Remembering Judith Hershcopf Banki (1928 - August 14, 2026)

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The ICCJ mourns the recent death of Judith Hershcopf Banki, an internationally renowned writer, lecturer and pioneer in interreligious affairs.

Judith Hershcopf Banki was an internationally renowned writer, lecturer and expert in interreligious affairs. Her writings and research reports largely focused on the image of the “other” in religious education and the sources of prejudice in various teaching and preaching traditions. She has served as the Associate National Director of Interreligious Affairs for The American Jewish Committee and as editor of the Interreligious Newsletter. In 2001, she received an honorary doctorate from Seton Hall University in recognition of her pioneering work in the area of Jewish-Christian Relations. Ms. Banki authored The Image of the Jews in Catholic Teaching, a memorandum which helped pave the way for the historic declaration, Nostra Aetate, adopted at the Second Vatican Council. She condensed and interpreted major religious textbook self-studies carried out at Yale Divinity School, St. Louis University and Dropsie College in the United States, and in Europe at the Pro Deo University in Rome, Louvain University in Belgium and the universities of Duisberg and Freiburg in

Germany. An early proponent of women's interreligious dialogue, she was a founding member of the Women of Faith Task Force, a dialogue involving Jewish, Christian and Muslim women. She was the only woman to give a paper at the Vatican-Jewish conference in Baltimore, 1993.

Her writings have appeared in a variety of publications, including Commonweal, Religious Education, the National Catholic Register, and the Journal of Ecumenical Studies. For two consecutive years, her coverage of the Second Vatican Council was featured as "The Year in Religion" articles of the American Jewish Year Book (1965-66). Her article "Baltimore and Eisenach: Reflections on Two Dialogues" was awarded The Graymoor Ecumenical Prize for 1993.

Judith Banki has been repeatedly honoured for her longstanding commitment to interfaith dialogue, including an honorary doctorate from Seton Hall University in 2001, the Interfaith Gold Medallion from the International Council of Christians and Jews [ICCJ], the Nostra Aetate Award from the National Catholic Center on Holocaust Education at Seton Hill University, and the 2009 Shevet Achim Award from the Council of Centers on Jewish-Christian Relations [CCJR]. In 1992, the National Workshop of Christian-Jewish Relations, in recognizing her contributions, said: "No one has done more to shape the nature and meaning of interreligious relations as we have developed them, perhaps uniquely, in this country than Judith Banki." One of the pioneers of organized interreligious dialogue, she was honored by the National Workshop on Christian-Jewish Relations in 1992.

Banki was a regular speaker and participant in ICCJ conferences. Some of her exceptional work can be found below:

- Nostra Aetate: Reflections from an Eyewitness (Rome, 2015)
- "Shalom aleichem! Pax nobi! As-salamu alaykum! Béke legyem veled! Peace be with you!" (Budapest, 2018)
- 75 Years After Seelisberg - Reflection
- Judith Banki on her Historic Role in Nostra Aetate and Pioneering Work in Interreligious Engagement

Source: ICCJ, courtesy of the Council of Centers on Jewish-Christian Relations.