

The Continuing Ministry  
of the  
Pennsylvania Council of Churches  
1961-2011

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## Preface

As part of its commemoration of the centennial of the Pennsylvania Council of Churches, its Board of Directors through its Centennial Planning Committee commissioned an updating of the Council's history. Three previous volumes had been written—*A History of the Pennsylvania Council of Churches 1911–1945* by William LeRoy Mudge, former Executive Secretary of the Council (1951); *The Recent History of the Pennsylvania Council of Churches* by John P Harman (1962); and *A History of Christian Social Consciousness within the Pennsylvania Council of Churches* by Paul Andrew Remick (1966). Mudge's volume largely recounts the years of his tenure as Executive Secretary of the Council (1920–1927 part-time, 1928–1945 full-time). Harman and Remick did their work “in partial fulfillment of the requirements” for the Bachelor of Divinity degree (Harman) and the Master of Sacred Theology degree (Remick) at Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg. (Harman also prepared “A Brief History of the Pennsylvania Council of Churches” for publication in *50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary 1911–1961: The Pennsylvania Council of Churches Marking a Half Century of United Christian Witness*, the program bulletin for the fiftieth anniversary festivities.

With nothing having been written since the 1960s, clearly the Council's story needed updating. The Centennial Planning Committee commissioned the Rev. Dr. David A. Schattschneider, dean and professor of the history of Christianity emeritus of Moravian Theological Seminary. Schattschneider, with a Ph.D. from the University of Chicago, brings the eye of a professional church historian to the last fifty years, placing the Council and its activities within its larger context of American church life.

May those who share the vision of Christian unity and value the model of state-wide conciliar ecumenism “read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest” (*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 236).

Gary L. Harke,  
Executive Director  
October 25, 2011



## I. The Building

The Pennsylvania Council of Churches celebrated its fiftieth anniversary in 1961 at the end of the most expansive decade in American religious life. A 1957 survey by the U.S. Census Bureau asked, “What is your religion?” and 96% of the respondents reported a specific affiliation in their answer. By 1960, only 69% of Americans claimed a church affiliation. The decade of the 1950s saw the emergence of “civil religion ... evangelical revivalism ... liturgical renewal ... and the Neo-orthodox impulse.” In response to the easing of World War II construction restrictions and rapid suburban growth, a staggering \$1,016,000,000 was spent on church construction in 1960.<sup>1</sup>

John P. Harman in his review of “The Recent History of the Pennsylvania Council of Churches”<sup>2</sup> refers to the 1950s as “the dynamic decade” of the Council’s life. He offers a two-page listing of the Council’s significant activities during the 1950s including: the expansion of staff, the establishment of new Departments—United Church Men, Christian Education, and Missions. The ministry to migrant farm workers, begun in 1946, was strengthened and continues today in its sixty-fifth year. The State Pastors’ Conference was begun in 1952 and remains a part of the Council’s program. Today’s Leisure Ministries Program carries on the State Parks chaplaincy program begun fifty-two years ago in 1959.<sup>3</sup>

### Celebrating Ministry—the Council’s Fiftieth Anniversary

The Council’s fiftieth anniversary was observed with two major public events held in conjunction with the 1961 Pastors’ Conference: The Fiftieth Anniversary Service of Worship and The Fiftieth Anniversary Dinner. Both gatherings took place in the Scottish Rite Cathedral in Harrisburg with approximately five hundred people in attendance.

The Service on Tuesday evening November 7 was led by judicatory leaders from the Evangelical United Brethren, Presbyterian, United Church of Christ, Methodist, Episcopal, African Methodist Episcopal, and Lutheran traditions. The preacher was the well-known John Wesley Lord, Resident Bishop of the Washington DC Area of the Methodist Church. His message “Is Christ Divided?” presumably made reference to 2 Corinthians 4:1–10, the only scripture reading in the service of prayers. Anthems were sung by the Gettysburg Lutheran Theological Seminary Chorus, and a special hymn, with text by the Rev. William Reid,

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<sup>1</sup> Sydney E. Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972) pp. 952–953.

<sup>2</sup> John P. Harman, “The Recent History of the Pennsylvania Council of Churches.” (B.D. Thesis, Gettysburg Theological Seminary, May 1962.)

<sup>3</sup> Harman, pp. 125–126.

pastor of the Carverton Methodist Church in Wyoming, Pa. Titled “The Fiftieth Anniversary Hymn,” it was sung to the familiar tune *Aurelia*, the setting for “The Church’s One Foundation.”

The hymn was sung again the next evening by those gathered for the Anniversary Dinner. David L. Lawrence, Governor of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, offered greetings, and an address was given by Harold E. Stassen. A three-term Governor of Minnesota, Stassen would later gain notice in American political life for the twelve times (between 1944 and 2000) he sought the Republican party nomination as a candidate for the Presidency of the United States. In 1961 Pennsylvanians perhaps best knew him as a Baptist lay leader who had served as President of the University of Pennsylvania from 1949 to 1953. In 1963 he was elected President of the American Baptist Convention.

The programs for the service and the dinner were included in a souvenir booklet that also contained “A Tribute to Three Executive Leaders of the Pennsylvania Council of Churches” (William L. Mudge, Ivan M. Gould, and Jesse D. Reber) and photographs of the Council’s Presidents from 1911 to 1961. Gettysburg seminarian John Harman, who would later write his thesis on the subject, offered a “Brief History” of the Council. The booklet also contained photos of the construction of the United Church Center and additional general information about the Council and its staff and committees.<sup>4</sup>

## **Building for Ministry—the Pennsylvania United Church Center**

When the Pennsylvania Council of Churches officially occupied the United Church Center at 900 South Arlington Avenue in Lower Paxton Township on April 16, 1962, it marked the fulfillment of nine years of planning. The Council’s offices had previously been in The Protestant Center, a large house at 2403 North Front Street in Harrisburg. There it shared space with offices of the Pennsylvania State Council of Christian Education and the United Churches of Greater Harrisburg and Dauphin County. In 1953 the expanding program of the Council, with its consequent need for more office space, prompted Dr. Claude S. Conley, executive of the Presbyterian Synod of Pennsylvania, to envision the prospect of a Protestant headquarters building in the state capital where denominational offices could be clustered around the offices of the Council. Council leaders enthusiastically accepted the idea. Appropriate plans were developed that led to the purchase of land, the hiring of an architect, fundraising through member judicatories, and groundbreaking on November 9, 1960. The corner stone was laid eight months later on July 9, 1961.<sup>5</sup> The original estimate for

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<sup>4</sup> *50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary 1911–1961—The Pennsylvania Council of Churches Marking a Half Century of United Christian Witness.*

<sup>5</sup> See Harman, pp. 123–124 for details regarding the planning phase for the Center. A display of twelve photographs, “Pictorial Development and Growth of the Pennsylvania United Church Center—June, 1960 to October, 1961” can be found in “Biennial Report” (of the PCC), February 5–8, 1962, pp. 22–23.

the building construction was \$427,500 to be prorated at a cost of \$.50 per member from the member judicatories. Contracts were signed in October 1960 when cash and pledges totaled \$418,000.<sup>6</sup>

The construction was carried out under the supervision of a Building Committee chaired by Oscar L. Lingle. An indefatigable Lutheran layman, Lingle also served as chair of the Council's Business and Finance Committee and as Council treasurer. On April 24, 1962, Lingle reported to the Council's Board of Directors that "The building (Center) was accepted March 2, 1962, with the punch list to be completed during occupancy; the parking lot was completed April 23; the Center is the first public office building in this area to have electric heating; the committee to replace the Building Committee will be the Headquarters Committee." Lingle stated it was a pleasure to work with staff and the several committees and contractors; in response "The Board expressed appreciation to Mr. Lingle for his leadership and devotion." The Directors also heard from Robert L. Herr, chair of the furniture committee, regarding the lengthy process the committee pursued to select the office furnishings.<sup>7</sup>

In an earlier action, the Directors had voted to place a plaque in the Board Room of the Center identifying it as the "H. B. Alexander Room" in recognition of the offer of Mr. and Mrs. Alexander to furnish the room. The Alexanders were described as "... good Christian folk (who) have been devoted, consecrated and faithful churchmen [*sic*] and servants of Jesus Christ all their lives, serving both the local church and agencies in the ecumenical sphere beyond the local church." Mr. Alexander had been a member of the Council's Business and Finance Committee for twenty years and chair for eight.<sup>8</sup>

In keeping with the vision of the planners that the Center should be a visible symbol of ecumenical cooperation, seven other church-related agencies moved their offices into the Center along with the Pennsylvania Council of Churches in April 1962. They were the Church of the Brethren (Eastern District); Evangelical United Brethren Church (East Pennsylvania Conference); Churches of God in North America (East Pennsylvania Eldership); United Church of Christ (Penn Central Conference); Pennsylvania State Sabbath School Association; Pennsylvania Temperance League; and United Churches of Greater Harrisburg.<sup>9</sup>

The formal dedication of the building took place the following fall at 2:30 p.m. on October 24, 1962, in conjunction with a meeting of the Board of Directors. About 150 denominational officials and staff attended

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<sup>6</sup> Harman, p. 124.

<sup>7</sup> Minutes, Board of Directors, April 24, 1962. Lingle also chaired the Headquarters Committee. Early in the fund-raising process, the Pennsylvania Power & Light Company contributed \$1,000 with the understanding that it could use the building as a model to show to future clients interested in electric heating. The company also sponsored the reception held after the building's dedication.

<sup>8</sup> Minutes, Board of Directors, February 7, 1962.

<sup>9</sup> 1962 Report of the Pennsylvania Council of Churches, pp. 2-3.

the ceremony on the steps of the building's main entrance. Former Council President, the Rev. Dr. Dwight F. Putman, President of the Central Pennsylvania Synod of the (then) Lutheran Church in America, gave the dedicatory address, "We Must Not Walk Alone." Various other Council leaders spoke and Oscar L. Lingle formally presented the "keys to the building" to the Rev. Dr. Jesse Reber, the Council's General Secretary.<sup>10</sup> All present then toured the facility.

In reflecting upon the campaign to raise funds for the building and its construction, Dr. Reber commented, "As we review our experiences ... one has a satisfying emotion. In this project many people were involved and thousands of decisions had to be made. There were times when decisions had to be made under very uncertain circumstances. There were no precedents to follow. The conditions under which tensions and misunderstandings arise were in abundance. Nevertheless, the whole project was accompanied by warm-hearted support and wholehearted cooperation. Personally, I have never been engaged in such an extensive project when so many people were involved and such complete harmony prevailed. Of course, this is the way it should be, but, as all of us know, sometimes it is not."<sup>11</sup>

Bringing these groups together under one roof and creating harmonious relationships proved to be a formidable task. As Reber had rightly noted, there were no precedents. Prior to occupancy, the major work was accomplished by the Business and Finance Committee, a standing committee of the Board of Directors, chaired by F. LaMont Henninger. The meeting of March 15, 1962, in particular, revealed the extent of the work to be done. After a morning tour of the building the members heard from sub-committees concerned with particular projects and made decisions concerning bids for landscaping work, the purchase of carpets, venetian blinds, insurance coverage for the building, and purchase of fire extinguishers. Equipping the kitchen involved the approval of china patterns, silverware, trays, a coffeemaker, water glasses, coat hangers, and even salt and pepper shakers and sugar containers. Considerable time was spent reviewing and authorizing the purchase for furniture for all offices and public areas of the building. Finally, a Headquarters Committee was appointed to oversee management of the building, chaired by Oscar L. Lingle.<sup>12</sup>

The Headquarters Committee held its first meeting on April 16, 1962, with representatives of the renting agencies present. The Committee continued to meet every two or three months until September 13, 1963, sometimes dealing with small details of appearance. In the first meeting it was agreed, as suggested by Oscar

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<sup>10</sup> Minutes, Board of Directors, September 19, 1962. For a photograph of the event, see "Biennial Report" (of the PCC), February 3–6, 1964.

<sup>11</sup> Minutes, Board of Directors, April 24, 1962. Report of the General Secretary, p. 3.

<sup>12</sup> Minutes, Business and Finance Committee, March 15, 1962, pp. 1–5. The Business and Finance Committee, however, continued to maintain an active interest in building management, including protection of the new floors. For example, in a meeting on July 13, 1962 the Executive Committee issued a memorandum to "all female employees in the building, seeking their cooperation to either not wear spike heel shoes during working hours or to use 'heel protectors.' The heel protectors are available free of charge." Minutes, July 13, 1962, p. 3.

Lingle, that when offices were not occupied the venetian blinds should be down with the slats open so as to give a uniform appearance to the whole building when viewed from outside.<sup>13</sup> The majority of the Committee time, however, was devoted to working out arrangements for the facilities shared by the building occupants. The equipping and operations of the Service Department were frequently discussed as was the method of prorating among the agencies the costs for providing mimeographing and printing services.<sup>14</sup> Other topics that occupied the Committee included control of keys to the building, provision of custodial services, the handling of long-distance telephone calls, and the operation of the cafeteria. This food facility opened on October 1, 1962, and remained in operation until February 28, 2001.<sup>15</sup> Although it was clear that the Pennsylvania Council of Churches owned the building, the functioning of the Headquarters Committee reflected a cooperative approach. Tenants developed management policies through mutual discussion and agreement.

In 1963, the Board of Directors mandated significant changes in the management of the building. In their April 23 meeting, Henninger reported that the original occupancy agreements with tenants had been based on the assumption “that the Council would be a tax-free organization; since Council is not tax-free a new occupancy agreement is necessary.”<sup>16</sup> A resolution “Management of the United Church Center” was approved by the Board at its October 22–23 meeting. It clearly places control of the Center under the direction of the Business and Finance Committee, which has responsibility for the “management and direct supervision of ... 1. the United Church Center, including the telephone operations, 2. the Service Department, and 3. the Cafeteria.” The resolution also calls for the creation of the United Church Center Advisory Committee and states that “the purpose of the Committee shall be to advise the Business and Finance Committee concerning matters related to the United Church Center.”<sup>17</sup> The Advisory Committee was composed of three members of the Business and Finance Committee and one person from each tenant agency. This action terminated the previous occupancy agreements between the Council and building tenant agencies.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Minutes, Headquarters Committee, April 16, 1962.

<sup>14</sup> In its forty-nine-year existence, the work of the Service Department has proved attractive to all the building’s tenants, as it does today.

<sup>15</sup> Janet A. Gulick, Director of Finance and Facilities, e-mail, April 19, 2011.

<sup>16</sup> Minutes, Board of Directors, April 23, 1963, p. 2.

<sup>17</sup> Minutes, Board of Directors, October 22–23, 1963, pp. 13–14.

<sup>18</sup> A template for the original lease is in the Report of the Executive Committee of the Business and Finance Committee (p. 3) as found in the Minutes of the Business and Finance Committee, October 11, 1963.

The new operating procedures were explained to the members of the Advisory Committee in their first meeting of February 14, 1964.<sup>19</sup> This committee functioned in much the same way as the former Headquarters Committee. In subsequent meetings, attention was given to the building's operating budget. Much attention was paid to developing operating rules for the Service Department and concern expressed about the marginal financial operations of the cafeteria.<sup>20</sup>

The building that opened in April 1962 was originally conceived as a “core” building around which later additions would be added,<sup>21</sup> and the Board of Directors addressed this issue in their April 23, 1963 meeting. In a lengthy resolution the Business and Finance Committee was authorized “to contract for architectural services and construction of an additional wing to the north of the present building when there is sufficient demand for space, to amortize the cost of construction by the rent realized in leasing of said space, and to arrange the financing for the construction of said wing, not to exceed \$300,000, by mortgaging the United Church Center to the amount of the construction of the said wing, and to lease without further reference to the Board of Directors to, and only to, member judicatories and their agencies.” The Council's President and Secretary were directed to begin this process.<sup>22</sup>

The Committee responded to this directive in the next month when it noted that a request for information about office space had been received from the Central Pennsylvania Synod of the (then) Lutheran Church in America. In its letter of response to the Synod, the Committee laid out its plan for the construction of a new wing and stated that “According to the best information which we have at this time, we should be able to provide space for approximately \$3.75 per sq. ft.”<sup>23</sup>

General Secretary Reber and a small committee spent much of the next year studying the need for more office space. In May 1964 Reber reported that he had contacted an architect and asked for a price for “a wing on the north side; a wing on the south side in two parts, a chapel on the first floor and office space on the second floor.”<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Minutes, Advisory Committee, United Church Center, February 14, 1964.

<sup>20</sup> The Agenda (but not the Minutes) of the October 15, 1965 meeting of the Business and Finance Committee lists “Summary Report on the United Church Center.” This is a four-page single-spaced document (“United Church Center”) bound with the Minutes which details the planning for and construction of the original Center building. It includes the names of the many individuals involved in various planning committees and a complete financial summary of construction costs. Though unsigned, it bears a stylistic resemblance to the reports of General Secretary Reber.

<sup>21</sup> Harman, pp. 123–124.

<sup>22</sup> Minutes, Board of Directors, April 23, 1963, p. 3.

<sup>23</sup> Minutes, Business and Finance Committee, May 24, 1963, pp. 1–3.

<sup>24</sup> Minutes, Executive Committee, Business and Finance Committee, May 15, 1964, p. 1.

An interruption in these forward-moving plans occurred when the Executive Committee of the Business and Finance Committee received a communication from the Synod of Pennsylvania of the United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. which objected to the inclusion of a chapel in the proposed new wings.<sup>25</sup> In a move indicative of the bureaucratic nature of Council decisions in that era, the Executive Committee referred the matter to the Executive Committee of the Board of Directors. This Executive Committee decided that since the full Board of Directors had approved the original plan that included a chapel, it was their responsibility and so referred the matter to that Board (while advising Dr. Douglas S. Vance, executive of the Presbyterian Synod, of the progress of the discussion on his objection).<sup>26</sup> The full Board of Directors dealt with the matter on October 28, 1964. The Presbyterian objection was twofold: “Facilities at the site should be confined to office facilities” for the Council and denominational judicatories and they believed “that facilities for worship or large meetings can be found in the buildings of large churches in any area of the State where a meeting may be needed.” A lengthy response was offered by Council Treasurer F. LaMont Henninger who noted that the original plan for the Center had included a combination chapel–conference room in a wing to the south of the Center. “The purpose of this wing was to provide for the symbolism of a building housing a religious agency. The present structure is a flat roof, this making possible for certain economies, but as someone has pointed out it looks much like a factory. The architect was aware of this and, therefore, had planned to provide the symbolism that rightly belongs to a building representing the Protestant churches of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.... Also, in the early plans there was a strong emphasis that some spot be provided in the Center which would be designated for worship.” Henninger noted there would soon be a need for additional office and meeting space that would be provided along with the chapel. Also, any changes to the plans would have to be made by the Board and would involve “revoking anything previously agreed upon and would need appropriate Board action.” The Directors voted “that the above communication become a part of the plans for future expansion of the United Church Center and be referred to the Business and Finance Committee.”<sup>27</sup>

As of October 15, 1965, the Business and Finance Committee had not yet considered this matter; there is no indication of formal communication with the Presbyterians in subsequent meetings of the Committee.

Meanwhile, plans for the new construction were slowly moving ahead. Reber reminded the Business and Finance Committee in their April 15, 1965, meeting of the action of the Board of Directors in April 1963 calling for the new construction. The Business and Finance Committee voted unanimously that, in light of that action, “immediate steps be taken to construct an additional wing to the United Church Center.”<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Minutes, Executive Committee, Business and Finance Committee, July 17, 1964, p. 1.

<sup>26</sup> Minutes, Executive Committee, Board of Directors, September 16, 1964, pp. 5–6.

<sup>27</sup> Minutes, Board of Directors, October 28, 1964, pp. 7–8.

<sup>28</sup> Minutes, Business and Finance Committee, April 15, 1965, p. 2.

