

Don't Know Much About History:
Reviewing 70 Years of Rapprochement Between
A Cappella Churches of Christ and Conservative Christian Churches
1933-2004

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Victor Knowles, Teacher

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Sam Cooke was born on January 22, 1931 in Clarksdale, Mississippi, but grew up in Chicago where his father was a minister in the Church of Christ Holiness Church. By age nine Sam was singing with his two sisters in a group called The Singing Children. In 1950 he sang the lead on "Jesus Gave Me Water" with the Soul Stirrers. He became a gospel superstar. Later he entered the world of popular music. In 1960 Sam Cooke signed with RCA and released a song called "Wonderful World." In part the lyrics read:

Don't know much about history
Don't know much biology
Don't know much about a science book
Don't know much about the French I took

But I do know that I love you
And I know that if you love me too
What a wonderful world this would be

When Jerry Rushford called and asked me to do this workshop, he said (as best I can recall), "A lot of people don't know much about the history of these unity meetings. Please do something that will bring us up to speed on the history of these meetings." That's what I hope to accomplish in this two-part lecture, "*Don't Know Much About History: Reviewing 70 Years of Rapprochement between A Cappella Churches of Christ and Conservative Christian Churches 1933-2004.*" Perhaps Jerry Rushford, Sam Cooke and I can pull this thing off together. What a wonderful thing that would be!

Most of us don't know much about history – our own history, that is! Many of us are biblical illiterate – like the elder who though Dan and Beersheba were lovers. Many of us are historically illiterate – and I include myself here. Until I went to Bible College in 1964, I was blissfully ignorant of that fact that there were Churches of Christ, thousands upon thousands, who did not sing to the accompaniment of musical instruments when they assembled on Sunday in their church buildings to worship God. I am sure that my ignorance was matched by any number of 18-year-old boys on the other side of the keyboard who were equally unaware that there were Churches of Christ (also called Christian

Churches), thousands upon thousands, who sang to the accompaniment of musical instruments when they assembled on Sunday in their church buildings to worship God. Whether you were born and raised in the Midwest or in Dixie made all the difference!

It has taken us many years to cross that great divide. The spiritual heirs of the Stone-Campbell Movement worked and worshipped as one, in spite of some differences of opinion. From the storied Cane Ridge Revival in 1801 to “the handshake that shook the frontier” in Paris, Kentucky in 1832, the Stone-Campbell Movement made their mark for God. Thomas Langford writes, “The Movement flourished throughout the 19th Century. It was not even divided by the Civil War, when every other major Christian group divided into North and South. Moses Lard wrote, in fact, that widespread division in the Movement was impossible since each congregation was independent of others and there was no controlling headquarters organization to effect an official division. Individual congregations might hold different views on slavery and other matters, but no church had power over the convictions of other congregations. Fellowship between congregations might indeed be strained or broken, but there could not be, thought Lard, a general division” (“Can We Divide?” *Lard’s Quarterly*, Vol. III, 1866, pp.330-336 as quoted in *The Restoration Ideal and The Church Today* by Thomas A. Langford, pp. 43,44). But Langford rightly notes that Lard was wrong. Lard under-estimated the organizational power of religious journals. As someone once observed, “The Methodists have bishops and the Disciples have editors.”

Fast forward to 1889. My understanding of history is that we became “a separate people” when a “line in the sand” was drawn by Daniel Sommer, editor of *American Christian Review* – which Leroy Garrett called “the most influential journal in the Movement in the post-Civil War years.” On Sunday, August 18, 1889, at Sand Creek, Illinois, an annual gathering of thousands of Christians, Sommer urged Peter Warren to draw up “An Address and Declaration” which excoriated the users of such innovations like choirs and societies (but oddly did not include instrumental music). The document closed with these chilling words: “if they will not turn away from such abominations, that we cannot and will not regard them as brethren.”

This did not set well with the *Christian Standard*, which denounced the Sand Creek Declaration, calling it a “new confession of faith.” Editor Russell Errett said, “Daniel Sommer has abandoned apostolic ground and is no more identified with the Disciples of Christ than Sidney Rigdon.” J. C. McQuiddy wrote in *Gospel Advocate* that the Sand Creek manifesto was “manifest folly.” But once a line is drawn, it is hard to erase. Earl Irvin West states, “And so, by 1906, the work of division had taken its full course. The ‘Christian Churches’ or ‘Disciples of Christ,’ as they preferred to be called, took their instruments and their missionary society and walked a new course. The battles had been long, treacherous, costly, and bitter. Many brethren, still licking their wounds, looked to the future to start all over again.” In 1906, J. W. Shepherd and David Lipscomb, acting unilaterally for Churches of Christ, compiled and submitted the first religious census on the numerical strength of Churches of Christ to the U.S.

