

CCT E-newsletter

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*Reflections from Executive
Administrator, Richard L. Hamm*

Annual Meeting Set for January 12-15, 2010 at SeaTac

The 2010 Annual Meeting (January) will feature two keynoters. Dr. Mel Robeck, Professor at Fuller Theological Seminary, and Dr. Doug Strong, Dean of the Seattle Pacific University School of Theology. Dr. Robeck will help us explore the American historical context and the Edinburgh Conference of 1910 as they inform the work of evangelization today. Dr. Strong will speak on the Great Commission and understanding evangelism in the early church. In addition, panelists will lead us in conversation about evangelization in the U.S. generally today and in the Northwest particularly (this being the part of the country with the lowest church attendance of all 50 states).



In a “Market Place of Evangelism,” providing several workshop choices, we will also hear leaders addressing evangelism and ecumenism (John 17:20); evangelism and social justice (Luke 4); evangelism and culture (1 Corinthians 9); “power” evangelism (Matthew 9), and; evangelism and the “emergent church movement”.

Unfortunately, given the current state of the economy, and the fact that the Northwest is one of the most expensive venues in the country, the registration fee is about 25% higher than we experienced in Baltimore (although those willing to have a roommate will pay the same as the single rate was in Baltimore). The rooms are quite spacious with very comfortable beds and the conference space is very nicely appointed and equipped. While we will be only minutes from the SeaTac airport (free shuttle service provided), the Cedarbrook Conference Center is surrounded by several acres of wetlands so that we will enjoy a “retreat” feeling. SeaTac is a relatively inexpensive destination (Southwest Airlines flies there, which tends to lower the prices charged by all airlines). In addition, we will be just minutes from World Vision headquarters, so we will have the opportunity to visit those facilities as an integral part of our meeting.

We will seek to find a less expensive venue for 2011, but there were simply no less expensive conference style venues available in the Seattle-Portland area that could adequately accommodate our numbers and program (we checked every lead we were given or could find: church retreat centers, universities, and a number of hotels).

Registration forms have gone out to participants and we hope people will return their forms as soon as possible. Those desiring a “double” are especially encouraged to register soon as the number of these rooms is limited.

Since the primary focus of the meeting is “evangelism”, we hope that each participating communion with national evangelism staff will recruit them to attend as well. This could be an important opportunity to build bridges for collaborative future efforts.

We will offer “Seminarians’ Day” again this year on Wednesday, January 13th. Registration forms for this day will go out soon and everyone is encouraged to recruit seminarians (of all ages) and young church leaders to attend.

I believe this will be an excellent meeting that will push us all to a deeper understanding of one another and our various perspectives on evangelization. If you are a representative of a CCT participating church or organization, or wish to attend as a visitor or observer, and have not received a registration form, please contact me.

Grace and peace,

Dick Hamm

CCT Seminarian Steward Program Offered Again in 2010

In addition to the usual Seminarians’ Day (Wednesday, January 13th), the 2010 Annual Meeting will offer the opportunity for up to five seminarians (one from each family) to serve as Seminary Stewards throughout the January 12-15 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 1st. 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.

ELCA’s Trice Delivers Powerful Statement to Mennonite USA

(Dick’s note: It was my privilege to attend the Mennonite USA convention this June to represent CCT. I was so grateful to have been present when Dr. Michael Trice, ELCA Associate Executive for the Office for Ecumenical and Inter-Religious Relations, offered the following statement on behalf of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. As you can imagine, the statement was very warmly received by the several hundred Mennonite delegates present.)

“Good morning Mennonite Church USA! Thank you for this invitation to speak with you this morning. I see so many youth delegates here throughout the Convention that I wonder if you

might be the youngest church in the United States. I congratulate you all on this inclusion of your youth as a visible sign of your witness to the world.

