

**Minutes of the Standing Commission on
Ecumenical and Inter-religious Relations**
October 2008
New York, New York

Attending Members:

The Rev. Daniel S. Appleyard
 The Rev. C.B. Baker
 Dr. Roderick B. Dugliss
 The Rt. Rev. Philip Duncan
 Ms. Janet R. Farmer
 Ms. Elaine Francis
 The Rt. Rev. Edwin F. Gulick
 Mr. Richard Miller
 The Rev. Deacon Lorraine Mills-Curran (Lori)
 Ms. Cecily Sawyer-Harmon
 The Rt. Rev. Alan Scarfe
 Ms. Elizabeth Wendt
 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. Canon Tim Anderson, Executive Council Liaison
 The Rt. Rev. C. Christopher Epting, Deputy for Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations
 The Rev. Susan Gaumer, Provincial Coordinator for EDEIO
 The Rev. Canon Dr. J. Robert Wright, Theological Consultant
 The Rev. Samuel G. Candler, Special Representative, PHD

Tuesday, Oct. 7, 2008

Chris Epting opened the meeting with Morning Prayer at 9:10. Necessary introductions were completed. The group welcomed new members Susan Gaumer and Cecily Sawyer-Harmon, and noted the resignation of Ray Bonoan. After a motion by Richard Miller, seconded by Susan Gaumer, the minutes from last session were approved. Chris gave an overview of the Blue Book process.

Review of Lambeth Conference

An extensive review of the Lambeth Conference followed. Ted indicated that the experience was one of the more profoundly moving of his Christian life. He lauded the Indaba process and emphasized the fidelity with which participants engaged in adaptive work, rather than searching for a technical fix. Alan Scarfe indicated he felt a new engagement with catholicity in our communion. While there was no willingness on the part of many in the global community to engage in discussion concerning the Episcopal Church's witness to the gay and lesbian community, he felt all participants emerged with a much clearer understanding of the 21st century global church. Philip Duncan noted that other provinces often had limited understanding of how the Episcopal Church functions

and tended to superimpose their structures on us, while we had little understanding of how we affected them. He was deeply touched by the details of other bishops' challenges. Pierre Whalon indicated that the bible study methods added greatly to the process, and detailed how the Episcopal church participants were greatly affected by a deepened understanding of how linked we are to other parts of the communion. Pierre felt it likely that Canterbury will become much more the center of a globalized communion than previously: "The Anglican Communion is finally being born." In sum, the bishops' experience was scripture-rooted, enlightening, and convicting.

Chris Epting summarized ecumenical issues at Lambeth by noting that all full communion partners were represented and engrossed in the process engaging in mutual admonition and affirmation. Their main concern was ecclesiology: *i.e.*, who speaks for the Anglican Communion? A small meeting occurred with Cardinal Kaspar, who indicated his eagerness the Anglican Communion remain intact. There was a disappointing lack of participation by interfaith representatives. Ted noted women bishops were better received than in 1998. Ted also noted the proposed covenant requires much more theological clarification before it can be adopted. Pierre noted that the bishops who did not attend Lambeth (perhaps 150, some of whom attended the alternative conference) are united in what they oppose, but not in what they support.

The group adjourned for lunch at 11:50.

International Concerns

Pierre Whalon reported on the recent Network for Interfaith Concerns' (NIFCON) meeting. The organization is responsible for the drafting of "Generous Love," and discusses how to present that document to Lambeth. Pierre also noted some preliminary progress has been made by Bp. John Chane of the Center for Global Reconciliation and Justice in Washington, D.C., concerning an international discussion of the misuse of eschatological theory to excuse violence.

Pierre noted that the Anglican/Old Catholic consultative Council needed a new representative, and urged closer Episcopal/Old Catholic cooperation. He also explained how he had recently been involved with Roman Catholic clergy to provide refugee assistance to certain Iraqi refugees to France, and was one of several ecumenical clergy to greet the Pope in France on his recent visit there. Pierre indicated his support for an ecumenical province and a coordinated strategy for evangelism in Europe.

