

THE ARK



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American Association of
Interchurch Families

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A Publication of the 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"

Gratitude

"When it comes to life the critical thing is whether you take things for granted or take them with gratitude." ~
G.K. Chesterton 1874-1936

"At times our own light goes out and is rekindled by a spark from another person. Each of us has cause to
think with deep gratitude of those who have lighted the flame within us."

~ Albert Schweitzer 1875-1965

"Gratitude is the fairest blossom which springs from the soul." ~ Henry Ward Beecher 1813-1887

"Ut Unum Sint" ~ "The call for Christian unity made by the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council
with such impassioned commitment is finding an ever greater echo in the hearts of believers,..."

~ POPE BENEDICT XVI

http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_25051995_ut-unum-sint_en.html

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Contact Information for AAIF:

AAIF 2012 OFFICER ELECTION

The results of the AAIF Board Member's Election this past fall in 2012 have been tabulated. The following were elected by a unanimous vote to the following positions:

CO-CHAIR =
Libbye & Guy Montgomery
aaif.co.chair@gmail.com

VICE CO-CHAIR =
Lynne & Doug Wragge
lynnewragge@hotmail.com

SECRETARY =
Diane & Lamar Burton
lamarb52@hotmail.com

TREASURER =
Elaine & Clint Hall
l.elaine.hall@gmail.com

The current term of office will be from July 1, 2012 through

June 30, 2014, at which time another election will be held.

Please contact any of the above mentioned officers if you would like to have information about how to become more actively involved with AAIF. You would be welcomed by this group.

The next AAIF Conference will be in 2016. Please plan to join us. All are welcome.

“Listen With the Ear of Your Heart”

This is the theme that we began at the AAIF 2012 Conference. We will continue to explore this topic now, after the conference.

Seeking to live a Sacred Life:

Andrew Harvey in his book: “The Hope: A Guide to Sacred Activism” delineates direct steps for us to take toward becoming a “Sacred Activist.” Among his suggestions, he indicates that we would be well advised to **“Write down one thing that has made you feel grateful to be alive today. You will discover that this reminds you of how blessed you are just by being alive in a world full of ordinary wonders.”**

Harvey suggests that we **“write down, just off the top of our heart, 10 things that are sacred to you.”** Harvey explains that “In the act of writing, you will start to be inspired by your deepest values, beliefs and sources of emboldening joy.”

I am requesting interchurch families to share their lived experiences of the times when they have felt gratitude and how this sense of gratitude has helped them on their journeys. I am also asking you to think about ten things that are sacred to you. Please send your thoughts to THEARK.AAIFPUBLICATION@GMAIL.COM so that your insights can be shared with others.

The Little Church of the Home

“One of the most important dimensions of St. John Chrysostom’s exalted vision of the Christian life is his emphasis on Christ-filled marriage and family life,” explained Dr. David C. Ford, an Associate Professor at St. Tikhon’s Orthodox Theological Seminary, in a talk that he gave at the parish of St. John Chrysostom Orthodox Church, House Springs, Missouri, on September 29, 2007, on the occasion of the 1600th Anniversary of St John’s repose.

Dr. Ford explained, “some of the most important characteristics of the home as a little church that can be found in St. John Chrysostom’s preaching and writing.”

Dr. Ford believes six such characteristics stand out:”

Dr. Ford’s talk, in written form, can be found in its complete version at this link: http://orthodox-stl.org/little_church.html I found the contents of his homily to be inspiring. Thank you for posting it for us to be able to read it.

The following article is inspired by Dr. Ford’s talk.

Implications for Interchurch Families, as they create “Little Churches of

the Home” and/or “Domestic Churches” :

#1 **Interchurch marriages model a form of love that creates one from two**, which can also be found in single church marriages, but with the added component that the interchurch marriage has created a bond of love that connects two historically divided Christian communities into one family, one “Little Church of the Home,” one “Domestic Church,” one Christian Church body.

The Unity that Christ seeks and which is written about in **John 17:21 “That they may all be one”** exists in a physical and real state of being in interchurch family homes. Interchurch Families have served to bridge that great divide through love.

#2 By the nature of the fact that Interchurch Marriages join in matrimony two Christian communities in their creation of their own “Little Church of the Home” or what is also known as a “Domestic Church,” there are two devout Christians **bringing a deep understanding and commitment to Christianity into their lived experience on a daily basis, albeit from two different Christian perspectives.**

Respect most often grows out of this kind of marriage for the unique attributes found in their spouse’s denomination. That same denomination which has

“Listen With the Ear of Your Heart” ~ The Little Church of the Home

loved their spouse from the day of their baptism or their birth. There is a need to be open to possibility and to let God lead.

