Is it time to close our ministry?

Jeff Weston

There comes a time in the life of many congregations when they must ask the question, “is it time to close our ministry?” Has our time of usefulness for the Kingdom purposes of God come to an end or do we still have a vital and valuable role to play in God’s plan?

For the Board of the World Convention we had to face this question at the recent biannual Board meeting. In light of recent moves in the US towards healing between at least two of our family members and increased awareness and focus of many groups on unity activities, less than expected attendance at the 2004 Brighton Convention, and increasing financial pressure due to a small donor base, has our ministry’s effectiveness come to an end?

The Board met July 1 - 3 in Nashville to discuss the issue of our future. Most Board members travelled at their own expense from Australia, New Zealand, Canada, India, Zimbabwe, West Indies and the USA. The Disciples of Christ Historical Society provided their building as a venue for the meeting.

Two former Convention Presidents, David Thompson and Ron Brooker, former President and General Secretary Lyndsay Jacobs and current General Secretary Jeff Weston presented discussion papers on the future of World Convention. These papers, circulated a month before the meeting, generated a great amount of thought and prayer. Discussion in small groups and then in a larger forum led by President Dr. C. Robert Wetzel enabled all Board members to share what God had laid on their hearts.

Far from being the end of the road for our ministry all believe that we are at an exciting stage of history and the World Convention has a valuable role to play in encouraging unity in the global church. We do more than just organize a quadrennial conference!

The World Convention is a unique organization in that it relates to all parts of the movement around the world and has established a key ministry in facilitating global discussion. For many in two-third world countries the World Convention is seen as offering a vision beyond their own small work, it promotes a feeling of being part of a global movement of vital Christians reaching into around 180 countries with the Gospel. For local pastors in these small works the World Convention office is viewed as a reference point for global networking and a place where encouragement is offered.

The quadrennial World Conventions are important, not because of the numbers that attend, but because of who attends. At Brighton around 40 countries were represented by their key leaders and pastors. Many of these people are from small countries around the world where they have few resources and opportunities to meet with like-minded Christians or to obtain quality teaching and feeding.

The World Convention is also a great opportunity for Christian leaders from developed countries to dialogue with two-third world leaders and to receive input from those who face a completely different, and in many cases, difficult cultural context for sharing the gospel.

As the Board discussed these issues it became apparent that God is wanting to do a lot more with this valuable ministry and that we need more time to pray, think and discuss our future ministry. A decision was made for the Board to meet again in 12 months time to discuss further the direction of our ministry. In the meantime a number of small groups have been established to review various activities of the work. We are interested in hearing any thoughts our supporters may have in regard to the future ministry of the World Convention. You can forward these to our Nashville office via email or regular post, we would like to hear from you.

What’s in this issue?

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- Convention News P4
- VP Visits P3
- Dialogue Report P7
75th Anniversary Convention of the Korean Christian Churches and Churches of Christ

by Dr. Yoon Kwon Chae

Korean Christian Churches and Churches of Christ are celebrating their 75th Anniversary with a Christian Convention in August of 2007, in two locations around SEOUL, KOREA. There will be Preaching, Prayers, Seminars, tours. Everyone is invited.

The Restoration Movement in Korea was started around 1932 by some denominational Churches declaring “Bible only”, abandoning constitutions, creeds and all denominational ties, and changing their names to “Christian” or “Church of Christ”. This movement among the Korean Christians was encouraged by the coming of American missionaries, such as Brothers Michael Shelly and John T. Chase. Brother Chase, with the help of the Korean leaders such as Brothers Sung and Chae (Choi), started a Bible College in 1936 and the Churches kept growing rapidly.

During the Second World War, the occupying Japanese military regime persecuted the Churches, imprisoned the preachers and the Churches went underground, but they kept meeting secretly. When Korea was liberated in 1945, the Christian Churches started to move again and many preachers who escaped the North Korean Communistic dictatorship joined the movement. When the Korean War started in 1950, there were 9 Churches and about 1,000 members.

