

Every Square Inch

Reports on Christian Reformed Representation in Canadian Ecumenical Ministry

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"No man is an island entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main."

John Donne

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CHRISTIAN
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CHURCH

Presbyterian / Christian Reformed tête-à-tête

Rev. Bruce Adema, Director of Canadian Ministries, CRCNA

Two years ago or so, when the Synod of the Christian Reformed Church and the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Canada formally recognized the relationship between our denominations, what did the delegates think would happen? Some might have thought little. Others might have thought lots. It seems that the former were wrong, and the latter absolutely correct.

Evidence of this was the PCC / CRC Staff Interchange Day that took place on November 14, 2011. Thirteen CRC staff members journeyed to the PCC headquarters in Toronto, and a large contingent of PCC staff members made the trek to Burlington.

Events in Toronto and Burlington mirrored each other. Time was given for welcome and introductions, for staff in similar ministries to share their projects and priorities – and through that to see where collaboration might grow, or to gain new ideas that can be applied in the particular ministry context.

At noon all staff and guests in the building were invited to share a supplied lunch together, and a time of worship ended the Interchange.

Already the Principle Clerk of the PCC and I are talking about how to build on this connection. Don't be surprised to hear that a similar event takes place again: this is the start of something good. Poet John

Donne was right about the individual, and his insight is true for our denominations as well: the CRC and the PCC are not isolated islands, but are joined together and part of the one great Church of Christ.

Expect to see and experience that even more as time goes by.

The Living Face of Ecumenical Relations: A Report on the CANAAC Meeting

Rebecca Warren, Representative on the Ecumenical Interfaith Relations Committee of the CRCNA

This past September, I was privileged to be able to attend the meeting of CANAAC, the Caribbean and North American Area Council of the WCRC (World Communion for Reformed Churches) in the Dominican Republic. The theme for this gathering was "Who is my neighbor?" As part of our meeting, participants from CANAAC, as well as CANACOM (Caribbean and North American Council on Mission) and the Theological Institute (seminary students from around the region), visited schools, NGOs, and other agencies that seek to live out Christ's calling to love and protect our neighbors.

I have been a member of the Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee of the CRCNA for three years, and in that time learned lots of acronyms and heard many reports from others about ecumenical trips. But what was brought home to me on this trip to the Dominican was how much those acronyms and reports are merely representative of the living face of ecumenical relations.

Our cooperation with other Reformed brothers and sisters from our region of the world is more than just committee decisions and paper reports—behind every one of those acronyms are living faces!

I am happy to report that when it comes to ecumenical relations, I have seen more of our neighbors and their faces are alive with the light of Christ!

Interfaith Forum on Climate Change

Kathy Vandergrift, CRC Representative on the Commission for Justice and Peace of the Canadian Council of Churches

For the first time in Canadian faith-based activity, leaders from many different faiths gathered on parliament hill in October to discuss concerns about the environment. The leaders issued a joint call for leadership and action on climate change, in advance of global negotiations on a follow-up to the Kyoto Protocol.

The Call to Action, which draws on various faith traditions and sacred texts, asserts that the solution to the challenge of climate change includes a spiritual dimension. Turning from a culture of consumerism and waste to a culture of sustainability and stewardship will be a conversion experience. As well as concern for the physical planet, the faith leaders expressed a common concern for the people who are already suffering from climate change and millions in poor countries that will face major adjustments in the coming years.

While change starts with local and personal behaviours, faith leaders also called for a new global agreement,

replacing Kyoto, that would reduce carbon emissions enough to stay below a two degree increase in average global temperatures and provide funds for adaptation and mitigation in less developed countries.

The Commission for Justice and Peace, which hosted the inter-faith dialogue, will take the statement to the global negotiations in Durban and follow up with political leaders in Canada. A copy of the Call to Action is available on the Canadian Council of Churches website at www.councilofchurches.ca.

“Turning from a culture of consumerism and waste to a culture of sustainability and stewardship will be a conversion experience.”

KAIROS Speaks to Climate Change with Ecumenical Voice

Submitted by Louisa Bruinsma, CRCNA Board Member on KAIROS

It wasn't too long ago that both political and religious leaders scoffed at the notion of climate change, dismissing it as doomsday warnings of tree huggers. But anyone who regularly watches the evening news can no longer deny the images before our eyes: the millions displaced by coastal flooding and the thousands threatened by starvation because of draught in Somalia. (If more convincing is needed, check out the small signs at the Athabasca glacier indicating where the glaciers have receded over the years, a recession that may eventually threaten water supplies for even the privileged.) And leaders in the western world can no longer deny the impact of extreme weather as it profoundly affects even their own countries.

In the 1980s Canada took an effective leadership role in opposing the system of apartheid in South Africa. At the Durban climate change conference in South Africa (currently underway as this article is written), Archbishop and Nobel laureate Desmond Tutu challenged the Canadian government to take a similar leadership role, this time in addressing climate change.

As members of a relatively small denomination, we may often feel overwhelmed by the call to wit-

ness to God's good news and grace in our world. We cannot deny some self-interest: obedience to that call may affect our economy, impact our jobs, reduce our income (our pensions!) and our lifestyles – the "need" for "things" – cars, iphones, cheap air fares, etc. The problems are too big and too complicated, and now global in scope. So our response is often a helpless, "Oh well."

What a development to celebrate, then, when the voice of the Christian church doesn't grow tired, or weary or faint (Is 40), but continues to try to sound a clear note of hope. The CRCNA is one of 11 members of KAIROS, the ecumenical organization with a Mission to proclaim this prophetic message.

One such clear note was sounded through a statement KAIROS prepared for presentation at the Durban conference in South Africa. It begins with Psalm 64 which praises God for caring for the earth, blessing it with showers and drenching its furrows. It laments the way we damaged the earth and mourns with those who have suffered due to severe storms, floods, heat waves and droughts. And it confesses our complicity in economic systems and life style choices that perpetuate these problems.

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**Transforming Lives
and Communities
Worldwide**

Our Mission

As people called by God,
We gather to praise God, listen to him, and respond.
We nurture each other in faith and obedience to Christ.
We love and care for one another as God's people.
We commit ourselves to serve and to tell others about Jesus.
We pursue God's justice and peace in every area of life.

Our Vision

The Christian Reformed Church is a diverse family of healthy congregations, assemblies, and ministries expressing the good news of God's kingdom that transforms lives and communities worldwide.

www.crcna.org

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The statement ends with a call to the government of Canada

- to renew our commitment to the Kyoto Protocol
- to reduce our emissions, to redirect federal subsidies to fossil fuel industries to programs that promote energy conservation and renewable energy sources
- to cancel debts of the nations of the Global south through working with the UN World Bank.

I am honoured to represent the CRCNA on the Board of KAIROS. I want you to know what an exciting experience is it when leaders from diverse church houses (Anglican, Catholic, Mennonite, United, Lutheran, Quakers, Presbyterian) can engage in these discussions to produce a clear sounding prophetic note.

Please pray for KAIROS, and for efforts by all people to work towards social and environmental justice. And pray that our government, too, will recognize and act on this call.

For a full copy of the Durban statement link on <http://www.kairoscanada.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/11/SUS-CJ-11-10-StatementDurban.pdf> and www.kairoscanada.org for general information on KAIROS.