2012 location announced

17th World Convention a success

New President takes office
"Exciting, restored my vision for unity; Inspiring, wonderful worship; I appreciated the excellence of the speakers and workshop leaders; Great selection of practical workshops; Excellence in all things was evident." These are just a few of the comments from people who attended the 17th World Convention in Nashville.

Four years of planning finally came to fruition as the lights dimmed in the main auditorium of the Nashville Convention Center on July 30 and a lone Bagpiper started his rendition of "Amazing Grace". I remember standing at the front of the congregation and silently breathing "phew, we made it" as the flags of the nation’s processed behind the piper lead by Clinton Holloway and his 3 year old son Jon Campbell carrying the host nation flag. This was just the start of a wonderful four day event which truly expressed the desire for Christian unity among all who attended. As one person expressed to me; “There was never a feeling that one part of our Movement dominated or was left out of the program”.

Just over 1500 people registered for the Convention while our best estimates show that around 3000 people attended at least one event of the Convention, be it at one of 46 workshops (most of which were given twice!) or one of the many worship options both morning and evening. Of great disappointment was that many overseas people were not able to attend due to tightened international travel that restricted many visas, 25 countries were represented in Nashville. Due to the generosity of many World Convention supporters we were able to offer partial and full scholarships to 14 people from two-third world countries. The Australian committee for World Convention also supported a further 10 people. Many of these people had never had the opportunity to travel outside of their own country before or to attend a global gathering of our churches. They went home excited and inspired. Martin Phiri of Kenya expressed what we pray for: “I know those who came from Kenya were really encouraged and all were going home with one thought: unity in Kenyan churches.”

The Program Planning Committee under the leadership of President Dr. C. Robert Wetzel developed one of our busiest and best programs. Nashville is known as “Music City” and many were blessed by the variety and quality of music presented at the Convention. Ken Young and Hallal in a very beautiful and sensitive way led the evening worship each day. A number of people commented in particular at how sensitive the musicians were, “you could actually hear the voices of those around you singing praises to God!” The worship lead into the speakers theme each night. Our speakers, Cynthia Hale, Bob Russell, Mike Cope and Robert Wetzel did an excellent job of expounding the word and challenging us to seek unity. This message was reinforced by the inspiring morning Bible study speakers; Rhonda Lowry, Ajai Lall and in-coming President B. J. Mpofu. Each speaker, because of their cultural heritage, brought a different biblical perspective of Christian unity and its expression but also the cost. Each also spoke of the urgency and essential need for Christians to stand as one.
The morning worship services gave an opportunity for attendees to experience some of the variety of expression in our global movement. The day started with an early morning reflective prayer time in the rooftop ballroom of the Millennium Hotel. At 9am six worship services were offered at the Convention Center. Many enjoyed the opportunity to experience the rich variety of worship formats.

A record number of booth spaces were taken out by more than 125 exhibitors making it the largest ever World Convention Exhibit Hall. A feature of the exhibit hall was the central meet and greet area where people could sit and relax on comfortable furniture and share fellowship.

A special focus of the convention was the emphasis on mission. Each day attendees were invited to join the “Nashville Tools for Schools” program. This group undertook voluntary building projects in local schools. The World Convention group painted desks, cleaned shelving and even gave a gymnasium a new coat of paint! Meanwhile at the youth program two complete house frames to be used by Habitat for Humanity were constructed. One tenth of the offerings taken up at the convention have been set aside for a special fresh water project to be undertaken by COCOA - Vietnam (Churches of Christ Overseas Aid), an aid group established by the Australian Churches of Christ.

Apart from the main convention events there were a number of associated meetings pre and during convention. Global Women Connecting conducted a very successful women’s retreat and women’s lunch (see report elsewhere in this edition), the Disciples Ecumenical Consultative Council conducted their global meeting, Emmanuel School of Religion and the European Evangelistic Society conducted successful breakfasts, while Bright Divinity School conducted a celebration honoring those who have worked for unity and Central India Christian Mission celebrated their 25th anniversary with a reception. The Hisportic Christian Mission conducted a successful dinner and members also led a Portuguese language service each morning. The Global Leaders’ Forum attracted a large number of participants who were able to view and test drive a range of new resources for Christian workers (see separate report). Two special meetings conducted were a meeting of aid agencies to discuss a relationship which would facilitate effective global response to needs, and the first ever meeting of Presidents of Stone-Campbell Colleges. Both these meetings were exciting and will hopefully breakdown some of the past divisions.

