



Ecumenical and Inter-Religious Relations

In 1991, the ELCA Churchwide Assembly adopted “A Declaration of Ecumenical Commitment: A Policy Statement of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.” Building on the legacy of the ELCA’s predecessor churches, this policy statement serves as a compass, guiding the ELCA’s ecumenical relations in their various forms and stages. The ELCA has grown in Christian unity and mission through full communion agreements with six churches, as well as through continued dialogues, discourses and coalitions with other Christians.

The ELCA has also grown in mutual understanding and cooperation with neighbors of other religions and worldviews. The ELCA’s long-standing commitments to inter-religious relations find articulation in the proposed policy statement “A Declaration of Inter-Religious Commitment,” to be considered by this assembly. In a time marked by unprecedented religious extremism, as well as unprecedented inter-religious peace-building, affirming this church’s vision for and commitments to inter-religious relations is itself an act of Christian witness.

Ecumenical relations: 2016–2019

Full communion partnerships

The ELCA’s full communion partnerships, which continue to enrich the ministry of this church in multiple ways, have reached a season of anniversaries. In March 2017, during the yearlong observance of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton preached in the Amistad Chapel at the UCC Center in Cleveland, Ohio, at a worship service celebrating 20 years of partnership under the Formula of Agreement (FOA) with three Reformed churches in the U.S.: the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), the Reformed Church in America, and the United Church of Christ. In 2019 the ELCA recalls 20 years since the decisions to enter into full communion with The Episcopal Church (TEC) and with the Moravian Church in America, northern and southern provinces, and 10 years in full communion with the United Methodist Church.

The passage of years has called for revision of the documents for each relationship that describe procedures for the “orderly exchange of clergy,” a distinctive mark of full communion. This task has helped clarify for our partners new ELCA policies for deacons as rostered ministers of this church; provided opportunities to lift up the relationship guidelines with new leaders; updated the terminology and procedures for each partner; and opened the way for continuing conversations about changing shapes of ministry.

To support continued growth in these relationships, coordinating committees meet regularly. The work of the FOA churches is supported by meetings of the heads of churches and ecumenical officers, sometimes with ministry staff. The Lutheran-Moravian Coordinating Committee has completed a three-year cycle of attention to specific opportunities in areas where both Moravian and Lutheran populations are comparatively dense (Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, Winston-Salem, North Carolina, and Madison, Wisconsin). The Lutheran-United Methodist Coordinating Committee has developed resources for a retreat of mutual exploration for local pastors, and will take up matters related to our continued journey together as full communion partners in light of the decisions of the 2019 Special Session of the General Conference of The United Methodist Church. The Lutheran-Episcopal Coordinating Committee continues to respond to ongoing theological questions and pastoral opportunities; uniquely, this committee is complemented by a staff counterparts’ group focused on advocacy and congregational support and by regular meetings with the Canadian Joint Anglican-Lutheran Commission, which guides the full communion relationship in that country.

In 2017, the Rev. Lamont A. Wells, president of the African Descent Lutheran Association (ADLA), and his counterparts in the Union of Black Episcopalians, convened the first-ever joint summit: “Like a Mighty Stream, Let Justice Roll: Absalom, Jehu, and Beyond.” Here, the ELCA commemorated the 500th anniversary of the Reformation in light of the 30th anniversary of ADLA.

Lutheran-Roman Catholic relations

The 500th anniversary of the Reformation placed Lutheran-Catholic relations in high relief, as Lutherans in the U.S. and around the world made “commemoration” rather than “celebration” their principal focus. Hundreds of events around the country took up this spirit. The goal was not to tell a different history but “to tell that history differently.”

On Oct. 31, 2016, Pope Francis joined leadership of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) in Sweden for a joint ecumenical commemoration. Presiding Bishop Eaton represented the ELCA at the [Common Prayer in Lund](#)

[Cathedral](#), a service of thanksgiving, repentance and commitment shaped by the international study document “From Conflict to Communion,” and then at “Together in Hope” in Malmö Arena, a time of commitment to shared witness and service.

The Common Prayer in Lund provided the framework for a service in the chapel of the Lutheran Center in March 2017. The ELCA Conference of Bishops’ Ecumenical and Inter-Religious Liaison Committee and the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops’ Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs Committee co-hosted the service, preceded by a joint meeting of the committees. Lutheran bishop Donald Kreiss and Catholic bishop Mitchell Rozanski, the committee chairs, signed a joint statement, patterned after the statement from Lund. Speaking to the U.S. context, it read, “As Americans, we pray especially at this moment for wisdom and courage to welcome the stranger seeking refuge in our country,” and concluded, “May God’s Holy Spirit so strengthen us to be bold and creative, filled with joy and hope, that we may look toward one another and say, ‘Can we not walk together another stretch of the way?’”

