

## ILLINOIS CONFERENCE OF CHURCHES

Joint Teams Meeting

March 2, 2010

**Meeting Place:** Grace United Methodist Church, Springfield, IL

**Attendance:** Bishop Gary Wollersheim, Rev Terry Clark, Rev Dr, John Charlton III, Very Rev. Robert Flannery, Rev. Linda Harrod, Rev. Kevin Kessler, Rev. Catiana McKay, Rev. Robert Pearson, Rev. Robert Sherman, Mrs. Marianne Stowers, Rev Kevin Laughery, Sister Joan McGuire, Rev Dan Schwick, Garnett Fay, Earl Smith Ms. Pamela Tackett. Not attending: Rev Robin Barrow, Rev. Janice West, Rev. Cynthia Hallas, and Rev. Fr. Michael Condos. Robert Gilligan

**Welcome, Introduction and Prayer:** Bishop Wollersheim led worship. Pr Clark welcomed us. Grace Church is 131 years in ministry this year. Introductions made by all attending, and then the agenda was approved.

**Excerpts from the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity**, events we were involved in: Bob Flannery reported on Methodist/Catholic celebration in Johnston City. Pr Clark preached; more than 100 attended. The congregations in that town do ministry together, especially to those with low or no income.

Terry is has and is willing to attend judicatory events and share what ICC is all about. Pam participated and did well.

Fr Laughery spoke of Terry and Pam's visit to the Greater Springfield Interfaith Association. (Kevin is now on his 3<sup>rd</sup> round as president; it really is interfaith. Rabbis, priests, protestant ministers attend (should have more Protestants.) They also have Muslim, Buddhist, and B'hai participants. All meet for lunch once a month. Feb meeting focused on the homeless; they had 4 homeless people speak to them. They do a thanksgiving worship service together. Kevin said they do a lot of agreeing to disagree, but continue to meet. Hindus and Unitarian Universalists also participate.

There was an ecumenical service celebrating the reopening of the Catholic cathedral after remodeling in Springfield. Pamela was there.

Bishop Mark Hansen, Presiding Bishop of the ELCA, visited the Ecumenical Patriarch in Turkey for more than 2 hours, and with the Pope, who talked about the Joint Declaration on Justification by the Lutheran and Catholic Churches. Bishop Wollersheim appreciates those visits, but said he feels the best ecumenical ministry happens congregation to congregation.

Attendees were reminded of ELCA Lutheran/United Methodist full communion agreement completed in 2009.

Sister McGuire talked about the Ecumenical Millennium Committee out of Chicago, who felt not all were doing the sharing of the good news of the Gospel as we should.

Fr Bob Flannery did a joint celebration with the Episcopal Church in Carbondale. The Episcopalians get a new bishop in the fall. Preacher was Janis West, Presbyterian.

It was noted that Springfield still does not have a new Catholic bishop after Bishop Lucas left.

**Teams Status:** Fr Clark stated we need to be more proactive to help team members be aware of our meeting dates. Terry is big on accountability. Folks need to be really participating. We can't carry people just for sake of just being on the team. We need those who will participate.

**Leadership Team:** Bob Gilligan can't make it today because of conflict arising from the change of date. Fr Condos couldn't make it either-Lent prep. Robin Barrow is a full time teacher; non-tenured, so she has to stay at work. She is the leader of the ICER team. Critical – only Kevin and Earl Smith will be here for ICER. Janice West has health issues.

**Annual Assembly Forum team:** only 2 members are here today- Sister Joan and Catiana McKay. Really need to gather more names, especially those who have a passion for a particular team. A lay Greek Orthodox man will join the team as well. Hopefully we will get members from around the state.

**Biannual Statewide Gathering team:** Rebuilt: members include Dr Mary Lokan, ELCA, Springfield; Rev Ted Hartley, UMC, Johnston City; Rev Stacey Tate, Irvington, serving a UCC church, though she is Presbyterian. Possible additional member: Rev Don Jones, AME Zion, Centralia. (It was noted the new AMEZ bishop is interested in the ICC.) Rev Doug Cripes, Lebanon, Il, with a church in Caseyville, Il is a resource person.

**ICER:** Earl Smith and Fr Kevin are the only members present. Didn't hear from 3 and got 5 nos. We need to rebuild this team. Robin Barrow is current chair, but she is overwhelmed with other activities, need another chair.

**Public Policy team** – Linda –Beau Underwood, Disciples of Christ, new member, and Garnet Fay. This team needs rebuilding too. Needs a Presbyterian.

We have to re-connect with judicatory leaders.

**Team Meetings** - The Leadership team met as did the other teams. Leadership Team minutes are in a separate file named Mar 2, 2010 Leadership Team

**Presentation,** Jeremy Schroeder, Executive Director of the Illinois Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty:

The time is now. We are part of changing history and are starting to see that in Springfield. The reality of election year in a job (legislator) that is not fun if one does not enjoy serving the public. Illinois has been looking at the issue for 10 years. Governor Ryan's moratorium was shocking. It changed the way the nation was working. New Jersey has changed; the tide has changed. As people of faith we look to the world community looking at world-wide abolition. Had the USA followed it should have happened 15 years ago. It is shocking we still have it. In Illinois it has become a political issue. Nationwide the number are reducing. Failed executions, executing an innocent person have contributed to this. The thinking is why not abolish it? Illinois has spent millions; \$100 million dollars in the capital punishment trust fund. We are working to be the voice of the victims as well. 11 states in 2009 introduced legislation to abolish the death penalty. Not to reform, but to abolish. Very much a prolife issue and criminal justice issue as well. Today got our first republican co-sponsor in the senate. Those who have supported in private are going public.

