

Christian Unity and Interfaith Relations Action Group

Board of General Ministries, June 13, 2014, 9 AM – 12 Noon

Assembled as our new Action Group with revised membership, and a reduced time frame, we introduced ourselves and shared why we wanted to be in this Action Group. Members are: Andy Arndt, Ruth Clark (past President), Dennis Johnson, Ernest Jones, Duh Kam, Roy Medley (staff), June Totten (chair); Alan Rudnick and Hopeton Scott (both absent this meeting). We welcome back Roy Medley's active participation.

Roy, chairperson of the newly restructured National Council of Churches (NCC), reported on the organization and their priorities, and on American Baptists representing ABC on NCC Convening Tables. Roy, Ernest, and June reported on NCC's first ever Christian Unity Gathering held May 18-20 in the Washington, DC, area.

As a member of the World Council of Churches (WCC) Central Committee, June will attend meetings in Geneva, Switzerland, July 2-9. Our Action Group approved WCC's request for \$15,000 in funding. Contributions of WCC member groups with resources help defray costs of other groups to participate, and fund the organization.

With the retirement of our General Secretary on the horizon, we considered how major initiatives Roy has developed such as Baptist-Muslim Dialogue and Middle East Peace Seeking will be carried forward.

The Baptist-Muslim Dialogue process is co-sponsored by six Baptist groups, with ABC taking major leadership. American Baptist Quarterly will be devoting an issue to the 2nd National Dialogue. Ernest represents ABC on Shoulder to Shoulder (S2S), a Christian, Jewish, Muslim emphasis to combat Islamaphobia. American Baptist Women's Ministries (ABWM) is developing resource materials to help churches engage in Baptist-Muslim conversations in their own communities. We also discussed other dialogue possibilities, such as Baptist-Buddhist.

Another Middle East Peace Seeking trip is scheduled for April 19-28, 2015. [Revised since meeting: April 15-30, which includes a Nazareth Peace Conference at beginning, and optional trip to Jordan at the end.] American Baptists, Brethren, and Progressive National Baptists are invited to participate. Roy shared with our group, and with the Board, about his peace seeking efforts in other areas of the Middle East. Ernest shared about the Impact Holy Land Conference sponsored by Evangelicals for Social Action where he represented ABC in Philadelphia last December.

We had a phone conversation with Dr. Wesley Brown who represents ABC at Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP). Wes and his wife previously served as International Ministries missionaries in Israel/Palestine. He shared with our group his insights and concerns and answered our questions; he also heard Roy's report related to Iran and Sudan. He reminded us that "God can do impossible things" and encouraged us to not give up, and to support with prayer any efforts that seek peace with justice.

We then turned to the 2015 Biennial Mission Summit and our responsibilities in preparation for that family gathering. CCUIR oversees the nominations for the Luke Mowbray Award and honoring the recipient for outstanding ecumenical service. We also plan the program and meal for the Christian Unity and Interfaith Relations dinner.