Executive Director Reports on Africa

News of Fantastic Youth and Children’s Programs Planned for Convention

More Convention News

ISSUE 56 MARCH 2008
A new church with deep roots, Aspen Grove Christian Church of Franklin, Tennessee is one of the proud sponsors of the 17th World Convention, convening in Nashville this July 30th -August 3rd. Formerly First Christian Church of Nashville, the congregation became Aspen Grove late in 2007 after moving to the nearby town of Franklin, a move brought about by the purchase of a new building in a largely commercial and retail district in this growing community. First Christian/Aspen Grove has long been a significant partner in the ministry of World Convention, including making space available for Convention offices in their former Nashville facilities.

Founded in 1953, First Christian was once a Sunday school class of Nashville’s Vine Street Christian Church. In the late 1950s the congregation moved to the Nashville suburb of Oak Hill and began building a physical plant that eventually included a sprawling, traditional Georgian architecture building, multiple parsonages, school and athletic facilities. For two years in the 1990s they opened their doors to Woodmont Hills Church of Christ, while that congregation built new facilities nearby. At that time, a Christian Church and a Church of Christ sharing space was unheard of, particularly in Nashville where lines of separation between the two groups were drawn early in the twentieth century. After the sale of the First Christian facility in 2004, the Family of God at Woodmont Hills returned the favor and gave First Christian a home for nearly three years. The cordial relationship between the two congregations has been a strong example of Christian unity in the community and embodies this year’s Convention theme, Together in Christ. Bryant Brown is minister of the church and a member of the Nashville Local Arrangements Committee.

Late in 2007 First Christian purchased a sound studio and music production facility in the Aspen Grove area of Franklin, known as the “W Building.” This was a move distinctly away from the traditional route followed by the congregation for decades and thus became Aspen Grove Christian Church. While some renovations have occurred to fit the building for congregational use, the facility has continued to be a venue for music events and concerts, thus engaging a segment of the community in which they previously had little or no connection. As the congregation becomes settled in their new home they have begun reaching out to their new neighbors, including bringing meals to the firemen at the fire station two doors away. With a new name, new facility and new outlook, Aspen Grove continues to “tell the old, old story,” making a difference for Christ in their community, and through their support for World Convention, in yours. World Convention is proud to have Aspen Grove Christian Church as a sponsoring partner for the 17th World Convention. Visit Aspen Grove online at www.aspengrovecc.com.
We have developed a great program for you! Our team of professional children’s workers have been working hard to ensure that there will be lots of exciting things for you to participate in at convention.

Our program is for kids from **Preschoolers to grade 5** and will operate from 9am till 5pm each day. **Lunch and snacks will be provided each day** so Mum and Dad can be involved in the adult stuff while you enjoy days full of adventure.

We will have great fun music, trips to interesting places around Nashville including the **Science Museum, Marionette Theater, and Zoo**. Lots of games and quizzes with prizes, and great craft work. Make sure that Mum and Dad **register you** for this fantastic time.

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**GLOBAL YOUTH GATHERING**

Join us at the Millennium Maxwell House Hotel Nashville, Tennessee July 31 til August 2. Meet and make friends with young people from all around the USA and overseas.

- **Exciting and stimulating worship and bible study each day.**
- **Fantastic music with Andra Moran and local bands.**
- **Help Build Hope House Construction**: Help to build house frames with CrossRoads Missions to be transported to New Orleans Area for Hurricane Katrina victims.
- **Late night Coffee Shop with open Mic.**

Make sure you register and are part of this fantastic and unique program. Go to [www.worldconvention.org](http://www.worldconvention.org) and register on-line or talk to your Youth Minister about coming as a group, special **discounts apply for groups of 10+**

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**Have you changed your address and not advised us?**

We had over 200 issues of the last World Christian returned to us because of change of address. It cost money every time a World Christian is returned. Please advise us of your change of address.
Executive Director Visits Africa

In November 2007 I spent one month visiting Africa. The following are some observations from my trip as I visited contacts in Kenya and Zimbabwe.

It is hot, humid, dusty and the traffic congestion is some of the worst I have experienced in my world travels, on a par with the notorious traffic of Bangkok, Thailand. However, Nairobi, the capital of Kenya, has some of the friendliest and most welcoming churches I have ever met. I spent most of my Kenya time in the capital visiting pastors and church leaders who have connected with our global network. Most of these live and work in the slum areas of Nairobi. Many worship in small corrugated iron buildings with an earth floor yet they are viewed as bearers of hope as is evident in their presence in the face of violence following the recent elections. Many local people who are innocent victims of the violence have taken refuge in the relative safety of the Church buildings.

This has created another problem for congregations as they needed to provide emergency food to their sheltering community. As most congregations struggle for financial survival the burden of caring for their neighbors is a huge task. Thankfully friends around the world have provided some financial assistance.

