

From the President

A Journey of Discovery

There are a couple of images that come to mind in sharing with you this column. In talking with colleagues in ecumenical and interreligious work some of us seem to be like the soldier hunkering down in the foxhole trying to avoid the enemy's bullets. Will my work, my livelihood, my calling and vocation die in the trenches? Another image comes to mind as well—a vision of the new. Many of us are familiar with the prophetic words in the Jewish tradition that describe the Holy One as doing a new thing. In fact, the prophet suggests the former things will not be remembered by the people because the new will fill their minds and hearts.

In recent conversations with some of you a common theme is that money and other resources for ecumenical and interreligious ministry are dwindling. Sweeping changes taking place in the religious communities leave little attention for anything but basic survival in many instances. The general economic malaise compounds the challenges. When we think about the successes and memories of former days among our colleagues, it's almost as if we are in exile. The current landscape created by the challenges we face seems treacherous and timidly we strive to move forward.

Some of you may react or respond differently, but my pattern of response, when faced with challenges and threats to the vision of ecumenism, interreligious work and the mission of economic and social justice we are doing, has been figuratively speaking, to hide in the foxhole. All the while it seems to me that the Spirit who calls us out of those places of cover is saying to me that something new is on the horizon. I can't make it out yet, but for me it holds promise. In that inner urging and prompting of the hovering Presence hope is being rekindled day by day.

I don't know about your situation, but my vocation seems to be about living in that tension between the foxhole and the vision of the new. And hope against hope I'm trying desperately to focus on the horizon because in the future are the answers to the challenges I'm facing. Maybe it's in coming out of the foxhole and facing the enemy that the shape of the future will become clearer. In other words, as you well know, facing our challenges with reason and imagination is a critical first step in living into the future. On our journey of discovery may we find what we seek!

Dan Krutz

NAEIS President

Rev. Dan Krutz
Executive Director
Louisiana Interchurch Conference

SAVE THE DATE! NAEIS Annual Gathering March 16-19, 2010 Holy Trinity Spiritual Center Baltimore, MD

You and your staff are invited to our next annual gathering. The general theme will be Ministries that Work Towards Ending Poverty: A Moral Call to Care for the Poor.
Location: Holy Trinity Spiritual Center - Baltimore, MD

Among the presenters invited are:
David Beckman - President Bread for the World
Michael Kinnamon - General Secretary National Council of Churches
Joan Rosenhauer - Catholic Relief Services, Executive Vice President for U.S. Operations
Ronald C. Sims - Deputy Secretary US Department of Housing & Urban Development

More information and registration materials will be coming to you before the end of the year.

NAEIS in Transition: Your Input Needed!

The NAEIS Board of Directors will be meeting in Baltimore October 7-9 for a two day retreat to assess NAEIS and to develop recommendations regarding the future of NAEIS to be presented at the March, 2010 Annual Gathering.

As a part of the Board's discernment process, we are seeking input from NAEIS members and friends. If you have not already done so, please fill out the on-line survey no later than October 1. Go to:

<http://www.zoomerang.com/Survey/?p=WEB229NSRL79E7>

NAEIS Dues for 2009 Paid Up???

If you haven't submitted your NAEIS dues for 2009, there is still time. Checks should be made payable to NAEIS and mailed to Alice Woldt, NAEIS Treasurer at our Seattle, Washington address before the end of the calendar year.

Changes to NAEIS Website

As the new volunteer Web editor for the NAEIS website (www.naeis.org), Ammon Ripple, intern with the National Council of Churches in New York, has made several changes to the site in consultation with NAEIS President Dan Krutz and Board member Scott Anderson. Many thanks to Skip L'Heureux for providing technical assistance and hosting the site. Primarily the changes have involved updating information on the site and streamlining it by

Online Community for Regional and Local Ecumenism

Many NAEIS members have little opportunity to be in community with others doing the same work. The Ecumenical Networks Standing Committee (ENSC) of the National Council of Churches/Church World Service General Assembly has been working toward developing a way for people in the local and regional ecumenism community to share information. We will begin this fall by creating an e-mail conversation list that anyone can sign up for. We hope all NAEIS members will sign up and serve as a core community, along with ENSC members and members of the State Ecumenical Executives organization.

