Epiphany

The Christmas Season for Christians actually lasts 12 days from Christmas at Midnight through Epiphany when the Magi arrive. Contrary to the commercialized way that it is celebrated, the Christmas season doesn’t begin until much later than what we may be lead to believe, and it lasts longer than we may think as well.

Epiphany on January 6 is the last day of the Christmas season when the Magi arrive bearing gifts for the Christ child. Actually, very little is known about the Magi. Over time, we have begun to call them the three wise men. Perhaps they were astronomers? Perhaps they came from a Priestly caste from Persia?

As the years passed, the traditions surrounding the Magi became increasingly embellished. By the 3rd century they were viewed as kings within

Inspired from a sermon given by the Rev. Dr. Tim Mitchell at the Church of the Advent, Louisville, KY

All you ever need to know: An example given to us by the Magi
our church tradition, and that there were three of them who came from Asia, Africa, and Europe.

We have come to believe that these three kings brought the gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh to the baby Jesus. These may seem like most unusual gifts to bring to give to a baby, but this was no ordinary baby; these gifts were also prophetic, speaking of our Lord's offices of king, priest, and savior. Gold speaks of His kingship; frankincense was a spice used in the priestly duties; and myrrh was an embalming ointment anticipating His death.

Most of what we associate with the "Magi" is from early church traditions. Most have assumed there were three of them, since they brought three specific gifts (but the Biblical text doesn't number them). They are called "Magi" from the Latinized form of the Greek word magoi, transliterated from the Persian, for a select sect of priests. (Our word "magic" comes from the same root.) By the 6th century they had names: Balthasar, Melichior, and Gathaspa or some form of these names. Relics attributed to them emerged in the 4th century and were transferred from Constantinople to Milan in the 5th century, and then to Cologne in 1162 where they remain enshrined or possibly not (but that would open up an entirely different topic.)
What can we, as people living in the twenty first century, learn from the Magi?

The Rev. Dr. Tim Mitchell suggests that there are 7 lessons that can be learned from the Magi in order to survive.

The Christ Child from a Christian perspective is a manifestation of the Divine in human form. Since God is beyond our seeing, Jesus has been sent to the world that lives in a form of darkness. So that Jesus can become “The Light” in our darkness. What form did that darkness take in the world into which the Christ Child was being born? The world was in state of darkness based on being in a state of ignorance, being in the shadow, being in various states of iniquity meaning unfair circumstances that are lacking balance, wickedness meaning hatred, Covetousness, corruption, exploitation, distortion, fabrication and exaggeration, pretext, subterfuge, deception, equivocation, duplicity, hypocrisy, bigotry, discrimination, intolerance, unawareness in the sense of being self-centered, indifference, apathy, disregard, antipathy, and as an adjective meaning sinister; evil, or unenlightened.

"In the midst of a world of light and love, of song and feast and dance, [Lucifer] could find nothing to think of more interesting than his own prestige." - C.S. Lewis

It could be said that there are similarities with our contemporary world. What 7 gifts did the Magi bring to the world, our world?

1. **Follow your star:**

We do know from the Bible that the Magi came from the East following the great light that they saw in the sky which they perceived to be a great sign. Others must have seen that same great light shining in the sky too, but these Magi decided to go out to find a source for the great light. The Magi got moving. They didn’t just sit on their couches feeling perplexed or overwhelmed. Nor did they complain saying that someone else should fix this. They went out to seek out the details for themselves, “to unpack” this bright shining star for themselves using first hand information that they would collect for themselves. Nothing would be left to rumor.

For us, the implication is that we need to get off of “our duffs,” get off of the couch, turn off the remote and get moving. Where? Follow our own stars. Stars? What gives us purpose in life and motivates us that brings us and others joy should guide us. Do this with passion, peace and with love. Do what you believe in.

Travel with others. Look in the least of places and go out to welcome the strangers. It is there that you will find God.

