

THE ARK



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**A Publication of the American Association
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**Interchurch Families:
Christian Unity Made Visible in our
Households**



Interchurch Families

"Listen with the ear of your heart"

An Evening Prayer

"Let us look expectantly to a new day, new joys, new possibilities."

Lord, it is night.

The night is for stillness.
Let us be still in the presence
of God.

It is night after a long day.

What has been done has
been done;
what has not been done has
not been done;
let it be.

The night is dark.
Let our fears of the darkness
of the world and of our own
lives
rest in you.

The night is quiet
Let the quietness of your
peace enfold us,
all dear to us
and all who have no peace.

The night heralds the dawn.
Let us look expectantly to a
new day,
new joys,
new possibilities.

In your name we pray.
Amen.

© A New Zealand Prayer Book He Karakia
Mihinare o Aotearoa 1989 p.185

**"What counts is prayerfulness, not prayers.
And the fullness of prayer is grateful living." ~ Unknown**

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Contacts 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. Details to follow in a future issue of the ARK

The Children of Bi-Cultural Interchurch Families Provide Great Hope For Those Who Are Seeking Christian Unity.

Art Markman, Ph.D. wrote **“Becoming Bi-Cultural Makes You More Creative, The Value of Living in More Than One Culture.”** I found his article in [Psychology Today](#).

Dr. Markman observes that “Innovation provides a key path to business success.” He observes how creativity helped companies like Apple to succeed in a very competitive market. Apple had taken a different approach from its competitors. Dr. Markham observes that “Companies that bring out new and exciting projects capture people’s imaginations and ultimately people are willing to pay a premium for their new products.”

Dr. Markham observes that “Because of the key role of innovation in generating new

business, companies are on the lookout for people who are likely to bring a creative spirit to their work. A paper by Carmit Tadmor, Adam Galinsky, and William Maddux in the September, 2012 issue of the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* explores how living abroad can influence people’s creativity.”

How can living abroad in another culture influence people’s creativity?

Dr. Markham observes that “When people live abroad for an extended period of time, there are three possibilities for their relationship to their host culture.

1. One possibility is that they will retain their original cultural identity and keep themselves separate from their host culture.
2. A second possibility is that they will assimilate to the host culture and lose their original cultural identity.
3. A third possibility is that they will become bicultural, and will retain a strong tie both to their original culture and to the host culture.”

I focused on the use of the term “Possibility” that Dr. Markham had examined. I immediately saw a similarity with the three possible options for those who are immersed in another culture with the potential that we observe when a couple, coming from two different Christian traditions, marries. Some simply drop out, some convert to their spouse’s faith and some become

interchurch marriages. We have no statistics from which we can determine how many potential interchurch marriages are for whatever reason not becoming interchurch marriages. Converting the spouse may sound like a good option, but I have observed that frequently the spouse who has converted is absent regarding their new church. This, of course, isn’t always the case. The drop outs seem to be gaining ground in our society according to a recent Pew Study on church attendance.

Dr. Markham observes that “The researchers suggest that when people become bicultural, it helps them to see many sides to an issue. This integrative complexity allows them to be more creative. After all, being creative often involves seeing things in more than one way.” Being able to see many aspects or many sides to any given situation allows

Dr. Markham observes that Carmit Tadmor, Adam Galinsky, and William Maddux in the September, 2012 issue of the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* explores how living abroad can influence people’s creativity. To do this study, “they tested this prospect in a series of studies using people who had lived abroad.”

“In each study, the researchers measured whether people were separate from their host culture, assimilated to it, or

Hope and Possibility found among the Children of Bi-Cultural Interchurch Families

bicultural. They also assessed a variety of personality characteristics to ensure that the findings were based on the degree to which people became bicultural and not because of a basic personality variable that leads people to be more accepting of a new culture.”

“They also measured people’s tendency toward integrative complexity by having them write essays about a dilemma. Essays displaying integrative complexity were ones that acknowledge both sides of the dilemma and talked about the relationship between the opposing sides.”

Dr. Markham observes that “In one simple study, participants were asked to list as many functions as possible for a brick. Previous research suggests that creative people are more likely to find many uses for a brick than those who are not that creative.”

“Participants who were bicultural typically found more uses for a brick than either those who were separate or assimilated to the host culture. Statistical analyses suggested that the best explanation for this difference was that the bicultural participants also displayed more integrative complexity in their essays.”

Dr. Markham notes that “Two other studies explored the workplace. One study found that bicultural individuals were more likely than separated and assimilated individuals to start new companies based on new ideas and to generate new

ideas that were successfully implemented in their companies. A second study found that bicultural individuals were also more likely than separated and assimilated individuals to be promoted and to achieve high levels of status in their company. In both cases, the degree of integrative complexity supported by being bicultural was the best statistical explanation for these findings.”

This is a short article based on lengthier reports that examine in greater detail the positive aspects of biculturalism. We think of children who are raised in two church homes, those homes that are truly interchurch homes where the children are exposed in an intimate way to the two churches of their parents as being a form of bi-cultural experience. Dr. Markham observes, “Putting all of this together, the value of living abroad comes from putting in effort to understand the new culture while at the same time retaining an original cultural identity. Truly understanding and identifying with two cultures allows people to see the same issue from multiple perspectives. In real world settings, this ability to consider different sides of a situation allows people to generate new ideas and to innovate. These findings suggest that companies would do well to find employees with experience in more than one culture.” Dr. Markham has applied his findings to corporations seeking innovative solutions.

We are seeking a way forward toward Christian Unity. The task may seem overwhelming at times.

For interchurch families where the parents both retain their own denominational identity, but who allow their children to become involved in the church of their spouse as well as in their own church, we have observed that the children have a deeper understanding of the nuanced differences in practices found in each church.

In our lived experience, they have been the ones who have been able to clearly articulate and explain those differences in practices and also relate how they are the same.

