

ONE TABLE

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A Word From Our Co-Presidents

Over the last decade CREO has been engaged in an ongoing dialogue, examining and reflecting on its unique role for this time and place. Who are we? What is our mission? What do we discern from God as we wrestle to define our identity and work together? When many of the historic ecumenical struggles have been waged and won, what is the character of modern day ecumenism, especially as we strive to live as faith-filled people here, together, in the Capital Region? **CREO is at a cross-road.** How we move forward will depend on how we answer these and other questions.

We come with a rich ecumenical history of cooperation and over the decades have seen the fruit of many collaborative projects, which were largely funded by pooled denominational monies, and a CREO staff that provided daily oversight. Today, CREO operates with one part-time staff person, and a Board that meets four times a year, predominately comprised of members over 65.

Times have changed, those glory days are behind us, we aren't who we used to be. Nor should we be. Informed by our rich history and challenged by the present ecumenical landscape, we must discern afresh CREO'S identity and Spirit-led vision for our day.

The CREO Executive Committee is working to enable us to answer these questions. Here's a thumbnail list of what's been happening in the last 18 months and what is planned for the future:

- *A 2011 survey* (sent to 51 with 27 responding) gave us feedback
- *January 2012* started with the departure of the CREO Coordinator (Misha Marvel), and left a 6 month period without someone in this role.
- *March and April 2012* two special sessions were assisted by an outside facilitator (Bob Zittel) to help CREO Board members articulate issues, concerns, vision and possibilities.
- *June 2012* the CREO Executive Committee followed this up with a meeting with consultant David Olsen from the Samaritan Counseling Center.
- *July 2012* Margot Phillips began working as Interim Coordinator

(Continued on page 3)

CREO Members

Albany United
Methodist Society

American Baptist Churches,
Capital Area Association

Capital Area
Council of Churches

Catholic Charities,
Diocese of Albany

Christian Church
(Disciples of Christ)

Episcopal Diocese of Albany

Evangelical Lutheran Church
in America,
Hudson Mohawk Conference

FOCUS Churches of Albany

Interdenominational
Ministers Conference of the
Capital Region

Presbyterian Church, USA,
Presbytery of Albany

Reformed Church in
America, Classis of Albany

Roman Catholic
Diocese of Albany

Schenectady Inner City
Ministry

Troy Area United Ministries

United Church of Christ,
Hudson Mohawk Association

United Methodist Church,
Upper New York Conference

Learning CREO: My First Year

In the Spring of 2011 I was elected to serve as Dean of the Hudson Mohawk Conference of the Upstate New York Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. I soon discovered that my responsibilities included serving on the CREO board, attending the Judicatory Executive meetings as Bishop Marie Jerge's representative, and serving as an Ecumenical Officer. This has given me the unique perspective of being the only individual who regularly attends the meetings of all three groups. I would like to share my reflections from this past year of service.

I have served as a parish pastor in the Capital District for 25 years and was familiar with CUM but had very little knowledge of CREO or its activities. I have not been able to clarify in my mind how the three bodies (JE's, EO's, and Board) interact with one another. Each of the groups displays respect and gratitude for the other two groups. Who sets the agenda and priorities for CREO? Do all three groups have equal voice? How are those voices heard? Who speaks for each group?

During this past year I have been very impressed with the folks who serve in the various bodies of CREO. They are committed to working ecumenically, generous in spirit, open to new ideas, centered in Christ, and committed to working for peace and justice in the world. My encounters with Judicatory Executives, Ecumenical Officers, and the Board have inspired me and opened my eyes and heart to the challenges and opportunities we have to work together to do God's will.

The loss of CREO Coordinator Misha Marvel has been embraced by the CREO board as an opportunity to evaluate where CREO is and to recast its vision. This is a very challenging process and one where all the parties involved have been careful to listen to one another. I am impressed with the respect and patience that the members of this organization demonstrate as they grapple with difficult issues.

CREO is and, I believe, can continue to be a model for the wider church in its willingness to work together for peace and justice. Its members demonstrate in all they do what ecumenism can be. The voice of CREO is vital in a world that can be deaf to Jesus' command "to love one another as I have loved you".

Rev. Charles F. Schwartz, aka "Pastor Chuck", Dean, ELCA

The Details...

Deadline for Submissions to
One Table Fall Edition,
Sept./Oct./Nov., is October 26

Please help us by updating your contact information. We mail our newsletters Third Class for a first-class reason – to save money.

While some newsletters may arrive late, we hope the message will always be timely. **This edition was distributed the last week of August, 2012.**

One Table is published quarterly by the Capital Region Ecumenical Organization on recycled paper. Circulation: 450 per hard copy issue, 400 per email. *One Table* serves as an ecumenical voice in our region and is supported by CREO members and *One Table* readers. Only motions duly passed at Board meetings reflect the official actions of the entire Capital Region Ecumenical Organization. Opinions expressed by contributing writers are not necessarily those of CREO.

