

1 **Lutheran-Reformed Coordinating Committee**  
2 November 29-30, 2004  
3 Cleveland, Ohio  
4 United Church of Christ Church House  
5

6 **Draft**  
7

8 Present: Doug Fromm (chair), Lowell Almen, Jack Lynes, Robert Laha, Carlos Malave, Jim  
9 Sanders, Lynn Japinga, Lydia Veliko  
10 Guests: Craig Settlage, Dick Sparrow, Marcia  
11 Myers, Gregg Mast (*Formula of Agreement Ministry Staff*)  
12 Absent: Randy Lee, Robina Winbush, Thomas Fiet  
13

14 **Opening prayer**

15 Almen led opening prayers.  
16

17 **Welcome and review of agenda and minutes**

18 Before reviewing agenda and minutes from the previous session Fromm reported that the  
19 Ministry Staff would join the Coordinating Committee Tuesday morning for report and  
20 discussion, and asked if they could consider the following questions as they prepared to make a  
21 presentation: the status of conversations about and preparation for licensed/commissioned  
22 ministry; the status of liturgy for "installations" of FOA clergy; if possible, a review of how  
23 many FOA pastors are currently in service; any relevant questions related to specialized  
24 ministries (chaplains, etc.); finally, the current wisdom of ministry staff related to questions  
25 from pastors who want to serve (and search for calls) in a FOA church. Fromm indicated that  
26 the primary expectation for the time together was an opportunity for collegial conversation and  
27 connection.  
28

29 Fromm then welcomed the Committee and asked for approval of both March 2004 minutes and  
30 current agenda. Both were approved.  
31

32 **Introductions and check-in**

33 Fromm invited members to share personal updates and news.  
34

35 **Communion updates**

36 ELCA

37 Almen reported that October 31, 2005 marked the 5<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the signing of the Joint  
38 Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification between the Vatican and the Lutheran World  
39 Federation (LWF) in Augsburg, Germany. As a way to commemorate the anniversary, the  
40 ELCA invited Cardinal Kasper (President of the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of  
41 Christian Unity) to address the ELCA Church Council and to participate in evening prayer in  
42 October. He offered the homily at St. Luke Lutheran Church and was also present for morning  
43 prayer. His presentation to the Conference of Bishops that same morning in the plenary session  
44 was very well received. Bishop Marcus Miller (Northeastern Ohio Synod) offered a formal

45 response. It was a meaningful event for the Church Council and an important commemorative  
46 opportunity.

47  
48 The publication resulting from the 10<sup>th</sup> round of Lutheran-Roman Catholic dialogue is about to  
49 be released. This dialogue was the setting which provided the original documents leading to  
50 the drafting of the previously mentioned document. The theme of the 10<sup>th</sup> round is "The Church as  
51 Koinonia of Salvation: its structures and ministries." Almen hopes for widespread study of the  
52 document, published jointly by US Conference of Catholic Bishops and Augsburg Fortress Press  
53 and due to be released shortly.

54  
55 A vote on the establishment of interim Eucharistic sharing with the United Methodist Church is  
56 scheduled for Churchwide Assembly in Orlando in August of 2005. For the ELCA interim  
57 Eucharistic sharing provides for hospitality at the communion table but indicates that issues of  
58 interchangeability of ordained ministers has not yet been resolved. Almen expects that after a  
59 vote, if positive, a committee will be established to continue the dialogue exploring further  
60 agreements.

61  
62 There is good news and bad news related to matters of finance in the ELCA. Since 1992  
63 congregational income has declined, although the past fiscal year saw new growth, a hopeful  
64 sign for churchwide budgets. Almen reported that there will not be an immediate positive  
65 impact, however, because the major expense – health care costs – continues to increase, and  
66 therefore the challenge to budgets will remain significant.

67  
68 The 2003 Churchwide Assembly authorized the continuation of the work of the Task Force on  
69 Human Sexuality, which is scheduled to give a report to Churchwide Assembly in August on  
70 two controversial issues: the ordination of gays and lesbians and the blessing of same-sex  
71 unions. The task force has continued its work though the national climate has presented a  
72 challenge. The report will be released January 13, 2005, and the clergy will have access to it  
73 before it is made available to the public. The experience of the 1993 draft of the social statement  
74 on issues of sexuality, which was made available to the press before it was seen by some  
75 constituency, created difficulties in its reception, and they hope to avoid recreating this  
76 dynamic. After the document is released, the Church Council will take its recommendations  
77 and then formulate recommendations of its own, and it will be the Church Council's  
78 recommendations, informed by the work of the Task Force report, which will be submitted to  
79 Churchwide Assembly in August 2005. The Task Force recommendations themselves will then  
80 become a historical document. In November 2004 Church Council established the rules for  
81 receiving and responding to the recommendation, intentionally prior to knowledge of the  
82 recommendations themselves, so that the procedure was not unduly influenced by the content.  
83 These procedural rules will form the content of the first plenary session at Churchwide  
84 Assembly.