I have **also observed** that they have a greater depth of understanding of the potential and possibility for Interchurch Families which they are able to articulate quite clearly to both communities.

Among their peers, they are quickly able to dispel misunderstandings both about their peers’ home church and any misunderstandings or myths about the other church. These bi-cultural interchurch children provide great hope for those who are seeking Christian Unity.

Is this a resource to be found in the wisdom of our own interchurch families’ children that has been largely overlooked for the wisdom they have?

At times, we may even become discouraged as we seek a

Hope and Possibility found among the Children of Bi-Cultural Interchurch Families

pathway toward Christian Unity. Sometimes, we perceived roadblocks of sorts that stop us from seeking that pathway forward toward Christian Unity.

“Miracles”

Please take a moment to consider quietly the following quotes:

Willa Cather said, "Where there is great love there are always miracles."

Marianne Williamson said, "Miracles occur naturally as expressions of love. The real miracle is the love that inspires them. In this sense everything that comes from love is a miracle." - Marianne Williamson

C.S. Lewis said, "Miracles are a retelling in small letters of the very same story which is written across the whole world in letters too large for some of us to see."

Saint Augustine said "Miracles are not contrary to nature, but only contrary to what we know about nature."

Ann Voskamp said, "Gratitude for the seemingly insignificant -- a seed --this plants the giant miracle."

These quotes indicate to me that miracles, hope, and possibility may exist all around us, not just for the select few, but for all of us, if we are open to them. Love and gratitude seem to be at least some of the key components needed to be able to move us forward toward what Christ wished for all of us as written in

John 17:21

21 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.

It is God's wish for us to work for Unity. Love is the beacon that must guide us toward that Unity. We also must be able to consider all the possibilities that already exist among us; in a culturally diverse world, there is great potential for being able to find creative solutions that will help us to find the Unity we have been seeking for a very long time. by M.J. Glauber

Dr. Marham's original article can be found at <http://www.psychologytoday.com/collections/201208/your-creative-flow/becoming-bi-cultural-makes-you-more-creative>

Further reading on the cultural nuances of being truly bi-cultural and our ability to be creative (find creative solutions) can be found at:

<http://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/ulterior-motives/201006/can-living-abroad-make-you-more-creative>

<http://www.psychologytoday.com/collections/201106/cultivating-creativity/go-the-flow>

<http://www.psychologytoday.com/collections/201106/cultivating-creativity/everyday-creativity>

<http://www.psychologytoday.com/collections/201106/cultivating-creativity/how-renaissance-people-think>

Art Markman, Ph.D., is Annabel Irion Worsham Centennial Professor of Psychology and Marketing at the University of Texas at Austin.

He got his Sc.B. in Cognitive Science from Brown and his Ph.D. in Psychology from the University of Illinois.

He has published over 125 scholarly works on topics in higher-level thinking including the effects of motivation on learning and performance, analogical reasoning, categorization, decision making, and creativity.

Art serves as the director of the program in the Human Dimensions of Organizations at the University of Texas.

He is currently executive editor of the journal Cognitive Science and a member of the editorial board of Cognitive Psychology.

Books by Art Markham, Ph.D.

Tools for Innovation: The Science Behind the Practical Methods That Drive New Ideas; by Arthur B. Markman, Kristin L. Wood; Oxford University Press, USA

Smart Thinking: Three Essential Keys to Solve Problems, Innovate, and Get Things Done; by Art Markman; Perigee Trade

The Purpose and Nature of Prayer; Prayers that may serve Interchurch Families well in their homes

The Nature of Prayer:

“Intercessory Prayer is the purifying bath into which the individual and the fellowship must enter every day.”

– Deitrich Bonhoeffer

“If we truly love people, we will desire for them far more than it is within our power to give them, and this will lead us to prayer.”

Intercession is a way of loving others.”

– Richard Foster

“The purpose of prayer is to prepare our own hearts for the in-breaking of God, for the putting on of the mind of Christ, for the burst of awareness, when it comes, that God is not somewhere else.”

God is here, now, in our hearts.”

– Joan Chittister OSB

“On every occasion of uneasiness we should retire to prayer that we may give place to the grace and light of God.”

– John Wesley

“Prayer is a serene force at work within human beings, stirring them up, changing their hearts, never allowing them to close their eyes in the face of evil, of wars, of all that threatens the innocent of this world.”

From it we draw the energy to wage other struggles, to transform the human condition and to make the earth a place fit to live in.

All who walk in the footsteps of Christ, while holding themselves in the presence of God, remain alongside other people as well. They do not separate prayer and solidarity with others.”

– Brother Roger of Taizé

[http://www.otago.ac.nz/chaplain/
otago017083.pdf](http://www.otago.ac.nz/chaplain/otago017083.pdf)

New Zealand Chaplains share some of their:

Reflections on Prayer: What is Prayer?

Greg Hughson:

For me, prayer has to do with being in relationship with God.

Prayer nurtures and sustains my relationship with God.

Each time I pray, I am acknowledging God’s loving presence with me.

Sometimes I offer quick “arrow prayers” to God – requests for help and guidance in specific situations.

At other times, especially just before sleep or sometimes during the night, my prayers are more extended conversations with God. At these times, prayer enables to me to make sense of the way my life is unfolding in relationship with God.

Prayer with God expands the horizons of our thinking, our living and our actions. As a result of prayer we become more aware of the spiritual significance of our lives.

In prayer to God we can express our deepest needs and we can discern God’s way for our lives.

Prayer is not a mechanical process. We cannot manipulate God in any way. God knows our needs before we ask.

Reflections on Prayer: What is Prayer?

Through prayer we can have our perspective on life restored and we can find refreshment for the journey of life through being in touch with the Holy One in whom we live, move and have our being.

