

TITLE: Report of the Council on Christian Unity

ORIGIN: Robert K. Welsh, President

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

The Council on Christian Unity submits this report on its program and activities for the period from February 2014 – March 1, 2015.

Major developments and highlights in our work and ministry this past year:

As I review the work and ministry of the CCU over the past year, there are several significant highlights and new initiatives that have given direction our life as a general ministry as we seek to live out our mission in relation to congregations, regions and other general ministries “to encourage their partnership in our church’s efforts in the quest for the unity of all Christians as a sign of God’s love for the world”:

1. Continued to give major energy and effort to work on the Identity Initiative of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) , especially in relation to preparing congregational resource materials in English, French, Korean and Spanish (all resources have been posted on the Disciples website under “Our Identity”).
2. Giving leadership to planning and preparations for the 2015 General Assembly:
 - a. Celebrating the 25th Anniversary of our Disciples-UCC Ecumenical Partnership
 - b. Involvement in developing “learning tracks” on (1) the Global and Ecumenical Church; and (2) Seeking Justice.
 - c. Joining again with the Division of Overseas Ministries in a “Celebration of Unity and Global Witness” (with key focus on launching a Middle East Initiative) – with the speaker for our dinner: Rt. Rev. Munib Younan, Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land.
3. Representing the General Cabinet on a “Mission Council Task Force” that has worked Sharon Watkins in developing the concept/proposal of “**Mission First!**” for action at the 2015 meeting of the General Board.
4. As a member of the Executive Committee of Churches Uniting in Christ (CUIC), I helped to plan the meeting of CUIC’s Coordinating Council in December, 2014, with a major focus on racial and social justice issues as key elements in our quest for visible unity.

5. Delivered the keynote addresses to “Ministers’ Gathering” at the Kentucky and Capital Area Regional Assemblies on the topic, “*The World is Too Strong for a Divided Church*,” and led workshops at those events highlighting our Identity Initiative.

6. As co-secretary of our International Commission for Dialogue between Disciples of Christ and the Roman Catholic Church, I planned and helped to organize our second session of our fifth phase of dialogue (2013-2018) on the theme “Christians: Formed and Transformed by the Eucharist” that took place in Rome, Italy, in June, and prepared the June 2015 session at Bethany, West Virginia.

7. Led three workshops on Disciples Identity at the NAPAD Convocation in Chicago in July, 2014.

8. Attended the Pepperdine Scholars Conference in May 2014 and the North American Convention of Christian Churches in Indianapolis in July 2014, to share in panel on *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* within the Stone-Campbell tradition.

9. Participated and gave leadership to the Stone-Campbell National Dialogue meeting in Abilene, Texas in October, 2014, on the topic of “*New Church Establishment and the Emergent Church*.”

10. As General Secretary of the Disciples Ecumenical Consultative Council (DECC), I attended the Annual Meeting of the Conference of Secretaries of Christian World Communions in Amersfoort, Netherlands in November 2014.

11. Gave major leadership to the preparations for an International Consultation on Believers Baptism that took place in Kingston, Jamaica on January 7-11, 2015, gathering representatives from the Baptist, Church of the Brethren, Mennonites, Pentecostal, Disciples, and Christian Churches/Churches of Christ.

12. Represented the Disciples at the annual meeting of Christian Churches Together in the USA in Houston, Texas, on February 11-13, 2015, to explore the topic of the immigrant communities’ impact in changing religious life in North America.

13. And finally, at the November 2015 meeting of the CCU Board, upon my recommendation, the decision was taken to launch a search process in early 2015 to name a “President-Elect” for the CCU in mid-2015, who would then have a significant time of overlap with me for some basic orientation to the work and involvements of the CCU, and to arrange for introductions with major leaders in the ecumenical movement. At the time of my retirement in 2016, that person will then become the next President of the CCU.

Recommended Action:

The General Board receives the report from the Council on Christian Unity and forwards the report to the 2015 General Assembly for consideration and discussion.