One of the ministries I was able visit is that of Charles and Darleen Coulston. This unassuming couple has been ministering in Nairobi for 14 years. They have a burden for the thousands of children living on the streets of Nairobi. The Coulston’s have a ministry center on the edge of town that provides a range of skills training to 13 – 18 year olds. Many who have graduated from their training are now employed and raising families of their own. Some have also come back to the center to assist in the training of others.

Another ministry I visited was that of Deaf Ministries International which operates a small church in the central business district. DMI International Director Neville Muir was visiting Nairobi at the same time. We spent a wonderful Wednesday evening attending a worship service and bible study with the enthusiastic congregation. Despite the usual difficulties faced by deaf people in two thirds world countries, this group is doing a wonderful work of sharing the gospel in the deaf community. Their small rented worship center on the seventh floor of an old office building (with no elevator) is rapidly running out of space.

Another work which is particularly encouraging is that of Martin and Nancy Phiri in the suburb of Embakasi. Those who attended the 16th World Convention in Brighton, England would have met this enthusiastic couple. With very few financial resources they have built a ministry complex that includes an elementary school in their slum area. Many of the classrooms are corrugated iron which means they are extremely hot in summer. Thanks to the generosity of some supporters in the USA they were able to begin construction on a brick building. To date three classrooms in the new building are in use. Two more classrooms and bathrooms need more funds before they can be finished. It is also hoped to build a second and third level on the building as funds become available. There are 310 students at the school.

The congregation at Embakasi is enthusiastic in their worship as I discovered on my Sunday morning visit. A recent addition to the building was needed to accommodate the growing numbers. Although a more substantial building is needed the church worships in their corrugated iron building with freedom and enthusiastic praise. I left Kenya with a feeling of excitement at what God is doing within the lives of the churches despite the corruption and violence around them.

Prior to leaving Nairobi I conducted a one day seminar for leaders and ministers. We had over 100 people attend including three brothers who travelled from Uganda. Many are hoping to attend the 17th World Convention in Nashville this year.
From Kenya I traveled to Zimbabwe to share with congregations of the Associated Churches of Christ. First stop was to be guest speaker at the Dadaya Regional Conference at Siboza Church of Christ in the south. Despite the harsh economic situation in Zimbabwe many people traveled from all over the district to attend this weekend event, some even walked 30 or more kilometers to be in attendance.

The collapse of the Zimbabwe economy has left most stores with empty shelves and gas stations empty and closed. Added to this is a record drought which has seen crops fail and water courses dry up. The Christian community is doing its best to assist those in need. World Convention vice President B. J. Mpofu with assistance from the Australian, New Zealand and USA Churches has established Showers of Blessing Trust which is importing bulk loads of grain for distribution to needy communities. They are also drilling bore holes and installing hand pumps for areas without water. We praise God that in recent days rain has come to Zimbabwe.

Despite the desperate economic situation in Zimbabwe the Churches are seeing record growth. People are looking for hope and turning back to God. The convention I attended was overflowing with numbers, especially young teenagers. At every Church I visited there were large numbers in attendance. I was able to conduct a two day seminar for local ministers in Bulawayo. Despite the difficult circumstance in which they work the ministers brought wonderful reports of the enthusiasm within the life of their congregations. I praise God for these men who share hope in such a difficult circumstance.

Last stop for me in Zimbabwe was to Khayelihle Children’s Village outside Bulawayo. This wonderful place offers hope to children who are orphans as a result of HIV Aids deaths. Currently 66 children are in care in this loving community. They live on this lovely farm in family homes of 20 children of mixed ages with cottage parents. A further three houses are waiting for final construction. The children range in ages from a few months to teens. Those of school age are bused into local schools until completion of an elementary school that is under construction on the property. It is just wonderful to meet children who have now moved out of the village and are making their own way in life because of the support of KCV. A Church has been established on the farm site, and it is already having an impact on its local community.

I left Africa with a sense of amazement at what God is doing through the ministry of our churches. Even in the darkest circumstance God is shining His light of hope through the Church. Please continue to pray for our brothers and sisters in Africa.

Can you assist an African Church leader or minister to attend the 17th World Convention?
We need funds to assist with travel costs, accommodation, and meals.
Send your donation to World Convention.

Jeff Weston
Exhibit Space Now Available

We are currently taking applications for exhibitors at the 17th World Convention.

There are a limited number of spaces available all at reasonable cost. For information contact Jim Ingmire at worldconv@aol.com

Global Leaders Forum About Sharing Resources

Preceding the 17th World Convention there will be a one-day Global Leaders Forum, specifically designed to share new resources available for ministry. Mark your calendars for the pre-event Wednesday, July 30, from 9 to 4 at the Millennium Maxwell House Hotel.

