



THE ARK

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Interchurch Families:
Christian Unity Made Visible in our Households

Interchurch Families: "Listen with the ear of your heart"

- Carrying Forward the
theme from the 2012 AAIF
Conference held in
Minnesota until we gather
again in 2016

Theme: Exploring All That Sustains Us and Hope.....

Hope is both a verb and a noun.
As a verb it means: To wish for
something with expectation of its
fulfillment; To have confidence;
trust. or To look forward to with
confidence or expectation. As a
noun, hope means: A wish or
desire accompanied by confident
expectation of its fulfillment;
Something that is hoped for or
desired; One that is a source of or
reason for hope.

All That Sustains Us

"Day by day, God is made known to us in the simple things that sustain our lives--some bread, some love, some breath, some wine--all those absolutely essential things that are here today and gone tomorrow."

~Barbara Brown Taylor, from Bread of Angels

Hope:

"We hope for things unseen, but I also think we hope for things in plain sight. I hope for my family, for friends that I know are facing difficult times, for the community in which I live, for the corner of this Earth that I call home. My hope is rooted. It is grounded in reality. I hope for what I can touch and feel, what I share in every day, what I see in the eyes of others. Hope is what we have when we have little more. It has to be seen. It has to be tangible. So yes, I do hope long distance, but I also hope up close and personal, hope so near to me I never lose sight of it."

~ The Rt. Rev. Steven Charleston, Choctaw

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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.

Pastoral Care Needs for the Family as of 2014 - Based Upon the building block concept of the need for having “ A Profound Connection Between Two People.”

On Thursday, February 5, 2014, Gannett's USA Today published an article entitled, “**Singles Embracing Once-Taboo Choices**”. This is the kind of title that is sure to catch readers attention. The writer of the article, mentioned above, Sharon Jayson discusses the findings of match.com, which provided the data base, and the research that was done by a Rutgers University social anthropologist.

Match.com didn't exist 40 years ago so I did an on-line search to learn more about match.com. It was founded by Gary Kremen in 1993. And you may wonder who is Gary Kremen; I did. According to Wikipedia, Gary Kremen, who was born in 1963, is the entrepreneur who invented Online Dating and who founded the personals site match.com, as well as founding Clean Power Finance. Gary Kremen was born in the Chicago area, he graduated from Niles West High School in Skokie, Illinois in 1981. Then Kremen graduated with bachelor's degrees in both electrical engineering and computer science from Northwestern University in 1985, and an MBA from Stanford University in 1989. Match.com is apparently one of the online sites where many young people go to meet each other at this point in history. It is a business venture created by Gary Kremen. Various religious groups

also post advertisements online and on television for those people who will not consider even the possibility for meeting someone who is from outside of their own faith group. We have no further details for how successful these religious online meeting sites are at this time nor how they compare with match.com.

Sharon Jayson, in her Gannett article of February 2014 entitled “Singles Embracing Once-Taboo Choices” says that “**Today's singles are an accepting bunch - up to a point**” according to a survey done by match.com with the help of Rutgers University's researchers. In the survey, they asked about sex, dating behavior and What's OK, that is what is acceptable, in a relationship in our society as of February 2014. Jayson states that “**Most singles say some relationships once considered taboo are 'fine.'** This includes interracial marriage which now has an + 86% acceptance rating. **Interfaith marriage has an + 80% acceptance rating while same-sex marriage has a 65% acceptance rate.**” **What is key for us though is that pastoral care will be needed for all of these groups because this is society as it exists.**

Jayson points out that most other relationship choices that had once been deemed to be unacceptable are also considered to be “fine.” Jayson gives the example of “*long-term unmarried partners living together that has an acceptance rate of + 76%; the acceptance rate of having children outside of marriage has an acceptance rating of + 53%*” at this time in history. I must highlight that these statistics simply serve to point out for our

church communities where pastoral care will be needed and perhaps how it may be needed.

Jayson points out that the match.com and the Rutgers research regarding current American trends also uncovered that “**Some things are 'not fine' with most of the more than 5,000 singles 18 and older in the nationally representative survey, done for the dating website match.com.**” *Those include sexually open marriages, in which partners agree that each may have extramarital sexual relationships.*” *The disapproval rating was at -78%. The disapproval ratings for long-distance marriages in general was at - 58%.*” Perhaps this percentage rating allowed for the fact that some employment requires spouses to be separated. The example that comes to mind first is military families who must be separated when a spouse is deployed, and it is well known that this kind of separation does place an added stress on those families. Also considered to be “not fine” were married couples sleeping in different bedrooms at - 56% or living in different homes at -75%.

Jayson states that the anthropologist, Helen Fischer of Rutgers University, who helped Match.com to develop the survey, had concluded that the “**everything that is 'not fine' had one element in common: a disruption of that profound connection between two people.**” It can be inferred then that our societal building block at this point in time relies on **the health and well-being of society when people have or feel “a profound connection between two people.”**

These are the lived conditions as we find them and as they exist whether we favor them or not. They simply exist. It from this point then that the pastoral care and nurturing of the family must begin if that pastoral care is to be effective in any way. Although we have no data available at this time from the religious matching services provided on line, we strongly suspect that even there that the fundamental building block would still be based on having the ability to create a profound connection between two people.

