

Ecumenical Connection

ILLINOIS CONFERENCE OF CHURCHES

Volume 2, Issue 1

Spring 2007

ICC Public Policy Team - On the Move



Rev. Gary McCants, Chair of ICC's Public Policy Team

The Public Policy Team (PPT) held its second meeting in conjunction with the ICC Joint Team meeting on Feb. 23. The PPT will take a leadership role on issues that impact the ICC and its member judicatories by being vocal on concerns before the Illinois General Assembly and Congress.

The portion of the ICC's new mission statement, "to make

public, prophetic witness to Christ's love for all people, and to address in particular, issues of poverty and racism", will guide the PPT's efforts. While our primary focus will be on the public policy arena impacted by the Illinois General Assembly, the PPT will not be limited to state government.

The PPT will consult with the Leadership Team, Illinois Christians Encountering Racism and the ICC Public Policy Coordinator once hired. It will be the Public Policy Coordinator's responsibility to serve as the liaison between the General Assembly and the ICC member judicatories to educate and mobilize prophetic action and witness of the ICC while staffing the PPT.

In the interim, the PPT will be the eyes and ears of the ICC on the state level and from time to time prepare informational materials for distribution to the wider membership of the ICC through each judicatory's established grassroots organization. It remains the goal of the PPT to work in partnership with the established public policy leaders and the grassroots organization of each judicatory. Consequently, the PPT would like public policy leaders to contact the ICC office or Rev. Gary McCants at 217-522-4796 or at stpaulamesplfd@aol.com about how we together may best accomplish this task.

Among other activities, the PPT plans to meet with the

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The Illinois Conference of Churches Has a New Home

As of May 1, 2007 the Illinois Conference of Churches has a new office. We are now one of several offices located in a building situated on one of Springfield's main streets. Our new address is 2160 S. 6th Street, Suite D2, Springfield, Illinois 62703. All contact numbers remain the same.

Our hope with this new location is that as it is simpler for members to find and has free, on site parking, you will stop in and visit as you are in Springfield.

In addition to the secure location and parking, this move has allowed the ICC to

save \$150 each month in rent.

The preparation and labor for this move took considerable time and effort. The ICC would like to thank the following volunteers from Harvard Park Baptist Church

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Our Mission

We seek to be an inclusive community of churches that celebrates and makes visible our sacred bonds of unity in Christ. We will do this by:

- ❖ Promoting an honest sharing and understanding of both our common and divergent theological convictions; and
- ❖ Making public, prophetic witness to Christ's love for all people, particularly by addressing poverty and racism.

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**Breaking Through Our Barriers
to Become One in Christ**

Illinois Christians Encountering Racism

Racism is one of the most obvious realities in contemporary society. Perhaps because it is so obvious, we can do a very good job of hiding it from ourselves. Christians, of course, must make a courageous examination of the racism within themselves so that they can better understand its effects on all people.

Since late 2005, a number of Christians representing many of the communions of the ICC

have been in training to heighten their awareness of racism as it exists throughout society. They have formed a team which has named itself Illinois Christians Encountering Racism (ICER). The people of ICER are happy to announce their readiness to work with groups of people who want to "encounter" racism as a first step toward seeing it for what it is and discovering alternative ways of looking at people.

For information about resources and opportunities offered by ICER, contact any of the following:

Martha Herrin
(217) 682-5782
mjherrin@consolidated.net

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awilson@ilconfchurches.org



ICC Teams Meet to Discuss Direction and Agenda

The ICC Leadership, Public Policy, Bi-Annual Statewide Gathering, Forum, Transition Mission and ICER teams met on February 23 at St. Luke's Union Church in Bloomington, Illinois. Bringing the teams together allowed for a time of fellowship and getting to know one another as well as a time for the teams to communicate their visions for the work of the ICC in the coming

year.

The Joint Team Meeting began with devotions, was followed by the teams breaking out to discuss their goals and ended with everyone coming together to report on their progress earlier in the day. Those who wished to do so remained after the joint meeting to observe the Leadership Team as it concluded

its meeting.

The Forum team focused on the Annual Assembly and determined that the forum topic will be our understanding of "church." Like the previous assembly, the forum will feature a panel to discuss their tradition's specific view.