I have been asked by Bishop Mark S. Hanson, Presiding Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and President of the Lutheran World Federation, to greet you this fine morning, at the opening of your convention, in the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

I want to bring you faithful greetings – if I may be so bold – from all of the synods and congregations that stitch together the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. And finally, I want to say good morning to you from the individual members of those congregations whom you pass on the street every day, who are your neighbors in Christ down the block, and across this country, who stand with you at water coolers and soup kitchens, to whom you spoke a kind word last week, or for whom you will share a gesture of peace tomorrow.

In the 16th century, our forebears – those emerging Lutherans and Anabaptists of their day, had a complicated relationship, to say the least. Invectives against Anabaptists were treacherous and produced serious harm and death to the historic members of your community. Even when we may forget the specific trespass that affects our Christian identity, the cost of that forgetting can be great indeed. For instance, Lutherans by and large developed a historical amnesia about this part of their Lutheran heritage. As Lutherans, if we had confronted the complicity of our 16th century atrocities, perhaps those of the 20th century would have been quite different indeed.

With the past in tow, in 1999 the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America established a liaison committee with the Mennonite Church USA, after *two* ELCA synods urged this church to publically reject the invectives of Martin Luther and other Reformers against Anabaptists. This liaison committee met, beginning in 2001. It should be remembered that the first meeting of the liaison committee was scheduled for September 13, 2001, and was in fact cancelled due to the September 11th attacks.

Fast forward to 2006, when a document aptly titled *The Declaration of the ELCA on the Condemnation of the Anabaptists* notes where signatories of the 1577 *Formula of Concord* identified that “the power of the state should be used to eradicate Anabaptist teachings from Lutheran territories.” In contra-position, the *Declaration* affirms: “These statements are particularly problematic, because they suppose that secular authority ought to be used to resolve religious differences – a position *especially dangerous* in the light of much popular discourse since the terrorist attacks in September of 2001.” The *Declaration* continues: “No church should use the state to impose its own beliefs and practices on others. We [therefore] express our **deep and abiding sorrow and regret** for the persecution and suffering visited upon Anabaptists during the religious disputes of the past.”

On April 24, 2007, a letter from your Executive Director of the Mennonite Church USA, Mr. Jim Schrag, – whom I have the pleasure of standing to his right at this moment – arrived at Bishop Hanson’s office. The context of Mr. Schrag’s letter was in fact a public response to Bishop Hanson and the ELCA; Mr. Schrag’s letter recognized the significant step forward in

relations between these two churches, and addressed the ELCA Church Council directly. Mr. Schrag wrote in his letter: “We receive this apology with gratitude for its honesty, courage and humility and accept it in a spirit of forgiveness. We all live many generations after these events and none of us has personally caused or suffered this persecution. Nonetheless, we pray that God will use this gesture to release both Lutherans and Mennonites from a past that may have bound us in ways we did not even know.”

Now, where we are today: The Lutheran World Federation will meet for its 10th Assembly in Stuttgart, Germany in 2010. A document is being crafted now that asks you, my Mennonite brothers and sisters, for forgiveness. The expression of a “deep and abiding sorrow and regret” that does not speak the grammar of forgiveness today would be a cheap visitation of history. Even when those voices and ears of our earliest communities no longer speak and hear the chords of forgiveness, our responsibility in the years to come will be exemplified in the activities of our hands and arms, feet and shoulders, in our common witness and work of Christ for the sake of the world. You see, forgiveness matters for the past as much as for the blessings of our collective future together.

Where we know our stories and their resolution yesterday, we will seek greater unity and transformation of human communities today.

I encourage you therefore to “keep all of the doors open.” Reach out to your Lutheran and other Christian sisters and brothers throughout this country. Your work and mission in the world is of central importance to our common calling of Christian unity, where all of our local relationships are irreplaceable aspects of the one greater unity of the Body of Christ. God bless you.

God’s peace be with you, God go with you, God bless you all through the discernments of your convention! And, thank you faithfully for this invitation to speak with you this morning. Amen.”

