

Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs Commission Report to Diocesan Convention 2015

Receptive ecumenism, "What we can learn from each other," is the most hopeful, new activity of the Church's ecumenical leaders in 2015. Begun about a decade ago by Professor Paul Murray of Durham University in England, receptive ecumenism begins with an understanding that one's own tradition does not have all of the answers and must listen to and learn from the experience of other Christian traditions. An illustration of this, noted by the director of the Anglican Centre in Rome, was last year's action by Archbishop Welby and Pope Francis on behalf of the 29 million people living as slaves worldwide. The Vatican was already preparing to address the issue, but because Archbishop Welby shared his concern, agreement between Anglicans and Roman Catholics to combat slavery is underway. Subsequently, some Muslim leaders have joined us in this work.

Local congregations gather in each other's buildings for ecumenical worship during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity in January each year. A typical response is "we enjoy seeing how other churches worship." Receptive ecumenism challenges us to ask "What can we learn from other churches' worship? What do we learn about our own tradition and what spiritual riches are evident in the piety of our neighbors?"

The National Workshop on Christian Unity was held in Charlotte, North Carolina in April. In addition to learning about receptive ecumenism, the fact that ecumenism is more widespread in the global north causes us to be increasingly concerned about the Gospel's spread worldwide. In February we spent a day with the University of Tubingen's Dr. Karl-Joseph Kuschel while participating in the Paul Wattson Lectures at the University of San Francisco. "How the dialogue with Jews and Muslims has changed me as a Christian" was the theme of his lectures and our dialogue. During the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, on January 18 we shared in a splendid service celebrating Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday and interfaith relations at the United Methodist Church in Moraga. Music by the local chorus of Sufism Reoriented enriched our peace project prayers.

Jurisdictions represented by our Ecumenical Officers Committee: Episcopal Diocese of California, United Methodist Church, Catholic Diocese of Santa Rosa, San Francisco Association of Evangelicals, Catholic Diocese of San Jose, Archdiocese of San Francisco, Greek Orthodox Church, Missouri Synod Lutheran and the Evangelical Lutheran Church.

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