On the Thursday night of convention President Wetzel announced the location for the 2012 World Convention. Surrounded by a large group of people he announced that the invitation from the churches in Brazil had been accepted. As yet an actual venue has not been finalized but the Christians in Brazil are excited that the world is to come in 2012.

The closing communion service of World Convention is always very moving as we celebrate at the Lord’s Table. This year the communion service was the first to commemorate the bicentennial of Thomas Campbell writing the “Declaration and Address”. It is hoped that over 1,000 such services of unity will be conducted over the next 12 months. For more information and resources visit www.greatcommunion.org The Convention concluded with the installation of Bafundi J. Mpofu from Zimbabwe as the new World Convention President by Dr Wetzel. B. J. (as he is known to all) expressed thanks to Dr Wetzel for his excellent leadership and invited all to pray for his own leadership.

As the Convention closed President B. J. Mpofu was heard to remark; “we really are a World Convention with a Zimbabwean President, Australian General Secretary, US Treasurer and our next convention being conducted in Brazil!” Praise God for this global unity in Christ.

It is this comment from a first time attendee which encourages me most: “What a spiritually vibrant experience it was. It was my first World Convention but I am praying that I will be able to attend several over the coming years!”
From Top Left:
Mountain Mission School Choir
Bob Russell
Dr Cynthia Hale
Dr C. Robert Wetzel
Ken Young and Hallal
The Gospelaires
Dr Sharon Watkins
Tommy Emmanuel
Tools for Schools Volunteers
Dr Wetzel and B.J. Mpofu
Jeff Weston leads Communion
Rhonda Lowry
Martin Phiri
Clinton Holloway
Nalini Gaikwad
A happy group at Convention

Photos courtesy of Ted Parks
The goals of World Convention are to build fellowship, understanding, common purpose and effectiveness within the family of churches known as Christian, Churches of Christ and Disciples of Christ. One way that these goals are accomplished is through providing resources that help to tell the story of our global family and our witness to the body of Christ. World Convention is pleased to offer three volumes which have been written or edited by the Convention staff, that we hope will be valuable ministry tools for our global family.

**Together in Christ, A History of the World Convention of Churches of Christ, 1930-2008**, by Clinton J. Holloway. A synopsis of each of the seventeen global gatherings of the World Convention, together with sundry historical notes by Jesse Bader, Lyndsay Jacobs and others, this brief history offers insights into the dynamic ministry of World Convention that has now spanned eight decades. It is richly illustrated with more than two dozen photographs drawn from the Convention Archives, many of which have never before been published.

**One Church, A Bicentennial Celebration of Thomas Campbell’s Declaration and Address**, edited by Glenn Thomas Carson, Douglas A. Foster and Clinton J. Holloway, produced by Leafwood Publishers. The 17th World Convention was the kick-off celebration for the 200th anniversary observance of the Declaration and Address. This book, which contains an essay by Clint Holloway and a Communion meditation by Jeff Weston, is the spring board for discussion on the relevance of a two hundred year old document for ministry in today’s Stone-Campbell Movement Churches. This volume is sponsored by the Disciples of Christ Historical Society.

**Lest We Forget, Meditations at the Meal of Remembrance**, by Clinton J. Holloway is a collection of 75 meditations for use in the local church’s observance of the Lord’s Supper, drawn from historical anecdotes, favorite hymns, humorous stories, real life situations and more. An introduction provides guidance in preparing the leader and congregation in the observance of the central act of worship, as well as suggests other resources to utilize when readying the hearts of the congregation to commune with Jesus in the Lord’s Supper.

**Souvenir Communion Cups**

Olive wood Communion Cups from Jerusalem were used in the World Convention closing Communion Service, which was also the kick-off for the Bicentennial Celebration of Thomas Campbell’s Declaration and Address (see www.GreatCommunion.org). A limited number of the 2 inch olive wood cups/chalices are available through the office at a cost of $2 per cup plus $2 each for postage within the United States, $3 international postage.

**Recordings** were made of all the workshops and worship sessions of the 17th World Convention, including some sessions on both CD and DVD. More than 50 recordings are available through www.catapes.com by searching under “World Convention.” A complete set of 54 CDs with Main Session DVDs is available for $214, the CDs only can be purchased for $194. See their website for cost on individual CDs and DVDs.