Articles, news items, and announcements are invited. Publication cannot be guaranteed, but all submissions will be reviewed for use. The Coordinator reserves the right to edit material to conform to editorial policy, style and length. Unless otherwise attributed, articles are compiled and/or written by the Coordinator.

Please help us reduce costs by requesting an email copy at CreoBoard@gmail.com.

Our Call to be One in Christ

In my document files there are no fewer than 10 pieces whose labels begin “CREO”: CREO statement on Iraq from 2002, pieces on baptism, recreation, politics for One Table, a statement on diversity on the state Supreme Court, and the like.

For the ten years I was regional minister for the United Church of Christ, it was my great privilege to sit at the table of Judicatory Executives, and be part of CREO’s public witness in letters and news articles.

I believe it remains important for Roman Catholic and Protestant regional bodies and judicatories to be connected with one another, and with the regional ministries like Schenectady Inner City Ministries, Troy Area United Ministries, and Capital Area Council of Churches. Our call to be one in Christ has not abated.

But, since we already have an ecumenical educational vehicle in Capital Region Theological Center, and since we have the three regional agencies and several local collaborations (FOCUS churches, for instance) for congregations to join for local mission, certainly it is time to make sure that CREO or its successor fulfills a mission unique to itself. Will it be that public witness on statewide or local issues? Will it be ways to serve our neighbors within the region? Will it be an ecumenical endeavor for youth, or new church planting?

What we are all learning about the future of our churches is that we must offer people the opportunity to use their gifts in a meaningful way to help others. Can CREO help that happen as part of the basic partnership of denominations? Can that happen without putting faithful members to work on endless organizational tasks? Can CREO activities be joyfully invitational and effectively missional? Is our “target audience” only the members of our churches, or are there unchurched folks who need to hear that Christians stand up for justice and engage in mission as ecumenical bodies?

These are the same questions each of our churches and judicatories face. Is God speaking to us with a new inspiration for mission? I know the Board has been setting time apart for discerning and listening. I look forward to hearing what is emerging.

Rev. Marian P. Shearer, Associate Conference Minister
New York Conference, United Church of Christ

A Word from our Co-Presidents (*cont. from page 1*)

- **August 2012** ONE TABLE published
- **September 14th** Ecumenical Officers meet with Judicatory Executives
- **September 14th** CREO Board meets with consultant David Olsen to determine next steps
- **October 17th** CREO Board meets to begin implementation of “next steps”

Dr. Olsen will be meeting with the CREO Board on September 14th, 2012, at 11am, to assist us in fleshing out the CREO of today and tomorrow, to help us answer for ourselves whether to move forward into life, remain frozen and muddled, or fade away. It’s up to all of us to set the direction. In this issue we have engaged the Judicatory Executives to write of their experiences and hopes for CREO.

Rev. Deb Jameson, Rev. Mark Chaffin

Co-Presidents

Margot Phillips, Our New Interim Coordinator



I am honored and privileged to serve as the Interim Coordinator of CREO. Why Interim? Because I will be working with this ecumenical community as we strive to discern God's will for our future.

I was born into the church in 1947 with Baptism at St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church, Williamsville, NY. I was confirmed at St. Paul's at the age of 16, following two years of Bible and catechetical studies. I served as president of Luther League while in high school, sang in the church choir and with the Lutheran Chorale in Buffalo, NY. I was married in St. Paul's in 1968 and raised three now adult sons during a twenty-five year marriage.

When I entered college, I visited a church in the local community, but it didn't seem to "match" what I had learned in my home church and thus began my absence from regular church attendance other than during vacations at home.

In the early 1970's, I was taking a course in feminist literature at the University at Albany to complete the requirements for my BA. At the same time, I was hesitantly returning to an active life in the Christian community. I was challenged then by a question "Can a person be both Christian and feminist?" I began to read early feminist theology, and found the answer for me was "yes"! Refreshed in my faith journey, I joined a Lutheran church and was active in two Lutheran congregations in Rensselaer

County and later as a member of St. John Lutheran Church in Albany. During those years I served as delegate to several state-wide synods and also as a delegate to Capital Area Council of Churches, which I continue to do frequently.

I joined First Congregational UCC in 1993 and more recently became a member of a new church start congregation, Journey UCC, Delmar. I served on the Church & Ministry Committee for the Hudson Mohawk Association, UCC for 13 years, served a term as the HMA's president, was a member of the NY Conference Executive Council for over 6 years, and was a delegate or visitor at three national Synods. I am currently in my second term on the Capital Region Theological Center Board and serve as chair of its personnel committee. I have taken several "core" courses at CRTC and many more courses of interest. I participate frequently in CACC's Ecumenical Witness to Baptism program. I also serve as a hospice volunteer, primarily performing home visits and vigils.

