

Ecumenical Formation Survey
Department for Research and Evaluation
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Overview

The Department for Research and Evaluation, in consultation with the Department for Ecumenical Affairs, conducted an online survey to assess ecumenical formation in different contexts. Two versions of the survey were developed, one to be completed by individuals at academic institutions and one for ecumenical leaders. The surveys were posted on the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) website in February 2005 and data were collected through the first week of March. An email invitation with a link to the academic version of the survey was sent to the ELCA seminaries, colleges/universities and campus ministries, as well as the Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities, to be distributed to their students, faculty and staff. This version was also sent to the ecumenical leaders of several denominations to be distributed to their schools: the United Methodist Church, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Reformed Church in America, Presbyterian Church USA, United Church of Christ, The Episcopal Church USA, Moravian Church and the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. The link to the second version of the survey was sent to ecumenical leaders of different denominations for distribution to their local church leaders. These groups included the Lutheran Ecumenical Representatives Network, the National Association of Diocesan Ecumenical Officers, the Episcopal Diocesan Ecumenical Officers, and the ELCA synod bishops. A total of 307 surveys were completed, with 147 academic respondents and 160 ecumenical leader respondents. Since we did not have direct control over the email invitations to complete the surveys, it is not possible to calculate accurate response rates.

Academic Institutions Survey

We will consider each of the versions of the survey in turn and then compare the questions that were similar across the two surveys. As stated above, a link to the first version was emailed to the students, faculty and staff of seminaries and colleges. Of the 147 respondents, over half were students (54%), about one-fourth were faculty/instructors (26%), and 21 percent were administrators. (See Appendix A for a complete list of frequencies.) Respondents live all over the country in 25 different states, with the largest number of participants from Iowa (29%), Pennsylvania (24%) and Ohio (15%). Seven different denominations were represented, with the majority of respondents affiliated with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (51%), followed by the Roman Catholic Church (27%) and the Episcopal Church USA (13%). A total of 32 institutions were represented, with about one-third of respondents affiliated with Wartburg Theological Seminary (34%), followed by Immaculata University (20%) and Trinity Lutheran Seminary (15%).

Ecumenism at the Institution

Since this was the first evaluation of ecumenism across many institutions, we were primarily interested in determining a baseline level of ecumenical formation. First, we

asked about courses on ecumenism offered at the institution. The majority of institutions offered a course about non-Christian religion/comparative religion (73%), with about one-third offering a basic course on ecumenism (31%). Fewer institutions offered a course on the history of ecumenism (18%) or other course concentrated on ecumenism (17%). For the institutions where a course on ecumenism was offered, only one-third of the respondents reported that the course was required, but almost half had taken a course on ecumenism (47%).

Next, respondents were asked to rate the importance of ecumenism at their institution. When asked how important ecumenism was to the student body, most respondents indicated that it was “somewhat” or “very” important (74%). Ratings were higher for how important ecumenism is considered by the faculty, with 86 percent of respondents rating it as “somewhat” or “very” important. We can also compare the means of these two ratings, where 1 = “not at all important” and 4 = “very important.” The average rating of the importance of ecumenism to the student body was 3.30, while the importance to the faculty had an average of rating of 3.56 on the four-point rating scale.

We also asked about organizations and opportunities to get involved in ecumenism at the institution. Slightly over one-third of respondents (35%) reported that there is an organization at their institution dedicated to ecumenism in some form. About three-fourths of respondents (76%) said that there are opportunities to get involved in ecumenism on campus. Only 38 percent of respondents reported that they are currently involved in ecumenical opportunities, but 35 percent would be interested in getting involved. Twelve percent of respondents said that they are not interested, and 16 percent chose “don’t know/not applicable.” About three-fourths of respondents (76%) reported that their institution offers opportunities for worship with other denominations.