Architectural proposals were reviewed and with an estimate of approximately \$8.00 per square foot, or \$152,000 for the whole addition, the Committee voted (with one abstention) “To recommend to the Board of Directors that we build the shell of a new wing and be authorized to proceed with details necessary to complete the project.”<sup>29</sup> The Board approved this request and planning continued.<sup>30</sup>

The efforts of Oscar Lingle and the Business and Finance Committee to move ahead with plans for the new wing were not without controversy. Lingle presented a lengthy report to the Board of Directors in April 1966. After reviewing the history of the project, he proposed a motion on behalf of the Committee asking the Directors to endorse two major points: authorizing the Committee to award a construction contract “if one-half of the rentable space has been leased,” and authorizing “the borrowing of \$400,000, rather than \$300,000.”<sup>31</sup>

Considerable discussion was provoked by this request. Several Directors voiced objections: there were no potential tenants; the Council had no money; the present building is adequate; amortization costs would be high and interfere with the Council’s mission; the Council should spend money on programs, not buildings. Four judicatory leaders who had offices in the building countered these arguments. They argued that the combination of Council and judicatory offices in one building had created a unique and cordial ecumenical atmosphere that state councils of churches should be working toward.

Substitute motions were offered which would have rejected or weakened the call for a new wing but all failed. Council President Paul F. Hudson called for a paper ballot in each case. When the vote on the original motion was taken, it passed 28 to 10.

Construction of the new wing now moved ahead rapidly. A year after the heated discussion about the project, Lingle could tell the Directors that financing for the new wing was in order and that all space (with the exception of 2,000 sq. ft.) was rented. He also brought more good news to the April 1967 meeting when he presented the canceled note for the last of the indebtedness of the core building. Upon receiving this, President Hudson led the Directors in a “note-burning service.”<sup>32</sup>

In another six months Lingle reported the completion of the new wing with financing by a mortgage from Dauphin Deposit Trust and “borrowed monies from judicatories and interested individuals.” His report

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<sup>29</sup> Minutes, Business and Finance Committee, October 15, 1965, p. 2.

<sup>30</sup> Minutes, Board of Directors, October 26–27, 1965, p. 2.

<sup>31</sup> Minutes, Board of Directors, April 26, 1966, p. 4. The original \$152,000 figure was for the “shell” of a new wing. In subsequent discussions potential contractors suggested that figure would be considerably higher—hence the second request to raise \$300,000. It was then suggested that a finished new wing would cost only an additional \$84,000. The final request was for \$400,000 to cover all anticipated costs for a complete structure.

<sup>32</sup> Minutes, Board of Directors, April 25, 1967, p. 2. The liturgical service for “Retirement Of Indebtedness of the Core Building” is found on p. 15 of these Minutes.

was approved “by common consent, with commendation to the chairman and committee for services rendered.” Following adjournment of this October 1967 meeting, “Board members participated in the dedication of the north wing of the Pennsylvania United Church Center.”<sup>33</sup>

Among the first tenants on June 25 were the Pennsylvania Council on Alcohol Studies and the Eastern Conference of the Evangelical United Brethren denomination. The Augsburg–Fortress (Lutheran) Bookstore arrived on July 10 and on July 15, the Lower Susquehanna Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.<sup>34</sup>

The Business and Finance Committee addressed the issue of management of the expanded facility in October 1967 when it adopted the “Standing Rules for Operating and Supervising the Pennsylvania United Church Center.” Reference to the former Headquarters Committee was retained but new protocols for the Service Department and the Cafeteria were added.<sup>35</sup> By that time, however, the Advisory Committee had replaced the Headquarters Committee. References to the Advisory Committee fade from the subsequent records as the Business and Finance Committee assumed its functions. Eventually the traditional landlord–tenant model became the operating management principle governing relations between the Council and the building tenants and has remained in place.

The plans for an additional south wing consisting of a chapel and more office space were never fulfilled. Yet, from the outset of planning the original core building, there was an expressed desire for a designated worship space. At a meeting of the Headquarters Committee in July 1963, the Committee voted “to hold weekly worship services on Wednesday mornings from 9:00 to 9:15 a.m. The Pennsylvania Council of Churches is to be responsible for setting up a schedule of agency participation. It will be necessary that the switchboard be manned during this period.”<sup>36</sup> Thus began an ongoing tradition of holding worship services even though the Council never erected a formal chapel. In the configuration of their rental space in the second, or “north wing,” the Lower Susquehanna Synod included a chapel in which services open to all are held. For Wednesday mornings during the Advent and Lenten seasons, the Council staff organizes a schedule of devotional leaders from the denominational officials who have offices in the building. At other times, the Lutheran staff offers Morning Prayer on Tuesdays and Thursdays and a Eucharist on Wednesdays. Although the pattern of services has changed over the years, there is “still a worship experience in the building.”<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Minutes, Board of Directors, October 24–25, 1967, p. 1.

<sup>34</sup> Center Tenant List, Gulick e-mail, April 14, 2011. The Lower Susquehanna Synod is the successor body to the Central Pennsylvania Synod of the Lutheran Church in America. The bookstore closed in April 2009.

<sup>35</sup> Minutes, Business and Finance Committee, October 13, 1967. These “Rules” were adopted by the Board of Directors on October 4–5, 1967 (Minutes, p. 4).

<sup>36</sup> Minutes, Headquarters Committee, July 12, 1963, p. 1.

<sup>37</sup> Executive Director Gary Harke, interview, March 25, 2011.

After nine years of discussion and planning, the United Church Center opened in 1962 as the permanent home of the Pennsylvania Council of Churches and the site of a variety of Protestant denominational regional judicatory headquarters and other non-profit agencies. The building has served its purpose well for the last forty-nine years and continues to attract support. As the Director of Finance and Facilities has observed, “Turnover does happen, but ... it is slim and many tenants have stayed since the building has opened. It is NEVER difficult to find new tenants. In fact I currently have a waiting list, and I think I have had one since I have worked here [1992].”<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Gulick, e-mail, April 14, 2011.

## II. Organizing for Ministry—the Council and Its Structure

The Pennsylvania Council of Churches entered its second fifty years of service in an optimistic mood. The Fiftieth Anniversary Celebration and completion of the Church Center in 1962 (with plans for an addition to the “core” building) provided the background for an extensive program set within a large, complex structure.

In his October 1963 report to the Board of Directors, General Secretary Reber wrote, “In my judgment, the Pennsylvania Council of Churches has come to a crossroads. When the Council had a very small budget and very limited staff, and when it was primarily a paper organization, not many people got excited about what the Council was or was not doing. But since the Council has increased its activities, since many more people are involved in its operations, and since the Council receives a great deal more public attention, the critics of the Council, both friendly and unfriendly, are much more vocal. This is not, necessarily, to be considered “bad”—we do, however, need to be concerned that our ties of unity are strong enough to withstand the shock of the inevitable.”<sup>39</sup>

The coming years would bring significant changes to the Council’s structure and leadership as it attempted to “withstand the shock of the inevitable.” The general trend was to move from an embrace of bureaucratic leadership to a more flexible style of operations undergirded by a theologically sophisticated understanding of the basis of Christian ecumenical life and work.

By the mid-twentieth century many American Protestant churches had adopted the organizational structures of American corporate life.<sup>40</sup> The Council of Churches was not immune from this tendency.

In 1963 the Board of Directors exercised authority over all aspects of the Council’s work. The directors met twice a year (often in two-day sessions) and reviewed the work of all other Council entities, including reports from their own Executive Committee and Standing Committees: the Business and Finance Committee (which had its own Executive Committee), the Center’s Headquarters (later Advisory) Committee, the Nominating Committee, and the newly formed Faith and Order Committee. Also heard from were the program units consisting of four divisions: Christian Education, Evangelism, Missions, and Social Relations. In addition there were Departments of United Church Women, United Church Men, and a special committee for the Pastors’ Conference. Each division and department begat committees and commissions to cover specific aspects of its work. In 1964 a Department of United Church Youth was created which lasted

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<sup>39</sup> Jesse Reber, Report to Directors, October 22–23, 1963, p. 1.

<sup>40</sup> See, for example, the study of Dwight Zscheile, “A More True ‘Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society’: Toward a Missional Polity for the Episcopal Church,” in *Journal of Religious Leadership*, Vol. 5, Nos. 1 & 2, Spring and Fall, 2006, pp. 154–155.

until 1966 when its work was folded into that of the Division of Christian Education. A Committee on Radio and Television was formed by 1967.

Overseeing this entire structure was yet another Standing Committee: the Committee on Constitution. Its meetings were devoted to constantly modifying the Bylaws and “rules of procedure” of the divisions and departments as they sought to align their charters with their actual work.

## Constitutions and Bylaws

The Council Constitution and Bylaws were frequent topics of conversation among the Directors and attempts were made to revise the documents. In April 1965, for example, in response to questions about representation raised by several judicatory members, the Board of Directors called for “a committee to think in terms of making a careful study of the Council structure, program, staff, etc.”<sup>41</sup> Two years later this committee presented a report that called for a modest streamlining of operations by consolidating Divisions and Departments into program “staffs.” The directors promptly referred the report to the Committee on Constitution “for whatever implementation it may find valuable.”<sup>42</sup> This reform effort came to an end in October 1967 when the directors voted to accept the report of the Committee on Constitution. That report included the statement, “The Committee ... agreed wholeheartedly with the motivation which prompted the suggested restructuring. However, the Committee expresses the conviction that preoccupation with the machinery of the Council gives no guarantee that basic needs will be either sensed or addressed and solved but may become a substitute for facing our basic responsibilities. The Committee feels that the purposes expressed in the study paper can be accomplished under existing structure.”<sup>43</sup>

However, interest in the Constitution and Bylaws did not wane during the following decades. It was often intertwined with the administrative work of the Council’s Executive Directors. Ten individuals have served as Executive Directors (full-time or interim or acting) in the Council’s one-hundred-year history.

## The Executive Director—Jesse D. Reber

The recent history of the Council featured the twenty-one-year directorship of the Rev. Dr. Jesse D. Reber (1947–1968). A native of Maryland, Reber received Bachelor of Divinity degrees from both Elizabethtown College and Gettysburg (Lutheran) Theological Seminary. After ordination as a minister of the Church of the Brethren, Reber served pastorates in Pennsylvania, New York City, and Ohio. In 1937 he earned a Master of Arts degree from New York University. His career with the Pennsylvania Council of Churches began in 1947 when he became associate general secretary of the Council as well as part-time

<sup>41</sup> Minutes, Board of Directors, April 27, 1965, p. 5.

<sup>42</sup> Minutes, Board of Directors, April 25, 1967, p. 2. For the Committee’s Report, see pp. 18–21.

<sup>43</sup> Minutes, Board of Directors, October 24–25, 1967, p. 4. For the Committee’s Report, see pp. 20–21.

executive of the United Churches of Greater Harrisburg and Dauphin County, after having served on the staff of Church World Service. After moving to full-time associate responsibilities with the Council, he was named full-time Executive Director in 1952.

Reber led the Council during its years of mid-century growth and expansion. Five additional staff persons were added, the Council's financial situation prospered as judicatories increased their support, and the United Church Center was constructed. His collegiate alma mater awarded him the honorary Doctor of Divinity degree in 1950 in recognition of his beginning service with the Council.<sup>44</sup>

On October 25, 1966, Reber sent a letter to the Board of Directors indicating his desire to retire on September 7, 1967, his seventieth birthday.<sup>45</sup> He agreed to the Board's wish that he remain in office until his successor could be found. His formal retirement, May 15, 1968, was recognized at a testimonial dinner on February 6, 1968, in conjunction with the meeting of the General Assembly. There he received a framed citation citing the many accomplishments of his twenty-one years as "the devoted executive of the Council of Churches."<sup>46</sup>

## Transitions

The Rev. Chauncey Varner was elected by the Board of Directors to succeed Reber as Executive Director in 1968 and served in that office until 1971. Varner had previously been Executive Director of the York County Council of Churches. In 1971 the Rev. Dr. John B. Ketcham, formerly the acting executive director of the Commission on Regional and Local Ecumenism of the National Council of Churches, moved to Harrisburg to succeed Varner, where he remained until 1974.

During these transitional years the Council continued to operate with its traditional structure. The biennial General Assembly (meeting in February) brought together representatives from member judicatories as well as representatives of all the Council's entities. These included the officers of the Council, the Board of Directors (meeting in April and October), and the heads of the divisions, departments, and committees (who could meet at their discretion) as well as consultants and "accredited visitors." Woven throughout this structure was a complex system of nominations and elections which sought to insure that the many entities

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<sup>44</sup> *50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary 1911–1961—The Pennsylvania Council of Churches Marking a Half Century of United Christian Witness*

<sup>45</sup> Minutes, Board of Directors, October 25–26, 1966, p. 1.

<sup>46</sup> The full text of the citation may be found in Minutes, Biennial General Assembly, February 2–5, 1968, p. 8.

were fully staffed by volunteers from member judicatories.<sup>47</sup> There were later attempts to revise the Constitution and Bylaws but the next revision was not accomplished until 1984.<sup>48</sup>

## The Executive Director—Albert E. Myers

The Pennsylvania Council of Churches entered a new era of stability in its leadership and structural life with the arrival of the Rev. Dr. Albert E. Myers as Executive Director in 1974. He would lead the Council until 1997, making his twenty-three-year tenure the longest of any Executive Director to date. Myers came to the Council following an eight-year pastorate at Prince of Peace Lutheran Church (of the former Lutheran Church in America) in Pittsburgh. A native of Ohio and graduate of the University of Akron (B.A.), he earned an M.S.T. from the former Oberlin College Graduate School of Theology and an M.Div. from the former Hamma School of Theology. His earlier career included pastorates in Ohio, Wyoming, Manitoba, and Ontario. In every setting, Myers was actively involved in leadership positions in both denominational and ecumenical activities. As he commented, “I felt called by God to serve in a local congregational setting but God patiently prepared me to receive the gifts of the wider Christian community.”<sup>49</sup>

During his years of leadership the Council added five new denominations to its membership, bringing the total to forty-three communions.<sup>50</sup> New ministries were developed, including trucker/traveler chaplaincies, refugee sponsorship and resettlement, a chaplaincy program in partnership with the Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare, and a campaign for a nuclear weapons freeze. After a hiatus of several years, the annual State Pastors’ Conference was revived. Myers also oversaw the creation of a barrier-free entry to the United Church Center to provide handicapped accessibility.<sup>51</sup>

The three-hundredth anniversary of the proclamation of religious toleration in Pennsylvania was observed by the Council in 1987 when Myers served as publisher of *Penn’s Example to the Nations: 300 Years of the Holy Experiment*.<sup>52</sup> In this important resource, twenty-eight authors representing as many denominations provided detailed accounts of denominational origins in the Commonwealth.

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<sup>47</sup> See *The Constitution and General Bylaws* (revised April 1966) for details regarding this structure.

<sup>48</sup> See, for example, the Minutes of the 1968–1969 Biennial General Assembly (February 6–8, 1968), pp. 3–4, 6–7 and Minutes of the General Board (October 26, 1971) p. 4.

<sup>49</sup> *Christian Ministry* (PCC newsletter), Fall 1997, p. 1.

<sup>50</sup> See the Council website (<http://pachurches.org>) for a list of the current forty-two member judicatories.

<sup>51</sup> Thomas M. Johnston, Jr., “A Tribute to Albert E. Myers,” in *Christian Ministry* (PCC Newsletter), Fall 1997, p. 2.

<sup>52</sup> Robert Grant Crist (ed.), Pennsylvania Council of Churches, Inc. for the Pennsylvania Religious Tercentenary Committee (Harrisburg, 1987).

There were two revisions to the Council's Constitution and Bylaws during Myers's directorship. Most notable in the first revision (1984) was the disappearance of the multi-day biennial General Assembly.<sup>53</sup> The governing body of the Council became the General Board, meeting at least twice a year (April and October). Membership included officers of the Council (which the Board elected), chief executives and lay representatives of member judicatories (chosen according to a membership-based formula), and the chairpersons of all the committees. The former Executive Committee was now identified as a "Cabinet." Five standing Committees were established: Personnel, Nominating, Business and Finance, Constitution, and Planning. While there was reference to program committees, their possible duties were described in very general terms.<sup>54</sup>

A longer and more detailed restructuring plan was evident in the Constitution and Bylaws adopted by the General Board in April 1997, just two months before Myers's retirement. Membership for individual persons or groups was now provided along with the traditional membership for "church bodies." The Governing Board remained in charge but the Cabinet became the Steering Committee. The entire committee structure was re-worked to be replaced by five Action Teams: Ministries, Public Advocacy, Future Action, Support, and Constituency Services. The Bylaws now began with a new Article I, "Mission: God calls us to unity and partnership; we celebrate Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and share this good news with our neighbors in words and deed, and we are partners in nurture, service, and moral leadership." Following this is a statement of eight "values" from which the Mission statement arises. Article VI of the Bylaws goes into considerable detail regarding the responsibilities of the Action Teams, and it is clear that the duties of the former Standing Committees were absorbed by the Teams. Reflecting the legal necessities of the era, the Bylaws contained for the first time articles concerning limitation of personal liability for governing board members and indemnification of employees and officers of the Council.

## Transitions

Following Myers's departure, the Council entered another period of transitional leadership when The Rev. Canon Kermit L. Lloyd became Interim Director in the summer of 1997, serving for a period of six months. He had just retired as rector of the Episcopal Church of St. John the Baptist in York, Pa. Throughout his career Lloyd held numerous positions in The Episcopal Church and in ecumenical organizations, including having served as Council President 1968–1969.

The Rev. Dr. Carl W. Gittings began his appointment as Executive Director in January 1998. Prior to coming to the Council, Gittings was senior pastor of the West Shore Baptist Church in Camp Hill, Pa. Before

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<sup>53</sup> The General Assembly had been changed from a three-and-a-half-day meeting to a two-day event in 1967. Minutes, Board of Directors, October 24–25, 1967, General Secretary's Report, p. 1.

<sup>54</sup> *The Constitution and General Bylaws*. 1984.

that, he had served for four years as Director of Evangelism, Social Concern, and Communication for the American Baptist Churches of Pennsylvania and Delaware.

Following Gittings's departure in October 1998, the Rev. K. Joy Kaufmann assumed the position of Acting Executive Director, serving until July 1999. Kaufmann had been associate pastor of Market Square Presbyterian Church in Harrisburg prior to becoming Director of Public Advocacy for the Council in 1997. She has been the only woman to serve as the Council's top executive.

### **The Executive Director—Gary L. Harke**

This second period of transitional leadership ended in 1999 with the election of the Rev. Gary L. Harke, the current Executive Director. He came to the Council from a position as staff associate to the governing board of the Moravian Church—Northern Province where he carried out planning and administrative tasks, including educational ministries and coordinating relationships with the National Council of Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. Harke is a graduate of St. Olaf College and Yale Divinity School (M.Div.) and began his career as a fraternal worker with the Moravian Church in Nicaragua. There he served in parish ministry and theological education, and later served as a parish pastor in Easton, Pa. In addition to his work with the Council, he participated in the Moravian-Episcopal Dialogue that led to the 2010 full-communion relationship; he is currently a member of the Faith and Order Commission of the National Council of Churches and co-chair of the United Methodist-Moravian Dialogue.<sup>55</sup>

In reflecting upon his twelve years with the Pennsylvania Council, Harke speaks in terms of “balances” which characterize his approach to ecumenical work. To balance any tendency toward having a “staff-driven” program there is a need for the Council's members to “take responsibility for the common life, ministry, and witness in which they engage through the Council.” Balance is also sought between the Council providing an opportunity for inter-church cooperation and providing a forum for discussion of theological issues as a way to eliminate misunderstandings that impede common action. Such an approach also invites the broader participation of some judicatory members who may be uncomfortable with aspects of the Council's public advocacy role. Common ministries need to be balanced with attention to the building of personal relationships so that people “and the churches which they lead or of which they are a part—know one another, care for one another, and find ways to make each others' joys and sorrows their own.” Members of the Board of Directors are encouraged to share the stories of their faith journeys, and at the annual December gathering in State College, Pa. of denominational leaders which Harke hosts, participants have come to “prize it as a valuable opportunity for peer relationships.” The importance of relationships is also stressed in his efforts throughout the usual round of Council meetings to teach that “devotional attention to

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<sup>55</sup> See Harke's biography on the PCC website at <http://pachurches.org>.

scripture and prayer both for and with one another are significant ecumenical acts.” With the able assistance of the Director of Finance and Facilities, both the United Church Center and the Council remain financially viable at the present time.