Census of Religious Bodies. Murch called this act a “drastic step for national separation.” The May 2004 *Gospel Advocate* carried a special series based on the 1906 division: “Division in the Church: History in the Remaking?” The editorial page re-printed David Libscomb’s famous article “Division Must Come.”

In 1927 the movement divided again. This time a group of churches chose to become “independent” of the Christian Churches (Disciples of Christ) because of the Disciples’ liberal theology, “open membership” and matters of church polity. They became known as the independent or conservative Christian Churches/Churches of Christ. The North American Christian Convention, “independent” of the Disciples’ International Convention, was formed in 1927 by conservative leaders such as P. H. Welshimer. By 1955 the conservatives had their own *Directory of the Ministry*. The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) voted to become a full-fledged denomination in 1968. In 1994 Russ Blowers identified 14 differences between conservative Christian Churches and the Disciples of Christ (*The Lookout*, July 19, 1994).

Now “we” are three. Today the three streams, or branches, of the Stone-Campbell Movement number as follows in the U.S. and Canada:

- Churches of Christ: 1.2 million members; 13,032 churches
- Christian Churches/Churches of Christ: 1.2 million members; 5,539 churches
- The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ): 834,000 members; 3,792 churches

This paper will endeavor to briefly review several efforts from 1933 to today to bring brethren together for prayer, study and understanding. The paper will deal primarily with efforts between Churches of Christ and Christian Churches/Churches of Christ, but not always. A portion of this material is taken from the author’s article “Working for Unity in Spite of Our History” which appeared in the September 8, 2002 *Christian Standard*. A helpful Timeline will appear at the end of this paper. For now we will look at several major efforts at *rapprochement* and other significant events or happenings that have shaped the unity effort between Churches of Christ and Christian Churches/Churches of Christ.

The Beam-Jessup “Unity Rallies” (1933-1957)

Through the years there have been concerted efforts by concerned brethren to bring the divided heirs of the Stone-Campbell Movement together again. In the summer of 1933 a “Unity Rally” was held in the city auditorium of Visalia, California. This rally, attended by about 1,000 brethren from both sides of the keyboard, was the happy result of prayerful planning by William Jessup, president of San Jose Bible College, and Ernest Beam, a judge and preacher in the Churches of Christ. Ten speakers, five from each side of the keyboard, spoke. Succeeding unity rallies to places in cities like Los Angeles, Los Gatos, Malibu, and San Jose. It was not an easy road. Beam and Jessup were publicly called “braying jackasses” at one meeting. In 1949 Beam delivered his famous “17 Propositions for Unity” at a unity rally at San Jose Bible College. In 1950 Beam

launched a journal, *The Christian Forum*, which was published through 1953. The California unity rallies continued off and on until Beam's untimely death in 1957. For more information see "A Look Back at the Beam-Jessup Unity Meetings" *One Body* Spring 1991.

The Murch-Witty "National Unity Meetings" (1937-1944)

Back east two men were leading out in another cordial unity effort: James DeForest Murch and Claude Witty. Murch was well known in Christian Church circles and Witty preached for the Westside-Central Church of Christ in Detroit, Michigan. Murch was speaking at a rally at the Keele Street Christian Church in Toronto, Canada, when he was approached by the elders of the Fern Street Church of Christ who suggested that he get in touch with Claude Witty in Detroit. The two men corresponded and prayed for about a year before Witty invited Murch to preach at Westside-Central. The following Feb. 23, 1937, the first of a series of conversations was held in Cincinnati, Ohio. Murch and Witty proposed a 5-fold approach to unity: (1) Prayer. (2) Survey – seeking to determine how much each fellowship had in common in faith and practice. (3) Friendliness. (4) Cooperation – in enterprises that would not do violence to personal or group convictions. (5) Study and discussion – of things which divided them, in order to discover the way to complete a permanent unity. Successive meetings were held in Indianapolis; Akron, Ohio; and Columbus, Indiana. Meetings were also held in Los Angeles and Ontario, California.

