

CCT E-newsletter

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*Reflections from Executive Director, Richard L. Hamm*

## **The Steering Committee Looks to the Future**

The CCT Steering Committee met in Chicago September 30<sup>th</sup> – October 1<sup>st</sup> and spent much of the meeting in discernment of God’s future for CCT. A proposed plan will be recommended to the Annual Meeting January 12-15, 2010. Our statement of purpose says, “*Christian Churches Together shall seek to fulfill [its] purpose and to embody our unity in Jesus Christ through mutual support, learning, and outreach into our participant bodies and into American society.*” Using this as a guide, the Steering Committee considered goals around each of the three elements: mutual support, learning, and outreach. The proposed plan will include seeking invitations to visit one another’s significant gatherings (especially those of families other than our own); the development of a “prayer cycle” in which each participant church and organization will be encouraged to pray for each of the others at specific times; placing a link to each participant church and organization on CCT’s website which leads to a description of the history, polity and other information about each; the development of annual, one-day forums on various topics open to all; the development of on-line forums and blogs; offering the CCT model for use by local groups (without creating “chapters” directly tied to CCTUSA); development of a communication strategy; and a national day of Joint Action on Poverty in 2011 that will bring national attention to the issue of domestic poverty.



The Steering Committee also developed an advisory committee, which I requested, which includes each of the five presidents plus one other representative of each of the five families plus one representative of our participant organizations. This group of 11 persons is intended to meet monthly by phone to give advice and counsel on how to implement the decisions of the Steering Committee and Annual Meeting.

The Steering Committee also voted to change my title from executive administrator to executive director. Though I did not actually ask for this, I appreciate the trust it signs and the fact that it is a much less ambiguous title than executive administrator.

Registration for the 2010 Annual Meeting is going very well, with only a couple of rooms left at Cedarbrook (though there is still plenty of room for commuters and those who choose to stay off campus). This promises to be a fine meeting. After the Annual Meeting, I intend to draw together all of the papers on evangelism/evangelization that have been presented at previous annual meetings as well as this one and make those available in printed form, which will help us move forward in our mutual understanding of one another and our various perspectives on the subject.

I would sum up the past few months for CCT as a time of gaining greater clarity and moving forward with confidence. God is getting us right where God wants us, to be an effective witness for the unity of the whole church of Jesus Christ and a positive force for the elimination of poverty in the United States!

Grace and peace,

*Dick Hamm*

## **Continuing Education Event for Heads of Communion at Duke December 2-3**

Christian Churches Together and Leadership Education at Duke Divinity (LEDD) are co-sponsoring a continuing education event for CCT heads of communions. The 24 hour event will feature dialogue with Brian McLaren, well known leader within the emergent church movement. There is still room for two more participants (call Dick Hamm as soon as possible at 317-490-1968).

## **Steering Committee Expresses Solidarity with Families Affected by Inner City Violence**

While meeting in Chicago, Illinois, for its regular meeting, the following statement was crafted on behalf of the Steering Committee by Rev. Carlos Malave:

*The last week of September, Derrion Albert, a 16-year-old student from Chicago was fatally beaten in an after-school mob melee. The news of his death was nationally publicized and moved our country to a collective reaction of indignation and deep pain.*

*As Christian communities in the USA we are painfully aware of the forces of evil present in our communities that, in particular, are snatching away our most precious treasure, our youth. As Christian Churches Together, we join in prayer with and for families in our country who are victims of senseless acts of violence. We also raise our common voice to support and call our churches and civic institutions to give particular attention to the cry and the needs of young men and women living in our inner cities.*

## Record Number of Americans Go Hungry

Washington, DC, November 16, 2009 – More than one in seven, or 14.6 percent of American households, suffered from food insecurity in 2008, according to the most recent data on hunger released by the US Department of Agriculture today. The 3.5 percentage point increase from 2007 is the largest one-year increase since the USDA first began publishing data in 1998.

"The data released today is not surprising," said Bread for the World president David Beckmann. "What should really shock us is that almost one in four children in our country lives on the brink of hunger." According to the report, in 2008, 16.7 million children, or 22.5 percent, were food insecure – 4.3 million more than the year before. "We must make serious progress against child hunger when Congress renews child nutrition programs next year," Beckmann continued. *(For more info, go to [www.bread.org/foodsecurity](http://www.bread.org/foodsecurity) )*

## Ervin R. Stutzman to be Mennonite Church USA Executive Director

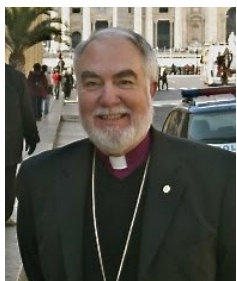
NEWTON, Kan. and ELKHART, Ind. – Mennonite Church USA Executive Board named Ervin R. Stutzman of Harrisonburg, VA, the denomination's next executive director at a special meeting held Aug. 25<sup>th</sup>. "Ervin is the right person for this time in our denominational history," says Mennonite Church USA moderator and Executive Board member Ed Diller, Fort Thomas, KY. "His experiences in the church and his commitment to the healing and hope vision of Mennonite Church USA will serve him well in this role."



Stutzman is vice president and seminary dean as well as professor of church ministries at Eastern Mennonite University (EMU) in Harrisonburg. He served on the Executive Board for Mennonite Church USA from 1999 to 2005 and as denominational moderator from 2001 to 2003.

