

Mission Statement

The Catholic-Jewish Conference, founded in 1975, is dedicated to the premise that understanding is the bedrock of mutual respect...it underscores the proposition that the journey to God can take many paths and that each person has an inviolable right to his or her religious convictions.

The consensus of this organization is that both Jews and Catholics be assured of reinforcing support when the faith or concerns of one or the other is challenged, thus helping to build a bulwark against such catastrophic events that have occurred in our time and in the past... 3/27/85

History

The Catholic-Jewish Conference was established in 1975 at the initiative of the Ecumenical Commission of the Archdiocese of Milwaukee in response to the documents of Vatican Council II, particularly, *Nostra Aetate*. The Conference is a joint committee of the Ecumenical and Interfaith Office of the Archdiocese of Milwaukee, the Jewish Community Relations Council, and the Wisconsin Council of Rabbis. Since its inception, the Conference has issued joint statements on issues of common concern, offered lecture series on topics of interest to Catholics and Jews, sponsored significant community-wide events, initiated home dialogues as well as a dialogue between rabbis and priests, hosted interfaith Seders in conjunction with local synagogues, and co-sponsored several interfaith missions to Israel.

Shortly after its founding, the Conference issued a statement against Christian proselytizing of Jews. In 1977, a delegation from the Council of Rabbis and the Synagogue Council attended the ordination of Archbishop Rembert Weakland. In 1981, Milwaukee was the host of the 6th National Workshop of Christian-Jewish Relations. These early events set a firm foundation for the growth of Catholic-Jewish relations in Milwaukee. Through the years, lecture series featuring local and national speakers have touched on such topics as: public service, the Holocaust, forgiveness, justice, ritual and practice, church and state, scripture, the land, racism, the reaction of sacred texts, and many others.

Significant community events

- 1994 Hartmann-Weakland Lecture on *Judaism and Christianity in a Secular Society: A Mutual Search* takes place as part of the Jewish Sesquicentennial Celebration
- 1999 Proclaim Jubilee program featuring Rabbi Yitz Greenberg, in preparation for the 25th anniversary of the Conference and the beginning of the Jubilee Year in the Catholic Church. At this event, Archbishop Rembert Weakland, retired Archbishop of the Archdiocese of Milwaukee, made an historic apology to the Jewish people for actions of the church which helped make events such as the Holocaust possible.
- 2000 Imitatio Dei Award Initiated, Rich Lux is first recipient
- 2003 Archbishop Dolan invites representatives of the Steering Committee to meet with Cardinal William Keeler prior to his Pallium lecture on *Catholic-Jewish Relations in the Vision of Pope John Paul II*
- 2004 Response to Mel Gibson's *Passion of the Christ*. The Conference made headlines as it responded to the film through media interviews, the creation of educational materials for congregations, and a forum at Congregation Shalom that attracted over 350 Catholics and Jews to learn about the movie and Christian/Jewish perspectives on passion portrayals. The Conference issued the following statement: *We encourage Christians viewing any depiction of the passion to be sensitive to the concerns of the Jewish community. Similarly we encourage Jews to be aware of*

the central place of the passion narrative within Christianity. We hope that both sides can empathize with the feelings of the other and that the film or other passion portrayals might ultimately serve as a vehicle for dialogue and growth rather than being divisive.

2005 The Conference celebrated the 40th anniversary of Nostra Aetate with a year-long series of events. The kick-off celebration featured The Most Reverend Richard J. Sklba, Auxiliary Bishop of Milwaukee and Dr. Amy-Jill Levine reflecting on *Nostra Aetate: The Catalyst for Conversation*. The year also featured a film series exploring how popular films have depicted Jews and Catholics post World War II, a community-wide Passover Seder, architectural tours of historic synagogues and churches, a sacred concert featuring Psalm settings performed by Catholic and Jewish voices and choirs, a presentation on Abraham Joshua Heschel by Dr. Eva Fleischner with a response from Dr. Herzl Spiro, and a concluding banquet featuring Rabbi David Sandmel and Dr. Mary Boys reflecting on *Visions for a New Generation*.

2007-2008 Judaism and Christianity: Identities Forged in Conflict. This five-part series, funded in part by the Bader Foundation which traced the development of the Jewish and Christian communities from the 1st century CE featured local and national speakers on the following topics: Influences on First Century Christianity and Judaism, The Development of Biblical Text in Christianity and Judaism, The Development of Christianity and Judaism During the Middle Ages, The Development of Christianity and Judaism During the Enlightenment, and Christianity and Judaism in the Modern Period.