However, much will depend on how over a period of years the “other church” member spouse is treated in the church community and by the family members of their spouse. Interchurch Families are often met face to face with what Christian Hospitality actually entails.

Often, we visit other churches to study the Bible, for example, but as interchurch couples; it is in this unique experience where Interchurch Families and Interchurch Couples are able to explore other aspects and interpretations as they exist for how to be Christian while remaining strong in their own church tradition. This aspect of our lived experience offers hope to the world.

#3 “Parents giving the children careful, attentive instruction in godliness and virtue, both by word and by example” is the definition of the role of Christian parents in general. As Interchurch Families, we also teach our children these same values both by word and by example, just as any single church family, but also by creating a unity between two Christian denominations within our home. This is mostly an unrecognized gift for the world but which interchurch families share regularly.

#4 “By regular Scripture reading, spiritual discussions, and prayer—

even prayer in the night, besides morning and evening prayers together as a family.” Just like a single church family, interchurch families read the Bible together and have spiritual discussions and pray together at home. The added dimension is that each parent brings in an added dimension from their own tradition that serves to expand and broaden our understanding of what it really means to be a Christian. Chrysostom emphasized evening prayer so that we can repent, set aside what we do not wish to continue, rest and then be able to begin with a fresh start the next day.

#5 “Exhorting and spurring each other to grow in the spiritual life”... The family should be a place where each member encourages the other to become the best of whatever it is that they should become according to God’s plan for their lives. Interchurch families, as “Little Churches of the Home” or as “Domestic Churches” encourage each other to grow spiritually much like single church families, but with the added dimension that two church traditions are re-united by love in the home.

#6 “Generous almsgiving: giving to the poor as if to Christ Himself.” Interchurch Families give money to two Christian Communities whereas single church families only give to one Church.

Everything that happens in an interchurch family enables it to be a complete “Little Church of the Home” and/or a “Domestic Church.” There is an added

dimension that within a loving home base, a form of Christian Unity has been found. In John 17:21 Christ asks “that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me.” The Christian Unity found in an interchurch family has achieved a form of unity that hasn’t yet been achieved elsewhere. It would serve Christian denominations at this time, if they would ask how to best give pastoral care to interchurch families so that their gifts can be recognized by others. It would also serve Christian denominations to do some remote study so that they can discover the gifts offered to their dual communities by those couples who choose to become interchurch families rather than church drop-outs.

Hope for the future of Christianity and for Christian Unity exists as a lived example within Interchurch Families now.

~ M.J. Glauber



Ray Temmerman wrote his thesis on the role of the Domestic Church found within Interchurch Families:

Interchurch Families As Domestic Church:
Familial Experiences And Ecclesial Opportunities
Ray’s thesis is posted on line at:
<http://www.interchurchfamilies.org/STM/Thesis-InterchurchFamiliesAsDomesticChurch.pdf>

Ecumenical Corner
December 2012

What Does God Require of Us?

The theme for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity (January 18-25, 2013) is taken from the prophet Micah and was chosen by the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity and the World Council of Churches. The theme was given to a working group in India composed of the Student Christian Movement of India (SCMI) which is marking its centenary and they involved the All India Catholic University Federation and the National Council of Churches in India in preparing reflections on the theme for the coming year.

*“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 God be pleased with thousands of rams, with tens of thousands of rivers of oil?...
...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?” (Mi 6:6-8).*

Those preparing the reflections decided to focus on the context of the 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. The

Dalits in India are the communities which are considered “outcastes.” They are the people most affected by the caste system, a rigid form of social stratification based on notions of ritual purity and pollution. The Dalits were placed outside the caste system and were previously called “untouchables”. Because of casteism the Dalits are socially marginalized, politically under-represented, economically exploited and culturally subjugated. Almost 80% of Indian Christians have a Dalit background.

Despite great progress in the twentieth century, the churches in India remain divided along the doctrinal divisions inherited from Europe and elsewhere. Christian disunity in India within churches and between them is further accentuated by the caste system. Like apartheid, racism and nationalism, casteism poses severe challenges for the unity of Christians in India and therefore, for the moral and ecclesial witness of the church as the body of Christ. It is both a church-dividing doctrinal issue as well as a moral one.

In this context the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity invites everyone to explore the text from Micah focusing upon the question: “What does God require of us?” as the main theme. The Dalit experience serves as the crucible from within which theological reflections on the biblical theme emerge.

