

Special Report to the CCC Governing Board, November 2014
Christian Interfaith Reference Group

Chair: Gail Allan

Please note:

Note: This Report has been updated after the Commission on Faith and Witness meeting during the November 2014 CCC 70th Anniversary Assembly. Please see the updates below in bold.

This Report is special because we are presenting it as an annotated version of topics from our fall meeting agenda. Particular questions to the Governing Board are included with each agenda item. By the evening of Tuesday, November 18, after CIRG's meeting has been completed, we will update this Report online [www.councilofchurches.ca/70th-anniversary-assembly-important-documents/] and indicate particular questions we are directing to the Governing Board.

We respectfully request that you give your denomination's feedback and guidance personally to our Chair, staff members, and/or the CIRG representative from your denomination before the end of the November Governing Board meeting.

CIRG November 2014 Agenda Topics:

- **Visit to Commission on Faith and Witness**
 - progress on CFW's Religious Pluralism discussion / document
 - possible directions for Religious Pluralism discussion / document

Update: After meeting with Faith and Witness, we have received affirmation that it is important to keep close connections between the two groups and keep each other informed of and by our ongoing work, especially as Faith and Witness continues its reflection on the topic of Religious Pluralism.

- **CIRG Welcome**
 - Representatives from CIRG to attend Churches' Forum on Global Ministries (second half of presentation) and Biotechnology Reference Group meetings on our behalf
- **Religious Freedom statement**
 - General discussion of statement and suggestions (Gail Allan), including May 2014 report to the Governing Board
 - Decision: Where to go from here?

Update: Bruce Myers has agreed to develop a synthesis document from our initial draft which reflected values and principles on freedom of religion gathered from member churches.

What would the Governing Board see as next steps to be taken by CIRG in working on this document that would be valuable to the Council? The CIRG members request GB's input regarding possible directions for the use of this resource.

- **CIRG visits Churches' Forum on Global Ministries** (general presentation)

Update: From our discussion during the visit, we have received affirmation that there are multiple areas for possible collaboration between CCFGM and CIRG, e.g. links between interfaith and intercultural dimensions of our work.

- **Inter-Faith Database**
 - Presentation by Robert Smith
 - Discussion
 - Decision as to next steps and completing the work

Note: Robert Smith is a researcher on a special contract with CIRG to gather and shape the Interfaith Resources Database for Canada. He will be reporting on the work done thus far, and on his vision for completing it. CIRG will be deciding (in consultation with Jesse Hair, CCC Communications Officer) how to present this database on the CCC website.

Update: After receiving an update from Robert, we aim to have a functioning inter-faith directory on the CCC website by our April 2015 meeting. To this end, we have agreed on the following next steps to be taken in collaboration with CCC Communications Officer, Jesse Hair: 1) receive a quote from CCC's website developers re: potential costs for designing the directory by end of December 2) create a mock-up, review it, and agree on the format and design of the directory with members of CIRG by early March 3) upload the information already gathered by Robert into the finished resource.

- **CIRG Business**
 - 3 year plan (this triennium and next triennium)
 - report or requests to Governing Board
 - business arising from today's activities
 - Religious Freedom statement
 - Database
 - Relationship with Commissions and Committees
 - membership and leadership of this Group
 - relationships with Canadian Christian-Jewish Consultation (CCJC) and National Muslim Christian Liaison Committee (NMCLC) and Interfaith Conversation

Note: One of CIRG's roles is to communicate the work of CCJC and NMCLC to the CCC GB.

- news of and relationship with North American Interfaith Network
- next meetings

Note: Spring 2015 meeting will be in Kingston.

Update: CIRG will conduct a detailed review of its work and mandate at its April 2015 meeting in Kingston and will develop a proposal for re-mandating, and a working plan for the next Triennium. In the context of our round-table discussion of CIRG work, it was observed, and CIRG members agreed, that it would be helpful for the Governing Board to provide CCC Commissions and groups with guidelines for evaluating their work. The CIRG members would welcome having these guidelines to facilitate their April 2015 discussion.

- **Round-Table Discussion on Inter-Faith Work in Our Contexts (open to the Assembly)**

Discussion Questions:

In the context of your denomination, what are the key calls for interfaith work in the future?
What is your advice for the CCC as it seeks to engage member churches in this work?

Note: We will be providing further information about the participants, and about the content of this discussion, after the CIRG meeting.

Update: Members of CIRG were joined by President Jim Champ and Treasurer Larry Brennan as we shared reflections on inter-faith work and suggested directions for the CCC in the future. Some common themes included: vibrant inter-faith work done on the local level across Canada, the need to continue providing theological grounding for interfaith work, the urgency of interfaith engagement and reflection in the lived reality of Canadian and global communities.