

***Report to the Governing Board of the Canadian Council of Churches
Biotechnology Reference Group
November 13, 2014***

Introduction

This will be a brief report this time, and it draws heavily on Anne Mitchell's report to you in May. Too much going on with the Assembly itself!

Summary: The Biotechnology Reference Group (BRG) has 15 years of experience and collaborative work. A summary of this work continues to include: 1) continuing efforts to distribute and animate the Faith and Genetics curriculum entitled *When Christian Faith and Genetics Meet: A Practical Group Resource*; 2) regular watching list of issues, in particular synthetic biology (safety, ownership of life, and creating new forms of life issues); and 3) collecting a sample of theological and ethical reflections on faith, science and biotechnologies for eventual publication.

Faith and Genetics Curriculum: On Saturday, November 1 a successful workshop entitled, *We Are More than Our Genes* was held in Toronto for 20 participants. The workshop used the Faith and Genetics Curriculum and we received very positive reviews. The members have been encouraged and are now considering scheduling additional workshops in Barrie, Hamilton or Kitchener-Waterloo. Where would you like to host or join us to make the next one a success? Contact Rebecca Ivanoff, Faith and Genetics Learning Animator for more information: Ivanoff@councilofchurches.ca.

Watching Briefs include: synthetic biology; stem cells; nanotechnology; Genome Canada; GMO labelling; consumer and genetic testing; privacy issues; and patenting human genes. As a result of our regular engagement with the Government of Canada, the Biotechnology Reference Group is meeting with representatives from Environment Canada on a Federal policy regarding Access and Benefit Sharing for genetic resources and traditional knowledge associated with genetic resources during this Assembly.

Reflections on Faith, Biological Science and Ethics: Following on Emanuel Kolyvas Reflections on Anthropology by a Follower of the Orthodox Christian Tradition, Jim Rusthoven led us in a reflection on Covenant and Ethics: A Model for Biomedical Ethics. Then Ursula Franklin, Religious Society of Friends, spent a morning with us on the same topic. Her presentation is being transcribed as well. We continue to see a value in collecting a series of essays on reflections on faith, biological science and ethics from different perspectives. Who else should we invite to share their perspective? We will package these contributions one by one for web distribution, with an eventual goal of compiling a series of several reflections on the topic for an informative publication as a contribution to greater unity and understanding in this area.

This report has been prepared by Peter Noteboom, Deputy General Secretary and draws heavily on the report of Anne Mitchell, Chair of the Biotechnology Reference Group to this group in May 2014.