The Collegeville Institute for Ecumenical and Cultural Research: Resurrecting (Bits of) Its History

2006 photo by the Archivist – linked from Buildings page
Note: The Institute for Ecumenical and Cultural Research became the Collegeville Institute for Ecumenical and Cultural Research in 2006.
Box 1594:1 1963 Bishop Malone (Nebraska) document, p.4, with 1960 photo of Ecumenical Dialogue at SJU
A document authored by Godfrey Diekmann in 1957 was put to use in 1963

Box 1594:1  1957 Diekmann document, heavily edited for later use
With a due sense of pride and adventure I want to lay the following matter before you. Five years ago when I was in my first year at Luther Theological Seminary, St. Paul, Minnesota, I initiated, in cooperation with Father Paul Marx, O.S.B., a dialogue between the students and faculty of Luther Seminary and the same of St. John's Abbey, Collegeville, Minnesota. At that time the climate for such a dialogue was not anything like it is today; what was then exceedingly difficult to get started is now taken for granted. The election of a Catholic President, the appearance of a number of pertinent books, and the current Vatican Council have all together brought about a climate which fosters such dialogue. This year I was back for the weekend of dialogue at which theological papers were presented and discussed and quite frankly, I was astounded at the progress that has been made in five years of such activity. Not least of all was I impressed by statements from members of the St. John's faculty and student body to the effect that this dialogue has transformed the entire theological attitude of the Abbey. Part of the same effect has been felt at Luther Seminary, an institution of over 500 students. At both institutions to be astounded is what we expect.
May 14, 1963

Professor D. Ernst Kinder
29 Weiberstrasse
Munster/Westfalen
West Germany

Dear Professor Kinder:

You will be happy to hear that the dialogue with our brethren at St. John’s has continued to progress in a very fine manner. I was again able to participate this year, the fifth year since its beginning. You again were remembered with thankfulness and we are confident that your presence with us the second year was decisive in setting the tone for the whole dialogue. You perhaps heard that Father Godfrey was very seriously ill but he has now recovered quite well. He and Professor Hans Kung (who will visit you at Munster) were banned from speaking at Catholic University Washington, D.C. This proved to be an interesting event in American Catholicism and will eventually result in much good because it has given some American bishops and archbishops an opportunity to take a stand with the courage which they gained at the II Vatican Council.

In our work with St. John’s we are embarking on a new venture. After being there this last February, I proposed to St. John’s and Lutheran Seminary that a Library for Catholic Studies be set up at Luther and a Library for Protestant Studies be set up at St. John’s. I am now acting as chairman of this project and we hope to obtain money from some philanthropic foundation to establish these libraries.

Calvin (“Jack”) Eichhorst
We hope to organize and continue such initial steps in an Ecumenical Study Center in the new St. John's Library. A collection of basic ecumenical reference works, journals and publications will be assembled and made available to theologians and visiting scholars. Guest lecturers will be invited to foster the ecumenical spirit in the faculty, student and public community. With ecclesiastical approval, plans are underway to establish a first-rate Protestant library of ecumenical works for the use of competent scholars. Luther Seminary will, in turn, establish a similar library of Catholic works. We need financial assistance to realize the development of this new and vitally important apostolate for the advancement of Christian unity in our times.

3. MONEY FOR THE PROJECT: Jack Eichhorst reported that he had sent letters of inquiry to seven foundations to see if giving a grant for such libraries as we propose would come within the scope of their philanthropy. From Kressge, Three M, Kellogg, Hazen, and Danforth he received a negative reply. No word has yet been received from Dayton's and Dean of Minneapolis. Father Coleman suggested that the libraries might be started on a small scale with funds we may be able to get from the Catholic Aid Association and Lutheran Brotherhood. It was pointed out that such a joint project is unique to this area where Catholicism and Lutheranism have been forced to flourish together. He suggested that...
MEMO

March 20, 1964

The following is a proposal from Father Paulin:

"... Might I suggest that someone like that might be the one to tap for a project I shall very briefly describe as an "Institute for Ecumenical Studies" set up on the same basis as Princeton's Advanced Institute of Studies. It involves provision of a small permanent staff, a building, and very large annual stipends to be offered top-notch scholars who seek to do advanced study in the area involved, and money for the publication of their research. This would be the kind of 'institute' which would most aptly make use of our resources, help build up ones which would complement our graduate study program, our monastic and theological interests, and which would most likely have a national impact and therefore be something a person with money and 'big ideas' might willingly finance."

