

**ELCA Ecumenical and Inter-Religious Relations, Office of the Presiding Bishop
Staff Report to Lutheran Ecumenical and Inter-Religious Representatives Network
Fall 2023 – early Winter 2024**

Ecumenical Relations

Ecumenical Dialogues

In late 2023, we celebrated the publication by Fortress Press of the report of Round XII of US **Lutheran-Catholic Dialogue** on [Faithful Teaching](#). In January 2024, during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, Bishop Deborah Hutterer and the Grand Canyon Synod, and Rev. Dr. Jonathan Linman and Faith/La Fe Evangelical Lutheran Church in Phoenix (who was a Lutheran member of the dialogue, and is a LEIRN Rep.) served as hosts for a reception event that was co-sponsored by ELCA Ecumenical and Inter-Religious Relations and the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops Secretariat of Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs.



The event included reflections from Round XII co-chairs Rev. Lowell Almen and Bishop Denis Madden, and presentations from members Dr. Ian McFarland (Lutheran) and Dr. James Buckley (Catholic). (A snowstorm prevented our east coast participants from joining in person.) Following the program there was a joint prayer service and festive reception. The involvement of all three expressions of the ELCA with our Catholic partners was significant and meaningful, and a model for how reception is the work of the whole church.

This year marks the 25th anniversary of the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification, and next year will mark 60 years of US Lutheran-Catholic dialogue.

After a fruitful time of focusing on relational work and reviewing the ground that has been covered by previous dialogues, the members of Round XIII are now immersing themselves in a careful study of episkopé (as noun and verb!) in the Scriptures and in the teachings of the ancient church. In



March and April there were virtual meetings of the dialogue to take an in-depth look at papers that were commissioned on the relevant subjects, co-authored by a Catholic and a Lutheran theologian working together. The third in-person meeting of the **US Lutheran-Catholic Dialogue** took place at St. Mary's Seminary in Baltimore this October. The theological conversations included a review of previous dialogues and presentations on the understanding of the ministry in the Lutheran Confessions, the

biblical and historical backgrounds of the ministry of episkopé, and the relationship between the Catholic process of synodality and the role of the bishop.

On October 31, Bishop Eaton and the Auxiliary Bishop Emeritus of Baltimore, Denis J. Madden, who serves as co-chair of the U.S. Lutheran-Catholic Dialogue, issued a [joint letter](#) on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the signing of the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification (JDDJ). In

addition, the Lutheran World Federation published [a special liturgy](#) and [looked back at a quarter century of progress](#) since the signing of the JDDJ.

There have been transitions of staff at the USSCB which included the departure of their Secretariat for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs Executive Director Fr. Walt Kedjerski – who has returned to the parish in Long Island – and the arrival of his successor, Fr. Russ McDougall. Fr. McDougall previously served as rector of the Tantur Ecumenical Institute in Jerusalem.

In June, the Lutheran World Federation Council approved the appointment of Bp. Patricia Lull as co-chair of the **international Lutheran-Catholic Dialogue**. The LWF Council also affirmed the [Lutheran-Orthodox Common Statement on the Filioque](#), which urges a refocus on the original wording. The communion office has provided interpretative resources, and early 2025 we hope to organize a learning opportunity related to this development. The LWF Council also affirmed a second Lutheran-Orthodox “Common Statement on the Holy Spirit, the Church and the World” was also affirmed. Bishop [Leila Ortiz](#) serves on the LWF Council Committee for Ecumenical Relations.



This year’s meeting of dialogue between the **Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and the ELCA** took place in late February, hosted by Co-Chair Bishop Bill Gafkjen at the Indiana-Kentucky Synod Office in Indianapolis. The topic was “Ecclesiology: Theology & Polity.” A methodology that included presentations, question exchanges, and team work to prepare responses then shared and discussed in plenary served to strengthen each church’s dialogue team as well as the understanding between the two churches. The online session of the dialogue took place in mid-November. It was an opportunity to hear state of the church reports from our heads of communion, and to begin planning the topic and methodology for the 2025 in-person meeting. We are glad to receive updates about developments between Disciples and Lutherans “on the ground,” and encourage you to continue to inform the dialogue by sharing what is happening in your synods.

