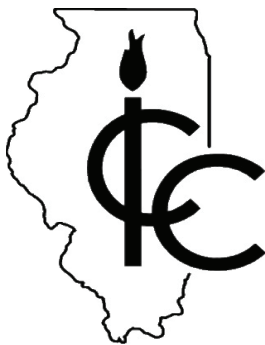


Ecumenical Connection



ILLINOIS CONFERENCE OF CHURCHES

Volume 1, Issue 1

Fall 2006

ICC is Alive, Well and in Good Hands!



2006 Transition Leadership Team
From left: Rev. Dr. Charles Emery, Rev. Dr. Jane Fislser Hoffman, Rev. Bob Sherman, Very Rev. Robert Flannery, Sr. Joan McGuire and Rev. Dr. John Charlton. Not pictured: Most Rev. George Lucas and Rev. Terry Clark.

As we live into a new design for the Illinois Conference of Churches, the member churches are being led in our ecumenical effort together by a dedicated Transition Team and by our new Administrative Coordinator.

The Transition Team consists

of: Rev. Dr. Jane Fislser Hoffman, the Very Rev. Robert Flannery, Rev. Dr. John Charlton, Rev. Terry Clark, Rev. Charles Emery, the Most Rev. George Lucas and Sr. Joan McGuire.

Each of these leaders has their own ministry and is giving this time and effort because of deep commitment to the ecumenical enterprise. They have been meeting regularly since the new design was approved and working between meetings by email and Conference call to help cover the miles between Chicago and Carbondale. Members of the team have testified that the collegial ecumenical community among them is a true gift along the way. The Team was charged with

steering the organization from the previous model of staff and elected leadership into the new design. The first key step of that transition was to seek and select an Administrative Coordinator to be our staff mainstay, handling the office, communications, coordinating plans for meetings and more. After interviewing three highly skilled individuals, the Team was pleased to select Ms. Andrea Wilson. Andrea is a graduate of SIU School of Law and came to us after serving for seven years with the non-profit organization Sojourn Shelter and Services, Inc. The Team was immediately taken with Andrea's sharp intelligence, her strong references, her organizational ability, and personable, (continued on p. 2)

ICC Inaugural Annual Assembly—September 29, 2006

On Friday, September 29, 2006, the Illinois Conference of Churches (ICC) will hold its first Annual Assembly at St. John's Lutheran Church, Bloomington. Delegates from every judicatory will meet under the banner "A New Beginning: Together" to set the course for the future of the ICC. The agenda for

this Assembly is focused around the new mission statement (see above).

Starting with worship at 9:30 am participants will discuss the future of the ecumenical movement, adopt a revised constitution and by-laws, elect officers, receive reports from the Anti-Racism project

and establish priorities for the coming legislative session.

If you are not already registered for the Assembly, please contact Andrea Wilson at (217) 522-7099 or awilson@ilconfchurches.org.

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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Baptism in an Ecumenical Context

Baptism is taken very seriously by all Christian churches. The actual practices and requirements of Catholic, Orthodox, Anglican, and Protestant Christian churches are very similar. These are two of seven “points of unity” discovered in a five-year research project by the Unity & Relationships Commission of the Illinois Conference of Churches. The report, “Baptism: An Ecumenical Study of Similarities, Differences and Opportunities,” is a document based on the responses of twenty-three different judicatories representing thirteen denominations.

The release of the report this year anticipates the 25th anniversary in 2007 of *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry [BEM]*, one of the most famous and influential of all ecumenical texts. Baptism is universally recognized as both the foundation of the Christian faith, as well as the cornerstone of ecumenism. Quoting from BEM, paragraph 6, the document affirms “our one baptism into Christ [as] a call to

the churches to overcome their divisions and visibly manifest their fellowship.”

