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THE ARK

A Publication of the American Association of Interchurch Families

"Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?"
Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

Interchurch Families:
“Listen...with the ear of your heart"
Theme for the 2012 AAIF Biennial Conference
July 13 - 15, 2012

Ephesians 4:2-6
2 Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.
3 Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.
4 There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called;
5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism;
6 one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

Matthew 18: 1 - 4
1 At that time the disciples approached Jesus and said, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?"
2 He called a child over, placed it in their midst,
3 and said, "Amen, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.
4 Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

We will all be changed by the victory of our Lord Jesus Christ (cf. 1 Cor 15:51-58)
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In 2010, the AAIF Biennial Conference was held at Holy Wisdom Monastery near Madison, Wisconsin.

AAIF Members and people interested in ecumenism will gather from July 13-15, 2012 for our 2012 AAIF Biennial Conference to be held at CSB/SJU in Collegeville, MN.

PHOTOS FROM THE 2010 AAIF BIENNIAL CONFERENCE

Libbye Montgomery speaks with other AAIF Members

Interchurch Child

mjg ©
"Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?"

Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

From these Bible lines we learn from Christ’s own words that:

Greatness in the kingdom of heaven is measured not by rank or power but by childlikeness.

The question has to do with rank in the church, where the kingdom is manifested here and now, although only partially and by anticipation of the Heavenly Kingdom of which John the Baptist has been preaching about in the desert of Judea referenced to in Matthew Chapter 3:1-2 and to which Christ refers to in Matthew 4:17.

The lines invite us to reflect on the innocence of children and what this means for us as Christians. Children by necessity have a complete dependence on, and trust in, their parents, and so must be the disciples in relationship to God.

We are being asked to share in this kind of relationship today too. How can we be like children now that we are grown adults?

Children bring to the relationship with their parents their own gifts of being and this is the part that we must remember.

We must look for the positive aspects of what it means to be a child because I believe that Christ is asking for us to remember and to reflect on those aspects from us as adults as we relate to God in this world.

The world is new and freshly viewed from their perspective. Children seem to be in awe and wonder of the world, and they enjoy sharing this joy with those people around them even with their simple vocabulary. The word, “Leaf, Leaf, Leaf” until our attention is brought to view a wonderful leaf, part of God’s creation.

Another child, equally curious about the world around them may draw our attention to every light fixture that lights the path along the route we are walking along. As adults, we may have become immune to how ordinary that light fixture is and even to the function it performs. The act of having it pointed out to us at each location on our path brings it to our attention closely although we, as adults may usually take it for granted. The interaction between the child and the adult is one of those moments when, as we reflect back on it, we may take note of the presence of God all around us in our daily lives. God is there in the relationship that is being forged between the child and the adult too. God is using the child to remind us of the wonder of creation and the many gifts and talents that God has given to us so that we can create and do things within God’s Creation. How we use our time and talents is for us to discern?

God is present, but God allows us to explore and to learn from our mistakes. God gives us a sense of curiosity.

I have observed children hard at their work which is what we, as adults, call play. Children are busy learning about important things in their environment and about how the world works. Much of their time is spent in experimentation and in physically interacting with their environment. Children have a natural curiosity.

I have observed brief moments of frustration in children when their vocabulary isn’t adequately present yet so the child is unable to express their needs, but they feel needs as any human being would. Fortunately, this is rather short lived and often accompanied by an attentive parent who has been watching over them to see what it is for which they might be in need. Sometimes, young children get tired, extremely tired by this work of exploring their new world so a nap is required; attentive parents seem to be able to recognize these signs and to find an appropriate place for them to sleep.

Little children have wonderfully expressive faces with which they can demonstrate their tastes or preferences in food. No words are needed at these moments to be able to express their personal food tastes.

It seems that young children learn a great deal through silent observation of the social interactions going on about them to the extent that I have heard
adults often wonder aloud what non-verbal toddlers must be thinking. The child appears to be so focused.

Since children view and interact with the world they explore in a completely non-judgmental way, this may be an exercise for us to undertake as adults as we seek to follow Christ’s advice for us found in Matthew 18:4.

There is another thing that I noticed in children recently that I have enjoyed immeasurably. They seem to seek out joy and humor. I have seen this in laughter and giggles. I have seen this when they try to initiate playful interactions with the adults around them for no other reason other than to enjoy the contact and the presence of that adult. Certainly, there is something holy in the contact and presence of interacting and being with others simply to enjoy their being in a pleasant and wholesome interaction like play.

We have been told that we were created in God’s image. I have observed through my volunteer work that all children love to see photos of themselves and often times photos of themselves with their friends. Their arms wrapped over each other’s shoulders as a sign of the bond they are sharing in that singular moment. Perhaps they enjoy viewing this image of God even without having heard the theology behind what motivates it.

Recently some adults were asked, “How can we be more like children?” The person who posed the question set the tone for the responses by beginning the answers with their own, “I say finger painting but no one seems to agree so I’m curious. What do you think?”

The next answer immediately took a more serious turn, “Stop judging people by the color of their skin and their religious beliefs.”

The next post switched back for a moment to the playfulness we had just read before, “Be joyous and vulnerable and live in the moment... Say "ta da" and twirl a lot. ;-)” This one garnered a direct comment, “and singing in the rain...worked for Gene Kelly! :D”

Then back to the original question with a more serious response, “Make everyday play day, don’t worry, be free, loosen your mind, and enjoy the time.”

Our time is limited, and as adults we realize this. At the point when we stop telling our age by holding our hand up to tell our age using our fingers to express the number of years of age we have so far, and also when we still feel inclined to indicate our age in halves or quarters, it may be at that point that we start to realize that our time is limited in some way. I have a dear friend who

"Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?"
Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

@info AAIF: Are you interested in meeting and talking to other interchurch families in your city between AAIF Biennial Conferences? PLEASE SEE WWW.AIFUSA.ORG For membership information and other pertinent updates: Please contact: Dave and Carol Natella who are the Co-Chairs for AAIF for information about how to form a City chapter in your area or how to find the AAIF City Chapter closest to you.

© Changed by the Servant Christ
goes around asking people to guess her age. They always guess that she is about 70 years old or so. She loves to tell people that she is now 94. She has such a balanced and positive attitude that it seems very much like the joy that a child has in telling you their age.

She has always been a loving person. She seems to be driven by love. How she shows love is a lived example of how God works through us in our ordinary lives. I recognize that she has retained the aspects of being like a child that most of us seek so that we can fully enjoy this life. Her giggles about having attained the age of 94 may be a form of gratitude to God that she shares with everyone.

Our time may be blocked out into segments or into expectations by age groupings.

Our time is very limited. We only have so much time in which we have available for us to accomplish what we may have set up as goals. Children are not bound by this kind of thinking. Children do seem to live each day and each moment to the fullest; this we may want to replicate as much as we can.

Another entry on how to be more like children made what at first seemed like a far more playful suggestion, “Stick play dough up our noses and poo on things.”

Then I thought about the nature of children. They explore the limits of everything in an effort to see how the world works. Of course, this is done under the watchful care of their parents and caregivers.

The other aspect of being human is that we have biological functions that allow us to survive. We must have food and water. We must eat. Babies must eat so they can grow and there is a natural and normal biological outcome from this process. This is part of being human. Parents are no doubt extremely involved in this aspect of the care of a child on a daily basis to the extent that some of the first conversations with a child, of necessity, deals with the biological functions of their bodies and “potty training.” This is all a part of being human. In talking to the parents of young children, they readily and freely discuss potty training with anyone who is willing to listen.

At the far other end of our lives, we may experience other aspects of being humbled by being human and dependent once again on the care of others. We live in a cycle of humbling experiences that are unique to our shared experience of being human. Underlying all of these experiences of humility may actually be a key for finding ways to bond and to mature fully into the role we are seeking as Christians, and in our case Christians seeking the unity that Christ and God have wished for us.

Another suggestion for how to be more like a child, “Drawing on walls too or no?” Budding Michel Angelo’s? God has given all of us a gift of creativity. Our parents may not be too pleased about which wall we may have chosen to mark up or with which kind of permanent marker we may have selected. Our taste and skill in artistic expression may not match the tastes of our extended family, but over time they may come to “rather like” those marks we put on the wall. If our creativity is allowed to be developed, we may grow into and become a fine artist who has something to share and to offer to the world. Then those doodles on the wall will become priceless to more people than just that child’s parents.

Another person suggested that while marking on the wall the child would “of course! all while
singing can you tell me how to get, how to get to Sesame Street!” (Please note: I have never seen anyone on Sesame Street encourage marking on the wall, but the TV Program does encourage singing and pure fun for children.)

I have observed that children love to sing and to dance. They love to sing in a group, songs that everyone seems to know. They seem to find joy in music much as adults find joy in music. If any greater message is within this suggestion, it would be to fill our lives with song, community and joy.

