

CAREE Communicator

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BLOCKBUSTER DOUBLE ISSUE!

This issue of *CAREE Communicator* is jam-packed with information for you. It comes also, on the detachable last page, with a CAREE membership form. Now, as to the contents of this newsletter:

Item #1 gives information about the upcoming CAREE conference to be held Thursday and Friday, February 10 & 11, 2005. We will have special international speakers for the conference, updates and reports from several conferees, and CAREE's annual meeting. This item also includes information about hotel accommodation we have arranged for conference attendees who choose to take advantage of preferred rates, instructions as to how to get from the hotel to the conference site and back again, and information about registration.

Item #2 gives an update about the website CAREE launched this year: www.caree.info. At the annual meeting, we will spend some time considering ways of improving, further filling out, modifying or changing it. This item gives some specifics about what you can do to help make the website better.

Item #3 reports on a trip to Macedonia.

Item #4 offers information on the history of Macedonia, as encountered on that trip.

Item #5 invites you to submit reports on your activities for or in Eastern Europe.

Item #6 points to three short but important books which update us on developments in recent hotspots in Eastern Europe.

At the end a CAREE membership form is attached. Why not go ahead and join, or renew your membership? The rates remain unchanged – what you get is quite a bargain, as you already know: the best English-language journal on religion in Eastern Europe, newsletters, and the opportunity to keep up with what is going on in the region. Please take time to renew your membership now – CAREE needs your ongoing support.

(1) CAREE CONFERENCE: February 10 & 11, 2005, in Manhattan

CAREE's conference and annual meeting will be held on Thursday and Friday, February 10 & 11, 2005. This is different from our common Friday/Saturday pattern, but the change allows us to coordinate our meeting with the schedule of two significant international speakers who will address us.

The first is Professor Thomas Bremer, professor at the Catholic Faculty of the University of Münster, Germany; Dr. Bremer has recently been appointed Dean of the faculty. He has

studied in Belgrade and continues to interact with churches in the Balkans; on a regular basis, he takes teams of students to work among those churches. He is well known in European circles as an expert on the religious life of Eastern Europe.

Our second international guest speaker is Dr. Mitja Velikonja, Professor of Sociology at the University of Ljubljana, Slovenia. His research and writings have dealt with religious communities in Eastern Europe, and we look forward to his presentation.

The members of the Europe Forum affiliated with the National Council of Churches will join us. We look forward to hearing reports about developments, interaction, concerns, etc., from these denominational representatives who carry responsibilities for interaction with churches and communities in Eastern Europe. As well, representatives of Church World Service (CWS) will be present, to advise us of recent developments, needs, initiatives, etc. CAREE will also hold its annual meeting.

AS TO THE SCHEDULE:

While some of the particulars remain to be worked out, note that the conference will begin at 9:30 a.m. on Thursday, February 10. We will meet in the morning, and (following lunch) in the afternoon, and (after supper) in the evening. It will be a full day! CAREE's annual meeting will begin at 9:00 a.m. on Friday, February 11, and is to end by noon that day.

As details become more specific, they will be posted on the CAREE web-site, which you should check for that information: www.caree.info. (See further information about the website below, under Item #2.)

AS TO ACCOMMODATIONS:

You are free to make your own, of course. However, you may want to take advantage of the special rates arranged with Hotel Edison, 228 West 47th Street, New York, New York 10036; telephone for reservations: (212) 840-5000. (Hotel Edison has often granted CAREE reduced rates for conferences and annual meetings, and we are grateful it has done so again this year.) The hotel is located just off Times Square, and only three blocks from a subway line which can take riders within a few blocks of the InterChurch Center, where the conference will be held (see precise address and travel instruction below).

The special rates at Hotel Edison are (per room, per night, plus taxes): Single, \$125.00, Double/Twin \$135.00, Triple with two double beds \$150.00, Quad with space for four and two double beds \$165.00. (These costs are in U.S. dollars.) The rates are applicable Wednesday, February 9, through Saturday, February 12, 2005 (to allow for various travel schedules).

Please note that it is important that, if you want to get a room at these rates, you register as soon as possible. *Make sure* that you ask for the rates for the "CAREE Conference" when you make your reservation (which will require prepayment or other guarantee).

AS TO LOCATION AND GETTING THERE:

As has been the practice the last many years, the conference and CAREE's annual meeting will be held at the InterChurch Center, 475 Riverside Drive, New York, New York.

