

STONE-CAMPBELL DIALOGUE AFFIRMS THE ROLE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN RELATION TO OUR SEARCH FOR UNITY



November 15, 2011 -- (Albuquerque, NM) The Stone-Campbell Dialogue met for its sixteenth session, November 4-8, 2011, on the topic “**The Role of the Holy Spirit in Christian Unity**,” and to experience that unity through service and worship.

Representing the three “streams” of the Stone-Campbell Movement, the group was composed of ministers, scholars and other leaders from Christian Churches/Churches of Christ, the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), and the Churches of Christ.

The group began its time together with a service project on Saturday, November 5, that benefitted East Central Ministries, Inc. East Central is committed to establishing a Christian presence in the southeast “International District” of Albuquerque by partnering with economically vulnerable neighbors, creating community, and building sustainable micro-businesses that will empower and equip the residents of this “at-risk” neighborhood. The Stone-Campbell team helped clean up various structures and grounds surrounding the houses that are to be occupied by East Central Ministries. In addition, \$1,265.25 was given to this ministry by the participants in a Sunday evening service of worship that included representatives of local Stone-Campbell congregations.

Saturday evening, Dialogue Members and local participants attended a lecture by Disciples historian D. Newell Williams at the Monte Vista Christian Church. His topic was the “Spirituality of Early Restoration Movement Leaders,” with a particular focus on Barton W. Stone and Alexander Campbell.

On Sunday morning, Stone-Campbell participants preached and worshipped with local congregations in the Albuquerque area, including Ridgecrest Christian Church, First Christian Church, Monte Vista Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Los Altos Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), West Mesa Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), and Montgomery Blvd. Church of Christ. At 4:00 in the afternoon, all three streams came together to observe a “Great Communion Celebration,” an ecumenical gathering at Montgomery Blvd. Church of Christ, which featured Scripture readings, songs by Tim Neuenschwander, Claire Frederick, and the Monte Vista Bell Choir, and *a capella* praise from all participants.

On Monday morning, the group convened at Montgomery Blvd. Church of Christ for its discussion of “The Role of the Holy Spirit in Christian Unity.” The primary resource was a paper presented by John Mark Hicks (Churches of Christ), with initial responses by Andy Mangum (Disciples of Christ) and Paul Blowers (Christian Churches/Churches of Christ). The Dialogue participants affirmed five modes of Spirit-enacted unity as expressed by John Mark Hicks: (a) Confession, (b) Transformation, (c) Liturgy or worship, (d) Shared participation in the Kingdom of God, and (e) Spiritual Formation or Prayer.

After dinner at a local restaurant Monday night, national Dialogue members met with local leaders and Christians at Montgomery Blvd. Church of Christ to ask how the Dialogue might encourage or assist local communities to seek unity in their particular contexts. Douglas A. Foster of Abilene Christian University moderated the discussion.

On Tuesday morning, with Robert Welsh, president of the Disciples Council for Christian Unity chairing, the participants met for a final conversation, reflecting on the events of the weekend and planning the details of next year's meeting. The group decided that the 2012 meeting would be held in Arlington, TX from November 10-13 around the theme "Unity—A Contemplative Stance." The gathering will include a spiritual retreat involving congregational ministers and local leaders in their first five years of ministry to seek unity and strength through spiritual formation and the disciplines (prayer, divine reading, meditation, fasting, contemplation.)

The dialogue session concluded Tuesday with a period of worship and communion, including an exercise in *Lectio Divina*, led by Doug Foster.

Paul Blowers, Johnson City, Tennessee, served as coordinator for the **Christian Churches/Churches of Christ team** this year. Other members attending this year included Robert Rea, Lincoln, Illinois; Mark A. Taylor, Cincinnati, Ohio; and Guthrie Veech, Florissant, Missouri.

Robert Welsh, Indianapolis, Indiana, is coordinator for the **Disciples of Christ team**, that this year included Ron Degges, Indianapolis, Indiana; Bill McDonald, Lexington, Kentucky; Laurie Lewis, Albuquerque, New Mexico; D. Newell Williams, Fort Worth, Texas; Andy Mangum, Arlington, Texas; and Robert Riestler, Indianapolis, Indiana.

Douglas Foster, Abilene, Texas, is coordinator for the **Churches of Christ team**. Representatives this year included Albert Acosta, Abilene, Texas; Claire Davidson Frederick, Mt. Juliet, Tennessee; Gary Holloway, Nashville, Tennessee; John Mark Hicks, Nashville, Tennessee; and Eric Wilson, Memphis, Tennessee.