

# Ecumenical and Inter-Religious NEWS

FEBRUARY 2022

Dear partners in ecumenical and inter-religious relations,

While your new year's resolutions may already be a distant memory, our collective resolve against anti-Semitism must never cease. In November of last year, the ELCA Church Council approved revisions to "A Declaration of the [Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to the Jewish Community](#)" as an expression of this church's continual opposition to rising anti-Semitism and incitement to violence. (Read more about the revisions to this foundational 1994 declaration in my [EIR Perspectives blog](#) post.)

As the hostage situation at Congregation Beth Israel in Colleyville, Texas, unfolded in real time for the world to see, the Jewish community experienced again the trauma of anti-Semitism. Like many of you, my first impulse was to reach out to Jewish colleagues, friends, and neighbors to offer our concern, love, and care. We can also express our love for our Jewish neighbors publicly by calling a thing what it actually is: a violent act of anti-Semitism.

On the morning after the safe escape of the hostages, Rabbi Esther Lederman and I published a [message](#) as co-chairs of the [Shoulder to Shoulder Campaign](#): Standing with American Muslims, Upholding American Ideals. We affirmed that we stand "with all those who uphold human dignity and who work to build bridges over the raging waters of anti-Semitism, anti-Muslim bigotry, racism, white supremacy, and violence in our shared society." This is existential work – if not for us, then for our neighbors. It is essential work that expresses to the world our core theological conviction: loving our neighbors is not a zero-sum game.

This is not just about the visionary leadership of religious giants such as the dearly departed Archbishop Desmond Tutu or Thich Nhat Hanh but a sacred vision for us all. Rabbi Cytron-Walker has consistently built bridges of interfaith understanding in his many years as rabbi of Congregation Beth Israel. He courageously works and walks together with neighbors of various religions and worldviews, among them Lutherans, seeking the common good in the community of Colleyville. In a crisis of anti-Semitic violence, it was those very same neighbors who rushed toward him and his community to pray, to console and give witness to another way. Their capacity to embody this vision together – against all odds – is a reminder of our daily vocation and the value of our resolve.

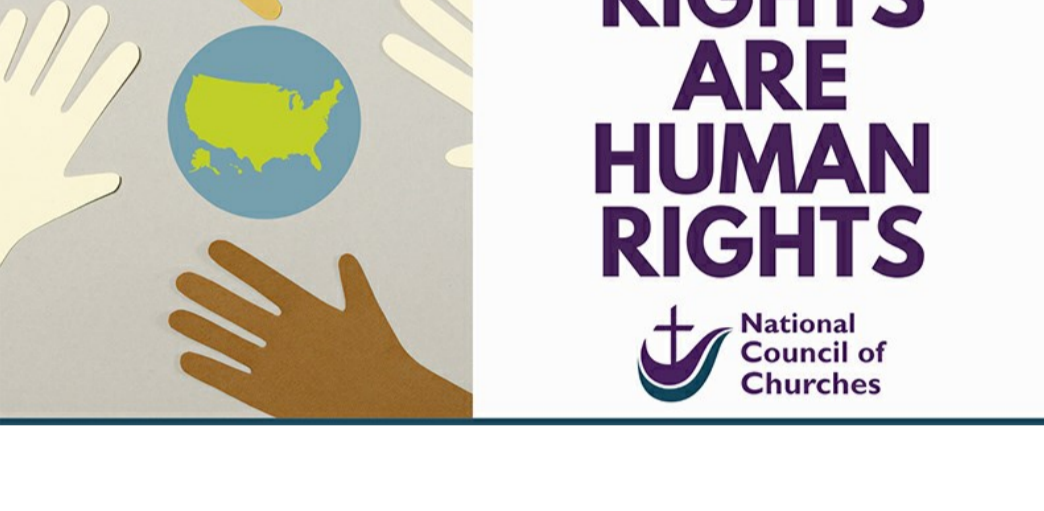
In partnership,



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ELCA Office of the Presiding Bishop

