

THE ARK

THE ARK, a Publication of the American Association of Interchurch Families
November and December 2012; Volume 23; Edition 9



A·A·I·F®

American Association of
Interchurch Families

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Interchurch Families:

Christian Unity Made Visible in our Households



Interchurch Families

“Listen with the ear of your heart”

In God's Hands: The Ecumenical Prayer Cycle

At the very heart of the ecumenical movement is the reality of prayer.

Prayer is a solemn request for help or expression of thanks addressed to God. Prayer is a conversation with God in which we are required to listen calmly for that still small voice of our God and Creator while we live amidst the storms, the wind and the fires. It is through our Creator that we will be able to see possibility, find hope and be able to find what unites us as we seek solutions, that is, if we are able to “Listen with the ear of our heart.” Jesus prayed that we may all be one, united in God in the mystery of the Trinity, and this is the basis and the goal of our search for unity.

What does God require of us?

“To do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God”

Theme for the 2013 Week of Prayer for Christian Unity

(Micah 6: 6-8)

“With what shall I come before
the Lord, and bow myself before
God on high?

Shall I come before him with
burnt-offerings, with calves a
year old?
Will the Lord be pleased with
thousands of rams, with tens of
thousands of rivers of oil?
Shall I give my firstborn for my
transgression, the fruit of my
body for the sin of my soul?’

He has told you, “O mortal,
what is good; and what does
the Lord require of you
but to do justice, and to love
kindness, and to walk humbly
with your God?”



All,

My dear husband Dave Natella passed away on November 2, All Souls Day. A wonderful ecumenical service was held at my church, Vienna Baptist Church, with Fr. Metzger of Our Lady of Good Council Catholic Church and Pastor Ben Wagoner of VBC.

I had been caring for Dave in our home for 4 weeks before he passed away. He was wonderfully peaceful and enjoyed his many visitors immensely. In the last week of his life he lost the ability to speak, but he still flashed that beautiful smile at everyone who visited.

My life has been such a whirlwind these last few weeks that I only now realized that there were people who cared about him who still had not heard of his passing. I am very sorry that I had not let you know before now.

I am doing well, considering. I know that he was well-loved by many, he loved everyone back, he was at peace with everything that was happening, and he left behind no unresolved issues with anyone in his life--how can I not feel graced by all that?

I thank you all for your friendship and your love.

--Carol Natella



Dave Natella had wisdom so that he was able to see the bigger picture for how things might be and the desire to leave the world a better place, compassion for humanity, sincerity, personal integrity, the ability to listen and an open heart for the possibilities that every situation holds. In this way Dave was able to see the potential that lies out side of the box while respecting those age old patterns that may guide us.

Dave Natella studied ecumenism and found ways to further ecumenical efforts on a very personal level in his community. He was filled with gratitude and he was able to find what was good in our world so that he could work diligently to reinforce that which is good.



*Memorial Supplement
to the ARK November and December 2012; Volume 23; Edition 9*

Philippians 4: 8-9

8 Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.

9 What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.

+++++

Dave Natella was a friend of Christian Unity, the Ecumenical Effort and Interchurch Families.

He dedicated his life to promoting all that is good about these endeavors. Dave was a true friend of what is honorable, whatever is lovely, all things that have excellency in them, all that is worthy of praise. He thought about these things and these noble pursuits became who he was.

Dave was curious about the world he lived in, and a scholar. Dave was attentive to the world he lived in. Dave was a good friend.

Dave had a balanced perspective about the world and a great sense of humor along with an appropriate sense of humility. God was in charge and Dave understood how to serve God. If ever there was someone who understood how to seek and then respond appropriately to God's will, it was Dave. Dave has served as a role model for the rest of us. May he rest in peace wrapped in the loving care of God's embrace for surely if anyone is worthy of God's embrace, it is Dave Natella. Dave had willingly accepted and embraced being God's servant in the world; he has left us all with his legacy of gratitude and compassion for that which is noble and worthy of praise.

May sweet memories help to carry those who are left to mourn his loss through these painful days of mourning. A.A.I.F. wishes to acknowledge and to thank Dave and his family for all that he has done to promote Christian Unity and to support Interchurch Families. ~ M.J. Glauber on behalf of A.A.I. F.

Prayers and blessings are extended to all of our interchurch family members and ecumenical community as we enter the new year that their lives might be filled with good health, hope and possibility. May we be able to find and to follow role models in our lived experience of all that is good about being interchurch families so that we can experience gratitude, compassion and love for humanity for this is God working through us.



“To do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God”

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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?
Please contact:
lynnewragge@hotmail.com

WWW.AIFUSA.ORG
For membership
information and other
pertinent updates please
contact:
aaif.co.chair@gmail.com

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

Please contact
lamarb52@hotmail.com if you
would like to have information
about how to become more actively
involved with AAIF.

PLEASE SEE

Interchurch Families Meet In Minnesota July 2012

Ecumenical Corner
August 2012

Interchurch Families Meet In Minnesota

The American Association of Interchurch Families (AAIF) held its biennial conference under the auspices of the Collegette Institute for Ecumenical and Cultural Research in Collegette, Minnesota from July 13 through July 15, 2012.

AAIF is the American counterpart to the Association for Interchurch Families (AIF) of the United Kingdom and Foyers Mixtes of France. The International Congresses held near Rome July 24-28, 2003, at the Mondo Migliore Center, also included many participants from Austria and Germany. [Australia, Italy and Switzerland also sent representatives along with those representatives who came from many other countries.]

Interchurch families “consist of two baptized Christians who are members of two different, and, as yet separated Christian traditions, who have come together to form one Christian family.”

This year’s American conference consisted of three plenary presentations, the first on Friday evening, given by Dr. Darrell Jodock, Distinguished Professor of Religion at Gustavus Adolphus College on “**Living with Limits and a**

Sense of Humor: A Lutheran View of Intra-Christian Relations.” This presentation was a comprehensive view of ecumenism from a Lutheran perspective, taking note of the **Joint Declaration on Justification** which was signed by the Vatican and the Lutheran World Federation in Germany on October 31, 1999.

Dr. Jodock gave the audience a candid assessment of progress made since the Second Ecumenical Council of the Vatican (1962 -1965), which is being studied and remembered during its 50th anniversary while planning for further progress for the celebration of the five-hundredth anniversary of the Protestant Reformation in 2017.

The second presentation was given on Saturday morning by Dr. Donald Ottenhoff, Executive Director of the Collegette Institute for Ecumenical and Cultural Research at St. John’s University. His topic was “**Ecumenism in a World of Change.**” Dr. Ottenhoff engaged participation in a discussion of the kinds of change they had experienced in their lifetime. In the past, the world was [perceived to be stable]; today’s world is a place of change and instability.

People are more mobile and relocate to distant places. There is less accountability. All of these changes have affected the ecumenical scene as well. Cardinal Walter Kasper, in a

talk in San Francisco, said we face two dangers: that ecumenism remain a mere academic exercise; the other, that ecumenical activism focuses on spectacular events rather than on the slow, patient movement **from below** - sharing gifts, the ecumenism of life, ecumenical collaboration with a focus on our commitment to openness of the spirit.

The third presentation was given on Saturday evening on “How Interchurch Prayer ‘Happens’: Models for Negotiating Our Differences” by Daniel J. Olsen, who received a Ph.D. in Constructive Theology from Loyola University, Chicago in 2008, with a research focus on interchurch families.

Using the model of Jesus the Liberator from Jon Sobrino and Virgilio Elizondo’s **Galilean Journey**, he indicated how this model might be helpful to interchurch families for enriching their prayer experience.

He stressed that the future of the movement for Christian Unity is with grassroots ecumenism; revisiting the concept of the border, of new language, Jesus “as soul of our soul” and the revealing of Christ, could reveal the nature of prayer as relational, personal and communal.

It is Christ forming “not a third church” but a family. It is recognizing that Christ lived “from the margins” and that

Interchurch Families Meet In Minnesota July 2012

interchurch families share this life in many ways.