Hamm Visits Churches Together in England

In May, Dick Hamm visited executives of Churches Together in England in London, while in Great Britain as an ecumenical representative of his denomination (Disciples of Christ)



(from left) David Cornick, Dick Hamm, and Mark Fisher at London offices of Churches Together in England

to the Church of Scotland's General Assembly. Some of the elements of CCT in the USA were patterned after Churches Together in England (formed in 1990), including the practice of having presidents from the various families of churches (the four CTE presidents are Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O'Connor, Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams, Bishop Nathan Hovhannisian of the Armenian Church, and Commissioner Elizabeth Matear (Free Church Moderator). CTE members include some 31 churches.

Dick met with David Cornick, General Secretary of CTE (formerly General Secretary of the United Reformed Church) and Mark Fisher, Executive Secretary of the Free Churches Group. They discussed a wide range of topics including the formation of local ecumenical partnerships and the challenges that face the churches and CTE in the current social climate.

Reformed Church Christians Propose Sacramental Union

News release, 2 June

World Alliance of Reformed Churches

Representatives of Reformed, United and Presbyterian churches from diverse traditions have voted to form a union which is unprecedented in its inclusiveness and overcomes longstanding divisions among some churches.

The executive committees of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) and the Reformed Ecumenical Council (REC), meeting jointly for the first time last week in Geneva, approved a draft constitution for a new organization to be called the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC).

Use of the word "communion" implies that member denominations of the new organization will accept the ordination of each others' clergy and respect the rites of each tradition. The draft constitution for the new organization says "no individual or church may claim precedence or dominance over another."

The move signals a significant step towards unity among Reformed churches which have splintered into separate denominations over the years since the Protestant Reformation was launched in 16th century Europe.

"The decision is in line with John Calvin's commitment to Christian unity," says Setri Nyomi, WARC's General Secretary referring to the early church reformer. "It signals that Reformed churches today are ready to do their part."

The draft constitution will be presented for approval by delegates of the two organizations at the Uniting General Council to be held in Grand Rapids, United States in June 2010.

REC's president, Peter Borgdorff, who led the process of drafting the constitution, declared it an important signal that Reformed churches are "seeking to overcome their divisions and come together as one body in the tradition of Biblical teachings which describe the Christian church as one body made of many parts."

Other decisions made by the joint executive committees on the final day of meetings, Friday 30 May, included approval of a proposed new program and staff structure, elimination of

the current budget deficit by 2011, and a draft budget for the new organization, subject to approval at the June 2010 general assembly.

“Our objective was to create a sustainable model for our combined organizations”, says WARC President Clifton Kirkpatrick. “To achieve this we had to make some difficult decisions such as reducing the size of the staff. But we are confident that we have a good basis now on which to build for the future.”

The joint executive committees also decided that the new organization would be established in Geneva where the WARC offices are currently located. The report on a proposal for relocation accepted by the governing bodies says the decision could be revisited three years after WCRC is created. For now, says the report, “It was deemed wisest to focus on planning for the WCRC and our world assembly.”

Candidates for General Secretary of the World Council of Churches (from the newsletter of Churches Together in England)

The World Council of Churches' search committee for a general secretary met 23-26 June in Amsterdam. The committee was elected by the Central Committee in February 2008 and led by the moderator, Dr Agnes Abuom. The committee interviewed the six highly qualified candidates identified at the last meeting of the committee in April 2009 in Crete. After three days of interviews and thorough discussions, the committee decided by consensus to propose the following two candidates for election by the Central Committee during its meeting in August 2009: Rev Dr Park Seong-won of the Presbyterian Church of Korea and Rev Dr Olav Fykse Tveit of the Church of Norway (Lutheran). "The search committee worked in a good spirit of cooperation and Christian fellowship. The candidates are both committed to the ecumenical movement. They come from diverse backgrounds and offer a variety of experiences, gifts and skills," Dr Agnes Abuom, the moderator of the search committee, said following the meeting.

Currently, Rev. Dr Park Seong-won is professor of Theology at Youngnam Theological University and Seminary in Kyeongsan, Republic of Korea. He was previously executive secretary of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) Department of Cooperation and Witness, 1995-2004, and assistant to the WARC general secretary, 1986-1990. He is an ordained minister in the Presbyterian Church of Korea and has also served as senior minister in Busan, Korea, 1992-1995, Geneva, Switzerland, 1987-1991, and Seoul, Korea, 1983-1986.

