

## **Stone-Campbell Dialogue continues progress toward unity**

INDIANAPOLIS, December 6 -- The Stone-Campbell Dialogue met November 7-8, 2010, in Johnson City, Tennessee to assess its work over the past decade and to look to the future of these conversations that focus upon unity among the three “streams” of the Stone-Campbell Movement. Twenty-three church leaders participated in the discussions. The group was composed of ministers and other leaders from the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Christian Churches and Churches of Christ, and Churches of Christ.

The group began its time together with a worship service Sunday evening in the chapel of Emmanuel School of Religion, the host site for the whole meeting. Discussions Monday centered on issues that have divided these three groups in past decades and recent progress toward recognizing unity with each other. For example, the Stone-Campbell Dialogue initiated the idea for the 2009 Great Communion project that led to community celebrations in honor of the two hundredth anniversary of Thomas Campbell’s *Declaration and Address*.

Group members expressed great hope for progress toward experiencing unity. One attendee said, “Our differences are real, and they are important, but they do not determine whether we are family.”

Another added, “This is inspiring. I am deeply touched, and I am reminded that there is so much work to do. Dialogue needs to continue.”

Another said he had reflected again and again on the words of Christ recorded in John 17 as he has participated in the Dialogue. “Apparently Christ thought the unity of His followers was the single most important evidence that He truly came from the Father, that He was divine. And this makes unity compelling—an absolutely compelling thing—not a backburner issue. Unity is at the heart of what the whole gospel is about.”

Future plans include sponsoring information/dialogue sessions at conventions attended by members from each of the groups and efforts to create affinity groups of workers from each of the three groups involved in similar ministries (i.e., women in ministry, missions, church planters, etc.).

The Dialogue’s next discussion will center on the topic, “The Role of the Holy Spirit in Producing Christian Unity” at a meeting tentatively scheduled November 4-8, 2011 in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

Robert Rea, Lincoln, Illinois, is coordinator for the Christian Churches and Churches of Christ. Members attending the Dialogue this year included Paul Blowers, Johnson City, Tennessee; Jerry Headen, missionary to Thailand; Heather Holland, Johnson City, Tennessee; Pat Magness, Elizabethton, Tennessee; Mark Taylor, Cincinnati, Ohio; and Guthrie Veech, Florissant, Missouri.

Robert Welsh, Indianapolis, Indiana, is coordinator for the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). Included this year were Ron Degges, Indianapolis, Indiana; Vincent Dial,

Jonesborough, Tennessee; Jim Hamlet, Indianapolis, Indiana; Amy Lignitz-Harken, Independence, Missouri; Bill McDonald, Lexington, Kentucky; John M. Richardson, Wilson, North Carolina; Ryan Starr, Milligan College, Tennessee; and Sharon Watkins, Indianapolis, Indiana.

Douglas Foster, Abilene, Texas, is coordinator for the Churches of Christ. Representatives this year included Albert Acosta, Abilene, Texas; Claire Davidson Frederick, Mt. Juliet, Tennessee; Gary Holloway, Nashville, Tennessee; D'Esta Love, Malibu, California; Jerry A. Taylor, Abilene, Texas; and Eric Wilson, Columbia, Missouri.