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National

McKean's resignation signals new chapter for ICOC

By Lindy Adams
The Christian Chronicle

December 18, 2002

Los Angeles - Howard Norton, director of the Institute for Church and Family, Harding University, says he remembers it well. In February 1987, while editor of the Chronicle, he wrote an opinion piece, "Second thoughts on Boston" about the then-called Boston Movement, now the International Churches of Christ.

In the article, Norton said, "... we believe this to be a dangerous movement within the body of Christ because it robs people of their freedom in Christ, turns Christian leadership into authoritarian power and divides the body of Christ almost everywhere it appears. ... Let us pray that the present doctrines and practices that separate us may be corrected according to God's will so that we may all be one in Christ."

Norton's hope for unity didn't materialize. In preparation for the 1994 edition of "Churches of Christ in the United States," compiler Mac Lynn contacted the group's leader Kip McKean to ask if the ICOC wanted to be included.

"I asked Kip, he paused, and there was a period of silence. Then he said, 'I guess not. I suppose the time has come for us not to be included,'" Lynn said.

From this official demarkation which marked a schism developing for more than seven years, the two groups went their separate ways, with each becoming less knowledgeable and involved with the other as the years passed.

"Most of the present members of the ICOC have no ties with the Restoration Movement," said Roger Lamb, president of ICOC's media division for the last eight years. Lamb, a Harding graduate, was a minister for churches of Christ in Texas and Illinois before joining the discipling movement.

Despite conjecture to the contrary, the ICOC is not on the verge of collapse, Lamb said. Instead a unity meeting in mid-November brought 200 leaders together from a number of ICOC's 430 congregations in 162 countries to recommit to the movement.

A report of the unity meeting on ICOC's web site (www.ucd.net) says a "... new emphasis on teamwork and consensus will reduce our dependence on any one individual and place the emphasis on God and the leadership of His Spirit."



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"Our churches are mature. We feel we've outgrown leadership with one person in that position, and we're going to a type of leadership ... with more people making decisions," Baird said.

Critics of the ICOC have long denounced its top-down, hierarchical leadership style with McKean as head.

In the new leadership structure, instead of one person heading each of the church's nine world sectors and reporting to McKean, each sector will be led by a group, Baird confirmed.

Some ICOC churches are a cappella, some instrumental, and some use both forms of music in worship, he said.

Of ICOC's hopes concerning mainstream churches of Christ, Baird said, "We pray for the day when our paths will move closer together. We realize this can only happen through focusing on loving God, loving each other and carrying out Jesus' purpose through evangelizing the world."



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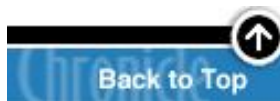
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