

Lutheran-Reformed Coordinating Committee

May 15-16, 2006

Lutheran Center, Chicago, Illinois

Roll Call

Lydia Veliko, xxxxx and chair of the Lutheran-Reformed Coordinating Meeting, called the meeting to order at 1:04 P.M. on Monday, May 15, 2006, in the Easter Room of the Lutheran Center, Chicago, Illinois. Doug Fromm led opening prayers. The following persons were present for all or part of the meeting:

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Pr. Lowell G. Almen, secretary of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Chicago, Ill.

Pr. Randall R. Lee, executive for ecumenical and inter-religious affairs, Chicago, Ill.

Pr. Judith Cobb

Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

Pr. Robina Winbush

Pr.

Reformed Church in America

Lynn Japinga, Hope College,

Pr.

Pr. Douglas W. Fromm, Office of the General Synod, New York, N.Y.

United Church of Christ

Pr. Lydia Veliko

Resource and Staff Persons

Pr. Paul A. Schreck, executive assistant to the secretary, Office of the Secretary, Chicago, Ill.

Pr. Sherman Hicks

Pr. Jonathan Strandjord

Adoption of the Agenda

Chair Veliko asked if there were any additions to the agenda. Items revised by unanimous consent were: moving scheduling future dates and locations to an earlier position, inviting visiting presenters to come earlier.

Veliko then asked if there were revisions to be made. Hearing none, the minutes were approved as distributed.

Welcome and Check In

Veliko invited each member of the committee to provide brief updates on life and ministry since last the committee met.

Communion Updates

Veliko invited brief summaries of developments within church bodies since the previous meeting of the coordinating committee.

Formula of Agreement Ministry Staff Update

Veliko reviewed the document “Abundance of Opportunity,” resulting from a meeting of judicatory leaders held in Bedford, Pennsylvania April 4-5, 2006 (attached) sponsored by the Formula of Agreement Ministry Staff. She reported on the event which she said was very upbeat even though only half of the judicatory leaders had ever had a substantive conversation with one another. Three stages of the conversation were conducted (1) mission and ministry of small membership congregations and how they are hindered by a lack of professional staff; (2) outlining the gifts small membership congregations bring; (3) strategizing for the future. The judicatory leaders all stated that the meeting was extremely helpful, especially in the process of getting to know one another. One of the major challenges facing these congregations is health insurance poses for those who serve small membership congregations. Another interesting convergence was a slight discomfort with the way each communion has secured pastoral leadership for these congregations. Douglas Fromm indicated that his office was not notified of this event, which is problematic. Veliko also noted that a glaring absence in this conversation was discussion of active outreach to attract new members. It was noted that for the RCA the most effective means of communication on ministry issues is through the ecumenical office. There are plans to hold at least two more of these kinds of meetings in other parts of the country. Veliko said this represents a very practical step the churches have taken together under the aegis of national staff.

Dialogues

Veliko reported that the Catholic-Reformed dialogue is meeting on the topic of Baptism and Eucharist. There is a much more clearly defined way that clergy and bishops relate to the lay people in the Roman Catholic delegations. Because the topic is baptism, one of the things they learned is that in Germany conditional baptism is assumed because many of the churches in Europe cannot be “trusted” to use the traditional baptismal formulary. She noted as well that there has been a marked shift among the Catholic participants between those who uphold the teachings of Vatican II and younger Roman Catholic theologians who are much more conservative and often are converts to Roman Catholicism. She noted as well a shift from an attitude from what is the most edifying thing we can do at this table to an attitude of let us listen carefully enough to find a hole in your argument or to find a reason to cancel the dialogue. At one point a Roman Catholic participant also opined that in the near future it will not be enough to point to official documents to substantiate the practice of a particular churchbody. These kinds of observations are being articulated by global partners, Veliko said.

Tuesday, May 16, 2006

The Rev. Lydia Veliko reconvened the meeting of the Lutheran-Reformed Coordinating Committee at 9:10 A.M. and Judy opened with morning prayers.

Robina was contacted via conference telephone call at 9:28 A.M. and Chair Veliko reviewed the agenda items to be addressed.

National Gathering Votes on Sexuality

Chair Veliko reviewed the background for why this topic was to be addressed, namely, what would the results be if one of the churches adopted a position that the others considered unacceptable. Some in the UCC had asked if it was time to sever the relationship because of the trial of Norm Cansfield in 2005.

