

THE ARK

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A·A·I·F®

American Association of
Interchurch Families

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Interchurch Families:

Christian Unity Made Visible in our Households



**The Theme for
the 2012 AAIF Biennial Conference was
Interchurch Families: "Listen...with the ear of your heart"**

**The 2012 AAIF
Conference took
place
From July 13 to
July 15
in Collegeville,
Minnesota at Saint
John's University**

AAIF members offer their
time and lived experiences
through their shared
stories so that AAIF can
fulfill becoming the
"Resource Group" which is

how we describe our
ministry to interchurch
couples and families.
Please feel free to contact
AAIF Members through
aaif.co.chair@gmail.com

The next AAIF National
Conference will take place
in 2016. Between the 2012
AAIF National Conference
and when we meet again
in 2016, AAIF will be
seeking a way forward that
addresses the needs of
our church denominations,
in the 21st Century, and
the ways that we are all

inter-related as one
people, all of whom have
been created in the
likeness of God.

L'Osservatore Romano
wrote an article about the
2012 AAIF Conference in
Collegeville, Minnesota.

It can be found at:
[http://www.vatican.va/
news_services/or/or_quo/
160q01.pdf](http://www.vatican.va/news_services/or/or_quo/160q01.pdf)

on page 6 of that issue of
L'Osservatore Romano

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Contact Information for AAIF:

Are you interested in meeting and talking to other interchurch families in your city between AAIF Biennial

Conferences?

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PLEASE SEE

WWW.AIFUSA.ORG

For membership information and other pertinent updates please contact:

aaif.co.chair@gmail.com

AAIF Board Member elections will be held within the next two months by mail. If you are interested in being on the AAIF Board and you are a member of AAIF, please notify Lamar and Diane Burton

at lamarb52@hotmail.com

"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](http://www.gustavus.edu/faith/resources.php)

Introduction:

Dr. Darrell Jodock began his presentation to the A.A.I.F. members attending the 2012 AAIF Conference on Friday, July 13, 2012 by pointing out that Garrison Keillor had begun his career in radio on the campus of Saint John's University. Garrison Keillor has continued in radio and has become a well known and popular radio personality. I have created this report of Dr. Jodock's presentation using my own notes. I recognize that I may have inadvertently omitted or misunderstood precisely what was said, but I have tried to re-create as best that I can an account of what was shared

that evening in Collegeville, Minnesota in Christian terms can be described as being composed of Swedish Lutherans and German Catholics. In fact, Garrison Keillor, building upon these two religious groups as the foundation of the theme for his radio program, has created much of his radio program around these two ethnic American groups who live in Minnesota in the fictional town of "Lake Wobegon."

Keillor mentions that "the Fourth Wiseman" from Minnesota was bringing "a covered dish" to share with Christ, much like what can be found at many of the church gatherings in Minnesota and all across the United States. We all laugh with Garrison Keillor because it is true; many church gatherings involve bringing food prepared at home to share with the rest of the church community.

Background:

Dr. Jodock pointed out that the Lutheran Church is the third largest denomination in the world. He noted that the Lutheran Church of today is made up of members who inhabit almost every continent in the world.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church of America is also the third largest Protestant Church in the U.S.A.; the E.L.C.A., of which Dr. Jodock is a member. The E.L.C.A. is a separate entity from the Missouri Synod Lutheran Church.

The E.L. C. A. is gospel oriented, ordains women clergy or pastors, is part of the Lutheran World Federation, the National Council of Churches and the World Council of Churches. One of the goals that the E.L. C. A. pursues is a model of ecumenism called "Full Communion" of which the E.L. C. A. currently shares with six churches: the Presbyterian Church USA, the Reformed Church in America, the United Church of Christ, the Episcopal Church, the Moravian Church and the United Methodist Church.

"Full Communion" is when two churches develop a relationship based on a common confessing of the Christian Faith and a mutual recognition of baptism and the sharing of the Lord's Supper. The state of being in "Full Communion" does not mean that the churches merge, but rather by reaching an understanding and the creation of agreements based greatly upon the respect for differences.

I thought that what Dr. Jodock gave as an explanation of what is and is not "Full Communion" mimics in some ways, if not in all ways, a marriage of two people whether they are interchurch or same church. Although united by the bonds of marriage that creates a single unit, each partner in any marriage retains their own

identity within that marriage. Each partner in a marriage brings their own personal gifts and talents to that relationship which creates the whole and complete unit we call family.

Dr. Jodock explained that these denominations which are in “Full Communion” with each other may worship jointly, exchange clergy, and share a commitment to evangelism, witness and service in the world.

A central document to Lutherans is the “Augsburg Confession.” In Article VII of the Augsburg Confession, it states that “the true identity of the Church” is present where the gospel is rightly preached and the sacraments are rightly administered.

The E.L.C.A. is committed to this model of full communion as an authentic expression of Christian Unity. The E.L.C.A. has the largest social service network in the U.S.A.; Dr. Jodock also pointed out that the E.L.C.A. has an excellent international relief program which allowed them to be able to quickly address the needs of Tsunami Victims in the recent past.

Three Interlocking Principles of the E.L.C. A.:

Dr. Jodock noted that there are three interlocking principles of the E.L.C. A. that influence many of their practices, behaviors and attitudes.

First, there is the “Gospel

Principle” which infers that humans are not in charge of their relationship with God.

Dr. Jodock explained that for Martin Luther, it was problematic to believe that God had a passive role in our lives. Luther was scrupulous about his own self-examination. **Luther found it difficult to convince himself that he had done enough.**

To clarify this dilemma for us that Luther had considered in depth, Dr. Jodock gave the example of a foster child who was told that if he could prove himself worthy then he would be adopted by his foster parents after a trial period during which time, the foster child would prove himself to be perfect enough in the eyes and the opinion of his foster parents so that they would adopt him as their own child. Finding this to be an impossible task, the child “messed” up over and over again during that trial period. The foster parents rejected the child at the end of the trial period because they had found him to be unworthy.

The social services agency needed to find a new home and foster parents for the older child who had probably reached the age of 13 years or so already. Placing older children with families who are willing to adopt them can be extremely difficult. The social services agency called all of the candidates who met their criteria as being acceptable parents, but they couldn’t find

a family for this rejected foster child.

As a last resort, the social services agency contacted a couple who would normally have been considered far too old to become adoptive parents to see if they would take in the child, and they agreed. In fact, the older couple, believing that this may be their only chance to get a child that they could adopt, agreed wholeheartedly to take this child into their home.

The social services agency continued to monitor that foster child’s progress. He did better in his school work. Although he wasn’t perfect, they were able to note improvement. The child had made enough improvement that the social services agency wanted to know what had made the difference; they spoke to the older couple who had taken in the child.

The older couple explained that because they had considered this child to be their only chance to become parents that they had openly welcomed the child and told the child that he didn’t have to prove himself worthy to them in order for them to adopt him as their child.

The child knew that he would be adopted into this family even if he made mistakes or “messed things up a bit.”

The older couple hadn’t placed any conditions on the

child requiring that he needed to prove that he would be worthy to become their child. They simply set about the task of being the best parents that they could be for the child they had been given, and this approach had worked.

The conditions that had been placed on the child in the previous foster home which required him to prove themselves to be worthy had been anxiety producing and counterproductive. The child never could live up to the foster parents' expectations; it was an impossible task. Whereas, the open and complete acceptance of the child from the very beginning of the relationship by the older couple proved to be far more beneficial for everyone.

In **Romans 1**, Dr. Jodock found that **the righteousness of God is from God**. It is not for humans to judge the worthiness of others. God takes the initiative. Humans do not take the first step, God does.

The older couple technically didn't qualify to become step parents because of their advanced age, and yet they had succeeded where others couldn't. The social service agency decided that they should ask the older couple what they thought had allowed them to become successful parents for this child others had rejected.

The older couple told the

social services agency that when the child had first arrived that they had told him that **“You are our child no matter what.”**

That one statement set the scene and created a foundation upon which a genuine relationship could begin from the moment that the child had arrived to live with them. This story models a restored and healed relationship with God. Dr. Jodock explained that “Only God can heal the sin. **Sin is being ‘curved into oneself’**. It is God's grace that restores relationship with others. God's grace allows us to create and to restore community.”

Dr. Jodock explained that “the E.L.C.A. is based on this Gospel Principle which affects everything else. The Gospel means **the ‘Good News’ of what God has done, is doing and will do.**”

We don't have to do anything to deserve God's love and care. Because we are not in charge, nothing about us is serious. It is within this concept that a sense of joy and humor comes into being and it is a gift from God.