The first "National Unity Meeting" was held May 3,4, 1938 at the Westside-Central Church of Christ in Detroit with more than 1,000 in attendance. These national meetings continued for several years at Indianapolis; Lexington, Kentucky; Columbus, Ohio; and other places. Murch said, "Some fifty key men from each communion braved the criticism of many of their brethren to make valuable contributions to the venture." A journal, *Christian Unity Quarterly*, was launched by Murch and Witty. A tract, *Christian Unity: Churches of Christ and Christian Churches*, was distributed by hundreds of thousands of copies. Prayer meetings were held at the graves of Campbell, Stone, and McGarvey.

The main accomplishments, according to Murch, were: (1) A growing personal acquaintance. (2) A growing knowledge of the current status of the churches. (3) A frank study and discussion of the obstacles to unity and possible methods of achieving unity. (4) Publicizing the 5-point approach. (5) The creation of a spirit of prayer and surrender to God's will.

The Ketcherside-Garrett Wynnewood Chapel "Unity Meetings" (1955-1960s)

In 1951 Leroy Garrett and others started Wynnewood Chapel, "a congregation of the Restoration Movement," in Dallas, Texas. In pursuit of peace and truth, they became increasingly concerned over division in the Restoration Movement. The first unity meeting was held in 1955 with Carl Ketcherside and Leroy Garrett along with a "precious few" who accepted their invitation to come. One of those who came was J. Ervin Waters, the "champion debater" for the one-cup churches. Garrett says, "Time proved him to be one of the greatest influences in our unity efforts. His inestimable contribution, made through numerous unity

meetings for years to come, is a story within itself. It all started at Wynnewood Chapel in Dallas" (*A Lover's Quarrel*, pp.132, 133). Garrett also notes that the hardest part of these meetings was to bring people together who didn't want to have anything to do with each other. But "some who came to scorn remained to pray." These meetings were primarily between brethren of the *a cappella* persuasion.

The "Defining Moment" Debate (1957)

Though not called as a "unity meeting" as such, a 1957 debate in Nowata, Okalahoma, on instrumental music between Ketcherside, Garrett, Seth Wilson, and Don DeWelt (both from Ozark Bible College) was described by Garrett as the "defining moment" in the unity effort. Garrett had written to Ketcherside before the debate that this one should be different – it should be made clear that "Seth and Don are our brothers in Christ as much as we are to each other." The letter continued: "We might differ on the issue under discussion, but that would not keep us from loving and accepting each others as brothers in Christ. We don't have to agree on instrumental music to be united in Christ!" Ketcherside read this letter at the beginning of the debate and gave it his wholehearted approval. Garrett notes, "On that occasion, we publicly stated what Churches of Christ had never said before – we can differ on such things as instrumental music and still be a united people" (*A Lover's Quarrel*, p. 139).

Don DeWelt recalled this historic meeting in his autobiography *Happy on My Way to Heaven*. "There was a spirit of openness and acceptance we all remember with joy. In the recollection of all four men there is a real historic significance to this meeting. It was the first breakthrough in the Midwest among our two fellowships ... The friendliness and good humor that prevailed there will not soon be forgotten. We accepted each other as we are accepted in Christ" (pp. 129, 130).

The "Hartford Forum" (1957-1972)

The Hartford Forum, held in Hartford, Illinois, began in 1957 and continued annually until 1972. Hundreds of people from all three streams of the Movement attended these meetings which, according to Garrett, "provided more opportunity for the rank and file to get involved and were largely discussion sessions, with no holds barred" (*A Lover's Quarrel*, pp. 136, 137). The meetings were always promoted and given good coverage by Carl Ketcherside in his paper *Mission Messenger*.

The "Annual Unity Forum" (1966-1975)

A 10-year series of unity forums began in 1966 at Bethany College. The series was put together by Leroy Garrett and Perry Gresham, president of Bethany College. Thomas A. Langford, one of the attendees (and later part of the ad hoc planning committee), recalls, "It was a wonderful experience, embracing a goodly number of folk from the three wings of the Movement ... Perhaps the highlight of the meeting was the Sunday Service. The old meeting place where Campbell reached, long closed, was dusted out for our morning worship. We all praised