The meeting in Collegeville did not make headlines, but it did draw the attention of Father Riccardo Burigana, who wrote an article in *L'Osservatore Romano*, the official newspaper of the Vatican, entitled "Ecumenism in the Family" in the July 13 edition, commenting on the up-coming meeting and its significance for the church and Christian Unity.

Father Ernest Falardeau, SSS

(Reprinted With Permission)



Ecumenical Corner
September 2012

The Dutchess County Interfaith Council

The Interfaith Council of Dutchess County, New York celebrated its fortieth anniversary of faith and good deeds on August 23, 2012. The Gala Dinner celebrating the forty year legacy at Villa Borghese in Wappingers Falls, NY brought together many of the past presidents and board members as well as active members of the Council.

Honorees were:

- Rabbi Erwin Zimet, who served on the first Board of Directors, and his wife Lilli,
- the Reverend Hugh Miller, the Executive Director of the Dutchess County Council of Churches,
- and his wife Martha, who was the first Executive directory of the Dutchess County Interfaith Council,
- and Fr. Ernest Falardeau, SSS, first president of the DCIC.

The guest speaker for the occasion was Imam Dr. Salahuddin M. Muhammad who is Senior Imam at Masjid Al Ikhlas (The Islamic Learning Center of Orange County), located in Newburgh, NY.

Early Beginnings

Rabbi Zimet, Rev. Hugh Miller and I served on the Planning Commission that explored the possibility of replacing the Dutchess County Council of Churches with the DCIC from 1970 through May 2, 1972 when the Interfaith Council was founded. It was one of the few interfaith councils in the United States. Taking the best features of the Council of Churches before its motion to adjourn "sine die" and from the five models of interfaith councils at various locations (town, city and county) the DCIC set out to bring people of faith and social awareness to work together with civic and private entities in solving some of the major problems since the 1970's.

Affordable housing for the aging was one of the earliest projects as well as participation in Crop Walk (a fund-raiser contributing to the World Church Service) for the hungry and homeless.

Other programs included shared ministry at the County Correctional Center, Media (radio/TV), and ministry to singles. A Music Festival at the Vassar College Chapel provided a sharing of religious music in the Jewish, Orthodox, Catholic, Anglican, Lutheran and Protestant traditions. This music festival also helped finance the work of the Interfaith Council.

Interfaith Dialogue

Pope Paul VI in his first encyclical *Ecclesiam Suam* wrote extensively on the purposes of ecumenical and interfaith dialogue.

His remarks on dialogue are extensive and suggest the idea of three concentric circles, all contributing

- to better understanding
- and the realization religious collaboration.

These three circles are

1. first the outer circle of interfaith dialogue, including people of good will who work for the common good;
2. the second circle is the Christian dialogue with other churches,
3. and finally the inner circle of dialogue within the Catholic Church.

The Dutchess County Interfaith Council; Ecumenical Corner: September 2012

Paul VI emphasizes that what we have in common, namely **faith in God and respect for other human beings, can be the foundation for a common effort for peace and justice.**

Ecclesiam Suam describes the thrust of the Second Vatican Council and the pontificate of Paul VI. It also continues the vision of Pope John XXIII for a renewal of the Church in the modern world.

In my first report as president of the DCIC I was quoted as saying **“Enthusiasm, hope and courage mark our humble beginnings. Noble deeds must chart our future history, if we are to long endure.”**

As a community of faith, hope and love, the Dutchess County Interfaith Council has produced many significant “noble deeds” during its forty years of ministry.

Most importantly it has brought people of faith together as friends and collaborators in a common cause for a better community and for people in need.

Father Ernest Falardeau, SSS.

(Reprinted with permission)

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August 1997

‘Interchurch families are called to holiness, and **holiness is measured by love.** There is a special love required by interchurch families, and it is a

love for the church, the church one but divided. It presses you to be courageous in your efforts to prod the churches toward ever growing unity. Your impatience with the *status quo* and your prayer and longing for continuing progress toward the unity of all Christians should characterize your spirituality.’

Ernest Falardeau, SSS

The complete report can be found at the following link:

<http://interchurchfamilies.org/journal/98ja04.html>

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Some Difficulties to be straightened out; Along With A Growth in Appreciation for the Other;

A Discussion about what it means: To be ‘an Interchurch Family’

“Being an Interchurch Family”:

“...to respect the differences, and to learn about each other’s faith”

“...if we really care to see the good things instead of the weaknesses, you will learn lots of things”

At the following link you will find excerpts highlighting the lived experiences of interchurch families: http://interchurchfamilies.org/our_stories/difficulties-benefits.html

Listed at that link you will be able to read in chart format, with any “cons” on the left side and the “pros” on the right side in a list about what the experience will be like or has been like in the past for interchurch families.

It should also be noted that from any and every potential “con” there has arisen an opportunity for growth and love across a traditional barrier.

You will see what interchurch families have found to be problematic issues and the positive growth and enrichment that being in an interchurch family has already provided. They are positioned side by side so that the balancing out of the entire experience is made clear. All in all, this has been one of the greatest and most positive growth experience.

Various barriers and/or hurdles must be overcome, but mostly this is due to a lack of specific long range ecumenical training within both churches of the family so that the church communities aren’t aware of how to be supportive nor that they should be supportive of an interchurch marriage.

~ M.J. Glauber



AAIF is a formally recognized partner and member of the IFIN (Interchurch Families International Network)



Interchurch Families International Network News: Great Britain

The GB Association of Interchurch Families has three strands to its Mission Statement: it aims to provide a **Voice in the Churches**, a **Support Network** for couples and families, and an **Information Service** for all those interested.

AIF-UK was encouraged by a past President of the Association, who said that he saw the Association as a real gift to the church: Whilst for much of the time while we played our roles quietly in the life of our various churches, every now and again we rose to the limelight for a “Day in the Sun” when people stopped and took notice. He was referring to the visit of the Archbishop of Canterbury to deliver the 2010 John Coventry Memorial Address, one of a series of

lectures founded by the Association in memory of our founder, and by implication to the first strand of our Mission Statement that of being a Voice in the Churches.

Six months later, the invitation for 25 AIF members to attend the Service of Evensong jointly celebrated by the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Pope in Westminster Abbey - apparently the largest invitation to any one Christian group in the country - was a ringing endorsement of the fact that this Voice, which has been a constant and carefully moderated influence over the years, really is widely recognised and respected among the churches and ecumenical bodies. This gave us an opportunity to give thanks for the efforts of so many members over 40 plus years whose quiet work has brought about this degree of influence, and allows us to meet this particular strand of our Mission.

Our Executive Secretary Keith Lander has participated in several meetings of national ecumenical bodies for many years, including those of Senior Church Representatives, Churches Together in Britain and Ireland and Churches Together in England. Other members continue to be involved in local and regional ecumenical activities, as officers on Churches Together groups, on liaison groups and many others - often with the AIF publicity boards on display wearing their AIF sweatshirts.

Our work to provide a Support Network has focussed, in recent years, on our two top priority gatherings, the Annual Conference in Swanwick, Derbyshire, and the Spring London Meeting. At last year’s London Meeting we had an embarrassment of riches when we were addressed by two key speakers - Professor Antoine Arajkovsky from the Ukraine, who is Eastern Orthodox in an interchurch marriage with a French Catholic; and Commissioner Betty Matear from the Salvation Army who, as the then Free Churches’s Moderator, was one of our Presidents. (Our other two Presidents are the RC Archbishop of Westminster Vincent Nichols and the Anglican Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams.)

The RC Bishops’ Conference of England and Wales is in the process of revising its Directory on Mixed Marriages. The last edition came out in 1990, and was followed by the Ecumenical Directory of 1992 from the Vatican, which contained a substantial section, and the teaching document on the Eucharist from our bishops in GB ***One Bread, One Body*** (1998), which also dealt with them. We are very pleased that our bishops have asked AIF to comment on the Directory on Mixed Marriages. Our Advisory Council met recently to begin to consider the document, and it is clear that it could do with a complete rewrite, both of some of its content now superseded by

Interchurch Families International Network News: Great Britain

later documents, and certainly in its rather negative and un-affirming tone, with quotes from even earlier statements which are significantly out of date.

