

## **PSEC report to UEK April '16 and to PSEC for Annual Meeting '16**

### **Anhalt District Church Partnership**

Presently five PSEC churches are in partnership with churches in the Anhalt District Church, Dessau: churches:

St. James, Havertown; Trinity, Collegeville; Trinity, Holland; Good Shepherd, Tuckerton, Reading; Huff's Church, Alburdis. Good Shepherd and Huffs Churches are anticipating a reaffirmation of their partnerships.

In August the partnership was expanded through a long weekend visit to PSEC by:

Rev. Dr. Christof Theilemann, Deputy Director, landeskirchlicher Pfarrer der EKBO für Öku, Trappe, Pmene und Weltmission, Berliner Missionswerk der Ev. Kirche Berlin-Brandenburg-schlesische Oberlausitz und der Landeskirche Anhalts Ökumenisches Zentrum;

Andreas Boer, Mayor of the town of Reichenbach in the region of Silesian Upper-Lusatia and Member of EKBO's Church Leadership Board and his wife, Karin

Rev. Joachim Liebig, BMO Board Member, Kirchenpraesident der Ev. Landeskirche Anhalts and his wife, Andrea

Rev. Roland Herpich, Director of Berlin Mission, der EKBO and his wife, Annette Herpich

In October they joined in hosting a group from Trinity Church, Collegeville for two days before going on to a six day stay with partner church pastor, Pr. Elisabeth Preckel, and parishioners, and President Liebig and Vicar Ulrike Bischoff.

### **Shared Ministry**

In October 2013 four pastors serving Union or Federated (Lutheran and United Church of Christ) congregations in PSE and PNE Conferences were guests of the Anhalt District Churches. Now in October 2016 six pastors have been invited to visit at a time that will include Sundays of Oct. 9 and 16<sup>th</sup> – which is the 275<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration at Jerusalem Western Salisbury, Allentown, PA.

The hosts who have volunteered through their pastors re:

St. Peter's, Macungie; Jerusalem Western Salisbury; St. Peter's, Mantzville; New Bethel, Kempton; Trinity, Collegeville.

The potential schedule will be at least 2-3 days of unstructured time – spend with host; one day for a specific presentation at NE Lutheran Synod office near AEB airport, a central location with good facilities for meeting and worship. The presentation/discussion will include all shared ministry and union churches, viewing of Jane Kropa's PowerPoint of Evangelical and Reformed and Lutheran connections, and discussions of shared concerns:

Stewardship

Being church in a secular society

Guests' impressions of American life and religion...and the count-down to the US Presidential election.

### **Expanded Partnership with PNE Conference**

The PNEC Board of Directors has given the go ahead to enter into the partnership with the PSEC Ecumenical Relations Mission Team [ERMT]. Four representatives from PNEC are:

Rev. Dr. David Charles Smith (who some years ago along with then CM Donald Overlock visited the Mecklenburg Pomerania church district), pastor of Jordan UCC at Walbert west of Allentown.

Rev. Frank Schaefer, Supply pastor, Solomon's Church, Macungie.

Mr. Bob Krug, St. John's Church, Nazareth which has a partnership with a church in Hesse.

Rev. John Snyder-Samuelson, Visitation Supervisor and Transportation Provider of Pinewood Services for Children and Youth, Allentown.

This partnership also enables PSEC to be involved in PNEC's Guatemalan Mission.

The ERMT will now have Co-chairs:

(from PSEC) Rev. Dr. Martha B. Kriebel

(from PNEC) Rev. Dr. David Charles Smith

### **Cuban Partnership**

Our partnership with The Fellowship of Baptist Churches of Cuba formed in 2007 when a group of Conference representatives, led by members of Old First Reformed United Church of Christ in Philadelphia, visited Cuba. Since then several groups have exchanged visits to make connections with Cuban Christians who share a passion for the gospel and a commitment to the church.

The Fellowship of Baptist Churches of Cuba, an organization of 39 congregations founded in 1989, traces its roots to the 17th century. Its "Seven Commitments" mirror the values we prize in the United Church of Christ:

- To defend the independence of each of its 39 churches.
- To be unwavering in its defense of the historic belief of freedom of conscience and diversity.
- To work to empower lay people at every level of leadership.
- To preserve the principle of separation of church and state.
- To recognize the important role of women in the life of the church.
- To participate in the coming together, understanding and collaboration between different denominations of Christianity so that they may all be one.
- To renew and deepen its study of the Bible, and to incorporate elements of the local culture and traditions into its worship.

We have let time and distance diminish our partnership but the PSEC Ecumenical Relations Team has seized this moment in history to reconnect with fellow Christians as the citizens of our two nations reestablish "normal diplomatic relations." In February Rev. Darryl Cruz, Pastor St. John's Church, Reading, and I attended the Annual Meeting of The Fellowship of Baptist Churches, worship with local congregations, revived old friendships and made new ones. (Adapted from letter by Rev. William P Worley, Conference Minister, PSEC, UCC) Regular communication continues and donations from churches go to r a Cuban church's three times a week meals for needy children. \$66.48 feeds one person for a year.

As a note of interest and the inter-relatedness of the Anhalt and Cuban partnership: In the past the Anhalt Church served as the conduit for money-gifts to our Cuban church partners.

Report prepared for UEK April 28-29 2016 meeting,  
and PSEC annual report to Conference,  
by Martha B. Kriebel, Chair, EMRT, PSEC