

ECU-DIALOGUE

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Do we function as a part of the whole – or as though we were the whole ourselves?

Called to Be One Church: An Invitation for Churches to Renew Their Commitment

Robina Winbush, Associate Stated Clerk for Ecumenical and Agency Relationships



An historical witness of disunity

I've been wondering lately if the institutional church has lost its focus. With so much attention and concern about internal struggles of membership, faithfulness, integrity, witness, and diminishing resources, we become consumed with our own life and survival. In congregations, presbyteries, synods, and General Assembly agencies, the struggles reveal themselves in very familiar ways. These struggles can be seen not only within the PC (USA) but often with our ecumenical partners throughout the United States and the world. The struggles often give birth to threats of schism and divisions, within and between communities of believers.

Struggle within the Christian community is as old as the very first community. The first disciples pursued positions of privilege and preference in relationship to Jesus. Greek and Aramaic-speaking Christians struggled over the fair distribution of resources within the community. The Church at Corinth fought over many

things, including whose baptism was superior and what food was prohibited. The church at Galatia struggled with the relationship between "Jewish Christians" and "Gentile Christians." As the Church grew, so did its struggles and so did its divisions. Whether the Chalcedonian divide following the Sixth Ecumenical Council or the Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries or the American divisions over chattel slavery in the nineteenth century, the witness of the church has not been its unity but its division and proliferation. In the midst of this ethos, the institutional expression of the community of believers becomes obsessed with its own particular and internal realities. Our witness becomes defined in market terms of competition – numbers, resources, and influence. We function not as part of a larger whole but as the whole by ourselves.

God's Spirit flowing through the whole

The best of our Reformed theology articulates an understanding that "the Church universal consists of all persons in every nation, together with their children, who profess faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and commit themselves to live in a fellowship under his rule" {Book of Order: The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), Part II (2005-2007), G-4.0100}. We know that we are not the Church universal but only one part of it in one

place in history. What does it mean, however, to live not as the whole but only as one part of the Body of Christ? How do we live as relational Christians?

Paul's letter to the church at Ephesus is a word so familiar that we often lose its power and its challenge to our contemporary expressions of the Christian community. "All of you are part of the same body. There is only one Spirit of God, just as you were given one hope when you were chosen to be God's people. We have only one Lord, one faith, and one baptism. There is one God, who is the Father of all people. Not only is God above all others, but he works by using all of us, and he lives in all of us" (Ephesians 4: 4-6, Contemporary English Version).

The fact that we are in relationship with other parts of the Body of Christ is irrefutable. The quality of the relationship determines the health and functioning of the Body. The unity of the Spirit of God is intended to flow through the Body of Christ as oxygen flows through the human body, and yet too often struggles and internal ⇔

**Don't miss them! Two
announcements in this
issue need your response:**

- **ECU-DIALOGUE goes electronic**
- **PC(USA) Network gathers**

obsessions threaten to cut off access to this life-sustaining Spirit. It is not to suggest that institutional divisions are not at times necessary. It is to suggest that our divisions do not make us independent and self-sufficient, without relationship to the other parts of the Body of Christ and the unity of the Spirit of God.

The WCC invitation: "Called to Be One Church"

The Ninth Assembly of the World Council of Churches adopted a text on ecclesiology, "Called to Be One Church: An Invitation for Churches to Renew their Commitment to the Search for Unity and to Deepen Dialogue." In this text, the WCC invited its member churches: "(a) to reflect what the churches, at this point on their ecumenical journey, can say together about some important aspects of the Church; and (b) to [engage in] a renewed conversation – mutually supportive, yet open and searching – about the quality and degree of their fellowship and communion, and about the issues which still divide them" (World Council of Churches, *Called to Be One Church: An Invitation for Churches to Renew their Commitment to the Search for Unity and to Deepen Dialogue*, 2006).

In this invitation, the WCC poses several questions to its member churches. I share them with the readers of ECU-DIALOGUE and invite you to consider the answers for your own congregations and middle governing bodies and also for the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) as a whole.

On the surface this might seem to be an easy exercise. But I invite us to go beyond the easy answers, to examine our lived realities and to consider our answers in relationship to parts of the Body of Christ with which we are in the greatest struggle. As we develop mission statements and ministry goals, may these questions give rise to

new possibilities of relationship and witness.

