

CCT E-newsletter

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*Reflections from Executive  
Administrator, Richard L. Hamm*

## **Steering Committee Meeting Productive**

The Steering Committee (comprised of 24 representatives from across our five families) met recently in Chicago. It was a very good meeting from my perspective. We are slowly but surely gaining clarity about a number of important matters having to do with the future growth and development of CCT.

A question that has been before us for some time is, “How will CCT be expressed locally?” We have wondered whether we should have local “chapters” or other “official” expressions. We seem to be moving toward consensus that rather than having “chapters” per se, we will invite local groups to use the Christian Churches Together in the USA model of organization including: (1) consensus decision making, (2) the designation of “families” of churches, (3) seeking participation by as many churches as can claim the three “theological affirmations” of CCT (belief in Christ according to the Scriptures, worship and serve the triune God, “seek ways to work together in order to present a more credible Christian witness in and to the world”), and (4) the inclusion of local organizations as up to 20% of participants.



In addition, any local expression of CCT would avoid undercutting any existing councils, associations or other means by which Christian unity is encouraged and practiced in a community. Local groups agreeing to these guidelines would be permitted to use the CCT name. The role of the national organization would be to network these local groups (primarily through the Internet) so they can exchange experiences and ideas and learn from each other.

A second question is, “When will CCT have an Annual Meeting that is open to the public?” There was a public celebration of the formation of CCT in Pasadena in 2007, but since then the Annual Meetings have been limited to participants, those considering participating, and a few observers. There will likely be a public day to close the Annual Meeting in January 12-15, 2010, which is likely to be in the northwestern United States. This will include a worship service and perhaps a forum.

A third question is, “When will CCT offer a public witness regarding domestic poverty?” The answer to that is likely to be this January during the 2009 Annual Meeting. We went into to 2008 Annual Meeting last January thinking we were ready to say something publicly to the President and Congress. But we discovered we did not yet have consensus on how it should be done and we decided to hold off. While this was a disappointment to me and many others, I believe it was necessary for us to take some additional time to think through how we can do public witness without getting mired in partisan politics. This year, the national elections will be over, which will make it easier to avoid partisan interpretations or

uses of our witness. It will surely be a timely word, since poverty has received almost no attention in the presidential election process so far; the focus has been almost entirely on Wall Street and on the middle class. Whoever is elected in November, we want to make sure that domestic poverty is on the primary agenda. This is especially important in the wake of our current economic woes which will surely exacerbate unemployment and poverty generally.

These are some of the questions before us and it is exciting to see the Holy Spirit leading us forward into a creative future of faithful effectiveness. It has been my privilege to be executive administrator for just a little over a year. We have come a long way since Pasadena in 2007. Thanks be to God!

Grace and peace,

*Dick Hamm*

## **Name Change Proposed For Racial Ethnic Family**

At the Annual Meeting in January, CCT participants will act on a recommended change in the By-Laws which would rename the “Racial Ethnic Family” the “African American Family”. This change is recommended in recognition of the fact that the historic African American Churches have had a unique experience in American culture and history. CCT Participant Churches that are predominantly comprised of other racial ethnic groups generally consider themselves to be a member of one of the other four families (Evangelical/Pentecostal, Historic Protestant, Orthodox, or Roman Catholic) rather than primarily as a particular racial ethnic “family”. For example, the Korean Presbyterian Church in the USA identifies primarily with the Historic Protestant Family.

The original intent of having a “Racial/Ethnic Family” was to empower the voices of distinctly racial/ethnic churches. However, in practice the actual effect has been the opposite. The very different journeys of the various racial ethnic groups that are a part of CCT has made it difficult for the “Racial Ethnic Family” to function congruently. Thus, the proposed change is offered in order to reflect practical reality and to effectively implement the original intent of creating a fifth family. The proposal was generated after conversations with representatives of the participating churches that comprise the “Racial Ethnic Family”.

## **Moderator Kishkovsky Expresses Concern Over Caricatures**

In his opening remarks to Steering Committee earlier this month, Moderator Leonid Kishkovsky, a priest of the Orthodox Church in America, expressed Christian solidarity with our Pentecostal brothers and sisters in the face of caricatures of their faith that have been used in political cartoons and commentaries recently to lampoon Vice Presidential candidate Sarah Palin’s religious life. Father

Kishkovsky's remarks were affirmed by the other members of the Steering Committee and were received with gratitude by those representing the Evangelical/Pentecostal Family.



