

# Department of Inter-Orthodox and Inter-Faith Relations

Very Reverend Thomas Zain, Chairman

Very Reverend David Barr, Vice Chairman

## Areas of Involvement:

The mission of our department is to interact with and attend various meetings, dialogues and conferences with other Orthodox Christian, non-Orthodox and non-Christian bodies. Fr. Thomas Zain, Chairman, and Fr. David Barr, Vice Chairman, make up the department. Fr. Thomas concentrates on Inter-Orthodox relations and Middle Eastern affairs and Fr. David concentrates on ecumenical relations with other Christian Churches.

## Inter-Orthodox and Middle Eastern Affairs (Fr. Thomas):

Over the past two years there have been few in person meetings however, we continue to participate via zoom in many meetings and, since the fall of 2022, in person gatherings and meetings have resumed. We participate in CMEP (Christians for Middle East Peace), CAMECT (Christian Arab and Middle Eastern Churches Together), and others. We also regularly participate (via zoom only since the pandemic) in conference calls with the Hudson Institute and other governmental agencies when they are discussing topics pertaining to Christianity and especially Christianity in the Middle East.

With regard to Inter-Orthodox Relations, over the past two years I continue to represent Metropolitan (and the Archdiocese during the interim period) on the Executive Committee of the Assembly of Bishops. I also serve on the Secretariat for the Assembly of Bishops and attended the general assemblies in Washington DC (2021) and Los Angeles (2023). We work hard in the Department to maintain good relations with the various Orthodox jurisdictions. This is especially vital during the difficult times of the rift between the Constantinopolitan aligned jurisdictions and the Moscow aligned jurisdictions. These relations are somewhat tenuous because of the split in the Orthodox world between the Churches of Constantinople and Russia over the recognition of two schismatic groups in Ukraine. Sadly, these tensions have spread to our shores in North America and we continue to be a bridge between the two sides on the one hand and, on the other hand, stand in resistance to changes in the status quo.

## Christian Churches Together (CCT – Fr. David)

- Christian Churches Together (CCT) is the sole ecumenical body in which the Antiochian Archdiocese currently participates (relations with the National Council of Churches of Christ [NCCC] were terminated in 2005).
- CCT is comprised of member communions of Churches from five major families of Christian Churches: Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Historical Protestant, Historical African-American, and Evangelicals and Pentecostals. Representatives from these churches meet together to form a united witness, where possible, to the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

- CCT offers the Orthodox the ability to interact with other Christian bodies in a non-threatening atmosphere, giving us the opportunity to know each other better and come to common understandings. It offers the Archdiocese the ability to contact other Churches with similar needs and views on shared concerns. It also keeps us apprised of what is happening in other Churches.
- The Antiochian Archdiocese has representation in both the general forum and Steering Committee of CCT.
- CCT has an annual convocation/forum for 2-3 days, held in October in various parts of the US each year. The average cost for one participant in this convocation is \$1,000-1,500 (airfare, hotel, conference fees).
- There are two Steering Committee meetings per year. The average cost for one participant in these meetings is less, probably somewhere around \$700-800 (airfare, hotel) per meeting.
- Annual Dues for CCT: \$1,500

## Ecumenical Dialogues

- Orthodox/Roman Catholic Dialogue: This is typically run by the Ecumenical Relations Committee of the Assembly of Bishops.
- Ecumenical Relations Committee of the Assembly of Bishops: There has been interest within the Greek Archdiocese to get this committee back up and running. We have been working with this committee to establish a new ecumenical guideline manual for all jurisdictions in the USA.
- Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches (WCC): We have participated in the North American dialogues in the past, but it seems as if we have not been a part over the past several years. There is interest among many of the Roman Catholic
- World Council of Churches: We are represented there through our Patriarchate and not directly from our Archdiocese.
- Christian/Islamic Dialogue in the National Council of Churches of Christ (NCCC): At times in the past, Fr. Theodore Pulcini has represented us in the Christian/Islamic dialogue of the NCCC.

## Budgetary Needs for FYs 2023 and 2024

- 2023: Total of approximately \$6,500 (includes dues to CCT) at current levels of involvement.
- 2024: Total of approximately \$7,000 (includes dues to CCT) at current levels of involvement.

If we get involved with the Assembly of Bishops in the Ecumenical Committee, which could include us in the Roman Catholic Dialogue, we would suggest an additional \$2,500 per year for travel and participation.