

Presbyterian-Episcopal Dialogue Reflects on Tools Needed to Deepen Ties Between the Churches



September 18, 2020

Ecumenical and Interreligious Relations

Meeting remotely by Zoom on September 17th and 18th, 2020, the representatives of the Episcopal-Presbyterian Bilateral Dialogue met and considered how the two ecclesial traditions could work to deepen ties and work together for mutual mission. This was the third meeting of the Third Round of bilateral dialogues between the two ecclesial communions, originally scheduled as a face-to-face gathering in Chicago. The meeting was grounded in prayer, scripture, and song. In light of the **2008 agreement between the two traditions**, and with an eye toward upcoming General Convention (for The Episcopal Church) and General Assembly (for the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)), the Dialogue worked on educational materials for their respective churches and a potential proposal for the limited orderly exchange of ministers between the faith bodies.

The Dialogue members agreed that their churches are in a season of upheaval due to the scourge of COVID-19 and increased awareness of longstanding problems of racial inequity and other injustices in our society. At a time when our individual faith

communities are struggling to be Christ in the world while stripped of our usual tools of ministry, we are challenged to seek out the critical core of what it means to be the church. In such a season, it is particularly urgent to work together in common mission in a world hungering for the message of Christ.

Our special guest during the gathering was the Rev. Donald J. McCoid, retired Bishop in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). Rev. McCoid was a key figure in working out the agreement for full communion between the Episcopal Church and the ELCA Church. He also worked on the Formula of Agreement with the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and some of their full communion partners. He shared his experience in ecumenical outreach and the challenges inherent in that ministry. He also shared his insights concerning the particular issues facing Episcopalians and Presbyterians engaged in that work.

Representing the [Presbyterian Church \(U.S.A.\)](#) were Ruling Elder Anne Bond (co-chair), the Rev. Dr. Neal Presa (co-vice chair), the Rev. Terri Ofori, the Rev. Dr. Christian Boyd, the Rev. Robert Foltz-Morrison, the Rev. Brooke Pickrell, the Rev. Brian Entz, and Ruling Elder Dr. Dianna Wright, serving as staff liaison.

Representing [the Episcopal Church](#) at the gathering were the Rt. Rev. Eugene Taylor Sutton (co-chair), the Rev. Canon Elise Johnstone (co-vice chair), Dr. Michael Booker, Elizabeth Ring, and Richard Mammana, serving as staff liaison, and the Rev. Margaret Rose, serving as staff. Hank Jeannel was also in attendance as an intern from the Ecumenical and Interreligious Relations Office of the Episcopal Church. The members of the dialogue will meet again February 22-24, 2021. The format for that gathering will be determined at a later date.