Full Communion

In late October 2023, the **United Church of Christ** installed their new



General Minister and President, the Rev. Dr. Karen Georgia Thompson. She is the first woman, first African Descent woman, and first immigrant to lead the denomination, and previously served as the ecumenical officer. The ELCA was



represented by Bishop Laura Barbins and Kathryn Lohre.

Following the **UMC General Conference** in early May, Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton offered [a pastoral letter](#) of support to the members of the United Methodist Church (UMC). Postponed since 2020, the General Conference had a number of significant outcomes, including adopting a plan for worldwide regionalization to restructure the UMC in more equitable ways, the lifting of a 40-year ban on the ordination of practicing homosexual clergy and the removal of harmful language related to the LGBTQIA+ community. The General Conference also adopted a proposal for full communion

with The Episcopal Church, which now awaits action by The Episcopal Church’s General Convention in 2027. You can read a full overview of the outcomes at [umc.org](https://www.umc.org).

The **RCA General Synod** met in Tucson in June. The ELCA was represented by Grand Canyon Synod LEIRN Rep. Rev. Dr. Jonathan Linman. A multi-year discernment process culminated at this General Synod, as recommendations from the [RCA Restructuring Team](#) were considered. These actions were approved:

- Condense regional synods and classes into a single assembly
- Update the name of the merged assembly: middle assembly
- Ensure equity in the new judicial bodies
- Hold General Synod in-person every three years
- Resize the delegation of General Synod
- Experiment with a consensus model for decision making
- Adjust the approval process for changes to the
- Pursue an equitable and just ordination and reception process (amended)
- Adjust the commissions’ sizes and requirements (amended)
- Allow gifted elders to serve as church supervisors* (amended)

Two recommendations were rejected. Deacons will not serve as voting delegates to middle assemblies, and there will not be a 2% cap on General Synod covenant shares. The approved changes will be considered next by classes, and then approved by General Synod 2025. Rev. Dr. Carmelo Santos continues to accompany the RCA through their Theology Commission as they work on theological resources for their restructuring process.

Unfortunately, a **Churches Beyond Borders** (ELCA, TEC, ELCIC, ACC) solidarity visit of the heads of churches and their ecumenical staff officers to the Holy Land that was originally planned for October 2023, has been rescheduled three times and postponed again due to the war. In lieu of the visit, a 2023 [Advent Prayer resource](#) was developed, lifting up the ministries, congregations, and communities of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land and the Diocese of Jerusalem. This can easily be adapted for use again this year.



The final in-person gathering of the current iteration of Heads of Churches of **Churches Beyond Borders** (ELCA, TEC, ELCIC, ACC) took place at **The Episcopal Church General Convention** in Louisville in June 2024. They participated in the honoring of Presiding Bishop Michael Curry and the ecumenical guest program.

As part of its consent calendar, the TEC General Convention adopted “A Proposal for the Exchangeability of the Diaconate” as an interpretation of Called to Common Mission. The Lutheran Episcopal Coordinating Committee is working on the Orderly Exchange document and has finalized and approved the revised document. It is now before legal counsel in each church, and it will next be reviewed by our bishops and their standing commission. *The exchangeability of deacons will be possible when the Orderly Exchange review is completed. The expected timeframe is spring 2025.*

The TEC House of Bishops adopted a resolution assuring Bishop Eaton of their prayers and rejoicing “in our most recent agreement on the diaconate and the service of deacons in the ministry of our two Churches as yet another visible sign of deeper unity between us.”

The Rt. Rev. Sean Rowe was elected the next presiding bishop of TEC during the General Convention. His scaled-down investiture took place at the Chapel of Christ the Lord in The Episcopal Church Center in New York City (rather than the National Cathedral) in early November. Bishop Eaton was part of the service, which you can view [online](#).