Stutzman replaces Jim Schrag of Newton, KS, who announced his retirement last October. Schrag concluded his executive director position July 31<sup>st</sup> after 36 years of ministry, including 13 years of denominational leadership. Acting executive director, J. Ron Byler of Elkhart, IN, has been appointed to lead the church body until Stutzman begins.

## Episcopal Church's Ecumenical Officer to Retire



The Rt. Rev. C. Christopher Epting, Presiding Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori's deputy for ecumenical and interreligious relations, has announced his retirement at the end of 2009, according to a release from the Episcopal Church's Office of Public Affairs.

"It has been a distinct privilege to serve two presiding bishops and this church in the ongoing quest for Christian unity," Epting said. "As we move into the future, ecumenical and interreligious work will have to be done differently, and fresh thinking will be necessary to see how this might best be accomplished." "I am very grateful for Bishop Epting's abundant and effective gifts in ecumenical and interreligious work over the last several years," said Jefferts Schori. "We will miss him and his gifts." According to the Presiding Bishop's office, the Rev. Dr. Thomas Ferguson, associate deputy for Ecumenical and Interreligious Relations since 2001, will serve as interim ecumenical officer after Bishop Epting's retirement.

## Excellent Presenters Lined Up for Annual Meeting including:

**Cecil M. Robeck**, who has worked at Fuller Seminary since 1974, is professor of church history and ecumenics and director of the David J. DuPlessis Center for Christian Spirituality. His recent historical research centers on the Azusa Street Mission and Revival and its African American pastor William Seymour. In 1999, he received a \$90,000 grant from the John Randolph Haynes and Dora Haynes Foundation to explore this topic and its impact on Los Angeles. His recent



publications in the field of ecumenics have focused on the Holy Spirit, the Church, and potential contributions the Pentecostal Movement can make to the global Christian Movement.

For nearly 30 years, Robeck has also worked on ecumenical dialogue with the World Council of Churches, the Vatican, the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, and other groups. For the past 11 years, he has served on the Steering Committee of the Global Christian Forum. Robeck is author of *Prophecy at Carthage: Perpetua, Tertullian, and Cyprian* (1992)

and *The Azusa Street Mission and Revival: The Birth of the Global Pentecostal Movement* (2006), and co-editor of *The Azusa Street Revival and Its Legacy* (2006) and *The Suffering Body: Responding to the Persecution of Christians* (2006). For nine years, he was editor of *Pneuma: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies*. He is an ordained minister with the Assemblies of God.

**Douglas Strong**, *Dean and Professor of the History of Christianity*, holds a B.A. from Houghton College, a Master of Divinity and a PhD from Princeton Theological Seminary. He came to the School of Theology of Seattle Pacific University in 2007 from Wesley Theological Seminary, in Washington, D.C., where he taught church history for 18 years and was also the associate dean for church relations.



Dr. Strong's field of study is American religious history, particularly the history of 19th-century revivalism and social reform. He is a past president of the Wesleyan Theological Society, a co-convenor of the History of Methodism Working Group of the Oxford Institute of Methodist Theological Studies, and is on the Steering Committee of the Wesleyan Studies Group of the American Academy of Religion.

Since 1999, Dr. Strong has led students on numerous trips to Russia. He has taught four times at the Theological Seminary of the Russian Methodist Church and has also taught at two theological schools in Korea. He is committed to intercultural learning as essential for students preparing to live out their Christian vocation in a global society.

Dr. Strong is an ordained clergyman in the United Methodist Church and served for eight years as a pastor in East Brunswick, New Jersey. He is especially interested in reviving the Wesleyan practice of small-group accountable discipleship among today's Christians.

Selected Publications: *Reclaiming the Wesleyan Tradition: John Wesley's Sermons for Today* (Discipleship Resources, 2007); *Perfectionist Politics: Abolitionism and the Religious Tensions of American Democracy* (Syracuse, 1999); *They Walked in the Spirit: Personal Faith and Social Action in America* (Westminster John Knox, 1997); *Readings in Christian Ethics: A Historical Sourcebook* (Westminster John Knox, 1996).



**Rev. Flora Wilson Bridges**, PhD, Associate Professor, Spehar-Halligan Professor of Ecumenical Collaboration in Inter-Religious Dialogue. An ordained Baptist minister, she received a PhD in Systematic Theology from Vanderbilt University. She has served as dean of the chapel at Spelman College and Fisk University and served as pastor of Grace Community Church in Gadsden, Alabama. Dr. Bridges is author of “Resurrection Song: African American Spirituality,” 2001. She will be a Wednesday morning panelist responding to Dr. Strong’s presentation.



**Rev. Dwight Friesen**, was the community-curate of an Eastside emerging simple church for more than eleven years; he is licensed and ordained by the Christian & Missionary Alliance. Dwight earned his Doctor of Ministry degree at George Fox University. He is active locally and internationally with missional and emerging church movements, serves on the “Faith & Order Commission” of the *National Council of Churches*. Dwight will present a workshop on the Emergent Church Movement on Thursday morning.

**Future Dates**

- Annual Meetings:     January 12-15, 2010 (SeaTac, WA)
- January 11-14, 2011
- January 10-13, 2012
- Steering Committee Meetings:     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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