To get to the InterChurch Center by subway from the hotel, ask the concierge for directions to the subway station at 50th Street (three blocks north of the hotel). At the subway, go in at the "uptown" entrance and take the IRT #1 or #9 train. Exit the train at the 116th Street station. Walk north to 120th Street and one block west to Claremont Avenue (where the entrance to the InterChurch Center is). Enter at the door on Claremont Avenue, proceed to the reception

desk, and identify yourself; the attendant will have the list of registrants.

To return to the hotel, exit the InterChurch Center, head east one block, and go south to the 116th Street subway entrance. Descend the “downtown” stairs and take IRT #1 or #9 train. Exit the train at the 50th Street station and go south three blocks, to 47th Street. Hotel Edison is to your right, halfway down the block.

AS TO REGISTRATION:

While we charge no registration fee for the conference, the InterChurch Center is a controlled-access building. Consequently, we need to know ahead of time that you are planning to attend the conference, so that we can include your name (and that of any guests you may wish to bring) on the list of attendees.

To register for the conference, please contact Jim Payton, CAREE’s executive secretary, at either the regular or the e-mail address on the masthead, or via the fax number listed there. Please be sure to get your registration to him no later than Tuesday, February 8, 2005, so that Jim can finalize the list before he leaves for the conference.

(2) CAREE WEBSITE: www.caree.info

As indicated in the previous issue of this newsletter, at the March 2004 annual meeting, CAREE launched a website. Since then, it has been under construction, with progress coming in increments. Recently, several elements of the website have been further constructed and are functional. We invite you to visit the website, explore it, try the “hot buttons” – and make suggestions for how to improve it further.

In fact, one of the items on the February 2005 CAREE meeting will be a consideration of suggestions for changes, improvements, additions, etc. So, explore, consider – and suggest!

Try the links to the reports that have been posted. Note that the reports include photographs in the body of the report – and that you can go to the “photo gallery” to see still further photos from each of the trips.

The website is now able to post reports (and other news items) with accompanying photographs. (Both reports in Items #3 and #4 below are found on the website, complete with numerous photographs which enhance the reports considerably.) So, if you send us some reports about your activities or trips (as you are invited to do under #5 below), please send us any accompanying photographs you may have, so they can be included.

Beyond that, the webmaster Chris Vandonkelaar has a request for all of you who have been involved with CAREE for some time: please send him any and all photographs you have of CAREE meetings or activities in the past – whether the photos are in color or in black and white.

If you have a scanner and can send them via e-mail, that is easiest: send them to him at cvandonk@rogers.com. Alternatively, you send them to him at his regular mailing address

(Chris Vandonkelaar, 1847 Sawmill Road, Conestogo, Ontario NOB 1N0, Canada); he will scan them and return them to you (so please make sure to include your return address!). It would tremendously improve the website if we could post some photos from years past.

As you will appreciate, the website is a work in progress. As mentioned above, we will discuss possible improvements at the February 2005 meeting. In due course, we will need to sort out what will appear in this newsletter and what will be posted on the website; other questions will come up, as well.

But the website will help make others aware of CAREE and the services we have offered in the past and still offer in the present. In fact, we have already heard reports about people who have discovered us through the website. So, it is a promising addition to CAREE's outreach and an improvement to our visibility. You can help with that, by submitting photographs, reports of your activities, and making suggestions for further improvements or additions. So, please visit the website at www.caree.info and tell us what you think.

(3) RETURN TO MACEDONIA (October 11-17, 2004)

—report by Leonard Swidler and Paul Mojzes (revised by Jim Payton)

CAREE was one of the sponsoring organizations for the International Scholars' Annual Trialogue [ISAT] held in Skopje, Macedonia, May 10-14, 2002, at the invitation of the President of Macedonia, Boris Trajkovski. The president of CAREE, Paul Mojzes, is one of the coordinators of ISAT; Leonard Swidler is the other. Jim Payton, CAREE's executive secretary, participated in the conference.

President Trajkovski hoped that the ISAT conference would help ward off civil war in Macedonia and assist in the promotion of civil society in the nation. The meeting made an effective contribution in that regard, as evidenced by the three main commitments made at the end of the conference: (1) the heads of the five religious communities mentioned in the Macedonian constitution agreed to meet regularly; (2) a Council of Interreligious Cooperation would be set up, with representatives from each of the religious traditions; and (3) the two major theological faculties (Orthodox Christian and Islamic) pledged to cooperate. (For a report on the May 2002 ISAT conference, see *CAREE Communicator*, Summer & Fall Issue, 2002, pp. 2-5.)