Dr. Jodock presented us with the term: **“Adiaphora.”** He explained that “it is a concept of church where there are many important things, but not all are essential elements of church.” Dr. Jodock explained that “Church is a community of believers where

‘The ‘Word’ is preached and ‘The Sacrament’ is received.” Dr. Jodock explained that “This concept opens the structure of worship in the church so that church can accommodate cultural diversity. Church includes people, word and sacrament.”

Dr. Jodock indicated that “during the discussions related to the creation of ‘the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of the Justification of Faith’ that both the Lutherans and the Roman Catholics had come to an understanding that they both believe that **‘God takes the initiative.’**”

Dr. Jodock gave us an image of how this justification takes place. This “Now” aspect in the relationship allows us to be simultaneously justified and ‘not acting perfectly as human beings.’ Dr. Jodock added that “some may refer to these imperfect human actions as being a sinner.”

This explanation of the role of justification is an idea or principle upon which the church relies. This concept removes condemnation, identifies differences so that the role of justification can therefore be found to be not church dividing.

The second principle of the E.L.C.A. is the “Incarnational Principle.”

Dr. Jodock referred us to **John 1:1-14** as our starting point for

“Living with Limits and a Sense of Humor: A Lutheran View of Intra-Christian Relations.” being able to understand the “Incarnational Principle.” God became human in the form of Jesus. Jesus was fully human and fully divine. God is shown to us through our interactions with other humans, earthly creatures and all of nature. The divine can be observed working through human interactions. We need each other to be able to see that of God and God’s Light in the world around us.

Everyone, everything is a gift from God although we may perceive these gifts as coming through other means such as people, creatures, a government agency and so forth.

Dr. Jodock noted that much Protestant Reformation Theology had been influenced by “the Swiss Reformation” which had focused its concerns primarily on the issue of idolatry.

The effort to move away from what was perceived to be a form of idolatry brought about the removal of statues, paintings and many forms of early Christian art from “the Swiss” influenced form of Reformation. Some of these art forms have been retrieved from fields and were brought to “the Cloisters” of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in NYC. The “Swiss” influenced Reformation also carried with it the concept that humans can’t convey that of God. The E.L.C.A. believes that God can be conveyed in many ways.

Dr. Jodock clarified that “Deism” is a belief that God set up or created the world, then God leaves the world and all of humanity to their own devices. However, God will judge humanity in the end.

Dr. Jodock noted that Martin Luther had struggled and worried about the absence of God. From this search for God at work in the world we live in, the E.L.C.A. has a distinctive image of God, our God who gets His hands and feet dirty. Humanity seeks “Peace and Wholeness.” God influences humanity in their search for this divine “peace and wholeness”, but God doesn’t force humanity to act.

Luther came to believe that God is right here among us. We are needed. All of us are called to serve our neighbors and the community. God doesn’t have a specific plan for us. Rather God has a “goal” for humanity, for all of us.

Dr. Jodock pointed out that “Wisdom” is/was an important theme for Lutherans and Martin Luther. **Humanity is asked to address “How do we make things better?”** Therefore, the Lutheran concept regarding the “Incarnational Principle” is based on the concept that God works with humans and all creatures. By taking on human flesh, God came to us in human form as Christ Jesus who lived and interacted with the rest of humanity and creation. The

divine works through human actions and more specifically through human interactions with others and with all of creation.

The third principle of the E.L.C.A. is the “Cautionary Principle.” As human beings, we can’t possibly know everything that we would like to know. Our success isn’t assured ahead of time. **“God doesn’t reveal enough to satisfy our quest to know everything, but only what is necessary for us to know.”** This seems to be one of the foundational concepts guiding Lutherans so that they must be cautious in what they claim to be the absolute truth.

Dr. Jodock pointed out that many situations have no good answers. In the Psalms, we read the questions that have been asked for which there was no action and no clear response. **We must live with unanswered questions.** No human being is able to answer these questions in an authoritative way because there is no answer. Or rather, the answer confuses the human form of answer with human traits and authority, but God’s answer isn’t a human answer that always uses a logic with which we may be familiar.

Dr. Jodock explained that Lutherans think about what God’s Truth may be, but that Lutherans do not claim to

have all of the Truth. It would seem then that for Lutherans that the “Cautionary Principle” allows them to seek that of God while recognizing their own human limitations.

A time for questions followed:

- Dr. Jodock explained that one’s position in the world which is also known as “Believer’s Success” or “the prosperity gospel” is actually at the opposite end of the spectrum that Jesus modeled for the world. Jesus suffered, the Disciples suffered and they were keenly aware of the suffering of others. This kind of theological perspective allows the believer to acknowledge suffering in the world and in their own lived experiences. It may be that through our suffering that we are able to see that of God in the world around us more clearly.
- “The “Rapture Idea” is also on the opposite end of the spectrum from the belief’s that Lutheran’s hold,” Dr. Jodock noted. Disciples are called to be with those who suffer.
- Limits can’t be set on God’s Saving Abilities. There are no known limits on God’s ability.
- The central doctrines of the Lutheran Church are “Relational.” The doctrines are explanations of relationships that illuminate

that of God in our lived experiences as human beings. Relationships are essential to being able to find that of God in the world. We are not able to uncover God in isolation, but through our interactions with others.

- Paradoxes exist. Our vocabulary is limited; words can be and are contradictory or may appear to be contradictory so we must look past the words to the relationship.

We are called to pass God’s gifts on to others. Dr. Jodock gave the example by sharing with us a question asked by Rabbi Grunberg; “**How do people act after they have experienced community?**” The term “Triumphalism” simply doesn’t work for modeling that of God in community, where as, “**Compassion**” is a **channeling of the divine into the community.** This should be the criterion for our behavior.”

- These Lutheran Principles leave an open end to our actions which will or may make it possible and necessary for us to work toward God’s goals for us rather than our own goals.
- “**I don’t know.**” No single person is expected to have all of the answers. Wisdom is found through dialogue and interactions with others. Interacting with others is what makes people whole

and able to work well according to God’s Divine Light.

- This is not to say “That anything goes.” Some ideas are good; some ideas aren’t good. We are called to distinguish what is good or not, and this is done in community with others and through our daily interactions with the rest of humanity.
- As human beings, we are not the ones in charge. We are called to have a sense of humor about ourselves. This concept is one that may need to be explored further for the potential for growth to be found in it.
- This kind of faith calls for moral courage to be able to act decisively in a way that is of benefit to others. We are called to discern that which is propaganda in the world we live in. Dr. Jodock gave the lived example of Dietrich Bonhoeffer who made the hard choice to serve “Peace and Justice.”
- When we are drawn out of ourselves, this is where we encounter that of God. We can’t be humble by ourselves alone. We must be drawn out of ourselves by the needs of the world.
- Human beings don’t know everything.

“Living with Limits and a Sense of Humor: A Lutheran View of Intra-Christian Relations.”

• As humans we often wish for miracles. However, it is humanity that channels God through their actions and interactions with others and all of creation.

The gathered community of AAIF Members asked Dr. Jodock to explain the difference between Heaven and Hell. Dr. Jodock gave an example which he referred to as Shalom. In Hell, all of the people there had stiff arms which projected straight outward from their bodies. There was a banquet spread before them, but they were all starving because they couldn't bend their arms to bring the food to their mouths.

So what was Heaven like then, you may wonder.

Certainly it would be far better than Hell where everyone had stiff arms so they could feed themselves even though a banquet was spread before them.

Upon observing Heaven, as the story goes, the viewer saw that all the people also had stiff arms. Likewise, there was banquet set before them. However, in Heaven, with their stiff arms, they found that they could feed each other. All of them had plenty of food to eat because they each fed the others. Heaven was found through the interactions of the people there.

Through the stories, examples of how to live, I was able to better envision the concepts that Dr. Jodock was sharing with us. Dr. Jodock explained

that many of Martin Luther's sermons had been repeated in taverns among the people.

Dr. Jodock pointed out that for Lutherans a marriage covenant is a mutual promise between two people. They have made themselves husband and wife through their covenant made with each other. This is a slightly different attitude from the concept of a sacrament. The spouses are to be channels of graciousness to each other.

Marriage is a microcosm to the larger community. Interchurch Families have often discussed this relationship which we refer to as “The Domestic Church” or “The Little Church of the Home.” Dr. Jodock gave as an example Martin Luther's relationship with his wife Katie. They were equals.