Questions that raise possibilities

- To what extent can your church discern the faithful expression of the apostolic faith in its own life, prayer, and witness and in that of other churches?
- Where does your church perceive fidelity to Christ in the faith and life of other churches?
- Does your church recognize a common pattern of Christian initiation, grounded in baptism, in the life of other churches?
- Why does your church believe that it is necessary, or permissible, or not possible to share the Lord's Supper with those of other churches?
- In what ways is your church able to recognize the ordered ministries of other churches?
- To what extent can your church share the spirituality of other churches?
- How will your church stand with other churches to contend with problems such as social and political hegemonies, persecution, oppression, poverty, and violence?
- To what extent will your church share with other churches in the apostolic mission?
- To what extent does your church share with other churches in faith formation and theological education?
- How fully can your church share in prayer with other churches?

To Do:

Robina says, "I would love to read your responses and encourage you to send them to me." Your reflections will find a way into the thinking for the PC(USA) response to the WCC. Send to: Robina Winbush, Director of the Department of Ecumenical and Agency Relations, 100 Witherspoon Street, Room 4412, Louisville, KY 40202 or to <rwinbush@ctr.pcusa.org>, labeled "Ecu-Dialogue response." ■

ECU-DIALOGUE is published by the Worldwide Ministries Division's Ecumenical Partnership offices with responsibility for ecumenical and interfaith relations, as a means for exchanging ideas and information with the church.

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Use our web sites

Two web sites are increasingly important for Presbyterians interested in ecumenical and interfaith relations. Use them!

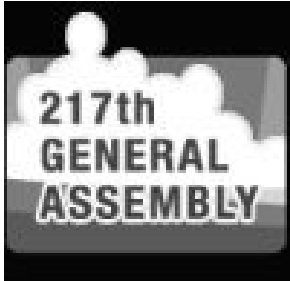
- www.pcusa.org/interfaith, posted by the Office of Interfaith Relations, focuses on concerns directly related to the office, its partners, and the PC(USA).
- www.eif-pcusa.org, posted by the PC(USA) Ecumenical and Interfaith Network, is intended to be a one-stop resource providing news, information, and links from a variety of sources (and updated almost daily). ■

So Great a Cloud of....Hospitality

James E. Foulter, Jr., senior pastor, the United Church of Montebello in Denver, Colorado

“So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.”

— 2 Corinthians 5:20, NRSV



Hospitality that welcomes

As I got off the plane in Birmingham to attend my first PC(USA) General Assembly representing my United Church of Christ ecumenical officer, the Rev. Lydia Veliko, I was deeply appreciative of the gracious welcome extended in the airport by Mrs. Robin Williams and her family from South Highlands Presbyterian Church. She was there to pick me up and drop me off at the hotel. South Highlands Church also provided a “hospitality” bag with highlighters, pens, tablets, and little snacks. Their hospitality was even better than the hospitality provided by United Airlines when I was growing up. I was impressed that the local PC(USA) churches found a way to make such a solid impact on the visiting delegates. As I met Robin in the airport, she asked me, “Well, James, where are you from? The last delegate I picked up was from Egypt.” I responded smiling, “Oh, I’ve just flown here from good ‘ole Denver.” I think Robin may have thought I was visiting from a foreign country, too.

I was richly inspired by the stories of former Moderator Rick Ufford-Chase. He gave us a marvelous view of the

work of the PC(USA) around the world. It wasn’t just his report that was inspiring; he was a great preacher, too! Our ecumenical luncheon was a wonderful occasion to meet the other delegates from around the globe and to fellowship with Robina Winbush and Cliff Kirkpatrick. I appreciated meeting national staff from the PC(USA) during that time.

Hospitality that recognizes the other

I am blessed to serve on the PC(USA) permanent G.A. Committee for Ecumenical Relations and as pastor of an ecumenical congregation in Denver. My congregation is working through what it means today to be an ecumenical church founded by the United Church of Christ, PC(USA), and United Methodist Church. We are trying to balance the three kinds of Christian witness borne by these denominations along with the backgrounds of members who come from other denominations and from the unchurched population. It is not always easy to balance such diversity.

Sincere hospitality can help overcome fractiousness resulting from a willingness to live only in our own comfort zones.

Experiencing the presentation of “Celebrating a Common Heritage: 300 Years of Presbyterian Witness” at G.A. helped me appreciate again the lengths to which sincere hospitality can help overcome fractiousness and contention resulting from misunderstandings and from a willingness to live only in our own comfort zones. This living witness of these three denominations – the PC(USA) and the two Cumberland churches – striving to forge new ‘oneness’ in Christ helped me come back home hopeful.