While the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity is observed in

the northern hemisphere during the month of January, it is the peak of summertime in the southern hemisphere. Many churches and ecumenical agencies in the south prefer to schedule the observance of it at another time of the year, preferably in connection with Pentecost, when the church celebrates the descent of the Holy Spirit and the beginning of the apostolic mission to the world. The theme and reflections for the WPCU are appropriate throughout the year.

Father Ernest Falardeau, SSS



**Amo ergo sum.
(I love therefore I am)**

“I think, therefore I am.” The philosopher, Descartes, said that, but I would add: **therefore I am... what?**

One answer for me is: therefore I am a believer. **I am a believer because I am a thinker.** I do not hold the beliefs I do because I never question them. I question them all the time. I use the intellect, the common sense, the curiosity God gave me to study my reality, not just accept it.

Sometimes that process makes me uncomfortable, but growing up is impossible without questions. If I want to grow in faith, I must learn by reason as well as by tradition.”

~ The Rt. Rev. Steven Charleston,
Choctaw

Now Thank We All Our God

*Now thank we all our God, with heart and hands and voices,
Who wondrous things has done, in Whom this world rejoices;
Who from our mothers' arms has blessed us on our way
With countless gifts of love, and still is ours today.*

*O may this bounteous God through all our life be near us,
With ever joyful hearts and blessed peace to cheer us;
And keep us in His grace, and guide us when perplexed;
And free us from all ills, in this world and the next!*

*All praise and thanks to God the Father now be given;
The Son and Him Who reigns with Them in highest Heaven;
The one eternal God, whom earth and Heaven adore;
For thus it was, is now, and shall be evermore.*

<http://www.cyberhymnal.org/htm/n/o/nowthank.htm>

“Now Thank We All Our God” was written by Martin Rinkart, circa 1636 - 1644. This well known hymn was originally written in German, as “Nun danket alle Gott.” It first appeared in *Praxis Pietatis Melica*, a hymnal created by Johann Crüger in Berlin, Germany in 1647. The hymn was translated from German into English by Catherine Winkworth in 1856.

The music for “Nun Danket” is attributed to Johann Cruger from 1647. The harmony was created by Felix Mendelsohn in 1840.

It is noted that, “Martin Rinkart, a Lutheran minister, was in Eilenburg, Saxony, during the Thirty Years’ War. The walled city of Eilenburg saw a steady stream of refugees pour through its gates. The Swedish army surrounded the city, and famine and plague were rampant.” A bare bones historical account, but it caught my attention.

“Eight hundred homes were destroyed, and the people began to perish. There was a tremendous strain on the pastors who had to conduct dozens of funerals daily.”

“Finally, the pastors, too, succumbed, and Rinkart was the only one left—doing 50 funerals a day.”

“When the Swedes demanded a huge ransom, Rinkart left the safety of the walls to plead for mercy.”

“The Swedish commander, impressed by his faith and courage, lowered his demands.”

“Soon afterward, the Thirty Years’ War ended, and Rinkart wrote this hymn for a grand celebration service. It is a testament to his faith that, after such misery, he was able to write a hymn of abiding trust and gratitude toward God.”

Martin Rinkart lived from 1586 - 1649. San Juan, P.R. was founded in 1521 by Spanish Colonists. The Pilgrims landed at Plymouth Rock where they founded the Plymouth Colony in 1620. Please consider if and how the 30 Years War may have affected the settling of the “New World.

“Now Thank We All Our God” is a hymn of gratitude.

What are you feeling grateful for?

Please share your interchurch family’s lived experience(s) with ARK readers.

Gratitude:

A Blessing for those who give pastoral care throughout the year

May the blessings released through your
hands
Cause windows to open in darkened minds.

May the sufferings your calling brings
Be but winter before the spring.

May the companionship of your doubt
Restore what your beliefs leave out.

May the secret hungers of your heart
Harvest from emptiness its sacred fruit.

May your solitude be a voyage
Into the wilderness and wonder of God.

May your words have the prophetic edge
To enable the heart to hear itself.

May the silence where your calling dwells
Foster your freedom in all you do and feel.

May you find words full of divine warmth
To clothe the dying in the language of dawn.

May the slow light of the Eucharist
Be a sure shelter around your future."

