

Christian Churches Together in the USA
CELEBRATION AND COMMITMENT
February 7, 2007 - 7:30 PM
Pasadena Presbyterian Church

Gathering of the People

Organ Music
Coptic Choir

Dr Timothy Howard
St Mariana Coptic Orthodox Church

***Call to Worship**

Rev. Wesley Granberg-Michaelson

Leader: The world belongs to God,
the earth and all its people.

People: ***How good and how lovely it is
To live together in unity.***

Leader: Love and justice come together,
Justice and peace join hands.

People: ***If the Lord's disciples keep silent
These stones would cry out.***

Together: ***Lord, open our lips
And our mouths shall proclaim your praise.***

***Processional Hymn – Praise with Joy**

Praise with joy the world's Creator,
God of justice, love and peace,
Source and end of human knowledge,
Force of greatness without cease,
Celebrate the Father's glory.
Power to rescue and release.

Praise the Son who feeds the hungry,
Frees the captive, finds the lost,
Heals the sick, upsets religion,
Fearless both of fate and cost.
Celebrate Christ's constant presence
– Friend and Stranger, Guest and Host.

Praise the Spirit sent among us,
Liberating truth from pride,
forging bonds where race or gender,
Age or nation dare divide.
Celebrate the Spirit's treasure-
Foolishness none dare deride.

Praise the Father, Son and Spirit,
One God in Community,
Calling Christians to embody
Oneness and diversity.
Thus the world shall yet believe when
Shown Christ's vibrant unity.
(cWild Goose Resource Group, Iona Community)

***Opening Prayer**

Rev. Dr Stephen Thurston

Words of Welcome

Cardinal Roger Mahony, Archdiocese of Los Angeles

My Sisters and Brothers in Christ,
On behalf of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Los Angeles and the Council of Religious Leaders of our city, I take great delight in welcoming you to this historic gathering this evening.

Christian Churches Together began in 2001 out of a deeply felt need to broaden and expand fellowship, unity, and common witness among the diverse expressions of our Christian Faith today. Los Angeles, perhaps uniquely, is a wondrously religiously diverse city, a beautiful mosaic of Christian Faith, with each family of Christians adding its own particular beauty and radiance to the whole tableau. It is very appropriate, therefore, that this gathering take place here for Christian Churches Together has become the broadest, most inclusive fellowship of Christian Churches and traditions in the United States.

The Archdiocese has a long history of fruitful dialogue and interaction with our Sisters and Brothers of other Christian Churches. Our decades old Evangelical/Catholic Dialogue continues to thrive. We were a joint sponsor of the Billy Graham Crusade here a few years ago. We actively participate in and promote the Annual Week of Prayer for Christian Unity in conjunction with the Southern California Ecumenical Council. We celebrated the signing of the Document "Mary: Grace and Hope in Christ" with the Episcopal Church, and we anticipate celebrating the 500th Anniversary of the Reformation with our colleagues in the Evangelical Lutheran Church. Our relationship with the various Orthodox Churches here is beautifully manifested by their participation in our Annual Requiem for the Unborn. Many of our fellow Christians joined us in last May's March for Comprehensive Immigration Reform.

Tonight I join the five Presidents of Christian Churches Together in committing myself to endeavoring to grow even closer to all who bear the name Christian in order to strengthen our common witness in the world.

Words of Welcome

Rev. Dr Barbara Anderson, Pasadena Presbyterian Church

Preparation for the Word

Come and Fill Our Hearts

Taize Community

Reading and Responding to the Word
Reader

Bishop Stephen Blaire

But now thus says the Lord,
He who created you, O Jacob,
He who formed you, O Israel:
Do not fear, for I have redeemed you;...
I have called you by name, you are mine.
You are my witnesses, says the Lord,
And my servant whom I have chosen,
So that you may know and believe me
And understand that I am he....
Do not remember the former things,
Or consider the things of old.
I am about to do a new thing;
Now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?
(Isaiah 42: 1,10, 18,19a)

People: ***Lord we await;***
 Do a new thing among us...

