

National Workshop on Christian Unity

<http://nwcu.org/>

The next National Workshop on Christian Unity (NWCU) will be May 1 – 4, 2017 in Minneapolis, MN (at the Hilton Minneapolis). Shirley Paulson (as Committee for Ecumenical Affairs) and other members of the Ecumenical Team, and probably other Christian Scientists are planning to attend this NWCU and would love to welcome any Christian Scientists who would like to become involved. Please contact Shirley at shirlpaulson@gmail.com.

Our Christian Science participation last year was inspiring, challenging, and encouraging. All of us had opportunities to talk to people about Christian Science, and we always learn from those experiences! We also learn from others how they live and learn their Christian faith. The most essential motivating factor in Christians' efforts to find unity is the understanding of Christ's calling us together. There are several biblical examples of this, but one that is often cited is from Ephesians (4:17 NRSV):

I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all. But each of us was given grace according to the measure of Christ's gift.

In addition to the warm welcome the Christian Scientists received at the 2016 workshop, it is noteworthy that these national workshops provide an excellent opportunity for Christian Scientists to support each other in their ecumenical activities at home. The personal relationships tend to open doors for constructive conversation, and those relationships continue to build. Some want to know more about Christian Science theology; others want to know how Christian Scientists pray; and others are just glad to see more diversity among the Christians who are finding their way to the ecumenical conversation. The general topic for study and reflection this year will be on the 500th anniversary of the Reformation.

History of the presence of Christian Science in the NWCU meetings:

- In 2008, Maryl Walters and Shirley Paulson attended the NWCU in Chicago, where Michael Kinnamon first began to talk to us about the importance of Christian Science participation in the ecumenical movement.
- In 2013, two Christian Scientists, Nancy Hagan and Sondra Elkins, attended the NWCU in Columbus, OH.
- In 2014, a dozen Christian Scientists attended portions of the NWCU in Albuquerque, NM. Their presence was so noticeable and welcome, we heard frequent comments from regular participants about gratitude for the Christian Scientists' participation.

- In 2015, six Christian Scientists attended the NWC U in Baltimore, MD. Our presence was expected, as we had been quite noticeable the year before. By meeting in Baltimore, we met more ecumenical Christians from the Eastern portion of the US.
- In 2016, eight Christian Scientists attended the NWC U in Louisville, KY. We were all more fully engaged and worked together as a group and as a whole. See our photos on the Facebook page, Circle of Faith, the album of April, 2016!

Who is NWC U?

Quoting from the National Workshop on Christian Unity (NWC U) website, here is the way they describe how they celebrate the spirit of ecumenism. By:

- providing meeting seminars for all who are concerned with the ministry of Christian unity: laity, clergy, ecumenical officers, theologians, staff of ecumenical organizations;
- stimulating an exchange of ideas and experiences among people concerned with Christian unity and the bodies they represent;
- being a resource and balance between national planning and local responsibility, general ecumenical discussions and particular interchurch conversations, and regional leadership efforts and local realities,
- encouraging denominational networks to develop and serve as a framework within which they can interact;
- celebrating the unity which already exists among Christians and searching for ways to overcome the divisions that remain.

Read our Circle of Faith blog on NWC U, posted July 14, 2014:

More ecumenically involved Christian Scientists making a difference

by Shirley Paulson



Two good friends with me at NWC U: Evangelical Rev. Dr. John Armstrong (left) and Lutheran Rev. Dr. Russell Meyer (right)

What a great treat for me to be in Albuquerque, NM in late April. A good number of Christian Scientists committed an afternoon to participating in our Ecumenical Workshop, and then we got to see how it all works in living color. Two days later, several of us from the workshop attended the Orientation Meeting for the National Workshop for Christian Unity (NWC U).

Once a year, NWCU meets in a different US city, providing an opportunity for Christians of any denominational focus to gather and consider seriously the meaning and practice of Christian unity. The first time I went, in 2008, I was usually met with surprise: “Why would a Christian Scientist be here?” Their question implied their assumption that Christian Scientists didn’t especially care about being considered Christian by other Christians. But this year was different!

Some new readers of this blog may not realize that the effort to support Christian unity does not mean a removal of distinct identity, but rather the Christian practice of loving and supporting one another as fellow Christians! Don’t worry. All Christians who support Christian unity are eager to preserve their own identity and unique contributions to Christianity. Christian Scientists are no exception!

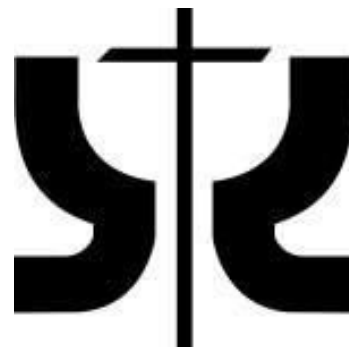
This is a good question for us to think about. Why would Christian Scientists care about Christian unity? A couple of thoughts:

1. Christian Scientists want to be disciples of Christ Jesus, as do their fellow Christians, so his followers ought not to be rivals.
2. We support the biblical idea of ‘one faith, one God, one baptism.’ Specifically, Mary Baker Eddy writes, “Christian Scientists preserve unity, and so shadow forth the substance of our sublime faith, and the evidence of its being built upon the rock of divine oneness, — one faith, one God, one baptism” (Mis. Wr. 131).

Being with other Christians who seriously pray for Christian unity has inspired me to ask myself the question: Have I really prayed for Christian unity? Jesus certainly did. My own prayers make me appreciate the blessings Christian Science has to offer to the whole Christian mission for humanity. This year, the common response to our being there as Christian Scientists was, “Oh, how nice to meet you. I just met another Christian Scientist attending the meeting!” Next year the NWCU meets in Charlotte, NC, so we hope even more Christian Scientists will be able to participate in this commitment to Christian unity. They’re happy to welcome our gifts.

The NWCU Logo

The logo for the National Workshop on Christian Unity was designed for the 1995 National Workshop on Christian Unity, that was held in Albuquerque, New Mexico. The New Mexico Council of Churches Executive John Ford asked a local artist, the late John R. Fulton, to design a logo for the event. Following the event, the National Planning Committee of the NWCU voted to adopt that logo as the official logo of the NWCU.



The logo affirms the cross as central to Christian unity. On either side of the cross is the outline of a chalice, which represents the existing unity (although not complete) and the anticipated full communion, which is the goal of the ecumenical movement. The space between the chalice and cross suggests the hands of prayer embracing the reconciling cross.