



*Your Gifts In Action*

## Annual Report 2008-2009



National Council of the  
Churches of Christ in the USA

# NATIONAL COUNCIL OF THE CHURCHES OF CHRIST IN THE USA

Since its founding in 1950, the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA has been the leading force for ecumenical cooperation among Christians in the United States. The NCC's member faith groups — from a wide spectrum of Protestant, Anglican, Orthodox, Evangelical, historic African American and Living Peace churches — include 45 million persons in more than 100,000 local congregations in communities across the nation.

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## STATEMENT OF FAITH

“The National Council of Churches is a community of Christian communions, which, in response to the gospel as revealed in the Scriptures, confess Jesus Christ, the incarnate Word of God, as Savior and Lord.

These communions covenant with one another to manifest ever more fully the unity of the Church.

Relying upon the transforming power of the Holy Spirit, the communions come together as the Council in common mission, serving in all creation to the glory of God.”

— *from the Preamble to the NCC Constitution.*



## *From the Desk of the President H.E. Archbishop Vicken Aykazian*



Sisters and Brothers in Christ:

After more than a century of ecumenical cooperation, it's easy to overlook one of the most remarkable religious news stories in the nation today: namely, the National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA.

We are an unlikely family. The 35 communions that compose the National Council of Churches range from Oriental Orthodox, of which my own church is an example, to mainline Protestant. Included in this range are venerable peace churches, historic African American churches, evangelicals, Eastern Orthodox and Anglicans. We represent traditions that both predate the Reformation and molded its vision.

It makes no worldly sense that this variegated family could hang together for so long, but so it does, bound together by the Lord we all name. The amazing news is stated in the preamble of our Constitution: "Relying upon the transforming power of the Holy Spirit, the communions come together as the Council in common mission, serving in all creation to the glory of God."

That common mission requires of all of us a generosity of grace. The wonderful ministries we accomplish together require our ongoing spiritual and financial support. This has rarely been more true than in these times of economic challenge.

I like to think of our ecumenical family as being like the crowds that gathered on the Sea of Galilee to hear Jesus' preach. They were young and old, male and female, Jew and Samaritan, Roman and Greek – and yet their hearts were mystically joined by the words of Jesus. When he had finished speaking and the time came to feed them, a miracle happened: five barley loaves and two fish were transformed into thousands of meals.

Those of us whose hearts are joined by our beloved Savior will also find our gifts transformed by God's love and power into mighty instruments for mission. I pray that each of us, regardless of our tradition or background, will listen carefully to Jesus' words, and respond generously to God's call to support our common mission.

Peace be with you,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Vicken Aykazian". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Archbishop Vicken Aykazian  
*President*

## *From the Desk of the General Secretary Rev. Dr. Michael Kinnamon*

Dear Friends of the National Council,

“The Lord is our shepherd, we shall not want...Even though we walk through the darkest valley, we fear no evil; for God is with us.” In the midst of lean financial times, God is with us. In the midst of contentious debates, God is with us. In the midst of discouragement at the pace of genuine change, God is with us. This is the gospel. Thanks be to God!

With this promise God has also blessed us with gifts that we as the National Council of Churches share with each other and the world. A quick page-through this report shows the breadth and depth of these gifts in the programmatic work of the Council.

In seeking to more clearly manifest the visible unity of the churches, our Faith Forum, Ecumenism from the Margins, and study groups on mission, unity and justice all provide abundant resources for members of our churches. In the interfaith arena, our Jewish-Christian and Muslim-Christian dialogues have expanded, and we are active participants in the ongoing conversation on “A Common Word.”

We are excited to provide space for the “New Fire” young adult ecumenical movement, as we continue our educational and leadership work with families, congregations, culture-specific ministries. We are actively involved in the production of TV documentaries and seasonal worship programming, as well as advocating for media justice both within and beyond our communities of faith.

Our justice ministries have sought to bring the voice of the faith community to the pressing social needs of the day including hunger, homelessness, poverty, health care, racial justice and our responsibility for all of God’s creation. The gifts we share include program resources, excellent staff leadership in racial justice, justice for women, and eco-justice, and our moral voice advocating on behalf of “the least of these.”

When look at our challenges, we remember that no one else can be what the Council is—a community of churches whose vey life together is an embodied witness to God’s reconciling love. That is the gift we bring and share.

I would like to thank all of you who gave of time, talent, and treasure to support the National Council of Churches this year. Your gifts have allowed our thirty-five member Communion together to continue to pursue the ecumenical vision of unity and justice. With all of our efforts we will continue to build up the body of Christ in love.

Warm regards,



Rev. Dr. Michael Kinnamon  
*General Secretary*



The goal of ecumenism is theological unity. While Christian churches already share some degree of unity, by virtue of their common confession of Jesus Christ as the crucified and risen Lord and Savior of the world, they are also painfully aware that their unity is incomplete. This reality compels the churches to seek to manifest visible unity – through common prayer and witness – even as they lament their remaining disunity. In the center of this reality, and driving the theological exploration of its meaning, is the Faith and Order Commission.