## Ecumenical Relations

Celebrate Archbishop Tutu's legacy by hosting a free screening during February of the film *Mission: JOY – Finding Happiness in Troubled Times*, a documentary that examines the remarkable friendship between Archbishop Tutu and His Holiness the Dalai Lama. [Register to host a screening in your congregation today!](#)

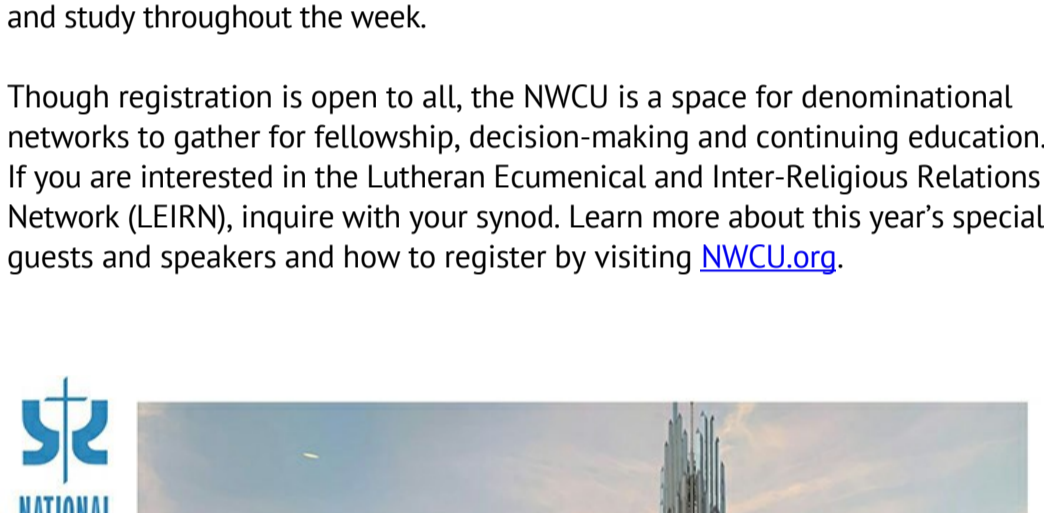


### Remembering Archbishop Tutu's Life and Legacy

In her recent post on the EIR Perspectives blog, "[Journey of Justice and Joy: Lessons Learned From the Arch](#)," Kristen Opalinski looks back at the life and legacy of the late Archbishop Desmond Tutu. She shares personal insights from their work together at COP17 (the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Durban, South Africa) in 2011, along with lessons she learned from him in subsequent encounters.

