

Chapter II

Ecumenical Ministry: Organizations and Resources

Jude D. Weisenbeck, SDS

Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity

Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue

Bishops' Committee for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs

Diocesan Ecumenical Offices

The National Association of Diocesan Ecumenical Officers

The National Workshop on Christian Unity

The National Association of Ecumenical and Interreligious Staff

The National Workshop on Christian/Jewish Relations

Ecumenical Institutes and Centers in the United States and Canada

Periodic Institutes and Workshops

The World Council of Churches

The National Council of Churches of Christ in the United States

State Councils of Churches

Local Ecumenical Organizations

The Joint Working Group

The North American Academy of Ecumenists

The Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity

The Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity originated in 1960 as a preparatory committee for the Second Vatican Council. It later became a conciliar commission in 1962 and played a central role in developing the ecumenical aspects of the Council's work. Cardinal Augustine Bea was its first president.

It was confirmed by Pope Paul VI in 1966 as a permanent office of the Holy See and was given the name Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity until the name was changed in 1989 to Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity. Cardinal Johannes Willibrands was its first secretary; later, upon the death of Cardinal Bea, he succeeded to the office of president and retained that position until 1989 when Cardinal Edward Cassidy became its president. The Paulist priest, Father Thomas Stransky, was one of the original staff persons. Cardinal Walter Kasper has succeeded to the presidency in 2001.

The PCPCU has as a primary function that of guiding and serving the ecumenical activities of the Catholic Church, but it is also responsible for Catholic/Jewish relations through the Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews, the president of the PCPCU is *ex officio* its presiding officer. Another principal function is to serve as a top-level point of contact with other Christian churches and organizations. An assembly of bishops and a group of consultants meet annually to help determine general policy under the direction of its president

Among its numerous activities have been international theological dialogues with the Lutheran World Federation, the Anglican Communion, the World Methodist Council, the Old Catholic Churches of the Union of Utrecht, the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, the Pentecostals, the Disciples of Christ, evangelicals, the Orthodox, and the Baptist World Alliance.

There is also a Joint Working Group between the Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches. This body meets annually, periodically issues statements on ecumenical issues, and serves as a contact between the Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches.

Notable among the ways in which the PCPCU has guided the ecumenical activities of Catholics is the **Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms on Ecumenism**, issued in 1993.

Address: Via dell'Erba 1, 00193 Rome, Italy
Telephone: 69.88.30.71
FAX: 69.88.53.65

Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue

Pope Paul VI inaugurated the Secretariat for Non-Christians on Pentecost Sunday (May 17) 1964. Although this occurred more than a year before the promulgation of *Nostra Aetate* (October 28, 1965) at the Second Vatican Council, the care of the declaration on the relation of the church to non-Christian religions remained in the hands of Secretariat Promoting Christian Unity where it had originated. Cardinal Paulo Marella served as the first president (1964-73). In 1967, Paul VI confirmed the place and role of the Secretariat for Non-Christians in the Roman Curia. In 1974, Paul VI established the Commission for Religious Relations with Muslims within the Secretariat. In 1988, Pope John Paul II reorganized the curia, and the Secretariat was designated the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue.

The PCID is responsible for relations with members and religious bodies other than Christians and Jews as well as with those who in some way possess a religious spirit. The goals of these relations are mutual understanding and respect, cooperation and common action, and spiritual enrichment.

Four have served as president (Cardinal Marella, Cardinal Sergio Pignedoli, Archbishop Jean Jadot, and Cardinal Francis Arinze), and four have served as secretary (Fr. Paul Humbert-claude, S.M., Bishop Pietro Rossano, Archbishop Marcello Zago, OMI, and Bishop Michael Fitzgerald, M.Afr.). The work of the PCID has gradually expanded over the years focusing at first on communication and education for dialogue within the church to formal and informal contact with religious organizations and leaders around the world to numerous series of inter-religious and multireligious dialogues and meetings.

Notable among the Council's publications are: **The Attitude of the Church toward Followers of Other Religions: Reflections and Orientations on Dialogue and Mission** (1984) and **Dialogue and Proclamation** (1991). The Council publishes a bulletin, **Pro Dialogo**, three times and year for an annual subscription of \$27.