Why the US Conference of Catholic Bishops is a Participant in CCT
Bishop Richard Sklba:

My Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ:

I rise this evening in the absence of Cardinal William Keeler who is experiencing temporary illness which precludes cross-country travel, and deeply regrets his inability to be present with us. He sends his greetings and prayers for our gathering in Pasadena, and in particular for this solemn occasion.

The Catholic Bishops of the nation are founding members of Christian Churches Together because of the Eucharist which we celebrate and because we are convinced of our duty to obey and to embrace the Lord's call for unity within and among the Churches ... full visible unity ... that we make be one as God is one (cf. John 17:21).

Cardinal Keeler acknowledged his personal pride that the early meeting of Christian Churches Together took place in the oldest Catholic Archdiocese in the nation, Baltimore, and that this first formal meeting takes place in our largest Catholic Archdiocese, Los Angeles. Thus the movement has embraced us geographically as well as historically!

Almost forty-five years ago when the bishops of the Catholic Church gathered to begin the spiritual adventure we call the Second Vatican Council, Blessed Pope John XXIII offered three principal goals for that historic meeting, namely, the renewal of the Church, the reunion of the Churches and the transformation of the modern world by the Gospel. That vision and that hope engaged, energized and excited Catholics throughout the entire world.

Almost half a century later the Catholic bishops see Christian Churches Together as an opportunity to bring us into greater conformity with the Will of Christ, and to enable all

who have been baptized in Christ give united witness to the Lord's saving Death and Resurrection.

In his special message to the World Council of Churches Assembly in Porto Alegre, Brazil last February, Pope Benedict XVI again insisted that we Catholics are "irreversibly committed" to the full visible unity of the Church.

It is a privilege and a duty for our United States Conference of Catholic Bishops to be participants in this solemn service this evening.

Vocal solo

Pazzi Bohnenkamp

Reader:

Rev. Lydia Veliko

How very good and pleasant it is
When kindred live together in unity!
It is like the precious oil on the head,
Running down upon the beard,
On the beard of Aaron,
Running down over the collar of his robes.
It is like the dew of Hermon,
Which falls on the mountains of Zion.
For there the Lord ordained his blessing,
Life forevermore. (Psalm 133)

People: *Lord we await;
Do a new thing among us...*

**Why the Historic Protestant Churches are Participants in CCT
The Reverend Larry Pickens, CCT President:**

Solo *The Lord is My Light*

Anita Protich

Reader

Bishop Serapion

I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all.

(Ephesians 4: 1 – 6)

People: *Lord we await;
Do a new thing among us...*

**Why the Orthodox Churches are Participants in CCT
The Very Reverend Leonid Kishkovsky, CCT President**

Coptic Orthodox choir

St Mariana Coptic Orthodox Church

Reader

Rev. Jim Wallis

I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them, even as you have loved me. (John 17: 20 -23)

People: *Lord we await;
Do a new thing among us...*

Why Evangelical and Pentecostals are Participants in CCT Bishop James Leggett, CCT President

As followers of Jesus Christ, we gather together in response to His passionate, high-priestly prayer: "I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in me through their word that they may be one, Father, as you are in me and I in you; that they may also be one in us, that the world may believe that you sent me" (John 17:20-21).

If this was the passion of our Savior, who loved the Church and gave Himself for it, then each of us should avail himself of every opportunity to become one, to develop unity in the body of Christ. CCT gives Evangelicals and Pentecostals the opportunity to work toward this unity in the broadest gathering of the Christian Church in America.

We know that the body of Christ is neither identified nor limited to any one denomination or fellowship. All of those who are true followers of Jesus Christ, whatever church fellowship, are a part of the body of Christ.

We have a family relationship which transcends denominational boundaries or labels. The Apostle Paul's statement in Ephesians makes this clear: "I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the whole family in heaven and on earth is named" (3:14-15).

In meetings like this, CCT offers us the opportunity to come together as families in the family of God. As we sit at the table and in our fellowship, we learn from each other. We have the joy of sharing and learning the history and the vision of each family. We can avoid the stereotypes in our future labors together. As we grow together, we gain an appreciation for individual leaders as well as well as the various families. Sometimes we learn we are more alike than we are different. We also learn to understand the differences and yet work together.