Another person suggested, “Don’t judge people just cause they aren’t the same as you.” I do see an openness in children and a curiosity about everything and everyone. Their questions have a genuine quality of curiosity and there is no hidden agenda behind their questions. Oh well, as I say that I also need to note that with limited vocabulary sometimes, children ask adults questions for which they already know the answer simply to engage the adult in some kind of a dialog with them. This is an invitation to play.

Children are quite gifted at exposing that “Huge Elephant Sitting in the Room” that no one else is willing to talk about.

If a child asks a simple question about why we might do something a certain way that is all they want to know. They will not come back in judgment to tell us that we are sinful because we have made choices that meet their disapproval. However, children have the great ability to point out what should be obvious to everyone and yet no one is talking about the obvious.

I heard that one little boy went right over to a man in a wheelchair and stated to that paraplegic man, “You can’t go up and down stairs, can you?”

The man in the wheelchair was actually pleased by his observation and told him that there were ramps and elevators for him to use instead, which pleased the child. Many people in wheelchairs or with disabilities struggle to make people aware of their needs. If a child can observe this issue, then what happens to us as we age?

If the child wants candy just before a meal and the parent believes that it is not in the child’s best interest, the child may protest. However, we would not expect a young child to debate the decision and the grounds for the decision that the parent has made.

Then it was suggested if we are to be more like a child that we should “go with the flow, live for the moment... and count your many blessings!”

Although I suspect that the last part was more of an afterthought. Gratitude and appreciation are important.

Children often don’t know how to say the words “thank you,” yet.

They show their appreciation in other ways. They want to cuddle into their parents arms. They want you to read to them again, and again as they cuddle by your side. They want you to lift them up so they can see out of the window. They want to show a favorite toy or a drawing to you so that you can admire it. They want you to interact with them; they want you to be present with them where they are in the world they are in.

In this way, you as an adult are being invited to go with the flow and to be in the moment with that child. This is how children show gratitude for your presence when they have no words to say, “I am thankful for your being.” They will show you this by what they do in their own way, but adults must be attentive to what it is that they are being shown.

Then, one person noted all of the curiosity and natural awe that children have as a positive attribute. Children fall down and
get right back up in their efforts to learn a new skill like “How to walk.” She observed an innocence found in children as they explore all of the possibilities that may exist all around them to examine and to admire; things that no longer seem to even catch the attention of adults. She felt that the only real mistake that adults may be making is when they assume that they have all of the answers which prevents them from being able to be more like a child, and this she perceived to be a real problem for adults and how we engage with each other and our environment.

The last entry about “How can we become more like children?” referred us back to the Bible:

His words are recorded at Matthew 18:3,4.

Jesus sat down, called the disciples to him, and said: “If anyone wants to be first, he must be last of all and minister of all.” (Mark 9:35)

These words likely dumbfounded them. Jesus’ reasoning directly contradicted Jewish notions of greatness!

Jesus then called a little child to his side. Warmly embracing the child, and he drove home his point:

“Truly I say to you, Unless you turn around and become as young children, you will by no means enter into the kingdom of the heavens. Therefore, whoever will humble himself like this young child is the one that is the greatest in the kingdom of the heavens.”

see: Matthew 18:1-5

1 At that time the disciples approached Jesus and said, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?"
2 He called a child over, placed it in their midst,
3 and said, "Amen, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.
4 Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.
5 And whoever receives one child such as this in my name receives me.

What a profound object lesson in humility. Picture the scene. A group of large, solemn adult men surrounding one small child, their eyes firmly fixed on the child. How timid and trusting the child was! How free of rivalry and malice! How submissive and unassuming! Yes, the little child beautifully epitomized the godly quality of humility.

Become like children: the child is held up as a model for the disciples not because of any supposed innocence of children but because of their complete dependence on, and trust in, their parents. So must the disciples be, in respect to God.

Jesus’ point is clear. All of us must cultivate childlike humility if we are to inherit God’s Kingdom. In the Christian congregation, there is no place for competitive strife or pride.

(see Galatians 5:26) “only faith working through love” matters. If a Christian had formerly been a Jew or a Pagan was of no significance to God, but faith and love matters.

In fact, these are the very traits that prompted Satan the Devil to rebel against God in the first place.

See: Proverbs 8:13 -

God’s Word Translation (© 1995)

To fear the LORD is to hate evil. I hate pride, arrogance, evil behavior, and twisted speech.

True Christians seek to serve, not to exercise power.

No matter how unpleasant the task or how lowly the recipient, true humility moves us to minister to others. Such humble service brings rich rewards.

Says Jesus:

English Standard Version (©2001)

“Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me, and whoever receives me, receives not me but him who sent me.” Mark 9:37

Cultivating a generous, humble, childlike spirit unites us with the highest Personage in the universe and his Son.

(see John 17:20, 21; 1 Peter 5:5)
We will reap the happiness that comes from giving.

(Acts 20:35)

And we have the satisfaction of contributing to the peace and unity evident among God’s people.

(Ephesians 4:1-3)

The author only signed their name as “Perryman.” I found this last entry to be very well articulated and I wish to thank “Perryman.”

Now our task is to apply Christ’s suggestion to be more like children to our lived experience and mission as Interchurch Families:

First let’s look back at the newly introduced Bible verses:

“And we have the satisfaction of contributing to the peace and unity evident among God’s people.” Ephesians 4:1-3.

This is our role as Christians to create peace and unity.

Perryman has pointed out that

“In the Christian congregation, there is no place for competitive strife or pride.”

(see Galatians 5:26)

Our lived experience as interchurch families bears witness to the truth of this statement based on Galatians 5:26 and Ephesians 4:1-3

Living lives more like children allows us to be more open to God’s presence in our lives and less rigidly bound by rules as they may have been interpreted for us through some kind of an intermediary or by our cultural customs of this time period or “social mores” of this era or any era.

As childlike beings, we explore our world to seek possibilities and potential. We do not form opinions before we have thoroughly examined something and everything directly for ourselves. We see that God allows us to sing, play and dance in joyful celebration for our having been created or simply to jump for joy as a child might jump for joy. We may encourage others to jump along with us, especially if we are childlike and at play. We invite others to share our joy and celebration.

We ask questions without having a hidden agenda behind them. We live in awe of creation. We share this awe and joy verbally and through our actions with those around us.

Although we are able to say “thank you,” we are more likely to show our gratitude by our actions and deeds. We enjoy being and other human beings, recognizing that it is through our interactions with others that we are able to encounter God. We are social beings who like to gather in community.

Developmentally, as children of God, we may be at different stages from others so we allow for that; we do not judge others, because they are at a different place in their religious understanding and development. In return, we ask for the same space so that we can encounter God as God intends to be revealed to us as we have read in the Bible it will for God to do these things.

We value the insight and input others may be able to give us if it is given to us in a respectful and loving way.

This sharing of knowledge and experience may help us to grow. This is yet another way to find that of God.

Planting “seeds” for Christian Unity and growing in our understanding of hospitality is important to us.

~M.J. Glauber

Children Have A Natural Curiosity:

“Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?”

Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

Some Suggestions based on the inspired ideas of Darren Rowse for Ways to be more Curious

Children Have A Natural Curiosity:

~M.J. Glauber

The ARK May 2012

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Some Suggestions based on the inspired ideas of Darren Rowse for Ways to be more Curious

Who is Darren Rowse? A creative photographer.

Not an ecumenist? No, not that I am aware of. Although he may be. He is a photographer.

Is he in an interchurch marriage? I don’t know.

How can a photographer talk about “interchurch families” and ecumenism? He is inspired and creative. Although Darren Rowse is speaking about becoming a more curious photographer, many of his ideas apply to life in general:

1. Don’t be held Captive by ‘the Rules’ ...
   “Rules are a great thing to know (and use) – however the curious photographer often takes great shots because they not only know the rules but because they set out to break them.”

   Okay, I am not telling people to break the rules, but did I get your attention? Remember that Darren Rowse is talking about photography; his discussion is being adapted for use by interchurch families, ecumenists and those who are seeking Unity.

   Please be curious enough to read and to know the rules yourself. We are examining the role of curiosity and seeking solutions which may exist in ideas that we haven’t considered yet.

   In the case of interchurch families, we are often presented with conflicting rules, multiple rules, misinterpreted rules, layers of rules that may have existed at one time, rules that have been filtered through some kind of cultural system before they even get to our ears.

   Be wary of the source of the rules. Do the rules help to foster real communication and understanding across what have been traditional barriers? When were the rules made? Have the rules been updated recently? Whose rules are they? Do these rules serve to help us to remove barriers and to be more easily able to love our neighbor as ourselves?

