

Task Force to Coordinate Ecumenical and Interreligious Work
December 2, 2019
Zoom meeting

MEMBERS AND STAFF PRESENT: David Simmons; Jaime Briceño; Sharon Alexander; Walter Baer; Kate Bellam; Luz Montes; Bill Franklin, chair; Denise Yarbrough, Vice Chair; Lucinda Mosher, Technology Officer; Marisa Tabizon Thompson, Secretary; Margaret Rose; Scott Hayashi; Richard Mammana; Chuck Robertson

MEMBERS ABSENT: Eugene Sutton

OPENING: The meeting was opened in a prayer at 2pm EST by +Bill Franklin.

MINUTES AND AGENDA: The September 29, 2019, minutes were approved as submitted by a unanimous vote. The agenda for this meeting was unanimously approved as proposed.

IN-PERSON MEETING: The chair was able to secure funds for an in-person meeting. It is scheduled for noon on Thursday, May 14, 2020, to noon on Saturday, May 16, 2020, at the Maritime Conference Center in Linthicum Heights, Maryland. A call to meeting will come from Patrick Haizel in March.

STAFF UPDATES:

Richard, Chuck, Margaret –

- ARCUSA meets in two weeks and will focus on reconciliation in many forms and spaces.
- Meetings with the Lutherans have focused on the orderly exchange of pastors/priests, and climate change.
- The Presbyterian-Episcopal dialogue is moving forward with new energy.
- The Moravian coordinating committee is also experiencing renewed energy. A Moravian/Lutheran/Episcopal meeting will happen soon to further those discussions.
- There was a TEC-UMC meeting in Boston this Fall. There is work on talking points for bishops, intentional regional work and gathering in New England, and videos on the extranet.
- Chuck was in Sri Lanka and Hong Kong. The Presiding Bishop was struck by what it means to be Christian in a true minority setting. There was a focus on the necessary collaboration and commitment to ecumenism and interfaith opportunities. There is a need for stories to be told and the images to permeate the minds of the bishops.
- Much of the work in DC and on the Hill is focused on helping people understand the value of working together, especially strategically, and effort has been put into joining other religious groups with shared platforms and values.
- The World Council of Churches meeting for Interreligious officers from member churches in Wales was attended by representatives from a good/broad geographic range. The discussions were similar to those in Sri Lanka. The next World Council of Churches 11th Assembly, which includes delegates from 330 member churches, is scheduled for Germany in 2021.
- The Christian-Jewish dialogue meets in Pittsburgh later this week.
- The Alliance of Virtue meeting is coming up.
- There is a great deal of work being done, on our own and with others, in the UN. Of special concern are issues around environmentalism and creation care.
- EDEIO and NWCU will be meeting at the same time in Houston, March 23-26, 2020. There is excitement around the mutual gathering.

SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS

1. General Convention, structure, and governance (David Simmons, chair):

SCSGCC will start reviewing resolutions this summer.

Major projects are focused on potential legislation at General Convention on the UMC, ELCA, and ELCA/ACC/TEC/ELCIC relationships.

- Documents related to ELCA/ACC/TEC/ELCIC talks are on the extranet. Please review and get comments to Sharon. There is a need for clear education of deputies. There was the question of adding this to the consent calendar. However, Chuck is concerned that this is not a slam dunk. Some people have issues with the original Call to Common Mission, there are concerns around the diaconate, etc.
- It was reported that the ELCA now includes the diaconate as an ordained order.
- UMC discussions – The discussions between TEC and UMC will continue, but at this point, we need to wait and see what happens at the UMC General Conference in early 2020 before creating definitive next steps. The thought is that the problem will not be in writing the resolution but in how people will vote. The main issues at play are around class, human sexuality, and sacramental things.

2. Theology (Denise Yarbrough, chair):

Topics under discussion include the confluence of interreligious work with issues of intersectionality, anti-Semitism work (perhaps with consultation from the Anti-Defamation League), and various statement updates. For the May meetings, this subcommittee will prepare two statements, one on anti-Semitism and one on inter-religious relations. See the section further down for related statements and websites.