The North Korean Army, with the help of Russia and China, swept down south and wherever they went they destroyed Church buildings and arrested preachers. The missionaries evacuated to the nearby countries. The Korean preachers such as Brothers Chae (Father of Yoon Kwon Chae) and Beck had been murdered. Wherever the Christians took refuge, they started the Churches again. During four years of war, after many Church buildings were destroyed and many preachers were killed, the Churches grew about ten times. And after the war, we found more than 75 Churches and 85 preachers.

Seoul Christian University (Korea Christian Seminary at that time) as well as Korean Christian University were started in the sixties and many orphanages such as Geon Christian Children’s Home had been opened. Presently, there are over 500 Christian Churches and Churches of Christ and so far, they have sent out over 50 missionaries to the other countries. We are emphasizing evangelism of North Korea presently and helping the defectors from North Korea through Korean missionaries. We are also sending Gospel messages through radios, letters, balloons and person to person contacts wherever possible.

The Gospel is the only hope of the world and it will be the motto of our Convention. Anyone who is interested can contact Dr. Yoon Kwon Chae, Convention President, Yoido P.O. Box 876, Seoul, KOREA 150-010
WORLD CONVENTION HOUSE DEDICATED

Sunday afternoon July 2 a large group gathered at the World Convention house in Nashville for a dedication service and open house. Unfortunately it was a very hot summer day with a 100F temperature which meant everyone wanted to be inside with the air-conditioning working overtime! All enjoyed a wonderful afternoon tea which was provided by World Convention staff and friends.

Prayers of Dedication were lead by Bryant Brown, minister First Christian Church of Nashville; Gary Holloway, associate minister Natchez Trace Church of Christ; and Robert Welsh, Executive Director Disciples of Christ Council on Christian Unity. Amongst those in attendance included the World Convention Board, Dr. Glen Stewart representing the Middle Tennessee region Christian Church-Disciples of Christ, Dr. Glenn Carson President, Disciples of Christ Historical Society as well a number of local Church members across all three streams.

All were impressed with the house and excellent office facilities it offers to the work. If you are visiting Nashville why not stop by our office for a quick visit, but please be sure to ring and let us know you are coming first, we would welcome you.

World Convention House - Nashville, Tennessee

WORLD CONVENTION HOUSE DEDICATED

VP Visits USA

World Convention Vice President and President-Elect Mr. Bafindi (BJ) Mpofu and wife, Chipo recently visited Nashville for our Board meeting. The Mpofu’s where also able to share in Cane Ridge Day and the North American Christian Convention in Louisville, Kentucky.

A highlight of their visit was an opportunity to visit Emmanuel School of Religion and Milligan College Johnson City, Tennessee as guests of World President Dr. C. Robert Wetzel.

This was Chipo’s first visit to the US, she was astounded at the large size and quality of the Church buildings, “back home many churches can’t even afford a single room and meet under trees”, said Chipo.

The Mpofu’s live in the second largest Zimbabwe city of Bulawayo. They have two sons, one who is a school teacher in Bulawayo and the second who lives in New Zealand. Both BJ and Chipo are very active in their home Church. BJ is headmaster of a large independent Christian elementary school and the immediate past President of the Associated Churches of Christ in Zimbabwe. He is also a member of the Harare Christian College Board.

The Mpofu’s trip to the US was made possible by the Australian Churches of Christ Overseas Mission Board. From Nashville the Mpofu’s visited Hagerstown Christian Church who have been active in supporting work in Zimbabwe, then to London, England to visit relatives on their way home.

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BP Visits USA

MIX Generates enthusiasm

by Julia Keith

World Convention Office Administrator Julia Keith reports on her experiences at Mix in ’06, a convention for women sponsored by the Christian Church-Disciples of Christ and United Church of Christ.

Energy. Enthusiasm. Excitement. I did not expect my first Quadrennial, Mix in ’06, to be anything more than a casual experience with women of faith. I had forgotten how God uses a woman’s intrinsic qualities to effect change. We sang...we danced...we cried...we laughed. We told the stories of our experiences in our homes from around the world. How we live the faith – our call to be daughters of God. And we came away equipped to do more. Shared gatherings, worship, and workshops gave us new insights and renewed hope and determination. Dream on, Sisters! Our Creator has work for us to do!