So the number one gift or lesson from the Magi to us today is for us to follow our star. Many interchurch couples have been led to find a spouse across traditional denominational boundaries by some great Light. This wasn’t an accident, but some great Light.

2. **It is okay to travel in the dark:**

There is the darkness of night, but there are other kinds of darkness that fall over us in our lives: illness, anger, death, job-loss, the list can be endless for what might put us into a state of darkness. Any variety of suffering can put anyone of us into the “dark” at any time unexpectedly. Life is not figured out ahead of time. None of us knows what may lie ahead of us on our journey. Sometimes there is such “heavy fog or mist” that we can’t even see the road ahead of us. Know that God is with us at all times. Trust in God. Your commitment to please God will keep you going in the right direction.

As ecumenists or interchurch families, allow yourselves to explore your commitment to God although you may feel as if you are in total darkness, God is very much present with you and guiding you on this journey.
“Impossible only means that you haven’t found the solution yet.” ~ Anonymous

3. TRAVEL WITH OTHERS:
We live in communities. We come from families and we grew up in church families. They nurtured us as we grew up. They rounded out the edges for us. We will help to round out the edges for them in return.

None of us are identical one to the other. God made us all different so that we might find each other and God through knowing each other. Trust in the Lord. God’s plan, based on loving creation and all of humanity is a divine plan in scope that doesn’t have human limits or qualifications imposed on it. God isn’t building fences.

4. WELCOME THE STRANGER: “The Light” belongs to all people. God’s plan is mysterious to us; we must trust in the Lord, but being guided by Love and a humanitarian hospitality based on the Biblical concept that “all may be one,” we do belong to one another as sharers of the promise.

As interchurch families, we recognize that others have perspectives and new insight for us that can help to bring us to a higher level or deeper level of understanding our own faith. They may pose questions to us in a slightly different way that makes us respond in such a way that we must think about a familiar subject in an entirely new light. This is Christ working through us when we are gathered. This is theologically sound practice.

Here are other insights:
“I have always depended on the kindness of strangers.” ~ Tennessee Williams

“It is futile to judge a kind deed by its motives. Kindness can become its own motive. We are made kind by being kind.” ~ Eric Hoffer

“It’s also selfish because it makes you feel good when you help others. I’ve been helped by acts of kindness from strangers. That’s why we’re here, after all, to help others.” ~ Carol Burnett

“Kindness is ever the begetter of kindness.” ~ Sophocles

“Kindness is the language which the deaf can hear and the blind can see.” ~ Mark Twain

“Kindness, I’ve discovered, is everything in life.” ~ Isaac Bashevis Singer

“Safety and happiness can only come from individuals, classes, and nations being honest and fair and kind to each other.” ~ C.S. Lewis

5. LOOK FOR GOD IN THE ‘LEAST PLACES’:
God will not be found in power or wealth. Bethlehem was not a large commercial city; it was a small city. Christ’s parents couldn’t find a room in the inn, so he was born in a manger, or the equivalent of a barn for animals. The Magi found Christ in “the least of places.”

In Matthew, we are told, "And the King will say, 'I tell you the truth, when you did it to one of the least of these my brothers and sisters, you were doing it to me!' In Matthew 25:40 that by doing what is right, the righteous, not self-righteous, will be astonished that in caring for the needs of the sufferers they were ministering to the Lord himself.

God is found in the struggles, in those interactions that are difficult and through those bumps in the road on our journey through life. Knowing that God is there with us helps to endure and to persevere. But where is God exactly and how do we go to God when we need God the most?