Martin Luther had taught his wife, Katie, Latin. She became the executor of his estate; it was unheard of at that period in time to have a woman be an executor.

Martin Luther and his wife, “Katie” modeled what it meant to be a couple. Although each had their own strengths and duties; they were equals within the marriage. This may have been one of the greatest, and also perhaps little acknowledged gifts that Luther and his wife gave to the world; they had modeled what it meant to be a couple by the way that they lived their life together.

Using this example given to us by Martin Luther and his wife, Katie, we note that

couples have a vocation together. They have a calling to serve together as a couple and as individuals.

Martin Luther had been uncomfortable and suspicious of the term “Obedience to God” if it meant that a believer forgot their neighbor. God is found in relationship with all of humanity, our neighbors all around the globe.

Dr. Jodock explained that for the E.L.C.A., their ecumenical role is an intentional ecumenism. He indicated that **“We need to respect different gifts. This is a lay movement where we put our feet on the ground.”**

Unfortunately, ecumenism “may have taken a turn” in recent times. It may have been chilled out by “Caution.” We are distracted by societal struggles that have filtered over into our churches, and which seem to be affecting just about all denominations within the USA according to recent “Pew Research and Statistics.”

It will be for us to forge a new path that is suited to the issues and circumstances that we are encountering as ecumenists in the 21st Century.

Report created for the American Association of Interchurch Families. from my personal notes, taken during Dr. Darrell Jodock's presentation on Friday, July 13, 2012 at Saint John's University.

~ Mary Jane Glauber

Ecumenism in a “World of Change”

Speaker: Dr. Donald Ottenhoff,

*Executive Director,
Collegetown Institute for
Ecumenical and Cultural
Research; Collegetown,
Minnesota*

The Institute is an autonomous part of the 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.

The Episcopal House of Prayer is located next to the Ecumenical Institute; both are located on the property of Saint John's University. This helps to illuminate the centuries long Benedictine tradition of holding values of hospitality along with an ecumenical perspective and approach to finding that of God.



Dr. Ottenhoff began his

presentation by asking us to share what we perceive and have observed about the status of church in American Society and what the reality to which any and all Ecumenical Efforts need to respond to that exists in our American Culture at this time in our human history.

Dr. Ottenhoff was modeling for us the art of listening before he began to share his views.

He asked us, **“What do we give our time to as an American Community?”**

We all noted that church membership has dropped in almost every denomination according to the Pew Research and Report regarding church attendance.

Technology has changed our world view. We are being constantly bombarded by information. However, what we get as news reports are actually only a series of “information bubbles.”

Frequently we only hear one side of an issue through the media sources of our own choosing. We observed that we seem to be living in a very polarized society. This carries over into how we view church, and how we perceive the role that church, should play in our daily lives.

Martin E. Marty noted in a recent written report that “The offense caused by denominational hostility is less

relevant today, when denominations get along fairly well; the destructive conflict today is within the communions.” ...

... **“The modern ecumenical organizing began just over a century ago, in a very different world.”**

The dialogue originated among the church leaders and ordained clergy, but never seemed to actively involve lay people. Lay people never seemed to understand that they needed to pick up the discussion among themselves and carry that ecumenical message out into the world.

Lay people never seemed to understand that how we live our ordinary lives can be an ecumenical dialogue and that it may benefit the world if we studied how to act and react with compassion toward those others.

At this point in history, we seem to have strayed away from even focusing on a discussion of the merits of learning how to live peacefully with those others, no matter who they may be, where they live and under what circumstances they may be living. All of them are our neighbors.

In our discussion, we noted that even marriage has a different concept than it has had in the past. Larger numbers of co-habiting adults who have had children

together, who must raise those children born from that union, simply aren't getting married. They are not getting married in civil ceremonies nor in church weddings. The numbers of couples who have children together who choose simply to co-habitate with each other has risen.

Now, we are observing that Americans, who have long been famous for “church shopping” and a lack of denominational ties, tend to simply have no faith in their homes. At this point in time, we observed that there seems to be a greater indifference to faith than we have ever seen previously. Children are not being church-ed by their families. The parents of American children simply tend to choose for them not to attend catechism nor Sunday School at this time.

Why are people not affiliating with a faith community?

We all noted that we had heard people say that they are spiritual, but not religious, and wondered what this means.

We also wondered why people are choosing not to become affiliated with the faith?

There has been outside criticism of church that we thought that this may have influenced some people, but we weren't sure that this was the only factor

bringing about this change.

Society has viewed aspects of church to be hypocritical; this is perceived to be a moral failing of the church.

We have been presented with a concept of high moral values that as a collective community that we, (simply stated) do not know how to address adequately within our current time period through church membership.

The default position by many has therefore become to choose Atheism or a form of Materialism instead of church membership as we have formerly known it.

Ecumenism has a unique history. The Faith and Order discussions have focused on the doctrinal aspects of life and work of Ecumenism, the part where we put our feet on the ground so as to allow ourselves to become personally immersed in an Ecumenical Journey, hasn't been addressed by our collective communities yet.

The life and work of Ecumenism has rarely been heard, and it appears that humanity struggles most with finding out how to love and be loved by each other. This statement seemed accurate to me, but I wondered why loving and being loved seem to be such difficult tasks for humanity.

I wondered to myself then what would a community that

found ways to love and to be loved would look like?

Our collective cultural history is one of being in a constant state of war. For my entire life, our country has been in military combat with another group of people someplace in the world. Those people are probably a lot like us if we would only allow ourselves that kind of personal contact. [This concept is referred to in Wendell Berry's book “Hannah Coulter, a Novel” in regard to the indigenous people of Okinawa.]

Ecumenism, as we have known it in the past, is gone.

For example, the National Council of Churches has decreased their staff of 400 to a staff of under 20. However, we do not need to lay ecumenism to rest. We noted that the world situation affects ecumenism.

Where to from here? What factors are affecting religious affiliation and ecumenism?

What will the world be like in the 21st Century?

What is the world like right at this moment in time?

We must raise new questions that address the current situation.

Our American society has moved from a status of relative religious stability to one in which we tend to change denominations easily.

Is this an opportunity then that we may have overlooked? Personal faith journeys tend to have many stops along the way. Our journey may lead someplace, that is to a higher level of spirituality, or it may lead nowhere.

Americans at this time tend to seek out their church affiliation based on their personal needs; in this sense there is a form of consumerism in our religious affiliations. We seek out churches for many reasons; we may be drawn in by the preaching, the physical facilities, the presence of a youth group or by any number of other factors.

Ironically, we also believe that we must also perpetuate strong denominational ties at the same time. Also noted in our discussion was that clergy stay where their pensions are located; this may be perceived by the general public far more than many may have realized.

What do we do as an ecumenical community to address church affiliation mobility?

Why is the growth of religious individualism present and in what ways is it affecting ecumenical efforts?

We live in a culture that is materialistic. Stability is missing both in the church and in the society in which the churches serve. Upon hearing this, I thought that many

Americans may actually be craving a sense of community and a sense of stability without even being able to recognize their own real needs.

While we pursue individualism what we may actually crave most is to have a sense of belonging and a sense of community, but given the cultural ambiance in which we live we may not know how to achieve this fundamental desire to belong to something greater than ourselves.

The statement, "I'm spiritual but not religious" is a repudiation of the structures of denominational affiliations.

Religious affiliation and the criteria of membership relies on the development of a sense of community. How we interact with each other may have been affected by how we communicate with each other in general. Listening and feeling heard may have been replaced with a sense that we must yell louder if we are to be heard; this is where we must develop a community based on being able to listen with the ear of our heart.

Secularism has come to the United States. Robert Putman's study noted that the greatest shift between 1960 through 2012 has been from "religious affiliation to religious non-affiliation." This lack of affiliation can be observed most among those who are between ages 18 to 29. (It should perhaps also be noted

that any increase in percentages for non-affiliated may also reflect that non-affiliated began at zero so their percentages may seem to have grown greatly. However, the issue of non-affiliation still exists, and it is serious.)

In the Chavez study of religious affiliation, it is noted that greater religious affiliation exists among the better educated and higher income people. In that study, Chavez noted that poorer people who are less educated are also less religious. I wondered if that meant that they were required to work at minimally paying jobs that necessitated that they work during the times when church services and masses would normally take place.

The markers of a religiously affiliated society may be determined by simply asking, "Do you believe in God? Do you attend church?"

How do we create a welcoming community?

How do we create a community that says there is life here?