Christa Pongratz-Lippitt writing for The Tablet in the U.K. (<http://www.thetablet.co.uk/news/383/0/church-must-adjust-to-reality-of-co-habitation-divorce-and-remarriage-says-cardinal>) reported on the family recently, as well; noting that “The Pope had spoken of his observations of marriage in Latin America and underlined that it was the Church’s duty to accompany people on their way through life.” and that “People are on the way. They live together, have children, some then get married in a register office and later perhaps in church. The important thing is to accompany them on their way,” Austrian Cardinal Schönborn, reported that “Ninety-five per cent of Austrians who had filled in the Vatican questionnaire on the family were in favour of allowing remarried divorcees to receive the sacraments, Cardinal Schönborn said, adding that the Austrian bishops would be handing over the questionnaire results in Rome.” Cardinal Schönborn explained, “ ‘We in the Church tacitly live with the fact that the majority of young people, including those who have close ties to the Church, quite naturally live together.’ and added that

“The simple fact is that the environment has changed,” he said. This was “in no way” a call to change canon law on his part, he underlined, but he wanted to show how difficult it was to bring the ideal family model into line with reality.” To clarify his point, the cardinal warned that “The Church must adopt a more rational, down-to-earth approach as far as the reality of life was concerned.” There is a call for improved pastoral care of the families as we find them.

As interchurch couples and as interchurch families, many of whom were created before there was an internet, we were already meeting and marrying across historic denominational divides. This change therefore is not caused by the internet. One interchurch couple, whom I met many years ago, had met and fallen in love while studying theology at Louvain in Belgium. The gentleman was an Anglican, who may have been an ecumenical exchange student, and the lady who would later become his wife was a Roman Catholic Theologian. Their bond was based on a profound sense of connection that began with their interest in theology and their own personal faith journeys. Both had wished to become closer to the church. It appeared to me that their connection and love for each other nurtured not only their marriage, but the concept that being interchurch as a family was a gift for both of them and their church communities. They met long before there was match.com or anything like it.

Not all potential interchurch families are able to become truly interchurch because often they are quickly and rudely met with rules, often times presented by a

family member who may have had the best intention to be helpful, but who has no concept that ecumenism has been embraced by most of our churches of origins, even before Vatican II happened. I have witnessed rules being bantered about as if they actually existed when they don’t, and I have found myself feeling happy to come from another perspective that didn’t require me to make up a bunch of rules while feeling equally sad for those who felt they must know and follow rules, even if they have to make up the rules on the spot. There is really only one rule and that is to love our neighbor as we love ourselves. The Rutgers research, using match.com as a source, is a very helpful resource because it doesn’t have a church agenda of its own hidden somewhere in the background, and if that agenda is simply to fill their own pews on Sunday mornings then it fails to address the pastoral needs of the very people the church indicates they intend to serve.

Church attendance should be a profoundly nurturing experience for those who may be brave enough to attend and to find out for themselves just what all church is really about. We are back to the basic need in our society for us to nurture and give pastoral care that addresses our basic human need to feel profoundly connected to another person.

Profoundly Connected To Another Person is the key phrase here upon which the pastoral care of the family should begin. The lived experience of interchurch families is an example of profound connectedness on a very human level
~ M.J. Glauber

Pastoral care of the family: Will Interchurch Families' needs be considered by our churches?

We shall be very fortunate if our situation, which is being in an interchurch marriage and being an interchurch family, does come up for discussion on the Synod agenda when it wasn't specifically included in the questionnaire, so please let's all pray fervently for that.

~ Interchurch spouse from IFIN



When 'The Promise' is a Problem

by

William P. McDonald

Associate Professor of Religion, Tennessee Wesleyan College, Athens, TN

And,

Ecumenical Covenant Pastor, St. Paul Lutheran Church (ELCA), Vonore, TN

The starry-eyed couple sits in the priest's office. Premarital counseling has been helpful, even enriching...so far. That is, until Father hands the Roman Catholic of the two a paper to sign while he explains the document's words "that I am prepared to avoid the dangers of abandoning the faith and to promise sincerely to do all in my power to see that the children of the marriage be baptized and educated in the Catholic Church." Suddenly the love boat hits a shoal. Though the two have quite likely already discussed the matter privately, the document comes as an awkward and jarring reminder of their differences. If they weren't before, they are now well aware of their ecclesial situation as a Catholic and non-Catholic pair. Why must this part of Catholic premarital counseling with interchurch couples be so troublesome? Is there a better way?

