

# **Christian Churches Together in the U. S. A.**

## **I. Preamble**

We are challenged as Christians by the prayer of Jesus in John 17 that all who believe in Him might be one with God and with one another so that the world would believe in Him as God and Savior.

We acknowledge that this is not what we experience now and recognize that we have different histories and convictions on some key issues.

We pray for a fresh awareness of the Holy Spirit's work among us that will foster:

- Relationships where our differences can be better understood, our commonalities better affirmed, and our brokenness healed by God;
- more opportunities to engage in shared witness, vision, and action;
- a strong prophetic voice of the Christian community in America.

We believe that we will be led into these new relationships as we commit ourselves to spiritual disciplines such as prayer and study of Scripture to listen for and obey the voice of Christ.

This leads us to establish Christian Churches Together in the U.S.A. to create new levels of relationships and actions that offer a shared witness for Christ to the world.

## **II. Theological Affirmations**

Christian Churches Together in the USA welcomes churches, Christian communities, and national Christian organizations that:

- believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Savior according to the Scriptures;
- worship and serve the One God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; and
- seek ways to work together in order to present a more credible Christian witness in and to the world.

## **III. Purpose and Activity**

The purpose of Christian Churches Together is to enable churches and national Christian organizations to grow closer together in Christ in order to strengthen our Christian witness in the world. Participants in Christian Churches Together accomplish this purpose by:

- rejoicing in our faith in the Triune God;
- discerning the guidance of the Holy Spirit through prayer and theological dialogue;
- providing fellowship and mutual support;
- affirming our commonalities and understanding our differences;
- fostering Christian evangelism faithful to the proclamation of the gospel;
- speaking to society with a common voice whenever possible;
- promoting the common good of society.

We cannot act together until we pray and walk together and understand each other better. Therefore in the early period, our primary focus should be on the first four activities. As we do this faithfully, we believe the Holy Spirit will lead us to discern how best to engage in the three remaining activities in our Christian witness to the world.

At least once a year, a General Assembly will gather for two and a half days for fellowship, prayer, theological discussion and discernment of potential areas for common witness.

Christian Churches Together will sponsor in the name of Christian Churches Together, various Forums on diverse topics (e.g., evangelism, worship, public policy). The Steering Committee will have full authority over the topics and the program (speakers, etc.) for Forums sponsored by Christian Churches Together. National Christian organizations that share Christian Churches Together's purpose and theology will be invited to participate in these Forums.

#### **IV. Participation in Christian Churches Together**

All who share the theological affirmations and purpose are eligible to participate in Christian Churches Together.

There will be two categories of participants:

- Participant churches which include national church bodies and associations of churches which are national in scope
- Participant national Christian organizations

No more than approximately 20% of Christian Churches Together will be participant national Christian organizations.

The Christian Churches Together Steering Committee will develop a broad invitation list of national church bodies, associations of churches and national Christian organizations, which will be invited to become participants in Christian Churches Together as it is founded. Participant national Christian organizations will be those that strongly share the theological convictions and purposes of Christian Churches Together, are deeply related to its churches, and which have the strong support of a wide variety of churches that will compose Christian Churches Together.

Once inaugurated, and Phase II has begun, Christian Churches Together will develop a process for issuing additional invitations for participation and for receiving applications from those churches and national Christian organizations wishing to participate. Criteria will be developed to welcome into the fellowship those national church bodies, associations of churches and national Christian organizations, which, based on the discernment of the governing bodies of Christian Churches Together, will uphold its theological affirmations, further its purpose, and promote unity within the fellowship of Christian Churches Together.

All participants in Christian Churches Together will be expected to:

- uphold Christian Churches Together's theological affirmations;
- forward the purpose of Christian Churches Together;
- support the organization, both financially and through personal participation;
- share in fellowship, prayer and dialogue with other participants in Christian Churches Together;
- join others in common ministry as they are led by the Holy Spirit.

Those organizations that meet the criteria for participation, but are not able to do so at this time, will be invited to be observers in the meetings and gatherings of Christian Churches Together.