It has been observed that many stop attending any church because they have been taught that divorce is not acceptable by their church. Therefore, any Ecumenical Agenda, as we have known it, may be beside the point when many are opting out of the faith.

The context in which ecumenical endeavors may have formerly taken place has changed. Originally, ecumenism was created to reconnect a divided church, but the current scenario in which we find ourselves is one of internal conflict within denominations rather than between denominations. This poses a new challenge.

We asked, **"What if the churches implode?"** (implode = to collapse or cause to collapse violently inward.)

How does "this sense of commonality of some or all" that we have perceived in our church communities affect the future of the ecumenical dialogue?

In our discussion, we observed there is a vested interest in politics to create wedge issues, and that the stirring up of hatred is in the best personal interest of many people who are behind this kind of politics.

On the other hand, working together for social charity may be the opportunity for us to see that of God in the face of strangers. The churches have adopted an ecumenical effort that addresses social justice and peace efforts.

Much has changed in the world since the beginning of the 20th Century to where we are now at the beginning of the 21st Century. Ecumenism has become complicated to the tenth degree in a society

that is multi-polar in addition to being extremely polarized.

Often times, we are only catching bits and pieces of the "Big Picture" with on-going and repetitive news bites, so as a community we tend to shrink back to a place of comfort that is familiar. However this kind of familiar place of comfort may not necessarily be a position that is solution oriented nor directed toward problem solving. We need genuine solutions.

However, we tend to seek out the easiest solution, those "quick fixes" and our political climate tends to give us a polarized image of the world situation rather than a balanced viewpoint. The "quick fixes" don't really fully address the fears and concerns that drive the problems. Some prefer to live in a state of denial and of non-action.

We observed that we are in the middle of a cultural war of some kind in the United States; this was compared to **Bismarck's "Kulturkampf."** Albeit our experience may be somewhat different, but very similar in so many ways to what we are experiencing in the United States at this time that it may serve us well to review the historical manifestation and implications of **Bismarck's "Kulturkampf"** both in that time period and in the decades that followed. It is best that we learn from history so that we do not have to repeat it.

Ecumenism must be reconstructed so that it addresses the new world situation, but we all wondered **"Where do we start?"** We need to return to the first principles of ecumenical dialogue and keep an ecumenical dialogue going in spite of how complicated our world may seem.

Even the term, "Ecumenism" carries a negative connotation for some who are suspicious of the motives driving any kind of an ecumenical movement. A fear may exist that an ecumenical movement may require people to give up what they cherish about their own denomination. **We then must ask, "To what are we committing ourselves as ecumenists?"**

We must have a respect for the viewpoint of others. We must have an openness to learn other people opinions. I thought that along with that we ourselves must feel that we too are being heard and respected for our viewpoints. This may be the catch point that prevents on-going dialogue between diverse communities of thought. We may want to be assured that we have been heard or "why should we bother to listen?" However, we can not let this stop progress in ecumenism for our times

It was suggested that ecumenists must have that conversation with Fundamentalists or those people who may thus far be

opposed to the concept of ecumenism. This may be a beginning step and an opening.

However, first, we agreed that we must be willing to listen and we must recognize our own biases.

It may be that we should stop using the term "Ecumenism" and replace it with terms such as:

- Respect
- Openness
- Striving to understand each other
- Honesty
- Humility (in contrast to being self-righteousness and how to recognize self-righteousness in ourselves)
- Patience
- Co-operation
- Religious pluralism and multiplicity needs to be recognized as a gift which is Bible based.

We need to acknowledge that each religious tradition is based on a vision of God's truth; each church has some important insight to be shared with the rest of us. This is a gift not a threat.

As a first step, we must address, **"What is the local ecumenical task that exists here in our community?"**

We must recognize how "consumerism" has affected our religious affiliations. We noted that communities are important. We agreed that we must focus on "Conflict

Resolution" and how to achieve that.

Discipleship means "to be the salt of the world." We see in Matthew 5:13-16 *Salt and Light*

'You are the salt of the earth; but if salt has lost its taste, how can its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything, but is thrown out and trampled under foot.

'You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hidden. No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lamp stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.'

And

"What does the Lord require of you, but to do justice, to love kindness and walk humbly with your God." (Micah 6:8)

These Bible verses can help to serve as our guide as we move into the 21st Century.

"The implication being that our political choices should not reflect simply our own interests, partisan preferences or ideological agendas, but should be shaped by the principles of our faith and our commitment to justice, especially toward the

weak and vulnerable.... Every believer is called to serve "the least of these," to "hunger and thirst for justice," to be a "peacemaker."

"The most important Christian witness is often neither very visible" nor given credit for their importance.

The list may include: the sacrifice of parents trying to raise children with concern for others; the service and creativity of workers who do their best and reach out to those in need; the struggle of business owners trying to reconcile the bottom line and the needs of employees and customers; and the hard choices of public officials who seek to protect the weak and pursue the common good.

The Church's social mission is advanced by teachers and scientists, by family farmers and bankers, by sales persons and entertainers.... Being a believer means that one lives a certain way -- walking with the Lord, doing justice, loving kindness, living peaceably among all people.... We are not called to abandon the world, but to help shape it. This does not mean leaving worldly tasks and responsibilities, but transforming them."

Interchurch families will have observed that what we do as a family is very significant to the world. We live a unity that others seem to find to be impossible or illusive.

(How did we accomplish this? I wondered to myself.)
We have managed to thrive by creating a form of a human bridge so that we can serve to connect opposite sides of an historical division. This is our gift of a lived experience that we have to share with the world.

The family plays an important role in society; it is the foundation for all that we do. "Our families are the starting point and the center of a vocation for justice. How we treat our parents, spouses and children is a reflection of our commitment to Christ's love and justice. We demonstrate our commitment to the Gospel by how we spend our time and money, and whether our family life includes an ethic of charity, service and action for justice. The lessons we teach our children through what we do as well as what we say determines whether they care for the "least among us" and are "committed to work for justice."

We live in a society that is driven by materialism and consumerism. The church suggests that, "As consumers, believers can promote social justice or injustice simply by the ordinary choices we make every day. We must then choose wisely.

In an affluent culture that suggests that what we have defines who we are, but we can live more simply.

When we purchase goods and

services, we can choose to support companies that defend human life, treat workers fairly, protect creation, and respect other basic moral values at home and abroad. We can also make conscious efforts to consume less."

Many denominations cherish these same ideas and they have spelled them out on their websites, but many of the statements above come from this link below:

<http://old.usccb.org/sdwp/projects/everyday.shtml>

In 2011, Cardinal Walter Kasper, in his San Francisco address, indicated that we have entered "The New Phase of Ecumenism." Recognizing that the world situation has changed since the ecumenical efforts began 40 years previously, he indicated that "**Ecumenism is in a time of change.**" The dangers facing the Ecumenical Movement now are:

~ Ecumenism as an academic enterprise that serves to further alienate and to annoy the faithful who may wish to become a part of the ecumenical movement.

~ Ecumenical theologians who may feel more important than the average person, those people who will be the ones who will carry this message out into the world.

~ Ecumenism is far more than lengthy documents. Between 2001 and 2011,

an ecumenical document of 2310 pages was created, but the length of such documents create a situation where few will be able to take the time to sit down to read it. Ecumenism is far more than documents.

~ We must also avoid perpetual conferences where ecumenism is discussed, but where little action is required after that.

What is needed at this point in history?

We need to be guided by one underlying principle, "**that all may be one.**" Spiritual ecumenism must be started from below as an exchange of spiritual experiences.

People need to meet other people on a very ordinary level, face to face and in a very spiritual way.

During these personal meetings, there needs to be a sharing of our lived experiences. We need to share our hope, our joys and our fears one with the other on a personal and human level coming out of and directly from our lived experiences.

Ecumenical collaboration is needed in what we do.

Where we are working toward social justice, manifesting a respect for human life and dignity no matter what that person's religious affiliation may be, while also promoting peace and preserving God's

creation are all efforts in which we can all work together for the creation of a better future.

Our efforts must appeal to the spirit of God, our creator. We may have previously over emphasized Jesus, but we are prompted by the Spirit to endeavor to include all of humanity.

An over reliance on documents and rules may have created a sense of "feeling as odd man out" among church members.

"Odd Man Out" is a person who differs or who feels singled out from the other members of a group who does not accept them only because the "Odd Man Out" is perceived to be different.

To myself, I reflected over the concern in the media about the issue of bullying. I had wondered if part of the situation and difficulty in it may be may be found in trying to decipher who was the bully and who may be reacting to having been bullied. This may not always be so easy to discern.