85  
86 PCUSA

87 Malave began with a reflection that it is the context of the "whole church" and its ministry  
88 which is important to keep in mind when considering more specific aspects of the life of the

89 church, because it is in the local engagement where the mission and ministry of the church is  
90 most clearly lived out, and it is this work which motivates the rest.

91  
92 He reported that congregations and governing bodies are struggling with finances throughout  
93 the PCUSA. Synods and Presbyteries are having to sell property in some locations, but Malave  
94 says that his hope is that even in the midst of decline, God will bring forth new life. He  
95 reported that one sign of new life has been the emergence of new forms of racial-ethnic  
96 ministries in the PCUSA. At the recent annual Moderator's Conference held in Louisville,  
97 participants focused on the theme of the multi-cultural church. While there are disagreements  
98 about the approach to becoming more fully multicultural (is it something we need to build or  
99 something that most fruitfully occurs spontaneously?), it too is a sign of new life and hope in  
100 the church.

101  
102 In the international arena, PCUSA Stated Clerk Clifton Kirkpatrick was elected President of the  
103 World Alliance of Reformed Churches at its General Council meeting in Accra, Ghana in  
104 August 2004.

105  
106 The number of national staff positions has been reduced by about 38 as a result of budget cuts.  
107 Women's ministry staff and staff working with Hispanic curriculum production were most  
108 impacted by this most recent reduction in force. It was a painful time for staff and difficult  
109 decisions about how commitments will be maintained/tasks will be accomplished loom large.

110  
111 The most controversial action from the 2004 General Assembly related to a decision to study  
112 phased selective divestment from companies doing business in Israel which contribute to the  
113 oppression of Palestinians. The reaction was intensified because this action was accompanied  
114 by two others: to continue support for a Messianic Jewish congregation in the Philadelphia  
115 area, and a statement opposing traditional Christian Zionist views. The action related to all  
116 three, but especially the study of divestment, has strained relationships with the Jewish  
117 community and a recent trip to Palestine, during which some staff had conversation with  
118 Hezbollah, resulted in the termination of two national staff. Malave noted that since the  
119 summer the PCUSA has been ongoing dialogue with the Jewish community about these issues  
120 and has done so in ecumenical dialogue as well.

121  
122 Malave also noted that the PCUSA had, in 2003, taken an action to meet in General Assembly  
123 biennially rather than annually. Though this is helpful for finance and work-load, he also noted  
124 that many are concerned about the impact on the ownership of a wider-church agenda with  
125 fewer meetings.

126  
127 Finally, he reported the PCUSA will vote on participation in the newly emerging ecumenical  
128 table Christian Churches Together at its 2006 General Assembly.

129  
130 Sanders noted the reverberations from the action at GA were also felt in regional and local  
131 levels, both in support of the action and against it. Those who were against it generally felt  
132 strongly for one or both of two reasons: either they understand that support for Israel is

133 essential in the coming of the “end times,” or they have forged significant relationships with  
134 members of the Jewish community and are fearful that the actions will cause serious disruption.

135  
136 Sanders reported that in addition to the reflections from the national setting, realities in the  
137 regional setting indicate that the PCUSA will be a very different church in the next 10 years.  
138 What does it mean, for example, to be a church which does work “decently and in order” using  
139 western European assumptions when increasingly new churches are of immigrant, non-  
140 European communities? How do the changing economic realities, and the vast alterations in  
141 life in rural America, change the way the church does business? He believes that all of this will  
142 have implications for the church’s structure in the next decade.

143  
144 Laha reported that the themes already shared by Malave and Sanders are the same he’d note in  
145 the local arena, but that the “local flavor” gives different perspectives. He had not heard much  
146 in the local community related to the strained relationship with the Jewish community as a  
147 result of the General Assembly actions, though he is aware of the national-level concerns. He  
148 reports that budget constraints are significant, and that those experienced by his local church  
149 will negatively impact the life of his Presbytery. He is also concerned that older members with  
150 love for and knowledge of the wider church are being replaced by people who have neither,  
151 and is convinced that there is shared responsibility for this circumstance.

