



May, 2005

North American Academy of Ecumenists

Volume 2, Issue 1



North American
Academy of Ecumenists

Register for the Fall Conference Membership Online or by Mail:

- at our website www.naae.net
- for the meeting at www.sporg.com, event ID 26239

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Forgiveness and the Healing of Memories: the Ecumenics of Reconciliation

The annual meeting of NAAE is set for September 23-25, 2005, at the Bishop Molloy Passionist Retreat House, Jamaica Estates (Queens), New York (www.bishopmolloy.org.)

Professor John D. Roth, Goshen College, is the keynote presenter. His address will explore the healing of memories from the perspective of the persecuted Anabaptists.

On Saturday afternoon a panel conversation will look at the healing of memories from the perspectives of other minority communities, including First Nation and African-American churches.

The winner of the student essay contest will be presented. NAAE members will also be able to report on their own significant ecumenical endeavors.



On Sunday morning, discussion led by Professor Jon Ericsson will consider the theme from within the Orthodox tradition.

A religious tour of Queens will be offered Friday afternoon.

Registration for lodging, the event, and membership is now available online. Please check our website www.naae.net for links. Or go to www.sporg.com (search for NAAE).

John D. Roth is professor of history at Goshen College, director of its Mennonite Historical Library, and editor of *The Mennonite Quarterly Review*. He has authored several books, among them *Choosing Against War: A Christian View* (Good Books, 2002) and *Beliefs: Mennonite Faith and Practice* (Herald Press, 2005). Roth has spoken throughout the Mennonite church on its history and faith. From 2000-2004 he participated as a member of the ecumenical Liaison Committee of the Mennonite Church USA and the ELCA. This summer he will represent North American Mennonites in conversations between the MWC and the LWF. He and his wife, Ruth, have 4 teenage daughters and are active members at the Berkey Avenue Mennonite Fellowship in Goshen, Indiana..

NAAE Student Essay Contest

Students in seminaries, theological schools and graduate schools of religion are invited to enter an essay contest sponsored by the North American Academy of Ecumenists. The essay is to be based on the theme of the fall conference:

"Forgiveness and the Healing of Memories: the Ecumenics of Reconciliation."

The winning essay writer will receive an award of \$250 and an expenses-paid invitation to the conference. The winning essay will also be submitted for consideration by the *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*. The recommended length is 20 pages, double-spaced (5,000 words), using font size 12. Students may write their essay also to fulfill a course requirement.

The essays will be evaluated on the basis of the following criteria: (1) General content, (2)

Scholarly style, (3) Appropriateness to the theme, (4) Use of World Council of Churches references and/or agreed ecumenical statements and official church documents, (5) Advancement of Christian unity, and (6) Publishable quality.

A list of resources for writing the essay may be found on at www.naae.net.

Send the essay before June 1, 2005, together with a brief biographical sketch of the author, to the Rev. Russell L. Meyer (NAAE Treasurer/Membership Secretary), 5025 Southampton Circle, Tampa FL 33647, or by attachment to russellm@fbsynod.org, with a copy to the Rev. John George Huber, NAAE Essay Contest Coordinator, 809 Colima St., La Jolla, CA 92037-8037, john.huber@ecunet.org (Telephone 858-459-8855).

*Fall Conference***Bishop Molloy
Retreat House**

86-45 Edgerton
Boulevard
Jamaica Estates,
New York
11432
United States

www.bishopmolloy.org

Two blocks
north of the
179th Subway
Station; 20
minutes from
Kennedy or
LaGuardia.

**Registration
Fees**Lodging
& Meals

Early \$240
Late \$275
(After 8/1)
Student/
Retired \$200

Friday \$50
Saturday \$75

Queens
Tour \$25

Membership
(June 1—May
31)

Regular \$50
Student/
Retired \$25

The President's Page: by William H. Petersen

Dear Friends,

The penultimate chapter of Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* is not featured in the recent and deservedly acclaimed three-part epic cinematic version of this classic novel of quest. While there are probably good reasons for this lacuna, it is still unfortunate that the "Scouring of the Shire" is omitted. The burden of the chapter concerns how the evil that has infected Middle Earth lingers on in its effects even after the minions of the Dark Lord have been defeated and he and his 'one ruling ring' have been destroyed.

As the four hobbit-companions, led by Frodo, the hero of the quest, return to their beloved homeland they find that the war, though fought far away, has been "brought home" to the Shire as it were. A kind of totalitarianism with multitudinous rules and a dark and seemingly pointless but nonetheless destructive industrialism has replaced the traditional common law and agrarian life enhanced by village industries. They quickly determine that the situation wants redress and most of the hobbits, who have not been seduced by the ruined wizard Saruman, just need a spark to set off the "scouring" that will clean the shire of its pollution both physical and communal.

When the four set about this last task of the quest, they are quickly confronted by a band of "shiriffs" (whose numbers, in their absence, have greatly increased to secure the new order). Frodo and company are mounted on sturdy ponies, the shiriffs are on foot, but the chief shiriff nonetheless takes them into custody. A semi-comic scene ensues during which the shiriffs are forced to march quick-pace to

headquarters in front of the mounted group. When they tire beyond further endurance, the four move to go on by themselves to Hobbiton. The leader of the shiriffs sternly warns, "Alright, but don't forget I've arrested you!" To which Frodo responds, "I won't...never! But I may forgive you." And so the work of healing begins.