Our ecumenical delegation gatherings away from the floor of G.A. got me more acquainted with delegates from

around the globe. Their varying perspectives on the witness of the PC(USA) and the Church of Jesus Christ helped me understand that our intentional will to reach beyond borders and oceans is still a vital part of our Christian journey today. It was meeting our partners, formally and informally, that helped me again affirm the need for Reformed theology that isn’t finished reforming.

We live in a world of electronic communications, and I spent a good deal of time in the computer area where I could send e-mails to United Church of Christ staffers. We were all deeply interested in Israeli-Palestinian issues and how our two denominations – the UCC and the PC(USA) – might be supportive of one another in our continuing witness to the world.

Hospitality that shares knowledge

On the Assembly floor I sat next to the ecumenical representative of the United Church of Canada, and she ably assisted me in answering questions I had about business matters of the Assembly. My status as an advisory delegate meant that my vote was recorded before the vote of PC(USA) commissioners. I tried to view voting first as a holy privilege but many times my heart tussled with the votes I made long after I left the floor. There were such tough issues before the Assembly this year. I was grateful to have such a dear soul to sit next to.

The richness of connection

I wondered as I boarded the plane to return to Denver whether or not church folks who live and work in independent churches today ever experience such a rich, wonderful time for reflection, faithful service, connection, and exposure. The 217th General Assembly was all that for this first timer, and I pray Christ’s continuing blessing on all our partners in the PC(USA). Shalom!



ECU-DIALOGUE Electrified

Jay Rock, ECU-DIALOGUE editor

With this issue, ECU-DIALOGUE will cease as a printed newsletter and become an electronic news vehicle.

In many ways, your editorial staff is sad to see production of the print version of this newsletter come to an end. Receiving a piece in print through the mail is by now a part of the tradition of doing ecumenical and interfaith work in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). And, truth be told, some of us still prefer hard copy to news or documents received or available through our computers.

Nevertheless, in light of budget decreases – and with the hope of including some new features – beginning in January 2007, ECU-DIALOGUE will be published solely in electronic format. We expect to include photographs, other graphics, and longer articles. It will be possible to provide links to documents and other material posted on the web.

If you ask now to be on our e-mail list, a message will be sent to you when each newsletter is posted on our web site, with a brief description of the content and instructions about accessing it on the web.

Use *one* of the following ways to sign up, listed in the order of our preference:

- Go to <www.pcusa.org/interfaith/connect.htm>; fill in the form and submit it. (This is an automated process and requires a new entry now.)
- Send an e-mail to Susan Abraham at <sabraham@ctr.pcusa.org>, with your name, address, telephone number, and e-mail address.
- Fill out the form on page 7 and send it by U.S. mail.

Please respond even if you are sure we already have all your information.

If you do not use a computer, please find someone to receive the message and get the newsletter online on your behalf and/or on behalf of the entity you serve through your interest in ecumenical or interfaith relations.

And do continue to contact the office by e-mail, mail or phone, as needed. ■

ECU-DIALOGUE Is Seventeen Years Old

ECU-DIALOGUE was conceived by Robina Winbush (see pages 1-2) 17 years ago, when she was on the staff of the then-Global Mission Unit. Robina envisioned a publication that would encompass ecumenical and interfaith concerns, particularly since the same people in the church are often involved with both. She led efforts to get a logo that would express both concerns and to select an appropriate name for the newsletter. ECU-DIALOGUE became the name – an expression of the priority of *ecumenism* as the fundamental relationship of Christians in the one body of Christ, the base from which we move forward into *dialogue* with others.

A number of people have produced ECU-DIALOGUE over the years: Robina and others at the birthing, especially Lew Lancaster and Peggy Thomas; Kathy Reeves who adopted Robina's baby; and Jay Rock and Susan Abraham who will now carry the more mature creature into a transformed electronic life.

Being Formed and Reformed Ecumenically *The National Workshop on Christian Unity*

Learning to be ecumenical does not happen in a closet – nor within the relative simplicity of one's own tradition! This is the experience of those who attend the National Workshop on Christian Unity (NWCU). In 1963, in the context of Vatican II, American Roman Catholic dioceses began sponsoring a yearly meeting to equip local American Catholic leaders for ecumenical ministry. Although they invited the participation of others, by 1969 they recognized that ecumenical education needs to be planned and carried out ecumenically, and so they invited leaders of other Christian communions to join them and the present form of NWCU was born.