It is beyond the scope of this article to recount the painful history of interchurch marriage preparation, though the reader may find Anne C. Roses's

Beloved Strangers: Interfaith Families in Nineteenth Century America (Harvard University Press, 2001) a good place to start.¹ There is much to be learned about the subtle changes in marriage preparation across time. We can give thanks for the provisions effected in the 1983 Code of Canon Law, relaxing or suppressing the more stringent requirements of the 1917 code. Still more positive guidance is offered in the 1993 Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms on Ecumenism (DAPNE). The liberating breakthroughs made possible by Vatican Council II are also echoed in subsequent papal pronouncements on marriage, beginning with *Matrimonia Mixta* in 1970. Matters have improved drastically for interchurch couples preparing for marriage. Perhaps the churches--Catholic and Protestant--are catching up to the Spirit. However, there are still obstacles that keep the premarital counseling of these couples vestigially juridical and not fully pastoral, especially where promises to raise children Catholic are concerned. Here is

why, followed by a modest suggestion.

The Roman Catholic in an interchurch marriage signs a document (or otherwise declares) that he or she will do "all in his/her power" to see that children are raised Catholic. Whatever latitude in interpretation (more later), the language is unfortunate. Marriage is a tough proposition, even for the starry-eyed. For the church to suggest that one party is to use "power" in a way that may magnify and exacerbate division in the name of fulfilling an obligation recalls old legalisms at best, and invites guilt, manipulation, anger (on the part of both) and inequality at worst. It harkens back to the days when the Roman Catholic party was to "do all in his or her power" to work for the conversion of the non-Catholic spouse. "Power" language delegitimizes the non-Catholic partner's tradition, implying that, were the children to end up, say, Lutheran, that the Catholic would have "lost" a battle the church expected him or her to fight and win. Marriage, by definition, is no place for one to

be unilaterally doing anything with all one's "power"!

To be certain, the promise being solicited is not absolute. That is, were the promise to become a threat to the well being of the marriage, or were other extenuating circumstances in place, such as the devotion of the non-Catholic spouse to his or her church, then it should not be carried out. Catholics who do so will not be penalized. This is certainly a humane, pastoral gesture on the part of canonical requirements. In fact, this is spelled out in DAPNE, noting that non-Catholics come with an equal sense of duty to catechize children in their faith (Article 151).

However, the question remains: How can premarital counseling for interchurch couples be improved upon at this point? First, remove all suspicions of an ecclesial promise with legal overtones by discontinuing the promise altogether. No more quasi "oaths." Erase the language of power. True, there has been latitude in interpretation of the document, ranging from the older approach of binding the conscience with an obligation over against the other partner to the much improved, more sensitive notion that the Roman Catholic is to find ways to share his or her faith with future children. If the latter view comports with the Catholic Church's gradual movement toward a more pastoral approach in this matter, then the language used should better reflect it.

A structured conversation--
the duty of the priest or deacon

to facilitate in most dioceses-- should allow the couple to describe their respective religious histories, what each means to them, and the extent to which they believe they are prepared to nurture future children in it. The clergyman should listen carefully, and help the couple move toward a workable arrangement. Sometimes the result will be the traditional approach, wherein the Catholic party plans to raise children primarily in the Catholic Church, though always with the non-Catholic's consent. Or, the conversation might conclude with another arrangement being the wiser. How children might be exposed to both traditions should be thoroughly discussed. At the end of the premarital counseling, the priest or deacon signs a document that he has interviewed the couple and is satisfied that they have intentionally thought through the questions and have (or are on their way toward) a "plan" should the blessing of children arrive one day. The clergyman's signed statement goes on file in the local diocesan office. There is no document for one or both of the couple to sign.

This would be a small, but significant adjustment. It would render premarital counseling completely pastoral and not juridical at the point where it can become most gut wrenching. Even more, it allows the ecumenical couple, who, after all, are the ministers of the sacrament, to lead the way as ministers of unity, not pack-mules forced to carry a sign of the church's division. To do "all in

one's power" by way of a coercive promise fails to recognize the particular nature of the domestic church that ecumenical families create. The Spirit calls interchurch couples to lead the way in taking responsibility for their children's spiritual formation. How that will look will necessarily differ from couple to couple. All churches stand to learn something about the mystery of holy matrimony from these differences.

Postscript: As Rose recounts in her book, few details of Protestant opinion on interchurch marriage survive from the nineteenth century. Even now, discussions of children's faith do not occupy much time in most Protestant premarital counseling of ecumenical couples. After all, if few eyebrows raise altitude over Catholic-Protestant marriages, it would be a surprise if any go up when a Presbyterian and a United Methodist tie the knot. Perhaps inter-Protestant premarital counseling curricula should take note of the attention Roman Catholics give to the subject, so that the starry-eyed of every confession may be ready if and when children are welcomed into their future homes.

Footnotes: 1. For an excellent survey of the problem, with examination of statements by interchurch couples, see Ray Temmerman's thesis, "Interchurch Families as Domestic Church: Familial Experiences and Ecclesial Opportunities," which argues more comprehensively for the change I suggest.

<http://interchurchfamilies.org/STM/Thesis->

InterchurchFamiliesAsDomestic Church.pdf.

William P. McDonald is an ordained United Methodist Minister who is serving as the pastor of an ELCA parish, too, in addition to his work at Tennessee Wesleyan College. He is the spouse of a Roman Catholic (Carolyn) and they are the parents of 4 children.

