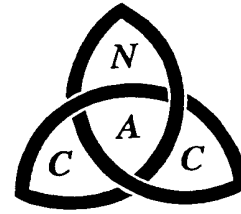


NEWS BRIEFS

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A periodic news letter of the National Alliance of Covenanting Congregations

-----Website: www.unitedrenewal.org/-----

2009 AGM, April 24, 25

This year our AGM was in Edmonton, where we were hosted by the Pleasantview United congregation. They embraced us with warmth, looked after us well, and fed us temptingly, . . .and rather more generously than was good for us.

Delegates (table officers and representatives from across Canada) numbered twelve, while there were a number of guests, mainly from Pleasantview.

Three items of business that will likely interest you:

1. Will There Be an NACC After the 2010 AGM?

On both days the delegates spent time considering the options the Alliance faces in light of the very challenging question, How is the NACC going to answer its now immediate need for new leadership? While finances seem secure and local congregations still are apparently invested in their original reasons for joining the NACC, there is an increasingly critical need for new leaders at both our national and regional levels. For example, Geoff Wilkins has made it clear he will not serve as national Chairman past the next AGM, and, despite efforts during the last year, no one has been identified as willing to take on his role.

Given that, Geoff asked the meeting to consider which of the following possibilities is worth exploring in coming months:

- Staying as we are, with no change in structure, modus operandi, or goals;
- Staying much as we are, but with a changed MO and refocused goals;
- Completely transforming ourselves into something new, with new purposes;
- Amalgamating ourselves with others who are working toward goals consistent with our own;
- Winding up the NACC and directing our assets to the use of others with similar goals.

The delegates spent several hours of prayerful thought on all of this during the first day, returning to it as first business on the second. Barring God pushing someone unexpected onto the stage (which he has certainly been known to do), the meeting saw just two viable possibilities - the second and fourth of those options, singly or in combination.

The leadership of our member congregations (Sessions, Boards, Councils) will be asked to offer advice on those options, but you as a reader of *News Briefs* are also invited to share your thoughts, either with a local Steering Committee member or NBS itself, which will pass them on. What would also be of particular interest is knowing which NACC activities (local or national) you feel should be maintained. (Contact info. for reaching NBS is at the top of the previous page.)

Finally, the next, and perhaps final, AGM will be in London, Ontario, where we will be the guests of Byron United Church.

2. “Called to Be Church: toward a unifying vision”

Primarily intended for the '09 General Council Commissioners, General Council Office issued this document earlier this year, but at the AGM, no one, other than Lester Settle, our rep. from the Maritimes, was aware of it. However, he had found some time to read it and had prepared a quick initial reaction for us.

CTBC is a nine-page discussion paper, closing with four questions about “vision”, “leadership”, “opportunities and challenges”, and “finances” in the national church. As a reward for being so alert, Lester was asked to head a small team to prepare a written NACC reaction to both CTBC and its companion document, “The State of the Church”. As you might expect, there is a good deal that is troublesome to us in these two papers, and the NACC’s reaction, presently under preparation, will shortly be shared with our congregations, with the request that they submit their own reactions. (The NACC response may be used as a reference if they so wish.) Both CTBC and TSOTC, as well as the General Secretary’s introductory letters, are available at the United Church website, <http://united-church.ca/>. Just enter “Called to Be” and “State of the Church” in the Search box to get them.

The General Secretary has engaged to pass on any such reactions received by her, so that the GC’s Planning Committee may consult them in framing the General Council discussions this coming August. You may send submissions to Nora Sanders, the GS, at nsanders@united-church.ca, or 3250 Bloor St West, Toronto, ON M8X 2Y4

3. Defections – An Alert

During the last two years we have had notices of withdrawal from three of our large congregations. Two of these were reviewed at this AGM. Even though the churches in question are geographically removed from each other, their cases exhibit curious and unlikely commonalities. For example, the letters of withdrawal are phrased surprisingly similarly; in each case the reasons for leaving remained vague, despite our questioning; somewhat pointedly, NACC officers were not permitted to act as resource persons (indeed, the Alliance knew nothing of what was afoot until very late); the roles played by the local leadership, including the clergy, were, to be charitable, decidedly not supportive of continued NACC membership; and so on. (On some previous occasions, the NACC has been afforded early opportunity to provide information, but not here.) All of this suggests that some external coordinative agent may be at work, and that it is targeting what it considers to be key NACC congregations.

May we therefore ask that, if what the NACC stands for matters to you, that you please be vigilant, informed, healthily skeptical of anything that seems out of kilter (especially in terms of the faith). Above all, don’t be shy about asking pointed questions and talking things over with others. And, may we stress, please **get in touch with the NACC as soon as you feel that your concerns have substance.**