“We need to find God, and he cannot be found in noise and restlessness. God is the friend of silence. See how nature - trees, flowers, grass- grows in silence; see the stars, the moon and the sun, how they move in silence... We need silence to be
able to touch souls.” ~ Mother Teresa

“Just remaining quietly in the presence of God, listening to God, being attentive to God, requires a lot of courage and know-how.” ~ Thomas Merton

“We turn to God for help when our foundations are shaking, only to learn that it is God who is shaking them.” ~ Charles C. West

“God allows us to experience the low points of life in order to teach us lessons we could not learn in any other way. The way we learn those lessons is not to deny the feelings but to find the meanings underlying them.” ~ Stanley Lindquist

“God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks to us in our conscience, but shouts to us in our pains: It is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world.” ~ C.S. Lewis

Psalm 16:11 - You will show me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

“I have learned silence from the talkative, toleration from the intolerant, and kindness from the unkind; yet, strange, I am ungrateful to those teachers.” ~ Khalil Gibran

“The Divine pervades everything in the Universe. This may not be understood by everyone. Some may not agree that the Divine is Omnipresent. But whether they accept this fact or not, the truth is, evidence of the presence of God can be found wherever one turns.” ~ Sri Sathya Sai Baba

We are loved by God. God has given each of us purpose to carry out God’s will here among God’s people. Who are God’s people? God created the Heavens and the Earth and all that is on it, all the peoples of the earth are God’s people. Our mission is to love humanity and God’s creation. We will find that of God in the face of the stranger and by looking in the mirror at our own faces.

God lives with interchurch families; we have been given a special mission to share our lived example of Christian Unity. This may seem like a very simple gift, but it is our gift to explore and to develop to its fullest capacity with God’s help.

http://www.ncccusa.org/elmcfamily2006/

6. DO HOMAGE.
BE GRATEFUL AND IN AWE: The Magi were inspired by a great, bright star shining over Bethlehem to go to see why this star was shining so brightly. The three Magi came in reverence for the Christ Child. Reverence is often shown in paintings especially with a gesture indicative of deep respect as a bow, or curtsy that one might have given to a royal infant although the Baby Jesus was found in extremely humble conditions which would be parallel to a child living in a homeless shelter in our time period. The Magi wanted to show a feeling or attitude of deep respect tinged with awe and veneration for this child who was born under a very great sign from above. Veneration is showing respect and admiration most likely in a very formal way so that it is very visible. The Magi were in awe at the sight of the birth of the Christ Child and perhaps by the hope that accompanied this child who was born under such a bright shining
star. The Magi were grateful to have witnessed such an historic event.

How do we see that of God in the world around us that inspires awe in us for which we too feel grateful and are awed? How do we show awe for God and what God does and has done in our lives and in the world around us?

Interchurch Couples have bridged a divide that our churches have had greater difficulty bridging. Feel grateful for the gifts we have been given and think about how we arrived at this point on our journey. Please consider sharing your success stories with other ARK readers.

7. LEAVE GIFTS: These three Magi brought the gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh to the baby Jesus. Strange gifts to bring to a baby, but this was no ordinary baby. Gold speaks of Christ’s kingship; frankincense was a spice used in the priestly duties; and myrrh was an embalming ointment anticipating Christ’s death.

Our gifts? What gifts should we bring to this Divine Creator for our time and place in history so that God’s will can be carried out? We are not Christ, but as human beings, created by God, we are loved by the Divine Creator and we are of the Divine Creator. All of us belong to the Divine Creator. We should share our gifts with creation, God’s creation and each other to our mutual benefit. We have a responsibility to care for creation and each other. This may become our gifts for our place in history.

Will we be the first to find a way to achieve peace or will we continue useless and never ending wars? Will we find a solution to Global Climate change to stop glacial melt and all the ramifications that follow? Will we find a way to feed the hungry and the poor, especially the children? Are our hearts in tune with God’s plans? Are we willing to look for that of God in the face of the stranger? Are we willing to listen for the small still voice of God? Are we willing to listen with the ears of our hearts? When will we begin to follow God’s plan? Take a close look at the Domestic Churches or the Little Church of the Home of many interchurch families and see how it operates; this is how the world should operate.

I John 3:17-18
If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth.