God together and enjoyed a sweet fellowship across lines that were seldom crossed in our home communities" ("Unity Forums" *One Body* Spring 2002). Langford also said, "It was a glorious time and gave all of us hope of what might be accomplished if advocates of unity should prevail in their respective communities" (*The Restoration Ideal and The Church Today*, p. 45). Garrett said of the first meeting: "It was the first time in our history that such a diverse group of our divided Restoration family gathered to talk and pray about unity in Christ ... We closed by singing the old hymn composed by M. C. Kurfees (Churches of Christ) and A. C. Hopkins (Christian Churches), who were themselves seeking unity for their people in Louisville, Kentucky, part of which reads:

*How blest and how joyous will be the glad day,
When hearts beats to heart in the work of the Lord;
When Christians united shall swell the grand lay,
Divisions all ended, triumphant His word!*

Subsequent forums were held at: Milligan College in Tennessee; Southeastern College in Kentucky; West Islip Church of Christ in New York; Lubbock Christian College in Texas; Atlanta Christian College in Georgia; Blaney Avenue Church of Christ in Cupertino, California; University of Tulsa in Oklahoma; Scarritt College in Nashville, Tennessee; and Bethany College, where the meetings concluded in 1975. Garrett notes, "Unlike the earlier Wynnewood Chapel meetings, these were better attended and there was a greater representation of Restoration churches" (*A Lover's Quarrel*, p. 133).

Langford cites the positive results of the annual Unity Forum: "Some mellowing of attitudes and attempts to rethink the possibilities of greater cooperation. It may be that this series plowed the ground out of which, after an interval of ten years, the Restoration Forums could grow in 1984."

The "Restoration Forum" (1984 –present)

Author bias should be noted in this section as I have been involved in the Restoration Forum since its inception in 1984, having missed only one forum in all that time. Doug Foster has written, "Those who promoted those (earlier) efforts were engaged in a righteous work. But none have had the longevity and widespread results of the Restoration Forums begun in 1984" ("Where There is Division: The Necessity of the Restoration Forums" *One Body* Spring 2002).

In the summer of 1983, Don DeWelt, teacher at Ozark Bible College and president of College Press, both in Joplin, Missouri, received a call from Alan Cloyd, evangelist with the Restoration Leadership Ministry, Nashville, Tennessee. Would Don be interested in inviting 50 men from Christian Churches to meet with 50 men from Churches of Christ "to establish dialogue for mutual understanding and appreciation"? Later in the year Cloyd and Dennis Randall met with DeWelt, Chris DeWelt, and Ken Idleman, president of OBC, to plan what was at first called "Restoration Summit."

The first meeting was held on the campus of OBC August 7-9, 1984. The 100 men "were looking for ways in which two long divided branches of a movement might talk together and bridge the gaps of broken fellowship" (Chris DeWelt, "Reflections on our Journey" *One Body* Winter 2001). Speakers included Monroe Hawley, Furman Kearley, Hardeman Nichols, Reuel Lemmons, Boyce Mouton, Fred Thompson, W. F. Lown, and Lynn Gardner. Ken Idleman said, "The closing

prayer time on our knees was the closest I have been to the spirit of Pentecost. I shall never forget it and will cherish the memory until I die" (*Almost Pentecost* "One Body Spring 2002). The meeting was "cussed and discussed" around the country in many journals and private conversations.

Christian Standard (Oct. 21, 1984) opened its editorial pages to Rubel Shelly who wrote that the Restoration Summit was not a merger attempt, not an exercise in compromise, not a symposium-debate on instrumental music, nor was it a brawl. "A beautiful spirit of love for God and one another as estranged brothers pervaded the discussions." Shelly listed four things we learned about each other: Churches of Christ learned that conservative Christian Churches are altogether different from the Disciples of Christ; that each group is a "mirror-image" of the other; and both groups seek to exhibit integrity with the Word of God; and each group has little awareness or understanding of each other. He suggested three steps for the future: continue to meet, study the Word, and draw closer to God and one another; meaningful exchange on a personal and congregational level; and cooperate in many ways to represent Christ before our communities.

Monroe Hawley said, "It was apparent that the two groups have far more in common than they have in disagreement. The meeting revealed that both groups are biblically oriented and seek only to follow the Scriptures, though there are differences over how the Bible should be interpreted. No one ever suggested that any person should compromise his convictions. It was recognized that among autonomous congregations the participants could only speak for themselves. One of the most amazing things in the meeting was the genuine spirit of love on the part of all participants. There was a total absence of acrimony, though the sessions were conducted in absolute candor" (*Restoration Leadership Quarterly*, Fall 1984).

