



2006 General Assembly  
National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA  
Church World Service  
November 7-9, Orlando, Florida



## General Assembly Opening Plenary

**November 7, 2006, 1:30 p.m.**

President Michael Livingston welcomed the delegates and guests to the General Assembly of the National Council of Churches and Church World Service.

Bishop Earl McCloud was introduced to report on the work of the General Assembly Planning Committee.

Bishop McCloud said the committee has done its best to make the Assembly a meaningful time and he encouraged participants to attend all sessions.

President Livingston called upon Dr. Eileen W. Lindner and other worship leaders to begin worship.

Members of the NCC delegation to the Middle East Council of Churches in Lebanon, and the CWS delegation to Israel and Palestine, led a litany to express their reaction to the trips and their concerns and reactions. They included: Rev. Michael Livingston, Mr. Thomas Swain, Rev. Ramon Hunt, and Dr. Antonios Kireopoulos (NCC) and Bishop Earl McCloud, Mr. David Weaver, Dr. Tyrone Pitts, Dr. Cheryl Dudley, and Bishop Ronald Cunningham (CWS)

## Bible Study on Revelation 22:1-2

David Waugh introduced Dr. Mary F. Foskett, who led a study of Revelation 18, 21 and 22. Delegates discussed the passages in table groups for 20 minutes. Michael Livingston recalled the Assembly to order after a 20-minute discussion.

President Livingston announced the appointment of the following committees:

The members of the Committee of Reference for New Business are:

Archbishop Vicken Aykazian, Chair  
Dr. Michael Kinnamon  
Dr. Barbara Brown Zikmund  
Mr. Dennis Frado  
Bishop Earl McCloud

President Livingston announced that Larry Pickens and Cheryl Wade will serve as parliamentarians for the plenary sessions of the General Assembly.

President Livingston called on Bishop Dimetri Kantzavelos, chair of the Nominations Committee, to read a list of proxies for the 2006 General Assembly. The proxies were:

Dr. Fahed Abu-Akel for Ms. Linda Valentine, Presbyterian Church USA  
Mrs. Rosetta J. Dunham for Dr. Barbara L. Shaw, AME Zion Church  
Rev. Dr. James Fenimore for Deborah Bass, United Methodist Church  
Rev. Dr. Arlene W. Gordon for Ms. Aimee Moiso, Presbyterian Church USA  
Very Rev. Nicholas Graff for Archbishop Demetrios, Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America  
Rev. Willie Israel for Dr. D. Wayne Burkette, Moravian Church in America  
Kristen Larsen for AlexToy, United Methodist Church

Rev. Edith Lenz for Ms. Angie Mabry Nauta, Reformed Church in America  
Rev. Carlos Malavé for Kent Winters-Hazelton, Presbyterian Church USA  
Rev. Frank McGrath for Rev. Herman Harmelink, International Council of Community Churches  
Rev. Paulette Mixon-Weller for Mr. Stanley Bhasker, Presbyterian Church USA  
Rev. Douglas Moss for Ms. Christine M. Laitner, Swedenborgian Church in North America  
Rev. Christopher Pierson for Mr. Paul Perez, United Methodist Church  
Mr. Jared Stahler for Ms. Hazel Steward, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America  
Ms. Becky Ullom for Mr. David Whitten, Church of the Brethren  
Rev. W. Douglas Mills for Bishop William B. Oden, United Methodist Church  
Lyle Hamilton for Motoe Yamada, United Methodist Church

**Bishop Kantzavelos moved to seat the proxies as listed. The motion was carried by unanimous voice vote.**

Bishop Kantzavelos said the Nomination Committee proposes the following persons for election by the General Assembly to serve for the remainder of the quadrennium:

Nominations for Delegates to the General Assembly:

Rev. Larry Batie, Christian Methodist Episcopal Church  
Rev. Dr. O'Neal Shyne, Jr., Christian Methodist Episcopal Church  
Linda Valentine, Presbyterian Church USA

Nominations for Interfaith Relations Committee Members:

Mr. Kevin C. Brown, International Council of Community Churches  
Rev. Dr. Gwynne Guibord, Episcopal Church

Nomination for Chairperson for Inclusiveness and Justice Standing Committee:

Ms. Joan Richardson, Presbyterian Church USA

Nominations for Church World Service Board of Directors

Mr. Robert Radke, Episcopal Church  
Rev. Earl D. Trent, Jr., Progressive National Baptist Convention

Nominations for Justice and Advocacy Commission Members:

Ms. Patricia Chapman, Presbyterian Church USA  
Dorothy Day, Friends General Conference  
Rev. Dr. Johnny B. Hill, Progressive National Baptist Convention

Nominations for Faith and Order Commission

Dr. Allen Callahan, Progressive National Baptist Convention  
Rev. Lyndon F. Harris, Episcopal Church  
Ms. Rachel Lyle, Episcopal Church  
Rev. Dr. John Mendez, Progressive National Baptist Convention  
Ben Richmond, Friends United Meeting

**Bishop Kantzavelos moved to approve the nominations. The motion was carried by unanimous voice vote.**

President Livingston presented the minutes of the 2005 General Assembly. **The motion to approve the Minutes of the 2005 General Assembly was carried unanimously by voice vote.**

## President's Report

President Livingston said his report was for information only. He noted that journalistic references to the Council as "NCC" omit the third C, leaving us open to the accusation that we are leaving Christ out. Even so, the work of the Commissions is the work of the Gospel. The Communications Commission is the Council's Gabriel, announcing the good news. The NCC responds to the earthly Jesus and the living Christ. We give good evidence of working together as a council, increasingly so as we hold one another accountable for the stewardship and ministry that is ours. The Executive Committee is an instrument of leadership. The NCC's relationship with Church World Service is strong and moving well beyond a tentative and wary beginning to mutual trust and interdependence. We are still approaching maturity in an increasingly dynamic environment. We have gifts to equip the saints for the work of ministry, to the measure of the full stature of Christ. It is time to put the "national" back in the national council of churches of Christ in the USA. As our influence wanes in our society and culture – once shaped and defined by religious norms but now shaped by values that prefer volume over substance – as war and disease ravage our bodies and chemical pollutants ravage the planet that is our home, as fragmentation divides the body of Christ, so much greater then is the need go hold on to one another for the sake of Christ. So much greater is the need to be a National Council of Churches.

Simple cooperation is not enough. Open lines of communication are not enough, cordial but inadequate to bear the weight of the word our nation and our citizens need to hear. Support is not enough. Being a National Council of Churches means that together we bear witness and stand and testify to become the exclamation points like the cross that is stabbed into the earth on Calvary. Our table is no longer sufficiently national, absent the full participation of our member communions. We need a strong representation from leaders of all the communions. We must engage our people and our communions in this work at every level.

This is not criticism. It is hope, a passionate desire that our nation and its people, its leaders, to hear a word they cannot ignore.

Pray together to the One God of Us All.

President Livingston said he was privileged to be a part of the investiture of the Rt. Rev. Katherine Jefferts Schori as Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church.

Michael said his presidency has seen many pastoral moments to attend to the spiritual health of our nation in the face of tragedy and loss. In such endeavors as the NCC's Joint Commission on the Just Rebuilding of the Gulf Coast, and Let Justice Roll, God is in our midst.

We have to face the challenges that confront us all, Michael said. The same elephants are in all our rooms. Respond to the God who hears and responds in mercy.

President Livingston thanked NCC General Secretary Bob Edgar "for his extraordinary gifts for ministry, his passion to eliminate poverty, and seek peace." He thanked the NCC staff for their work on behalf of member communions. He also expressed his "profound appreciation" for Church World Service. CWS offers tools of hope, blankets and water pump's and food and health kits. A difference is being made and we can be proud to have a hand and a heart in CWS's long ministry, 60 years and counting.

