

Wisconsin Council of Churches Annual Report

www.wichurches.org

*We pray and work for the unity and renewal of the church
and the healing and reconciliation of the world.*

Tracing its roots back to the early 1940's with an inter-denominational recreation ministry for young people, the Wisconsin Council of Churches (WCC) began in 1947 and now encompasses 19 denominations with approximately 2,000 congregations and over one million church members statewide.

2016 Accomplishments

Equipping Leaders - The Council's signature educational event each summer is the Washington Island Forum, which in 2016 drew 150 pastors and lay leaders from 18 states representing 15 faith traditions to hear Forum presenter Carol Howard Merritt. The 2016 Winter Forum welcomed Sr. Simone Campbell as presenter. The Council also hosts regional events throughout the year on a variety of timely topics to equip clergy and lay leaders for effective ministry, including several regional boundary training workshops for pastors and lay leaders.

New Congregational Study Resources—the Council published two study resources in 2016 which were mailed to every WCC member congregation in the state: *Loving our Interfaith Neighbors*, to encourage greater interfaith dialogue and collaboration, and *On Behalf of our Children: Wisconsin's Racial Disparities and the Call of the Gospel*, focusing on a recent Annie E. Casey Foundation study which ranked Wisconsin last among the states in the well-being of Black children.

New denominational partner – The Council welcomed its 19th denominational member in 2016, the Catholic Ecumenical Communion. The ECC, a 30-year old denomination, has one congregation in Wisconsin located in Oshkosh.

Poverty - the Council joined three statewide partners (WISDOM, Wisconsin Council on Children and Families, and the Citizen Action Education Fund) to host 18 regional forums over the last two years with over 1,300 local religious leaders to raise the voice of Wisconsin's faith community in addressing poverty.

Looking Ahead to 2017

Washington Island Forum - 2017 Forum Presenter and world-renowned Biblical scholar John Dominic Crossan will speak on the topic of "The Challenge of the Christian Bible" and will focus on ways the Christian scriptures deal with violence. For more information about the Forum and other WCC educational events, go to www.wichurches.org/events.

Winter Forum - The Council has launched a two-day winter forum to complement the summer Washington Island Forum. The 2017 Forum was March 3-4 in the Madison area with Anabaptist theologian Dr. Drew Hart speaking on changing the conversation about race in the church.

People of Faith United for Justice Advocacy Day was held April 4th at First United Methodist Church near the State Capitol in Madison. This biennial interfaith event brings together a broad cross section of Wisconsin's religious community to be briefed on important issues facing the State Legislature and also to be equipped to advocate to state lawmakers through face-to-face visits in the State Capitol.

Poverty - a third round of regional forums is planned for 2017 as we develop an anti-poverty agenda and a statewide constituency within Wisconsin's religious community to advocate for it. The initiative has set the goal of reducing child poverty by half in the next decade.

Search for a new Executive Director-with the departure of Rev. Scott Anderson at the end of February, the Council is now engaged in a search process for a new Executive Director.