

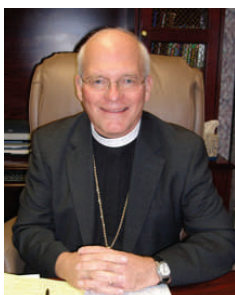
Ecumenical Connection

ILLINOIS CONFERENCE OF CHURCHES

Volume 3, Issue 1

Spring 2008

The ICC Welcomes New Leadership Team Co-chair



Bishop Gary Wollersheim, Northern Illinois Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and New Co-chair of the ICC Leadership Team

It is with great joy and enthusiasm that the Illinois Conference of Churches welcomes Bishop Gary Wollersheim as the new judicatory Co-chair for the ICC and its Leadership Team. His appointment completes the remaining term of Rev. Dr. Jane Fisler-Hoffman who

assumed a new position as Conference Minister with the United Church of Christ in California and Nevada. Bishop Wollersheim was approved by the members of the ICC Leadership Team in accord with our by-laws regarding mid-term replacements on the team.

Bishop Wollersheim is the judicatory executive of the Northern Illinois Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) and, as such, will fulfill the ICC by-laws' requirement of having two judicatory executives on our Leadership Team. Wollersheim attended our Inaugural Annual Assembly that approved our new ICC structure, constitution and by-laws. In the past, he has been a supporter of the con-

ference by sending representatives to our various meetings, and he is excited about this new leadership calling to ecumenical ministry in the ICC.

Bishop Wollersheim was ordained a Lutheran Pastor June 5, 1977, at Christ Chapel, Gustavus Adolphus College, St. Peter, Minnesota. He received a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Secondary Education from Augsburg College, Minneapolis in 1973 and a Master of Divinity Degree from Northwestern Lutheran Theological Seminary, St. Paul, Minnesota in 1977. His Internship year was at Bethel (West) Lutheran Church in Chicago. He received a Doctor of Ministry Degree from Luther

(continued on p. 5)

Rev. Dr. Jane Fisler Hoffman—Called to California



Rev. Dr. Jane Fisler Hoffman, former ICC Co-chair and current Interim Conference Minister of the Southern California, Nevada Conference of the United Church of Christ

Rev. Dr. Jane Fisler-Hoffman completed her membership in the Illinois Conference of Churches in December of 2007. She began her very active membership on the ICC in 2000 as Conference Minister of the Illinois Conference of the United Church of Christ. Members of the Illinois Conference of Churches

are extremely grateful to Rev. Fisler-Hoffman for sharing her many gifts with great vitality, humor and organizational skill during these past seven years.

For those of us who attended the ICC Annual Assemblies

(continued on p. 5)

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.

Inside this issue:

RACISM IN OUR SOCIETY	2
CBHC FAITH CAUCUS PRESS CONFERENCE	2
ECUMENICAL WITNESS: DISCIPLES	3
NATIONAL WORKSHOP ON CHRISTIAN UNITY	4
ICC FINANCIAL SUPPORT UPDATE	5
SAVE THE DATES	6

Ecumenical Connection



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

The Dramatic Ironies of Racism in Our Society

We Christians watch a drama developing in our land. It is the drama of human relations. It is the drama of how perceptions of human beings carry with them considerations of race and ethnicity. This is a drama which has been developing for a quarter of a millennium.

Christians understand very well that we cannot be passive spectators of this drama. We must act. We must influence our society, so that our understandings of race and ethnicity, and the Christian affirmation of human dignity, will be a call to conversion to all the people with whom we live. We gain authority when we ourselves can acknowl-

edge our own conversion in this regard.

Illinois Christians Encountering Racism (ICER) is a team whose purpose is to assist people in exploring the dramatic issues of race, and the ways in which perceptions of fellow human beings can become distorted. The ICER team, made up of members from Mount Carroll to West Union, received their own training over two weeks in 2005 and 2006. They have contemplated their various individual ethnic connections. They have pondered issues of societal privilege. In summary, they have been meditating for a long time on things that are at the heart of

the ironies of being human, things which Christians must take to prayer and reflection for the sake of a deeper conversion to the Christ who is the savior of all humanity.