All cases must be viewed indepth, with caution and empathy, along with compassion for all sides.

Many times what we actually need is a fresh perspective and it is precisely that "Odd Man Out," the one who may see things differently who may be able to provide us

with some insight and direction in a problematic situation that had previously overwhelmed us to the extent that no solution could be found.

Elements of "the way things should be" can be found by visiting other denominations. **In this sense being "Ecumenical" is a sharing of gifts.** What one community emphasizes and by what it is enriched can become a form of an exchange of riches.

We observed that people vote with their feet, by what they do. In the United States, a greater number of couples are living together without ever getting married.

We also observed that there is a mentality of needing to be instantly gratified; this is also encouraged in publicity and in advertisements which inundate us on a regular basis so that the need to be instantaneously gratified seems normal and appropriate to us. This is a consumerist mindset that allows us to believe that "No Friction" is appropriate and that you should be able to get whatever you want immediately.

Complicated issues tend to overwhelm us while we are in this state of mind. We tend to avoid those complicated issues as much as possible; we tend to take the easiest path and the one that seems to provide the least friction and the least resistance.

On the other hand, the easiest way may not actually also be the best way.

Sometimes perhaps the easiest way and the best way converge, but not always. Sometimes what seems to be the easiest way actually has hidden pitfalls and complications.

Marriage is a complicated issue. Statistics indicate the 50% of all marriages end in divorce so many are now simply choosing not to marry at all. I wonder if that is really a solution that addresses the issues related to the percentage rate of divorces in the USA. I wondered if it was simply an effort to avoid what may be perceived as a problem, but which ends by creating yet a bigger problem. Anyone who has watched "Judge Judy" will understand the problems created by co-habiting without being legally married.

Hospitality is needed at every level and actively present in every aspect of our lives. Human beings want to feel welcomed. Yet, it can be very difficult to show or to be able to recognize and to accept hospitality at times.

On the other hand, there are teachable moments where we can take good people and make them better. People need to be impressed with the seriousness of what they do or don't do, as the case may be.

The issue of “Sheep Stealing” which may be founded on a lack of sensitivity that allows some denominations and their members to basically “fish in the others waters” needs to be addressed. We are all in this together. Vatican II’s documents clearly and definitively addresses this topic in a very positive way.

How well did this message filter down to the general population?

Whenever interchurch families gather the issue of partaking in the eucharist at their spouse’s church always comes up sooner or later. In the Vatican II documents, it notes that “By way of exception the eucharist can be taken” in each other’s church. Then as usual, the discussion turns to ask the question, “When is a special occasion a special occasion, especially in the case of the lived experience of being in an interchurch marriage?”

Frequently, then the conversation will continue on to ask about the nature of Christ and about the meaning of Christian hospitality, especially as it relates to being allowed to take the eucharist. This tends to puzzle the lay person who may have a concept of Christ and what it means to be a Christian that is founded on the principle of being hospitable and inclusive. Interchurch Families often ask a question related to this topic

Ecumenism in a “World of Change”

when we meet.

The role of “Obedience” and what this word means to Americans entered into the conversation.

Americans want to be free. Being free carries some responsibilities with it. We still live in a global community. We have freedoms, but we also have some responsibilities that come with these freedoms.

The word “Obedience” comes from the Latin word: **obedire** which means to listen. We are called then to listen, to hear what God commands.

However, in this time and place in history, we must ask, “Who is listening to God?” It seems that everyone wants to talk, but not be encumbered by having to listen.

Dialogue goes both ways; otherwise it only is a monologue. If a voice is too rigid, or too shrill or too loud, it can’t be heard because it is, in and of itself, a distraction.

Many Americans feel passionate about various issues that have polarized our communities, but we lack the ability “to make bridges” that allow us to hear each other.

Although the underlying message may be about how to love God and our neighbor, this part of the message has been lost in the

noise, and also perhaps lost into a strong and fervent case of self - righteousness in a society that praises self-indulgence.

The problem then becomes cyclical, feeding upon its own momentum to push each side in any given issue away and back into their own corner because they feel unheard and unvalued. No one has heard the underlying message nor the real fears behind the words that may at times sting.

And yet to hear is to be liberated. It is important to follow the path of wisdom and not to simply conform so as to appear to be accepted. This is Christ’s message for all of us in any time period in history.

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We walked over to the Colledgeville Institute for Ecumenical and Cultural Research which was only a short walk from where we were meeting on the Saint John’s University Campus.

Upon entering the Institute, I observed a colorful umbrella tree near the entrance. Actually it was a modified coat tree near the entrance upon which many colorful umbrellas were hanging in wait. The colorful umbrellas were hanging on it to be shared by the researchers in case they were ever caught by a rainstorm. I viewed this as a form of hospitality. It was a simple concept that had great potential, I thought.

Studio apartments were a short distance from the central meeting room at the Institute on a quiet part of the Saint John's University campus reserved for researchers.

The Institute is on the banks of one of Minnesota's many lakes. A book with Mother Teresa's image on the front of it was prominently displayed on one of the book shelves lining both walls. I also observed that the walls were lined with many similar books. It was the kind of place that felt welcoming.

The other wall was full of windows that were looking over the view of the lake. Large glass, double plated windows look out over that lake. The view is calm and beautiful.

The fourth wall seemed to be dedicated to a worship space; the light filtered into that space indirectly; the filtered light created a sense of calmness.

The Collegeville Institute for Ecumenical and Cultural Research is an impressive place that brings in some of the most noted scholars, theologians, thinkers and writers of our times.

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This report is created from my own notes and impressions. Other AAIF Members who were present may have more details and further impressions to share. ~ Mary Jane Glauber



The Pottery at Saint John's University

On the 2012 Conference agenda, we had scheduled a visit to the Pottery. We had no real idea ahead of time what this would mean for us. Since we had arrived early, we went to visit the Pottery before the conference formally began. It is only open in the afternoons for guests. We appeared at the door, and we were welcomed and invited in. The tea kettle was filled with water and put over a fire in what resembled a Japanese home, I imagined because I have never been to Japan.

We were all invited to sit around the fire where the iron tea kettle was heating water for our tea. The potter and all of his apprentices and associates sat around the fire with us. Snacks were passed around the table on earthen pottery plates. We were introduced to each of the assistant potters and told something significant about each one of them, and each one of them had a special gift and/or talent which they contributed to the pottery studio.

When the water boiled, it was poured over tea into an earthen pottery tea pot and left to steep. Once steeped it was

then poured into individual hand thrown cups and each person present was given a cup of hot tea to enjoy.

This was hospitality, I thought, but the hospitality went much deeper than sharing tea with us in the afternoon. In the deep conversations between us and the gathering of potters, we found that of God.

We learned that the Benedictines think and plan for far into the future. This would explain why so many of their buildings are on the National Register of Historic Places. Jeff Wubbels at the visitor/guest/hospitality center had also mentioned this concept. Then when we had stepped outside, we saw a copper roof being replaced. Scaffolding had been built by and for the roofers who were replacing a roof with material and in a manner that is intended to last 100 or so years.

Richard Bresnahan had discovered a vein of clay that would last a pottery studio at least three hundred years. The Benedictines at Saint John's University view the world as it is now and plan for how it will be centuries into the future.

This is a form of mindful living. It was the Benedictines who helped Richard Bresnahan to unearth and preserve the deposit of clay so there would be a pottery on Saint John's campus well into the future.

Richard Bresnahan became the Artist in Residence on the campus of Saint John's University. He only uses natural dyes. He noted that he had attended far too many funerals for those potters who had immersed their hands in chemical dyes; they had died when they were too young from an over- exposure to the chemical dyes they had used over a long period of time. The cup that I was drinking tea from fit comfortably into my hand. I thought the pottery was beautiful. It was all in natural earth tone colors.

It became clear as he spoke that Richard Bresnahan was a deeply spiritual person. I observed that the pottery was beautiful.

Then I asked what would happen though if a piece of pottery was broken apart. Does it just become useless?

Richard Bresnahan who had studied through a lengthy apprenticeship in Japan noted that when a very valuable piece of Asian pottery broke into pieces that due to the value of its parts, it was basically glued or sealed together with gold. This repair then that rejoined the parts that had been broken apart into shards, once rejoined became even more valuable than the original pottery vessel had been.

I saw a comparison to our current society, where we have become broken away from each other. If reconnected in a loving and

valued way, then we would have something far more valuable than what we may have ever had before.