The [226th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church \(USA\)](#) took place in Salt Lake City in late June/early July under the theme “Live into Hope.” The Rev. Jihyun Oh, Director of Mid Council Ministries and an Associate Stated Clerk in the Office of the General Assembly, was elected as the next Stated Clerk

Multi-Lateral & Conciliar Ecumenism

The 2023 **Christian Churches Together Forum** took place in Savannah, Georgia in early October under the theme “Waters That Unite & Waters That Divide: Baptism and the Journey to Unity and Reconciliation.” CCT is the most expansive ecumenical table in the US, and the forum provides an opportunity for participants representing five church families (Orthodox, Pentecostal/Evangelical, Catholic, Protestant and Historic Black) to focus on three goals: learning, loving and leading actions. This forum included both theological and practical presentations, small group discussions, and visits to various historic sites and churches in Savannah. A special day was dedicated to visiting the Historic Baptismal Trail in Riceboro, where enslaved people and their descendants were baptized in the swamp and springs, beginning in the 1840s. Bishop Suzanne Dillahunt, who serves on the Steering Committee, and Kathryn Lohre represented the ELCA.



The 2024 [Christian Churches Together \(CCT\) Forum](#) took place in early October in Memphis under the theme “Come, Holy Spirit: Renew, Restore, and Reconcile.” Highlights included visits to the



Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, St. John Orthodox Church and the Mason Temple (Church of God in Christ’s world headquarters), site of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s “Mountaintop” speech. In addition, the group visited the National Civil Rights Museum, housed within the Lorraine Motel, site of Rev. King’s assassination in 1968. After the visit, the group laid a wreath at the site and held a service in remembrance of King’s life of service and sacrifice. The entire week was framed by the ongoing work of repentance and racial reconciliation and our Christian call to justice in the life of the Holy Spirit. Bishop Kevin Strickland, Rev. Dr. Mari Larson, Bishop Suzanne Dillahunt, and Kristen Opalinski took part in the 2024 forum.

The 2023 **National Council of Churches' Christian Unity Gathering** took place in mid-October in



Nashville under the theme “Faith Under Fire: The Church in the Public Square.” The gathering opened with a celebratory reception at the AME Church Publishing House and worship at Greater Bethel AME Church across the street. Through Bible studies, plenary speakers and panels, the gathering explored themes of Christian extremism and supremacy, the role of faith leaders in public safety, religious nationalism and the persecution of religious minorities, and gun violence. Various awards were presented, including an interfaith award

to the Rev. Dr. Michael Trice (ELCA), who is the Spehar-Halligan Professor at Seattle University and founding director of its Center for Ecumenical and Interreligious Engagement. The ELCA delegation participated in the various convening tables. Bishop Eaton gave the Bible study on Ephesians 4. At the conclusion of the meeting, Bishop Eaton began her two-year term as chair of the board.

The NCC Governing Board met in mid-May 2024 at Gallaudet University in Washington, DC, under



the Theme, “Navigating the Boundaries of Church and State.” The meeting included final preparations for the [NCC Freedom Summer campaign](#), which mobilized people against voter suppression and to encourage voter registration. On May 15, a worship service was held at the Lutheran Church of the Reformation on Capitol Hill to install Bishop Eaton as the Chair of

the NCC Governing Board; her term will conclude October 2025 with the installation of HE Elpidophoros of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America.

The 2024 NCC Christian Unity Gathering was held in Nashville in mid-October under the theme “Equitable Futures: Paving the Way for Environmental and Economic Justice.” The statement “[God’s Sacred Earth: A Renewed Commitment](#)” emerged as a recommitment echoing the 2004 statement “God’s Earth Is Sacred.” The gathering also served as a springboard toward 2025, the NCC’s 75th anniversary. During the event, the latest NCC Faith & Order publication was celebrated. [Confronting Racism and White Supremacy in the US: Twenty-first Century Theological Perspectives](#) includes a chapter by the Rev. Dr. Carmelo Santos: “Lutheran Theological Resources to Confront White Supremacy.” Bishop Eaton currently serves as chair of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA and Kathryn Lohre serves as chair of the 75th anniversary committee.



Carmelo Santos also serves on the **World Council of Churches' Faith & Order Commission**. The



[first in-person meeting](#) took place in Manado, Indonesia, February 1-8, 2024. The Indonesian Communion of Churches partnered with the local government (North Sulawesi) to host the Commission as a visual sign of religious peaceful coexistence – Indonesia is the largest Muslim Nation in the world.

