

CCT E-newsletter

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May, 2009



Save the Date!

CCT Annual Meeting, January 12-15, 2010 to be held at Cedarbrook Conference Center, just minutes from the Seattle Airport (SeaTac). Evangelism will be our primary focus in this meeting. Please invite your denominational staff for evangelism.

Reflections from Executive Administrator, Richard L. Hamm

Satisfaction and Hope Expressed for CCT

I told the Steering Committee (meeting May 4-5 in Chicago) that I felt that we came out of our Annual Meeting with some clear results, having developed an important elaboration on our excellent Poverty Statement, and having connected with members of Congress and with members of the Obama Transition Team (who are now in place in the Domestic Policy Council, the Office of Faith Based and Neighborhood Partnerships and in Health and Human Services) including: Melody Barnes, Joshua DuBois, Mara Vanderslice and others. Regardless of political party affiliation, if one is interested in eliminating domestic poverty, these are important folks to know.



Yes, we took some large steps together as an organization in that Annual Meeting. Though we are not a policy making or lobbying organization in the usual sense of those phrases, we found that we were able to reach consensus on some important principles that grow out of our common commitments to Christ and Biblical understandings of mercy and justice, and we are able to share those in a non-partisan way. Thus we have demonstrated that we can speak to our culture with a common voice on an important issue, which is one of our foundational purposes as CCT.

However, the three months since the Annual Meeting of January 13-16 have also been very satisfying! Four CCT leaders have been appointed to serve on President Obama's Advisory Council. The National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference has expressed the intention to become a CCT participant (the NHCLC represents some 16 million Christians). We have developed a CCT promotional video. I have been invited to represent CCT at several of our participant churches' annual meetings and to speak to a number of State-level ecumenical gatherings. We secured a marvelous conference center, Cedarbrook, for the site of our 2010 Annual Meeting (January 12-15) in Seattle. I and several other CCT leaders attended Sojourners' Mobilization To End Poverty, April 26-29, in Washington D.C. and it was an excellent meeting, as well as an excellent opportunity for me to network on behalf of CCT.

Yes, it has been a satisfying four months. CCT is moving in good directions. I am very grateful to be a part of this “work of the Spirit.”

However, of course, there remain important challenges to be addressed. Primary among them is the continuing need to draw more historic African American communions into CCT and to discern God’s future for us, developing a strategic plan to match. In the May Steering Committee meeting, we spent a considerable amount of time in discernment and a first draft of a plan will be made available for review and comment very soon. I will be in Scotland in late May as an ecumenical delegate to the Assembly of the Church of Scotland. While there I will have an opportunity to have conversations with leaders of Churches Together in England, which has been in existence for several years and whose experience could be invaluable to CCT in the USA as we move forward.

It is a very exciting time to be a part of CCT and great to be on the journey together!

Grace and peace,
Dick Hamm

Four CCT Leaders Tapped for President’s Advisory Council

William Shaw (President of the National Baptist Convention, USA, and a president of CCT), Rich Stearns (President of World Vision), Jim Wallis (President of Sojourners), and Sharon Watkins (General Minister and President of the Disciples of Christ) have each been invited to serve on the President’s Advisory Council. This represents huge access to this Administration and to Congress.

As Jim Wallis pointed out during Sojourners’ recent “Mobilization To End Poverty”, “Access can be very seductive and doesn’t really mean much unless it is used to further goals that have integrity.” However, we feel confident that these four will effectively use this access to represent the Biblical values of justice and mercy. Let us all support them with prayer and encouragement.

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. The five presidents and other CCT leaders also wish to attend such gatherings as able.

CCT Video Now Available

A multiple version video about CCT is now available. There is a 16 minute version that is suitable for use with small groups; a 14 minute version; a six minute version; and a five minute version for use in tightly packed denominational meeting agendas. It is available by e-mailing Dick at dhamm@ddi.org. Hamm and others also seek invitations to speak in various settings, bring greetings, do workshops, and so forth.

Sojourners' "Mobilization To End Poverty" Draws More Than a Thousand!