   Are there exceptions to these rules? Why were these rules made and for what purpose were these rules made? What perceived needs do these rules meet? Is what you are hearing actually what the rule says or is it hearsay? As the rule is being related to you will it affect any minority group adversely? Have the rules been interpreted correctly in the various translations of the Bible? Do the rules help us to love one another? Do the rules serve to foster compassion?

2. Ask Questions
   “Curious photographers are always asking questions. Questions of other photographers, questions about their own work, questions about their cameras, questions of their subjects etc”

   “As a result they often learn things about their art (and themselves) that the rest of us don’t and their work improves because of it.”
Even for interchurch families and couples, there is room for us to learn from each other. We also need community among interchurch families and all of the pastors who serve us; we need a community where ideas can be inspired, and in which positive solutions tend to flow freely.

3. Ask ‘What if…’
“One of the key questions you should get in the habit of asking is ‘what if?’”

“Curious people don’t just ask questions – they also come up with solutions.”

Solutions!?! Goals!?! This is a great idea. What about Christian Unity? What will it look like? What if…? Looking at things from a new or a different perspective or in a new light or asking the same questions with slightly different terminology that may get a completely different answer.

4. ‘Turn Questions into Quests’
“Ask what if… (and other questions) is not enough, Rowse explains. “Keep a record of the questions that you ask yourself and keep coming back to them from time to time to attempt to find a solution to the problems behind the questions. Taking your questions to the next level like this may not always be fruitful but at times it’ll lead you on journeys of discovery to unexpected places.”

“Set yourself quests and challenges for your photography. I occasionally set myself a list of photos that I want to capture in an afternoon or will have a week where I explore a theme.”

Interchurch Families might refer to this study as topics or we might also use the term “Theme” as well. Although Darren Rowse is using this technique to focus on and to improve his photography, the technique helps to give direction and focus to other projects that need to be studied and understood in greater depth. Interchurch Families and Ecumenists may consider this practice as studying a concept in greater breath or depth.

5. Learn from Others
“While sometimes the best way to learn is by trying, making mistakes and then trying again – sometimes it’s more effective to find someone else who has already tried, made mistakes and tried again to help you avoid the pitfalls of photography.”

Interchurch Couples have found talking to mentor couples helpful in the past. We find our AAIF Biennial Conferences to be informative, encouraging, and supportive of us as we make our way along this journey. The community of other interchurch families and of ecumenists inspires us at these biennial interchurch families conferences.

6. Put disconnected ideas together
Darren Rowse explains, “Edward De Bono has a lot of different exercises that help people develop lateral thinking skills.”
“In a number of his books he talks about how one way to think outside the box is when you put random ideas together to find new solutions to problems.”

“Get in the frame of mind where you regularly do this and you’ll be surprised at how your mind comes up with wonderfully creative things.”

Can this be compared to Christian Unity and diversity? The images that Darren Rowse found as examples to show what he meant were lovely. I would encourage you to look at his website.

7. Play Darren Rowse wrote, “Perhaps the most curious of people are children who do a lot of what we’re writing about here (especially asking questions).”

Darren Rowse explains, “Another thing that children do is ‘play’. With no other agenda than having fun and seeing what happens next, children will play with the things around them and experiment, and push the boundaries of their environment.”

“In doing so they learn about life, themselves and their world. I find that it’s often when I take this ‘playful’ approach to life that I’m at my most creative and make all kinds of discoveries,” Rowse notes. This would apply to our lives in general and especially as interchurch families as we seek solutions.

“Some of my best photos have come out of periods of ‘play’ when I just fooled around with my camera with no agenda at all. Play with new angles, with different shooting distances, with shooting from different perspectives, etc.” Rowse explains. Looking at any issue or problematic situation from a different angle would work in most situations. Other perspectives or angles may give us some insights that we may have overlooked.

I selected this entry by Darren Rowse on “How to be more curious” because he made a reference to “being more like a child” in it. Rowse points out that “children ask questions and play for no other apparent reason it would appear than to experiment with their environment so that they can learn about life.” This is an example that may serve us well as adults too.

Romans 12:2

And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.
Experimentation and exploration have value to us if we are to learn new things in the way that children learn new things.

Rowse notes that some of his most creative work and best discoveries have resulted when he has allowed himself “to play” at photography. He has discovered solutions to questions he didn’t know he was asking yet or that he even knew how to formulate as a question yet in his mind. The action of being more like a child brought a creative solution before the question could be asked.

8. Go with the Flow
Darren Rowse wrote, “One of the biggest blockages to creativeness and curiosity are statements like: “We’ve never done it this way before”, “This is Stupid”, “It will never work” “It is often directly after such statements that ideas stop being explored, projects end and people return to the humdrum of life.”

“Learn to ignore such statements and follow your intuition and hunches and you might just find yourself doing something that ‘has never been done before’ that people wish HAD been done before.”

Consciously look for the ways that you may be blocking creativity either in yourself or others. Many times it is the fear of new or untried paths that are the source of any kind of comment like these. Stepping out of the tried and true can be really frightening.

Seek ways to affirm yourself and others around you. We were all created in God’s image. Rowse encourages us to follow our intuition and hunches. In what ways does God nudge us in the right direction?

9. Get Proactive
Darren Rowse, writes, “One of the main things that I notice about curious people are that they rarely sit still and are always pushing forward and taking the initiative. Curious photographers don’t expect great photographic opportunities to come to them – but instead they actively search for them. They have a mindset where it almost becomes natural to ask, seek and find the things that the rest of us hope that will one day fall in our laps.”

“Get up, go out and find the answers,” makes sense to me. Then repeat often.

Take the initiative to ask some questions and then see what possibilities flow from it. You may be surprised.

10. Slow Down
Darren Rowse wrote, “We live in a fast paced world where we race

Matthew 11:28 Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.
from one thing to another, rarely sitting still.”

“Unfortunately it is easy to bring this way of life into our photography. We impatiently wait for ‘the shot’ and when it doesn’t quickly come we snap away and move on. However in most cases photography isn’t a fast paced medium,” Rowse notes.

“I learned this talking to a Pro Landscape photographer once who told me that some days he’d sit in a spot for a full day and only take a handful of shots,” Rowse explains.

Some people call this “contemplative practices,” I thought.

Darren Rowse explained “He had learned to slow down, to see the smaller subtleties of life, to be patient and the results were that his work was truly magnificent.”

“Set aside a few hours this week to go and sit quietly in a place in your town or city and watch the world go by.

Don’t set yourself an agenda – just watch and when you see something worth photographing take the shot,” Darren Rowse suggests.

In Christian terms, we also take time out to become still and to look for that of God in the world around us, or to wait for that “Still Small Voice.” It is in those quiet moments of contemplation where we find God at work and where we can best see God at work in our lives.

Take some time to be still and to look for that of God at work in the world around you.

~M.J. Glauber

Please see Darren Rowse’s blog: http://www.digital-photography-school.com/how-to-be-a-curious-photographer#ixzz1HcBgJLqd

A Community re-purposes wasted space to create a public space of beauty to be shared by all:

High Line Park in NYC near the Chelsea Market is shown in the image at left.

The High Line is a public park built on an historic freight rail line elevated above the streets on Manhattan’s West Side. It is owned by the City of New York, and maintained and operated by Friends of the High Line. Founded in 1999 by community residents, Friends of the High Line fought for the High Line’s preservation and transformation at a time when the historic structure was under the threat of demolition.

It is now the non-profit conservancy working with the New York City Department of Parks & Recreation to make sure the High Line is maintained as an extraordinary public space for all visitors to enjoy. In addition to overseeing maintenance, operations, and public programming for the park, Friends of the High Line works to raise the essential private funds to support more than 90 percent of the park’s annual operating budget, and to advocate for the preservation and transformation of the High Line at the Rail Yards, the third and final section of the historic structure, which runs between West 30th and West 34th Streets.

The High Line is located on Manhattan’s West Side. http://www.thehighline.org/about/high-line-history

Working together for the common good can bring about many and varied positive results.

Darren Rowse explained that, “Edward De Bono has a lot of different exercises that help people develop lateral thinking skills.” I wondered what this “Lateral Thinking” was; I needed a definition. It was a new concept for me. I turned to Wikipedia as a starting point and to find a definition for “Lateral Thinking.”

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lateral_thinking

Wiki says that “Lateral thinking is solving problems through an indirect and creative approach, using reasoning that is not immediately obvious and involving ideas that may not be obtainable by using only traditional step-by-step logic.”

I became intrigued by this initial definition because I believed that God, Our Creator, uses means that are not always immediately obvious, and that are often creative in their approach to any given problematic situation. I read more about De Bono and his theory at Wikipedia.

**Lateral thinking**

“Edward de Bono's key concept is that logical, linear and critical thinking has limitations because it is based on argumentation. The traditional critical thinking processes of Plato, Aristotle and Socrates are reductive, designed to eliminate all but the truth. In many of de Bono's books, he calls for the more important need for creative thinking as a constructive way though that is deliberately designed. In de Bono's first book, Mechanism of Mind, he wrote of the importance to disrupt the dominant patterns preferred by human brain design to facilitate potential creative abilities. Many of de Bono's speculative models from that era about how the brain worked were vindicated by later brain research.”