The Commission received reports from the work of the previous commission, from the planning committee for the 1,700th anniversary of the Council of Nicaea, and of the diakonia arm of the WCC. The Commission also focused on setting the agenda for the next eight years. There are three working groups. The first group is “Being Church on the Way to Visible Unity,” dealing directly with the question of visible unity and broadening the table. The second group, focused on matters of theological anthropology, moral discernment, gender, race, and technology is: “Being Human: Discovering the Image of God Together.” The third group is “Being Church in and for the World,” working on issues of violence, decolonization, reconciliation, mission, and peace.

The WCC has a [webpage](#) with information and resources for the 1700th anniversary of the Council of Nicaea next year. In early November 2024, the WCC convened an [international conference](#) at Bossey Ecumenical Institute: “Towards Nicaea 2025: Exploring the Council’s Ecumenical Significance Today.” [Six keynote addresses and more than 40 papers were presented](#), including



“The Significance of the Creed in Lutheranism for Identity and Ecumenism” by the Rev. Dr. Ashley Hall, an ELCA pastor, LEIRN rep, and an associate professor and chair of the theology department at Creighton University in Omaha. (The keynotes should be available online soon.) The conference launched the

WCC’s Ecumenical Year 2025, which will culminate in the Sixth World Conference on Faith and Order in October 2025, to be held in Alexandria, Egypt on the theme “Where Now for Visible Unity?”

The 13th Assembly of the **Lutheran World Federation** (LWF) took place September 13-19 in



Krakow, Poland, under the theme "One Body, One Spirit, One Hope." The assembly was preceded by three pre-assemblies — for women, youth, and men. The ELCA delegation included Bishop Eaton and Rev. Dr. Robin Steinke, who completed their



service on the Executive Committee, as well as Bishop Leila Ortiz, Rev. William Flippin, Jr., Brad Wendel, and Khadijah Islam, who were elected to serve on the LWF Council for the next period. Rev. Barbara Lund was elected to serve as chair of the World Service Committee, and she will serve together with Khadijah, who was elected to chair the Constitution and

Membership Standing Committee, on the Executive Committee for the next period. Rev. Katherine Gohm from the ELCIC was elected to succeed Bishop Eaton as the Vice President of the North



American Region. The ELCA was also represented by advisors, co-opted staff, and visitors. You can find resources, resolutions, photos, presentations, study guides, and more [online](#). Kristen Opalinski was the visual identity coordinator for the Assembly, and her beautiful, meaningful work was highly praised by all. She was invited to adapt her designs for use in the communion’s 2023 Christmas cards.

The Assembly keynote speaker was Monsignor Tomáš Halík, a Catholic intellectual and author from the Czech Republic. Kathryn Lohre and Tanzanian Presiding Bishop Shoo, served as respondents. You can find Halík’s keynote and their responses [here](#).



On the closing day of the Assembly, LWF General Secretary Anne Burghardt and Cardinal Kurt Koch of the Vatican’s Dicastery for Promoting Christian Unity presented a [Common Word](#) to the Assembly, anticipating the 500th anniversary of the Augsburg Confession in 2030. This was followed by a [panel discussion](#) of representatives of seven Christian World Communions – the five co-signers of the JDDJ (Catholic, Lutheran, Methodist, Anglican, and Reformed), along with Orthodox and Pentecostal respondents.

In December 2023 Kathryn Lohre participated in an ecumenical consultation on Freedom of



Religion or Belief co-convened by the **Lutheran World Federation** (LWF) and the **World Communion of Reformed Churches** hosted by the EKD in Schwerte, Germany. The intention was to build a theological basis for a unified Protestant witness in relationship to this urgent issue in our times. Participants in the consultation offered presentations on how this issue is playing out in their context, as well as the theological and policy basis for such cooperation. Work continues on a common stance on this issue.

The Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission (FELM) has launched a multiyear initiative called Branches of Peace (*Rauhan Oksat* in Finnish). The initiative includes peer-to-peer workshops of global Lutheran theologians, pastors, and practitioners with specializations in peace and reconciliation to [examine theologies of peace and reconciliation in practice](#). The first workshop



was hosted by the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Colombia in mid-November 2023 in Bogota, Colombia. Kristen Opalinski was invited to serve as one of three contributing theologians for the project. She joined alongside Rev. Dr Bruk Ayele Asale, President of Mekane Yesus Seminary and Rev. John Hernandez, FELM Advisor for Peace and Reconciliation in Colombia in developing a theological framing of the event.