There is a lot more to life than what we can see with our eyes! There is a sacred and unseen – yet very real – spiritual dimension to life, which we can access through prayer.

Prayer is “the way in” to encounter the mystery of God.

When we pray, we adopt a “posture of receptivity” towards a personal encounter with God.

When we pray, we open ourselves to being more consciously in relationship with our Creator.

Christian prayer to God is often offered in and through the name of Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour. Through the life, death and risen presence of Jesus Christ, we have access to God in a personal way.

Through our faith in Christ, we can experience something of the personal nature of God. relationship with our Creator.

Christian prayer to God is often offered in and through the name of Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour.

Through the life, death and risen presence of Jesus Christ, we have access to God in a personal way.

Through our faith in Christ, we can experience something of the personal nature of God.

Mark Chamberlain:

Prayer is about relationship

– when we pray we express and experience the relationship we have with God.

We are all in relationship with God in our own way and in prayer this uniqueness is expressed in the variety and all the personal ways we have of praying.

The delightful paradox with all of this is that God prays in us; it is waking up to this which is prayer.

It can be about conversation with God, sharing all that has happened or is about to happen in our day.

Prayer is about refreshment

– we all live within multi- environments, and some of these ecosystems are polluted with demands, expectations, threats, negativity; prayer is about letting go and being with God as the Ultimate of all reality.

We can leave prayer feeling refreshed, and with a new clarity.

Prayer requires space

– we need to give time to prayer, it need not be a huge amount of time.

The saying “quality rather than quantity” applies here.

I mean it is easy to get caught up in the myth that a great amount of time needs to be given to prayer.

No, **prayer is about discovering the holiness that is already in time.** A few minutes here, and a minute or so there can help us to appreciate that God is with us all the time.

Space is also about place: sometimes to pray in a garden, or with a view of the changing sky, or beside a lit candle, or before and icon or in a Church, can nourish and support our prayer.

Prayer is about listening

– in prayer we stop our chatter and move into a mode of listening, even if for a few minutes.

Reflections on Prayer: What is Prayer?

God seldom speaks back in clear defined words. Not so; rather in a sudden thought, or an emerging feeling, or a slither of inspiration or a moment of understanding.

We sometimes hear people talk about distractions in prayer, but they are no longer so if we choose to see them as providing our real agenda for prayer.

Prayer is about intercession

– we all need help, and frequently we struggle to help ourselves, let alone our friends or family.

In prayer we actually admit our powerlessness and ask God to help us.

The answer usually involves us helping in one way or another. This part of prayer more than any other expresses our connection with and our solidarity with others. What I find so attractive about this, is that both time and distance are no limitation.

<http://www.otago.ac.nz/chaplain/otago017083.pdf>

Mike Wright:

Prayer is Invitation and Response

– for me, prayer is about invitation and response; God's initiative and our response to the great mystery that is God (regardless of whoever or whatever you understand God to be).

It is an acknowledgement of a divine presence in the world and in my own personal experience of life that is unseen yet very real.

Prayer is Relationship

– in praying we assume that God is listening and is interested in what we are saying.

This implies relationship. God is not therefore an impersonal Force.

Prayer is also about listening and being attentive to the God who has told us God's greatest desire is to communicate; to express overwhelming love, care and concern for me as a unique individual and as part of the wider human race.

Prayer is Sacred

– in communicating with God we stand on 'holy ground'. We are 'set apart' in this incredible event.

In prayer we commune with our Creator. The One who sets the stars in place, who oversees the replication of DNA, and who guides the flow of human history chooses to work with us and through us for our good and for the good of all. This is a sacred task.

Prayer is Ordinary

– this inviting and responsive, relational and sacred experience that is prayer occurs in the midst of the ordinary things of life.

No special place, time, language, stance or mood is required.

Simply ourselves and who and what we are in the moment is all that is needed. No issue of life is too big or too small to bring to God's attentive ear. No triumph or failure unimportant enough to speak of.

Prayer is integrative, inclusive and whole-of-life embracing.

Amy Armstrong:

Prayer is spending quiet time, getting to know God and the Spirit that dwells within us, more intimately.

When we spend quiet time in prayer, we have an increased awareness of God's presence – in the world and within our own hearts.

Reflections on Prayer: What is Prayer?

Prayer is becoming still on the inside, and when this stillness occurs, we have better perspective on everything because we are more closely attuned to God.

We see and hear more clearly and have an increased capacity to love. Even making decisions can be easier. To sit quietly with God and feel the love that he has for us – this is prayer.

‘My sheep know my voice’, says Jesus. And the result of silent prayer is increased peace and the ability to recognise his voice in the world.

When we sit and listen to God, we get to know that voice better and are able to hear it more clearly amongst the noise of our daily lives.

It’s like when you spend a lot of time in the peace and quiet of the bush, you get to know the calls of the native birds quite well. And then one day you are walking in the midst of the bustle of campus and you hear the sharp and melodious call of the Grey Warbler or the Bell Bird. You are quite surprised to hear it in a different place, but you know it in an instant.

And it is because you spent so much time in the quiet of nature, getting to know it intimately almost without realising it, that you recognise it.

And the sound is so sweet and so soothing, that you stop and reflect, becoming calmer on the inside. And now you see campus differently than you had a moment ago.

It’s the same with the kind voice of God. God is always there, speaking to us, loving us and guiding us.

An important part of prayer is to calm and quiet your soul long enough to hear what God is saying to you.

Paul Armstrong:

Prayer is being. It is the most essential state. **It is the very presence of my self to Christ.**

It is in this place, where I am unconcerned with my own self, just in the fact that I am, that I am with Christ.

To let go, to let be. To simply exist. This is in fact the purest form of being. This is prayer.

Lyn Meinders:

Prayer is the most important part of my relationship with God. Prayer is a continual open line to God. For me it is like a phone conversation – sometimes I speak and sometimes I listen.