~ John O'Donohue, Irish poet, author,
priest (Jan. 1, 1956 - Jan. 4, 2008)

Dear Lord and Father of Mankind

a poem and hymn lyrics by John Greenleaf Whittier

*Dear Lord and Father of mankind,
Forgive our foolish ways!
Reclothe us in our rightful mind,
In purer lives Thy service find,
In deeper reverence, praise.*

*In simple trust like theirs who heard
Beside the Syrian sea
The gracious calling of the Lord,
Let us, like them, without a word
Rise up and follow Thee.*

*O Sabbath rest by Galilee!
O calm of hills above,
Where Jesus knelt to share with Thee
The silence of eternity
Interpreted by love!*

*With that deep hush subduing all
Our words and works that drown
The tender whisper of Thy call,
As noiseless let Thy blessing fall
As fell Thy manna down.*

*Drop Thy still dews of quietness,
Till all our strivings cease;
Take from our souls the strain and stress,
And let our ordered lives confess
The beauty of Thy peace.*

*Breathe through the heats of our desire
Thy coolness and Thy balm;
Let sense be dumb, let flesh retire;
Speak through the earthquake, wind, and fire,
O still, small voice of calm.*

"O still, small voice of calm"

This is how God speaks to us. We do not find God in nor through the wind, not in nor through the storm, not in nor through the earthquake, not in nor through the fire, not in nor through the flood, but through that still, small voice of calm... It is in that calmness, and in what some may describe as being in a state of meditation, where we are quiet enough so that we can discern that of God in our world.

It is God's still, small voice that is always present in our chaos of daily life if we are willing to stop to listen and to be attentive to that of God that surrounds us everywhere.

~ M.J. Glauber

Ecumenical Efforts for Epiphany:

“Already, But Not Yet”

Our churches' full communion agreements are a bit like this "already, but not yet" time of God's realm in which we dwell.

Just over a decade ago, Anglicans/Episcopalians and Lutherans inaugurated a new relationship in which we fully recognized each other "as churches in which the gospel is truly preached and the holy sacraments duly administered" (Called to Common Mission).

Even so, we recognize that this achievement "marks but one step toward the eventual visible unity of the whole Church catholic" (Waterloo Declaration).

As with the kingdom of God, we cannot sit idly by waiting for this unity to somehow manifest itself.

Rather we are called as the baptized to take our part in making more visible, day by day, the unity to which Christ calls our churches.

The four of us will gather in Chicago next month to continue our conversations about how Anglicans/Episcopalians and Lutherans in the United States and Canada can grow together more closely in unity and mission.

In the meantime, we commend to your use an inspired collection of devotions for the season of Epiphany, each prepared by a different member of the Lutheran-Episcopal Coordinating Committee (USA) and the Joint Anglican-Lutheran Commission (Canada).

Epiphany Devotions

The Lutheran Episcopal Coordinating Committee (LECC) and the Joint-Anglican Lutheran Committee in Canada (JALC) have worked on Epiphany devotions that are recommended for use in the four churches that participate on those Committees.

- [January 6, 2013 - The Epiphany](#)
- [January 13, 2013 - The Baptism of Our Lord](#)
- [January 20, 2013 - Epiphany 2](#)
- [January 27, 2013 - Epiphany 3](#)
- [February 3, 2013 - Epiphany 4](#)
- [February 10, 2013 - The Transfiguration of our Lord](#)

These devotions can be found at this link:

<http://www.elca.org/Who-We-Are/Our-Three-Expressions/Churchwide-Organization/Office-of-the-Presiding-Bishop/Ecumenical-and-Inter-Religious-Relations.aspx>

They represent a modest but visible sign of what our churches can do together

Ecumenical and Inter-Religious Relations

That they may all be one
~ John 17:21

rather than separately.

Through them our prayers will be united across international and denominational boundaries.



Up-coming events for Ecumenists:

The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity

An annual event in the global ecumenical movement, the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity will be observed January 18-25, 2013, in the northern global hemisphere. <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/programmes/unity-mission-evangelism-and-spirituality/spirituality-and-worship/week-of-prayer-for-christian-unity.html>

This week celebrates the great diversity of ways of adoring God. Pulpits are exchanged and special ecumenical worship services are arranged. Worship resources and materials that can be adapted for local settings have been prepared and published by the Commission on Faith and Order of the World Council of Churches and the Pontifical Council for Christian Unity.

Ecumenical Efforts

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?

~ Micah 6:6-8

Ecumenical Advocacy Days 2013:

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

(Exodus 16:16-18 & Luke 14:12-24) <http://advocacydays.org/2013-at-gods-table/registration/>

APRIL 5-8, 2013
DOUBLETREE HOTEL
CRYSTAL CITY, 300 ARMY
NAVY DRIVE, ARLINGTON,
VA

Their 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. <http://advocacydays.org/2013-at-gods-table/>

Ecumenical and Inter-Religious Relations

"God's work. Our hands."

