



June, 2004

North American Academy of Ecumenists

Volume 1, Issue 1

Register for Columbus or Membership Online or by Mail:

- at our website [www.naae.net](http://www.naae.net)
- for the meeting at [www.sporg.com](http://www.sporg.com), event ID 6008
- for lodging at <https://marriott.com/reservation/availability.mi?property-Code=CMHAM&gc=bebx>. Or call 800.228.9290; ask for NAAE rates at the Columbus Airport Marriott.

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## Fall Meeting: The Church: Its Faith and Its Unity

The annual meeting of NAAE is set for September 24-26, 2004, at the Columbus Airport Marriott, Columbus, Ohio.

Professor George Lindbeck is the keynote presenter. His presentation, "Paris, Rome, Jerusalem: An Ecumenical Travelogue" will provide a retrospective visit from his days as a student in Paris, through his observer status at Vatican II and his many contributions to bilateral dialogues, up to the crossroads and beyond that the ecumenical movement now faces. Lindbeck, the Pitkin Professor Emeritus of Historical Theology at Yale Religious Studies and Divinity School continues to write and lecture from his home in Vermont. A panel discussion will respond to his Friday night presentation on Saturday morning.



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Two other major issues will be addressed at the conference.

On Saturday afternoon a panel conversation will look at human sexuality and ecumenism, one of the most controversial issues facing church unity today (see the President's letter inside).

On Sunday morning, discussion led by Dr Anne Riggs will look at

the current state of Faith and Order in North America.

There will also be opportunity to hear from members about their own significant ecumenical endeavors.

Registration for lodging, the event, and membership is now available online. Please check our website [www.naae.net](http://www.naae.net) for links.

### Treasurer Hurty Honored

At last year's Montreal meeting, the NAAE Membership by unanimous vote honored the Rev. David Hurty, former Membership Secretary/Treasurer, with a lifetime membership to NAAE. During his tenure, David oversaw the NAAE recovering a strong fiscal position.

### Membership Data

<b>Active Members</b>	<b>108</b>
<b>Regular</b>	<b>98</b>
<b>Student/Retired</b>	<b>10</b>
....	
<b>Canadians</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>USA</b>	<b>82</b>
<b>Total Member Records</b>	<b>307</b>

Cash on Hand

**\$8779.21**  
as of 6/18/04

### First Essay Contest Attracts Eight Entries

Eight student contestants have submitted essays for the first NAAE essay contest. The winner will be announced in time to be invited to the annual meeting in September and receive a \$250 prize. Winning essays may also be submitted for publication in the *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*.

John Huber is chair of the essay contest committee. Other readers include John Crossin and Russell Meyer.

The Contest asked students to write on the theme of this year's meeting, with special reference to

the World Council of Churches' publications *The Unity of the Church as Koinonia: Gift and Calling; Confessing the One Faith: An Ecumenical Explication of the Apostolic Faith as it is Confessed in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed (381); The Nature and Purpose of the Church: A Stage on the Way to a Common Statement*

The NAAE Executive Committee hopes the annual contest will interest more theological students in ongoing participation in the Academy.

*Mainline churches will continue to wrestle with the roles of gays and lesbians and debate the blessing of same-sex relationships.*

**The Foundation for a Conference on Faith and Order in North America** plans to sponsor its meeting in New York City on September 18-25, 2005.

A resource book for study groups is soon to be published by Wm B Eerdmans, entitled, *The Church Its Faith and Its Unity*.

## The President's Page: A Challenge for the NAAE by William H. Petersen

The membership of the academy will be aware of the ecumenical fallout from the ordination of the Rt Rev'd V. Gene Robinson as bishop-coadjutor in the Episcopal Church's diocese of New Hampshire. From the time of his election by lay and clerical delegates to the convention in that diocese last spring there had been dire admonitions of consequences should the selection be confirmed by the triennial meeting of the national church's General Convention. The intensity of these warnings increased after the fact of such confirmation last summer in Minneapolis.

In the aftermath of Bishop Robinson's November consecration three results have occurred: (1) major problems relating to ECUSA's internal unity have arisen; (2) various provinces and dioceses (mostly African and Asian) of worldwide Anglicanism have declared themselves out of communion with the Episcopal Church; and (3) not only has ECUSA's Presiding Bishop resigned from chairing the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission, but a hold or suspension has been placed upon some ecumenical dialogues (notably Anglican-Orthodox and the Anglican-Roman Catholic dialogue in the United States).