We asked to see them at work. They made their work look almost effortless. They were truly artists and craftsmen.

The group of AAIF members who came for the scheduled visit to the pottery as noted on the AAIF agenda for the 2012 Conference reported a similarly positive experience.

As I heard their story, I learned that during their visit, Father Kilcourse had mentioned that Wendell Berry had spoken at the Bellarmine University's graduation. Wendell Berry's written works convey a strong need to belong to a particular place and to be part of a community which Berry calls "a membership."

This connection to the natural world, to the earth, to the soil where food is grown is a spiritual connection for Wendell Berry, a Kentucky author from Henry County not that far away from Louisville, in miles anyway. Berry's work to protect and to preserve the environment while working with members of his community is reminiscent of the Benedictine values we were observing at Saint John's Campus.

Richard Bresnahan also had a fondness for the writings, and the work of Wendell Berry. How Wendell Berry finds that of God is in how we

form community and how we interact with the environment. We sustain each other not just for now, but for well into the unseen and distant future. In this way, Wendell Berry's philosophy merges with Benedictine principles.

In the sharing of tea and snacks around the Japanese style stove, there was that of God in the interactions and the spirituality of a craftsman who is in tune with the earth and with humanity.

I highly recommend a visit to the Pottery on the campus of Saint John's University.

These are my own impressions inspired by my visit to the Pottery. I invite others to share their impressions as well.

~ Mary Jane Glauber

<http://www.csbsju.edu/Saint-Johns-Pottery.htm>



Report from the 2012 AAIF Conference
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

"How Interchurch Family Prayer 'Happens': Models for Negotiating Our Differences"

both Minnesota and Illinois. He currently resides in suburban Chicago with his wife, Tracy, and two children Abigail and Matthew.

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Grassroots ecumenism is the future of the movement for Christian Unity. In small groups we need to make ecumenism much more than a theological enterprise. Prayer is the heart and soul of this movement.

Theology that is rooted in experiential realities and key Biblical stories such as the Exodus, the Great Flood and the Paschal Mystery relate to our lives even today.

Some refer to this kind of experiential theology as a "Liberation Theology." We are led from one life to another way of life, a new life where justice reigns and where we are free from oppression.

Often times this kind of theological thought begins in those marginalized groups of people, similar to those people we note with whom Christ sat and shared a meal.

This kind of theology begins with the oppressed and marginalized people who seek the central concept of justice for their lived experience and the lived experience of others.

To be made in the image of God doesn't require us to be a copy of an image that has previously been filtered through and accepted by an

Anglo-American concept, for example. Each of us has a soul of our own. We are all individuals who don't fit into any category.

There may be three ways to explore the role of interchurch families:

1. Many interchurch families live on the borders, on the fringes of the two churches to which they belong. They/we are like a square peg in a round hole. Often seen as a problem to be solved, While in reality, interchurch families may be an example of the solution itself.
2. Interchurch Families, due to their/our unique position, create a blending of two church languages. The question to be explored further is how does language coming from two cultures influence and create an interchurch family experience. Then, perhaps this understanding can be expanded upon and applied to other lived experiences.
3. Each interchurch family has a soul of its own. Each family, that is each interchurch family although perhaps a hybrid, is a full and vital representation of God's image. Each individual interchurch marriage shows us a varied image and each interchurch marriage is gifted.

We are called to look beyond the borders or walls we may have constructed around us. We all remember the Berlin Wall. Although the exact

circumstances for why it was constructed in the first place may have faded in our memories, we remember the great joy that was felt when it came down.

Jesus was a border crosser. Jesus was concerned for the marginalized, those little ones who have little or no significance and those who are considered to be the outcasts.

What does this tell us?

What is the link or comparison between the existence of borders and prayer in interchurch families homes?

The prayer in interchurch family homes fosters inclusivity, cooperation, conflict resolution, and discipleship that opens to the world.

Community is as important to interchurch families as it is to those single church families in our various denominations.

In this time and place in history, we need that thinking that comes from those people who are marginalized to help us to find those illusive solutions for the problems we are facing.

Language is the way that a group represents, interprets and communicates its understanding of reality. Each church body has a language of its own. A specific language of the church group is tied closely with the identity and

"How Interchurch Family Prayer 'Happens': Models for Negotiating Our Differences"

uniqueness of the group.

We had all looked at the Saint John's Bible. Borders at the edge of the page serve to help to delineate, frame and highlight what appears on each vellum page.

In a sense, interchurch families are bilingual. Our children shift easily from the language of one church to the language of the other. Do we want to create a new language that is specific to the lived interchurch experience?

What would happen then if every family developed its own language?

How is a balance found between the inherited religious language and our current lived experience in the United States?

Given that we each have a soul of our own, there should be nothing limiting. Our lived experience of being in an interchurch family is an opportunity for us to construct an image of Christ in our homes in a divided Christian context. We are not a problem but solution seekers who love one another.

Our American lives, that is our lived experience, reveal the broken body of Christ.

Prayer should be a dialogue with God and with other people, especially other people whom we may perceive to be very different from us.

We discussed the many

forms that prayer may take on in our ordinary lives.

The importance of listening cannot be emphasized enough. However, "Listening with the ear of our hearts" is an even more important part of how we go about listening to each other.

The communal act of prayer combats individualism, that form of individualism that is excessive. Prayer in community provides an opportunity to listen and a way to heighten the sense of Spirit.

Prayer is a response to a call to become family, and community with each other. We can only define ourselves in the context of our relationship with others.

As interchurch families, we also have been given the grace to live with unanswered questions.

The ability to dialogue with God and with others relies on a profound sense of listening. Through prayer, dialogue that depends on our listening skills, we will be able to form a cohesive spiritual bond in the midst of an increasingly divisive world. This will become the way to find solutions.

How do you experience living on the border between your two churches? What has been a gift or a challenge? How does this border experience affect and

influence your family's prayer life? In what ways has your family developed your own language for prayer? How do you accomplish this task in relation to the two different "languages" offered by your churches?

How has a child in your family facilitated a break through in the awareness of these different languages? How do you see your prayer life as a reflection of the image and likeness of God in your home? What challenges do you find best reflected in this image of Christ that comes out in the prayers in your family? Has a child led you to a new expression of family prayer?

During the next four years AAIF members will be continuing this discussion and study within our group. Further details from our discussion on the evening of July 14, 2012 with Daniel J. Olsen, Ph.D. will be explored in up-coming editions of the ARK.

The theme for the 2012 AAIF Conference was "Interchurch Families - Listen with the ear of your heart" This is a Benedictine belief and tradition along with the tradition of hospitality that we will continue to explore in our American context over the next four years until we meet again at our next formal AAIF Conference.

This report was created from my notes and from my own impressions of the presentation made

by Daniel J. Olsen, Ph.D.

~ Others who were present may also wish to contribute their impressions in an up-coming issue of the ARK.

~ M.J. Glauber



AAIF Members visited the HMML during the 2012 AAIF Conference at Saint John's University:

The recently created Saint John's Bible, was crafted in the same manner as early Christian Bibles, written on vellum using a quill pen.

It is on display at the Hill Museum and Manuscript Library on the Campus of Saint John's University in Collegeville, Minnesota. AAIF members toured the HMML on Saturday afternoon, July 14, 2012.

Our guide said that locally they call the HMML, **Himmel**, which is German for "Heaven." Many of the Roman Catholics in Minnesota historically would be of German descent.

The Saint John's Bible is a beautiful creation. I highly recommend to anyone and to everyone that they make the journey to Collegeville, MN so they can see this Bible.

~ M.J. Glauber



Sharing Our Stories as Interchurch Families

Denys and Margaret Nicol came from England to the 2012 AAIF Conference in Minnesota. Below Denys shares his and Margaret's personal story of their wedding as an interchurch couple and family

Margaret and I met at Charing Cross Hospital, London, where Margaret was a State Registered Nurse and I a second year clinical medical student. I had been advised to seek her out so that she could invite me to The Matron's Ball at The Savoy Hotel where I would be expected to announce a friend's engagement.

The interchurch problem was apparent from about our second date when I said it would prevent our marrying. Margaret does not think she was thinking about marriage at that time...

Initially Margaret was well received by my family and we became engaged soon after I qualified in 1965. Our parish priest at Lowestoft was friendly and supportive. When I did obstetric and pediatric resident's jobs, Margaret found nursing jobs nearby.

These jobs, however, were in East Anglia, near my parents' home and Margaret and I felt rather unwelcome there. My father said that my

expensive Catholic education would have been wasted if I married a non-Catholic. My mother expressed an equally prejudiced view.

