

Healing and 'Soul Repair' Focus of Stone-Campbell Dialogue

Oct. 8, 2013 – Indianapolis: The Stone-Campbell Dialogue met October 6-8, 2013, at Allisonville Christian Church in Indianapolis, IN, to explore possibilities for ministry to persons who serve in the military, to veterans and family members of veterans, and to first responders who have been impacted by the trauma of their service.

The three churches involved in the dialogue – Christian Churches/ Churches of Christ, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), and Churches of Christ – share common roots in the “Stone-Campbell tradition,” but they divided over the past 100 years. The stated purpose of the dialogue is “to promote greater understanding among the churches, and to explore the possibility of their coming together in common witness, mission and service as an expression of God’s gift of unity and reconciliation in Christ.”

This year’s meeting, the 18th session since the dialogue began in 1999, was another step in this journey. Attendees moved into a new territory of looking not at their differences or the places where they have been divided, but exploring a critical area of ministry within our society today. Most congregations, ministers and members alike, have not dealt with or known how to address the “soul repair” of persons who have been morally injured in war or have been morally injured as “first responders.”

The opening event on Sunday afternoon focused on “The Healing Power of the Lord’s Supper.” Representatives of the three groups involved in the dialogue spoke on how the Lord’s Supper heals:

- division within individuals, Kent Ellett, minister of Speedway Church of Christ, Indianapolis;
- division within the church, Diane Spleth, pastor of Allisonville Christian Church (Disciples), Indianapolis; and,
- brokenness in our society and world, Mike Bowling, pastor of Englewood Christian Church, Indianapolis.

Following dinner and table conversation, all who attended (120 persons from all three “streams” of the Stone-Campbell Movement) shared in a closing service of the Lord’s Supper.

On Monday, Dr. Rita Nakashima Brock, Co-Director of the “Soul Repair Center” at Brite Divinity School in Ft. Worth, Texas, and author in the area of “moral injury,” presented definitions and examples of moral injury and led the group in discussion of how churches might minister to those suffering.

The national dialogue team is made up of 18 representatives from the three groups from across the United States, including laypersons and congregational pastors, university and seminary teachers, and executive staff persons in ecumenical and communication ministries. The 2014 meeting is scheduled to take place at Abilene Christian University in Abilene, TX.

[For more information on the dialogue go to <http://ccu.disciples.org/StoneCampbellDialogue/tabid/1295/Default.aspx>, or contact Robert Welsh, president of the Council on Christian Unity of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) at rwelsh@ccu.disciples.org.]