

serving **SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA ECUMENICAL COUNCIL** **Together** celebrating Christian unity . . . respecting diversity

Volume 9, Number 2  
April 2008

## Comings and Goings

Our Board is forever in flux as members are appointed and then retire from the fellowship. Welcome to the newcomers and blessings on the veterans who have served us well and now move on to other responsibilities. Still additional blessings on those (not named here) who continue to serve.

Several weeks ago we expressed appreciation to **Frank Brougher**, representing the American Baptist Churches. After a life time association with First Baptist Church, Glendale, Frank is headed for a life of leisure on the coast of Oregon. Oregon is also the new home of **Rod Parrott** (DOC), for many years Chair of our Faith and Order Commission. He and Mary Ann have found their new digs near the Columbia River, outside Portland.

Rod's departure has opened the door for our new Chair of Faith and Order, **Tamara Rodenberg** (DOC) Dean of the Disciples Seminary Foundation in Claremont. We look forward to her leadership of this important aspect of conciliar ecumenism. Frank steps aside for **Charles Urdike**, new pastor of First Baptist, Glendale, who comes from a long and strong ministry to a congregation in Maryland.

**Gail Geisel** (UCC) resigned to accept a call as pastor of a parish church. She is replaced by **Katey Headbloom**, doing chaplaincy work in a Long Beach Memorial Medical Center.

We are deeply saddened by the sudden death on March 21 of our friend and colleague **Mark Jaufmann**. Mark is a relatively recent addition to the board representing the Ecumenical Catholic Communion. He has been a chaplain at the Glendale Memorial Hospital. Also gone but not forgotten is our colleague **Efstathios Mylonas**, former pastor of St. Anthony Greek Orthodox Church in Pasadena, posthumously given the Boutilier Award for Ecumenical Service last January. Death has taken **Ruth Kloefer**, Quaker representative, and like Efstathios, board member for twenty years. Ruth has been replaced by **Laurel Gord**, who also represents SCEC on the board of the Interreligious Council of Southern California.

Newly appointed by their respective judicatories are **Barry Smedberg** (ELCA), **Rob Crowell** (Presb. USA), **Mark Diamond** (Bd. of Rabbis) and UMC representatives **Brad Beeman**, **Alissa Johnson**, and **Fernando Santillana**. We look forward to getting to know you and appreciate your agreeing to cast your ecumenical lot with us for the years to come.



Photo by Suzanne Stanfill

### Frank Brougher's Farewell Party

Faith Sand,, Fr. Alexei Smith, Fr. Arshag Khatchadourian, Deacon Tigren Garibjanyan, Rev. Frank Brougher, Rev. Albert Cohen

## CAMPUS MINISTRY

Rev. Albert G. Cohen, Executive Director

Our Council office is literally across the street from the campus of Pasadena City College. For four years I have watched thousands of students and cars driven by students come and go by our corner of Hill and Cordova. The question begged by our location asks how can SCEC take advantage of the geography and reach out to these people who walk and drive past our front door every day?

As many of you know I was a campus minister at Cal State Los Angeles for thirty-five years. I left that campus four years ago but we have retained the legal structure of the ministry and the board which has administered the program budget for those years. Two months ago a grant from a sister campus has put the campus ministry program back in business, and it seemed logical to focus this new grant on the campus that has been staring us in the face since we moved here. It would appear our first challenge is to develop ties with local churches and with the PCC staff and faculty in order to facilitate a presence on the campus which will be helpful to students and educators alike.

It takes time to win the confidence of an educational institution struggling to maintain the proper balance of community involvement from off campus which represents, in total, a broad spectrum of religious and political interests. While the first call is to maintain the integrity of the curriculum, free of manipulation by various points of view; still there are off-campus resources which can

supplement budgeted services and complement academic instruction.

At Cal State the denominational campus ministries were seen as an asset to the educational process, offering informal counseling support for students, staff and faculty in times of stress, like the death of colleagues, a divorce, problems with loneliness, illness, or

photo by Jean Woo



frustration with tasks on the job or in the classroom plus the tension of dealing with hot-button issues which come on unexpectedly—like the decision to go to war with Iraq.