Memo from Fr. Arno
(SJU President 1958-1964)
To Abbot Baldwin

A shift to something bigger than a library collection...

Fr. Paulin = Michael Blecker, OSB
(SJU President 1971-1982)

1980 Abbey Directory

29 1594:1 1964 March Arno Memo
Fr. Arno’s memo (quoting Michael Blecker) continues— envisioning what the Institute will become

Box 1594:1 1964 March Arno Memo; Abbey photo of Fr. Godfrey
Something bigger meant more fundraising

Mr. George Dayton
Cedarhurst
Wayzata, Minnesota

Dear Mr. Dayton:

Please permit me to thank you for your kindness and generous sacrifice of your valuable time in coming to lunch with Harry Holtz and me on Friday. I enjoyed our visit very much, and especially appreciate your interest and genuine Christian foresight in the possibilities opening before us all in the Ecumenical Research Center which Minnesota will soon have.

I look forward to welcoming to Saint John's you and your wife and the other guests we may be able to interest in hearing about this ecumenical adventure. You know how welcome you will be. We will have a good time, I promise you.

Under separate cover you are receiving a leaf of Saint John's Bread. It comes with every best wish from the O.S.B. Wh!

Sincerely yours,

Colman J. Barry, O.S.B.

The practice of giving away Johnnie Bread existed even back then!

Box 1594:1 Colman Barry letter to Dayton
**"A" List**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Greeting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Edgar M. Bronfman</td>
<td>President and Director</td>
<td>Dear Edgar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seagram &amp; Sons, Inc.</td>
<td>375 Park Avenue</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New York, New York</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Joseph P. Cullman</td>
<td>President and Director</td>
<td>Dear Joe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philip Morris, Inc.</td>
<td>100 Park Avenue</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New York, New York</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Robert Lehman</td>
<td>Lehman Brothers</td>
<td>Dear Bobby</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 William Street</td>
<td>New York, New York</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Harold D. Uris</td>
<td>President</td>
<td>Dear Harold</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uris Buildings Corp.</td>
<td>850 Third Avenue</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New York, New York</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Gustave L. Levy</td>
<td>Goldman Sachs &amp; Co.</td>
<td>Dear Gus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 Broad Street</td>
<td>New York, New York 10005</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

...aiming high!

**"B" List**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Greeting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mr. David Rockefeller</td>
<td>President</td>
<td>Dear David</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chase Manhattan Bank</td>
<td>1 Chase Manhattan Plaza</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New York, New York</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Box 1594:1 (undated, but presumably from 1963) – A and B Lists
Text from Box 1557:3 1967 press release, p. 2; photo from 1980 Abbey Directory
From Kilian 2011 March 16: “In the late 1950s the Theology department decided to do something on ecumenism, but they needed someone to be trained/do a dissertation in Protestant theology. My thought was, ‘We don’t have time to teach the students Catholic theology!’ But they wanted me to do it, so I sent a two-page proposal to ten foundations. Two funded my studies; one was the Butlers.”
From Kilian 2011 March 16: “I wrote them a newsy letter twice a year; tried to make it interesting. I was invited to their home for lunch. Mr. Butler had taken my letter and copied it and sent it around to his friends. He asked, ‘Where do we go from here?’ I talked to fellow monks and came up with the idea for a post doctoral degree, and waited a year, then called Mr. Butler. I told him that there was currently a popular wave of ecumenism that should be capitalized upon. Butler gave me a check for $250,000.” (And when that proved to be less than needed, he donated an additional $100,000.)
Breuer was tapped to design yet another building for St. John's.

(more on Breuer to come…)

1557:3 1967 0118 Press release p. 1; photo from http://www.marcelbreuer.org/At.SJ.html
Protestants Back Ecumenical Institute at St. John's

Minneapolis Tribune Oct. 19, 1967

Box 1593:4 - Minneapolis Tribune Oct. 19, 1967, p. 1B
Saint John’s offers the scholar and his family the experience of life at a large Benedictine monastery with its emphasis on the intellectual life and the search for relevant forms of worship. For the family accustomed to life in a city or at a large university, the institute offers the novel experience of country living in the heart of the Minnesota lake country with three institutions of higher learning within a radius of twelve miles. Within easy commuting distance is the metropolitan area of Minneapolis-Saint Paul with the research facilities of the University of Minnesota, fine stores and the cultural opportunities afforded by a nationally known symphony, the Tyrone Guthrie Theater, the Walker Art Center, and the Saint Paul Art Center.