Knowledge of Ecumenical Organizations and Events

Finally, respondents were asked about their knowledge of various ecumenical organizations/institutions and events. The most well-known ecumenical organization was the World Council of Churches (WCC), with 86 percent of respondents reporting that they had heard of this organization. Other recognized organizations were the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA (NCC) (61%), the American Academy of Religions (AAR) (38%) and Churches Uniting in Christ (CUIC) (31%). The fewest number of respondents had heard of The Irish School of Ecumenics (8%) and Tantur (12%). The most widely-known ecumenical event was the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity (77%), followed by Parliament of the World’s Religions (37%) and the National Workshop on Christian Unity (NWCU) (30%).

Differences by Student/Faculty/Administration

We also analyzed the responses to examine possible differences between the students, faculty and administration¹. (See Table 1.) Administrators (55%) were most likely to report that there is an organization at their institution that is dedicated to ecumenism in some form, followed by students (34%) and faculty (16%). When asked about their

¹ All reported differences are significant at the .05 level.

involvement in ecumenical opportunities, administrators (56%) and faculty (52%) were more likely to be currently involved compared to students (24%). On the other hand, students (48%) were more likely to be interested in getting involved than faculty (22%) or administrators (20%). Students (87%) were also most likely to report that their institution offers opportunities for worship with other denominations, followed by administrators (65%) and faculty (55%). Not surprisingly, faculty and administrators had more often heard of the Bossey Ecumenical Institute, the Irish School of Ecumenics and Tantur compared to students. However, administrators were most likely to be familiar with the National Workshop on Christian Unity (NWCU) compared to both students and faculty.

Table 1
Differences by Student/Faculty/Administration

| | Students | Faculty | Administration |
|--|-----------------|----------------|-----------------------|
| Ecumenical organization at institution | 33.8% | 15.6% | 54.8% |
| Currently involved in ecumenical opportunities | 23.7% | 52.2% | 56.0% |
| Interested in getting involved | 47.5% | 21.7% | 20.0% |
| Worship with other denominations | 87.0% | 54.5% | 64.5% |
| Heard of Bossey Ecumenical Institute | 5.2% | 24.2% | 32.3% |
| Heard of The Irish School of Ecumenics | 0% | 12.1% | 19.4% |
| Heard of Tantur | 0% | 21.2% | 29.0% |
| Heard of National Workshop on Christian Unity (NWCU) | 20.8% | 24.2% | 48.4% |

The largest group of students lives in Iowa (40%), while more faculty and administrators live in Pennsylvania (46% and 42%, respectively). A large majority of students are affiliated with the ELCA (79%), while more faculty and administrators are affiliated with the Roman Catholic Church (46% and 55%, respectively). Finally, there were differences in the ratings on the importance of ecumenism at the institution. Interestingly, students gave higher ratings for both the importance of ecumenism to the student body at their institution ($M = 3.44$) and the importance to the faculty ($M = 3.68$) compared to the faculty and administrators' ratings. (See Table 2.)

Table 2
Mean Ratings of Importance of Ecumenism by Student/Faculty/Administration

| | Students | Faculty | Administration |
|---|-----------------|----------------|-----------------------|
| Importance of ecumenism to student body | 3.44 | 2.96 | 3.13 |
| Importance of ecumenism to faculty | 3.68 | 3.43 | 3.37 |

Ecumenical Leaders Survey

A link to the second version of the survey was emailed to ecumenical leaders of various denominations. Of the 160 respondents, the majority identified themselves as ordained (58%) and about one-third indicated they were lay (31%). (See Appendix B for a complete list of frequencies.) As for the type of leaders, 40 percent were regional church

leaders, 34 percent were local church leaders and one-fourth ecumenical officers. Almost all of the states were represented (41), with the largest number of participants from Minnesota (13%), Pennsylvania and California (both 9%). Eleven different denominations were represented, with the majority of respondents affiliated with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (52%), followed by the Presbyterian Church USA (29%) and the Roman Catholic Church (8%).