Hope Comes From God, Who Has Created Inspiring and Dedicated People Who Serve:

“Darkness cannot drive out darkness: only light can do that.”
~ Martin Luther King Jr

“It is a great blessing to have lived in a time of Martin Luther King Jr., when forgiveness and generosity of spirit encouraged our citizenry to work for a better world for everybody.”
~ Maya Angelou

How far you go in life depends on your being tender with the young, compassionate with the aged, sympathetic with the striving and tolerant of the weak and strong. Because someday in your life you will have been all of these.
~ George Washington Carver

Marcus Borg Examines What It Means To Be Christian

Please read the thoughts, and the questions in their original format that Marcus Borg poses to all of us at the following links:

What is the Gospel?

November 9, 2013 By [Marcus Borg](#)

<http://www.patheos.com/blogs/marcusborg/2013/11/what-is-the-gospel/>

What Is a Christian?

November 5, 2013 By [Marcus Borg](#)

<http://www.patheos.com/blogs/marcusborg/2013/11/what-is-a-christian/>

“Marcus Borg Examines What It Means To Be Christian” - Implications for Interchurch Families and Ecumenists:

Actually, I would like to hear from you regarding what the role of Christianity is and about our efforts toward creating some form of Christian Unity.

- Does Marcus Borg’s explanation of the transformative aspect of Christianity resonate with your understanding of being Christian in an “Interchurch” family and/or being Ecumenical?

- How does Christ’s message apply to our own personal transformation?

- Can you cite examples where Christ asks for a transformation from the Bible or in the lives of saints?

I have found this idea to be very interesting and I hope that you do too. I would like to hear your thoughts about the underlying principles behind what it means to be a Christian and about the role of hope in your lived experience.

I have many questions about what it means to be a Christian in the 21st Century. I would like to hear your thoughts as Interchurch Families and as Ecumenists.

- How does our Christian message of hope translate into how we live our lives in the 21st Century?

- Does being transformed into the likeness of Christ resonate with you?

~ M.J. Glauber

Hope and Faith

“Optimism is the faith that leads to achievement. Nothing can be done without hope and confidence.” ~ Helen Keller

“Faith is not the belief that God will do what you want. It is the belief that God will do what is right.” ~Anonymous

The Recognition of Something Greater than the Self; This is the Hope We All Seek

“Reverence is the recognition of something greater than the self-- something that is beyond human creation or control, that

transcends full human understanding."
~Barbara Brown Taylor,
from An Altar in the World

What is Your Experience of God?

Father Terrence P. Ryan, CSP in his article, "Spiritual Stuff" wrote that "A catechism answer that is not lived out, is shallow. Young people are dropping out of religion that is all about ideas, and very little about shared experience."

I remembered reading in a recent Pew Study on Religion which had noted that the numbers of unaffiliated was the fastest growing "denomination" in the United States.

Father Terrence P. Ryan, CSP prefers to respond to questions by asking, "Tell me of your experience of God, or Jesus, who, whoever, whatever."

Father Terrence P. Ryan, CSP explains, "If people tell us simply what we are supposed to think, believe, do, we might comply when we are young. As we grow up, we drop a lot of this. If people come to me with a problem, I may have a solution that I think will help them, but if I simply say do this or that, it has only a short term effect. If I tell them what I actually did, what my experience with the problem/ solution is for me, that goes a lot further."

What is your experience of that of God at work in your life?
~ M.J. Glauber

Father Terrence P. Ryan, CSP "Spiritual Stuff - Tell me what you believe, not what to believe!" can be read in its original and complete form at <http://www.paulist.org/blog/father-terrence-p-ryan-csp?page=1>

Father Terry Ryan, CSP, travels throughout the United States offering workshops, missions, retreats and evening reflections on the Contemplative Experience. St. Thérèse of Lisieux, the great mystics, and the spirituality of the 11th step of a 12-step recovery program provide the frameworks for Father Terry's discussions of the Contemplative Experience. He has been blogging on "Father Terry's Spiritual Stuff" since 2008.

Note: Step 11 of a 12 Step Program states "Seek through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understand God, praying only for knowledge of God's will for us and the power to carry that out."

How do we Raise Children in Inter-Church or Interreligious Families?

by Daniel Olsen

This article originally appeared <http://www.paulist.org/evangelization/how-do-we-raise-children-inter-church-or-interreligious-families> and at <http://www.paulist.org/ecumenism/koinonia> Issue 50, Winter 2014
It is being reprinted here with permission from Daniel Olsen and from Father Thomas Ryan, CSP who publishes "Koinonia"

As interchurch and interreligious marriages become more and more common in the United States, the need to explore how to educate and evangelize children in these homes becomes ever more urgent. Recognizing this reality, on Saturday, October 19, 2013, members of the Archdiocese of Chicago's Ecumenical and Interreligious Parish-to-Parish Learning Community gathered interchurch and interreligious couples, pastoral staff and other interested participants to discuss the opportunities and challenges present for those raising children in interchurch/ interreligious families.

Three questions initiated the dialogue:

- What does the Catholic Church teach about interchurch and interreligious families?
- How can both traditions be honored in order to foster a healthy family spirituality?
- How does God's love shine in these families?

