

# **REPORT OF THE OFFICE OF ECUMENICAL AND INTERRELIGIOUS AFFAIRS**

JUNE 2019-JUNE 2020

Following the 2019 Synod Assembly the Office entered a period of transition. Over the next months some twenty-five years of files have been organized and prepared for archival storage at Virginia Theological Seminary. This includes records of Lutheran-Episcopal Coordinating Committee (LECC); Lutheran-Episcopal Planning Committee for Joint Clergy Conference (Jt.CC); Lutheran/Anglican/Roman Catholic/United Methodist Planning Group (LARCUM), Week of Prayer for Christian Unity Observance (WPCU); National Workshop on Christian Unity (NWCU); Lutheran/ Roman Catholic Conversation (L/RC C); Office for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs- Metro Synod ELCA (OEA and OEIA); certain materials of Lutheran Ecumenical/Interreligious Representative Network Executive and Plenary (LEIRN); North American Academy of Ecumenists (NAAE); Washington Theological Consortium (WTC); Greater Washington Interfaith Conference (IFC); Virginia Council of Churches, Faith and Order Commission (VCC-FO); and various papers from Lutheran-Jewish consultations and Lutheran-Muslim conversations.

That rather tedious paragraph does describe a variety of dynamic and vital relationships that have been nurtured over the life of the Synod since the creation of the ELCA by this Synod Unit. Relationships that mark this Synod as having taken its constitutional and mission responsibilities seriously to and on behalf of members.

This past year divides into two parts – before and after pandemic. During the transition period in 2019 and very early 2020 the OEIA helped in planning the installation of the Synod Bishop; the 2019 LARCUM Conference and the 2020 WPCU observance in Northern Virginia. Periodic meetings of LECC, the L/RC Conversation, the Joint Clergy Conference project spooled out as planned. Preliminary work for finding a new chair for the Committee also got under-way but has been delayed. A budget for 2021 has been submitted. The cancelation of all face to face meetings, indeed the cancelation of the national NWCU, our Synod Assembly, and several conferences has resulted in

either postponement or suspension of some gatherings, but use of Zoom and conference calls as a new format for others. This has created a new way of doing some business in order to continue planning for late 2020/2021 gatherings. My service continues on an interim basis as chair, until a new chair for the Committee is appointed, and a new chapter in the life of our Synod's ecumenical witness comes into reality. We all look forward to a reopening of life as congregation and Synod as the intermediate future unfolds.

Submitted by,

Thomas Prinz, interim chair OEIA