Address: Via dell 'Erba 1, 00193 Rome, Italy
Postal Address: Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue,
00120 Vatican City
Telephone: 69.88.43.21
FAX: 69.88.44.94
e-mail: pcid-office@interelg.va

Bishops' Committee for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs

The Bishops' Committee for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs (at first known as the Bishops' Commission for Ecumenical Affairs) was established by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops on November 11, 1964, with Archbishop Lawrence J. Shehan of Baltimore as

its first chairman. Six other bishops served as members of the Commission and Msgr. William W. Baum was selected as its first executive director. Its office was located in the headquarters of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops in Washington, D.C.

The purpose was to assist in implementing the **Decree on Ecumenism** and other ecumenical decisions of the Second Vatican Council. More specifically, the Commission was to interpret the **Decree on Ecumenism** and its application to the United States; propose guidelines, methods and techniques for ecumenical dialogue; advise and cooperate with individual bishops regarding the practice of ecumenism in their dioceses; and coordinate the participation of the bishops in the various aspects of the ecumenical movement in the United States.

The Commission and its office expanded very rapidly, as did its stated set of purposes. In a mandate approved by the bishops in November of 1968, it was stated: “The Bishops’ Committee for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs (the name adopted in 1966) has a mandate from the National Conference of Catholic Bishops to give guidance in ecumenical and interreligious affairs and determine concrete ways of acting in accordance with the Decrees on Ecumenism and on Non-Christian Religions of the Second Ecumenical Council of the Vatican and with other ordinances and legitimate customs, taking account of the time, place and persons they are concerned with, but also of the good of the universal Church.” This mandate listed no less than fourteen functions ranging from “putting into practice the rules and instructions issued by the Apostolic See” to “giving advice and assistance to Bishops” to “maintaining liaison with the other territorial commissions of the hemisphere,” and so forth.

Finally the mandate clearly expanded the scope of its work to include “ways to foster through dialogue and other forms of cooperation the relations of the Catholic Church in the United States with the Jewish Community in this country, with the people of the non-Christian religions and with the secularist world.”

In November 2000, BCEIA Chairman, Bishop Tod D. Brown, acting on the recommendation of the Episcopal Moderator for Interreligious Relations and supported by the members of the committee, approved a Subcommittee on Interreligious Dialogue. The SID held its first meeting meeting on March 30, 2001 under the chairmanship of Bishop Joseph J. Gerry, who served as the first Episcopal Moderator for Interreligious Relations.

Currently, the secretariat, which serves the BCEIA, has an executive director and four associate directors.

The BCEIA co-sponsors several national dialogues and conversations with other churches and confessional bodies including the Episcopal Church USA, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, the Polish National Catholic Church, the United Methodist Church, the Orthodox Churches, the Oriental Orthodox Churches, the Alliance of Reformed Churches, and the Interfaith Witness of the North American Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention.

The BCEIA co-sponsors a number of regional dialogues with the Islamic Society of North America, the Islamic Circle of North America, and Muslim consultative councils in Northern and Southern California.

Offices of the BCEIA are located at:

3211 Fourth St., N.E.
Washington, D.C. 20017

Diocesan Ecumenical Offices

The **Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms on Ecumenism** contains four paragraphs devoted to the diocesan ecumenical officer and the diocesan ecumenical commission or secretariat. These paragraphs state: “the Bishop should appoint a competent person as diocesan officer for ecumenical questions” and “the diocesan Bishop should set up a council, commission or secretariat charged with putting into practice any directives or orientations he may give and, in general, with promoting ecumenical activity in the diocese.” (# 41 and # 42.)

Paragraph 44 contains a rather detailed listing of nine functions of the ecumenical council, commission or secretariat, however it may be called.

Although the use of the word “should” seems to indicate that appointing an ecumenical officer and establishing an ecumenical commission is not mandated by law, nevertheless, these things are strongly urged.

Since it is assumed that readers of this handbook are serious about their task as ecumenical officer, it is also assumed that they will be familiar with the **Directory** and will refer to those paragraphs just cited regarding the ecumenical officer and commission. Therefore, it will not be necessary to duplicate that material here.

The National Association of Diocesan Ecumenical Officers

The National Association of Diocesan Ecumenical Officers (NADEO) is exactly what its name states, an association, organized on the national level (USA), of persons who have been appointed to fill the role of ecumenical officer in their own diocese.