On October 11-17, 2004, with financial support made possible by a grant from the United States Institute of Peace, several scholars returned to Macedonia. The visit was led by Paul Mojzes and Leonard Swidler, who were accompanied by Prof. Mahmud Aydin (Turkey), Rev. Peter Baktis (US), Jim Payton (Canada), and Rabbi Reuven Firestone (US – his arrival was delayed until the evening of October 13, owing to responsibilities at another conference). Fr. Baktis is a priest in the Orthodox Church in America, who serves as a chaplain in the U.S. army; Prof. Aydin is a Muslim scholar; Prof. Firestone is Jewish; Paul Mojzes is Methodist, originally from the former Yugoslavia; and Leonard Swidler is Roman Catholic. The delegation thus included representatives of all five religious traditions mentioned in the Macedonian constitution. (Jim Payton had been invited by the Orthodox theological faculty to present a paper at the seminary.) The purpose of the trip was to engage academically with the Muslim and

Orthodox seminaries again and to follow up on the progress in meeting the commitments made in 2002.

The Orthodox and the Muslim theological faculties had extended invitations to us to speak to them. On October 12, at the Faculty of Islamic Studies, we lectured for faculty, students, and visitors. The main presentation was made by Prof. Aydin, with the others speaking more briefly. A representative of the Orthodox Theological Seminary addressed the body, as well. A lively and fruitful public discussion ensued, with women and men students as well as faculty participating. The program was filmed by the Albanian language channel of Macedonian TV and shown to its viewers.

That evening, Leonard Swidler and Paul Mojzes spoke on interreligious dialogue at a Cultural Center in Skopje called Tochka (Point-Counterpoint), with the other members of the delegation making briefer presentations. The session was chaired by Prof. Slobodanka Markovska of the University of Skopje, and sponsored by the center, which is partially supported by the Soros Foundation in Skopje – which also financed the Macedonian translation of the book, *The Study of Religion in the Age of Global Dialogue*, by Leonard Swidler and Paul Mojzes. (Prof. Markovska had arranged for the translation.) The center was packed with young people, and Macedonian language television crews were present, doing interviews and filming the session. The program was subsequently aired on state television.

October 13 was a busy day. It began with an audience with the chief hierarch of the Macedonian Orthodox Church, Archbishop Stefan. We had a lengthy and warm discussion with him, during which a number of concrete possible projects – such as the joint training of Orthodox and Muslim clergy in common pastoral concerns (alcoholism, drugs, trafficking of women, battered wives and children) – were proposed and discussed.

Then we went to the Orthodox Theological Seminary, where we presented another set of lectures. Jim Payton and Fr. Peter Baktis gave the main addresses, with the others also briefly speaking to the assembled faculty, students, and visitors. (A report of the audience with Archbishop Stefan and on the lectures at the seminary can be found on the Macedonian Orthodox Church's website: go to www.mpc.org.mk/English, select "News & Events," and click on the entry for 14.10.2004.)

Through the interchanges at the seminaries, we discovered that, as a result of the 2002 Dialogue, a series of six exchange lectures had been held, three each at both colleges by the other faculties. We also learned that the deans of the two theological faculties had appeared in a lengthy dialogue on public television. Further, during the summer of 2004 a joint study camp for students from both the Orthodox and the Islamic colleges had been held in southern Macedonia – and further plans for major cooperation are afoot. Thus, commitment number three from 2002 is making good progress and promises even more.

After the lectures at the Orthodox Theological Seminary, the delegation also met with Branko Crvenkovski, the new President of Macedonia (after the tragic death of President Trajkovski in a plane crash this past February). We were warmly received by him and encouraged to continue our work, with the promise to collaborate with us in whatever way possible. We made a specific suggestion that the government of Macedonia specify some public space in some property it owns to house the offices, library, and meeting space for the Council of Interreligious Cooperation. He promised to take this up at various levels of the government. As well, we learned from him that the very next day he was hosting a meeting in Ohrid of the heads of the five major religious communities of Macedonia – who are the members of the Council of Interreligious Cooperation. He indicated that these meetings would take place every three

months, hosted on a rotating basis by the several religious leaders, and that he as President would attend the meetings. Needless to say, we are delighted that commitment number one has been auspiciously launched.

Later that day, we visited the widow of President Boris Trajkovski, Mrs. Vilma Trajkovska, to offer our condolences and to learn about the beginning, but promising, work of “The Boris Trajkovski International Foundation.” Both sides promised to stay in contact to see how we might be able to collaborate in the future on the causes that we share.

