

January 26--27, 2012

Reformed/Seventh--Day Adventist Dialogue Meeting, November 5--7, 2011

The second official meeting of the Reformed/Seventh---Day Adventist Dialogue took place in the northern suburbs of Washington D.C. November 5---7, 2011. Representatives of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) included co-chair Sheldon Sorge, Pastor to Presbytery of Pittsburgh Presbytery; Eileen Lindner, Pastor of the Presbyterian Church at Tenafly NJ; Barbara Wheeler, Director of the Auburn Seminary Center for the Study of Theological Education; and Carlos Malave, Associate for Ecumenical Relations in the Office of the General Assembly. (PCUSA dialogue participant David Cortes---Fuentes, pastor of Emmanuel Hispanic Presbyterian Church in Claremont CA, was unable to attend due to a family emergency.) The Christian Reformed Church was represented by Doug Bratt, pastor of Silver Spring MD Christian Reformed Church.

Seventh---Day Adventist representatives included denominational staff from its world headquarters in Silver Spring MD _ Bert Beach, Ken Denslow, Hal Thomsen, and William Johnsson _ and Denis Fortin and Teresa Reeve of the Seventh---Day Adventist Seminary at Andrews University in Berrien Springs MI.

Primary meeting topics were (1) Worship and Sacraments, and (2) Congregational Life. From the PCUSA side, Sheldon Sorge led a conversation on Worship and Sacraments, while Eileen Lindner discussed the contours of Presbyterian congregational life. Dialogue partners from the Christian Reformed and the Seventh---Day Adventist churches made similar presentations, and each elicited lively conversation.

This consultation was unique in that discussions were anchored in experiences of worship and education in each other's congregations. On Saturday the team attended worship at the Sligo Seventh---Day Adventist Church in Tacoma Park, MD, where PCUSA team member Sheldon Sorge led a Sabbath School presentation on the PCUSA. Tables were turned on Sunday, when the team worshiped at St. Mark Presbyterian Church in Rockville, MD, followed by a Sunday School class where William Johnsson introduced the Seventh---Day Adventist Church.

All participants expressed enthusiasm for the vitality of both our dialogue conversations and our experience of worship and congregational life in one another's congregations. This dialogue session significantly advanced the goal of more fully understanding one another's churches. The Reformed contingent greatly appreciated the vitality and diversity of Seventh-day Adventist life and worship, while the Seventh---Day Adventists enthused over the theological and missional depth they witnessed in the PCUSA congregation.

The Reformed/Seventh---Day Adventist Dialogue began as an exploratory conversation in 2006, and became an official ecumenical dialogue in 2010. The dialogue group will meet next in Michigan in September 2012.