The way forward may not always be the path we had always thought it would be. Imagining a new future requires us to take some risks.

Interchurch Families: Christian Unity Made Visible in our Households

Theme for the 2012 AAIF Biennial Conference
July 13 - 15, 2012

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The way forward may not always be the path we had always thought it would be.

Imagining a new future requires us to take some risks.

We will all be changed by the victory of our Lord Jesus Christ (cf. 1 Cor 15:51-58)
Interchurch Families: “Listen...with the ear of your heart”
The 2012 AAIF Biennial Conference
Collegeville, MN
July 13(5 PM) - July 15, 2012 (1:30PM)

Registration Form ~ Page One: Contact Information

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

Please print clearly

Name:_____________________________/Special Dietary Needs ________________________

Denomination:______________________________

Email Address: ___________________________________________

Phone Numbers: cell (_____) _______________ (other) (_____) ________________

Name:_____________________________/Special Dietary Needs ________________________

Denomination:______________________________

Email Address: ___________________________________________

Phone Numbers: cell (_____) _______________ other (_____) ________________

Child’s Name:_____________________________/Special Dietary Needs ________________________

Age:__________

Child’s Name:_____________________________/Special Dietary Needs ________________________

Age:__________

Child’s Name:_____________________________/Special Dietary Needs ________________________

Age:__________

More than three children? Please insert the information needed for registering any children in this space as you copy and paste. To do that, please, re-copy the information immediately above, and simply insert it here.

Mailing Address:____________________________________________Apt.#_____

House Number + Street Name or P.O. Box Number

Name of City + State/Province + Zip Code + country

Do you plan to arrive early and wish to stay on campus? Date of arrival: July_____2012

Do you plan to stay after and wish to stay on campus? Date of departure: July_____2012

Those people who have indicated their interest either in arriving early or in staying on after the end of the 2012 AAIF Conference, may contact CSB/SJU to make those arrangements directly. CSB/SJU has asked that AAIF provide them with a list of those people from our registration forms. After you have sent in your AAIF Registration: Please contact: jwubbels@csbsju.edu

Please note: Many other events will be taking place on the campus of Saint John’s University on the weekend of July 13 - July 15, 2012. AAIF Conference Attenders will be more likely to be able to find accommodations available, the sooner they send in their fees and registration forms.
Please copy and paste this page to be mailed in with your registration form and payment in the same envelope.

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 http://www.hmml.org/ http://www.saintjohnsbible.org/
The 2012 AAIF Biennial Conference
Collegeville, MN
July 13 - 15, 2012

Registration Form ~ Page Three: Costs

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

Please print clearly

Fees are all inclusive and per person, beginning with supper at 5 PM on Friday, July 13, 2012 and going through lunch, 11 AM - 1 PM on Sunday, July 15, 2012

Conference fees include: Housing, Meals and AAIF Membership dues for July 1, 2012 through June 30, 2013

Add together the column at the far right to find your total amount due

Adult
Conference Fees per person:$ 195 USD X _________ Number of Adults = ____________

Children age 10 and younger
Conference Fees per person:$ 45 USD X _________ Number of Children = ____________

Babies who sleep in a pack ‘n play that their parents bring for them and who are not eating table food (ex. under age three): No Charge

To find your grand total due, Please add up your totals from the right hand column. 
Then enter the amount due on the line for “Total amount due” at the right.

Total amount due =__________________

Please make checks payable to: AAIF and mail them to: AAIF
c/o Lamar Burton, AAIF Secretary
1124 Grazing Meadows Lane
Louisville, KY 40245-4594

Kindly have your envelopes with payment enclosed mailed in as soon as possible
- Please include all the registration forms with your check. Thank you.

Baby sitting services may be arranged upon request.

Flying into the Minneapolis-Saint Paul Airport? Need Shuttle Service

Please phone Executive Express to make those arrangements directly with them Phone Number: 320-253-2226

It will be about 1 hour 40 minutes driving/riding time from the Minneapolis - Saint Paul area to Collegeville, MN at Saint John’s University
http://www.executiveexpress.biz/City/43/St.%20John's%20University.aspx (Or reserve online)

Attendees will be in charge of their own travel expenses and arrangements
- This information is only to help people plan in case you will be flying into MSP (Minneapolis-Saint Paul, MN)
The more people in the van, the cheaper it is per person.
Also, reservations can be made online for the shuttle between the MSP airport and Saint John’s University https://executiveexpress.hudsonltd.net/res
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.

Signature: __________________________  Date: ____________

Signature: __________________________  Date: ____________

Signature: __________________________  Date: ____________

Signature: __________________________  Date: ____________

Signature: __________________________  Date: ____________
DAY 3 Theme: Changed by the Suffering Servant

Text:
Christ suffered for us (cf. 1 Pt 2:21)

Readings
Is 53:3-11 The man of sorrows accustomed to suffering
Ps 22:12-24 He did not despise the affliction of the afflicted
1Pt 2:21-25 Christ suffered for us
Lk 24:25-27 Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things?

Commentary
The divine paradox is that God can change tragedy and disaster into victory.
He transforms all our sufferings and misfortunes, and the enormity of history’s pain, into a resurrection that encompasses the whole world.