Affiliation with an Academic Institution

About one-third (31%) of respondents indicated that they were affiliated with an academic institution in their area. Of those respondents affiliated with an institution, about three-fourths (74%) reported that the institution had a course about non-Christian religion/comparative religion. About one-third (32%) of the institutions had a basic course on ecumenism, and only 12 percent had a course on the history of ecumenism. Sixteen percent reported that the institution had some other course concentrated on ecumenism, and 12 percent of respondents chose “not applicable.” These findings are very similar to the responses given to the same question by participants from academic institutions.

Ecumenical leaders were also asked to rate how important ecumenism is considered by the affiliated institution. Three-fourths of respondents felt that it was “somewhat” or “very” important, which is again very similar to the findings from the academic version of the survey. The average rating on a four-point scale where 1 = “not at all important” and 4 = “very important” was 3.16.

Ecumenism in the Community

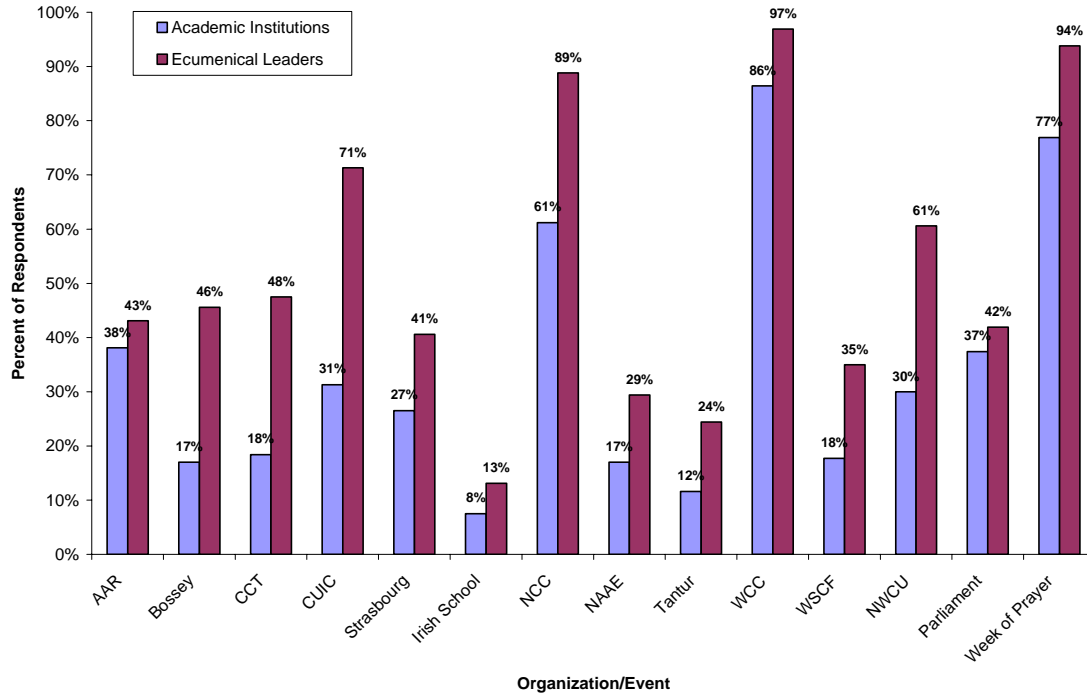
The next set of questions concerned the importance of ecumenism in the community. Nearly three-fourths of respondents (73%) indicated that ecumenism was “somewhat” or “very” important in the community, with an average rating of three on a four-point scale. Eighty-four percent of respondents indicated that there was an organized committee or group in their area that is dedicated to ecumenism in some form. However, only one-third of respondents were aware of anyone on their ecumenical committee under the age of 40. Eighty-six percent of respondents indicated that there are opportunities for people to get involved in ecumenism in their area, but only about one-third (34%) have a staff position for ecumenical relations at their regional office.