We appreciate the fact that what we call interchurch marriage, where both partners are practising members of their own church but share in each other's church as well, is only a subsection of all 'mixed' marriages which our priests and bishops have to think about, but any marriage between Christians has the potential to develop into the rich and positive relationship which many of us have found it to be, and needs careful and sensitive pastoral support, rather than any suggestion that one partner should convert, or that it shouldn't be happening in the first place.

We hope the bishops will ask us to do the rewriting, but in any case we will be keeping an eye on the process!

One particular plus of this past year was a **Considering Confirmation** Weekend held for seven of our younger members who are trying to determine what (if anything - and that's not a negative perspective) they want to do about committing themselves to Christ through the sacrament of Confirmation.

This was a really good example of an activity being proposed, sponsored and implemented from within the membership,

being both hosted and facilitated by members. The 2011 annual AIF conference was held at Swanwick as usual at the end of August. It concluded the joyful celebration of several significant wedding anniversaries of long-term members.

This year's conference in August was - surprise, surprise - on the quasi Olympic theme of '**Passing on the Baton**', where we shall consider what 'baton' we are passing on, and who we might be passing it on to, our children, our churches, people in general?

We continue to receive inquiries at the office in London and on our website, but fewer than in previous years. There has been little activity amongst local groups of members this year, though the re-formed Midlands Group has met a couple of times, including once with the Archbishop of Birmingham, Bernard Longley; and the Herts 'n Beds for group support but also for giving an opportunity for our voice to be heard.

Fulfilling our mission to provide an **Information Service**, the design and purchase of some printed roll-up banners to replace or complement the AIF travelling boards has been a significant step, and they are now available for use by members when they attend local events, and are much more easily transportable. They were bought with some of the proceeds of the money donated in memory of our co-founder

Martin Reardon. A number of volunteers maintain a substantial presence each year at the four-day annual National Christian Resources Exhibition, attended by over 11,000 people.

AIF GB now faces several important decisions to be made concerning its administration and operation, as members who have carried out significant jobs over many years are retiring or moving overseas, and others are finding their lives more and more busy with work, family and local church pressures.

We ask for your prayers for the right outcomes so that we can continue our work which it is clear is still needed.

Report submitted to the ARK 2012 by AIF GB

"To do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God"

The Northern Ireland Mixed Marriage Association has published: **“Mixed Emotions, Real Stories of Mixed Marriages”**

“All love stories are unique and these ten accounts of mixed marriage are no exception. Each story is shared with openness and courage and, stretching back nearly seventy years, the collective experience on offer reveals much about the attitudes of the day, showing how society has changed and yet, ironically, how it remains the same.” ...

...“their love ripples outwards across our communities and we all benefit from these triumphs.”

“One of the joys found within these stories is the diversity of response to common difficulties arising out of misunderstanding, turmoil and hurt. Some were subjected to outright rejection and exclusion, others to more subtle forms of coercion. Each had to make choices against backdrops ranging from violent intimidation to unacceptable familial expectations. Yet, each story sparkles with positivity. Each person tells his or her own story in their own way, highlighting what is important to them. These are the people who have forged a life together, sometimes with apparent ease, occasionally by serendipity and often through great courage.”

“They explain how they have adapted and overcome and they express the enrichment

that they have experienced through mixed marriage.”

“Collectively, these experiences show how relationships can be made to blossom, even when it is made most difficult. People have found many different ways to embrace the positive nature of their mixed relationship and, with simplicity and honesty, they have reached out beyond the narrow negativity of others to build their own love stories.”

“Together, they profess how they have benefitted from mixed marriage through stories that are testimony to how much they deserve the rewards. We should be thankful that they have also shown us how, in the face of adversity, we can aspire and achieve far beyond our common divisions.”

~ Hugh Nelson, NIMMA
February 2012

A Short History of Mixed Marriage in Ireland by Ken Dunn, Chairman of NIMMA, which I found to be most interesting, is included at the end of this book, **“Mixed Emotions, Real Stories of Mixed Marriages.”**

All of the personal stories of what it means to be in a Mixed Marriage in Northern Ireland or in an interchurch marriage, anywhere, are enlightening.

These personal stories, which are journeys of discovery, are also very interesting to read. I highly recommend this book to anyone who is in an interchurch marriage, who may

enter into an interchurch marriage, their extended families and to anyone who may give interchurch families pastoral care.

Perhaps this book would serve all of society well if it could be used as a form of ‘remote preparation’ so that when confronted by the presence of interchurch marriages in the community that this can be recognized for the positive contributions and for the role that mixed marriages serve for the positive advancements our society seeks.

Coming out of NIMMA, there has been a major breakthrough that came about in 2012 “when the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, the body that controls the majority of the social housing stock in the Province, agreed to change its application forms to reflect the wishes of those people who wish to shake off the traditional Catholic/Protestant labels and be known as ‘Mixed.’”

All forms will now have a ‘Mixed’ tick box. This change of policy came directly as a result of years of hard work and lobbying by NIMMA member Anne Odling-Smee and this sets a ground breaking precedent in Northern Ireland where, formally, all official forms, such as the Census form were regarded as changeable only by parliamentary action. This augurs particularly well for the future on a number of fronts.”

“NIMMA continues to provide information and support to

“To do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God”

Interchurch Families International Network News: Northern Ireland and Australia

individuals and couples, to give talks to a range of community and educational groups, as well as universities, colleges and schools, to produce a bi-monthly newsletter, which is distributed widely throughout the island of Ireland to press, clergy, educationalists, politicians, opinion formers, and the general public.”

“NIMMA collates and presents reports to church bodies, networks with cross-community groups, represents Northern Ireland at international conferences, lobbies for extended integrated education and increased shared social housing and sees itself as an agent for real social change in Northern Ireland.”

“It also makes recommendations that can and will make life easier for those in mixed marriages and sets guidelines for the way forward to a truly shared future.”

“NIMMA has achieved much since the dark days of the 1970’s, but there are many challenges ahead and it is determined to continue to address sectarianism in a post-conflict society.”

~ Ken Dunn,
Chairman NIMMA

Ken Dunn hopes that we will enjoy the NIMMA Book: **“Mixed Emotions, Real Stories of Mixed Marriages”**

The book charts the single/married lives of individuals living in Northern Ireland, a first for mixed marriages anywhere on the Island of Ireland while it documents the difficulties and

highlights the courage and commitment of the people in question. These ‘volunteers’ from across Northern Ireland are the first mixed marriage people to speak openly about the subject, certainly since the outbreak of “The Troubles” in 1969. The book, launched at the home of the Northern Ireland Parliament and with the blessing of the Province’s First and Deputy Ministers, has been extremely well received both in Northern Ireland, Ireland, but also around the world. The book paints vivid pictures of changing clerical attitudes toward mixed marriage over a period of nearly 70 years, while featuring a comprehensive history of the subject on the island of Ireland.”

Please contact: N.I.M.M.A.
28 Bedford St. Belfast BT27FE

email: nimma@nireland.com

or go to

www.nimma.org.uk

to obtain your own copy of this book.

This book is highly recommended for all.

~ M.J. Glauber



Charles Fivaz from Langwarrin, Victoria, Australia wrote **“Heartland, a parable,”** which was first published in 2010. **ISBN 978-1-921681-63-9**

Charles Fivaz indicates that “ ‘Heartland’ is a story about a people, Christians, who are living a profound contradiction that amounts to a scandal. It is a tale that charts where this people have come from, and where they can go from here if they are wise and listen to their dreams.”

Although this is a fictional story, Fivaz says that “the narrative is much broader because it takes on universal themes to which everyone can relate.

Fivaz tells this dream to everyone who is on the journey from a coming-from and a going-to; to anyone who is trying to chart a course across the field of broken dreams.”

Fivaz notes that “wherever there is community there will be conflict and brokenness, prejudice and exclusion, and a struggle to find belonging and unity again.”