While appearing to be defeated, He is nevertheless the true Victory whom no one and nothing can overcome.

Isaiah’s moving prophecy about the suffering Servant of the Lord was completely fulfilled in Christ. After suffering enormous agony, the Man of Sorrows shall see His offspring.

We are that offspring, born from the Saviour’s suffering. In this way we are made one family in Him.

One can say that Psalm 22 is not only about Jesus, but also for Jesus. The Saviour Himself prayed this psalm on the cross, when He used its desolate opening words: My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

Yet in the second part of the psalm the lamentation, the imploring full of pain, changes into praise of God for His works.

The apostle Peter is a witness of the sufferings of Christ (1 Pt 5:1), which he presents to us as an example: it is to this suffering for the sake of love we are called. Jesus did not curse God, but submitted to Him who judges righteously. His wounds have healed us, and returned us all to the one Shepherd.

information for 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.
Only in the light of the presence of the Lord and His word does the divine purpose of the Messiah’s sufferings become clear. Just as for the disciples on the way to Emmaus, Jesus is our constant companion on the stony road of life, stirring our hearts and opening our eyes to the mysterious plan of salvation.

Christians experience suffering as a result of humanity’s fragile condition; we recognize this suffering in social injustice and situations of persecution. The power of the cross draws us into unity. Here we encounter Christ’s suffering as the source of compassion for and solidarity with the entire human family.

As one contemporary theologian puts it: the closer we come to the cross of Christ, the closer we come to one another.

The witness of Christians together in situations of suffering assumes remarkable credibility.

In our shared solidarity with all who suffer we learn from the crucified suffering servant the lessons of self-emptying, letting go and self-sacrifice.

These are the gifts we need from His Spirit on our way to unity in Him.

Prayer

God of consolation, you have transformed the shame of the cross into a sign of victory.

Grant that we may be united around the Cross of your Son to worship Him for the mercy offered through his suffering.

May the Holy Spirit open our eyes and our hearts, so that we may help those who suffer to experience your closeness; You who live and reign forever and ever.

Please consider the potential you have to do something good for others.

~ M.J. Glauber

“A hug is like a boomerang – you get it back right away.”

~ Bill Keane

Questions for reflection

1. How can our faith help us in our response to long-lasting suffering?

2. What areas of human suffering are unnoticed and belittled today?

3. How can Christians bear witness together to the power of the cross?

There you have the theme for day three from the 2012 Week of Prayer for Unity.

If possible use this study with others because it is in those shared moments with others where we are often able to find that of God.

If that isn’t possible, please consider the concepts that are written here yourself.

Know that others appreciate your presence, especially when they are suffering. Even in their daily lives, in that ordinariness, your company has the potential to give comfort to others.

~ M.J. Glauber

The Fourth of July Fireworks Display

Time for being with friends and family

A National Holiday that gives us a chance to be with friends and family: Please enjoy this time.
Prayer for a gathering of Christians seeking Christian Unity:

L = Leader
C = congregation

“Changed by the Suffering Servant”

L: The cross is the sign of victory. And so we call: we worship You, O Lord!

C: We worship You, O Lord!

L: For Your cross – the cathedral of truth and the court of mercy.

C: We worship You, O Lord!

L: For your cross – the tree of life and the throne of grace.

C: We worship You, O Lord!

L: For your cross – the sign of compassion and the sign of hope.

C: We worship You, O Lord!

L: Lord, You died on the cross to gather into one the dispersed children of God.

May the contemplation of Your cross transform our understanding of suffering, for You live and reign forever and ever.

C: Amen.

“Bearing Witness”

The verb BEAR WITNESS has 2 senses:
1. provide evidence for
2. give testimony in a court of law

Let’s Explore further the Meaning for “Bearing Witness” in a Christian Context:

Provide evidence for

Verbs of telling, asking, ordering, singing

Synonyms:
bear witness; evidence; testify; prove; show ...

“that of God in our lives?”

... and yet this may be almost an impossible task for us to explain the full nature of God. On the other hand, the term: “Bearing Witness” is often used in a Christian context to explain our own experience of God.

Kenosis/self-emptying

If one is empty, then one is also open and able to receive what the Lord has to give.

Christian spiritual life means being animated by the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Christ. The life of holiness to which all believers in Christ are called is one of ever greater resonance to the Spirit of Christ.

That Spirit reminds us that even though "His state was divine, He did not cling to his equality with God but emptied himself to assume the conditions of a slave, and became as men are; and being as all men are, he was humbler yet, even to accepting death, death on a cross..." (Phil. 2:6-8).

If God is understood as Father, Son, Spirit toward us, for us, with us, and in us, then our response to this communion must lie in setting aside, standing apart from or above self-absorption, moving beyond self-preoccupation, self-indulgence, self-fixation. Holiness rests in becoming persons conformed to the image of God in us, being toward and for another, for others and for God.[1]

Our fundamental desire and motivation is for God and the fullness of love, even if we are

Christian Terminology:

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Our fundamental desire and motivation is for God and the fullness of love, even if we are...
not consciously aware of it. Since we do not encounter God directly through our senses and concepts, we are drawn to what we can feel, see and grasp. We expect these things to satisfy us, without realizing that we are drawn to them only because they point to their Creator, the One for whom we truly long.