The work of the Faith and Order Commission is first and foremost “to call the churches to the goal of visible unity in one faith and in one Eucharistic fellowship expressed in worship and common life in Christ, and to advance toward that unity that the world may believe” (Mission Statement, emphasis added). Pursuant to this task, the NCC strategic plan outlines the commission’s goals as: 1) to explore church-dividing and church-uniting issues in a manner consistent with the worldwide Faith and Order movement; 2) to build on the legacy of the past 50+ years of Faith and Order in the US to amplify its importance for both church and academy; and 3) to undertake additional theological activity in support of the churches’ unity efforts.

This year, the theologians and other church representatives on the Faith and Order Commission furthered these goals through creative engagement on the following initiatives:

***Faith Forum.*** This new online program encourages and guides local communities through ecumenical, and specifically theological, dialogue. The materials available for this program include books and other resources, all of which are designed to facilitate the ease of these encounters.

***Ecumenism from the Margins.*** This ongoing consultation brings the perspectives of under-represented groups into ecumenical dialogue, and reflects critically on their

role in shaping such discourse. Sessions have included African-, Latino-, Cuban-, Haitian-, and Native American, as well as Western Rite Antiochian Orthodox (Afro-Caribbean) and Metropolitan Community Church presentations.

***Authority of the Church in the World.*** The online materials associated with this study have expanded to include 24 denominational reflections. The convergence text, the outcome of 8 years of theological discussion, has prompted similar theological engagement in various regional councils of churches.

***Theology in the US Today: Churches on the Journey.***

Preparation of this book, which is a collection of major presentations from the “On Being Christian Together: The Faith and Order Experience in the United States” conference (2007), is nearly complete. We are in the process of soliciting funds for its publication.

***Speaking of Unity.*** We are preparing two issues of this online journal, both of which will present the outcomes of the previous study group on Full Communion. We anticipate that the publication of this work will be followed in 2010 by a conference that brings

together participants from the various bilateral dialogues that have taken place over the years.

In addition to these initiatives, work of course continues in our three study groups: The Nature and Mission of the Church; Unity and Mission; and Justice and Salvation. To ensure that this and other work of the commission sees wider engagement with the churches and the academy, we are exploring a new methodology for the study groups and the possibility of online conferencing for public events. It is our hope that this wider engagement with critical stakeholders brings the churches closer to our ecumenical goal of unity, so that indeed the world may believe.





## INTERFAITH RELATIONS COMMISSION

Christian churches come together ecumenically in search of theological unity. While this is, of course, a Christian enterprise, we consciously take up this mandate within a pluralistic society. Particularly when shared commitments lead to a common witness for justice in a world of injustice, our conviction is that our journey as Christians is enriched by our friendships with people of other faiths. Laying the groundwork for such friendships between Christian and other religious communities is the work of the Interfaith Relations Commission.

The Interfaith Relations Commission primarily sees as its task “to articulate a Christian theology for interfaith relations, provide educational materials to churches [to enhance dialogue and cooperation], train church members in interfaith relational skills, and create ecumenical opportunities for relations with communities of other traditions” (Mission Statement). With this task in mind, the NCC strategic plan lists the commission’s goals as: 1) to strengthen churches through their engagement in interfaith relations; 2) to expand and deepen interfaith conversation; and 3) to strengthen and engage in the interfaith formation of Christian leadership.

In order to accomplish these goals, the commission has divided its work among three caucus groups: Theology of Interfaith Relations; Relationships with Interfaith Partners; and Equipping Congregations for Interfaith Engagement. In addition to working within these groups, the theologians and other church representatives on the commission furthered their collective goals through creative engagement on the following initiatives:

***Jewish – Christian Dialogue.*** The long-standing dialogue with the Jewish community continues to be a valuable encounter. Focusing primarily on Middle East issues, and how Jews and Christians each bring their concerns for peace in the region to the table, the discus-

sion has included theological topics such as Palestinian Liberation Theology, Exodus and Covenant, and Christian Zionism. With regard to the latter, the designated task force is following up its first educational resource introducing the topic (2008) with a second educational resource that will be a scriptural study of pertinent themes (2009).

Our dialogue with the Jewish community is also developing to include pastoral and policy issues other than the Middle East. A second dialogue will begin next spring, evolving from an already-existing Presbyterian Church USA – National Council of Synagogues dialogue that has been wanting to become more ecumenical in nature.

***Muslim – Christian Dialogue.*** The National Muslim – Christian Initiative continues to develop. Together, the Muslims and Christians at the table have fought hateful rhetoric, and they have come together to discuss theology. With regard to the latter, topics have included those raised by the Muslim letter to the Christian churches worldwide, “A Common Word Between Us and You,” namely our respective understandings of the One God and of loving one’s neighbor.

With regard to this latter initiative, the NCC remains involved in the ongoing academic conversation surrounding “A Common Word,” and we are developing a project that would bring the text, the NCC response, and study questions together into an educational resource to be used in local churches and mosques. The NCC also is involved in another interfaith initiative coming out of the Muslim world, the World Conference on Dialogue.

A third aspect of our work, alongside relationships and dialogue, concerns cooperation among different faith communities. To serve this end, we intersect with various interfaith organizations, coalitions, and advocacy groups.