Tom noted that the Presiding Bishop went to Sweden for the 50th anniversary of the ordination of women in the Church of Sweden.

Blue Book Preparation

A preliminary discussion clarified precisely which resolutions from GC 2006 required the committee's response. A response will be needed to communicate the committee's awareness of and faithfulness to budgetary concerns. Chris will also prepare a comment on how our committee expresses the Executive Council's priorities for the triennium in its work.

The committee's work concerning the Moravian Church's ecumenical agreement will be presented to General Convention 09 and Philip indicated the importance of good explanatory materials. Cecily is seeking a seat on the cognate committee, which will assist in communications. An executive summary and fact sheet are being prepared, as well as the resolution and Blue Book report.

Dan Appleyard reported concerning the interreligious statement. The draft presented has been sent to Ian Markham, Claire Amos, Ian Douglas, Michael Trice and John Borelli asking them for comment as to whether they believe it expresses accurately the reasons why the TEC is called to uphold interfaith dialog. When these comments are reviewed, the final statement will be emailed to SCEIR members. No substantive changes are expected. The document has been reviewed with an eye to identifying potential conflicts with the Lambeth Indaba document and "Generous Love."

Ted Gulick praised the language of incarnation in the document. Dan Appleyard indicated the subcommittee's hope that the document could be understood by both liberals and conservatives. An intensive discussion followed concerning the specific wording of a resolution before the committee, in which the primary concern was claiming the integrity of the Christian commission, and the scriptural authority for the interfaith position indicated in the Interreligious Statement draft before the committee. After extensive discussion, the commission approved the text's language, subject to the review process outlined above. The final minor changes were left in the subcommittee's hands.

The following motion was moved by Richard Miller:

Resolved, that the Standing Commission on Ecumenical and Interreligious Relations approves in substance the draft "Theological Statement on Interreligious Relations," pending editorial changes by the authorized subcommittee which will submit a final draft electronically for their approval by November 30, 2008.

The resolution was seconded by Cecily and adopted by the Standing Commission.

Lori then moved and Philips Duncan seconded the motion approving the following language as the enabling resolution to be presented to General Convention in this matter:

Resolved, House of Deputies concurring, that the 76th General Convention of the Episcopal Church adopt the following statement as the foundation upon which it engages in interreligious dialogue; and be it further

Resolved, that this statement be commended to dioceses and congregations and shared with our ecumenical and interreligious partners.

The motion passed unanimously.

The Standing Commission noted with satisfaction its desire to approve an enabling resolution for General Convention authorizing the adoption of “Finding Our Delight in the Lord.”

Pierre Whalon proposed and Rod Dugliss seconded the following motion:

Resolved, the House of Bishops concurring, that the 76th General Convention of the Episcopal Church accept “Finding our Delight in the Lord” as set forth following as the basis for a relationship of full communion to be established between the Episcopal Church and the Northern and Southern Provinces of the Moravian Church; and be it further

Resolved, that Title I, Canon 20, Section 2 be amended to include the northern and Southern Provinces of the Moravian Church as churches in full communion with this Church.

Chris gave a brief report summarizing the changes at the Episcopal Church Center with the regionalization of several departments, with the goal of empowering collaborative leadership. This process of regionalization is not yet complete. Pierre indicated the desirability for pastoral sensitivity to employees as changes are made.

After clarification of certain administrative matters, the group adjourned at 4:55 for Eucharist at the seminary chapel.

Wednesday, Oct. 8

CB Baker opened the meeting with Morning Prayer at 9:15.

EDEIO

Susan Gaumer reported on the current functioning of EDEIO. A new monthly email newsletter has been started, edited by Liz Ring. More participation is needed at the national workshop. An introductory course in ecumenism is offered at the national workshop. Ted Gulick asked for an annual report to SCEIR on these meetings from EDEIO.