Conceived as discussion primers, the questions lead to a robust dialogue about the unique pastoral challenges

Continued on the next page

faced within these families, while fostering a sense of their giftedness.

Issues/Challenges

The discussion began with a reminder of the Catholic commitment to ecumenism and interreligious dialogue as well as an awareness of the sacramental nature of Christian marriage. This dual focus gave the group a sense of the inherent holiness and specific ecumenical mission of the interchurch family. How might the shared baptismal and marital commitments of interchurch parents undergird the Christian education and formation of children in relation to two Christian traditions? How might this “church of the home”, rooted in two diverse expressions of Christianity, coalesce positively for the benefit of educating children about life in Christ? Answering these important questions not only led to a wonderful consideration of shared sacramental life, but suggested that many questions remain unanswered.

Catholic teaching about the holiness of family life springing from interreligious unions was also examined. As these families come to learn about one another’s religious traditions from the context of a loving relationship, the exchange can be a great boon to grassroots interreligious dialogue. Respect, mutual growth and understanding, as well as justice initiatives were noted as means by which these families could effectively live out their religious convictions as a home united in love and fellowship.

The questions ultimately turned from Catholic teaching regarding interchurch and interreligious family life to how one might effectively communicate it. The group perceived that discussing the challenges these families encountered on a daily basis might actually serve as the best mode of communication. In other words, the need to “tell our stories” became apparent. Some saw their mixed reality as a “painful spur” which caused them to come to a clearer sense of what they believe and how they should express it to their children. “Children pick up on the pain we experience,” one participant stated, seeing this as a catalyst for growth because “this is not what God wants.” Another marveled at how kids more easily recognize diversity as a gift, even while they are “caught in the middle” of a struggle not of their making.

A common refrain was that their union as a family taught them the value of working out religious and confessional differences by building bridges instead of erecting barriers to mutual growth. Thus, it was ultimately found that: a) the challenges interchurch and interreligious families overcome can, and often do, strengthen their faith and their commitment to Christian unity and interreligious dialogue, respectively, and b) the solution to this state of affairs ultimately resides with God, thus being beyond their control, but not beyond their influence.

Provisional Solutions

Unsurprisingly, education was seen as the primary key to

overcoming the pastoral challenges of passing on the faith in interchurch/interreligious homes. A common sentiment was that the education needed to come from the children as much as from the adults or the church itself. Children, especially their accepting and trusting nature, were seen as exhibiting the welcoming spirit required to move forward as a unified family amidst confessional or religious diversity. Education was also viewed as a mainly experiential process, flowing out of participation in shared service projects, joint celebrations of secular and religious holidays, and working together to solve pressing social issues. The relationships established and fostered through these encounters were seen as grounding the faith lives of the family members in positive ways.

Some participants wondered why more was not done for specifically interchurch and interreligious marriage/family enrichment. One couple asked why interchurch couples, who are often told that their marriage offers more opportunity for tensions and inherent challenges, were not offered additional support to live out their vows harmoniously. Rather than pursue the myriad reasons for this pastoral conundrum, those gathered constructively decided to move forward with planning an interchurch/interreligious dialogue group. This peer-led and supportive community is now being developed as a future pastoral resource for these families in the Chicago area.

Continued on the next page

How Does God's Love Shine in These Families?

What was evident throughout this session was that God's love can and does shine forth in these families. The Catholic understanding of the Christian family as a domestic church, re-introduced at the Second Vatican Council and further developed within Pope John Paul II's theology was seen as an important framing element in this regard. Parents in these small communities of faith discern each day how to put into action their beliefs and traditions, while forming their children to do the same. The experience of two traditions within the fabric of the spiritual lives of interchurch/interreligious families may make the unity harder to discern at times. However, gracing the children and all members of this family with a sense of unified, grassroots ecclesial life bound to the unwanted reality of Christian and religious divisions in our world can nonetheless be instructive, constructive, and grace-filled.

Interchurch/interreligious children come to experience the contemporary religious situation landscape as it is; not how it should be. This perspective, born of experience, can serve to form conscientious ecumenical and interreligious dialogue members from birth. Thus, these children can uniquely grow up to speak eloquently about God's transformative and boundless love, while inviting further dialogue about unity, forgiveness and mutual concern among all.

Daniel Olsen serves as the Assistant Director of Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs for the Archdiocese of Chicago. He received his Ph.D. in Constructive Theology from Loyola University Chicago in 2008, with his research focusing on the pastoral gifts and challenges to be found in the experiences of Christian interchurch families. He also serves as an adjunct professor at St. Xavier University and The College of Saint Scholastica (MN).

and

Father Thomas Ryan, CSP, directs the Paulist North American Office for Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations in Washington, D.C. The Paulist Office for Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations serves as a concrete expression of the Paulist Community's commitment to work for unity among the followers of Christ (Ecumenism) and to build bridges of understanding, respect, and collaboration with members of other world religions (Interfaith Relations). Their work can be summarized in three words: Information, Representation, Action. Father Thomas Ryan, CSP publishes "Koinonia" which can be found at the following link: <http://www.paulist.org/ecumenism/koinonia>



How do we Raise Children in Inter-Church

or Interreligious Families? - Implications for Interchurch Families and Ecumenists

Every opportunity to share our stories and to highlight the gift that being interchurch is for those who are interchurch and for our communities should be taken and explored as it is an educational opportunity for the interchurch families and their communities. True growth in Christ's love for us all will come from these kinds of exchanges.

