



The Communion of Evangelical Episcopal Churches

Initial History and Growth of the CEEC

This short history of the Communion of Evangelical Episcopal Churches focuses on our initial history and growth. It is provided so that you, the reader, may relate clearly and properly to our roots in God's purposes as a part of His One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church.

The Communion of Evangelical Episcopal Churches (referred to as the CEEC) was birthed as a result of a more general work of the Holy Spirit among the Christian churches which has become known as the "Convergence Movement", and sometimes referred to as the "Convergence of the Streams" renewal. This is the spiritual vision, rooted in the New Testament revelation and the experience of the early Christians, that saw the Church as one Body with many diverse and contributing parts. Or, to put it another way: one river with many streams. In the 1940's, the well-known mission pioneer of the union Church of South India, Bishop Leslie Newbigin, wrote a seminal work called "The Household Of God", examining the spiritual and functional nature of the Lord's one Church from a missions perspective. His prophetic observation at one point in the book was that the revelation of Scripture in Ephesians 4 is that there is one Body, one Faith, one Lord, one Spirit, one Baptism, one hope of our calling, one God and Father of us all. However, through history this one Body of Christ has been fragmented into separated and often competing groups, camps, or streams, all having been originally a part of the one river of God's saving grace poured out into the world through the incarnation, life, death, and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Newbigin goes on to make a startling statement for his time; that is, that the one Church of Jesus Christ, which has been so fractured by human sin and political/cultural circumstance through history, is by its nature threefold in the spiritual essence of its historical and existential makeup. This threefold nature he describes as being Catholic, Protestant, and Orthodox/Pentecostal or charismatic. In describing this threefold reality, he goes on to remark that these three streams represent emphases that are all necessary for the wholeness and fullness of the Church on earth as God has decreed it in Christ and revealed it in the apostolic tradition of Holy Scripture. The Catholic he relates to the emphases of "incarnation and creation"; the Protestant to "biblical proclamation and conversion"; and the Orthodox/Pentecostal to "the mystical and the Spirit".

At this point in the 20th century, Bishop Newbigin was a lone voice crying out for a holistic understanding of the nature of the Church of Jesus Christ that was born out of an apostolic missionary activity in the nation of India. This vision eventually led to the formation of the Church of South India, made up of 5 different denominations, receiving apostolic succession through the Anglican tradition from Anglican bishops in India. In turn, this united expression of the Lord's one Church, made up of those from differing streams, was recognized by the Anglican Communion and brought into inter-communion with them.

Not until the 1970's did this vision begin to gain a wider hearing. It was through the fruits of the ecumenical movement, the charismatic renewal of the mainline Churches, and the Liturgical Renewal movement that was trans-denominational in its scope (and included the historic Vatican II Council of the Roman Catholic Church) that this understanding of the Church as one river made up of many streams, all necessary for the fullness of the river and the gladness of God's people, began to gain impetus. Dr. Robert Webber, professor of Theology and Bible at Wheaton College in Illinois, began to publicly give voice to this concept in his efforts at ecumenical and evangelical renewal of the unity and fullness of the Church, tied to its ancient roots. His 1978 book, "Common Roots", looked at foundational elements of the Church's life, worship, witness, and spirituality that had roots in the second century experience of Christianity. In this work, he urged leaders across the evangelical spectrum of the Church to take serious notice of the models presented in the second century Church for renewal of these aspects of the Church's life today.

This was followed in the 1980's by his landmark book, "Evangelicals on the Canterbury Trail: Why Evangelical Christians Are Attracted to the Liturgical Church". He chronicled his own personal spiritual journey from a fundamentalist evangelical background into the Anglican tradition and the six reasons for this attraction. In the

epilogue to this work he quotes his pastor at that time who stated that he believed the future of the Church of Jesus Christ might very well lie in the "convergence of the catholic and evangelical" streams or traditions of the Church. Many pastors since have identified and resonated with this vision. Soon thereafter, it was realized that the one stream or tradition missing was the Charismatic/Pentecostal; not realizing that Bishop Newbigin had made the same prophetic observation some 40 years earlier.