152  
153 UCC

154 Lynes reported that the UCC is undergoing some shifts in leadership as elected officers finish  
155 terms and either choose to run for re-election or retire. He noted that the same budget  
156 constraints reported by the ELCA and the PCUSA are also operative within the UCC. The UCC  
157 is launching an identity initiative called “God is Still Speaking,” and this has been very strongly  
158 and actively supported by more than a third of the denomination’s congregations. The  
159 initiative staff have contracted with an advertising firm to develop TV and radio commercials  
160 with a particular focus on welcoming the unchurched.

161  
162 Lynes reported that at the local level he has been a bit disappointed in recent years to  
163 experience a “so what” attitude toward ecumenical commitments, and hopes that this is not  
164 indicative of the whole country.

165  
166 Finally, he reported that the issue of same-sex marriage has been difficult even in a state like  
167 Massachusetts, because while many of the congregations are openly welcoming of gay and  
168 lesbian members and support their ordination, the question of the constitutional amendment  
169 raised a set of questions that even they felt forced issues they were not yet prepared to face.  
170 Lynes believes that the political focus on this question opened some sore wounds and brought  
171 out some hidden biases.

172  
173 Veliko reported on national setting concerns. Finances, she said, remain difficult, and in the fall  
174 24 staff (just over 10%) were laid off as a result of budget cuts; and many program dollars are no  
175 longer available. She affirmed Lynes’ report of the identity initiative and said that the support  
176 has been widespread. Reporting on the WARC General Council meeting, she affirmed the

177 enthusiasm for the election of PCUSA Stated Clerk Clifton Kirkpatrick as President and said  
178 that he was a very good leader for this particular time in the Council's life. She shared  
179 disappointment with the result of the WARC meeting related to a statement on global economic  
180 policies, saying that it could have been theologically more sophisticated and more substantive  
181 in its approach to economic analysis. As have many denominations, the UCC has voted to  
182 participate in the newly emerging Christian Churches Together, though is worried about the  
183 lack of participation thus far by the historic African American churches, both Baptist and  
184 Methodist.

185

186 Veliko reported that the UCC, in partnership with other Reformed churches, continues its  
187 national dialogue with the Roman Catholic Church, and says that while there have been some  
188 difficult aspects, the work remains vital to ecumenical progress.

189

190 She shared the general anxiety around Jewish-Christian relations. For the UCC these  
191 discussions did not begin with the PCUSA action in the summer, but the previous year when  
192 the UCC General Synod took an action calling for an alternative voice to traditional Christian  
193 Zionism. She expects that the General Synod in 2005 will receive at least one if not more  
194 resolutions similar to that of the PCUSA, and noted that this will be a very difficult  
195 conversation. The relationships of many congregations with members of the Jewish  
196 community, long years of dialogue, and ambivalence about how (though not whether) to  
197 support the rights of Palestinians will make, and a resistance to endanger pension funds will all  
198 result in very difficult discussions.

199

200 She reported that the UCC is working on a statement on interfaith relations for General Synod,  
201 and has done this in collaboration with the Disciples (though the two denominations will have  
202 separate documents based on differing needs). This has been a challenging but important  
203 process for the church.

204

205 Finally, Veliko updated the committee on the ongoing work related to global mission partners.  
206 Increasing numbers of immigrant community churches establishing congregations and  
207 affiliating with the United Church of Christ have required attention to protocols for relating to  
208 ordained ministers and congregational membership in the denomination. She reported that the  
209 conversations are proceeding with the Church of South India and Micronesian church leaders.

210

#### 211 RCA

212 Japinga reported that an ongoing issue for the RCA remains questions related to human  
213 sexuality. There have been some high-profile instances in recent months of members who have  
214 challenged the RCA stand on the question of gay marriage and ordination. This coupled with  
215 the anxiety around state constitutional marriage amendments has caused much anxiety. She  
216 finds it hard to see where there can be compromise between those who see these as moral issues  
217 and those who see them as justice issues. She observed that years ago when there were intra-  
218 denominational arguments, loyalty to the denomination was often strong enough to keep  
219 people "in the family" in spite of deep differences. There is not the same loyalty now and

220 wonders what will replace loyalty as that which can hold the denomination together in the  
221 midst of struggles.