Margaret's mother became upset and Margaret and I wondered where to turn for help. Through a friendly priest from my school-days we sought the opinion and advice of the then Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster and arranged to receive the feedback in a plutocratic MP's apartment near the House of Commons.

The Cardinal's opinion was that we should not marry; and there was no advice and no discussion. We went to see Margaret's Methodist minister in Hull, her home town. He received us courteously in his sombre brown study and soon announced the solution: Margaret should become a Catholic. If she had any problems with Catholic teaching or doctrine he would explain it to her.

Margaret's minister offered to explain Catholic doctrines to her. But of course we found this quite distressing and were further discouraged when we found we could not marry in Margaret's church, according to RC rules at that time.

I had passed an exam, the ECFMG, that allowed me to continue my medical studies in the USA and was accepted for a two year General Practice training course in Fairview Hospital, Minneapolis.

I only completed two thirds of the Pediatric job in Norwich and started at Fairview in November 1968.

I had fallen among friends: how lucky I was! I would chat and relax with the other residents and they were sympathetic to my situation and told me to see the Dominican priest, Fr John Malone at the Holy Rosary Church nearby. I was planning a minimal mid-week marriage service to be followed by snacks in our apartment. But this was conveyed to the Chief of Staff, a Jewish surgeon who had married a Catholic nurse some 20 years previously.

We had a Nuptial Mass on a Saturday with organ and singer but without charge: "You can pay later, Denys, if things work out". Dr Stiegler, the surgeon, took the photos and gave us a sit-down champagne reception downtown. Margaret cried during the Service because her parents were not there and she had had to sign that she agreed to bring up the children as Catholics. (Prior to Vatican II)

Emmanuel Methodist Church was the nearest and what a splendid group of Christians they were. We went there together rather more than we went to the Holy Rosary and they had some jolly good parties and trips.

Our parents became friends and never talked to us about

their objecting to our marrying.

Our local churches have become increasingly friendly over the years and finding AIF was a great boon.

Perhaps I have written enough to illustrate the types of problems interchurch couples faced in the 1960s when AIF-GB started.

If I add that most of the four weeks we recently spent in Minnesota we were guests of Dr & Mrs Stiegler and the rest of our time in Minneapolis we stayed with my best man and then a nurse friend, you will promptly understand why we independently volunteered to be the British delegates to the AAIF conference which Melanie Finch had announced as being in Minneapolis.

Margaret and I greatly enjoyed our time with you and all the others [AAIF Members] at the St John's conference. We are sorry about those whose problems prevented their attendance and we hope and pray that AIF on both sides of the Atlantic will work out how we can progress together.

God bless you and yours,
Denys & Margaret

AAIF members express their gratitude that Denys and Margaret could attend the 2012 AAIF Conference and for sharing their story with us.

Other interchurch families are invited to share their interchurch stories with the readers of the ARK.

Again, many thanks, Margaret and Denys

~ M.J. Glauber



Carrying Forward the Theme from the 2012 Week of Prayer for Christian Unity

We were given the option to modify how we continued the theme forward through the year.

Using the theme from Day 4 of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, we will examine Jesus Christ's meaning for Victory.

DAY 4 Theme: Changed by the Lord's victory over evil

Text: Overcome evil with good (Rom 12:21)

Readings

Ex 23:1-9 Do not follow the majority in wrongdoing

Ps 1 Happy are those whose delight is in the law of the Lord

Rom 12:17-2 Overcome evil with good

Mt 4:1-11 Worship the Lord your God, and serve Him only

Commentary

In Jesus we learn what 'victory' really means for human beings - that is, happiness with one another in God's love through His overcoming of all that keeps us apart. This is a sharing in Christ's victory over the destructive forces that damage humanity and all of God's creation.

In Jesus we can share in a new life which calls us to struggle against what is wrong in our world with renewed confidence and with a delight in what is good.

The words of the Old Testament give a categorical warning against engaging in wrongdoing and injustice. The attitude of the majority must not in any way provide an excuse. Neither do wealth or other situations in life entitle a person to do wrong.

Psalm 1 draws attention not only to the need to observe the commandments, but especially to the joyful fruits of doing so. A person who loves the law of the Lord above all else is called happy and blessed. The word of God is a sure guide in adversity and is the fulfillment of human wisdom.

Meditating on the word of God *day and night* enables a person to lead a life full of fruitfulness for the good of others.

In the apostle's admonitions we find encouragement to

overcome evil with good.

Only good can interrupt the endless spiral of hatred and the human desire for revenge. In the struggle for what is good, not everything depends on human beings.

However, the apostle Paul calls for every effort to be made to maintain peace with others. He understands our continuous struggle against our instincts to harm those who hurt us. But Paul appeals to us not to let ourselves be overcome by these destructive feelings.

Doing good is an effective way of combating wrongdoing among us.

The gospel reading describes the Son of God's struggle against Satan – the personification of evil. Jesus' victory over the temptations in the desert is fulfilled in His obedience to the Father, which leads Him to the Cross.

The Savior's resurrection confirms that here God's goodness ultimately wins: love overcomes death. The risen Lord is near! He accompanies us in every struggle against temptation and sin in the world.

His presence calls Christians to act together in the cause of goodness. The scandal is that because of our divisions we cannot be strong enough to fight against the evils of our time.

United in Christ, delighting in

His law of love, we are called to share in His mission of bringing hope to the places of injustice, hatred, and despair.

Prayer for a gathering of Christians seeking Christian Unity:

L = Leader

C = congregation

"Changed by the Lord's victory over evil"

L: The arrival of the Kingdom of God is the defeat of the kingdom of Satan. Jesus, when He defeats the tempter in the desert, and frees people from the power of evil spirits, anticipates the great victory of the Hour of His Passion. The ruler of this world is cast away.

In the last request of the Lord's Prayer – ***But deliver us from evil – we pray to God for Him to reveal the victory already won by Christ.***

In the spirit of this request, we call:

Save us, O Lord!

C: *Save us, O Lord!*

L: From all evil

C: *Save us, O Lord!*

L: From every sin

C: *Save us, O Lord!*

L: From Satan's traps

C: *Save us, O Lord!*

L: From hatred and all ill will

C: *Save us, O Lord!*

L: From eternal death

C: *Save us, O Lord!*

L: Save us, O Lord, from all evil, and support us in Your mercy, You who live and reign forever and ever.

C: Amen

Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ, we thank You for Your victory over evil and division.

We praise You for Your sacrifice and Your resurrection that conquer death.

Help us in our everyday struggle against all adversity.

*May the Holy Spirit give us strength and wisdom so that, following You, we may overcome evil with good, and division with reconciliation.
Amen.*

Questions for reflection

1. Where do we see evil in our own lives?
2. In what way can our faith in Christ help us to overcome evil and the Evil One?
3. What can we learn from situations in our community where division has given way to reconciliation?

Interchurch Families who can share their stories may be able to shed light on the experiences they have encountered in the world arising from and out of their lived experience of unity.

Our form of unity may be considered to be a form of reconciliation. This form of reconciliation though may be in a different way from what others may consider to be a solution and to be reconciled.

We maintain our own identities within diversity. This requires us to listen with the ears of our heart.

Everything must be filtered through a vision of love for our neighbor, that other person who sometimes looks a lot like us, but who may think differently due to their early life experiences and general philosophy.

On the other hand, our neighbor and that other person may look quite different from us, but once we get to know them, we learn that we have so much in common.

We are cautioned not to follow the crowd.

It may simply be a case of needing to be able to consider the world as if we were walking in the shoes of that other person so that we can see the world from their perspective.

In the Biblical readings for this theme, we learn that we will be exposed to evil and even be tempted by it, perhaps in a variety of forms. Our role is to examine how we live our lives and to consider our own actions.

It may be easier to study this kind of change or Christian Victory by observing those stories of success found elsewhere within our own greater communities.

In this way we may be able to

view success from a neutral perspective first before we endeavor to try to find ways to implement the path toward what is good and what is noble in the world around us.
~ M.J. Glauber

The 2012 AAIF Conference in Minnesota.....

Trying out a new format for the ARK in this issue.

Many photos were taken during the 2012 AAIF Conference at Collegeville, MN on the campus of SJU.

The location is absolutely beautiful. Perhaps the photos can be shared in an up-coming edition of the ARK.

As usual, the AAIF Conference was both illuminating and a wonderful opportunity to see long time friends once again, and to have some time together as a community.

