



CCJR and ICCJ Conclude Annual Meeting in Philadelphia

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ICCJ 2016 CCJR webThe Council of Centers on Jewish-Christian Relations (CCJR) and the International Council of Christians and Jews (ICCJ) held their combined 2016 meetings in Philadelphia, USA, July 10 – 13. The CCJR is the ICCJR's United States member organization. The event was hosted by the Institute for Jewish-Catholic Relations of Saint Joseph's University (SJU).

A total of 175 participants studied the conference theme of “The Dynamics of Religious Pluralism in a Changing World: The Philadelphia, United States, and International Contexts.” Working together in Philadelphia with many excellent institutions, religious groups and organizations and civic authorities, the conference provided people from around the world with many insights into the complex and diverse experiences of religious pluralism, freedom and tolerance of Christian, Jewish, and Muslim communities in the Philadelphia region, the United States and around the world.

The conference began on Sunday, July 10th with a keynote address by the U.S. Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom David Saperstein entitled, "Interreligious Relations in the World Today."

The first morning of the gathering – titled “William Penn’s Holy Experiment” – focused on the experiences of Christians as a diverse majority in North America and Philadelphia. A panel of experts organized by Dr. Kate Oxx included Drs. David Krueger, Terry Rey, and David Watt. The sessions of the second morning – titled “The (Non) Establishment Experiment” – incorporated Jewish and Muslim experiences into the discussions, offered respectively by Drs. Jonathan Sarna and Mehnaz Afridi, with responses from Dr. Volker Haarmann. The final morning – titled “International Insights” – considered the wider horizon of international situations with a panel consisting of Liliane Apotheker (France), Dr. Pavol Bargar (Czech Republic), Rabbi Shmuel Szeinhendler (Chile), Dr. Michael Trainor (Australia), and Dr. Deborah Weissman (Israel).

On Monday afternoon July 11th, a CCJR-organized dialogue and study session examined four recent documents on Christian-Jewish relations with some of their authors. They included: Rev. Joyce Shin on a text from the Presbytery of Chicago (Presbyterian Church, USA); Jean-François Bensahel on a statement from the Jewish community of France; Rabbi Jehoschua Ahrens on an Orthodox rabbis' text; and Rev. Norbert Hoffman on a document from the Vatican. After small group discussions, CCJR members Drs. Adam Gregerman, Peter Pettit, and Matthew Tapie added further insights.

On Tuesday afternoon July 12th, participants were able to choose to visit a number a local sites of interest: the National Museum of American Jewish History; a walking tour of Jewish Philadelphia with AJC guides Joella Klinghoffer and Larry Greenfield; a walking tour of of the religious pluralism of Philadelphia with Dr. David Krueger; the Philadelphia Museum of Art to see artworks of particular religious significance, guided by Rev. John Haugen; and Independence Hall and the Liberty Bell. Everyone reconvened at the National Constitution Center to hear a presentation on the Constitution's "free exercise" of religion clause by Prof. Jeff Rosen, the NCC's director.

A highlight of Wednesday afternoon July 13th was a paper by renowned Pauline scholar Dr. E. P. Sanders on the interpretation of Paul and Christian anti-Judaism. Responses were offered by Dr. Adele Reinhartz and Rev. Dick Pruiksma. Later that evening, Dr. Sanders was awarded the CCJR's Shevet Achim award for outstanding contributions to Christian-Jewish relations.

The concluding panel in the afternoon offered reflections on the entire conference from Dr. John Crossin, Rev. Friedhelm Pieper, and Rabbi David Straus.

A detailed program booklet may be downloaded [HERE](#).

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