

The Kentucky Council of Churches Sixty-First Annual Assembly
October 16 – 17, 2008
Delegates' Report

On Thursday morning, October 16, 2008, at Good Shepherd Roman Catholic Church (Frankfort), the Sixty-first Annual Assembly of the Kentucky Council of Churches was convened. Delegates were present from a variety of Catholic and Protestant judicatories. The theme for the Assembly was “Praying for Unity,” in observance of the centennial anniversary of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity.

In her Executive Director's Report, the Rev. Nancy Jo Kemper formally announced her intention to retire in June, 2009, after seventeen years of service as the Council's Executive Director. Rev. Kemper has chosen this particular time to retire because of her sense that the Council must engage some serious revisioning of its life and ministry, and that a new Executive Director should be part of that process. Deep appreciation was expressed to Rev. Kemper on behalf of the Council, its constituent church judicatories, and the Commonwealth of Kentucky. A committee (including the Rev. Clifton Kirkpatrick of the PCUSA) has been established to search for Rev. Kemper's successor.

Father Thomas Ryan offered the Assembly keynote address on the theme of “Spiritual Ecumenism,” which envisions the future of church unity not through institutional merger, doctrinal agreement, or mission cooperation (though all of these are good and appropriate), but rather through shared experience of the Spirit of God in life, work, and worship together. Spiritual ecumenism is a receptive form of ecumenism, which looks for gifts of the Spirit both in our own community as well as in others. Father Ryan introduced us to the “Gospel Call” program, which has been used effectively in various places (including Louisville) to put spiritual ecumenism into practice.

As is always the case, a variety of workshops were offered at this Assembly including topics such as spiritual ecumenism, *The Compassionate Community*, theology of ecumenism, interfaith dialogue, the care of creation as spiritual practice, and others.

During lunch on Thursday, Ms. Joanie Lukins (from the Presbyterian Church of Danville) was presented the 2008 Peacemaker and Anti-Racism Activist Award for her leadership and work on behalf of Living Waters for the World...A traditional part of every Assembly is an ecumenical worship service, which was held on Thursday evening at Good Shepherd Church. Rev. Kemper delivered the evening message as this will be her last Assembly as Executive Director.

Friday morning's business session included a review of the 2009 Council budget. The Council's financial position has been weakened in recent years due to limited judicatory support and declining endowment value. The Council's financial health will be a major issue in the years ahead.

Always important are the Assembly's policy statements. This year's Assembly approved an extensive policy statement on criminal justice. The Assembly also approved signing

on to an ecumenical statement opposing torture and an ecumenical social creed. These and other Council policy statements can be viewed on the website of the Kentucky Council of Churches (www.kycouncilofchurches.org). The Council's policy statements serve as a guide for its public advocacy and are excellent resources for congregational and individual reflection.

It was truly an honor for us to serve as Transylvania Presbytery's delegates to the Sixty-first Annual Assembly of the Kentucky Council of Churches. In light of our experience, we offer the following recommendations to the Presbytery:

***that the Rev. Nancy Jo Kemper be invited to address the Presbytery in 2009, preferably at its March meeting;**

***that congregations be encouraged to observe *The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity* (January 18 – 25), and that they consider receiving special offerings on behalf of the Kentucky Council of Churches as part of that observance;**

***that the Presbytery of Transylvania review its financial commitment to the Kentucky Council of Churches to ensure that the Presbytery's financial support reflects our theological commitment to the work of ecumenism;**

***that the Kentucky Council of Churches be invited to offer a presentation or workshop at the next Presbytery mission conference.**

Respectfully Submitted,

Mary Seeger Weese and Michael L. Ward