“Lateral thinking, (literally, sideways thinking) uses various acts of provocation to incite ideas that are free from previously locked assumptions.” [Think about the way children learn things.]

“The best known lateral thinking technique is the "random word." Invention of the word "PO" by de Bono, (meaning Provocative Operation, also related to POetry and hyPOthesis) gives notice that what will follow isn’t meant as nonsense, but intended to relate to the subject at hand. Various provocative lateral thinking actions, (such as escape, new stimuli, reversal, etc.) were designed to deliberately shift perceptual assumptions for the purpose of generating observations and insights about the subject.”

“Lateral thinking is different from our normal perceptions regarding creativity and innovation, and it is even different from pure vertical logic and pure horizontal imagination: Purely horizontal thinking is known as daydreaming. Fantasy. Mysticism. The purely horizontal thinker has a thousand ideas but puts none of them into action. He or she sees the big picture and all its possibilities but has little interest in linear, step-by-step implementation.”

“Purely vertical thinking leads to compliance, conformity, and a false sense of knowledge. (False because it’s often just memorization in disguise. The student knows what to do without understanding why.) The purely vertical thinker is a nit-picker, a legalist, a tight-ass.” [These adjectives were written at Wikipedia; they are not mine.]

**Language**

“De Bono has stated that he regards language as having been both the biggest help and the biggest barrier to human progress. His contention is that just as language has allowed one generation to pass useful knowledge onto the next, it has also allowed dangerous myths and out-of-date ideas to become enshrined.”

“Convinced that a key way forward for humanity is better language, he published "The Edward de Bono Code Book" in 2000,” Wiki points out...

“For example, de Bono code 6/2 means "Give me my point of view and I will give you your point of view." dBC 6/2 might be used in situations where one or both of two parties in a dispute are making insufficient effort to understand the other's perspective,” Wiki notes. The full Wiki discussion can be found at: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edward_de_Bono

Lateral Thinking should be considered then to see if it can enable us to better communicate and create solutions where none could be found before. It is not a theology; it is a hypothesis. If Lateral Thinking is used with a sound theology, there may be great potential within it for finding the unity that we seek.

~M.J. Glauber
Theme from Day 1:
Changed by the Servant Christ

Text:
The Son of Man came to serve
(cf. Mk 10:45)

Readings
Zech 9:9-10 A king righteous and victorious – and humble
Ps 131 My heart is not proud
Rom 12:3-8 We have different gifts with which to serve
Mk 10:42-45 The Son of Man came to serve

Commentary
The coming of the Messiah and His victory were accomplished through service. Jesus wants a spirit of service to fill the hearts of His followers as well. He teaches us that true greatness consists in serving God and one’s neighbor. Christ gives us the courage to discover that He is the one for whom to serve is to reign – as an early Christian saying has it.

Zechariah’s prophecy concerning a victorious and humble King was fulfilled in Jesus Christ. He, the King of Peace, comes to his own, to Jerusalem – the City of Peace. He does not conquer it by deceit or violence, but by gentleness and humility.

Psalm 131 briefly but eloquently describes the state of spiritual peace which is the fruit of humility. The picture of a mother and child is a sign of God’s tender love and of trust in God, to which the entire community of believers is called. Paul the apostle challenges us to make a sober and humble assessment of ourselves and to discover our own abilities. While we have a diversity of gifts we are one body in Christ. In our divisions each of our traditions has been endowed by the Lord with gifts that we are called to place at the service of others.

For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many (Mk 10.45).

By His service, Christ redeemed our refusal to serve God. He became an example for repairing all relations between people: Whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant – those are the new standards of greatness and priority.

In the Letter to the Romans, Paul reminds us that the diverse gifts given to us are for service: prophecy, ministry, teaching, exhortation, giving, leadership and compassion.

In our diversity we are always one body in Christ, and members of one another. The use of our diverse gifts in common service to humanity makes visible our unity in Christ. The joint action of Christians for the benefit of humanity, to combat poverty and ignorance, defend the oppressed, to be concerned about peace and to preserve life, develop science, culture and art are an expression of the practical ecumenism which the Church and the world badly need.

The imitation of Christ the Servant provides eloquent testimony to the Gospel, moving not only minds, but also hearts. Such common service is a sign of the coming Kingdom of God – the kingdom of the Servant Christ.

BIBLICAL REFLECTIONS AND PRAYERS
FOR THE ‘EIGHT DAYS’ - suggestions from the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity to be used on throughout the year.

Mother and sons reading together

or violence, but by gentleness and humility.
Prayer
Almighty and eternal God, by traveling the royal road of service your Son leads us from the arrogance of our disobedience to humility of heart. Unite us to one another by your Holy Spirit, so that through service to our sisters and brothers, Your true countenance may be revealed; You, who live and reign forever and ever. Amen.

Questions for reflection and discussion:

1. What opportunities for service are most threatened by pride and arrogance?

2. What should be done to ensure that all Christian ministries are better experienced as service?

3. In our community, what can Christians of different traditions do better together than in isolation to reveal the Servant Christ?

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D9Ihs241zeg

“The Single Story”
At the link above, you will find a video that is thought provoking. It considers how we perceive reality. Although it is about 19 minutes long, the message is excellent and well worth the time it takes to listen to it.

The Parable of the Good Samaritan
Luke 10:25-37
New International Version (NIV)

25 On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. “Teacher,” he asked, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?”

26 “What is written in the Law?” he replied. “How do you read it?”

27 He answered, ‘“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind’; and, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’”

28 “You have answered correctly,” Jesus replied. “Do this and you will live.”

29 But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?”

30 In reply Jesus said: “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he was attacked by robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead.

31 A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side.

32 So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side.

33 But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him.
34 He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him.

35 The next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper. ‘Look after him,’ he said, ‘and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.’

36 “Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?”

37 The expert in the law replied, “The one who had mercy on him.” Jesus told him, “Go and do likewise.” (Our actions matter. How we think affects our actions.)

A Review of the Film: “The Visitor”

If you look for that of God in the face of others, and if you wish to see films that serve to highlight agape love, the same kind of love that Christ showed us, as we might expect to find it in our time and place, “The Visitor” is “a must see film.”

Richard Jenkins was nominated for an Academy Award for his role as Walter Vale in the 2007 film, “The Visitor.” A. O. Scott of the New York Times said that, “Mr. Jenkins manages at once to deflect and to earn the audience’s sympathy, and to convey an inner transformation brought about by a shy, unselfish engagement with other people. How does he do it? Great acting is always, almost by definition, something of a mystery, a blend of technique and instinct for which no identifiable formula exists. Mr. Jenkins’s posture, his balked smile, the occasional fidget of his hands or pause in his stride — all of these almost subliminally communicate something about who Walter is, so that by the end of the film we feel we know him very well. And more than that, that he is someone worth knowing.”

Inner Transformation is an essential component of the Christian message. Walter Vale had been living a life that was desolate and lonely, but in the film, “The Visitor,” we see him changed for the better. As Walter Vale reaches out to help others, Other people, who are very different from him, and who enjoy a different lifestyle from the one he has always known and that is familiar to him, Walter Vale’s life gains purpose and we see agape love. Walter Vale’s actions are not a burden to him. On the contrary, his gift of friendship lightens his own burden and his sense of loneliness. Walter Vale is changed for the better because he made a choice to be compassionate.

Stephanie Zacharek, in a movie review for Salon (magazine) says that “The Visitor” is an eloquent, unassuming movie that evokes the miraculousness of finding a sense of place.” Zacharek then explains that “Jenkins, perhaps best known for his recurring role on “Six Feet Under,” is a subtle, responsive actor, but he isn’t exactly leading-man material: The basic fact that any movie would make a space for his unflashy but considerable gifts seems like a minor miracle. Jenkins plays Walter Vale, a bean-stalky, slightly hunched economics professor who’s been teaching the same course for years and who leads a life that’s uneventful and solitary. He lives alone in a spacious, silent Connecticut house that seems underfurnished and under-lived-in. In an early scene, we learn that he’s trying to learn how to play piano, even though his teacher portrayed by a marvelously tart Marian Seldes, tells him he has zero aptitude. In later scenes, we learn, offhandedly, that his wife was a concert pianist and music teacher. Without spelling things out too baldly, Jenkins and McCarthy make it clear that Jenkins is trying to keep his late wife’s memory alive in himself, but his desperation goes even deeper than that: He seems to have lost his own pulse, and he can’t find it in the notes represented by the piano keys.” Zacharek explains, “But more significantly, it’s a story about friendship and connection, and about how we sometimes locate the best parts of ourselves by reaching out to others.” Zacharek notes that, “The movie’s title is intentionally ambiguous: Who, exactly, is the visitor? Who belongs here and who doesn’t?”