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ICC Has a New Home (continued from p. 1)

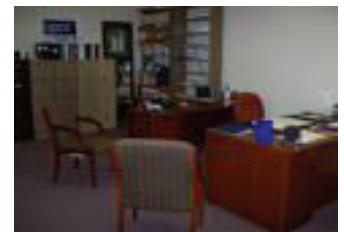
who gave their time and strength in helping us file, clean, shred paper and physically move the office:

Mike Williams
Eddie Williams
Ted Williams
John Charlton

Many thanks to each of you and may God bless you for your service.

Anyone is welcome to stop by and see us at the new office.

Joyce Williams
Barbara Day
Marian Hamilton
Debbie Williams
Catherine Dyer



Top Left: Front of the building—Our office entrance is on the side. We should have signs up late in May.

Bottom Left: Inside our office

Above: Inside our office



Ecumenical Connection



E. Garnet Fay, ICC Representative from Western Yearly Meeting

“THE GOAL OF THE ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT—TO BRING GOD’S DIVIDED PEOPLE INTO A FELLOWSHIP OF LOVE AND SERVICE IN COMMUNION WITH GOD—IS PRECISELY THE GOAL OF QUAKER WORSHIP.”

A Few Brief and Random Thoughts on Quakers and Ecumenism

"Walk cheerfully over the world speaking to that of God in everyone." Thus did George Fox, a leading founder of the Religious Society of Friends admonish his 17th century followers who banded together seeking a new experience of Christ in the world.

Though at times the Quaker culture has created perceived barriers of exclusion, the primary currents of Quaker life have freely intermingled with most other Christian divisions and denominations. Sometimes said to be primitive Christianity restored, the Quaker faith embraces the sacraments common to our Christian brethren including those of baptism and the Eucharist. Simply put, Quakers observe the sacraments as spiritual mysteries to be received at the deepest levels of transforming spiritual experience. The common view of Friends is that God is present to us through Christ and the Holy Spirit, indivisible.

Ann K. Riggs, a Quaker representative to the World Council of Churches, notes in her report on the WCC 2001 launching of the Decade to Overcome Violence, that, "it is in seeing the world as God's that we see ourselves (all persons) as one and, in seeing all the world's people as made in God's image, we are called to protect the welfare of everyone."

According to Eden Grace, one of the most prolific con-

temporary Quaker ecumenical leaders, "The grounding principle of Quaker ecclesiology is the radically real presence of the living Christ in the worshipping community. The church, by definition, is the community of that presence--of that gift which we can neither create nor capture, but only enjoy. The presence is radically, scandalously real, not symbolic or remembered. It is operative in our midst, actively teaching, leading, ministering, and healing. It is the living Christ, the Jesus of scripture and Christian tradition, the incarnation of God and the resurrected Savior, who is present in the room with us.

To be a true church does not require such things as bishops in apostolic succession, outward practice of the eucharist or the profession of a particular creed.

NEITHER DOES A TRUE CHURCH REQUIRE REJECTION OF THESE. [emphasis mine] Ultimately, it is God, by the gift of his presence, and not human structures or the absence of them, which creates a church. The goal of the ecumenical movement--to bring God's divided people into a fellowship of love and service in communion with God--is precisely the goal of Quaker worship."

>From *FRIENDS RELATING TO OTHER CHRISTIAN CHURCHES* by Eden Grace, July 19, 2000.

From the Friends World Conference meeting in 1952, came this minute: "Our Quaker experience embodies

elements that are both protestant and catholic; we claim to be a movement rather than a sect...To achieve the ideal of unity in diversity, we must have confidence in the integrity of one another. Dependence on the Holy Spirit will lead us into unity at the deepest level of fellowship. At that point differences are accepted, yet transcended in a common loyalty to Jesus Christ." #197 LONDON YEARLY MEETING. [now BRITAIN YEARLY MEETING]

Note: all errors and omissions in this necessarily short drawing together on Quaker Ecumenism are mine alone. For a rich spring of ecumenical writings by Eden Grace, visit online at www.edengrace.org.