One area where balance between past and future has not been maintained relates to the launching of new common ministry initiatives. The existing common ministries are now nearly forty to fifty years old, yet the Council has not been willing or able to identify unmet needs or launch new programs in several decades.<sup>56</sup>

## Continuing Revisions—Constitution and Bylaws

There have been four revisions of the Constitution and Bylaws since 1999. The first (2001) was a fine-tuning of the 1997 Bylaws. The Governing Board now must approve the creation of all executive staff positions; the term of office of the Executive Director is a five-year renewable appointment, and the Steering Committee can designate an acting executive director if necessary. The duties of the Action Teams are more clearly defined.<sup>57</sup>

One new article was added to the Bylaws in 2002 by a mail ballot of the Governing Board. It outlined the legal process to be followed in the unfortunate event there were a dissolution of the Council of Churches.<sup>58</sup>

The Council’s self-understanding and mission commitment underwent a thorough study in the first decade of the twenty-first century; this resulted in two more revisions of the Constitution and Bylaws. First, Harke led the Steering Committee, Action Teams, and committees through a study of the book *Councils of Churches and the Ecumenical Vision*<sup>59</sup> during the 2002–2003 biennium. This exercise was followed by his preparation of a twenty-five page study guide, *Toward a Common Understanding and Vision for the Pennsylvania Council of Churches: A Study and Discussion Resource* (January 2004) for the 2004–2005 biennium. As he explained, “Ecumenism in this country suffers from many things, one of which is excess amiability.... But this amiability comes with a price: we don’t ask hard, critical questions and don’t push each other to be clear about what we believe and why.... I hope, through candid conversation, we can maintain good relationships but make them deeper, more knowledgeable, and more caring.”<sup>60</sup>

The study guide asked the same groups to examine a second document: *Towards a Common Understanding and Vision of the World Council of Churches*. The World Council statement had been published in 1997 following eight years of international dialogue. Harke’s guide reprinted the statement document along with outlines for

<sup>56</sup> Executive Director Gary Harke, e-mail, June 22, 2011.

<sup>57</sup> *The Constitution—The Pennsylvania Council of Churches*, 2001.

<sup>58</sup> *The Constitution—The Pennsylvania Council of Churches*, 2002.

<sup>59</sup> Diane Kessler and Michael Kinnamon. (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 2000).

<sup>60</sup> Gary Harke, *Toward a Common Understanding* .... Introduction, p. 1.

four sessions designed to correlate the World Council document with the concerns of the Pennsylvania Council. (Session Three specifically asks participants to have the Constitution and Bylaws in hand for their discussion.)

The study of *Councils of Churches and the Ecumenical Vision* and the World Council document exposed Council members to the latest expressions of ecumenical thinking with its expansion from an emphasis on common action to an examination of the theological roots of ecumenism.

The resultant trends toward simplicity of organization and a growing theological sophistication are clearly evident in the 2007 Constitutional revision. The former Governing Board is now a Board of Directors and the old Steering Committee is now the Executive Committee. The former five Action Teams are replaced by three Commissions: Unity and Relationships, Public Witness, and Common Ministries. The term of office of the Executive Director is now a renewable seven-year appointment.

The most significant changes are the additions to the 2007 document. The earlier “Purpose” statement is replaced by a much longer “Basis” statement which, while acknowledging the fractured nature of Christian unity, nevertheless speaks of “sacred bonds” such as “Proclamation through word and deed of the gospel, God’s reconciling and redeeming love for all creation as revealed in Christ and recorded in scripture; incorporation into Christ through baptism; worship through word and sacrament of the one God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; ministries of service and witness in Christ’s name.”

A completely new section, “Covenant,” appears in the Constitution for the first time. Five “marks of commitment” are presented: worship, social mission and witness, covenantal unity, dialogue, ecumenical vision, and evangelism as expressive of the relationship between the member communions.

Finally, the “eight values,” which had formerly appeared as a statement of “Mission” to introduce the Bylaws, are reduced to a single paragraph. It defines the Council as a “voluntary association of separate and autonomous Christian churches ... through which its members seek to manifest their fellowship (koinonia) with one another, to engage in common ministries of witness and service, and to advance towards the goal of visible unity.”<sup>61</sup>

This 2007 version of the Constitution and Bylaws was endorsed again by the Board of Directors on April 14, 2009 and is currently (2011) in force. The full text may be found on the Council’s website.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> *The Constitution—The Pennsylvania Council of Churches, 2007.*

<sup>62</sup> <http://pachurches.org>

## The Director of Public Advocacy

With its enduring history of advocacy for all citizens of the Commonwealth, the Council has a long record of providing staff leadership to its efforts. The Council began giving specialized leadership to the then Department of Social Relations in the early 1950s with full-time leadership established in 1955. In 1958 the Rev. George I. Evans became the full-time Executive Secretary for the Division of Social Ministry. The Rev. Roderick J. Wagner succeeded him in this position in January 1965. The position was vacant between 1968 and 1972 due to a restructuring of Council offices and funding problems.

The Rev. Dr. Paul Gehris was hired as full-time Special Assistant to the Executive Director for Social Relations in 1972, a position that he held until 1996. John Taylor served a brief interim following Gehris's retirement from what was now termed the Office of Public Advocacy. The Rev. K. Joy Kaufmann was appointed to this position in June 1998.

The Rev. Kaufmann was a graduate of Mary Washington College and received a Master of Divinity degree from Union Theological Seminary in 1984. She came to the Council from the position of associate pastor of Market Square Presbyterian Church in Harrisburg. Kaufmann began her ministry in 1985 at Covenant Presbyterian Church in Harrisburg and had been active in denominational service and with several community social service agencies.<sup>63</sup> Kaufmann remained with the Council until February 2003.

Dr. Kay Dowhower, formerly director of the Washington office for governmental affairs of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, joined the Council staff for a brief time as interim director of Public Advocacy. She held this position until she was succeeded by the Rev. Sandra L. Strauss.<sup>64</sup>

She is a graduate of the Lindenwood Colleges and holds an M.A. in Public Policy Studies from Duke University. Before attending Lancaster Theological Seminary, from which she received an M.Div. in 2003, Strauss worked in the area of solid waste and recycling management in both private and public service positions. She joined the executive staff of the Council in April 2004 as Director of Public Advocacy after a brief interim as Associate Pastor of First Presbyterian Church of York, Pa.<sup>65</sup>

## The Executive Staff

The Council has had a full-time Executive Director since the Rev. Dr. William L. Mudge came to the position in 1928. In the years following, the executive staff has both grown and shrunk in response to program needs and financial viability. During 1960–1961, for example, the Council had eight staff positions in

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<sup>63</sup> “K. Joy Kaufmann Joins Council Staff,” in *Christian Ministry* (PCC newsletter). Spring, 1998, p. 3.

<sup>64</sup> My thanks to Ms. Darlene Schlegel of the Council office for researching the chronology of this position, e-mail, June 22, 2011.

<sup>65</sup> See Strauss's biography on the PCC website at <http://pachurches.org>.

addition to the Director, with titles such as Associate General Secretary, Director, Staff Associate, Executive Secretary, and Office Manager.<sup>66</sup> By 1966–1967 there were six staff members in addition to the Director. The title of Office Manager was changed to Business Manager.<sup>67</sup>

The number of full-time staff members has been reduced over the years due to the consolidation of programs and dependence upon volunteer leadership of the commissions to carry out these ministries. Funding of a large number of staff positions has also become increasingly problematic.

The current Executive Staff is composed of three persons: the Executive Director, the Director of Public Advocacy, and the Director of Finance and Facilities. Until 2002, the Finance and Facilities position had been known simply as Business Manager. Janet A. Gulick joined the Council staff in 1992 as the Business Manager. She brought to the position experience in accounting, office management, and banking. As a result of the staff reconfiguration in 2002 she became the Director of Finance and Facilities, a member of the Executive Staff with enlarged responsibilities that include not only managing the Council's finances but also managing the United Church Center and supervising the clerical and maintenance staff. Gulick is the first layperson to hold an Executive Staff position with the Council.<sup>68</sup>

## The Council's Presidents

One constant through all the constitutional revisions has been the Council's adherence to the election of the traditional corporate officers: president, vice-president, secretary, and treasurer. The process of selection of officers is a familiar one. A Nominating Committee is appointed by the Board of Directors and presents likely candidates to the Board (previously the General Assembly) which then conducts the election. The officers are elected to a two-year term and can serve no more than three consecutive terms.

There have been fourteen Council presidents since 1966. From 1972 forward all presidents have been judicatory executive officers. All were clergy with the exception of the Presbyterian layman, John D. Killian, Esq. who served from 1970–1971. The Rev. Dr. Marjorie (Marja) Coons-Torn, Conference Minister of the Penn Central Conference of the United Church of Christ, elected in 2008, is the first woman to hold the office of President.

Denominations with the largest number of adherents in the state have been prominent in providing presidential leadership during the last forty-five years. The Presbyterian Church U.S.A. and the United Church of Christ have each provided four presidents, followed by two from The Episcopal Church. Four

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<sup>66</sup> 1960–1961 *Biennial Report*, p. 2.

<sup>67</sup> 1966–1967 *Biennial Report*, p. 5.

<sup>68</sup> Janet A. Gulick, e-mails April 19 and 21, 2001. See Gulick's biography on the PCC website <http://pachurches.org>.

other denominations have each provided one president: the American Baptist Churches, the Christian Church/Disciples of Christ, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, and the United Methodist Church.

The Council has always needed a large number of volunteers, lay and clergy, to serve as members of the Board of Directors, the Commissions, and the committees as well as to be involved in carrying out ministry initiatives. Difficulty in filling all these positions has led to an expanded role for the Executive Committee of the Board of Directors. Specifically, its membership has been expanded to include committee chairs who are not denominational executives.

Two geographical problems also affect the recruitment of volunteers. First, volunteer participation in Council programs is strongest from constituents living in eastern and central Pennsylvania, including those who are members of the smaller denominations in terms of membership. Second, geography plays a role when judicatory boundaries do not correspond to state boundaries. Congregations of a particular denomination may be part of a larger jurisdiction with headquarters outside the Commonwealth, so it becomes harder to support the Council unilaterally when judicatory leaders have to work with several such ecumenical entities.<sup>69</sup>

During the last fifty years the Council has sought to fulfill its role in Pennsylvania through numerous adjustments to its structure and changes in leadership. There have been at least seven revisions of the Constitution and Bylaws which have led to a much less complex and more streamlined structure. The Council has continued to find competent executive leadership although transitions in leadership were sometimes handled awkwardly. Although the theological basis of ecumenism has received new articulation, some of the optimism of the fiftieth anniversary celebrations of 1962 has been tempered by changing ecumenical commitments from judicatories and the social and economic realities of the intervening decades.

Throughout all these changes to its internal life the Council has managed to maintain a strong program of united Christian proclamation through its common ministries.

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<sup>69</sup> Executive Director Gary Harke, interview, June 13, 2011.



### III. Action in Ministry: The Council and Its Programs

Even as Council members paused in 1961 to celebrate a fiftieth anniversary and devote resources to the construction of the United Church Center, they remained firmly committed to the pursuit of programs fostering their united ministries. Some of these were “legacy programs” begun before the anniversary year. Others were newer ministries. Some have continued to the present; others have disappeared. Several programs had begun in response to a need expressed by others. For a time, it appeared that officials of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania regarded the Council as a quasi-mainline-Protestant establishment that could be the source of clergy to serve in state agencies, even though the Council expanded its Protestant base in 1980 when it welcomed the Metropolis of Pittsburgh of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America as a member.<sup>70</sup> Often Council members themselves identified needed ministries and initiated their own programs. Once a need was identified, the Council supplied the initial staff leadership and financial support needed to begin the ministry. The Council also acted as a facilitator by recruiting local congregations, clergy, ministerial associations, and volunteers for much of the on-site activity.

#### Among Farm Workers

The premier “legacy program” is the ministry among migrant agricultural workers in Pennsylvania. This sixty-two-year-old program was sparked by a 1949 report prepared by the (then) Department of Women’s Work. The report cited the presence of “13,000 outside workers” including African-Americans from the southern states, Puerto Ricans, and “white migrants from the South and from the hard coal regions of Pennsylvania.”<sup>71</sup> These were migrant workers, following the crops. As such, their lifestyle presented a myriad of problems related to housing and health care, lack of educational and recreational programs, pastoral care, and worship opportunities. The Council responded by developing the structure and means for establishing a ministry program. By 1954 the ministry was lodged in the (then) Division of Town and Country Churches. Eleven chaplains had established programs in ten areas aided by local congregations and supervisory committees.<sup>72</sup> Twenty-three chaplains in as many counties staffed the program in 1964.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Barker Howland, “Ecumenical Council: State Church Group Admits Eastern Orthodox Denomination to Fold.” *The Patriot* (Harrisburg, Pa. October 29, 1980). The Archdioceses of Pittsburgh and Western Pennsylvania and of Eastern Pennsylvania of the Orthodox Church in America joined the Council in 1986.

<sup>71</sup> Paul A. Remick, “A History of Social Consciousness within the Pennsylvania Council of Churches.” (S.T.M. Thesis. Gettysburg Theological Seminary, May 1966), p. 38.

<sup>72</sup> Pennsylvania Council of Churches, 1954 Annual Report, pp. 18–19.

<sup>73</sup> Remick, p. 42.

In addition to ministering directly to the migrants, the Council periodically presented programs in local congregations explaining the ministry and eliciting their support. Individual congregations were encouraged to “Adopt-a-Camp.” Another important task performed by the Council has been the prodding of state officials, through sponsoring conferences and lobbying, to establish regulations regarding the conditions for the employment of migrant laborers throughout the Commonwealth.

The ministry has operated with this basic structure from its inception. The Council provides program management, coordinates local activities, and pays chaplains’ salaries. Increasingly, chaplains bi-lingual in English and Spanish have been recruited. Support funds are also raised on the local level. The ministry provides worship services, spiritual counseling, and assistance with emergency needs such as housing, clothing, and food. Translation services, assistance with immigration issues, emergency transportation, and recreational opportunities are also arranged.

In 2011, the Chester County Migrant Ministry is active among those who harvest mushrooms in Kennett Square. The Fruitbelt Farmworker Christian Ministry provides services for those who harvest apples, peaches, and cherries in Adams, Franklin, and Cumberland counties.<sup>74</sup>

## The State Pastors’ Conference

The first State Pastors’ Conference was held from November 11–13, 1952 in Johnstown and attracted 300 pastors. The event was in response to a recommendation of a Council committee charged to study the need for a continuing education experience for clergy.<sup>75</sup> The success of the Conference led to the appointment of a Standing Committee of the Board of Directors, responsible for planning such annual meetings. Their reports reflect the optimism generated by this program. In 1954, 463 pastors representing nineteen denominations attended the Pastors’ Conference and the Committee announced, “The Council looks forward to the time when attendance at the Pastors’ Conference will reach the one thousand mark.”<sup>76</sup> The next year the Committee defined the purpose of the Conference as an opportunity “to provide a ‘fellowship across church lines’ for mutual benefit and at the same time, the stimulus of refreshing and challenging seminars and messages.”<sup>77</sup> This description provided the outlines of the Conference for the years to come. Each year the Committee chose a theme, and nationally known leaders—theologians, academics, and high-profile pastors—were invited to address the theme in plenary sessions. Seminars related to the

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<sup>74</sup> For details of these ministries, see descriptions on the Council website, <http://pachurches.org>.

<sup>75</sup> Remick, p. 118.

<sup>76</sup> 1954 Annual Report, Pennsylvania Council of Churches, p. 30.

<sup>77</sup> 1955 Annual Report, Pennsylvania Council of Churches, p. 32, “Report of the Pennsylvania State Pastors’ Conference.”

theme were organized and led by clergy and lay leaders from around the state. In addition to providing a time for general fellowship, denominational officials often gathered their own clergy in special sessions.

The hoped-for attendance of 1,000 registrants was never realized. By 1970 the Executive Committee of the General Board noted a continuing decline in attendance and the accumulation of a deficit since Conference expenses exceeded registration income. Also “some member judicatories are conducting or supporting some other programs of continuing education for clergy.” The 1970 Conference was held with only 172 registrants, an income of \$975, and expenses of \$1,164.<sup>78</sup> This bleak situation forced the Council to cease sponsoring these Conferences.

But the Conference idea did not disappear permanently. In 1978 an ad hoc committee of Council leaders raised the possibility of reviving the Conference. And on November 17–19, 1980, the Pastors’ Conference returned, ending a ten-year hiatus. New to the Conference format was a “Pennsylvania Festival of Faith,” a service open to the public featuring as preacher the Rev. Dr. Robert H. Schuller, pastor of the Garden Grove (California) Community Church (the “Crystal Cathedral”).<sup>79</sup>

For over twenty years, the resuscitated Conference proved to be a much-anticipated event in the Council’s annual calendar. In 2003, for example, nearly 400 attended what was described as “one of the strongest such events in the country [which] offers opportunity for fellowship, worship, and learning in a rich ecumenical setting.”<sup>80</sup> Yet a year later a noticeable decline in attendance began and that trend has not been reversed. In 2010 only 125 persons attended and costs were nearly \$3,500 more than received in registration fees.<sup>81</sup>

One of the Council’s signature programs now faced an uncertain future. When it began in 1952 the Pastors’ Conference was a pioneering venture in the field of continuing education for clergy. But since its resurrection in 1980, the continuing education landscape had become filled with new possibilities. Even in the 1960s, denominational continuing-education programs were providing competition. Since then denominations have become increasingly interested in clergy “wellness” and morale, and such programs have proliferated. Seminaries faced with a decline in the number of degree candidates ramped up their continuing-education programs. Some schools with low enrollments reinvented themselves as conference/retreat centers and began offering programs. Many continuing-education events are now available via live streaming on the Internet, including the possibility of interactive discussion with the presenter. This option eliminates travel

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<sup>78</sup> Memo to the General Board from Albert E. Myers, April 11, 1978, Re. Pastors’ Conference.

<sup>79</sup> Darlene Schlegel, Office of the Executive Director, e-mail, July 6, 2011.

<sup>80</sup> *Plan of Ministry for 2003*. Pennsylvania Council of Churches, n.p.

<sup>81</sup> Executive Director Gary Harke, e-mail, July 5, 2011.

costs and reduces time commitment while still providing continuing-education credit. These possibilities challenged the traditional on-site lecture-discussion format that the Pastors' Conference tended to favor.