## Strategic Plan

**Note: the final version of the Strategic Plan can be accessed at [www.councilofchurches.org/pdfs/2007strategicplan.html](http://www.councilofchurches.org/pdfs/2007strategicplan.html)**

President Livingston said the Strategic Plan has been thoroughly reviewed by committee members, by representatives of member communions and by staff, and will be submitted to the General Assembly for final approval at this meeting. That does not mean that additional comments at this meeting will not be welcomed or valued. Comments at this session and subsequent sessions will be forwarded to the Strategic Plan Committee.

President Livingston introduced Dr. Michael Kinnamon, chair of the Strategic Plan Committee,

Dr. Kinnamon expressed his appreciation for the colleagues who worked on the plan. He offered the following general comments:

First General Comment: The theological foundation in the introduction, lines 8-49, should not be thought of “window dressing tacked on” but a shared vision of the unity we have that celebrates our diversity, our commitment to Jesus Christ, and our recognition that the way we now live – fragmented and timid far too often – must be changed. If we lose the theological vision that has given energy to the ecumenical movement, then we have no real reason for being.

Second General Comment: Strategic planning is often confused with restructuring, with which the NCC has considerable experience. This is not restructuring. It is a set of goals and strategies for a four or five year period, it is a limited-time plan. Part of successful planning, therefore, is naming the signs of the times – lines 53-105 – and identifying accurately the challenges we face – lines 107-171. We think you will find that all the elements of the plan flow from the challenges in this introduction

It is important to strengthen the relationship of member communions to one another. What makes this a council of the churches is the commitment these members have made to one another, not to some organization in New York. We believe as a committee that the building of relationships among the churches must be a top priority in the next period of the council's life. The expectations of membership are spelled out in lines 359-388.

The committee's hope is that these ties will strengthen mutual accountability and the participation of churches in the council, including financial participation – line 755 – and sets goals for increasing the percentage of the NCC budget that is funded by the churches – line 760.

A second element is institutional accountability. The plan seems to insure that the structure of the council is responsible to the churches. It calls for reducing the number of Governing Board meetings from three to two to allow for better preparation for each meeting – lines 585 ff. Ecumenical formation is an important part of the plan – lines 606-625 – as is regular strategic planning, line 640. The plan mandates accountability of the staff to the churches, from the General Secretary on out.

The committee also underscores how important it is to support the staff in their responsibility to the council, even when we don't like it.

The creation of a new position, Deputy General Secretary for Program, is designed to free the General Secretary to concentrate on other leadership responsibilities – line 692 ff.

In our judgment the NCC has a crucial role in furthering the whole ecumenical movement in the U.S., something we can do more effectively if we recover something like the Office of Ecumenical Networks.

The plan assumes a commitment to the NCC on the part of the Commissions, through the Governing Board.

The plan also invites the Governing Board to establish two additional Commissions, one for Mission and Evangelism and one for International Affairs lines 854-864.

Express the acceptability of the commissions to the NC through the GB.

Invited the GB to consider establishing two mission and evangelism, international, affairs, lines 854-864

Dr. Kinnamon said this council is not pro Democrat or pro Republican, it is Christian. The Strategic Planning Committee invites the churches to articulate together a vision of common life, of authentic human community, as an overarching goal for the coming years.

## **Church World Service Report**

John McCullough, the executive director of Church World Service, reported on the mission of the agency.

Church World Service's 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary affirms a tradition of help, a legacy of hope, and a celebration of what it has meant to millions of lives around the world and in the U.S.

Rev. McCullough described his recent visit with CROP leaders in Denver Area.

Our mission as Christians is to work together with partners to promote peace and justice around the world, he said. This has been a source for inspiration and purposeful living. CWS is working around the clock around the world to meet that challenge every day of the year.

Rev. McCullough described CWS initiatives in Moldova, the poorest country in Europe as measured by the consumer price index.

## **General Secretary's Report**

General Secretary Bob Edgar's video report was projected on a screen in the Assembly Hall.

## **Faith and Order**

The Rev. O.C. Edwards, Jr., chair of the Faith and Order Commission, reported the "birthday party" to be held in Oberlin, Ohio, July 19-23, 2007. The exciting program for its 50th anniversary celebration includes Dr. Martin Marty, a distinguished theologian, church scholar and Lutheran pastor; and, Rev. Dr. James Forbes, renowned preacher, theologian and Senior Minister of The Riverside Church in New York; have both been confirmed to speak at the celebratory event.

In addition, he announced the first ever Oikumene Film Festival that will invite persons of all ages to express their ideas about ecumenism through video or film. He introduced a film on the work of the Faith and Order Commission.

## **Introductions**

The Rev. Garland Pierce, associate general secretary of the National Council of Churches for Education and Leadership Ministries, introduced the Young Adult Stewards who are providing valuable logistical support for the General Assembly.

The senior stewards, returning from the 2005 General Assembly, are:

Shannon McDonald, African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, Philadelphia  
Shelley Varner, American Baptist Churches USA, Princeton, N.J.

Other stewards are:

James Blackman, Christian Methodist Episcopal Church, Mobile, Ala.  
Jared A. Carson, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Columbia, S.C.  
DeMay Marie Grunden, United Methodist Church, Kansas City, Mo.  
Sahra Harding, Episcopal Church, Omaha, Neb.  
Marissa Harris, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Philadelphia.  
Mark Stephen Huber, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Columbus, Ohio  
Becky A. Johnson, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Las Vegas, Nev.  
Julie Quello, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, St. Paul, Minn.

Callie J. Smith, United Methodist Church, Noblesville, Ind.  
Whitney E. Walton, United Methodist Church, DeWitt, Ark.

Bob Edgar introduced Clare Chapman who will become the NCC's Deputy General Secretary for Administration and Finance in January 2007. She succeeds Leora Landmesser, who died June 19, 2006.

Bob also introduced Claire McCurdy, the NCC's new assistant director of development, and Leslie Tune, assistant director of the NCC's Justice and Advocacy Commission.

## **November 8, 2006**

Opening worship was led by the Rev. Dr. Cliff Kirkpatrick, Stated Clerk of the Presbyterian Church (USA).

The Rev. Dr. Eileen Lindner introduced the Rev. Dr. Robert Franklin, a scholar-preacher, ethicist and educator, to lead the Bible study in the form of "Ecumenical Table Talk."

Rev. Dr. Robert Franklin made the following remarks:

There are four wounds that affect our nation, that affect our wounded heroes. The gospel offers social and spiritual transformation. We need social therapy, groups of people engaged in social transformation. As persons of faith, we must resist the temptation of people to allow us to become chaplains of social clubs. We are social therapists. We are, in the words of Martin Luther King, Jr., transformed nonconformists seeking a creative maladjustment of a transformed majority.

The four wounds that affect our nation:

1. Political wounds. Elections have become the political equivalent of root canal. We do little or nothing to bring healing, humility. What can religious leaders do to bring healing to our political community? What distinguishes the social witness of the church from the calculations of mere political hacks? Can Christians be patriots?
2. Economic wounds. Persistence of poverty in our nation is a moral scandal. The new poor in our country are children. This is something that makes Jesus mad. What two things should the church do to intensify the alleviation of policy? How do we awaken a nation that is in denial about the ravages of poverty?
3. The global religious wounds. We are all ugly Americans now. Much of American policy in Iraq has been arrogant and stupid.
4. The racial wound. W.E.B. Dubois – the problem of the country is the color line. Now lines. Race and racism are a part of the church. Why the movie Crash was America's best picture last year. We need a vision of the beloved community. The energy may be coming from the growing Latino and Asian churches. What can the church do to revive interest in racial reconciliation? What can we do to remind the church that we are not at war with Islam, that we are all children of Abraham?

Following Dr. Franklin's presentation, the General Assembly discussed the four wounds in table groups.