Fivaz explains that “‘Heartland’ is a story for an open mind and the generous heart, for the young and the old.. the story is about growing and changing”... As a father and daughter go through “life’s wringer they beget wisdom and leave their legacy. The community where they live also must change; they become “unstuck and grow up.” The future is examined. Change happens that better aligns humanity with “their spiritual relationship to the land, the creatures the earth sustains and to the Spirit of its Creator.”

“What you dream alone remains a dream, what you dream with others can become a reality.”

~ Edward Schillebeeckx

Healing the hurts from the past .. A short story created by the author of this book, entitled “Hannah’s Dreamtime” won 3rd prize in the 2008 Avant Press National Short Story Competition (Australia)

The 2012 AAIF Conference was held at Collegeville, MN in July: A Few Photos

The Arboretum at SJU
- dragon fly



MJG©

Historic Buildings of SJU



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Historic Buildings of SJU



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The beach on the SJU Campus - July 2012 -
Family Time



MJG©

Images of the
SJU Campus -
photos taken
during the 2012
AAIF Conference
in Collegeville,
MN

Characteristics of Strong and Healthy Families

The Cooperative Extension Service of West Virginia University provides the following list of terms that describe strong, healthy families in general:

Strong, Healthy Families:

- Are fun
- Believe in themselves
- Are involved
- Are able to forgive
- Share beliefs and values
- Show appreciation
- Spend time together
- Communicate effectively
- Show commitment
- Are able to deal with crises in a positive manner
- Establish reasonable rules and expectations
- Build self-esteem
- Set achievable goals
- Evaluate family strengths and needs
- Have healthy lifestyles
- Celebrate special times
- Keep promises
- Talk it over
- Make time for one another
- Respect each individual
- Have a strong belief system and a high degree of religious orientation
- Provide a stable environment
- Provide security

The Cooperative Extension Service of West Virginia University observes that "Today's families face a multitude of challenges and transitions that place great demands on their resources. Strong family systems provide support for meeting these challenges. It is vital to the well-being of individuals to build and sustain strong families."

<http://www.wvu.edu/~exten/infores/pubs/fypubs/wlg204.pdf>

What this implies for Interchurch Marriages:

Interchurch Families have these healthy characteristics including "shared beliefs and values" added to their "strong belief system and a high degree of religious orientation."

This characteristic of an interchurch family would be perhaps the strongest similarity and connection between all interchurch families because this is the part of our very identity that allows us to become interchurch families.

We may find various practical solutions for how to be devout, such as the times that we will worship and where, but we all share this aspect of our identity "a strong religious Identity."

Our families provide stability and security. We celebrate

special times, sometimes twice as much as a single church family may.

The fact that we have bridged a gap between two historical divisions in society is significant.

~ M.J. Glauber

Resources:

WVA Extension References:

"Blended Families" and "Extended Families," Family FUNdamentals, University of Idaho Extension, 1994.

"Characteristics of Strong Families," Utah State University Extension.

"The Future as if Families Really Matter," Enriching Kansas Families Newsletter, Kansas State University Extension, 1995.

"12 Step Program for Healthy Families," Enriching Family Relationships, University of Nebraska - Lincoln Extension, March 1995.

James Van Horn, "Remarriage," Pennsylvania State University Extension.

Programs and activities offered by the West Virginia University Extension Service are available to all persons

<http://www.wvu.edu/~exten/infores/pubs/fypubs/wlg204.pdf>

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**

**2013 NWCU
Workshop in
Columbus, Ohio
at the Sheraton
Columbus at
Capital Square**

Important News - The National Planning Committee, by unanimous vote, recommended to the NEOA that the NWCU be continued as an annual event. The NEOA has acted to approve that recommendation. Planning is underway for the 2013, 2014 and 2015 events.

News release: April 20, 2012

[http://nwcua.org/WhoWeAre/
NWCUHistory.htm](http://nwcua.org/WhoWeAre/NWCUHistory.htm)

The National Workshop on Christian Unity (NWCU) is an annual ecumenical event for all

involved in, or concerned with the ministry of Christian Unity. It brings together laity, pastors, ecumenical officers, theologians and church leaders to exchange ideas and programs, and to pray and plan together for the sake of Christian Unity.

The Workshop is intended to balance national planning with local responsibility, general ecumenical discussions with particular inter-church conversation and regional leadership efforts with local realities.

NWCU is not an ecumenical agency with a staff and set program to which various denominations contribute. Rather it is an event created by people whose commitment to Christian Unity calls them together.

The NWCU happens because of the contribution of its participants. Responsibility for the event is shared by the National Ecumenical Officers Association (NEOA).

[http://nwcua.org/2012-
Highlights.html](http://nwcua.org/2012-Highlights.html)

[http://nwcua.org/
2012%20Workshop/
2012Documents/JohnBorelli-
NWCU2012Keynote.pdf](http://nwcua.org/2012%20Workshop/2012Documents/JohnBorelli-NWCU2012Keynote.pdf)
[http://nwcua.org/Documents/
EveningPrayerhomilyNWCU20
12.pdf](http://nwcua.org/Documents/EveningPrayerhomilyNWCU2012.pdf)

[http://www.englishtexts.org/
reims.html](http://www.englishtexts.org/reims.html)

[http://nwcua.org/
2012NWCUSeminarSummaries
.htm](http://nwcua.org/2012NWCUSeminarSummaries.htm)

Some Highlights from
the NWCU 2012:

2012 Seminar 5: By the Numbers: A Quantitative Look at the American Religious Landscape

The Rev. Dr. Eileen Lindner
(PC-USA)

Changing patterns of church membership gains and losses, seminary enrollments and the emergence of new church groups have altered the long dominant face of American Christianity.

Growing religious pluralism and increasing secularism have likewise contributed to a substantial reconfiguration of the American religious landscape.

This workshop charted these changes and identified emerging trends in faith communities and their implications for Christian unity and ministry.

It gave special attention to the ways in which church institutional life is adapting within the American context.

The workshop leader is editor of the Yearbook of American and Canadian Churches.

- Growing Religious Pluralism
- Growing Congregationalism
- Redefinition of Denominations
- Increasing Secularization
- Ministry Specialization thru Para church Organizations

Attraction Factors

- Growing Religious Pluralism
- Growing Congregationalism
- Redefinition of Denominations
- Increasing Secularization
- Ministry Specialization thru Para church Organizations

Mega Trends #1

- Growing Religious Pluralism
- Growing Congregationalism
- Redefinition of Denominations
- Increasing Secularization
- Ministry Specialization thru Parachurch Organizations

Mega Trends #2

- Interreligious Supplants Ecumenical
- Spiritual vs. Religious
- Protestant Surrender of Cultural Hegemony?
- Conflictual Articulations of Faith in the Public Square

Mega Trends:

Congregational:

- Mega-churches – Multi-service Campus
- Cafeteria Approach to Resources and Ministries
- Gravitate to “Theological Affinity Groups” (Greens, etc.)
- Intolerant of National Divisive Issues
- Adaptive Parish Life – middle judicatories

World View: Manner of Thinking

- Modernity
 - Scientific Method; Empirical Truth
- Post Modernity
 - Intellectual Relativity; Personal Narrative

Theological Context

Mainline Yields to Post Christian
Evangelical Yields to Postmodern



The Great Emergence

The Road Ahead: General Trends

- Increasing Pluralism
- Accelerated Secularization
- Denominational Redefinition
- Increasing Congregationalism
- Stable Growth/Decline Patterns

Health and Welfare Ministries

- More Issues “Specialized”
- Weighted to Direct Service vs. Advocacy
- Interfaith Primacy over Christian Ecumenism

2012 Seminar 7 Young Adulthood Interrupted: Is There a Place in Today’s Churches for Young Adults? - The Rev. Dr. Eileen Lindner (PC-USA)

Eileen Lindner (PC-USA)

<http://nwcua.org/2012NWCUSeminarSummaries.htm>

Using contemporary research, this workshop examined the patterns of affiliation and disaffiliation that characterize the generation born between 1980 and 1995.

Often called Generation Y or Millennials, **this group has exhibited behaviors and interests in faith identification that hold important implications for the character of American religious demography.**

Churches, at both the congregational and denominational levels, are seeking to understand and respond to a new generation, now young adults, whose perspectives and longings are quite distinct from earlier generations.