Since there is a separate chapter in this handbook devoted to NADEO, the reader is referred to that for detailed information. It is listed here in order to fill out the structure through which the work of ecumenism is carried out in the Catholic Church starting with the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity to the association which aims to be an enabling agency for ecumenical officers at the diocesan level.

The National Workshop on Christian Unity

The National Workshop on Christian Unity is an annual event that originated in 1963. The first sponsors were a group of Catholics who saw a need to form local leadership for the task of ecumenical ministry. Leaders from other Christian communions were invited to join in 1969. Today the National Ecumenical Officers Association is the official sponsor. In practice, it is organized by ecumenical officers from various Christian churches, notably, the National Association of Diocesan Ecumenical Officers (Catholic), the Episcopal Diocesan Officers, the Lutheran Ecumenical Representatives Network, and Ecumenical Colleagues (American Baptist Churches USA, the Christian Church [Disciples of Christ], the Presbyterian Church USA, the United Church of Christ, the United Methodist Church, and others.)

The workshop, a four-day event, rotates to cities around the United States. It includes seminars, Bible study, general sessions and prayer services open to and of interest to all as well as denominational meetings, seminars and worship.

The National Workshop on Christian Unity celebrates the spirit of ecumenism by:

- providing a meeting with seminars for all who are concerned with the ministry of Christian unity: laity, clergy, ecumenical officers, theologians, staff of ecumenical organizations;
- stimulating an exchange of ideas and experiences among people concerned with Christian unity and the bodies they represent;
- being a resource and balance between national planning and local responsibility, general ecumenical discussions and particular interchurch conversations, and regional leadership efforts and local realities;
- encouraging denominational networks to empower and witness to the unity of the church in regional and local places;
- celebrating the unity that already exists among Christians and searching for ways to overcome the divisions that remain.

In recent years, the National Workshop on Christian Unity has met in:

San Diego, CA — 2001
Louisville, KY — 2000
Rochester, NY — 1999
St. Paul, MN — 1998
Sacramento, CA — 1997
Richmond, VA — 1996
Albuquerque, NM — 1995
Providence, RI — 1994
Milwaukee, WI — 1993
Denver, CO — 1992
St. Louis, MO — 1991

The National Association of Ecumenical and Interreligious Staff

It is difficult to pinpoint the actual origins of NAEIS. Predecessor bodies with which continuity can be traced go back as far as 1824 when the American Sunday School Union was formed. This body had staff from the beginning, although organizations of paid staff came later. For example, in 1892 a fellowship of state and local Sunday school executives was formed. This body provided peer support and exchange of ideas for thirty years through newsletters and an annual meeting in conjunction with the national Sunday school conventions.

The years after 1890 saw the emergence of federations of churches as distinct from Sunday school associations which had only the loosest ties with church hierarchy. Eventually these federations formed the Federal Council of Churches in 1908. Conferences of executives of church federation of councils soon followed, and the Church Federation Secretaries Council was formed in 1915.

The decade from 1910 to 1920 saw a rapid increase in the number of federations, and by 1920 a new name was used by their executives: The Association of Executive Secretaries. Interaction with other ecumenical bodies, especially the Employed Council Officers Association, resulted in a merger and new name, the Association of Council Secretaries in 1940. In turn, the merger of national bodies resulted in the formation of the National Council of Churches of Christ in 1950.

The decade of the 1960's saw a growth in ecumenical relationships and well as interaction with non-Christian religions, leading to a more inclusive structure and still another name, the National Association of Ecumenical Staff. This occurred in 1970. One of the purposes of NAEIS was to serve the interests and needs of persons serving professionally in ecumenical ministry. By 1997 it was seen fit to become even more inclusive, extending membership in the organization to non-Christian religions. It was at this time that the name was changed to the National Association of Ecumenical and Interreligious Staff (NAEIS).

NAEIS conducts an annual summer conference as well as several regional meetings, and its committees work throughout the year. It publishes a bi-monthly newsletter called **CORLETTER** and has an electronic communications meeting on ECUNET called NAEISnet. It maintains regular contact with the NCCC through its Ecumenical Networks Working Group.