The ELCA welcomed partners from nine countries to take part in the second workshop in this series, titled “Peace and Public Witness: Countering the Rise of Religious Nationalism,” held in late October 2024 in DC, and at the [United Lutheran Seminary](#) campus in Gettysburg. The workshop focused on the role of advocacy in countering religious extremism and tribalism around the world. Participants visited Luther Place Memorial Church in Washington, met with Bishop Leila Ortiz of the Metropolitan Washington, DC Synod, were hosted for a day of learning by ELCA Witness in Society staff, received contextual training at the United States Institute of Peace, toured the National Museum of African American History and Culture and the U.S. Capitol building, and spent time engaging with ULS faculty and students, including those pursuing PhDs in public theology and witness. A third workshop is planned for next year.

The [Global Christian Forum](#) (GCF) held its fourth global gathering marking its 25th anniversary in April in Accra, Ghana in April. The forum is a unique gathering of global Christian churches and organizations from all the major streams of world Christianity. The message from the Fourth Global Gathering “[That the World May Know](#)” highlighted a gospel of unity and the GCF’s charism of sharing faith stories, personal and collective, in order to embrace diversity and foster mutual respect. The ELCA partnered with the LWF to ensure Lutheran participation from the global south.



Members of the ELCA Ecumenical and Inter-Religious Relations staff joined with staff from the ELCA Innovation home area to attend “[AI & the Church Summit](#),” a first-of-its-kind ecumenical meeting focusing on artificial intelligence and the church. The group gathered in Seattle in August for a week of discussions, workshopping and collaboration. Participants visited the headquarters of Microsoft Corporation to learn about its “AI for Good” initiatives and the ethical guardrails around the technology. Cohorts were formed that will continue investigating and working on the ethics of AI and applications of AI for ministry from an ecumenical perspective. The event was co-sponsored by the ELCA’s Innovation home area, the [Presbyterian Church \(U.S.A.\)](#) and [The Episcopal Church](#), and included Catholic and Orthodox participants. [Virginia Theological Seminary](#) was the convening institution, and the event was hosted by Epiphany Parish in Seattle. A report from the summit can be downloaded [here](#), and a review of the summit, co-authored by form LEIRN Rep. Dr. Daren Erisman, an ELCA member, former LEIRN rep, and assistant professor of computer science at Minot State University, can be found [here](#).



The biennial conference of the international **Anglican Lutheran Society** met in September in Edinburgh, Scotland under the theme, “Church in a State.” Kathryn Lohre was a keynote presenter. Her paper was titled, “On Earth as in Heaven: The Prophetic Church in the Polarized Public Space.” Her primary sources included the 2016 LWF study document “[The Church in the Public Space](#),” ELCA social teaching, and the 2023 “[Lambeth Calls: God’s Church for God’s World](#).” Her presentation can be found on the society’s [website](#).



The following week, Kathryn Lohre attended the National Council of Churches in Korea’s centenary celebrations in Seoul, South Korea, representing the ELCA and the LWF. The global ecumenical movement’s leadership in the movement for the reunification of the Korean peninsula has been longstanding and sustained, and given current events is now focused on reconciliation. Given her role as chair of the NCCCUSA’s 75th anniversary committee, Lohre pledged to help strengthen conciliar relations in this time of celebrating history and looking to the future of the one ecumenical movement, and in advocating for a just peace for all people on the Korean peninsula.

Inter-Religious Relations

Inter-Religious Dialogues

The ELCA participates in the National Council of Churches' inter-religious dialogues with Jews, Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus, and Sikhs.

