

# The Church of St. Augustine

## What It Means To Be Ecumenical

The term is not new, but it is still mysterious to many. It's important to explore it, because it lies at the very heart of the original inspiration of our Communion.

Originally, the term was used to speak of openness to and dialogue among all Christian faiths.

Corresponding to this are the terms "interreligious" or "interfaith" which address openness and dialogue between Christians and other world religions.

But the term, "ecumenical" has come to have a very broad, common usage that goes beyond the technical definitions.

Here is a very reasonable and common definition of "ecumenical":

promoting or tending toward worldwide Christian unity or cooperation

And here is a very broad, all-encompassing definition:

A religious or spiritual outlook so open and inviting to "the other," so deliberately all-inclusive as to be truly comfortable in the whole of God's creation: catholic, cosmic, cosmopolitan, global, planetary, universal, worldwide.

It was in both senses that our Ecumenical Catholic Communion embraced its name. We are, and we commit ourselves to always be, open and welcoming to every person. While we have our particular Catholic Christian beliefs and practices, we are deeply interested in, and learn greatly from, the beliefs and practices of other traditions. We wish to avoid committing the error of so many – thinking ourselves to be exclusively God's chosen. We know that all God's people – all of creation – is truly God's chosen.

Ways of living out our ecumenical charter, besides offering our open tables of communion and fellowship, might include these:

Regularly inviting representatives of other faith groups – Christian, Jews, Muslim, Buddhists and others to offer prayers and presentations for our learning and the opening of our minds and hearts and spirits.

Recognizing the holy days of other religions by explicit mention within our celebrations of eucharist, and in our newsletters and other communications.

Exploring ecumenical topics in book groups or movie clubs.

Appointing delegates to local interfaith groups.

Seeking to partner with other faith groups in projects for social justice.

Creating special ecumenical prayers and distributing to our members.

Offering support – physical presence, labor, prayer, etc – whenever another faith group or congregation is the object of defamation, vandalism or violence.

We invite all our members and friends to dedicate themselves to continual reflection on the nature of ecumenism, and to become committed to living out its promise.