As the year opened, Presiding Bishop Eaton hosted a webcast, “Ecumenical Witness and the Reformation,” ([elca.org/webcast](#)), with Martin Marty, Khadijah Islam and Susan Wood. As the anniversary closed, Presiding Bishop Eaton delivered the homily at a service in the Basilica of the Sacred Heart at the University of Notre Dame in Indiana; Bishop Denis Madden joined in presiding, together with ecumenical partners and local leaders.

Throughout the ELCA, the hopeful tone of the anniversary year was shaped by the actions of the 2016 Churchwide Assembly on the ecumenical document “Declaration on the Way: Church, Ministry and Eucharist.” This was a pioneering effort to produce a new genre of ecumenical text — one rooted in 50 years of Lutheran-Catholic dialogue, both domestic and international — that would indicate the common ground already established. The declaration drew together 32 statements on which Catholics and Lutherans in dialogue had already agreed; it also tentatively identified some remaining differences. In a defining moment, the assembly received the 32 statements of agreement and commended the declaration, along with “From Conflict to Communion” and the “Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification,” as “resources for the common life of the church as it approaches 2017 and beyond.” The vote for this action, exceeding 99%, reflected the yearning for unity palpable in the assembly, evident in Bishop Madden’s prayer for a “day not far distant” when Lutherans and Catholics can “share the chalice of Christ’s blood together.”

In the meantime, the U.S. Lutheran-Catholic dialogue, now in its 12th round and its sixth decade, continues its work, co-chaired by the Rev. Lowell Almen, retired secretary of the ELCA, and Bishop Denis Madden. Its report, “Faithful Teaching,” examining the structures and procedures by which each church teaches with authority, is expected in late 2019.

Undergirding all these theological engagements is the “Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification,” the 20-year-old agreement between the Lutheran World Federation and the Catholic Church. In March, the University of Notre Dame hosted a consultation assembling leaders of the five global church families (including Methodists, Anglicans and Reformed) that now jointly adhere to the declaration. Together these partners bear witness that justification, divisive for much of the church for half a millennium, no longer divides. The consultation affirmed that “in a time of individualism and commodification,” the world is “in need of the message of God’s liberating grace.” Coming full circle to the affirmations of the anniversary year, the statement endorsed the first commitment made at Lund on Oct. 31, 2016: we “should always begin from the perspective of unity and not from the point of view of division in order to strengthen what is held in common, even though the differences are more easily seen and experienced.”

Lutheran World Federation

The [12th Lutheran World Federation Assembly](#) took place in Windhoek, Namibia, in 2017. The theme was “Liberated by God’s Grace,” with the subthemes “Salvation — Not for Sale,” “Human Beings — Not for Sale,” and “Creation — Not for Sale.” Namibia, a country with a rich Lutheran history, provided a remarkable context for this forward-looking assembly and symbolized the ways in which the global Lutheran movement is growing most strongly in the global south, especially in Asia and Africa. Presiding Bishop Eaton led the ELCA delegation.

On Sunday, the assembly gathered in Sam Nujoma Stadium for a celebratory worship service to commemorate the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, joined by thousands of Namibians and Africans from across the continent. The assembly honored the service of its outgoing president, Bishop Munib Younan of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land, and elected his successor, Nigerian Archbishop Musa Panti Filibus, who will attend the 2019 Churchwide Assembly in Milwaukee.

Through the LWF, ELCA Ecumenical and Inter-religious Relations participated in a number of international dialogues, which can be viewed at [lutheranworld.org/content/ecumenical-relations](#).

Other Lutheran churches

In accord with a Churchwide Assembly resolution in 2013, the ELCA maintains regular contact with the North American Lutheran Church (NALC). Together with leaders from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (ELCIC), Presiding Bishop Eaton and others have met several times with NALC leaders in order to build relationships, exchange information and discuss difficult issues. The ELCA continues to reach out also to the Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod, recognizing that, especially at local levels, relationships and collaborations in ministry continue.

