

From the President

Reflections on Our Future

When I was in Geneva in 2001, Konrad Raiser named our current era as the "Deinstitutionalization of the Ecumenical Movement." And for those of us in the North American context, that painful process is a direct consequence of the collapse of the bureaucratic model in the mainstream denominations.

What are the consequences for us in the ecumenical and interreligious movements?

First, congregations--not denominations--are the new center of our universe. As the mainstream denominations follow their trend lines towards decline and reinvention, the only constant in the shifting ecclesial equation will be the local congregation. Ecumenical and interreligious organizations which fail to develop new and vital relationships with congregations will probably not survive.

Second, the faith and order stream of conciliar ecumenism must shift downward and be missionally engaged. What has largely been a game of insider baseball--denominational staff and academics in bi-lateral and multi-lateral dialogues leading to doctrinal reconciliation--now needs to devolve to the local level to serve a very practical purpose.

One quick example: in my own context, almost one third of the counties in Wisconsin, all rural, are actually losing population. The immigration patterns of the 19th century led to denominational church planting that today has left too many churches with too few people to fill them. In the next three decades our member denominations will close between 350-500 churches in our state. As denominations seek to re-define the character of ministry in this new cultural context, might these full communion agreements be of use in reshaping the identity, ministry, and vitality of rural congregations that otherwise might close?

Third, the emerging ecumenical and interreligious paradigm will focus on relationships, not program or structure. With a few exceptions, big staffs with big budgets and ambitious top-down programs--all expressions of the old bureaucratic model--will be no more (thanks be to God!). Bivocational leadership

NAEIS President



Scott Anderson
Executive Director
Wisconsin Council of Churches

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

**2011 NAEIS Annual
Gathering**

Feb. 4-7, 2011

San Antonio, Texas

Find NAEIS on Facebook!

To join the new NAEIS
Facebook group, simply:

- 1) log in to Facebook;
- 2) search for 'National Association of Ecumenical and Interreligious Staff' and select our group; and
- 3) click on the "Request to Join" button.

All NAEIS members and others
who want to relate to NAEIS
are more than welcome!

Receiving this newsletter for the first time?

NAEIS is in the process of
updating its national database.

in the ecumenical and interreligious movements will likely become the norm in most places. Our leadership will be more pastoral than prophetic, helping the thousands of congregations which will die in the next several decades, and the judicatories which will downsize or close along with them, do so with grace and dignity. In the Christian context, it will be a ministry of holding the hands of judicatory leaders who are trying to figure out what it means to be church in our 21st century mission field, and lovingly asking them if figuring this out together is far more faithful to the gospel than going it alone.

Scott Anderson

2010 NAEIS Gathering a Huge Success

A few weeks ago NAEIS members met at Holy Trinity Spiritual Center near Baltimore for our 2010 Annual Gathering focused on our common calling to end poverty.



It was one of the best events we've had in recent years, with outstanding speakers (Michael Kinnamon from the NCC, David Beckman from Bread for the World, and Mara Vanderslice from the White House Office of Faith Based and Neighborhood Partnerships, among others) and great fellowship. Even in the midst of the monumental challenges we are now facing in the ecumenical and interreligious movements, we witnessed a hopeful spirit and a common commitment to revitalize our work.

You can download Michael Kinnamon's outstanding keynote address, "The Ecumenical and Interfaith Call to End Poverty" at <http://www.ncccusa.org/news/MK.NAEISpoverty.html>.

WANTED: Young Adult Ecumenists

NAEIS, the NCC Ecumenical Networks Committee and the New Fire Network are attempting to identify young adults (35 and younger) who are involved in and committed to Christian ecumenism in local and regional settings.

Please contact Ammon Ripple at 646-596-4750 or aripple@ncccusa.org if you know of anyone who fits this

In the last four months we have added over 200 new local, regional or national ecumenical/interreligious staff people with e-mail addresses. Welcome to our on-line community!

NAEIS Contact Info



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description. We hope to get contact information for these individuals to connect them to the local ecumenism team which New Fire is forming and to encourage involvement in NAEIS and NCC.

Kathryn Lohre, the incoming NCC president, is sponsoring an essay contest for young adult ecumenists. See <http://www.ncccusa.org/essays.html> for details. The deadline is May 1.

Development Professionals Round Table

At the March NAEIS gathering, there was interest in the possibility of creating a virtual community for those in the ecumenical and interreligious community who have development responsibilities. This will primarily consist of a moderated e-mail distribution list which could be used for collaborative fundraising and professional support. Please contact Scott Anderson at sanderson@wichurches.org if you or someone you know would be interested in this possibility.

November 2010 Consultation

The Promise of Ecumenical Community: Visioning Our Future

Thu. Nov. 11, 2010 at 12:00 noon
through
Fri. Nov. 12, 2010 at 3:30 p.m.

New Orleans, Louisiana

Organized by
State Ecumenical Executives,
NAEIS, and
the NCC Ecumenical Networks Committee.

Associated with the
Centennial Ecumenical Gathering
convened by the
National Council of Churches,
Nov. 9-11, 2010.

**To sign up for e-mail updates, contact
Ammon Ripple at aripple@ncccusa.org
or call 646-596-4750.**

NAEIS Officers for 2010-2011

At our NAEIS Gathering in March, the membership elected these officers for the coming year:

President: Scott Anderson, Executive Director, Wisconsin Council of Churches

Vice-President: The Rev. Carlos Malave, Associate for Ecumenical Relations, Presbyterian Church (USA)

Secretary: The Rev. Dr. Clark Lobenstine, Executive Director, Interfaith Conference of Metro Washington

Treasurer: Alice Woldt, Executive Director, Washington Association of Churches

2011 Program Chair: Sr. Sylvia Schmidt, NAEIS Life Member



NAEIS Board (l-r): Ron Quay, Sr. Sylvia Schmidt, Dan Krutz, Scott Anderson, Carlos Malave, Alice Woldt, Clark Lobenstine. Not pictured: Elsie Dursi.

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