

**Minutes of the Standing Commission on
Ecumenical and Inter-religious Relations**

Oct. 3 and 4, 2007

Atlanta, Georgia

Attending Members:

The Rev. Daniel S. Appleyard

The Rev. C.B. Baker

Dr. Roderick B. Dugliss

Ms. Janet R. Farmer

Ms. Elaine Francis

The Rt. Rev. Edwin F. Gulick

Mr. Richard Miller

The Rev. Deacon Lorraine Mills-Curran

The Rt. Rev. Pierre Whalon

Ex Officio Members Attending:

Dr. Thomas C. Ferguson, Associate Deputy for Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations

The Rev. Dr. Gwynne Guibord, Theological Consultant

The Rev. Gregory Straub, Secretary of the General Convention

Regrets:

The Rev. Canon Tim Anderson, Executive Council Liaison

The Rev. Raynald S. Bonoan

The Rev. Samuel G. Candler, Special Representative, PHD

The Rt. Rev. C. Christopher Epting, Deputy for Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations

Ms. Kate Ketcham

The Rt. Rev. Alan Scarfe

The Rev. David Veal, EDEIO

Ms. Elizabeth Wendt

The Rev. Canon Dr. J. Robert Wright, Theological Consultant

ELCA Observer Michael Trice (acting)

Wednesday, October 3, 2007

Ted Gulick opened the meeting with Morning Prayer. Necessary introductions and “check-in” was completed. Attendance was noted as low and there was thoughtful discussion about the illness of several parties and employment barriers to participation by some members.

Administrative Matters

Gregory Straub was invited to present a one-page summary of important organizational matters for the committee’s functioning. Meeting policies and procedures were reviewed and the report distributed.

Tom Ferguson gave an extensive review of the reorganization of the Episcopal Church offices at “815.” SCEIR has been assigned a position in the new “Partnerships” Mission Center. Practical ministry consequences for these changes are still unclear.

Review of Anglican Communion Issues

Pierre Whalon gave a detailed overview of the recent House of Bishops meeting with the Archbishop of Canterbury. He indicated the meeting was a “wrenching face-to-face experience of how our way of life affects others.” He expressed satisfaction that the House of Bishops actions appear to have allowed the communion to avoid a schism, and discussed various ecumenical dialogs which would benefit from this circumstance.

Moravian Church

Rod Dugliss assisted the committee to review the 14th draft of the document allowing full communion with the Moravian Church. The document has received substantial review in the Moravian Church. Rod noted five significant changes from the draft considered at our last meeting, primarily concerning issues related to the Moravians’ concern about the nature of oversight as “conferential,” and lingering issues concerning the reconciliation of diaconal ministries given that Moravian deacons regularly consecrate the eucharist.

Pierre Whalon expressed concern about ecumenical implications of the document in Europe, given that the Church of England’s dialog with the Moravians faltered on issues of historic episcopacy, in the “Fetter Lane” discussions. Tom Ferguson indicated that these issues are deemed by Robert Wright to be resolved by the ceremonial actions called for in the document, which call for a “clear and visible sign” of historic episcopate when Episcopal bishops lay hands on Moravian bishops (while receiving in a reciprocal action the Episcopal gifts of the Moravian tradition). Rod indicated that persons involved in the Fetter Lane discussions who had reviewed our draft document felt that the agreement proposed had resolved problematic issues. Dan Appleyard suggested an accompanying glossary might be helpful for perfectly clear communication of the issues involved, and Pierre Whalon volunteered to assist in the drafting of the glossary.

Discussion then turned to the practical issues of assisting the General Convention to pass the resolution calling for implementation of the document, and the process of implementation itself. Janet Farmer urged consideration for those Episcopal communities living in geographical areas where Moravians are concentrated. Lori Mills-Curran noted the graciousness of the Moravian Church in going ahead with this agreement despite the fact that many Moravian clergy who have full authority to preside over the eucharist (deacons who have a “transitional diaconate” of several years, in Episcopal terms) will not be interchangeable under the agreement. Pierre Whalon noted the question of reconciliation of diaconal ministries remains open, since some of the primary gifts of the diaconate recently discerned in Episcopal theology are unaddressed in the document. (Rod noted those gifts had aroused interest in informal discussion with Moravians of his acquaintance.) Tom clarified technical issues concerning what divisions of the Moravian church will be covered by the agreement.

