ACREC January 17-19, 2013 Meeting Overview:

- Discussion led by Sung Yeon Choi-Morrow, Interfaith Worker Justice, regarding the Hyatt Hotel having extreme working conditions, low pay and high quotas on housekeepers. The organization, Unite Here, has been fighting these issues for three years. They are calling for a global boycott of the Hyatt.

The PC (USA) is under contract with the Hyatt Hotel for lodging and meeting space for the 2013 Big Tent. The financial impact of cancelling the contract would be approximately $43,000.00

- The committee heard updates from the following General Assembly Special Committees
  - National Racial Ethnic Ministries Task Force
  - Christian and Jews Paper
  - Hispanic National Strategy
  - Belhar

- The committee agreed to partner with the Special Committee on the Confession of Belhar by being supportive of their efforts in the education process and working with them in all of their efforts.

- Discussion with Teresa Waggene of the Office of Immigrations Issues regarding their partnership with the Office of Theology and Worship in efforts to come up with the ecclesiology of “being church together.” This is an ecclesiology already embraced by the Waldensian Church in Italy, and staff from the Office of Theology and Worship travelled to Italy to learn more about their model. From ACREC’s resolution on this topic to the 220th GA (2012):

The image of “welcoming the stranger” has been prominent in our immigration thought, policy, and theology. We welcome people into our house, but our house does not become the guest’s or the stranger’s house as a result of our welcome. While welcoming is a pleasant activity (and certainly preferable to spurning, dismissing, or discounting), the power issues raised are not conducive to relationships between brothers and sisters in Christ. It is time for reframing the way we relate as a church to immigrants, many of whom come to the U.S. as fellow disciples of Jesus with us.

Additionally, some of those who have been “welcomed as strangers” by our church have included people from lands in the Caribbean, Mexico, and other parts of Central and South America, whose ancestors entered what is now U.S. territory as citizens of Spain, France, or Mexico. These people are not “strangers”; instead, they are returning to lands their ancestors called home. A theological and ecclesiological foundation of “welcoming the stranger” does not adequately serve the church in this time.

The Waldensian Church’s program of “Being Church Together” provides a model for us, as we reflect on relationships within the human community between those who have lived in the U.S. for years or generations and others who are newer to our shores. Conversations between representatives of the Waldensian Church and GA staff and GA committee members have already provoked deep thought and conversation on the current operative models of being church. As we learn from the scriptural witness, immigration and migration often happens not as an accident but as a movement of people in response to the will and plan of God. How can we be open to human movement as part of God’s plan? What can we learn from this? How do we go about “being church” if this is the foundational reality? If human movement could come to be understood as the norm and as a positive, constructive part of God’s intention for the world and the church, we could learn ways not only to accept but also to greet with joy the cultural change that comes with building community with people who are different from each other. We must discern models for the church that help us serve God and
neighbor both in the current reality and in a projected future, and develop, engage, and live into foundational theology and ecclesiology documents that interpret these models creatively and faithfully.

- Presentation by Rhasshell Hunter, Director, Racial Ethnic Women’s Ministries, Presbyterian Women (REWM/PW).

- Discussion with Vince Patton, Racial Ethnic Leadership Development Manager, who noted that a major portion of his work in REWM/PW is filled with planning and coordinating the following leadership institutes:
  - African American Mentoring Event in April 2013
  - New Immigrant Young Adult Leadership Institute in September 2013
  - Women’s Leadership Development in November 2013