# EDUCATION AND LEADERSHIP MINISTRIES COMMISSION

Education and Leadership Ministries—fourteen ecumenical program committees—work in the diverse areas of faith formation, leader development, and education and advocacy. Its priorities include:



- Providing relevant approaches and resources for strengthening families, so that every child may grow up and fulfill her or his full potential
- Providing leadership development for congregational leaders
- Providing creative projects to enhance and foster spiritual formation and life-long learning
- Promoting and supporting high-quality, comprehensive public education
- Providing action programs to dismantle institutional racism

## **Program Ministry Prioritization Process**

In light of the NCC's staff restructure and the commission's desire to be focused and effective in its ministry of formation, leader development, and advocacy, ELMC has begun a prioritization discernment process to help its diverse program ministry committees identify those issues and initiatives that are most pressing given the trends, needs, and available resources at this given time. These various ministries will also examine meeting patterns to test the feasibility of meeting in clusters. Likewise, these program ministries will explore areas of collaboration within ELMC and other parts of NCC, CWS, and other organizations with shared ministry foci.

## **ELMC Learning Moment**

The commission seeks to be an intentional learning community as is evident by the design of the commission and program ministry meetings that include moments of shared learning. As an attempt to offer other moments of learning, the commission has instituted an online feature called "ELMC Learning Moment" which allows commissioners and others opportunity to offer brief contributions for the purpose of educating the community on trends, subjects, resources, etc. that might be of interest and import in the areas of faith formation, leader development and education and advocacy. To view them, please visit: <http://www.nccusa.org/elmc/elmclearningmoment.htm>

## **YOUNG ADULT FAITH FORMATION, LEADERSHIP, AND ECUMENICAL FORMATION**

The Ecumenical Campus Ministries Team (ECMT) continues to produce the Advent and Lenten devotional (online and in print). Staff and students reached a decision that the Council for Ecumenical Student Christian Ministries will dissolve at the end of this calendar year hopefully to make way for the fledging Student Christian Movement USA to emerge as the USA expression of grassroots student movement for ecumenical formation and leader development.

The Ecumenical Young Adult Ministries

Team (EYAMT) continues as a young adult ministry staff colleague forum. In order to promote its foci of resourcing young adult ministry and young adult ecumenical formation, it will institute a pilot program of providing seed grants for local initiatives in ecumenical young adult ministry and young adult ecumenical formation. It made a commitment to increase the young adult presence at the 2008 NCC/CWS General Assembly and was one of the co-sponsors of the New Fire: Young Adult Ecumenical Days, which brought together just prior to the

general assembly young adult leaders from several ecumenical groups. In both cases, all remain committed to ongoing engagement and dialogue between staff and young adults. Finally, David Fraccaro, Young Adult Ecumenical Formation Coordinator for the US Office of the World Council of Churches, now serves in a similar interim role with the NCC until after the 2009 general assembly. ELMC staff is giving leadership to the Young Adult Stewards Program and young adult pre-assembly programming for the upcoming 2009 NCCUSA/CWS General Assembly.

## CULTURAL SPECIFIC MINISTRIES

**The Committee on Black Congregational Ministries (CBCM)** continues its work on expanding its signature resource for congregations, Resources for Special Occasions in the Black Church.

**The Pacific Asian American Canadian Christian Education Ministries (PAACCE)** is nearing completion of an Asian American/Canadian worship resource, Worship on the Way, and an Asian American Christianity Reader done in partnership mainly with members of the Institute for the Study of Asian American Christianity (ISAAC). PAACCE is now strategizing programming to promote the usage of these two resources.

## FORMATION AND ADVOCACY MINISTRIES

**The Committee on Families and Children** has worked in partnership with the NCC Health Task Force and the Children's Defense Fund to advocate specifically for quality, affordable health care for all children and their families.

**The Committee on Disabilities (COD)** has been an active participant in the healthcare insurance reform debate through partnering with the NCC Health Task Force. Likewise, COD has been speaking out against negative portrayals in the media of persons with disabilities.

In light of the new administration, the **Committee on Public Education and Literacy** continues its work on the current focus, rethinking the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). It hosted a pre-event to the 2009 Ecumenical Advocacy Days in March. The event, Transforming No Child Left Behind, brought together members of the faith community, education policy experts and education policy reform advocates for a time of education and dialogue leading to advocacy for quality education for all and the opportunity to learn. Michael Kinnamon and Archbishop Vicken Aykazian gave leadership in the event; and, members of the NCC Justice and Advocacy Commission were able to participate in part of the day's event. Dr. John H. Jackson, President of the Schott Foundation for Public Education and US Representative Chaka Fattah were the event keynotes. Both the ELMC and JAC have signed on in support of Congressman Fattah's call for a National Commission on the



Opportunity to Learn. For a fuller report of the event, please visit: <http://www.ucc.org/justice/public-education/transforming-no-child-left.html>

## COOPERATIVE CURRICULUM AND RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

**The Committee on Outdoor Ministries (COM)** continues its New Earth Resources, a curriculum used in Christian camps.

The work of the **Committee on the Uniform Series (CUS)** continues to be foundational to the overall work of ELMC. The royalties of CUS under gird the work of ELMC; but, what continues to be reaffirmed is that there is a strong symbiotic relationship between the work of CUS and the work of the other program ministries of ELMC. In March, the Cycle Planning Team completed its interim work on the lesson goals for the 2016 lesson outlines, while the Scope and Sequence Team of CUS met to continue work on discerning the themes and scriptures for study for the curriculum years of 2016-2022, which represent the next 6-year cycle of the series. The committee completed the outlines for 2012-2013. The continuing education presenter was The Rev. Mayra Castañeda, former Associate Director of ELMC, who helped the group think about curriculum and Christian education implications related to Hispanic/Latino congregations. The committee is also exploring the use of wiki technology to do its interim development work.

