



The Self-Ruled Antiochian Orthodox Christian

Archdiocese of North America

50th General Convention—Chicago, Illinois

July 25-31, 2011

Report of the Department of Inter-Orthodox and Inter-Faith Relations

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Very Rev. Olof H. Scott, Chair

Christian Churches Together in the USA: Very Rev. Olof H. Scott

Over the past two years our archdiocese has continued to participate as a member of Christian Churches Together in the U.S.A. (CCT). CCT is a coalition of five Church Families, Historic Protestant, Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Evangelical/Pentecostal, and Historic Black along with Christian service organizations. The Orthodox representation in this organization continues to be the same six Orthodox jurisdictions, three Eastern and three Oriental, as reported at our last General Assembly. No other Orthodox jurisdiction has applied for membership during this time.

Fr. Olof Scott continues to serve on the Steering Committee which is charged with the planning and work of CCT in between annual meetings. He is one of four Orthodox members, two Eastern and two Oriental, on this committee.

The 2010 and 2011 Annual Meetings of CCT were held in Sea-Tac, WA, and Birmingham, AL, respectively, with Steering Committee meetings held in between in Chicago. Major emphasis over these past two years have included:

- Domestic Poverty Initiative working through CCT's position paper.
- Evangelism/Evangelization and how member churches understand and practice it with the potential for proselytism.
- Domestic Racism/Civil Rights and its changes over the past forty plus years including a brief response to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "Letter from Birmingham Jail"

The annual meeting for 2012 is planned for Memphis, TN, with continuing examination on the theme of Racism and Civil Rights, past, present and future. A special four day tour of significant historic civil rights sites throughout the south and ending in Memphis is being planned as a preliminary study for the meeting. Preliminary investigations are underway to hold the 2013 meeting in Jerusalem as a sign of solidarity and support for Christians of all persuasions in this region. Meetings between CCT churches and their sister contacts in this region would precede or follow the Jerusalem gathering.

North American Orthodox-Catholic Theological Consultation: Dr. Robert M. Haddad

This semiannual Consultation met four times between June 2009 and June 2011. Each meeting usually runs for an afternoon, a full day and a morning, and is usually divided into seven sessions: one business; two informational; and four theological. The business session draws up plans for the next meeting—time, place and theological subjects to be examined. The informational has various members of the Consultation report briefly on recent developments in each Church. The theological sessions normally involve presentation of pre-assigned papers for discussion. Because the theological sessions comprise the heart of each meeting, this report focuses on them. The papers presented at the four meetings to which this report is devoted dealt largely with subjects related, directly or indirectly, to the issue of papal primacy.

June 1-3, 2009, held at St Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary, Crestwood, N.Y., co-chaired by The Most Rev. Daniel Pilarczyk, Roman Catholic Archbishop of Cincinnati, and His Eminence Metropolitan Maximos, Greek Orthodox Bishop of Pittsburgh.

The theological session on June 1st saw the following presentations: "Draft Responses to the Ravenna Document" by two Catholic members: Sr. Susan Wood and Fr. John Galvin; and an Orthodox member, Fr. Nicholas Apostola. The second theological session, held on June 2nd, was taken up by the presentation "Points of Convergence in our Papers on Primacy and Conciliarity" by two Catholic members: Fr. Brian Daley and Dr. Vito Nicastro; and an Orthodox member Fr. James Dutko. In the third theological session, also held on June 2nd, all members were invited to contribute to a "Review of Recent Scholarship on the First Vatican Council: Examination of the Presentation By Cardinal Walter Kaspar at the 2003 Catholic-Orthodox Symposium in the Vatican." The fourth and final theological session was devoted to an "Assessment of our Work on Primacy and Conciliarity, the Status of our Response to the Ravenna Document, and Next Steps."

October 22-24, 2009, held at St. Paul's College, Washington, DC, co-chaired by Metropolitan Maximos and Archbishop Pilarczyk.

