



Annual Meeting January 13-16, 2009: *Return to Baltimore!*

The Steering Committee has decided to go back to the Baltimore-Washington DC area, upon recommendation of the CCT Domestic Poverty Committee. We will meet again at the Conference Center at the Maritime Institute of Technology, near the BWI Airport.

The Maritime Conference Center was given high marks in the 2008 Annual Meeting participant evaluations, and it is well situated to provide us access to Washington DC in the event we decide at our gathering to engage in some form of non-partisan public witness regarding domestic poverty. The Presidential Inauguration will follow CCT's Annual Meeting by only a few days (January 20), so that Washington will be the focus of much media attention.

In 2010, the Annual Meeting will likely be in a different part of the country, but the Steering Committee felt that January 2009 provides an auspicious opportunity for us to press governmental leaders about the importance of addressing poverty. Registration forms will be made available soon.

Reflections from Executive Administrator, Richard L. Hamm

The Future of Christian Churches Together

The Steering Committee, meeting in Chicago May 1-2, continued a conversation about the future to which God is calling us by addressing several questions. The Committee did not presume to answer all of these questions on behalf of the whole fellowship, but this discussion was part of the shaping of a process it is hoped will assist the Annual Meeting in discerning future direction.

Questions included: What are your dreams for what CCT will be doing in two years? How do we deepen our relationship with our participant churches (beyond presiding bishops, presidents, ecumenical officers and other high ranking representatives)? How shall we relate to local expressions of churches and organizations? How can we fully utilize the gifts of our participant organizations? How shall we relate to non-participant organizations that may provide additional ways of addressing our agenda (partnerships, strategic alliances, endorsements)?

The answers to these, and other questions, are important for us to continue working on prayerfully and respectfully. The conversation provides yet another way for us to understand each other, our commonalities and our differences. There is not uniform



agreement around these questions among Steering Committee members, but there was much wisdom and enthusiasm shared. It is clear that everyone has high hopes for the future of CCT.



Jacob Jang, Ron Roberson, Don Williams and Jeff Farmer review CCT business



The Steering Committee met in the headquarters of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

We have been formally constituted for only a little over two years (Pasadena in February 2006), and we are seeking our way forward deliberately but with great hope and enthusiasm, and in the faith that this fellowship has been led into being by the Holy Spirit. We believe that we are called to grow in numbers of participant churches and organizations, in relationship, in depth of understanding, and in influence. Yet, we are seeking to maintain a networking approach to our organizational structures, keeping staff at a minimum and utilizing, as much as possible, the gifts and capacities of our participant churches and organizations.

We do not understand CCT to be in competition with any other association, fellowship or network of churches, including the National Council of Churches, the National Association of Evangelicals, Churches Uniting in Christ, or any other such organization. In fact, most of our participating churches participate fully in one or more such bodies in addition to CCT. We pray for the faithfulness and success of all such bodies that are seeking to be faithful to the work of the Holy Spirit, and for their leaders. Whenever possible, we seek to schedule our meetings and events at times that will not coincide with the meetings and events of other such organizations.



Doug Beacham, Bishop Serapion, and Wendy McFadden



Don Williams, Steve Haas, Ron Roberson

In seeking to fulfill our purpose, Christian Churches Together in the USA is breaking new ground: 1) by providing the broadest table of conversation ever among communions in the US, with Roman Catholics, Evangelicals and Pentecostals, Orthodox, Historic Protestant, African American and other racial ethnic churches; 2) by providing for national Christian organizations to be up to 20% of our participants; 3) by making discernment and consensus our primary model of decision making; and, 4) by choosing evangelism and domestic poverty together as our initial foci.

I, for one, am both excited and impatient to see what the next months and years will bring as we together discern more clearly what God would have us do. But, while I believe much is at stake, it is a conversation that must not be rushed. Meanwhile, we are beginning to find a way forward in our witness against domestic poverty.

Thanks be to God! And thank you for allowing me the privilege of being a part of this journey with you!

Grace and peace,

Dick Hamm

Pope Benedict XVI Visits the United States

Pope Benedict XVI was well received during his visit April 15-20. He was energetic and engaging as he moved about the country. Father Leonid Kishkovsky, CCT moderator, quoted the words of a Protestant leader, “Only the Pope could bring together so diverse a group as that which was present” at St. Joseph’s Parish, New York, on Friday, April 18. Many CCT participants were part of the congregation, including four of our five CCT presidents. It was apparent that Roman Catholic participation in CCT very much affected the invitation list. The Pope mentioned CCT in his remarks, expressing appreciation for “invaluable work.” (To view the Address of His Holiness Benedict XVI: http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/speeches/2008/april/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20080418_incontro-ecumenico_en.html.)

Fr. Ron Roberson also spoke of CCT in his introduction to the ecumenical commitments of the Catholic Church, which he presented before the arrival of the Pope at St. Joseph’s Parish.

Much preparatory work was done by the US Conference of Catholic Bishops Secretariat for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs in which our own Father James Massa and Father Ron Roberson labor. Many of us had them in our prayers during the long months of preparation! Congratulations to them and their colleagues.

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, 2008. Final selections will be made by Dr. Hamm and the President of each church family.

CCT participants are asked to please assist in making this opportunity (as well as Seminarians' Day) known among students.

Poverty Committee to Meet July 8

Following up on the last Annual Meeting, the Poverty Committee will be meeting July 8 to design CCT's next steps in the struggle against domestic poverty, including a major portion of the Annual Meeting in 2009. Committee chair Ron Sider (Evangelicals



Ron Sider, Poverty Committee Chair, seen here with Olof Scott and Major Mark Israel

for Social Action) will preside over the gathering which will be held in Philadelphia in the White Rock (National) Baptist Church of Dr. Bill Shaw, one of our five CCT presidents.

Committee members include: David Beckmann, Bishop Stephen Blaire, John Carr, Gary Cook, Steve Haas, Roy Medley, Bishop Serapion, Jim Wallis, Bill Shaw, Ron Sider, and Bert Waggoner.

Future Dates

Annual Meetings:

January 13-16, 2009
January 12-15, 2010
January 11-14, 2011
January 10-13, 2012

Steering Committee Meetings:

October 1-2, 2008
May 4-5, 2009
Sept-Oct 1, 2009
May 3-4, 2010
September 29-30, 2010

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

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Know someone who would like to be on the list to receive CCT's e-newsletter?

Please send their name and e-mail address to ValCCT@att.net.