We may even find our attraction to them becoming compulsive and destructive. This destroys our freedom. We allow these attachments to control our lives.

Eventually, we discover that some attachments are obstacles to our deepest motivation and desire. We want to love God with all our heart and soul and mind, and love one another as ourselves. Yet, we find our hearts given elsewhere, our souls compelled by something else.[2]

Self-emptying is a deliberate attack on our illusions and attachments. It is a turning away from abstraction in favor of what is actually present to us. It is the realization of our human limits. It is immersion in an environment in which our capacities are reduced to nothing and we are at the mercy of God to shape his will in us. An acknowledgement of our humanity before God, that we will always be developing and in process, is the beginning of self-emptying.[3]

Rahner describes self-emptying when he speaks of leading our life such that we forget ourselves for God, when we love him, praise him, and thank him. Spiritual life in grace means that we realize the inner divine life in ourselves; it means waiting for eternity in faith, hope, and love, bearing the darkness of human existence; it means not identifying oneself just with this world.[4]

Self-emptying finds concrete expression in our response to the experience of loss. This can be the loss of a loved one to death, the loss of a job or the loss of status among one’s peers. This can also be experienced as change, such as in the loss of youthful vigor and the signs of advancing age as we approach the middle years of life. [5]

Our children grow up and move out on their own. It is painful to let go of them and the parent-child relationship that is important to us. Yet, from the letting go, the loss of the parent-child relationship, there emerges something new. We discover a parent-adult child relationship that allows a greater depth and reciprocity than was ever possible in the more unidirectional parent-child relationship. The self-transcendence that ultimately enriches everyone involved is only possible by accepting the loss of what was.

The Resurrection was only possible after the Crucifixion. A man cannot enter into the deepest center of himself and pass through that center into God, unless he is able to pass entirely out of himself and empty himself and give himself to other people in the purity of a selfless love.[6]

"Openness" is the result of self-emptying. If one is empty, then one is also open and able to receive what the Lord has to give. It is acceptance of the transcendent, a willingness to go out beyond the present circumstances. Self-emptying is not fruitful unless it is also open to other possibilities. Self-emptying/openness is generative.


Some questions for your reflection and discussion:
1. It seems strange to speak of emptying oneself. What is this “self” of which we are trying to be emptied? What is left when we are emptied of self?

2. It is said that the most basic illusion to which we are given is that we are God. Can you think of any examples of this illusion in your life or in the life of someone close to you?

Why is this illusion so difficult to recognize?

3. Authors speak of a critical difference between an attitude of willfulness and willingness. Consider the difference between these two words and what impact that difference has on the spiritual life.

What does either term have to do with self-emptying?

4. Rahner speaks of not identifying oneself with the world as a significant component of self-emptying; yet, Downey tells us to be toward and for others. How, do we integrate these seemingly two contradictory elements?

5. We have read a lot of nice words about the need to empty ourselves of illusion and a false self. What is required of us in practice? How does one self-empty?

Kenosis: Emptying Self and the Path of Christian Service, this discussion was created by Kevin M. Cronin

Inspirational Quotes made by Nelson Mandela with Matthew 18:1-5, a discussion of the principles and lived Christian example given to us by Nelson Mandela and the Bible for our times by M.J. Glauber

“I learned that courage was not the absence of fear, but the triumph over it. The brave man is not he who does not feel afraid, but he who conquers that fear.”

“It always seems impossible until it’s done.”

“I learned that courage was not the absence of fear, but the triumph over it. The brave man is not he who does not feel afraid, but he who conquers that fear.”

“There is nothing like returning to a place that remains unchanged to find the ways in which you yourself have altered.”

“Resentment is like drinking poison and then hoping it will kill your enemies.”

“The greatest glory in living lies not in never falling,
Inspirational quotes made by Nelson Mandela:

but in rising every time we fall.”

“I am not a saint, unless you think of a saint as a sinner who keeps on trying.”

“If you talk to a man in a language he understands, that goes to his head. If you talk to him in his language, that goes to his heart.”

“As I have said, the first thing is to be honest with yourself. You can never have an impact on society if you have not changed yourself...

Great peacemakers are all people of integrity, of honesty, but humility.”

“(…) when a man is denied the right to live the life he believes in, he has no choice but to become an outlaw.”

Upon reading the quote above, I was reminded of the people Jesus sought out to eat with them. They were not the social elites, but the outcasts. Christ had found something sacred and holy in them that made them worthy. God is the one who is to judge us; it is a step in far into the wrong direction for us to judge others because we are not God. On the other hand, how we treat people may place them in positions they never would have chosen to be in. Have we adequately considered how our actions may affect or impact the lives of others??

“Do not judge me by my successes, judge me by how many times I fell down and got back up again.”

“One of the things I learned when I was negotiating was that until I changed myself, I could not change others.”

“Courage is not the absence of fear — it’s inspiring others to move beyond it.”

“No one is born hating another person because of the color of his skin, or his background, or his religion. People must learn to hate, and if they can learn to hate, they can be taught to love, for love comes more naturally to the human heart than its opposite.”