222  
223 Fromm observed many seem to be worried about the future of the denomination for these very  
224 reasons. Finances are not currently a concern for the RCA, and there has been resolution to  
225 issues related to health care program sustainability, but anxiety about deeply-held convictions  
226 which divide churches remain a cause for concern.

227  
228 The work to develop Christian Churches Together has been a major effort for the RCA General  
229 Secretary in the last two years, and the RCA voted to participate in the emerging organization at  
230 its 2004 General Synod. Leadership is enthusiastic about participation in a table where Roman  
231 Catholics are full members, since there has not been such a setting in the US in the past. The  
232 General Secretary's leadership in this arena will continue and it is hoped that over time a  
233 majority of the US churches will agree to participate.

234  
235 Fromm updated the Committee on the RCA's 5-year study of the Belhar Confession. This past  
236 General Synod was the third to address the question as the RCA seeks to discern whether to  
237 add Belhar as a 4<sup>th</sup> confession. In the process most of the Commissions of the church have  
238 actively engaged the study, and at the 2004 General Synod Mitri Rahib from Bethlehem spoke  
239 from the larger context of the intersection between justice and unity, particularly in the Middle  
240 East. The Commission on Christian Unity will bring a study guide to General Synod in 2005  
241 and will guide delegates through a one-session experience to test the process of a wider study of  
242 the document. It is not yet clear whether ultimately the church will decide that it rises to the  
243 level of a 4<sup>th</sup> Confession, but the process has been very important. (The RCA has never received  
244 another Confession so it's not even clear how to do such a thing if it is the will of the church.)  
245 The RCA is also in the middle of a Decade to Overcome Racism, so the various themes in the  
246 church's life have worked well this year.

247  
248 The RCA remains in dialogue with the CRC, a dialogue which resulted from an action in 2000  
249 which proposed a merger between the two churches. Both stepped back from that for a number  
250 of reasons (including that it's a very difficult financial and structural thing to pull off) and  
251 determined that ongoing dialogue to discover ways in which we could do things together might  
252 "seam the garment together" better. One cooperative effort has been the merger of the two  
253 churches' distribution center in Michigan. In addition, prior to the dialogue between the two  
254 churches there was no process for "orderly exchange" of pastors, and as a result of the recent  
255 conversations work has begun to create a document for such a process to be completed in early  
256 June.

257  
258 Fromm also noted that the 2004 General Synod received and approved a major paper on  
259 Christian Zionism, similar to those received by the UCC and the PCUSA, and the denomination  
260 has received similar reactions both from the Jewish community and some within the RCA.  
261 There has also been much discussion in the RCA related to biblical interpretation, particularly  
262 in the context of the popular "Left Behind" series and other writings.

263

264 Finally, Fromm reported that concerns related to human sexuality remain contentious and will  
265 be for some time.

266  
267 Veliko suggested that an important future discussion topic should relate to instances when  
268 clergy of one Formula church choose to move to another particularly as a result of  
269 denominational decisions related to sexuality. She feels that our ability to speak honestly to  
270 each other will be an important aspect of deepening commitment and will provide a healthy  
271 model for constituency to engage the same issues.

272

### 273 **Agenda for heads of communion/ecumenical officers meeting**

274 Fromm reported that Formula heads of communion and ecumenical officers will meet in mid-  
275 December for conversation about the Formula relationship, assessing the implementation to-  
276 date, and sharing vision for the future. Ecumenical officers wanted input from the  
277 Coordinating Committee prior to that meeting re: agenda items. The following were suggested  
278 as possible topics:

279

- 280 • Vision and mission of the heads of communion for the future of the relationship
- 281 • What are the “difficult issues” and how should we approach them?
- 282 • Issues related to human sexuality
- 283 • Concerns related to Israel/Palestine and possible cooperative strategies
- 284 • Ministry concerns, especially related to education about protocol for pastoral calls and  
285 communication between judicatory leaders
- 286 • Mainline churches after the election – possible joint strategies
- 287 • 10 year anniversary celebration – what do we want to do?

288

289 The ecumenical officers will take this list and shape an agenda, and will share a report of the  
290 meeting with Coordinating Committee members after the new year.