Almen noted that each church body remains responsible for its own internal discipline and decisions, so if one church body took an action that another likes the immediate question is if the decision effects that body's own internal discipline. The principle from the FoA is of mutual affirmation and admonition, so prior to any withdrawal from the relationship would be the commitment to mutual admonition. If one church is troubled by the actions of another, the conversation should unfold that might lead to renewed mutual understanding. If honored, these commitments could preclude any one church body from precipitous action.

Fromm said if the General Synod went in the direction of severing ties in June 2006, as a Lutheran it would be appropriate for the ELCA or the PCUSA to operate under this principle to engage the RCA about its action. Almen said in this scenario, this would be true, but one response would be an expression of concern that the RCA did not honor its commitment to a preliminary step of admonition but instead jumping immediately to severing ties. It is a potential decision of any of the church bodies, but it would represent a unilateral failure of one body to honor the commitments of the FoA. The agreement does not outline steps for revoking the agreement, but it does seem to include steps for continued mutual understanding, but an instant decision to withdraw did not seem appropriate. Fromm recalled a conversation in 1996 between the three Reformed churches outlining mutual admonitions, which some members of the RCA would consider to be admonition and justify action at this time. Almen said the troubling feature of this is that the document is 10 years old and while many elements may still be relevant, at least some updating would be appropriate. Fromm said the new Overture specifically cites the marriage issue, which would be the basis for a new admonition process.

Cobb said if there was such a conversation would it be between the two churches alone, or all four partners. Veliko said in the earlier round there was only RCA and UCC. Fromm said he thought there was a Lutheran observer. Veliko said it would seem odd at this point not to include in some way the other parties. Fromm said that agreement had been pursued to enable the RCA to take the vote in 1997 on FoA.

Fromm asked if the PCUSA assembly would address a marriage question as well. Robina said there always was some version of this issue, basically to affirm that marriage is between one man and one woman.

Winbush asked if the coordinating committee might not need to take the initiative on this conversation and where the churches are at the moment to determine if it could help shed some light in this area. Almen said at least updates should be provided. Veliko said she thought the request was for more intentional address of this issue. Winbush said her desire was for some

initiative. Almen suggested that a special consultation could be problematic, though part of one of the regular meetings might be possible.

Fromm said although the RCA has a small vocal group, it is not a wide-felt issue between his church and the UCC. He did not want the RCA to be singled out as a neanderthal group, and was sure that the issue is similar in the other churches. To do something preemptive could send the message to this handful that they now have the attention of the other churches, but to not do something could indicate that the other churches do not have any issues with the UCC.

Winbush said she noticed that the conservative UCC members are joining hands with the conservative PCUSA members and copying a shadow-church movement. Heads in the sand will not take care of the problem. Veliko said the networks were strong among the churches.

She then summarized the conversation to this point, that there was agreement that at least leaders understand that the churches' commitment prior to precipitous severing of relationship would be to engage in consultation about the issue known full well that we cannot control the actions of the church body gatherings. She asked if there was some way to engage members who wanted theological deliberation on issues of sexuality among others to avoid polarizing or bilateralizing the question about marriage. She acknowledged Fromm's concern about making it appear to be a uniquely RCA concern, and understood the caution about making a focus on sexuality alone. She wondered if some systematic approach to addressing all controversial topics.

Fromm said he is asked by moderates, as FoA unfolds, about the consultative process involved as another church body moves into an action that would be opposed by another, and what the responsibility of a church body if another moves unilaterally. Does the RCA need to hear from the UCC the rationale for its decision out of a sense of accountability. If this is part of the direction that Almen was suggesting, this would feel fairly good to have the conversation. If the RCA changed its baptismal formula to creator, redeemer, sustainer, he suggested they would hear from the ELCA rather quickly, and suggested constructive engagement in the process rather than punitive reactions to decisions. Veliko agreed that discussion of the theological rationale would be appropriate, and she insisted that the UCC did engage in consultation of the materials developed afterward, but the synod only received the proposal as an overture and so did not have the opportunity to engage in consultation prior to adoption. Schreck asked if it was not appropriate for the general synod to adopt an action not yes or no on the overture but to adopt an action that called for consultation with FoA churches prior. Veliko said this would be a possible action, but added that this was an issue decades in the making, and acknowledged that ecumenical consultation had not been a large part of that process. She raised responses to Israel-Palestine as a new issue that could include consultation.