Current addresses of NAEIS are:

National Association of Ecumenical & Interreligious Staff
475 Riverside Drive, Suite 880
New York, NY 10115-0050
(212) 870-2155
FAX (212) 870-2158

Rev. N. J. L'Heureux, Jr. Registrar
86-17 105th Street
Richmond Hill, NY 11418-1597

The National Workshop on Christian/Jewish Relations

The National Workshop on Christian/Jewish Relations traces its origins to a meeting held near Dayton, Ohio, in November 1973. Seventy-five people attended this meeting. Since then meetings have been held in various locations around the United States. In recent years more than 1,000 participants have participated. The sixteenth such workshop was held October 24-27, 1999, in Houston, Texas, with the theme "From Recognition to Reconciliation: Looking Back and Looking Forward at the Millennium."

Not only have these workshops attracted an unusually large number of participants but a very large number of sponsors, both national and local, support this effort to improve understanding and cooperation between Christians and Jews.

For the further information, the reader is referred to the excellent web-site:

<http://www.jcrelations.net>

Ecumenical Institutes and Centers in the United States and Canada

The **Institute for Ecumenical and Cultural Research**, founded in 1967 by Kilian McDonnell, OSB, and the Benedictine monks of St. John's Abbey, is located on the campus of St. John's University in Collegeville, Minnesota. The institute is a residential center for study, research, writing and dialogue. Its broad purpose is "to dispel religious ignorance and promote better understanding and harmony." Men and women scholars are invited to spend one or two semesters of study and writing on their selected fields of research and to share the results of their research with their colleagues. Conferences are held during the summer months on timely ecumenical topics.

The address, phone number, and FAX number are:

P.O Box 6188
Collegeville, MN 56321-6188
Tel. (320) 363-3366
FAX: (320) 363-3313
e-mail: iecr@iecr.org
www.icer.org

The **Graymoor Ecumenical and Interreligious Institute**, founded in 1967 by the Atonement Friars at their headquarters in Garrison, NY, is a place where people of all faiths can come to discuss issues related to the unity of the Church and topics of an interreligious nature. Conferences, seminars and consultations are the normal means used to engage in ecumenical dialogue. The Institute publishes **Ecumenical Trends** monthly except August. It also publishes, in cooperation with the National Council of Churches and the Bishops Committee on Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs, on an annual basis, materials for use in observing the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity.

The address, phone number, and FAX number are:

475 Riverside Drive, Room 1960
New York, NY 10115-1999
Tel. (212) 870-2330 * FAX (212) 870-2001
e-mail: lmnygeii@aol.com

The **Canadian Centre for Ecumenism**. Besides promoting ecumenism through conferences, workshops, and developing resources, the Center publishes its quarterly journal **Ecumenism**.

The address, phone number, etc. are:

2065 Sherbrooke St. W.
Montreal, QC, H3H 1G6
Tel. (514) 937-9176
FAX: (514) 937-4986
e-mail: ccocce@total.net

The **Prairie Centre for Ecumenism**, founded in 1984, promotes inter-church dialogue, understanding and cooperation. It is also actively involved in inter-religious dialogue. For greater detail refer to its web site listed below. Its address, phone number, etc. are:

250-B Second Avenue South
Saskatoon SK S7K 1K9 Canada
Tel. (306) 653-1633
FAX: (306) 653-1821
e-mail: pce@ecumenism.org
www.ecumenism.org

Periodic Institutes and Workshops

Besides the above-listed institutes and centers in the United States and Canada, there are other institutes and workshops conducted on a regular basis. Among these are:

Institute for Ecumenical Leadership, offered by the National Association of Diocesan Ecumenical Officers in cooperation with the Secretariat for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops. It is a ten-day program conducted during the summer months, generally in July or August and is designed to provide the basics for new ecumenical officers, members of ecumenical commissions, and leaders in Catholic dioceses and religious communities. The location changes from time to time. More detailed information may be obtained from the president of NADEO or the Office of Ecumenical and Religious Affairs (202) 541-3020.

In addition to the above, an **Advanced Institute for Ecumenical Leadership** was recently started and is offered in rotation with the other two institutes, by the same sponsoring agencies.

Institute for Interreligious Leadership, offered for the first time in 1997, is the third summer institute offered by the National Association of Ecumenical Officers in cooperation with the National Conference of Catholic Bishops.