291

### 292 **National Gathering of judicatory leaders**

293 Prior to recess for the evening, the Committee considered the topic of a projected national  
294 meeting of judicatory leaders. Almen shared that he had pursued the question of scheduling  
295 such a gathering with the ELCA Bishops’ Conference and reported that the earliest it could  
296 probably be fit into their calendar would be 2008. He also warned the Committee of the  
297 immensity of such a project, stating that when planning for a similar gathering with the  
298 ECUSA, it required 3 meetings a year for 4 years, and included a staff person working full-time  
299 on logistics. He urged that we consider carefully whether we have the capacity to do this well.  
300 Fromm concurred.

301

302 The committee recessed for the evening.

303

304

305

306

307

Tuesday, November 30

308  
309 Laha led opening prayers.

310  
311 Fromm asked, before inviting the ministry staff to share a report, whether it would be useful to  
312 consider any cooperative response and activity to the issue of relationships with the Jewish  
313 community and the situation in the Middle East, as all 4 communions reported similar  
314 circumstances and concerns. All agreed that a joint effort in the area of Jewish-Christian  
315 relations would be valuable. Veliko suggested that a letter from the Coordinating Committee to  
316 the staff in each communion who relate to Middle East concerns and interfaith relations,  
317 encouraging their continued efforts at collaboration, would be important. Fromm agreed to  
318 draft a letter and circulate to members of the Coordinating Committee. It was also suggested  
319 that one of the staff be with us at our next meeting.

320  
321 **Ministry discussion**

322 Ministry staff reported having had a very good conversation and spent part of the time  
323 reacquainting themselves with the Orderly Exchange document.

324  
325 They then detailed a few issues regarding the "Principles of Agreement" found on page 2 of the  
326 document.

327  
328 *Principle 1:* Staff reaffirmed that "orderly exchange" refers not to a permanent transfer of  
329 credentials or to pulpit supply but rather to extended service of an ordained minister of word  
330 and sacrament in a Formula partner congregation.

331  
332 *Principle 2:* In order to serve in another communion one must be fully grounded in one's own.  
333 Because of this, it was stressed that these are not intended to be for a "first call," and the staff  
334 worry that in more than a few cases this has not been followed.

335  
336 *Principle 4:* Staff emphasized that calls should, according to the Agreement, be made at the  
337 invitation of the calling body (whatever that is in the particular communion); and therefore they  
338 understand that this Agreement does not extend to "open search" within a Formula partner's  
339 system. This is often confusing to pastors and congregations alike.

340  
341 *Principle 6:* This was noted with some anxiety, as it appears that in more than a few settings the  
342 appropriate "approval" process of the sending judicatory has not been sought, or has been  
343 ignored even when sought. Staff and Coordinating Committee agreed that this is a serious  
344 issue and needs to be addressed in a variety of settings.

345  
346 These were the principles which the ministry staff agreed needed special consideration in  
347 months and years ahead as the 4 churches deepen their relationship.

348  
349 Almen shared the ELCA "Letter of invitation" which is used in orderly exchange circumstances.  
350 Because in the ELCA only an ordained minister of the ELCA can be "called and installed," the  
351 church recognized that other language was needed in order both to honor the denomination's

352 polity and also the validity of the orderly exchange relationship, particularly so that a  
353 congregation understands that this person was brought to serve as a pastor “fully and  
354 completely.” The language they settled on was that of “invitation of extended service,” which  
355 is consistent with the Orderly Exchange doc and a parallel document related to their ECUSA  
356 agreement. The congregation extends this “letter of invitation” and when the pastor begins  
357 ministry in the setting, a “rite of invitation to extended service” is used in place of the regular  
358 “rite of installation.” It provides language to acknowledge the authorization by the bishop for  
359 the pastor to serve in that setting and also recognizes that the minister comes from a Formula  
360 church. There is also a model “contract” which is used, for the purposes of establishing the  
361 actual employment relationship between the congregation and ministers. Though according to  
362 the Formula the pastor remains accountable to the sending church’s discipline, from a civil  
363 perspective the terms of the employment relationship must be clear.

364  
365 The PCUSA reported using a similar document which includes questions out of the Book of  
366 Order. Ministry staff flagged this item as one for continued work.

#### 367 Orderly exchange data

368  
369 Next, the ministry staff reported on the number of pastors serving other churches and  
370 congregations in Formula relationships of one kind or another [refer to written FOAMS report].

#### 371 Ongoing questions

372  
373 All four ministry staff reported that one of the most persistent questions comes from pastors  
374 asking to be included in open searches in the Formula partners’ systems. Myers reported that  
375 early in the relationship the PCUSA did have an open process, but it caused much confusion,  
376 particularly online, and so they changed their policy and closed the process. None of the other  
377 Formula partners permit open searches.

