

Ecumenical Connection

ILLINOIS CONFERENCE OF CHURCHES

Volume 1, Issue 2

Winter 2006

ICC Mission Statement in Action: The First Annual Assembly



Assembly participants worshipping during the Prayer Service.

The concise, inspirational mission of the Illinois Council of Churches has an operational statement that can be said "to have legs". It can be put into action. The first annual assembly proved this to be true. The Assembly itself developed out of the three mandates within our mission statement.

We seek to be an inclusive community of churches that

celebrates and makes visible our sacred bonds of unity in Christ.

The Assembly made visible the sacred bonds of unity in Christ among the ICC churches as we prayed together at the opening service that was structured around our mission statement. The preacher, Rev. Dr. Larry Pickens, inspired members of the Assembly to "Answer the Ecumenical Call."

We do this by promoting an honest sharing and understanding of both our common and divergent theological convictions.

The panelists for the Forum, Bishop Hee-Soo Jung, Reverend George Pyle and Bishop Francis Kane, as well

as others who were present, participated in "The Possibilities and Challenges in Ecumenical Engagement". Issues, as deep as the meaning of church and of church unity, and as practical as a common baptismal certificate, emerged.

We do this by making public, prophetic witness to Christ's love for all people, particularly by addressing poverty and racism.

Mr. Robert Gilligan and Rev. Dan Schwick provided an overview of the next Illinois legislative sessions and suggested areas that the ICC might be able to influence.

(continued on p. 2)

ICC's Public Policy Team Holds Organization Meeting

On November 20, 2006, the ICC's Public Policy Team (PPT) held its organization meeting. The meeting afforded the PPT an opportunity to dialogue around public policy matters, while pointing out fresh ways to address matters championed in the past and identifying issues that may surface

in 2007.

The primary task of the PPT is to assist the ICC in implementing the portion of its Mission Statement concerning, "making public, prophetic witness to Christ's love for all people." The PPT believes the ICC will best accomplish its mission as a

unified organism. The ICC must be active and known in the State House and Congress as concerned about how public policy impacts the daily lives of the members of our judicatories. This will require a higher level of

(continued on p. 2)

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:

NCC-CWS ANNUAL ASSEMBLY	2
WEEK OF PRAYER FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY	3
SAVE THE DATES	4
2007 ICC LEADERSHIP TEAM MEETING	4

Ecumenical Connection

AS THE ICC
BECOMES MORE
VOCAL AND
VISIBLE, IT HELPS
US IN
DEMONSTRATING
CHRIST'S
COMPASSION
FOR THE LEAST
OF THESE—OUR
BRETHREN.

ICC Public Policy Team (continued from p. 1)

grassroots involvement in the public policy process. As the ICC becomes more vocal and visible, it helps us in demonstrating Christ's compassion for the least of these—our brethren.

Several issues discussed were access to health care, including, representation on the Health Care Justice Faith Caucus and continuing our efforts along with the Campaign for Better Health Care and others. The team members agreed that the ICC should demonstrate support

for the recent state legislation, Senate Bill 1268 (and proposed federal legislation) to increase the minimum wage. Consequently, a letter was sent to Governor Rod Blagojevich urging him to sign the legislation when it reaches his desk.

We discussed the death penalty, including the impact of the Death Penalty Moratorium, abolition of the death penalty and eliminating it for the mentally ill. Meanwhile, economic issues facing the poor and disenfranchised

were addressed, including seeking improved employment opportunities for the poor and those difficult to employ, the various important educational funding issues, personal and property tax matters, and increased funding for affordable housing and child care, among many others.

Lastly, the PPT urged the Co-Chairs of the ICC Leadership Team to be active in both seeking audience with political leaders and encouraging ICC members to be equally active.



National Council of Churches-Church World Service Annual Assembly

A 'First Timer' View:

Wearing two ecumenical 'hats'—co-chair of the ICC and a member of the Church World Service (CWS) board, I attended my first Annual Assembly of the National Council of Churches in the USA and CWS. Perhaps you are surprised, as I was, that this was indeed a *joint* assembly of the two closely allied organizations. That alone was an interesting dy-

namic to see, as the two excellent organizations used to be one. It seemed to me that the fairly recent separation-while-remaining-in-partnership dynamic makes for a somewhat challenging reality. Like all of ecumenism!

As a CWS board member, I could attend these yearly assemblies but have not done so in the past. However, with funding help from my de-

nomination, the United Church of Christ, I went this year because this was our first year as the ICC without an Executive who would automatically attend. It seemed important somehow to be sure 'we' were represented. However I did learn that I was not looped in to the shrinking circle of persons who staff state ecumenical organizations.

(continued on p. 3)

First Annual Assembly (continued from p. 1)

The Assembly received a report, given by Rev. Curt Keller, on Illinois Christians Encountering Racism (ICER), formerly known as the ICC anti-racism task force.

In addition, the assembly approved a Constitution and elected leadership to enable the churches to take the steps

needed to realize our mission.

The Assembly of the twenty-nine judicatories/churches that are the Illinois Conference of Churches have a vision, a mission, a structure and leadership. The mission belongs to every person within these

churches...each of whom is invited to be the "legs" of the ICC by embracing its vision and mission, by developing appropriate structures and leadership for every ecumenical "neighborhood" in Illinois.