Members of the ICER team are ready and eager to come to your church or to any other group, anywhere in Illinois, to conduct a training session which helps the participants to be more in touch with the dramatic ironies of racism in our society. For further details about what ICER has to offer, please contact:

Teamous Newberne
(847) 836-8249
ccu0963@comcast.net

To View Bills of Interest to the ICC

Log onto our website at:

www.ilconfchurches.org

Click on:

1. ICC Teams
2. Public Policy Team
3. My Legislation

Enter the following email

address and password:

legislative@ilconfchurches.org

Illinois

Click "View" and then

"Preview"

Campaign for Better Health Care Faith Caucus Press Conference

Families USA, one of the Faith Caucus partners, has just approved the release of a significant study specific to Illinois. Using their research for "Too Great a Burden," they have given us new numbers that show just how pressing the health care crisis in Illinois is becoming, even for those with insurance.

For example, the study shows that more than 600,000 non-elderly people in Illinois are in families that will spend *more than 25%* of their income on health care costs this year. And over three-quarters of them *have insurance*.

Campaign for Better Health Care (CBHC) will release this new study at a Faith Caucus

press conference in the Capitol Building on **Wednesday, May 7th at 11:30 a.m.** After the press conference, the CBHC Faith Caucus Steering Committee will personally deliver the study to legislators in order to send a strong signal that this crisis must be addressed now.

What is the Faith Caucus?

All faith traditions challenge us to engage in healing, to act with justice, and to treat one another with compassion. But our health care delivery system distributes services unjustly, rations care inequitably, and offers compassion only to those who can afford it.

The Faith Caucus, including

Christian, Jewish, Muslim and other traditions, pulls from across the state of Illinois to assert the moral imperative of health care for all. We recognize that equal access to health care is not only a socio-economic issue, but also a moral issue whose impact is felt strongly within our communities and congregations.

Together the Faith Caucus has been bringing the moral crisis of health care disparity to policymakers through educational awareness events, thoughtful discussion and prayer.

For More Information:
www.cbhconline.org

Ecumenical Connection

Ecumenical Witness: Disciples at Their Best

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

Recently, I've devoted a lot of time to our ecumenical involvements. But that's natural for a Disciples leader. As I commented to a group of Disciples and United Church of Christ seminary students recently: wherever Christians join hands for common witness in God's name on behalf of others - Disciples are there! Whether on the national or international scene - or in our local food banks, community Lenten services, or Habitat builds - Disciples are there!

Our Design of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) describes us as a church in three expressions: congregational, regional, and general. But there's also a fourth: the ecumenical/global. Disciples have always been clear about this. We welcome people into the church by confession of faith in Jesus Christ alone - not by adherence to a denominational doctrine. We baptize into the body of Christ at large, not into our own little piece of it. We gather weekly at an open table - Christ's table. As the Design says, "Within the universal Body of Christ, the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) is identifiable..." We understand ourselves to be part of a larger Body, and we try to act like it, so the world will begin to know - through us - the power of God's reconciling love in Jesus Christ.

It's that reconciling love of

God that has made us so ready to join hands with others in the name of Christ. Disciples have always believed that division within the body of Christ betrays our mission and undermines our witness to the power of God's love to reconcile and bring wholeness to our fragmented world. Our society -- where persons and communities so often feel abandoned and isolated and abused -- cries out for true signs of healing, and hope, and wholeness. We long to be among those signs.

Admittedly, we all too often participate in the brokenness - along denominational, race and class lines, among others. But Disciples, at our best, have always understood that division within the church is a denial of the Gospel message itself. One of our founders, Thomas Campbell in his *Declaration and Address* (1809) proclaimed that, "Division among the Christians is a horrid evil... It is antichristian, as it destroys the visible unity of the body of Christ; as if he were divided against himself, excluding and excommunicating a part of himself. It is anti-scriptural, as being strictly prohibited by his sovereign authority; a direct violation of his express command." For us Disciples, disunity is not just an inconvenience, or problem to be overcome. It is sin. Our calling to unity is not simply one more program on the agenda of the church's life; it is an essential element in our understanding of what it

means to live faithfully as God's people.

We Disciples understand that our work and efforts in seeking Christian unity are finally not for the sake of the church, but for the sake and salvation of the world. This witness is ultimately about glorifying God and participating in the in-breaking of the Reign of God.

It's been an ecumenical season! But, then for Disciples, it's always an ecumenical season. In this world, so often characterized by brokenness, alienation, racism, isolation, fear and loneliness, we strive to be a movement for wholeness. We long to represent the one body of Christ. We join hands with other Christians whenever we can. May God bless us in this witness! To God be the glory!