GRASSROOTS JOURNEYS TOWARD FULLNESS AND CONVERGENCE

It was soon apparent that many of our early church leaders in the Convergence Movement were independently discovering Robert Webber's books on this topic, unbeknownst to each other reading and discovering the same vision. Other authors began to share their experiences and searching in this direction, pointing everyone back to the writings of the early Church Fathers, the key leaders and theologians of the early Church's life. Pastors and leaders from a variety of backgrounds began to discover one another in a multitude of settings where they were able to share with each other the common search and journey they were on. All alike were expressing not only common elements of emerging understanding about this "convergence of the streams" of Christianity, but were also hungry to experience this as a lived reality.

Soon, a common body of Scripture passages began to come to the fore among these leaders, giving scriptural language and confirmation to these discoveries and common hungers. Passages such as Matthew 13:52, Jeremiah 6:16, Malachi 4:5,6, and Job 8:8-10, in addition to our Lord's prayer for the unity of His people in John 17, were key prophetic indicators that God was indeed speaking to many at a grassroots level about His desire to restore the fullness of the river by bringing the separated streams or strands back together (Psalm 46:4,5). By a movement of God, these church leaders began to network and seek together.

FORMATION OF THE CEEC

Two major events occurred that initiated the formation of the Communion of Evangelical Episcopal Churches. First, in late 1989 conversations between Michael Owen, Wayne Boosahda, and Robert Wise began to develop concerning the need to go beyond the Charismatic renewal and incorporate aspects of the historic church into worship. For a number of years Robert Wise had worked in liturgical renewal when he served as the Moderator of the Reformed Church in America. Both Beth Owen and Stephanie Boosahda served as integral parts were parts of these formal discussions. To our knowledge Wayne Boosahda was the first person to use the term convergence and that began a concentrated effort to blend charismatic experience, biblical renewal, liturgical renewal, and sacramental worship. Out of this segment of spiritual questing came a conference held in Oklahoma City, Ok. in the summer of 1993 called "Treasures Old and New: The Convergence of the Streams of Christianity", sponsored by the newly formed and nascent Fellowship of St. Barnabas the Encourager which was overseen by then Fr. Wayne Boosahda. The fellowship was an ecumenical group of pastors and leaders having found themselves on this common "journey" or "pilgrimage" and wanting to come together to share their discoveries, experiences, and ideas. About 75 leaders gathered that summer at the Church of the Holy Spirit, pastored by then Fr. Michael Owen and Rev. Beth Owen, who had also formerly been Vineyard pastors. Present at that small but historic event were the founders of the newly formed Charismatic Episcopal Church, Fr. Peter Gillquist of the Antiochian Orthodox Church (formerly an evangelist with Campus Crusade for Christ), Professor Thomas Howard (author of "Evangelical Is Not Enough" and other books on his own journey toward catholicity from a fundamentalist evangelical background), The Rev. Bob Stamps (former chaplain of Oral Roberts University and pioneer of this concept on the ORU campus in the early 70's), Dr. Thomas Oden (professor of patristics at Drew University school of divinity and a United Methodist), and Dr. Robert Webber himself. In addition to this many leaders who would ultimately pioneer convergence works and movements representing many portions of the church also participated in the conference.

Secondly, early 1994 a handful of members from a charismatic renewal parish in the Episcopal Church USA (John Reed being the first president of the corporation), together with their rector, began to conceptualize a vision identical to the one being discussed and considered in the '93 conference. Prayerful efforts began to be put on paper, as well as strategic organization concerning the foundation and vision of a new communion of churches that would be tied to the historic Anglican spiritual tradition that would allow for the coming together of churches and leaders from all backgrounds who had a hunger toward experiencing and practicing this apostolic and prophetic vision of the convergence of the streams of the Church. Simultaneously Dr. Russ McClanahan was overseeing a network of ministries that had been growing in it's understanding of convergence and a number of leaders from this network would ultimately become bishops and archbishops in the Communion of Evangelical Episcopal Churches. During this time Dr. McClanahan and the network he oversaw linked arms with this group of renewal leaders. Dr. Russ McClanahan was, therefore, unanimously elected by the founding leadership of the Evangelical Episcopal Church to be it's first Bishop in historic Apostolic Succession.

Through a series of divinely orchestrated events, then Bishop Michael Owen was contacted and asked if he would be open to participating in the inaugural service and serving as the chief consecrator for the first two bishops of the newly formed Evangelical Episcopal Church.

