8. Report of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA

“I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one.”
—John 17:20

The National Council of Churches in the USA (NCC) held its annual Christian Unity Gathering in Hampton, Va., in October. The focus on the gathering was “Ending Racism: Confronting Our Past, Revisiting Our Present and Naming God’s Preferred Future.”

As a central part of this gathering, the NCC held “A Day of Remembrance and Lament,” to commemorate the 400-year anniversary of the first enslaved African persons being brought to North America. Nathan Hosler, director of the Office of Peacebuilding and Policy, helped plan and participated in the service.

During the service, 21 flowers of remembrance were laid at the marker commemorating each of the first enslaved individuals, the “20 and odd,” as the record then described those brought from Africa. As each flower was laid, the affirmation “a child of God” was recited, to which people responded with ashe, a traditional Yoruba saying interpreted, “so it is.” The service concluded with celebration of the courage and persistence of those who have stood against oppressive regimes for the freedom of fellow children of God, and with hope for a future where God’s healing will be known by all people and all nations.

The National Council of Churches has two overarching priorities for its work—mass incarceration and interreligious relations with a focus on peace. At the council’s governing board meeting, held the same week as the Christian Unity Gathering, the board reaffirmed its calling to “continue its relationships with people of other religious traditions” and committed itself to seek “new ways to uphold our priority to work for the peace of the world.”

The NCC holds the copyright to the New International Standard Version of the Bible, and the governing board heard a report on an update to the NRSV, a new edition for the AME Zion Church, and a joint venture for a Bible app. The board also discussed the Truth and Racial Justice Initiative, finances, and other organizational matters.

In early 2020, the NCC added its voice to those grieving the execution of Lawan Andimi of Ekklesiyar Yan’uwa a Nigeria (EYN—the Church of the Brethren in Nigeria). “We have stood by our sisters and brothers in the Church of the Brethren over the past years as they have endured unspeakable persecution and loss,” said Jim Winkler, president and general secretary of the NCC. “We continue to pray for the safety of those who follow the way of peace that is at the
core of this beloved church and the Christian faith.”

The Church of the Brethren is a founding member of the National Council of Churches, a diverse covenant community of 38 member communions from Protestant, Anglican, Orthodox, Evangelical, Historic African American, and Living Peace traditions.

David Steele, general secretary