In 2011, the Council's Board of Directors met to hear a report about declining attendance and the increasing debts of the Conference, as well as to consider "contextual" factors. They agreed to hold the already announced 2011 Conference on November 14–16, but voted to "suspend" the event after this year.<sup>82</sup>

## Leisure Ministries Program

The Leisure Ministries Program began as the State Parks Ministry in response to a request from the Commonwealth's Division of State Parks of the Department of Forests and Waters. In March 1959, the Division's Chief, Mr. Joseph A. Blatt, wrote to Council leaders: "A problem is developing in the camping areas of some state parks regarding the holding of religious services. Would the Pennsylvania Council of Churches assist the state in controlling the situation?"<sup>83</sup>

The Council's Division of Evangelism responded promptly to this invitation. The 1959 Council Yearbook reports that during the 1959 summer season they conducted a survey of twenty of the forty-six camping areas (and the seven already established religious programs) in response to the Department of Forests and Waters request "for assistance in maintaining order and goodwill between religious groups holding religious services in State Parks." The Board of Directors accepted the Division's plan for a cooperative sponsorship among the campers and the program was launched in 1960.<sup>84</sup> During that first summer there were eight chaplains (three full-time, five part-time) serving in eight parks.<sup>85</sup>

A challenge to this emerging program soon arose. In March 1961 the Executive Committee of the Division of Evangelism received another request from the Department of Forests and Waters "for assistance in devising a policy statement to satisfy [the] American Civil Liberties Union."<sup>86</sup> A lengthy statement was prepared the next day and accepted by the Executive Committee of the Board of Directors. In the statement, the program was framed within the context of freedom of religion as guaranteed by the Bill of Rights, urging respect for the rights of both majorities and minorities. A U.S. Supreme Court ruling of 1952 was cited where the Court declared, "When the state encourages religious instruction or cooperates with religious authorities

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<sup>82</sup> Executive Director, Gary Harke, e-mail, July 5, 2011.

<sup>83</sup> Special Report: "Challenge in Pennsylvania State Parks," Division of Evangelism, October 20, 1959 as quoted by Remick, p. 43.

<sup>84</sup> 1959 Year Book, Pennsylvania Council of Churches, p. 17.

<sup>85</sup> Remick, p. 45.

<sup>86</sup> Minutes, Executive Committee, Division of Evangelism. March 14, 1961, p. 2.

by adjusting the schedule of public events to sectarian needs, it follows the best of our traditions.”<sup>87</sup> The statement urged that arrangements be made with all faith groups “for the orderly and equitable conduct of religious services as may be required to guarantee the rights of all but the special privileges of none.” In conclusion, the Council presented itself as “representing a large majority of evangelical communions in Pennsylvania” and authorized by them “to establish orderly and equitable opportunities for religious worship and fellowship in State Parks.” Other Protestants, not members of the Council, were also welcome to participate in the program.<sup>88</sup>

This ministry in the State Parks developed an organizational structure similar to that already in place for the ministry among migrant farm workers. The Council provided overall management. Chaplains were recruited from among seminary students, retired pastors, and lay volunteers interested in serving for the season (Memorial Day to Labor Day). Local support committees were formed that included pastors, congregations, and ministerial associations or judicatory groups in the areas surrounding the parks. The committees provided support for the local program, contact with park management, and contributed to its financial stability. Chaplains participated in a mandatory spring training event and an optional mid-summer meeting. In the parks, chaplains provided a weekly ecumenical Protestant worship service, campground calling, counseling to visitors and staff, crisis intervention, religious education, and often craft and recreational programs for children.

Details of the ministry’s operations are spelled out in a comprehensive *Campground Chaplaincy Handbook*.<sup>89</sup> The *Handbook* describes the responsibilities of all the individuals and groups involved, and is reviewed thoroughly at the spring training event led by the Council’s Coordinator of Leisure Ministries.

The offering received at worship services is remitted to the Council office on a weekly basis. This income, along with the “fair share” financial commitment from the local sponsors, provides the funding for chaplains’ salaries, housing expenses, training conference costs, and travel reimbursement.

In 1966 it was noted that “in the Commonwealth there are other ministries in State Parks and this is the first year the Department of Forests and Waters has asked that this ministry be cleared through the Council of Churches—Division of Evangelism.” The Division sought information about these other activities in order to integrate them into the Council program.<sup>90</sup> Ten years after its inception, ten judicatories were

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<sup>87</sup> *Zorach v. Clauson*, 343 U.S. 306, 1952.

<sup>88</sup> The full text of this important statement is filed with the Minutes cited above in note 26.

<sup>89</sup> *Campground Chaplaincy Handbook*, Prepared by Leisure Ministry Program Committee, Pennsylvania Council of Churches for Church Body Sponsors, Chaplains in the Park, Local Committees, Park Managers, Private Campground Owners, Revised February, 1999.

<sup>90</sup> Annual Report, Division of Evangelism, October 25–26, 1966, p. C-3.

supporting the work of fifteen full-time and five part-time chaplains in twenty-one parks.<sup>91</sup> After the program was expanded to include Federal campgrounds within Pennsylvania and private campgrounds, the 1991 report noted that some 30,000 worshippers were in attendance at services in thirty-one state parks, eight Federal parks, and fifteen private campgrounds, conducted by twenty-one chaplains plus volunteers at eleven other sites.<sup>92</sup> In 2010, by contrast, 12,340 people gathered for worship at twenty-five locations.<sup>93</sup>

The unique relationship between the State of Pennsylvania and the Council through the Leisure Ministries has been sustained throughout the program's fifty-two-year history. In October 1966 the Council received a letter from Conrad R. Lickel, Director, Bureau of State Parks, expressing "sincere thanks for your kind cooperation and assistance" to all involved in the past summer's "Sunday devotional services." He reported that "public acceptance, as evidenced by State Park camper comment, assure that this will provide a progressively rewarding program for all involved."<sup>94</sup>

It was not until 1990 that the informal relationship between the Council and the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources was changed to an official contract. From that date on the Council has operated in the parks under a Special Activities Agreement, a ten-year renewable contract that requires an annual notification to the State of chaplaincy plans for the coming summer.<sup>95</sup>

The Rev. Dr. Paul Herring, Council Coordinator for Leisure Ministries, reported in 2003 that "I met with several park managers to solicit their support of the Chaplaincy in the Parks program. I found many of them to be both supportive and involved in the ministry."<sup>96</sup>

The program was the subject of a feature story that ran in *The New York Times* on July 24, 2006, with the provocative headline "On Pennsylvania Public Land, Sunday in the Park with Prayer." Reporter Neela Banerjee offered a lengthy description of the development and organization of the program, built around a description of a Sunday service at Cowans Gap State Park. Chaplain Bruce Carriker was interviewed as were several members of the congregation who expressed their appreciation at being able to worship in the beautiful outdoor setting. She also included comments from the Rev. Dr. Paul Herring and Audry Crawford of the Council staff who claimed that Pennsylvania was the only state with such a program and noted, "Over

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<sup>91</sup> Biennial Report for 1968–1969, Pennsylvania Council of Churches, n.p.

<sup>92</sup> *Christian Ministry* newsletter, March 1991.

<sup>93</sup> "State Park, Federal and Private Campground Attendance and Offering Five Year [2006–2010] Comparison Profile"

<sup>94</sup> The letter may be found in the Annual Report, note 26.

<sup>95</sup> Interview, Audry Crawford, Coordinator of Leisure Ministries & Administrative Assistant, July 14, 2011.

<sup>96</sup> Report of the Executive Director to the Governing Board of the Pennsylvania Council of Churches, April 8, 2003, p. 13.

the years, some people have objected to the religious services being held on public lands, but there never has been a formal complaint or organized opposition.”<sup>97</sup>

In 2010 the Council received a certificate “In recognition of providing 50 years of chaplaincy services to the visitors of Pennsylvania State Parks” signed by Mr. John Norbeck, Director of the Bureau of State Parks of the Commonwealth Department of Conservation and Natural Resources.

## Trucker/Traveler Ministry

Before the ready availability of cell phones, GPS tracking devices, and other communication aides for the long-distance traveler, the truck stop provided an oasis. Here the over-the-road long-haul trucker could not only refuel, but also find a telephone to call home and the company dispatcher. Also available was a chance to relieve the monotony of the road by taking a shower, watching television, eating a meal, and talking with other drivers. With the opening of the first stretch of the Pennsylvania Turnpike in 1940 and the Inter-State Highway system (1956) the number of truck and leisure travelers rose across the state.

After the Council created a Task Force on Truck Ministries, a pilot project was launched at the Gateway Truck Stop in Breezewood where I-76 (The Pennsylvania Turnpike) and I-70 intersect. Mr. Charles L. Lady, chair of the local steering committee, described the program in an August 1979 report to the Council. Lutheran layman (and disabled trucker) Mr. Fred Sell had been hired as a part-time chaplain. “The model provides a ministry of presence.... Sell spends most of his time in the trucker’s lounge area and at the lunch counter. He has counseled with about 60 truckers in the first five months ... listening to truckers, praying with or for truckers, their families, and their concerns, and being a visible witness of the church’s concern for these people.” Posters and notices in trucker magazines promoted the program. The local steering committee (which met bi-monthly) consisted of a member of the local ministerial association, two area members of the Council’s Truck Stop Task Force, the Rev. Charles Frazier of the Council’s Office of Special Ministries, and a manager of the Gateway Truck Stop. Local pastors served as “resource persons to the Chaplain.” Lady’s report concluded with a request that the Council underwrite costs of the program through March 1980.<sup>98</sup> The Council accepted the challenge, and the program continued until February 1981 when lack of funding caused its discontinuance. But a new Breezewood Planning Committee emerged in 1986 and the ministry resumed in April 1988.

The Breezewood “model” provided the template for subsequent trucker/traveler ministries. In July 1981 the Rev. Glenn McQuown began his part-time ministry at the I-80 truck stop in Brookville. This effort was developed (and initially funded) by the Presbytery of Kiskiminetas and the Synod of the Trinity of the

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<sup>97</sup> A full description of the program can be found on several pages at the Council’s website, <http://pachurches.org>.

<sup>98</sup> Charles L. Lady, “A Progress Report on the Model for Ministry to Patrons of Truck Stops,” August 21, 1979.

Presbyterian Church U.S.A. and the Western Pennsylvania Conference of the United Methodist Church. Four years later the Carlisle/Greater West Shore Area Truck Stop Ministry began at the junction of I-76 and I-81. Western Pennsylvania received attention in 1988 when a planning effort in Erie County for the juncture of I-90 and I-79 led to the 1991 hiring of Chaplain Dale Francis.

The truck-stop ministries were organized through the local interest of Council member judicatories, local congregations, ministerial associations, truck-stop plaza owners, and drivers themselves. In April 3, 1990, the General Board of the Council voted to establish the trucker/traveler ministry as a program committee of the Council effective January 1, 1990. Henceforth the Council exercised its usual management function of the ministry, including paying chaplains' salaries. Local committees were encouraged to raise funds to cover other costs of the individual sites.

The duties of the chaplains continued to reflect the approach first undertaken by Chaplain Sell at Breezewood. The need for a "listening ear" has been ongoing but sometimes crisis intervention, help with a medical emergency, or anger management is part of the task. Words of encouragement or a prayer might be offered over a cup of coffee. Chaplains presented descriptions of their ministry to local churches and civic organizations and urged them to join in support of this outreach. In 1994, for example, youth groups from area churches were challenged to design a banner about the ministry for the Breezewood site. The winners were youth from the Roxbury, Otterbein, and Upper Strasburg United Methodist Churches. Their banner featured Matthew 28:20, "I am with you always" and "a distinct scene from the four corners of the United States, in four different seasons." The banner was displayed in local churches and at the truck stop.<sup>99</sup>

The Brookville I-80 truck-stop ministry continues as a ministry of the Pennsylvania Council of Churches. The ministries at Breezewood and Carlisle became independent local ministries on January 1, 2010, and the Erie ministry closed on July 30, 2001.<sup>100</sup>

## Public Advocacy

Public advocacy is a program of the Council of Churches through which it seeks to "empower people of faith, through education and skill-building to make a difference for the common good in the public square (and to) advocate on behalf of the Council's member church bodies before Pennsylvania's legislative and administrative branches of government."<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> "Sharing God's Love" in *Christian Ministry* newsletter, Fall 1994.

<sup>100</sup> My thanks to Executive Director Gary Harke and Ms. Darlene Schlegel of the Council office for detailed information regarding the trucker/traveler ministries.

<sup>101</sup> <http://pachurchesadvocacy.org>

The roots of the concept of public advocacy lie in support for the Prohibition movement. “Some of the momentum which gave rise to the birth of the Pennsylvania Council of Churches was the victory in the Court of Quarter Sessions in Mifflin County in 1909 when the Christian forces working together accomplished the prohibition of alcoholic sales in that county.”<sup>102</sup> As the Council developed its own structure, by the mid-1920s its Commission on Social Service became “a heterogeneous forum of representatives from denominational and secular agencies, cooperating with most of the reform and humanitarian groups in the state such as the Lord’s Day Alliance, Anti-Saloon League of Pennsylvania, Pennsylvania Women’s Christian Temperance Union, National Child Welfare League, Children’s Aid Society, Pennsylvania Federation of Labor, Pennsylvania Prison Society, and others.”<sup>103</sup> Later advocacy work was assigned to various groups within the Council such as the Department of Social Relations, the Division of Social Ministry, and currently the Commission on Public Witness. The appointment of the Rev. George I. Evans in 1958 as the Division of Social Ministry’s first full-time Executive Secretary established the Director of Public Advocacy staff position that has remained a permanent part of the Council’s structure.<sup>104</sup> In April 1963, on the advice of the Council’s attorney, Evans was registered as “a lobbyist for the Pennsylvania Council of Churches in the General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.”<sup>105</sup> The Director of Public Advocacy has continued to maintain this registration (renewable every two years) although direct contact with state legislators is no longer a primary focus.<sup>106</sup>

While the Council was stabilizing the leadership of advocacy efforts, member judicatories were asked to develop acceptable standards upon which to base such action. In 1961 the Division of Social Relations began “to formulate a series of legislative statements which would represent the legislative viewpoint of the churches. It was thought that these “Legislative Concerns” could be printed and circulated among the legislators and the churches.”<sup>107</sup> Although it took some time for the judicatories to prepare their response to the statements, by 1976 the Council had developed a lengthy Statement of Legislative Principles. After a Prologue discussing Christian citizenship, major sections of the statement covered Justice, Welfare, Family, Education, Environmental Quality, Housing, Migrant and other Agricultural Labor, Taxation, Senior Citizens, Drugs and Alcohol, Mental Health/Mental Retardation, “Other Concerns,” and National Issues. Within each

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<sup>102</sup> Remick, p. 71. The 18<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the U.S. Constitution established Prohibition in 1919. It ended with the passage of the 21<sup>st</sup> Amendment in 1933.

<sup>103</sup> Harman, p. 25.

<sup>104</sup> See Part II, p. 19.

<sup>105</sup> Minutes, Board of Directors, April 23, 1963, p. 6.

<sup>106</sup> Interview, The Rev. Sandra Strauss, Director of Public Advocacy, July 14, 2011.

<sup>107</sup> Minutes, Board of Directors, October 22–23, 1963, pp. 4 and 26.

broad category were sub-paragraphs listing initiatives that the Council either supported or opposed. Included with the Statement was a schedule for updating the Principles within the following two years.<sup>108</sup>

The biennial review of the Principles has been faithfully followed even when disagreements arose. In 1978 objection to the section on “Sunday trading” was raised by a representative of the Pennsylvania Conference of Seventh-Day Adventists who “advocated the protection of everyone’s rights rather than just the majority who worship on Sunday.” The offending paragraphs were sent back to the Social Ministry Committee to be re-written while the rest of the document was accepted.<sup>109</sup> In the 1983–1984 Statement of Legislative Principles, this issue was treated in two paragraphs: “Right to Worship,” and “Right of Business to Close for Day of Rest and/or Recreation.”<sup>110</sup>

The custom of reviewing the Principles biennially and appending to each review specific policy positions supported by the Council for the following two years marked the approach to public advocacy until 2003. A change then occurred in the presentation of the Principles for Public Advocacy.

This document has traditionally been produced on a biennial basis. In the past, it was a document that provided both principles and a list of policy positions supported by the Council. In the 2003–2004 biennium, for the first time both the principles and policy positions were organized around the Biblical concepts of justice (economic, social, civil, environmental, and criminal) and shalom (health, wholeness, and peacemaking), and the document also contained printed reference to the denominational positions of the 43 member bodies of the Council. . . . In the course of discussing how to present this document, the writing team noted that the principles themselves, because they are based on Biblical concepts supported by member denominational positions, are not likely to require substantial updates for every biennium/legislative session. It is the policy positions and legislative priorities that are in need of change biennially as new legislation and policies are proposed and enacted, or as conditions (the economy, for example) change at the local, state, federal, and global levels. To that end, the writing team has elected to produce this latest *Principles for Public Advocacy* as a more permanent document, open to revision as necessary, but not necessarily on a biennial basis. Policy statements/position papers and priority issues for the biennium will be presented separately, beginning with the 2005–2006 biennium. The policy positions continue to be derived from the principles presented in this document. They are designed, along with the *Principles*, to inform the Council’s advocacy efforts, but not to cast specific efforts in stone; issues and priorities do not remain static during the course of a legislative session, and neither should the Council’s advocacy efforts. This new presentation of the *Principles* with separate policy statements and a biennial statement of priorities provides additional flexibility to respond as advocacy needs arise.<sup>111</sup>

Even before the arrival of Evans in 1958 to lead the Division of Social Ministry, the Council had recognized the need to broaden its understanding of public advocacy. The Division’s 1954 Annual Report

<sup>108</sup> Minutes, General Board, October 26, 1976, pp. 6–7, Agenda Item: 6-G.

<sup>109</sup> Minutes, General Board, October 24, 1978, p. 7 and attached Statement of Legislative Principles, 1979–1980.

<sup>110</sup> Minutes, General Board, October 26, 1982, pp. 7–8 and attached Statement of Legislative Principles, 1983–1984.

<sup>111</sup> Pennsylvania Council of Churches, *Principles for Public Advocacy*. October 2005 as found at <http://pachurchesadvocacy.org>.

noted, “There is a growing concern in the churches that in matters of legislation the approach must be positive. Such issues as unemployment, rejuvenation of business and industry, a sound fiscal policy, mental health, and good appointments are important to citizens across the Commonwealth. Not only are churches against what is wrong, but they are also for what is right.”<sup>112</sup> This new understanding emerged under the leadership of Evans. “The Christian social consciousness of the Pennsylvania Council of Churches moved from a period of few social concerns during its early history, involving primarily a set of prohibitions, to an era of total involvement into virtually every area of man’s [sic] life from the cradle to the grave—from issues concerning birth control and planned parenthood to care of the elderly and homes for the aging.”<sup>113</sup>

There was also a growing recognition that many issues of concern had ramifications beyond the borders of the state of Pennsylvania. In 1962, for example, in response to a Federal government call for the construction of nuclear fall-out shelters, the Council pronouncement declared such effort to be useless in the face of the assumed realities of nuclear warfare. Rather, “A positive world-wide witness for peace in place of a more selfish shelter program is preferable.... Shelters are not the answer to the world problem. The major struggle is for the minds of men [sic] and the ideological battle can only be won by means of a superior ideology implemented in programs for alleviating human distress and misery.” The Peace Corps, the United Nations, the Race for Peace, and foreign aid devoid of military assistance were endorsed as such programs.<sup>114</sup>

The role of the Director of Public Advocacy has changed from the previous activity of lobbying state legislators to one of education and interpretation. The educational function involves background research for presentations to the Board of Directors as they consider development of statements on various social issues and editing of the Legislative Priorities every two years. Assistance is also provided to judicatory heads as they prepare denominational statements.

The Legislative Priorities include references to many other Pennsylvania and national groups advocating for causes or positions that are compatible with the Priorities of the Council. The Director seeks to interpret the work of such organizations, publicize their activities, and their relationship to the work of the Council.<sup>115</sup>

Communication efforts on behalf of public advocacy have included the *Legislative Information Service* newsletter and the development of the Pennsylvania IMPACT Network. The Network featured the monthly publication “Update” and the occasional “Action Alert,” both pertaining to the work of the state legislature. In 2008 a website devoted to the advocacy program was established at <http://pachurchesadvocacy.org>. This

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<sup>112</sup> 1954 Annual Report, Pennsylvania Council of Churches, pp. 16–17.

<sup>113</sup> Remick, p. 113.