“It is said that no one truly knows a nation until one has been inside its jails. A nation should not be judged by how it treats its highest citizens, but its lowest ones.”

“After climbing a great hill, one only finds that there are many more hills to climb.”

“As we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same.”

“Overcoming poverty is not a task of charity, it is an act of justice. Like Slavery and Apartheid, poverty is not natural. It is man-
made and it can be overcome and eradicated by the actions of human beings. Sometimes it falls on a generation to be great. YOU can be that great generation. Let your greatness blossom.”

“Nothing is black or white.”

“A leader...is like a shepherd. He stays behind the flock, letting the most nimble go out ahead, whereupon the others follow, not realizing that all along they are being directed from behind.”

“As I walked out the door toward the gate that would lead to my freedom, I knew if I didn't leave my bitterness and hatred behind, I'd still be in prison.”

“Quitting is leading too.”

“I had no epiphany, no singular revelation, no moment of truth, but a steady accumulation of a thousand slights, a thousand indignities and a thousand unremembered moments produced in me an anger, a rebelliousness, a desire to fight the system that imprisoned my people. There was no particular day on which I said, Henceforth I will devote myself to the liberation of my people; instead, I simply found myself doing so, and could not do otherwise.”

“There is no easy walk to freedom anywhere, and many of us will have to pass through the valley of the shadow of death again and again before we reach the mountaintop of our desires”

“You will achieve more in this world through acts of mercy than you will through acts of retribution.”

“One cannot be prepared for something while secretly believing it will not happen.”

“A winner is a dreamer who never gives up”

“We must use time creatively, and forever realize that the time is always ripe to do right.”

“The brave man is not the one who has no fears, he is the one who triumphs over his fears.”

“We must use time creatively, and forever realize that the time is always ripe to do right.”

“There can be no keener revelation of a society's soul than the way in which it treats its children.”

“Within each and everyone of these quotes made by Nelson Mandela, I see a profoundly Christian inspired message of hope and charity. At the 2010 AAIF Biennial Conference, we began to consider Matthew 18:1-5

“At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, “Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?” He called a child, whom he put among them, and said, “Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever becomes humble like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me.”

”We discussed the qualities of children among ourselves at the 2010 AAIF Biennial Conference. In the words of Nelson Mandela, I can almost hear the voice of a parent teaching their beloved child how to cope in this world. His words are filled with wisdom most likely grown from a profound belief in the message that Christ brought to all of us.

In the last quote in the listing of some of the quotes made by Nelson Mandela, he asks us how we treat our children. Mandela states that “there is no keener revelation about a society than the way it treats its children.”

So on one hand we have been told to become as humble as a child in Matthew 18: 1-5 and then we have been asked by Mandela to make a note of how we treat our children. I believe there is a strong correlation between the two statements. It may require us to change our focus and our priorities.

The serious business of children is to play; this is how they learn. I see an openness in little children and a great curiosity within them that allows or rather spurs them on to explore their immediate environment. That environment is the one that God gave them, and they delight in the exploration of that place. This exploration allows them to sense their environment. In this process of exploring, the
child develops physical strength and knowledge. They become little problem solvers and they take delight in figuring out their mini-universe.

Then there is the adult world. At times it may seem to be so far removed from that delightful place where children play and learn about how the world works. Oh yes, children get tired and throw the occasional tantrum; after all, they are human beings who get frustrated, tired or hungry, but they don't yet have the vocabulary to express their needs and frustrations. So the aspect of forgiveness enters into the equation too. Forgiveness for our own tiredness just at the moment our child may also be equally tired, but unable to say simply that they are tired.

As adult human beings we are being asked to be attentive to the needs of infants who lack a vocabulary to ask for what they need. As Christians we are being asked to be attentive to that of God which can be found in the face of those around us. Certainly, we can see that of God in a child or that should be our goal.

Nelson Mandela tells us, “Do not judge me by my successes, judge me by how many times I fell down and got back up again.” Is that not what we see infants doing as they try to learn how to walk. They fall down however many times it takes until they finally learn to walk without always falling down. Of course, we expect every child to be able to walk; our expectations as adult caregivers for their success in being able to learn how to walk matters. We expect basic and normal things for our children. In the process of learning how to walk, I often see two adults near the child. One who stands behind the child to encourage the child to reach a little bit further so they can walk into the open arms of that other adult waiting with a big encouraging smile for them to get to them.

God is waiting for us to “get God’s message.” God is the one behind us encouraging us forward and also the one who is waiting with open arms at what may seem like a long and difficult few steps ahead of us. God encourages us forward in order to reach that love that is only a few steps in front of us. We are all the children of God.

There is that of God all around us. It is for us to seek out that of God.

~ Commentary on some of the quotes of Nelson Mandela and on Matthew 18: 1-5
by M.J. Glauber

“I'm a Stranger Here Myself: Notes on Returning to America After Twenty Years Away” by Bill Bryson

What is the GDP?

GDP represents the Gross Domestic Product. The GDP is the total market value of all final goods and services produced in a country in a given year, equal to total consumer, investment and government spending, plus...
the value of exports, minus the value of imports.