## **V. Governing Christian Churches Together**

### **1. General Assembly**

The General Assembly (meeting at least once every year for two and a half days) will consist of the heads of communions (or their designated representative) of each participating church plus an additional representative for each five million members (or fraction thereof) in their church or association of churches. Twenty per cent may also be heads of participant national Christian organizations.

For a small part of the annual meeting, the heads of participant churches and participant national Christian organizations will meet to decide upon basic issues-- including at least:

the addition of new participants, foundational theological documents, and Christian Churches Together's constitution.

## **2. Steering Committee**

The Steering Committee will consist of 18-24 members. Each of Christian Churches Together's five families (Evangelical/Pentecostal; Historic Protestant; Historic Racial/Ethnic; Orthodox; Roman Catholic) will have three members each on the Steering Committee. Each of the five families will choose their three representatives according to their own procedures. The Steering Committee will have at least three additional at-large members. These at-large members may be representatives of participant national Christian organizations (selected according to criteria to be developed by the Steering Committee).

Upon joining Christian Churches Together, each communion or association of churches will choose which of the five families they wish to join for purposes of selecting the members of the Steering Committee.

The Steering Committee will elect its officers, develop bylaws (including length of term on the Steering Committee), and attend to the business of Christian Churches Together between meetings of the General Assembly.

## **3. Topical Forums**

Any action (declarations, policy proposals, etc.) that develop out of the Forums sponsored by Christian Churches Together will be done, not in the name of Christian Churches Together, but in the name of whatever churches, national Christian organizations and individuals choose to sign on to that specific item. Common action in the name of Christian Churches Together can only be done by consensus of the General Assembly or Steering Committee.

## **4. Consensus Decision Making**

Decisions in every setting of Christian Churches Together's life will be by consensus. Only when all members present either say "Yes" or agree to "stand aside" will the body move ahead on any action. For every decision, representatives from each of the five families must be present.

A consensus decision-making process emphasizes the process of listening and discussion and is not merely a matter of saying yes or no. Several responses to any proposal are possible in consensus decision-making:

- 1.) Yes - that means one is supportive of the proposal and will do nothing to undermine it.
- 2.) No - one cannot in good conscience allow the proposal to go forward.

3.) Stand Aside - one has reservations, but not enough to keep the group from accepting the proposal and one will do nothing to undermine the decision.

4.) The group by consensus can decide to make a particular decision by majority vote.

NOTE: In any of the above situations, but especially in 3) and 4), the group may decide by consensus to present majority and minority opinions on any given topic.

## **VI. Finances and Budget**

### 1. During phase I

All meeting costs, including professional fees, will be covered by registration fees.

Each year, \$20,000 should be raised to cover the costs of the Steering Committee. Churches and organizations exploring participation should contribute at least \$100 annually and where possible \$1,000 or more.

### 2. During phase II

We anticipate a budget of at least \$250,000 which will cover one professional, one support staff member and other costs.

We will need to create an equitable formula which should include one or more of the following factors:

- number of members as defined by the communion
- number of congregations/parishes
- annual budget of the communion or national Christian organization
- annual budget of communion's judicatories/sections
- maximum-minimum
- number of persons that communions have in the General Assembly of Christian Churches Together

## **VII. TIME LINE**

### 1. During Phase I

This period started at the January 27-29, 2003 meeting when it was decided to invite churches and national Christian organizations formally to decide (in ways appropriate to their particular church polity) to join Christian Churches Together.

## 2. During Phase II

This period will start when at least twenty-five churches from an adequately representative group of the five families-Evangelical/Pentecostal, Historic Protestant, Historic Racial/Ethnic, Orthodox and Roman Catholic--have formally decided in ways appropriate to each church's internal polity, to join Christian Churches Together in the U.S.A.

NOTE: This document was approved by consensus by the participants at the January 27-29, 2003 meeting at Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, California.

