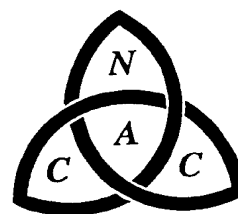


NEWS BRIEFS

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A periodic news letter of the National Alliance of Covenanting Congregations

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A New Dawn?

The United Church's four renewal/reform bodies are presently considering the merits of integrating their activities, possibly even merging their organizational structures. They all differ in their mandates, of course, and in their modes of action, their focuses, etc., but they share a number of preoccupations, including a profound concern for what the institutional church is doing to itself. One hopes these preliminary discussions will lead in promising directions in the next few months. Please pray that whatever transpires will be in accord with God's wishes.

General Council '09 – Decisions and Implications

Several actions by this summer's General Council provided a textbook illustration of how the church's power structure typically deals with inconvenient obstruction. Take three Proposals which appeared before the GC, the UCC's senior court:

1. The heavily biased Proposal concerning the Israel-Palestine conflict (which received a lot of uncomplimentary media coverage);
2. A Proposal to limit, very sharply, a local congregation's control of its own worship, with same sex marriage being the explicit target; and
3. A Proposal to abstract the Articles of Faith, the UCC's formal statement of its faith, from the *Basis of Union*, the church's constitution.

In the event, all three were defeated, and some people have taken considerable comfort in that, since their being approved would have had hugely negative implications.

But, the power brokers remained unapologetic and the push for all three goals is still with us. Thus, in the case of

- #1 - Conferences, Presbyteries, Sessions, etc., are now instructed to keep the issue alive, implicitly maintaining a strong pro-Palestinian emphasis, witness your editor's Presbytery, where a study of Ilan Pappé's "The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine" is already in the works (the title hardly suggests an objective approach);
- #2 - (a) Presbyteries are now instructed to use triennial visitations to make sure their Pastoral Charges review policies on performing same-sex marriages, and (b) Presbyteries in turn are to report progress on this to the 2009 GC;
- #3 - There is now to be a Remit to fold all of the UCC's faith-type statements into the Doctrine section of the Basis of Union. If successful,

this would extend the UCC's officially declared faith to include almost every fashionable theology of the day, and with no end in sight. The NACC relied, unsuccessfully, on the Doctrine section to challenge approval of "A Song of Faith", but, were this Remit to win approval, the grounds for such challenges would be gone. Indeed, if "A Song" is OK, virtually anything will be acceptable. But, as a wise Christian recently wrote, "*Chaos is not nothing; it is a substantial Something, lacking beauty and meaning because it lacks the order of God, whose workings, being eternal, are not bound by time*" (S.M. Hutchens). That's where we're headed – to a chaotic faith.

So, our leadership continues as usual, secure in its self-righteous but misguided certainties, unshakeably wedded to keeping things under control by moving things along "two steps forward, one step back" (if absolutely necessary). Reportedly, Lenin was frank about using the same strategy to bring about the Soviet Revolution. And it worked for a while, Although at huge cost. But, of course, it worked *only* for a while, and the USSR is now history. Pray that the UCC doesn't suffer the same fate.

Update: Ted Wigglesworth

Ex-Chairman Ted, who was improperly removed from his pulpit twelve and a half years ago – and subsequently struck from the UCC clergy - just phoned to say that, after prevarication, the UCC has agreed that a mediator might indeed be a way of avoiding a costly civil court case. This was suggested some time ago by Ted's counsel, who named a fair-minded mediator likely acceptable to the church. The concept sparked some interest, but the suggested mediator was rejected, with three alternatives nominated in his place. All of these were unacceptable to Ted, since each was tainted by (to put it in lawyerly language) "the apprehension of bias". (For instance, the church's #1 nominee was a member of the General Council panel that turned down Ted's final appeal.)

There the matter sat, with the prospect of another drawn out negotiation, until Ted's lawyer eventually gave notice that, unless this option was picked up quickly, he would move to expedite the court case. That prompted the quick OK, *including acceptance of the mediator originally proposed*.

So, over a decade on, this whole sad saga may just possibly be nearing its end. Thus it is that this just might be the last time we have to appeal for funds to help with Ted's legal costs. Incidentally, to date the Legal Defence Fund has been able to cover over \$ 150,000 of those costs. If you can help with what we hope will be the final push, your donation, in any amount, can be forwarded to "The Legal Defence Fund", c/o Cameron Smith, NACC Treasurer, 3 Sunshine Gardens, Sussex NB E4E 2E3. Tax receipts will be issued as usual. Many thanks.

Snappers:

- **Highly recommended** Sample copies of *Touchstone*, a "conservative" ecumenical US bimonthly may be ordered by contacting Julie Grisolano at grisolano@fsj.org.
- **Garden Hint** The best way to make sure you are removing a weed and not a valuable plant is to pull on it. If it comes up easily, it's a valuable plant.
- **Sports** Long ago, when men beat the ground with sticks and uttered curses, it was called witchcraft. Today it's called golf.
- **Unhappily Ageing?** When you're dissatisfied and would like to go back to your youth, think about having to take Algebra again.