We are looking forward to seeing you in 2016 at the next AAIF Conference.

With all best wishes from Mary Jane Glauber on behalf of AAIF and the ARK.

Please Save The Date
For:

National Workshop on Christian Unity

Equipping Church Leaders in the Quest for Christian Unity

Sponsored by the National
Ecumenical Officers
Association

Save the Date
- April 8 to 11, 2013
in Columbus, Ohio
at the Sheraton Columbus
at Capital Square
<http://www.nwcu.org/>

Also please save the date for:

ECUMENICAL ADVOCACY DAYS 2013 *For Global Peace with Justice*

FRIDAY, APRIL 5 -
MONDAY, APRIL 8, 2013

DOUBLETREE HOTEL,
CRYSTAL CITY, VA
WASHINGTON, DC

<http://advocacydays.org/>

Join 1,000 Christian advocates in Washington, DC for the 11th annual Ecumenical Advocacy Days to seek Food Justice for a Healthy World! In a world that produces enough food for everyone, EAD 2013 will explore the injustices in global food systems that leave one billion people hungry, create food price shocks that destabilize communities everywhere, and undermine God's creation.

At God's Table, all are invited and fed, and the poorest in our midst are given a special place. Together we will seek the abundance and equality that we find reflected in the biblical image of God's great banquet table (Exodus 16:16-18 & Luke 14:12-24). Inspiring speakers will offer a faith-based vision for fair and humane food policies and practices, along with grassroots advocacy training, all culminating with Monday's Lobby Day on Capitol Hill.

EAD 2013 follows in the wake of national elections, a new Congress, a lingering Farm Bill debate, and devastating droughts and floods, all with lasting consequences for our society and world. April 5-8, 2013 will be a critical time to raise faith voices in support of ending hunger, improving nutrition, creating more just and sustainable food systems and protecting God's creation -

and advocating for a "Faithful Federal Budget."

Come to EAD 2013 and help build a world in which every person, in present and future generations, has a place "At God's Table." Join the ranks of nearly ten-thousand Christian advocates who over the past eleven years have made a faithful public witness on Capitol Hill!

Bring A Friend! We encourage groups from churches, denominations and regional councils of churches to charter buses and bring large groups to this important faith-in-action event.

Biblical Sources:

"...But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind. And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you, for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous..."

Luke 14: 12-24 (NRSV)

"This is what the LORD has commanded: 'Gather as much of it as each of you needs, an omer to a person according to the number of persons, all providing for those in their own tents.'" The Israelites did so, some gathering more, some less. But when they measured it with an omer, those who gathered much had nothing over, and those who gathered little had no shortage; they gathered as much as each of them needed."

Exodus 16: 16-18 (NRSV)

Ecumenical Advocacy Days 2013: Conference Theme

AT GOD'S TABLE: Food Justice for a Healthy World

God's loving abundance is highlighted throughout the entire biblical story. This is especially true with food. Whether it is God feeding the Israelites with manna in the desert (Exodus 16) or Jesus' call to invite all to the Great Banquet (Luke 14:12-24) there is enough to eat at God's Table. As inheritors of this tradition, the Christian community is called to ask, "What has gone so wrong?"

Some of us live in communities where grocery stores abound, where we can find aisles of colorfully packaged food, coolers stacked with gleaming meats, walls of vegetables, and piles of perfect fruit. Behind the flawless tomatoes and shining peppers is a less bright reality. What are the true costs of this apparent plenty?

Meanwhile, only a few miles away, others of us may live in a food desert, where families are simply unable to purchase affordable, healthy food. And across the globe, children are dying of starvation and being stunted by malnutrition.

Can Christians support a system of food production and consumption that turns crops into fuel, where more than a third of all food goes to waste, and nearly one billion people go hungry? Even in the United States, an agricultural powerhouse, millions are food insecure or hungry, and the kind of food many of us eat is making us sick.

Tragically, our national and global food systems have lost focus on the human dimension. Food is now seen as one more commodity, just another product to own and speculate on. We have forgotten God's mandate for human beings to serve as stewards of a just food system in which all can meet their daily needs (Exodus 16:16-18).

What are the costs to the environment, to farm and food chain workers, and to the producers themselves? What are the long-term effects of corporate agribusiness, over-reliance on chemical inputs, genetically modified single crop farms, misplaced subsidies in the U.S. Farm Bill, and massive food exports into fragile farming communities? How do we respond when human rights advocates are killed for trying to stop land-grabbing?

In the face of such challenges, we return to the invitation from Jesus to set a banquet table where all are invited (Luke 14:12-24). This will mean a transformed food and agricultural system with justice

and ecological sustainability – right relationship among “neighbors” and with all God’s creation – as the core ingredients, the menu, for the banquet.

EAD 2013 follows in the wake of national elections, a new Congress, a lingering Farm Bill debate, and devastating droughts and floods, all with lasting consequences for our society and world. April 5-8, 2013 will be a critical time to raise faith voices in support of ending hunger, improving nutrition, creating more just and sustainable food systems and protecting God’s creation – and advocating for a “Faithful Federal Budget.”

During Ecumenical Advocacy Days, participants will share information and learn about these important issues. Most importantly, as part of EAD 2013, hundreds of Christians will go to Capitol Hill and advocate with members of Congress for policies that ensure sufficient and nutritious food for all, preserve ecological sustainability, protect children and adults from exploitative labor practices, and strengthen rather than destroy small-scale farmers and the rural economy. We will break-down myths such as the one that says farmers cannot grow enough food with ecologically sustainable means. And we will be challenged to become sustainable consumers of healthy, fair food.

Come to EAD 2013 and help build a world in which every

person, in present and future generations, has a place "At God's Table." Join the ranks of nearly ten-thousand Christian advocates who over the past eleven years have made a faithful public witness on Capitol Hill!

Who We Are:

Ecumenical Advocacy Days is a movement of the ecumenical Christian community, and its recognized partners and allies, grounded in biblical witness and our shared traditions of justice, peace and the integrity of creation. Our goal, through worship, theological reflection and opportunities for learning and witness, is to strengthen our Christian voice and to mobilize for advocacy on a wide variety of U.S. domestic and international policy issues.

Sponsors Organizations
Updated: August 17, 2012

If your organization is interested in becoming a sponsor of Ecumenical Advocacy Days, please contact EAD Coordinator [Doug Grace](#).

[Africa Faith and Justice Network](#)
[American Friends Service Committee](#)
[Bread for the World](#)
[Catholics in Alliance for the Common Good](#)
[Center of Concern](#)
[Christian Church \(Disciples of Christ\)](#)
[Christian Reformed Church](#)
[Church of the Brethren](#)

[Church World Service](#)
[Churches for Middle East Peace](#)
[Columban Center for Advocacy and Outreach](#)
[Community of Christ](#)
[Disciples Justice Action Network](#)
[The Episcopal Church](#)
[Evangelical Lutheran Church in America](#)
[Franciscan Action Network](#)
[Franciscan Friars \(OFM\) - Holy Name Province](#)
[Friends Committee on National Legislation](#)
[Global Ministries \(UCC/DOC\)](#)
[Interfaith Committee for Nuclear Disarmament](#)
[Interfaith Worker Justice](#)
[Interfaith Working Group on Trade & Investment](#)
[Jubilee USA Network](#)
[JustFaith Ministries](#)
[Latin America Working Group](#)
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[Mennonite Central Committee U.S., Washington Office](#)
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[Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate JPIC Office](#)
[National Advocacy](#)
[Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd](#)
[National Council of the Churches of Christ USA](#)
[National Religious Campaign Against Torture](#)

[NETWORK: A National Catholic Social Justice Lobby](#)
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[Week of Compassion, Christian Church \(Disciples of Christ\)](#)
[Witness For Peace](#)
[World Council of Churches](#)
[World Student Christian Federation - North American Regional Office](#)

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All of those interchurch couples who were able to make the journey to Collegeville, MN in 2012 as we set out to find a new way forward that addresses the needs of the 21st Century. All interchurch families everywhere in the world. Special thanks are extended to Margaret and Denys Nicol who came from England to be with AAIF members at the 2012 Conference, and to Ruth Reardon and Melanie Finch for their words of encouragement.

Jeff Wubbels who helped to make our stay in Collegeville, MN so pleasant and for those who work diligently to maintain the Benedictine Traditions found at SJU. Abby, who although only a child, understands and shared hospitality and kindness.

My family and especially to my husband, Peter, whose on-going support and encouragement, makes the ARK possible. ~ M.J. Glauber

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