Matthew 6:1-4
1 "Be careful not to do your ‘acts of righteousness’ before men, to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven.
2 "So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full.
3 But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing,
4 so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

“A tree is known by its fruit; a man by his deeds. A good deed is never lost; he who sows courtesy reaps friendship, and he who plants kindness gathers love.” ~ Saint Basil

“As much as we need a prosperous economy, we also need a prosperity of kindness and decency.” ~ Caroline Kennedy

“In the context of interfaith encounter, we need to bring to the surface how our actual beliefs shape what we do - not simply to agree that kindness is better than cruelty.” ~ Rowan D. Williams

“For beautiful eyes, look for the good in others; for beautiful lips, speak only words of kindness; and for poise, walk with the knowledge that you are never alone.” ~ Audrey Hepburn

As interchurch families, we have found a shared Christian Unity that has eluded other parts of our churches. This can be frustrating at times, when we try to worship with the greater body of our churches since they may
not be as far along on the road toward this Christian Unity that Christ has wished for us. They may not recognize our gifts for what they are, but we have gifts. Our gifts may seem simple. Our gifts of being present with accurate and clear information about the possibilities that being an interchurch family holds for Christian Unity, goals held by our churches. This is a gift of hope. Our gift to the world is to continue to be a presence and a visible sign of Christian Unity in our communities.

*Summary and Notes compiled by M.J. Glauber*

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*SUNNY WINTER DAY*

A sunny day in January just before Epiphany

Trees and winter plants still standing in Cherokee Park in Louisville, KY in early January
Nature:
God created all of creation including all of humanity. I often marvel at God’s handiwork in nature. Tall trees grow from such tiny acorns. Ice naturally prunes tree branches. Rain waters our fields and gardens. Snow provides ground moisture for our streams and farm fields. Left to its own devises, nature can and does find a balance.

“Renewed Wonderment”

Earth our mother, breathe forth life
All night sleeping
Now awaking
In the east
Now see the dawn.

Earth, our mother, breathe and waken
Leaves are stirring
All things moving
New day coming
Life renewing

Eagle soaring, see the morning
See the new mysterious morning
Something marvelous and sacred
Though it happens every day
Dawn the child of God and darkness

“This prayer has been handed down for generations among members of the Pawnee tribe in modern-day Kansas as an invocation of renewal and wonderment at the beginning of each new day.”
Former King associate urges Louisville congregation to disregard cultural differences ~ Focus on what binds us together

One year ago, on the eve of Martin Luther King Jr. Day, a former associate of the civil rights leader urged a Louisville church congregation to disregard cultural differences, but not to shy away from difficult interactions with fellow people.

“There comes a time when we must walk a dangerous walk and engage in raising the dialogue in order to play a role of redemption and love and reconciliation,” the Rev. Otis Moss Jr. told a packed house at St. Matthews Episcopal Church on Sunday January 16, 2011.

Moss, 75, lead Olivet Institutional Baptist Church in Cleveland for 33 years until his retirement in 2008. He also worked with Martin Luther King Jr. for about 10 years. Following King’s assassination in 1968, the Rev. Otis Moss served as co-pastor of Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta with King’s father, Martin Luther King Sr.

“It was appropriate for us to celebrate Dr. King’s memory with one of his colleagues — to celebrate that work for justice,” church members in Louisville reported.

In his sermon, Moss focused on the story in John’s gospel of Jesus encountering the woman at the well. He held up Jesus’ ability to see beyond petty matters, like the fact that he was a Jew and she a Samaritan, to instead offer the woman a path to salvation.

“Jesus never allows himself to engage in demeaning dialogue, but he keeps the comments at an ever higher and higher moral and spiritual level,” Moss said.
Moss said in an interview that King had a similar ability to confront “hostile situations” with unconditional love instead of violence.

“This is the relevance of the life of Dr. Martin Luther King — with all the attacks and the violence and the criticism he faced, he did not give up on the power of redeeming love,” Moss said.

We needed to heal as a nation and a people together. Questions posed to the Rev. Otis Moss appear to have been asked in an effort to move in the country in a new direction. There had been the shooting of Giffords and others in Arizona the week before Moss spoke.