And so it was, that in October of 1995, in Fredericksburg, Virginia, approximately 300 people gathered, representing a wide variety of denominational backgrounds and 25 independent congregations who had come into relationship with the new group. Bishop Owen, and two other bishops in apostolic succession from Orthodox and Old Catholic jurisdictions passed on the historic apostolic succession to the newly formed group. Archdeacon Beth Owen and Fr. Wayne Boosahda were present to help as Master of Ceremonies and Chaplain in the consecrating of the first two bishops and the ordination of 25 pastors and 7 deacons for the Evangelical Episcopal Church. The first two bishops consecrated included one of our current Archbishops, the Most Reverend Russell McClanahan of the CEEC Province of St. Peter, who was one of the initial leaders brought into the formation process of the fledgling EEC and The Right Reverend Vincent McCall. Initially, five congregations fully affiliated with the new communion. All involved sensed a connection that had been looked for in each individual journey; many having been trained and ordained in differing branches of the Continuing Anglican Churches.

In November of 1995, Bishop Owen was asked unanimously by the founding leadership and new bishops of the Evangelical Episcopal Church to serve as the first Presiding Bishop of the new communion. As Bishop Owen accepted the call, those clergy and churches under his oversight joined with the infant communion and began its movement forward. Two small ads had been placed in Christianity Today magazine, one in 1994 and one in mid 1995, which brought in an overwhelming response of interest across the U.S. from leaders of differing backgrounds showing interest in the vision of the convergence of the streams in this new communion. The total number of responses neared 1600 and literally inundated the new and unprepared communion. As growth began to take place through pastors and congregations affiliating, international interest began to emerge, and by the fall of 1996 interest from 5 other nations besides the USA was being seriously expressed. New missionary bishops were consecrated and new missionary dioceses here and abroad began to be strategized.

DEVELOPMENT AND GROWTH SINCE 1997

Through the fall of 1996 and into January of 1997 international interest and expansion continued to develop. The House of Bishops of the EEC, 5 as of January 1st, 1997, began to realize the Lord was moving in a way not completely prepared for in the founding documents of the communion and met in synod at the end of January 1997. By this time, one of our current Archbishops, Robert L. Wise, had been consecrated as a new missionary bishop with a focus on the United Kingdom, Europe and Canada. Five of the six bishops making up the House at this time voted to reconstitute and reincorporate the Evangelical Episcopal Church as "The Communion of Evangelical Episcopal Churches" to reflect the international growth and the needs for eventual provincial structuring. Six nations were now represented in affiliation and strong interest was being shown by others.

Archbishop Wayne Boosahda was elected at this point to serve as the second Presiding Bishop for the worldwide CEEC and served for 6 years, helping to facilitate and establish the provincial structure of the communion, the development of the international canons and the founding of the CEEC Province of the USA .

Archbishop Robert Wise's ministry expanded into Eastern Europe and includes congregations in Canada, England, the US and Italy. In addition, Archbishop Wise serves as the Ecumenical Officer for the CEEC College of Archbishops and of the communion and has been invited by the Vatican to yearly ecumenical dialog in Rome with Roman Catholic officials and key lay leaders of Roman Catholic charismatic renewal movements and to serve as a guest professor in one of the Roman Catholic Seminaries in Bari, Italy. During the mid-1980's, Dr. Robert Wise worked behind the Iron Curtain in Hungary and Romania which laid the ground work for his early work for the CEEC in these countries. During this time, he became acquainted with many important Christian leaders who led the fight against Communism and struggled to regain freedom and the right for public worship to be released from state control. Currently The Ark is under his leadership with experimental community development across Europe under the leadership of Fr. Tony Palmer. Each years retreats are held on the Isle of Capri and in England. A new ministry has begun in Milton Keynes, England with street ministry working through the night. The CEEC is at work with the "least of these" on the streets of this city.

In July of 2003 Archbishop McClanahan was unanimously elected as the third Presiding Bishop for the CEEC around the world by the CEEC International College of Archbishops. Archbishop Russell McClanahan served through 2006 in this capacity contributing many new initiatives that have led to significant International growth of the CEEC. Archbishop McClanahan has seen the hand of God give substantial new expansion and growth to the Province of St. Peter around the world since 2003. Including churches and ministries in the United States, Australia, the West Indies, Haiti, Mexico. Guyana, portions of Africa, Pakistan, Vietnam, Cambodia, Korea, Japan, China and Brazil. The

churches and ministries represented number in the Province of St. Peter are well over 2,000 churches worldwide including The Anglican Church of Brazil under the leadership of The Most Reverend (Dr) Ricardo Lorite de Lima. The Province of St. Peter now has 16 Bishops and 14 Diocese. In addition, through long time friendships and educational connections, he has helped to facilitate the Logos Christian College and Graduate School as an official educational institution for the CEEC with President and now CEEC Bishop Dr. Charles Travis.

