

inter. religious peace colloquium

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Steering Committee
(In Formation)

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Statement of Purpose

The Interreligious Peace Colloquium is the designation for a series of consultations that will bring together leading personalities from the major religious faiths in all parts of the world to consider the contribution that faith communities can make to a better understanding and resolution of the problems of human survival in the closing decades of the 20th century.

The ancient dilemma of how to apply ethical and moral values to the lives of men-in-society confronts modern man with unprecedented urgency. The problem is not only the threat of a nuclear holocaust; in a very literal sense, human survival depends on structures of international relationships that are moral and just. While there is no one segment of society that enjoys greater authority than others in dealing with these problems, religious institutions have a special responsibility to stimulate public awareness of the ethical and moral issues involved, and, by example, to encourage men's best efforts to deal with them.

Modeled in some respects after the Pugwash consultations, the Colloquium proposes to bring together on a regular basis a small group of leading religious personalities with men in public life and experts in the areas under consideration. Unlike convocations of large numbers of religious leaders that have been held from time to time, it will be the purpose of the Colloquium not so much to dramatize the problem as to enable a small number of individuals in a position to influence the policies and programs of religious communities to think together about these critical issues.

The Colloquium was first proposed by the Synagogue Council of America, the umbrella organization for national religious bodies of Conservative, Orthodox, and Reform Judaism in the United States. The Council maintains close relations with peer Christian organizations in the United States - The National Council of Churches of Christ and the United States Catholic Conference. (The executive heads of these three bodies together make up the "Interreligious Committee of General Secretaries.")

In recent years, the Council established interreligious relationships on an international level with the World Council of Churches and with various Vatican agencies. As a result of its experiences with these international religious bodies - the personal associations that were formed, the emergence of a sense of common fate transcending religious differences, and a realization of the far larger contribution religious bodies could make to the quest for international justice and peace - the idea for the Interreligious Peace Colloquium emerged.

A grant from the Rosenhaus Peace Foundation enabled the Council to engage in a series of initial consultations in the United States, Europe, Asia and the Middle East, leading to the formulation of this project. The Rockefeller Foundation then made a grant in support of the first Colloquium. The Council invited a number of leading lay and religious personalities in the United States to form a Steering Committee, which assumed responsibility for the conceptualization and implementation of the project. The names of the members of the Steering Committee, all of whom serve in a personal rather than an official capacity, are listed on this stationery.

The Steering Committee determined the theme, program and structure of the first meeting which is to be held in Bellagio, Italy. Participants in the first Colloquium will form a "committee of the whole" to evaluate the first meeting and to determine a course for the future.