Lutheran Episcopal Coordinating Committee

Alan Scarfe reported on this coordinating committee that meets every nine months. Alan indicated that the committee provides guidance and oversight for the implementation of *Called to Common Mission*, but some questions remain as to the functioning of the committee’s authority. The committee spent significant time on the issue of *diakonia*, and produced an extensive paper on the matter. Philip, Gwynne and Rod expressed concern that interfaith work should be pursued ecumenically. Ted Gulick indicated the desirability of the House of Bishops receiving further educational efforts directed towards CCM.

Christian Churches Together

Chris Epting noted the continued progress of this fledgling organization. He noted the support of the Roman Catholic Church and several evangelical churches, and some concern by others that it will be constituted as a rival to the National Council of Churches. Gwynne noted the desire of some to have regional gatherings.

World Council of Churches - Part I

Chris noted that the WCC continues to struggle with funding. He noted there was a greater push for younger and lay voices on the council. Sarah Harte represents TEC, with Chris as back-up. The current work of the WCC is focusing on the document "The Nature and Mission of the Church," to be assessed later in this meeting of SCEIR.

National Council of Churches - Part I

Chris noted financial issues at the NCC as well, including reductions in staff and disappointment concerning donations from member churches. There has been a delay in the appointment of Liz Wendt to the NCC. Robert Wright indicated the desirability of supporting the NCC as a long-standing hope for coordinated common witness. Gwynne noted the importance of the NCC as a forum for Christian-Jewish and Christian-Muslim dialog, and SCEIR indicated the necessity of including a statement to that effect in the Blue Book.

The committee adjourned at 11:35 for Eucharist with the seminary community, reconvening at 1:35.

Gwynne then gave an extensive report on the NCC Interfaith Relations Commission. The NCC feels strongly that interfaith work should be done ecumenically. Tony Kireopoulos is now the NCC staffer for this work, and Diana Eck is chair. Al Moss and Gwynne are TEC's representatives. The primary goals at this time are the development of local outreach and education. This body wrote a response to "A Common Word," and will be developing a study guide and DVD for it, which will be distributed to NCC member churches. Gwynne expressed great concern about a film, "Obsession," which was distributed around election time in "swing states," with the apparent aim of inflating hostility towards Muslims. Gwynne will arrange a showing for SCEIR sometime during this meeting. Dan Appleyard suggested a formal committee response.

Philippine Independent Church/ Iglesia Filipina Independiente

Robert Wright reported on TEC's relationship with the Philippine Independent Church. (IFI). There are five million members in that country. TEC has had an historical relationship with another denomination in the Philippines, the Episcopal Church in the Philippines (ECP). There was at one time an intention that the IFI would be joined with the ECP, and they had a joint seminary. They are still in communion, but that effort has waned. IFI bishop Alberto Ramento, who was an great advocate for the poor, was brutally murdered under circumstances that cast suspicion on the Philippine government.

The IFI has recently developed a close relationship with the Old Catholics of the Union of Utrecht, with whom TEC works closely. A dialog has been initiated, and there is also

hope for participation by the Church of Sweden. IFI has accepted TEC's financial support for participating in this dialog, which has promise in an increasingly globalized world. The dialog committee has met in Utrecht, New York and Manila. Marsha Dutton of Ohio University is a committee member (as well as Robert), and is editing a collection of papers concerning their efforts. There may be a joint effort of these churches and the Church of England to memorialize Bp. Ramento on the calendar of saints.

Presbyterian Church

Tom reported on the current state of the bilateral dialog with the Presbyterian Church. He noted that after several disappointing attempts at attacking the primary dividing issue of *episcopate*, the decision has now been made not to walk away but to acknowledge in a joint statement the unity we do possess. The existence of a few prosperous local efforts make it clear that joint mission and witness is happening "around the edges" of our formal theological disagreements. Tom noted that a model for such a statement was found in the Church of England's agreement with the Evangelical Churches of Germany, (the Meissen documents), and that the Church of England allows for experimentation in joint mission and ministry at the local level in a way the Episcopal Church does not in its canons. A document has been prepared, and approved by the Presbyterians in June 2008. A resolution is needed for the Blue Book so General Convention may respond in kind.