Worship at Mix in 06

Together in Christ
Nashville
Music City
July 30 - August 3
2008

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Nashville, TN 37211, USA
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Convention News

Plans for the 17th World Convention were presented to the Board for approval at its recent Nashville meeting. Board members complimented the planning committee on developing an exciting and ambitious program which they feel will offer a range of wonderful experiences to all who attend. The cornerstone of the program is that there will be three conventions running consecutively. Special convention programs for children and youth will be conducted simultaneously with the main convention. In the evening everyone will come together as one family.

We are pleased to announce that Cynthia Hale will be the speaker on the opening night of convention. On Thursday night Bob Russell will be the speaker. We are still negotiating with a speaker for the Friday night. On Saturday night we will have our own version of the “Grand Ole Opry” with a range of well known Christian performers and Nashville based Christian song writers. At this stage we are also negotiating with two world renown Christian performers to share our stage on the Saturday night. Nashville will live up to its reputation as “Music City USA.”

A highlight of this convention will be the worship. Each morning we will offer a range of worship opportunities. We feel it is important that conventioners have an opportunity to experience the worship of other members of our family. For early risers there will be a reflective prayer service at 7 am. Then at 9 am each day six consecutively run worship services will be available; Contemporary/Youth, a cappella, Spanish language, African culture, Bluegrass, and Reflective. We hope that people will attend a different worship service each morning.

Following morning worship we will come together for Bible Study lead by leaders such as B.J. Mpofu from Zimbabwe and Ajai Lal from India. In the evening our worship leader will be Ken Young from Fourth Ave. Church of Christ Franklin Tennessee. Ken is an experienced worship leader and musician. He will be supported by a range of Christian artists from across our churches.

There will be a strong “missional” emphasis to the program. This will be manifest in activities such as the construction of a Habitat for Humanity House and smaller community based projects over the week of convention. Workshops on global mission will also be a feature.

As we draw the convention to a close the Sunday communion service will be a wonderful experience as we celebrate the Bicentennial of Thomas Campbell writing the “Declaration and Address”. This will be conducted early afternoon so as to allow conventioners to attend special functions in local Nashville Churches in the morning.

As you can see an exciting program is coming together for 2008. If you haven’t already done so you need to register. Special Incentives are available until the end of the year, now is the time to register.

Sponsorship Team Growing

In the last edition of World Christian we reported that Abilene Christian University and Disciples of Christ Division of Overseas Ministries/Global Ministries had joined the sponsorship team for the 17th World Convention. Since then three more partners have joined the team. The European Evangelistic Society, Disciples of Christ Historical Society and Emmanuel School of Religion have now also joined us. Each of these groups offers a ministry to all Churches of the Stone - Campbell heritage and we are excited and pleased to have them as our ministry partners.

There are a number of opportunities for sponsorship at a range of levels. We still have space for two major sponsors but there are also opportunities to sponsor a speaker, workshop, meal event or function. For more details please contact our Nashville Office. The World Convention is a unique event in that it is only conducted once every four years and brings together people from around the world and from within all streams with a common heritage in the Stone - Campbell tradition. This is the first time in 16 years that this global gathering has been conducted in the USA.

Jeff gets a new job title

What is the job title for the executive officer of the World Convention? Our executive officer has been called everything from; “hey you” to “Global President!” At the recent Board meeting it was decided that the general secretary of the World Convention will be known as the “Executive Director” and that this would become effective immediately. It was felt that this title was already commonly in use around the world and adequately describes the role which the general secretary plays within the organization. Unfortunately there is no pay raise to go with the new title!

What World Convention Does

The ministry of World Convention builds fellowship, understanding, common purpose and effectiveness within the family of churches known as Christian, Churches of Christ and Disciples of Christ.