## **Statement**

**Dr. Michael Kinnamon asked for a point of to present a statement to the Assembly. He moved approval of the statement, and his motion was seconded from the floor.**

**After some discussion, the following statement was unanimously approved by voice vote:**

## **Statement from the General Assembly, November 7-9, 2006**

**Eliminating poverty is the great moral challenge of our era! This conviction has been central to the work of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA in recent years, including the Council's strong support for raising the minimum wage. Through its "Let Justice Roll Living Wage Campaign," the Council, in relationship with others, has advocated for an increase in the federal minimum wage (currently \$5.15 an hour) and – successfully! – for an increase in the state minimum wage in such places as Arkansas, Pennsylvania, West Virginia, North Carolina, and Michigan.**

**Thus, it is with a real sense of joy and thanksgiving that we, the delegates to the National Council of Churches and Church World Service 2006 General Assembly, note the results of minimum wage ballot initiatives. Voters in six more states – Arizona, Ohio, Missouri, Montana, Nevada, and Colorado – approved an increase in the minimum wage, acknowledging that such public policy is good for business as well as workers.**

**There is still much work to do. The federal minimum wage has not been raised since 1997 and now buys less than it did in 1950. Full-time workers earning \$5.15 an hour simply cannot provide a decent livelihood for their families. It may well be, however, that 2006 will prove to be a turning point in this struggle. And for this we say: Thanks be to God!**

General Secretary Bob Edgar said some 80 partners are working with us throughout the country to raise the minimum wage. He thanked the United Church of Christ for hosting Let Justice Roll in their offices in Cleveland.

**The Rev. John H. Thomas, General Minister and President of the United Church of Christ, moved that the General Assembly express its gratitude to The Rev. Dr. Paul H. Sherry, Let Justice Roll National Coordinator, for his continued work on the campaign to raise the minimum wage.**

The motion passed unanimously by voice vote.

Paul H. Sherry came in to the room to thank everyone "for a joint effort."

## **Membership and Ecclesial Relations Committee**

The Very Rev. Leonid Kishkovsky, chair, reported on behalf of the committee.

1. An application for membership in the National Council of Churches has been received from the Apostolic Catholic Church, founded in 1977. The committee will bring a recommendation to the General Assembly in a year.
2. The committee is planning for communion visitations between and among member communions and with the NCC. Planning is under way and will be ready for implementation in 2008.
3. The committee has a concern for the relational dimension in the vision statement in the Strategic Plan. One of the avenues for reflection will be a meeting of the committee with the ecumenical officers of member communions.
4. Christian Churches Together in USA. Founded with encouragement of NCC, the group is an effort to expand the table. It seems to some that its existence may endanger the NCC, but in fact the emergence of Christian churches together has not resulted in a diminishing of the NCC. Christian Churches Together will work parallel with NCC.

Bishop Thomas L. Hoyt, Jr., affirmed the committee and its outreach to other denominations. He said the matter of what it means to visit these communions is too urgent to wait until 2008. Visits need to be made now. Can it be speeded up?

Bishop Hoyt also expressed concerns about the Christian Churches Together.

Father Kishkovsky said the concern about the urgency of visits must certainly be taken into consideration by the committee. A lot is happening in the calendar, including election of a new general secretary of the National Council of Churches and the fact that the general secretary will immediately be pressed into the visits. In the matter of the CCT, Father Kishkovsky noted Bishop Hoyt's cautions, including the concerns of historic African American communions.

John Thomas also addressed the question of the CCT. He was initially concerned about the vulnerability of the National Council of Churches. He noted that the Antiochian Orthodox Church, which pulled out of the NCC in 2005, has applied for membership in CCT. That, he said, is "anxiety provoking."

Father Kishkovsky said the Committee has assessed this precise situation. The committee believes it unlikely that other churches will leave the NCC to join the CCT.

Bishop Earl McCloud said African American Churches that are NCC members are saddened by fact that our sisters and brothers invite us to their table but are not willing to come to the table at which we already sit. Only the National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc. has joined the Christian Churches Together, "not the rest of us. It's like paying for a party we were never invited to."

Father Kishkovsky said there are five families in CCT: racial ethnic, Orthodox, Catholic Pentecostal/evangelical, and Protestant. He said Bishop McCloud's critique will be taken seriously.

Dr. Daryl Ingram of the African Methodist Episcopal Church said that for CCT to go on with one team of historic African American churches lends credence to other problems.

President Livingston suggested the executive committee take up the issue of CCT.

Bishop McCloud said that in the beginning, CCT was almost anti-women. Some adjustments were made when we pointed it out. If this persists, we might have to reconsider our relationship here. We are saddened by the fact that the Christians want us to come where they are and are not willing to come where we are.

The Rev. Dr. Tyrone Pitts, general secretary of the Progressive National Baptist Convention, Inc., said the executive committee needs to consult with historic African American churches before it takes action. Father Kishkovsky asked that the committee be enabled to participate in discussions.

**The report of the Membership and Ecclesial Relationships Committee was accepted by voice vote.**

## **Pandemic Flu Preparation**

Dr. Miriam J. Burnett, M.D., vice chair of the Justice and Advocacy Committee, cited widespread concern about a pandemic flu outbreak. CDC. This is not just a domestic issue, she said, but one of global concern. She introduced Dr. Richard Dixon, M.D., associate director for science at the Centers for Disease Control, who narrated a slide show on "Pandemic Flue Essentials for Church Leadership."

Dr. Dixon said there are very few organizations that bind communities together, but churches are at the top of that list.

The points made in the slide show included:

- No living person has immunity
- The H5N1 virus has been compared in CDC labs with the deadly 1918 virus.
- The virus consistently had a greater than 50 Percent mortality rate.
- Older anti-viral drugs are not effective, and newer drugs are unproven.

- There are isolated instances of the spread of the virus from person to person, particularly in Northern Indonesia
- More than 90 million in the U.S. would get the virus.
- The virus would result in an estimated 200,000 to 1.5 million deaths.
- The virus would last for weeks at a time

A Pandemic occurs when:

- There is a major shift in the virus.
- There is a susceptible population.
- The virus can be transmitted easily from person to person.

In a pandemic, Dr. Dixon said, there won't be service people available to help. They will be busy or ill in their communities.

Governments and international organizations are planning to be where the starts in order to snuff out the virus embers at their source.

Communities must come together to prevent transmission of the virus, treat it, and maintain essential services.

Churches know who the vulnerable populations are in their communities. Churches provide critical safety net services. Churches bind communities together.

Bishop Vicken Aykazian, President Elect, asked that suggestions to fill vacancies on the board or committees be given to Bishop Dimetri Kantzavelos.

## **Pastoral Message on the War in Iraq**

**John Thomas presented the Governing Board's Pastoral Message on the War in Iraq and moved that the General Assembly make the statement its own.**

**Dennis Frado of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America suggested the phrase "top the administration" be added to the addressees of the pastoral message. The phrase was added by consensus.**

Thomas Swain, presiding clerk of the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, said he has been troubled by this pastoral letter. In mentioning the bombs that Israel used, we have had to wrestle with our own complicity. The bombs destroyed farmer's fields for two or three years and the statement does not recognize our own involvement, he said. He said he could not vote for the statement.

Jolinda Matthews of the Episcopal Church said she agreed with this comment about how we sell weapons to the world and bomb people. She said the statement would be more relevant if it were more radical.

Michael Kinnamon, chair of the Justice and Advocacy Commission, said he has taken note of the comments and assured the speakers JAC will not lose these statements.

The Rev. O.C. Edwards of the Episcopal Church said the Episcopal delegation desired to consult with its ecumenical officer before a vote was taken on the statement.

**O.C. Edwards moved that the pastoral letter be tabled until later. The motion was approved with no negative votes.**

Bishop Dimetri Kantzavelos, chair of the Nominations Committee, said that the NCC by-laws provide for vacancies on committees to be filled on an acting basis.

**The Rev. Dr. Cheryl Wade of American Baptist Churches USA was nominated to fill the position of chair of the Administration and Finance Committee. The motion was seconded by John Paterakis of the Greek Orthodox Church in America.**

**The motion to elect Cheryl Wade was passed by unanimous voice vote.**

## **Church World Service Board**

Betty Voskuil, chair of the Church World Service Board, reported on behalf of the board. She said CWS is under girded by an exceptional staff.

