

REPORT OF THE OFFICE OF ECUMENICAL AND INTER-RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS

YEAR 2017-2018

CHAIR: REV. THOMAS PRINZ

It is no surprise that the last year has been fairly consumed with various events and meetings concerning the commemoration of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation. Scores of books covering every conceivable angle of scholarship along with new anthologies and popular readers for every age group have been published. Many reports have been made in various publications documenting all sorts of local, regional, national and international observances. From the 10 year (!) series of Lutheran World Federation annual themes leading to the year 2017 to refreshingly creative events and experiences growing out of local talent and enthusiasm the Reformation has been well and thoroughly observed.

What makes this 5th centenary different is that it is a global event that has made it a decidedly ecumenical and inter-faith occasion. So, what has been true throughout Lutheran communions worldwide has also marked observances here on the territory of the synod.

The time-period of this report is bookended by a presentation last June on, Martin Luther, The Bible, and The Jewish People, held at Resurrection Lutheran Church, Arlington, led by Profs. Brooks Schramm and Kirisi I. Stjerna, and this year's Synod Assembly hearing on a draft document by the ELCA, A Declaration of Our Inter-Religious Commitment, which will go before the Churchwide Assembly next year. Perhaps the most notable event was the national observance at the National Cathedral on Reformation Sunday, preceded by the world premier of "Mass of the Holy Spirit", by a Norwegian composer performed at the National Shrine and followed by a day of major presentations and reflection at the Lutheran Church of the Reformation, DC. The annual Lutheran Anglican Roman Catholic, United Methodist (LARCUM) conference focused on Lutheran-Roman Catholic strides in the international and national dialogs. Important events were sponsored by congregations throughout the synod with participation from full-communication partners. The National Workshop on Christian Unity gathered here in Washington for its annual meeting and the North American Academy of Ecumenists will meet here also in September. Major scholarly conferences were held at Georgetown University, The Catholic University of America, Roanoke College and The Center for Catholic and Evangelical Theology at Loyola, Baltimore, with major speakers reflecting on the Reformation from a broad ecumenical perspective.

Please remember that the international document, From Conflict to Communion, a Study Guide and worship materials titled, Common Prayer, and the U.S. dialog document, Declaration On The Way, remain important and available for use in congregations.

Also available for congregational use is Building a Relationship, for use with United Methodist Communities. We hope to see late in the year the release of Round XII of the Lutheran-Roman Catholic dialogue on "Faithful Teaching".

Our local Lutheran-Episcopal Coordinating Committee (LECC), Lutheran/Roman Catholic Conversation Group (L/RC) continue to meet on a regular basis. The Joint Lutheran-Episcopal Clergy Planning Group is preparing for a spring 2019 event at Shrine Mont in the Shenandoah Valley with the theme, "From Crib to Cross".

In terms of inter-religious materials please consult the ELCA resource, Engaging Others; Knowing Ourselves: A Lutheran Calling in a Multi-Religious World and The Should to Should Campaign in relationship to the Muslim Community.

The ELCA continues to forge deeper and stronger relationships with our full-communion partners and the Roman Catholic Church. Lutherans and Episcopalians are active in resisting gun violence, poverty and racism as these tensions continue to flare up in the national consciousness. The ELCA has sought closer relationships with the historic Black Churches, especially the AME and AMEZ churches. The growing coordination and consultation among our partner churches at the national staff level is not often visible but real and helps us to be better church and more reflectively Lutherans in our witness among the other communions. Active formal dialogues at the international and national level are too numerous to mention, but form the backdrop for what OEA attempts here on the territory of the synod.

As a local synodical unit we maintain on-going Lutheran-Roman Catholic Conversation; a local Lutheran-Episcopal Coordinating Committee; a Jt. Lutheran-Episcopal Clergy Planning Committee. We have organized a Metro area observance of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity and provided leadership through our members to the Lutheran Ecumenical Representative Network (LEIRN); the National Workshop on Christian Unity (NWCU); the North American Academy of Ecumenists (NAAE); the Washington Theological Consortium (WTC); the annual conference of the Center for Catholic and Evangelical Theology (CCET). As a Synod we are represented and participate in the Virginia Council of Churches (VCC) on both the Executive Committee and the unit on Faith and Order.

All together this activity results in more than 40 meetings/events around the region. Maintaining relationships and keeping communication open between our various ecumenical and inter-faith partners is vital part of what it means to be in common witness in the world.

Submitted by,

Rev. Thomas Prinz, chair OEA