

Ecumenical and Interreligious Relations in The Episcopal Church



As part of our baptismal covenant, we commit to striving “for justice and peace among all people and respect the dignity of every human being.” Before his passion, Jesus prayed that “they may all be one” (John 17:21). These key parts of our tradition are the foundation of our ecumenical and interreligious work. The Office of Ecumenical and Interreligious Relations seeks to support you, our Bishops, as well as all people in this work.

The Office at the Episcopal Church Center

The Presiding Bishop is the chief ecumenical officer of The Episcopal Church, serving as the church’s primary representative in relations with other churches. The Presiding Bishop appoints a deputy for ecumenical and interreligious relations (currently the Rev. Margaret Rose) who oversees denominational dialogues and ecumenical and interreligious engagement as they relate to the public commitments of The Episcopal Church. Current areas of focus include anti-racism, peace building, and reconciliation within the United States and internationally. The Office of Ecumenical and Interreligious Relations is part of the “Ministry Beyond the Episcopal Church” team of the DFMS.

Conciliar and Ecumenical Bodies

Current churchwide ecumenical work is carried out through membership in conciliar bodies such as the [National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA \(NCC\)](#), [the World Council of Churches](#), and [Churches Uniting in Christ \(CUIC\)](#). The Episcopal Church is also active in the [Consultation on Common Texts \(CCT\)](#), and [Christian Churches Together \(CCT\)](#), a broad ecumenical body which includes Orthodox churches, Historically Black churches, and Protestant, Catholic and Pentecostal churches.

Interreligious Engagement

The Episcopal Church, in conjunction with the NCC, is committed to working ecumenically in interreligious dialogue. We participate in national dialogues with Jewish, Muslim, Sikh, Hindu, and Buddhist partners. We are also active partners in [Religions for Peace, USA](#) and [Shoulder to Shoulder](#), which works to address Islamophobia and anti-Muslim bias. The Episcopal Church works closely with Jewish partners such as [ADL](#), [AJC](#), and others in addressing issues of anti-Semitism. For more information, see “[Toward Our Mutual Flourishing](#)” and our “[Guidelines for Christian-Jewish Relations](#).”

Episcopal Diocesan Ecumenical and Interreligious Offices

Each diocesan bishop is the diocesan ecumenical and interreligious officer in the diocese, but this role is normally deputized to an appointee who has passion, interest, and time for this work! Diocesan officers are members of [Episcopal Diocesan Ecumenical and Interreligious Officers](#), a network that provides ongoing communication and training to equip ecumenical officers for local and regional work. The Presiding Bishop encourages each diocese to pay annual dues to EDEIO.

Ecumenism and Interreligious Relations in Your Diocese

Diocesan bishops are involved in a wide variety of ecumenical and interreligious work, including but not limited to:

- participation in the consecration and installation of full communion partner bishops
- public responses to hate speech or crimes with religious implications
- annual services with full communion partners for the renewal of ordination vows
- reception of clergy in holy orders from some churches
- reception of lay persons from some churches
- advocacy work in connection with the public commitments of The Episcopal Church

[The Ecumenical Handbook](#), now maintained by EDEIO, aims to provide a comprehensive resource of information for bishops and ecumenical officers.

The Task Force on Ecumenical and Interreligious Relations

Chaired by the Rt. Rev. William Franklin

The General Convention in 2018 established a new Task Force to Coordinate Ecumenical and Interreligious Work. Appointed by the Presiding Bishop and the President of the House of Deputies, this task force reports annually to the Standing Commission on Structure, Governance, Constitution and Canons (SCSGCC).

What do they do?

- They address matters of ecumenical and interreligious significance, to respond to ecumenical and interreligious issues arising between meetings of the General Convention.
- They develop responses to ecumenical and interreligious documents as well as theological statements for consideration by the Episcopal Church.
- They assist the Presiding Bishop, and his staff, and the Executive Council with formulating and implementing the ecumenical and interreligious policy of The Episcopal Church
- They provide assistance and counsel to the SCSGCC with regard to matters which come before the SCSGCC that have an ecumenical or interreligious dimension (in coordination with the Deputy for Ecumenical and Interreligious Relations and the Episcopal Diocesan Ecumenical and Interreligious Officers)

Ongoing Dialogues

- The United Methodist Church
- The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)
- Roman Catholic Church through the US Conference of Catholic Bishops

Full-Communion Coordinating Committees

- Lutheran-Episcopal Coordinating Committee
- Moravian-Episcopal Coordinating Committee



The ecumenical movement is The Episcopal Church's response to Jesus' prayer for his disciples in John 17:21 - "that they may all be one." The Office for Ecumenical and Inter-Religious Relations offers prayers for unity and participates in formal dialogues to nurture a spirit of understanding and respect, while collaborating actively in mission and ministry opportunities. For further questions, contact the Rev. Margaret Rose at mrose@episcopalchurch.org.