Bill Bryson in his book “I’m a Stranger Here Myself: Notes on Returning to America After Twenty Years Away” asks us to imagine what a trillion dollars is. He explains that the amount of billions or trillions of dollars is far beyond our grasp as ordinary citizens. We have nothing with which to compare this vast amount of money with from our own lived experience.

Bryson notes that “the GDP which was devised in 1930 worked well in a traditional industrial economy. However, things like computer software, telecommunications, financial services, which produce wealth but don’t generally result in a product that you can put on a pallet and ship out to the marketplace don’t work as well using this out-dated system. The greater part of the output from nearly all of the developed nations is in services and ideas. These kinds of products and services are very difficult to measure in economic terms.” Bryson explains that “any kind of economic activity adds to the gross domestic product.

“It doesn’t matter if it is a good activity or a bad activity,” Bryson explains. “In fact, bad activities often generate more GDP than good activities.”

“I was recently in Pennsylvania at the site of a zinc factory whose airborne wastes were formerly so laden with pollutants that they denuded an entire mountainside . . . From a GDP perspective, however, this was wonderful. First there was the gain to the economy from all the zinc the factory had refined and sold over the years. Then there was the gain from the tens of millions of dollars the government must spend to clean up the site and restore the mountain. Finally, there will be a continuing gain from medical treatments for workers and townspeople made chronically ill by living amid all those contaminants. In terms of conventional economic measurement, all of this is gain, not loss . . . In short, the more recklessly we use up natural resources, the more the GDP glows.” Bill Bryson explains.

Bryson points out that “The current national accounting system treats the earth as a business in liquidation.” Quoting an economist from the Atlantic Monthly, Bryson observes that “By the curious standard of the GDP, the nation’s economic hero is a terminal cancer patient who is going through a costly divorce.”

Bryson asks, “So why do we persist with this preposterous gauge of economic performance? Because its the best thing that economists have come up with yet.” And there is the challenge for our times.

That said, I would like to recommend the rest of Bill Bryson’s book, “I’m a Stranger
Here Myself: Notes on Returning to America After Twenty Years Away” because it is insightful and because Bryson has a wonderful sense of humor and an incredible sense of humility. You will also come away from reading his book, “I’m a Stranger Here Myself: Notes on Returning to America After Twenty Years Away” both enlightened and amused. Every aspect of American life is considered.

What you decide to do with the information that you acquire from his observations of America will also be for you to decide. You will be entertained. How you apply the information found in his book for creating a greater sense of unity, and for creating a greater sense of Christian Unity is for you to discover, but I believe that some ideas or resources can be found within it.

~ M.J. Glauber

The Hope of Our Calling inspired by Ephesians 1:18. Oklahoma City provided the many advantages of a center city site with nearby churches for liturgical functions such as the Opening Worship Service and the CADEIO Mass. Archbishop Paul S. Coakley, the local Catholic ordinary, was homilist at the Opening Service at the First United Methodist Church and the celebrant of the CADEIO Eucharist at St. Joseph’s Old Cathedral. (CADEIO is the Catholic Association of Diocesan Ecumenical and Interreligious Officers.)

Workshops Sponsored by the NWCU
There were nine Workshops sponsored by the NWCU covering a wide range of topics. I attended the workshop on The Hope of Eternal Life: Common Statement – U.S. Lutheran-Catholic Dialogue presented by Dr. Michael Root who is Professor of Systematic Theology at the
Catholic University of America in Washington, DC, a recent Catholic convert from the Lutheran Church and member of the International Lutheran-Roman Catholic Dialogue. Among the issues he discussed were continuity in the communion of saints, prayer for and about the dead, meaning of death, purgation, and the promise of the resurrection.

I also attended the workshop on Young Adulthood Interrupted: Is There a Place in Today’s Churches for Young Adults? presented by the Rev. Dr. Eileen Lindner (PC-USA). She is the editor of the Yearbook of American and Canadian Churches, and based her observations on the Pew Study of Religion as it applies to Young Adults, identified as Millennials (born between 1980 and 1995).

The third national workshop I attended was on the subject of Native American Spirituality presented by Bishop Steven Charleston (Episcopal) a citizen of the Choctaw Nation. He focused on the forced migration of Native Americans to Oklahoma and other parts of the Southwest under President Andrew Jackson. Bishop Charleston showed the sharp contrast between the spirituality and world view of traditional western Christianity and the spirituality and culture of the Native Americans for whom Oklahoma is now a homeland.

CADEIO Program


Fr. Tom Baima presented Cleaning the House before the Guests Arrive: Intra-religious Dialogue as preparation for Inter-Religious Engagement. Fr. Baima is Vice Rector for Academic Affairs and Professor in the Department of Systematic Theology at Mundelein Seminary in the Archdiocese of Chicago.

Evaluation
In conversations with other long time participants of the NWCU, we agreed this one stood out as outstanding. It was evident that the collaboration of the National Planning Board members focused on the overall quality of the workshop and each offering was well worth the time and effort to be there. The NWCU has come a long way. It is better organized, more substantive, and shows a willingness to share speakers on a common agenda based on the topics to be treated. Places of worship were within easy walking distance and transportation was provided abundantly.

For the first time in my memory there was even free transportation to and from the airport!