Yours in the Spirit,

E. Garnet Fay

ICC representative from Western Yearly Meeting

This article is the first in a series which will highlight the perspective of different traditions on Ecumenism.

If you have an interest in contributing to this particular series, please contact Andrea Wilson at:

awilson@ilconfchurches.org

Ecumenical Connection

Centenary Celebration of the Church Unity Octave

“THE THEME FOR THE 2008 WEEK OF PRAYER FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY IS ‘PRAY WITHOUT CEASING.’”

2008 marks the centenary celebration of the Church Unity Octave, first celebrated in the Our Lady of the Angels Chapel at Graymoor in Garrison, NY between January 18th and 25th, 1908. Since the beginnings of the ecumenical movement, proponents have advocated common prayer as a means of promoting Christian unity. The current dates of the annual observance (January 18 – 25 in U.S.) were inspired by the correspondence between an Episcopal priest and an Anglican rector who were both ardent supporters of reuniting the Church. In the fall of 1907, Rev.

Spencer Jones, Anglican vicar of Moreton-on-Marsh, England, wrote to Fr. Paul Wattson suggesting the idea of a day of prayer for Christian unity to be observed each year on the Feast of Sts. Peter and Paul (June 29). Fr. Paul, co-founder of the Society of the Atonement, a Franciscan order in the Episcopal Church, liked the idea but proposed holding an eight day observance of prayers, sermons and conferences between the Feast of the Chair of St. Peter, a symbol of unity and collegiality (which used to be on January 18th), and the Feast of the Conversion of Saint Paul, a symbol of evangelization, on January 25th.

In January 1908, the Society of the Atonement celebrated the first Church Unity Octave. In October 1909, the Society of the Atonement was received corporately into the Roman Catholic Church by Pope Pius X, who gave the Octave his official blessing. In 1916 Pope Benedict XV extended its observance throughout the Catholic Church and in the 1930s the name was changed to the "Chair of Unity Octave" to emphasize the centrality of the Petrine ministry. Meanwhile, other movements for Christian unity were also promoting observances. Beginning in 1920, a Protestant initiative of the first world conference on Faith and Order organized a special Octave of Prayer for Church Unity to be held every year ending on Pentecost (Whitsunday). By 1941 this date was moved to January with the hope that Protestants

and Catholics might pray together for unity.

In 1935 in Lyon, France, Abbé Paul Couturier began advocating a Universal Week of Prayer for Christian Unity praying for the "unity that Christ wills, as he wills and when he wills." With the Second Vatican Council's Decree on Ecumenism in 1964 calling prayer the "soul of the ecumenical movement," the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity coalesced into a worldwide observance focusing on the shared experience of all Christians rather than their differences.

Since 1968 the World Council of Churches and Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity have collaborated annually to select the scriptural theme and accompanying materials for the celebration of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity.

The theme for the 2008 Week of Prayer for Christian Unity is Pray Without Ceasing.

But we appeal to you brothers and sisters...Be at peace among yourselves. And we urge you beloved to admonish the idlers, encourage the faint-hearted, help the weak, be patient with all of them. See that none of you repays evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to all. Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Jesus Christ for you.

(1 Thessalonians 5:12a, 13b-18)



Altar in Our Lady of Angels Chapel where the first Church Unity Octave was celebrated in 1908

Public Policy Team On the Move (continued from p. 1)

Governor and legislative leaders or their top staff at least once every two years. These meetings will be attended by members of the PPT and the Leadership Team while making every effort to balance the delegation across our denominations, gender and race. The PPT wants to ensure that the Governor and legislative leaders become acquainted with the new Illinois Conference of Churches. The PPT will work closely

with Illinois Christians Encountering Racism (ICER) which will discuss how the public policy concerns of the ICC impact race and our anti-racism training program. ICER will be fully integrated into the workings of the PPT and apprised of its positions on all issues and concerns. Moreover, the PPT in support of ICER, will involve local ecumenical groups to help the ICC get the word out about anti-racism training offerings of ICER, particularly as it

relates to public policy concerns.

At the end of the day, the PPT would like to work with all of our judicatories and local ecumenical organizations and their grassroots organizations to determine how we may be able to speak with the same voice on issues, including access to health care and the minimum wage.. We believe that will make the churches much more effective.

