

# THEOLOGICAL DIALOGUE COMMISSION FALL REPORT

## September 27, 2011

Members of the Theological Dialogue Commission include: Nick Knisely (TEC), Peter Perry (ELCA), Tom Chapman (TEC), Vernon Meyer (UCC), Lowell Byall (PCUSA), Penny Davis (UM), John Meyer (RC) Patricia Hoyt (RC), Al Gephart (PCUSA), chair. Jan Flaaten, staff.

In August of 2010 the Public Policy Commission asked the Theological Dialogue Commission to produce a **theological statement**, founded on scripture, that would support the mission of the Public Policy Commission and likewise that of the Arizona Ecumenical Council. Our Commission accepted the request. The Statement begins with a Preamble that focuses primarily on our call as Christians to walk in the “way of Jesus.” It draws on the life and teachings of Jesus along with reference to many biblical passages from both the Jewish and Christian scriptures. Following the Preamble specific current issues of concern in our community are addressed. These include Health Care Access and Reform, Economic Justice and the State Budget, and Immigration. Further resources from some of our member denominations are also included.

The Statement begins: *“The Arizona Ecumenical Council lives out its corporate life as those seeking together to walk in the Way of Jesus. As partners in Christ we join to express the love that was fully manifest in Jesus, showing compassion for all in need, especially those on the margins of society, to advocate for justice for all caught in systems of injustice, and to enact the commonwealth here and now that Jesus advocated and demonstrated.”*

A majority of our time and energy has gone into the planning of the **2011 Donohoe Forum**. Last year we determined that evolution was an issue of considerable concern and debate among Christians. Of importance to us was not whether or not evolution was a viable theory. The scientific evidence appears overwhelming. Our goal became to consider the implications of evolution for our views about God, our views concerning divine action in the universe, and our spiritual practices as Christians. With that in mind we chose our theme: **“God After Darwin: Evolution, Christian Faith, and Spirituality.”**

Dr. Philip Clayton, the keynote speaker for the Forum, is a theologian who has written extensively on issues of faith and science. He has a deep concern for “integrating the best of contemporary experience and contemporary reason with the inherited resources of Christian scriptures and traditions.” In addition, we have assembled six other church and academic professionals, representing a diversity of viewpoints, who will give responses to each of Dr. Clayton’s presentations. This year we are also placing greater emphasis on opportunities for participants to ask questions of presenters, and to discuss issues openly with them. The Forum will begin at 4pm, Friday, November 4th and continue until 2pm, Saturday, November 5th. It will be held at the Church of the Beatitudes in north Phoenix.

We are incorporating a variety of means to get the word out about the Forum including flyers, brochures, emails, public announcements, radio interview, etc. The best is personal invitation. So like last year we are also asking AEC members to invite 6-10 others to join them in attendance of the Forum.

Al Gephart, Chair, Theological Dialogue Commission