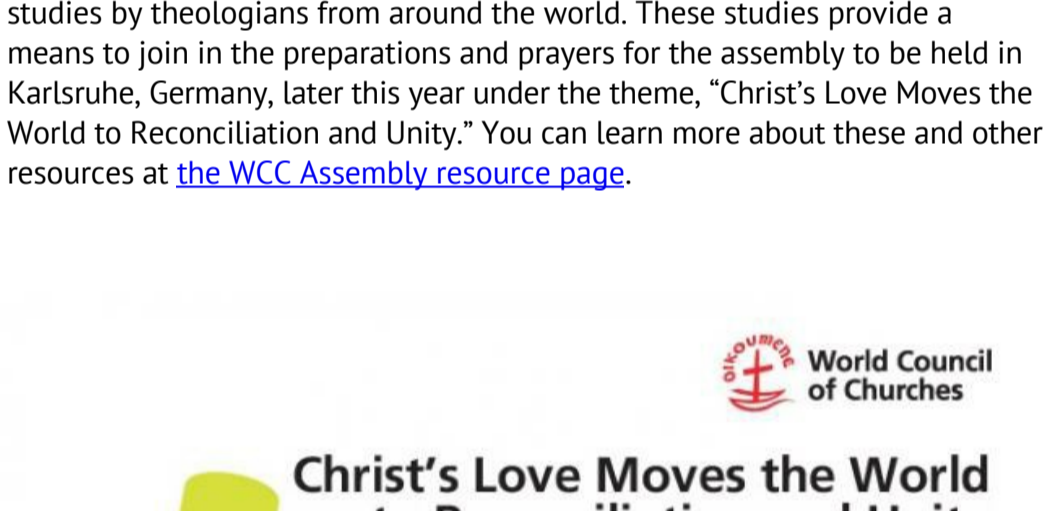
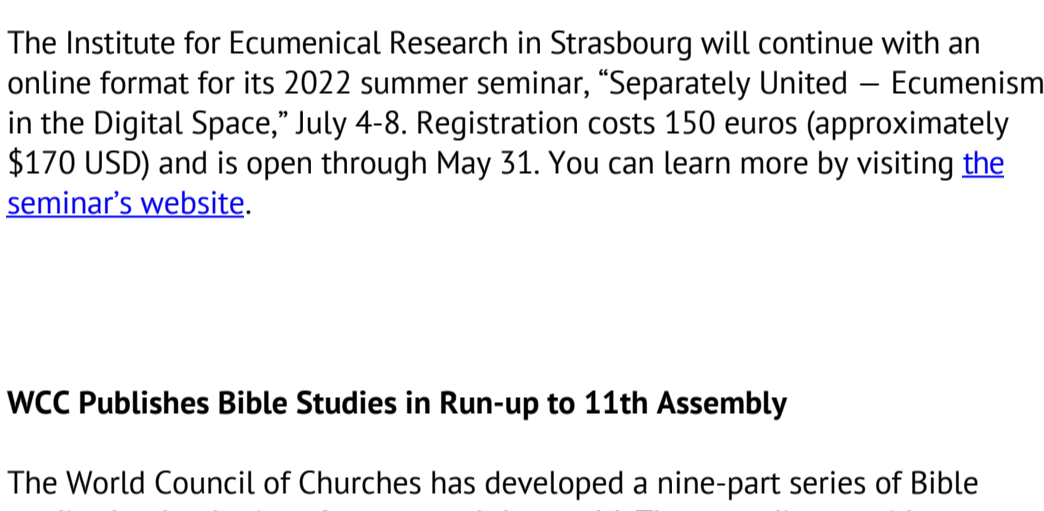
### Interconnection of Reparations and Voting Rights

On Jan. 19 the "Reparatory Justice" webinar series continued with the session "[The Interconnection of Reparations and Voting Rights](#)." The webinar explores the difference between racial equity and racial equality, reflects on the theology of this type of justice work and points to the important connection between voting rights and reparations. The webinar is part of a larger series being developed and supported by the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA (NCC) and its Reparatory Justice partners, including the ELCA. On Martin Luther King Jr. Day, Bishop Eaton and other NCC leaders issued the joint statement "[Voting Rights Are Human Rights](#)." For more information on ELCA advocacy related to voting rights and other issues, visit the [ELCA Advocacy page](#).



### EAD 2022 Theme to Focus on Advancing Civil and Human Rights

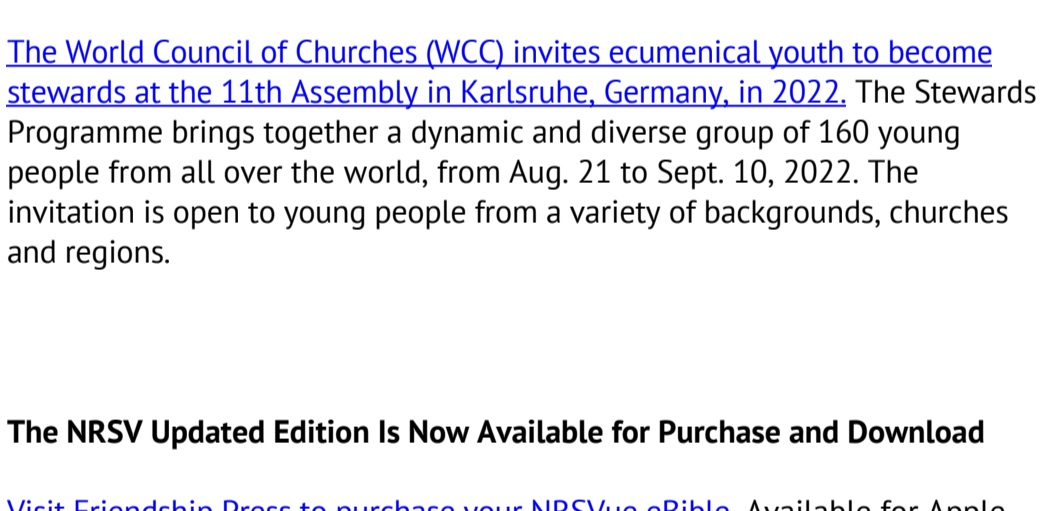
[Ecumenical Advocacy Days 2022](#) will be held virtually April 25-27. Registration will soon open for the conference, which will gather under the theme "Fierce Urgency: Advancing Civil & Human Rights." Participants will use the time to mobilize and call on Congress to protect and expand voting rights in the U.S. and human rights around the world.