Some of our traditions are spontaneous. But more and more I am learning the importance of formal prayers prayed through the centuries. After each meeting I have taken home with me an orthodox or Catholic prayer service. And I trust that the formalized liturgical traditions also will gain from being exposed to a more spontaneous worship style.

The other advantage for the Evangelical/Pentecostal is that we can work together to fulfill the Great Commission and to show the love of Christ to this world. The task is too immense for any of us individually, but we may be able to accomplish it together.

I remember something Charles Chaney said to me a few years ago. He and I were both involved in church planting. On a ride to the airport, he said to me with tears in his eyes, “We must join hands and work together. The task of church planting and evangelism is too great. None of us can accomplish the task alone. We have learned we cannot do it alone.”

The two themes of this gathering, Evangelism and Poverty, show that we can work together to proclaim Jesus Christ as Savior of all people. We can also show His love and compassion for the poor and the marginalized.

We must keep in mind that the passion of Jesus for the unity of His Church was the parallel passion “that the world might believe.” Remember that He said, “If I be lifted up from the earth, I will draw all men unto me.”

Our responsibility is to exalt Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.

Musical Contribution from the Pentecostal family

Reader

Rev. Dr Seung Koo Choi

When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor.

He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.

And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. Then he began to say to them, “Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.” (Luke 4:16 – 21)

People: ***Lord we await;
Do a new thing among us...***

Why Racial/Ethnic Churches are Participants in CCT

Rev. Dr William Shaw, CCT President

The involvement of the ethnic/racial family in the formation of CCT is connected with two realities defined by three words. The first word/reality is “**being**”. CCT is not now a full reality. But we believe it is the manifestation of a possibility that God, by His Spirit, is bringing into “**being**”—a church relationship of His envisioning. What God wills His Church to “**be**” is larger than, even other than that which we see or maybe even desire.

We have spoken this night of the joy attending the development of CCT to this point. But the full blessing of His vision for us may well involve pain as well as joy. Before Abram could become the father of the nation of God's desiring he had to suffer the pain of severance from what was familiar and even comfortable. He had to venture towards a

land whose location he did not know. He had to venture “**not knowing**”. CCT is a venture into the “**being**” of God’s designing by the power of His Spirit.

But “being” alone is not the final end of His desiring for us in this world. God is bringing us into being **so that** we can “**be about**” the work of His intentioning. The anointing of the Spirit is for a purpose. “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me for He has anointed me to . . .” The anointing is not for our intention except when our intentions are to submit to Divine intentioning. The actualizing of His intentions also points to the challenge of pain. The incarnation was inseparably related to the pain of the crucifixion.

If God is indeed bringing CCT into “**being**” so that we can “**be about**” the work of His intentioning, how can we of the historic racial ethnic Church family say no to or stand apart from His summoning?

Commitment Ceremony

Rev. Wesley Granberg-Michaelson

A group of church leaders met in Baltimore on Sept 7-8, 2001 to pray, to listen and to seek the guidance of God on whether all who confess the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Savior in accordance with the Scriptures can talk together about how to share with the world our common confession of Jesus Christ. We continued this prayerful conversation in Chicago in April 2002, where we shared our laments and longing for an expanded Christian conversation in our nation in the following way:

We lament that we are divided and that our divisions too often result in distrust, misunderstandings, fear and even hostility between us. We long for the broken body of Christ to be made whole, where unity can be celebrated in the midst of our diversity.

We lament our often diffuse and diminished voice on matters critical to the gospel in our society. We long for a more common witness, vision and mission.

We lament how our lack of faithfulness to each other has led to a lack of effectiveness on crucial issues of human dignity and social justice. We long to strengthen the prophetic public voice of the Christian community in America.

We lament that none of our current organizations represents the full spectrum of Christians in the United States. We long for a place, where our differences could be better understood and our commonalities better affirmed.

