

## History of the Ecumenical Catholic movement – Part 4/4

Up to now, we talked about the considerable diversity within the universal church, provided some background on the historical roots of the Ecumenical Catholic Communion, and briefly reviewed the more recent history of the Communion. This week we will provide a "bird's eye view" of the current size and diversity of the communion.

The Ecumenical Catholic Communion identifies itself as a Communion of communities. The ECC has communities in every region of the United States, and in several countries in Europe. The Presiding Bishop of the ECC is Peter Hickman. Bishop Peter resides in Orange, CA, and is also pastor of St. Matthew ECC community in Orange. Within the ECC, the United States is divided into 9 regions. Two of the regions (California and Florida) have evolved into autonomous dioceses, and several additional regions are currently considering this step. Massachusetts is in the Northeast region. The Vicar of the Northeast region is Rev. Rosa Buffone, who resides in Newton, MA and is pastor of Holy Spirit Catholic Community in MetroWest Boston. Holy Spirit Catholic Community affiliated as an ECC community on Pentecost Sunday in 2007.

The ECC is guided by a communal constitution which was developed by the original organizing communities in 2003. The ECC is governed by the Synod of the communion. The Synod is comprised of the Presiding Bishop in collaboration with the House of Laity (HOL), the House of Pastors (HOP) and the Episcopal Council. The communion meets in Synod every two years. The 2010 Synod was held in St. Louis, MO. The 2012 Synod will be held in southern California. The constitution includes provisions for the modification and adaptation of both doctrine and polity; changes require the approval of the HOL, HOP and the Presiding Bishop. Thus, no one person, including the Presiding Bishop, or one group can unilaterally exert control over the communion.

The HOL consists of two or more (depending upon the size of the community) individuals elected from each faith community, according to the election processes determined by that community. Members of the HOL are elected for a term of two years; term limits may be set by each local faith community. Members of the HOL cannot be ordained clergy. The current president of the HOL is Ms. Sarah Ball of Little Rock, AR; the vice chair is Ms. Carla Altepeter of Spokane, WA.

The HOP includes two members from each community. Typically the delegates include the pastor and one associate pastor or lay pastoral associate from each community. Pastors serve on the HOP for the term of their pastorate; others are elected by the local faith community. Term limits may be set by each local faith community. The current president of the HOP is Rev. Frank Krebs, who resides in St. Louis, MO, and serves as pastor of Sts. Clare and Francis ECC community in St. Louis. The vice chair is Rev. Kedda Keough, who resides in the Seattle, WA regional area and is co-pastor of the Emmaus ECC community in Olympia, WA.

The ECC Presiding Bishop is elected by a combined vote of the House of Laity and the House of Pastors. The Presiding Bishop is elected for a term of 4 years, and if re-elected may serve up to 3 consecutive terms (for a maximum of 12 consecutive years). Diocesan

bishops are elected by a combined vote of the laity and clergy from the communities within the diocese. Diocesan bishops are elected for a term of 6 years, and if re-elected may serve up to 2 consecutive terms (for a maximum of 12 consecutive years).

The ECC explicitly supports the autonomy of each local faith community. Pastors, associate pastors and lay pastoral associates are called to ministry by the local community. They are not appointed by an outside authority, such as a bishop. All local faith communities are independently incorporated as not for profit entities in their respective states. Community property and assets are held in sole ownership by the local faith community, in accordance with its own constitution and the laws of the state in which it exists. Neither the ECC nor the Presiding Bishop claims any right to the assets or properties owned by the local faith communities.

To learn more about the Ecumenical Catholic Communion, visit the website at [www.ecumenical-catholic-communion.org](http://www.ecumenical-catholic-communion.org)