Knowledge of Ecumenical Organizations and Events

Finally, respondents to this second survey were also asked about their knowledge of various ecumenical organizations/institutions and events. The most well-known ecumenical organization was the World Council of Churches (WCC), with 97 percent of respondents reporting that they had heard of this organization. Other recognized organizations were the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA (NCC) (89%) and Churches Uniting in Christ (CUIC) (71%). The fewest number of respondents had heard of The Irish School of Ecumenics (13%) and Tantur (24%). The most widely-known ecumenical event was the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity (94%), followed by the National Workshop on Christian Unity (61%) and Parliament of the World’s

Religions (42%). The pattern of results was very similar between the two surveys, but ecumenical leaders were much more likely to be familiar with all of these organizations and events than participants from academic institutions. (See Figure 1.)

Figure 1: Have you heard of the following organizations/events?



Differences by Ordained/Lay Respondents

We next examined differences in responses between ordained and lay participants. (See Table 3.) Ordained respondents (37%) were more likely to report that their regional office has a staff position for ecumenical relations compared to lay respondents (30%). Ordained participants had more often heard of Christian Churches Together (CCT), Churches Uniting in Christ (CUIC), the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA (NCC), the National Workshop on Christian Unity (NWCU) and the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity compared to lay participants. Finally, ordained respondents gave higher ratings for the importance of ecumenism in the community ($M = 3.12$) versus lay respondents ($M = 2.82$).

Table 3
Differences between Ordained and Lay Responses

| | Ordained | Lay |
|--|-----------------|------------|
| Regional office has ecumenical relations staff position | 36.7% | 30.0% |
| Heard of Christian Churches Together (CCT) | 56.7% | 34.0% |
| Heard of Churches Uniting in Christ (CUIC) | 82.2% | 58.0% |
| Heard of National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA (NCC) | 95.6% | 76.0% |
| Heard of National Workshop on Christian Unity (NWCU) | 70.0% | 48.0% |
| Heard of Week of Prayer for Christian Unity | 97.8% | 88.0% |

Differences by Type of Leader

We also examined differences by type of leader, whether respondents were ecumenical officers, local church leaders, or regional church leaders. (See Table 4.) Ecumenical officers (27%) were most likely to report that the institution in their area offered a basic course on ecumenism, followed by regional leaders (11%) and local leaders (2%). Ecumenical officers (60%) were also most likely to indicate that their regional office has a staff position for ecumenical relations, compared to local and regional leaders (35% and 30%, respectively). Ecumenical officers had most often heard of the Irish School of Ecumenics, the North American Academy of Ecumenists (NAAE), the National Workshop on Christian Unity (NWCU) and Parliament of the World's Religions compared to local and regional leaders.

Table 4
Differences by Type of Leader

| | Ecumenical Officers | Local Leaders | Regional Leaders |
|---|----------------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|
| Institution offers basic course on ecumenism | 26.7% | 2.3% | 10.9% |
| Regional office has ecumenical relations staff position | 60.0% | 34.9% | 29.7% |
| Heard of the Irish School of Ecumenics | 33.3% | 14.0% | 4.7% |
| Heard of North American Academy of Ecumenists (NAAE) | 73.3% | 41.9% | 12.5% |
| Heard of National Workshop on Christian Unity (NWCU) | 100% | 62.8% | 57.8% |
| Heard of Parliament of the World's Religions | 86.7% | 41.9% | 31.3% |

Finally, there was a greater diversity of church affiliations among the ecumenical officers, with the largest groups from the Presbyterian Church USA (27%), the Roman Catholic Church (27%), the Episcopal Church USA (20%) and the ELCA (20%). The regional and local church leaders were mostly affiliated with the ELCA (both 51%) and the Presbyterian Church USA (41% and 21%, respectively).

