

May 8, 2009



Dear FMF staff member (and others who read this):

As you know, the FMF executive team has wisely urged me to indicate in writing what should happen if I unexpectedly die or am suddenly incapacitated. Also, as you know, an order of the type we are in is one in which a successor is chosen by the incumbent, and that in the case of a new General Director there is no automatic succession according to seniority. For this reason it is important for the choice to be made in advance of any unexpected event, thus preventing confusion.

I may observe that to name a successor in the present circumstances is much easier than it would have been some years ago. Every year that goes by, the increasing maturity among our leaders enables greater and greater confidence in apparent qualifications. At this point, I could hardly go wrong in whom I choose since I feel confident that whoever that person is will be welcomed by the others and supported, the very function of "leadership" being considerably a team reality, as it already is extensively. A key factor is durability of present goals and perspective, not to be confined to them, but not to lose sight of them either. To leave them is possible if their original purpose is reviewed and is clearly understood.

Meanwhile, it seems unwise for an outsider to be chosen over long-term insiders. It might work for continuity, ideally, to find a person with roughly my qualifications, however, as important as those may seem, I believe God can better guide our community if vision and faith are held to be primary.

In this light I sense it is God's will that David and Cathie Datema should be the couple that would carry on (with the help of others) the role of General Director of the FMF, basically as a team in the way that Roberta and I and Barbara and I have functioned. Dave's steady involvement, his pastoral experience and his scholarly emphasis, and not least his concern for the FMF as a fellowship, all equip him and are factors in this decision. While he and Cathie may lack some abilities, they possess others I do not have. It is not a case of trying to find someone exactly like I am.

I earnestly trust that this succession will not be like the four generals who took Alexander the Great's place, and could not get along, nor like the ill-fated "troika" in the former Soviet Union. Even now, our strength lies considerably in the team-complex of capable and willing servants who make up our leadership, as well as our larger membership. I am immensely proud of our people. I believe our fellowship is stronger than ever and will continue to grow stronger, and that its best days are beyond my lifespan—if you are willing to work as a team, rather than a clutch of terrific individuals.

Upon the Datemas and this continuing team I pray God's manifold blessings.

Faithfully,

*Ralph D. Winter*

Ralph D. Winter



David and Cathie Datema