I concluded my report with these words: "The closing service touched the lives of all present. Brother Dennis Randall, working with non-instrumental churches, along with his uncle, Brother Max Ward Randall, longtime missionary with the instrumental churches, prayed together for unity. With breaking voice Brother Max Ward prayed for 'days of promise ... days of hope.' Uncle and nephew embraced in front of all as grown men wiped their eyes and saw a vision of what could become a reality in the future – two great movements becoming one again" (*One Body* Nov. 1984).

Though the planners of the "Summit" meant the term to mean a spiritual mountain peak, critics perceived it as a high-level conference. In future meetings the name was changed to "Restoration Forum" (with the Roman numerals added to each conference with the third meeting).

The Restoration Forum has been hosted by the following churches and colleges since 1984.

- Garnett Church of Christ, Tulsa, OK – March 18-20, 1985
- Pepperdine University, Malibu, CA – July 7-9, 1985
- Milligan College, Milligan College, TN – April 29-30, 1986
- Cincinnati Bible Seminary, Cincinnati, OH – April 28-30, 1987
- The Church in the Falls, Cuyahoga Falls, OH – Nov. 1-3, 1988
- Lincoln Christian College & Seminary, Lincoln, IL – June 13-15, 1989
- Garnett Church of Christ, Tulsa, OK – Nov. 7-9, 1990
- Crossroads Church of Christ, Portland, OR – Nov. 6-8, 1991
- Skillman Avenue Church of Christ, Dallas, TX – Nov. 10-12, 1992

- Ozark Christian College, Joplin, MO – Nov. 9-11, 1993
- Abilene Christian University, Abilene, TX – Nov. 1-3, 1994
- Louisville Bible College, Louisville, KY – Nov. 8-10, 1995
- Southside Church of Christ, Milwaukee, WI – Nov. 10-12, 1996
- Florida Christian College, Kissimmee, FL – Nov. 9-11, 1997
- Woodmont Hills Church of Christ, Nashville, TN – Nov. 1-3, 1998
- Bow Valley Christian Church, Calgary, Alberta, Canada – Oct. 15-17, 1999
- Bethany Meeting House, Bethany, WV – Oct. 22-24, 2000
- Crossroads Church of Christ, Portland, OR – Oct. 14-16, 2001
- Quaker Avenue Church of Christ, Lubbock, TX – Oct. 20-22, 2002
- Emmanuel School of Religion/Milligan College – Oct. 12-14, 2003

Calvin Warpula listed six things the Restoration Forum has helped accomplish (“What the Forums are Accomplishing” *One Body Spring* 2002). (1) We are learning much about each other (strengths and weaknesses). (2) We encourage joint participation in good works. (3) We emphasize unity and love as the Lord commanded. (4) We are brought out of isolation and into the open market with the people. (5) We have been forced to research and refine our positions and maybe even abandon them, as we study the Scriptures. (6) We realize that unity can exist in agreements on essentials while allowing diversity on other matters.

Marvin Phillips has cited a number of changes that have taken place since the Joplin meeting in 1984 (“The Restoration Forum: So What?” *One Body Spring* 2002). “Notably our attitude toward each other. Our openness in listening to another point of view. Our awareness that none of us are right on ALL the issues ... There has been more cooperation between churches in youth activities, teaching seminars, exchanging pulpits, joint-worship assemblies and soul winning workshops ... Preachers have been freed up to preach across lines that were forbidden before. About a third of my own preaching is to Christian Churches or joint efforts between the two groups. It is not over. We’ve not come as far as we need to go. Churches of Christ and Christian Churches ought to take the lead in unity and evangelism discussions all over the world.”

After listening to well over 200 major addresses at Restoration Forums, Chris DeWalt had this to say: (1) We have kept the Word central. It would be very hard to argue that these meetings have not been characterized by serious study of God’s Word. (2) Issues have been discussed. Yes, the issues that have divided us historically. No one has tried to skirt the difficult questions. (3) A tremendous amount of listening has occurred. The sheer amount of doctrinal messages alone would fill a sizable number of books. (4) Perhaps more attention could be given to the study of interpretation. The process of hermeneutics is necessary and extremely important to unity. (5) Attention has been given to ways in which we can and have worked together as the body of Christ.