378  
379 Staff reported that many of the fears related to orderly exchange (that our congregations would  
380 be flooded with pastoral applicants, that inappropriate decisions would be made about pastoral  
381 appointments, etc) have not materialized. The number of orderly exchanges has been lower  
382 than some wished for, but from the perspective of the ministry staff it is working relatively well.

383  
384 The staff noted that one area of confusion related to the way we talk about ministries which are  
385 local and non-mobile: do we call them “commissioned” pastors, “licensed,” or “authorized”?  
386 Nomenclature referring to one role in one church may refer to a very different role in another.  
387 This needs clarification for the benefit of regional judicatory staff and the committees which  
388 deal with authorization for ministry.

389  
390 All four Formula partners face the same realities: small congregations, inability to support full  
391 time or sometimes even part time trained pastors, and the desire to explore alternate routes to  
392 training. Each of the Formula partners has studied and proposed solutions to these issues,  
393 looking out a decade to determine what future needs will dictate about present training.

394

395 Still, they noted, they feel strongly that this category of pastoral staffing *cannot* be appropriately  
396 considered under the rubrics established by the Formula, which were developed with certain  
397 understandings related to preparation and mobility. To do so would represent an unauthorized  
398 expansion of the language of the Formula agreement.

399  
400 Fromm asked how we can be ecumenically hospitable and encourage ongoing exchange but not  
401 be technically “invitational,” so as not to cross understood boundaries. He worries that the  
402 “letter of the law,” while accurate, sounds prohibitive and doesn’t convey the message of  
403 relationship desired by the Formula.

404  
405 Malave asked if the Orderly Exchange document could be “attached” to the Formula page on all  
406 of our websites so that judicatory leaders could easily see it. Staff said that in some  
407 denominations this is already the case, but that what is probably needed is a simpler, shorter  
408 version for quicker reading. Fromm also suggested that material which would aid the average  
409 candidate, so that someone who feels a call to ecumenical ministry can understand the rubrics  
410 related to search and call in Formula churches.

411  
412 Lynes wondered if it would be possible for the four partners to work cooperatively in various  
413 regions on training of “lay,” “licensed,” or “commissioned” pastors, so at least there might  
414 begin to be a history of shared standards. Veliko noted that while she is aware of a few places  
415 where this is actually happening, it may begin to indicate “permission” for exchangeability  
416 which we don’t want to convey. Myers also noted that in some of the denominations, it is the  
417 seminaries which have responsibility for this sort of training, and it would introduce  
418 complexities into regional relationships which may not be helpful.

419  
420 Mast, however, noted that in New York a consortium of Formula educators has been meeting  
421 for about 5 years and has received a Lilly grant for continuing education for FOA clergy. While  
422 this is not the same as a training for commissioned/licensed pastors, it does suggest a successful  
423 model which could, over time, be replicated for different purposes.

424  
425 “Update” resource

426 Settlage reported that it is the intention of ministry staff to begin more regular communication  
427 to nurture middle judicatory leaders’ understanding of Formula issues, particularly related to  
428 exchange and discipline, and that they plan to develop an “update” communication, sent  
429 periodically and not just as a “one shot deal.” [Note attached report from FOAMS for detail of  
430 first “update.”] Future communication might include a list of current middle judicatory  
431 leaders, so many of whom have changed since 1998, so that colleagues who may not know each  
432 other (particularly where geography makes relationship difficult) don’t have to sift through  
433 long lists.

434  
435 Fromm urged that all information be kept very succinct and simple. People understand the  
436 issues, but agendas are full, and those who are not familiar with the relationship will not take  
437 the time to read through many pages and complicated explanations.

438

439 National judicatory leaders gathering

440 Sparrow noted, in response to discussion about a national middle judicatory leaders' meeting  
441 (such as was envisioned at the previous Coordinating Committee meeting), that if such a  
442 gathering were to relate to "search and call" issues it would be important to assess whether it  
443 could be successful. The UCC and Disciples experienced a similar meeting which was not  
444 successful. It was not mutually planned and some colleagues felt excluded both from the  
445 process and the discussion – and thus actually detracted from a sense of "Partnership." He  
446 concluded that these gatherings are very difficult to pull off well and that they take so much  
447 time in preparation that it is unclear whether they are worthwhile.