SCEIR contemplated what objections might be raised to the resolution. The discussion indicated clearly that this statement does not institute interchangeability of clergy, only the acknowledgement that we have the same baptism, with the intention of holding the door open for greater future unity. Tom has developed a Fact Sheet and various educational efforts will be provided to deputies and bishops.

Pierre Whalon moved the following resolution:

Resolved, House of Deputies concurring, that the 76th General Convention adopt the following Agreement between the Episcopal Church and the Presbyterian Church (USA) and commend it to dioceses and congregations; and be it further

Resolved, that the 76th General Convention authorize a second round of dialogue to address the issues specified in this Agreement and report to the 77th General Convention on its progress.

Liz Wendt seconded the motion, and the motion was passed by the commission.

Anglican Orthodox Dialogues

Chris Epting reported that the main area of interest is the reception of international document *The Church of the True God*, which Chris hoped would be an area of discussion. He indicated there are some reservations in the Greek Orthodox church to pursuing these kinds of issues with TEC in the midst of the current international Anglican discussions. Robert Wright indicated that New York Episcopalians and Orthodox were planning a joint pilgrimage to Serbia.

Churches Uniting in Christ (CUIC) - Part I

CB Baker gave a comprehensive review of recent CUIC work. In summary, an incident occurred in which the head of an historic African-American denomination experienced an Episcopal clergyman's actions as racism. This led to a very painful gathering, at which a high-level committee was formed to address the issues. CB characterized the committee's subsequent work as "tough talk and plain language." The painful conclusion was that the Episcopal Church was experienced as a systematically racist church. It is commonly understood that these denominations started as a result of TEC's and other denominations' historical failure to allow black leadership. Thus, our recent articulation that their leadership's not being in the historic episcopate constitutes an impediment to reconciliation of ministries is experienced as disingenuous. Our antiracism efforts are not well known and are viewed as insufficient. Several efforts have been made to over the last two years or more to improve relations.

Whether this extremely difficult work will now progress is the current issue. SCEIR may reaffirm TEC's involvement in CUIC. Two new ecumenical officers in the AME and the AMEZ want to reengage with CUIC. Cecily noted that TEC needs these churches to make us whole, and expressed the desire to see the work go forward. A variety of ideas were discussed, with the intention of discovering what could in the terms of Alan Scarfe, "put it right." A eucharist of reconciliation presided over by the offended denomination was proposed. Richard Miller indicated that we should be at the table if they are willing to be. Pierre Whalon expressed a desire simply to kneel before them, and expressed the growing consensus of the group that we should continue to offer our sincere efforts to resolve our differences.

The meeting adjourned at 5:30 for evening prayer, and met again at 7:15 for a viewing of the preview for the film "Obsession." Gwynne and Dan commented on the film and coordinated a concerned discussion.

Thursday, Oct. 9

Sam Candler opened the meeting with Morning Prayer at 9:00.

CUIC – Part II

Resuming discussion of CUIC affairs, Ted Gulick proposed a comprehensive letter to CUIC, sent from Chris, himself and the Presiding Bishop, in which these issues will be discussed. The letter should include a description of TEC's historic commitment to CUIC as part of our anti-racism commitment, a description of the presenting incident, a description of our recent denominational efforts in anti-racism work, a "humble description of our current dilemma," and a statement of our continued commitment to this work. Tom clarified that a formal reauthorization by resolution of this work is not needed, but CB indicated the desirability of providing him with a resolution for the immediate work he faces at the next CUIC meeting in Baltimore. Chris will write the proposed letter in consultation with CB, and CB was charged to develop a resolution for SCEIR's consideration.

National Council of Churches – Part II

Gynne Guibord coordinated discussion on the desirability of creating a formal committee response to the film “Obsession.” Gwynne was charged with creating a resolution indicating SCEIR’s deep concern with the harmful mischaracterization of our Muslim brothers and sisters, for distribution to the Executive Council, the Committee on National Concerns and others.

