

unity over to the margin of your commitments, never rank it as a deferred priority, never rest content with the ecumenical status quo, which is still a scandal — in God's eyes and even in the eyes of the world.

## ECUMENISM IN ACTION

*The second in our series of Local Ecumenism is: Bay Area Native American Ministries. The article is written by James Treat.*

In less than two years, much of the Western world will unite in commemorating the five-hundredth anniversary of European presence in the Americas. This impending celebration may serve to remind us that, since the beginning of cross-cultural contact with the native inhabitants of these lands, Christian missionaries have pondered over the problems raised by the presence of non-Christian religious traditions. The checkered history of Christian response to these problems has been tragic more often than it has been heroic, and repeated opportunities for inter-religious dialogue and spiritual growth have instead become occasions for religious intolerance and spiritual pride. Authentic respect for Native American cultural and spiritual traditions has only recently found a place in the churches' agendas.

As a product of this new appreciation for the dignity and value of Native American life, the Bay Area Native American Ministry (BANAM) is pioneering a new approach to spiritual and social ministry within urban Indian communities. Headquartered in Oakland's American Indian Human Services building, BANAM is a community-based ministry program. As an ecumenical outreach effort, BANAM receives major support from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America with the Presbyterian Church (USA), and is developing a relationship with the American Baptist Churches. Paul Schultz, a Chippewa from the White Earth Reservation in Minnesota and a Lutheran layman, has been the Executive Director of BANAM since 1985.

"We support the integrity of an individual's personal experiences," says Schulz. "Spiritual well-being is the bottom line." Healing the wounds from past encounters with Christian churches must be an inclusive and open-ended process, since the 86,000 Native Americans now living in the San Francisco Bay Area come from hundreds of different tribal backgrounds.

The need for making spiritual connections in the urban environment is just one of several ministry priorities. BANAM's agenda, as defined through a community response process, also includes supporting chemically-dependent individuals in recovery, providing advocacy and support for personal and family problems, and establishing working relationships with tribal spiritual leaders representing traditional faiths. Healthy cooperation with tribal spiritual leaders, the missing ingredient in so many previous approaches to Native American ministry, provides the foundation for BANAM's authentically contextual and cultural orientation.

Weekly prayer ceremonies conducted by local tribal leaders provide opportunities for inter-faith understanding and cultural reconnection, while regular worship gatherings and individual spiritual guidance allow persons from different church and tribal backgrounds to come together in a sharing of gifts. Rev. Judith Wellington, BANAM's Assistant Director, is Pima/Sioux and an ordained Presbyterian minister. Recognizing that worship is a community experience rather than a public performance, she advocates an inclusive approach to sacramental ministry. "Everyone is gifted with spiritual gifts. Everyone brings something of value to worship."

The gospel message—the good news of reconciliation and hope—takes on fresh meaning among Native Americans only as it allows for the transformation of old pain and confusion into new life and affirmation. As a model of ecumenical cooperation, the Bay Area Native American Ministry is an important new reality for contextual, cross-cultural ministry among Native Americans.

## ECUMENISM IN EAST GERMANY

The Ecumenical Commission of the Sierra Pacific Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America invited the Rev. Karlheinz Eichhorn to speak to them of the ecumenical movement in East Germany on June 22nd and 23rd.

Pastor Eichhorn, who is the Superintendent of the Lutheran Church of Saxony in Auerbach, shared the experiences of the churches under the oppressive government of the DDR. He said that in a sense the state brought the churches together, and together they lived in the courage given by the Virgin Mary's words, "He has put down the mighty from their thrones, and exalted those of low degree."

He related that in Leipzig, where the Lutheran Church is strong and the Roman Catholic Church is weak, the Lutherans cooperated with the Roman Catholics, helping them to build a new church. In appreciation for this, Pastor Eichhorn's name was engraved into the church's foundation and he was the preacher at the church's dedicatory mass. This harmony between the two denominations amazed the government authorities. The church's response to this was: for years the devil made us enemies, but we have defeated the devil. Now the devil is making the same difficulty between the church and the state; therefore, our unity in the church is to serve as an example inviting the government to unity with the people.

Ecumenical activities in some of the parishes have reached such a level that some Lutheran and Roman Catholic parishes have joint back accounts, joint services twice a year; joint lectures series; an active support group for couples of mixed marriages and, in some special cases, a joint celebration of the Holy Communion.

Ecumenical activity also is strong within other denominations. In Auerbach, the Methodists, Baptists and Free Evangelical Church work closely together and have a Week of Prayer for Christian Unity every January, in which prayer services are held every day of the week with the people attending a different church each day for prayer.

This August there will be a "Tent Mission" called "Faith in Daily Life" in which all congregations will participate, offering counseling and other services to all who attend.

## Summer Supper Dialog Presentation WESTERN CULTURE AND THE NEW AGE MOVEMENT

"The definition of a Christian," declared the Rev. Bill Kellogg of the Spiritual Counterfeits Project (SCP) located in Berkeley, CA, "is anyone who believes in the Apostles Creed." Together with Mr. Brooks Alexander, founder of SCP, the Reverend Kellogg gave an energetic presentation of the Christian encounter with the New Age Movement in Western Culture to an attentive group of 55 persons at Bethel Presbyterian Church, San Leandro, CA, Sunday evening, June 10.

Mr. Alexander, who is also full-time research editor for the *SCP Newsletter*, explained how he became deeply involved with counter-culture ideas in the 1970's. While at college, he went with friends to Houston in 1973 to challenge Guru Maharishi Mahesh Yogi's teaching about Transcendental Meditation (TM). The SCP filed a successful suit several years later to halt the Guru's TM program from being taught in public schools. SCP identified TM as a "religion" which has a "secular" image.

The Rev. Kellogg pointed out that at the world view level, Western Culture has two main streams — one a stream flowing from the ancient philosophies of Athens and the other a creationist stream flowing from Jerusalem. Judaic doctrine is the basis upon which current notions of human rights rest. It is a doctrine of revealed truths about the creation and the redemption of the world.

During the Medieval Renaissance period, the secular arm of Christendom gradually began to separate itself from the creationist