Anyone interested in doing more to promote ecumenical dialogue, prayer and service in their communities will be welcome to join. In addition to helping facilitate community, this may serve to be a helpful way to draw new people into this work. The ongoing conversation will include a broad range of topics related to local and regional ecumenism, including: best practices; social, doctrinal and ecclesiastical issues; interfaith concerns; relevant information and resources; notices of important events; and any other topic of interest.

Stay tuned for this list to go live later this fall. You will receive instructions for how to join the list once it is active.

Charter for Compassion Unveiled November 12th

Renowned religion scholar Karen Armstrong and a group of colleagues are developing a "Charter for Compassion" which seeks to find a common message among the world's religions. In late 2008, people of all nations, all faiths, all backgrounds, submitted their suggestions for the wording of the Charter.

By recognizing that the Golden Rule is fundamental to all world religions, the Charter for Compassion can inspire people to think differently about religion. This Charter is a collaborative project and everyone is encouraged to participate.

The Charter does NOT assume:

- all religions are the same;
- compassion is the only thing that matters in religion;
- religious people have a monopoly on compassion.

The Charter DOES affirm that:

- compassion is celebrated in all major religious, spiritual and ethical traditions;
- the Golden Rule is our prime duty and cannot be limited to our own political, religious or ethnic group;
- therefore, in our divided world, compassion can build common ground.

For more information about the Charter for Compassion, go to www.charterforcompassion.com

removing some inactive or outdated pages. The NAEIS newsletter will now be available on the website as a PDF document. An option for Employment Opportunities will return once it is available. We will add some links to other important sites on the "Resources" page over time. If you have any thoughts or suggestions for the site, please contact Ammon at aripple@nccusa.org or 646-596-4750.

Job Announcements? Staff Transitions?

Send info to NAEIS E-News editor Scott Anderson at sanderson@wichurches.org

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Lisa Mitchell Elected Executive Director of GRACE

At its September 16, 2009 meeting, the Board of Directors of the Grand Rapids Area Center for Ecumenism (GRACE) voted unanimously to name Lisa H. Mitchell as Executive Director.

Lisa, former NAEIS Treasurer, has been employed by GRACE since 1994-first as Program Director and later in a Leadership Team role from 2000-2008 with the Reverends David Baak and David May. This past year she acted as Interim Executive Director.

Lisa brings to this position her well-honed skills of program development and building partnerships and collaborations with congregations, organizations and individuals. She will continue to represent GRACE by promoting ecumenical cooperation and establishing positive relationships with the religious and larger community.

Additionally, she will oversee the administration of operations at GRACE, as well as securing the financial resources needed for operation and program development.

Lisa looks forward to the challenges and opportunities this position will bring, stating "I am very committed to the mission, vision and values of GRACE and I believe I have the ability to influence, persuade and enable others to further [the] GRACE mission of 'creating a community of compassion and justice by organizing responses to human need and issues of faith.'

"I have the passion and belief that we can do more together to affect the common good than we can do alone. I believe GRACE does make a difference through our focus areas of hunger, homelessness and racial justice.

"I want to be able to move that mission forward so that this community is a better place for everyone to live. Working with people of faith who want to make a difference is inspirational and it empowers me to do my best work."

GRACE Board President, Nathalie Meyer OP says, "We are very fortunate to have Lisa Mitchell as our new Executive Director. During her time as interim director, Lisa has made the necessary adjustments in the organizational board structure to strengthen the programs of Hunger, Homelessness and Racism in an effort to meet the challenges we are facing in the current economic downturn. She has done all this with graciousness, a positive attitude and a constant willingness to do everything and anything necessary on our path toward achieving the goals of GRACE."

-reprinted from the Rapidian