<sup>114</sup> Minutes, Board of Directors, April 24, 1962, pp. 5–6.

<sup>115</sup> Strauss interview.

comprehensive site provides access to the *Principles and Priorities*, the Council's most recent policy statements (such as the 2010 Resolution on Marcellus Shale Natural Gas Extraction), and links to other advocacy groups. Viewers are invited to check a weblog for the latest news and information and to subscribe to electronic delivery of news and action summaries.

The Council of Churches has issued policy statements on a wide variety of subjects during its history. They present a picture of how the Council and its member judicatories viewed the ever-changing context of life within the Commonwealth as well in the nation and the world. Unfortunately, there is no single list of all these statements. A brief sampling of more recent statements drawn from Council records does, however, suggest the scope of issues demanding attention.<sup>116</sup> Some statements concerned matters which the passage of time has resolved: appointment of United States Ambassador to the Vatican (1950); Communism (1961); Cuban missile crisis (1962); nuclear disarmament (1962); public school and Bible reading (1963); Vietnam (1966).

The Council has upheld a consistent policy on at least four issues: gambling, liquor, public education, and civil rights. The Council has continually opposed legalized gambling or any extension thereof (1957, 1976, 1968, 1969, and 2005). The 21<sup>st</sup> Amendment to the U.S. Constitution repealing Prohibition gave to the states the right to control the sale of alcoholic beverages; as a result, Pennsylvania instituted the State Liquor Control Board with its system of "state stores." The Council viewed this as a "containment" policy for regulating such sales and until recently has supported it while opposing any effort to privatize the state stores by selling them to individual owners (1962, 1968, 1969, 1997).<sup>117</sup> In 1965 the Liquor Control Board issued a pamphlet, "The Choice is Yours," aimed at under 21-year-olds in Pennsylvania and requested the Council's mailing list for distribution to "certain key people or clergy across the state." The Council supplied the list.<sup>118</sup>

The Council has been an adamant proponent for public education and has often cited the separation of church and state as a principle to be upheld. It has opposed public funds for bus transportation for private/parochial school students, endorsed the concept of "released time" for religious instruction, recognized the right of the state to rule in matters such as Bible reading and school prayer (1963), and opposed state aid for private schools through vouchers (1950).<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> See Remick, Chapter 5 for a discussion of statements before 1968.

<sup>117</sup> The Council has not yet rendered an opinion on the current (2011) proposal to sell the state stores.

<sup>118</sup> Minutes, Executive Committee, Division of Social Relations, March 17, 1965, p. 6.

<sup>119</sup> This position has led to tension within the Pennsylvania Conference on Interchurch Cooperation. See the section "From 'Faith and Order' to the Pennsylvania Conference on Interchurch Cooperation."

During the tumultuous years of the African-American struggle for civil rights the Council expressed its support for such initiatives as school desegregation (1954), the civil rights act (1964), and voting rights (1965). This commitment continues in the 2005 statement of Legislative Priorities.

There are two issues with which the Council has struggled but has failed to reach a consensus: abortion and homosexuality. During a discussion of the proposed 1983–1984 Statement of Legislative Principles at the October 26, 1982 General Board, the Rev. Fred Bauer (Western Pennsylvania Conference, Churches of God [General Conference]) proposed a more restrictive statement about abortion than the essentially “pro-choice” paragraph in the Statement. His proposal was not accepted, but the discussion by the Board recognized that there are differences of opinion among the judicatories.<sup>120</sup>

Issues related to homosexuality have been a Council concern since 1976. In a Review of Cabinet Actions presented to the General Board it was reported that “A recommendation from the Committee on Social Ministry that the Council prepare a public statement on homosexuality was tabled. The Cabinet felt unable to authorize preparation of such a statement until denominations have completed pending studies and some consensus seems possible.”<sup>121</sup>

Both issues re-appeared sixteen years later in a 1992 discussion of the draft of the 1993–1994 Statement of Legislative Priorities. After a period of parliamentary maneuvering, the proposed statements regarding abortion and homosexuality were deleted in favor of substitute language. In reference to abortion the amended Statement reads, “Because we have achieved no consensus on the issue, the Pennsylvania Council of Churches takes no position on the issue of abortion.” In reference to homosexuality, the Statement reads, “While we have achieved no consensus on the general issue, we affirm the civil rights of all persons.”<sup>122</sup> The terms “abortion” and “homosexuality” do not appear in the Index of the 2005 Principles for Public Advocacy.

This impasse reflects a basic premise behind the Council’s various pronouncements—“a clear desire not to speak for or on behalf of member church bodies but rather to facilitate their occasional speaking together. And, we do try to always work on the basis of consensus and to avoid ... addressing contentious issues on which we know there is no current consensus.”<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> Minutes, General Board, October 26, 1982, pp. 7–8.

<sup>121</sup> Minutes, General Board, April 6, 1976, Agenda Item 4:C.

<sup>122</sup> Minutes, Cabinet, September 16, 1992, p. 5, and attached Statement of Legislative Principles, 1993–1994.

<sup>123</sup> Executive Director Gary Harke, e-mail, June 27, 2011. In her interview, Strauss noted the need to currently “stay away” from issues of sexuality and reproductive choice because there is no judicatory consensus.

A new aspect of the Council's advocacy emphasis was proposed in July 1985 when Executive Director Albert Myers presented a "Statement of Need" to the Personnel Committee. "The religious bodies which cooperate as the Pennsylvania Council of Churches are convinced that God intends them to be inclusive. Evidence of this inclusiveness must be apparent in their life together in the Council. Wholeness and faithfulness to God's people requires full engagement of the black religious bodies with us in a common program of witness and service. Some say it is inappropriate to expect a high level of engagement in what appears to be a "white church agenda." The proposed response is employment of a black executive for the Council core staff."<sup>124</sup> This proposal was endorsed by the Council's leadership and wound its way through the bureaucratic structure of the Council but also included extensive consultations between the Personnel Committee and leaders of predominantly African-American churches. As a result, the Rev. Dr. Andrew T. Holtz, Jr. was elected in 1986 as Assistant to the Executive Director for Ethnic Cooperation and Institutional Ministries.<sup>125</sup>

The Rev. Debra L. Moody, a minister of the African Methodist Episcopal Church Zion became Associate General Secretary for Ethnic Diversity and Institutional Ministries, replacing Holtz after his short tenure. In that capacity she arranged a number of conferences on topics such as "Social Strategies for Empowerment of the African-American Community"; these conferences were usually held in African-American churches.<sup>126</sup> A conference on "Racism in the 90s" planned for October 1992 involved the Harrisburg area Jewish and Hispanic communities as well.<sup>127</sup> Moody designed the "Save our Youth program," a twelve-week leadership training/development program specifically for use with African-American church youth groups. In June 1992 Moody left the Council to become Executive Director of the Ohio Council of Churches.<sup>128</sup>

## Programs Come and Gone: Institutional Chaplaincy

In December 1953 Council leaders held a strategic-planning retreat to develop programs of united Protestant witness in the state. The second "whereas" of a resolution unanimously adopted stated, "It has been established that the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania is prepared to increase, in cooperation with the churches, the chaplaincy services in State Institutions whereby the churches will be called upon to recruit, train and nominate chaplains to be employed by the State expense...." The task of meeting this opportunity

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<sup>124</sup> Minutes, Cabinet, September 18, 1985. Personnel Committee Report, p. 1 and attachment. (The term "black" was the preferred term for "African American" in the 1970s and will be retained wherever it appears in quoted documents.)

<sup>125</sup> Minutes, Cabinet, September 17, 1986, p. 4.

<sup>126</sup> Minutes, Cabinet, January 16, 1990, p. 15.

<sup>127</sup> Minutes, Cabinet, May 20, 1992, p. 2.

<sup>128</sup> Minutes, Cabinet, September 16, 1992.

was turned over to the Division of Evangelism and Spiritual Life and the Institutional Chaplaincy program was born.<sup>129</sup>

There had been a voluntary inter-denominational Protestant chaplaincy program in operation at the Tuberculosis Sanitarium in Cresson since 1951, and this provided an impetus to the rapid development of a statewide plan during the decade of the 1950s. By 1955 a “Statement of Operating Principles for a Protestant Chaplaincy Service in the State Institutions of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania”<sup>130</sup> had been developed. It was followed the next year by approval of “Principles and Procedures for a Clinical Pastoral Training Program.”<sup>131</sup> Within the next two years, eight Protestant seminaries in the state had agreed to include a component of clinical training at one of the centers being developed in state mental hospitals. It was a forerunner of the national Clinical Pastoral Education movement.<sup>132</sup>

In its Annual Report to the Board of Directors in October 1963, a decade after the program had been conceived, the Division of Evangelism could report the placement of thirty-three full-time and twenty part-time chaplains in forty-eight state institutions. The Report also included a five-page list with detailed information about the institutions being served.<sup>133</sup>

The program, designed to serve the spiritual needs of “the mentally ill, the retarded [*sic*], the wayward and others whom society is compelled to separate,”<sup>134</sup> developed a basic pattern of operations which involved a unique church and state relationship. The Council served a managerial function, often through a part-time staff member. It was responsible for recruiting potential chaplains and insuring their proper preparation in clinical training programs and also through denominational endorsement. Potential candidates were presented to institutional directors who did the hiring and supervision of the chaplains. The Council paid their salaries but was then reimbursed by the state Department of Public Welfare. The Department eventually worked out similar arrangements to provide Roman Catholic, Jewish, and Muslim chaplains. As late as 2006 the Council employed forty-eight part-time chaplains in thirty state facilities.<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>129</sup> Recommendation by the Executive Committee to the Board of Directors, Pennsylvania Council of Churches, February 2, 1954, as quoted by Remick, p. 35.

<sup>130</sup> 1955 Annual Report, Pennsylvania Council of Churches, p. 15.

<sup>131</sup> 1956 Annual Report, Pennsylvania Council of Churches, p. 7.

<sup>132</sup> See Remick pp. 36–39 for details about the beginning of this program.

<sup>133</sup> Listed were “Mental Hospitals (18); Correctional Institutions (10); Youth Development Centers (6); Schools and Hospitals for Retarded (9); Hospitals – Department of Health (5)”

<sup>134</sup> “Protestant Chaplains in the State Institutions of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, 1964” as quoted by Remick, p. 38.

<sup>135</sup> Pennsylvania Council of Churches, *Common Life*, Summer 2006, p. 1.

The Institutional Chaplaincy program, however, represented a model of ministry that was difficult to maintain. The number of residential state facilities was slowly shrinking. Changes in the medical treatment of tuberculosis no longer required a sanitarium.<sup>136</sup> The desire to place those persons formerly classified as mentally ill or mentally retarded in small-group community residences also reduced the number of old-style hospitals or schools. The reduction in the number of facilities meant a reduction in the number of traditional chaplaincy positions.

Finances have also played a role. Recent state administrations wanted the Council to bid on contracts to provide chaplains for individual facilities rather than have an umbrella contract for all sites. In addition, individual chaplains were encouraged to register with the Department of Public Welfare as vendors and submit their own bids for jobs. Since the Council had always retained a small percentage of a chaplain's salary to cover its administrative costs, this second approach undercut the Council's financing of the program. The amount of money available to reimburse the Council for chaplains' salaries had been subject to the vagaries of the state budgeting process. It had been a source of concern to the Council as to how late, or reduced, annual payments would affect its budget.

Because a growing number of contract chaplains did not hold credentials with Council member church bodies, there was an erosion of interest in this program within the Council. Within the remaining residential facilities, the directors still supervised the work of the chaplains. Changing protocols of mental health therapy and the chaplain's role in institutional programming sometimes produced conflicts about what was expected of "spiritual support" providers.<sup>137</sup>

When all relationships for contract chaplaincy with the Department of Public Welfare were terminated in 2007, the Council could look back over fifty-four years of faithful Christian ministry among some of Pennsylvania's most vulnerable citizens.

## **Programs Come and Gone: From "Faith and Order" to the Pennsylvania Conference on Interchurch Cooperation**

"The Faith and Order (F&O) movement serves the churches by leading them into theological dialogue as a means of overcoming obstacles to and opening up ways toward the manifestation of their unity given in Jesus Christ."<sup>138</sup> This movement, along with the Life and Work movement, grew out of a 1910 international missionary conference in Edinburgh, Scotland, and eventually evolved into an ongoing commission of the World Council of Churches following its formation in 1948.

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<sup>136</sup> Cresson closed in 1964 when its buildings were turned over to the Department of Corrections.

<sup>137</sup> Executive Director Gary Harke, e-mail, July 1, 2011.

<sup>138</sup> *History of Faith and Order*, p. 1 at <http://oikoumene.org> [World Council of Churches]

The Pennsylvania Council of Churches' interest in the F&O movement began in November 1962 when it sponsored a conference at Allenberry in Boiling Springs, Pa. as the final celebratory event in its fiftieth anniversary year. The Rev. Dr. Paul S. Minear, Director of Faith and Order for the World Council of Churches, provided the main address describing "the nature of the unity the churches seek together."<sup>139</sup>

Positive response to this event led the Council's Board of Directors to create a special committee in April 1963 to study the potential for future involvement with F&O concerns. The committee was formed because "Faith and Order is receiving an increasing amount of attention by the churches." Membership included six professors of theological seminaries, four "parish clergymen," four laymen, and four laywomen. At the end of three years, the Directors were to review the committee's work to see if it should be given permanent status.<sup>140</sup>

The Rev. Dr. Jacob W. Heikkinen, committee chair, reported in October 1964 that the committee had met several times in an effort to identify its tasks and plan its activities. Members hoped to become acquainted with F&O discussions occurring "on the national level" and to communicate these efforts to "Pennsylvania Christians." Plans included a series of local workshops across the Commonwealth and another conference similar to the event at Allenberry.<sup>141</sup> A year later the Committee's Annual Report noted sponsorship of two significant conferences. In February 1965 the topic was "The Ecclesiological Significance of Councils of Churches" (based on a program offered by the F&O Commission of the National Council of Churches) which featured commentary by two Pennsylvania seminary professors. The second conference (October 1965) was a discussion of the Papal Encyclical *Pacem in Terris* (Peace on Earth). The Rev. Fr. Mark Heath, O.P. from LaSalle College in Philadelphia presented the Roman Catholic understanding of this document and the Rev. Dr. Paul F. Hudson, a committee member, offered a Protestant interpretation. This format proved attractive to all present and moved the committee to request that the Directors invite Roman Catholic and Orthodox representatives to attend planning sessions for future conferences. The Directors endorsed this idea.<sup>142</sup>

The second statewide F&O conference was held on December 2–3, 1968, again at Allenberry. The theme was "The Christian Affirmation of the Living God." Papers on sub-topics were prepared by Protestant, Roman Catholic, and Orthodox theologians and circulated to participants in advance. This time the Committee was able to report that after several planning meetings there was full participation by Roman Catholic and Orthodox representatives as well as participation from Protestant bodies that were not Council

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<sup>139</sup> Biennial Report, 1962–1963, Pennsylvania Council of Churches, p. 21.

<sup>140</sup> Minutes, Board of Directors, April 23, 1963, pp. 7–8, Exhibit XIII.

<sup>141</sup> Minutes, Board of Directors, October 27–28, 1964, p. 4.

<sup>142</sup> Minutes, Board of Directors, October 26–27, 1965, pp. 2 and 16.

members. These representatives were also now attending the regular meetings of the Committee.<sup>143</sup> One hundred and sixty-one persons attended the Conference. This number included sixty-two Roman Catholics from the dioceses within the Commonwealth and three Orthodox representatives.<sup>144</sup>

The 1968 General Assembly recognized the work of the F&O temporary committee by changing its status to that of a “Standing Committee” of the Council. This action took place on the eve of significant new cooperative efforts between Pennsylvania’s Protestant, Orthodox, and Roman Catholic churches. The Second Vatican Council of the Roman Catholic Church (1962–1965), particularly in its Decree on Ecumenism, moved Catholics into the mainstream of ecumenical work with the “separated Brethren.” Discussions between John Cardinal Krol, Roman Catholic Archbishop of Philadelphia, and Council leaders began in 1970 and led to the creation of the Pennsylvania Conference on Interchurch Cooperation (PCIC) in 1973.<sup>145</sup> As this organization developed, it would not only foster F&O discussions through theological consultations but also form task forces in support of chaplaincy at state institutions and the ministry to seasonal farm workers.

The emergence of the PCIC also presented some strategic challenges to the traditional programming of the Pennsylvania Council of Churches. By 1976, for example, the PCIC had developed a lengthy statement of Goals, Objectives and Programs with a projected budget of \$6,617 for the next two years. The Goals were to be understood as “generic statements of purpose, indicating in broadest outline the proposed direction of the Conference. With this understanding, the Conference sees only two major goals: one relating to the mandate for unity among Christians given by Our Lord Himself, and the other relating to His mandate that His followers be a leaven for society, a light to the world. The Conference would express these goals as follows: I. To enable Christian unity and cooperation in Pennsylvania; II. To provide prophetic Christian witness in the Commonwealth.” The program initiatives included continuing theological consultations, promoting the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, maintaining a Forum on Ecumenical Relations (to sponsor an annual Ecumenical Prayer Seminar), issuing public statements on moral issues, supporting institutional chaplaincies and seasonal farm workers, and reforming the state criminal justice system. Other judicatories (not members of the Council) would be invited to join PCIC provided they were “Trinitarian in their theology, and willingly affirm the goals of the Conference.” The membership of the Conference was composed of Roman Catholic bishops resident in Pennsylvania and the bishop or chief executive of each of the Council’s member judicatories. The PCIC planned to meet quarterly with two co-chairmen: a Roman Catholic bishop and a judicatory head from among the Council members. The Council and the Catholic bishops would provide staff

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<sup>143</sup> Annual Report of the Committee on Faith and Order to the Board of Directors, October 24–25, 1967.

<sup>144</sup> Biennial Report for 1968–1969, Pennsylvania Council of Churches, n.p.

<sup>145</sup> *Christian Ministry* newsletter, Pennsylvania Council of Churches, March 1991.

support from their respective offices.<sup>146</sup> The Goals, Objectives, and Programs would be reviewed regularly in the years to come. While the Goals and Objectives remained the same, there was occasional revision of (or additions to) the Programs as need arose.

The creation of the PCIC led to dissolution of the Council's Committee on Faith and Order. As the Council's Executive Director Albert Myers remarked to the General Board on October 26, 1976, "The Committee on Faith and Order submitted its final report on April 6, 1976. It is now experiencing terminal hiatus, and will be replaced by the Committee on Theological Consultation sponsored by the Pennsylvania Conference on Interchurch Cooperation." Myers then offered two resolutions: a "Resolution of Thanks" expressing the Council's gratitude to all who had served on the F&O committee in the past and a "Resolution of Support" of the new Committee on Theological Consultation of the PCIC.<sup>147</sup>

Prior to the creation of the PCIC, the Council had its own Ecumenical Relations Committee that sponsored activities like those promoted by the PCIC, although on a smaller scale. After the creation of the PCIC, the Council's committee gradually shifted its support to PCIC programs or stopped meeting altogether. At the January 1986 meeting of the Cabinet (Executive Committee), it was reported that the "Committee on Ecumenical Relations will meet for the first time in many years on March 11, 1986.... This Committee is meeting annually with the Roman Catholics in the Forum on Ecumenical Relations of the Pennsylvania Conference on Interchurch Cooperation."<sup>148</sup> Despite this and subsequent attempts at revival, the Committee on Ecumenical Relations was eventually subsumed by the PCIC.