The above is an excerpt from a Letter to the Church by Sharon E. Watkins, General Minister and President of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

This is the third in a series of articles 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



"WE UNDERSTAND OURSELVES TO BE PART OF A LARGER BODY, AND WE TRY TO ACT LIKE IT, SO THE WORLD WILL BEGIN TO KNOW—THROUGH US—THE POWER OF GOD'S RECONCILING LOVE IN JESUS CHRIST."



Sharon E. Watkins, General Minister and President of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

Ecumenical Connection

National Workshop on Christian Unity — Chicago O'Hare Marriott, April 14-17, 2008

**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.

The upcoming 2008 National Workshop on Christian Unity will be held at the Chicago O'Hare Marriott Hotel from Monday, April 14th, to Thursday, April 17th. It is the first time that this annual national gathering has taken place in the State of Illinois. The Illinois Conference of Churches is one of the sponsoring groups of the 45th Annual Event, and it is hoped that many people from the ICC member churches will have an opportunity to participate in this ecumenical conference. The Opening Prayer Service and Reception will be held at the nearby Mary Seat of Wisdom Roman Catholic Church. The preacher for the service is Sister Dr. Lorelei F. Fuchs, SA who is a Theological Consultant for The Interchurch Center in New York City.

A number of our Illinois Conference of Churches members and associates are involved with the planning and presentations during this year's conference promoting Christian Unity. Rev. Catiana McKay, former ICC Board Member from the United Methodist Church Northern Conference and President of ECCO, the ecumenical officers' network covering a variety of denominations, sits on the NWCU National Planning Committee. Father Robert Flannery, Co-chair of the ICC and ecumenical officer for the Roman Catholic Diocese of Belleville, is also on the

NWCU National Planning Committee as President of the national Catholic Association of Diocesan and Interreligious Officers' network, CADEIO.

Sister Joan McGuire, OP, member of the ICC Leadership Team as Forum Team Chair, and ecumenical officer for the Catholic Archdiocese of Chicago, is on the Local Planning Team for the NWCU event serving additionally as liaison for the specific events involving the Catholic network. Other members of the Millennium Committee of Chicago, representing many Christian denominations, form the Local Planning Committee whose chair is Rev. Grayson Van Camp, a Reformed Pastor and Faculty member at McCormick Seminary in Chicago.

The Illinois Conference of Churches will have two seminars presented during three morning seminars at the Workshop. Our immediate past ICC Co-chair, The Rev. Dr. Jane Fidler Hoffman, will co-present a seminar on Thursday morning, April 17, from 9 to 10:15 am entitled "State Councils of Churches: Focus on Structure". In the seminar Jane will share the ICC's journey toward our new structure, and The Reverend Warren Murphy from the Wyoming Council of Churches will explain his state's creative way of ecumenism and

the structure it takes to accomplish it.

The second ICC seminar at the NWCU will be based on our ICC Baptism survey, study and document which is entitled "Baptism: Ecumenical Implication of Theology, Ritual and Practice." The Very Reverend Robert B. Flannery, Co-chair of the ICC, will co-chair the seminar with liturgical theologian, The Rev. Ruth A. Meyers from Seabury-Western Theological Seminary. The theological papers written as a response to the ICC Baptism Study will be given out at this seminar which will be held on Tuesday and Wednesday, April 15 and 16 from 10:30 to 11:45 am each day.

The cost of the full conference is \$150. One-day registrations are also available for \$50. For more information and to register on-line, please go to www.nwcu.org. We hope to see many familiar and new ICC faces at this historic event and important event for our state and the Illinois Conference of Churches. The ICC Leadership Team has deemed this event to be the Bi-annual Statewide Gathering for the year, so make every effort to let your congregations and colleagues know about the upcoming NWCU.

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

Bishop Gary Wollersheim (continued from p. 1)

Seminary, St. Paul, Minnesota in 1995. In 2002, he received an Honorary Doctorate from Augustana College, Rock Island, Illinois.

From 1990-1998 Wollersheim served as Assistant to the Bishop in the Northern Illinois Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) and also Shared Staff with the ELCA as a Mission Director and Stewardship Specialist. During this time he assisted in starting 12 new mission congregations in Northern Illinois. The Reverend Dr. Wollers-

sheim was elected Bishop of the Northern Illinois Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America in June of 1998 and was reelected for a second term in 2004.

Bishop Wollersheim serves on many boards of directors including Augustana College, Lutheran Social Services of Illinois and the Mission Investment Fund of the ELCA. He is Chairperson of the Region Five Bishops and he also chaired the Task Force which wrote the Evangelism Strategy for the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

The Illinois Conference of Churches thanks Bishop Wollersheim for accepting this new position of leadership with our statewide ecumenical body. We look forward to working with him and having him share his talents and experiences with us in the reconciling ministry of ecumenism in Illinois.