A year has passed, have we made some progress from that one identifiable moment in time? How do we carry out acts of Agape Love toward our neighbor?

In mid January, we remember Martin Luther King, Jr.’s life and the example he gave to all of us.

In the Garden of the Lord

The word of God came unto me,
Sitting alone among the multitudes;
And my blind eyes were touched with light.
And there was laid upon my lips a flame of fire.

I laugh and shout for life is good
Though my feet are set in silent ways.

In merry mood I leave the crowd
To walk in my garden.
Ever as I walk
I gather fruits and flowers in my hands.
And with joyful heart I bless the sun
That kindles all the place with radiant life.
I run with playful winds that blow after the scent.

Of rose and Jessamine in eddying whirls.
At last I come where tall lilies grow.

While the lilies pray, I kneel upon the ground;
I have strayed into the holy temple of the Lord.

“The poem of exaltation, using the beauty of nature as a conduit to God, was written by author and social activist Helen Keller. Blind and deaf before age two, she advanced the special needs of the disabled by printing Bibles and ‘devotionals’ in braille and by inspiring millions of people around the world to take charge of their lives, no matter what their personal circumstances happened to be,” according to James P. Moore, Jr, who included this prayer/poem in his book, “The Treasury of American Prayer” Chapter on “Love and Devotion”
At the center of non-violence stands the principle of love.
~ Martin Luther King, Jr.

Every man must decide whether he will walk in the light of creative altruism or in the darkness of destructive selfishness.
~ Martin Luther King, Jr.

Fear makes strangers of people who would be friends
~ Shirley MacLaine

I am not interested in power for power's sake, but I'm interested in power that is moral, that is right and that is good.
~ Martin Luther King, Jr.

Nothing in life is to be feared. It is only to be understood.
~ Marie Curie

He who is not everyday conquering some fear has not learned the secret of life.
~ Ralph Waldo Emerson

Fear makes strangers of people who would be friends.
~ Shirley MacLaine

We will all be changed by the Victory of our Lord Jesus Christ
(cf. 1 Cor 15:51-58)

Introduction to the theme for the year 2012

The material for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity in 2012 was prepared by a working group composed of representatives of the Roman Catholic Church, the Orthodox Church and Old Catholic and Protestant Churches active in Poland.

Following extensive discussions in which the representatives of various ecumenical circles in Poland took part, it was decided to focus on a theme that is concerned with the transformative power of faith in Christ, particularly in relation to our praying for the visible unity of the Church, the Body of Christ.

This was based on St. Paul's words to the Corinthian Church which speaks of the temporary nature of our present lives (with all its apparent "victory" and "defeat") in comparison to what we receive through the...
victory of Christ through the Paschal mystery.

Why such a theme?

The history of Poland has been marked by a series of defeats and victories. We can mention the many times that Poland was invaded, the partitions, oppression by foreign powers and hostile systems. The constant striving to overcome all enslavement and the desire for freedom are a feature of Polish history which have led to significant changes in the life of the nation. And yet where there is victory there are also losers who do not share the joy and triumph of the winners.

This particular history of the Polish nation has led the ecumenical group who have written this year’s material to reflect more deeply on what it means to “win” and to “lose”, especially given the way in which the language of “victory” is so often understood in triumphalist terms.

Yet Christ shows us a very different way!

In 2012 the European Football Championship will be held in Poland and Ukraine. This would never have been possible in years gone by. For many this is a sign of another “national victory” as hundreds of millions of fans eagerly await news of winning teams playing in this part of Europe.

Thinking of this example might lead us to consider the plight of those who do not win - not only in sport but in their lives and communities: who will spare a thought for the losers, those who constantly suffer defeats because they are denied victory due to various conditions and circumstances? Rivalry is a permanent feature not only in sport but also in political, business, cultural and, even, church life.

When Jesus’ disciples disputed over “who was the greatest” (Mk 9,34) it was clear that this impulse was strong. But Jesus’ reaction was very simple: “Whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all” (Mk 9,35).

