

STONE-CAMPBELL DIALOGUE EXPLORES NEW CHURCH DEVELOPMENT IN A CHANGING CONTEXT



October 9, 2014 – Abilene, TX: The 19th session of the Stone-Campbell Dialogue took place on October 5-6, 2014 in Abilene, Texas. The goal of Dialogue, which meets annually, is to foster understanding, trust, and partnership among three separate, but related, churches.

An estimated 250-300 members of Churches of Christ, Disciples of Christ, and Christian Churches and Churches of Christ came together for an evening worship service and observance of the Lord's Supper on Sunday, October 5, at First Christian Church. The service included presentations on the history and nature of the Stone-Campbell Dialogue by Newell Williams, President of Brite Divinity School at TCU, and Doug Foster, professor of church history and director of the Center for Restoration Studies at Abilene Christian University. Reports were also offered from representatives of the three "streams" of the Stone-Campbell movement reflecting on the progress and challenges experienced today by their churches: Robert K. Welsh, president with the Disciples' Council on Christian Unity; Mark A. Taylor, editor and publisher of *Christian Standard*; and Gary Holloway, executive director with World Convention.

Doug Foster hosted the session on Monday, October 6, at Abilene Christian University. The theme of this year's event was "It Doesn't Look Like Church To Me," which focused on the development of new churches in the changing context of North American society. About 50 students, professors, and Christian leaders heard Kent Smith, professor of missional formation and director of Abilene Christian University's Missional Residency for North America, set the stage for the discussion by describing how and why "new church" experiences are happening across America. Four speakers with roots in the Stone-Campbell heritage described their experience with alternative expressions of Christian fellowship and worship: Laura Callarman, Abilene, Texas; Jared Looney, New York, New York; Joel Brown, Chicago, Illinois; and Blake Ryan, Corona, California.

Members of the Dialogue national planning team met Monday afternoon and evening to discuss and discern unity progress among the three groups and to decide future directions. Their plan is to continue meeting for at least five years. They made preliminary plans for next year's event, to focus on racial reconciliation and to meet in St. Louis, Missouri, in October, 2015.

Those attending from the national team were:

- Ron Degges, Julia Brown Karimu, Andy Mangum, Bob Riester, Robert Welsh and Newell Williams from the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ);
- Albert Acosta, Doug Foster, Claire Frederick, Gary Holloway, D'Esta Love, Kavian McMillon, and Jerry Taylor, from the Churches of Christ; and,
- Bill Baker, Paul Blowers, Alicia Crumpton, Karen Diefendorf, Terry O'Casey, Mark Taylor, and Guthrie Veech from the Christian Churches/Churches of Christ