Leroy Garrett sees Restoration Forum XX as perhaps the most significant thus far. “Restoration Forum XX, held in Lubbock, Texas in 2002 – which I attended – was historic in nature. Things happened that we could not have anticipated back at Wynnewood Chapel back in the 1950s. The Forum opened on a Sunday evening at the Broadway Church of Christ with a Communion service attended by 900 – from all three wings of our heritage. For the first time the Forum had invited the Disciples of Christ to participate. Royce Money, president of ACU

(Churches of Christ) and Bob Wetzel, president of Emmanuel School of Religion (Christian Churches) spoke on 'The Restoration Dream: The Spirit of Unity.' The singing and fellowship were breathtaking. I told Royce Money that evening that I had been waiting a half-century for such an occasion!

"The Forum continued at the Quaker Avenue Church of Christ ... with over 300 participants from all three churches. Two unusual things took place. There was a video presentation on 'Honor Roll of Unity,' conducted by Doug Foster of ACU and Victor Knowles of *One Body*. It recognized those, living and dead, who helped bring us to where we are today – pioneers in unity. I was pleased to see those honored that I not only knew but had worked with in building bridges: Perry Gresham of the Disciples of Christ; Seth Wilson, Charles Gresham, and Don DeWelt of Christian Churches; Carl Ketcherside and Tom Langford of Churches of Christ. They were gracious to include me ...

"If all that were historic enough, the Forum closed by inviting all to sign a 'Covenant of Unity,' pledging 'To be part of the answer to our Lord's prayer for unity among believers in Christ' and 'To turn away from any kind of divisive or factious spirit which is not characteristic of the spirit of Christ.'

"It was awesome to see 302 people – of diverse backgrounds – lined up to sign a pledge to be peacemakers amidst our divided people. When all this started 50 years ago, we did well to gather a handful of daring souls who ventured to shake hands and get acquainted; now I was witness to hundreds pledging themselves to do something about our tragic divisions. Wow!" (*A Lover's Quarrel*, pp. 137, 138).

Dennis Randall, co-planner of the original "Restoration Summit" and the only person who has been at all 22 forums, recently shared his reflections on that first forum ("Only God Could Have Known" *One Body* Winter 2004). "From that first gathering, we learned. We learned that we knew a lot less about each other than we previously thought. We learned that there were many more areas in which we agreed that disagreed. We learned that there were substantive areas of difference. We learned the importance of love, even when we disagreed. We learned to employ an irenic spirit in all our discussions ...

"I remember vividly that first 'Restoration Summit' in 1984. Then, as now, I had the responsibility of closing the final session of that meeting. In doing so, I asked my uncle, Max Randall, to come to the podium and pray with me for unity between the two represented branches of our movement. At the end of our prayers, Max and I also tearfully embraced as we symbolically demonstrated not only the love between an uncle and nephew, but also love and unity as brothers, united in Jesus Christ ... It is this love that has and can forever change the face of our movement."

The Restoration Forum continues to be a voice for unity under the *ad hoc* direction of Dennis Randall, Doug Foster, Chris DeWelt, and Victor Knowles. Restoration Forum XXII will be held Oct. 15-17, 2004, in Rochester Hills, Michigan, co-sponsored by Rochester College and Great Lakes Christian College.

The "Stone-Campbell Dialogue" (1999-present)

On June 25, 1999, an *ad hoc* gathering of nine ministers and church historians met in Cincinnati, Ohio, in the interest of restoring dialogue among all three segments of the Stone-Campbell heritage. "Unofficially" representing the

Disciples were Richard Hamm, Robert Welsh, and Peter Morgan. Representing the Christian Churches were John Mills, James North, and Henry Webb. Representing the Churches of Christ were Mike Armour, Doug Foster, and Phillip Morrison. A "Statement of Purpose" was developed which read: "To develop relationships and trust within the three streams of the Stone-Campbell Movement through worship and through charitable and frank dialogue, "that the world may believe."

In subsequent meetings the group was expanded to 18 people – six from each branch of the movement – and two "invited observers." Meetings have been held in Indianapolis (November 1999), Nashville (June 2000), Cincinnati (November 2000), Lexington (August 2001), Atlanta (2002), Louisville (2003), and Indianapolis (April 2004). A historic statement of "Confession of Sin" and "Affirmation of Faith" came out of the Nashville meeting. Beginning in Louisville, a Sunday night program open to all interested members was begun. About 285 attended the Sunday night service in Indianapolis in 2004. The October 2001 issue of *Mid-Stream* (published by the Disciples of Christ) featured 16 speeches delivered at the Stone-Campbell Dialogue. The next scheduled Stone-Campbell Dialogue is Dallas in June 2005.

