

Illinois Conference of Churches Leadership Team Meeting

Attendance: Bishop Gary Wollersheim, Rev. Robert Flannery, Rev. John Charlton, Rev. Bob Pearson, Ms Marianne Stowers, Rev, Cynthia Hallas, Rev. Bob Sherman, Rev Terry Clark, Rev Catiana McKay, Ms. Andrea Wilson, guest: Mr. Bob Gilligan from Catholic Conference of Illinois (CCI)

The ICC Leadership Team met at Wesley United Methodist Church, 502 East Front Street – Bloomington, IL 61701

Called to order at 9:15 am by Bishop Wollersheim

Devotions were led by Catiana McKay Theme: In the midst of the world Jesus leads us toward peace

Agenda was Reviewed and approved the proposed agenda with the addition of a CCI presentation before lunch.

Minutes of previous meetings:

The minutes of the 8-13-08 Leadership Team are still not available

The September 26, 2008 Annual Assembly minutes were accepted as printed

Today's agenda:

All ICC Teams for 2009 were reviewed.

Yellow highlighted names are new members. A major consideration is to be sure there is good judicatory representation. The Forum Team needs more balance. Deacon Heckman will be Msgr Hallin's replacement on ICC and on the Forum, but both will serve for now. It has no person of color either. Possible Forum members include Pastor Tim Olson, Belvedere, IL, Lutheran, Janice West, Presbyterian, Laurie Hill UCC, Deborah Owen, Disciples of Christ. Msgr Bob will seek an Orthodox priest. Turmoil in the Episcopal Church affects participants-both those who left the judicatory and those who stay in. Hopefully the new dioceses will want to participate. (They are now under foreign authority and how it affects the ICC remains to be determined.

Ron Quay, Executive Director of Churches United of the Quad City area is a possible member on Biannual State Wide Gathering Team. It will have a social justice component. (I will ask him.) Keith Harris, Presbyterian, a person of color is a possibility also. All the teams will meet Feb 17, 2009 in Springfield.

2008 Annual Assembly Review

Evaluations results indicate the Presentations were well received. The table arrangements were appreciated as well as the mixture of people around the tables.

The topic choice was agreeable to most around the table. This may be why the topic choice was questioned on some evaluations. Maybe people expected more controversial topics.

Seating arrangements were appreciated.

Use of parish pastors was appreciated.

Finances went well. For this year we will be ok. We made a little money, but felt the \$50 per person seems reasonable. We will pay speakers meals. We will set a deadline after which refunds are not possible because we have to pay for meals-either eaten or missed.

Planning for the next Assembly:

The date is September 25, 2009, the 4th Friday which seems acceptable to most judicatories. The suggested location is St John's Lutheran Church in Joliet. It is convenient to Interstates and has good parking and appropriate meeting space. Pr Peter Holmer

Catiana McKay will chair the worship committee for the Assembly.

Possible topic –Racism-ICER, and non ICER resources could be used. Terry Clark commented that racism is a good possible topic, but he has a greater concern for the poor. The poor were not mentioned by the presidential candidates nor by the winner. Their focus seems to be the middle class. We need to care for the needs of the poor. All agreed, but concern was expressed that we not just present a social service approach, but must include the faith. The financial melt down implications within society should not be ignored.

Numbers served at meal sites, food pantries, etc. are increasing across all denominations in the state that have such programs. Resource people need to be very involved, able, preferably well known. If you know the name and ministry of possible resource persons, please don't keep it secret!

Possible Preachers List

Episcopal Bishop Jeffrey D. Lee – Cynthia will contact for 2009 Assembly
Michael Kinnamon, General Secretary, National Council of Churches (possibly for BSGT event)

Miroslav Volf, Yale Divinity School.

Two women from CTS Indianapolis: Holly Hearon, Marti Steussey

Rev. Grace Imathieu – Bob Sherman will contact for 2010 Assembly

Bishop Demetrios

Rev. Peter Marty

Bishop Mark Hanson – 2009

Armenian Orthodox Bishop

Bi-annual Assembly Chair - Rev. Cynthia Hallas volunteered to serve.