The first theological session, convened on October 23rd and presided over by the Catholic members, Sr. Susan Wood and Fr. John Galvin, and the Orthodox members, Fr. Thomas Fitzgerald and Fr. Nicholas Apostola was devoted to the "Draft Response to the Ravenna Statement." The same subject occupied the second theological session, also held on October 23. The third session took place on the evening of the same day and was devoted to discussion of "Draft Statements Incorporating the Vision Statements [Concerning How Union between the Two Churches might Present Itself]." The presenters were the Catholics, Fr. Brian Daley and Dr. Vito Nicastro, and the Orthodox, Fr. James Dutko. The fourth theological session, held on October 24th, concerned Fr. John Erickson's presentation on "The Role of the Metropolitan and the Appeals Process in the Early Canons." Fr. Joseph Komonchak then presented his paper on "Herve Legrand and the Council of Sardica (343)."

Meeting of June 1-3, 2010, held at Hellenic College/Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology, co-chaired by Metropolitan Maximos and by Archbishop Pilarczyk's successor, The Most Rev. Gregory Aymond, Archbishop of New Orleans.

The first theological session, convened on June 1st, was devoted to consideration of the draft "Steps towards a United Church." The second session, held on June 2nd, featured two papers on autocephaly: Fr. John Erickson's carried the title "The Autocephalous Church," while Dr. Robert Haddad's was entitled "Constantinople over Antioch, 1516-1724--Patriarchal Politics in the Ottoman Era." Fr. Joseph Komonchak provided a Catholic response. The third theological session, also held on June 2nd, was devoted to Fr. Mark Arey's "Report on the Assembly of Orthodox Bishops of North and Central America." The fourth session, held on the morning of June 3rd, saw further consideration of the draft "Steps towards a United Church."

Meeting of September 30-October 2, 2010, held at Georgetown University and chaired by Archbishop Aymond. Illness obliged Metropolitan Maximos to absent himself.

On September 30th, the members of the Consultation enjoyed a reception and dinner hosted by the Georgetown Jesuit Community. The first theological session convened on October 1st and led by the Catholic, Dr. Vito Nicastro and the Orthodox Fr. James Dutko, was devoted to the "Draft Statement on the Date of Easter." The second and third sessions, also held on October 1st, once again took up the draft of the vision statement, "Steps towards a United Church." The fourth session, held on October 2nd, continued discussion of the same statement.

Meeting of June 6-8, 2011, held at St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary and chaired by Archbishop Aymond. Illness once more kept Metropolitan Maximos from attending.

The first theological session took place on June 6th and had Fr. Mark Arey, an Orthodox, hold forth on "The Meeting of the Orthodox Episcopal Assembly in May 2011." The Catholic Fr. Joseph Komonchak presented a paper on "Episcopal Conferences in the Catholic Church." The second session, held on June 7th, had Dr. Thomas Bird, a Catholic, present a paper on "The Role of the Laity in the Catholic Church," and Dr. Susan Harvey and Fr. Nicholas Apostola, both Orthodox, offer presentations on "The Role of the Laity in the Orthodox Church." The third session, held on the same day, was devoted to "General Discussion and Reassessment of the Goals and the Methods of our Dialogue." The fourth session, convened on June 8th,

continued the discussion of the role of the laity in the two Churches. This session went on to discussion of “The Methodology of Editing Future Agreed Statements.”

NCCCUSA Interfaith Relations Commission: Rev. Fr. Theodore Pulcini

Fr. Theodore Pulcini was an invited participant in the NCCCUSA Interfaith Relations Commission (IRC) meeting held in Philadelphia, PA, October 7-9, 2010. This was the result of the commission’s desire to have Antiochian Orthodox participation specifically in ongoing dialogue of the National Muslim-Christian Initiative.

Fr. Theodore was one of two Orthodox participants, the other being Fr. Emmanuel Clapsis of Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology. His presence was enthusiastically received. Even though the Antiochian Archdiocese is no longer a member of the NCCCUSA, participation in the IRC and its dialogues does not presuppose such membership; other non-member churches (most notably the Roman Catholic Church) participate in the commission’s various activities. Participants were grateful for the Antiochian Orthodox presence among them, even in this more restrictive form, especially in light of our Church’s centuries-long interaction with Islam.