These words speak of victory through mutual service, helping, boosting the self-esteem of those who are “last”, forgotten, excluded.

For all Christians, the best expression of such humble service is Jesus Christ, His victory through death and His resurrection. It is in His life, action, teaching, suffering, death and resurrection that we desire to seek inspiration for a modern victorious life of faith which expresses itself in social commitment in a spirit of
humility, service and faithfulness to the Gospel. And as he awaited the suffering and death that was to come, he prayed that his disciples might be one so that world might believe. This “victory” is only possible through spiritual transformation, conversion. That is why we consider that the theme for our meditations should be those words of the Apostle to the Nations. The point is to achieve a victory which integrates all Christians around the service of God and one’s neighbour.

As we pray for and strive towards the full visible unity of the church we - and the traditions to which we belong - will be changed, transformed and conformed to the likeness of Christ.

The unity for which we pray may require the renewal of forms of Church life with which we are familiar. This is an exciting vision but it may fill us with some fear! The unity for which we pray is not merely a “comfortable” notion of friendliness and cooperation. It requires a willingness to dispense with competition between us. We need to open ourselves to each other, to offer gifts to and receive gifts from one another, so that we might truly enter into the new life in Christ, which is the only true victory.

There is room for everyone in God’s plan of salvation. Through His death and resurrection, Christ embraces all irrespective of winning or loosing, “that whoever believes in him may have eternal life” (Jn 3,15). We too can participate in His victory! It is sufficient to believe in Him, and we will find it easier to overcome evil with good.

See the whole brochure in pdf format (773 KB)
Related Documents:

Church Unity
Commission on Faith and Order
Communion
Jesus Christ
Poland
Prayer
Roman Catholic Church
Vatican
Week of Prayer

A complete version of the annual brochure jointly edited, jointly published and printed, and distributed by Faith and Order (WCC) and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity (Catholic Church) is available online.

The brochure includes the outline of an ecumenical worship service, an introduction to the theme for the week, a description of the ecumenical situation in the region from which the original, source material comes and eight sets of daily bible readings and meditations.

Traditionally, the week is observed from 18 to 25 January in the northern hemisphere but in other parts of the world it is observed around Pentecost.

Please note: The resources the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity are offered in the hope that they will be appropriately modified to suit particular local situations and that they will continue to be used throughout the year.


Peace Prize winner Gbowee says faith helped in peace campaign By Chris Herlinger, October 09, 2011
Nobel Peace Prize winners, Leymah Gbowee, a Liberian activist who helped bring her country out of a brutal civil war, said on Oct. 7 that the best way to achieve global peace is to start in local communities.

"It is time for us to do justice in our communities ... one day the world's problems will meet you at your doorstep," she said at the Interchurch Center in New York. Coincidentally, she had been scheduled to appear there at an event organized by the National Council of Churches (NCC) when the prize was announced.

Gbowee, citing examples of peace and justice campaigners such as the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. and Archbishop Desmond Tutu, said she does not believe it is possible to practice non-violent action without some connection to a higher power. "My faith has really helped me," said Gbowee, a member of the Lutheran Church in Liberia.

Faith groups around the world hailed the recognition of activists for justice and women's rights.

Gbowee, who organized a group of Christian and Muslim women to challenge Liberia's warlords, was honored for mobilizing women across ethnic and religious dividing lines to bring an end to the long war and to ensure women's participation in elections.

She trained as a trauma counselor during the war and worked with former child soldiers. The Liberian civil war ended in 2003.

Speaking of Johnson Sirleaf, Gbowee said every time "she sees me coming, she's weary" because "I always say, 'Madame President, you need to do this, this, this.'" But, Gbowee added, "We have a good professional relationship, like mother and daughter."

Gbowee, who was slated to return to Liberia following the reception, was in the U.S. to promote her memoir, "Mighty Be Our Powers: How Sisterhood, Prayer, and Sex Changes a Nation At War."