World Convention is creating a sense of continuing (every day) convention through:

- Publishing the quarterly, World Christian.
- Publishing the monthly email newsletter, ChristiaNet.
- Maintaining the World Convention web site which includes a growing number of national profiles (currently 100) of your church family’s witness.
- Promoting World Convention Sunday to provide a sense of family (first Sunday in August).
- Publishing Exploring Our Destiny - papers on the future of your global church family.
- Emphasising your church family’s unique story and witness through the writing of brochures and articles and by speaking.
- Awarding World Convention Citations that recognise the outstanding civic and church leadership of members.
- Appointing World Convention Ambassadors to advocate for the ministries of World Convention & lift up the heritage and destiny of your global church family.
- Strengthening networking through global correspondence and visiting.
- Emphasising links with other Christian World Communions and our place within the wider church through things like World Communion Sunday.
- And of course organising the Quadrennial world conventions for those who can attend.
Registration Form

17th World Convention Nashville, USA
“Together in Christ”
July 30 - August 3, 2008

Now is the time to register your interest in attending the 2008 World Convention.

Please print very clearly

• **Names** (Christian and family names as for name badges)

  (1) first __________________  last __________________

  (2) first __________________  last __________________

Please tick box if you are a Youth Registrant (must be aged 13 -25 years as at August 1 2008) __

Children or family youth attending (age: August 1, 2008)

( ) __________ ( ) __________ ( ) __________

• **Contact information**

  Street __________________

  City/Town __________________  State/province __________________  Postal/zip code __________

  Country __________________

  Email __________________

  Phone: Area code - ________  Local number - ________

  Local Congregation __________________

• **Registration (check/tick)**

  _____ Attending. (If we hope/plan to be there!)

  _____ Non-attending. (Supporting; mailed materials)

Registration Fees:

Fees are per person.

There is no registration fee for children up till age 12 years attending with parents. PLEASE NOTE: There will be a program fee for children who share in the children’s program which will cover costs.

1. Paid before end of 2006  160.00 US
2. Paid before end of 2007  180.00 US
3. Full Registration (paid in 2008)  200.00 US
Spouse paid when registering with partner  110.00 US (no further discount)
Youth 13 years – 25 years  110.00 US (no further discount)
Seminarian  110.00 US (no further discount)

Family (2 Adults and own Youth)

1. Paid before end of 2006  340.00 US
2. Paid before end of 2007  380.00 US
3. Full Registration (paid in 2008)  420.00 US

2/3rd World Countries

1. Paid before end of 2006  55.00 US
2. Paid before end of 2007  60.00 US
3. Full Registration (paid in 2008)  65.00 US

Method of Payment: Check/cheque ___ or credit card ___. Cheques (payable to World Convention) in US dollars only.

If paying by credit card please supply

Name on card: __________________

Card type: Visa ___  Mastercard ___  Discover ___  Diners Club ___

Card number __________________

Expiry date __ / ______

Signature __________________

We can debit cards from any currency but our entries are in US dollars. We calculate exchange rates carefully but remember they will not be exact and credit card companies build in a margin.

Please mail this form to:

World Convention  
1279 Brentwood Highlands Drive  
NASHVILLE, TN 37211  
United States of America

Enter the TOTAL you are paying here: $ __________
Thank You Friends

Without the gifts of Friends of World Convention, the ministry of World Convention would cease. These gifts also determine the amount World Convention can do to serve our global family. Opportunities abound! We are very grateful for the support of the following friends who have given since our last issue of World Christian.

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Oklahoma Disciples Foundation, Oklahoma City, OK
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Lyndsay and Lorraine Jacobs by Richard & Peggy Ziglar, Tulsa, OK
Jeff & Rosemary Weston by Richard & Peggy Ziglar, Tulsa, OK

Together in Christ
Nashville Music City July 30 - August 3 2008
Stone-Campbell Dialogue Tackles Issues of Interpretation
by Ted Parks

Representatives of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Churches of Christ, and Christian Churches / Churches of Christ gathered in Nashville June 11-13 for the 10th Stone-Campbell Dialogue, an ongoing discussion intended to strengthen ties between the three historically related religious groups.

