

Churches Uniting in Christ Recommits to Goal of Racial Justice

Baltimore, October 6, 2007 – At a special three-day gathering of the Coordinating Council of Churches Uniting in Christ (CUIC), representatives of ten communions committed themselves to “keep racial justice at the top of its agenda” as together they seek to build “God’s Beloved Community.”

In reflecting on the meeting that was resourced by consultants from the Antiracism Study-Dialogue Circles (ASDIC), Ron Cunningham, Bishop in the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church and Vice-President of CUIC, stated, “For me this was the first time we sincerely sought to understand who we are as partners in this unique ecumenical venture . . . We now must embrace this calling to live out ways and means of eradicating racism and making racial reconciliation CUIC’s fundamental approach to prophetic witness.”

In reclaiming the central, guiding vision of “seeking to be God’s beloved community,” CUIC understands that racial justice and reconciliation are fundamental to the calling of the church’s unity, and that this will require a new orientation by the churches to return to the core Christian experiences of confession, repentance and forgiveness.

Suzanne Webb, President of CUIC and senior pastor of Union Avenue Christian Church in St. Louis, acknowledged, “We entered our meeting with disappointment that we had not lived up to our vision of racial justice. We left from our time together recommitted to seek God’s beloved community and give expression to our passion to dismantle racism.”

“My experience at this meeting transformed my understanding of the mission of the Racial Justice Task Force of CUIC,” stated its convener, Bentley De Bardeleben, Minister of Racial Reconciliation for the United Church of Christ. “A new trust among representatives of historically Black churches and the mainline churches, sorely lacking at times in the past, is a hallmark of the renewed ties binding these churches together in a stronger relationship.”

Neil Sloan, an observer from the Roman Catholic Church in his initial experience with the group noted, “Unity is both a gift of God and a task we must take up. CUIC’s commitment to ecumenical dialogue and racial justice brings excitement and hope to our search for God’s Beloved community.”

Looking to the future, Patrice Rosner, Director of CUIC, stated, “The focused work of this gathering lays a strong groundwork and sets a clear tone for the upcoming CUIC Plenary on January 11-14, 2008, when the churches will send delegations, including their Heads of Communion, to St. Louis. This will be the second Plenary in CUIC’s six-year history.”

-- end --