I need to listen when God speaks to me or prompts me to do something. In the same way God listens to the requests I make.

Likening prayer to a ‘telephone’ conversation means that I never ‘hang up’. I have the line open 24/7. Saying ‘amen’ for me is hanging up the phone line and I don’t want to do that. Sometimes the thoughts that I have could only be God ... they are so ‘far’ out there, that I am not sure I could think of the things myself.

However, they will inevitably lead to an encounter or appointment which is always a two way blessing. That is why prayer, and having the line open to God at all times, for me, is so very important.

<http://www.otago.ac.nz/chaplain/otago017083.pdf>

Prayers from New Zealand

A Morning Prayer

Kia ora my Friend God.
I give to you the voyage of this day, that to be
which is already yours, adding to it my rejoicing,
a shout of praise. Amen. Amen.
You are the wind: fill up my sails.
You are the water: run fast beneath my keel.
And I will sing in the wind and dance over the
water, God my Friend, oh God my Friend.
You are the light: enfold me,
You are the darkness: embrace me.
You are pain: hollow me.
You are love: overflow me.
The storms of change are you,
and the peace of tranquil waters.
You are all these things Friend God, and I thank
you. Amen. Amen.
May I journey without fear through all your
seasons.
In emptiness let me find fullness.
In imprisonment let me find freedom.
Render me passive in your will
and I shall be most active,
moving with you in everything,
seeing you in everything
knowing you in everything.

Amen.

Written by Joy Cowley,
Aotearoa Psalms

God, we come before you in prayer, be close to
us today (at this time), care for us, lead us.

We praise you and offer to you, all of our work
and activities today.

You indeed are God who sustains us,
and empowers us in all things. Amen.

Almighty Father giver of love and peace be with
us in our homes bless us and our families, and
grant us your guidance all the days of our lives
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen

written by Richard Kerr-Bell

A Prayer for Families

Dear God, thank you for my family. Thank you
for the love and the care that I have received
from them all.

Even though we may be far away from each
other geographically, we nevertheless still feel
deeply connected.

Thank you that all families are different and
that my family is uniquely special. I realise that
no family is perfect.

Help me to value the strengths, and deal with
the inadequacies of my family.

Amen.

A Prayer for Growth in Faith

Help me, loving God, to be open to growth in
faith, for I am not a baby anymore. I know that
you long to lead me deeper and deeper into
the mystery of your love and grace.

Grant me courage to grow.

It would be so easy to stagnate and to opt only
for simplistic answers, when I know I am called
to engage all my heart and mind and soul in
your service. Amen.

A Prayer for Understanding

Loving God, sometimes I find it so hard to
understand what is going on.

When people annoy me and life is hard, help
me to trust that you are with me and that you
can help me to move beyond mere tolerance to
true compassion.

Grant me wisdom to know what to say and what
to do. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

[http://www.otago.ac.nz/chaplain/
otago017083.pdf](http://www.otago.ac.nz/chaplain/otago017083.pdf)

Prayers from New Zealand

A Student's Prayer:

A Prayer in the Midst of Challenge and Competitiveness

God, we come to You in humility in the midst of our struggles.

We cry out to You in this time of academic challenge and competitiveness and ask for Your help.

You have said that You are a God of the impossible, and that all things can be done through You.

At times this task before us seems impossible, so we call to You, asking You to work in us and through us, and to give us success in all that we do.

We know that You have a plan for our lives, and we ask for Your strength to help us when the going gets tough.

We also want to bring before You those who are seemingly in competition with us. We ask you to bless them also, and bring them success and prosperity in all that they do.

We thank You for Your great love and faithfulness toward us.

In Your name we pray.
Amen.

– Heidi Pendergrast,
Tertiary Students' Christian Fellowship

<http://www.otago.ac.nz/chaplain/otago017083.pdf>

Prayers at the Close of Day From the New Zealand Prayer Book:

Support us, Lord, all the day long, until the shadows lengthen, and the evening comes, the busy world is hushed, the fever of life is over, and our work done; then Lord, in your mercy, give us safe lodging, a holy rest and peace at the last. Amen

Holiness; make us pure in heart to see you; make us merciful to receive your kindness and to share our love with all your human family; then will your name be hallowed on earth as in heaven.

Support us, Lord, all the day long, until the shadows lengthen, and the evening comes, the busy world is hushed, the fever of life is over, and our work done; then Lord, in your mercy, give us safe lodging, a holy rest and peace at the last.

God our judge and our companion, we thank you for the good we did this day and for all that has given us joy.

Everything we offer as our humble service. Bless those with whom we have worked, and those who are our concern. Amen

Look down, Lord, from your heavenly throne. Illuminate the darkness of this night with your celestial brightness, and from us, the children of light, banish for ever the deeds of darkness.

God our judge and our teacher, let us not waste time when the day is done in guilt or self-reproach.

Give us rather the courage to face whatever has been, accept forgiveness, and move on to something better. Amen.

Interchurch Families often seek prayers that will work in our lived daily experience of being an interchurch family. For their "Little Church of the Home" or "Domestic Church" interchurch families seek prayers that reflect their lived experience. I hope that these prayers from New Zealand can be useful to interchurch families no matter where they may be living in the world.

A Blessing...What is a Blessing?

Blessings are words that offer encouragement. Blessings ask for God's favor and protection.

May the sun bring you new energy by day.

May the moon softly restore you by night.

May the rain wash away your worries.

May the breeze blow new strength into your being.

May you walk gently through the world and know its beauty all the days of your life.

an Apache Blessing

<http://www.ya-native.com/>

How we call to God may vary from person to person and even from day to day for the same person. Our God is a personal relationship with a higher power. We may include: our Divine Creator, that Holy Light, The All-Knowing, Abba/Father/ Parent, Teacher, Healer, Oh Great Spirit.....