Conclusions

One of the main purposes of this survey was to establish baseline information on ecumenical formation in different contexts. Although the sample size was relatively small and we were not able to control who completed the survey online, we had good geographical distribution and several institutions and denominations were represented. The majority of respondents were affiliated with the ELCA, which is not unexpected since most of the institutions and ecumenical groups contacted were affiliated with the ELCA. However, using a web survey allowed us to reach participants affiliated with other denominations as well.

With these limitations in mind, this survey is one of the first to examine ecumenical formation in different contexts and provides baseline data. In both surveys, it appears

that courses on non-Christian religion or comparative religion are much more common than courses on ecumenism. Ratings of the importance of ecumenism were generally high, averaging three out of four or higher for both the community and the institution. There also appeared to be many opportunities for involvement in ecumenism, both in the community and at institutions. However, actual involvement levels were lower, particularly by students and people under the age of 40. Knowledge of ecumenical organizations and events were relatively high, and ecumenical leaders were more likely to be familiar with these organizations and events compared to participants at academic institutions.

Looking at differences among respondents, students were generally less involved in ecumenical opportunities and less familiar with various ecumenical organizations and events compared to faculty and administrators. However, many students expressed interest in getting involved and gave higher ratings for the importance of ecumenism at their institutions. In the second survey, ordained respondents and ecumenical officers were generally most knowledgeable of ecumenical organizations and events. Ordained participants also gave higher ratings for the importance of ecumenism in their community compared to lay respondents.

One important application of this survey is the role of ecumenical formation in future leadership. If this movement is to survive, students at seminaries and colleges must be invested and involved. Although students were interested in getting involved and gave higher ratings for the importance of ecumenism, their actual involvement levels were lower. Targeting these student groups and creating networks on campuses are vital to the future of ecumenism. Offering courses on ecumenism and making these courses required are possible changes to the curriculum that might highlight ecumenism as a priority of the institution. In addition, the recruitment of young adults for ecumenical committees in the community is very important. These future leaders will be critical for the ecumenical movement to continue and thrive.

Appendix A
Ecumenical Formation Survey
Academic Institutions
February 2005
Frequencies (N = 147)

1. Does your institution offer (Select all that apply):
 - 30.6 a basic course on ecumenism
 - 17.7 a course on the history of ecumenism
 - 17.0 other course concentrated on ecumenism
 - 72.8 a course about non-Christian religion/comparative religion

2. Is the course on ecumenism required?
 - 33.3 yes
 - 64.4 no
 - 2.2 not applicable

3. Have you taken a course on ecumenism?
 - 46.7 yes
 - 48.9 no
 - 4.4 not applicable

4. Please rate how important ecumenism is considered by the student body at your institution.
 - 0.7 Not at all important
 - 12.0 Slightly important
 - 34.5 Somewhat important
 - 39.4 Very important
 - 13.4 Don't know/No opinion

5. Please rate how important ecumenism is considered by the faculty at your institution.
 - 1.4 Not at all important
 - 4.2 Slightly important
 - 27.3 Somewhat important
 - 58.7 Very important
 - 8.4 Don't know/No opinion

6. Is there an organization at your institution that is dedicated to ecumenism in some form?
 - 34.5 yes
 - 33.1 no
 - 32.4 don't know