This affecting literary example of the Gospel truth, contrary to the common adage "forgive and forget," clearly sets forth that forgiveness has nothing to do with forgetting. The business of reconciliation rests not on *amnesia*, but rather on *anamnesis*. But, of course, it is

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the motive of our remembering (the "how" and "why") that makes all the difference. And it is precisely here that forgiveness comes into play. These truths have always been active in the ecumenical movement, but it seems only in more recent

times that the pernicious divisions caused by inter-ecclesial sins of commission and omission has come into prominent focus.

For nearly a century, it has been the quest of the ecumenical movement to overcome doctrinal differences evident upon initial occasions of schism or as these have grown up in languages of separated traditions. Then, too, after decades of addressing differences in polity and the ordering of ministry toward their reconciliation we still find that, even with the best of will, the event produces profound hesitations between or among ecumenical partners. And, finally, though there has been a great deal of convergence in the common project of liturgical renewal, the graceful energies let loose in worship still do not seem to impel separated ecclesial families to common mission in unified ways.

The piece that has been missing or left largely unattended in the process, it seems to me, is the need for that forgiveness of sins upon which true reconciliation depends. The Lutheran-Roman Catholic *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* came just short of this, for instance. There are obvious long memories that have shared various traditions: these entail bitter memories of harsh or even deadly treatment by traditions now in ecumenical dialogue. Many examples might be adduced, but two will suffice here: nearly all the reforming traditions of the 16th century (including the Roman Catholic) had one thing in common: death-dealing persecution of the so-called Radical Reformation.* As for my own Anglican tradition we remember the bitter period of puritan retribution for Laudian excesses during the English Commonwealth era and, of course, Presbyterians remember that a Restoration Church of England returned the favor with interest! This last has made it nearly impossible ever to envision a reconciliation in regard to episcopacy between the Anglican and Reformed traditions.

Even where traditions have not actually condemned each other, there is still the almost tacit but nonetheless pernicious stereotyping that infects the atmosphere of dialogue. I can well remember when we were recruiting Anglican bishops for the third series of the Lutheran-Episcopal Dialogue in the United States One said to me, "Why would we want to get together with them?" On the other hand, a Lutheran bishop of my acquaintance in the same period said, "This will never happen because Lutherans and Episcopalians are from two different classes." Both attitudes require not only a healing of memories but a forgiveness of separating sin.

All of which is to say, though we have come to it lately, I am profoundly encouraged that the quest of the ecumenical movement is coming to address these topics with a view to overcoming an obstacle to unity that has practically prevented us from realizing the unity that Christ wills for the Church. Certainly some of the inspiration for confidence in undertaking this task has come to us all from such sources as the "Truth and Reconciliation Commission" as led by then Archbishop Tutu in South Africa. There sins at least as heinous as those in ecclesial history and memory were addressed to good effect for healing. When we can say – even in the face of bitter memory in the "scouring" of our own "Shires" – that memories can be healed by such forgiveness, then we will have ranged ourselves with the reign of God.

It is my hope that what we can learn from the pilgrimage, presenters, and panels of our early autumn meeting this year will deeply affect our own ecumenical endeavors in the various venues represented by the membership of the Academy. I look forward to seeing you and, in the meanwhile, wish you that gift of recreation which is the Spirit's gift for the summer season.

Faithfully,
 Bill
 (The Very Rev'd) William H. Petersen
 President of the NAAE

*Hence the appropriateness of our Keynote Speaker this year as he comes from the Mennonite tradition.

North American Academy of Ecumenists

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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

Update on the Journal of Ecumenical Studies by Nancy Krody, Mg. Ed.

The staff, editorial board, and Board of Directors of the Journal of Ecumenical Studies are grateful for their longtime collaboration with the North American Academy of Ecumenists. This was strengthened by the decision of the NAAE Board to give each member a subscription to JES as a part of their membership.

For a variety of reasons (under-funding, understaffing, particularly), the publication schedule has become very delayed in recent years. Our new Board of Directors, on which Peter Baktis represents NAAE (and of which Elizabeth Mellen is secretary), is working with the staff to provide more adequate funding, which will eventually allow for more adequate staffing.

For nearly 30 years, Nancy Krody has been the only paid staff, with all other persons volunteering their services. We have received a gift from one Board member that enabled us to order new computer hardware and software for the office, which arrived during late December. It requires some additional training of both Nancy and our graduate assistant, Julie Sheetz-Willard, to learn to use it for upgrading our data base, so that we can work more closely with Russell Meyer in keeping track of NAAE member/subscribers, as well as attempting our own typesetting with programs that are new to all of us.

We have published vol. 40, nos. 1-2, a special double issue on Confucian-Christian-Jewish dialogue, based on two Confucian-Christian confer-

ences in East Asia and the serendipitous arrival of two articles on Jewish-Confucian dialogue. We are completing work on 40:3, which is to include four articles from the NAAE conferences of 2002 and 2003, in addition to other material. Because of receiving a subsidy, 40:4 will be a special Jewish-Christian issue.

Occasional subsidized special issues are still needed to help pay for the publication of JES. While not always of primary interest of NAAE members, we hope you will recognize our attempt to balance intra-Christian and interfaith articles and other material. We are somewhat limited by the kinds of material we receive, as well. If more scholars are working in interfaith areas, we will get more articles in those fields at a given time. The arti-

cles waiting in the "pipeline" are fairly well distributed over both of our focus areas at this time.

When the NAAE treasurer sends us a check and a list of names to receive new or renewed subscriptions, we apply those to the current volume (which now means vol. 40), not the volume that will be dated in the year the payment arrives. This means that your membership year and your subscription year are not the same, in most cases. We are trying valiantly to get back on track, but please understand that it will take a while to accomplish that. Once on schedule, we will stay on schedule! If at any time you need to know the status of your subscription, please e-mail me at nkrody@temple.edu (or call 215-204-7714).