And yet, the improbable encounter and the equally
improbable sharing of a New York City West Village Walk Up Apartment that Walter Vale has held onto over the years becomes essential to the story line and it works. Zacharek explains that “The Visitor” is about the miraculousness of finding a sense of place, even when a person feels doomed to dislocation.”

In this film, we see how where two or three are gathered, doing the work of God in the ordinariness of their daily and routine lives that God is there among them. There are four main characters featured in the film: Tarek, portrayed by Haaz Sleiman, a drummer from Syria, Zainab portrayed by Danai Gurira, his Senegalese girlfriend, who sells handmade jewelry at flea markets, and Hiam Abbass who portrays Tarek’s mother in this film.

“The Visitor” was directed by Tom McCarthy, who did an excellent job of casting actors and actresses for his second film as writer and director. McCarthy’s first film was “The Station Agent.” Danai Gurira, Haaz Sleim and Hiam Abbass are physically beautiful people; they also successfully portray the inner beauty of the characters they are portraying in the film, “The Visitor.”

Music serves to connect the characters of Walter Vale and Tarek. Walter Vale has failed at being able to show any talent playing the piano. Although Walter Vale has tried to learn how to play his deceased wife’s concert piano, he has failed at this repeatedly. However, this image conveys to us, as the viewers, the intense loneliness that Vale is experiencing.

Walter Vale appears to be struggling to connect or to stay connected to the life that he once had with his deceased wife, but it is impossible for Walter Vale to be able to connect in anyway through playing the piano. When the film opens, Walter Vale is living his own life as if he was a shadow. We see a sad life that seems to be so empty.

Walter Vale extends hospitality to Tarek and Zainab. This act of reaching out to help a stranger, someone Walter Vale would normally never be able to encounter in his ordinary life is a risk. However, Walter Vale discovers that by giving what he can, using his available resources and given freely from who he is according to his quiet character, that in return he receives as much as, or perhaps even more than he has given in return. In this way, the film also discusses the value of giving of oneself for the greater good of humanity.

Tarek introduces Walter Vale to the musical instrument known as the Djembe which originated in West Africa. Walter Vale takes to the Djembe drum, and is finally able to connect with another person in a meaningful way when he finds a friend in Tarek.

We, too, may ask “And who is our neighbor?” This film portrays human kindness and compassion in our times. Those who embrace others with kindness and compassion are our neighbors.

I highly recommend this movie. It is rated PG-13 apparently for

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some language. It also may not be able to hold the attention of younger children. As an adult, I was so impressed by the movie that if there was “some mature language” used in the film, it never left an impression on me.

The Djembe Drum Music is delightful. It helps to draw us in and to engage us as viewers. In this way, playing music for the sheer joy of it, would be yet another example of becoming like a child. This is an example of an application of the principle concept and wish that Christ expressed that we need to become more like children.

Other examples of Djembe Drum Circles can be found and heard on Youtube. However, the examples of the Djembe Drum Music shown in “the Visitor” is gently introduced so that it doesn’t seem foreign to the viewer in anyway. The Djembe Drum Music serves to help to connect the characters of Walter Vale and Tarek in a meaningful way.

The Djembe Drum Music also helps to draw the viewer into the story line and serves to highlight the growing friendship between two people who would otherwise have been rather unlikely to have connected. Each is better for having known the other.

I highly recommend the film, “the Visitor.” In a quiet way, it has the potential to engage you in the lives of Others and you most likely will feel enriched by that, just as the characters were enriched by having known the other. Zacharek explains that ““The Visitor” may be a gentle picture, but it’s not a toothless one”.... Zacharek explains that while visiting Tarek who has been arrested for doing nothing wrong that “Walter holds the letter to the glass and instinctively turns his head, a way of allowing Tarek privacy. This is the sort of subtle actor’s moment that a dumb director could ruin, by letting the camera linger just a fraction of a second too long, or by adding melodramatic music to intensify the effect. But McCarthy underplays everything here. There are places where a character will ask Walter a question, and instead of countering with a line of dialogue, Jenkins responds with just a look: This is that rare script written by someone who understands that writing doesn’t just mean dialogue.”

Zacharek explains that ” “The Visitor” captures something of the essence of the ( New York) city, chiefly the capacity for decency that thrives here in the midst of so much chaos, anxiety and nervous energy. This is a small picture that explodes the boundaries of what size really means. Sometimes it’s the smallest gesture that makes you feel most alive.”

“The Visitor” is a really good movie. Why not get it to view so that you can form your own opinion?

Movie Review by Mary Jane Glauber
Interchurch Families: Ecumenical Instruments

From the time we came together as interchurch families in the 1960s, we believed we could contribute to our churches’ moving together towards unity. But I didn’t really think of us as ‘ecumenical instruments’ until I was asked to write a chapter for the forthcoming Oxford Handbook of Ecumenical Studies precisely on interchurch families as ecumenical instruments. Under ‘Instruments’ we were to stand alongside the World Council of Churches, the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, Bilateral Dialogues, the Groups des Dombes, the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity etc! I was surprised, but ready to try. My chapter has three sections.

Do we recognise ourselves as ecumenical instruments? Do the churches recognise us as such? The World Gathering of Interchurch Families, Rome 2003, said that ‘we believe we have a significant and unique contribution to make to our churches’ growth in visible Christian unity’. This conviction came from groups and associations of interchurch families from eleven countries. They give a voice to a particular kind of ‘mixed marriage’ in which both partners remain faithful to their original church membership, but are committed to participate in the life and worship of their spouse’s church so far as they can. They share parental responsibility if they have children, and bring them up appreciating both their Christian traditions. It is these groups and associations that I considered as ‘ecumenical instruments’. Over the years, the institutional churches have increasingly recognised their ecumenical role.

How do interchurch families contribute to Christian unity? They embody unity simply by growing together as partners, parents and families. As the partners grow in married love, sharing their lives together, respecting and forgiving and learning from one another, they find that this attitude can extend to one another’s churches too. They take on a larger identity that includes rather than excludes; they discover that differences can be enriching and are not necessarily divisive. Their children inherit this wider identity. They share their experience of unity with others, taking on responsibilities in each other’s churches, encouraging clergy and congregations of both to join in celebrating family occasions — unity can become for others a living reality in a new way. They host ecumenical house-groups for Bible study or prayer. As ‘domestic churches’ they are one church at home, living under one roof and sharing their resources; in their everyday lives they create a living and healing connection between their ecclesial communities.

How can interchurch families become more effective ecumenical instruments? Because of their two-church solidarity they challenge the institutional churches, and especially the Roman Catholic Church whose self-understanding includes a sense of being ‘church’ in a fullness that it does not attribute to other ecclesial communities. Challenges to accepted ways of thinking ask for change and so are always uncomfortable. But because change and conversion is needed on the ecumenical journey, challenges can be received as gifts. In their refusal to be divided, interchurch families witness to the priority of relationships in promoting Christian unity, to spiritual ecumenism and the ‘ecumenism of life’. Other aspects of unity are important, but these are central.

It is not easy for the churches, and especially the Catholic Church, to receive interchurch families as gifts, but what has been happening over the years is the development of a better pastoral understanding of interchurch families in their concrete situation. In itself this leads to ecumenical progress; a response to pastoral need helps to break down an institutional mentality.

However, to be effective, instruments must be put to use. There are signs that this is being recognised, but relevant church authorities need to take action.

Ruth Reardon

Originally written for the British AIF News; reprinted with permission from Ruth Reardon

IFIN - Interchurch Families International Network

Changed by the Servant Christ
BUILDING ON FORTY YEARS OF DIALOGUE

By Father Ernest Falardeau, SSS

The New York Anglican-Roman Catholic Dialogue, with participants from the Archdiocese of New York and the Episcopal Diocese of New York, has chosen as its dialogue topic for 2012, the International Anglican-Roman-Catholic Commission on Unity and Mission report Growing Together in Unity and Mission: Building on 40 Years of Anglican-Roman Catholic Dialogue. It is an agreed statement by IARCCUM published on October 6, 2006 with an introduction of its co-chairs Archbishop John Bathersby (Roman Catholic from Brisbane) and Bishop David Beetge (Anglican from Highveld, South Africa).

After the conclusion of the work of ARCIC I (Final Report) and ARCIC II (Other Issues), IARCCUM believed and expressed a desire to spell out the new level of understanding and communion which had been achieved by the churches during the forty years since the first meeting of the dialogue at Malta in 1970.

Unfortunately, IARCCUM had to confess that because of matters which had intervened in recent years, including the ordination of women as bishops in the Church of England and some Provinces of the Anglican Communion, and the ordination of a practicing homosexual as a Bishop to an Episcopal Diocese in the United States, IARCCUM did not judge it appropriate to declare the “new level of communion” at this time.