The Board met in Cleveland in last week to discuss its strategic plan for 2008-2011. Suitable objectives will be developed for Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, the Middle East and Europe, and North America.

At the spring board meeting the staff shared some of the lessons they learned from the unremitting string of disasters in the past couple of years. She said it is very difficult for CWS to predict what its revenue will be in any given year. In FY 2004, 13 percent of contributions to CWS were designated to a particular disaster. In FY 2005, 45 percent of contributions were designated, and in FY 2006, 48 percent of contributions were designated.

**The motion to receive the CWS report was passed with no negative votes.**

## **Second call for new business.**

Dr. Daryl Ingram of the African Methodist Episcopal Church presented a resolution on Christmas gifts to Lebanon

Jeff King of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America presented a resolution inviting continued conversation about young adults in the life of the council.

The General Assembly recessed for lunch and to attend the afternoon Rotation Forums.

The General Assembly was called to order at 4 p.m.

## **Human Biotechnology Committee**

Clare Chapman, chair of the Human Biotechnology Policy Committee, reported on behalf of the committee. She introduced the Rev. Dr. Eric L. Brown, African Methodist Episcopal Church; the Rev. Dr. O.C. Edwards, Episcopal Church; the Rev. Dr. James Fenimore, United Methodist Church; and Dr. Olivia Masih White, United Church of Christ.

Clare said the first item of business will be to review and act on the Policy on Human Biotechnologies. Following that, two resolutions will be presented for discussion and action. For a copy of the policy and related curricula and resolutions, see [www.councilofchurches.org/biotechnology/](http://www.councilofchurches.org/biotechnology/).

**On behalf of the committee, Clare Chapman moved the adoption of the Policy on Human Biotechnologies.**

**The Policy on Human Biotechnologies was passed by voice vote without dissent.**

Clare Chapman said she hoped congregations will use the curriculum and give feedback on its usefulness.

**On behalf of the committee, Clare Chapman moved the adoption of the resolution, A Call for a Worldwide Ban on Human Reproductive Cloning.**

The motion to adopt the resolution, A Call for a Worldwide Ban on Reproductive Cloning, was passed by voice vote without dissent.

## GENERAL ASSEMBLY 2006 OF THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF CHURCHES USA

### PRESENTED BY THE HUMAN BIOTECHNOLOGIES POLICY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

**TITLE:** Call for a Worldwide Ban on Human Reproductive Cloning

**POLICY BASE:** “Genetic Science for Human Benefit” (1986); “Fearfully and Wonderfully Made” (2006)

**RATIONALE:** In 1997 scientists at the Roslin Institute in Scotland announced that they had cloned the first large mammal, Dolly, a sheep. Since that announcement, hundreds of other mammals have been cloned. In this context speculation centered immediately on the prospect of an eventual human clone.

News of successful cloning, across a variety of species, has obscured a troubling fact: there were thousands, even tens of thousands of failures before a single successful clone survived. The successful cloning of Dolly occurred after 276 experimental embryos failed. Dolly died of premature old age. Embryonic clones might appear to succeed, but eventually develop fatal problems, or exhibit other gross abnormalities in later stages of development. Failed attempts resulted in:

- grossly deformed fetuses that do not survive,
- grossly deformed fetuses that survive but only in a variety of severely compromised states,
- animals that developed “inside-out” or of gigantic proportions,
- animals that age and die prematurely,
- a high frequency of animals that die from a variety of cancers,
- a variety of other genetic anomalies.

As many as two thousand human eggs were extracted surgically from otherwise healthy women for the experiments of Woo-Suk Hwang, the scientist who fraudulently claimed to have cloned a human embryo. Moreover, it came to light that women egg “donors” were in fact employees who had been coerced to participate.

**In our current deregulated environment, tens or hundreds of thousands of “failed human clones” could be created in the interest of someday cloning a human being that develops into adulthood. This future offends our moral sensibilities and diminishes us all as human beings. Human beings are not a means to an end, and certainly not experiments along a path to a dubious future. The prospect of even a single human embryo serving as a mere instrument in a cloning experiment (failed, or not) is morally, ethically, and theologically repugnant. The prospect that an apparently “successful clone” might be allowed to develop, but only long enough to die of developmental or other unforeseen genetic aberrations is abhorrent.**

**Many countries have already enacted comprehensive cloning bans, including Canada, Australia, and Germany. The United Nations General Assembly in 2004 passed a resolution opposing both research and reproductive cloning of human embryos. The President of the United States has stated that he would sign a ban on human reproductive cloning. The House of Representatives of the United States passed a bipartisan bill banning human cloning in the USA. The U.S. Senate failed to pass its own version, and as a result it remains legal at the federal level to experiment with, and create, human reproductive clones, as long as no federal funding is utilized. While several state legislatures have banned human reproductive cloning within their jurisdictions, still many states have not acted, leaving a legal opening for privately funded cloning experiments to proceed unhindered within the United States.**

**RESOLUTION:**

**Whereas,**

- A) The Member Communions of the National Council of Churches USA recognize the urgent need to enact a ban on human reproductive cloning within the entire United States, and in all nations; and whereas,**
- B) The National Council of Churches USA is committed to advocating for a moral, just, and safe development of biotechnologies for human benefit; and whereas,**
- C) The cloning of Dolly, the sheep, was achieved only after 276 experimental sheep embryos failed, and died of premature old age; and whereas,**
- D) The experience of previous research results suggest any apparently successful human clones will eventually exhibit severe genetic problems, die young, or live lives compromised by cancers and other health problems; and whereas,**

- E) Even if experimental animals were used to ever perfect cloning techniques, there is never an absolute certainty that animal models adequately represent what would occur with human beings. The risk will always exist that experiments involving cloning of humans will fail horribly; and whereas,
- F) Bringing even a single human being into the world as the experimental subject of a human cloning experiment offends our sense of human worth and dignity. Such experimentation is unethical, immoral, and theologically repugnant; and whereas,
- G) At the present time, there are no known medical benefits to human reproductive cloning, nor is there any evidence that human reproductive cloning has any future potential for alleviating human suffering. Nevertheless, the threat that reproductive cloning presents to human life and our moral and ethical values is such an extraordinary risk that prudence is the only proper course. Little will be lost by taking a cautious path, for instance by instituting a ban on human reproductive cloning, and using experimental animals as models as long as possible (perhaps forever); and whereas,
- H) The number of laboratories with the equipment and expertise to conduct cloning experiments grows every day. Specifically, human fertility clinics currently have the equipment to carry out nearly all the techniques involved in human reproductive cloning. The vast majority of these clinics, in the USA and around the world are unregulated and unsupervised by any authority.

**THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Member Communions of the National Council of Churches of Christ USA call on the United States Congress to enact federal legislation that would attach criminal penalties to the creation of human reproductive clones. Likewise, we call on governmental agencies around the world to regulate and oversee laboratories with the capacity to create human reproductive clones. Moreover, we resolve to work in conjunction with Regional Ecumenical Organizations to urge the involvement of international agencies to establish standards for such regulation.**

.Biotechnology and National Security.

Dr. Olivia Maseh White introduced the resolution, Biotechnology and National Security. She said the resolution was developed because of the widespread concern about bioterrorism, particularly in the research that is going on in the defense field.