We are still in the early stages of working on this project and would welcome any of your suggestions. Many of you have campus experience which could be useful to us as we decide how to proceed. Our churches originated higher education in this country in the seventeenth century; why should we abandon the process now when value questions are more than ever at the heart of our survival?

## Visit by Chinese Muslims Scholars

During Holy Week this year four Chinese Muslim academics stopped by SCEC on the last leg of a three-week visit to the United States sponsored by the State Department. The purpose of their visit to our country—the first for all of them—was to interact with the Muslim community here and explore the

roles that religions play in civic and community life in the U.S. For some reason this last-minute arrangement was made (we were asked the day before to gather a half-dozen church leaders to meet with them) and it turned out that we were the first Christian clerics they had met on the trip.

With two interpreters, there were six of them and six of us participating in a stimulating hour and a half conversation. It culminated with their asking three questions: How do we resolve the dilemma of church/state relations? (Drawing the boundary between issues and candidates is obviously a difficult exercise at times.) Why is the Christian church divided into so many factions and how do we come together? (A great question to pose

the separations which are so painful to us and so obvious to our neighbors.) Finally, does one have to believe in the Trinity to be a Christian? They brought that question from China where a visiting Christian cleric had told one of them, as he understood it, that it was not necessary to believe in the Trinity to be a Christian.

They had only one more day in America, and here we were their first interaction with any Christian group. It was a marvelous opportunity, even though Maundy Thursday is not the most opportune day to gather a Christian delegation. Thankfully we were able to assemble a representative and articulate group: Marie Durflinger (Disciples of Christ), regional president of Church Women United; Don Smith (Presbyterian, USA), director of Angel Interfaith Network, supporting patients at the County/USC hospital; Faith Sand (Episcopal), publisher of Hope Publishing House, a program unit of SCEC; Franklin and Jean Woo (Presbyterian, USA), retired, Mandarin-speaking National Council of Churches staff persons and former missionaries in Hong Kong and Albert Cohen (U.C.C.), executive director of SCEC.

All but four spoke both languages. All but four of us operate out of a religious paradigm and the same experience of reflecting on living in societies largely expressing values inimical to our expressed beliefs. By time we stopped for the photo op at the end, we had bonded and could balance serious discussion with the usual lighthearted banter about who will stand where for the camera. Easily the conversation could have

gone on another couple hours, but even this fleeting encounter was a personal treasure. [Note: we were fulfilling the expectation of our newly stated SCEC Goal #5 —“demonstrate planetary solidarity.”]

Our new Chinese friends had spent the morning with our colleague Jihad Turk at the Islamic Center of Los Angeles. Grand international strategies are born in personal friendships and the intimate, one-on-one relationships which weave the fabric of society in its most fundamental designs. You don't need to be an expert; nor have special status, to respond to the Holy Spirit's prompting to show hospitality to strangers and be nice to your neighbors. None of the participants will soon forget that memorable Maundy Thursday gathering in Pasadena.



## BIG TRUCKS

For six years SCEC has been part of an ecology movement specifically focused on highway safety, noise and air quality. Partners include Environmental Defense, Clean Air Council, and Environment California. The law now limits trucks to two trailers weighing no more than 40 tons.

International pressure, backed by the WTO, has been lobbying to increase the limits to include triple trailers weighing close to 50 tons and to open the southern border to traffic coming in from Mexico.

Right now the Canadian border is open to the longer combination vehicles (LCV's) which operate throughout the northern part of the country. So far California, Arizona, New Mexico and Texas have cooperated to keep our highways relatively safe and the pavements in comparatively good condition. It is to be noted that one big rig causes damage to the road equivalent to 2,000 to 3,000 cars. Seven thousand bridges in this state are already designated deficient by the Department of Transportation.

The personal observation of my daughter the surgeon as well as the official testimony of the Society of Trauma Nurses is that accidents involving large trucks are likely to cause more serious and life-threatening injuries. It is not hard to imagine the increased danger from longer, heavier vehicles which are inherently more difficult to control and are a greater hazard in traffic.

