

Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs Commission Report

In 2014, we participated in the Paul Wattson Lectures program at the University of San Francisco. "Rethinking the Ecumenical and Interfaith Path: Should We Accentuate What Unites or What Distinguishes?" The speaker was Dr. William R. Burrows, a Roman Catholic research professor at the New York Theological Seminary. While both are important, we are called to unity in Christ.

The theme of the National Workshop on Christian Unity in Albuquerque, N.M., April 28-May 1, "Has Christ Been Divided?", drove us more deeply into the subject. Bishop John Bauerschmidt, Episcopal Bishop of East Tennessee and a Co-Chair of ARCIC, gave several scholarly addresses on "Moral Decision Making in an Ecumenical Context." Anglicans and Roman Catholics teach in different ways. Ours is a dispersed and non-centralized theology without a supreme, magisterial office. Issues such as Migration, Immigration, Same-sex Marriage drive us both to Holy Scripture and prayer, together. The Presiding Bishop's Deputy for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs brought us up to date on the changing relationships and dialogues of the world's churches and their organizations. At an evening Eucharist at the First United Methodist Church, our preacher was a Roman Catholic Bishop who is the President of the Catholic Association of Ecumenical and Interreligious Officers. Although we are unable to share the Cup, we do share the pulpit, pray together and learn from the Holy Spirit.

On May 20, the Ecumenical and Interreligious Officers spent the morning with the Roman Catholic Bishop of Oakland. We were assisting in an effort to identify some of the social issues of the day and to discuss how and where we can address them together. The meeting included sixty men and women of several races and of a wide variety of religious traditions. The California Council of Churches' Marijke Fakasiieiki spoke of her work promoting "Covered California" and affordable health care. Poverty, Inequality, Racism, the Sexual Abuse of Women and Children and Social Justice were among the issues about which we spoke with passion. (No one mentioned the Oakland Diocese' division over a Morality Pledge required of their school teachers.)

Our Ecumenical Officers plan to gather for our Annual Retreat at the Jesuit Center in Los Altos on November 3 – 4.

— Sumner Walters, Ph.D.