Japinga said if a consultation was to be considered, she would like to frame the question differently, and instead look at how discuss divisive issues within a denomination. It might help not to have the hot topics identified by the ultra-conservatives. This current topic has been around a long time in the RCA too.

Cobb asked what the function of the coordinating committee was, and asked if it could not be consultative too. Veliko suggested delaying discussing this after Winbush had to leave the conversation, and instead turn to other agenda items while she was on the line.

Formula Representation

Winbush noted FoA representation on General Assembly Council, committee on ecumenical relations has four slots for FoA partners. She said the absent members were missed,

and asked that others be appointed if ecumenical directors could not participate regularly. Fromm asked for deadlines for proposed names. Winbush said tomorrow would be good. May 1 would normally be the deadline, but Thursday she would need to address these in order to avoid being ruled out of order by her General Assembly.

Veliko asked in addition if there were other ideological issues to be raised. Winbush asked if there was a rotation system in the ELCA and UCC for the rep on council. Veliko said the rotation for them was to be determined by the PCUSA. Winbush said she would likely rotate both reps soon because of their own internal rotations.

Veliko said the reps at the UCC meetings were highly valued. Lee agreed that reps were appreciated.

Dates of future meetings

February 2007

November 2007

September 2008

Veliko observed that there was a 9 month schedule to the meetings, and periodically the coordinating committee would meet twice in a year.

Fromm suggested sending to Veliko lists from each church of all people serving as reps to compile a comprehensive list including projected rotations. Veliko said this would be a helpful idea.

Winbush left the meeting at 10:10 A.M.

Consultation on Divisive Issues Facing the Churches

Veliko asked if the matter of a consultation was too large to determine with so many not represented, but the question of the purpose of the coordinating committee would be appropriate to address. Convening consultations seemed to be beyond the scope of its responsibilities.

Almen said the committee would not need to be completely restrictive, but having the conversation in the course of its regular meetings would provide an appropriate cover for having the topics addressed without escalating the issues. He noted the types of outlines of decision making processes that would be useful for discussion, and reviewed legislative processes that receive and consider overtures and memorials. He suggested caution in response to what a few people considered major issues.

Fromm agreed that he would be concerned if the committee targeted an issue preemptively, but discussion at the next meeting about the processes, legislative and otherwise, would be helpful because he would be able to report this to the RCA advisory committee. This approach would speak to the moderates.

Veliko said she was very hopeful about the relationships between the churches, and pointed out how each church had trajectories that were longer than the new relationship. 10 years in the future the trajectories would be different and affected by this new relationship. She commented upon how specific staff members now are routinely asking if FoA partners should be consulted and how this was a huge change in culture.

Almen used the analogy of constructing a vehicle using parts from various auto makers, and acknowledged that it would be a challenge at times. The vision is clear, but the process

would be messy at points. Broad consultation processes cannot always be implemented prior to church body action, because each church has idiosyncratic procedures that allow consideration of unexpected proposals. This committee becomes, in some way, the gears and the grease for getting the machinery to work together.

Cobb said because of living in a disposable society it is imperative to resist efforts to dispose of the relationship simply because it is uncomfortable. Educating one another on the committee was a helpful dynamic.

Fromm asked if there were parallels between the ELCA-TEC relationship and the RCA-UCC relationship that would be helpful to consider. Lee said that coordinating committee focused upon walking with TEC during its crisis with the Anglican Communion through what could be a difficult time. The main reason for this was because TEC has not made a formal decision on sexuality, but on polity. Robinson was approved because it is the right of the diocese to approve whomever it wishes, and was a separate issue from sexuality. Dioceses have been urged to exercise restraint this year because the issue of sexuality had not been addressed as a church body. Fromm said this was not a point that had been made clear in popular press, and was a helpful distinction. Almen said it was clear at that general convention in the House of Deputies in the number of people who spoke to the issue of polity quite aside from the issues of sexuality. He had expected to hear more discussion about sexuality instead. The issues before the Anglican Communion also is a North/South fight and if the ELCA were to change its standards for ordination we would have similar turmoil in the LWF but without the orderly means for resolving those differences. If the ELCA were to proceed in that direction he would hope for a more solid foundation for such a change than backing into it because of polity of elections.