National Workshop on Christian Unity

Registration is now open for the [NWCU](#) to be held **April 8-11, 2013**, in Columbus, Ohio. To register, you can [go online](#) where by searching using "National Workshop on Christian Unity" you will be able to find and to download the brochure and registration form.

Resources for the 10th Assembly of the WCC

A new online publication from the World Council of Churches (WCC) invites parishes and congregations to explore the

themes of Christian unity, justice, and peace leading up to the 10th Assembly in Busan, South Korea. <http://wcc2013.info/en/about-the-assembly/theme-logo>

The six unit resource, ***Pilgrimage to Busan: A Journey Into Ecumenical Christianity***, is designed for use by congregations in study groups, adult forums, or for a day-long retreat. <http://wcc2013.info/en/resources/pilgrimage-to-busan>

Participant and leader guides are available for free download at the link above.

The WCC assembly will take place October 30 - November 10, 2013, in Busan, Republic of Korea, under the theme:

God of Life, Lead Us to Justice and Peace.

For more information, see the WCC Assembly website. <http://wcc2013.info/en/resources/pilgrimage-to-busan>

Ecumenical Efforts

Take the Plunge into a deeper spirituality.

Experience the global faith community at the ecumenical centers in Geneva, Switzerland, and Taizé, France.

Dates: May 29-June 9, 2013.

Schedule: For four days, young adults from Canada and the United States will visit The Lutheran World Federation and World Council of Churches in Geneva to learn how we are connected across the globe through the church.

Then they will travel to the Taizé community in southern France for a retreat week. There they will experience firsthand the unique style of worship and music that arises from that community as it welcomes youth from across the globe.

Thank you for considering this invitation to deepen our understanding and participation in the global communion. Join us in celebrating this new step in our pilgrimage together in Christ!



One of the goals the ELCA pursues is a model of ecumenism called

"full communion."

Shared communion, that possibility, that invitation to all

Full Communion Defined

baptized Christians is a topic that is near and dear to Interchurch Families. Our lived experience outside of our homes is far too often perceived to be a rejection of us; we are not welcomed at the table. It feels like a personal rejection of us when it happens. So I am including a discussion of what "Full Communion" is according to the ELCA so that we might be able to explore this topic to find the potential and the possibilities within this concept.

Full Communion Partners with the ELCA currently are:

- Presbyterian Church (USA)
- Reformed Church in America
- United Church of Christ
- The Episcopal Church
- The Moravian Church
- United Methodist Church

**"Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household."
~ Ephesians 2:19**

What is Full Communion?

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 sharing of the Lord's Supper.

This does not mean that two churches merge; rather, in reaching agreements, churches also respect differences.

These denominations likewise jointly worship, may exchange clergy, and also share a commitment to evangelism, witness and service in the world.

A central document to Lutherans is the Augsburg Confession. Article VII of the Augsburg Confession states that "the true unity of the church" is present where the Gospel is rightly preached and Sacraments rightly administered. The ELCA is committed to this model of full communion as an authentic expression of Christian unity.

Characteristics of Full Communion

For the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, the characteristics of full communion are theological and missiological implications of the Gospel that allow variety and flexibility.

These characteristics stress that the church act ecumenically for the sake of the world, not for itself alone.

Full Communion Defined

They will include at least the following, some of which existed at earlier stages:

- a common confessing of the Christian faith;
- a mutual recognition of Baptism and a sharing of the Lord's Supper, allowing for joint worship and an exchangeability of members;
- a mutual recognition and availability of ordained ministers to the service of all members of churches in full communion, subject to the disciplinary regulations of other churches;
- a common commitment to evangelism, witness, and service;
- a means of common decision making on critical common issues of faith and life;
- a mutual lifting of any condemnations that exist between churches.

ECUMENICAL OPPORTUNITIES:
Resources and on-going opportunities as elaborated by the ELCA:

ELCA-UMC Full Communion Local Formation Model

The ELCA-United Methodist Church Coordinating Committee

On-Going Ecumenical Opportunities

has developed a 6 page template, which can be accessed through a link at the following website: <http://www.elca.org/Who-We-Are/Our-Three-Expressions/Churchwide-Organization/Office-of-the-Presiding-Bishop/Ecumenical-and-Inter-Religious-Relations.aspx>

"Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace." ~ Ephesians 4:3

day-long local celebration, formation, and theological reflection, using a mini-retreat model.

