

# CAREE Communicator

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New Series, #2

## CAREE Conference

CAREE will hold its long-awaited conference on Friday and Saturday, March 10 & 11, 2000 (with possible overlap into Sunday, March 12). While the title has yet to be finalized, the conference will focus on North American Christian concerns for Eastern European religious communities. We want to consider what CAREE can and should do in Eastern Europe, given the changes throughout the region over the last decade. In addition to a main speaker, we will meet in discussion groups to encourage as wide participation and reflection as possible. The end result should be the articulation of a renewed vision for CAREE's role in and for Eastern Europe.

In preparation for the conference, the next issue of the *CAREE Communicator* (in December, 1999) will offer a summary of the history and purpose of CAREE (to be prepared by Charles West and Paul Mojzes). It will also give details on the title and structure of the conference, the main speaker, venue (either in New York city or at Princeton University), and information for accommodations, reservations, etc. The dates are firm, so please mark your calendar--and plan to attend and participate. CAREE values your input as to how best to proceed with service to and within Eastern Europe, so please join us on March 10 & 11, 2000.

Following the conference, CAREE will hold its annual meeting. (Many of you remember that CAREE has often met in conjunction with the annual meeting of the American Academy of Religion. Please note that we will *not* do so this year.)

## Upcoming Events That May Be of Interest to You

(1) "Unity in Christ: Gift and Calling"--the 50th Anniversary meeting of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA; November 9-12, 1999; Cleveland, Ohio. General meeting ("the Great Conversation"), 19 forums, several caucuses, special events, NCC committee meetings, etc. For further information, visit the 50th Anniversary Celebration website at [www.nccusa.org](http://www.nccusa.org)

(2) "Tolerance and Beyond: Religions, Rights and Civil Society in the OSCE Countries"--sponsored by The Center for the Study of Human Rights at Columbia University; March 13-15, 2000; Berlin, Germany. (The language of the conference will be English.) -- A call for papers has been issued: abstracts of about 500 words must be received by November 31, 1999, for consideration. Contact Dr. Elizabeth Cole at (212) 854-7189 [phone], (212) 854-6785 [fax], or via e-mail: [eac30@columbia.edu](mailto:eac30@columbia.edu) (With good travel arrangements, you could take in this conference after our CAREE conference!)

## **Kosovo Information**

The Spring 1999 issue of *CAREE Communicator* carried no information or articles regarding the Kosovo conflict being waged at the time. We all doubtlessly had it on our minds and in our prayers, though. While the conflict has been brought to a conclusion, reconciliation will take extraordinary effort. The information below offers some reports (beyond what you probably had access to via mass media) about what happened during the conflict and how some people are handling the aftermath.

**Statement on Kosovo**  
**By the NCC's Church World Service and Witness Unit Committee**  
**Meeting in Atlanta, Georgia**  
**March 25, 1999**

**“Blessed are the peacemakers; for they shall be called the children of God.”**  
**(Matthew 5:9)**

The Unit Committee of Church World Service and Witness of the National Council of the Churches of Christ meeting on March 25, 1999 witnesses with horror the attacks by the Government of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia on its own people and villages and the bombing in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) by NATO forces involving sizable contingents of United States and British military personnel and equipment. The member communions of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA (NCCC) seek to be faithful to the call of God through Jesus Christ to struggle for peace with justice. The Church World Service and Witness (CWSW) Unit Committee asks the General Secretary of the NCCC to convey the following concerns to the appropriate bodies.

The path to a negotiated, peaceful settlement of the conflict has failed to this point due to a number of circumstances including the following:

- Escalation of the level of violence and other violations of human rights during this period;
- Failure to respect the role and involve the United Nations in the negotiations; and
- Demands for an agreement to a peace settlement not reached by consensus nor adequate representation of the parties and peoples involved.

Peace in Kosovo and the FRY will be realized as the residents are given the opportunity to engage in the resolution of the issues which have become barriers to peace and justice. We stand with the people of good will in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia who seek peace and reconciliation. No true resolution of the issues can be achieved by the application of force.

We find hope in past meetings of representatives of the religious bodies in Kosovo and urge continued support of the efforts of religious leaders to seek reconciliation in Kosovo.