Veliko said she thought a more substantive conversation on this topic in February would be useful, specifically on procedural and polity issues, and also on some of the theological underpinnings for existing positions. Fromm asked for clarity about “the issue.” Veliko said she thought the marriage question had emerged as the topic rather than the much broader question of sexuality. Almen suggested that this was too narrow because it could focus too much on the UCC. He would rather see the discussion focus on the deliberative and legislative process and theological underpinning of decisions by FoA church bodies on issues related to matters of sexuality especially same-sex relationships.

Veliko said the PCUSA would be hosting the February meeting in El Carib, and it may be too expensive to bring in staff for the usual round of reports, and perhaps that meeting could focus instead on this topic. The discussion would fill up the agenda anyway.

Fromm said some members of this committee had hoped that as the relationships of full communion evolved and became clearer, it would have an impact upon each of the churches where issues such as these would be more intentionally engaged together. He asked if it would be useful to have the heads of each communion present at that particular meeting. Almen suggested that their presence would increase the visibility too much and would place them in awkward positions. He said there had been engagement in consultation that had stemmed because of the full communion agreements that would not likely have been conducted prior to FoA. Although it may not be as widespread as Fromm was hoping, there were some things happening to suggest hope. Fromm asked who would come to address this topic if not the heads of communion. Almen said he was imagining the normal members of the committee, and perhaps an outside resource to spark additional reflection.

Cobb asked if a number of new members would be appointed before that meeting.

Veliko said this was true. She then noted that the UCC head of communion would not be awkward, but it would be difficult calendar wise. She expressed concern about limiting the discussion to members of the committee and whether or not it would have any real effect upon the FoA partners. Almen responded that if it was desirable to expand the table, the executive director for Vocation and Education would be a useful addition, as well as a staff person who relates to the task force on sexuality.

Lee said his concern about bringing in others is that the topics required a high level of trust to mine the most from the conversation, but if new committee members would be joining in February perhaps this would not be a concern. Veliko said if it could not be this group, she would at least hope it would be a group that would continue over time.

Veliko asked if the amount of time and who would be invited still needed to be determined. She asked for consensus on the participants. Japinga said it still needed conversation. Veliko suggested setting the conversation aside for the scheduled presentation, and return later in the morning.

CARE Report

Sherman Hicks provided a report on CARE.

The Multicultural Institute will be convened August 7-13, 2006, at Ghost Ranch, Albuquerque, New Mexico. The PCUSA, RCA, and the ELCA are working together to present this institute. It will be a week long intensive leadership training program designed for those interested in deepening their understanding of multicultural ministry and expanding their leadership skills in evangelism and church growth in the 21st century. Individuals and groups from each of the three communions will participate in a variety of courses taught by experienced practitioners and scholars.

The Spirit of Wholeness In Christ: Racial Ethnic/Multicultural Gathering is scheduled for July 11-15, 2007, this event is a culmination of the CARE Partners collaboration. Participation will be from the RCA, UCC, PCUSA, and the ELCA. The event's purpose statement illustrates the CARE Partners commitment to justice and equality. The goals of the event are:

1. To assist people to become more multicultural/multiracial, to bond together in ministry to assist our communions in becoming inclusive.
2. To learn to value and appreciate racial/cultural differences.
3. To provide leadership development opportunities for our constituencies.
4. To provide tools for dismantling systems of oppression.

The last meeting of this group on Latino ministries was in July 2005 in New York. The group has chosen the following themes to organize their work around: resources, evangelism, Christian education, and leadership formation. Discussion of the respective church bodies' National Ministry Strategies has taken place. On May 31, 2006, a meeting will be held in Louisville where evangelism and Spanish resources will be discussed.

The Racial Justice Ministry group has been meeting to share information, build working relationships and do some cross-cultural and denominational learning. The group's first major project will be developing a children anti bias resource. The consultation leading to this resource is named "Internalizing a New Paradigm of Anti-Bias in Children" to be held August 25-26, 2006, in Louisville. The objectives for this resource project are:

1. To discover what is currently available in this field.
2. To create a new paradigm of inclusion in children.

3. To internalize the process of inclusivity in children.
4. To create anti bias material.
5. To equip Christian educators with an anti bias lens.
6. To include curriculum writers, authors who can take ideas from this consultation and produce materials.