7. Are there opportunities to get involved in ecumenism at your institution?
 - 76.2 yes
 - 10.5 no
 - 13.3 don't know

8. What is your involvement in ecumenical opportunities at your institution?
 37.6 I am currently involved
 34.9 I would be interested in getting involved
 11.9 I am not interested
 15.6 Don't know/Not applicable
9. Does your institution offer opportunities for worship with other denominations?
 75.5 yes
 17.0 no
 7.5 don't know
10. Have you heard of any of the following organizations/institutions? (Select all that apply.)
 38.1 American Academy of Religions (AAR)
 17.0 Bossey Ecumenical Institute
 18.4 Christian Churches Together (CCT)
 31.3 Churches Uniting in Christ (CUIC)
 26.5 Institute for Ecumenical Research—Strasbourg
 7.5 The Irish School of Ecumenics
 61.2 National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA (NCC)
 17.0 North American Academy of Ecumenists (NAAE)
 11.6 Tantur
 86.4 World Council of Churches (WCC)
 17.7 World Student Christian Federation (WSCF)
11. Have you heard of any of the following events? (Select all that apply.)
 29.9 National Workshop on Christian Unity (NWCU)
 37.4 Parliament of the World's Religions
 76.9 Week of Prayer for Christian Unity
12. Please tell us briefly what your experience with ecumenism has been personally.
13. Are you (Select all that apply):
 53.7 Student
 25.9 Faculty/Instructor
 21.1 Administration
14. Where do you live?
- | | | |
|--------------------|--------------------|----------------|
| 4.1 California | 0.7 Massachusetts | 1.4 Texas |
| 0.7 Connecticut | 1.4 Michigan | 0.7 Vermont |
| 0.7 Delaware | 0.7 Minnesota | 0.7 Virginia |
| 1.4 Washington, DC | 2.7 New York | 4.1 Wisconsin |
| 0.7 Georgia | 0.7 North Carolina | 0.7 Wyoming |
| 4.8 Illinois | 0.7 North Dakota | 1.4 Outside US |
| 0.7 Indiana | 15.0 Ohio | |
| 28.6 Iowa | 0.7 Oregon | |
| 1.4 Kentucky | 23.8 Pennsylvania | |
| 0.7 Maryland | 0.7 South Dakota | |

15. What church are you affiliated with?

- 2.7 None
- 12.9 Episcopal Church USA
- 51.0 Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
- 0.7 Friends United Meeting
- 1.4 Presbyterian Church (USA)
- 26.5 Roman Catholic Church
- 0.7 United Church of Christ
- 2.0 United Methodist Church
- 2.0 Other

16. What institution are you affiliated with?

- 0.7 Albertus Magnus College
- 0.7 Archdiocese of Vancouver, BC
- 1.4 Bexley Hall Seminary
- 0.7 Brescia University
- 0.7 Catholic College
- 0.7 Catholic Theological Union
- 0.7 Christ Episcopal Church
- 0.7 Diocese of Kentucky
- 0.7 Diocese of Long Island
- 0.7 Diocese of Oregon
- 0.7 Diocese of Quincy—St. Paul's Cathedral, Peoria
- 0.7 Diocese of Southwest Virginia
- 0.7 Divine Word Missionaries
- 1.4 Franciscan Friars of the Atonement
- 0.7 General Theological Seminary
- 0.7 Holy Nativity Episcopal Church
- 20.4 Immaculata University
- 0.7 Loyola University, Chicago
- 0.7 Mount Marty College—Yankton, SD
- 4.1 Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary
- 1.4 Sacred Heart School of Theology—Hales Corners, WI
- 0.7 Saint Charles Borromeo Seminary, Overbrook—Philadelphia, PA
- 0.7 Saint John's School of Theology and Seminary
- 0.7 St. Paul's Parish Lake James—Morganton, NC
- 0.7 St. Josaphat Ukrainian Catholic Seminary
- 0.7 St. Joseph's Oblate Seminary
- 0.7 St. Paul's Episcopal Church—Natick, MA
- 0.7 Texas Tech University
- 15.0 Trinity Lutheran Seminary
- 0.7 Union Theological Seminary
- 34.0 Wartburg Theological Seminary
- 0.7 Wyoming Association of Churches

Appendix B
Ecumenical Formation Survey
Ecumenical Leaders
February 2005
Frequencies (N = 160)