We call upon CWSW and the NCCC through the office of the General Secretary to communicate with the appropriate bodies the following concerns:

- ◆ that NATO cease the bombing immediately;
- ◆ that the United Nations Security Council pursue vigorously a peaceful settlement of the conflict and call for a cease fire by all parties to the conflict to provide time to search for

- ◆ such a settlement;
- ◆ that all humanitarian agencies, including Action by Churches Together, increase efforts to meet the emergency needs of all victims of the conflict and of the latest attacks;
- ◆ that the NCCC member communions seek additional funding for the humanitarian needs of all of the people in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia;
- ◆ that the member communions continue their efforts to address the moral and ethical imperatives of a comprehensive common global security for the 21st century, in cooperation with regional and international ecumenical bodies, and
- ◆ that all people of faith pray for God's guidance and forgiveness for all violence done, for all missed opportunities to seek peace and for those persons who face these days with fear.

In addition to this statement, **Church World Service** offered considerable tangible assistance. The following comes from CWS' June 1999 "Kosovo Fact Sheet":

- Church World Service, the relief & development agency and refugee assistance arm of the NCC, had by then already sent more than \$1.6 million in assistance for the needs of Kosovar Albanians and other displaced persons in the region.
- By the end of summer 1999, CWS anticipated that it and its member denominations will have provided \$3.4 million in material and financial assistance to the Balkans.
- CWS assistance was provided to any survivors of the crisis regardless of their religion, nationality or cultural heritage.
- CWS' Immigration and Refugee Program resettled refugees in the USA with the help of local churches in Chicago, Brooklyn, Austin, Dallas, and Houston.
- Among the items purchased and sent by CWS were tents, blankets, mattresses, baby goods and formula, health kits, medicines, school kits, underwear, sanitary napkins, sewing kits, baby kits, socks, and soap.

As for the situation now, he said, "We must look to the future and build

To find out how you can contribute to the provision of ongoing needs of the displaced in the region, check out the CWS website: [www.churchworldservice.org](http://www.churchworldservice.org)

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Excerpts from "**Being Catholic in Kosovo,**" by **Melanie McDonagh**, from the July 10 *Tablet* of London (Ms. McDonagh interviewed Catholic priests in Kosovo for the article):

"Fr. Nush Gjolaj is the Albanian parish priest, and when I went to see him he was still basking in the aftermath of war and liberation. 'It was a terrible situation,' he said of the time since March. 'Some nights were very hard; you were just waiting for the dawn.' The army, he said, had surrounded the [Catholic] church, and the commanders were next to the school. 'Here, up above us,' he said, pointing, 'they put four big trucks and they had rocket launchers ten metres away. They put them there, with intent, next to the church. They activated them on 9 April, and the NATO pilot fired on them. And when he saw the church, the steeple, the missile was in the air, and yet he diverted it, and it fell away from the church. For me, this is the work of God. We could all be dead; it was my second birth.'"

bridges between people." He was ready to cooperate with priests nearby from the

Serbian Orthodox church, but he expressed sympathy for their situation and commented about the kind of ecumenism that was needed: "I sympathize with them; all their ideas have fallen, and they have lost Croatia, Bosnia, and Kosovo. Now they're frustrated, and I don't want them to misunderstand me. It's much better in a quiet way, to build bridges." Ms. McDonagh paraphrased what the Catholic priest meant by commenting, "In these circumstances in-your-face ecumenism is not the kindest option . . . And Catholic priests also have to take account of the feelings of their own community."

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While I was in Ukraine and Russia in May, I was often asked about NATO's bombing of Yugoslavia. The people who asked me

### **To Eastern Europe**

— Please send information about any travel to or service in Eastern Europe. We would be pleased to report on your activities and thus share them with the rest of the readers of the *Communicator*. Try to keep your report to not more than one page. I did not receive any such reports since the last *Communicator*, but I am happy to report on mine.

After several years of teaching various facets of the history of Eastern Europe, I finally had the opportunity to travel to it. In May of this year, after mailing out the *CAREE Communicator*, I flew to Ukraine and Russia. I participated in two academic conferences and gave two guest lectures. Beyond that, of course, I saw as much as I could of Kiev, Simferopol, and Yalta in Ukraine, plus St. Petersburg and Repino in Russia.