Since 2002, Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit has been the general secretary of the Church of Norway Council on Ecumenical and International Relations. He was previously secretary for the Church of Norway Doctrinal Commission, 1999-2000, and Church-State Relations, 2001-02. He is an ordained pastor in the Church of Norway and has also served as a parish priest in Haram, Møre Diocese, 1988-91 and an army chaplain during his compulsory year of national service in 1987-88.

(Note from Dick: “The following reflection of a father and grandfather for his children and grandchildren touched me very deeply. I found in it a parallel to my own experience as a white man who grew up in the segregated south. I am sharing this reflection with you not as an endorsement of a party or of policies, but as a celebration of a seismic event in this nation’s racial history. Bruce Naylor is a long time friend, a Disciples of Christ minister who has served congregations and ecumenical organizations.” Printed with permission.)

IN ANTICIPATION OF THE INAUGURATION: ONE JOURNEY

(For friends and family, but especially for my children and grandchildren)

The image will stir hearts and emotions around the world next Tuesday: a man of color being sworn in as President of the United States. I expect to shed some tears of joy and hope as will millions across this country and across the globe.

I grew up in the segregated South. From childhood I remember separate bathrooms, water fountains, schools, neighborhoods and churches. Things began to change during my school days with “Brown vs. Board of Education” in 1954, but I graduated from high school without ever having a black classmate. During high school, one of the vivid images in my mind is of going with some friends to stand outside the fence surrounding the football field of the black high school to catch a glimpse of Charlie “Train” Taylor, the outstanding running back for that school. Even then, I think we felt some selfish regret that he wasn’t on our high school team. (He went on to become an All-American at Arizona State and an outstanding pro wide receiver with the Washington Redskins.)

Despite my upbringing and the separateness and general prejudice around me concerning “the n.....s”, it never made sense to me when I began to be serious about my Christian faith. I went away to a church-related college that practiced the amazing double standard of welcoming “African” students from Africa recruited by missionaries, but shunning those “African-American” students who lived and grew up in the same town. Eventually I ended up at another little Baptist college in the deep southern culture of Louisiana. While there in the early 60’s, I began to hear and read about Martin Luther King Jr. His powerful voice for justice began to stir me even then. I was impressed by his education and his eloquence and began what would become genuine admiration and hope for his work and cause. (I recently learned that my seminary, Garrett-Evangelical, invited him to teach there in the 1960’s. But he felt he had another mission.)

In 1963, I eventually found myself as a student pastor (with a wife) in a small church in the northwest part of Louisiana, trying to finish a college degree and prepare to move on to a seminary. King’s work and the civil rights movement went into full swing and in the fall of 1963 when JFK was assassinated. One church member that evening marveled to me about what a wonderful shot it was by Lee Harvey Oswald. Blacks began to show up at white church doors across the South, seeking entrance and were almost always turned away and told they were not welcome. My deacons called a special meeting in the spring of 1964 to discuss what we would do when and if such a group showed up at our church. I told them what I would do (welcome them to worship!) heard their angry protests and went home to tell my wife we should begin packing. I knew that at least one of my deacons was a member of “The White Citizens Council”, an active and open racist organization during those days and another I suspected was actually a part of the Ku Klux Klan, the secret “gold standard” of racist groups.

I returned to my Texas home, still without a degree. In the subsequent months, I was in danger of being drafted possibly to serve in Vietnam. I applied for Conscientious Objector status (persons who by reason of conscience refused to go to war) and cited as one of my major influences, the first published book of the writings/sermons of King, *“The Strength to Love.”* His commitment to non-violence was now a part of my own identity. Unless you belonged to a traditional “peace church” like Quakers or Mennonites you were required to explain how you came to that position. The draft board never acted on my request because I was in school again moving toward my degree.