The next NWCU will be in Washington D.C. from January 29 to February 1, 2007. The venue will be the Key Bridge Marriott Hotel in Arlington, Virginia. A rich mix of persons from a variety of communions are expected, most of them combining attendance at NWCU-planned events with events planned by their own network.

For the first time, Presbyterians will be part of not only the “ecumenical colleagues” network, ECCO, but also their own formally-begun network, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Ecumenical and Interfaith Network.

Events of the NWCU meeting will include:

- The opening prayer service at the Washington National Cathedral on Monday, January 29, at 7:30 p.m., with preacher Vicken Aykazian of the Armenian Church of America, NCC president-elect
- The keynote address by Jeff Gros of Memphis Theological Seminary

- Bible studies led by Brenda Girton-Mitchell of the NCC Washington Office
- Seventeen seminars of which each full-time participant may choose three
- An optional evening tour of the National Mall and community singing led by Ysaye Bamwell, a Sweet Honey on the Rock singer
- A panel on “How Faith Influences Christians in Public Office”
- A concluding Thursday noon lunch

Among the seminar offerings will be one on Congressional chaplaincy, another on Churches Uniting in Christ (CUIC), others on local ecumenism. Still another will look at Christians in the Holy Land, and Jay Rock will be among several leaders of a seminar on Christian-Muslim relations.

For the first time, Presbyterians will have their own formal network meeting in conjunction with the Workshop.

Registration should be completed by December 1 for the \$125 fee, which will be \$150 thereafter. Hotel registration is a separate personal responsibility, at \$120/night (tax included) for single or double occupancy. This year all expenses will be a personal responsibility for Presbyterians, some of whom may obtain local financial assistance.

Plan to attend and meet Catholics, Episcopalians, Lutherans, Baptists, Methodists, Orthodox, Disciples, and more. This is a unique yearly opportunity for ecumenical formation!

To Do: ● Get information and register at <www.nwcu.org>. Look for the printed brochure, to be available soon.

- Consider also attending the Network Gathering (see pages 6-7). ■

More Congregational Interfaith Activity
FACT 2005 report

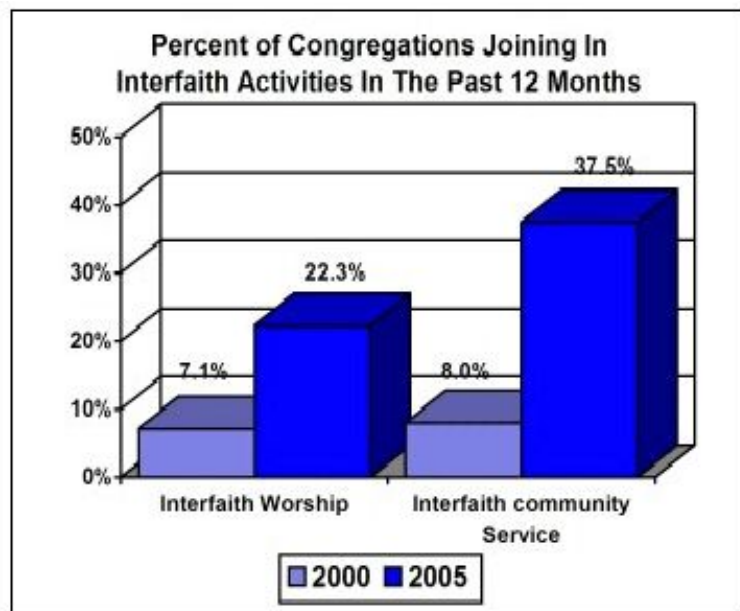
Interfaith activity among faith communities more than tripled since 2000, according to the latest Faith Communities Today (FACT) national survey sponsored by the Cooperative Congregational Studies Partnership hosted by Hartford Seminary. In 2005, 22.3% of congregations reported participating in an interfaith worship service in the past year, and 37.5% reported joining in interfaith community service. The groundbreaking FACT 2000 survey showed only 7% reported participating in interfaith worship in the previous 12 months, while 8% reported joining in interfaith community service activities.