Pierre Whalon moved the following motion:

Resolved, the document *Finding Our Delight in the Lord: A Proposal for Full Communion Between the Episcopal Church; the Moravian Church, Northern Province; and the Moravian Church, Southern Province* be accepted by the

Standing Commission on Ecumenical and Inter-religious Relations for presentation to the 76th General Convention of the Episcopal Church.

Rod Dugliss seconded the motion and it was unanimously accepted. Rod noted that the process of bringing this dialog effort to fruition was an amazing personal journey, and the committee extended its thanks to Rod and to David Veal, for their outstanding efforts. The committee delegated Lori Mills-Curran to convey its special thanks and appreciation to David Veal, and its regret that his health precluded attendance at this meeting.

Dan Appleyard moved the following motion:

Resolved, that the Standing Commission on Ecumenical and Inter-Religious Relations commend its Moravian Dialog Team, in consultation with the Commission, to design a communications strategy and develop resources to assist both churches to receive *Finding Our Delight in the Lord*.

Elaine Francis seconded the motion and it was unanimously accepted.

The Philippine Independent Church (*Iglesia Independiente Filipina*) and the Old Catholic Churches of the Union of Utrecht

Tom Ferguson reported on TEC's involvement in a Globalization Project with these churches, indicating the three are creating a more formal system of intentional coordination. Project participants will soon meet at General Seminary for a theological seminar, holding a PIC/IPI- TEC coordinating council meeting as well. Tom emphasized TEC's need to become aware of the growing level of cooperation, and the potential of expanding this work to include Swedish Lutherans and the Mar Thoma Church. Tom participated, with Bp. W. Michie Klusmeyer, in an Old Catholic theological conference.

Pierre Whalon again affirmed his close ties with Old Catholics in Europe, and issues pertaining to overlapping jurisdictions. He noted that the Old Catholics are discussing in their communities the same issues TEC has concerning same-sex blessings, and are doing excellent theological work pertaining to it.

Pierre has recently been reappointed to the Anglican/Old Catholic International Coordinating Council. Pierre urged SCEIR to address more formally the Old Catholics' firm desire to coordinate ecumenical work, and their recommendation that we have joint dialogs and observers when we are in dialog with the same bodies. Rod Dugliss recommended sharing our materials concerning the Moravian dialog with them.

Pierre Whalon moved the following motion:

Resolved, that the Standing Commission on Ecumenical and Inter-Religious Relations request the Chair of the Standing Commission to communicate to the appropriate authority of the Old Catholic Churches of the Union of Utrecht those recent documents pertaining to our ecumenical dialog partners, especially those with whom the Episcopal Church is in or is

contemplating full communion; and directs future Standing Commissions and the Office of Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations to continue appropriate communication efforts in future; and invites regular participation in our deliberations by an observer of the Old Catholic Churches.

Rod Dugliss seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously. Ted Gulick indicated that he would consult with Pierre on precise steps for prompt implementation of the resolution.

National Council of Churches

Tom Ferguson reported on major changes being undertaken by the National Council of Churches. He indicated that financial concerns have necessitated a staff reduction of 50 per cent. Some of the program work of the NCC (such as Church World Service) are actually underwritten by denominational funding, and will not be affected. An excellent new General Secretary has been named, Michael Kinnamon. Alice Webley is our representative to the NCC, Ted Gulick suggested we invite Alice to report back to SCEIR, and Richard Miller will do so. Tom gave an extensive overview of the development of the NCC, noting that Kinnamon's appointment may indicate the organization's desire to recommit to the cause of Christian unity as its top priority.