Historic Black Church relations

Building on the 2016 Churchwide Assembly resolution “Deepening Relationships with Historic Black Churches,” the ELCA has continued to engage in a multifaceted strategy. This has included strengthening our bilateral, coalition and conciliar work and witness with our partners, as well as our communication and cooperation among churchwide colleagues, synods and the African Descent Lutheran Association. In late 2018, Racial Justice Ministries moved to the Office of the Presiding Bishop, enhancing the possibilities for internal dimensions of this strategy. The ELCA and the Historic Black Church partners have continued to meet regularly and participate in each other’s assemblies, and important new steps have been taken during this period, as detailed here.

Bishop John White, then-president of the African Methodist Episcopal Church Council of Bishops, was received as a special guest to the 2017 ELCA Bishops’ Academy in Charleston, South Carolina. Amid sharing together through plenary, Epiphany worship and a pilgrimage to Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church (“Mother Emanuel”), Presiding Bishop Eaton convened a meeting to discuss future possibilities for dialogue and collaboration that might build upon the historic bilateral dialogue of the 1990s. Senior Bishop McKinley Young, who died in early 2019, was a strong supporter of these efforts toward renewed bilateral relations; future work will seek to honor his legacy of ecumenical leadership.

Senior Bishop George Battle Jr. and other bishops and leaders of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church (AMEZ) attended the 2016 Churchwide Assembly. The ELCA reaffirmed its shared commitments with the AMEZ as articulated in their 2010 joint statement of mission. In response to the statement’s call for ELCA and AMEZ congregations to “gather in your regions and communities, to listen and speak our stories of faith, and to create and enhance communities of hope where our ministries may be enriched by one another,” the North Carolina and South Carolina synods are partnering with AMEZ and, in some cases, AME leaders to develop replicable local initiatives. These models are being shared through the ELCA Conference of Bishops. Common commitments to truth-telling and racial justice, and specific responsibilities to this work as a predominately white church, were lifted up by Bishop Darin W. Moore, presiding prelate of the Mid-Atlantic Episcopal District of the AMEZ, at ELCA500, an ELCA churchwide event commemorating the 500th anniversary of the Reformation.

The ELCA has participated in Churches Uniting in Christ (CUIC) with other Protestant churches, including the Historic Black Churches. CUIC seeks visible Christian unity at the intersections of racial justice, and the mutual recognition and reconciliation of ministries. The ELCA has been a partner in mission and dialogue with 10 other member churches. In 2017, all CUIC member churches publicly celebrated their mutual recognition of ministries. A worship service and a series of public dialogues on systemic racism were hosted by Bishop Teresa Jefferson-Snorton, president of CUIC and presiding bishop of the Fifth Episcopal District of the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church. The 2019 CUIC plenary took place in May 2019 in Montgomery, Alabama; participants visited the Legacy Museum: From Enslavement to Mass Incarceration and the year-old National Memorial for Peace and Justice, the first national museum and memorial dedicated to the legacy of enslaved black people, victims of lynching, survivors of Jim Crow legislation and racial bias within the criminal justice system.

For four consecutive years, since the 2015 martyrdom of the “Emanuel Nine,” the ELCA has co-sponsored the cross-racial dialogue at the annual consultation of the Conference of National Black Churches (CNBC). The CNBC comprises the eight largest Historic Black Churches in the U.S.; the annual consultation addresses ecclesial and policy issues that impact communities of African descent. The ELCA delegation has included the presiding bishop and staff and leadership from ethnic-specific associations, including the ADLA and the European Descent Lutheran Association for Racial Justice; ELCA leaders have served as speakers and panelists. The leadership of the CNBC has invited its predominately white church partners to consider ways of collaborating at national and regional levels and through the “A.C.T. Now! Unite to End Racism” initiative of the National Council of Churches.

In 2019, various ecumenical events will commemorate the quad-centennial of the forced trans-Atlantic voyage of enslaved African peoples. The ELCA joined with various churches and organizations, including the CNBC, as partners in Bread for the World’s publication “Lament and Hope: A Pan-African Devotional Guide.” The ELCA is also able to share with ecumenical partners the newly published *Luther’s Small Catechism With African Descent Reflections* (Augsburg Fortress, 2019), which provides the contexts, voices and experiences of African-descent

Lutheran theologians. The Council of the Lutheran World Federation issued a public statement on the quad-centennial at its June 2019 meeting.