David A. Roozen, Partnership director and a Hartford Seminary professor, says that “after September 11 there was a surge of interfaith activity” and now we know this increased attention is continuing. “Our public consciousness has had to acknowledge . . . that the religious liberty-in-diversity that Americans cherish has moved from ecumenical Christian to interfaith, and . . . will forevermore include Islam.”

The survey shows that interfaith worship is significantly higher for mainline Protestant congregations but is highest among faith traditions other than Christian (40%). Rosen says “they tend to be concentrated in cosmopolitan areas where there are larger numbers of Christian congregations seeking to partner with relatively small numbers of other than Christian communities.”

Interfaith community service activities are highest for the other than Christian category (64%), followed by Catholic and Orthodox (56%), mainline Protestant (46%), and other Protestant (30%).

– *Permission to summarize their reporting and reproduce their graph from Faith Communities Today and Hartford Seminary. See <http://fact.hartsem.edu/fact2006news.html>* ■



Come to the Network Gathering!

The Ecumenical and Interfaith Network of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) set to meet in Washington, DC, with a focus on healing and on future work plans

Here is an invitation to you from leaders of the Presbyterian Ecumenical and Interfaith Network: Landon Whitsitt and Sherri Hausser, co-chairs; David Alger, Paul Masquelier, and Joseph Pallikathayil.

Beginning with lunch on Wednesday, January 31, and concluding with lunch on Friday, February 2, 2007, Presbyterians involved in ecumenical and interfaith work and relationship building will gather in Washington, D.C. The Network Gathering will include workshops and educational opportunities; sharing of ideas, best practices, and resources; and time to be together for fellowship – to “hang out together,” laugh, cry, and support one another. We hope that you can come! The deadline for registration is December 11, 2006.

This 2nd Network Gathering is being held in conjunction with the National Workshop on Christian Unity (NWCU), which will be meeting from Monday afternoon, January 29, through Thursday noon, February 1. You may want to come for both events. (See the article on the NWCU on pages 4-5.)

Here is the schedule:

Wednesday, January 31

Noon: Lunch with members of ecumenical networks from other Reformed and Methodist churches at the Arlington Temple Methodist Church
Topic for joint conversation: the reconciling of ministries process of Churches Uniting in Christ (CUIC).

Afternoon: First sharing session of the Presbyterian network
Occuring at the same time other denominational networks at NWCU are meeting

Evening: Optional evening of food, song, and celebration planned by the NWCU local host committee
Tour of the National Mall, buffet dinner, and community sing led by Ysaye Barnwell of Sweet Honey in the Rock (\$45 additional charge)

Thursday, February 1

Morning: Attendance at NWCU offerings
Bible study led by Brenda Girton-Mitchell (NCC Washington office), a seminar you select from the Thursday morning offerings on the NWCU menu, and a panel discussion on “Faith Influences Christians in Political Office”

Noon: Lunch with NWCU

Thursday Afternoon, February 1, through Friday, February 2, noon

Independent sessions of the Presbyterian Ecumenical and Interfaith Network
Includes a visit with a local ecumenical or interfaith organization and time for planning and sharing together

What will we do?

We will look at the role that healing of wounds plays in what we do and how we do it. Building ecumenical and interfaith cooperation and understanding is hard work, at times unrewarding. In doing it we often feel beat up or beaten

down. Yet the work seeks, and is a practice of, healing and reconciliation.

We will develop a concrete plan for the work of the Network in 2007-2008 and will discuss the role of the Network in the ecumenical and interfaith work of the PC(USA).

We will also have time to relax together, to identify the community of people in our church who are engaged in this work, to share what we are doing, to discuss resources that we have developed or need, and to explore topics of interest using open space methodology.

Please accept this invitation

We need your ideas, wisdom and participation! Come!

If you can only attend a portion of the Gathering, you are welcome.

What will be the cost?

- \$40 fee for the Network Gathering
Covers Wednesday lunch and transportation for the site visit
- \$50 for a one-day NWCU registration or \$125 for full-time registration (if completed by December 1 and thereafter \$150)
Covers Thursday lunch
- Other meals, hotel costs, and travel expenses will be your personal responsibility. There are no national funds available to underwrite this Gathering.

What are the deadlines?

December 1: deadline for paying \$125 for NWCU full-time registration
December 11: deadline for Network Gathering registration



To Do:

1. Register for the Network Gathering

Fill in the form at <www.pcusa.org/interfaith> and submit it electronically. If you are unable to do this, fill out and return the form on this page.

