

# REFLECTIONS ON THE JANUARY 20-24, 2010 MEETING OF THE ACPE REGIONAL DIRECTORS

The Reverend Jasper N. Keith, Jr., Th.D.

The 2010 Meeting of the Regional Directors (at Humphrey's Moon Inn in San Diego, CA) was attended by the nine Regional Directors, the ACPE Executive Director and Associate Director, and the Co-Chair of the Capital Campaign Portfolio of the Foundation for CPE, Inc.

Prior to attending this meeting, I informed the members of the Southeast Region of the ACPE, Inc. that the purpose for the Meeting of the Regional Directors and the Executive Director of ACPE, Inc. is *"for the RDs to be informed about actions taken by the ACPE Board of Representatives, the ACPE Commissions, and the Board of the Foundation for CPE, Inc."* I noted that *"RDs make no decisions in the governance of ACPE or in the establishing of its mission or policies."* Basically, the RDs receive information about what the elected representatives on the Board of Reps have enacted and expectations of how we are expected to implement those actions.

Historically, the relationship between the RDs and the ED of the ACPE has never been defined by the governance manuals or the By-Laws. That relationship has been fluid, and has been continually negotiated, almost annually, by the good will of the RDs and the ED. The ED is selected by, reports to, and is held accountable to the ACPE Board of Reps through its Personnel Committee. Regions establish the job descriptions, employ, and hold RDs accountable according to each region's governance structure.

Thus, over the years, questions have been asked: to what extent is the RD accountable to the ED? Whose meeting is this? Who sets the agenda, convenes, moderates, records and keeps the record, pays the expenses, values and utilizes the outcomes, etc., etc.,? From the beginning of ACPE, it was designated as a "Meeting of the Regional Directors;" but since the establishment of the ACPE Board of Representatives, it should have been changed to a "Meeting of the ED with the RDs." Subtle semantics? Maybe, but annually the RDs meet with the ED, the Associate ED, the ACPE President, and whoever might serve as a consultant about whatever Board of Reps actions that will need implementing in the coming year. The agenda is formed primarily by the actions of the Board of Reps and secondarily by the concerns of the ED and the RDs. Nevertheless, the motivation and the intention of everyone at the table are: ***how can we cooperate for the better good of the common welfare?***

Over twenty-six years of meeting with four different EDs and many more RDs, I've experienced a variety of visions, perceptions, and stances by RDs, EDs and Boards. Frankly, I think we are healthier and more creative when this tension between local needs/regional interests and national vision is accepted as our reality and our strength. Concomitantly, I think that we, individually and collectively, are more resistive and less creative (probably, most bored) when any group presumes to control, dictate, or dominate the agenda, the dialogue, and the mission.

To state this another way: the issue (for me) is, has been, and will be: ***how can we, the members, the elected leadership, and the employees of ACPE cooperate best for the better good of the ACPE, Inc. and the mission(s) we serve?***

At this **2010 ACPE REGIONAL DIRECTORS CONSULTATION** (a far better designation of this meeting), I'm glad to report (from my perspective) that transparency and "leveling" communication prevailed, that differences were respected and valued, that "rhetoric" rather than "sophistry" characterized our debates/discussions, and that "statesmen/women" rather than "politicians" participated in the conversations. I experienced "statesmen/women" declaring their truth, listening and hearing the truth of their colleagues, and seeking ways in which we can cooperate for the better good of the ACPE, Inc.

***[Self reflection: I know: please be patient with me: but this is entitled "reflections." Some folks think of me as a "passionate preacher." That's o.k.; I have aspired to be a better than average preacher. More than that, I am passionate about what I believe and hold dear. But before there was "preaching," there was "rhetoric" (that disciplined art of persuasion by which statesmen/women seek to accomplish a purpose for the common welfare). "Sophistry," on the other hand, is a "plausible but misleading or fallacious argument" by which the "politicians" seek to seduce others to his/her agenda in order to satiate his/her greed. Please, colleagues, let me be known for my rhetoric (vulnerable, honorable rhetoric) that "speaks my truth in love for the better good of the common welfare." I am thoroughly convicted that "rhetoric" rather than "sophistry" must be our method, yesterday, today, and always.]***

Again, let me reiterate: the only decision made by this group of RDs was the dates for our meeting in 2011(January 27-29). We received information about Board actions, the proposed ACPE Academy, the Foundation for CPE, and the possibility of the purchase of 542 Church Street; and we were urged to implement the actions of the Board of Reps within our regions. In the remainder of this report the facts imparted are in normal script while my reflections about what has happened are in *italics*.