The future of the ecumenical movement looks bright judging from the many new ecumenical officers appointed by their bishops and who come with pastoral experience as well as theological preparation.

Father Ernest Falardeau, SSS

Reprinted with permission of Father Falardeau

Theme: Changed by the Suffering Servant

Lessons Learned from Nelson Mandela:

David Crane shares his views on Nelson Mandela’s legacy which would help us make a small but positive mark in our society.

Here they are:

1. Determination in fighting for the right thing.
2. Stay the course
3. Never sell out on your beliefs.
4. Be ready to change your tactics.
5. Know the facts.
6. Admit our mistakes.
7. Reconcile with your enemies.
8. Sharing with others.
9. Lead from the front, i.e. by example.
10. Letting go.
11. Smile

If applied, these lessons would make the world a better place and for that may God bless Mandela and may his lived example continue to inspires for many more years to come in the future.

By David Crane, July 2011
Mixed Sheep in the Church

by Jason Weirich

Do not be confused with the title of this article. This article is not about sheep that have been cloned or about sheep that are part sheep/part-unicorn. Sorry, I do not write fables!

This article is about couples (married or unmarried) that belong to two different flocks (churches). Many of us refer to this as “interchurch relationships” and the couples are usually a mix of Protestant and Catholic or Orthodox and Protestant. For my wife and me, she is Roman Catholic and I am Protestant. To be honest, I struggle with calling myself Protestant because it means “one whom protests” or “one whom protests Catholicism”. I am not against Catholicism.

Additionally, this article will discuss ways that churches (particularly referring to pastors) can be more respectful and resourceful to “mixed sheep”. Many pastors (including priests and other Christian leaders) merely assume that everyone in your family has the same denominational ties just because everyone attends the same church.

Let’s start with the family dynamics of mixed sheep. They may attend one or two churches. If you attend two different churches, then you will have to deal with two different theologies/traditions that you are engaging in on a weekly basis. When I was in ministry, my wife and I used to attend Catholic Church and the church that I was on staff at. We encountered many people whom were okay with us attending two churches. We also encountered people whom questioned our motives and our relationship with God (and each other) because we attended two churches. The biggest objector to our dual-church attending was often other pastors, including senior pastors. We will tackle this later on in the article.

Another challenge that mixed sheep face is family expectations. It is often the case that family members (parents and in-laws) will push for baptism, confirmation, etc and not realize that they are offending family. They are pushing their expectations (generations of the same tradition) without realizing that this interchurch couple (mixed sheep) worships and lives in Christian community quite differently. The mixed sheep deal with pressures and prejudices that the typical singular-church attending family will never have to face.

Children pose another challenge to being an interchurch family. Do we get them baptized in this church or confirmed in that church? Do we teach them the structured prayers of one tradition or teach them how to pray without a guide? Do we attend my church often or only every other Sunday? Do our teenagers attend youth group or do we skip youth ministries because they have been attending a private Christian school?

It all comes down to Jesus.

Is this my Sunday school response? No. Not even close.

Jesus is the Good Shepherd (John 10). The Shepherd (Jesus) knows his sheep by name. He knows each of us BY NAME. He will guide us past wolves, false leaders, and guide us to life. Life = peace, joy, purpose, fulfillment.

It all comes down to Jesus.

I tell you this because those of you whom are “mixed sheep” have or are probably experiencing issues with church leadership. Many of our church
models of discipleship today focus heavily on church membership and baptism. I am not knocking either of these; however, they are not the final chapter in the Christian’s journey. We are called to live out the Great Commission—to make disciples of all the nations. We are called to live out the Great Commandment—love God with all of our heart, mind, and soul.

It all comes down to Jesus.

Church doctrine has its time and place but it should not replace our need for Jesus. Church doctrine and polity keep our churches “in order” but it does not touch the darkest places in our soul.

I want the real Jesus. The table flippin’ Jesus whom stood up for injustice and the broken hearted. The loving Jesus who welcomed children into his arms when the Pharisees tried to shoo the children away because “they were interrupting Jesus”.

If churches want to provide adequate pastoral care to mixed sheep and their families, then they need to get over themselves (their agendas too) and give the sheep the real Jesus. Don’t worry about folks converting to your church or having their child double-baptized. Love the mixed sheep. Ask questions about why they believe what they believe.

Ask questions about how they celebrate life events in two different churches. Pray for them.

Church leaders, pastors, priests…..listen up. You set the tone here. If you create divisions in your church between your church and another within Christianity, your flock will do the same. There is no perfect church, no perfect denomination. There is a perfect God.

Here are some suggestions for cultivating cross-church unity in your congregation.

❖ Try to meet with leaders from other churches. Make friends. Network. Don’t view the meetings as a time to boast about your church’s successes. Meet with other leaders for encouragement.

❖ Allow some guest speakers to come to your church whom are NOT FROM YOUR DENOMINATION. Yes, this is risky. Yes, their preaching style may be different. So what! Their style may reach out to people that your preaching style does not.

❖ Share resources with churches in your community. Plan a few events together. Let one of your experienced staff members aide the new church in planting ministries.

If you are part of an interchurch relationship (mixed sheep); here are some suggestions for you:

❖ Find some friends whom respect your unique relationship. If your friends cannot respect that, maybe you need new friends.