## MISSION EDUCATION

This program ministry has a long history predating the council. Given the changing landscape of mission education and mission interpretation, the group has discerned the need to move from direct resource development to a colleague forum where trends and issues related to mission and mission education might be explored and strategies developed for implementation by the member communions. The team is keenly interested in partnering with the NCC Faith and Order and Interfaith Relations Commissions and Church World Service as we engage in a study process leading to Edinburgh 2010, the 100th anniversary of that mission conference, marking the beginning of the modern ecumenical movement.

# COMMUNICATION COMMISSION

The Communication Commission, composed of media professionals working mostly at the national level for Christian communions, serves as a “best practices” resource, a channel for collaborating ecumenically on service projects to benefit church and society, and as a moral and educational advocate in today’s media-dominated culture.

**NETWORK TV.** The Commission is actively involved in the production of TV documentaries and seasonal worship programming on the network affiliates of ABC, CBS and NBC through its membership in the Interfaith Broadcasting Commission, a joint venture with Catholic, Muslim and Jewish colleagues that has spanned more than a quarter-century. In 2009, the National Council of Churches presentations on ABC and NBC stations include:

- “Finding Hope in Recovery: Families Living with Addiction” January 4 on ABC, produced by Mennonite Media.
- “Pascha: The Resurrection of Christ,” on ABC during the 2009 Easter season, produced by the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese.
- “Native Nations: Standing Together for Civil Rights” May 3 on NBC, produced by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.
- “Long Road Back: Ex-Offenders Struggle for Acceptance,” October 4 on NBC, a production of Mennonite Media.
- “Uganda: Ready to Forgive” October 18 on ABC, produced by Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.
- “A Place for All: Faith and Community for People with Disabilities,” a joint production of Jewish, Muslim and Christian faith groups, December 6 on ABC.
- “Christmas Eve with First United Methodist Church of Dallas” December 24 on ABC, a presentation of United Methodist Communications.

CBS produces four half-hour documentaries in consultation with NCC and its interfaith partners. Topics for 2009 are: Global Poverty (April 26), Music and Faith (June 7), Faith Groups and Advocacy on Capitol Hill (September 27) and Scriptures, Art and Archaeology (December 6).

For more on IBC, visit [www.interfaithbroadcasting.com](http://www.interfaithbroadcasting.com).



**MEDIA ADVOCACY.** This year, the Commission became a founding partner in a new interfaith coalition, “So We Might See,” that hopes to educate and advocate for media justice both within and beyond communities of faith. It is the latest effort in the Commission’s long-standing efforts to reform the media environment into a more responsible asset in American society. “So We Might See” envisions up to four short campaigns per year. The first, “Bring Betty Broadband,” began in June and seeks universal availability of online high-speed Internet access for all, especially those in economically depressed neighborhoods and rural communities. The second campaign, to be called a “Violent Media Fast,” points

up the 100,000 hours of violence each child will see on TV in a 10-year period, and encourages families to seek alternate sources of entertainment and education. The third campaign, “Spare Kids the Ads,” opposes the increasing use of subtle commercial product placement in the content of children’s television shows, a technique that already consumes 45 per cent of primetime programming.

The project is managed by the United Church of Christ and its Washington-based media advocacy arm, OC, Inc. The sponsoring coalition includes the National Council of Churches, U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, Islamic Society of North America, Presbyterian News Service, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, and United Methodist Communications. For more on this project, see [www.ucfiles.com/swms/](http://www.ucfiles.com/swms/).

**NEWS DISTRIBUTION.** The Commission created and manages Worldwide Faith News, an international, ecumenical distribution service for faith groups’ news bureaus that provides editors and reporters with a “one-stop source” of religion news. WFN is considered by Google and other web search engines to be a news service similar to AP, and thus posting a story to WFN guarantees its wide dispersal within minutes to anyone searching on topics contained within the story. WFN itself receives more than 10 million visits per month from those seeking original-source religion news content. For more, see [www.wfn.org](http://www.wfn.org).

**PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT.** The Commission provides its members with continuing education through its national meetings each year. This fall, for example, the schedule for the Commission meeting in New York City included on-site seminars with religion editors and reporters for the New York Times and Associated Press, and on-site visits with programming leaders of CBS and Public Broadcasting Service. In the spring meeting in Nashville, a team of digital specialists on the national staff

of United Methodist Communications shared with their ecumenical colleagues the variety of ways UMCom is using advanced, interactive, Web-based techniques, converging with other media, to reach an expanded audience with information about United Methodist initiatives in mission and ministry.