Teresa and Deryck updated us on the operations of the ACPE Office, the E-Newsletter, the website, the newly formed Annual Conference Committee (cf. motion #59 of the November 09 Minutes of the Board of Reps), and actions of the Board relative to the five sections of the ACPE Strategic Plan. Teresa presented "***The ACPE Academy for Continuing Education***" (approved by the Board of Reps in Nov 09 with the first courses being offered at the ACPE Conference in Kansas City in April 2010). Gary Sartain (RD/NC) demonstrated "distance learning" utilizing the "*Illuminate webcasting program.*"

***[A few years ago when the Board of Reps adopted "The ACPE Strategic Plan," the work of the ED and the RDs changed from administrative functions to both administrative and program functions. I opposed that action of the Board not because of the content/vision of the strategic plan, but because there wasn't sufficient consideration of how or who would pay for its implementation. When a "vision" becomes a "plan," someone has to implement the program.***

***A “vision” costs very little, “programs” can become quite expensive. You can create, persuade and print a very good vision, even get it adopted by a Board at minimal expense; but in order to implement a plan/program you need space, staff, technology, etc.; and all of that can become quite expensive.***

***When the ACPE Strategic Plan was adopted enthusiastically, it was still largely a “vision” and the economy was more prosperous. Subsequent Boards of Reps have struggled with how to pay for implementing the ACPE Strategic Plan.***

***The shift in the work of those implementing the actions of the Board (ED and RDs) was subtle when the ACPE Strategic Plan was first adopted because we had been engaged for years in some of it (contextual & pastoral education (accreditation), supervisory education (certification), multicultural and international learning, and organizational relationships).***

***Few of us, however, had experience in development and fundraising; and this portion of the Strategic Plan was the hub around which the rest of the strategic initiatives were dependent.***

***To raise money, you have to spend money for additional staff and/or consultants; and, you have to convince donors that you need space and technology for implementing the program.***

***Nowadays, the ED and RDs and staff still do administrative functions in support of accreditation, certification, and organizational relations. Additionally, they do both administrative and program functions for multicultural and international learning and the courses soon to be offered through The ACPE Academy for Continuing Education.***

***To implement the actions of the Board of Reps, both administrative functions and program functions serve both our dues-paying members and our consumer public (which is expected to become far greater than it is presently). The dues-paying members and centers cannot pay for programs for the consumer public; and therefore, we must find ways for the consumer public to provide additional income through registration and/or tuition fees.***

***It is clear; however, that the major costs for the plan/program will come neither from “students/members contributions” nor from “registration/tuitions of consumers;” but rather, the major costs will come from donors and foundations presently unknown to us. Therefore, a recent Board of Reps approved the establishing of The Foundation for CPE whose “sole purpose is to serve the needs of ACPE.”]***

Stu Plummer (RD/SC) provided information about the work of the Board of the Foundation for CPE. He and others reported that on-going conversations were occurring between the Board of Reps and the Foundation Board, that a person of color had been added to the Foundation Board, and that the Board of Reps had approved the launching of a capital fund campaign in 2010. Stu, Teresa, Bill Scribner (Past President) and Dennis Kenny (RD/EC) explained that the ACPE had established a contract with the owners of the property located at 542 Church Street in Decatur, GA, that a title search had been completed, that a “due diligence” review process is under way by Lord-Aeck-Sargent Architecture, and that conversations with the Decatur City Manager about the use of the Decatur Conference Center have been most productive. Agnes Borne, a member of the Foundation Board and very experienced in renovating, designing and decorating, described the space and location at 542 and spoke appreciatively of the connections and relationships converging in Decatur during the explorations of this property for purchase. A process of exploration and discovery is being trusted, and recommendations may be made to the Board of Reps sometime in February.