This workshop also explored the themes and patterns which are emerging from the data which traces the religious identification of this age cohort.

The facilitator is editor of the Yearbook of American and Canadian Churches

The Connected Generation Can the Church Log In?

A Portrait of “Generation Next”

- Confident.
- Connected.
- Open to Change.

Generational Names:

The Millennial Generation – Those born after 1980

Generation X – Born from 1965 through 1980

Baby Boomer – Fertility boom between 1946 to 1964

The Silent Generation – Born 1928 through 1945

The Greatest Generation – Those born before 1928

Millennial's Priorities:

- 52% Being a good parent
- 30% Having a Good Marriage
- 21% Helping Others in Need
- 20% Owning a Home
- 15% Living a very religious life
- 15% Having a high paying career
- 9% Having lots of free time
- 1% Being famous

Young Leader's Heros:

By Name:

- Franklin Delano Roosevelt (15.6%)
- Abraham Lincoln (11.4%)
- John F. Kennedy (9.9%)

By Historic Circumstance:

- Military Leader (36%)
- Founding Father (14%)
- Social Change Leader (10%)
- Religious Leader (1%)

Life Context:

- Lowered Economic Expectation
- Heightened Personal Expectation
- First "Always Connected" Generation
- Newspaper & TV passe – Niche News

Seeking Gemeinschaft in Gesellschaft

- Virtual "Friends"
- Common Interests over Kinship
- Non-Geographical Affiliation
- World Café Consensus Building
- Homogeneity ≠ Unity
- Fluid Identity: Culturally, Politically, Racially, Religiously

(**"Gemeinschaft"** means

community, collective, solidarity, fellowship [in a religious context], companionship, communion [fellowship], confraternity; "in Gesellschaft" means "in company" so perhaps in English: "The communion of Fellowship with the company of others")

Millennial "Spirit Quest" Characteristics

- Global/Local Faith in Action
 - Non-Parochial Interfaith
 - Reasoned Spirituality to Mystical "Worthy Adventure"
 - Symbolic Ritual vs Non-Linear Thought
 - Devotional Meditation
- Millennial Spirit Quest Expressions**
- Symbolic Witness
 - Electronic Presence
 - Traditional Moral Values / Unusual Application

Videos - Videos of the Plenary Sessions are being placed online and can be accessed by clicking on the video image to the right of the Seminar descriptions. Please go to the NWCU website to find those videos.

**2012 Seminar 1
The Art of Ecumenical and Religious Exchange**
Fr. Leo Walsh (Catholic)

Being involved in ecumenism and/or interfaith activities is an art as well as a science. This seminar provided the basics needed to be an effective Ecumenical/Inter-religious officer or informed "lay person."

Topics include **"A Five-Minute History of the Modern Ecumenical Movement"; "The WCC and Vatican II"; and "Current Theological and Practical Issues."**

The workshop leader was the Pastor of St. Benedict Parish, Anchorage, and formerly the Interreligious Specialist at the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.

**2012 Seminar 2
Reading Each Others' Scriptures**

The Rev. Darryn Hewson (United Methodist), Rabbi Abby Jacobson and Imam Imad Enchassi

What is distinct about how different faith traditions use and understand their scriptures?

What do they have in common? And what can we learn from one another?

This seminar provided an enriching exploration of how Jews, Christians, Muslims and others view their sacred texts and apply them to their life in community and in the world.

**2012 Seminar 3
Ecumenical Advocacy**
Shirley Cox (Catholic) and Richard Klinge (Catholic)

There are times when it is important for the church to speak out on important issues before the legislature.

This seminar provided an overview of how bills become laws and gives practical advice

National Workshop on Christian Unity: Equipping Church Leaders in the Quest for Christian Unity

about the best possible times and ways to advocate ecumenically.

Shirley Cox is the Legal Services Developer for the Oklahoma Department of Human Services. Richard Klinge is Associate Director of Catholic Charities – Oklahoma City.

2012 Seminar 4 **The Hope of Eternal Life: Common Statement—U.S. Lutheran-Catholic Dialogue**

Dr. Michael Root (Catholic)

The Lutheran-Catholic dialogue completed Round XI with agreements that contribute to the ongoing ecumenical journey.

The common statement “The Hope of Eternal Life” offers fresh insights into some issues that proved contentious in the debates of the sixteenth century.

Among issues explored in this dialogue were continuity in the communion of saints, prayer for and about the dead, the meaning of death, purgation, an interim state between death and the final general judgment, and the promise of the resurrection.

The presenter is Professor of Systematic Theology, Catholic University of America.

2012 Seminar 6 **Native American Spirituality**

Bishop Steven Charleston (Episcopal)

Many followers of Native American spirituality do not regard their spiritual beliefs and

practices as a “religion” in the same way that traditional western Christianity talks about “religion.”

Rather, Native American spirituality and practices form an integral and seamless part of the very being of a person.

This seminar explored various aspects of native spirituality and considered the rich cultural diversity among first peoples across North America, with a special focus on Native Americans for whom Oklahoma is a homeland.

Bishop Charleston is Interim Dean of St. Paul’s Cathedral, Oklahoma City, and a citizen of the Choctaw Nation.

2012 Seminar 8 **Ecumenical Engagement: Providing Healing and Hope Throughout the Disaster Cycle**

The Rev. Mary Gaudreau (United Methodist)

Faith communities hold a unique and valuable role through all phases of disaster: preparedness, response, relief, recovery and mitigation.

This workshop introduced participants to some of the well-established national and state level networks through which faith communities engage in vital disaster-related communication, cooperation, coordination and collaboration.

Participants also learned avenues through which they can become better prepared to serve others impacted by

disasters and to prepare for disasters they themselves may experience. The presenter is a consultant with the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) and Domestic Emergency Service Office

2012 Seminar 9 **Christian Response to Peace and Non-Violence**

Dr. Michael Trice (Lutheran), Jordan Blevins (Brethren), and Ronaldo Cruz, a Pax Christi representative (Catholic)

This seminar explored concrete efforts among our churches and other partners to promote nonviolence, peace and reconciliation in a broken world.

Learn about contributions Christians can make together to raise awareness, inform public dialogue, and take meaningful steps to attend to suffering and to overcome violence.

Also addressed were recent actions by church bodies to seek forgiveness for historic wrongs committed against one another.

Panelists included representatives from major peace networks, including Pax Christi (Roman Catholic), National Council of Churches, and Seattle University’s School of Theology and Ministry (ecumenical in the Jesuit tradition)

Source:
<http://nwcu.org/2012NWCUSeminarSummaries.htm>

At least once a year, many Christians become aware of the great diversity of ways of adoring God. Hearts are touched, and people realize that their neighbours' ways are not so strange.

The event that touches off this special experience is something called the **Week of Prayer for Christian Unity**. Traditionally celebrated between 18-25 January (in the northern hemisphere) or at Pentecost (in the southern hemisphere), the Week of Prayer enters into congregations and parishes all over the world. Pulpits are exchanged, and special ecumenical worship services are arranged.

Ecumenical partners in a particular region are asked to prepare a basic text on a biblical theme. Then an international group with WCC-sponsored (Protestant and Orthodox) and Roman Catholic participants edits this text and ensures that it is linked with the search for the unity of the church.

The text is jointly published by the **Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity** and WCC, through the **WCC's Commission on Faith and Order**, which also accompanies the entire production process of the text. The final material is sent to member churches and Roman Catholic dioceses, and they are invited to translate the text and contextualize it for their own use.

Theme for 2013

What does God require of us?

(cf. Micah 6:6-8)

The search for unity: throughout the year

The traditional period in the northern hemisphere for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity is 18-25 January. Those dates were proposed in 1908 by Paul Wattson to cover the days between the feasts of St Peter and St Paul, and therefore have a symbolic significance. In the southern hemisphere where January is a vacation time churches often find other days to celebrate the week of prayer, for example around Pentecost (suggested by the Faith and Order movement in 1926), which is also a symbolic date for the unity of the church.