The "M2EP", as it was dubbed, was a powerful event! Speakers included a wide range of the political and theological spectrum. John Lewis, the legendary Civil Rights leader and Congressman, preached at the opening service at Shiloh Baptist Church. Numerous preachers, academics, Democratic and Republican Senators and Representatives, and other leaders (including Rich Stearns and many other CCT leaders), provided encouragement throughout the meeting and at a rally at the Rayburn Building Courtyard immediately after hundreds of visits were made on Capitol Hill (below left, Nancy Pelosi speaks to the rally). Members of the Obama administration also appeared to speak and to respond to questions (Joshua Dubois and Martha Coven are pictured below right; Mara Vanderslice and Van Jones were also present). Dick Hamm was invited to speak on behalf of CCT and received many requests for more information.

Congratulations to Sojourners, Jim Wallis, Adam Taylor and all the staff and volunteers!



Bread for the World "Gathering 2009" Celebrates 35 years!

June 14-16, in Washington D.C., Bread for the World participants from around the country will gather to celebrate past victories and to engage present challenges. The event will feature worship, noted speakers, workshops, and visits to Congress. Go to www.bread.org for details and to register.

Christian Churches Together is proud to have Bread for the World among our participant organizations. "Bread" has had a huge impact on hunger and poverty through the years, domestically and globally. Pray for Bread's continued success!

CCT Steering Committee Meets May 4-5 in Chicago

Once again enjoying the hospitality of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, the CCT Steering Committee met in the “Easter Room” atop the ELCA’s headquarters building near O’Hare Airport. The facility is a warm environ and very convenient to committee members. It was especially helpful to the small group discernment sessions that worked on understanding what God is calling CCT to be and do in the immediate future. The results of the small group



Small groups spent hours in discernment, looking toward God’s future for CCT.

work will be shared with the larger body of participants soon and it is hoped that decisions can be made at the 2010 Annual Meeting in Seattle.

Also on the Steering Committee’s agenda was the approval of the audit report, review of the evaluations from the 2009 Annual Meeting, review of the 2010 Annual Meeting program (the primary focus will be evangelism), and regular reports.

Steering Committee Invites Nominations

The CCT Steering Committee has two openings for members, and is especially interested in adding a young adult or two. If you wish to make a nomination or nominations, please send basic biographical information, including church affiliation, to Dick Hamm at dhamm@ddi.org as soon as possible.

The Steering Committee meets three times per year: 24 hours in May, 24 hours in October, and for three hours immediately before the start of the Annual Meeting.

Other News

Congratulations to Archbishop Vicken Aykazian: Awarded Ellis Island Medal of Honor!

NEW YORK – Archbishop Vicken Aykazian, Legate of the Diocese of the Armenian Church of America (Eastern), President of the National Council of Churches, and CCT Steering Committee member, was awarded the Ellis Island Medal of Honor on Saturday, May 9.

Established in 1986 by the National Ethnic Coalition of Organizations (NECO), the Ellis Island Medal of Honor recognizes the many ethnic groups that contribute to America's rich diversity.

Recipients of the prestigious award are individuals whose achievements in their personal and professional lives have benefited their communities and helped build bridges between their ethnic or racial groups and society at large.

Archbishop Aykazian was born in Siirt, Turkey in 1951. He studied at the Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem and was ordained a celibate priest in 1971. In 1992, he was ordained bishop by His Holiness Vasken I, Catholicos of All Armenians. He was elevated to the rank of archbishop by His Holiness Karekin II, Catholicos of All Armenians, in 2007, and began serving as president of the National Council of Churches the following year.

Active in the ecumenical movement, Archbishop Aykazian is a member of the World Council of Churches, Habitat for Humanity, Christian Churches Together, and Churches for Middle East Peace, among other ecumenical organizations. He holds a Ph.D. in history and is working on a second Ph.D. in theology at Catholic University in Washington.

The Ellis Island Medal of Honor has been recognized by both the U.S. House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate, and recipients are entered into the Congressional Record each year.