Of primary interest at this meeting was a caucus group meeting on the subject of “Equipping Congregations for Interfaith Engagement.” Fr. Theodore’s experience is reflected in his own words, “I cannot adequately emphasize how necessary a consistent Orthodox witness is to the continued productivity of the IRC’s efforts, which are more necessary than ever in these days of ever-increasing interreligious strife both internationally and domestically.”

World Council of Churches: Anne Glynn Mackoul

World Council of Churches in Geneva, Switzerland, under the leadership of the moderator the Rev. Dr. Walter Altmann (Lutheran/Brazil) in September 2009 elected a new general secretary, the Rev. Dr. Olaf Fyzke Tveit. Rev. Dr. Tveit (Lutheran/Norway) replaced the Rev. Samuel Kobia (Methodist/Kenya) who had served one term as general secretary. The Rev. Dr. Tveit, a noted theologian who had served on staff with the Church of Norway, among many other accomplishments, had been serving the WCC as a co-moderator of the Palestine Israel Ecumenical Forum during the period that the Amman Call document was issued, which document issued a challenge to Christians and Christian communities worldwide to pray and act in support of Christians in the Middle East, especially the Holy Land. Under his facilitation, the Kairos document was signed by the leaders of all of the Christian communities in Palestine and Israel and was sent out to the more than 345 member churches of the WCC and global news outlets.

Dr. Tveit's first official church visit upon taking office was to Istanbul, Turkey, where he was received by the Ecumenical Patriarch, His All Holiness Bartholomew. He since has met with most of the patriarchs of the Orthodox member churches, including His Beatitude Ignatius IV, patriarch of Antioch and All the East.

Orthodox Representation

The Patriarchate of Antioch is represented at the WCC by His Eminence Damaskinos metropolitan of Sao Paulo and all Brazil, the Very Rev. George Dimas (Beirut, Lebanon), and Mrs. Anne Glynn Mackoul (USA). Others from the Church of Antioch represent the patriarch at other committees, commissions and consultations, including many lay persons, male and female.

Most Orthodox members of the central committee regularly are present at meetings of the WCC and its committees or send proxies, assuring that the Orthodox presence -- Eastern and Oriental -- remained close to the twenty-five percent of members present. With the exceptions of the Orthodox churches of Bulgaria and of Georgia, all Orthodox churches, Chalcedonian and non-Chalcedonian, currently participate in the World Council of Churches. The Orthodox churches also are represented on staff at the WCC.

Orthodox Focus

Interest on the part of the Orthodox churches represented in the WCC seemed to focus during the 2011 meeting of the central committee on the issues of (1) participation in the 2013 Assembly of the WCC to be held in Busan, South Korea and planning for its prayer life, (2) the question of including as a member church (with an exception made to the criterion of size) the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land, (3) the situation of Christians in the Middle East and Northern Africa, (4) the consultations of the Commission on Faith and Order around the document, The Nature and Purpose of the Church, (5) governance issues, and (6) the relationship of the WCC to the ACT Alliance.

The Tenth Assembly

His Eminence Gennadios (Limouris) metropolitan of Sassima (Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople), as moderator of the Assembly Planning Committee, vice moderator of the Central Committee, and co-moderator of the Permanent Committee on Consensus and Collaboration, has been active assuring that Orthodox concerns will be addressed properly during the Tenth Assembly, following the policies established through the Special Commission on Orthodox Participation in the WCC. A large representation of Evangelical Christian communities is expected to be present as visitors to the Tenth Assembly. In addition to

the Roman Catholic Church, the Pentecostal and Evangelical stream of Christianity -- especially prevalent and growing in the southern hemisphere -- is largely missing from formal membership in the WCC. All four major streams: Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Protestant/Anglican and Evangelical/Pentecostal participate in the Global Christian Forum, initiated by the WCC.

The Nature and Purpose of the Church

This study document was recommended to the member churches during the Ninth Assembly in Porto Alegre and responses have been requested and received from numerous churches, seminaries and theologians. Theologians representing the Orthodox member churches met in Cyprus in the spring of 2011 in order to consider the document from an Orthodox perspective. The results of the various consultations will be reported back to the Tenth Assembly and will form the basis for further work of the Commission on Faith and Order and the WCC. The Commission on Faith and Order gathers theologians from the Orthodox Churches, Protestant and Anglican churches and from the Roman Catholic Church to study and reflect together on issues of theology and ecclesiology.