Mindful of the need for flexibility, we invite you to use this material throughout the whole year to express the degree of communion which the churches have already reached, and to pray together for that full unity which is Christ's will.

Adapting the text

This material is offered with the understanding that, whenever possible, it will be adapted for use in local situations. Account should be taken of local liturgical and devotional practice, and of the whole social and cultural context.

Such adaptation should ideally take place ecumenically. In some places ecumenical structures are already set up for adapting the material; in other places, we hope that the need to adapt it will be a stimulus to creating such structures.

Using the Week of Prayer material

■ For churches and Christian communities which observe the week of prayer together through a single common service, an order for an ecumenical worship service is provided.

■ Churches and Christian communities may also incorporate material from the week of prayer into their own services. Prayers from the ecumenical worship service, the 'eight days', and the selection of additional prayers can be used as appropriate in their own setting.

■ Communities which observe the week of prayer in their worship for each day during the week may draw material for these services from the 'eight days'.

■ Those wishing to do bible studies on the week of prayer theme can use as a basis the biblical texts and reflections given in the eight days. Each day the discussions can lead to a closing period of intercessory prayer.

■ Those who wish to pray privately may find the material helpful for focusing their prayer intentions. They can be mindful that they are in communion with others praying all around the world for the greater visible unity of Christ's church.

BIBLICAL TEXT

(Micah 6: 6-8) ***"He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?"***

PRAYER

Lord, you call on us to pray for our enemies.

Have mercy on those who are disposed to do us evil and who divide your church.

Deliver us, Lord, from every temptation.

Have mercy on our lack of belief and our wavering faith as we travel the path towards the unity of your people.

You are our God and we want always to be your people under the guidance of your Holy Spirit.

(Prayer by the group from Zaire who prepared for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 1993)

O God,

the source of our belonging to one another, none of us can give anything to our sisters and brothers if we have not first of all belonged to you; give us your Spirit in the bond of perfect unity so that the Spirit may transform us into a new humanity, free and united in your love, through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who is God, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, world without end.

(New Roman Missal, Democratic Republic of Congo)

Pray for:

- An awakening of the churches' leadership in the political arena, that their eyes and ears be opened to the plights and cries of the people and that their hearts be wise to discern what makes for peace with justice.
- Interfaith dialogue and cooperation.

- That all believers assume their gift of priesthood and thus carry one another's burden for the sake of the mission of the church.

- Good governance and leadership with vision.

- Those living along coastal lines, that they may be protected from the devastation of annual typhoons and hurricanes, and those living in arid places that they may be saved from drought and famine.

- The leading of the Spirit for churches to renounce self-justification and rather work for the establishment of justice and human rights for all.

- Christians in the southern islands to be more eloquent with their deeds than with their words.

- A faithful witnessing to the way of the Lord in political and economic arenas.

- God's justice to prevail in the political arenas and for good results from elections.

- God's love to permeate and transform all the work of the churches in the islands.

- Churches to find ways to cooperate in love and trust in the common goal of pointing to the in-breaking reign of God in Christ.

- Every Christian to gain understanding of and commitment to God's justice in society.

PRAYER

Lord Jesus,

the storm is life and life is the storm and there is no escaping it; but what matters is that you are in the storm with us, a beacon and a presence that is sure.

From Madagascar, www.cms-uk.org/prayer-month.htm Used with permission.

Our heavenly Father,

in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, we glorify you, we give thanks to you, for in your infinite mercy you extended your family to include the islands of the sea, even islands at the end of the earth: *Comoros, Madagascar, Maldives, Mauritius and Seychelles.*

We praise your name for you moved your Holy Spirit who stirred and sustained a century-long revival movement in Madagascar, an awakening to your power that brought transformation, reconciliation, healing and empowerment.

We magnify your name for through this revival the different denominations have discovered a spirit-filled way to come to a unity in diversity.

Lord of the church, we pray that the churches be strengthened in their spirituality, one that would powerfully engage them in a priestly and prophetic way in the midst of their local contexts.

Strengthen the churches to recover their sight and so to resist overt and covert manipulation in the political arena, from either government officials or politicians.

God of all creation and nature, we pray for the inhabitants of these islands, that they may be spared the devastation of cyclones or typhoons with the open seas lashing every year against the coastal areas, causing suffering and loss for the population.

© 2005 Péri Rasolondraibe, Antananarivo, Madagascar.

The week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2013: *What does God require of us?*

INTRODUCTION TO THE THEME FOR THE YEAR 2013

What does God require of us? (cf. Micah 6:6-8)

To mark its centenary, the Student Christian Movement of India (SCMI) was invited to prepare the resources for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity (WPCU) 2013 and they involved the All India Catholic University Federation and the National Council of Churches in India.

In the preparatory process while reflecting on the significance of the WPCU, it was decided that in a context of great injustice to Dalits in India and in the Church, the search for visible unity cannot be disassociated from the dismantling of casteism and the lifting up of contributions to unity by the poorest of the poor....

.... Micah was one of the twelve minor prophets of the Old Testament who prophesied from approximately 737-690 BC in Judah. He came from Moresheth, southwest of Jerusalem, and prophesied during the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah of Judah (Micah 1:1).

He lived in the same political, economic, moral, and religious conditions as his contemporary

Isaiah and with him witnessed the destruction of Samaria, and the invasion of the Southern Kingdom by the King of Assyria in the year 701 BC.

His grief as he wept over the plight of his people informs the tone of his book, and he turns his anger upon the leaders (2:1-5) and priests who had betrayed his people.

The Book of Micah belongs to the literary tradition of Prophecy. At the heart of its message is the oracle of judgment.

The book unfolds in three sections demonstrating a journey from judgment in general (ch.1-3), to the proclamation of salvation (ch. 4-5), to the word of judgment and the celebration of salvation (ch.6- 7).

In the first part, Micah harshly criticizes those in authority, both political and religious, for abusing their power and stealing from the poor: They —tear the skin off my people(3:2), and —give judgment for a bribe (3:11).

In the second part of the book Micah exhorts the people to walk in pilgrimage —up to the mountain of the Lord... that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his pathll (4:2).

God's judgment is revealed in the third part to be accompanied by a call to await in hope for salvation, with faith

in God who —pardons iniquities and passes over transgressionll (7:18). This hope focuses upon the Messiah, who will be —peace... (5:4), and who will come forth from Bethlehem (5:1) bringing salvation —to the ends of the earthll (5:4).

Micah ultimately calls upon all nations of the world to walk in this pilgrimage, to share in the justice and peace which is their salvation. Micah's strong call to justice and peace is concentrated in chapters 6:1 – 7:7, part of which forms the theme of this year's Week of Prayer for Christian Unity (WPCU).

He sets justice and peace within the history of the relationship between God and humanity but insists that this history necessitates and demands a strong ethical reference.

Like other prophets who lived in the period of the Israel monarchy, Micah reminds the people that God has saved them from slavery in Egypt and called them through the covenant to live in a society built on dignity, equality and justice. Thus, true faith in God is inseparable from personal holiness and the search for social justice.

More than just worship, sacrifices and burnt offerings (6:7), ***God's salvation from slavery and daily humiliation rather demands that we should —do justice, love***

The week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2013: *What does God require of us?*

kindness, and walk humbly with our God (cf. 6:8).

In many ways, the situation facing the people of God in the time of Micah can be compared to the situation of the Dalit community in India. Dalits also face oppression and injustice from those who wish to deny them their rights and dignity.

Micah compared the greed of those who exploited the poor to those who —eat the flesh of my people, flay the skin off them, break their bones in pieces (3:3).

Micah's rejection of rituals and sacrifices which were impoverished by a lack of concern for justice, speaks of God's expectation that justice ought to be at the core of our religion and rituals.

His message is prophetic in a context where discrimination against the Dalits is legitimized on the basis of religion and notions of ritual purity and pollution. Faith gains or loses its meaning in relation to justice.

In the contemporary Dalit situation Micah's insistence on the moral element of our faith requires us to ask ourselves what God truly requires of us; mere sacrifices, or to walk with God in justice and peace.

The path of Christian discipleship involves walking the path of justice, mercy and humility.

