

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.

2017 Accomplishments

Equipping Leaders, Empowering Public Witness – events included the *Washington Island Forum*, with John Dominic Crossan speaking on ways the Christian scriptures deal with violence; the *Winter Forum*, in which Dr. Drew Hart spoke on changing the conversation on race in the church; and *People of Faith United for Justice Advocacy Day*, which brought together a broad cross-section of Wisconsin's religious community, equipping them to advocate with state lawmakers in face-to-face visits.

Executive Director Transition – with the departure of Rev. Scott Anderson at the end of February, the Council was in transition during much of 2017. Laurie Wilkinson served as interim executive during the search process. The Rev. Kerri Parker began serving as the Council's new Executive Director in late October.

70th Anniversary Dinner and Annual Meeting – At the anniversary dinner, our keynote speaker Kathryn Lohre, former president of the National Council of Churches, helped us to think creatively about the future of the ecumenical movement. The next day, Katherine Cramer of the UW-Madison riveted the Annual Meeting audience as she spoke about people's deep struggles with identity and invisibility.

End Child Poverty – We launched this initiative in December with three statewide partners (WISDOM, Kids Forward, and the Citizen Action Education Fund), seeking 10,000 signatures from WI residents committed to the goals of cutting child poverty and racial disparities in half in the next ten years. Read more and sign on at www.endchildpovertywi.org/endorse

2018 Highlights

Washington Island Forum – What is true in life is also true in scripture: the verbs dominate. It's what we *do* and *don't do* that preoccupies us. Anna Carter Florence will be our presenter for this year's event, inviting us to find new things to see and hear in our sacred text and our human drama. Join us for 4 days of worship, workshops, discussion and contemplation in a beautiful retreat setting this June. For more information about the Forum and other WCC educational events, go to wichurches.org/events.

Winter Forum – Dwight Zscheile helped us explore faithful innovation in the church, reminding us that “innovation grows out of close listening relationships with neighbors.” Over two days in Stevens Point, individuals and teams explored how church traditions and practices could be clarified, translated and renewed to make sense in today's contexts.

Unite to End Racism – The journey to an April rally on the National Mall and day of action in Washington DC serves as the anchor for conversations about race, relationship-building, and action planning toward the transformation of our hearts and institutions. Unite to End Racism is more than a field trip – it is a call to action, the launch of an ongoing initiative.

Becoming Welcoming Communities – A series of regional forums will help communities assess their readiness to take the next step in welcoming their immigrant and refugee neighbors.

Addressing Gun Violence – We are preparing resources to help communities have faithful conversations & take action on this critical issue.