The **Jewish-Christian dialogue** is co-convened by the National Council of Churches (NCC) and the National Council of Synagogues with a focus on pastoral issues. The dialogue met in early December 2023 at the Carter Center in Atlanta on the topic of Israel-Palestine. The meeting was a poignant opportunity for Jews and Christians to reconnect and to share deep pains and connections in light of the ongoing war and the increase in antisemitism and other forms of hatred in the United States. The dialogue met again in June 2024 in Philadelphia. Members of the dialogue carefully examined texts, statements, and essays on topics that included waging war, Zionism in its various forms, and liberation theology in the context of Palestine. Participants shared a sense that they were making progress in understanding each other's perspectives despite the tensions of the current moment. Another round will take place in November 2024 during the NWCU.



The **Christian-Muslim dialogue** is co-convened by the NCC and the Islamic Circle of North America. It met online in mid-February. The agenda included reflections from one Christian and one Muslim on "appreciation of the other's tradition," discussion of the war in Israel/Palestine and current advocacy priorities, increasing anti-Muslim sentiment in the US because of the war, and personal concerns and organizational priorities related to the 2024 election cycle. The dialogue will meet in person in the fall.

The **National Buddhist-Christian Dialogue** met during the last week of May at the University of the West in Rosemead, California, the first university in the United States established to cultivate learning in the context of Buddhist precepts. Those gathered heard an intergenerational panel reflect on shared challenges and hopes and another panel focusing on how each tradition understands and engages in the process of peacebuilding. An important aspect of the dialogue has been the value placed on the whole and not allowing conflict to divide its members into "sides." A prominent theme was the call to empathy and the need to stand together to help the vulnerable in our midst.



The **National Hindu-Christian Dialogue** also met during the last week of May, at the Vedanta Center and Temple in Hollywood, Calif. The group took part in two exercises. The first invited each member to articulate their appreciation for and challenges with the other tradition. The second was an exercise to articulate a mission statement, which revealed common goals as well as differences. For example, the group explored how each tradition understands the concept and practice of justice. As in the National Buddhist-Christian Dialogue, a panel discussion reflected upon each tradition's understanding of and engagement in peacebuilding. This included examples of how each tradition subverts violence toward peace.



In mid-December 2023, **Shoulder to Shoulder** convened prominent faith leaders at the National Press Club in Washington, DC to share a joint declaration and launch a [multifaith commitment](#) to fighting anti-Muslim and anti-Jewish bigotry. Those gathered expressed deep concern for the rise in Islamophobia and antisemitism across the United States, especially since October 7. Shoulder to Shoulder invites faith leaders to add their names to [the pledge](#) and to take action to counter anti-Muslim and anti-Jewish discrimination in communities across the country.



In late March 2024 during Ramadan, the Campaign hosted an interfaith iftar in Washington DC. The event acknowledged the difficulties facing the interfaith movement in the US in light of the war in Gaza, and the rising bigotry and violence experienced in the US as a result.

In September the Campaign published a [“Faith-Rooted Primer for Understanding & Addressing Bigotry in the US Amid the Violence in Israel-Palestine”](#) as a resource to equip religious and interfaith leaders to respond effectively, thoughtfully, and responsibly to such bigotry. Additional Shoulder to Shoulder resources include: [“Countering and Dismantling Islamophobia: A Comprehensive Guide for Individuals and Organizations”](#) and [“Allyship Through Civic Action.”](#)

In January 2024, a new reference group for inter-religious dialogue was appointed by the World Council of Churches General Secretary to serve in this new period between Assemblies. The group's mandate is to strengthen the WCC's inter-religious work globally and through its member churches, and to engage in theological dialogue, common formation, and advocacy with inter-religious partners. Kathryn Lohre was invited to serve as co-moderator along with Elias Halabi, director of The Nahyan Center for Arabic Studies and Intercultural Dialogue at the University of Balamand in Lebanon. The first meeting of the **WCC's Inter-Religious Reference Group** will take place in Geneva in early December. They will join the newly appointed Programme Executive for Interreligious Dialogue and Cooperation, Prof. Dr. Angeliki Ziaka, with other members to chart the work for the coming period.

