



Metropolitan Washington, D.C. Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

4005 Wisconsin Ave NW, P.O. Box 39105, Washington, D.C. 20016

metrodcelca.org

The Ecumenical and Inter-Religious Relations Committee A Report to the 2024 Assembly

The Ecumenical and Inter-Religious Relations Committee (EIRC) supports the bishop, congregations, rostered ministers and members of the synod in working toward unity among Christians.

We also work to promote mutual understanding and cooperation between Christians and people of other religions.

<https://metrodcelca.org/eirc/>

The committee mission we share is *thrilling* in its intent and spaciousness! And it is *daunting* in its immensity! But more important, it is the call of Christ, the playful work of the church and the inexhaustible vision of the Holy Spirit—and so it is our marvelous life together. Is that too much to say?

Think of it! Ecumenical relationships and inter-religious encounters exist and thrive through people like you and me. Relationships exist between *individuals* and often begin by chance introduction, curiosity, a marriage in the family, a neighbor's welcome, collegial affinity and friendship. They grow through the ministry of *institutions*—shared seasonal worship breaking tired parochial habits, congregations within a common community collaborating over hunger needs and gun violence concerns, church bodies aligning their advocacy efforts to practice social justice out of core faith commitments. And they stretch through *church-wide expression*—when global scholars meet to articulate and interpret the heart of our faith understandings, informed by history and humanity's varied, often fractured stories. All this, for the purpose of provoking one another to love in shoulder-to-shoulder ways and in joyful, cruciform lives.

The EIRC of Metro D.C. Synod has continued these efforts with you this year.

- Supported by NRMT Partnership Grant, EIRC prompted Conference deans to gather over lunch to *share* stories about faith relationships and companionship ventures (theirs or their congregations) to *imagine* future possibilities. We seek to recognize, affirm, inspire and build on what the Holy Spirit is nudging the church to be and do.
- We created a GoogleDoc to inventory and serve as a provocative resource of various partnerships and informed connections within the Synod to build on that. The hope is to multiply that effort broadly within the synod. Organized by Conference and congregation, leaders are invited to insert *abbreviated* references and notes. See <https://tinyurl.com/2h8sm7dh>



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- We are curating the EIRC webpage to offer links to ELCA-based and ecumenically-relevant references and organizations. So much is available. We want you to put your fingers on useful things, to connect with helpful people, to be inspired by thoughtful faithful commitments. And... without reinventing the wheel or bogging the mind.
- We've been stretched with possibilities beyond our imaginations. Happily our small team is growing, folks have been curious, and we invite new partners in this critical and joyful work! Consider being a branch with us in Christ the vine.
- We are delighted that Bishop Mariann Budde of the Episcopal Diocese of Washington will be with us for the June 1 Assembly! Building on a donor's gift to make 150 copies of her book *How We Learn to Be Brave—Decisive Moments in Life and Faith* available for \$5, we hope this might be stir leaders to invite an Episcopalian or other ecumenical leader to coffee or lunch and exchange the question; how is God calling *you* to be brave and how can *I* support you?

Metro DC EIRC continues to be a partner in several long-established and active networks nurturing unity, understanding and collaborative witness, both locally and nationally. Since the disruption and dislocation of the pandemic, efforts to regroup and reimagine have begun. Notably...

- The Virginia Episcopal-Lutheran Joint Committee (including three Virginia dioceses and Virginia and Metro DC Lutheran Synods) continues to build on the strength of our Called to Common Mission full communion relationship.
- LARCUM (Lutherans, Anglicans, Roman Catholics, United Methodists, geographically centered in eastern Virginia and DC), traditional host of Week of Prayer for Christian Unity and learning events, is reassessing priorities and schedules for the future.
- The National Workshop on Christian Unity, in which our ELCA LEIRN Network has been a central participant, will reconvene its major annual event in November 2024 "Hear what the Spirit is Saying to the Churches" at the Lutheran Center in Chicago focusing on networking and practical ecumenism. We plan to continue our practice of sending at least one participant from Metro DC.

We are an ecumenical church around the world, a member church of Lutheran World Federation (Geneva CH) in which Bishop Leila Ortiz serves on the LWF Council. At the 2023 Assembly in Kraków, Poland, Roman Catholic keynote Tomas Halik urged the church to look beyond the 16th and 20th century reformations to what the 21st invites:



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The new Reformation must strengthen the consciousness of Christian co-responsibility for the whole “body” of which we are part through the mystery of the Incarnation of the Word of God: for the whole human family and for our common world. We must ask not only what “the Spirit says to the churches today” but also how “the Spirit, who blows where he wills” works beyond the churches. We need to have the courage to kinetically self-transcend the current forms and boundaries of Christianity... We strive for unity not to make Christianity more powerful and influential in this world but to make it more credible: “so that the world might believe.”

And so, let us provoke one another to love for Christ’s sake, for all creation’s sake!

With EIRC participants— Pr. Annabelle Markey, Pr. Amy Feira, Pr. Anna Anderson, Pr. Becca Vargas, Pr. Eric Randolph (Synod Council), Kristin Opalinski (ELCA LEIRN Network, Asst. to Kathryn Lohre), Pr. Christopher L. Weidner, Chair