I recently retired from New York State after working 28 years at the Departments of Civil Service and Health with experience in administration, human resources, and management. After retirement, I briefly returned to the Department of Health and worked part time as an investigator for the Office of Professional Medical Conduct.

My husband Joe and I were married in 1996 and are both active members of Journey, UCC, and serve in various capacities in the HMA and in the state conference. We are both frequent performers in community theater and enjoy spending time vacationing, and with our four grandchildren.

What we miss isn't "there," somewhere else, or sometime else. It's here and now in the circumstances we face. It's found in the power for good, the presence of God, stronger and more lasting than the best we wish for and the worst we complain about.

Prayer

Almighty God, free me from thinking too much about what has been or could be. Help me to act better right now in the confidence of your presence. Amen. William C. Green, UCC Daily Devotions, August 2, 2012



Resources and Announcements

For your newsletter or bulletin

CAPITAL REGION THEOLOGICAL CENTER NEWS

CRTC ecumenical theological education, support for clergy, training for ministry, and resourcing services for congregations.

New Testament Part I: Acts, Epistles & Revelation, Dr. Peter Bedford, Ten Tuesdays beginning October 9, 7-9pm, Scotia United Methodist Church, A Lay Theological Education Program core course; open to all. \$275, or \$250 to Audit. Registration deadline: Sept. 28.

Misused & Abused: Re-Claiming & Proclaiming Revelation, Rev. Dr. Richard Carlson, Oct. 18-19, 9am-4pm, Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Glenville, Don't miss this opportunity to engage one of the most misunderstood books of the Bible, with one of CRTC's most dynamic instructors! \$155 by Sept. 20; \$175 thereafter; Reg. deadline Oct. 2.

We Are Not Our Own: John Calvin Speaks to us Today, Fr. Dennis Tamburello, Oct. 30, 9am-4pm, Siena College, Explore the life and spirituality of John Calvin -- perhaps a side you've never considered before! Just in time for Reformation Day! \$75 by Oct. 3; \$90 thereafter. Reg. deadline: Oct. 15.

Thinking Outside the Box: Becoming Communities of Vibrant Engagement, Rev. Dr. Richard Chrisman, Nov. 3, 9am-4pm, Skidmore College, How well does your congregation really engage with your community? Does the community know what you really stand for, or what goes on "inside your box"? Are you sending the message you intend to convey? Find new ways of reaching out! \$85 by Oct. 5; \$95 thereafter. Reg. deadline: Oct. 18.

Register online at www.crtc.org or by phone at 518-462-2470. Watch our website for information on these and **many other courses** available in 2012. Scholarships and group discounts available for most classes; please contact us for an application.

- **St. Peter's Hospital** in Albany has several openings for chaplains, both full-time and part-time. Visit www.SPH.org or call the Human Resources Department at 525-2300.
- **Mormonism 101** - an informational program on Mormonism presented by Rev. James Kane at **First Lutheran Church** on Wed., Sept., 19, Noon-1:30. Bring a bag lunch, beverages provided.
- **Fall banquet**, sponsored by CACC, marking the 50th anniversary of the opening of the Second Vatican Council and honoring Phyllis Silverman and Kathleen Duff, long-time co-chairs of the Jewish-Catholic Dialogue, with the Carlyle Adams Ecumenical/Interfaith Award. **Thursday, Oct. 11 at the Albany Country Club.**
- **34th Annual Ecumenical Musical Celebration** sponsored by CACC, Sunday, Nov. 4, 3pm @ **First Lutheran Church.**

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Capital Region Ecumenical Organization

The Covenant

“Believing ourselves to be under God’s direction through the Holy Spirit, we feel the need for an ongoing regional, ecumenical structure as a vehicle of cooperation for and among those bodies accepting the sole lordship of Christ. We are aware of the richness of our varied religious traditions, we purpose to work together for the good of all people and to strive for reconciliation among all groups and ideologies.”

The ecumenical movement from its very beginnings has been and will continue to be an impulse and a gift of the Holy Spirit. Ecumenical activities not grounded in spiritual ecumenism will very soon become a soulless routine, whereas spiritual ecumenism will lead us to the conviction that (the One) who has initiated the whole ecumenical movement, is faithful and will bring it to its fulfillment. With this hope we can start with courage and with confidence in the 21st century.

- Presentation at the event marking the 40th anniversary of the Joint Working Group between the Roman Catholic Church and the WCC, November 18, 2005

Faithful God, you are true to your word in every age. May we, like Jesus, have patience and trust in your steadfast love. Enlighten us by your Holy Spirit that we may not obstruct the fullness of your justice by our own hasty judgments, but rather discern your wisdom and love in all things. Through You who lives and reigns forever and ever. Amen.