3. Anglican Communion, the Convocation of Churches in Europe, & related (Eugene Sutton, chair; Walter Baer, reporting)

- On the extranet is the current memorandum of understanding with the Church of Sweden. It is not quite as solid or complete as originally thought, and additional clarity, especially around the orderly exchange of clergy, will inform other agreements.
- The dialogue with the Bavarian Church is continuing and is at a point when it needs to be formalized beyond the ad hoc operation. There are questions around who represents TEC in the discussions as well as the timeline. In preparation for May, this body is asked to look at the document so that we might be able to come to agreement on something while together.
- The Committee of Anglican Bishops in Europe is experiencing growth and growing pains as different entities jockey for leadership.

4. United Methodist Church and other bi-lateral discussions (Scott Hayashi):

The primary focus of this subcommittee is the UMC-TEC work. A local joint gathering is planned in Utah that might serve as a model for other areas. The big questions at play, in addition to those noted by staff above, are around what the UMC will look like after their 2020 convention. Will they separate, split, or something else? Additionally, one issue is that many people did not know what was in the UMC Book of Discipline when the discussion and vote occurred in TEC, especially around human sexuality. *See related websites below.

ADDITIONAL DISCUSSION:

In this work, we discussed the need to frame the efforts as critical to the efforts for larger unity in and of the world. This work is not just for us but for the sake of world relations.
Going into General Convention, we need to have an educational strategy for this work.

We also talked about the idea of this group becoming more focused on advocacy rather than a document group.

FUTURE MEETINGS:

It was agreed that plenary meetings via Zoom will be scheduled to occur in February and April. Additionally, we are set to meet in person in May, 2020.

WEBSITES AND ARTICLES REFERENCED:

<https://umcnex.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/UMCNEXT-PROPOSAL-OVERVIEW.pdf>
<https://religionnews.com/2019/08/15/a-united-methodist-group-proposes-a-denominational-breakup/>
<https://religionnews.com/2019/09/19/united-methodists-float-plans-to-split-denomination-after-lgbtq-vote/>
<https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2019-11/godsunfailingwordweb.pdf>
<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/11/14/opinion/college-israel-anti-semitism.html>
<http://nwc.org/>
<https://episcopalchurch.org/anglican-roman-catholic-dialogue>
<https://www.oikoumene.org/en/about-us/organizational-structure/assembly/karlsruhe>

CLOSING PRAYER

Offered by Margaret Rose and focused on Advent

The meeting ended at 3:37 Eastern time.

Committee assignments/Requests:

General Convention

David Simmons, Chair
Sharon Alexander
Marisa Tabizon Thompson

Theology

Denise Yarbrough, Chair
Lucinda Mosher
Marisa Tabizon Thompson

UMC/Bilateral Work

Sharon Alexander
David Simmons
Denise Yarbrough
Scott Hayashi, Chair
Kate Bellam
Walter Baer

Anglican Communion and Europe

Lucinda Mosher
Walter Baer
Eugene Sutton, Chair
Jaime Briceño

ADDITIONAL NOTES AND REFERENCES:

Hungarian Reformed Church in America:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hungarian_Reformed_Church_in_America
<http://anglicanhistory.org/usa/misc/nanassy1922.pdf>

Anglican/Presbyterian Dialogue: http://anglicanhistory.org/usa/misc/presbyterian_episcopal1896.pdf
Toward Our Mutual Flourishing by Lucinda Mosher:
<https://www.peterlang.com/abstract/title/22143?rskey=CGbcNL&result=2>

EMM – Episcopal Migration Ministries

EDEIO – Episcopal Diocesan Ecumenical and Religious Officers

Methodist-Episcopal dialogue and resources: <http://umc-tec.org>

Anglican-Roman Catholic Theological Consultation in the USA (ARCUSA): <http://archusa.church>

Lutheran-Episcopal Coordinating Committee: <http://lutheran-episcopal.org>

Moravian-Episcopal Coordinating Committee: <http://moravian-episcopal.org>

CUIC: Churches Uniting in Christ