The final goal is to develop a resource which will be used and supported by each denominational member involved in the project.

The American Indian/Alaska Native group has widely distributed the document "A Vision of Partnership and Unity," with 500 copies requested by UCC, 500 by PCUSA, and 3000 by ELCA.

The establishment of a Bible study has been encouraged at the Chicago Indian Center. Continued partnering takes place with the Council of Native American Ministries and the National Congress of American Indians.

During discussion, Veliko asked for clarity on why the UCC was not participating in the August 7-13, 2006 event in Albuquerque, N.M. Hicks indicated that he understood that they did not currently have a staff person in the counterpart position. Veliko asked for as much information as possible so she could provide it to the appropriate staff members.

Cobb asked who the audience would be for the July 2007 gathering. Hicks indicated it was primarily for members of the ethnic communities, although he was attempting to redefine multicultural to include everyone instead of only primarily the ethnic communities.

Hicks indicated the appreciation of staff members in getting to partner with other staff members and that important things were happening. He would be attending the PCUSA multicultural event in Orlando.

Veliko expressed appreciation for the report, and indicated that it revealed just how much had occurred since the last meeting of the coordinating committee, including the major shift toward planning events jointly instead of individually.

Consultation continued

After short discussion about El Caribe, Veliko proposed that after determining the shape of the consultation, it could be determined if the location still was appropriate given its expense and relative difficulty getting in and out, and the meeting is scheduled to begin at 1:00 P.M. the first day and conclude by 4:00 P.M. the next.

Almen suggested that it would be helpful to include some of the usual components the first day, particularly on further follow-up on the theological education consultation, then begin the second day at 8:15 with devotions, take up this topic at 8:30 until Noon. Final conversations on this topic then could be concluded by 2:00, for departures by 3:00 could work.

This schedule was agreed in principle by unanimous consent.

Fromm suggested that written reports from the consultation on theological education and the CARE committee about the events that are convened during the interim, or by conference telephone call.

Veliko said this schedule left some time for maintenance, which was good.

Conversation then turned to the participants. Lee repeated his desire to keep it to the committee members.

Japinga said the committee did much work that did not necessarily ever go anywhere.

Almen said perhaps the notes from the discussion could be distributed more widely, at least with the heads of churches and heads of theological departments. It would be good to have some document to share.

Fromm said when Almen was describing who could participate on behalf of the ELCA he had tried to think of who would come from the RCA, and he thought of John Stapert as one possibility, but to introduce him into the committee and to bring him up to speed would be difficult.

Veliko said if people from beyond the committee were to be included, would it make sense that they be people who are members of the theology committee. She asked this because the UCC who is working on human sexuality is not someone she would want to inject into the discussion of the committee. People who have been charged with theological engagement might be helpful, but this could become a large group and would become expensive.

Cobb said if we want to invite anyone else, they should be connective folk so that the conversation is not dependent upon their knowledge but their ability to connect to other groups. There was general agreement that these persons would satisfy this connective desire.

Japinga said the hoped-for outcomes from this meeting would be an appropriate way to determine who should be invited to participate.

Veliko reflected that she hoped one outcome would be that this discussion inform the ongoing theological discussion in an ecumenical context. The theological committee people are the ones who have been asked to think about ongoing theological education, so one of the outcomes could be that they would hear the discussion and incorporate it into their thinking about ongoing education. She did not want 36 interesting hours that went no further than the committee. She also hoped that the committee members came to a deeper understanding and appreciation of each other.

Cobb said at the beginning of this discussion, each church had authority for its own internal decision making, so it seemed that the point of this discussion was for people to understand how decisions are made to avoid knee-jerk reactions that led to withdrawal from the FoA. Education in how bodies make decisions and how they are rooted is the point.

Veliko said what she learns in the conversation is only as good as her ability to convey what is learned to those in decision making positions. She did not know if the PCUSA considered their people on the theology committee to be connective types or not.

Almen said if the extra people were to be invited, perhaps they should be present from the beginning of the meeting, then as the updates are provided they would hear this, they would be present for table talk over dinner, and would then become more part of the group and would be engaged more deeply in the conversation on the following day, avoiding the insider-outsider dynamic. This would increase their capacity to be connective persons.