The project began with a survey of ICC member churches to gather information and identify specific and practical discoveries made in the process, to note widely agreed upon points of unity, recognize continuing questions for additional work, and propose preliminary conclusions and recommendations. An annotated bibliography, a sample ecumenical baptism certificate, and a six-page appendix tabulating actual survey results are included in the report.

The report highlights several discoveries of interest: “conditional baptism” practiced by some traditions when an actual record or written testimony cannot be ascertained, the varying uses of godparents or sponsors, and details of interchurch observances and recognition ceremonies. The vast majority of denominations require the Trinitarian formula, the use of water, and the proper intent.

There is almost always some preparation for the parents and godparents, and there is always a connection to the community of faith.

The study points to six areas for continuing conversation, including believer and infant baptism, the language for Trinity, objective change in one’s salvation, how the water is used, and placement and size of the font or pool. Among the recommendations made is the proposed use of an ecumenical baptismal certificate to symbolize our visible unity and mutual recognition of baptismal unity.

The report, authored by the research team of Fr. Robert Flannery (Roman Catholic) and Rev. Donald E. Mason (Presbyterian), will be available online at www.ilconfchurches.org or from the office of the Illinois Conference of Churches.

By Rev. Donald Mason,
President of the 2005 ICC
General Board.

ICC... continued from page 1

collaborative style. She was undaunted by all the challenges the Team identified of being a single staff person for a somewhat complex organization. Since she began with us on April 17, Andrea has proven herself as very able, willing to learn, and ready to serve. Above all, the Team was and is im-

pressed with her desire to serve Christ’s church in her life and work.

The remaining focus of the Team’s work has been to plan for the first Annual Assembly of the ICC in the new design. An interesting and stimulating day of ecumenical community is planned as we

begin in new ways to live out our mission as the Illinois Conference of Churches.



Candidate Forum

Lincoln Library,
Springfield, IL

Saturday, Sept. 23, 2006
2:00—4:00

For more info, contact:
Gerard Broeker
(217) 744-7777
gerard@silcofillinois.org

“BAPTISM IS
UNIVERSALLY
RECOGNIZED AS
BOTH THE
FOUNDATION OF
THE CHRISTIAN
FAITH AS WELL
AS THE
CORNERSTONE
OF ECUMENISM.”



Andrea Wilson, ICC’s new
Administrative Coordinator

9th Assembly of the World Council of Churches, Porto Alegre, Brazil

This past February 14 to 23, 2006 I had the privilege of attending the 9th Assembly of the World Council of Churches which was held in Porto Alegre, Brazil. I was there as national president of the Catholic Association of Diocesan Ecumenical Officers, but I also informally represented everyone in the Illinois Conference of Churches in my other role as Co-chair of the Transition Leadership Team.

As I had learned from others who have attended previous WCC Assemblies, the worship tent, where we gathered each morning and evening for communal prayer, was the center of our unity in Christ and our primary focal point. It was there that the Christian faithful gathered for prayer and meditation each day drawing on the diverse spiritual traditions of our churches across the globe. The theme of the 9th Assembly, "God in your Grace, Transform the World," was a beautifully woven thread binding us all together not only in our worship, but also in the major talks, seminars, entertainment, meals, fellowship and exhibits we took part in each day. For the WCC, the present decade is also one to overcome violence, and this was referred to regularly throughout the plenary sessions and workshops. Those of us attending as observers were able to be present for the business sessions where the official delegates conducted the official business of the WCC. This is first Assembly where the decision making at the WCC meetings was by done the

consensus model, the method our new ICC structure has also adopted.