448  
449 Myers wonders if one way to use judicatory leaders' time well would be to plan a meeting, a  
450 few years in the future, for judicatory leaders, seminary staff, and governing bodies in a certain  
451 region, *focusing the agenda around "leadership needs for the future."* In this way the agenda would  
452 be clear and the demographics focused as well.

453  
454 Sanders hoped that the idea of a consultation wouldn't be dismissed too quickly, even if  
455 challenging, because it could be very useful for colleagues in settings where there is no longer  
456 an option but to consider meeting pastoral needs ecumenically. In these arenas accurate  
457 information must be shared and relationships must be built.

458  
459 Almen suggested that since a large judicatory leaders' gathering is not seen as the best approach  
460 at this time, perhaps working harder to ensure Formula partner participation at various  
461 denominational gatherings related to search/call would be helpful. All agreed. Myers thought  
462 that it would be useful to have someone overlay denominational calendars related to these  
463 meetings. Malave suggested that a significant Formula presence at polity gatherings could help  
464 build the relationship which Sanders affirmed.

465  
466 Next steps

467 Fromm summarized the discussion of the "Update" by referring to the notes [attached],  
468 confirming that the elements noted in the report would be included in the first update, and that  
469 the following would be added:

- 470  
471
- 472 • Issues related to discipline
  - 473 • Brief outline of questions related to lay/licensed/commissioned pastors (including  
474 definition of terminology)
  - 475 • A paragraph for each communion so that it is a "customized" document for the  
476 judicatory leaders.

477 In response to a question about responsibility for the "update" resource, Settlege said that the  
478 Ministry staff would welcome a request from the Coordinating Committee and would expect to  
479 be held accountable for finishing it. The Coordinating Committee duly made the request and  
480 expressed great appreciation and thanks to the Ministry staff for their commitment and  
481 collegiality. The Ministry staff expect the "update and reminder" (language used to emphasize

482 its regular/periodic nature) to be completed by April of 2005. Their next scheduled meeting is  
483 April 12, 2005.

484  
485 Settlage then offered that a preliminary step toward an eventual judicatory gathering (whether  
486 national or regional) would be to identify what is already on the calendar and offer to resource  
487 each other. Fromm asked if Ministry staff could, over the next 6 months, look at calendars,  
488 share information with the Coordinating Committee about what is currently scheduled, and  
489 offer a recommendation about whether there is a region of the country which might benefit  
490 from an ecumenical gathering around ministry/leadership issues. Ministry staff agreed.

491  
492 In response to a question by Lynes about how the four churches are preparing pastors for  
493 potential service in Formula settings, Sparrow reported that in the UCC the majority of the  
494 committees on ministry require pastors to take a polity class in preparation for receiving dual  
495 standing. Mast said that the RCA is just beginning to explore this issue, and they expect to use  
496 the structure of a general orientation class formatted around issues of polity,  
497 theology/confessions, and liturgy. This is not in direct response to needs of the Formula but  
498 could easily be used. It cannot be required of the classes but strongly recommended. Myers  
499 reported that the practice of PCUSA committees on ministry vary a great deal. She wonders if  
500 there would be ways to communicate "best practices" among our various governing bodies. All  
501 agreed that this would be very useful.

502  
503 Malave suggested that a resource of "interpretation" for the Formula would be helpful in  
504 placing the Formula in the larger context of ecumenical relationships. Almen noted that such a  
505 piece was done in 1998, but that much had transpired since then and it would need to be  
506 updated. Sanders and Laha agreed that this would be very helpful for judicatory leaders, lay  
507 leaders and clergy alike.

508  
509 Fromm expressed his appreciation to the Ministry staff, and asked what the staff needed from  
510 the Coordinating Committee. Ministry staff also expressed appreciation for the meeting, and  
511 suggested that in the future, as much clarity as possible about what kind of reporting would be  
512 useful to the Coordinating Committee would be helpful to the Ministry staff. They also  
513 suggested that knowing future dates early would make it possible for one or all of the Ministry  
514 staff to meet with the Coordinating Committee for a time.

515  
516 It was agreed that Mast would represent the Ministry staff at the fall Coordinating Committee  
517 meeting since the gathering will be held in New York hosted by the RCA.

518  
519 The Coordinating Committee recessed for lunch.

520  
521 **Reflection on Ministry conversation**

522 Upon return, members reflected on the conversation with Ministry staff and considered what  
523 had been learned. All expressed appreciation for the collegiality and wisdom of ministry staff  
524 colleagues and recognized that this work is crucial to the success of the relationship.