**On behalf of the Committee, Clare Chapman moved the adoption of the Resolution on Biotechnology and National Security.**

**The Resolution on Biotechnology and National Security was passed by voice vote without dissent.**

# GENERAL ASSEMBLY 2006 OF THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF CHURCHES USA

## PRESENTED BY THE HUMAN BIOTECHNOLOGIES POLICY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

**TITLE:**            **Biotechnology and National Security**

**POLICY BASE:** **“Genetic Science for Human Benefit”** (1986); **“Fearfully and Wonderfully Made”** (2006)

**RATIONALE:** Powerful new biotechnologies have begun to unveil the intricate mechanisms of physical biology. Along with the promise of alleviating human suffering related to physical illness, this new knowledge also raises concerns about the potential for great harm. Recent advances in scientific research engendered further concern about the potential for malevolent uses for powerful biotechnologies, particularly research into the military uses. While the offensive uses of biotechnology are banned by international agreement to which the United States is signatory, concerns remain related to permitted *defensive* research. Significantly, the only terrorist attack in the U.S.A. since September 11, 2001 was a bio-terror incident that involved anthrax spores subsequently traced to U.S.A. military research laboratories. Potential misuses of these technologies provided the impetus for The National Academy of Sciences report “Biotechnology Research in an Age of Terrorism”, which recommends:

- 1) Creation of National Science Advisory Board for Bio-defense within the department of Health and Human Services.
- 2) Creation of an international forum on bio-security drawn from scientific and policy communities.

**RESOLUTION:**

Whereas,

- A) The science currently allows experimenters to manipulate common pathogens to make them more pernicious and devastating to human communities; and whereas,
- B) Researchers are currently able to manipulate and strengthen common pathogens so that they are immune to current vaccines; and whereas,
- C) Researchers are able to create entirely new classes of pathogens that could promote illness on a massive, even catastrophic scale; and, whereas,

- D) There are numerous examples of biotechnological experiments involving the manipulation and modification of viruses that have surprised researchers with the virulence and lethality of the resulting new organisms; and whereas,**
- E) Research into bio-warfare, and defense against bioengineered weapons diverts scarce funding from beneficial applications; and whereas,**
- F) Research into bio-warfare and defense against bioengineered weapons diverts talented scientists and highly capable laboratories from beneficial research; and whereas,**
- G) At the present time, there is very limited public awareness and review of bio-defense projects, creating a maze of classified projects under the Department of Defense and Department of Homeland Security with little transparency, scientific oversight, nor comprehensive scientific value assessment; and whereas,**
- H) The number of laboratories with the equipment and expertise to conduct bio-warfare experiments grows every day. The vast majority of these facilities, in the USA and around the world are unregulated and unsupervised by any authority.**

***THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED* that the National Council of Churches USA calls on governmental bodies in the United States to enact legislation that would create a National Science Advisory Board for Bio-defense within the Department of Health and Human Services with powers of regulation and oversight over the bio-defense activities within government and in the private sector. Also, we call on governments, research institutions and scientific agencies to convene an International Forum on Biosecurity, and begin work toward diminishing the threat of these emergent uses of biotechnology for human harm. Further, we urge all people of good will to become, and continue to be vigilant of these issues, as an exercise of civil responsibility.**

Clare Chapman said for the past year the committee has been engaged in a discussion of biotechnology issues with the Canadian Council of Churches. The World Council of Churches has approved the concept of an international gathering on biotechnology.

**Clare Chapman moved that the Policy Development Committee on Human Biotechnologies be continued through the end of the quadrennium and report to the Governing Board and General Assembly on its discussions with the World Council of Churches.**

**The motion was passed by voice vote without dissent.**

Clare said it had been an honor to work with the committee. She expressed thanks to the Rev. Dr. Eileen W. Lindner and the Rev. Marcel Welty, staff to the committee. She said it is our greatest hope that the policy will provide the churches with the tools they need.

## Approval of the Strategic Plan

### The Rev. Thelma Chambers Young moved that the Strategic Plan be approved.

President Michael Livingston asked for discussion of the motion.

Betty Voskuil said a joint committee of the NCC and CWS had developed proposals adopted by the respective boards. She said the committee wanted the General Assembly to receive these proposals in writing, for information. She particularly asked for feedback on proposal number 8, that the General Assembly consider the frequency of its meetings.

She said the committee referred its proposals to the General Assembly Constitution and Bylaws Committee for consideration and action by the General Assembly in 2007.

Bishop Kantzavelos, referring to page 2, number 5. asked that "Christ" be put back in the title.

John McCullough. Referring to line 473, page 11, of the Strategic Plan, said this section is basically a reiteration of the paper that was just presented by Betty Voskuil. The reference to "and International Affairs" should be deleted.

The Rev. Peg Chamberlin said a conversation is taking place between Ecumenical Networks and Church World Service.

Lydia Veliko, referring to lines 859-865, page 20, which talks about the creation of a new International Affairs Commission, asked if the section had been precluded by John McCullough's statement. Michael Livingston said the Strategic Planning Committee wanted to create a committee separate from what is now the Justice and Advocacy Commission, but there is no assurance it will be added.

John Haines said these seem to be pretty major changes and he cautioned against acting on them too quickly. He asked, do these proposals qualify as advance notification? Michael Livingston said the General Assembly has not approved the list of what CWS and NCC thinks we should be doing. This will be referred to the General Assembly's Constitution and Bylaws Committee and brought back to the General Assembly in 2007.

The Rev. Dr. Angelique Walker-Smith asked that the Strategic Plan make explicit the issue of nurturing our young adults. Referring to "dot" number 4, line 71, on the "lingering effects of racism," she asked that the word "lingering" be deleted.

Bishop Hoyt asked if the NCC and CWS will share equally in the cost of future assemblies, and Michael Livingston said, yes.

Peg Chamberlin asked if the chair would entertain a motion on the Strategic Plan, and President Livingston said the motion to adopt the Strategic Plan was now on the floor.

Peg Chamberlin, referring to line 760, page 17, said she was concerned about how this will be interpreted. Michael said the plan is to encourage steps toward this giving goal toward the end of the millennium. The intent is to encourage greater giving, not to cap giving at that level.

Peg Chamberlin said having denominational ownership is valuable, but she expressed doubt that a formula is the way to accomplish that.

Bob Edgar said the budget we are talking about is approximately \$7 million. The amount given by member communions is \$1.6 – 1.8 million. The rest is from royalties, donors, and foundations.

The Rev. Lawrence Hargrave, referring to page 12, public witness, noted that the General Assembly was spending a lot of time talking about poverty and social justice, but was

nevertheless meeting on election day. He asked if, strategically the date of future General Assemblies to be moved.

There being no more questions or comments from the floor, President Livingston called for a vote.

**The Strategic Plan was passed by voice vote without dissent.**

## **Reference Committee Report**

Dr. Barbara Brown Zikmund, chair, reported on behalf of the Reference Committee.

**On behalf of the committee, Barbara Brown Zikmund moved the adoption of the resolution on “Christmas Gift Aid for Bethlehem, Palestine, Israel and Lebanon.”**

Dennis Sparks, of the Disciples of Christ, said he thought this is a great resolution. He said he has been helping to raise money for Christmas gifts in Palestine. He asked if the resolution takes into account the Christians in Palestine who are such a fraction of the population.

John McCullough said the implementation of the resolution would require close work with CWS and churches in Palestine, to take into consideration needs of Christians.

Rebecca Marsten, ELCA, expressed concern about the title, which limits the scope. She moved that the title be changed to, “Christmas Gift Aid for people affected by violence in the Middle East”. She also suggested that in line 21, the words “anti-personnel bombs” be replaced with “cluster bombs.”

**President Livingston said the title and the substitution of “cluster bombs” were made by consensus.**

Bishop Vicken Aykazian asked if the intent was to provide gifts for children or aid for families. Michael said this will become clear as CWS and NCC works it out.

The Rev. Dr. Tyrone Pitts said the U.S. state department gives money to Israel that supports the wall and arms. He expressed the hope that this resolution would focus on aid to churches.

Bishop Kantzavelos suggested that line 27 be amended to, “Israeli Jews and Christian and Muslim Arabs.” The committee accepted this as a friendly edit.

Fahad Abu Akel of the Presbyterian Church (USA), referring to lines 24-29, said that when most people think about Arabs they think about Muslims. “People in the churches do not think I exist,” he said. “In this time of gifts, can we remember the church? For God’s sake, can you remember the Christians?”

