

GACEIR UPDATE
December 2014
The Reverend Aimee Moiso

What calls you to this work?

The newly elected General Assembly Committee on Ecumenical and Interreligious Relations (GACEIR) opened its first meeting with this question. As stories unfolded around the table, it seemed the prompt could just as easily have been, “How have you been changed by encounters with other people of faith?” To a person, committee members shared moments of being opened and enlivened by people who saw the world in a different way, and experiences of being disappointed, hurt, and angry when such meetings were stifled, discouraged, or prohibited.

What calls GACEIR to this work? Quite simply, it is the conviction that we are not and cannot be alone in this journey. As Christians, we need each other to be and see the fullness of the body of Christ, and we need enriching partnerships and friendships with people of goodwill across many traditions.

This reemerging conviction took us back to basics: that the heart of ecumenical and interreligious engagement is *relationships*. To keep relationships central to our work, the committee chose *formation* and *engagement*—the *what*, *why*, and *how* of ecumenical and interreligious relationships—as its focus for the next two years. In so doing, we also stepped out of our normal operating procedures in order to rethink and reimagine why this work is so important to us. How are we formed for and through partnerships with people of different convictions? How can we engage more deeply in these relationships—which are so crucial to our faith—throughout the church?

In our next three meetings, we will focus on ecumenical and interreligious formation and engagement in connection to (1) theological institutions, (2) PC(USA) councils (formerly middle and other governing bodies), and (3) congregations. In other words, we will be looking at how ecumenical and interreligious relationships are and can be more fully at play in theological education, our councils, and our congregations of all shapes, sizes, and styles across the country. A major element of these conversations will be the Interreligious Stance as we look for ways to live more fully into its call and possibilities.

It is an exciting season for GACEIR as we look toward newly energized and energizing years ahead!