### 2022 NWCU Registration Now Open

This year's NWCU will take place May 3-6 at Christ Cathedral in Garden Grove, Calif., under the theme "We Saw the Star in the East, and We Came to Worship Him." Early-bird registration is now open and will run through March 1. The upcoming workshop includes a rich program of plenaries and seminars, and opportunities to join together in prayer. The theologian-in-residence will be the Rev. Elaine A. Heath, PhD, founding president of Neighborhood Seminary, who will lead participants in daily prayer, reflection and study throughout the week.

Though registration is open to all, the NWCU is a space for denominational networks to gather for fellowship, decision-making and continuing education. If you are interested in the Lutheran Ecumenical and Inter-Religious Relations Network (LEIRN), inquire with your synod. Learn more about this year's special guests and speakers and how to register by visiting [NWCU.org](#).



Tuesday–Friday, May 3–6 | Christ Cathedral, Orange County

### 55th Strasbourg Seminar to Focus on the Digital Space

The Institute for Ecumenical Research in Strasbourg will continue with an online format for its 2022 summer seminar, "Separately United – Ecumenism in the Digital Space," July 4-8. Registration costs 150 euros (approximately \$170 USD) and is open through May 31. You can learn more by visiting [the seminar's website](#).

### WCC Publishes Bible Studies in Run-up to 11th Assembly

The World Council of Churches has developed a nine-part series of Bible studies by theologians from around the world. These studies provide a means to join in the preparations and prayers for the assembly to be held in Karlsruhe, Germany, later this year under the theme, "Christ's Love Moves the World to Reconciliation and Unity." You can learn more about these and other resources at [the WCC Assembly resource page](#).



### WCC Invites Youth to Be Stewards at 11th Assembly

[The World Council of Churches \(WCC\) invites ecumenical youth to become stewards at the 11th Assembly in Karlsruhe, Germany, in 2022.](#) The Stewards Programme brings together a dynamic and growing group of 160 young people from all over the world, from Aug. 21 to Sept. 10, 2022. The invitation is open to young people from a variety of backgrounds, churches and regions.

### The NRSV Updated Edition Is Now Available for Purchase and Download

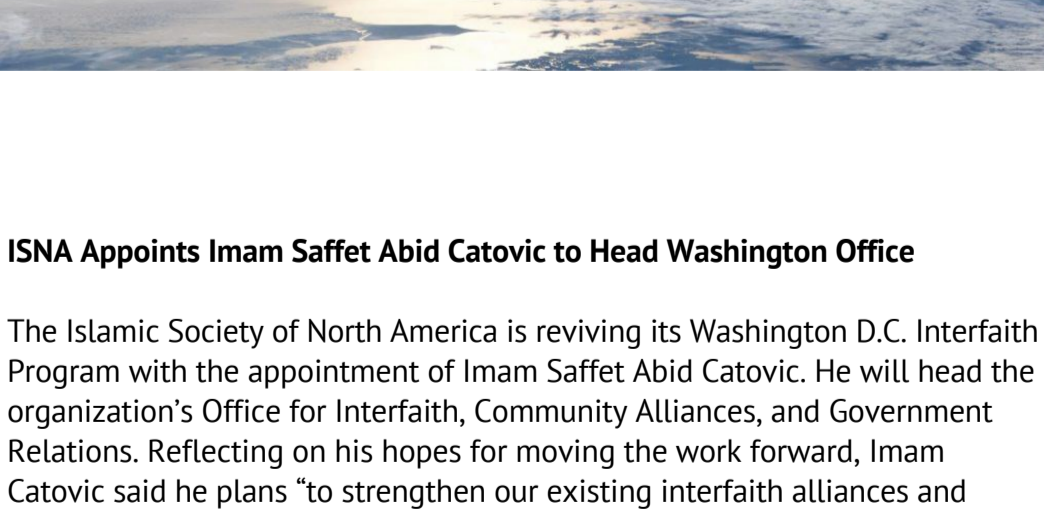
[Visit Friendship Press to purchase your NRSVue eBible.](#) Available for Apple, Android and Kindle devices, the NRSVue is considered the world's most meticulously researched, rigorously reviewed and faithfully accurate English-language Bible translation to date.