1. Are you affiliated with any academic institution in your area?
31.4 yes
68.6 no

2. Thinking of the main institution in your area, does that institution offer (Select all that apply):
32.0 a basic course on ecumenism
12.0 a course on the history of ecumenism
16.0 other course concentrated on ecumenism
74.0 a course about non-Christian religion/comparative religion
12.0 not applicable

3. Please rate how important ecumenism is considered by the main institution.
2.1 Not at all important
12.5 Slightly important
43.8 Somewhat important
31.3 Very important
10.4 Don't know/No opinion

4. Please rate how important ecumenism is considered by your community.
0.6 Not at all important
23.4 Slightly important
48.7 Somewhat important
24.7 Very important
2.5 Don't know/No opinion

5. Is there an organized committee or group in your area that is dedicated to ecumenism in some form?
83.6 yes
9.4 no
6.9 don't know/not applicable

6. Are you aware of anyone on your ecumenical committee under the age of 40?
32.5 yes
39.5 no
28.0 don't know/not applicable

7. Are there opportunities for people to get involved in ecumenism in your area?
86.0 yes
4.5 no
9.6 don't know/not applicable

8. Does your regional office have a staff position for ecumenical relations?
 34.0 yes
 47.2 no
 18.9 don't know/not applicable
9. Have you heard of any of the following organizations/institutions? (Select all that apply.)
 43.1 American Academy of Religions (AAR)
 45.6 Bossey Ecumenical Institute
 47.5 Christian Churches Together (CCT)
 71.3 Churches Uniting in Christ (CUIC)
 40.6 Institute for Ecumenical Research—Strasbourg
 13.1 The Irish School of Ecumenics
 88.8 National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA (NCC)
 29.4 North American Academy of Ecumenists (NAAE)
 24.4 Tantur
 96.9 World Council of Churches (WCC)
 35.0 World Student Christian Federation (WSCF)
10. Have you heard of any of the following events? (Select all that apply.)
 60.6 National Workshop on Christian Unity (NWCU)
 41.9 Parliament of the World's Religions
 93.8 Week of Prayer for Christian Unity
11. Please tell us briefly what your experience with ecumenism has been personally.
12. Are you (Select all that apply):
 25.0 Ecumenical officer
 34.4 Local church leader
 40.0 Regional church leader
 57.5 Ordained
 31.3 Lay
13. Where do you live?
- | | | |
|----------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| 0.6 Alaska | 3.1 Kentucky | 3.1 Ohio |
| 0.6 Arkansas | 1.3 Louisiana | 1.3 Oklahoma |
| 8.8 California | 1.3 Maryland | 1.3 Oregon |
| 0.6 Colorado | 3.1 Massachusetts | 9.4 Pennsylvania |
| 0.6 Connecticut | 0.6 Michigan | 0.6 South Carolina |
| 0.6 Delaware | 12.5 Minnesota | 0.6 South Dakota |
| 1.3 Washington, D.C. | 0.6 Missouri | 1.3 Tennessee |
| 0.6 Florida | 1.3 Montana | 2.5 Texas |
| 1.9 Georgia | 0.6 Nebraska | 4.4 Virginia |
| 0.6 Idaho | 1.3 New Jersey | 1.3 Washington |
| 5.6 Illinois | 0.6 New Mexico | 5.6 West Virginia |
| 1.9 Indiana | 4.4 New York | 0.6 Wisconsin |
| 4.4 Iowa | 1.3 North Carolina | 1.3 Puerto Rico |
| 1.9 Kansas | 3.1 North Dakota | |

14. What church are you affiliated with?
- 1.3 None
 - 0.6 American Baptist Churches USA
 - 0.6 Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
 - 0.6 Diocese of the Armenian Church of America (Eastern)
 - 4.4 The Episcopal Church USA
 - 51.9 Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
 - 1.3 Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada
 - 28.8 Presbyterian Church USA
 - 0.6 Reformed Church in America
 - 8.1 Roman Catholic Church
 - 0.6 United Church of Christ
 - 1.3 United Methodist Church