The document begins with a summary of the achievements of the ARCIC Dialogues and where the churches are today. Using the methodology of the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification (JDDJ), prepared by the Lutheran-Roman Catholic International Dialogue, IARCCUM states the points of agreement on matters of doctrine, and in “boxes” it gives Anglican and Roman Catholic positions which differ and will therefore require further work and study for consensus.

The New York dialogue believes this is an excellent document, much like the Harvesting of Fruits of Cardinal Walter Kasper which it studied previously. ARCNY is hoping to make a report and suggestions to the respective authorities at the conclusion of its work during this calendar year.

The Good News

The good news about the International Report and the status of the churches is that the dialogue continues and the goal of full communion remains the goal of the work at hand. The realistic picture (the bad news, if you prefer) is that obstacles preventing further progress are very real and dialogue will be both necessary and difficult.

Paul D. Murray, a participant in the newly formed ARCIC III indicated in his article in One in Christ, a British ecumenical publication (sub-titled: The Need for a Gear-Change) that participants agree “receptive ecumenism”, i.e. seeking to learn what we can from each other rather than the more academic approach which led to the JDDJ document, would be more productive. This would suggest that each side try to learn from each other’s experience.

Work and Prayer

Again, the need for prayer, work and willingness to walk together seeking God’s will and God’s way becomes imperative. There is no easy way of building trust and respect for others and to earn it from them. And yet without an honest exchange of views and an effort to move to common ground and a new direction on all sides, there may be many words but little forward movement.

Originally printed in the series: “The Ecumenical Corner” by Father Ernest Falardeau, SSS;

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Changed by the Servant Christ
The Colorado Anti-defamation League has created a list:

**101 WAYS TO MAKE A POSITIVE IMPACT**

It is further divided into categories for where and how to make some positive impact. The first area is: **In Your Community** which includes “Thinking globally, Acting locally!,” advice to vote, Organizing a “Get to Know Your Neighbors” night, BBQ or potluck in your neighborhood, some specific ways to become involved in the Denver area which could be adjusted and adapted for your own area or city.

Then it includes ways to make a positive impact: **In Your School.** Some of the recommendations are specific to Colorado so further research would be needed to adapt their ideas to your own community. Some suggestions were universal such as: “Be an ALLY – speak out against jokes and slurs that target people or groups. It is not enough to refuse to laugh” which would work well anywhere and everywhere. “Learn more about the First Amendment, civil rights, hate crimes and other legal aspects of the fight against prejudice – invite an ADL staff member to speak to your school.” This also would work everywhere in the USA. As interchurch families, we may already be doing this, but the Anti-Defamation League encourages schools and students to “Participate in a foreign exchange program.” The Anti-defamation League suggests that “Say no to name-calling, gossip, offensive forwarded emails or other forms of bullying over the Internet (cyberbullying).” I have been told that this is far more prevalent than any of us may have realized and that it takes many varied forms. In this section the ADL encourages, “Set up a school exchange that matches students from different schools to bring youth of differing backgrounds closer together.” The ADL encourages: “Start an annual film festival which highlights films and documentaries from around the world. Invite community groups and local theaters to be co-sponsors.” The ADL encourages students to become actively involved in making a positive impact by “Working with your school librarian to create a display of historical and contemporary publications, including books, newspapers, magazines, films, music, and videos in order to expose the continued effort to defame people from different cultural and religious groups.”

In the school setting, the ADL encourages: Constructing a multimedia display that examines how today’s media perpetuates stereotypes. The ADL asks students to consider current films, television sitcoms, music, and advertising campaigns, in addition to newspapers, magazines and books. The ADL encourages students and schools to “host a school wide dance party and play music from a variety of cultural groups and genres of music.”

I liked the suggestion from the ADL that says, “Ask your librarian to collect samples of popular teen magazines or comic books from around the world and request a special corner be set aside for them in the periodical room.” This section for “In Your School” was filled with many positive ideas.

The next section pertained to: **In Your Workplace.** Among the many suggestions in this section was, “Offer professional development workshops that help all employees understand and respect individual work and communication styles.” Another recommendation was “Publish and distribute to all staff a list of ethnic and religious holidays and the meaning of the customs associated with celebrating them.” The ADL suggests that “Once a week, eat lunch with a different co-worker, until you have met everyone.” This was a mealtime practice that was used in Northern Ireland at Corymeela, a Peace and Reconciliation Center; it works quite well. The ADL suggests, “Make respect for diversity a core value in your organization and articulate it as such in your handbook or employee manual.”

The ADL encourages workplaces to “Conduct an audit of your workplace to ensure it is easily accessible to all people with disabilities.” This may actually mean that the variables related to disabilities need to be better understood for their dimension, scope and limiting factors; you may be very surprised to find out all of the disabilities that people often work very hard to cover up so as not to appear to be
different and that these people with disabilities exist in great numbers in all that you do everywhere in the world around you.

Then the ADL addresses how we can create a more positive attitude in your home. The ADL suggests: “Traveling to a new part of your city, state, United States or a new country,” “Taking advantage of the free programs and speakers offered by your local public library, university and college,” and “Being an ally – speak out against jokes and slurs that target people or groups.”

The ADL also encourages families to “Visit ADL’s Question Corner (www.adl.org/education/miller) for ideas on how to support young children’s curiosity about diversity in our world” and to “create a regular family movie night and pick movies or documentaries that are about diverse cultures and issues that provoke discussion.”

The ADL suggests that American families, “Encourage your children to read books that promote understanding of different cultures and abilities as well as books written by authors of diverse backgrounds” and for us to “visit www.adl.org/bibliography/ for recommendations.”

Expanding the positive actions for families, the ADL suggests, “Taking a conversation course in a language different from your own that is spoken in your community.” I can assure you that this has made my life so much more enjoyable. Also recent studies coming out of Columbia University’s School of Social Work indicate that the study of a second language or the study of how to play a new musical instrument are the two best ways to stay mentally alert well into your old age. This was new insight for me so I am sharing it so that all can live happier lives for longer.

Then the ADL speaks about positive actions that can take place in your place of worship. Some of the Anti-Defamation League suggestions in this category include: “Urge your leaders to use the pulpit to condemn all forms of bigotry,” “Be respectful and welcoming to anyone who attends your religious services,” “Plan a monthly community service project which would expose your religious community to a different religious, ethnic, or social community or issue,” “Organize an interfaith retreat for youth to increase understanding of each other’s beliefs and build lasting friendships,” “Explore texts, teachings and basic themes of a religion different from your own religion,” (This is with the idea of finding positive ways to build bridges within your own community.) “Reach out to diverse religious communities to co-sponsor festivals and holiday observances that highlight and celebrate our common humanity,” “Identify common ethical problems such as poverty, “just war vs. unjust war” and medical treatments, and compare how different faith groups respond to these challenges,” “Ensure that all faiths are represented accurately in existing library materials and religious school curricula,” “Attend services faiths different from your own and visit different houses of worship. Get permission where and when needed,” and “Invite representatives from religions different from your own to deliver a presentation about their faith and answer questions.”

Suggestion 101 is for “YOU” and in reality it always comes back to us/you/our own actions in everything that happens or doesn’t happen. How we respond in any given situation matters as to whether we have contributed in a positive way to our community or not. The final Anti-Defamation suggestion is: “101 YOU – Brainstorm 101 more ways to make a Positive Impact! in your community!”

The original and complete document was posted by the Mountain States ADL and it can be read at the following link: http://regions.adl.org/mountain-states/pdfs/101waysweb1.pdf

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I included excerpts from this document because I saw a great connection with Christ’s message within what was written there. “That we may all be one” is a simple message, but how to achieve that kind of unity seems to have eluded us, all of us, for centuries. It will take effort and knowledge for us to make the kind of positive changes that Christ wished for us in the world around us so that we can become one. ~ M.J. Glauber

http://regions.adl.org/mountain-states/pdfs/positiveimpact2012web.pdf
Ecumenical Realities

— Martin E. Marty

"Hopes for an 'Ecumenical Spring'" was a Christian Century headline above a report by Adelle M. Banks of the Religion News Service. Her report spelled out why such hopes are wan, if not desperate. Three samples: The National Council of Churches has shrunk from 400 staffers in its prime to fewer than twenty today. Churches Uniting in Christ closed its office doors in 2010 and has lost one of its major denominations. Christian Churches Together has "struggled." Monitor and assess the news of the separate church bodies and you will find few folks mourning or, indeed, "planting" so there can be some sprouts in an "ecumenical spring." Do people in parishes know of the declines and demises? Would they care, if they did know? If so, what should they do?

