

REPORT OF THE EUCMENICAL AND INTERRELIGIOUS TABLE

YEAR 2015-2016

CHAIR: THE REV. THOMAS PRINZ

In the synodical constitution the chief ecumenical officer of the synod is the synodical bishop. The ecumenical unit serves to support the bishop in fulfilling this arena of responsibility of the office of the synodical bishop. The ecumenical unit is constituted to enlarge, facilitate and manage the ecumenical relationships of the synod with other judicatories and organizations and to assist the bishop in the bishop's function as chief ecumenical officer. The unit is also charged with oversight of certain grants by the synod to local and regional ecumenical organizations. To this end the unit engages with our full communion partners at the local level and conducts activities to inform and encourage ecumenical contact and partnerships at the congregational and synodical level. We are committed to keeping informed on ecumenical texts and agreements, and maintain conversation with interested parties on these texts and topics. We are a full and active partner in the Lutheran Ecumenical and Interreligious Representative Network (LEIRN) ; the Lutheran Episcopal Coordinating Committee and other formal committees related to full communion partners and on-going dialogues and conversations with ecumenical and interreligious partners.

As a lead up to the 2017 500th year commemoration of the Reformation there has been a flurry of activity. Much of this activity quite naturally involves the Roman Catholic Church both internationally and nationally. Last year an international document From Conflict to Communion was published along with a Study Guide and an approved order for worship titled Common Prayer. Additional materials are being made available for congregational and synodical use. This year another significant document was released jointly by the US Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) and the ELCA titled, Declaration of the Way. This is a product of a joint task force and highlights both a summary of thirty-two (32) dialogue agreements over the last 50 years and points the way to further convergence. We hope to work to promote the use of this material in our congregations in the coming two years. Round XII of the Lutheran-Catholic dialogue is taking up the topic "Faithful Teaching".

A major resource booklet has been prepared for inter-congregational conversation between United Methodist and ELCA communities titled Building a Relationship. There is continued and extensive cooperation between the Episcopal Church (TEC) both in the US and in Canada. This is reflected in our local Lutheran-Episcopal Coordinating Committee (LECC). In May the Coordinating Committee visited a joint parish in the Baltimore area, and we have just concluded a major clergy/AIM event at Shrine Mont in VA participated in by the three VA

diocese of the Episcopal Church and our VA and Metro DC Lutheran Synods. Over ninety persons gathered for the 3 day event which focused on our worship practices. Most of our bishops, including Bishop Graham attended and lead worship, as well as national ecumenical staff. This is the second such gather; the last being nine years ago.

Continued conversations and coordination with the Moravian Church and the Mennonite Church is moving to an international dialogue on baptism and engaging issues of peacemaking. While the Formula of Agreement partners: Presbyterian Church, USA (PCUSA), Reformed Church in America (RCA) and the United Church of Christ (UCC) has no national coordinating committee talks have coalesced around possible joint commemorations of the Reformation anniversary. The tragic event at Mother Emanuel AME church in Charleston has sharpened a renewed activity on the part of the ELCA in matters of racism. Bishop Easton has been a major participant in the memorial service following the shootings and ELCA has had an important role in the Black Methodist Coalition, Racial Reconciliation Summit in Louisville and the Conference of National Black Churches. There is an expectation that many AME bishops will be personally present at the ELCA Assembly this summer.

Churches Uniting is Christ (CUIC) has languished for some years but a plenary held this spring has brought new energy to this long standing multi-lateral conversation. Christian Churches Together (CCT) has Lutheran participation in its leadership and the National Council of Churches (NCC) which has struggled and downsized in recent years continues its work in Faith and Order matters.

Interreligious relationships maintained through consultative panels with Jewish and Muslim groups continue to face hard and tense issues. In December of 2015 Bp Easton issued an Open Letter to the American Muslim Community. The ELCA has promoted the Shoulder to Shoulder Campaign with the Muslim community, and more broadly, encourages our congregations to use the resource, [Engaging Others; Knowing Ourselves: A Lutheran Calling in a Multi-Religious World](#).

LWF and ELCA ecumenical involvements are almost overwhelming in number and seriousness. Here at the local level we try to help communicate this work done on our behalf and to work with willing partners to bring this witness into the lives of congregations and members of synod. As a local unit we maintain an on-going Lutheran-Roman Catholic conversation and a local regional Lutheran-Episcopal Coordinating Committee. Our unit has organized observance of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity (WPCU); provided leadership within 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 participate in the Virginia Council of Churches on the Executive Committee and the Faith and Order Unit and the recently revived Interfaith Conference of Greater Washington (IFC). One of our members was honored with a Faith in Action Award by the VCC.

Budget constraints continue to limited our operations but we have not diminished our commitment or focus. The unit meets about 5 times a year and through its members participates in over forty additional meetings and events. We hope to assist the synod in making our observance of the events of the Reformation anniversary an occasion of ecumenical significance which it has always been and remains so today.

Submitted by

Rev. Thomas Prinz, chair