**Fahad Abu Akel moved the removal of lines 24-29..**

**After some discussion, the amendment was lost by voice vote.**

The Rev. John H. Thomas said he supported Christmas gifts of this nature. There are numerous opportunities to make gifts. He said he wished to name a caution: it is important to think through how our generosity is distributed equally and fairly across all the desperate needs across the world, and CWS helps us make those decisions. The challenge is: I hope as we give gifts to our partners, we look at ways to use our economic resources to resist the policies of occupation.

**Charles Miller, of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America proposed the following amendment to line 27: after words “vulnerability and anger” add “and wider divisions,” striking the words “widening ...between Israeli Jews and Arabs.” The motion was passed by voice vote.**

Beverly Wilkes, United Methodist Church, called the question.

**The resolution now entitled "Christmas Gift Aid for people affected by violence in the Middle East" was passed by voice vote with one recorded nay.**

There ensued a discussion on the involvement of young adults in the ecumenical movement.

**The report of the Reference Committee was received by unanimous voice vote.**

## **Justice and Advocacy Commission**

Dr. Mary Bernard, Vice Chair, reported on behalf of the Justice and Advocacy Commission.

**On behalf of the committee, Dr. Bernard moved the adoption of the Resolution on Global Warming that had already been approved by the Justice and Advocacy Commission and the Governing Board. The motion was carried by voice vote without dissent.**

**On behalf of the committee, Dr. Bernard moved the adoption of the resolution, Support of the National Movement to Reform Wal-Mart**

**Dennis Frado moved to recommit the motion to the Justice and Advocacy Commission.**

**The motion to refer was passed by voice vote.**

The Rev. O.C. Edwards said the Episcopal Church delegation has consulted on the Pastoral Message on the War in Iraq and is ready to support it.

**The motion to remove from the table and approve the Pastoral Message on the War in Iraq was with two abstentions.**

**"Pastoral Message on The War in Iraq" adopted by the Governing Board of the National Council of Churches USA Nov. 7, 2006 and affirmed by the General Assembly, Nov. 8, 2006.**

**To the Administration, Members of Congress, People of Faith, and All People of Goodwill:**

**In the months preceding the United States' invasion of Iraq, leaders of member communions within the National Council of Churches USA, along with Roman Catholic and other Church leaders worldwide, expressed the conviction that the war with Iraq was not warranted, even as our country was involved in what was termed by the U.S. Government as a global "war on terror." Since that time, many justifications have been given for this war: the need to prevent the spread of weapons of mass destruction; the desirability of planting a new democracy in the Middle East; the need to destroy a major base for terrorism; and Iraq's connection to the 9/11 attacks against America.**

**All of these justifications have been revealed as false or ill-considered. For this reason, the National Council of Churches USA repeats its call that this war must be brought to an end.**

**Our view of this war in Iraq is informed by our belief that war is contrary to the will of God, and an affront to God's creation (Genesis 6:11-12). Some member communions, therefore, including the historic peace churches, believe that all war is**

sin and never justified, and that participation by Christians in war cannot be sanctioned, even as others might consider it as engagement in a "lesser evil" to overcome a "greater evil." Other member communions hold that war can sometimes be justified if certain criteria are met. The cause or case for military action must be just, the war must be sanctioned by recognized governments, the war must be carried out so as to minimize civilian casualties, the destruction and death must not exceed in proportion the potential gain of peace and/or justice, and the war must be clearly a last resort. Whether one views the war in Iraq from the peace church perspective, or from that of the churches informed by a "just war" tradition, it is clear to the member churches that this war violates the churches' clear ethical norms.

We believe that our calling is to be co-workers with God in the creation of God's promised reign, by transforming our present world into a community of goodwill (Romans 12:9-21). Because scripture is our guide, we believe that all people are called to seek peace (Matthew 5:9) and to turn our swords into plowshares (Micah 4:3-4). We take this call seriously, mindful of what befalls a country that takes the path of arrogance, self-righteousness, and even hubris (Isaiah 2:5-11).

As men and women of faith, we believe that freedom, along with genuine security, is based in God, and is served by the recognition of humanity's interdependence, and by working with partners to bring about community, development, and reconciliation for all, and that such freedom and security is not served by this war in Iraq. And we mourn the tremendous toll this war has taken on both U.S. and Iraqi societies, and foresee a future of even more instability in the region and in the world should this war in Iraq continue.

As Americans, we affirm that the solution to so many problems in the world requires the moral leadership, in addition to the technological and economic leadership, that the United States can offer, and we lament, with our partners in the global church, the lapse in such moral leadership and also credibility in recent years, especially as it pertains to our country's justification and conduct of this war in Iraq.

Therefore, united together as the National Council of Churches USA, we call upon the U.S. Government to recognize that the continued presence of occupying forces has not provided meaningful security for Iraqi citizens and only exacerbates escalating violence, and begin an immediate phased withdrawal of American and coalition forces from Iraq with a timetable that provides for an expeditious final troop withdrawal. And we further call upon our government to link this withdrawal plan to benchmarks for rebuilding Iraqi society, since the reconstruction of infrastructure, the restoration of essential services, and a foundation for economic growth are necessary to nurture Iraqi hopes for a stable future, and to steps to meet the security concerns of all Iraqis, including the more vulnerable, smaller ethnic and religious communities.

We urge our government to give meaningful support to U.S. troops. This meaningful support includes: bringing active and reserve forces home from this war; providing soldiers still in harm's way with adequate armor to protect them

**from gunfire and explosive devices; giving earned benefits to veterans, especially injured veterans, of this war in which they have valiantly served; and honoring the sacrifice made by those who have died in this war by making adequate provision for surviving family members and creating a withdrawal plan that brings such sacrifices to an end. And we insist that our government begin a process of restoring trust in its conduct of foreign policy and multilateral engagement, damaged and undermined by a pattern of deception both in the arguments made by the Administration leading up to the war, as well as during the conduct of the war.**

**Also together, as an ecumenical organization that brings together diverse churches in the search for Christian unity and in common witness, we pledge that our member communions will continue to: educate their members on the way that lead to peace; promote moral choices in foreign policy, so that the well being of our own nation and of all peoples may be established; and pray and work for peace and reconciliation, in Iraq and throughout the world.**

**And finally, the National Council of Churches USA pledges that the leaders of our own member communions will give bold and public witness to these calls and affirmations within our own communions and ecumenically in public settings.**

Bob Edgar suggested the General Assembly take a moment to reflect on the changes that are taking place in the country today. President Livingston led the Assembly in prayer.

### **Bible Translation and Utilization report.**

Dr. Eileen W. Lindner, staff to the Bible Translation and Utilization Committee, noted that the Revised Standard Version and New Revised Standard Version of the Bible are intellectual, spiritual and financial assets of the National Council of Churches.

She introduced Professor Walter Harrelson, who was central to the translation work of the New Revised Standard Version.

Eileen introduced Hargis Thomas, who joined the staff of HarperSanFrancisco earlier this year as Bible Director.

Hargis Thomas said the NRSV translation speaks for itself. HSF is going to try to reinvent the NRSV. The text is wonderful and will be helped by new formats.

### **Faith and Order Commission**

The Rev. O.C. Edwards, chair, reported on behalf of the commission.

He said the Faith and Order Commission is delighted that there is so much enthusiasm about its birthday party, slated July 19-23, 2007, in Oberlin, Ohio. He announced the celebration will conclude with a message from the Rev. James Forbes that will be open to the public. There is a limit to the number of persons who can attend the conference so the commission has established a system whereby communions can nominate participants.

### **The General Assembly recessed for the 2006 General Assembly Awards Banquet.**

### **November 9, 2006**

Opening worship was led by the Church of the Brethren.

## 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of CWS

President Livingston introduced John McCullough, executive director of Church World Service.