The Rev. Duraisingh James, a priest and church planter with the Church of South India for 17 years at that time and long-time head of Christian Education for the Church Union of South India, traveled to meet with the USA founding House of Bishops and indicated his desire to affiliate with the CEEC, together with the 30 churches under his oversight. Shortly thereafter, Fr. Duraisingh was consecrated as Missionary Bishop for India , and later as Archbishop for the CEEC Province of India. His ministry and the number of churches in India have continued to flourish. In 1999 Archbishop James was awarded the Billy Graham Foundation international scholarship grant to finish his doctorate in theology at one of the prestigious universities in South Korea . Since that time he has founded a new seminary in India with a flourishing number of students eager to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ throughout India . Since 1999 six new bishops have been consecrated or received into the Province of India with now six flourishing dioceses numbering 1,000 congregations and missions and the flourishing seminary founded by Archbishop James called “ Antioch College and Seminary”. In addition, in 2004 Archbishop James was trained and certified as the national coordinator for the Alpha Course in India , which is spreading across that nation. In the April 2008 CEEC International House of Bishops synod held in Canada , Archbishop James was unanimously elected as the fourth Presiding Bishop of the CEEC following in the footsteps of his predecessor, Archbishop Russell McClanahan. This new step strengthens the international apostolic thrust of the CEEC in proclaiming Christ and His redeeming love and kingdom to the nations and peoples of the world.

Archbishop Wayne Boosahda now serves as the Primate Emeritus of the Communion of Convergence Churches USA and founding Archbishop of the Archdiocese of the Incarnation with 11 bishops and 8 dioceses/missionary dioceses in its jurisdictional family based in the USA , with apostolic missions in India , Africa, Spain and the Middle East .

The Communion of Convergence Churches USA is a sister communion of the CEEC in the geographic USA formed by the merger in 2005 of the previous CEEC Province USA overseen by Archbishop Boosahda and the International Communion of Christian Churches, a convergence communion of churches founded by Archbishop Daniel Williams of Ponte Vedra Beach, Florida. Since that initial merger, the CCC-USA was commissioned and blessed by the CEEC Archbishops in a public commissioning event with the celebration of the Eucharist and the laying on of hands in the fall of 2006 to be sent out as a sister communion in its own right tied closely with the CEEC in an ongoing co-communion relationship. The CEEC in its unfolding history has, by the sovereign and gracious working of Almighty God, been able to give encouragement and support to a number of other communions of churches involved in the convergence renewal journey through extending Apostolic Succession of Bishops, advice and consultation and signed inter-communion or co-communion relationships. Archbishop Boosahda serves in both communion’s House of Bishops and has founded the Society of St. Patrick and St. Aidan as an apostolic missionary society personal prelature jurisdiction which functions ecumenically in fostering new church planting, leadership training and mentoring and the development of new jurisdictions. The Society is a jurisdiction of the CEEC but functions ecumenically.

Archbishop Michael Owen, the first Presiding Bishop of the CEEC, and the one who laid many of the essential foundations for its growth, now serves as the Chaplain to the International College of Archbishops, while overseeing the development of new congregations in various parts of the communion. He also continues to serve as a bridge and networking figure for many other bishops and jurisdictions involved in both convergence renewal and in the autocephalous Anglican, Old Catholic, Eastern and Independent Catholic movements.

The International House of Bishops of the CEEC has been extended to include multiple Bishops with International ministries around the world. The CEEC Archbishops/Patriarch’s Council now numbers 5, together with 36 diocesan and missionary bishops, representing 4 provincial families, missionary districts and new archdioceses that circle the globe. The history of the CEEC is one of attempting to follow the leading and footsteps of the Lord and Savior of the Church into every culture, through divinely appointed relationships, connections and opportunities, as He continually unfolds to us the eternal purpose of His heart to reconcile and redeem His creation and to make His people one again.