525

526 Both Laha and Japinga hope that we can strike the right balance between needing to honor the  
527 original agreements, which don't allow for as much ministry-related engagement as some  
528 would like on the one hand, and nurturing the ecumenical relationship on the other. Both feel  
529 as though the emphasis appears to be on gate-keeping rather than relationship building, and  
530 hope that a better balance can be achieved.

531  
532 Sanders suggested that the key lies in developing guidelines/standards by which judicatory  
533 leaders and their committees can be guided, so that the appropriate function of gate keeping  
534 can take place, but so that leaders are also aware of the flexibility that they do have. If  
535 committees/judicatory leaders do not have a sense of how to take action, they may tend to be  
536 even more restrictive than necessary.

537  
538 Veliko feels that some of this is simply a part of the maturation process. She described various  
539 efforts between the UCC and Disciples as guidelines related to the full reconciliation of  
540 ministries were developed. That relationship is 15 years old and even now there are places  
541 where re-education is necessary, and new judicatory leaders and committees always have to be  
542 nurtured in the protocol and commitments. Much has improved, but this took time.

543  
544 Lynes expressed his concern about the ecumenical implications of pastors from a Formula  
545 church who may want to join the UCC because of sexual orientation. He feels torn between our  
546 needing to be open on the one hand and not perceived as "sheep stealing" on the other. Veliko  
547 concurred, and repeated her concern that this be a topic for heads of communion and  
548 ecumenical officers in December. This dynamic will increase, not decrease, in the coming  
549 months, and it is important, she said, that we be conscious of how we are all making decisions  
550 and communicating our commitments and cautions to judicatory leaders.

551  
552 Laha returned to the question of "gate keeping," saying that one concern he has related to the  
553 proposed development of further guidelines is that more "rules and regulations" serve to speak  
554 "prohibition" rather than openness to possibility. He hopes that this tension can be maintained  
555 even while the denominations do the necessary work of maintaining boundaries.

### 556 **Identifying Formula activity in local and regional settings**

557 A conversation ensued about whether/how to encourage judicatories to submit data related to  
558 how they are engaging the elements of full communion. This may come in the form of periodic  
559 gatherings, shared ministries, collaborative mission efforts, etc. The Coordinating Committee  
560 should not appear to "demand" that shared ministries be the prescribed vehicle for living into  
561 the Formula, but did feel it was important to assess – and strongly encourage – our judicatories  
562 and local congregations to enter into the relationship in one way or another. To do so it will be  
563 necessary to take periodic stock not only of what is happening but where the "growing edges"  
564 are. It was agreed that the Coordinating Committee will explore ways to ask regions and  
565 judicatories for information about how they are fulfilling this commitment.

566  
567  
568 Fromm reminded the Committee that there were once plans to have follow-up contact with  
569 pastors who are currently serving in Formula churches. This would give the Coordinating

570 Committee a sense of how the orderly exchange part of the relationship is working and what  
571 we've learned. He will ask Ministry staff to suggest the best way to achieve this, recognizing  
572 that they have a great deal on their plates and it may have to wait.

573

574 **Dates for summer denominational gatherings**

575 ELCA: August 8-14, 2005, Orlando  
576 RCA: June 16-22, 2005, Union College, Schenectady NY  
577 UCC: July 1-5, 2005, Atlanta  
578 PCUSA: General Assembly next meets in 2006

579

580 **Future meetings**

581

582 **October 20 – 21, 2005**, (noon to 3:00 p.m.)

583 Hosted by the Reformed Church in America in New York.

584

585 **May 22-23, 2006** (noon to 3:00 p.m.)

586 Hosted by the ELCA in Chicago.

587

588 **Preliminary agenda items for October 2005**

589 Fromm suggested that a major item for the October agenda be to begin organizing for the 10  
590 year anniversary, which may include regional and local gatherings, a celebration liturgy, a  
591 compilation of "best practices" and stories about how local communities have engaged the  
592 relationship.

593

594 In addition to this item, the Coordinating Committee will:

- 595 • Elect a new chairperson
- 596 • Connect with committees such as FOAMS and the theology committee

597

598 Fromm will contact Joe Small from the theology committee to ask if they can report on progress  
599 for plans for the consultation. Veliko reported that the Disciples are eager to offer a participant  
600 to that consultation as requested at the March meeting.

601

602 The meeting adjourned at 2:00 p.m.

603

604 Respectfully submitted,

605

606 Lydia Veliko

607

608