Governance

For the past three years a small group has been engaged in reviewing the governance of the WCC, including its structure, financial transparency, and governance responsibility and management accountability. The mandate of the committee has been expanded to include also the role and size of the governing bodies and its committees and the financial implications of the various proposals. The final report of this committee will be presented to the Central Committee in September 2012. From the beginning, the Church of Antioch has been represented in this work.

The ACT Alliance

During the previous year, two diaconal arms of the WCC have merged into one organization. The new organization, called the ACT Alliance, combines the work of Action of Churches Together (ACT) that coordinates the network of church related departments and non governmental organizations in response to emergencies, with that of church related development agencies that recently had been formed under the name ACT Development. The ACT Alliance includes from the United States IOCC and Church World Service.

The situation of Christians in the Middle East and Northern Africa

Recent events in Arab nations, particularly in Tunisia and Egypt, were much on the minds of delegates to the meeting of the central committee held in February 2011, yet concerns were expressed that statements with a political perspective might be misinterpreted in some contexts, negatively affecting local Christian communities. Thus, the Central Committee, after careful discussion, issued a gminute to the churches on the Christian presence in the Middle East and issued resolutions concerning the illegal settlements in Palestine and related to the situation in Libya. Subsequently, in June 2011, the WCC convened a meeting of church leaders, lay men and women and young theologians together with current and former government ministers and members of parliament around the issue: Christian Presence and Witness in the Middle East Today: Theological and Political Challenges.

Council of Christian Church Leaders in Iraq

In February 2011 the WCC convened a meeting of leaders from the newly-formed Council of Christian Church Leaders in Iraq (CCCLI) and representatives of church-related agencies with programs in Iraq, programs planned or being considered for Iraq, or with Iraqi refugees in neighboring countries or abroad. The meeting included, among many others, representatives from the Church of Antioch, who together work with Iraqi refugees, especially in Syria. Participants stressed the importance of helping Christians remain in the region, in order to return eventually to Iraq. Agencies are assessing whether conditions are feasible for increasing work in Iraq and will continue that assessment, but in the meanwhile have committed to helping increase the capacity of the office of the Council of Christian Church Leaders in Iraq so that they are better able to speak for the remaining, endangered Christian communities in the country of gthe two rivers.

International Ecumenical Peace Convocation

The International Peace Convocation (IEPC), long planned to conclude the WCC's Decade to Overcome Violence, Churches Seeking Reconciliation and Peace, took place in Kingston, Jamaica in May 2011. Over one thousand people gathered from faith communities worldwide to receive the work of theologians and those working to foster peace and reconciliation over the preceding decade.

Documents referenced and accounts of proceedings of various consultations can be found at the web site of the WCC: www.oikoumene.org

World Council of Churches Consultations: Rev. Fr. Philip LeMasters

The Rev. Philip LeMasters, priest of St. Luke Mission, Abilene, TX, participated in WCC-sponsored international Orthodox consultations on the ethics of peace and war in Bucharest, Romania, (2009), Leros, Greece (2009), and Saidnaya, Syria (2010). He also participated in a conference, co-sponsored by the WCC and the Volos Academy, Greece, (2011) on the challenges faced by

Orthodox and other Christians living in the Middle East. Fr. LeMasters addressed these international gatherings of Orthodox scholars, clergymen, and lay leaders on topics including peacemaking, the morality of war, and nonviolent resistance to evil. He served as an editor of the statements issued by the conferences at Leros and Saidnaya to the WCC in preparation for the International Ecumenical Peace Convocation held in Kingston, Jamaica in May, 2011. These meetings served the important role of helping the Church to articulate a clear, distinctive response to the challenges raised by the tragic realities of war and violence in a world that desperately needs the peace of Christ. Fr. Philip had an article recently published in a recent edition of **The Ecumenical Review** on Orthodoxy's stance on war, peace and violence.