The World Council of Churches

The World Council of Churches is a “fellowship of churches which confess the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour according to the Scriptures and therefore seek to fulfill together their common calling to the glory of the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.” The statement is taken from the Basis on which the World Council of Churches is founded and with which all member churches agree. Several decades in the making, the WCC was formally constituted at its first general assembly in Amsterdam, the Netherlands, on August 23, 1948. Initially 147 communions participated and ratified the constitution. Since then, membership has grown to 342 communions in 120 countries in all continents and virtually all Christian traditions. Detailed information may be found in its web site listed below. Its address, phone number, etc. are:

P.O. Box 2100
1211 Geneva 2, Switzerland
Tel. (+41 22) 791-6111
FAX: (+41 22) 791-0361
e-mail: info@wcc-coe.org
<http://www.wcc-coe.org/wcc/english.html>

National Council of Churches of Christ USA

The National Council of Churches regards itself as “the primary national expression of the movement for Christian unity in the United States.” Its member communions comprise 35 Protestant, Orthodox and Anglican church bodies that work together on a wide range of activities to further Christian unity, witness to the faith, and serve people throughout the world.

The Preamble to its constitution states: “the National Council of Churches of Christ in the United States of America is a community of communions, which, in response to the gospel as revealed in the Scriptures, confess Jesus Christ, the incarnate Word of God, as Savior and Lord. These communions covenant with one another to manifest ever more fully the unity of the Church. Relying on the transforming power of the Holy Spirit, the communions come together in the Council in common mission, serving in all creation to the glory of God.”

The Council was formed in 1950 in Cleveland, Ohio, by action of representatives of the member churches, and by the merger of 12 previously existing ecumenical agencies, each with a different program focus. The roots of some of these agencies go back to the 19th century. Its address, phone number, etc. are:

475 Riverside Drive. Room 850
New York, NY 10115
Tel. (212) 870-2227
e-mail: news@nccusa.org
<http://nccusa.org>

State Councils of Churches

Nearly every one of the states in the United States of America has a state ecumenical organization in some form. Sometimes the word “council” is a part of its name, but this is not universally true. For example, there are the Minnesota Council of Churches, the Kentucky Council of Churches and the Massachusetts Council of Churches. Others are called associations, conferences, covenants and so forth.

There is no uniform pattern regarding the size of the operations and the character of work. Some have very large staffs whereas some have only part-time directors. Many have gone through several stages of an evolutionary process while others have adhered to a definite pattern of goals and activities over an extended period of time.

What is necessary to note is that state councils of churches have no direct tie to the National Council of Churches just as the latter has no direct ties to the World Council of Churches. The use of the common name “council” does not mean these organizations are joined together structurally.

Local Ecumenical Organizations

When it comes to local ecumenical organizations, differences can be very pronounced both in terms of names and design. Many cities have such organizations, the purposes of which are often directed toward cooperative action to assist the poor and the homeless, although some are equally intent upon promoting better understanding through dialogue and various other forms of interaction.

* * *

There are two more other organizations which fall into quite a different class, namely, the Joint Working Group and the North American Academy of Ecumenists.

The Joint Working Group

The full name of this organization is Joint Working Group between the Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches. The Catholic Church is not a member of the World Council of Churches, although it is a full member of the Faith and Order Commission of the WCC. The Joint Working Group was established in 1965 as a way of insuring that there would be active collaboration between the two bodies. This group meets annually and submits reports from time to time. There are approximately 15-20 members on the JWG.

Because the Catholic Church and the WCC are quite different kinds of bodies (the former is “one church with a universal mission and structure of teaching and governance” while the latter is a fellowship of churches), the kind of collaboration possible flows from their differences. It has produced some excellent theological and pastoral studies and explored in relatively unofficial ways some of the serious issues facing the ecumenical movement.

The North American Academy of Ecumenists

As its name indicates, the NAAE is designed to appeal to the world of academia, although neither advanced degrees nor faculty status at the university level is required for membership or participation in its meetings. Its literature states simply that “The goal of the NAAE is to inform, relate, and encourage men and women whose profession or ministry in the church involves them in ecumenical activities and studies.” Ecumenically active clergy, laity, professors and students are welcomed as members, but its focus is clearly upon theological reflection and scholarship, hence the name “academy.” It is affiliated with the **Journal of Ecumenical Studies**.

The academy has met nearly every year since 1957 in a format that typically involves Friday evening, Saturday, and Sunday morning. Scholarly papers are presented followed by open discussion.