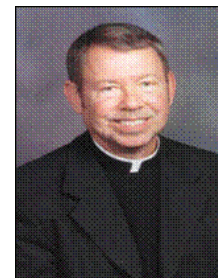
Attending the Assembly were 691 official delegates, 348 member churches, 150 young adult stewards, special guests such as the 18 member Vatican delegation, and all the rest of the nearly 4,000 thousand people who were participants in the numerous workshops or "mutirao" held several time periods each day. Present at the Assembly were a large number of young people besides the stewards. At the closing elections, of the 150 people elected to the Central Committee, 22 were youth which is a percentage of 15% of the body's entire makeup. There were a large number of Roman Catholics at the Assembly as well; a good number from Brazil, but a number of others from other parts of the world. I especially enjoyed the time when each denominations came together in their own single unit to discuss the happenings of the week. There were about 80 Catholics who met with the Vatican Delegation to give our impressions and insights.

In closing, attending the 9th Assembly of the World Council of Churches was an experience of a lifetime for me, and I hope everyone involved in ecumenism will have a chance to attend an Assembly sometime in their lives. The seminars, plenaries, worship, services, Bible studies, exhibits as well as various types of fellowship all made for an extremely enriching

and faith-filled experience. I know I will never be the same having been a part of this incredible worldwide gathering furthering the promotion of Christian Unity!

By Father Robert B. Flannery, Ecumenical Officer, Catholic Diocese of Belleville

This is an abbreviated form of Fr. Flannery's article. The complete article may be obtained from the office of the Illinois Conference of Churches and will be included in the materials at the ICC Annual Assembly.



The Very Rev. Robert Flannery, Co-chair of the ICC Transition Leadership Team

"IT WAS THERE THAT THE CHRISTIAN FAITHFUL GATHERED FOR PRAYER AND MEDITATION ... DRAWING ON THE DIVERSE SPIRITUAL TRADITIONS OF OUR CHURCHES ACROSS THE GLOBE."

2006 National Weekend
of Faith in Action
on the Death Penalty

October 20—22, 2006

Visit:

[www.AMNESTYUSA.ORG/
FAITHINACTION/](http://www.AMNESTYUSA.ORG/FAITHINACTION/)

for more details.



2006 Annual Assembly: *A New Beginning—Together*

ILLINOIS CONFERENCE OF CHURCHES

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Springfield, IL 62701

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awilson@ilconfchurches.org

Please remember to register for the ICC Inaugural Annual Assembly!

September 29, 2006

St. John's Lutheran Church

Bloomington, Illinois

9:30 am—3:30 pm

Call or email Andrea Wilson if you still need to register (\$40/person)

(217) 522-7099 or awilson@ilconfchurches.org

Appreciation and Farewell Dinner for Rev. David Anderson and Victoria Martin



Rev. David Anderson receiving his gift of appreciation for his years of dedicated service to the Illinois Conference of Churches.



Victoria Martin, former ICC Administrative Assistant

On Wednesday, May 31st, 2006 an appreciation dinner was held to honor and bid farewell to our outgoing Illinois Conference of Churches Executive Director, Rev. David Anderson. Due to an out-of-town training meeting for her new job, Victoria Martin, the former ICC Administrative Assistant, was unable to attend and be honored as well for her work with the Conference.

A large gathering numbering about forty people from around the State of Illinois gathered at La Sorella Restaurant in Springfield to partake in a delicious meal and to show the Conference's

gratitude to David for his nearly ten years of dedicated and visionary service. Transition Leadership Team Co-chairs, Rev. Dr. Jane Fisler Hoffman and Father Robert Flannery, shared the role of Masters of Ceremonies for the event. Knowing David's love for singing and music, Reverend Don Mason orchestrated a melody of church hymns which described in an appropriate way, the various contributions David has shared with the ICC during his tenure. Hymns such as "Be Not Afraid," and "Rock of Ages" were followed by testimonies by former Board members and officers of the ICC.

Following the tributes, Rev. Jane Fisler Hoffman presented David with an engraved clock commemorating his years with the Illinois Conference of Churches. An engraved clock was also given to Victoria Martin for her five years with the Conference. A wonderful time was had by all as the ICC bid farewell to one phase of its history and moved forward in a new direction. We especially thank Rev. David Anderson for graciously making that transformation and transition a spirit-filled process.