

ANNUAL REPORT NATIONAL COUNCIL OF SYNAGOGUES 2012-2013  
Rabbi Gilbert S. Rosenthal, executive director

The National Council of Synagogues is a partnership of the Reform, Conservative, and Reconstructionist movements in Judaism dealing with interfaith matters on a national level. It is committed to the notion that only through dialogue and friendly exchanges of ideas can we build bridges of trust, respect and understanding between the various faith communities. Accordingly, we meet regularly with the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, the National Council of Churches of Christ, and various Protestant denominations as well as Evangelical groups.

#### CATHOLIC AFFAIRS

At the May 22, 2012 meeting in New York City, the NCS met with the US Conference of Catholic Bishops to hear a report on the newly issued *The Jewish Annotated New Testament* by its co-editor, Professor Amy Jill Levine of Vanderbilt University. She described the process of producing such a volume and the hopes she has for wide distribution among Jews and Christians. Professor John Donahue of Loyola University in Baltimore responded and offered suggestions and positive criticism of the work in the hope that it will indeed be widely studied.

For the first time, an overnight conference with the USCCB was held from October 15-16, 2012 at St. Mary's Seminary in Baltimore. The theme: "Religion in the Public Square." Nathan Lewin, the eminent attorney who has argued 28 times before the US Supreme Court on issues of church and state, was the main presenter. He described a number of his fascinating cases and presented his view on why religion does indeed have an important role to play in American society. Dr. Stephen Colecchi of the US Conference of Catholic Bishops responded and reacted to Mr. Lewin's presentation. The second session was marked by a talk given by Professor Richard Destro of the Columbus School of Law at Catholic University. His presentation was critiqued by Richard Foltin of the American Jewish Committee.

Rabbi Gilbert S. Rosenthal, executive director of the NCS met on February 29, 2012 with Bishop Brian Farrell and Father Norbert Hoffman at the Vatican's Office of the Ecumenical and Interreligious Commission in Rome. They explored the ways of implementing the teachings of the Second Vatican Council as we approach the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of that historic religious conclave.

#### PROTESTANT AFFAIRS

Last January 10-12, 2012 witnessed a three-day conference at the Duncan Conference Center in Delray Beach, Florida between the NCS and the National Council of Churches of Christ, the umbrella organization of over 30 Protestant groups. The topic was: "How We Define Ourselves as Jews/Christians." Professor Alan Berger of Florida Atlantic University and Rev. Dr. Jay Rock were the presenters. The respondents were Rabbi Leonard Gordon and Rev. Dr. Antonios Kireopoulos. Break-out sessions followed and two sessions were devoted to the study of Scriptural texts common to both Jews and Christians.

Rabbi Gilbert S. Rosenthal was an official guest of the Presbyterian General Assembly in Pittsburgh held on the July 4<sup>th</sup> 2012 holiday. He played an important role in convincing the Assembly to shelve the motion to boycott and sanction the State of Israel.

Rabbi Alvin Berkun was the official guest of the Episcopalian General Assembly that convened at the same time and he represented our interests at that conclave.

#### EVANGELICAL AFFAIRS

A number of the NCS leaders participated in the third annual meeting with Evangelical leaders in Washington, DC on June 4-5, 2012. Several timely and vital topics were discussed as we opened up new channels of communications to this huge group of over 52 million Christians. The next meeting is slated for June 10-11, 2013.

#### NEW WEBSITE

This year, thanks to the generosity of Mrs. Maria Finkle, the NCS opened its new website which contains news, documents in the field of interfaith matters, and the reports of various dialogue meetings between the NCS and Christian groups. To access the website, go to: <http://nationalcouncilofsynagogues.org/>.