

**SUMMARY OF NOVEMBER 1, 2007 MEETING**  
WAC BOARD, REPRESENTATIVES OF JUDICATORY MEMBERS, ECUMENICAL  
ELDERS

**ATTENDEES**

WAC Board and Staff

Le Roi Brashears	Steve Lansing	Jon Olson
M. L. Daniel	Tony Lee	Suzanne Gordon
Anne Gienapp	Mike Lowry	Darel Grothaus

Judicatory Representatives

Disciples of Christ:	Rev. Rebecca Hale, Cherilyn Williams
ELCA-E.WA-Idaho	Bishop Martin Wells
ELCA-SW WA	Bishop Rob Hofstad
ELCA-NW WA	Rev. Dennis Andersen
Evergreen Assn. American Baptists	Rev. Marcia Patton
Presbyterian-Synod of AK/NW	Rev. Joyce Martin Emery
United Methodist-Pacific NW Conf.	Bishop Ed Paup
United Church of Christ-Pacific NW Conf.	Rev. Hollis Bredeweg

Elders of the Ecumenical Community

Loren Arnett	Tom Ewell	Jim Mulligan
Bill Cate	Pat Howell	Ruth Mulligan
Marvin Eckfeldt	Lowell Knutson	Tom Quigley

School of Theology and Ministry, Seattle University

Mark Markuly	Jack Olive	Bruce Chittick
--------------	------------	----------------

**FRAMING ISSUE FOR THE MEETING**

The following resolution by WAC's board framed the conversation and decisions:

*Recommendation to Judicatory Leaders:*

*Whereas, the preponderance of WAC's member judicatories affirmed their commitments to WAC's six-month transitional ministry for the purposes of:*

- *organizing the Religious Coalition for the Common Good for the '08 legislative session;*
- *convening the statewide dialogue on the future of ecumenical collaboration; and*

*Whereas, the preponderance of WAC's member judicatories committed to:*

- *participate in the November 1<sup>st</sup> meeting with the WAC board and ecumenical elders to determine WAC's future;*
- *continue their financial support through the remainder of 2007 and the first quarter of 2008;*
- *participate in the six-month dialogue; and*

*Whereas, WAC's ecumenical partners (Church Council of Greater Seattle, Associated Ministries of Pierce County, Church World Service, Earth Ministry, Lutheran Public Policy and School of Theology and Ministry at Seattle University) affirmed their*

*support for the six- month transitional ministry and their participation in the dialogue about the future;*

*Be it therefore resolved, the board of the Washington Association of Churches recommends to WAC's member judicatories that on November 1, they decide to continue the ministry of WAC for the six-month transitional period.*

## **DECISION**

The denominational representatives unanimously affirmed the WAC board's recommendation and committed to participate in the six month dialogue. Bishop Greg Rickel and Suffragan Bishop Nedi Rivera, Episcopal Diocese of Olympia, were unable to attend, because it conflicted with the opening session of the diocese's annual convention. However, Bishop Rickel sent a letter that conveyed his commitment.

## **THEMES FROM THE CONVERSATION ABOUT THE PATH FORWARD**

### Vision for the Future

- The ligaments knitting together our separate parts. This is the etymological meaning of religion.
- Connective tissue enabling us to share our resources and address common challenges unique to the "None Zone."
- Covenantal pledge to be together.
- A structure enabling us to pray, plan and work together.
- Public presence to help mend the creation.
- Magnify our separate expressions through a collective voice.
- Common space for respectful learning from one another about our different traditions.

### Strategic Emphases

- Bring into balance four strategies:
  1. Public policy advocacy for justice, peace and creation care.
  2. Public witness to religious values that support "human flourishing" such as the common good, reconciliation, redemption, hopefulness, fidelity and stewardship that have been drowned out by the culture's death-dealing messages of consumerism, accumulation of material wealth and individualism, fear, "redemptive violence" and punishment. Too often the church has been a "scold" in its confrontation with the deadly parts of the culture instead of lifting up the good news that these cherished values can be the foundation for joyful renewal of our common and personal lives.
  3. Theological reflection, dialogue and prayer.
  4. Cultivation of relationships among judicatory leaders, pastors and laity.
- Build relationships with congregations through WAC-organized ministries of compassion and justice so members see WAC providing benefit to their congregations.

- WAC's strategy in recent years has emphasized public policy advocacy and neglected other program themes.
- Focus and concentrate on what we can do well and be clear about what we won't be doing.