We sensed the Holy Spirit leading us to new possibilities and we began to see a vision of a new life together that, over these six years, has taken shape as Christian Churches Together in the USA.. We have invited all churches who confess Jesus Christ as God and Savior in accordance with the Scripture to the glory of the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit to join us on this journey. We celebrate the 36 who have committed themselves to walk together. We eagerly anticipate the fellowship of those who will come and help us explore how to walk together.. We do not know all the details of the way, but we long to allow the Holy Spirit to answer our Lord’s prayer to the Father, “that they may all be one . . . so that the world may believe that you have sent me.” John 17:

Those of us here tonight as CCT Participants have all agreed -- and we now confirm by the signing of our names -- that we will, as CCT Participants, celebrate a common confession of faith in the Triune God, discern the guidance of the Holy Spirit through prayer and theological dialogue, provide fellowship and mutual support even as we seek better understanding of each other by affirming our commonalities and understanding our differences, foster evangelism faithful to the proclamation of the gospel, speak to society with a common voice whenever possible and promote the common good of society.

I invite the founding participants to come forward as their names are called:

The Response

Veni Sancte Spiritus

CCT Participants

Taize Community

(Soft chanting music (Veni Sancte Spiritus) under the reading of the names)
As the Church/organization and representative names are read, the representative comes forward to the table and signs his/her name and then stands in the front forming a large semi-circle.)

Christian Churches Together in the USA Founding Participants & Representatives for the Celebration

AMEN (Alianza de Ministerios Evangelicos Nacionales)

Elder Ricardo Moreno

American Baptist Churches in the U.S.A.

The Reverend Dr A. Roy Medley

Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America

The Very Reverend Olof Scott

Bread for the World

The Reverend David Beckmann

Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

The Reverend Dr Robert Welsh

Christian Reformed Church

The Reverend Dr Peter Borgdorff

Church of God (Anderson)

The Reverend Dr Cynthia James

Church of God of Prophecy

Bishop David Bryan

Cooperative Baptist Fellowship

The Reverend Dr Daniel Vestal

Coptic Orthodox Church

Bishop Serapion

Diocese of the Armenian Orthodox Church in America

Archbishop Viken Aykazian

Episcopal Church

Bishop Chris Epting

Evangelical Covenant Church

Dr Robert Johnston

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Bishop Dean W. Nelson

Evangelicals for Social Action

The Reverend Dr Ronald J. Sider

Free Methodist Church of North America

Bishop Roger Haskins

Friends United Meeting

Ben Richmond

Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America

Bishop Dimitrios

International Council of Community Churches

Mrs. Sandra Nelson

International Pentecostal Holiness Church

Bishop James Leggett*

Korean Presbyterian Church in America

The Reverend Dr Seung Koo Choi

Moravian Church in America

The Rt Reverend D. Wayne Burkette

National Association of Congregational Christian Churches

Mr Bonn Clayton

National Baptist Convention of America, Inc.

The Reverend Dr Stephen Thurston

National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc.

The Reverend Dr William Shaw*

Open Bible Churches

The Reverend Jeff Farmer

Orthodox Church in America

The Very Reverend Leonid Kishkovsky*

Presbyterian Church (USA)

The Reverend Gradye Parsons

Reformed Church in America

The Reverend Doug Fromm

Salvation Army

Major Gary Miller

Sojourners/Call to Renewal

The Reverend Jim Wallis

Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch

Archbishop Karim

United Church of Christ

The Reverend John Thomas

United Methodist Church

The Reverend Larry Pickens*

US Conference of Catholic Bishops

Cardinal William Keeler*

World Vision

Mr Richard Stearns

* President of CCT

The Candle Lighting:

Jesus said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." As *Christian Churches Together* we understand that the closer we draw to Christ, the closer we will be to each other.

We invite each of the CCT faith families to light their candle from the central candle which represents the light of Christ and to place it in the holder. In so doing, we commit ourselves anew to draw closer to Christ and to each other.

[As the families are announced, CCT Representatives accompany their President as he moves to light his candle from the Christ Candle and sets it in the Orthodox style candle holder. After it is in place, each family says together as they stand around the candle:

We commit ourselves anew to draw closer to Christ and to each other.

Then the Family moves to the side, still close to the candle. When all candles are lit, all participants gather around the candle to pray the prayer of Dedication.]