During the visit, we were able to meet with representatives of four of the five religious traditions on the Council of Interreligious Cooperation – namely, the Orthodox (Prof. Ratomir Grozdanoski), Muslim (Dean Ismail Bardhi), Protestant (Rev. Mikhail Cekov), and Jewish (Mr. Viktor Mizrahi); the Catholic representative was unavailable. From all this, we were encouraged that, although not much progress had been made on commitment number two to date, considerably more seems likely in the future.

During the evening of October 13, we had lengthy conversations with the two Jewish community leaders, Mr. Zdravko Shami (President) and Viktor Mizrahi (Coordinator). The following day, the delegation met with the heads of Catholic Relief Services in Macedonia and discussed thoroughly the possibility of their cooperating with the Council for Interreligious Cooperation to facilitate the effectiveness of its grass-roots work. Those arrangements need to be finalized, but if they can be worked out, they promise to make the work on the ground much more efficient and effective. On October 15, we traveled to Strumitsa, in southeastern Macedonia, where the Methodist Annual Conference was being held. Paul Mojzes addressed the conferees, and we held brief discussions with the Methodist Bishop Heinrich Bolleter and with Rev. Mikhail Cekov, the Protestant representative to the Council for Interreligious Cooperation.

As well, on October 14, members of the delegation met with Mr. Vladimir Milchin, the Director of the Soros Foundation in Macedonia, to inform him of our activities and give him copies of the handsome publication of the Macedonian/Albanian translation of the papers from the 2002 Trialogue. 1,000 copies had been printed, to be disseminated among the five religious communities and others. He seemed pleased with the concrete results.

During our time in Macedonia, we also distributed a large number of English-language book versions of the *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* issue entitled *Interreligious Dialogue Toward Reconciliation in Macedonia and Bosnia*, containing the papers from the 2002 Trialogue. As well, we delivered a box of English language books on various aspects of interreligious dialogue and peace-making for the Council on Interreligious Cooperation.

On October 15 and 16, we visited several Macedonian Orthodox monasteries and traveled to Ohrid. We were all impressed by the new vitality of both the male and female monasteries and especially the significant number of very able young nuns – often gifted university graduates – who have joined the monasteries in the past five years.

We ended our visit with real satisfaction that significant progress has been made, partially as a result of our efforts, and that even more can be realistically be looked forward to as various arrangements “on the ground” are going forward.

(4) EXPLORING HISTORY IN MACEDONIA (October 9-17, 2004)

– report by Jim Payton

As one member of the delegation that went to Macedonia in October, I was glad to have the

chance to explore some of the rich history of the land. As a Protestant scholar, it was, of course, a great privilege and honor to be asked by the Orthodox Theological Faculty to present a paper to the faculty and students of the seminary. My paper was entitled, "Advice from St. Maximos Confessor for Contemporary Macedonians." It had already been translated into Macedonian and, after some preliminary comments from me, my good friend Professor Ratomir Grozdanoski read the Macedonian translation to the assembly.

While in Skopje, I took the opportunity to visit the remains of the Turkish fort in Upper Kale, strategically situated on the bluffs above the River Vardar. This had been the location from which the Serbian monarch Stjepan Dušan had ruled the expanding Serbian Empire in the 14th century; it became the center of Ottoman Turkish rule for the region after the defeat of the Serbian forces at the Battle of Kosovo-Polje in 1389. The Ottoman Turks ruled the region for the next five centuries, leaving marks of their long residence in the Ali Pasha mosque and the nearby market streets.

Near the fort is a museum dedicated to the Macedonian hero Gotse Delchev, who fought to bring an end to Turkish rule. His sarcophagus stands outside the museum, and the city park has a statue of him.

The Orthodox Church of Sts. Cyril and Methodius in Strumitsa stands on a site where Emperor Justinian the Great had originally erected a church (later destroyed by fire). During the Ottoman occupation, Christian churches were not allowed to rise higher architecturally than Muslim mosques, so the church on this high spot found it necessary to worship in the basement of the structure. The magnificent hand-carved iconostasis testifies both to the remarkable skill of Macedonian craftsmen, long known for wood-carving expertise, and to the Christian commitment of the worshippers. Once Ottoman rule came to an end, the upper floor of the church received the same attention.