For more information about the Communication Commission, visit [www.nccusa.org/communication](http://www.nccusa.org/communication)

## JUSTICE AND ADVOCACY COMMISSION

The Justice and Advocacy Commission -- seeking to be faithful to Scripture's call and Christ's command that we love our neighbors as ourselves, work for and walk with the poor and the disenfranchised, and cherish and protect God's creation -- provides an opportunity for communions, congregations, regional councils of churches, and related faith-based ministries to join in an ecumenical pursuit of peace, justice and stewardship in today's divided and troubled society.



**AGENDA.** The Commission's agenda is broad and complex. It encompasses the issues of responsible citizenship and religious liberty . . . eco-justice . . . social, gender and racial justice . . . poverty and economic justice . . . immigration, international affairs and peacemaking. Through the Commission, the member communions are offered a means of focusing their mutual concerns through research, ecumenical dialogue, and "best practices" sharing. And the Council looks to the Commission to pursue this work through both education and advocacy, working from a policy base developed by the member communions of the NCC over many decades.

**ADVOCACY DAYS.** One of the ways the Council's member churches prepare their congregants to fulfill their calling is through "Ecumenical Advocacy Days," an annual event that brings more than 700 Christians to Washington to discuss issues, learn how to exercise appropriate and effective advocacy with those in government, and spend a day on Capitol Hill to put their concerns into action. For more, see [www.advocacydays.org](http://www.advocacydays.org).

**PUBLIC STATEMENTS.** The Commission maintains a running summary of public statements by the Council on current topics of spiritual and moral concern, some with specific reference to matters before the Congress. Many of these statements develop collaboratively among the member communions, and some are drafted in concert with ecumenical and interfaith partners that embrace a community even wider than the NCC's members. The summary of recent public statements may be found on the web at [www.nccusa.org/about/justicestatements.html](http://www.nccusa.org/about/justicestatements.html).

**NEW JUSTICE RESOURCES.** The Commission's staff resources have been expanded this year to address several issues identified by the communions as high priorities. Several interns and a staff member in the Washington office have begun a new educational and advocacy emphasis to assist the communions on poverty issues, including a new webpage, worship resources, and policy statements. A new advocacy officer in racial justice and human rights has been added to the Washington office through a joint appointment with the United Church of Christ, which is providing start-up funding. Racial justice is a priority identified in the NCC strategic plan.

**OTHER MAJOR EMPHASES.** The Washington-based Eco-Justice Program, considered by many to be the model program for ecumenical work in justice, continues to set standards for effectiveness in advocacy and education. A detailed summary of their work is included in this annual report, as is the activity of the growing New York-based program of Women's Ministries. Both of these initiatives are monitored and governed through specialized working groups of personnel from the member communions.



The Council is participating in a new Immigration Task Force, assembled by General Secretary Michael Kinnamon to relate the Council appropriately to multiple local, state and federal initiatives emerging around the immigration issue, both in terms of social justice programs and legislation. David Leslie of Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon is chair of this task force, which includes representatives of NCC, Church World Service, member communions and regional councils of churches.

This spring, the Commission's Committee on Religious Liberty, in collaboration with the Freedom Forum's First Amendment Center in Washington, published on the Web a landmark five-volume reference work, *The Law of Church and State in America*, written by the late Dean M. Kelley, NCC executive for religious liberty, who died in 1997. This comprehensive work, unique in its field, was completed at the time of Kelley's death, but had gone unpublished until the Committee pursued a partnership with the First Amendment Center, which agreed to host the extensive document on its website. The Center's senior scholar, Charles Haynes, is the current chair of the religious liberty committee. For this and other major justice initiatives of the ecumenical community, see [www.nccusa.org/about/justiceinitiatives.html](http://www.nccusa.org/about/justiceinitiatives.html)



**INTERFAITH ENGAGEMENT.** The NCC is often at its best when it serves as convener for diverse faith organizations seeking ways to collaborate with one other. The Washington Interreligious Staff Community (WISC), a group of about 40 leaders of faith-based advocacy offices on or near Capitol Hill, is an example. At the invitation of the Council, this interfaith group – ranging from Catholic, Protestant and Orthodox to Jewish and Muslim – is now meeting regularly for dialogue, information gathering, and professional development. It has hosted top leaders of the White House offices of public engagement and faith-based and community initiatives, and participated in planning a CBS-produced TV documentary on faith-based advocacy, scheduled for airing in

September. The group, with help from the Council, has also published a comprehensive directory of faith groups working on Capitol Hill, including dozens of interfaith and ecumenical workgroups and think-tanks focused on a wide range of legislative issues.

The Commission staff also provides the Council's representation on the national board of what many have called one of the most successful federal aid programs ever developed – the Emergency Food and Shelter Program, which annually channels more than \$100 million in aid to regional EFSP boards and local benevolent agencies across the country, many of them staffed by local councils of churches. The national board, which is specified in the Congressional enabling legislation 25 years ago, includes representatives of the National Council of Churches, Catholic Charities, The Salvation Army, United Jewish Communities, United Way of America, and the American Red Cross.