### **Participants in the January 27-29, 2003 Meeting of Christian Churches Together**

Bishop Vicken	Aykazian	Diocese of the Armenian Church of America	Participant
Commissioner W. Todd	Bassett	The Salvation Army	Participant
Mr. John	Briscoe	NCCC USA	Participant
Bishop Tod	Brown	Diocese of Orange of California	Participant
Ms. Sharon	Browning	Sharon Browning and Associates	Participant
Rev. David	Caudle	Church of the Nazarene	Participant
Rev. Rothangliani	Chhange	American Baptist Churches, USA	Participant
Rev. Dr. Seung Koo	Choi	Korean Presbyterian Church in America	Participant
Mr. Bonn	Clayton	Nat'l Assoc. of Congregational Christ. Churches	Participant
Right Rev. Dimitrios	Couchell	Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America	Participant
Sister Joan	Delaney	Roman Catholic Church	Participant
Dr. Barrett	Duke	Southern Baptist Convention	Observer
Rev. Dr. Robert	Edgar	NCCC USA	Participant
Bishop Perry	Engle	Brethren in Christ Church	Participant
Rev. Dr. David	Engelhard	Christian Reformed Church	Participant
Rev. Jon S.	Enslin	Evangelical Lutheran Church in America	Participant
Dr. Thomas	Ferguson	Episcopal Church Center	Participant
Dr. Michael	Gillis	Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese	Participant
Rev. Wesley	Granberg-Michaelson	Reformed Church in America	Participant
Bishop Sang-Ehil	Han	Church of God (Cleveland Tennessee)	Participant
Bishop Roger	Haskins	Bd. Of Bishops - Free Methodist Church	Participant
Rev. Dr. Roberta	Hestenes	World Vision	Participant
Ms. Elenie	Huszagh	NCCC USA	Participant
Friend Thomas	Jeavons	Religious Society of Friends	Participant
Archbishop Cyril Aphrem	Karim	Syrian Orthodox Church	Participant
Cardinal William H.	Keeler	Archdiocese of Baltimore	Participant
Rev. Arthur	Kennedy	United States Conference Of Catholic	Participant

		Bishops	
Rev. Dr. Clifton	Kirkpatrick	Presbyterian Church (U.S.A)	Participant
Very Rev. Leonid	Kishkovsky	Orthodox Church in America	Participant
Bishop James	Leggett	Int'l Pentecostal Holiness Church	Participant
Rev. Michael E.	Livingston	Int'l Council of Community Churches	Participant
Dr. Howard	Loewen	Fuller Theological Seminary	Participant
Rev. Rafael	Luevano	Marywood Center	Participant
Dr. Kevin	Mannoia	Dean of Haggard School of Theology	Observer
Scott E.	McBride	Int'l. Church of the Foursquare Gospel	Participant
Ms. Retha	McCutchen	Friends United Meeting	Participant
Rev. Thomas	McGowan	Diocese of Oakland	Participant
Sister Joan	McGuire	Archdiocese of Chicago	Participant
Bishop George	McKinney	St. Stephen's Church of God in Christ Ministries	Participant
Very Rev. Dr. Michel	Najim	Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese	Participant
Commissioner Philip	Needham	The Salvation Army	Participant
Rev. Rodney	Parrott	Disciples Seminary Foundation	Participant
President Glenn K.	Palmberg	The Evangelical Covenant Church	Participant
Rev. Judy Mills	Reimer	Church of Brethren	Participant
Mr. Claude	Rhea, III	North American Mission Board	Observer
Dr. Ann K.	Riggs	Faith and Order Commission, Nat'l Council of Churches of Christ in the USA	Participant
Rev. Ronald	Roberson	United States Conference Of Catholic Bishops	Participant
Rev. Dr. William G.	Rusch	Foundation for a Conference on Faith & Order	Observer
Rev. Gabriel A.	Salguero	Missionary Pentecostal Churches of God, Inc.	Observer
Rev. Dr. Robert	Sawyer	Moravian Church in America	Participant
Rev. James	Schrag	Mennonite Church USA	Participant
Rev. Ronald J.	Sider	Evangelicals for Social Action	Participant
Bishop Melvin G.	Talbert	United Methodist Church	Participant
Dr. Joseph	Tkach	Worldwide Church of God	Participant
Rev. Lydia	Veliko	United Church of Christ	Participant
Mr. David	Wagschal	Orthodox Church in America	Participant
Rev. Jim	Wallis	Sojourners/Call to Renewal	Participant
Rev. Robina	Winbush	Presbyterian Church USA	Participant