You are invited to seek new opportunities that require research and initiative in shaping and being shaped in your specific ecumenical and inter-religious interests.

Parliament of World's Religions

Cities around the globe are organizing and hosting events that continue to inspire and support the inter-religious movement in local communities. <http://www.parliamentofreligions.org/index.cfm?n=24&sn=6>

Faith Connect US

A web-based tool that gives young adults the chance to discern God's mission for the Church and channel their leadership into focused, real responsibilities that matter. NewFire is a movement of the National Council of Churches USA. <http://eappi.org/de/mitmachen/oekumenische-begleitperson-werden/deutschland.html>

The Ecumenical Institute of Bossey

The Institute, near Geneva, Switzerland, is the international centre for encounter, dialogue, and formation of the World Council of Churches. For opportunities to study at Bossey, please go to this link: <http://www.oikoumene.org/activities/bossey/study-at-bossey.html>

An Award Winning Documentary from 1967: about building social bridges in our communities.

Please see this link for further details: <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0062372/>

Ecumenical Youth Ministry

The ELCA Youth Gathering <http://www.elca.org/Growing-In-Faith/Ministry/Youth-Ministry/Youth-Gathering.aspx> and [Lutheran Youth Organization](http://www.lutheran.org) carry special emphases in leadership development, faith formation, and service learning.

Building awareness -- or formation -- is the intentional activity of being shaped.

Ecumenical and inter-religious formation is the activity of crafting or shaping emerging leaders in the landscape of this work within the country and the world.

If you have opportunities to share, or questions about those listed here, or for further information, please see this link:

Gratitude

THE ARK, a Publication of the American Association of Interchurch Families
January, February and March 2013; Volume 24; Edition 1

Resources

<http://www.elca.org/Who-We-Are/Our-Three-Expressions/Churchwide-Organization/Office-of-the-Presiding-Bishop/Ecumenical-and-Inter-Religious-Relations/Building-Awareness.aspx>



Gratitude

Psalm 92:1

A Psalm. A Song for the Sabbath. It is good to give thanks to the Lord, to sing praises to your name, O Most High;

Gratitude – “Teaching Your Kids The Art Of Being Grateful”

By Dr. Caron B. Goode

<http://www.more4kids.info/184/teaching-gratitude/>

Gratitude is more than an attitude.

Recent studies show that grateful people are happier, more resilient, and less depressed.

They also have higher self-esteem and better relationships.

These results prove that gratitude is more than polite

manners and positive thinking. It is a way of life, and a wonderful legacy to leave our children.

Plus, the beauty of gratitude is that it does not have to come naturally. It can be taught.

A study by Dr. Michael McCullough, professor of psychology and religious studies at the University of Miami, demonstrates just that.

McCullough, who also co-authored *The Psychology of Gratitude*, asked his subjects to write down four or five things they were grateful for each day.

In as little as two weeks, they began feeling happier. This illustrates that gratitude can not only be taught, but that it is relatively simple to do so.

Seven Simple Ways to Teach Your Children Gratitude

▪ Daily Dose.

Take time each day to encourage your children to express gratitude. They can do this by making an entry in a family journal or by simply talking about what they are grateful for.

“The best and most beautiful things in this world cannot be seen or even heard, but must be felt with the heart.”
– Helen Keller

▪ Model Thanks.

As with everything, modeling is the best way to teach your children to be grateful. Be lavish with your thanks. Thank your children for

hugs. Thank the cashier for ringing up your groceries. Thank the bus driver for returning your students home safely. Letting your children see that you are grateful will encourage them to be so as well.

▪ Establish Rituals.

We all know the importance of family rituals. Establishing rituals that highlight being thankful is a wonderful teaching tool. Start dinner with each family member sharing what they are most grateful for. Say goodnight by sharing what you were thankful for that day. Any ritual that based on gratitude will reinforce its power.

▪ Volunteer.

Volunteering is a great way for your children to see gratitude in action. There are numerous chances in every community to volunteer. Homeless shelters, nursing homes, and mentoring programs are just a few. There may also be other opportunities closer to home.

Perhaps an elderly relative or neighbor could use a hand. It feels good to help others. Therefore, your children not only benefit from that, but they also get to experience the warmth of appreciation. Two things for which they can be grateful.

▪ Assign Chores.

Children learn by doing chores. They learn what it means to be part of a whole. They learn their contributions are important. They also learn that

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most things take effort. Simple household chores can help children learn to be grateful when they benefit from the efforts of others.

▪ **Thank You Notes.**

Writing thank you notes for gifts is a very literal way of teaching your children gratitude. Putting down on paper what they enjoyed about a particular gift, reminds your children why they are grateful for it.