The main work now is to have legislators believe their peers will vote for abolition. Death penalty is gut reaction. It cost millions more than the trials and law enforcement time & resources. \$ could go to victims families. What kind of society are we going to be?

What can do to support? Talk with legislators. Build a relationship with elected officials about it. They know who we are. The time is now. 99% of murder cases are not capital cases.

Imposition of death penalty is totally arbitrary. Senate bill 3569, House bills 262 and 5687. 5687 reintroduced exact same bill as 262 in order to get republicans on board. Right now the silent of our friends is defeating abolition. States that have the death penalty have higher homicide rates! We have JUST HAD 240<sup>th</sup> or 250<sup>th</sup> exonerates in USA. 20 in Illinois Those who are sentenced to death have 25% more mental issues than the general population. Little has changed in this in the last 10 years. We focus on innocence and cost. Cost includes every aspect from trial on through all the appeals. More attorneys more experts, more time. It takes 12 years or so so form the crime to punishment. Incarceration is more expensive. Mental illness and special needs resulting are one reason. We feel its 50 million dollars more than the cost of other murders. Some of the decrease in death penalty cases is because it's just not worth the money. During spring session we are working to get it abolished. We probably can get votes after the election because legislators' fears are here and now. Our speaker asks that we push the bills, HR 262 and 5687 and Senate bill 3569 which are all worded the same. The bill crosses off the death penalty. We don't take a position on life without parole because people feel strongly about both of those. Lobby day is March 11. Legislative action will probably be mid November.

### **Mission Team Reports:**

Leadership Team - Bishop Gary Wollersheim and Rev. Terry Clark  
Week of Christian Unity in Johnston City. Have made visits to judicatory leaders (Illinois Great Rivers Conference, The United Methodist Church, ELCA Central States) Can we set up a tour in northern area for Terry, Pamela and Gary to get entry to judicatory executives to continue the process.

Registered with the attorney general each year no fee

Website response is good

Office phone changes to AT&T saved \$50 a month, no fax now - email only.

We plan to establish a PayPal account on ICC website with "donate here" button.

We are reducing files and furniture from the office: meeting minutes, annual financial reports, annual reports, and legal documents will be retained, as will all financial data for 7 years. We will dispose of the resulting excess file cabinets.

New office space will save \$325 a month. Current office rental space cost goes up \$25 to \$625 in May. We have space available for \$300 a month in Kumler Outreach Ministries, Springfield on 303 North Grant Avenue East. It has good parking. It has a chapel, and meeting space, which would be available to us.

Public Policy Team - Linda – looked at 2010 areas of ministry. We want to be proactive as a body: 1. Death penalty abolition -progress ok. 2. Closely monitor developments in health care reform (statement is too narrow) 3. See notes from Linda advocating for the funding and commitment for state programs and services that serve the most vulnerable. 4. In the ICC brochure paragraph "ICC 2010 Areas of Ministry" in the line that starts "Concerns for those... change the semicolon following the word incarcerated to a comma 5. Monitoring legal issues affecting churches.

The following resolution was suggested: "The Illinois Conference of Churches urges Governor Quinn and members of the Illinois General Assembly to adopt a state budget for fiscal year 2011 that:

1. Maintains at least the current level of state funding for human care services (nutrition, housing, healthcare, social services and education);
  2. Raises sufficient new revenue to fund vital state services;
  3. Protects low and moderate income households from the impact of any increase.”
- (The Leadership Team adopted this at their meeting.) The statement will be sent to all judicatories for response with the indication that silence means assent. It will be sent to the governor and all legislators.

Annual Assembly Forum Team – Rev Catiana McKay shared possible topics, themes, approaches: Ethics; beloved community; divisiveness in society-too much of it has entered into the churches. We (churches) being absorbed in divisions within society. Standing together; standing apart. Claim our identity. As our members become absorbed in Christ we would change society. Faith would affect culture instead of the other way around. Can the church be a model for reconciliation? How shall we ground selves to live out He whom we profess? We all do it differently, we talk about being Christ in the world, but are we? Standing together is what Christ calls us to do. Presenters at the forum – we don't want to go with legislators. Society needs the church, not the other way around. We need the voice of who we are within the church. Also don't want to favor one party over the other which is they way it would look no matter who we chose. We need to remember who we are (whose we are?) Could Cardinal George make his presentation on beloved community? He is also head of all the cardinals in the USA. Quaker professor from Andover Newton Seminary has similar writings [name??] The team continues to build. The Assembly will be Sept 23 at Immaculate Conception Cathedral in Springfield. (Overflow parking at Marianne's congregation?) This committee deals only with the forum not the whole assembly. “Standing apart/standing together” is suggested theme.

2010 Bi-Annual Gathering - The Gathering has been postponed until March 11 & 12, 2011. Theme: “Seeing with new eyes: persons who are poor teaching us.” There is a flyer in your packet of materials. Input on flyer improvements is welcome.

ICER – Fr Kevin and Earl are the remnant. Team rebuilding is necessary. The team had no business for over a year. A change in leadership may be needed because the current chair is time constrained. Rev Barrow needs to be asked if she can do it because the current status is non-functional. It is a little unclear about what is expected to be on the team. There may be people from judicatories who are interested, some of whom may be involved in judicatory anti-racism efforts. Maybe it's time the leadership team had a training experience from ICER. ICER team could have a retreat for themselves when it is reconstituted.

Leadership Team Meeting – see separate minutes, same date

Other Items:

Next Leadership Meeting date: May 25, 2010 at First Church of the Brethren,  
4714 North Sheridan Road, Peoria, Illinois

The meeting adjourned at 3:35 pm

Respectfully submitted, Bob Pearson, Secretary