Part of the mission of the PCIC was to issue "public statements on moral issues." From 1973 to 1990 it issued eighteen statements, usually in leaflet form for wide distribution. A variety of subjects was addressed, including concern for Indo-Chinese refugees (July 1975), obscenity and pornography (February 1976 and June 1992), Sunday sales (October 1977), utility rates reform (April 1978), government intrusion into church affairs (October 1978), bigotry (April 1981), mortgage foreclosure (April 1983), peacemaking (October 1983), organ donation (April 1986), AIDS (April 1987), racism (July 1989), expansion of gambling (July 1989), and family life (June 1990). In April 1983, the Conference passed a resolution urging the state legislature to pass the state budget "on-time."<sup>149</sup>

The convergence of Protestant and Roman Catholic views on social issues is reflected in the report of the June 30, 1992 meeting of the PCIC authored by Bishop Guy S. Edmiston, Jr. (Evangelical Lutheran Church

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<sup>146</sup> The full text of this statement, "Pennsylvania Conference on Interchurch Cooperation," may be found in the Minutes, General Board, Pennsylvania Council of Churches, October 26, 1976.

<sup>147</sup> Minutes, General Board, Pennsylvania Council of Churches, October 26, 1976, pp. 5–6, Agenda Item 6:B.

<sup>148</sup> Minutes, Cabinet, Pennsylvania Council of Churches. January 13–14, 1986, p. 4.

<sup>149</sup> Minutes, General Board, Pennsylvania Council of Churches, October 23, 1990, p. 54. "Actions Taken by the PA Conference on Interchurch Cooperation, 1971–1990."

in America), who chaired the event along with Roman Catholic Bishop Nicolas C. Dattilo of Harrisburg. The meeting centered on a comparison of the Council's "Statement of Legislative Principles" and the positions of the Pennsylvania Catholic Conference (representing Roman Catholic Bishops in the Commonwealth). In a discussion which was "unusually intense and frank" and where "views were shared honestly and openly,... it appeared that 90%–95% of the public policy positions of the two bodies are in agreement." Areas of divergence were also noted. These included

some aspects of family planning services, distribution of condoms to limit the spread of AIDS and other diseases, homosexuality (the Council reports no consensus, while the Catholic Conference holds homosexuality to be immoral), corporal punishment in public schools (where the Council seeks elimination of this practice while the Catholic Conference takes no position), day care providers where the Catholic Conference is concerned about government intrusion through regulation of church-sponsored day care centers (a subject on which the Council takes no position), education vouchers, with the Catholic Conference supporting "school choice" (vouchers or credits) with the Council favoring application of tax money only to public schools.

Both groups oppose capital punishment "but apparently for different reasons. The Council ... because it is wrong. The Roman Catholic tradition, however, acknowledges the state's authority to impose the death penalty, while opposing it in practice because it advances a 'destructive anti-life attitude in society.'" Bishop Dattilo characterized the discussion as "productive" and one which "enhanced the quality of ecumenical dialogue."<sup>150</sup>

State funding for parochial schools, with the divergent positions of the Council and the Catholic Conference, emerged as a contentious issue for the PCIC in the following years. Following protracted discussions about the future of the PCIC, the matter was formally addressed at the April 1999 meeting of the Council's Governing Board chaired by Bishop Robert D. Rowley, Jr. There, the Rev. Msgr. John B. McCann, a member of the PCIC representing the Roman Catholic Diocese of Allentown, noted that "there were misunderstandings re. membership composition and a lack of enthusiasm from the statements produced through the PCIC Theological Consultation Committee." The proposed new structure would allow for "collaboration between the PA Catholic Conference and the PA Council of Churches on public issues, convening of church leaders for networking and cooperation in areas of social services" and the continuation of the annual Ecumenical Relations Forum. The PCIC leadership would now be composed of the Presidents of the Conference and the Council, an ecumenicist or theologian, and an expert in public affairs from each group. The leadership and the appropriate staff from each organization would meet twice a year. The new structure was to be reviewed within two years. After discussion, the Governing Board "Resolved to affirm the PA Conference on Interchurch Cooperation's Proposal for Ecumenical Partnership (A Structural Model to

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<sup>150</sup> Minutes, Cabinet, Pennsylvania Council of Churches, September 16, 1992, p. 14.

Facilitate Dialogue and Collaboration”<sup>151</sup> The first meeting of the restructured PCIC took place on June 21, 2000, although the proposed evaluation of the structure did not take place.<sup>152</sup>

The annual Ecumenical Relations Forum continued to bring together Protestants and Roman Catholics around topics of mutual interest. In October 2003 the topic was “Disciple-making in a Pluralistic Society,” featuring a presentation by Dr. S. Wesley Ariarajah from Drew University School of Theology with a panel of Protestant and Roman Catholic respondents.<sup>153</sup>

The Ecumenical Forums were ordinarily held in Harrisburg but a change in venue occurred in 2010. The Forum, “A Spirituality for Christian Unity,” was held at St. Vincent (Roman Catholic) Seminary in Latrobe, near Pittsburgh on October 27.<sup>154</sup>

An additional opportunity to foster understanding between Protestant and Roman Catholic leaders, aside from the PCIC, was launched in December 2003 with the first Pennsylvania Religious Leaders Retreat. This 24-hour event was held at the Nittany Lion Inn in State College and featured President Michael Cooper-White of Gettysburg Lutheran Seminary leading conversation to the topics of self-care and wellness.<sup>155</sup> The Religious Leaders Retreat has become a significant offering of the Council and, as Executive Director Gary Harke has noted, its participants seem to “prize it as a valuable opportunity for peer relationships.”<sup>156</sup>

The Council has never developed a strong inter-faith program between Christians and Jews. In 1962 the Rev. George I. Evans, Jr., Executive Secretary of the Division of Social Relations, presented a report to the Division’s Semi-Annual meeting in which he noted that during the previous year he had been meeting with representatives of the Pennsylvania Catholic Welfare Committee and the American Jewish Committee “in an attempt to present an inter-faith approach to social issues in the state of Pennsylvania.” He did this with the approval of the Division’s Executive Committee, in order to find a unified approach to social issues “where there are areas that we understand completely and clearly the position of the other faiths and that there is no opportunity to misinterpret what the other faiths are saying on social issues.”<sup>157</sup> Insofar as this committee functioned, it was mainly concerned with promoting the chaplaincy program in state institutions. Executive Director Reber recognized the existence of the committee “for about ten years” in April 1966: “This committee has been a very congenial and effective group.” A singular accomplishment of the group that he

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<sup>151</sup> Minutes, Governing Board, Pennsylvania Council of Churches, April 1999.

<sup>152</sup> “Restructured PCIC holds inaugural meeting,” *Common Life* newsletter, Pennsylvania Council of Churches, Summer 2000 and Gary Harke, Executive Director, e-mail, August 15, 2011.

<sup>153</sup> Minutes, Governing Board, Pennsylvania Council of Churches, April 8, 2003.

<sup>154</sup> For details, see <http://saintvincentseminary.edu>

<sup>155</sup> Minutes, Governing Board, Pennsylvania Council of Churches, October 28, 2003, pp. 4 and 33.

<sup>156</sup> Gary L. Harke, Part II, p. 16.

<sup>157</sup> Minutes, Semi-Annual Meeting, Division of Social Relations, Pennsylvania Council of Churches, September 24–25, 1962, p. 17.

cited had to do with altars in the worship space in state institutions. Originally three altars were proposed but a solution was reached when it was agreed that Protestants and Roman Catholics could use the same altar. It, along with an altar for Jewish worship, would be placed on a circular platform that could be rotated so each group would have its proper altar in place for services.<sup>158</sup> This committee met only intermittently and never became an integral part of the Council's structure.

## Programs Come and Gone: From the Department of Women's Work to Church Women United in Pennsylvania

Soon after the Civil War ended, American Protestants began preparing to face a new challenge: ministering to the populations of the rapidly growing cities of the Northeast that were marked by increasing industrialization. Several denominations emulated European practices by creating orders of deaconesses with the expectation that the women would engage in home visitations as assistants to male clergy. The experiment was short-lived, but "the battle over the employment of women had been won and the churches generally began to make use of women as church visitors and missionaries."<sup>159</sup> The Progressive Movement in the first decades of the twentieth century gave rise to a wide variety of voluntary societies advocating a host of social reforms with major concentration on the issues of Prohibition and women gaining the right to vote.<sup>160</sup> Awareness of these issues opened up new possibilities for Christian women. On February 26, 1910, for example, twenty-six women representing twenty churches in Erie, Pennsylvania, met "hoping to form a federation to include all missionary interests in the city of Erie. Miss Sarah A. Reed was elected first President of what was then named the Women's Missionary Federation."<sup>161</sup>

Protestant women continued organizing many such groups during the coming years. In 1928 two women living in Harrisburg met with the Rev. Dr. William Mudge, Executive Secretary of the Pennsylvania Council of Churches, to explore establishing a Women's Interdenominational Organization in that city. The idea was presented at the February 1929 World Day of Prayer service in Harrisburg and resulted in the formation of the Women's Church and Missionary Federation. Building on this foundation, the Department of Women was formally established by the Pennsylvania Council of Churches on January 26, 1934, with four standing committees: Evangelism, Missionary Education, Social Service, and International Relations.<sup>162</sup> In evaluating what later became the Department of Women's Work, it was claimed, "their prayers, loyalty and unselfish spirit, in Kingdom service, will ever be one of the brightest chapters in the history of the Ecumenical

<sup>158</sup> Minutes, Board of Directors, Pennsylvania Council of Churches, April 26, 1966, pp. 5–6.

<sup>159</sup> Winthrop S. Hudson, *Religion in America*, (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1965), p. 299.

<sup>160</sup> Hudson, pp. 318–319. See the earlier section on "Public Advocacy" for a discussion of the Council and Prohibition. The 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the U.S. Constitution ("Women's Suffrage") was adopted in 1920.

<sup>161</sup> <http://ericwu.org/history.html>

<sup>162</sup> William Leroy Mudge, "A History of the Pennsylvania Council of Churches, 1911–1945, unpublished manuscript, 1951. The Appendix, pp. 58–62.

Movement. As representing the major portion and strength of the membership of the Christian Church their participation should be welcomed heartily in World, National, State, County and local Councils of Churches. Neither Christian Unity nor Church Union can be a true reality without them.”<sup>163</sup>

Interest in the Department developed rapidly. In 1950 it employed a full-time Executive Secretary, Emily V. Gibbes, as the first Council Department to acquire full-time leadership.<sup>164</sup> “By 1959 there were 145 denominational and community federations of Christian women cooperating on the state level with the Department of United Church Women.”<sup>165</sup>

The Department of United Church Women developed a unique relationship with the Council of Churches that involved it in Council affairs while also maintaining a high degree of autonomy. It saw itself as a federation representing the interests of many Christian women’s groups in the Commonwealth. With delegates from these groups, the women held an annual Assembly at which they elected officers (President, Vice-President, Secretary, and Treasurer) who also became members of the Council’s governing board. The chairs of the Department’s standing committees related to the comparable Departments of the Council of Churches.<sup>166</sup> The Council’s Board of Directors also elected a “Panel of Twenty” to “represent the interests of local councils of church women.”<sup>167</sup>

While the Pennsylvania Council’s Department of United Church Women was developing its program, other avenues of service were developing beyond the state. In December 1941 delegates from three interdenominational women’s groups representing seventy denominations met in Atlantic City, New Jersey, to form the United Council of Church Women. The goal was to found “a racially, culturally, and theologically inclusive Christian women’s movement to celebrate unity in diversity and to work for peace in the world.”<sup>168</sup> This national organization, which later became Church Women United, maintains its autonomy in organization and program although it is a “Related Organization” to the National Council of Churches. The National Council, organized in 1950, has placed an emphasis upon the role of Christian women from its beginnings. This work is now centered in the Office of the Director of Women’s Ministries at the National Council.<sup>169</sup> In 1967, echoing the growth of both national movements, the Department of United Church Women of the Pennsylvania Council changed its name to the Department of Church Women United.<sup>170</sup>

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<sup>163</sup> Mudge, pp. 61–62.

<sup>164</sup> 1954 Annual Report, Pennsylvania Council of Churches, p. 3.

<sup>165</sup> Harman, p. 115.

<sup>166</sup> 1956 Annual Report, Pennsylvania Council of Churches, pp. 22–24.

<sup>167</sup> 1962–1963 Biennial Report, Pennsylvania Council of Churches, p. 36.

<sup>168</sup> [http:// churchwomen.org/history.html](http://churchwomen.org/history.html).

<sup>169</sup> <http://nccusa.org>.

<sup>170</sup> Minutes, Board of Directors, April 25, 1967, pp. 5 and 22.

These relationships gave the Pennsylvania Department of Church Women United several program opportunities. In cooperation with the National Council of Churches they have been long-time sponsors of three annual days of special emphasis: World Day of Prayer—Christian world missions; World Community Day—Christian world relations; and May Fellowship Day—Christian social relations.<sup>171</sup> Offerings received at these observances are divided between the National Council for nationwide projects and local councils of churches for their projects.

In 1951 the Christmas Stocking project was begun. It featured the distribution of holiday gifts of toiletries and candies to persons at many state institutions. In 1969 “churchwomen in fifty-nine counties brought 40,085 Christmas Stockings to forty state institutions and thirty-two adult boarding homes.”<sup>172</sup>

The Council’s program of ministry to migrant farm workers received substantial support from women. Local councils of church women worked at specific migrant camps with the Council-supported chaplains. Fundraising by judicatory women’s organizations resulted in the 1962 purchase of the seventh International Harvester station wagon for use by the chaplains.<sup>173</sup>

In addition to direct support of the Council’s programs, the Department of Church Women United sponsored its own programs. Besides the annual Assembly, there were statewide and regional conferences, workshops, and seminars on topics of interest to women. One of the most significant of these was a multi-year program devoted to race relations. In January 1958 the Pennsylvania Council’s Board of Directors “Approved a Policy Statement on Racial Inclusiveness as submitted by the Department of United Church Women, to be observed by the Council in holding meetings.”<sup>174</sup> Three years later the Department launched a three-year study program: Assignment: RACE 1961-1964. The program featured workshops and other experiences throughout the state, to deliberately bring Afro-American and Caucasian church women together to explore race relations in America. It often included the development of practical suggestions for dealing with this issue.<sup>175</sup>

By 1962, the Department needed more space for its growing program and full-time Executive Secretary, so it leased an office in the United Church Center. Part of its program involved an intensive effort to communicate with its many constituencies. A series of newsletters such as “MEMO—United Church

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<sup>171</sup> 1955 Annual Report, Pennsylvania Council of Churches, p. 26.

<sup>172</sup> Biennial Report for 1968–1969, Pennsylvania Council of Churches, n.p.

<sup>173</sup> Biennial Report for 1962–1963, Pennsylvania Council of Churches, p. 27. There is a photograph of the vehicle on p. 20.

<sup>174</sup> 1958 Year Book, Pennsylvania Council of Churches, p. 4.

<sup>175</sup> 1962–1963 Biennial Report, Pennsylvania Council of Churches, p. 26 and Minutes, Commission on Christian Social Relations, Department of United Church Women, Pennsylvania Council of Churches, p. 3.

Women,” “Channel of Togetherness,” “Christian Women Together in Pennsylvania,” and “The Church Woman,” appeared over the years.

An “amiable divorce” occurred in 1971 when the leadership of the Department of Church Women United decided to leave the formal structure of the Council. It sought, and received, recognition as an Affiliate Member of the Council with the name Church Women United in Pennsylvania. An Affiliate Member is a non-judicatory organization that endorses the mission of the Council and agrees to support it financially. The new Affiliate was invited to name representatives to the Ecumenical Relations, Social Relations, and Migrant Ministry committees of the Council and any appropriate committees in the future. The Council’s Board of Directors gave \$7,500 to the new Affiliate to cover expenses during the “transitional year of 1971.” Church Women United of Pennsylvania was given the same rental rate for its office space in the Church Center as that paid by the Council of Churches “because of the historical relationship of Church Women United to the Pennsylvania Council of Churches and with the expectation that Church Women United will become an agency related to the Pennsylvania Council of Churches.”<sup>176</sup> Today, Church Women United in Pennsylvania remains an Affiliate Member of the Council.

### **Programs Come and Gone: From “Inter-Church Relations” to “Comity”**

American society experienced fundamental changes following the end of World War II; these played out in the lives of the Commonwealth’s Protestant churches. One of the most significant was a change in the demographics of the state’s major cities and the rapid growth of surrounding suburban neighborhoods. “By 1950 two-thirds of the American population had moved into metropolitan regions. In a great crescendo of migration, Negroes [*sic*] and Puerto Ricans moved into the inner cities. Orchards, woods, and open fields yielded to the bulldozer to accommodate an expansion of suburban population that was three times greater than that of the central cities.”<sup>177</sup> Also entering the inner city were immigrant European Roman Catholic refugees.<sup>178</sup> As a 1954 report of the Philadelphia Council of Churches observed, “If the Chamber of Commerce estimates are correct and 900,000 new people are added to Greater Philadelphia in this decade, we may expect the equivalent of 360 new churches to meet the city’s spiritual needs, assuming one more church for each 2,500 people.... Three hundred and sixty churches should be planned for.... The new churches should be architecturally acceptable, structures of beauty, and a credit to the city and to the church.”<sup>179</sup>

Protestant denominations with formerly large inner-city middle-class white urban congregations faced two challenges. They found themselves in neighborhoods rapidly becoming Roman Catholic or surrounded

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<sup>176</sup> Minutes, Executive Committee, Board of Directors, November 18, 1970, p. 5.

<sup>177</sup> Ahlstrom, *A Religious History...*, p. 951.

<sup>178</sup> Winthrop S. Hudson, *Religion in America*, (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1965), p. 397.

<sup>179</sup> Report of the Philadelphia Council of Churches, September 1954, as quoted in *1954 Annual Report*, Pennsylvania Council of Churches, p. 15.

by African-Americans with whom relations were often difficult due to prevalent racial segregation. Meanwhile, their former congregants were moving to the new suburbs and asking for churches to be built there.

The Pennsylvania Council of Churches first addressed these problems at a planning conference in December 1953 when it was agreed that “There is a recognized need for greater cooperative research and planning in regard to church extension and relocating existing churches.”<sup>180</sup> Although it would take several years for the Division of Inter-Church Relations to develop the full program, the result was a unique comity agreement that avoided competition between the Council’s judicatory members as they relocated congregations or established new ones.<sup>181</sup> While it was a voluntary commitment, the agreement asked all members planning any actions such as relocating, merging, or closing congregations, or planning to establish new ones, to submit their plans for review by the Division. The members of the Division would examine the plans looking for any possible areas of potential competition. Once satisfied that no such overlapping existed, the judicatory would receive an “allocation” of the site.

The Division also worked with judicatories to conduct surveys of religious preference in new suburban neighborhoods. In many such communities the developers set aside building lots as specific sites for new church buildings. The surveys (conducted by seminary students, local pastors, and volunteers) helped the Division determine which sites would be appropriate allocations for which denominations.

By 1958 requests from the judicatories for assistance with what was now called “church planning” had become so numerous that six regional committees were established: Central, Northwest, Southwest, Northeast, East Central, and Southeast. These committees were to expand the work of the Council’s Division across the Commonwealth.<sup>182</sup>

The Division also sponsored an occasional “Institute on Church Planning and Adjustment.” The 1959 meeting featured presentations about the impacts of “Public School Consolidation, Regional Planning (and) Sociological Changes.” Also noted was the increasing workload of the Division and the need for a full-time Division Executive Secretary.<sup>183</sup> These needs were soon addressed with the appointment of the Rev. Harold

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<sup>180</sup> Recommendation by the Executive Committee to the Board of Directors, February 2, 1954.

<sup>181</sup> The term “comity” was first used to describe cooperative agreements between Protestant denominations in ‘foreign missionary work.’ See Ruth Rouse & Stephen C. Neill, *A History of the Ecumenical Movement 1517-1948* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.) (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1968), p. 633.

<sup>182</sup> See Harman, *Recent History* ..., pp. 92–93, 98–102 for a detailed discussion of the early stages of this planning effort. A map showing the demarcation of the regional committees is on p. 101.