“Country living in the heart of Minnesota lake country”
Three miles from Saint John’s is a large Benedictine convent which conducts the College of Saint Benedict, a liberal arts college for women which is closely associated with Saint John’s. The opportunity to share in the life of Saint Benedict’s, with its full program of intellectual and cultural activities and the excellent new Benedicta Arts Center, should be an added attraction for the wives of the scholars who participate in the institute. In addition the faculty wives of Saint John’s University and the College of Saint Benedict have an organization of their own and welcome the wives of scholars into their activities. Wives interested in returning to school will find a wide range of academic subjects to choose from at Saint John’s, the College of Saint Benedict and Saint Cloud State College. The Tri-College Program of the three institutions offers stimulating weekly evening sessions for interested auditors. For the scholar or his wife who would want to do some teaching, there will normally be the possibility of teaching a class or conducting a seminar.
The work of the Institute began in earnest at the end of August. Dr. and Mrs. Leonard Swidler, both Fellows of the Institute, and Dr. and Mrs. William Jerry Soney arrived with their children to take up a year’s residence.

Dr. Swidler is professor of religion at Temple University, a state institution in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. He has advanced degrees from Tübingen and the University of Wisconsin. He is co-editor and founder of the Journal of Ecumenical Studies and has published four books and a large number of articles. His research project while at the Institute is a study of reform in the American Catholic Church in the 19th and 20th centuries.

Mrs. Swidler is managing editor of the Journal of Ecumenical Studies, national chairman of the Church Communities Commission of the National Council of Catholic Women and member of the Working Group of Representatives from the National Council of Churches and the Bishops’ Committee for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs. She has an MA from Wisconsin and has published extensively in magazines and journals. Although her principal concern has been the role of women in the Roman Catholic Church, one of her most significant projects while at the Institute is work on ecumenism for children.
ABB EY A N D  U N I V E R S I T Y  L I B R A R Y

The library designed by Marcel Breuer and completed in 1966 houses the Monastic Manuscript Microfilm Library and an outstanding collection on liturgy. Each scholar will have a private, air-conditioned study in the area of the library adjoining the microfilm collection.

Box 1557:3 1968 promotional brochure, p.4;
The library designed by Marcel Breuer and completed in 1966 houses the Monastic Manuscript Microfilm Library and an outstanding collection on liturgy. Each scholar will have a private, air-conditioned study in the area of the library adjoining the microfilm collection.

Private…
and windowless…
in the sub-basement...!
THE MINNESOTA COUNCIL OF CHURCHES
AND
THE INSTITUTE FOR ECUMENICAL AND CULTURAL RESEARCH
CORDIALLY INVITE YOU
TO
THE DEDICATION
OF THE INSTITUTE FOR
ECUMENICAL AND CULTURAL RESEARCH
AT
ST. JOHN'S UNIVERSITY, COLLEGEVILLE, MINNESOTA
SUNDAY, MAY 26, 1968
AT
2:00 P.M.

Photo linked from Buildings page; invitation in 1594:2
Box 1594:2 Drawing 2 and 1557:3 p. 10 (floor plans)
From Kilian March 16 2011: “I did not ask for parquet floors – but we got them. I did not ask for fireplaces – but we got them. Breuer made those choices. I was delighted to have them.
I asked for an altar – not specifically a Catholic one, though. Breuer designed a trapezoid stone altar that I didn’t particularly like. I asked for a square one, like those used in the early church, but I’ve never been completely happy with it; it looks like a butcher’s block. I was told, by someone in Breuer’s office who had been here, that ‘You do not turn down designs by Breuer.’”
1968 aerial view from http://cdm.csbsju.edu/u/?/SJUArchives,5893

Ecumenical Institute under construction, 1968
Design Drawing - Box 1594:2
Note: The Institute for Ecumenical and Cultural Research became the Collegeville Institute for Ecumenical and Cultural Research in 2006.