Wikipedia explains that since the second century, Christian creeds included affirmation of belief in "God the Father (Almighty)", primarily as his capacity as "Father and creator of the universe"... "God is addressed as the father, in part because of his active interest in human affairs, in the way that a father would take an interest in his children who are dependent on him and as a father, he will respond to humanity, his children, acting in their best interests."...It is conceivable that the term "mother" or "parent" would also serve us well to explain our relationship with God.

...“In general, the title Father (capitalized) signifies God's role as the life-giver, the authority, and powerful protector, often viewed as immense, omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, with infinite power and charity that goes beyond human understanding. Omni- means all : universally. Omni- originates from the Latin word for “all.” This helps to explain why we find God referred to using many names; God is not limited in any way humans can easily understand.

In John (ESV) 12:46, we read: “46 I have come into the world as light, so that whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness.”

In John 8:12 (ESV), we read “12 Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”

God may sometimes be referred to as “The Light” or the “Light of the World.” However, it is easy to find God referred to using many other terms because God is limitless, no single adjective can serve to explain God.

Bible verses such as Genesis 1:1, 31 encourage us to view and to refer to God as the Creator: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth... God saw all that he had made, and it was very good." (Genesis 1:1, 31)

We find references to God as being “Divine” in 2 Peter 1:3-4

3 *"According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue."*

4 *"Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust."*

The term “Divine” is an adjective that means “Of, from, or like God or a god.” Early cultures may have had multiple Gods until they discovered that God actually embodies all of the aspects they had attributed to many Gods. Our experiences of God is difficult to articulate, and yet, that is what we seek to better understand.

How we express our spirituality and our understanding of God is affected by our history, our cultural context and our linguistic parameters.

Because we share the world with many cultures and many linguistic groups, it may serve us best if we are able to listen with the ear of our heart so that we are able to see that of God in the faces of others through different historical perspectives, cultural contexts and with linguistic

O' GREAT SPIRIT

Help me always to speak the truth
quietly, to listen with an open mind
when others speak and to remember
the peace that may be found in silence.

Cherokee Prayer



understanding that may serve to limit our perspective of the importance of those Others in the world with us. Each and every person has a gift or talent given to them by the Divine Creator to share with all of us.

In Genesis we read that God loves all of creation and all peoples. God has been revealed to the rest of humanity, who must explain their experience of that divine presence in their lives using their own cultural and linguistic tools. There is one God. God asks us to love our neighbors, all of them, all of creation.

It is through encountering others, where two or three are gathered, where we are able to find that of God. God is found in how we choose to find the sacred experience from the wisdom of others.

~ M.J. Glauber

If We
Wonder
Often,
The Gift
Of
Knowledge
Will Come

~ Arapaho



The Pew Report on religion in the U.S.A and American Families;

Implications for Interchurch Families and Ecumenists Seeking Christian Unity

By M. J. Glauber

I am encouraging everyone to take the time to read the following two recent Pew Reports; one is about religion in the U.S.A. and the other is about the nature of American Families at this time.

I have been wondering if some obvious solutions may be staring us all in the face within these findings that we simply may have overlooked as ecumenists.

The full Pew Report on religion in the U.S.A. can be found at <http://religions.pewforum.org/reports> and about American families can be found at <http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2010/11/18/the-decline-of-marriage-and-rise-of-new-families/>

From these statistical findings within this Pew research and report, it may seem to be overwhelming as where even to begin to serve. We will need to select one area of focus while understanding that many worthy topics still exist. It becomes more a question of "Not taking on more than we can manage."

Because we have only normal human capacities it is necessary for us to focus on what we know best or on areas where we have some expertise.

As interchurch families, we believe that our lived experience as "bridge builders" within our own "Little Church of the Home" that is "Our Domestic Church" which has succeeded in being ecumenical and achieving various levels of Christian Unity to be noteworthy. Mostly

because we live that experience of Christian Unity everyday, we have certain insights and perhaps we have also been given a gift by the circumstances of our lived experience. Others can discuss the theoretical aspects of Christian Unity and they have, but most often without ever reaching any kind of genuine lived Christian Unity.

While we hear from churches that ecumenical efforts have been "placed on the back burner." Ecumenism has never been placed on the back burner for those who are living in interchurch families. We look for pastoral care and some kind of recognition from our churches to indicate that we aren't being overlooked or ignored for the ecumenical resource(s) found within our lived experience. We need our own Christian denominations to be on our journey with us so that we don't feel neglected, ignored, discounted, nor rejected. As bridge builders, interchurch families have a unique gift based on our lived daily experience of unity in our "Little Churches of the Home"/ "Our Domestic Churches."

Meanwhile, we observe that the structure of American families has changed over the past few decades. Economic survival seems to have influenced the decision by many young parents to conceive of children without being married. We imagine the adverse affect that this must have on children born under these circumstances. Our society has become so polarized that civil discourse that may lead to finding genuine solutions for real problems cannot be achieved. Although, we all recognize

The Pew Report on religion in the U.S.A and American Families; Implications for Interchurch Families and Ecumenists Seeking Christian Unity

this failure to be able to negotiate across our differences, but that it is important. How to change these dynamics seems to have eluded us as an American people.

If we are to find any solutions for all of those big issues that seem to have occupied us in recent years in the U.S.A., we will first have to find ways to build bridges in our communities.

Families such as interchurch families have the potential for highlighting the ways they have found to live with differences and to even be nurtured by those differences.

Christian Unity must be sought and lived at a grass roots level if it is ever to succeed. It appears that isolated discussions about the theory of Christian Unity among the hierarchy rarely seem to be able to grow into any kind of viable grass roots level of understanding of the need for Christian Unity among the general population, nor is it followed by actions among the laity. We must live this unity so that we can find it.

