



PO Box 24188
Indianapolis, IN 46224-0188
Phone: (317) 490-1968
Fax: (484) 231-7467
www.ChristianChurchesTogether.org

Rev. Dr. Richard L. Hamm, *Executive Administrator* (317) 490-1968 Email: dhamm@ddi.org
Valerie A. Ruess, *Administrative Assistant* (317) 496-8656 Email: ValCCT@att.net

2008 Annual Meeting Moves CCT Ahead, Poverty Initiative Reaffirmed

Baltimore, Maryland, January 11, 2008 – Christian Churches Together in the USA wrapped up their four day Annual Meeting today in Baltimore at the Conference Center at the Maritime Institute. This young inter-church body represents the broadest national table of conversation among Christian Churches in the United States. This Annual Meeting provided an opportunity for representatives of the 43 participating churches and organizations of CCT to discern how to move forward together in confronting domestic poverty.

In the opening worship on Tuesday evening, seven new churches and organizations were received into CCT participation: American Bible Society, The Church of the Brethren, Elim Fellowship, Habitat for Humanity, The Mennonite Church USA, The Polish National Catholic Church, and The Vineyard USA. Wesley Granberg-Michaelson (General Secretary of the Reformed Church in America) was thanked for his service as moderator and Father Leonid Kishkovsky (Director of External Affairs and Interchurch Relations of the Orthodox Church in America) was commissioned as the new moderator. Also, Dr. Richard L. Hamm was installed as the new Executive Administrator of Christian Churches Together in the USA.

Wednesday, the 90 representatives bussed to the headquarters of Bread for the World (a CCT participant organization) where they were joined by 18 seminarians. The group toured the service sites of S.O.M.E. (So Others Might Eat) in Washington D.C. and Sojourners (a CCT participant organization). They heard reflections from representatives of the five church families of CCT (Catholic, Historic Protestant, Evangelical/Pentecostal, Orthodox, and Racial/Ethnic) on “What we have learned in our struggle to eliminate poverty.”

During the balance of Wednesday and on Thursday, the group met in small discernment groups to pray and think together about what God might be calling CCT to do as individuals, as churches and as CCT together in regard to poverty and in addition to the “Statement on Poverty” (see www.ChristianChurchesTogether.org) which was released last year. There was also a discernment session on the theme of evangelism, the other primary focus of CCT.

The seminarians participating on Wednesday reflected on their experience of that day and shared their thoughts with the CCT representatives. They appreciated the opportunity to be involved and many remarked upon the openness and humanness of these national church leaders. Likewise, the representatives were impressed with the quality of the seminarians and it was decided to enlarge this component of future Annual Meetings.

A major part of the Annual Meeting was the experience of high quality worship services, reflecting the traditions of each church family. Speakers included Cliff Kirkpatrick (Stated Clerk of the Presbyterian Church USA), Dr. William Shaw (President of the National Baptist Convention, USA), Gary Miller (Salvation Army Director of Program), and Cardinal William Keeler (Archdiocese of Baltimore).

Theodore Boback of St. Andrew's Church (a Baltimore parish of the Orthodox Church in America) brought Great Vespers of Theophany (Epiphany), and the group heard a 12 piece Salvation Army brass ensemble!

In remembrance of the 40th anniversary of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr's assassination, Dr. Ron Sider (Evangelicals For Social Action, participant organization) provided, "God, the Poor and Us: Forty Biblical Reminders," forty biblical texts that highlight God's special concern for poor people (available at www.ChristianChurchesTogether.org).

On Friday, next steps were approved, including dedicating the largest part of next year's Annual Meeting to a continued exploration of the convergences and divergences of the participant churches and organizations regarding poverty. The group also decided to press the new U.S. president-elect to make the elimination of domestic poverty a part of his or her administration's goals. New members of the Steering Committee were affirmed and the date for the next Annual Meeting was set for January 13-16, 2009.