Begun in Brisbane, Australia in 2000, this will be the third Global Leaders Forum this year with the new initiative of providing cutting edge resources for church leaders, pastors and people involved in the Lord’s work. Publishing houses, authors and other ministries will be on hand to present materials available in print, online and through other medium. You will get a glimpse of some things going on around the world and in other traditions of the Stone-Campbell Movement that can be useful tools for you and your Christian work. You may even discover ways of getting your own resources into the hands of others! Advanced registration only, fees are $25; this includes lunch and refreshments. A portion of the fee will help also subsidize leaders from two/thirds world nations who attend. You will leave the forum better informed, in touch, but not empty-handed!

Global Leaders Forum
Wednesday, July 30, 2008, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.
Millennium Maxwell House Hotel, Nashville, Tennessee
Registration: $25
Register by mail or fax only

Have YOU registered for World Convention?

Three ways to register:
2. Download a registration form from our web site www.worldconvention.org, complete it and mail it to us.
3. Contact our Nashville office and request a form be mailed to you.

Phone: +1 615 331 1824
Fax: +1 615 331 1864
Email: worldconv@aol.com
Postal Address: 1279 Brentwood Highlands Dr Nashville, TN 37211 USA
Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints (Psalm 116:15). When the Psalmist wrote those words he surely had in mind servants of the Lord such as Russ Blowers and Muriel Garrow, two members of the World Convention family who passed away late in 2007. Their presence and gifts among us will be sorely missed.

Russ Blowers was for 45 years the minister of the East 91st Street Christian Church, Indianapolis, Indiana, growing the congregation from 150 to nearly 4,500 in five decades. But what’s more, he grew the congregation to be a missions-minded church with a focus on international outreach. The congregation led the way among Christian Churches and Churches of Christ in church planting and in support of higher education. Russ was a faithful friend of World Convention, serving as Vice President. He attended several of the Conventions and was a speaker at the 50th Anniversary assembly in Honolulu in 1980. 17th Convention President Bob Wetzel says, “Russell Blowers was a great preacher and pastor. But his finest sermon occurred when he retired to take care of his wife, Marian. It proved to be a sermon of some ten years, but the story of his devotion and care is a beautiful example to all of us.” He died November 10, 2007 at the age of 83.

Muriel Garrow was also a World Convention Vice President and Program Chair for the 16th Convention in Brighton, England. Her first World Convention was in her hometown, Leicester in 1935, when she was only a few months old! Trained as a teacher, Muriel eventually became Deputy Head Teacher before leaving to take up various positions of ministry in the United Reformed Churches. After the British Churches of Christ united with that body, she spent ten years on the national staff and as a lay preacher. From 2000 to 2004 Muriel was World Christian Women’s Fellowship President. Her husband, Jim also spent fifty years in ministry. David Thompson, 16th World Convention President says, “Muriel was a natural encourager of others, and, with a winning smile, was always ready to urge people to use their talents. Her challenging questions about the Church’s mission at home and overseas prompted many to do things they did not think they could do. She exemplified the traditional commitment of Churches of Christ to the ministry of all God’s people.” She died in Leicester on November 19, 2007; she was 72.

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?

Use this form to send your gift:

Name:..........................................................................................................
Address: ..................................................................................................
City: ................................. State: ............................ Code: ...................

If using credit card please complete below also

Type of Card: .............................................
Number: ..................................................................................................
Exp Date: .....................................
Signature: ........................................................

Mail to: 1279 Brentwood Highlands Drive Nashville, TN 37211
United States of America
Global Women Connecting Retreat
(Formerly World Christian Women’s Fellowship)
July 28 – 30, 2008

WHAT: Women’s Retreat
Open to All Women of the World Convention

WHEN: Prior to World Convention - July 28, 2008 to July 30, 2008
The retreat starts with worship at 6:30 PM Monday, July 28 and
concludes before 12:00 noon on Wednesday, July 30.

WHERE: Millennium Maxwell House, Nashville, Tennessee USA
Contact the Millennium directly to make your reservations.

Enter code: WCCCC to receive our group rate.
1-866-866-8086 – Reservations
1-615-259-4343 – Direct line
1-615-313-1327 – Fax
http://www.millenniumhotels.com – Web Site
Maxwell@mhmail.com – Email

Transportation, hotel and meal cost (except daily breakfast buffet if staying at the Millennium Hotel) are not part of the retreat registration fee.

Retreat Cost: Registration fee is only $45
Money Order or Cashier’s Check, made payable to Global Women Connecting, should be mailed, along with your registration form, by June 15, 2008 to:
Office of Disciples Women
130 E. Washington Street
Indianapolis, IN 46204-3645 United States
Email: abowman@dhm.disciples.org
1-317-713-2665

Registration Form can be downloaded from
http://www.worldconvention.org/conventionregistration.htm