Archbishop Wilton Gregory, Roman Catholic Family president, and United Methodist Bishop Sharon Rader, were welcomed to their first Steering Committee meeting in October. Above right, Major Mark Israel, Salvation Army, looks on. Also, Mr. Alejandro Aguilera-Titus was affirmed to finish the term of Sister Ana Marie Pineda, who has been serving for two years as an at-large member of the Steering Committee.

## **The Churches Invited to Engage in an Anti-Poverty Action of Their Choice Thanksgiving to Easter**

All the churches of CCT are asked to engage in some kind of specific action to alleviate domestic poverty sometime between Thanksgiving 2008 and April 19, 2009 and to report that action to Dick Hamm for posting in future CCT e-newsletters. Resources to assist congregations and others in this activity will be posted on the CCT website within a week. Churches may choose any action they wish, including those already sponsored by their denomination. You may take an offering for the poor or for an agency that serves the poor, a fast in solidarity with the poor, a letter writing campaign to Congress, a

study of the issues surrounding poverty in America, or whatever can be imagined. Churches may wish to utilize means and resources offered by CCT participant organizations that engage poverty: Bread For The World, Evangelicals for Social Action, Habitat for Humanity, Sojourners, and World Vision.

The Steering Committee hopes that 100% of CCT's participant churches will engage in this unified effort to heighten awareness of domestic poverty among our churches' members and the larger society. African American, Evangelical, Pentecostal, historic Protestant, Orthodox and Roman Catholic Christians all making this witness together will surely help keep poverty before the nation in a time when so many issues vie for attention.

## **Invitations to Denominational Gatherings Sought**

CCT can increase its visibility and effectiveness by becoming better known within our participant churches and organizations. Thus, Dick Hamm asks that denominational and organizational leaders extend invitations to CCT colleagues to be present and, if possible, to bring brief greetings on behalf of CCT. Hamm is making it a point to be present in as many of these meetings as possible and also wishes to make such invitations known to the five presidents so they also can attend such gatherings as able.

A 3-4 minute video about CCT is being created for use in tightly packed denominational meeting agendas. It will be available by next spring. Hamm and others also seek to be available to speak in various settings, do workshops, and so forth. If you, or someone you know, could fund all or part of this video (about \$5,000 total), please contact Dick Hamm.

## **Deadline for Annual Meeting Registration**

Participant representatives are reminded that the deadline for Annual Meeting registration is upon us. Please submit your registration as soon as possible. If you need forms, please request those of Val Ruess at [ValCCT@att.net](mailto:ValCCT@att.net) as soon as possible. The Annual Meeting will again be held in Baltimore this year at the Maritime Institute near Baltimore Washington International Airport.

Registrants are asked to choose between "study tracks" that will be part of a two-day emphasis on domestic poverty. On Thursday, January 15, the Annual Meeting will move to Capitol Hill for a few hours to offer public witness to the importance of keeping domestic poverty on the national agenda (coaches will be provided for this purpose).



**Bowie Snodgrass, Episcopal Church, has been an active leader in Christian Churches Together for several years. She completes her service on the Steering Committee this year. The Committee also celebrated her recent marriage and the beginning of a new ministry.**

## **Seminarian Steward Program Offered for 2009 Annual Meeting**

In addition to the usual Seminarians' Day (Wednesday, January 14), the 2009 Annual Meeting will offer the opportunity for up to five seminarians (one from each family) to serve as Seminary Stewards throughout the January 13-16 event. These five students will get a "behind the scenes" look at the Annual Meeting while also assisting with meeting details.

Seminarians may apply to become Stewards by writing a letter of interest to Dr. Richard L. Hamm, at P.O. Box 24188, Indianapolis, IN 46224-0188. The letter should, in 200 words or less, explain why the applicant believes Christian Churches Together is of interest to them and why he or she wishes to serve as a Seminary Steward. Letters should be postmarked by October 1. Final selections will be made by Dr. Hamm and the President of each church family.

CCT participants are asked to assist please in making this opportunity (as well as Seminarians Day) known among students. If you, or someone you know, would like to assist in funding the attendance of these young leaders, please contact Dick Hamm.

### **Future Dates**

Annual Meetings: January 13-16, 2009

January 12-15, 2010

January 11-14, 2011

January 10-13, 2012

Steering Committee Meetings: May 4-5, 2009

Sept-Oct 1, 2009

May 3-4, 2010

September 29-30, 2010

Two-thirds of the CCT annual budget of \$150,000 is funded through dues paid by participant churches and organizations. The other one-third is funded through the gifts of interested individuals. Financial statements (including the annual auditor's report) are available upon request. Contributions to CCT are fully tax deductible.

For more information or to make a donation to CCT-USA, please contact:

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