Orthodox relations

In 2016, the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago (LSTC) ceremoniously returned a rare ninth-century Greek manuscript of the New Testament to the Greek Orthodox Church. His Eminence Archbishop Demetrios of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America (GOA) was present, joined by LSTC President James Nieman, Presiding Bishop Eaton and other GOA and ELCA leaders. LSTC and the GOA are exploring the possibility of renewed relations on shared commitments to care for creation. In 2018, the ELCA was present by invitation for the Enthronement of His Eminence Metropolitan Nathanael of the Metropolis of Chicago, former director for Inter-Orthodox, Ecumenical, Interfaith & Church-World Relations at the GOA. In 2019, the ELCA was also present for the Enthronement of the new archbishop of the GOA, His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophorus of America.

Mennonite Church U.S.A.

Following Lutherans' historic reconciliations with Anabaptists and Mennonites earlier in the millennium, both in the U.S. and around the world, the ELCA has remained in contact with the Mennonite Church U.S.A. In December 2018, Mennohof, a prominent Amish and Mennonite information center in Indiana, completed the exhibit "Reconciling in Christ," which highlighted the healing of relations with Catholic and Reformed world bodies alongside the central focus on relations with Lutherans.

Ecumenical engagement on Israel/Palestine

In 2018, Presiding Bishop Eaton led an ELCA delegation to participate in the consecration of the Rev. Ibrahim Azar as the new bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land. The delegation included bishops of companion synods and the president of the Association of Lutherans of Arab and Middle Eastern Heritage.

Presiding Bishop Eaton provided leadership on two coalition letters in March 2018 related to the closure of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in response to the Israeli government's proposed tax policies targeting Christian churches in the region. One letter, sent to Israeli President Benjamin Netanyahu and Mayor Nir Barkat of Jerusalem, decried the actions that led to the church's closure, detailed their impact on the churches' ministries, and expressed solidarity with the churches on the ground. The other letter went to the heads of churches in the Holy Land as a message of support and solidarity. The letters were co-signed by Presiding Bishop Eaton, Presiding Bishop Michael B. Curry of The Episcopal Church, Archbishop Vicken Aykazian of the Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church of America and His Eminence Daniel Cardinal DiNardo, president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. Responses were received from President Netanyahu and Father Francesco Patton, Custos of the Holy Land. Further coalition work on this issue took place through Churches for Middle East Peace.

In October 2018, the ELCA Conference of Bishops issued a statement endorsing humanitarian assistance to the East Jerusalem Hospital Network (EJHN), which includes the Augusta Victoria Hospital, a ministry of the Lutheran World Federation. On the basis of this statement, the ELCA reached out in partnership to The Episcopal Church and the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, each of which has connections to hospitals within the EJHN. The three partners issued a joint statement as a tool for continued advocacy for the hospitals.

"Four-way"

Annually, Presiding Bishop Eaton meets with the presiding bishop of the Episcopal Church, the national bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada and the primate of the Anglican Church of Canada. This "four-way" has produced occasional series of devotions for seasons such as Advent (2016), Lent (2018) and the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity (2019), as well as common statements such as "Remember the Refugees and Migrants" in 2017. Currently, the four leaders have proposed mutual recognition of relations of full communion between the U.S. churches of Called to Common Mission and their Canadian neighbors, signatories to the Waterloo Agreement. This would be a pioneering international act.

National Council of Churches

In late 2018, the National Council of Churches (NCC) launched the truth and racial justice initiative "[A.C.T. Now! Unite to End Racism](#)." Building on the history of its leadership during the civil rights movement, the initiative challenges Christians to "awaken, confront, and transform" racial injustice in church and society. ELCA leadership from Racial Justice Ministries supported the planning process. The public launch occurred in Washington, D.C., on April 4, 2018, the 50th anniversary of the assassination of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., and included a prayer

gathering, a silent march from the King Memorial to the National Mall, a rally with speakers, and a day of advocacy and action. In response to the invitation from Presiding Bishop Eaton, a few hundred ELCA leaders and people participated. The initiative will remain a priority for the NCC for the coming years.

The ELCA is engaging in this work as a member church, but also through the annual NCC Christian Unity Gathering, various inter-religious dialogues, and the process of convening tables for faith and order, education, advocacy and inter-religious relations. The 2019 Christian Unity Gathering, to take place in Virginia, will include a visit to Port Comfort in Jamestown, where the enslaved African peoples of the first forced trans-Atlantic voyage arrived in 1619.