❖ Find a church (or two) that welcomes you. If the church you are attending is anti-everything except their church; then go find a new church.

❖ Keep your focus on what really matters as an individual and as a couple.

Submitted by Jason Weirich to be printed in the ARK. Jason lives in Pennsylvania with his beautiful wife and daughter. He enjoys coffee, reading, spending time with his family, and providing resources to others through his online ministry (4Cministries.com).

Jason received his B.A in Youth Ministries from Mount Vernon Nazarene University and a M.A in Spiritual Formation from Northwest Nazarene University. Jason’s inspiration comes from Jesus. He desires for us all to heal from our wounds. Jason is part of an interchurch family.
In her letter to the editor of the local newspaper, Sister Mary, who resides in the U.S.A., explains:

"Persons with a compassionate heart are wise to be savvy about language use."

Sister Mary points to "Our United Nations Development Programme" that had been referred to in a recent letter to the editor through which the writer had brought the readers attention to "Our United Nations Development Programme. Sister Mary had been positively inspired by what that earlier letter said.

In her letter, Sister Mary notes that “Our United Nations Development Programme urges us not to use "poor" as a name to talk about a group of human persons."

Sister Mary observes that the use of "Poor as a noun is an early move in depersonalizing which 'greases the skids' toward demonization - of which we have far too much already. And each of us is much more than just an economic entity, right?"

We can all agree with this statement. All of us have many roles and we have a depth and breath to our lived experience as human beings which the majority of the people around us cannot perceive. That is unless they are willing to "Listen.... with the ear of the heart."

Actually, all of those people around us have an equal depth and breath to their personalities too.

Sister Mary explains, "We have a near desperate need to remember that we are all human persons in one human family.” I paused there to ponder how insightful this one sentence is at this point in our human history, a shared human history.

Sister Mary explains: “Thus: poor people, poor persons, or in keeping with the persons-first effort among people with disabilities: persons who are poor, people who are disenfranchised, young people, persons who are rich.... elderly ...in need."

I note to myself that some disabilities are visible and that other disabilities lie deep below the surface. We are complex; we meaning all of humanity. There is a beauty and a richness in this complexity, I thought.

Sister Mary adds: "It took me decades to learn this, but language is really important, built on a mountain of assumptions. May we not lose our sense of shared humanity."

~ Sister Mary
Letter to the Editor in May 2012

I agree with what Sister Mary has written as a letter to the editor. "We have a near desperate need to remember that we are all human persons in one human family."

There may have been times when all of us have been on the receiving end of this form of depersonalization that has lead to a form of demonization. No body likes to be categorized, especially in a negative way. It isn’t a pleasant place to find yourself when it happens to you and you are on the receiving end.

Besides we recognize that those who are “casting the stones,” as not being so perfect themselves. So what are they doing?

Once language gets out of hand, even the perpetrators of the depersonalization that has contributed to the demonization of others also become victims of the effects of this kind of language.

They don’t understand what they are doing. It is easy to rationalize that if many people believe and act the same way that it is therefore the right course of action. All that we are being asked to do is to LOVE.

Sister Mary points out, ""It took me decades to learn this, but language is really important, built on a mountain of assumptions. May we not lose our sense of shared humanity."

Without checking out our assumptions, we may simply go with the flow, and it is easy, so easy to just go with the flow. Sister Mary indicates, “May we not lose our sense of shared humanity."

In the Rule of Benedict, we discover very, very close to the beginning of the Rule a basic premise: "Listen .... with the ear of your heart."

How many times have any of us lead with an assumption of that other person, fueled by incomplete information, that grows from nothing more than the negative self-talk that we
have either heard or even that we say to ourselves??

If, first, we stopped to listen with the ear of our heart ...... well, just think about all of the positive outcomes that could develop.

And what does the Bible say on this topic?

Colossians 3:15
“And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful.” (KJV)

Proverbs 11:9
“The hypocrite with his mouth destroys his neighbor, but through knowledge the righteous will be delivered.” (NKJV)

Proverbs 15: 31-33
“If you listen to constructive criticism, you will be at home among the wise. If you reject discipline, you only harm yourself; but if you listen to correction, you grow in understanding. Fear of the Lord teaches wisdom; humility precedes honor.” (NLT)

1 Peter 3:8
“Finally, all of you should be of one mind. Sympathize with each other. Love each other as brothers and sisters. Be tenderhearted, and keep a humble attitude.” (NLT)

Matthew 18:15 “If your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother.” (NASB)

Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 “Take Time: Take time to think- It is the source of all power. Take time to read- It is the fountain of wisdom. Take time to play- It is the source of perpetual youth. Take time to be quiet- It is the opportunity to seek God. Take time to be aware- It is the opportunity to help others. Take time to love and be loved- It is God’s greatest gift. Take time to laugh- It is the music of the soul. Take time to be friendly- It is the road to happiness. Take time to dream- It is what the future is made of. Take time to pray- It is the greatest power on earth. Take time to give- It is too short a day to be selfish. Take time to work- It is the price of success. There is a time for everything”.