<sup>183</sup> 1959 *Yearbook*, Pennsylvania Council of Churches, pp. 18–19.

E. Millard as Executive Director and the folding of the Inter-Church Relations Division into the newly created Division of Missions (which also included the ministry to migrant workers).<sup>184</sup>

Attention to several aspects of planning continued to occupy the attention of the new Division. At the Division Assembly on February 5, 1963, the evening program was “Planning in Pennsylvania in the 1960s” addressed by representatives of the Pennsylvania Department of Public Instruction, Pennsylvania Department of Highways, Bell Telephone Company, Philadelphia City Planning Commission, and the Council of Churches. “A brief question and answer period followed. Great interest was evidenced and the group only reluctantly adjourned at 10:00 p.m.”<sup>185</sup>

In 1969 the Division provided a summary of its work from 1962 to 1969: “Sixty-one new congregations organized; 88 congregations relocated; 209 congregations in denominational unions; 44 congregations in interdenominational unions; 153 congregations dissolved; 72 congregations dissolved in order to unite with other congregations. The Division was involved in some way with most of these.” But, the Report also noted, “Although few congregations have been formed during the past two years, many have relocated or have built new buildings after church unions,” and “most of the work in Church Planning ... is carried on through the Regional Church Planning Committees.”<sup>186</sup>

The Council’s direct involvement in church planning was further reduced in 1970 when a restructuring plan was accepted during the transition between the leadership of Executive Secretaries Reber and Myers.<sup>187</sup> The Board of Directors voted that “present staff positions be abolished as of December 31, 1970, in favor of a new type of staff assignments.” Among the four staff members to be terminated was Harold E. Millard, Executive Secretary of the Division of Missions.<sup>188</sup> This action was soon followed by the creation of six new program committees and the call for four new executive staff positions.<sup>189</sup>

The Division of Missions, however, continued its work while discussions about its future were taking place. Millard presented a summary of Regional Committee actions to the Division’s Executive Committee in September 1970: Southwest (discontinued); Northeast (no leadership); East Central (plan yet to be developed); Central (will meet about future plans); Northwest (will hold consultation about the future). The Committee reviewed the Council’s restructuring and concluded, “The regions have been more or less autonomous in the past and the Pennsylvania Council of Churches has provided staff resources.... It would

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<sup>184</sup> Minutes, Executive Committee, Division of Missions, April 6, 1962 and 1962–1963 Biennial Report, Pennsylvania Council of Churches, pp. 23–23.

<sup>185</sup> Minutes, Assembly, Department of Missions, February 5–6, 1963, p. 3.

<sup>186</sup> 1968–1969 Biennial Report, Pennsylvania Council of Churches.

<sup>187</sup> See Part II, p. 6.

<sup>188</sup> Minutes, Special Session, Board of Directors, September 18, 1970.

<sup>189</sup> Minutes, Executive Committee, Board of Directors, November 18, 1970.

seem that our Regional Committees will cease to exist in relation to the Pennsylvania State Council as of December 31, 1970; and that if Regional Committees wish to continue their work they will need to take some kind of action and make provision for the same.”<sup>190</sup>

The Division members continued working towards the December closure by asking Millard to gather their records (allocation lists, maps, self-study guides, age-sex pyramids, rules, guidelines, procedures, files and “other furnishings”) with a hope for their preservation.<sup>191</sup> The Council’s Board of Directors decided that “the maps and other materials in the Division of Missions, together with some furnishings, be placed in a room, or portion of a room, in the United Church Center to be used, when necessary.”<sup>192</sup>

The Rev. Harold Millard found new employment in a program sponsored by the Central Pennsylvania Conference of the United Methodist Church.<sup>193</sup> Prior to his departure from the Council staff, the Rev. and Mrs. Millard were honored at a Division of Missions dinner, and he was given a certificate of appreciation for his work with the Division.<sup>194</sup>

## Programs Come and Gone: Radio and Television Ministry

The South Central (Pennsylvania) Educational Broadcasting Council was formed in 1963 with the goal of bringing public television to the area. The goal was realized when WITF (“It’s Top Flight”) TV began broadcasting from Hershey, Pa. in November 1964. Initial funding for the station was provided by financial contributions from individuals, corporations, foundations, and the federal government. The station became affiliated with the Public Broadcasting System after its formation in 1970. An affiliated public radio station, WITF-FM, started broadcasting in April 1971.<sup>195</sup>

The Pennsylvania Council of Churches became involved with WITF-TV at the request of the Protestant Religious Advisory Committee of the South Central Broadcasting Council and the United Presbyterian Church, U.S.A. In January 1966, Executive Director Jesse Reber reported to the Pennsylvania Council’s Executive Committee, “the Committee on Radio and TV, which was appointed some time ago, has made a proposal which will go to the Board of Directors, to the effect that a Commission on Radio and TV be organized within the Division of Christian Education.”<sup>196</sup> Proposed “Bylaws for the Central Pennsylvania Commission on Radio and TV” were presented to the Directors at their next meeting by the Rev. Dr. Ezra

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<sup>190</sup> Minutes, Executive Committee, Division of Missions, September 14, 1970, pp. 2–3.

<sup>191</sup> Minutes, Executive Committee, Division of Missions, November 5, 1970, pp. 1–2.

<sup>192</sup> Minutes, Executive Committee, Board of Directors, November 18, 1970, p. 3.

<sup>193</sup> Minutes, Executive Committee, Business and Finance Committee, December 31, 1970, p. 1.

<sup>194</sup> Minutes, Executive Committee, Division of Missions, November 5, 1970, p. 2, and attached copy of certificate.

<sup>195</sup> <http://witf.org/about/history>. The station’s location is now in the Public Media Center, Swatara Township, Dauphin County.

<sup>196</sup> Minutes, Executive Committee, Board of Directors, January 19, 1966, p. 2.

H. Ranck, chair of the Committee on Radio and Television. These included a “Proposed Budget” and a table of “Proposed Allocations” to judicatory members (at three cents per member). After lengthy discussion the proposed Bylaws were sent to the Division of Christian Education with the recommendation to contact central Pennsylvania judicatories to see if they would support such a Commission.<sup>197</sup> The judicatory representatives met in April 1966 and enthusiastically endorsed the idea.

An elaborate structure for the emerging ministry emerged at the October 25–26, 1966 meeting of the Board of Directors. Ranck presented a six-page report that opened with a summary of developments up to that point. Next was the text of a proposed one-year agreement with WITF-TV, renewable by mutual consent. In this arrangement, the station would loan a “television-trained theologically-trained staff member to serve as the Council’s radio-television executive director [75% time] while remaining salaried by the station with full benefits and staff standing [25%].” The Rev. Dr. Robert Larson is named in the report as the person to fill this newly created position. Larson was a producer, director, and writer for WITF-TV.<sup>198</sup> The Council promised to provide an annual modest supplement to Larson for any additional work he might do specifically for the Council’s radio and television ministry. Larson was also offered \$7,000 to use to produce television programs directly mandated by the Council.

This arrangement was predicated on the assumption “that Christian concerns related to the individual and to the community are, for the most part, identical to the concerns which a community E(ducational) TV station must in part address itself in television documentaries, dramas, and discussion reports. An ETV station has a professional staff and facilities; the Council represents functioning religious bodies which can aid problem identification and help bring about community action.”

Ranck’s report also proposed the creation of a Standing Committee on Radio and Television “to develop a strategy and long range goals for Protestant–Orthodox broadcasting in the Central Region of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.” To realize this, a lengthy set of “Rules of Procedure” were set forth covering such items as Committee membership, officers, executive committee, staff, and budget.

The Directors voted to “enter into a contractual arrangement with Television Station WITF-TV” and to create the Standing Committee. The Rules of Procedure, however, were referred back the committee on

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<sup>197</sup> Minutes, Board of Directors, Special Meeting, February 9, 1966, p. 1. A copy of the proposed Bylaws is bound with the minutes of this meeting.

<sup>198</sup> Larson was an ordained Presbyterian minister. He held two degrees from Pittsburgh Theological Seminary (M.Div., Th.M.) and an M.A. and Ph.D. in Communications from the University of Michigan.

Radio and Television for re-study (although the new Standing Committee was authorized to use them on an interim basis until the next meeting of the General Assembly).<sup>199</sup>

Council President Rev. Dr. Paul F. Hudson formally installed Larson as Executive Director, Radio and Television, Pennsylvania Council of Churches in a ceremony at the Board of Directors' meeting April 25, 1967. In his report to that meeting, Ranck identified five recently formed subcommittees: (1) program and talent; (2) survey; (3) publicity and promotion; (4) procedures; (5) finances. The budget (\$10,000) had been met with contributions from member judicatories and local councils of churches and WITF-TV had renewed the contract for 1968. Larson listed programs already aired or in development and offered a long list of "Program Plans."<sup>200</sup>

The lingering issue of approving the Committee's Rules and Procedures was resolved when the Directors voted to accept an edited (and streamlined) version at their October 1967 meeting. In their combined report, Ranck and Larson noted that WITF-TV now had an "interconnection with WSPX, the Penn State educational television channel, which added approximately one-and-one-half million potential viewers to the coverage area of Channel 33 [WITF-TV]." It was estimated that WITF-TV itself also had about one-and-one-half million viewers. In addition to their own programming, the Committee was developing contacts with other public television stations and accepting programs from denominational radio and television offices. Since the expanded viewing area now covered thirty-five counties, the Committee was attempting to recruit a cadre of "field representatives" to work with local television stations.<sup>201</sup>

The radio and television ministry produced programs on a wide range of topics in a variety of formats. *A Time to Act* dealt with the urban crisis of the civil rights era while *Sons and Daughters* addressed issues of human sexuality. In a month-long series of programs, the question *Is Religion Obsolete?* was discussed by representatives of the Protestant, Roman Catholic, and Jewish traditions. *The Place*, a United Methodist production addressed to senior-high youth, was promoted by the ministry.

The programs were used as a springboard for the development of congregational, community, and inter-faith discussion groups and preparation of materials for Sunday school use. Radio announcements were used to publicize upcoming special television programs.

Dr. H. Lawrence Swartz, a Methodist layman who had experience in communications and broadcasting, was hired as Associate Executive Secretary of the Committee in October 1968 to assist Larson. In addition to

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<sup>199</sup> Minutes, Board of Directors, October 25–26, 1966, p. 2. Ranck's report is on pp. 11–16.

<sup>200</sup> Minutes, Board of Directors, April 25, 1967, pp. 2 and 16. Also installed with Larson was Willis A. Smith, Jr., newly hired Council Business Manager.

<sup>201</sup> Minutes, Board of Directors, October 24–25, 1967, pp.1–2, 10-11, 13.

production efforts with WITF-TV, the Committee distributed materials to other public television stations in central Pennsylvania and sponsored workshops and seminars about religious broadcasting.<sup>202</sup>

Robert Larson resigned his Council staff position in May 1970 when he became President and General Manager of WITF-TV. Four months later Ezra Ranck convened a meeting of the sixteen-member Department (formerly Committee) of Radio and Television to consider the future of this ministry. The Council itself was undergoing an examination of its structure and how its various ministries were to be related to one another. The Department members declared that “those concerns of the Department of Radio and Television will continue, and that some group needs to continue the program.” The solution, which emerged “after some considerable discussion,” was the creation of “a new organization to be known as the Central Pennsylvania Commission on Radio and Television” as of January 1, 1971. The Commission would use the guidelines of the previous Department and local judicatories not currently participating in the work would be invited to join. The officers of the Department were authorized to “call a constituting session of the proposed Commission as soon as possible” and until it was formed, they were to “give direction to the concerns of the Department.” It was also agreed that “any balance of funds currently designated to the Department” were to be transferred to the Commission after its creation.<sup>203</sup>

The Business and Finance Committee concurred with this decision in March 1971 when “there was discussion concerning disposal of balance of designated funds for Radio-TV. Since the Council no longer had a Department of Radio and Television, it was voted to authorize release of designated funds for Ratio-TV to the South Central Radio-TV group in process of formation.”<sup>204</sup>

A final reference to the Council’s withdrawal from this ministry occurs in a Report of the Committee on Regional Guidelines (for organizing regional ecumenical structures) in October 1971. The Report lists several entities that form the South Central Regional ecumenical agency including “an emerging regional Commission on Radio-Television Ministry—Telrad (created by constituent judicatories in 1971 and involving the local council).”<sup>205</sup>

## **Programs Come and Gone: Department of United Church Men**

In 1952 a group of laymen who were members of denominations affiliated with the Council of Churches began meeting informally to explore the formation of a Department of United Church Men. Following

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<sup>202</sup> Biennial Report, Pennsylvania Council of Churches, 1966–1967, pp. 44–45 and Biennial Report for 1968–1969, Pennsylvania Council of Churches, Department of Radio and Television.

<sup>203</sup> Minutes, Department of Radio and Television, September 24, 1970.

<sup>204</sup> Minutes, Business and Finance Committee, March 18, 1971.

<sup>205</sup> Report of the Committee on Regional Guidelines, October 7, 1971.

several years of planning, an organizing conference was held in November. It was attended by thirty-five men representing nine denominations. Clayton L. Rock was elected chairman and along with other elected officers, began work on a set of Bylaws for the proposed new Department.<sup>206</sup>

These efforts met with success in January 1958 when the Council's Board of Directors "approved the formation of a Department of United Church Men" and nominated Rock as chair of the Department. The Bylaws were adopted at the October 28 Directors' meeting.<sup>207</sup> The Department was to "unite the church men of Pennsylvania in Christian service to their churches and communities and to witness the Christian way of life in their daily occupations, all in cooperation with the United Church Men of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the U.S.A."<sup>208</sup>

The men planned an ambitious four-point program. They would sponsor Laymen's Breakfasts "usually the first Sunday of Lent and also Communion therewith as the community may determine," as well as an annual Laymen's Sunday on the third Sunday of October. In the week following Laymen's Sunday there would be Laymen's Fellowship Rallies or Dinners "for men of a community to get together for fellowship and inspiration." Finally, through the "Play Ball" program, men would collect baseball equipment for use by chaplains working with migrant farm workers and help provide recreational programs for the workers' children.<sup>209</sup>

Where possible, the Department sought to weave its activities into the already existing programs of local or denominational Christian men's groups so as to avoid duplication of effort. It sponsored an annual conference to review its work and published an occasional newsletter. The Council provided a staff member who served the Department on a part-time basis and the judicatories were asked to send representatives to a large Board of Managers.

The Department experienced only modest success in realizing its program objectives. The judicatories were often lax in appointing members to the Board of Managers or to its several committees, and there was often a modest annual deficit. When programs were offered, they did not generate the attendance that was sought.<sup>210</sup>

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<sup>206</sup> *Department of United Church Men*, 1958 Year Book, Pennsylvania Council of Churches, p. 27.

<sup>207</sup> *Report of the Board of Directors*, 1958 Year Book, pp. 4 and 7.

<sup>208</sup> 1967 Annual Report to the Board of Directors, Department of United Church Men, p. 1.

<sup>209</sup> "Report of the Executive Secretary, Department of United Church Men, the Pennsylvania Council of Churches to Sixth Annual Conference," November 17, 1962, p.2.

<sup>210</sup> See, for example, Minutes, Executive Committee, Department of United Church Men, February 16, 1963.

The Council's Committee on Constitution presented a request to the Board of Directors on April 25, 1967, summarizing a lengthy report received from the Department's Board of Managers. The Managers listed several concerns: "It is evident that the cooperative men's work in the churches of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, through the Pennsylvania Council of Churches, is not as effective as it should be.... Through the present organization of the Department it has not been possible to reach as many of the Christian laymen of the Commonwealth as desirable in order to contribute to the advancement of the ecumenical movement.... It is important that laymen become involved in the whole ecumenical movement." The report of the Managers concluded with the request that "the present Department be discontinued." Their suggestion was that "the responsibility for involving and serving laymen be lodged ... [with] ... the Division of Christian Education where the work of the Department of United Church Men could be more flexible in fulfilling its purpose and in securing future judicatory representation for its program." Finally, it was pointed out that in the previous month the Division of Christian Education had already issued an invitation to the United Men inviting them to join the Division.<sup>211</sup>

The Council's Directors approved the recommendation and the Department of United Church Men was discontinued as of February 7, 1968, and "the interests of United Church Men shall be assigned to the Division of Christian Education."<sup>212</sup>

This action was repeated at the October 24–25, 1967, Directors' meeting with the additional suggestion that the Division of Christian Education create an "Association for Men's Work" within its structure.<sup>213</sup> This action was reviewed in the report of the Division of Christian Education to the 1968 General Assembly. The Assembly did authorize the creation of a number of Associations, but there is no mention of one for Men's Work.<sup>214</sup>

## Programs Come and Gone: Department of United Church Youth

Council leadership not only developed specific programming for women and men but also attempted to address the concerns of Christian youth in the Commonwealth. The 1964 General Assembly voted to adopt a resolution calling for the creation of a Department of United Church Youth of the Pennsylvania Council of Churches. The event leading up to this decision had occurred some two years earlier when the United Christian Youth Movement of Pennsylvania<sup>215</sup> approached the Council's Board of Directors with a request

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<sup>211</sup> "Recommendation, Department of United Church Men to Board of Directors, April 25, 1967.

<sup>212</sup> Minutes, Board of Directors, April 25, 1967, p. 5.

<sup>213</sup> Minutes, Board of Directors, October 24–25, 1967, p. 4.

<sup>214</sup> Minutes, General Assembly, February 6, 1968, p. 1.

<sup>215</sup> This organization was one of several which grew out of the 1937 World Conference in Oxford, England on the Life and Work of the Churches.

to become affiliated in some way with the Council. The Directors polled the judicatory members of the Council and twenty-nine voted “yes,” two voted “no,” and sixteen gave no response. The 1964 resolution establishing the Department stated “the basis of representation shall be four youth, not more than twenty-four years of age, and one adult. For judicatories with a membership larger than fifty thousand, an additional youth representative may be appointed for each fifty thousand or major fraction thereof after the first fifty thousand.” The representatives were to be voting members of the Assembly.<sup>216</sup>

In their earlier discussion, the Directors had prepared a detailed set of Bylaws for the Department that included a four-part statement of Purpose:

1. (To) give expression to the movement of the young people of the churches and their adult leaders who seek to find unity in Jesus Christ as Divine Lord and Saviour, and who seek to fulfill their mission in the world by sharing their convictions, concerns, and experiences, as they face together contemporary problems.
2. To serve as a channel for interdenominational cooperation and endeavor among Christian youth.
3. To correlate common concerns in the program areas of the youth groups of the several judicatories.
4. To train Christian youth for ecumenical leadership.

These Bylaws also provided for additional judicatory youth to be members of the Department on an “at-large” basis.<sup>217</sup>

The Department never enjoyed the leadership of a full-time Council staff member. Its activities were conducted on a voluntary basis by the judicatory representatives, both adults and the “Youth Associates,” most of who were college and seminary students. In April 1964 the Council’s Directors approved the relationship of the Department to the Central Committee of the United Christian Youth Movement of the National Council of Churches as a “Council in Association.”<sup>218</sup>

The program of the Department included plans for summer workshops throughout the state, an “ecumenical youth caravan,” and a Departmental Assembly. In the summer of 1964 an Ecumenical Youth Team visited nine judicatory youth camps where they served as staff members and conducted programs stressing ecumenical unity. The Team of five college students was deliberately designed to be interdenominational and interracial although there were no women.<sup>219</sup>

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<sup>216</sup> Minutes, *General Assembly*, 1964-65 Biennial Meeting, February 4, 1964, pp. 3-4.

<sup>217</sup> Minutes, Board of Directors, Pennsylvania Council of Churches, October 23-24, 1962, pp. 5, 21-24, 31. The “Summary of Votes by Constituent Members ... concerning Department of United Church Youth,” is found on pp. 29-30.