Once again I would like to focus your attention on: John 17:20-21, NRSV that say:

“I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one.

As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me.”

Christian Unity that we may be one is asked of us by Christ who compares this unity that Christ has in human form with God. Working together to solve our human problems, each contributing to the solution using our own unique gifts, talents and insight offers great hope and possibility not just for interchurch families, but for humanity and creation. The time is right now to focus our energies toward finding ways to work together, perhaps working across those barriers that may have historically divided us to create a better world for everyone

~ M. J Glauber



Interchurch Couples report on Gratitude

In Volume 24, Edition 1, we asked to hear from interchurch families about gratitude. Here is one response to that request:

I am grateful for all the beauty that is found in creation, especially the trees of the forest, the birds that sing in the morning, the rain that waters the crops so that we will have food to eat, for the mountains, for the rivers, for the oceans, for the beauty of flowers, for the insects that help to pollinate flowers, and for the wisdom that God imparts to all of creation

I am grateful to all of those people, who by their lived examples of kindness and personal integrity, have provided lived examples for ways to be in community that allows God to be in charge of all that transpires. These people give me a sense of hope as they highlight the possibility to be found within a situation that may have overwhelmed all of the rest of us.

I am grateful to all those people who have nurtured me and protected me when I was most vulnerable as a child. I am grateful to all of those people who treated me fairly because this has helped to show me what charity really is all about.

I am grateful to all those people who seek to forgive and to be forgiven. I have observed that we are simply human and not God; sometimes we may mess up simply because we haven't understood what is the right path, God's path. As humans, this is part of our frailty; we may make mistakes, unintentional mistakes that we may come to regret. I am grateful that God allows us to grow and to forgive and to be forgiven.

I am grateful for the love and care of others. Sometimes they are friends, but sometimes

Gratitude

total strangers say or do kind things for me. I look upon these actions with a sense of awe and newly renewed sense that as humans we are placed here to carry out the work of God in small, but meaningful ways. I feel protected and validated by this kind of love; this is the kind of love that God has shown us. When I receive this kind of love from humanity, I see that of God acting in them.

I am grateful for those difficult times that cause me to step back and to reflect about what has transpired and what it is that God wishes for me and all of humanity to learn from this puzzling encounter. I am grateful for the ever present possibility to grow in understanding.

I am grateful for the potential and hope that comes from shedding light on complex situations so that I can see God’s Light actively working in that situation. I am grateful for those moments of silence where I can hear that Still Small Voice of God.

I am grateful for those people who choose to run for elected office and who seek to serve their constituents. I am grateful for those constituents who communicate effectively with our elected officials, not through positions of economic advantage so they can leverage their own agendas and fill their own coffers, but so that our laws serve all of us well.

I am grateful for those who may perceive a situation from a different perspective from the one that I may hold, and who have the dignity to calmly explain how they came about seeing the situation from their perspective. I am grateful for their ability to be able to listen with the ear of their hearts so that I feel heard too in the exchange.

I am aware that I was born in a certain place and time in history and that historical events placed my ancestors and then my great grandmother, my grandmother and my mother in America so that I can be a part of American history too.

I am aware that history is often written from the specific perspective and bias of the author, no matter who that author may be, and I am grateful

for all those courageous people who observe that there are more perspectives to be considered than their own or those of people who share their own view of history. I am grateful for those moments when I can get a greater vision of what may be the “Big Picture.”

I recognize that God is in charge. I am grateful that God is in charge because this frees me from having to pass judgment on humanity. All that is really being asked of me is “To Love My Neighbor as myself.” I am grateful for the simple guiding principle “To Love My Neighbor as Myself.”

I recognize that throughout history, humanity has been in a state of war. Although all that is being asked of us is “to Love Our Neighbors As Ourselves,” but this may actually be the most difficult assignment ever given to us. I am grateful for all of humanity, who in fact, are our neighbors although they may live in diverse parts of the world. May we find ways to grow in the love given to us by our divine creator, no matter by what name we may call our divine creator according to our own cultural histories and linguistic heritage. May we be inspired to reach out across those gaps of miscommunication and misunderstanding created by our own linguistic and cultural perspectives so that we can grow in that Holy Light so that we may become enlightened.

I recognize that in our homes, we find a microcosm of the world and how humanity interacts. I am grateful for my family and my friends who create this microcosm. I recognize that this is “The Little Church of the Home” and “Our Domestic Church.” For interchurch families, our family explores two Christian Traditions. I am grateful for the world of possibility and hope that this lived experience of two Christian Families has given to us. May all interchurch families feel as enriched by this experience as we have. I am grateful for this perspective of the world that being interchurch has brought to me and our family.

~ Anna Sinclair
(The Protestant spouse of an Interchurch Marriage)



Unity ...Why?

"We need you. We need your vision and your courage, your good common sense and your creativity, your humor and your honesty.

We need you because without you we will not be complete. We will not be able to finish the great work that we have been given to do: the work of peace, of healing, of reconciliation and renewal.

There are not as many of us as you might imagine and the task is monumental. So we need you. More than we can say.

Please come then, stand beside us. Lift your voice with ours and let us proclaim that we need one another, without exception."

The Rt. Rev. Steven Charleston, Choctaw

Unity; Christian Unity

The Bible addresses Christian Unity

1 Corinthians 12: 12-31 *For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. 13 For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body— Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit.*

14 For the body does not consist of one member but of many. 15 If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body.

16 And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. 17 If the whole body were an eye, where would be the sense of hearing? If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell? 18 But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. 19 If all were a single member, where would the body be? 20 As it is, there are many parts yet one body.

21 The eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you," nor again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." 22 On the contrary, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, 23 and on those parts of the body that we think less honorable we bestow the greater honor, and our unpresentable parts are treated with greater modesty, 24 which our more presentable parts do not require. But God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it, 25 that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. 26 If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together.