In 1968, four years later, I was a seminary student, with a B.A. in history and philosophy finally finished. I wept when King was killed and understood the total frustration and grief of the black community in Kansas City where I lived. Their crushed hopes resulted in fires, vandalism, gun shots that we heard from our apartment, and finally the sounds of National Guard trucks rolling down our street to restore order. I shared what I felt in a sermon in Wichita, KS a few weeks later. I recounted the despair of the disciples traveling to Emmaus from the Biblical story who felt all was lost with the death of Jesus. King’s assassination and later Bobby Kennedy’s assassination made that a year of feeling hope was lost for so many. Our daughter, Jana, was born in Kansas City and her first friends and playmates were black. The world was changing, painfully, slowly. *(In the last decade I stood with hundreds of persons from many different denominations (CUIC) under that same motel balcony in Memphis where King was shot. Together we made a new commitment to rid our country of racism. Again I wept tears of hope.)*

Let me explain for my grandchildren exactly how I saw my years as a Christian minister: From those early years, I couldn’t understand how human beings could treat other human beings with prejudice because of the color of their skin. Our many arenas of separation became an overarching passion for my work as a minister. I often told the story in a sermon about my home town and its churches. I remembered the multiple churches that for the most part had little to do with each other. I came to believe that, in light of what I understood about God, such separation and competition made little sense. In those sermons, I also mentioned those churches I was never allowed to know anything about, because they were in a different part of my town. All I needed to know, so I was told, was that the skin color of their members was different than mine. I believed that the will of God for the churches was/is that all our walls come down and that one of the essential meanings of being “church” was to model that unity for all of the world around us. Racial divides were one of the most difficult issues. As a pastor and as a leader of ecumenical (those who worked for united church efforts) organizations for over 30 years, I focused on trying to create an inclusive and united church for a broken and divided world.

In 2004, Barack Obama stood to speak at the Democratic National Convention and took the collective breath away from millions of us who heard him. I dared again to hope for our country. He spoke of the kind of unity that I had worked for my entire ministry; one that my mentor Carlyle Marney said must include all humankind, not just the church.

I was no more a prophet than many others when I said that night, “I hope to live to vote for that man for President.” He embodied what I had always hoped our country would become. It was a wish grounded not in his color, but in his vision, his history and his understanding of the world. When I read his books, I had confirmed all that I believed about him.

I had no idea the opportunity for that political support would come so soon. When he stood in the cold at Springfield (a place my own journey took us for 4 ½ years) and announced his candidacy on the spot that Lincoln once spoke, I was thrilled, excited, and very hope-filled. Subsequent speeches thrilled me and once again brought tears of hope. His eventual victory in winning the nomination, his incredibly wise and powerful speech on race, and his ultimate election as president, felt like a personal victory not just for African-Americans, but for many of us who lived through this era in American history and longed for our country's dreams to be fulfilled.

It was indeed an "audacious hope." This election gives such hope for a truly changed society with creative energy beyond anything I have known. I felt I had waited and watched for such a moment and man all my life. I felt so grateful and glad to have worked on his primary campaign in Indiana and that in the last days of the general election Pat and I joined in to work for an Indiana victory for Barack Obama. It happened and helped turn the national tide his way.

On election night, we were exhausted but filled with joy and satisfaction when the results came in. My first thoughts were of my children and grandchildren. Theirs really was going to be a changed world. Calls from Chicago and Florida in the following eight hours confirmed their own sense that was true. The declaration that Barack Obama had been elected as the 44th President of our country I think will make the lives of my children and grandchildren very different than mine. Today at his inauguration that journey begins and my hope and joy overflows for all of them (all of you). I feel a sense of awe and wonder at this moment in history. My deepest wish and fervent prayer is that they (you) will know from these words how important this day is for me because of where my life journey led me.

I offer these words with deep love and an audacious hope for all of your lives and journeys.

Bruce Naylor (Dad and Granddaddy)

Future Dates

Annual Meetings: January 12-15, 2010 (SeaTac, WA)

January 11-14, 2011

January 10-13, 2012

Steering Committee Meetings: 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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