Limited quantities of each of these resources are available from the Nashville office at a discounted rate. Email us at worldconv@aol.com or write to 1279 Brentwood Highlands Dr Nashville, TN 37211 USA.
The 3rd Global Leaders’ Forum (GLF) convened in Nashville on July 30th prior to the 17th World Convention. The theme of Sharing Resources was a departure from previous forums whose thematic emphases had been the current state of the global Stone-Campbell Movement. With so many resources available in the United States the opportunity was taken to highlight a few of those as a way of familiarizing participants with the broad spectrum of our Movement. Churches of Christ, Disciples and Christian Churches, as well as an international voice and one from outside the Movement were among the formal presentations. Marriage mentoring, the Lord’s Supper, children’s ministry, literature and translation, discipleship, global poverty, visual resources and the history of the Stone-Campbell Movement were explored. In addition, two publishing houses highlighted some of their current curriculum and Biblical resources.

Of the nearly 100 participants of the GLF, half were from the US while the other represented nearly a dozen other nations. The largest international contingent, at both GLF and the Convention, was Australia. Thanks to the generosity of the presenters and a wide range of other “resource donors” each participant left with a hefty resource bag filled with books, DVDs, coupons, brochures, postcards, fliers, pens, pencils, bookmarks and other advertisements leading to resources on dozens of topics relevant to the ministry of the local church.

In addition to the material formally presented an open mic time allowed for the participants to share resources from within their spheres of influence as well as hear words of encouragement from Jeff Weston, Executive Director of World Convention and Dr. C. Robert Wetzel, 2004-2008 Convention President. Incoming President B.J. Mpofu of Zimbabwe, 2008-2012, was also present. An ice breaker activity early in the day, a round table lunch, and a break in the afternoon allowed the participants the opportunity to make contacts with each other and talk one-on-one with presenters. It was also an opportunity to see past international barriers and differences within the Stone-Campbell Movement to begin to form relationships born out of sharing ways to help each other in building up the body of Christ.

Through Spirit-led prayers and a closing worship service highlighted by a meaningful time of sharing the Lord’s Supper participants were reminded that we are, as the Convention theme suggests, Together in Christ. By our observation and from the feedback that was given the 2008 Global Leaders’ Forum was a success!

NEWS BRIEFS:
The Christian Churches and Churches of Christ in Brazil will meet for their annual convention in Goiania, November 14 -16, 2008. For the first time ever they are renting a convention center to cope with the expected record attendance. Jeff Weston has been invited to be a guest speaker at this event.

The Melanesian Evangelical Churches of Christ in Papua New Guinea will celebrate their 50th anniversary with a series of meetings at Bunapas on the Ramu River November 14 - 17, 2008.

The future ministry of World Convention is a topic of discussion for the World Convention Board. At it’s meeting during the 17th World Convention the Board discussed a broad and exciting plan for the future ministry. The Executive Board will meet again in April 2009 to further define the future ministry. If you have any thoughts we would welcome your input. Please email to Jeff Weston at worldconv@aol.com or write to 1279 Brentwood Highlands Dr Nashville, TN 37211 USA.
There were over 70 of us, July 28-30, representing homes around the world. Global women…connecting around Christ’s Table…welcoming each other into our lives and our hearts.

The Millennium Maxwell House Hotel was our retreat venue to stretch and move into new relationships; first, under the leadership of Diana Ault, CathyAnn Beaty and Angela Holley - our Interplay team. Then Rev. Dr. Joy Samuels guided our exploration and experience of hospitality. We sang, heard, worshipped and prayed with Ann Pickett-Parker, Marj Dredge, Dr. Stephanie Crowder, May Reed and Kathy Jeffries. Sara Harwell brought the Harpeth Valley Sacred Harp Singers, led by Timothy Reynolds, who taught us how to sing hymns in the traditional shape-note style. Thistle Farms and Eternal Threads provided those all-important shopping opportunities. We talked, meditated, wrote, read, created.

Saturday, August 2 brought nearly 200 of us together around different tables at the World Convention Women’s Luncheon. Again, we shared a meal and our hearts. We learned that Global Women Connecting will continue under the leadership of interim President, Jackie Bunch (USA) and newly elected Vice-President, Janet Fountain (Canada) until the women of Brazil select their presidential recommendation. GWC will help support the work of Ash and Anji Barker in the Klong Toey slum, Bangkok, Thailand over the next four years (for more information; www.unoh.org, Klong Toey Handicrafts).

We were fed, our souls filled with new ideas. What if we shared our new ideas with those ‘back home’? What if this idea of connecting unites us? What if…?

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**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:**

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