The Interchurch Families' Conferences, Dialogue Groups, and Meetings that we have attended, beginning in the early 1980's have helped to nurture us, and our children so that we had the correct information to share with others when it was needed.

I felt very proud when our children could navigate between two church cultures and clarify any misconceptions that others may have regarding the nature of being interchurch. Many other interchurch parents have reported similar stories. Our interchurch children are not at all confused. They are quite bilingual and bi-cultural that is our interchurch raised children have become truly interchurch.

Being interchurch isn't the scandal. The real scandal is a church divided. However, love can heal all wounds, even an historical wound between church denominations.

As interchurch families, we would like to be nurtured by both of our churches, and we applaud this whenever we see an effort being made to do this.

Simply being able to have dialogues across traditional divides may be able to lay the ground work for much greater advances in our understanding for what is needed to be able to promote and advance Christian Unity as a lived experience for others. We feel enriched by being interchurch so we believe that others would also profit from learning about our lived experience of being interchurch families.

We would like to thank Daniel Olsen and Father Thomas Ryan, CSP for their ecumenical work and their efforts to highlight the role, the gift, that interchurch families are. ~ M.J. Glauber

God Is Calling Us to Follow

"If my own experience can be trusted, then God does not call us once but many times. There are calls to faith and calls to ordination, but in between there are calls to particular communities and calls to particular tasks within them-- calls into and out of relationships as well as calls to seek God wherever God may be found." ~Barbara Brown Taylor, from The Preaching Life

God is calling us to follow: Implications for Interchurch Families and Ecumenists:

Have you ever taken a path that you are surprised by because it wasn't the path you had always presumed you would take? Have you ever ended up on the road less traveled, and felt all the better for it, although you have no real explanation for why you chose that path?

Perhaps God is nudging you along, and you were paying attention to God and not the expected or anticipated path that society may have expected for you?

Many people who become interchurch couples marry, and then discover that they have been given a mission to help to promote Christian Unity in the world or dialogue across historic divides of one sort or another.

God's way is filled with the energy of possibility and hopefulness, and those "ah ha moments" of awe and wonder. ~ M.J. Glauber



Native Spring Plants of Kentucky: Dutchman's Breeches

Our Town, Our American Life Examined

Thornton Wilder, the writer of the play, **Our Town**, "persuaded the university to invite Gertrude Stein to give a series of lectures. That was the beginning of a rewarding friendship.... Stein made a distinction between human nature and the human mind. Human nature she said, clings to identity, to location in time and place. The human mind has no identity; it gazes at pure existing and pure creating, and 'it knows what it knows when it knows it.' It can be found in masterpieces, for masterpieces alone report the ever-unfolding and boundless NOW. But it can also be found in America, which was brought up to believe in boundlessness. America's very geography, said Stein is 'an invitation to wander.' "

"With these ideas ringing in his mind, Wilder wrote Our Town." ... ~ Thornton Wilder cover story in **Time magazine**, January 12, 1953.



Our Town is a three act play written in 1938 by American playwright Thornton Wilder. Set in the fictional American small town of Grover's Corners, it tells the story of an average town's citizens in the early twentieth century U.S.A. as depicted through their everyday lives. Scenes from the town's history between the years of 1901 and 1913 are performed. **Our Town** was first performed on

Continued on the next page

January 22, 1938 in New Jersey. It later went on to success on Broadway and won the Pulitzer Prize for Drama. It remains popular today and revivals are frequent.

Wilder was dissatisfied with the theatre of his time: "I felt that something had gone wrong....I began to feel that the theatre was not only inadequate, it was evasive." His response was to use a metatheatrical style. Our Town's narrator, the Stage Manager, is completely aware of his relationship with the audience, leaving him free to break the fourth wall and address the audience, us as the viewers, directly.

The three act play is about:
Act I: Daily Life
Act II: Love and Marriage
Act III: Death and Dying

Simply stated, **Our Town** is an American play about life in America that works as well in 2014 as it did in 1938 to describe our life, our love, marriage and the nature of death.

Emily Webb and George Gibbs live as neighbors in Grover's Corners. They attend the same school. They fall in love and decide to get married. Just before getting married, right before the ceremony begins, they show their first signs of fear and trepidation about what a major adult responsibility they are about to take on simply by getting married. It is a moment in the play with which many people can identify. Their families convince them to go ahead and get married as they have planned. After all, Emily

Webb and George Gibbs are in love; it seems right that they should get married and live happily ever after. Then somehow before we even know it and all too soon, we are in the midst of the third and final act; the act with the title "Death and Dying"

The end, much like our own mortal end, seems to come as a shock and as a surprise even though the stage director has hinted at this ending in the introduction. The real questions posed to us, viewing the lives of ordinary people who are a lot like us then become:

Have we fully enjoyed our time here on earth?
Have we fully appreciated our loved ones during all those moments, those ordinary moments of our daily lives?
Are we so different from other people who may have lived before us or in another place?