The modern ecumenical organizing began just over a century ago, in a very different world. The councils and federations and conferences served well for decades. Ecumenism was "the great new fact of the era," according to wise Archbishop William Temple, half an era ago. Let me touch on various assessments of why so much has changed, beginning with the denominations or church bodies which made and make up the ecumenical bodies (whose smaller staffs usually include able and faithful people.)

For me, a central reason was illustrated in the press room at the Faith and Order (sub-WCC) meeting at Edinburgh, Scotland, in 1960, when I first got up close to ecumenical doings. I tell the story often: The participants were defining Christian unity: "all in each place who confess Christ Jesus as Lord . . . [should come to] a fully committed fellowship." The errant typist gave us in the press a draft-release that said we were "to come to a full committee fellowship." Ecumenism seemed to be the task of bureaus, task forces, commissions, but it was grasped heartily by most of the faithful.

The offense caused by denominational hostility is less relevant today, when denominations get along fairly well; the destructive conflict today is within the communions. Catholics do not fight Methodists any more; Catholics are in conflict with Catholics, ["United"] Methodists fight Methodists. Homework is needed desperately.

The drama of separation, suspicion, and conflict shifted when energies were transferred from within Christianity to Christianity in its relation to other faiths. Many Christians yawn when [if?] they hear of tensions among South Asian or South African Christian churches, while the urgent scene now faces Muslims against Christians, Christians against Jews. "Interfaith" ventures are more promising than "Ecumenical" ones.

Note: much has been achieved, as ecumenical programs are on a new plateau and are taken for granted. Some leaders in the ecumenical church bodies, scorned now for their moderation when their cutting edges are dulled, urge members to look again. A friend asks "What are Christians in mainline and moderate and (gulp!) liberal styles griping about. They won!" Christians to their right often came out of their isolation in ways influenced by ecumenical experiments. As those who stood off adapt to "modernity," they adopt approaches practiced by ecumenical pioneers through a century.

Sociological analysis and historical reviews should not soothe anyone, say the profoundly committed ecumenists. The Gospel and other New Testament scenarios consistently keep promises of Christian unity and commands to realize those promises in the minds and programs of Christians of all sorts. They simply cannot pretend their way back into cultures of 1910 or 1960 and proceed from there. Who's "planting" for spring?

References


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The 2012 AAIF Biennial Conference
Collegeville, MN
July 13 – 15, 2012
Interchurch Families: “Listen...with the ear of your heart"

Speakers for the Plenary Sessions:

Friday July 13, 2012
"Living with Limits and a Sense of Humor: A Lutheran View of Intra-Christian Relations."
Speaker: Dr. Darrell Jodock;
Drell and Adeline Bernhardson Distinguished Professor of Religion Gustavus Adolphus College
Faith & Learning Resources: Speeches by Darrell Jodock can be found at this link:
www.gustavus.edu/faith/resources.php

Saturday July 14, 2012
"Ecumenism in a Changing World."
Speaker: Dr. Donald Ottenhoff,
Executive Director, Collegeville Institute for Ecumenical and Cultural Research Collegeville, Minnesota
The Institute is an autonomous part of the Saint John's community, which includes Saint John’s Abbey and University, the Hill Museum and Manuscript Library and the Liturgical Press. The women's community of Saint Benedict's Monastery and the College of Saint Benedict in nearby St. Joseph further expand the resources for residents of the Institute.

Saturday July 14, 2012
"How Interchurch Family Prayer 'Happens': Models for Negotiating Our Differences"
Speaker: Daniel J. Olsen, Ph.D.
Dr. Olsen received his Ph.D. in Constructive Theology from Loyola University Chicago in 2008. Since that time he has taught at several Catholic Liberal Arts Universities in both Minnesota and Illinois. He currently resides in suburban Chicago with his wife, Tracy, and two children Abigail and Matthew.

Some Useful Links for the 2012 AAIF Biennial Conference:

AAIF Conference Attenders will be housed at the Saint Vincent Court Apartments
http://www.csbsju.edu/SJU-Archives/SJUHistory/SJUBuildings/VincentCourtApartments.htm
http://www.csbsju.edu/SJU-Residential-Life/Vincent-Court.htm

Campus Map: Please sign in upon arrival at St. Mary’s Hall which is open from 8 AM to 8 PM daily
http://www.csbsju.edu/About/At-a-Glance/SJU-Campus-Map.htm

Arboretum Map:

Micah 6:8
He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?
Psalm 118:24

24 This is the day the LORD has made. We will rejoice and be glad in it.
The ARK May 2012                     
Volume 23 Edition 5

Galatians 5:26

New International Version (NIV)

26 Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other.

The 2012 AAIF Biennial Conference
Collegeville, MN
July 13(5 PM) – July 15, 2012 (1:30PM)

Interchurch Families: “Listen...with the ear of your heart”

Registration Form ~ Page Two:
Optional Tours Interest Form

Please copy and paste this page to be mailed in with your registration form and payment in the same envelope.

To help conference planners to make the necessary arrangements

Please indicate which, if any, of the following tours or visits are of interest to you by writing the number of people from your family who wish to visit that site in the box to the left.

Thank you!

☐ The Pottery
http://www.csbsju.edu/saint-johns-pottery/about-the-pottery.htm
http://www.csbsju.edu/Saint-Johns-Pottery/Artist-in-Residence.htm

☐ Saint John’s Liturgical Press

~ The Arboretum:
The Arboretum adds to the retreat and calm ambiance to be found at CSB/SJU: It is open all day. Families may go there to enjoy nature on their own.

Please see the links below:

~The self-guiding tour of the buildings listed on the National Register of Historic Places because of its nature, can be done at any time using a guide book and campus map.

☐ However, if there is enough interest we will ask about a guided tour (Not all buildings are open to the public, but may be viewed from the exterior) Please see the links:
http://www.csbsju.edu/SJU-Archives/SJUHistory/SJUBuildings/SJU-Buildings-on-the-National-Register.htm
http://www.csbsju.edu/about/at-a-glance/sju-campus-map.htm

The Hill Museum and Manuscript Collection Guided Tour will be scheduled in the afternoon on Saturday July 14, 2012

☐ Hill Museum and Manuscript Collection:Tour to include seeing the newly created Saint John’s Bible
John 20:21
“Peace be with you.
As the Father has sent me, so I send you.”
The 2012 AAIF Biennial Conference
Collegeville, MN
July 13 - 15, 2012

Registration Form ~ Page Four:
Waiver of Liability Form

Please copy and paste this page, sign, date and mail it in with your registration form and payment in the same envelope

Waiver of Liability for the 2012 AAIF Biennial Conference
Member and/or Participant
(Must be executed by All Registrants)


I understand that I am a participant in this event. I release the American Association of Interchurch Families and/or its officers from all liability for accident, injury, illness, or loss of property for myself and/or my dependent(s) and agree to indemnify and save harmless the sponsors from accident, illness, or injury to others or loss of their property caused partly or wholly by me and/or my dependent(s) while engaged in any voluntary activity supported by the sponsors.

Please note: In most states an individual may accept a particular risk of harm resulting from another party’s conduct. An express release by which one party agrees to assume the risk of harm arising from another party’s negligent conduct will be enforced by the courts so long as it does not release liability for willful or gross negligence and does not otherwise offend public policy.

By signing this release, you are not only agreeing that you will not sue the American Association of Interchurch Families or its officers should one or more of its members or officers cause you harm; you are also protected from being held liable as long as your conduct is not grossly negligent or intentional.

Signatures: __________________________

_________________________________

_________________________________

_________________________________

_________________________________

Date: _________________________
A tradition of Catholic intellectual thought in a welcoming community

Catholic Benedictine Tradition

Character shaped by our founding Benedictine communities

The Catholic character of CSB and SJU is shaped by the Benedictine communities that founded the colleges in the 19th century and continues to foster the academic, spiritual and social life of these institutions. Today, Benedictine women and men remain actively involved in teaching and administration. Their prayerful presence in community life provides the stable sense of home for which CSB and SJU are so well known. By living according to Saint Benedict's Rule, members of the monastic communities cultivate love of God, neighbor and self through the art of listening, worship and balanced, humane living. They challenge students to embrace these values as well.

A tradition of Catholic intellectual thought

As two of the nation's foremost Catholic liberal arts colleges, CSB and SJU share in the rich tradition of Catholic intellectual thought. Students' coursework in theology seeks to promote a deeper understanding of their faith and to lay the foundation for meaningful participation in student liturgies, campus ministry programs, retreats, community service and social justice activities, through which their faith finds expression in the world.

A welcoming community

The Benedictine value of hospitality creates a welcoming community for individuals of all faiths. Students and faculty from many diverse belief systems collectively bring a rich dimension to the academic, cultural and religious experience at CSB and SJU.

http://www.osb.org/acad/benvall1.html
“Benedictine Values in an Educational Environment” considered for Interchurch Families

“Catholic, Benedictine Values in an Educational Environment” was written by John Klassen, OSB; Emmanuel Renner, OSB and Mary Reuter, OSB on May 1, 2001. The original essay can be found at the link above.