Fromm said he was going to suggest that instead of bringing both members, let them determine which of the two would come, which would provide four new people. In addition, there also would be newly appointed committee members. Veliko suggested, because of this, it might not be the best time to convene this conversation. Fromm said the process that Almen outlined would be a helpful way of heightening inclusion. Almen affirmed the idea of having the theological committee members deciding which of the two to participate.

Veliko summarized the suggestions so far. Discussion followed on whether or not El Caribe would be the most appropriate location, but if it was PCUSA final choice that would be fine.

Lunch at 11:50

10th Anniversary Celebration

Discussion during lunch included whether or not a conversation could be appropriately held about a 10th anniversary celebration without having anyone at the table from the PCUSA. Veliko recalled the suggestion from the previous meeting about encouraging regional observances. Lee said some time at the February meeting would need to be devoted to this topic.

Veliko asked what needed to be a focus between now and then. Lee suggested having Winbush being in touch with McCormick to determine the level of interest in hosting some observance. He asked if there were other seminaries in proximity in other places. Philadelphia and Berkeley emerged as possibilities in addition to Chicago.

Veliko proposed focusing upon Philadelphia as the site given that each church had seminaries, congregations, and judicatories in reasonable distances that could encourage a wider level of participation.

Fromm asked what was envisioned if seminaries were the focus. Japinga asked if it would be more than just a worship service. Lee recalled that the last celebration was ELCA bishops and stated clerks meeting together. Fromm suggested identifying specific people in each church body who could run with the idea as a subcommittee.

Veliko said it would need to be determined how committed McCormick's participation was before moving ahead to avoid withdrawing any offer. Local liturgical celebrations would also be handed off to local planning committees.

The first Sunday in October in 2008 would be the 5th. Almen indicated that, because of ELCA commitments, October 12 would be safer. UCC would find this difficult because of a meeting of the executive council.

Veliko summarized, that she would speak with Winbush about McCormick, will report the results of that question to all. We will work to make liturgies available to local settings to encourage the concurrent celebration in many settings. She asked if by February 2007 our respective worship people would be identified and in touch with each other, and this was agreed.

Japinga asked if the October 2008 meeting of the coordinating committee should include this celebration.

Veliko suggested waiting to address this question, and asked about venues if Winbush has not committed to McCormick. Lee said that Philadelphia could provide an opportunity for some sort of colloquy on some topic. He affirmed Japinga's suggestion about having the meeting in conjunction.

Discussion returned to dates, and the last weekend of October was raised as a possible Reformation/Reconciliation Sunday.

Veliko proposed that she write a memorandum that could then be distributed to the four worship staff members. If McCormick was not the site, Philadelphia would be, and the coordinating committee would meet in conjunction with this celebration. It was agreed that the committee would meet October 23-24, colloquy on October 25, worship on October 26. Veliko stressed the importance of checking these dates with the four heads of communion. The ecumenical directors all will confirm these dates on calendars.

Fromm asked about the possibility of regional celebrations as well. Veliko said she did

not know if she would be able to engage regional celebrations. Japinga suggested that regional celebrations could be planned by those people. Veliko said if a liturgy could be provided, this would help to promote such observances.

Global Fellowship Actions and Meetings—the Porto Alegre Commitment

Lee recalled that one action of the WCC assembly was a statement on ecclesiology, which asked questions at the end such as the ability to recognize other member churches as church. The responses are to be submitted by 2013 when the next assembly is convened. He, Fromm, and Veliko had speculated about whether or not it would be possible to answer the questions together as full communion partners. This would possibly provide a common project that would engage each church in serious theological conversation, and would bring each church into some conversation with other churches with whom there is not already conversation.

Veliko said they had also wondered if the collective could provide an additional level of response from the full communion perspective as an offering to the WCC that would not be received otherwise, and would not replace the individual responses of the member churches. This would need to be postponed until after the 2008 celebration unless it would be the topic of the colloquy.

There was general agreement that this idea could be pursued.

Veliko then reported an action of WARC about merging the organization with the Reformed Ecumenical Council of more conservative churches. Of the two bodies, there are only six churches that belong to the REC that do not also belong to WARC. The proposal includes changing the name to World Reformed Communion. Responses to the proposal are required by March 2007. For the UCC serious questions about the ecclesial implications of using the word “communion” in the name will be asked. The merger likely is a *fait d’accomplis* but conversation about the name will be serious. Lee asked what the concern about use of communion was. Veliko said the word implied a far greater degree of accountability than may be possible among the Reformed body of churches. It is not that it is a bad thing, but that it may not be possible at least at this time.