*interfaith engagement*

## RACIAL JUSTICE PROGRAM

The National Council of Churches' Racial Justice Program is a new direct partnership with the United Church of Christ. Through it, we seek to advance federal policies that will help confront systemic racial inequalities, and dismantle structural barriers to people of color. As a part of the Justice Roundtable and the "Crack the Disparity" Coalition, we seek to eliminate the current 100 to 1 sentencing disparity for crack versus powder cocaine offenses. We have met, and continue to meet, with federal legislators to promote pending legislation that would eliminate the disparity, and we published an article in the UCC's *Witness for Justice* encouraging Christian communities to engage this issue directly.

We have partnered with the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights to advocate that the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights be restored to the force for justice it initially was. Likewise, we participate with a coalition of faith-based and other organizations advocating for the enactment of the Democracy Restoration Act, which would restore the right to vote to individuals with felony convictions, but who are not currently imprisoned. We joined a faith-based amici Supreme Court brief opposing life sentences without the possibility for parole for juveniles.

Working with our member communions, we are developing a series of dialogues to promote healing, understanding and reconciliation in the churches, among the races. Likewise, we are working to revamp and restart the Ecumenical Bail Bond Program. Furthermore, we are reexamining and re-envisioning our 1984 Policy Statement on Race in light of our contemporary racial realities and climate.

## WOMEN'S MINISTRIES PROGRAM AND JUSTICE FOR WOMEN WORKING GROUP



The Chinese saying "Women hold up half the sky," is the source for the title of Nicholas D. Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn's newly released book "Half the Sky" which puts forth the premise that the worldwide momentum towards recognizing "women's rights" as "human right" is the primary solution for this century's ills. Although Kristof and WuDunn illuminate abuses and discrimination of women and girls, they also describe the female resourcefulness which makes the case that neglecting women's agency is a huge political and economic error. The Women's Ministries Program and the Justice for Women Working Group of the NCC also believe it is a huge spiritual error to neglect women's agency and so we are committed to recognizing and advancing women's leadership in our member communions, the ecumenical movement and society at large.

Major projects throughout 2009 which focused on Women's leadership included: a national study and evaluation process of the companion study workbook for the book "Faith and Feminism: A Holy Alliance", by Helen LaKelly Hunt, Young Women's Leadership Experience at the UN Commission on the Status of Women, a series of "Brown Bag Lunches" held at the Interchurch Center, involvement with Women's Funding Network – Women, Faith and Poverty initiative, development of campus ministry curriculum, website and pilot project on Fistula with funding support through UN Foundation, supervision of female interns in women's ministries office and Ecumenical Women at the UN, continued education and advocacy work related to "Human Trafficking", regional meeting to review Beijing Platform in preparation UN Commission on Status of Women, and an intensive planning process for an upcoming convening in 2010 of "women of faith thought leaders" in partnership with Auburn Institute, Sister Fund, Jewish Theological Seminary and American Society for Muslim Advancement.

Women's leadership abounds in the NCC member communions. We recognize, encourage and support women's leadership as a powerful agency of change that can usher in God's justice, as together – men and women – we hold up God's whole sky, care for God's whole creation and honor all God's children.



# National Council of Churches of Christ Eco-Justice Programs

The Eco-Justice Program manages a national network of member communions, state ecumenical agencies, and religious activists that support a theological and religious response to eco-justice issues. The program works through an education for advocacy model, encouraging education, worship, and engagement on issues such as climate change, energy, environmental health, water, biodiversity, wilderness, “green” churches, food/farming, and sustainability. The program office, in cooperation with the Council’s Eco-Justice Working Group, which includes representatives from NCC-member communions meeting twice a year, is charged with engaging and equipping congregations and people of faith to take action in their personal, congregational, and civic lives. The underlying programmatic foundation is the connection to justice issues in all of the program’s environmental work. The program pays particular attention to engaging young adults through a dedicated webpage ([www.ncccotenders.org](http://www.ncccotenders.org)) and a young adult training retreat.

The program focuses extensively on climate justice issues and has developed several education and worship resources to help congregants understand how climate change will impact vulnerable communities such as low-income communities, children, the elderly, and communities of color. By working with communion policy staff in Washington, DC, the climate initiative has been able to provide a witness to elected official offices on the need to address climate justice issues, conducting more than 450 educational meetings with Congressional offices and testifying at four Congressional hearings. The initiative has collaborated with more than 15 state and national faith groups and has conducted more than 90 presentations on climate, energy, green jobs, and poverty. The initiative has engaged more than 30,000 people of faith across the country to take action on climate issues including 20 candlelight vigils around the country focused on the importance of a moral and just response to climate change. The program, together with Church World Service, hosted a conference on international adaptation assistance. Together with denominational staff, program staff also participated in the United Nations climate negotiation meetings in Poland.

To highlight the connection between climate and poverty, the program hosted a climate justice Heads of Communion dinner to discuss the impacts of climate change on low-income communities and communities of color. This dinner was followed by a meeting with senior White House staff Carol Browner. The climate justice program has a focused effort with black churches in the Southeast with more than 2,000 clergy and lay leaders endorsing the Council’s Faith Principles on Global Warming, including 30 African American mayors from South Carolina and numerous bishops.

