

CCT E-Newsletter

Volume 2, No. 3

July, 2008



*Reflections from Executive
Administrator, Richard L. Hamm*

Benchmarks for Christian Churches Together

I was asked an interesting question by a reporter recently: “How will you know if CCT is succeeding?” It’s an important question, isn’t it? As an extrovert, I often find out what I think while hearing myself respond to someone else’s question (which is why I always have someone else review my remarks in this column before sending them out!). I was pretty pleased with my answer, so I thought I’d share it with you!



I believe there are at least three important benchmarks that we must keep before us. First, “Are we experiencing growth in the number of churches and organizations that are part of CCT?” Like so many congregations these days, we could become complacent about our size and be happy talking to ourselves only. We must remember that one of the primary gifts CCT brings is the fact that we are a significant number of diverse churches and organizations speaking with a common voice whenever possible. The more voices that comprise CCT, and the more Christian diversity we represent, the more effective we can be in speaking to this culture that tends to isolate and to erect dividing walls of hostility, creating competition where there could be common witness. As wonderful as our fellowship is when we gather in Annual Meetings and on other occasions, we must not simply be talking to ourselves. We must be growing in every important way, including both breadth (numbers) and depth (discernment), for the sake of a more effective witness.

Second, “Are we speaking to relevant topics?” We have chosen domestic poverty and evangelism as our first two focuses. In the spirit of the 4th chapter of Luke, we understand these two to be fundamentally related and inseparable. I am convinced that these two are worthy of our ongoing attention. They are both close to the heart of God.

A third benchmark is this, “Are we maintaining focus?” There are so many challenges, so many worthy causes today, that we could easily allow our focus to become diluted.

I was deeply impressed by a conversation I had with Rev. Luis Cortes recently. Luis is head of the Esperanza organization based in Philadelphia. Esperanza is seeking to build healthy Latino institutions. There are a million different directions in which he could go, but he seeks to maintain his focus by applying two criteria: first, “Is that which I am being asked to do truly *authentic*?”; and second, “No matter how worthy it may be, will it contribute to this organization’s core work or will it lead to dissipation of my efforts and those of the organization I lead?”

To put it another way, when seeking a plentiful supply of water, it is better to drill one hole a hundred feet deep than to drill a hundred holes that are each one foot deep. I get several contacts each week from groups wanting CCT to join in their work. Nearly all of these inquiries are from worthy outfits with which I am personally in sympathy. But, we must fiercely resist the temptation to do everything lest we end up accomplishing nothing.

So, how will we know if CCT is succeeding? One way to answer the question is this: 1) we will continue to grow in numbers and depth; 2) we will continue to address relevant issues that are close to the heart of God; 3) we will expand the number of topics we address only as our capacity to go deep continues to increase accordingly. I believe these are good benchmarks for success or, more importantly, for what Mother Theresa called faithfulness.

Grace and peace,

Dick Hamm

CCT Poverty Committee Meets in Philadelphia

On July 8, nine members of the Poverty Committee (representing all five CCT families) plus Moderator, Father Leonid Kishkovsky, met to follow up on the direction given by last year's Annual Meeting and to further develop CCT's strategy toward eliminating domestic hunger. The meeting was hosted by White Rock Baptist Church, the congregation of Dr. William Shaw, a CCT president.

Chairman Dr. Ron Sider led the committee through an all day process that created a framework for dealing with poverty at the January 2009 Annual Meeting and beyond. Five key elements were identified:

1. Set the context of poverty: where we as a nation are now.
2. The call: how CCT can provide leadership and how we shall call the nation to address poverty.
3. The confession: name the obstacles we as churches have created and our occasional complicity in poverty.
4. The commitment: what kind of commitment can we make as churches and what are we asking the other sectors (government, business, individuals) to do?
5. The convening: what kind of convening of business, government, church and individuals should we do?

The Annual Meeting will have the opportunity to review this framework.

In keeping with the decisions made at the January 2008 Annual Meeting, the Poverty Committee is recommending the following to the Steering Committee: 1) that a meeting be

arranged with the president-elect to occur as soon as possible after the November election; 2) that a press conference be held in Washington DC during the Annual Meeting to draw attention to CCT's Statement on Poverty, and; 3) a meeting be arranged with the leaders of Congress (from both parties) during the Annual Meeting.



Chairman Ron Sider, Kathy Saile, Bishop Stephen Blaire, Gary Cook, and Bill Shaw



Adam Taylor, Jim Wallis, Father Leonid Kishkovsky, Jim McDonald

Photos by Dick Hamm

Although the primary focus of the January 2009 Annual Meeting will be domestic poverty, evangelism will also be a topic of discussion and the primary focus of the 2010 Annual Meeting will likely be on evangelism.

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.

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. 30-Oct 1, 2009

May 3-4, 2010

September 29-30, 2010

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

Dr. Richard L "Dick" Hamm, Executive Administrator
P.O. Box 24188, Indianapolis, Indiana 46224-0188
Email: dhamm@ddi.org; Ph: 317-490-1968; Fax: 484-231-7467

www.ChristianChurchesTogether.org

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.