27 Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. 28 And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, helping, administrating, and various kinds of tongues. 29 Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? 30 Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret? 31 But earnestly desire the higher gifts. And I will show you a still more excellent way.

Interchurch Families, we are called to listen with the ear of our heart. Ecumenists who are seeking a pathway forward toward finding Christian Unity, are also called to listen with the ear of our/their heart.

We are called to listen for that still small voice; God is there guiding us if we are willing to listen with the ear of our hearts. We also note that where two or three are gathered, that God is with us.

1 Corinthians 12: 12-31 highlights how much we need each other. Each of us has our role and purpose, and we all need each other so that the Church can be in the way that it is written in the Bible for us. We always have been a part of each other even when we didn't or don't recognize this. God allows us to grow in our understanding of our role or roles for finding Christian Unity.

1 Corinthians 12:12-31 gives us yet another example of Christian Unity. Listen with the ear of your heart.
~ M.J. Glauber

Lectio Divina

The Bible speaks about Gratitude.... ...Our Goal is to Incorporate Biblical Gratitude into the Ways We live Our Lives

By M. J. Glauber

The Bible is filled with examples of Gratitude. These verses or psalms can be used in the practice of "Lectio Divina"

Wikipedia explains what Lectio Divina is: "In Christianity, Lectio Divina (Latin for divine reading) is a traditional Benedictine practice of scriptural reading, meditation and prayer intended to promote communion with God and to increase the knowledge of God's Word. It does not treat Scripture as texts to be studied, but as the Living Word."

"Traditionally Lectio Divina has 4 separate steps: read, meditate, pray and contemplate. First a passage of Scripture is read, then its meaning is reflected upon. This is followed by prayer and contemplation on the Word of God."

"The focus of Lectio Divina is not a theological analysis of biblical passages but viewing them with Christ as the key to their meaning. For example, given Jesus' statement in **John 14:27: "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give unto you"** an analytical approach would focus on the reason for the statement during the "Last Supper," the biblical context, etc. But in Lectio Divina rather than "dissecting peace", the practitioner "enters peace" and shares in the peace of Christ. In Christian teachings, this form of meditative prayer leads to an increased knowledge of Christ."

"The roots of Scriptural reflection and interpretation go back to Origen in the 3rd century, after whom St. Ambrose taught them to St. Augustine. The monastic practice of Lectio Divina was first established in the 6th century by Saint Benedict. It was then formalized as a 4 step process by the Carthusian monk, Guigo II, in the 12th century. In the 20th century, the constitution "Dei Verbum" of Pope Paul VI recommended Lectio Divina for the general public. Pope Benedict XVI emphasized the importance of Lectio Divina in the 21st century."

You may want to practice Lectio Divina using the following psalm:

Great Are the Lord's Works Psalm 111 (ESV)

1. Praise the Lord!

I will give thanks to the Lord with my whole heart, in the company of the upright, in the congregation.

2 Great are the works of the Lord, studied by all who delight in them.

3 Full of splendor and majesty is his work, and his righteousness endures forever.

4 He has caused his wondrous works to be remembered; the Lord is gracious and merciful.

5 He provides food for those who fear him; he remembers his covenant forever.

6 He has shown his people the power of his works, in giving them the inheritance of the nations.

7 The works of his hands are faithful and just; all his precepts are trustworthy;

8 they are established forever and ever, to be performed with faithfulness and uprightness.

9 He sent redemption to his people; he has commanded his covenant forever. Holy and awesome is his name!

10 The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; all those who practice it have a good understanding.

His praise endures forever!

Many psalms and Bible Verses pertaining to gratitude exist. At the following link, you can find a list <http://www.wisdomportal.com/Gratitude/Gratitude-Bible.html> You may be able to find even more on your own search.

Through this practice of using Lectio Divina, we may be able to consider the role of wisdom in our Christian lives, which for us happens to be a daily lived experience of ecumenism within our Interchurch Families' homes.

Beatitudes for Interchurch Families

Blessed are the interchurch spouses who participate also in the church of their partners from another Christian tradition; theirs is the Kingdom of God.

Blessed are the interchurch parents who share fully together in the religious education of their children; such children will grow to see the unity of the Body of Christ.

Blessed are the sorrowing interchurch families who have not found pastors to accept and minister to their needs; they will be comforted.

Blessed are the merciful interchurch couples who patiently work with their pastors and help to awaken them to Christ's presence in their marriage; they will know mercy.

Blessed are the interchurch spouses who are pure of heart; their marriage will be recognized as a sacrament of Christ.

Blessed are the interchurch couples who minister to engaged and newly married interchurch couples; on them God's favor rests.

Blessed are the interchurch families who hunger and thirst for the unity of the Body of Christ; they will be satisfied.

Blessed are interchurch spouses when they persecute you and utter all kinds of slander against you because you have married a Christian from another tradition; you will be called daughters and sons of God.

*Offered by Fr George Kilcourse,
Professor of Theology at Bellarmine College,
Louisville, Kentucky*

Fr George composed these beatitudes for a presentation which he made in California in 1997. He writes: "In my preparation, I spent time in prayer reflecting upon how often our AIF work gets derailed with intricacies of church bureaucracies and laws. So instead of writing a new Decalogue or Ten Commandments for Interchurch Couples, I decided that it would be more in the spirit of Jesus to proclaim Blessings. Interchurch families are indeed a genuine grace in the life of the churches. And these modest Beatitudes are an attempt to celebrate their faith-filled lives. "

Christian Unity, Baptism and Interchurch Families: Everything relies on that Holy Light

Holy Light

"Let in some light today, into the still corners of your life, where the shadows collect like dust, unmoved by the logic of change, as if sorrow could be permanent, or grief the final word.

Let in some light, that thin thread of life, reminder of the oldest truth, warm and penetrating, setting fire to every dry hope, healing the emptiness once and for all.