World Council of Churches

In 2016, the World Council of Churches (WCC) made a pilgrimage to the U.S. for racial justice solidarity. The global delegation visited Charleston, South Carolina; Ferguson, Missouri; and Chicago, Illinois, where the ELCA hosted discussions at the Lutheran Center. As a follow-up to this visit, the WCC Commission of the Churches on International Affairs organized a training in 2019 titled “Achieving Racial Justice Through UN Human Rights Mechanisms.” The training, with ELCA leadership, was held parallel to the 24th session of the U.N.’s Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent as part of the churches’ observance of the International Decade for People of African Descent.

Last year marked the [70th anniversary of the World Council of Churches](#). Events and initiatives took place throughout the year and around the world as part of the WCC’s Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace, launched at the 2013 WCC Assembly in Busan, South Korea.

As part of the anniversary festivities, the WCC hosted a historic visit from Pope Francis to the Ecumenical Center in Geneva during the Central Committee meeting in June. On that special day, the WCC relaunched its [“Thursdays in Black Campaign: Towards a World Without Rape and Violence.”](#) An ELCA launch of the campaign, tied to our church’s commitments in the social message “Gender-based Violence,” will take place Thursday, Aug. 8, during the Churchwide Assembly.

The next WCC Assembly will take place in Karlsruhe, Germany, in 2021.

Christian Churches Together in the USA

Christian Churches Together in the USA is the broadest ecumenical table in the United States, including five church families: Orthodox, Evangelical/Pentecostal, Historic Black, Catholic and Historic Protestant. Other Christian organizations, such as Bread for the World, Habitat for Humanity International and Sojourners, also participate. Annual convocations provide an opportunity to explore theological and social issues and to build relationships through prayer and fellowship. The 2019 convocation will take place in Montgomery, Alabama, and include visits to the National Memorial for Peace and Justice and the historic Dexter Avenue King Memorial Baptist Church to honor the quad-centennial.

Global Christian Forum

Through the Lutheran World Federation, the ELCA supports the Global Christian Forum, which brings together representatives of “historic churches” with those of “new churches,” especially Evangelicals and Pentecostals who often do not participate in other ecumenical structures. It seeks to develop methods, including the sharing of faith stories, that invite people to see the work of the Spirit in unexpected places and permit deeper conversation around sensitive issues such as “proselytism.” As an example of reconciliation among historic churches, the third global gathering — held in Bogotá, Colombia, in April 2018, with the theme “Let Mutual Love Continue” — encompassed the ecumenical reconciliation on the issue of justification that surrounded the 500th anniversary of the Reformation.

ELCA 500

On [Reformation Day 2017](#), Presiding Bishop Eaton joined Bishop William O. Gafkjen, chair of the ELCA Conference of Bishops, and Mr. Bill Horne, vice president of the ELCA, in co-hosting a daylong public-witness event that concluded with worship at Lutheran Church of the Reformation on Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C. The event, “Looking Back & Called Forward: ELCA 500,” explored 500 years of reformation through the lens of 50-plus years of ecumenical and inter-religious dialogue. Speakers representing Catholic, Jewish, Muslim, and Historic Black Church speakers joined with other partners to focus on repentance and healing of the past and on common action for the world’s flourishing in the future.

Inter-Religious Relations: 2016–2019

Inter-religious task force

At the 2016 Churchwide Assembly, Presiding Bishop Eaton announced that she had appointed a task force chaired by Bishop Patricia J. Lull of the Saint Paul Area Synod, to develop an inter-religious policy statement. The task force completed a first draft in late 2017, and ecumenical and inter-religious partners participated in a preliminary review process. From January through June 2018, the draft was made public for input and feedback from across the church. The drafting team then revised the document over the summer, and it was brought to the ELCA Conference of Bishops and Church Council in the fall of 2018.

That October, the Conference of Bishops strongly encouraged the Church Council to recommend the proposed policy statement for adoption by the 2019 Churchwide Assembly, and in November, the Church Council voted unanimously to do so. The document will be presented during the Churchwide Assembly, where hearings will give voting members and visitors the opportunity to raise questions and share about their own inter-religious engagement. Should the assembly adopt this policy statement, it will stand alongside “A Declaration of Ecumenical Commitment” (1991), which called for a “separate, official statement to describe [the ELCA’s] commitments and aspirations” with regard to this “important but distinct responsibility for the church.”