According to the Senate resolution, the award celebrates “the richness and diversity of American life,” and the “pluralism and democracy that have enabled the nation's ethnic groups to maintain their identities while becoming integral parts of the American way of life.”

Past awardees include six U.S. presidents, a number of Nobel Prize winners, and various religious leaders. Archbishop Khajag Barsamian, Primate of the Diocese of the Armenian Church of America (Eastern), was presented the Medal of Honor in 1998. The previous Diocesan Primate, Archbishop Torkom Manoogian, was awarded the medal in its inaugural year, 1986.

The elaborate award ceremony – marked by an array of cultural performances, a gala dinner, and a fireworks display – is held each May on Ellis Island to honor the annual recipients.

Episcopal Church report, Faith in the Balance: A Call to Action, addresses U.S. poverty with model for development initiatives

How can we help to break the cycle of poverty? How can we become a place of refuge and healing for the most vulnerable members of our society? How might we be a prophetic voice for those who find themselves stuck in dead-end situations?

These are questions Presiding Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori challenged participants to address while attending the Summit on Domestic Poverty held at the Franciscan Renewal Center in Scottsdale, Arizona.

The Presiding Bishop convened this leadership gathering envisioning “the development of creative ways in which we can work collectively on common issues, the development of steps to eradicate poverty in the United States, say a word to the nation, point to possible actions at the next General Convention, and recognize, elevate, and celebrate all that is done on behalf of the poor on a daily basis in our congregations, dioceses, and institutions.”

This call to action provides a brief introduction that summarizes the summit event as the beginning of a process designed to engage the ministry of the church as a whole in common mission that is informed by Holy Scripture and Holy Baptism. A Model for Domestic Poverty Alleviation is introduced that follows the general format of a congregational development model. The four-point organizing language of Vision, Formation, Networking and Advocacy that emerged at the summit is preserved in the model under the categories of Servant Leadership, Christian Discipleship, Partnership in Mission, and Stewardship of Creation. These four categories are further divided into three subcategories to acknowledge the complexity of the challenges before us and to create opportunity to draw the whole of the church around domestic poverty as a common mission. The model intends to provide a relational structure through which an effective response to domestic poverty can be developed. It does not intend to provide the details of a particular localized response nor does it intend to provide particular strategies that will be adopted by the participants. This design is to assure a broad sense of ownership, which includes ownership by those populations it intends to impact.

Stakeholders have been identified to correspond to each of the subcategories based on the focus of their mission. A process has been recommended that outlines necessary action steps for implementation. The details of that process are sufficiently loose at this point so that stakeholders are free to shape the model based on their areas of expertise. The model places its faith in the balance sought among stakeholders as ideas are exchanged and goals are established. The model seeks to nurture faith in the balance between piety and action, personal desire and communal responsibility.

The report in full, including resources and documents is available on Episcopal Church website: http://www.episcopalchurch.org/1905_99948_ENG_HTM.htm?menupage=105144.

Good Friday Worshipers Pray for Their Neighbors

In St. Joseph, Missouri, Wyatt Park Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) had an unusual Good Friday service. Some 45 participants walked about the neighborhood praying for the neighboring United Methodist Church, Jesus Tabernacle for All Nations (non-denominational African American Church), St. Francis Catholic Church, and Iglesia Cristiana Pan De Vida (an Hispanic congregation nested in their building).

Led by their senior Pastor Scott Killgore and Contemporary Worship Director Mark Pennington, the group started out in the sanctuary meditating on psalm 22 and Matthew 27 and then, to remind themselves that Jesus died for more than themselves alone, they set out on foot.

They also prayed for the people in the homes they passed as they went from congregation to congregation. Pastor Killgore joked, “God must have liked the idea because the rain earlier in the day was long gone....the skies were clear and the temperature was about 60.”



Good Friday worshipers in St. Joe, Missouri pray for neighbors and neighboring churches.

Future Dates

Annual Meetings: January 12-15, 2010 (Seattle)
 January 11-14, 2011
 January 10-13, 2012

Steering Committee Meetings: 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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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.

Participant news and announcements to report? Please send to dhamm@ddi.org.