These are questions for some church and interchurch families that basically deal with how we choose to live in this present moment in time. What we do today matters.

~ M.J. Glauber

Getting Lost in Our Lives and Discovering the Meaning of Christ's Resurrection in a Personal Way

"Popular religion focuses so hard on spiritual success that

most of us do not know the first thing about the spiritual fruits of failure. When we fall ill, lose our jobs, wreck our marriages, or alienate our children, most of us are left alone to pick up the pieces. Even those of us who are ministered to by brave friends can find it hard to shake the shame of getting lost in our lives. And yet if someone asked us to pinpoint the times in our lives that changed us for the better, a lot of those times would be wilderness times."

~Barbara Brown Taylor, from An Altar in the World

Implications for Interchurch Families and Ecumenists:
You have no doubt heard that as Christians that we are an "Easter people." Some people define this experience of being an Easter people as being a form of re-birth or being born again Christians.

First, I would like to highly recommend "An Altar in the World" by Barbara Brown Taylor.

This quote from her book highlights the possibility for all of us to be able to change for the better, to grow in our understanding of God's will for us. This is the kind of experience of being lost and then being found again by God, especially if we are open to finding that of God especially when we are lost in the wilderness of what we know as life.

~ M.J. Glauber

Marriage Moments:

by Saint James Roman Catholic Church, Louisville, KY

“Are you a perfectionist? It’s natural to want to do a good job, but don’t let the perfect be the enemy of the good. If your spouse advises you to “Lighten Up” it may be good counsel. Marriage and parenting are tough jobs.”



Sunrise over Miami Beach, Florida in late January 2014This American Life

Is Having A Goal To Achieve Christian Unity Enough? What Will Christian Unity Look Like When It Is Finally Achieved?

A discussion of the implications of the Ecumenical Council of 1439 in Florence, Italy for Interchurch Families and Ecumenists in 2014

The Renaissance is usually thought of as being a positive development. Wikipedia explains: “The word “Renaissance” comes from French; Renaissance means “re-birth.” In Italian, this cultural re-birth was called “Rinascimento”, the word is from rinascere which means “to be reborn.” The Renaissance was a cultural movement that spanned the period roughly from the 14th

to the 17th century, beginning in Italy in the Late Middle Ages and later spreading to the rest of Europe.”

“As a cultural movement, it encompassed innovative flowering of Latin and vernacular literatures, beginning with the 14th-century resurgence of learning based on classical sources, which contemporaries credited to Petrarch, the development of linear perspective and other techniques of rendering a more natural reality in painting, and gradual but widespread educational reform.”

“In politics, the Renaissance contributed the development of the conventions of diplomacy, and in science an increased reliance on observation. Historians often argue this intellectual transformation was a bridge between the Middle Ages and the Modern era. Although the Renaissance saw revolutions in many intellectual pursuits, as well

as social and political upheaval, it is perhaps best known for its artistic developments and the contributions of such polymaths as Leonardo da Vinci and Michelangelo, who inspired the term “Renaissance man”.’

Polymaths? “A polymath is a word of Greek origin used to describe someone who has “learned much” whose expertise spans a significant number of different subject areas; such a person is known to draw on complex bodies of knowledge to solve specific problems. The term was first used in the seventeenth century but the related term, polyhistor, is an ancient term with a similar meaning.”

“The term is often applied to great thinkers of the Renaissance, who excelled at multiple fields of the arts and science, such as Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo, Galileo Galilei, and many others...”

The term Polymath also “applies to the gifted people of the Renaissance who sought to develop their abilities in all areas of knowledge as well as in physical development, social accomplishments, and the arts, in contrast to the vast majority of people of that age who were not well educated.”

“Many notable polymaths lived during the Renaissance period. These polymaths had a rounded approach to education that reflected the ideals of the humanists of the time. A gentleman or courtier of that era was expected to speak several languages, play a musical instrument, write poetry, and so on, thus fulfilling the Renaissance ideal. The idea of a universal education

was essential to achieving polymath ability, hence the word university was used to describe a seat of learning. At this time universities did not specialize in specific areas but rather trained students in a broad array of science, philosophy and theology.”

“There is a consensus that the Renaissance began in Florence, Italy, in the 14th century. Various theories have been proposed to account for its origins and characteristics, focusing on a variety of factors including the social and civic peculiarities of Florence at the time; its political structure; the patronage of its dominant family, the Medici and the migration of Greek scholars and texts to Italy following the

Conquest of Constantinople at the hands of the Ottoman Turks.”

According to Christopher Hibbert in his book: “The House of Medici; Its Rise and Fall” (between 1433 - 1539), Pope Eugenius invited the Patriarch of Constantinople to attend a Great Council in Italy; this would be an overture via dialogue for the creation of a discussion leading to Christian Unity. Cosimo di Medici, as a rich benefactor, ultimately offered his home city of Florence as a meeting site for the two church leaders. Italy was divided up into city states at that time; it was on its way toward becoming a nation, but that would only come after many years of growth in



understanding and conflicts over power and control.