Seeing Kiev was both a dream come true and a challenge. Being in St. Sophia and touching the original frescoes of this 11th-century cathedral gripped me as I reflected that Christians had worshipped here for more than nine centuries: it is one thing to teach Church history, but something else to stand in its midst. Later on, I went to the remains of a church which had been erected on the foundations of the fortress Kyi had built in the 400s. Although I teach the history of Ukraine and am a historian to the very depths of my being, I found this overwhelming--like trying to call up Windows 98 on a 386. Kiev is a magnificent city, on which the Ukrainian people are expending considerable sums to restore the evidences of their heritage.

The guest lectures were in the Crimean Medical University in Simferopol. I was surprised to be asked, since my fields of specialization are nowhere near medical science. However, one of the professors explained to me that the old Communist structure for higher education mandated that every university--medical, technical, etc.--had to offer instruction in political science, philosophy, and ethics. The intent had been, of course, to inculcate proper Communist viewpoints. Even after the collapse of Communism, this "liberal arts" component of the curriculum has remained, but now the professors have considerably more liberty to choose

clearly did not understand the rationale for it. I expressed opposition to the bombing and indicated that the proposals for peace-keeping offered by President Kuchma of Ukraine and by Chernomyrdin of Russia seemed to be good options for ending the conflict.

My trip to Ukraine and Russia was shortly after the attack on the Chinese embassy in Sarajevo. The newspapers in both Kiev and St. Petersburg carried a lot of comment on that incident, plus some pointed (and clever) cartoons about it. -- Jim Payton

what sort of orientations to present to the students. I offered lectures on “The Influence of the Protestant Reformation on the History of Ukraine” (a topic I researched last year--I found two lines of such influence) and “A Christian Approach to History.”

Subsequently, a group of us travelled down to Yalta, where we participated in a conference sponsored by the the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences, Crimean-American College, and Crimean Medical University. Eight of us were from North America, with the other thirty from Ukraine and Russia. I offered a paper, “Toward an Orthodox Worldview for the Third Millennium.” Capable translators allowed the conference presentations and discussions to proceed vigorously.

From Crimea I flew to St. Petersburg for the second conference, on “Christian Higher Education in 21st Century Russia.” Sponsored by the St. Petersburg School of Religion and Philosophy and IAPCHE (International Association for the Promotion of Christian Higher Education), this conference drew participants from the Netherlands, England, Hungary, North America, and Russia. The opening session was held at the Academy of Sciences building--it struck me that only 15 years ago, such a conference would have been unimaginable, but in 1999 a group of international scholars could gather in the most highly respected of academic venues in Russia to discuss questions of Christian faith and education. I was privileged to bring one of the two keynote addresses. My paper was “Toward an Orthodox Approach to Higher Education in 21st-Century Russia.” The conference was stimulating: it was obvious that the numerous Russian professors and churchmen gathered there relished the opportunity to engage in serious face-to-face discussions over how best to reintroduce teaching about Christianity into higher education in the near future.

St. Petersburg was also magnificent--multitudes of beautiful churches, cultural sites, and the majestic Neva River with the 300 bridges that span it and unite the city. The time was over too soon.

Jim Payton

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## Signs of Hope

I would like to pass on in the *Communicator* encouraging news about ventures undertaken by the churches of Eastern Europe to deal with the situations they are facing. Please forward to me any such information you receive, and I will try to include a summary of it in an upcoming issue.

I recently received a copy of *Ars Longa*, a newsletter from a foundation of the same name which serves the Hungarian Reformed Church in Hungary, Romania, Transcarpathian Ukraine, and Croatia. The newsletter reports on abysmal hospital conditions in Munkács, Ukraine, and on the horrendous flood in Transcarpathia last year. Beyond that, it indicates that Hungarian Reformed and Hungarian Catholics are cooperating in relief efforts for the flood victims. To support agricultural productivity, the *Ars Longa* Foundation has also arranged for the purchase of a tractor, with a combine to be purchased soon.

Further efforts by the foundation have included financial support for rebuilding churches damaged in Croatia, helping with the reestablishment of Church schools, provision of seed for farmers, supplying pulpits through seminary students, and outreach to Gypsies. Information is also given about “The Christian College Association in Budapest,” an initiative begun by some Hungarian Reformed university students who want to think through and articulate a Christian

approach to the problems of their country and to the world of thought. The *Ars Longa* Foundation is providing support for their efforts.

Further information is available at: [arslonga@linserv.abc.hu](mailto:arslonga@linserv.abc.hu) or [rblant@iserve.net](mailto:rblant@iserve.net)