“THE PPT WANTS TO ENSURE THAT THE GOVERNOR AND LEGISLATIVE LEADERS BECOME ACQUAINTED WITH THE NEW ILLINOIS CONFERENCE OF CHURCHES.”

National Weekend of Faith in Action—Death Penalty

Amnesty International USA's National Weekend of Faith in Action on the Death Penalty (NWFA) is an annual initiative coordinated by the Program to Abolish the Death Penalty. Every October, the NWFA brings together faith communities and human rights activists to advance the common cause of social justice. The NWFA can be anything

you want it to be in your community—it's not a notional conference, it's a local solidarity event organized by people like you! Set aside some time during the weekend of October 19-21 for an activity or event that focuses on the death penalty, using the ideas and resources provided by Amnesty International USA as your guide.

Local involvement in the NWFA takes many different forms and is based on the needs and capacity of your community or group. Typical activities include hosting speakers, watching films, holding discussions, leading prayers, delivering sermons, organizing letter-writing campaigns, or distributing

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ICC Teams Meet to Discuss...(continued from p. 2)

The Bi-Annual Statewide Gathering Team focused on the timing and content for the next bi-annual assembly. The team is tentatively looking at Fall 2008 and following a theme of service to “the least of these” as recorded in Matthew 25.

In addition to working on how

they can best be used, ICER set a date of June 5 to join the Leadership Team and provide them with training on the issue of racism.

The Leadership Team received reports from all the mission teams. In addition they focused on editing and finalizing the ICC baptismal

document, reviewing member pledges for 2006 and 2007, discussing procedures for bringing new members into the ICC as well as details of the upcoming Annual Assembly.

COME TO
CHICAGO 2008

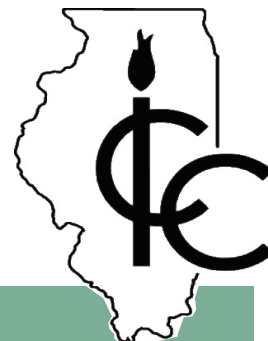
Celebrate Christian Unity in
our Wonderfully Diverse City

National Workshop on Christian Unity

2008 NATIONAL WORKSHOP
PRAY WITHOUT CEASING
April 14 - 17, 2008

Chicago Marriott O'Hare
8535 West Higgins Road, Chicago, Illinois 60631

For more information and online registration, go to www.nwcu.org.



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www.ilconfchurches.org

Save the Dates!

ICC Annual Assembly—Friday, September 28, 2007

First Presbyterian Church, Urbana, Illinois

Contact Andrea at (217) 522-7099 with questions.

2008 National Workshop for Christian Unity—April 14-17, 2008

Chicago Marriott O'Hare

8535 West Higgins Road

Log on to www.nwcu.org for information.

NWFA on the Death Penalty...(continued from p. 5)

information. These activities take place on college and high school campuses, at seminaries, in churches, synagogues, mosques, temples, and meetings, in public forums, and among interfaith groups of all sizes and affiliations. Visit www.amnestyusa.org/faithinaction/ for more information.

Rev. Gary McCants, Chair of ICC's Public Policy Team noted in his last Legislative Update that the team is watching Senate Bill 328.

SB 328—The Death Penalty Abolition measure is on Third Reading in Senate. The

deadline for hearing this bill in the Senate has been extended to May 31, 2007.

The ICC's Public Policy Resolution, "Abandon the Death Penalty," can be found at the website:

www.ilconfchurches.org. The resolution was unanimously approved by the General Board on November 30, 2005 and ratified by the Judicatory Executives on January 31, 2006. The ICC website also contains fact sheets regarding the death penalty.

The following resources on the death penalty are available at the ICC office:

Illinois Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty—2007 Annual Report

Too Flawed to Fix—The Illinois Death Penalty Experience (VHS and DVD)

The Empty Chair—Death Penalty, Yes or No (DVD)

Indiana Catholic Conference—Talking About the Death Penalty (VHS)

Please contact Andrea Wilson if you would like to review any of these resources.

(217) 522-7099

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