Other Programs and Events

- 2001 Tikva Frymer-Kinsky, one of the editors of *Dabru Emet* addressed the issues raised in the text along with a local panel of respondents including Rabbi Marc Berkson, Rabbi David Fine, Dr. Ralph DelColle and Dr. Richard Lux
- 2002 Sacred Writing, Sacred Texts. A presentation by Torah Scribe, Neil Yerman who was writing a Torah in honor of Rabbi Ron Shapiro's 25 years at Congregation Shalom
- 2003 Sacred Writing, Sacred Texts. A presentation on the St. John's Bible looking at the process being used by renowned calligrapher Donald Jackson to create this hand-written and hand-illuminated Bible commission by St. John's Abbey and University.
- 2006 Religious Educators' workshop led by Dr. Mary Boys and Sara Lee. Based on their book, *Christians and Jews in Dialogue: Learning in the Presence of the Other*, the day provided Catholic and Jewish educators with the opportunity to read and reflect on scripture together.
- 2006 "In the Presence of the Other: Dialogue between Faith Traditions", Sacred Heart School of Theology, Dr. Mary Boys and Sara Lee, November 5, Congregation Sinai
- 2006 *Sr. Rose's Passion*, Academy Award nominated film chronicling Sr. Rose Thering's work to oppose anti-Semitism in Church teaching, November 12, Congregation
- 2007 Several small groups of Catholics and Jews participated in *Walking God's Paths*, a multi-part series featuring videos and small group dialogue on the history of Catholic-Jewish relations. Sessions were held at Cardinal Stritch University.
- 2007 Rev. Steve Lampe and Rabbi Marc Berkson offer a presentation on The Covenant: A Shared Text Study at Lumen Christi Parish, October 26

- 2008 Bishop Richard J. Sklba and Rabbi Eugene Korn, Director of the Center for Christian-Jewish Understanding at Sacred Heart University offer a presentation on *Contemporary Questions in Catholic-Jewish Dialogue* at Sacred Heart School of Theology for students, staff, clergy and educators.
- 2009 Isaiah 53: The Suffering Servant – A Shared Text Study, Sherry Blumberg and Richard Lux
 2009 Perspectives on Atonement: A Shared Text Study, Sherry Blumberg and Richard Lux, October 18
- 2010 Perspectives on Forgiveness: A Shared Text Study, Sherry Blumberg and Richard Lux, March 14
 2010 Judi Longdin and Kathy Heilbronner attend meeting in Chicago sponsored by the International Council of Christians and Jews to discuss A Time for Recommitment: The Twelve Points of Berlin
 2010 Meeting of Rabbi/Priest Dialogue with Archbishop ListECKI at Sacred Heart School of Theology. November 11.
- 2011 Death and Dying, Ritual, Practice and Belief – Dc. Mark Filips, Mr. Howard Karsh, Rev. Wayne Jenkins, Rabbi Marc Berkson. January 23, 2011 Lumen Christi
 2011 Salvation and After-Life–Rev. Steve Lampe, Rabbi Jacob Herber. Congregation Beth Israel, April 3
 2011 Educators’ Seder-Congregation Shalom, April 4.
 2011 Reaching God through Worship: Exploring the Jewish Sabbath and the Catholic Mass, Cantor David Barash and Dr. David Stosur. November 13, Cardinal Stritch Kleibhan Hall
- 2012 Reaching God through Worship: The Transformative Aspects of the Collective Liturgical Experience, Rev. David Cooper and Cantor Rebecca Robins. March 4, Cardinal Stritch Schroeder Auditorium
 2012 Tzedek, tzedek, tirdof-Justice, justice, you shall Pursue. Engaging in Public Life: Catholic and Jewish Perspectives – Ms. Kim Wadas, Wisconsin Catholic Conference and Rabbi Noah Chertkoff, Congregation Shalom, October 31, Cardinal Stritch University
 2012 Educators’ Seder-Congregation Shalom, March 19
- 2013 Educators’ Seder-Congregation Shalom, March 19
 2013 Meeting of CJC Steering Committee with Dr. Amy-Jill Levine, April 20, Congregation Shalom
 2013 CJC confers Imitatio Dei award on Bob Peterman, of blessed memory, at Lux Center Fundraising Dinner, accepted by Beth Peterman, Sunday, April 21.

Participation in and support of Lux Center Events

- May 11, 2010 – Lux Center Kick-off dinner
 March 6, 2011 – Ruth Langer, Kick-off Public Lecture, *Approaches to our Sacred Text: Jews and Christians Living with the Bible*
 February 12, 2012 – Professor Yehezkel Landau, *Biblical Resources for Peacemaking: Liberating Lessons from Genesis*
 April 19, 2013 – *How to Avoid anti-Judaism in Preaching and Teaching*, Dr. Amy-Jill Levine
 April 21, 2013 – *An Evening of Shared Understanding* with Dr. Amy-Jill Levine (Why reading the New Testament will make you a better Jew) and Bishop Richard J. Sklba (Why Understanding Judaism will make you a better Christian)