Rev. Dr. Jane Fisler Hoffman (continued from p. 1)

in 2006 and 2007, we will remember Rev. Fisler Hoffman as the Co-chair, with Rev. Robert Flannery, of the newly structured Illinois Conference of Churches. In her words, the new structure was a "plane that we were constructing in flight!" She flew the plane well as the professional and engaging moderator of the two Assembly Forums. Members of the Transitional and Leadership Teams appreciated our co-chair's efforts to keep the mission statement straightforward and simple, and her caution to keep the ICC goals modest and affordable without losing sight of the mission.

At its last meeting in December, the Leadership Team thanked Jane for her service as co-chair and faithful member of the ICC with tributes, cake and an Icon that Jane deeply appreciated. Rev. Charles Emery and Sr. Joan

McGuire attended a farewell service for Rev. Fisler-Hoffman at the United Church of Christ where, in the name of the Illinois Conference of Churches, Sr. McGuire thanked Rev. Fisler-Hoffman for her excellent leadership in our Conference.

Jane left a gift that I pass on to you. At one of her last ecumenical activities in Chicago, Jane preached at an annual Week of Prayer for Christian Unity Women's Breakfast. She gave an interesting insight into the scriptural quotation, "Pray Without Ceasing." Jane gave credit to all those who in the past one hundred years of the ecumenical movement have prayed for Christian unity. Jane believes it was those prayers from the past that brought her, who was raised with a very anti-Catholic father, to be so actively engaged in ecumenical

life. Jane suggested that our prayers for Christian unity will have untold benefits for the Church in the future.

We will miss Jane's insights and her friendship. Many of us have been enriched by her presence. May Jane and her husband Milton continue to be blessed as they transition from Illinois to California.

May God bless Rev. Fisler-Hoffman in her ministry as interim Conference Minister of the Southern California, Nevada Conference of the United Church of Christ.

Sr. Joan McGuire, O.P.,
ICC Leadership Team

2007 Pledge Support

Budget: \$126,734

Pledged: \$108,191

Received: \$108,680

Thank you all for your support.

2008 Pledge Support

Budget: \$126,684

Pledged to date:
\$71,910

If you have not contacted the ICC office with your 2008 pledge amount, please do so as soon as possible. As you can see, we are approximately \$36,000 below last year's pledges and nearly \$55,000 short of our 2008 budget.

Click [HERE](#) to email your pledge to the ICC office.



2160 S. 6th Street, Suite D2
Springfield, IL 62703

Phone: 217-522-7099

Fax: 217-522-7105

awilson@ilconfchurches.org

www.ilconfchurches.org

Save the Dates!

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

Chicago Marriott O'Hare

Log on to <http://www.nwcu.org> for information.

ICC Joint Team Meeting—June 3, 2008

First Christian Church (DOC), Springfield, IL

Log onto the [ICC Website, Leadership Team](#) page for details

2008 ICC Annual Assembly—September 26, 2008

More details to come

ICC Publications

on the Web

Public Policy Profiles

ICC Resolution: Abandon the

Death Penalty

ICC Baptism Study

ICC Ecumenical Bible Study

Log onto our website at:

<http://www.ilconfchurches.org>

Click on "Publications"

Ecumenical Connection and ICC Website—What Do You Want to See?

At the ICC office we are striving to make the *Ecumenical Connection* as useful to you as possible. Currently we are including a series of articles on Ecumenism from various faith perspectives. To date we have printed articles from the Quaker, Moravian and Disciples communities. If you would like your particular community's perspective included in this series, please contact Andrea Wilson at the ICC office.

We are also looking ahead to our next series of articles. If there is a topic relevant to ecumenism and the work of

the ICC which you would like to see in the newsletter, please let us know.

In addition, we often have space in the *Ecumenical Connection* to announce events, changes and happenings in your faith communities. We generally publish the newsletter in March, June, September and December. If you have announcements or events you wish to be included in the *Ecumenical Connection*, please have the details to Andrea Wilson in the ICC office at the beginning of those months.

Similarly we hope to serve

our members by including the same kind of information on the ICC website at:

www.ilconfchurches.org

Please send any announcements to Andrea at the ICC office via email at:

awilson@ilconfchurches.org

It is important to us at the ICC that our communication through the *Ecumenical Connection* and website is meeting your needs as members. Your input and participation are vital and welcome components to our success.