Let in the Light, the holy messenger come to find you, the sacred arms reaching to lift you, the pure love that can never fail, heaven sent to make the weight of time turn to light, glimmering in the last edges of darkness."

The Rt. Rev. Steven Charleston, Choctaw

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Finding the path toward Christian Unity; The Possibility Found In Interchurch Families: Baptism

<http://interchurchfamilies.org/journal/pdf/2003V11N02Summer.pdf#nameddest=08-ChristianInitiation>

At the link above you will be able to read the stories of the lived experiences of interchurch families at the time of the baptism of their children. It should be emphasized that Interchurch Families may appear to some to be problematic, but in actuality it is within them where many potential solutions leading us all toward finding that path to Christian Unity.

Many of us are very familiar with the following Bible Verse:

John 17:21

"May they all be one, as You, Father, are in Me and I am in You. May they also be one in Us, so the world may believe You sent Me." This Bible verse serves to guide and to inspire Interchurch Families.

At the link below you will find details and a discussion of the baptism that took place in an Interchurch Family that united the Roman Catholic Church which does infant baptisms and the Baptist Church which practices the baptism of believers. This topic is discussed in detail at this link: <http://interchurchfamilies.org/journal/pdf/2003V11N02Summer.pdf#nameddest=08-ChristianInitiation>

Below is a blessing from one of those interchurch baptisms that others may find useful in helping our churches to be able to focus on our real needs as they give us pastoral care as interchurch families.

"God our Father, we thank you for bringing together today their two Christian Communities in a joint commitment to support (bride's name) and (groom's name) in their marriage covenant and in their role as parents, as they seek to bring (The names of their children) to maturity in the faith of Christ. We pray that this commitment of of the two church communities may continue and deepen as these (children being baptized names) grow up, especially at times when it may be difficult to see how the two different traditions can be reconciled in one family. We pray that in fulfilling their commitment to help (names of children being baptized inserted here) to share their riches of both their traditions as they set forth and continue on their pilgrim way, the two church communities will share those riches with one another as well. May they discover that they share more than ever thought possible of faith in Christ and life in his Spirit, which is signified and celebrated in baptism."

May the information found at the link on this page give hope to Interchurch Families and their two church communities. May our lived experiences serve to enlighten all to the positive potential that can be nurtured in interchurch marriages so that we can find that path toward Christian Unity.

World Council of Churches 10th General Assembly: 30 October - 8 November, 2013 in Busan, South Korea

An Invitation for Interchurch Families

Dear friends

WOULD YOU LIKE TO JOIN US AT THE

**World Council of Churches
10th General Assembly
30 October – 8 November 2013
Busan, South Korea**

The Association of Interchurch Families (GB) is delighted to have had an application accepted to run an exhibition stand at the WCC Assembly in October/November of this year. The title of our stand is *'Interchurch Families: Being Church Together Every Day'*.

Richard and Melanie Finch and Keith and Pat Lander will be attending the Assembly to run the stand. While we are there, we hope to be able to meet people from many countries working in the ecumenical field, and also to talk to significant church leaders, as we did at the 9th Assembly in Brazil in 2006. We will send messages back while we are there with photos and descriptions of what we are doing, and circulate a report afterwards.

Application forms for participation at the Assembly are now available on the WCC website <http://www.wcc2013.info>, where there is information in several languages. We hope that we can meet

some of you there, perhaps as part of a delegation from one of your national churches, or as individuals. The Assembly is open to all, and is a wonderful opportunity to meet, pray and worship with Christians from very many different churches and cultures all round the world.

At the last Assembly we were able to display posters, photos and leaflets from interchurch family groups and associations in several countries. If you are unable to come yourself, but you know somebody who will be attending and who can bring with them to South Korea some information about your group or association, or work among interchurch families in your country, we will be happy to give it publicity on our stand. Please contact me if you would like to do this.

International Leaflet

We will display the Interchurch Families International Leaflet on our stand in Busan. With best wishes to you all, and hoping to make contact in South Korea!

Melanie Finch

**Please consider this invitation.
This may be the opportunity for an adventure
of a life time.**

~ M.J. Glauber

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“You are not a human being in search of a spiritual experience.
You are a spiritual being immersed in a human experience.”

~ Pierre Teilhard de Chardin

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The early ecumenical efforts of Pope Francis I to be discussed in the next edition of the ARK Volume 24, Edition 3; July, August & September 2013

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

For the life of Dave Natella, which he had actively dedicated to seeking Christian Unity. For the opportunity to share our stories about our lived experiences of what it means to be "Interchurch Families." For those AAIF Members who serve on the AAIF Board and for our pastoral advisors. For the research of Art Markman, Ph.D on intercultural experiences and the advantages these experiences provide to us. For Divine Inspiration and for prayers that give us hope. For the Chaplains from New Zealand who have been exploring the Nature of Prayer.

For God and all the names and the many roles that God plays in our lives. For Blessings; For the richness found in the diversity of the many cultures in the United States who are on this journey with us everyday in the most ordinary and fantastic ways. For the Pew Reports and the research upon which they are based. For all who are seeking Christian Unity and especially for all those interchurch families who are sharing their lived experiences with us. For the inspiration and insight of The Rt. Rev. Steven Charleston, Choctaw. For the wisdom found in the Bible that helps to guide us and to unite us. For the practice of "Lectio Divina" that helps us to feel gratitude for the many gifts that God gives us regularly. For the Beatitudes for Interchurch Families by Fr George Kilcourse. For the commitment to Interchurch Families of Melanie Finch and Ruth Reardon. For the commitment of Father Ernest Falardeau to Christian Unity. For the insight of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin. For my family and especially to my husband, Peter, whose encouragement and support have made this issue of the ARK possible.

~ M.J. Glauber

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