Her story also will be featured in a documentary, "Women, War and Peace," premiering Oct. 11 on the U.S. Public Broadcasting Service. The NCC is adding her to its Circles of Names campaign that honors women of faith who have been a source of inspiration and who have mentored others in their walks of faith.

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I found this Ecumenical News International report to be encouraging. It points out that by working together, even across traditional barriers for a common good that great things can be accomplished.

There is hope in this lived example for what is possible. It also highlights that we need each other. The NCC notes that Leymah Gbowee has been both a source of inspiration, and that she mentored others in their walks of faith.

As interchurch families, should we be mentoring the engaged and newly weds who have the potential to become truly interchurch families and actively engaged in their church or churches.

Observation by M.J. Glauber

_______________________
Major demographic shift is under way in Christianity, say scholars

By Kim Cain, October 07, 2011

Scholars claim the biggest change in the history of Christianity is underway amid the religion's move to Africa, Latin America and Asia.

"The story of Christianity as a worldwide faith is being written before our eyes," declared Dana Robert of Boston University School of Theology, as she addressed a group of world church leaders at the Global Christian Forum (GCF) in Manado, Indonesia.

The gathering has brought together leaders from major church traditions, theological perspectives, and world communions, including the Anglican Communion, the World Council of Churches, the World Evangelical Alliance, the Pentecostal World Fellowship, and the Vatican's Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity.

According to Peter Crossing of the Center for the Study of Global Christianity, in 1910 about 66 percent of the world's Christians lived in Europe; a century later it was only 26 percent.

Crossing, a researcher for the Atlas of Global Christianity, said the overall percentage of Christians had remained fairly constant over the last century, but there had been a "dramatic change in the center of gravity of global Christianity."

One hundred years ago this would have been near Madrid, but by 2010 it had shifted somewhere just south of Timbuktu in Mali, according to Crossing. He added that Christians in the northern hemisphere still dominate financially; 60 percent of the world's Christians live in the southern hemisphere, but they generate only 17 percent of Christian income.

Sang-Bok David Kim of the World Evangelical Alliance told the GCF that huge changes in the church internationally meant "Christianity is no longer a 'white man's' religion. Christians are now everywhere."

"Conversations about mission and witness have become an urgent agenda for declining mainline Christians...as they struggle to reframe their identity in a global marketplace. At the same time, adherents of new ministries often see their witness as a recovery of primitive Christianity that challenges the older denominations," she said.

I believe that more is involved with this switch in demographics. What is bringing about these changes in the northern hemisphere? The Pew Report indicates that church membership has declined. What are the factors affecting church attendance?

How should we be reaching out? If families aren't taking their children to church, what are they doing instead?

Questions to ponder by M.J. Glauber

Many Thanks are extended to and for: The life and work of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.; The Annual Week of Prayer for Christian Unity and those who work diligently to plan for it; the life and work of Archbishop Desmond Tutu; the Rev. Dr. Tim Mitchell of the Episcopal Church of the Advent, Louisville, KY; Michael Kinnamon's long dedication to Ecumenism and Christian Unity; the Pawnee tribe in modern-day Kansas; James P. Moore, Jr.; the Rev. Otis Moss; Helen Keller, who advanced the special needs of the disabled by printing Bibles and 'devotionals' in braille; Maurice Malanes, Chris Herlinger, & Kim Cain of the Ecumenical News International; Leymah Gbowee, one of the 2011 Nobel Peace Prize winners, a Liberian activist who helped bring her country out of a brutal civil war; The National Council of Churches; The Kentucky Council of Churches; Stephen Schwarz; and AAIF Board Members, AAIF Members, AAIF Pastoral Advisors: Father Ernest Falardeau, S.S.S.; Father George Kilcourse; and Pastor Elaine Hall

Especially, I would like to thank my husband, Peter, and our family for their on-going encouragement. ~ MJG
Looking forward to the 2012 AAIF Biennial Conference: July 13-15, 2012 at Collegeville, MN
~ Details to follow at www.aifusa.org

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