To supplement the climate work, the program showcases a green building initiative that provides resources and tools for congregations wishing to make their worship and building facilities more eco-friendly and energy efficient. At the heart of the green building program is the desire to help congregations reduce energy use and thus save money that can then be spent on core church ministries. Recently, the green building initiative launched an online component that allows congregations to take action and calculate their carbon reduction. To date, close to 300,000 pounds of carbon have been reduced through this online carbon reduction program.

The environmental health initiative of the Eco-Justice Program office strives to provide information about how toxics and pollution impact human health. With a focus on the states of Maine, Michigan, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Connecticut, and Washington, the initiative has worked with state ecumenical agencies on advocacy and educational outreach to the faith community. To help congregants take action in their personal lives, a Green Cleaning Toolkit and Healthy Spa Toolkit have been developed. Over the past year, the initiative has given 71 presentations on environmental health, hosted a national conference in Minnesota on toxics, and conducted 20 briefings to religious leaders. The Mindful Living: Human Health, Pollution, and Toxics worship and education resource remains the program’s most popular resource with more than 10,000 copies being requested. In May 2009, to support the ongoing efforts of this initiative, the Council adopted a resolution on environmental health.

The program continues to educate and raise awareness concerning land issues while providing training to people of faith on how to engage on land issues. Working with the Arizona Ecumenical Council and the Wyoming Council of Churches, the land initiative effectively launched two place-based campaigns for wilderness protection.

The Eco-Justice Program draws upon the full range of

## HEALTH TASK FORCE

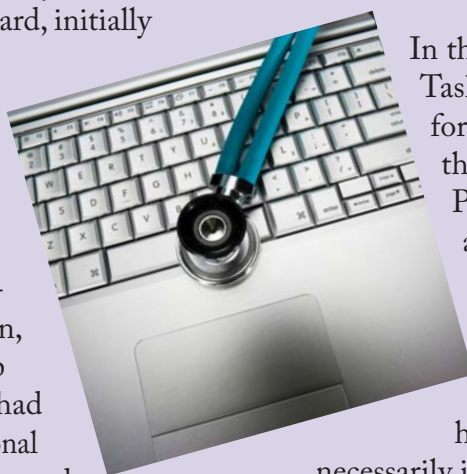
The National Council of Churches Health Task Force serves as the primary point of focus of the Council's work in network development, education and advocacy related to health ministries and healthcare policy reform. The Health Task Force, with more than one third of the member communions as well as specialized ecumenical health related groups has been in place for over three years. It was authorized by the NCC Governing Board, initially drawing its core membership from the Justice and Advocacy and Education and Leadership Ministries Commission, thus reflecting inter-commission collaboration. The Task Force relates to a NCC Health Network comprised primarily of congregations of member communions that are concerned with some aspect of health education, direct service or policy advocacy. The group has further developed this Network which had its origin in a national survey of congregational health care ministries. To address the interests and concerns of the Network, the Health Task Force has developed three foci including: Network development and capacity building, Health Care Policy Reform, and Emergency Preparedness.

Because of the confidence of foundations in the work of the NCC related to health care, the Task Force enjoys a unique staffing pattern with a senior consultant and an experienced consultant, who has upgraded our communications both printed and electronic; in recent months this has been further enhanced by the addition of two interns.

The Task Force has interviewed congregational and organizational leaders to catalog and access their varied efforts and initiatives in health ministry and policy reform advocacy as well as made contact with less engaged communions to acquaint them with the work of the Task Force and discover areas of mutual interest and focus. Through the chronicling and cataloging of this information, the Council can offer a snapshot of the health policy reform advocacy work of congregations and

insights, disciples, and perspectives of the Christian faith so that God's love and grace can be more fully revealed in all Creation and so that the children of God can work for justice on behalf of vulnerable populations disproportionately impacted from environmental problems. For more information on our extensive Eco-Justice Program initiatives, visit [www.ncecojustice.org](http://www.ncecojustice.org) or [www.ncecotenders.org](http://www.ncecotenders.org).

ecumenical partners across the country, showing where interests and emphases lie and where gaps in advocacy need to be addressed. The Task Force website has been developed, serving as an important education and advocacy resource for individuals, congregations, and organizations, providing health electronic alerts, background documents, links to relevant websites, etc. ([www.health-ministries.org](http://www.health-ministries.org)) as evidenced by the increasing number of daily hits to the website.



In the area of emergency preparedness, the Task Force has worked with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Emory University Health and Faith Project concerning preparedness for avian flu and more recently swine flu.

While both the NCC and many of its member communions have long standing policy positions related to health care, these policies are not necessarily in total accord with one another. The Task Force has been hard at work formulating an ecumenical response to contemporary efforts in the area of national health care policy, producing policy reform primers, background and update documents as well as talking points for staff, Task Force members, and the larger constituency. The Task Force, likewise, has cataloged and assessed the policy positions and efforts of historic partners, member communions, and other coalitions and organizations, interfacing consistently with the staff colleagues of the Washington-based public witness offices of our member communions.