“We can always accomplish far more together than if we were to attempt to do the same thing apart,” John said. “All of us understand, very personally, that we have a calling that comes from heaven.” Persons in need are “our son, our daughter, our father, our mother.”

Joy Olson, director of the Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA), said the office was started in 1974 by individuals who came out of the religious community, during “the dirty war years.” Information about Civil Rights violations came to the U.S. from church workers. WOLA was formed after the overthrow of the Chilean government. The mission of WOLA has remained the same since the beginning: facilitate access to Washington for our colleagues in Latin America, and to promote human rights, social justice, and democracy in Latin America. with a special focus on U.S. policy.

Jennifer Riggs introduced a slide show commemorating the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Church World Service.

John McCullough introduced the General Secretary of the Liberia Council of Churches. Dr. Benjamin Dorme Lartey.

Dr. Lartey congratulated Church World Service, particularly for its Africa initiative. The people of Africa, particularly Liberia, will always remain grateful, he said.

Dr. Lartey said the Liberia Council of Churches is now 25 years old. He expressed his belief that the church has a greater capacity to impact society than any other entity, especially in resolving conflict.

Liberia was the first independent nation in Africa in 1847, he said. In 1980 a military coup overthrew the president of Liberia, a devout churchman who was also president of the Baptist World Alliance. During the period of military rule the church remained outspoken. By 1982, an alliance of churches was formed. By 1989 Liberia was caught up in civil war. The Liberia Council of Churches invited the Muslims to work with Christians for peace and together formed the Interfaith Committee, a peace monitoring force. The church remained vigilant and continued to speak out. When it was proposed that elections take place in 1997, the church said reconciliation was necessary for the future. Three years later the country was in midst of a civil war again. The church remained vigilant. The church said to our government that peace needed to return. The church sought out the rebels to find out who they were and organized a conference of rebels, the government and the church. A meeting was held in 2003 in Ghana where a comprehensive peace settlement was signed. Church World Service remained steadfast in its support. There is now peace in Liberia. (Applause) The first thing the church embarked upon was civic voter education. Some 2,500 church election monitors were organized. In October and November 2005, the church deployed observers to monitor the elections. In January 2006, Liberia inaugurated Africa’s first democratically elected president. The job of the church has not stopped. How do we consolidate and sustain this peace? There is still too much division in the country. In January 2006, Church World Service hosted a conference in Liberia to expand peace to the area around Liberia. The church set up a good governance commission and a truth and reconciliation commission. Once again the church has set into place a framework to monitor the statement taking that has is going on. If the church is to remain relevant in Liberia, Dr. Lartey told the General Assembly, we need your support. When we picked up the phone to call Church World Service, you came to our support. We are most grateful. Liberia is one of the last bastions of Christianity in Africa.

## CWS Budget Report

President Livingston introduced John Paterakis to give the Church World Service budget report. Mr. Paterakis showed a slide show illustrating the history of CWS budgeting.

With regards to the FY 2006 budget, John said a “clean audit” had taken place, July through June. There were no material weaknesses and CWS is an organization that is in very sound health. Revenues still higher than expenses.

**John Paterakis moved the adoption of the CWS budget report. Michael said the minutes will reflect John’s extraordinary presentation of the report.**

**The CWS budget was received by unanimous voice vote.**

## **Education and Leadership Ministries Commission**

President Livingston introduced Rev. Garland F. Pierce, associate general secretary for Education and Leadership Ministries. Mr. Pierce said 2006 is the ecumenical year of ministry with young people. He cited such events as Come to the Feast, the Prayer for the children in Washington, and the Adult Youth Workers summit that will take place in the Magic Kingdom next week.

He called upon the Young Adults – stewards, delegates, children of God – to make their presence known. The presentation concluded with the singing of “This Little Light of Mine.”

## **NCC Budget Report**

President Livingston introduced Clare Chapman to give the NCC budget report.

Clare referred to the financial statements that had been mailed to the General Assembly delegates. The Ernst & Young Audit Firm provided a clear audit with no reportable conditions and no material weaknesses. She said the past several months had been a difficult time due to the illness and death of Leora Landmesser, the associate general secretary for Administration and Finance, on June 19. She thanked the staff for carrying on. She also thanked American Baptists, Evangelical Lutherans and United Methodists for their additional support and contribution of staff for special work.

**Clare Chapman moved the adoption of the NCC budget report.**

**The NCC budget was received by unanimous voiced vote.**

Michael Livingston thanked Clare for her services to the staff during Leora’s illness.

## **Break**

After a break, President Livingston reconvened the meeting at 11:28 a.m.

## **Special Commission for the Just Rebuilding of the Gulf Coast**

President Livingston invited Thomas Swain from the Special Commission to make a report. The chair of the commission, Bishop Talbert, was recovering from knee surgery and could not be present.

Mr. Swain reported that the commission has been meeting for over a year. They had observed the severe devastation in New Orleans and the Gulf Coast. The commission is prepared for the reality of a ten-year involvement to work for justice in the area. The human factors have been devastating, and churches are the first responders in a disaster. The churches continue to be actively involved in work in Gulf Coast area.

The Rev. Leslie Tune, associate director of the NCC’s Washington Office, reiterated that in the Gulf Coast region, the churches were the first responders. The most committed churches she found were in the Gulf Coast Region. The people who had lost everything had a rock, and the

rock was the church. The churches met with the mayor, the governor, Senator Trent Lott, with representatives of FEMA, and with many of our denominations that are there on the ground.

Cassandra Carmichael, director of the NCC's Eco-Justice program, handed out a list of special commissioners and a list of the commission's tasks. Last week the commission saw the Murphy Oil Spill area, where thousands of gallons of oil spilled in a residential area. "It is beyond humbling to meet people and pastors who come to me with open arms who want to hug me, feed me, welcome me," she said. "Yet these are people who have lost everything. The pastor of St. James Church had no electricity, the roof caved in, "but the pastor wanted to take me to lunch. Who is ministering to whom?"

Trond Moeller gave the on-the-ground report by showing a slide show. He said 900 churches and places of worship were destroyed by the hurricane. The slide presentation included theological statements and strategies: Listen, Educate, Stand, Advocate

Next steps will be to release a report card of government responses to the disaster, and to gather theological resources, stories, prayers, sermons, successes, and problems.

**Bishop Thomas Hoyt moved to affirm the commission's theological statement. The motion was carried by unanimous voice vote.**

President Livingston concluded the discussion with a prayer.

## **Ecumenical Networks Commission Report**

The Rev. Peg Chamberlin reported on behalf of the Ecumenical Networks Commission..

She said Ecumenical Networks is a standing committee of the General Assembly. It is more of a working group than a committee, and it functions without staff.

Ecumenical Networks has four tasks specified in the NCC constitution:

Ecumenical Networks has a goal to engage the five commissions of the NCC about how those commissions collaborate with local and regional ecumenical groups. All commissions have an Ecumenical Networks Commission representative on their Network.

In the Justice and Advocacy Commission, Let Justice Roll definitely benefited from being connected with local and regional ecumenism because of the grass roots nature of the Minimum Wage campaign.

Faith and Order has worked together with Ecumenical Networks on the Oberlin celebration to make sure regional ecumenical leaders participate in it.

Dialogue has begun with Education and Leadership Ministries and the Communication Commission.

The Strategic Plan also received feedback from Ecumenical Networks. It is our hope to create a position in the National Council of Churches to build relationships with U.S. ecumenical and interfaith organizations. We encouraged the involvement of representatives from state and local councils. NCC staff will make every effort to be in touch with state and local ecumenists.

If the spirit is one and the movement is one and if the body of Christ is one, then we are related and we cannot say we have no need of one another. We are coming to the end of the quadrennium, and our request to communions is to be aware that they should appoint representatives from Local and Regional Ecumenism to their delegations.

