

Report from the NY Conference to the UEK Forum – May 6, 2011

(Adapted from minutes of the NY Conference Commission on Ecumenism and Interfaith Relations)

Interns from Germany

Since the inception of our partnership with the EKHN, our German partners have sponsored German Vicars to serve in an assistant pastor capacity in several of our congregations. We are now enjoying the gifts of Markus Krieger, serving First Congregational Church in Binghamton, and Kerstin Peiper, serving Lakeville UCC. Conversations are ongoing about how these visitors fit into our structure. (What title should they have in their American congregations? Do they need to be licensed, and if so, for the congregation or for the Association?) Any congregation or pastor who might be interested in participating in a pastoral exchange in the future may contact Clare Price at clarea.price@gmail.com.

Visits

Our work with the EKHN has been immeasurably enhanced by our exchange of visits, whereby we host each other's delegations on an alternate biannual basis. This arrangement has the following aims: (a) to enable us to keep the Christian mandate to visit each other; (b) to encourage one-on-one fellowship among members of the congregations and not just the "staff"; (c) to bring the experience back to local churches. In March of this year our partners hosted 14 of us in and around Frankfurt, and we have been looking forward to hosting a similar group from the EKHN this June, to include their participation in our Annual Meeting. In addition, youth exchanges are in the works for the near future; and individuals from the EKHN are beginning to come to us with requests for guidance and hospitality for their individual trips.

Participation in Conferences

In September, 2010, David Seiple from Broadway UCC represented the UCC at the ecumenical discussion co-sponsored by the Community of Protestant Churches in Germany (GEKE). In November, Luvon Roberson from Riverside Church represented the denomination at an EKHN-sponsored consultation on Human Rights and Domestic Violence.

Theological exchanges

We had hoped to host Dr. Peter Scherle, Director of Herborn Seminary (EKHN), in a lecture & preaching tour at the beginning of April 2011. Due to illness, he was not able to travel to the US at that time. However, we remain committed to finding opportunities to engage in theological reflection with our EKHN partners.

Other activities

A young adult mission trip to South Africa, organized on our side by Rev. Rick Cowles, took place during the summer of 2010; six from the US, 7 from the EKHN, and 4 Moravians toured areas of the country, primarily connecting on a personal basis with South Africans. A blog of the trip is on the NY Conference website.

Addendum from Martha

I was pleased to attend the meeting of the UCC Forum in Hanover on September 29, 2010. Due to delayed flights, I missed the first part of the meeting, but arrived in time for lunch and was able to make a report from the UCC. The effort to put together that report, however, made me keenly aware of the limits of my familiarity with current events in our national setting. I recommend that the UEK Forum delineate more clearly what kinds of news should be reported to the UCC Forum, and where that information can be accessed.

Following my time in Hanover, I traveled to Frankfurt to meet with folks from the EKHN, and was graciously hosted by Lisa Neuhaus, Pastor of the *Sankt Petersgemeinde*. She organized visits to the *Evangelischen Frauenbegegnungszentrum* in Frankfurt; to a play in the *Jugendkirche*; to a celebration of *100 Jahre Diakonie* in Frankfurt; and a visit with Rainer Brunssen to his church in *Unterliederbach*. I am grateful for these visits and for the ongoing deepening of the partnership.

Respectfully submitted, Rev. Martha Koenig Stone, Associate Pastor, Henrietta UCC, mkstone@frontiernet.net