#### Relationships with Judicatories and Congregations

- Judicatory participation in WAC in the first 15-20 years was based on a covenantal relationship among the judicatories, particularly among their leaders. WAC was the embodiment of their covenantal relationships. As judicatory leaders and their work assignments changed, the leaders' relationships with each other became increasingly attenuated. As WAC's program emphasis drifted away from congregational connections, its relationship withered with grass roots congregational life. These trends resulted in WAC being perceived as a distant membership organization and the sense of covenantal and congregational connection was lost. Some perceived themselves as the "we" and WAC as the "they."
- Judicatories and congregations need to see clearly how WAC can serve their interests, if they are to support WAC financially and with volunteers.

#### Strategies for Organizing the Six Month Dialogue

- The first step is to invite others to the table. Fr. Pat Howell's report that Archbishop Brunett is interested in being represented in the dialogue was greeted with enthusiasm.
- In addition to inviting WAC's traditional ecumenical partners (see listing above in the board's resolution), this includes reaching out to historic African American churches, evangelicals such as those associated with Seattle Pacific and World Vision, Orthodox, local ecumenical partnerships across the state that are not affiliated with any of the existing ecumenical institutions, religiously affiliated colleges and universities, graduate theological seminaries and secular peace and justice organizations that are long-standing WAC partners.
- The recognition that the ecumenical constituency is "graying and wrinkling" is a wakeup call to reach out to younger people. Prospective groups are the campus ministries across the state; "emerging churches" such as the Abbey in Fremont (an ELCA-Episcopal congregation oriented toward young people); and Hispanic congregations because they tend to have younger participants than Anglo congregations.
- A working group representing the dialogue participants will be convened to guide the process. Judicatory executives will meet several times during the six months and at the end to consider the recommendations emerging from the working group.
- The geographic focus should be statewide. WAC has become Seattle-centric in recent years; hence from the outset the dialogue should encourage participants from across the entire state.
- *Christian Churches Together in the USA (CCT)* should be studied for its relevancy to Washington State. CCT operates at the national level and is composed of Roman Catholic, Evangelical, Pentecostal, Historic African American and Historic Protestant and Orthodox churches.

### Ecologies and Regional and Geographical Realities among Member Judicatories

Judicatory ecologies, the span of geography they represent and regional cultural differences influence how they perceive the value of statewide ecumenical participation and the nature of their participation. Representatives of several judicatories called attention to these realities:

- United Church of Christ-Pacific NW Conference: Emerging from an extended transition of conference ministers, marked by an internal institutional focus. The new conference minister will begin in January and has a strong interest in ecumenical relations. UCC congregations tend to be more autonomous than is typical of congregations in more connectional judicatories.
- Evergreen Baptist Association: Extends over 4 states (Washington, Alaska, Utah, California) with 34 congregations, 26 are in Washington State. There is a high degree of congregational autonomy.
- ELCA E.WA-Idaho: Congregations distributed over three states: 62 in Washington, 42 in Idaho and 2 in Wyoming. Region more politically conservative than Western Washington.
- Presbyterian-Synod of AK/NW: The regional synod was organized in the 1980's to redirect funding from the larger church to Alaskan mission churches through the Synod. As national funds decreased, the Washington and N. Idaho congregations had to cover the costs for Alaska. Presbyterians currently are re-directing resources to support mission rather than maintain institutions that have outlived their purpose. Covenant partnerships with ecumenical bodies like WAC were also created several decades ago for reasons that are now lost to many. Many local congregations have no idea about these covenants. Therefore these covenants must be examined.

### **NEXT STEPS DURING THE INTERIM**

#### WAC Board Will Convene a Working Group to Guide the Dialogue and Make Decisions

- The WAC board will invite member judicatories, the Roman Catholics, ecumenical partners and others to appoint representatives to a working group that will guide the dialogue and make decisions about the future.
- December will be used to organize the dialogue.

#### Caretaker Role for WAC Board until May 30, 2008

- Most of the current board members will continue until May 30 to provide continuity in governance, fiscal accountability and policy oversight for the RCCG during the legislative session.
- The board members will resign effective May 30 to make way for whatever form of ministry and governance that emerges from the dialogue.

#### Role of Interim Executive Director during the Interim Transitional Ministry

- Darel Grothaus will staff the dialogue, supervise the part-time RCCG coordinator and provide essential administrative services during the interim.
- He will resign no later than June 30, 2008 to make way for whatever staffing emerges from the dialogue.