Sally Schwab, President of ACPE, reported that the “Self-Study of Organizational Structure Task Force” had completed the member survey, and on the basis of that feedback the Board of Reps took the following actions in November 09: #36, eliminate paper issue of ACPE News; #37, reduce fall leadership meeting by one day for all except certification; #41, reduced Standards 2010 Budget by \$3,000; #44, eliminate alcohol reimbursement from ACPE; #46, leadership meetings to be held in Atlanta; #47, reduce travel for national leadership and office staff to a need basis and at the costs of the region when the travel is for regional function; #50, eliminate the Past-President position; and #51, create a work group on Association governance and organization for the purposes of: a) clarify expectations and structures related to management and leadership of ACPE professional staff; b) determine organization value of representative basis for the ACPE Board, commissions and committees; and c) research benefits and losses in regard to decreasing number of regions in ACPE.

As is always the case, there was general discussion about the work of the RDs, the costs of audits, the interpretation of standards, the latest technology, the pastoral care needed and the interventions attempted. Stu reported that the Board of Reps had referred the Peer Assistance Program to a Task Force for further review, and he led the RDs conversation about that proposal. RDs were encouraged to discover and collate referral resources within each region that could provide treatment for supervisors as needed.

Teresa pointed out motions #80 and #82 from the November Minutes of the Board of Reps that “instructed” increase of persons of racial, ethnic, multicultural heritage (PREMH) in leadership positions so that the representation would be increased by 10% in 2011, 20% in 2012, and 25% in 2013; and that “recommended” an increase on committees and commissions of generational diversity (understood as chronological, years in the Association, and years of certification).

At the end of this three day meeting I had been informed about the actions of the present Board of Reps. More importantly for me, I had a better sense of how and when the ACPE Office and regional offices moved from administratively supporting the education done in accredited centers by certified supervisors to also doing educational programs for a consumer public beyond the membership of the ACPE. Actions by the ACPE Board of Reps since 2007 established the plan/program that requires EDs and RDs to perform both administrative and programmatic functions. Now, we must raise funds to pay for a vision that has become a plan.

***[For many years, ACPE Supervisors, members, students and centers paid fees to the ACPE, Inc. for administrative services of their certification and continuing education and their center’s accreditation. But, in order to implement the Board of Reps actions that created the ACPE Strategic Plan, the Foundation for CPE, and the ACPE Academy, the need for more staff, additional space, enhanced technology was inevitable.***

***ACPE Supervisors, students and centers cannot underwrite these additional programmatic costs. If these plans/programs are to be successful, the ACPE is now dependent upon the success of the Foundation for CPE and ACPE Supervisors are now being asked to become fundraisers for the ACPE, Inc.***

*In my experience, fundraising is a two-edged sword. If we don't do it, and do it well, we can't implement the Strategic Plan, The ACPE Academy, or the Foundation.*

*Worst case scenario: if we don't become adequate fundraisers, bankruptcy or drastic altering of the present mission/plan/program of the Board of Reps is inevitable.*

*But, on the other hand, if we do an outstanding work of fundraising, the money received may determine the future mission/program of the ACPE. Major donors often have ideas of their own, and sometimes there are restrictions attached to their gifts. Recipients of restricted gifts enter into a fiduciary relationship, if not a legal contract, with those donors, and their designations must be honored.*

*But then, hasn't our mission always been determined by the sources of our money? Of course, we'll hope that our trained fundraisers will secure major gifts for the Foundation for CPE and that Board of Directors will invest the gifts wisely and productively. Mostly, we have to trust that our elected representatives (officers and Board of Reps) will exercise caution and keep as much control as possible so that they will determine the mission, vision, and programs of the ACPE and establish an operating budget that covers the costs thereof. For ultimately, our Board of Reps, and they only, have been entrusted with the power and the responsibility to forge the future of ACPE, Inc. That future will be determined not only by excellent visions but also by responsible stewardship. ]*