At a critical time in the healthcare insurance reform debate, the NCC and the Health Task Force has been poised to engage in and influence discourse and public witness, having a number of interventions related to the issue. Church leaders have been supported with the educational base and network development necessary to engaged in faith-based policy dialogue in a balanced and nuanced manner, lending the Council's and its member communions' moral authority in a credible way.

# FINANCIAL STATEMENT 2008-2009

This has been a wonderful year and we celebrate our continued common work together to more fully manifest the oneness we have been given by God. Our member Communion's work through the Council can be more fully appreciated as you read through this Annual Report and all that has been done this year and the work that lays ahead. These efforts do involve nuts and bolts and practical considerations, and the financial picture is shown below.

We are very grateful, in this past year with all of its financial turmoil, that our member Communion's have been resolute in their support of the Council with their unrestricted support slightly ahead of budget. We are also pleased that our contributed support increased very significantly. Foundation grants were behind budget as we had begun to see last year. In response, by mid-year we focused additional staff resources at increasing our contributed and grant income which should bear fruit this coming year. Changes in some of our administrative functions caused these expenses to be slightly higher this year as were retiree benefit expenses; however, as we move forward, these changes will result in declining costs. As one would expect, the significant fluctuations in the financial markets took its toll on our endowment and invested funds, and we have been working with less revenue there than was expected.

Our program work on Christian unity and common mission is expanding in new ways at reduced costs through our program Commissions: Faith & Order, Interfaith Relations, Education & Leadership Ministries, Communications, and Justice & Advocacy. We are also very grateful for our experienced and dedicated staff, both senior program directors and administrative staff, who consistently lead and deliver our significant mission programs shared among our member Communion's and the whole of the ecumenical movement. They too are mindful of the current economic environment and are working most effectively and efficiently.

Putting together this income picture and our work to reduce costs, the difference between income and expenses was much closer than could have been anticipated. With our sharp focus on contributed income and foundation grants, along with our continuing efforts to lower expenses, we look forward to stronger financials in the future.

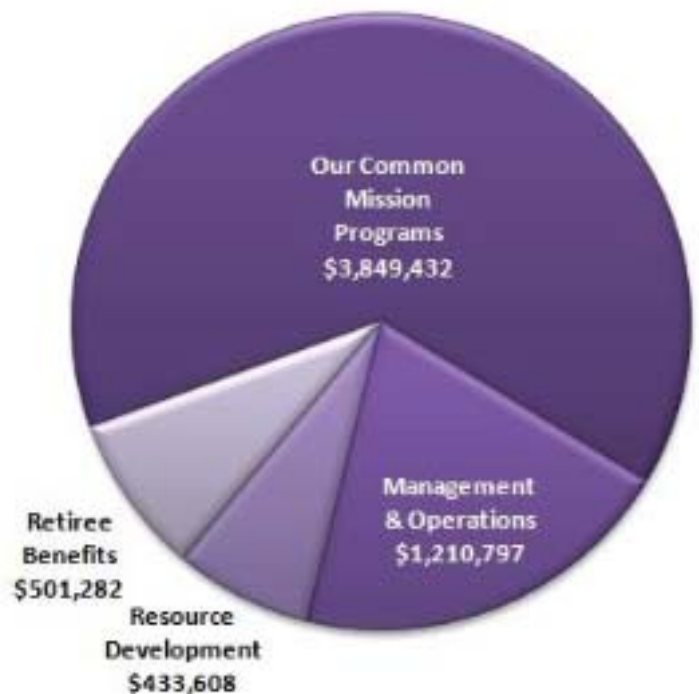
The Governing Board and staff of the Council are grateful for the many generous individual gifts given to support the work of the Council. We have thanked many of our contributors on the next pages, and look forward to their and your continued support as we continue to respond to the Gospel message to manifest the unity of the Church.

**Sources of Income 2008-2009**  
\$5,263,808

(excluding realized and unrealized capital gains & losses)



**Mission Programs & Administration 2008-2009**  
\$5,995,119



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**Phone:** Call our Resource Development Department during office hours (9am-4pm EST) at **212-870-2333**. Have your credit card ready.

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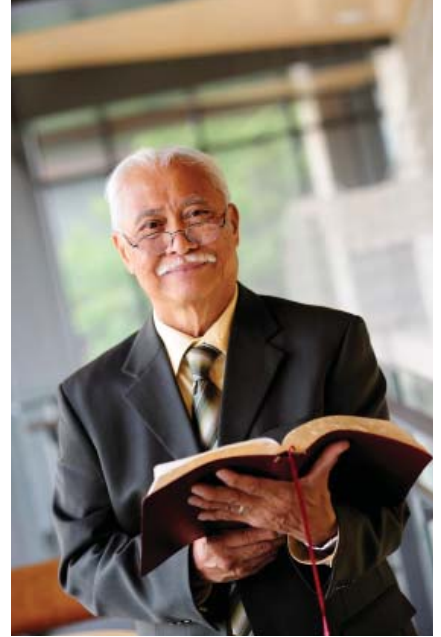
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