The Evangelical and Pentecostal Family

The Catholic Family

The Orthodox Family

The Racial and Ethnic Family

The Historic Protestant Family

Prayer of Dedication

CCT participants

Gracious God,
As you call us to yourself,
you draw us closer to one another.
Let your gracious Spirit
continue to work among us,
teaching us that we belong to each other,
even as we all belong to your Son, Jesus Christ.

Give us courage and patience
to trust the fragile threads of fellowship
that are weaving a new pattern
for Christian Churches Together.

We are called into unity
for the sake of your witness in the world.
May our coming together
join us to the power of your love,
poured out for the world.

We commit ourselves to this holy vision,
and to this new undertaking.

We pray this through your Son and our Lord, Jesus Christ,

Amen.

***Congregational Hymn – The Churches One Foundation**

The church's one foundation
is Jesus Christ her Lord;
she is his new creation
by water and the Word.
From heaven he came and sought her
to be his holy bride;
with his own blood he bought her,
and for her life he died.

Elect from every nation,
yet one o'er all the earth;
her charter of salvation,
one Lord, one faith, one birth;
one holy name she blesses,
partakes one holy food,
and to one hope she presses,
with every grace endued.

Mid toil and tribulation,
and tumult of her war,

she waits the consummation
of peace forevermore;
till, with the vision glorious,
her longing eyes are blest,
and the great church victorious
shall be the church at rest.

Yet she on earth hath union
with God the Three in One,
and mystic sweet communion
with those whose rest is won.
O happy ones and holy!
Lord, give us grace that we
like them, the meek and lowly,
on high may dwell with thee.

Benediction

Rev. Dr Daniel Vestal

Recessional

Dr Timothy Howard

(Please remain in place until the CCT Presidents and Participants have moved down the aisle)

The congregation, guests and CCT Participants are invited to the Fellowship Hall for refreshments immediately following the service.

Program Participants

Dr Timothy Howard, Staff Organist, Pasadena Presbyterian Church - **The Reverend Wesley Granberg-Michaelson**, Chair of CCT Steering Committee, General Secretary, Reformed Church in America – **Rev. Dr Stephen Thurston**, President, National Baptist Convention of America, Inc.- **Cardinal Roger Mahoney**, Archdiocese of Los Angeles - **The Reverend Dr Barbara Anderson**, Co-pastor, Pasadena Presbyterian Church – **The Reverend Gregory Norton**, Minister of Music, Pasadena Presbyterian Church - **Bishop Stephen Blaire**, Catholic Diocese of Stockton – **Bishop Richard Sklba**, Chairman of the Bishops' Committee for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs – **Pazzi Bohnenkamp**, soloist, Archdiocese of Los Angeles - **The Reverend Lydia Veliko**, Ecumenical Officer, United Church of Christ - **The Reverend Larry Pickens**, General Secretary, General Commission on Christian Unity and Interreligious Concerns, United Methodist Church – **Anita Protich**, soprano, Pasadena Presbyterian Church - **Bishop Serapion**, Coptic Orthodox Church - **The Very Reverend Leonid Kishkovsky**, Ass't to the Chancellor for External Affairs and Interchurch Relations, Orthodox Church in America, **St Mariana Coptic Orthodox Church Choir**, Irvine, CA - **The Reverend Jim Wallis**, Founder and President, Sojourners/Call to Renewal - **Bishop James Leggett**, Presiding Bishop, International Pentecostal Holiness Church - **The Reverend Dr Seung Koo Choi**, Korean Presbyterian Church - **Dr William Shaw**, President, National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc. – **Second Avenue Baptist Church**, Los Angeles - **The Reverend Dr Daniel Vestal**, Coordinator, Cooperative Baptist Fellowship.

Special thanks to:

Pasadena Presbyterian Church, Co-pastors the **Rev Dr Barbara Anderson** and the **Rev Dr Mark Smutny**, **Roger Snelling**, Business Administrator, the **Rev Gregory Norton**, Minister of Music, **Dr Timothy Howard**, Organist and the team of ushers. **Fr Alexei Smith**, Archdiocese of Los Angeles, liturgical coordinator; **Rev. Al Cohen**, Southern California Ecumenical Council.