Finding a sandy beach in the City of Chicago in the summer:
For the importance of play and creativity - Please refer to: Ecclesiastes 3:1-8

Please take a moment to consider these things. ~ M.J. Glauber

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

Chimamanda Adichie: The danger of a 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.

~ M.J. Glauber

China Christian Council hosted WCC meeting in China

30.05.12 Press Release

The World Council of Churches (WCC) will, for the first time since its 1948 inauguration, be holding its first meeting in Shanghai and Nanjing in the People’s Republic of China, focusing on the unique situation of Chinese churches and ecumenical relations in the region.

The meeting which took place from 9 to 16 June, was organized by the WCC Commission of Churches on International Affairs (CCIA) and hosted by the China Christian Council (CCC) and the National Committee of the Three Self Patriotic Movement of the Protestant Churches in China. The CCC, with its 23 million members, is the largest member constituency of the WCC in Asia.

The WCC general secretary, Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit will attend the meeting. This will be his first visit to China since he took office in 2010.

The main deliberations of the CCIA meeting took place in Nanjing. They included a seminar on “Understanding China” invoking diverse perspectives on market reforms and development in socialist systems, poverty eradication and environmental sustainability, China’s religions and religious polices, churches in China and other themes.

“This was the fifty first meeting of the CCIA. The meeting was an historic event as it was the first time since the inception of the WCC that an international ecumenical gathering took place in China, and was hosted by a WCC member church in China,” said Dr Mathews George Chunakara, director of the CCIA.

The event began with meetings in Shanghai, with Sunday worship services in local Chinese congregations, and were followed by visits to experience urban and rural models of life in the context of modern China.

The final meeting of the CCIA in follow up to the WCC 10th Assembly, which will take place in 2013 in Korea, was to discuss future programme directions and significance of international affairs in the ecumenical movement. This was to also include discussions on priorities for public policy and global advocacy initiatives in the emerging geo-political situation.


Commission of the Churches on International Affairs

The tasks of the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs (CCIA) include:

- advice on public policy and advocacy
- advice on programmatic directions, including analysis of systemic issues that underlie injustice and social transformation
- addressing particular programmatic and policy issues, with a special emphasis on the aim of promoting a peaceful and reconciling role of religion in conflicts and on the promotion of inter-religious dialogue as a framework for community building, faith sharing and understanding.

The CCIA oversees the WCC programmes Public witness: addressing power, affirming peace; Justice, diakonia and responsibility for creation; and Inter-religious dialogue and cooperation.

The CCIA dates back to 1946. However, its scope was much extended in 2006, when its merger with three other WCC advisory bodies was decided: the Commission of the Churches on Diakonia and Development (CCDD), the Commission of the Churches on Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation (CJPC), and the Reference Group on Inter-religious Relations and Dialogue (IRRD).

Structure

The Commission of the Churches on International affairs (CCIA) comprises 38 people nominated by churches and regional ecumenical organizations to advise the WCC. These men and women from around the world are church leaders, pastors, laypersons and academics with expertise on areas relevant to the commission. They usually meet every eighteen months.

Working groups on specific topics come together and stay in contact in-between commission meetings, mainly through the internet. They thus respond to the challenge of providing WCC staff and governing bodies with timely advice despite the complexity of issues.

Working groups are not established on a permanent basis but respond to urgent challenges faced by the WCC and the ecumenical movement. For the period between October 2010 and the WCC Assembly in October 2013, four working groups have been set up:

- Peace and Security
- Dignity and Rights of Migrants and Migrant Workers
- Freedom of Religion
- Peace in the Community, with a special focus on the Millennium Development Goals

The working groups are composed of commissioners, plus experts on the respective topics. Although some of the names of the working groups bring to mind existing projects or programmes of the WCC, the contents cut across the different areas of WCC work.

Methods

Particularly in the WCC programme areas of public witness, justice and diakonia, and inter-religious dialogue and cooperation, the CCIA offers an ecumenical forum, information and leadership on national and international problems to WCC member churches, their agencies and other ecumenical partners.

The CCIA provides a platform for information-sharing and joint advocacy on critical situations and on opportunities to support initiatives for peacemaking, justice and overcoming poverty.

The CCIA also assists the WCC in preparing public statements, appeals to state authorities and messages of support and solidarity to churches and others engaged in struggles for justice and peace. It helps the WCC governing bodies identify challenges to the churches and to guide them to shape a coherent ecumenical response.

http://www.oikoumene.org/en/who-are-we/organization-structure/consultative-bodies/international-affairs.html
MANY THANKS
To God; For Christ who suffered and died for our sins; and to the creators of the Week of Prayer For Christian Unity, The Christian Principles behind Bearing Witness and to Kenosis/Self-Emptying, for Kevin M. Cronin who has considered the possibilities within the practice of Kenosis; for the lived example of Nelson Mandela, who made a positive impact on the world; for the thoughts of David Crane; For the shared lived experience explaining what it may be like to be in an interchurch marriage by Pastor Jason Weirich, including our role and responsibility; for the AAIF Board Members; for the AAIF Conference Planners; for the AAIF Pastoral advisors; for my family and especially for my husband, Pete, whose on-going support and encouragement make the ARK possible.

~ M.J. Glauber

“May we not lose our sense of shared humanity.”
~ Sister Mary