Leroy Garrett, who served as an advisor in putting together the Stone-Campbell Dialogue, says, "I see it as the most important development in our history since the formation of the Commission on Re-study of the Disciples of Christ in 1934 – which was an effort to restore peace to our fragmented Movement after two tragic divisions" (*A Lover's Quarrel*, p. 253).

Hope Network Reunion (2004)

Though not billed as a "unity meeting" as such, the second annual Hope Network Reunion accomplished that objective and more. In an irenic effort to reach out to conservative Christian Churches, Lynn Anderson, director of Hope Network in San Antonio, Texas, contacted Larry Winger, president of Church Development Fund in Anaheim, California, to invite leaders within Christian Churches to attend the 4-day event, Feb. 5-8, 2004. About 250 leaders from both groups met at Oak Hills Church in San Antonio for the Reunion. Speakers included Anderson, Rick Atchley, Rubel Shelly and Randy Harris from Churches of Christ and Bob Russell and Marcus Bigelow from Christian Churches. Bigelow, president of Stadia, a church-planting ministry with a vision to plant 5,500 new churches by 2025, said, "It has long been my conviction that we will unify faster when we unite around compassion for the lost rather than trying to iron out all our differences. It is my prayer that a church planting movement will spring up not only in the Christian Churches but also in Churches of Christ. Moreover, it is my prayer that through this planting we will see a new spirit of unity and cooperation as we reach out to those who need Jesus." Bigelow felt that the consensus of opinion at the Reunion meeting was that we "move beyond talking about unity to actually working together in uniting ministry efforts" (*Stadia News*, Autumn 2003; *One Body Spring* 2004). A "Maximum Impact 2004" meeting is planned for Dallas in October.

"Faithful Conversations" (2004)

Billed as “a historic and sometimes tear-filled meeting” by the *Christian Chronicle*, leaders of the International Churches of Christ and “mainline” Churches of Christ met for three days of dialogue at Abilene Christian University’s Bible Lectureship Feb. 22-25, 2004, after a decade of formal separation. Participants included Al Baird, Mike Taliaferro, Gregg Marutzky and Gordon Ferguson of the ICOC (formerly known as the Boston and Crossroads movement) and Jack Reese, Terry Smith, Jim Woodruff and John Wilson of the “mainline” churches. Mark Love, lectureship director and moderator of the talks, said, “While division loves silence, peace cherishes conversation. ” More than 1,000 people attended the event. “Representatives of both groups acknowledged wrongs and asked for forgiveness and new beginnings. The conclusion? Proceed with faith, hope, love and a good measure of caution and discretion” (*Christian Chronicle*, April 2004).

Conclusion

On July 10, 2003, a singular event took place at the evening service of the North American Christian Convention in Indianapolis, Indiana. Rick Atchley, pulpit minister of the Richland Hills Church of Christ in Fort Worth, Texas, made an overture for unity to 8,500 people packed in the Indiana Convention Center. The entire transcript of his talk can be found in the Autumn 2003 *One Body*. In part, Atchley said, “Several years ago I spent some time really searching for the heart of God, asking Him to give me a mission in the second half of my life that was so big only He could do it. And God put something on my heart. I shared it that next Sunday in all three services of our church. I shared with them that God wants me to devote myself for the rest of my life to seeing reconciliation among the *a cappella* and instrumental Churches of Christ and Christian Churches in the world ... I can’t pretend to speak for all of the *a cappella* churches but I can speak for a lot of them ... And I can speak for them and I can tell you tonight I believe with all my heart, in my lifetime, we can have a family reunion ... I can imagine a day soon when our churches are partnering together to send mission teams into the world to do local outreaches in our city, to feed the hungry, to help the wounded in every major city in America. I can imagine the vision of our Restoration forefathers being restored and the prayer of Jesus being fulfilled. For a hundred years we have served God a part . . . only God knows what we can do the next hundred years serving Him together ...”

Plans are in the making on both sides of the keyboard to recognize in 2006 (but not celebrate!) the 100th anniversary of the division in 1906.

I would be remiss if I neglected to mention the part the Pepperdine University Bible Lectures, under the direction of Jerry Rushford, have made in improving relationships between the two fellowships. Jerry has intentionally included speakers from the conservative Christian Churches to teach classes and participate in panel discussions for a number of years. I wrote a feature article, “The Pepperdine University Bible Lectures,” which appeared in the March 28, 2004 *Christian Standard*. In the article I quoted Rushford’s description of the lectures – “a stimulating forum for the renewal and restoration of New

Testament Christianity." I have found them to be just that and make it a point to tell everyone I know about this key event.