The metaphor of "walking" has been chosen to link together the 8 days of prayer because, as an active, intentional and ongoing act, the metaphor of walking communicates the dynamism which characterizes Christian discipleship.

Further, the theme of the tenth assembly of the WCC to be held in Busan, Korea, in 2013 - "**God of life lead us to Justice and Peace**" resonates with the image of the Trinitarian God who accompanies humanity and walks into human history while inviting all people to walk in partnership.

<http://www.oikoumene.org/fileadmin/files/wcc-main/documents/p2/2013/WOP2013eng.pdf>

Implications for Interchurch Families

"Dynamism" that quality of being characterized by vigorous activity and progress, and/or that quality of being dynamic and positive in attitude.

The imagery of walking is used to convey the concept of an active, intentional and ongoing act; this is how we live our lives as interchurch families. Being interchurch requires us to examine our lives in relationship to another tradition.

This is a daily aspect of the lived experience of our lives because we are constantly reminded of the other denomination and we wish to treat that denomination and its members in the same way that we wish to be treated, a concept based on "The Golden Rule."

There is a positive attitude in the way we seek to find commonalities between our denominations accompanied by an equally positive attitude for considering what elements have divided our traditions historically and in this time period.

It is a form of looking for that of God in our world, the world where we live in a very human way that surrounds us. Most of the time, we find that of God in this kind of a relationship; there is always room for more growth in understanding. Because we are human, none of us comprehends everything at all times, but being on a journey to find that of God in our world and seeking to reinforce that of God.

What is required of any of us? "To do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God".... God is the one who is in control. All that we have to do is to be kind, to love kindness and to do justice... That is a major task so perhaps we, because we are simply human beings, need to keep viewing our lives as a journey. In this way, I find hope.

~ M.J. Glauber

International affairs, justice and peace are key to the ecumenical future

International affairs, justice and peace are key to the ecumenical future

1.11.12

It is not imaginable for the World Council of Churches (WCC) to have a future “without a much stronger emphasis on international affairs and peace with justice,” said Martin Robra, programme director for the study of ecumenism in the 21st century, at a consultation on “churches and the rule of law” this week in Geneva.

The consultation, sponsored by the John Knox International Reformed Centre and the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC) was held 28-31 October at the John Knox Centre.

Robra observed that churches “have been wrestling in recent decades with a more substantive understanding of the rule of law. They were challenged to redefine their thoughts concerning the role of states, of national and international law, the use of force, human rights and impunity.”

He suggested that the time has come for the WCC to focus on discussion of these matters in order to “harvest the results of its Decade to Overcome Violence and renew the mandate of the Churches’ Commission on International Affairs.”

Other speakers at the conference included the WCRC general secretary Setri Nyomi, John Langlois of the World Evangelical Alliance, Elizabeth van der Heide of the Centre for Terrorism and Counterterrorism in the Netherlands, Carlos Lopez of the International Commission of Jurists, and Harmen van der Wilt, professor of international criminal law at the University of Amsterdam.

A book-length report of the proceedings is in preparation.

Has security become the new religion? church conference asks

Participants at a church-sponsored conference in Geneva, Switzerland on the rule of law are calling for a rethinking of the escalation of state-supported security measures. The calls come in response to reports pointing to the high cost of “securitization” and the increasing invasion of individual privacy through surveillance via social media and travel controls.

“Security measures are necessary for a well-functioning society,” says Elizabeth van der Heide of the Centre for Terrorism and

Counterterrorism in the Netherlands. However, the Dutch academic warns against the tendency of governments to “terrorize their flock” with exaggerated images of danger that are then used to justify high levels of electronic surveillance and suspension of laws guaranteeing the protection of human rights.

“Society does not become more secure through installing security gates but through a feeling of trust, social cohesion and personal fulfillment” van der Heide says.

Van der Heide made her comments in delivering an address to the Churches and the Rule of Law conference at the John Knox International Center (28-30 October). The two-day event attracted forty participants from churches and non-governmental organizations in Africa, North America and Europe. “Is security the new religion?” Dietrich Werner of the World Council of Churches asked during debate. **“Are we idolizing security?”**

The German academic and theologian calls this a key contemporary concern for churches and says it is time to issue a declaration against the **“religious connotation of security”**.

Conference organizer, Douwe Visser of the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC), notes the conference theme was chosen in response to growing

International affairs, justice and peace are key to the ecumenical future

recognition of the role played by churches in the development of legal safeguards against the abuse of power and the infringement of human rights imposed in the name of security.

“The objective was to inform churches about the role they can play in their local contexts in ensuring the rule of law,” says Visser. “It was also intended to present an opportunity for global organizations such as the World Communion of Reformed Churches and the World Council of Churches to set their agendas in response to the question of rights and the rule of law in the coming years.”

Martin Robra of the World Council of Churches (WCC) called on the ecumenical movement in general, and WCC in particular, to focus on the multiple and sometimes contradictory issues associated with the role churches can play in response to questions and concerns about how best to defend human rights at the same time as ensuring protection for the vulnerable in politically unstable countries.

Robra acknowledges this is a controversial issue among churches, with some defending the need for security measures imposed by force and others opting for non-violent intervention. However, he says he “cannot imagine a WCC of the future without a much stronger emphasis on international affairs and peace with justice.”

Visser says that WCRC will initiate further work with ecumenical partners such as the WCC on the issues raised by the conference. The John Knox International Centre will be publishing a report on the conference early in 2013.

Justice and Partnership

In our world today, from our pews, communities and streets, we hear devastating stories about grave injustices, human rights violations and degradation of God’s creation. Gender based and societal violence, poverty, militarism and climate change instigated disasters are among injustices which are rampant, resulting in severe consequences for many people, especially for poor people in both rich and poor countries.

People are displaced and treated as disposables; they are losing their jobs, homes, access to health care, education, water, electricity and other basic necessities. This is the reality of the world in which the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC) was established and called to serve, where life is at stake.

“The WCRC is founded on a basis of communion and justice, through the grace of God who has bestowed upon us the deep privilege of becoming co-workers with God in this ministry. In accepting this gift the WCRC acknowledges the privileges and the responsibilities entrusted to us.

We recommit ourselves, therefore, to the basic, yet

profound principle *that in communion we belong to God and to each other and are accountable together for the stewardship of all God’s creation*. In this regard we accept responsibility for our part in the problems of the world.

We rejoice that we are led on this journey by the God of justice and we believe that we are called to work with God in creating a different world - a world of Peace, of Justice and of harmony with Creation: **“Justice in the Economy, the Earth and all God’s Creation.”**

Programme direction:

- Developing and promoting life-giving civilization as an alternative to the neo-liberal economic paradigm, introducing new metrics that reflect God’s intention for the flourishing of creation, and humankind within creation, that will include engaging the powers in the world economic system.
- Developing a framework and criteria for a new international financial and economic architecture.
- Establishing a global ecumenical panel, linking to initiatives with other faith communities and critical experts worldwide as well as with the UN expert commission for a new world economic and financial architecture, headed

by the Nobel laureate Joseph Stiglitz.”

- Establishing an international core group, including, feminist theologians, pastors, economists and climate change experts to develop a process to support churches’ engagement on economic and climate justice issues from critical gender perspectives.

- Living out the Accra Confession – through education on climate justice, ecological debt and ecological destruction.

- Building up the [Oikotree movement](#) and connecting the Reformed family with this initiative.

Publications and resources
www.wcrc.ch

If you have any questions or comments concerning our work or would like further information, please contact us at justice@wcrc.ch

Moderators: Mr. Helis Hernán Barraza Díaz, Presbyterian Church of Colombia

Executive Secretary: Rev. Patricia Sheerattan- Bisnauth, Guyana Presbyterian Church
Administrative Assistant: Ms Daphne Martin-Gnanadason

World Communion of Reformed Churches:

Called to communion, Committed to justice

What we do

The World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC) coordinates joint church initiatives for unity, worship renewal, contemporary mission, and economic, ecological and gender justice.

Why

WCRC’s member churches believe that Christian faith engages us in actions which respond to the spiritual needs and social rights of all people in society and that this includes ensuring responsible use of natural resources.