Gwynne Guibord then reported on the National Council of Churches Interfaith Commission, noting changes in personnel. Gwynne noted progress in creating a Muslim/Christian Dialog Table for the National Council of Churches, parallel to the long-standing Jewish-Christian Dialog Table. Gwynne had profitably offered a model for organization she had utilized in Los Angeles. She noted a desire to have a similar dialog table for Buddhist-Christian dialog as well. She reported progress in the development of an Interfaith Toolkit for member communions of the NCC, and noted some growing concern about the impact of Christian Zionism on interfaith dialog.

In a related development, Tom Ferguson noted that Gwynne Guibord had, in response to the request of the Evangelical Lutheran Church through Michael Trice, been appointed to be our liaison to the ELCA-Muslim dialog team. Ted Gulick indicated the budget was sufficient to enable Gwynne to participate in that effort.

Episcopal Diocesan Ecumenical and Interfaith Officers (EDEIO)

Gwynne and Tom then reported on progress in EDEIO's work. They noted that a newsletter has been re-launched, EDEIO participated in the national Workshop on Christian Unity, and that EDEIO has requested a grant from the Constable Fund to develop an on-line educational course for use by seminarians and new diocesan ecumenical officers. It is anticipated the course will be available in the fall of 2008. There was discussion of SCEIR's responsibility to involve the ecumenical officers in educational efforts concerning the Moravian and Methodist dialogs.

Network for Interfaith Concerns (NIFCON)

Pierre Whalon reported that he is now officially reappointed to this international Anglican ecumenical body. Pierre noted that a document detailing the Anglican rationale for interfaith work “Generous Love,” had been circulated to participants at a recent NIFCON meeting in Nigeria, and new guidelines for local interfaith dialog were welcomed by that group. Pierre has provided that to our interfaith team.

The day’s work was closed with evening prayer led by Elaine Francis.

Thursday, October 4, 2007

The meeting opened with Morning Prayer led by Pierre Whalon.

United Methodist Church

Tom Ferguson reported on the dialog with the Methodist Church. The dialog is a turning point with two main tasks ahead: spreading the dialog results throughout the church, and discerning the next steps in SCEIR’s role of guidance and oversight for the dialog team. A study guide has been prepared and issued to EDEIO’s and the bishops. Some local efforts exist in the dioceses of Connecticut, Mississippi, Southeast Florida, and Wisconsin. Rod Dugliss noted that he desired to facilitate the Methodist/Episcopal deacon dialog, and Gwynne Guibord, Janet Farmer and Ted Gulick indicated they had made some local efforts to arrange for celebrations in their areas. Janet Farmer noted the existence of a Methodist/Episcopal Church in Buena Vista, CO.

Tom indicated that he had followed up on the concern Ted had articulated at our last meeting concerning the possibility that gays could be excluded by local pastors, in the Methodist Church, from church membership. Tom indicated that discussion is on-going concerning this event, and his counterpart has filed a brief against the action taken, in an internal Methodist judicial proceeding now pending. Tom indicated the next meeting will be in London to consult with Church of England personnel who have been working on a similar dialog in Britain, seeking organic union of the two bodies. Tom noted that some complications have arisen in the British dialog, concerning Methodist acceptance of bishops and the Church of England’s lingering failure to open all leadership roles of the church to women. He did note that there was great activity at the local level, since the Church of England allows for “local ecumenical partnerships” without organic union. Tom urged us to consider what steps SCEIR should next take, since the benefits of this dialog go beyond the obvious ones. He noted the Anglican Communion’s satisfaction with our work in this area.

Discussion as to next steps followed. Tom indicated reviewers were requested by Michael Trice for the Lutheran/Methodist dialog draft document, and Lori Mills-Curran volunteered. Alan Scarfe was also felt to be a suitable reviewer and Tom will ask him. A discussion followed concerning the interplay between the issues of racism and this dialog, since lingering historically-rooted concerns about racism in mainline churches have affected the CUIC efforts. Pierre encouraged the dialog team to raise the issue of racism with the UMC team, to see how they are addressing the issues we are attempting

to address in our own denominational efforts. Tom will continue to represent the Episcopal Church on the dialog team, and anticipated a long process towards completion, because of the size of the body involved. Tom and Janet will consider what if any interim reports would be useful to the efforts of the dialog team. Pierre indicated his deep satisfaction, shared by others, that progress was being made on healing an avoidable rift between two such closely related bodies.