The proposed recommended declaration reflects the realities of our long-standing inter-religious relations as a church while giving us a framework for common articulation of our context, our calling, and our commitments to this vocation. More information about the document’s drafting team, background and timeline — as well as the document text, in both English and Spanish — can be downloaded [here](#).

Jewish relations

This year marks the 25th anniversary of the 1994 “Declaration of the ELCA to the Jewish Community.” The ELCA will honor that anniversary at the 2019 Churchwide Assembly using a litany of confession based on the declaration. The Institute for Jewish-Christian Understanding at Muhlenberg College is planning a fall conference to commemorate the anniversary.

The ELCA has continued to participate in the national Jewish-Christian dialogue on pastoral issues that was co-convened by the National Council of Churches and the National Council of Synagogues. In the immediate aftermath of the October 2018 massacre at Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh, the ELCA hosted the scheduled round of this national dialogue at the Lutheran Center. This was a tender but vital time to be together; a prayer service in the chapel took place with ecumenical and Jewish guests.

In April 2019, Presiding Bishop Eaton and Rabbi Rick Jacobs, president of the Union for Reform Judaism, met with their advocacy, program and relations staff at the URJ offices in New York to review their history of bilateral dialogue and relations and to discuss topics of common concern, including Israel/Palestine and immigration. Communications and partnership mechanisms were set in place to renew the ELCA’s relationship with the URJ.

Muslim relations

The 2016 Churchwide Assembly adopted the resolution “My Muslim Neighbor,” commending ELCA educational resources, encouraging ELCA members to work to eliminate anti-Muslim bigotry, and encouraging ELCA leaders to engage in dialogue and cooperation. To this end, Presiding Bishop Eaton has continued to build our bilateral relationship with the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA), hosting its leadership for high-level meetings, attending the ISNA conventions and carrying out new joint initiatives.

A series of pilot projects was launched as part of our witness to the 500th anniversary of the Reformation. Three ELCA synods — Southeastern Pennsylvania, Southwestern Washington and Southeast Michigan — partnered with ISNA to build church-mosque relations at the local level. These stories were told at the interfaith banquet of the ISNA convention in 2017, at which Presiding Bishop Eaton was honored with the ISNA’s Interfaith Unity Award.

Through the Shoulder to Shoulder campaign (“Standing with American Muslims. Upholding American Ideals.”), the ELCA has continued to address anti-Muslim bigotry through public statements and press conferences, local and regional training events, and formation programs for emerging leaders. A key partner in this has been a Center for Christian-Muslim Engagement at the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago. Ms. Kathryn M. Lohre, assistant to the presiding bishop for ecumenical and inter-religious relations, has been serving as co-chair of the campaign since early 2018.

In addition to our participation in the Christian-Muslim dialogue co-convened by the NCC and the Islamic Circle of North America, the ELCA has been involved in new international Christian-Muslim efforts, including the Forum for Promoting Peace, the Alliance of Virtues and the U.S.-Egyptian dialogue. These efforts offer the ELCA significant opportunities to engage in Christian-Muslim dialogue and with U.S. evangelicals who are involved.

Council for a Parliament of the World's Religions

The sixth modern Parliament of the World's Religions took place in Toronto, Canada, in November 2018 with the theme "The Promise of Inclusion, The Power of Love: Pursuing Global Understanding, Reconciliation, and Change." The ELCA was represented by teaching theologians, pastors, churchwide staff and members of the Lutheran Ecumenical and Inter-Religious Representatives Network who led workshops, plenaries and network meetings.

National Council of Churches dialogues

In 2018 and 2019, the National Council of Churches expanded beyond its long-standing Jewish-Christian and Christian-Muslim dialogues to co-convene dialogues with Buddhists, Hindus and Sikhs. These tables have provided the ELCA with an important way to expand the breadth and depth of inter-religious partnerships while maintaining the ELCA's commitment to doing inter-religious work ecumenically whenever possible. The initial focus of the new dialogues has been on relationship-building, histories and texts, and discussions of racism in our traditions and society.

Other partners and coalitions

The ELCA is a member of Religions for Peace USA and the National Interreligious Leadership Initiative for Peace in the Middle East. Ecumenical and Inter-Religious Relations in the Office of the Presiding Bishop partners with the Network of ELCA Colleges and Universities Inter-Religious Coordinating Committee and, through that work, the Interfaith Youth Core.

Ms. Kathryn M. Lohre, *assistant to the bishop and executive for Ecumenical and Inter-Religious Relations*

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