

Update on Christian Unity – May, 2009

Dear Friends of Christian Unity,

These past months have been an amazingly busy and rewarding (though sometimes difficult) time in my life and work as ecumenical officer for the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). And that has also been my experience of the life of the ecumenical movement.

It is a time of major transition within most ecumenical organizations and arenas -- not simply because of the tough situation that all of us are facing in terms of the turbulent financial picture these past months, but also in terms of seeking to find clear direction for the future that speaks to the realities of the challenges that the churches are facing in our society and our world:

- The World Council of Churches will be calling a new General Secretary at its Central Committee this coming August as it looks to a new era in its life and service to the ecumenical movement (http://www.oikoumene.org/en/news/news-management/eng/a/browse/2/article/1722/search-committee-for-a-ne.html?tx_ttnews%5Bwords%5D=central%20committee%20008&cHash=fd3b5cd844).
- The National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA is finding new vitality in its programming and relationships with its member communions after a period of financial decline and cutting of staff (http://www.nccusa.org/about/about_ncc.htm).
- Churches Uniting in Christ is in a two-year period of “prayerful discernment” about its future, especially around the issues of combating racism in the church and in our society (http://www.cuicinfo.org/pdf/cuic_april_09.pdf).

- Christian Churches Together has identified several new opportunities for its work in the areas of overcoming domestic poverty and evangelization
(http://www.christianchurchestogether.org/newsletter/pdf/newsletter_vol3no2.pdf).

In recent months the Council on Christian Unity has been involved in developing several significant congregational resources for use in your own local programming and witness to our unity as followers of Jesus Christ. Especially, I hope you will join in the "**Great Communion Celebration**" of the 200th anniversary of the bicentennial of Thomas Campbell's *Declaration and Address* that is planned for October 4, 2009 across the Stone-Campbell family of churches
(<http://www.greatcommunion.org/>).

I hope many of you will be able to attend the **10th Joe A. and Nancy Vaughn Stalcup Lecture on Christian Unity** that is taking place on June 14, 2009, at 3:00 pm at East Dallas Christian Church in Dallas, Texas. The speaker for this event will be **John H. Thomas**, the General Minister and President of the United Church of Christ, who has offered creative and significant leadership to the ecumenical movement for several years both here in the US and internationally
(<http://www.disciples.org/ccu/PDF/StalcupLecturelogo.pdf>).

For those of you who will be attending the **Disciples General Assembly in Indianapolis** this summer, let me remind you about the **special dinner on August 1** that is co-sponsored by the Council on Christian Unity and the Disciples of Christ Historical Society to celebrate our history as Disciples as a movement for unity and wholeness in a fragmented world. **Michael Kinnamon**, General Secretary of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA, will

be our featured speaker for this 25th Peter Ainslie Lecture on Christian Unity (*for information on ordering tickets, go to:*
<http://www.disciples.org/ccu/PDF/CCUDinner2009.pdf>).

Busy. Rewarding. Challenging. And sometimes difficult.

These words pretty well sum up how I would describe the ecumenical venture, and adventure, in these times. I continue to give thanks to God for the opportunity to be a part of this movement that stands at the core of who we are as Disciples of Christ – and thanks for your continued support and our partnership in this ministry of unity.

With best wishes,

Robert