While the same General Convention that confirmed Bishop Robinson's election did not officially endorse the blessing of same-sex unions, it did so by implication in finding Bishop Robinson a fit candidate for the episcopate as its first openly gay man living in a committed relationship. And, of course, that's just the problem that has engendered the internal controversies and the ecumenical consequences.

As an Anglican and a priest of the Episcopal Church, I have, of course, my own nuanced position on these events and their results. But I raise the matter in the forum of the academy for more than denominational reasons. For the issues that have been brought into high relief by events described above are ones that go beyond the borders of Anglicanism. Professor Leo Sandron in a nationally syndicated article appearing in the "Faith & Values" section of the *Columbus (OH) Dispatch* on January 16 noted five issues that will "continue to boil" during this year and beyond. In regard to the present subject, he writes:

Mainline churches will continue to wrestle with the roles of gays and lesbians and debate the blessing of same-sex relationships. The most recent spotlight has been on the Episcopal Church. But this issue also divides the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, the Presbyterian Church (USA) and the United Methodist Church. It will be unfinished business for some time, but it can neither be ignored nor tabled indefinitely. (Section E, p. 2)<sup>1</sup>

The wider ecumenical scope of these issues, which affect the churches in Canada as well as the United States, is what prompts my writing to the academy. And I want to ask whether and to what degree the North American Academy of Ecumenists can be helpful in addressing the issues precisely as an academy of focused reflection. Great passion from all sides is evident in conversation surrounding the questions involved in the issue. Often the greater the passion taken in condemning or affirming makes for a lesser ability to understand or find ways of doing anything but breaking communion or suspending dialogue. One side accuses the other of a moral default on Christianity itself, while the other responds that communion or conversation is suspended on the shaky grounds of a Donatism which all or most of our traditions have long since rejected.

It is my hope that, as a beginning, we can have a panel at our next meeting that starts to address the issues with some balance. Part, at least, of the way forward is to identify the ecumenical questions involved. As the NAAE Board considers the feasibility or acceptability of such a panel, I would solicit from the membership the formulation of specific questions to be addressed. My email address is [whpetersen@aol.com](mailto:whpetersen@aol.com). I do not think we can solve the problem for the churches, but I do believe we have some responsibility to address the ecumenical dimensions of the situation as an academy.

<sup>1</sup>*Sandron is a distinguished teaching professor of religion and American studies at Florida State University. The citation from his article "As year unfolds, religious issues will continue to boil" is made by permission.*

## Christian Churches Together in the USA by Ann Riggs

Christian Churches Together in the USA (CCTUSA) is now in the process of being formed "to enable churches and national Christian organizations to grow closer in Christ in order to strengthen our Christian witness in the world." The website [www.Christianchurchestogether.org](http://www.Christianchurchestogether.org) makes available key documents of the group.

The impulse to create a new venue for relationships among Christian churches and other Christian groups in the US is not new. The existing structures, among them the National Council of the Churches of Christ, an organization of Orthodox, Episcopalian and historic Protestant communions, and the National Association of Evangelicals, an association of Holiness, Pentecostal and Evangelical communions, local congregations, individuals and Christian organizations, each draws its constituency from among limited segments of the Christian communities of the US. The Catholic Church belongs to neither the NAE nor the NCC. Already, a variety of specialized theological and mission-oriented venues provide meeting grounds for discussion and relationship-building across the very broad spectrum of Christianity in the United States. Well before the first organizational meeting in September 2001, many have felt a need to weave these threads of relationship together into a new organization that can amplify and deepen the relationship building that is already underway in the US and open new possibilities for mutuality and shared witness. The steering committee of the group, drawn from five church families: Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Historic Protestant, Evangelical, Holiness and

Pentecostal and ethnic/racial churches, plus representatives of major Christian organizations in the US, anticipate that the organization will come into formal being in June 2005, with the official participation of at least twenty-five churches, with adequate representation from each of these five families. Christian organizations will make up no more than twenty percent of the total of participating bodies.