▪ **Find Your Gratitude.**

Always be on the lookout for things to be grateful for and express your gratitude. When your children hear you say things like, "Buster is such a good dog" or "What a beautiful day", they realize they can be grateful for even the smallest of things.

Dr. Caron B. Goode is the founder of the Academy for Coaching Parents International, a training and certification program for parent coaches. In addition to duties with the academy, Goode is the founding editor of the website InspiredParenting.net, and the author of eleven books, the most recent of which is Help Kids Cope with Stress & Trauma, which includes several chapters on the use of storytelling strategies. For more information on The Academy for Coaching Parents International or to sign up for academy announcements, visit www.acpi.biz.

Gratitude - Implications for Interchurch Families:

Gratitude can be taught and learned. This is hopeful for everyone. The simple exercise of writing down a few things each day for which someone is

grateful or thankful helps to highlight what is good in our lives.

People who experience gratitude also have healthier self-esteem and better relationships.

Gratitude is more than an attitude. Recent studies show that grateful people are happier, more resilient, and less depressed.

Interchurch Couples have been given the personal task to find unity in their homes. Gratitude helps everyone to build better relationships. Building better relationships is what is needed to help create those human bridges that serve to link what has been an historical cultural divide in society.

How has gratitude served you well as an interchurch family?

~ M.J. Glauber



That Still Small Voice:

1 Kings 19:11-13

King James Version (KJV)

11 And he said, Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the Lord.

And, behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the Lord; but the Lord was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but the Lord was not in the earthquake:

12 And after the earthquake a fire; but the Lord was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice.

13 And it was so, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out, and stood in the entering in of the cave. And, behold, there came a voice unto him, and said, What doest thou here, Elijah?

It was there at the opening of the cave with his face covered that Elijah was able to perceive God through the voice of God, that still small voice of God.

Listen for that still small voice.

- **How do you find that of God in your own life?**
- **What is your personal experience of that of God in your life?**
- **How do you articulate your experience of that of**

God?



AAIF is a part of IFIN, and is formally recognized as one of IFIN's affiliates.

I am very grateful for all the work and efforts made by others for Interchurch Families, on behalf of our home churches, for those who are on this journey with us seeking the unity that Christ wished for us, “that they may all be one,” John 17:21

At the website, created by Canadian, Ray Temmerman, you will find how to join in an on-line interchurch families international dialogue, information about interchurch families from around the world, information about past conferences, announcements about up-coming conferences and a collection of historical and current documents related to interchurch families and Christian Unity. Ray explains, “This web site seeks to link all those families, groups, and Associations so that together we may grow in Christian unity, and become for our churches an ever-greater gift of healing of the scandal of disunity.”

Ray Temmerman posts the “Daily Word” highlighting the interchurch families lived experiences and insights coming to us from over the years.

Please see:
www.interchurchfamilies.org

where you can explore many topics of interest to Interchurch Families and find suggestions for their pastoral care.

In recent “Daily Word” of highlighted comments, we read:

Pastoral Care Necessary

for Interchurch Families

‘Interchurch families are of many different kinds; each sort requires marriage preparation and support adapted to its special needs.

And within each group, each couple is unique, and true pastoral care will treat them as such.’ ~ Ruth Reardon

Are children who are raised in Interchurch Families confused?

‘An interchurch family conference in Ireland was held on the topic: **“Is double belonging confusing?”**

The day had been prepared by a questionnaire to interchurch children, and a number of them were present to answer questions and take part in the discussion.

One family reported that “their friends actually think that they are lucky having a choice of church to attend”. There was a general feeling that double belonging was an advantage to children in giving them a perspective on different churches that children raised in a one-church family did not have.’

INTERCHURCH FAMILIES: GIFT AND CHALLENGE

(excerpted selections appear below)

We asked the churches to

question themselves. ‘What has changed in the relationship between two churches if they have members who are common to them both, or at least partially common? How can this reality be expressed in ecclesiological terms? We were still more precise. ‘Interchurch families seem to us to be “islands of reconciliation” within the one Church, developing the potential contained in the reality of our mutually recognised one baptism. This is a significant and hopeful reality which the churches need to take more seriously in order to draw out the consequences which are so evident.’

Interchurch families and their activity within the churches are not only a challenge to academic theology, but even to some ecclesiastical institutions.

1. Interchurch families require the churches to revise their theology of marriage and their pastoral attitude to those who are divorced. In this area, which is particularly delicate today, the positions of the three great Christian traditions are probably less different than would appear at first sight.