John Klassen, OSB; Emmanuel Renner, OSB and Mary Reuter, OSB explain in their essay, “Catholic, Benedictine Values in an Educational Environment, 2001” and apply Benedictine Values in their essay, located at http://www.osb.org/acad/benval1.html, to the lives of the students at CSB/SJU. They add that these values actually may serve all of us in all aspects of our lives and throughout our lives. For those of us seeking a greater unity, we may find this information to be very helpful.

The Rule of Benedict serves to guide them. In their essay, in section 1, the Benedictine authors explain that “the fundamental idea of a sacramental view of the world embraces the Catholic sacramental principle that the universe is charged with the presence of God. It includes a discussion about Benedict's view of our search for God and our encounter with God through sacred texts, persons, and the rest of creation.”

Then they indicate that “Benedictine spirituality is grounded in the Christian search for God.” This concept should be a unifying factor therefore for all Christians and humanity.

Klassen, Renner and Reuter explain that “The universe is graced; it is a place where God can be encountered. Thus, we speak of the world as having a sacramental character."
... The Benedictine authors explain, “A Benedictine spirituality, in contrast to this exclusive focus on intellectual growth, extends beyond this conventional wisdom in two ways. First, students are learning skills such as accountability, teamwork, leadership, focus, time management, and confidence. This learning occurs in the classroom and independent research, on the volleyball court, through employment on campus, in student government, through writing for campus publications, through relating with roommates, or by working in campus ministry.” They are making an application of the Rule of Benedict for the campuses of the College of Saint Benedict and Saint John’s University in Collegeville, MN.

“Second, the integration of the emotional, the intellectual, and the spiritual components is the desired outcome of an education in a Christian environment, in this instance influenced by a Benedictine framework. In our situation this integration is often spoken of as balance.”

The term “balance” jumps off the page for me because at this point in history, the lived experience of many seems to be a yearning for a “balance” which seems to elude us. How to find balance may be one of the key factors as a foundational building block for the unity we seek as interchurch families, and, for that matter, everything else we do as well. Everything is interrelated whether we see the connection or not.

The authors point out that “Often students discover themselves in one area and growth can occur and expand into another if that development is recognized, acknowledged, and encouraged.”

I see great potential in this kind of thought process so I read on.

The authors explain, “Furthermore, we need to foster an environment in which students are aware that they are in a process of faith development as well as one of choosing a field of study. This understanding challenges the false dichotomy that promotes an ongoing tension and conflict between the curricular and the co-curricular, between academic life and ‘the rest of life.’ Just as a monastic encounters God everywhere and not only in church, so a student encounters learning and transforming moments in classes, in friendship, and in service to others. The Rule encourages all learners—students, faculty, staff and administrators—to see the potential for growth and new insights in all areas of the campus environment and beyond it.”

The term “New Insights” also jumps out at me from the written page. The concept of “always being able to find new insights” no matter who we are and no matter at what stage of life we may find ourselves gives me a renewed sense of hope and possibility.

John Klassen, OSB; Emmanuel Renner, OSB and Mary Reuter, OSB explain that “Through inner work we integrate our inner and outer worlds; align our thoughts, words, and actions with our core values (that for Benedict were based on the Gospel); nurture the ongoing dialogue between the community of which we are a part and the larger world. At times we are nudged and at other times we are torn from the world of certainty. We can then begin to think in new ways and we may come to a new self-understanding. It is then possible to imagine a new future .30”

The “Application” that John Klassen, OSB; Emmanuel Renner, OSB and Mary Reuter, OSB explains that “Through listening and a gradual change of

http://www.osb.org/acad/benval1.html
heart, deep personal change can be accomplished, making change in community possible. Genuine community is necessary for change to occur and is intensified and strengthened by positive change in individuals. Deep inner change strengthens our commitment to live the values of Christ. A committed Christian community will bring the Gospel more fully alive in its members.” I saw great potential within this understanding for humility which was followed by the role of centering prayer.

And what is humility? John Klassen, OSB; Emmanuel Renner, OSB and Mary Reuter, OSB explain that “Humility often has the connotation of passivity, meekness, and self-effacement. However, it really means coming to a true sense of oneself and one’s gifts. For each one of us, humility includes stretching toward one’s fullest self, being willing to take risks, including the risk of failure.”

This concept is one that is well suited for our times and which needs to be explored more fully, I thought. Please see http://www.osb.org/acad/benval1.html

The original document is rather lengthy, but it is very interesting. Within what they have written in the process of adapting the Rule of Benedict to their lived experience, I believe that we too can find great inspiration and a positive way forward in our own communities.

John Klassen, OSB; Emmanuel Renner, OSB and Mary Reuter, OSB provide the following:

Outline.

I. We live with a sacramental view of the world.
   A. We acknowledge the primacy of God
   B. We reverence all persons.
   C. We reverence all creation.
   D. We listen reverently with the ear of our heart.

II. We nurture and develop community Life
   A. We seek the common good
   1. We integrate a commitment to the common good with respect for the individual.
   2. We call the community together for counsel to make decisions.
   3. We practice hospitality and respect for all persons.
   4. We are committed to practicing simplicity and frugality.
5. We are committed to practicing justice.

B. We seek stability and community life.

1. We are committed to forming stable relationships in community.
2. We are committed to stability of place.
3. We are committed to live the gospel according to the monastic way of life-- conversatio.

Endnotes

John Klassen, OSB; Emmanuel Renner, OSB and Mary Reuter, OSB explain that ... “In this essay we relate the values expressed in the Rule of Benedict to the context of Catholic, Benedictine higher education. We have reflected on our own experience at the College of Saint Benedict and Saint John’s University so that we might use the essay for dialogue among faculty, staff, and students. We are confident that such reflection will help us deepen our commitment to these values in our mission as Catholic, Benedictine liberal arts residential colleges.”

I would urge everyone to explore the full essay for themselves at http://www.osb.org/acad/benval1.html

I believe that there is much that we can learn from practical applications of the Rule of Benedict. Please refer to the End Notes found at http://www.osb.org/acad/benval1.html

for the bibliography for this essay by John Klassen, OSB; Emmanuel Renner, OSB and Mary Reuter, OSB and to read the original essay in its entirety which I recommend.

This is only a very brief look at what John Klassen, OSB; Emmanuel Renner, OSB and Mary Reuter, OSB wrote in their essay in which they apply the Rule of Benedict to the College of Saint Benedict and Saint John’s University. There is so much more to be discovered within their essay. What I read there gives me a great sense of hope for our time and place in history for being able to find a positive way forward. Please find the original essay and examine it personally.

“Benedictine Values in an Educational Environment” considered for Interchurch Families by M.J. Glauber
Hymn of Promise
by Natalie Sleeth, 1983

In the bulb there is a flower, in the seed, an apple tree;
in cocoons, a hidden promise: butterflies will soon be free!
In the cold and snow of winter there’s a spring that waits to be,
unrevealed until its season, something God alone can see.

There’s a song in every silence, seeking word and melody;
there’s a dawn for every darkness, bringing hope to you and me.
From the past will come the future; what it holds a mystery,
unrevealed until its season, something God alone can see.

In our end is our beginning; in our time, infinity;
in our doubt there is believing; in our life eternity.
In our death, a resurrection; at the last, a victory,
unrevealed until its season, something God alone can see.

Tune:Promise 8.7.8.7.D. Natalie Sleeth, 1985

Natalie Sleeth composed her “Hymn of Promise first as a choral anthem and then adapted it to this
version for congregational singing. It was dedicated to her husband, Ronald Sleeth, who died shortly after
she completed it.

“something God alone can see”

I feel so blessed to have known this person, the one who loved this hymn, and for her to have been such a positive influence in my life.

Yes, I will greatly miss her. She will not be forgotten. Her life was a mission of love and caring. Her example will be carried forward.

~ Mary Jane Glauber

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Opus Dei
“Work of God,” in Latin is “Opus Dei.”

In 1928, Josemaría Escrivá began describing in his writings the value of ordinary work. The kind of work that most of us do to serve others, humanity as it exists. The Roman Catholic Church further developed his writings into a program after his death.

Josemaría Escrivá found a sacredness in our most ordinary tasks and the way we are to go about doing these seemingly ordinary things. From them, we can learn and then do “the Work of God.” Re-read the suggestions given to us by Darren Rowse for how to become more curious.

We are being asked to find that of God in our daily and most mundane work. The Week of Prayer helps us to examine our lives and actions. Darren Rowse has given us some suggestions, albeit for photography, but some of those suggestions may adapt quite well to other tasks that we take on in our daily lives as we seek that of God in the world around us. ~ M.J. Glauber

"Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?"
Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.