Procedure Discussion

Since there was some time before our guest arrived we discussed our procedure for deciding whether or not the ICC will sign on to X or Y issues. What process is best that will involve and meet the concerns of judicatories? We determined the Public Policy team will be first. Is it in mission statement? If so then call to Leadership Team for consensus as to whether we think judicatories would be on board. Then we could reach out to the judicatories for their views. That's why we asked at the assembly who are the pinpoint people for us to contact for each judicatory. We need to get about 20 more names to make

this more effective. Bishop Wollersheim said some issues he can sign, others he has to consult the executive committee of the synod council; other times he has to go to the entire Services of Illinois, and gets other advice from the synod's attorney. It is complicated. The issue before us today is such this item. Bishop W says he cannot make a unilateral decision. For the Methodists we were told the bishop would be the primary decider. But he would consult with superintendents or cabinet. If legal implications he turns to a chancellor—a lawyer. Similar in The Episcopal Church. Presbyteries would have to vote on it, each one.

We agreed that on all issues we encourage members to check out the ICC web-site.

Catholic Conference of Illinois [CCI] Presentation by Mr. Bob Gilligan

Subject was on the Amicus brief (friend of the court) e-mailed to the Leadership Team earlier. Their request is that the ICC join with the Catholic Conference and other entities in support of the Amicus brief. Friend of the Court papers are used by organizations that may or may not have a direct stake in the case before a court. Such a brief suggests to the court they may wish to consider the issues raised in the Amicus as well as any other issues before the court on the case at hand. Courts do not have to accept Amicus briefs. Mr. Gilligan stated the CCI thinks the Illinois Supreme Court will accept the Amicus, and the Court hopefully will grant an extension to submit 2 or 3 weeks from the announced deadline. Earliest would be Dec 8 latest around the 20th. This means the CCI folks need to know in 2 or 3 weeks if we can support this.

Mr. Gilligan: We believe any organization with a service relationship to children is liable to a claim if this case is decided against us. It would revive expired claims of childhood sexual assault even though the statute of limitations has passed. I know people have been abused and they want remedy. Our position is its best to avoid the court process. The Archdiocese of Chicago has paid upwards of 70 million. We want to take it out of adversarial court setting into a mediation session. We want those abused to come forward. We can tell if they've been harmed and by whom and when, and what the settlement range would be. It is not just financial. Most victims' primary concern is the offender is no longer out there, and the entity is justly sorrowful and repentant for past action, and thirdly, some sense of treatment, outreach, counseling to make them better is available. We note there is a network of plaintiff attorneys good at finding victims. Trying to correct the sins of the past gets sticky. We want victims to have counseling and assistance, but we are frustrated by hard-charging attorneys who want to make a name for themselves.

The importance of this case: if it's decided for plaintiff, it revives expired claims. The problem is that after a period of time has gone by the defendant can't defend self. The statute of limitations laws exist because beyond a certain time it's hard, memories change, evidence is lost, people die. Records that pertain may or may not exist. The law recognizes that after certain period of time you can't resurrect the past. This claim tries to do just that. Even if clock has expired you have a second chance. We feel this could affect anyone who's had any relations with children. It would create a whole new wave of motions. You would have to legally defend yourself. Child welfare agencies deal with that as well as the church.

We feel its best to avoid the legal side and bring in house and resolve, however this case is in court. The Illinois Supreme Court has heard the case. There are several others in Illinois Appellate Courts. Two cases were not accepted by the Supreme Court. In this case the Appellate Court changed its mind and found for plaintiff. The Catholic Conference of

Illinois appealed to the Illinois Supreme Court, which accepted it. There is no issue of repressed memory in this case. He knew at age 18 he legally could have acted. He knew before 18 that he had been harmed. None of the dynamics of the many cases based on repressed memory are involved here. If the case is decided for plaintiff the number of other cases to come forward is unknown. Our attorneys feel we have made a strong case.

Msgr Flannery –ICC should understand that a finding for the plaintiff could affect every judicatory in Illinois. Gilligan –if the concern is “do victims have enough time to file suit” -Gilligan feels they do. In 2003 the Illinois legislature gave victims more time to file. Before then you had two years after discovery to file suit after reaching age 18. 2003 law changed the definition of discovery was lowered, and the time extended it from 2 years to 5 from the date of discovery to bring legal action. Plaintiff claims the 2003 legislature intended the change to be retroactive. CCI position and Amicus brief argues why it should not be retroactive.

Other questions: Contact has been made with Boy Scouts. Don’t know how they’ll decide. What’s advantage for us signing on? Any entity providing services to children is concerned about the impact of the courts decision against them. ICC signing it enhances it. Shows many groups concerned. Portrays to the court many care.

The concern is serious and grave, but CCI may not be the only ones affected. The more we pay the more cases seem to come up. Legal fees go up, settlements go up. We do not want to be insensitive to people who have been harmed, but we don’t want to be victims of attorneys who are mining for cases. We don’t know if there will come a time when no more victims will come forward.