There is a resolution under consideration by the California legislature asking the President and Congress to maintain the current federal truck size and weight and oppose any proposal that would allow experimental longer or heavier trucks to operate. We will keep you posted as that legislation surfaces for a vote.

## WEEK OF PRAYER FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY

Photos by Wayne Haleen



Rev. Dr. John J. Hunter  
of FAME



United University Church  
at University of Southern  
California

What a grand celebration of the fellowship of God's people we shared last January at United University Church on the campus of USC. There were many enthusiastic, positive comments by people who were glad they were there and thankful for the afternoon together. We heard phrases like "such a joyful experience" and "I was very touched." 350 persons from throughout the region gathered to mark the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of this world-wide call to make visible the unity of the Body of Christ.

Singing by the *Brookinaires*, one of the seven choirs of First AME Church Los Angeles, quickly forged a congregation out of the gathering of strangers who had come looking for community. Following the world theme *Pray without ceasing* (I Thessalonians 5:12-18) the day's preacher, Reverend Dr. John J. Hunter of FAME, called the congregation to a life of prayer based on eight principles: adoration, confession, thanksgiving, supplication, faithfulness, humility, in all things, at all times. He reminded us that a life of faith, fortified by prayer, will bring great blessings upon our lives.

An additional highlight of the day was the presentation of the Gene Boutilier Award for Distinguished Ecumenical Service, posthumously, to Fr. Efstathios Mylonas. His widow, Presbytera Maria Mylonas accepted the award for his life-long commitment to ecumenical witness and specifically for his active participation in the Southern California Ecumenical Council for twenty years until his death in September 2006. He was our beloved colleague, and we miss his quiet, spirit filled presence among us. At the time of his

death he was pastor of St. Anthony's Greek Orthodox Church in Pasadena.

Scripture during the service was read in Korean, Greek and Spanish, recognizing the broad spectrum of God's people who live in Los Angeles. After lighting candles to represent the light of the Gospel calling us to make our Christian commitment to each other visible, we proclaimed a commitment "... to persevere in constant prayer for Christian unity, and through concrete gestures of reconciliation, to seek to bring forth perfect unity in Jesus Christ." The service closed with our customary sharing of *Bread for the Journey* following the ancient rite of the Eastern Orthodox Church. Higher education being a primary concern of the Christian church for centuries, it was entirely appropriate to celebrate the occasion on the campus of a major university.

Dean Nelson, ELCA and Mark Jaufmann, Ecumenical Catholic Communion



SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA ECUMENICAL COUNCIL

SCEC GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

NOVEMBER 15, 2007-February 7, 2008

GOALS



1. Review our theological assumptions regularly through scheduled reports from and interaction with the SCEC Faith and Order Commission.
2. Demonstrate “planetary solidarity” by programming focused on global warming, immigration and poverty.
3. Show concern for the “emerging church” by expanding our support base from the “main line churches” to include five church families identified by CCT (Pentecostal/ Evangelical, Orthodox, Catholic, historic Protestant and racial/ethnic). This could mean

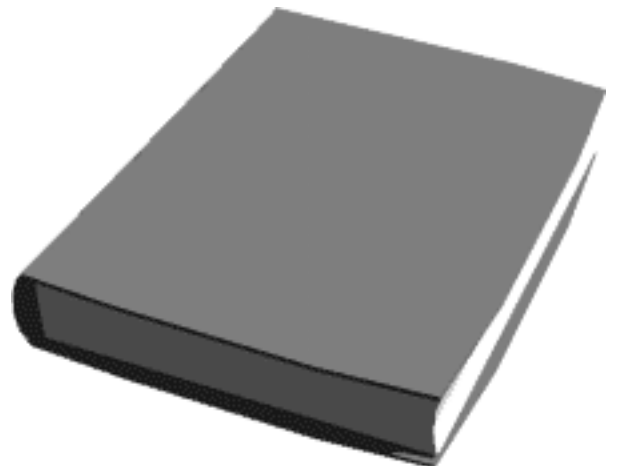
inventing new occasions to be together and expanding board membership.