The summer of 2004 will see the release of the long-awaited *Stone-Campbell Encyclopedia*, edited by Doug Foster (Churches of Christ), Newell Williams (Disciples) and Paul Blowers (Christian Churches). Leroy Garret said, "Some 200 scholars from all three churches have contributed to the 900-page production – covering virtually every subject possible – that is destined to become the most significant publication in our history. Teamwork, to be sure, but it is more than that. It is the unity of the Spirit. If we can write an encyclopedia together – issued by an international publishing house [Eerdmans] – we can do anything together!" (*One Body* Winter 2004).

Each of the unity meeting efforts in the past 70 years have been sincere and noble attempts by those who are concerned about healing our divisions and answering our Lord's prayer for unity – "that the world may believe." Thomas A. Langford observes, "As we look back, after some forty years, it is clear that while all the issues have not been resolved, or differences removed, there is a much more irenic spirit generally prevailing. The Forums reflect much more hopeful conditions and seem to engender much less opposition than was once the case. It is becoming clear, at least to many, that there can be fellowship and cooperation, even without total agreement on past contentious issues, that unity in diversity is truly a biblical doctrine. There is, indeed, one Body, consisting of all who have been born of water and spirit; all such are indeed brothers and sisters in Christ, members of the same spiritual family. May we find more ways of expressing that reality" ("Unity Forums" *One Body* Spring 2002).

*But I do know that I love you
And I know that if you love me too
What a wonderful world this would be*

TIMELINE

- 1801 – Cane Ridge Revival
- 1804 – Stone signs "Last Will and Testament of the Springfield Presbytery"
- 1809 – Campbell writes "Declaration and Address"
- 1832 – Stone-Campbell Movements become one
- 1859 – Midway, KY church instrumental music controversy
- 1866 – Moses Lard: Division is impossible
- 1889 – Sand Creek "Address and Declaration"
- 1906 – Churches of Christ listed separately in U.S. Census of Religious Bodies
- 1909 – Centennial Convention in Pittsburgh
- 1927 – Conservative Christian Churches form North American Christian Convention
- 1930 – World Convention of Churches of Christ organized
- 1933 – Beam/Jessup unity rally, Visalia, California
- 1934 – Commission on Restudy of the Disciples of Christ begins

1937 – Murch/Witty unity meeting, Cincinnati, Ohio
 1949 – Commission on Restudy of the Disciples of Christ dissolved
 1955 – Wynnewood Chapel unity meetings begin, Dallas, Texas
 1957 – “Defining moment” debate, Nowata, Oklahoma
 1957 – Hartford Forum begins, Hartford, Illinois
 1966 – Unity Forum begins, Bethany, West Virginia
 1968 – Disciples adopt “Restructure,” become denomination
 1972 – Hartford Forum concludes
 1975 – Unity Forum concludes
 1981 – Publication of Leroy Garrett’s *Stone-Campbell Movement*
 1983 – Jerry Rushford becomes director of Pepperdine University Bible Lectures
 1984 – *One Body* begins
 1984 – First Restoration Forum (“Restoration Summit”), Joplin, Missouri
 1985 – Disciple Renewal movement formed
 1991 – Peace letter from Quaker Avenue to Broadway, Lubbock, Texas
 1995 – One Body/Disciple Renewal Talks begin, Joplin, Missouri
 1997 – Shelly/Knowles letter exchange at NACC and Jubilee
 1999 – Restoration Forum goes to Canada
 1999 – Stone-Campbell Dialogue begins, Cincinnati, Ohio
 2000 – “Confession of Sin” signed at Stone-Campbell Dialogue, Nashville, Tennessee
 2000 – “Unity Covenant” signed at Restoration Forum, Lubbock, Texas
 2003 – Rich Atchley makes unity overture at NACC, Indianapolis, Indiana
 2004 – Hope Reunion, San Antonio, Texas
 2004 – “Faithful Conversations”, Abilene, Texas
 2004 – Publication of *Stone-Campbell Encyclopedia*

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Victor Knowles is founder and president of POEM, Peace on Earth Ministries, P.
O. Box 275, Joplin, MO 64802-0275. Web site: www.poeministries.org. Email:
Victor@poeministries.org. Tel. (417) 627-0325.