2. Send your Network fee

You can do this as part of the online registration. Alternately, write a \$40 check made out to the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and write on it "for SE07010." Mail it to: PC(USA) Special Events Remittance Processing, P.O. Box 6437654, Pittsburgh, PA 15264-3765.

3. Also register with the National Workshop on Christian Unity

Go to <www.nwcu.org> and register online or download a form to mail in. If you are unable to do this, ask Susan Abraham to send you a form. If your participation begins with Wednesday lunch, register with NWCUC for Thursday only and pay the one-day fee.

4. Select seminars

If you are attending the NWCUC seminars on Thursday morning only, you will need to select one of the seminars available that day. They are:

- Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry (Geoffrey Wainwright)
- Scripture, History and the Search for an Ecumenical Ecclesiology (Joseph Fitzmyer and William Petersen)
- Christians in the Holy Land (John Tidy, Pietro Sambì, Vicken Aykazian)
- Christian-Muslim Relations: Inter-religious or Intercultural Dialogue? (Jay Rock, Sayyid Syeed, Ahmad Dallal, John Borelli)
- Making Christian Churches Together Appropriate to Local Contexts (Ann Riggs)
- Fiftieth Anniversary of Faith and Order (Keelan Downton)
- The Concept of Spiritual Ecumenism (Diane Kessler, Tom Ryan)
- Ecumenical Advocacy on Moral Issues (Michael Kinnamon)

(See full descriptions of the workshops online at <www.nwcu.org> or in the NWCUC brochure.)

5. Make a hotel reservation

The Key Bridge Marriott Hotel is the meeting place. For reservations through the night of February 2, ask for the National Workshop on Christian Unity rate (\$120 per night, single or double occupancy, taxes included). Call 1(800)228-9290, or (703)524-6400. If you would like to share a room, before calling the hotel make an arrangement yourself or ask Susan Abraham if she can help you find someone to room with you {e-mail <sabraham@ctr.pcusa.org> or phone 1(888)728-7228 x5351}. ■

To clip and send:

Susan Abraham, 100 Witherspoon St., Rm. 3210a, Louisville KY 40202-1396

Network Gathering Information

Name _____

Address _____

Church/Presbytery _____

E-mail _____

Phone _____

Time of arrival in Washington _____

Time of departure from Washington _____

_____ I have already registered as a member of the Network.

_____ Add my name to the Network list.

I am registering with the National Workshop on Christian Unity _____ for one day _____ for the full time

_____ I expect to be at the Wednesday lunch.

_____ I am booking a room at the Key Bridge Marriott Hotel:

_____ I will book a single room.

_____ I will book together with _____.

_____ I am looking for someone to share a room.

Ecu-Dialogue notification information

Name (and Title) _____

Address _____

Telephone _____

E-mail _____

Women in Religion in the 21st Century Conference, October 17-19, 2006 at the Interchurch Center, New York City.

A wide array of speakers from various religious traditions will help conversation begin on the roles women play in religion today. Registration is \$300 until September 10; one-day registration is \$140. Registration and information are available online at <www.womeninreligion2006.org> or contact Sue Dennis by phone at (212)879-2931 or by fax at (212)870-2440.

Called to Be the One Church, a document of the 9th Assembly, World Council of Churches, 2006.

Robina Winbush uses questions from this document in her article on pages

1-2. Find the document itself at <www.wcc-assembly.info/en/theme-issues/assembly-documents.html>.

Please respond:
● **How will ECU-DIALOGUE's next issue reach you?**
See page 4.
● **Won't you come to our Network gathering?**
See pages 6-7.

Abraham and Ibrahim: the Bible and the Qur'an Told to Children by Francien van Overbeeke-Rippen with a study guide by Kenneth and Margaret Thomas. *Bridge Resources, PC(USA), 2006.*

This is a resource for teaching children about Islam within a context that primarily looks at faith rather than culture. It is adaptable for either Christian children or for groups of Christian and Muslim children together. Order from PDS {phone (800)524-2612}, ISBN 1-57153-072-X.

Building the Interfaith Youth Movement: Beyond Dialogue to Action edited by Eboo Patel and Patrice Brodeur. *Rowman & Littlefield, 2006.* This book opens up a specialized area of interfaith activity to which too little attention has gone until now. It includes program descriptions written by the programs' founders and leaders, plus theory and methodology. ISBN 0742550672. ■