Sharing roots in the 19th-century frontier religious reform movement associated with Christian leaders Thomas and Alexander Campbell and Barton W. Stone, the three major “streams” in the Stone-Campbell Movement have a combined US membership of over 3 million people.

The dialogue participants, composed of ministers and university and seminary professors, addressed the topic of biblical interpretation, building on the work of the June 2005 dialogue in Dallas.

Moving beyond theological conversation, participants in this year’s discussions also contributed ideas for materials congregations can use in local “dialogues.”

The event began with Sunday-evening worship at Nashville’s Woodmont Hills Church of Christ involving both dialogue participants and members of local congregations in the Stone-Campbell tradition. Some 300 people attended the service, the first of its kind in Nashville, according to Clint Holloway, organizer of the event and minister of involvement at Nashville’s First Christian Church.

Subsequent talks between dialogue members took place in the nearby facilities of Lipscomb University, affiliated with Churches of Christ.

Launching the dialogue’s opening session was a communion service directed by Glenn Carson, president of the Disciples of Christ Historical Society. For the service, Carson placed the communion elements on a table more than 175 years old that was once used by 19th century reformers Alexander Campbell and Walter Scott to celebrate the Lord’s Supper.

During the final sessions, members completed initial work on a statement of affirmations concerning the Bible and its interpretation. While acknowledging differences in the scriptural themes each group emphasizes, representatives affirmed that “We share a rich heritage which holds Scripture in high regard—we all think of ourselves as Scripture-focused and Scripture-driven,” a draft version of the statement said.

Airing misrepresentations born of a century of tension and mistrust proved a moving experience for participants. Dialogue members formed a circle and prayed, each person placing an arm on the shoulder of another. After the prayer, they sang the classic hymn, “Blest Be the Tie.”

For Douglas Foster, dialogue member and professor of Bible at Abilene Christian University in Texas, discussing the mistaken ideas of the past “let us hear out loud in their starkness the things we have said about each other and to realize how deeply we have wounded and maligned one another.”

Foster added, “only when we name sin openly in that way and repeat of it can we deal with it in a way that heals and brings reconciliation.”

John Mills, a representative of Christian Churches / Churches of Christ who lives in Brunswick, Ohio, said, “we knew the stereotypes, have heard them, most of them are out of date.” He commented, “the prayers and singing . . . spelled healing and hope, both of which are long overdue.”

For Robert Welsh, participant from the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), the ongoing discussions echo the longing for Christians to come together that lies at the core of all three groups. Welsh is president and ecumenical officer of the Disciples Council on Christian Unity. “The dialogue has served as an important meeting place . . . to re-claim our fundamental identity as a people of unity.”

Welsh said. That unique understanding of oneness, Welsh explained, “celebrates both the congregation as the essential focus of church life and the value of diversity in belief and practice.”

The next dialogue is set for June 2007 in Austin, Texas. The topic will be the Lord’s Supper, an aspect of the Christian tradition emphasized across the Stone-Campbell Movement.

2006 Participants

Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
William H. McDonald
Peter M. Morgan
Arnold Nelson
Diane Spleth
Robert Welsh
D. Newell Williams

Churches of Christ
Douglas Foster
Carol Gafford
Gary Holloway
Gary Pearson
Charme Roberts

Christian Churches / Churches of Christ
Paul Blowers
Wye Huxford
John Mills
James B. North
Robert Rea
Henry Webb

Observer
Jeff Weston
General Secretary, World Convention of Churches of Christ

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Set your watch for 11:11 am daily

• Thank God for what you have; pray for what you need.
• Include any person around you in your prayer.
• Be truthful if anybody asks you what you are doing.
• Remember your global church family and that you are a loved and commissioned member of the whole church of Jesus Christ.

Can You Help Us?
At World Convention we rely on our friends and supporters to send donations to fund our daily operation. Can you assist us in this ministry of unity and reconciliation? Will you send us a gift or ask for us to be added to your Church’s mission outreach support?
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United States of America
"The Church of Christ upon earth is essentially, intentionally, and constitutionally one."

Thomas Campbell

2006 Stone-Campbell Dialogue participants meet in Nashville. See page 7 for full story.