Lee asked for more discussion of the spectrum of ecclesiologies represented in WARC. Veliko said it was a composite of Presbyterian, Reformed, United, and Uniting bodies. Even among the Reformed bodies there were varying understandings of how the confessions function and are understood.

Lee reported that the LWF Council would meet in February 2007 in Lund to celebrate the 60th anniversary, and would be observed in the U.S. with a focus on the water issue.

Theology Committee Report

Jonathan Stranjord provided a report on the work of the committee on theology on a consultation on theological authority and ecclesial identity, attached to these minutes as Exhibit A.

During discussion, Almen asked who would write the grant applications. Jon said it would be within the committee members. Almen asked if there was any indication of receptivity to the idea of the grants. Jon said there was positive reaction so far.

Veliko asked to what degree the committee members saw the consultation depended upon the institutional funding. Jon said instead of five participants per church in addition to the committee members it could work with three plus the committee, which would reduce the expenses. It would be difficult to imagine it working with anything smaller than this. It would be easier to approach the granting agencies if institutional funding was already identified.

Japinga said it seemed very long, and she wondered how long each of the sessions was intended to be. She suggested that it might be possible to reduce the expenses if the length was shortened. Jon responded that the questions were so large or abstract that it would need to spend some time defining the shape of the conversation. Japinga then commented upon the level of assumptions that sometimes are required, and the accompanying difficulty of communicating a final report to anyone who was not present that would have any clear meaning. She asked what the pay off would be—just for 28 people to speak with each other, or was there a benefit to the larger church. Jon said one pay off was to have a group engaged in conversation together, and to keep them together over time in a way that will change the relationships and affect the way they do theology in the long run. This is precisely one point that Louisville would press. He was confident that the result would be documents that would be helpful in a variety of settings.

Fromm said, in light of earlier conversations, it seemed a timely and good fit.

Almen affirmed the way this was developing. Lee added that it seemed well thought out.

Veliko expressed concern that because this is a commitment over time what the impact on the project would be if participants became ill or could not continue. Jon said that some change in personnel would be inevitable, and in the imagining about the project younger participants were intended, as part of a desire to develop a new generation of theologians and leaders. A large turn over in participants would diminish the results.

Fromm asked when the final target date would be determined, and if it would be up to each church to decide who would represent it and when would that request come. Jon said a request could come as soon as Fall 2006, because getting the project onto people's calendars would be crucial. Getting one person from each church on the standing committee could generate a list of proposed names. Veliko said that some kind of certain date for the first meeting would be very helpful. Walking the fine line between offering the names of people the committee thinks best and being open to suggestions made by the churches if the balance appears to be bad would be helpful. She also asked for a deadline by which the churches would need to determine how much funding they would need to define, to avoid making plans that could not be supported in the end. Almen proposed making that commitment by September 1, 2006. This was agreed by unanimous consent. Veliko asked that the responses be conveyed to her and she would communicate them to the committee.

Jonathan said the selection of the participants would be complex, and he asked if it would be acceptable to proceed with the understanding that the choices would be made between the committee on theology and the coordinating committee. Veliko indicated that the coordinating committee would generate proposed names by the fall of 2006 to present.

Almen asked Jon if he would be available to attend a meeting in February 2006. Veliko outlined the conversation on the proposed topic and the involvement of members from the committee on theology.

Jon then distributed a revised final version of the document "Practices and Protocols for the Sake of Ongoing Theological Dialogue between FoA Partners," attached to these minutes as

Exhibit B.

Fromm noted that there were points in the document that would be very beneficial to share in a variety of settings, and it would help to demonstrate to others that there can be an orderly process for how to deal with issues.

Jonathan reported that the next meeting would be September XX, 2006, at New Brunswick.

Veliko said instead of receiving oral reports in February 2007, written reports on the work of the committees would be requested.

Adjournment

Veliko said it would take a little work for the February 2007 meeting to work well, and she asked for volunteers to work with her to coordinate this. Japinga offered to help. Lee also agreed to help.

Almen offered closing prayer.

The meeting convened at 1:43 P.M.