Just about every diocese has a former victim on the Diocesan Evaluation board. Compassion for victims is a great concern. END Gilligan presentation.

Leadership Team Discussion:

Not all judicatories can do a response in time. Bishop Gary will check with Lutheran Social Services of Illinois. If they are involved it will be easier for Northern Illinois Synod to do it.

Bishop Wollersheim stated the brief is fair, the presentation good, but we’ve not heard the other side of the story. “To pass it on for information is ok but I’m not ready to endorse it.” The Leadership Team agrees the letter should come from our Public Policy Coordinator, and should state why the issue is important to us as congregations and denominations. We were approached by CCI to consider signing on to this brief. Leadership Team feels there is not enough time to do the process precisely because is an issue that can affect us all. We are sending this to judicatory leaders for information and/or action as each may desire. If you want to support this directly please contact Mr. Bob Gilligan, Ex Director, Catholic Conference of Illinois (address- phone #.) Also know CCI have contacted agencies that deal with children, several of whom are considering it. The Boy Scouts are considering it. An Orthodox diocese has agreed. The deadline is in December.

Lunch

Coordinating time for a visit to Governor’s office by our Co-leaders and Gary McCants. January busy for politicians, February way better. March 3 was mentioned as well. Legislature in session –try first the President of the Senate, don’t bother with Madigan who

doesn't even give time to people who give to his campaign.

Status of 2009 Pledges

Andrea or John. See 12/1/2008 statement. See data from Agenda that shows these figures. 2008 Financials - John Charlton reviewed for the Team. Andrea will e-mail giving & pledging spreadsheet that goes from 2006 to 2009.

Team discussion:

ABC has had to downsize even staff. DOC has cut 2 staff and still have budget balance problems thru 2009. But some DOC congregations have contributed to the ICC - a few thousand dollars, gifts ranged from \$50 to \$200.

Central/Southern ELCA—financial concerns. Chicago down to 10k not 11k. Springfield RC diocese is giving exactly what the new formula calls for even though it's a reduction. Great Rivers UMC. Budget is finalized at annualized conference, 1st June. Terry made amendment on conference floor to 15,000. it lost, but not by much. One conf member felt UMC was paying far more than fair share. Also there are financial issues, but Terry feels it's a relational and attitude matter of fair share from the past and he will continue to work the issues, especially since they have a new bishop, Bishop Palmer. UMC Northern, IL is giving according to the fair share formula. Peoria RC diocese has said no, but other dioceses are working that issue with them.

There will be additional income, but not enough to meet the budget. Andrea has asked for the name of persons to contact to get our concerns before them. Most have not yet replied.

Fair share discussion again: Bishop Wollersheim suggested baptized members. Hard to interpret. How about number at worship on average? Catholics use October worshippers count of four Sundays for internal purposes. Bishop W said he doesn't expect change, but it is something to consider. Encourage web-site use. Find ways to get info to our people. We're not just local churches, we are in ministry together. Encourage judicatories to have info on their websites about ICC to point out we are already in relationship with each other. Andrea will go on judicatory website and get name of persons who run website.

EVALUATION OF ICC'S CURRENT STRUCTURE: Does current structure work?

Frequency of meetings. All teams in Feb works well.(How about an alternate date in case the Feb 17 date gets cancelled because of weather –decided on March 3 alternate) Location to be 1st Christian, Springfield, from 9-3. Works out to 4 meetings for Leadership Team plus assembly.

Suggestions for getting ICC better known. Info day followed by soup kitchen or some kind of service project. Forums can be throughout the year.

Invite the ministerial alliance of the community in which we are meeting for breakfast or lunch. Clergy, lay leaders too. More info about ICC, but also the ICER availability.

Structure of Team Reports day discussed. Follow what we did last year.

Future Meetings:

Bi-Annual State Wide Gathering. 2010. Cynthia is coordinator. A potential site for 2010 is Our Lady of the Snows near St Louis

Spring Leadership Team Meeting: May 28 Augustana Lutheran Church,

Andover , IL with worship/visits to Jenny Lind Chapel, 1 block away (Built 1851-1854)
Fall, Sep 9 10 am will be a conference call
Winter, Leadership Team, Tuesday Dec 1, Decatur, Congregational Church. Or Three
Hierarchs Orthodox Church in Champaign

Newsletter: Need an article from someone who attended the annual meeting as to their
experience. Bob Sherman will do this. Due Dec 17

Next Meeting - Feb 17 - Springfield

Cynthia Hallas led the closing prayer

Submitted by,
Robert L Pearson, Secretary