Does it not seem that each of the traditions has settled upon one aspect of our Gospel heritage? **Do not interchurch families call upon these traditions to examine themselves in mutual ‘conversion’ and to rediscover together the**

fullness of the Gospel message in this area?

2. Interchurch families show the churches that they are further advanced than they think or admit in their recognition, at least in part, of their ministries. Half a century ago, when pastors and priests set on a journey with interchurch families, no church questioned their authority and whether a certain minister could legitimately have pastoral responsibility for sheep not belonging to his 'fold'. **Certainly we did not speak of a theological recognition of ministries, but there was a mutual recognition in practice of such ministries, at least to a certain extent. Have the churches drawn out the ecumenical consequences of this practice?**

3. Interchurch families should lead the churches to question themselves more seriously about the apparent contradiction between a mutually recognised baptism and **a eucharist that puts up barriers to sacramental participation. Do we really give weight to all the consequences of baptism?**

And why not admit that certain differences might simply evaporate in the fire of a eucharist where mutual hospitality is practised?

The list could be lengthened, but let us be content with these three. They suggest ways in which, far from being Christians who challenge the churches, interchurch families (the groups

which have gradually come to birth and the international movement which represents them) constitute – or should constitute – a precious resource within the ecumenical movement.

There remains much work to be done. In many a church milieu there remains a suspicion of these 'hybrid' interchurch families, which must give way to trust of those who can light up the way.

They are men and women who, without any particular merit on their part but simply in virtue of their ecclesial situation, walk at the head of the pilgrimage. They have already recognised and partially opened up the evangelical way that all the Christians of all the churches must take towards the full and complete communion of the disciples of Jesus Christ our Lord. ~ René Beaupère OP

Father Beaupère's complete article can be found at:<http://www.interchurchfamilies.org/ifir/2006/ifir05-200611socoecbeaupere.html>

Pope Benedict XVI on Interchurch Families: 'laboratories of unity'

"We know that among Christian communities, called to witness to love, the family occupies a special place. In today's world, in which international and intercultural relations are multiplying, it happens increasingly often that young people from different traditions,

different religions, or different Christian denominations, decide to start a family. For the young people themselves and for those dear to them, it is often a difficult decision that brings with it various dangers concerning both perseverance in the faith and the future structuring of the family, the creation of an atmosphere of unity in the family and of suitable conditions for the spiritual growth of the children.

Nevertheless, thanks to the spread of ecumenical dialogue on a larger scale, the decision can lead to the formation of a practical laboratory of unity. For this to happen there is a need for mutual good will, understanding and maturity in faith of both parties, and also of the communities from which they come." ~ Pope Benedict XVI, excerpt from his speech made during his visit to Poland in May 2006 regarding the pastoral care of Interchurch Families <http://www.interchurchfamilies.org/ifir/2006/ifir05-200611BenedictXVI.pdf>

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A Reflection
The Living Presence of Grace:
"Today much of my child-like wonder has been purged by the strong winds of time, but I still feel the living presence of grace, the gentle support of unseen love, the sheltering wings of hope, in rooms and streets and every corner of God's good world. I do not see them as I once did, but they see me as clearly as ever."

~ The Rt. Rev. Steven Charleston, Choctaw

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

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For the hymn lyrics and poetic prayers by John Greenleaf Whittier; For the presence of God, our creator found in that still, small voice of calm

For the insight and depth of comprehension of Helen Keller; For Epiphany

For those places Where Full Communion Already Exists

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For the Ecumenical Advocacy Days, April 5 – April 8, 2013 in WASHINGTON, DC

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To Ruth Reardon, Ray Temmerman, René Beaupère OP ,who has helped Interchurch Families around the world

For our Bible; For our families; For our pastoral advisors, For the AAIF Board Members

To my family and especially to my husband, Peter, whose encouragement and support have have made this issue of the ARK possible. ~ M.J. Glauber

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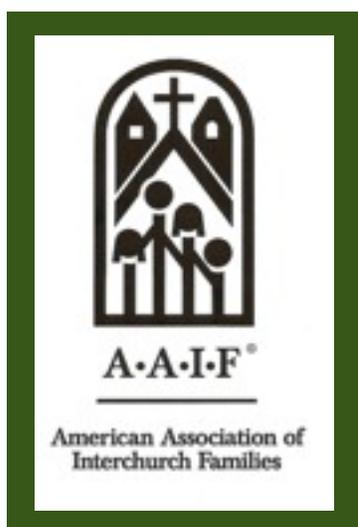
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