<sup>218</sup> Minutes, Board of Directors, Pennsylvania Council of Churches, April 28, 1964, p. 5.

<sup>219</sup> Minutes, Board of Directors, Pennsylvania Council of Churches, October 27-28, 1964, pp. 11, J1-J8.

Despite an auspicious beginning, the Department soon began to encounter difficulties. At the February 1966 General Assembly of the Council of Churches, a review committee gave a lengthy report about the Department, noting that, in addition to the lack of Council staff leadership, there was “perplexity and confusion at all levels of the church as to what youth really need and want, what forms the movement should have, where it is going and what churches ought to be doing with youth themselves.” Another problem was “the lack of support of the judicatory agencies responsible for youth work in their own denominations and therefore responsible for this ecumenical witness. No matter what reasons or excuses may be given, we do have to admit that the judicatories have not really undergirded this department.” The report concluded with a series of suggestions about the future activity of the Department. It called for the Department to clarify its mission, streamline its structure, and communicate more effectively with the judicatories. It also recommended that “there be more involvement of adult advisors in the planning, preparation and implementation [of Department programming] without infringing on the freedom and the responsibility of the youth themselves.” Finally, the report mentioned the possibility of absorbing the Department of United Church Youth into the Division of Christian Education.<sup>220</sup>

A Consultation on the Churches’ Responsibility With Youth was held in March 1967 with twenty-eight youth directors from judicatories representing ten denominations. Their decision was that the Department of United Church Youth should be discontinued and that the Division of Christian Education should appoint a three-member committee to consider the possibility of creating an Association on Youth Ministries.<sup>221</sup>

The matter finally came to rest at the 1968–1969 Biennial General Assembly of the Council when the delegates voted, without discussion, “to accept the recommendation from the Board of Directors and originating in the Department of United Church Youth, that the Department of United Church Youth be discontinued and that the Division of Christian Education is hereby directed to assume the responsibilities for administering youth ministries.”<sup>222</sup> There is no mention of an Association on Youth Ministries.

## **Programs Come and Gone: The Pennsylvania Council of Churches and the Pennsylvania State Sabbath School Association**

The Council of Churches has faced various obstacles in its century-long quest to foster Christian unity and action within the Commonwealth. Perhaps the outstanding example of this was in its decades-long relationship to the former Pennsylvania State Sabbath School Association.

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<sup>220</sup> Minutes, *General Assembly*, Pennsylvania Council of Churches, February 8–9, 1966, pp. 13–14.

<sup>221</sup> 1966–1967 Biennial Report, Pennsylvania Council of Churches, February 5–7, 1968, p. 39.

<sup>222</sup> Minutes, *Biennial General Assembly*, Pennsylvania Council of Churches, February 5–6, 1968, p. 3.

The Association was founded in 1862 as an evangelical non-denominational organization to encourage the formation of county Sabbath School associations. It was led by interested individuals and supported financially by county associations and private contributions. There was no attempt to develop any formal denominational representation. This situation changed in 1923 when the Association organized an Education Committee of denominational representatives. The Association grew into a strong statewide proponent of Christian education and “it was the clear and repeated understanding when the Pennsylvania Council of Churches was organized that the State Sabbath School Association would be the official medium through which it would work in this field.”<sup>223</sup> Although the Council of Churches and the Association’s Education Committee remained independent entities, their relationship grew ever closer in the following years.

The 1958 Assembly of the Council of Churches approved the creation of the Council’s Division of Christian Education to be governed by representatives of its judicatory members and representatives from the Association’s Board of Directors. Within two years a budget was established for the Division that combined funds from the Association’s Education Committee with funds requested from the judicatories to support this new venture.<sup>224</sup>

The discussion of the relationship between the Council and the Association continued for the next several years. In March 1962 the Executive Committee of the Council’s Division of Christian Education instructed its representatives to meet with the leadership of the Association “to attempt to arrive at a working relationship [and] ... to indicate to the representatives of the State Sabbath School Association that the Division of Christian Education of the Council ... plans to go ahead even if cooperation with the Sabbath School Association is not forthcoming.”<sup>225</sup> At its meeting the following September, the Executive Committee learned that two meetings had taken place with Association representatives and that they were positive.<sup>226</sup>

Negotiations continued but optimism soon began to fade. At the Division Assembly in early 1963 it was noted that there were outstanding differences in the organization of the two groups. “The Pennsylvania Council of Churches is organized on the representative principle; the Sabbath School Association is organized through county units and the participation of interested persons.”<sup>227</sup>

The end of the relationship between the Council and the Association came at the 1964–1965 Biennial Meeting of the Council of Churches. The Rev. William T. Longsdorf, a United Church of Christ pastor and

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<sup>223</sup> Mudge, *The Appendix – The Department of Christian Education*, p. 30.

<sup>224</sup> Harman, pp. 107–111.

<sup>225</sup> Minutes, Executive Committee, Division of Christian Education, March 12, 1962, p. 2.

<sup>226</sup> Minutes, Executive Committee, Division of Christian Education, September 18, 1962, p. 1.

<sup>227</sup> Minutes, Assembly, Division of Christian Education, January 31–February 1, 1963, p. 2.

long-time chair of the Division of Christian Education (and chief negotiator with the Association), presented a five-page report along with four recommendations. In his historical preface he noted that discussions between the two organizations had been going on “as early as the 1930s.” There had been periods of close cooperation such as from 1947–1956 but then the Association began to draw back from such involvement. In 1962 four all-day meetings had been held without achieving any consensus about a future relationship. “If the differences between the two bodies were merely personality clashes or organizational rivalry these could be corrected by appropriate action on the part of the Pennsylvania Council of Churches.” But there were more serious differences: “a basic difference in understanding the nature and mission of the church, a basic difference in theological approach, ... a difference in the principles of organization, [and] ... a difference in the areas of service.” Continuing on a more positive note, Longsdorf reported on the extensive study of the subject of Christian education in the Commonwealth that his department had conducted in the previous two years. The study indicated the need for a strong ecumenical program of Christian education that would provide support and resources for the forty Christian education specialists already working within the judicatories, a setting for the development of new and creative approaches to Christian education, and the need for “some common agency in the field of Christian education to serve as a liaison between the National Council of Churches, the Commonwealth government, character-building agencies, such as Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts and other state-wide cultural and educational agencies.” The Department’s study indicated “there is very little need for the traditional interdenominational program which has to do, primarily, with the Sunday Church School.” Finally, “whatever program of cooperative Christian education on the state level may be conducted, it must be financially supported by member judicatories and directed by their official representatives.”

The four recommendations called for endorsement of the Division’s work, the encouragement of local congregations to work with it, the employment of full-time executive leadership for the Division, and a commitment from the judicatories to pay for the program.

After “lengthy discussion” the Assembly delegates voted to adopt the report with the deletion of one statement. That statement claimed, “Some sentiment has been expressed by certain leaders of the Pennsylvania State Sabbath School Association that the Association should affiliate with the National Association of Evangelicals and the Youth for Christ.”<sup>228</sup>

Despite this decisive action, the Division of Christian Education’s Executive Committee made an attempt to meet with Association representatives when it appointed a two-member delegation to arrange a

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<sup>228</sup> Minutes, 1964–1965 Biennial Meeting, General Assembly, The Pennsylvania Council of Churches, February 4–5, 1964, p. 5, and Report—Division of Christian Education, pp. 1–5.

consultation in December 1965.<sup>229</sup> A month later it was reported that the meeting had taken place and “there is interest in continuing conversations” but that is apparently the last reference to the Association in the Council’s records.<sup>230</sup>

A review of the work of the Division of Christian Education’s work at the 1966 General Assembly of the Council of Churches makes no mention of the State Sabbath School Association. Although still without its own Executive Secretary, the Division was pursuing an active program by offering workshops on religion and public education, considering the issue of “released time” in public schools for religious instruction, denominational camping programs, and similar topics.<sup>231</sup> Minutes of subsequent meetings of the Council’s Board of Directors contain no references to the Association. The concerns and activities of the Council’s Division of Christian Education would receive different configurations in later re-organizations of the Council’s structure while the Pennsylvania State Sabbath School Association would continue its work as the Pennsylvania State Sunday School Association.<sup>232</sup>

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<sup>229</sup> Minutes, Executive Committee, Division of Christian Education, November 17, 1965, p. 1.

<sup>230</sup> Minutes, Executive Committee, Division of Christian Education, January 19, 1966, p. 1.

<sup>231</sup> Minutes, 1966–1967 Biennial Meeting, General Assembly, The Pennsylvania Council of Churches, February 8–9, 1966, pp. 5–6.

<sup>232</sup> <http://sundayschoolhelp.org>

## IV. One Hundred Years of Ministry and Future Challenges

“The Pennsylvania Council of Churches is a voluntary association of separate and autonomous Christian churches, within the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, through which its members seek to manifest their fellowship (*koinonia*) with one another, to engage in common ministries of witness and service, and to advance towards the goal of visible unity.”<sup>233</sup> Although the language used to express the Council’s Mission Statement has varied through the years, the three goals of fellowship, common ministries, and visible unity have remained constant. A review of the history of the Council allows us to reflect upon the successes and failures of the past but also provides the setting from which contemporary and future challenges arise.

A structure is needed to provide a setting for the manifesting of *fellowship*. The United Church Center in Harrisburg has been the physical structure for the Council’s life for the last fifty years. As William L. Mudge points out in his history of the founding of the Council, the initial impetus for ecumenical work came from local Protestant councils in western Pennsylvania. But there was soon evident a desire to have a presence in the state capital and this was realized in the renting of office space in downtown Harrisburg in the 1920s. After many years of planning and much hard work and fundraising, the United Church Center became a reality in 1962. It has proven to be a durable and serviceable home for the Council. It has also provided attractive office space for a variety of other non-profit agencies and continues to do so today.

The establishment of Council headquarters in Harrisburg was based on several assumptions. The decision by several area judicatories to establish their offices within the Center was hailed as a visible expression of Protestant unity. Physical proximity to the state legislature and government offices was considered advantageous because of the Council’s strong public advocacy program. Its leaders and judicatory heads could make their concerns known to state officials through direct contact. Indeed, it seemed to many state officials that the Commonwealth’s “Protestant Vatican” had a South Arlington Avenue address! Finally, the location of the building was excellent in the expanding “Age of the Automobile” in the 1960s. There was easy access to the Pennsylvania Turnpike. As the Interstate loop around Harrisburg was developed, the Council’s leaders (along with others) successfully lobbied for the creation of the interchange at I-83 and Union Deposit Road.

These historical accomplishments, however, do raise challenges for the future. The Council’s Public Advocacy program in recent years has moved away from direct lobbying of state officials to a strong emphasis on education and advocacy for many causes, state and national, and is designed to appeal to Council members as well as other concerned Christians. The presence of regional judicatory offices in the Center has

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<sup>233</sup> <http://pachurches.org>

led to the observation by Bishop Charlie McNutt<sup>234</sup> (Council President 1991–1994) that despite its western Pennsylvania origins the Council’s greatest impact has been in eastern and central Pennsylvania. The membership rolls of the Council’s various committees and teams continue to reflect a preponderance of participation by individuals from those areas of the Commonwealth. Although it remains easily accessible by automobile, Harrisburg is not the geographical center of the state and is not served well by train or air travel (other than to Philadelphia).

Perhaps enhanced utilization of modern electronic communications will enable the Council to overcome these limitations of geography and location. The Public Advocacy Program, with its weekly e-mail updates, is an effective example of communication. But the Council, which has traditionally flourished through relationships fostered by direct face-to-face contact such as the annual December conference of judicatory leaders, will have to evaluate the use of alternative means of communication in the future.

The creation of a setting for *fellowship* has also involved the development of a structure that is acceptable to all judicatory members. The Council has addressed this through its Constitution and Bylaws. Council leaders have devoted a significant amount of time and energy to tweaking the basic structure of the Council with the occasional restructuring of the whole organization. The principle of “fair representation” of the judicatories based upon denominational membership has been maintained throughout all the changes. In earlier years the judicatories were assessed an annual per member charge but this has evolved into a process whereby the Executive Director (with the knowledge of the Board of Directors) suggests the amount of an annual contribution to the judicatories based upon past financial support. There is no penalty for judicatories that do not support the Council financially on an annual basis. The financial health of both the judicatories and the Council are obviously affected by trends in the national economy and this has provided periods of stress in the early 1970s, for example, and at the present time.

Matters of organization and finances will continue to raise challenges for the future. The Council has recently sought to simplify and streamline its often-cumbersome structure and this is a process that will continue. Dr. Thomas M. Johnston, Jr.<sup>235</sup> (Council President 1995–1997) recalls that the state Council was originally supported in many ways by local councils of churches. The gradual demise of these regional bodies has decreased interest in the state organization.

The Council has an impressive history of inclusiveness but challenges remain. Women were welcomed into the structure and programming at an early date. Judicatories from historically African-American and

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<sup>234</sup> The Rt. Rev. Charlie McNutt was Bishop of the Central Pennsylvania Diocese of the Episcopal Church from 1980–1995 and a member of the Council’s Board of Directors. Interview, August 30, 2011.

<sup>235</sup> The Rev. Dr. Thomas M. Johnston, Jr. was Synod Executive of the Synod of the Trinity of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. and a member of the Council’s Board of Directors. Interview, September 1, 2011.

Orthodox churches have been Council members for many years. But both McNutt and Dr. Paul D. Gehris<sup>236</sup> (Council staff member from 1972–1996) have observed that the actual participation by representatives of these communions in Council structure and programming has been minimal. Despite the inclusive nature of its membership, the core support for the Council and accomplishment of its work has come from the large historic mainline Protestant denominations. Given the nature of contemporary Christian demographics within the Commonwealth, the commitment to inclusiveness will require future expansion.

In reference to organization and finance, the Council will have to continue its quest to find the balance between judicatory (and denominational) priorities and effective common ecumenical work.

The *common ministries* (particularly among farm workers, the leisure ministries, and the trucker/traveler ministries) are the means by which thousands of Pennsylvania residents and visitors “met” the Pennsylvania Council of Churches. Council publications are full of thankful stories of individuals who have benefited from chaplains representing the Council. According to McNutt, these ministries were examples of “things that could be done better together” rather than each denomination trying to meet these genuine needs alone.

The common ministries are now in a state of transition. In 2009 a process was begun to move responsibility for these ministries to local committees across the Commonwealth with the Council steadily decreasing its involvement. This approach was born both from a decentralizing emphasis within the Council’s structure and because of the Council’s declining financial resources to cover all program costs.

While the full outcome of this plan is not yet known, it does present challenges for the future work of the Council. As Johnston has pointed out, these programs represent the only link the Council had to local congregations whose members serve on the local ministry programs. Spinning off the programs may bring some satisfaction that the Council has identified ministry needs and empowered local congregations to respond but it also changes the nature of the Council’s activity. The Council may become an advocate for and supporter of existing programs of others rather than engaging in direct ministries. This will solidify the argument made by some in the past that the Council does not serve local congregations but only works through judicatories. But the opposition to that argument claims that such withdrawal from the common ministries will turn the Council into just another ecumenical think-tank. Such an undertaking might be comfortable for judicatory heads but it may alter the fundamental mission of the Council.

The Social Advocacy program has stirred up occasional controversy in the past as it has presented the unified opinion of judicatory members regarding social issues of concern to Christians. This will undoubtedly

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<sup>236</sup> The Rev. Dr. Paul D. Gehris joined the Council staff in 1972 as Special Assistant to the Executive Director for Social Relations and served for many years as the Council’s lobbyist in the state legislature until retirement in 1996. Interview, September 22, 2011.

continue to happen in the future. The program will speak where there is such unity of opinion but withhold comment about those contentious issues where the judicatories and the denominations of which they are a part do not agree. Gehris, who was involved in the Social Advocacy program for many years, argues that the goal of this outreach should continue to be to “help American Christians understand how the Gospel relates to their lives as citizens in our democracy.”

The search for *visible unity* remains a part of the Council’s mission and is as elusive as ever. The recent history of the Council took place in an era of remarkable ecumenical achievements and disappointments. “Family reunions” brought into existence the United Church of Christ, the United Methodist Church, and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. The World Council of Churches was formed in 1948, followed two years later by the founding of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. The Consultation on Church Union began in 1960 and the Second Vatican Council opened in 1962. The list continues with the inclusion of Churches Uniting in Christ and Christian Churches Together in the U.S.A. More recently, individual denominations have entered into bilateral relationships of interim Eucharistic sharing and full communion.

Within the life of the Council two programs typified the achievements and disappointments of the quest for visible unity. The development of inter-church relations into the church-planting program to meet new urban and suburban needs after World War II was a unique experiment in practical local ecumenism. The idea of “sharing the turf” between formerly competing denominations was a radical idea and its demise is unfortunate. Perhaps the need for its disappearance was valid, but two consequences involved were reduced awareness of the Council and its positive impact on congregational life throughout the state and a general decline in effective ecumenical planning and activity.

The second program was the development of the Pennsylvania Conference on Interchurch Cooperation. This program would not have been possible without the changes within Roman Catholicism brought about by the Second Vatican Council. The program would be quite a shock to William Mudge and other early Council leaders. In his history of the early years Mudge recounts (with some pride) the successful attempts the Council had in blocking attempts by Pennsylvania Roman Catholics to convince the state legislature to pass laws that they supported. Later years brought cautious approaches by the Council in exploring possible areas of cooperation with Roman Catholics. The situation changed dramatically after Vatican II when new avenues of cooperation were opened and the Conference enjoyed its most robust years. Over time, differences in understanding arose between the Council and the Pennsylvania Catholic Conference. While the Interchurch Conference still exists, the unfortunate withdrawal of the Pennsylvania Roman Catholic hierarchy from meaningful ecumenical conversation poses a challenge the Council must address in the future.

Among Protestants, the mergers and other ecumenical activities reviewed above also presented a practical problem for the Council. New arrangements often resulted in new judicatory boundaries that sometimes left judicatories with representational and financial obligations to two or more state councils of churches. As new denominational configurations emerge the question may be raised as to where the “state” fits into the picture of a “national” church. The Council may wish to help the judicatories adjust to new forms but it will also have to deal with the consequences of such changes.

The history of the Pennsylvania Council of Churches is really the story of thousands of men and women from diverse backgrounds of gender, age, race, and Christian tradition who for one hundred years have been committed to reaching out together and ministering to the world in the name of their Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. There have been significant achievements, experiments tried and abandoned, and always a willingness to address the future. And there have been many changes in form and function through the years. Drawing on an analogy from his own tradition, McNutt recalls that when he was Council President, the Council was like a parish. The Executive Secretary was the rector and the committees did all the work. But, he readily admits, that is not the way it is now. Johnston calls for the thankful celebration of a “historic, significant, and lively Council of Churches.” But it will be different in the future; it will continue to evolve.

For this writer it has been a fascinating journey to discover God at work through this unique organization and to await with great interest the coming years of the ministry of the Pennsylvania Council of Churches as it begins its second century.



## About the Author

**The Rev. Dr. David A. Schattschneider** is Dean and Vice-President Emeritus of Moravian Theological Seminary in Bethlehem Pa. and is currently President of the Moravian Music Foundation (<http://moravianmusic.org>). He is a graduate of Moravian College (B.A.) and received the Master of Divinity (M.Div.) degree from Yale Divinity School. Dr. Schattschneider is an ordained Moravian minister and also earned the M.A. and Ph.D. degrees from the University of Chicago.

Dr. Schattschneider taught the History of Christianity at Moravian Theological Seminary before serving as Dean for thirteen years. He has published in the field of Moravian Church history and is active in professional organizations and as a Board member of several Moravian Church and ecumenical agencies.

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His wife, Dr. Doris Schattschneider, is Emerita Professor of Mathematics at Moravian College and an author and lecturer. Their daughter Laura and her husband, Drew, and their son Owen, are members of the Episcopal Church of the Ascension in Silver Spring, Maryland.