

## **COUNCIL ON CHRISTIAN UNITY CENTENNIAL DINNER HONORS PAUL A. CROW, JR.**



Paul A. Crow, Jr., and current  
CCU president, Robert Welsh.

*(Indianapolis, Ind. – DNS – May 5, 2010)* - A celebration of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Council on Christian Unity drew friends, board members and supporters from around the country to a special dinner and program on April 27.

One of the evening's highlights was recognition of the service and leadership of Paul A. Crow, Jr. who served the Council from 1974-1999. Crow was named president emeritus and thanked for his 25 years of service to the Council and to ecumenical efforts around the world.

In welcoming guests to the event, current CCU president Robert Welsh, noted that Disciples have given significant leadership throughout our history to the cause of unity and wholeness in a fragmented world.

“I have always believed that the ecumenical movement is built not solely on theological agreement, or on common vision, or joint programming,” said Welsh. “It is built upon personal relationships and friendships that carry the movement through the good times and tough times.”

Several of those relationships that help sustain Disciples' quest for unity over the past century were presented in an overview given by Peter Morgan, former president of the Disciples of Christ Historical Society.

“For 100 years we Disciples have been watching for signs of unity, praying for unity, and holding meetings for unity,” said Morgan. “The prophetic vision of the early Disciples leaders.....called the church to its catholic and apostolic origins of unity in Jesus' prayer 'that they may all be one.’” (John 17:21)

Morgan touched on the leadership and commitment of several individuals who dedicated themselves to the quest for unity. One such person was Peter Ainslie III, whose stirring message before the International Convention of Christian Churches in 1910 led to the founding of the Council on Christian Unity. In that address, Ainslie called for Disciples to claim their special place in the wider church by becoming contributors to the wholeness of the church universal. For two decades he was a well-known participant in global ecumenical events.

The work of other outstanding council chief executives, including H.C. Armstrong, George Walker Buckner, and George G. Beazley, was also highlighted. However, Morgan gave special attention to Paul Crow's role in guiding and expanding the vision of CCU.

“Paul was the longest serving president of the council,” noted Morgan. “He brought us to prominence in the world-wide ecumenical movement.” Morgan mentioned Crow's initiation of

the International Commission for Dialogue between the Disciples of Christ and the Roman Catholic Church, and his creation of the Peter Ainslie III Lectures on Christian Unity and the Joe A. and Nancy Vaughn Stalcup Lectures on Christian Unity as examples of his outstanding work.

Other professional and personal colleagues of Crow also lauded him for his passion for ecumenism.

“Paul's ministry has been so effective because he has had a passion for Christian unity rooted in his own life experiences,” said Tom Best, who worked with Crow as part of the World Council of Churches.

“Paul Crow is the quintessential Disciples scholar, ecumenist and pastor in a church that values relationships more than almost anything else,” added General Minister and President Sharon Watkins. “He helped shape who we are today and he continues to shape us through his writings and teachings.”

In naming Crow as president emeritus of the Council on Christian Unity on behalf of the CCU Board, Welsh expressed his personal thanks to Paul for his valued service and leadership both within the Disciples of Christ and to the wider ecumenical church.

In accepting the honor, Crow shared, “I have met with leaders of most of the major churches in this country and around the world, and none of them can approximate the ecumenical witness of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).” He added, “The reason Disciples are well-known around the world is that regardless of the circumstances, we say it is the unity of the church to which we are committed. It is a gift that you and I are together in this witness.”

The dinner was one of a number of activities that will take place this year as part of the centennial celebration of the founding of the Council on Christian Unity. The Joe A. and Nancy Vaughn Stalcup Second Century Visioning Conference will occur on June 14-17 in St. Louis, Mo. The conference will explore current developments and challenges to the ecumenical movement and will make recommendations regarding the Council's future.

Other resources and activities for study and celebration of the Council can be found on its website at: [www.disciples.org/ccu](http://www.disciples.org/ccu)