The January 2004 annual meeting of the group was characteristic of the intention to draw together leaders from

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churches and national Christian organizations for two and a half days of fellowship, prayer, theological discussion and discernment of potential areas for common witness, as well as the continuing work of elaborating and establishing its organizational structure. At this meeting, participants engaged in sharing on their personal prayer-life and on their responses to Philip Jenkins' book *The Next Christendom*.

Many of the participants in CCT have been almost completely unfamiliar with the thought and life of at least some of the other groups present. The goal, and the gratifications, of coming to know one another more accurately and more personally was strikingly evident during the 2004 meeting in the presentations on prayer life and

in the following small group sharing, where participants were privileged to hear of one another's needs, joys and struggles in personal prayer, making it possible to recognize shared experiences from across known barriers of ecclesial difference.

The intention is for CCT to be first of all a venue for the fostering of relationships among church and organizational leaders and will employ minimal staff. However, there is expectation that as the organization matures, Christian Churches Together will sponsor national and/or regional Forums on diverse topics such as evangelism, worship or issues of public policy. These Forums may generate on-going activities that will become the responsibility of those involved rather than the CCT staff or volunteer leadership. A key and distinctive feature of CCT is its commitment to consensus decision-making. At no time will any participant be expected to sign on to any statement or policy with which they disagree.

Neither the National Association of Evangelicals nor the National Council of Churches will have a formal role in CCT. But the experience in fostering relationships among diverse Christians or in addressing the needs of Christian communities in the US at this time in history that the staff and volunteer leadership and other existing organizations possess may be utilized from time to time. For example, the Executive Director of the Foundation for a Conference on Faith and Order in North America and the Associate General Secretary for Faith and Order of the NCCC have been regular attendees at the meetings of CCT.

## North American Academy of Ecumenists

211 Easton Drive  
Lakeland, Florida 33647  
Phone: 863.682-8415  
Fax: 863.682.0645  
E-mail: russelm@fbsynod.org

News from the Ecumenical  
Movement



The goal of the **North American Academy of Ecumenists** is to inform, relate, and encourage men and women whose profession or ministry in the church involves them in ecumenical activities and studies. Its unique contribution is to provide ecumenists with an open structure for exploring issues too important to be left exclusively to official ecumenical agencies and projects.

Founded in 1957, the Academy meets annually in September. Its conferences are professional and scholarly in substance and informal in style.

The membership of the Academy includes ecumenically active clergy and laity as well as professors and students. It is an "Academy" by virtue of its members' shared concern for the theological reflection and scholarship that must accompany the movement toward mutual religious understanding and the unity of the Christian churches.

The Academy is affiliated with the *Journal of Ecumenical Studies (JES)*. NAAE membership includes a subscription to the JES.

The Academy is led by a twenty-one member board which plans the annual conference. Attendance at the conference is open to all who are interested in discussing the proposed theme.

*We're on the Web!*  
at [www.naae.net](http://www.naae.net)

### Update on the Journal of Ecumenical Studies by Peter Baktis

On 22 March 2004 the Board of Directors held their meeting where Peter Baktis was elected to the Board as the NAAE representative. At this meeting several important topics were discussed. Germane to the NAAE are the following.

Leonard Swidler was able to obtain three papers from the speakers at the September 2003 meeting of NAAE. A recommendation was made that the Academy Board members collect the papers from the meetings and submit them to JES for the publication in an issue

that will focus on the NAAE meeting.

JES is currently six issues behind and the plan is to be up to date by 2005. Vol 39:3-4 is forthcoming and Vol 40:1 (2003 Winter) is in the process of going to print. A full report and schedule to get the Journal up to date will be forthcoming.

The NAAE essay contest was advertised in the most recent issue of JES (39:1-2). The JES board held a Strategic Planning retreat where they developed a mission statement and plans for

future fund raising and the direction the Journal will take. The Journal of Ecumenical Studies is nominated for the Paul Carus Award for Interreligious Understanding.

*Editor's Note: NAAE members receive a subscription to JES; however, due to its delayed publication schedule, members may not have received an issue recently. NAAE is assured that all subscriptions will be delivered when they are published.*

### Notes ....

This first NAAE newsletter is intended to help make connections between members. As many as two newsletters a year may eventually be published. The newsletter hopes to keep the membership abreast of the annual conference plans and significant ecumenical endeavors. Please send notices for the newsletter and inquiries about membership to the Membership Secretary/Treasurer, the Rev. Russell L. Meyer, by email or post at the addresses listed above.