

IN MEMORIAM - Paul F. Wilson (1935 - 2010)

The Rev. Paul F. Wilson, passed away peacefully, in his sleep, on October 5, 2010. Born in Benton Harbor, Michigan, January 22, 1935, reared in Kansas City, Missouri, Paul graduated with a B.A. degree in 1957 from Tulane University, and a B.D. degree in 1960 from Lexington Theological Seminary. An ordained minister of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), he served as a pastor for churches in Tennessee and Louisiana before beginning his extensive career in ecumenical programs for social justice and human rights. He directed Migrant Ministries programs in Louisiana and Florida, then in 1973 served for ten months as staff member for the National Council of Churches working for agricultural community development in the Philippines before imprisonment and ouster by the Marcos government, thereafter in 1974 established the International Human Rights Program with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Indianapolis.

In 1991 Paul moved to New York to direct the Human Rights Program for the National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA (NCCCUSA), later becoming Director of the NCCCUSA Europe Office. In this capacity he focused on humanitarian assistance in the war-torn areas of Eastern Europe, and served as moderator of the Churches Human Rights Programme for the Implementation of the Helsinki Final Act (Europe/USSR/Canada/USA), and subsequently the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe.

Paul's involvement with CAREE began with his directorship of the Europe Office of the National Council of Churches. At that time CAREE's executive served as a resource group for the Europe Office and met annually with them. When Paul retired from that position he became more directly involved in CAREE, taking on the role of Treasurer in November 2006. In an article published in *Religion in Eastern Europe* in 2000, he reviewed "Ministry in Eastern Europe from a National Council of Churches (USA) Perspective." Involved with two conferences co-sponsored by NCCCUSA & CAREE on Christian Faith and Human Enmity, in Moscow, Russia (1994) and Kecskemet, Hungary (1995), his concern at these events was for church leaders to be true to the irenic message of the gospel, its possibilities of forgiveness and reconciliation which had been such a central focus during the moral non-violent revolutions of 1989, but also to acknowledge the facts of serious manifestations of enmity between ethnic groups that many were seeing as religious wars. Wilson cited numerous illustrations of what happened when church leaders met in round table conversations, listening to the other side without interruption, and responding from their own perspective with the shared intent of finding mutually fruitful outcomes. Throughout he kept stressing how much feelings and grievances mattered if serious grass roots ecumenism was to happen. During the communist era church leaders had faced state attempts to compromise their positions, later the public debated which church bodies had sought to defend the victims of serious human rights violations. Wilson remarked with reference to the NCCC's role, that its leaders needed to explain what they had been trying to do, "which was probably not enough, but we did do something."

Doing enough, at least doing something that helped those less able to speak and act, were his repeated concern as he drew attention to the fact that for many believers across eastern Europe, positive relations to the ecumenical movement were still complicated by the degree to which the ecumenical movement seemed "a manifestation of that Western globalization and culture" which east European people in post-communism were experiencing as an unbridled free market capitalism that left too many victims behind, and church bodies, long weakened by struggling to survive in hostile settings, were not able to assist. In a moving, experiential way, Wilson described stages of learning to trust each other, of showing respect to other churches which resulted in the

Charta Oecumenica of 2001, the fruit of “growth in ecumenical understanding and conversation.”

This was also the spirit in which Paul Wilson served as treasurer of CAREE in recent years, when retiring from his duties in New York. Living in Daphne AL with his wife Dede, he was active in tennis clubs and competitions, singing tenor at special events in nearby cities. He was diagnosed with lung cancer in early September, planned to continue his duties as treasurer while pursuing aggressive treatment. The cancer progressed too quickly and painfully. He is survived by his wife, Dede Wilson; his children, Michelle Athearn, David Wilson, and James Wilson; five grandchildren; his brother and two sisters; We give thanks for Paul’s life. We will miss his prompt attention to dealing with bills, and his creative suggestions for doing more with less, as the recession also affected CAREE’s capacities to act. - Walter Sawatsky Co-Editor

CAREE CONFERENCE MARCH 25 & 26 2011 - CALL FOR PAPERS

“EASTERN EUROPE STILL MATTERS” is the theme for a conference hosted by CAREE and the Center for World Christianity at New York Theological Seminary on March 25 & 26, 2011, located at the InterChurch Center, 475 Riverside Drive, Manhattan.

In the last few years, media attention, academic focus, and denominational activities have turned away from Eastern Europe. But many important developments are taking place in the region, and good reasons abound for ongoing interest in and service there.

“EASTERN EUROPE STILL MATTERS” will consider why interest in the region has declined, why Eastern Europe remains important, and examine developments there which invite attention – from scholars, political leaders, those who work for civil society, and religious leaders.

We welcome paper proposals dealing with any of these themes. Papers should be no longer than 25 minutes as presented, to allow time for discussion. Papers will be clustered into sessions by shared theme or emphasis. Proposals for sessions composed of related papers are also welcome.

Proposals should be sent no later than March 1, 2011, to:
Dr. Jim Payton (President, CAREE) at caree@redeemer.ca

While there is no registration fee for the conference, participants need to register in advance so that the host organizations can make appropriate plans.

*To register (and for information about finding lodging for the conference), please contact:
Dr. Paul Crego (Executive Secretary, CAREE) at paul.crego@comcast.net*