World Council of Churches

Rod Dugliss reported on his assessment of the WCC document, “The Nature and Mission of the Church.” Ted thanked Rod for his work, and indicated the committee’s satisfaction with his comments. Rod will finalize his comments and forward them to Chris for Cathy Grieb’s review. Further discussion will follow.

Alan Scarfe moved the following motion, seconded by Phil Duncan:

Resolved, that SCEIR having at its meeting on November 8, 2008 commends the work of Rod Dugliss on “The Nature and Mission of the Church,” refers it to the World Council of Churches Faith and Order Commission and to our member of that commission.

The motion passed.

Rod Dugliss moved the following motion, seconded by Cecily Sawyer-Harmon:

Resolved, that the Standing Commission for Ecumenical and Interreligious Relations refers “The Nature and Mission of the Church,” and our response to it, to the House of Bishops Theology Commission for study and discussion.

The motion passed.

Roman Catholic Church

Chris Epting gave a brief summary of events, commending members interested in further details to the proposed Blue Book report.

Internal Resolutions and Further Blue Book Preparations

Concerning the film “Obsession,” Cecily Sawyer-Harmon moved the following resolution:

Resolved, that the Standing Commission on Ecumenical and Interreligious Relations voices its deep concern over the film “Obsession: Radical Islam’s War Against the West,” and its recent massive distribution of 28 million copies. The mischaracterization of Islam dehumanizes Muslims and ultimately all people of good will.

We acknowledge the right of people to express anger and pain at actions of inequity, injustice and hostility against them. Yet we denounce the temptation to violence and demonizing hatred.

In this era of religious and political polarizations, our integrity as people of faith implores us to speak against those who would divide us by fear, and would incite untruths and compels us to stand with those who hold cherished and common beliefs. As Christians, we are mandated not to bear false witness against our neighbor and love our neighbor as self.

Liz Wendt seconded the resolution, and the motion passed.

A general discussion of Blue Book concerns followed, with these actions notable:

1. United Methodists: SCEIR commends the work of the United Methodist bilateral dialog team, and authorized Tom to write a commending resolution for General Convention.
2. Moravian Church: Rod has prepared and we have already acted on needed resolutions. General Convention liturgy planners will be encouraged to include Moravian elements in the Convention Eucharists.
3. Interfaith Statement: Needed actions for General Convention have already been approved.
4. The SCEIR discussed in general our response to the various 2006 resolutions generally commended to standing commissions.

Concerning the CUIC concerns, CB Baker moved the following resolution:

Resolved, that the Standing Commission on Ecumenical and Interreligious Relations expresses profound regret at offense caused by the Episcopal Church, and asks forgiveness from Churches Uniting in Christ member churches, and be it further

Resolved, that the Standing Commission asks for dialog, conversation and assistance in understanding how we can move forward in addressing the fundamentally interrelated issues of racism and reconciliation of ministries.

Cecily Sawyer-Harmon seconded the motion and the resolution passed unanimously.

Further intensive discussion followed concerning Gwynne Guibord's suggestion that a formal resolution be offered confirming TEC's intention to pursue its interreligious dialog under the auspices of the National Council of Churches, principally its Jewish-Christian Dialogue group, and the National Muslim-Christian Initiative.

After discussion, it was confirmed that since TEC had already committed to this course of action, no formal resolution was needed. A more appropriate forum to communicate SCEIR's strong affirmation of this general principle was a sentence in the interfaith section of the Blue Book Report, which Gwynne was authorized to draft.

After a discussion of General Convention plans, likely new candidates for SCEIR, and expressions of deep satisfaction and thanks by the departing members of the commission for the opportunity to serve this uniquely congenial group, the meeting adjourned at 11:50 AM.

Respectfully submitted, with apologies for delay,

The Rev. Deacon Lori Mills-Curran