Forum moderator and panelists: Rev. Dr. Jane Fisler Hoffman, Most Rev. Francis Kane, Bishop Hee-Soo Jung and Rev. George Pyle.

NCC-CWS Annual Assembly (continued from p. 2)

This is something we may want to address to be sure we stay informed.

But for now, let me share some impressions. Both the National Council of Churches (NCC) and Church World Service (CWS) have exceptional staff leadership, committed elected leaders and are, after some struggles, in a strong, stable financial status. All are cause for rejoicing.

Both NCC and CWS have some exceptional resources available to us all through their websites, www.nccusa.org and www.churchworldservice.org. Information about the global and national work of the two and educational materials are more abundant and well done. For instance, the interfaith relations section of the NCC has an excellent piece suitable as a bulletin insert titled, "Getting to Know Neighbors of Other Faiths—A Theological Rationale for Interfaith Relationships". In this era and our culture of religious diversity and, too often, tension, sharing this

with congregations could be very helpful. It can be downloaded from the NCC site. The NCC also offers training to leaders for Interfaith Dialogue that could be accessed by ecumenical and local communities. Other excellent resources are about peacemaking and seeking economic justice. There is a lot of great material of which many in our churches are uninformed!

Several statements/resolutions were approved including: A Resolution on Global Warming, A Pastoral Message on the War in Iraq, Call for a Worldwide Ban on Human Reproductive Cloning, Fearfully and Wonderfully Made: A Policy on Human Biotechnologies, and Action in Support of Christmas Aid for People Affected by Violence in the Middle East. There were, of course, many reports. Of particular interest were moving reports from groups that visited in Palestine-Israel, Africa and the Gulf Coast.

As with any ecumenical gathering, a huge part of the

richness was in the community that exists and grows during such events among diverse Christians. I met many fascinating new folks but was also delighted to see a number of colleagues from our Illinois Conference of Churches membership and region—Greek Orthodox, Armenian, United Methodist, among those I knew.

It was a joy to be a part of this national ecumenical gathering and a privilege in some small way to represent the ICC. I encourage all who read this to check out the NCC and CWS websites and learn more.

*Rev. Dr. Jane Filser Hoffman,
Co-chair of the ICC Leadership Team*

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2007


The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity (WPCU) is celebrated between the feast of Saint Peter (January 18) and Saint Paul (January 25). These feasts honor two apostles, one sent to the Jewish Christians, the other to the Gentile Christians. As we know from the Acts of the Apostles, the two had different visions of the Church, but came together in Council and,

through the work of the Spirit, set a new direction for the Church.

Because in the United States this week is celebrated in the days following Martin Luther King Day, it reminds us to promote reconciliation among races as well as among churches. The theme for the WPCU 2007, "Open our Ears and Loosen our Tongues,"

speaks to the need for reconciliation.

Please gather the churches in your community to pray together, in union with churches throughout the world, during the WPCU. More information can be found on the web at www.geii.org.



NATIONAL WORKSHOP
ON
CHRISTIAN
UNITY
2007
WASHINGTON, DC AREA



Jan. 29—Feb 1, 2007

At the Bridge Marriott,
Arlington, VA

YOU MAY REGISTER
ONLINE:

www.nwcu.org

Christian Unity is closer
than you think.



"Heart Song," by Mark Hokomaki. This is the WPCU Art Piece for 2007. The artist was inspired by the spiritual implications of Mark 7:31-37.



522 East Monroe, Suite 208
Springfield, IL 62701

Phone: 217-522-7099
Fax: 217-522-7105
awilson@ilconfchurches.org

Save the Dates!

ICC Annual Assembly—Friday, September 28, 2007

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

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

Chicago, Illinois

Log on to www.nwcu.org for information.

2007 ICC Leadership Team—Inaugural Meeting



The Very Rev. Robert Flannery and Rev. Dr. Jane Fislser Hoffman—Co-chairs of the 2007 ICC Leadership Team.

The newly elected Leadership Team held its first meeting on December 7, 2006, at Three Hierarchs Greek Orthodox Church, Champaign, Illinois. After a devotional based on the Liturgy for Christian Unity 2007, the Team turned to its business.

First it addressed the changes that were made to the proposed Constitution and By-laws by the Annual Assembly. They made an editorial change to the organizing documents by adding the phrase “particularly poverty and racism” to the third paragraph of the Mission Statement as the ICC had declared at the beginning of this transition. Sr. Joan

McGuire was added to the Team as the representative from Chicago proper. The Team reviewed the new structure and received reports from the three Mission Teams.

The Team also addressed policy issues such as who authorizes communications, who authorizes someone to represent the ICC on various panels/coalitions and what the process should be for identifying issues which will be taken up by the ICC. As to this last question it was decided that three factors would determine an ICC focus. One, whether this issue is consistent with the ICC Mission Statement. Two, where the

various communities of the ICC stand on this issue. Third, whether the ICC’s efforts will make a difference on the issue.

The Leadership Team lifted up issues for the Forum Team that rose out of the discussion at the Annual Assembly such as: baptism, what we mean when we say “church,” authority and Christian anthropology.

Finally, the Team reviewed financial reports and clarified issues related to ICC Personnel Policies.