**The motion to receive the report was unanimously approved by voice vote.**

## **A Social Creed for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

Dr. Miriam J. Burnett, M.D., vice chair of the Justice and Advocacy Committee, shared a copy of the Social Creed of 1908 and the draft of A Social Creed for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, to be studied by the churches in 2007.

President Livingston recognized Dr. Chris Iosso to report on the work of the special task force on the Social Creed of the Churches.

Dr. Iosso said the Social Creed of 1908 was the invention of the NCC's predecessor, the Federal Council of Churches. The two words, social and creed, have to go together. This is an application guide and not an ecclesial creed. Much of 1908 document has not yet been fulfilled, but the framers were ahead of their time.

Why should it be rewritten for today? We think it can strengthen the common witness of our communions on a wide range of social concerns. The current draft expands the issues and includes issues not included in the original. It represents the consensus of NCC member communions in June, but Orthodox members requested a deeper theological perspective. This draft moves in the Trinitarian direction.

We hope this can be part of the centennial celebration of the council in 2008. We have kept in currency the language of social creed for 100 years, and are seeking a way to reach young people musically.

We would be honored to work on your behalf to develop a statement that could be included as a part of your centennial.

**Dr. Burnett moved that the report of the Task Force be received, and the motion was approved by unanimous voice vote.**

**Bishop Ronald M. Cunningham of the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church moved on behalf of the Special Commission for the Just Rebuilding of the Gulf Coast that all energy be asserted to have the General Assembly meet in New Orleans in 2008. The motion was passed by unanimous voice vote.**

## **NCC Lebanon Delegation Panel**

A panel discussion on the NCC's recent trip to Lebanon was led by the Rev. Ramon Hunt, Bishop Dimitrios of Xanthos, and Dr. Antonios Kireopoulos.

Dr. Kireopoulos said the NCC had the sad privilege of visiting Lebanon after the region suffered this terrible war. Individual churches made statements about the war, and some heads of communion felt it was time to take an action together to make a stronger statement. One of the ideas was to send a delegation to the region, and perhaps to invite a delegation from the region to the United States. The Middle East Council of Churches affirmed the idea and invited the delegation to come to Lebanon. The question of visiting Israel was raised, but as Church World Service had plans to visit Israel and Palestine, it was deemed appropriate that CWS represent the ecumenical family in Israel.

The members of the delegation, led by NCC President Michael Livingston, were the Rev. A. Roy Medley, general secretary, American Baptist Churches USA; Thomas Swain, clerk, Philadelphia Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers); Bishop Dimitrios of Xanthos, director, Inter-Orthodox and Ecumenical Relations Department, Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America; Rev. Raymon Hunt, executive secretary, Christian Education Department, African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church; Martin Kromer and Edward R. Moon II, representatives, Philadelphia Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends; Patricia Finley, clerk, Peace and Concerns Standing Committee, Philadelphia Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends;

and Dr. Antonios Kireopoulos, NCC's associate general secretary for international affairs and peace.

The Rev. Ramon Hunt said the group had concerns about the lack of information about the Middle East. There is so much about the world that we don't know because we are so self-contained or we don't care. We need to become affirmed and educate our children. Churches have influence and they should use it. One of the things we heard over and over again is that children should not have to grow up in the atmosphere of animosity and fear in the Middle East.

Bishop Dimitrios said this was his third time in Lebanon. Once Lebanon was a thriving Middle East area. Now, after the war, destruction is everywhere. A "slight provocation" set the latest war off. We had to make our way through back roads because there were no bridges. Muslims and Christians were buried together in one site, and we saw pictures of children and women and men who died together. We saw great resilience among the people; the Lebanese people are not ready to give up.

Michael Livingston said the delegation heard over and over again, "the resolution of the Palestinian Israeli conflict is at the heart of the problem, we are not serious about peace in the Middle East or the war against terror until we are serious about resolving this conflict." The Sheik of the Sunnis said you don't understand why we are angry, you only understand the Israeli perspective. We have a responsibility to bring into clearer perspective what the conflict is about. It is a harrowing thing to contemplate what it is like for children to have a matter-of-fact attitude toward war. Some 900,000 Lebanese displaced by bombing went north and were sheltered by Christians, who opened their homes. People told us they didn't blame us, they blamed our government, but I had to say, we are responsible, we are a democracy.

Rev. Hunt noted that because of the incursions, more and more Christians are leaving the country.

Tony Kireopoulos said there were a million cluster bombs around the country. Farmers can't pick olives, kids can't play. Most of the bombs were sent by Israel in last 48 hours of the war while the U.N. was negotiating. There was no justification for that.

There is a need for development; the level of aid to Lebanon must increase. U.N. Resolution 1701 ending the war must be implemented. There must be a resolution to the Palestinian and Israeli conflict. That is the key to every conflict in the Middle East.

The U.S. policy to support Lebanon was countered by our other policy toward Israel. Our program to counter terrorism has been misguided.

In Qana, Tony said, "I put an olive branch in my pocket. A guy pulled it out and said, when can I go to my own field to pick olives. I made the commitment to him that the NCC would do what it could do to clean up the cluster bombs."

## **CWS Israel-Palestine Delegation Panel**

The panel representing the delegation consisted of Bishop Ronald M. Cunningham and Bishop Earl McCloud.

Bishop McCloud said during the World Council of Churches Assembly In Brazil, the pastor of the Lutheran Church of the Redeemer in Jerusalem invited historic black churches in U.S. to visit the Christians in Jerusalem. He said their struggle was much like the Civil Rights Movement in U.S. and apartheid.

When I first saw the (boundary) wall it made me cry because it cut off the Palestinians from the holy sites in Jerusalem. Places where they once worshipped they cannot go to because Israel has built a wall. places .

We believe in a two state solution: a homeland for Israel and a homeland for Palestinians. We believe that Israel should release the money for education of the children. We said to the Israelis: if you think (Palestinians) are going to use the money to buy weapons, you buy the books and the medicine.

Bishop Cunningham said the delegation met with leaders from the Patriarchate of the Greek Orthodox Church, the Latin Catholic Church, the Armenian Church, and Lutherans. At the heart of their concern was the severe crisis in the Christian community. There were grave implications of failure of Israel to ratify election of Theophilus III.

The Latin Catholic Patriarch told us: terrorism is the fruit of the Israeli occupation. The Palestinian Authority has no authority. Israel now restricts movement of Christians to Jerusalem. The Armenian archbishop stressed need for respect of the holy places, and spoke of the suffering of the people as a result of the breakdown of tourism. Our hope is that Christian brothers and sisters will come together. We also met with Ecumenical Accompaniers who walk with Palestinian children to school.

Bishop McCloud said, All of us worshipped together in Jerusalem at a sacred place. A man said we live a half hour from the sea but my children have never seen the sea and never will see the sea because of the walls. The inscription on one wall says: "Thank America." We give Israel \$10 million every day.

Some 1.5 million people are blocked off in Gaza Strip; there is no sea entrance, no hospital, only one way in, only one way out. Sometimes people die for lack of a permit to get out of Gaza to go to a hospital. The walls have separated people from the land, and if a man doesn't farm his land for three years the Israeli government takes it.

Bishop McCloud said Palestinians believe in hope. We wanted to see the Secretary of State but in six weeks couldn't see her.

Bishop Vicken Aykazian said he was moved by the panel's emotional presentation, "for which I thank you very much. I love Israelis. I love Palestinians. I love Arabs, every people, every color, every nation. We should never forget the Christian minority in the Middle East. Please go to your church leaders and say they should go to Middle East once a year to express their solidarity.}

Dr. Shanta Premawardhana said he has also met with Israeli victims of suicide bombings. People are suffering in Israel as well. I don't want to lose that perspective.

John McCullough said, we need to pay attention to the settlement issue. Israelis are building tunnels for Palestinians to get from one of their countries to the next.

President Livingston thanked both panels for a fruitful discussion.

**After expressing appreciations, a motion to adjourn was unanimously adopted by a voice vote.**

Respectfully,  
Philip E. Jenks  
Recorder