In 2023-2024, Bishop Kurt Kusserow and the Southwestern Pennsylvania Synod held a two-part formation event for pastors, deacons, and lay worship leaders titled, “Care with the Word: Preaching Respect for the Jewish People.” [Part I](#) last September involved ELCA Lutheran-Jewish Consultative Panel member, and co-author of the ELCA’s newest resource, “[Preaching and Teaching ‘With Love and Respect for The Jewish People](#),” offering a deep dive into the resource and support in hands-on work with upcoming lectionary texts. [Part II](#) in early February 2024 provided a recap, but the focal point was a panel of Reform Jewish leaders from the local community who offered valuable feedback on the resource, and affirmation of its intended purpose. Kathryn Lohre also offered an historical overview of the LWF, the ELCA, and its



predecessor bodies’ engagement in rooting out anti-Semitism. The day concluded with another hands-on text study. These events were an exemplary way to engage the resource and to reaffirm our commitments expressed in “[A Declaration of the ELCA to the Jewish Community](#).”

Bishop Eaton published a [video](#) ahead of the one-year anniversary of October 7, 2023. She also wrote a letter to Rabbi Rick Jacobs, president of the Union for Reform Judaism. He shared the solidarity letter publicly on Facebook and included the following comments: “During the excruciating and uncertain past year many within our wider Jewish community have wondered where are our faith partners, but I have no doubt as to where Bishop Eaton and the ELCA stand. We are profoundly grateful for their love and solidarity...”

To commemorate the 30th anniversary of the Declaration, Bishop Eaton took part in this year’s Interfaith Service of Remembrance and Commitment in Observance of Kristallnacht on November 11, held at the [Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago](#). The service was followed by [a luncheon and panel discussion](#) featuring Prof. Esther Menn, chair of the ELCA Consultative Panel on Lutheran-Jewish Relations; Rabbi Rick Jacobs, President of the Union for Reform Judaism, ; and Bishop Eaton. The conversation included how to deepen and expand the commitments articulated in the declaration.



Faith leaders from around the world gathered in New York in September 2024 ahead of the **United Nations Summit of the Future**, to highlight the urgent need to address the root causes of conflict globally.



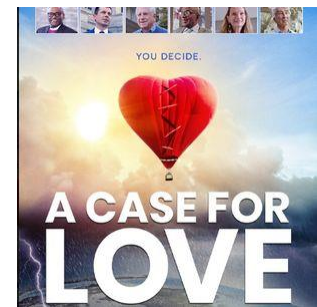
The ELCA and the Lutheran World Federation, through the Lutheran Office for World Community, partnered with Religions for Peace, Finn Church Aid and the African Council of Religious Leaders to hold [a panel discussion on the role faith actors play in promoting transformative peace](#). The panel, which was moderated by Kristen Opalinski, included the Rev. Dr. Anne Burghardt, LWF General Secretary, Rev. Khader El-

Yateem, ELCA Executive Director for Service and Justice, and Dr. Francis Kuria, Secretary General of Religions for Peace. Dr. Mohamed Elsanoussi, Executive Director of the Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers, delivered the keynote address for the event, highlighting the unique role faith-based institutions and religious actors can play in fostering social cohesion.

Upcoming Events and Opportunities

The traditional period for the [Week of Prayer for Christian Unity](#) is Jan. 18-25, but churches and Christian communities worldwide are invited to use the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2025 resources throughout the year. This year’s theme comes from John 11:17-27, “Do You Believe This?” (verse 26), taking its cue from the dialogue between Jesus and Martha when Jesus visits the home of Martha and Mary in Bethany following the death of their brother Lazarus. [The prayers and reflection resources for 2025](#) were prepared by the brothers and sisters of the monastic community of Bose in Northern Italy. The resources are jointly published by the Dicastery for Promoting Christian Unity and the World Council of Churches. With 2025 marking the 1,700th anniversary of the first Christian Ecumenical Council — held in Nicaea, near Constantinople, in 325 A.D. — this year’s Week of Prayer for Christian Unity provides a unique opportunity to reflect and commemorate together.

Earlier in 2024, [A Case for Love](#) was released to theaters for a limited engagement. This feature-length documentary, which features the teachings and writings of Bishop Michael Curry, former presiding bishop of The Episcopal Church, examines the question of whether or not love — specifically, unselfish love — is the solution to the extreme societal and political divide facing the world. *A Case for Love* is now available on all cable, satellite and digital retail outlets.



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