How

WCRC is committed to collaborating with other church movements on issues of common concern such as climate change, gender equality and theological dialogue.

WCRC is supported principally by membership contributions of finances and human resources. It also seeks funding for specific projects.

Theology

We promote church unity, worship renewal, and ecumenical formation.

<http://www.wcrc.ch/sites/default/files/RuleofLawWrapUp.pdf>

WCRC represents 80 million Christians in 108 countries. Its member churches are active worldwide in initiatives supporting economic, climate and gender justice, mission, and cooperation among Christians of different traditions.

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Ecumenical Advocacy Days April 5-8, 2013

Register Now!

-
www.AdvocacyDays.org
A national gathering in Washington, DC for people of faith who want to be a force for change for the betterment of all!

"...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

EAD Welcomes Three New Ecumenical Partners to Its Mobilization for Advocacy

Ecumenical Advocacy Days for Global Peace with Justice is pleased to announce three new sponsors to its advocacy mobilization for justice, peace and integrity of creation.

Strengthening EAD's voice and joint Biblical witness, The Christian Reformed Church, The Community of Christ, and Christian Connections for International Health join a total of fifty-four U.S. denominations, religious congregations, relief agencies and faith-based advocacy organizations as EAD national sponsors.

"It is clear that EAD's 10 years of experience, along with the current theme,

At God's Table: Food for a Healthy World,

is motivating a growing interest in EAD's advocacy efforts," said Douglas Grace, EAD's director. "In the wake of November elections and a challenging lame-duck Congress, now more than ever, the Christian voice of 1,000 faith advocates will be needed in the Spring of a new Congress."

Grace added, "Some may profess that ecumenical partnerships have been on the decline, but I believe EAD's continued expanse and commitment from Christian and related faith-based sponsors, and the number of people of faith who come to EAD each year, show that the ecumenical commitment to unity for 'Global Peace with Justice' is well alive and growing."

"The Community of Christ is extremely excited and grateful to be joining such a diverse ecumenical sponsorship for EAD. We became sponsors because of the fabulous educational and advocacy work they do for justice and peace," said Rev. Dr. Dale E. Luffman, Community of Christ Ecumenical and Interfaith Relationships Officer and Brad A. Martell, Peace and Justice Coordinator.

"Community of Christ's mission initiatives

- **to Invite People to Christ,**
 - **to Abolish Poverty and End Suffering,**
 - **to Pursue Peace on Earth,**
 - **to Develop Disciples to Serve,**
 - **and to Experience Congregations in Mission**
- greatly align with EAD's goal of strengthening Christian witness and justice and peace advocacy.**

We are honored to be sponsoring EAD and looking forward to April 2013!"

"The Christian Reformed Church is thrilled to join the diverse and committed ecumenical community of EAD," said Peter Vander Meulen, Coordinator of the CRC Office of Social Justice. "EAD's commitment to justice, civic engagement, and responsible Christian citizenship make EAD a perfect partner for the CRC. We are honored to add our voice to EAD's swelling ranks of Christians of all stripes in the on-going effort to act justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly."

"Christian Connections for International Health, a global network of 200 organizations and several hundred individuals, has discovered that Ecumenical Advocacy Days is a perfect opportunity for us to partner with others in our growing commitment to being a Christian voice in global health affairs," said Ray Martin, Executive Director.

"Our mission is promoting global health and wholeness from a Christian perspective, but initially we focused on operations and program support. But we came to realize that our calling also included an effort to mobilize our members to be a Christian voice for voiceless in global health and development challenges, so it is with excitement and anticipation that we join with the wider faith community in EAD."

God's loving abundance is highlighted throughout the

Ecumenical Advocacy Days April 5-8, 2013

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,**

Ecumenical Advocacy Days April 5-8, 2013

- preserve ecological sustainability,
- protect children and adults from exploitative labor practices,
- and strengthen rather than destroy small-scale farmers and the rural economy.

1. ***We will break-down myths such as the one that says farmers cannot grow enough food with ecologically sustainable means.***

2. ***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!

EAD 2013 Biblical Texts:

Exodus 16: 16-18 (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."

Luke 14: 12-24 (NRSV) "He said also to the one who had invited him, 'When you give a luncheon or a dinner, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, in case they may invite you in return, and you would be repaid. 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.'

One of the dinner guests, on hearing this, said to him, 'Blessed is anyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God!' Then Jesus said to him, 'Someone gave a great dinner and invited many. At the time for the dinner he sent his slave to say to those who had been invited, 'Come; for everything is ready now.' But they all alike began to make excuses.

The first said to him, 'I have bought a piece of land, and I must go out and see it; please accept my regrets.' Another said, 'I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to try them out; please accept my regrets.'

Another said, 'I have just been married, and therefore I cannot come.' So the slave returned and reported this to his master. Then the owner of the house became angry and said to his slave, 'Go out at once into the streets and lanes of the town and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind, and the lame.' And the slave said, 'Sir, what you ordered has been done, and there is still room.'

Then the master said to the slave, 'Go out into the roads and lanes, and compel people to come in, so that my house may be filled. For I tell you, none of those who were invited will taste my dinner.'"

The Ecumenical Advocacy Days is an opportunity for Christians to work together, side by side as we serve God, our Creator, Jesus our human role model and to become part of the Holy Spirit that seeks to unite us through God's truth and as we seek to create the world that God envisioned for us in Genesis when he found that what He had created was good.

<http://advocacydays.org/conference/glance.php>

Holy Apostles Church; Virginia Beach

Interchurch Families from all over the world are watching the on-going news updates regarding the changes taking place at Holy Apostles Church in Virginia Beach, VA. We are aware that changes are being made to the existing worship format, but why these changes are being made at this time is unclear. No reasons were given in public news reports.

Holy Apostles isn't of course only - or even mainly - for interchurch couples - it's part of a wider movement to explore how much RCs and Anglicans can do together, within the current legal framework. It wasn't intended to be a church exclusively for interchurch couples, per se, but interchurch families have felt welcomed and affirmed while being able to be actively involved there so it is with some sadness, as interchurch families, that we view these changes taking place.

We are left to wonder about ecumenical efforts everywhere. Given the Global situation, it seems that we should be encouraging joint efforts rather than eliminating them. This may be one more example pushing us to work and pray for full visible unity. (These are my own thoughts and they do not necessarily reflect those of AAIF.)

~ M.J. Glauber

Many Thanks.... I would like to express my gratitude to the many who make the ARK possible:

To Father Ernest Falardeau, SSS, who, as a frequent contributor to the ARK, gives an in depth perspective of the ecumenical movement;
to every interchurch family everywhere with whom we share this journey;
to Great Britain: AIF-UK from which AAIF was originally patterned and their on-going work;
to those who shared their stories of what it like to be in an interchurch marriage; to those members of the Northern Ireland Mixed Marriage Association because they have helped to illuminate our journey for us;
for Charles Fivaz and all those interchurch families in Australia who also share this journey of discovery with us;
to all those who planned the 2012 AAIF Conference in Collegeville, MN (a beautiful location and a wonderful conference);
to God, our Creator, for the beauty of Creation, especially for this beauty as we found it in Collegeville, MN;
to the planners of the National Workshop on Christian Unity;
to all the cooperative extensions everywhere in the United States that help us to find the educational materials that we need to make the quality of our lives better;
to the planners of the annual Week of Prayer for Christian Unity;
to those who work at the World Council of Churches;
to the Kentucky Council of Churches that brings the work of the WCC to us in Kentucky;
to the planners of the annual Ecumenical Advocacy Days so that we can work together as various Christian Communities to make the world a better place for all;
to our pastoral advisors: Father George Kilcourse, Father Ernest Falardeau, SSS and Elaine Hall.

To all those people who have volunteered for AAIF over the years so that the ARK could get to this point; to the Natellas and the Greens, may they experience improved health and the loving care of friends and family, and especially to my family and to my husband, Peter whose encouragement have made this issue of the ARK possible. Thank you! ~ M.J. Glauber

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American
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of
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