4. Increase diversity of board membership in terms of ethnic and age representation.
5. Maintain but improve what we have done with Week of Prayer, an annual retreat, communication within & outside SCEC, the budget, our sense of koinonia/family.

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OBJECTIVES

- A. Faith and Order, Theology: report to the board twice a year on WCC and NCC documents discussed; put “A Word to the Churches” in Together; chair of the commission should report to the board twice a year; Faith & Order minutes should be emailed to the SCEC board; links to denominations on our website.
- B. Social Programs: Increase awareness in our member denominations of the need to pay attention to these three issues; in addition: global warming activity should be supported on our website by links to 4 agencies; immigration concern should connect SCEC with the Dan Romero/UCC Center on the border and with the upcoming Catholic/ Evangelical conference at Fuller. There is a new CCT Statement on Poverty for our website. We should learn about and respond to the United Nations Millennium Development Goals.
- C. Diversity: invite AME, AMEZ and Brethren to return to our table; reach out to CCT denominations and encourage their participation; nurture our connections with Baptists and Greek Orthodox. New occasions would include our Kinnamon event in October; link with Ecumenical Council of Pasadena Area Churches for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity; religious participation in Earth Day events; peace emphasis around Veteran’s Day. Nurture our participants by calling on judicatory heads (Lucy Guernsey, President, and Albert Cohen, Executive Director) sharing our plans and hearing their needs; we can encourage greater diversity in their representation on our board.
- D. Evaluate progress on these objectives at the board meeting on May 15, 2008.



**SPONSORS IN 2007**

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**Agencies:** First Baptist Church, Glendale; Church Women United; First Christian Church, Riverside; Seaside UCC Church Torrance; Fuller Theological Seminary; South Coast Interfaith Council.

**Denominations:** American Baptist, Community of Christ, Disciples of

Christ, Ecumenical Catholic Communion, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Episcopal, Presbyterian (USA), Society of Friends, United Church of Christ, United Methodist.

We remain grateful for the generosity of persons and agencies who value their relationship with SCEC and demonstrate their commitment in this tangible way. The majority of the work of the council is devoted to improving ecumenical cooperation among the various religious groups in the area. We also look for ways to support a more effective witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ in the Southern California region.

**FAITH AND ORDER NOTES**

How does the SCEC Board keep up with the latest developments in ecumenical thinking and scholarship? We have our own “think tank” called the Faith and Order Commission of SCEC. This group of twelve clergy and lay persons meets monthly to, among other things, “provide theological perspectives on concerns and issues raised by SCEC.”

Chair of the Commission, Dean Tamara Rodenberg of the Disciples Seminary Foundation, reported to the SCEC Board at its last meeting that there are presently four priorities for F&O study and writing: environmental issues, the emergent church, diversity in ecclesiology, and publication of “A Word to the Churches” on current pressing events.

Two aspects of diversity being addressed directly are an initiative to reach out for expanded

membership on the Commission by faith groups not now represented and a special program to include seminary students in our meetings. Currently representatives from Lutheran, Disciples of Christ, Roman Catholic, United Church of Christ, Pentecostal, Free Methodist and Episcopalian traditions participate in Faith and Order discussions. *The Ecumenical Review* published by the World Council of Churches is one of several quarterly journals available to persons interested in current trends in ecumenical thinking.

The Commission meets monthly on a Friday over lunch at the SCEC office in Pasadena. Persons interested in joining the discussion should contact the office at 626-578-6371 or [scec1@scec1.net](mailto:scec1@scec1.net).

This newsletter is published by the Southern California Ecumenical Council, located at 195 South Hill Avenue, Pasadena, CA, 91106, phone 626-578-6371, fax 626-578-6358, e-mail [scec1@scec1.net](mailto:scec1@scec1.net). Website [www.scec1.net](http://www.scec1.net). Ms. Lucy Guernsey, President; Rev. Albert G. Cohen, Executive Director; Janet Vandevender and Paul Kittlaus, Editors