## Inter-Religious Relations

### Faith Communities Support Equitable COVID-19 Testing Distribution

Faiths4Vaccines, a multifaith movement to ensure equitable vaccine distribution, is mobilizing its partners, including the ELCA, to help get the word out about federally distributed COVID-19 tests. [Visit the information post on the EIR Perspectives blog](#) to learn how you can help ensure access to testing resources for all stakeholders, especially the most vulnerable.



OMNIA Celebrates Fifth Anniversary and Promising Expands in Africa, Asia and North America

The Rev. Dr. Shanta Premawardhana, president of OMNIA Institute for Contextual Leadership, recently shared insights into the institute's work as it marks its fifth anniversary. You can learn more about the institute; its predecessor organization, Seminary Consortium for Urban Pastoral Education (SCUPE); its Lutheran ties; and its expanding work by reading "[OMNIA: Striving Towards Beloved Community](#)" on the EIR Perspectives blog.

### World Interfaith Harmony Week Creates Space for Awareness and Advocacy

[World Interfaith Harmony Week](#) (WIHW) provides a global showcase for the events of interfaith and other groups. Celebrated the first week of February, this annual U.N. observance has helped to promote a growing global movement toward interfaith collaboration and understanding. [Plan your event today by visiting the WIHW resource page.](#) Events held between now and March 3 and registered on the site will be eligible for prizes.



### ISNA Appoints Imam Saffet Abid Catovic to Head Washington Office

The Islamic Society of North America is reviving its Washington D.C. Interfaith Program with the appointment of Imam Saffet Abid Catovic. He will head the organization's Office for Interfaith, Community Alliances, and Government Relations. Reflecting on his hopes for moving the work forward, Imam Catovic said he plans "to strengthen our existing interfaith alliances and programs and to include many others as we work for racial, economic, sociopolitical and environmental justice, as well as immigrant and human rights." You can read his entire interview on pages 8-9 of [the most recent issue of Islamic Horizons](#).

### ADL-URJ Resources to Combat Anti-Semitism and Hate

The Union for Reform Judaism and the Anti-Defamation League have collaborated to respond to the rising anti-Semitism and violence in our society and around the world. A tool kit of [resources](#) includes a study guide, a reporting tool and a webinar. Though these tools are designed for the Jewish community, they provide helpful insights to anyone seeking to partner with our Jewish neighbors to curb hate.

### LWF Highlights Vital Role of Film in Promoting Interfaith Dialogue

[The Norwegian Center for Holocaust and Minority Studies](#) joined with the [Lutheran World Federation](#) (LWF) and other partners to showcase short dramatic and documentary films that counter the rising tide of extremism and xenophobia in many countries around the world. You can learn more about the project through [LWF's website](#) or [this full video of the festival and panel discussion](#).

### Parliament of the World's Religions Set to Return to Chicago in 2023

Save the date – [the Parliament of the World's Religions returns to Chicago](#), its birthplace, Aug. 14-18, 2023.

Subscribe to the Ecumenical and Inter-Religious Perspectives blog today and let us know if there are events, projects or ministries that would make for a good story to share – email [ElRinfo@elca.org](mailto:ElRinfo@elca.org).

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