Interfaith Theological Statement

An extensive discussion of the SCIR's draft statement on the theology motivating interreligious dialog followed. Dan Appleyard led the discussion, indicating that the draft is proceeding well, with a section on soteriology and Christology not yet available for review. The document, expected to be about ten pages, and accompanied by a summary statement and an enabling resolution, will be presented to General Convention in 2009. Dan detailed the consultative process by which the document has been formulated.

Pierre Whalon expressed concern about the summary of Richard Hooker's theology found in the document, and agreed to draft an alternative statement clarifying Hooker's understanding of reason. The drafting committee welcomed Pierre's assistance. Dan indicated the need to plan in advance for the educational process by which the deputies to Convention will be prepared for the 2009 convention. Ted indicated the urgency of the project, indicating the need to have a policy in hand in the event of another 9/11 emergency. SCEIR commended the drafting group on their skill.

ELCA

Tom Ferguson gave an overview of recent developments in the Lutheran Church. He noted the ELCA is addressing similar questions of human sexuality in their internal processes, and is producing a statement concerning these issues. The ELCA extended full communion to some communities of Moravians in isolated areas. Rod Dugliss noted that SCEIR needed to monitor presbyterally ordained ELCA clergy, and Tom indicated that the ELCA can identify them.

World Council of Churches

Tom Ferguson noted the need to begin to plan the formal TEC review of the document "Nature and Mission of the Church." Reviewers were needed and Rod Dugliss volunteered. Ted suggested asking Bp. Tom Breidenthal, and will ask him. Dan Appleyard will also read the document. Rod noted two tasks lie ahead: critiquing the document and planning how it will be commended to TEC. Ted will provide Rod with an introduction to Tom Breidenthal.

Ecumenical Implications of Anglican Communion Issues

Ted Gulick gave an extensive overview, noting that the Archbishop of Canterbury has indicated the issues currently facing the Anglican Communion are primarily those of ecclesiology. Ted noted that ecumenical partners are watching with interest, and some concern. Ted discussed in detail the concern about "roaming" bishops, and summarized the issue as whether autocephalous churches could survive globalization and the age of instant communication. Ted indicated the possibility that guiding principles were needed

in a globalized church, but indicated his preference for a *koinoinia* ecclesiology, instead of concepts drawn from the 1662 Prayer Book.

Administrative Planning for Blue Book and Future Work Assignments

Tom Ferguson directed the SCEIR to a detailed discussion of the Blue Book Preparation for the 2009 General Convention. The three areas of concern (and the personnel who will take responsibility for the report section referenced) will be:

- 1) Items requiring action from GC:
 - a. Moravian Full Communion Proposal – Rod Dugliss
 - b. Interfaith Statement – Gwynne Guibord and Dan Appleyard
 - c. Response to WCC statement “Nature and Mission of Church” – Rod Dugliss
 - d. Resolution concerning CUIC efforts – CB Baker and Richard Miller
 - e. Resolution for Commendation of Methodist dialog work – Janet Farmer and Richard Miller
- 2) A report on items referred from GC in 2006:
 - a. Report on the GC resolution concerning the Middle East conflict – Chris Epting
 - b. Report on membership in CCT (Christian Churches Together)
- 3) Reports concerning on-going mandates:
 - a. PCUSA report – Chris Epting
 - b. IARCCUM report – Ted Gulick
 - c. ELCA bilateral status report – Tom Ferguson
 - d. IFI/PIC bilateral status report – Staff/Ray Bonoan
 - e. WCC/NCC report – Alice Webley and staff

There followed a general question and answer session for staff. Ted urged staff to communicate SCEIR’s satisfaction at the appointment of Michael Kinnemon to the leadership of the WCC. The meeting ended with evening prayer and prayers for safe travel.

Respectfully submitted,

The Rev. Deacon Lori Mills-Curran