



## *Washington Association of Churches*

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April 21, 2008

Dear : *TEXT OF LETTER INVITING PARTICIPATION IN NEW STATEWIDE ECUMENICAL MINISTRY*

On behalf of the Path Forward strategic planning group I invite you to join with other Christian ministries in Washington State and take the next step toward a transformed statewide ecumenical ministry. This invitation flows from Christ Jesus' prayer that we live in unity before a fractured world. Mark Markuly, dean of the School of Ministry at Seattle University, puts the ecumenical challenge squarely before us, "Contrary to what we say about ourselves, our lack of commitment to one another will reveal that we are a house divided against itself, like much of the rest of the world, and our theological discourse will reverberate through the culture as nothing more than clashing symbols amidst the din of talking heads and flood of 24/7 information." (STM Bulletin, April 2008)

The strategic planning group has worked intensively since January on recommendations for a "faithful and viable statewide ecumenical ministry." Please read the strategic plan carefully and prayerfully. We have provided an analysis for each of the recommendations to help you understand the working group's thinking. I and other working group representatives are available to meet with you and your colleagues to answer your questions.

The strategic plan presents a vision and a concept and outlines an organizational structure and programming opportunities. The next step will be to fine-tune the plan and to work out its implementation. For instance, a new name and by-laws need to be crafted. One or two programs that can be supported by available resources should be introduced in the fall to overcome the programming inertia of the past two years that has fostered the perception that statewide ecumenical ministry is dead. A fall fundraiser needs to be organized and a 2009 fundraising strategy developed. A job description for a permanent executive director should be created.

A new board will be appointed by May 15 to replace the current WAC board that will be resigning on May 31 to make way for this new initiative. This new board will hire a transition staff person to replace the interim executive director who is resigning on June 30.

We are inviting you to participate in the transformed statewide ecumenical ministry by making these commitments on or before May 15:

- Financial support for the new ministry. This means providing a schedule for your 2008 contributions, indicating when they will be received. The working group recommendations emphasize that participation in the mission and benefits of the new ministry entail responsibility for its financial support. In my recent conversation with the representative of the anonymous contributor, he emphasized that the contributor expects all of the participants to contribute financially as a condition for his contribution.
- Appoint a representative to the new board. The board transition will occur under the existing WAC by-laws. This means that current denominational members have the authority to name one board member. Denominations that are not members and ecumenical partners can each present a nominee to the nominating committee that will in turn present these names to the current board for ratification.

As you prayerfully discern this invitation I encourage you to reflect on the same scriptures that provide the foundation for the strategic plan:

**John 17:20-23:** Unity is not a choice! That is what we are called to be. **I Corinthians 12:** Members of the body of Christ need each other—the strong need the weak and the weak need the strong. **Ephesians 1: 9-10, 18:** God has promised boundless resources for our work if we step over our fears and trust those promises.

Shalom,

Darel Grothaus  
Interim Executive Director

P.S. I have enclosed a map of the 1,331 congregations that are part of the body of Christ across the state. These congregations represent the current WAC member denominations and the Roman Catholic dioceses. The beauty and power of this map is its graphic portrayal of the vast, untapped opportunity of a unified witness to the reconciling and redeeming grace of Christ Jesus. Imagine how our witness would be multiplied if these congregational members of the body were joined with hundreds of other Christian communities that are not part of these denominations.