Only a few miles away, in the village of Vodocha, stands St. Leontios Orthodox Church, erected in the mid-11th century near the spot where Emperor Basil II "Bulgaroctonos" ("the Bulgar-slayer") exacted cruel revenge for the humiliating treatment accorded Emperor Nikephoros I in the early 800s by Khan Krum, the founder of the Bulgarian state. In 1014, Basil ordered that the 15,000-strong Bulgarian army which had been captured by Byzantine forces should be divided into groups of 100; of them, 99 were blinded, with the other soldier blinded in one eye. The Bulgarian army was then ordered to take hands and march back to Prespa, the capital of the Bulgarian Empire. The shock was so severe that the Bulgarian Tsar Samuil died, and the First Bulgarian Empire came to an end. The village bears a name recalling this gruesome event: "Vodocha" means "poked eye." Within the St. Leontius Church, an icon of the 40 martyrs of Sebaste (soldiers martyred in the 2nd century) is rendered with the soldiers agonizingly touching their empty eye sockets. St. Leontius Church is the only place in the world where this icon is so portrayed.

In Ohrid stands St. Panteleimon Orthodox Church, a historical treasure. Founded in the 4th century, the original baptistery, surrounded by intricate mosaics, is being excavated and restored. Subsequently destroyed, the church was reestablished in the late 9th century and dedicated to St. Panteleimon by St. Clement of Ohrid, a disciple of Sts. Cyril and Methodius. St. Clement of Ohrid, the first Slav appointed a bishop, set up a remarkable school in Ohrid which trained some 3500 Slavs in the Slavic script and prepared them to serve as priests and translators for the burgeoning Slavic Christian civilization. St. Panteleimon Church is being carefully restored. It houses the sarcophagus of St. Clement of Ohrid, one of the patron saints of Macedonia.

Indeed, whether in Skopje or in Ohrid or anywhere else in the country, one is never far from a reminder of the historic roots of religion in Macedonia – as can be seen with the contemporary statue of the Apostles of the Slavs, St. Cyril and Methodius, in the public square at the edge of Lake Ohrid, in the heart of the city.

(5) INVITATION: TELL US ABOUT YOUR ACTIVITIES

In the two items immediately above, you have accounts of the activities of some members of CAREE. We would be glad to publish, in this newsletter and/or on the website, reports from you readers about your activities that relate to Eastern Europe – trips to the region, services you have offered for Eastern Europe (whether over there or from North America), contacts with scholars or religious leaders from the region (whether those contacts took place in Eastern Europe or North America or somewhere else) – or other things that relate to your ongoing interest in Eastern Europe. So, if you have taught a course about Eastern European history or literature or geography (or whatever!), let us know about it. As well, if you have found an interesting book about the region or some country or development within it, or some website with helpful information about Eastern Europe or items something else, pass on the information and we'll get it out.

In that regard, we gladly include information from CAREE member Paul Crego, a cataloguing specialist who works for the Library of Congress. In the last few years, he has regularly traveled to the southern Caucasus, especially to Georgia. In July of this year, he reported on his most recent trip at a U.S. Helsinki Commission briefing on the south Caucasus region. This report is available at the website: www.csce.gov/briefings.cfm?briefing_id+284. (Owing to copyright considerations, we cannot print it here.) Paul recently indicated that he hopes sometime soon to write more about his experiences and to analyze some of the Georgian religious periodical literature he obtained on that report. The first sounds like something for this newsletter and the website, while the second would be welcome for *Religion in Eastern Europe*.

As well, if you have received some honors, let us know – we'll let others know.

(6) SOME INTERESTING BOOKS:

Three books have recently come to my attention which you may find interesting. Each of them is short, but all contain a wealth of information about recent developments in Eastern Europe – specifically, “hotspots” in the former Yugoslavia.

The first two are “Occasional Papers” of the “International Peace Academy,” published by Lynne Rienner Publishers (Boulder and London):

(1) *Toward Peace in Bosnia: Implementing the Dayton Accords*, by Elizabeth M. Cousens & Charles K. Cater (2001) summarizes developments (or, perhaps more accurately, the lack of them) in 153 pages (plus two appendices and a bibliography). It offers much data, careful analysis, but little hope for significant improvement in the near future.

(2) *Kosovo: An Unfinished Peace*, by William G. O'Neill (2002) – 141 pages, plus an appendix and bibliography – is a hard-hitting, often very critical assessment of the numerous blunders and failures, as well as a few successes, in the region since the end of the NATO bombardment. The UN organizations have really dropped the ball in this one.

(3) *Preventing War: The United Nations and Macedonia*, by Abiodun Williams (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2000) offers (in 183 pages, plus bibliography) an examination of the UN's initiative to send peace-keeping forces into Macedonia as a way of forestalling conflict, before it erupted. As the author demonstrates, this initiative worked well. (It's nice, for once, to report something positive in western military involvement in the region!)