Hibbert observed in his book that for “the Florentine citizens that the Ecumenical Council proved to be a delightful spectacle.” This would be the first time that many of the Florentine citizens had ever seen “the bearded men from Constantinople walking through their streets in their astonishingly opulent clothes and their bizarre head-dress, attended by Moorish and Mongol servants and accompanied by strange animals” that would become “a never-ending source of interest as well as an inspiration to many Florentine painters.”

Hibbert explains that “Ultimately, after lengthy private discussions between Traversari and the patient and clever Johannes Bessarion, Archbishop of Nicea, a compromise on the delicate subject of the Holy Ghost was reached; and this opened the way for agreement on other matters, including the partial authority of the Papacy over the Eastern Church.” Hibbert explains that “the crucial document setting forth the terms of the oecumenical compromise was solemnly signed on 5 July 1439; and the following day, during a ceremony in the Cathedral, this dramatic pronouncement was made: ***‘Let the heavens rejoice and earth exult, for the wall which divided the Western and Eastern Churches has fallen. Peace and concord have returned.’***”

Hibbert notes that “The words were spoken by Cardinal Cesarini in Latin, and by

Archbishop Bessarion in Greek. Then the Italian cardinal and the Greek archbishop embraced each other and, joined by all the other prelates and the Eastern Emperor, they knelt before the Pope.” Although this was only to be a brief moment in history, the Oecumenical Council of 1439 appeared to highlight a successful attempt to bridge the divided church.

Remember that it is 1439, that the period still mostly known as the Middle Ages, is a system based on feudalism that was only beginning to come to an end. The term “Middle Ages” itself ultimately derives from the description of the period of “obscurity” in Italian history during the 9th to 11th centuries; the “saeculum obscurum” or “Dark Age” of the Roman papacy as seen from the perspective of the new understanding of their world view in 14th to 15th century when the Italian Renaissance began to flourish there also helped to originate the term “Dark Age,” so as to contrast and to explain the new changes that were beginning to take place in Florence and in Italy.

Living in 2014, we know that something must have happened that reversed the oecumenical success of that moment on 5 July 1493, but what happened?

Hibbert explains, “No sooner had the delegates returned home to Constantinople than the agreement reached in Florence was so strongly denounced that it had to be abandoned; the Emperor was to find that the protestations of sympathy and promises of help against the

(Turkish threat) which he had received in Italy were to count for little.” and he would suffer from this lack of military support.

Hibbert explains, “...for Florence and the Medici Family, the Council had far happier consequences.”

Of note, Cosimo di Giovanni de' Medici (27 September 1389 – 1 August 1464) was the first of the Medici political dynasty, de facto rulers of Florence during much of the Italian Renaissance; also known as “Cosimo ‘the Elder’” (“il Vecchio”) and “Cosimo Pater Patriae” (Latin: ‘father of the nation’).

Hibbert explains, “As well as profiting the trade of the city (of Florence), the Oecumenical Council was an important influence on what was already being spoken of as the *Rinascimento*. The presence of so many Greek scholars in Florence provided an incalculable stimulus to the quickening interest in classical texts and classical history, in classical art and in philosophy, and particularly in the study of Plato, the great hero of the humanists, for so long overshadowed by his pupil, Aristotle. Bessarion, whose lodgings had been crowded night after night with Greek and Italian scholars, was prevailed upon to remain in Italy where he was created a cardinal and Archbishop of Siponto.

Gemistos Plethon, the great authority on Plato, who had travelled from Constantinople with Bessarion, also agreed to remain in Florence for a time

"This American Life" →

Continued from the previous page:

before going home to die in his own country."

Hibbert explains that Cosimo di Giovanni de' Medici, "who had listened to Plethon's lectures on Plato with the closest attention, was inspired to found in Florence an academy for Platonic studies and to devote much more time to these studies himself."

Cosimo di Giovanni de' Medici hired a young scholar to translate all of Plato from Greek into Latin. Cosimo di Giovanni de' Medici persuaded the Greek Scholar, John Agyropoulos to come to Florence in 1456. Hibbert observes that Cosimo di Giovanni de' Medici and John Agyropoulos "would discuss philosophical questions far into the night. From these foundations grew the Platonic Academy which was to have a most profound an influence upon the development of European thought."

Hibbert observes that "As well as firing Cosimo with the ambition to found a Platonic Academy, the Council of Florence had also enabled Cosimo di Giovanni de' Medici to make several additions to his library, which was beginning to be recognized as as one of the most valuable in the world."...."Open to all of his friends who cared to study



there, it was the first of its kind in Europe, and a generation later served as a model for the Vatican Library in Rome."

Hibbert notes that after the death of his father, Cosimo di Giovanni de' Medici, that his son "continued to pour Medici money into the building, restoration, and embellishment of churches, convents and charitable institutions all over Florence and in the surrounding countryside," for the enjoyment of everyone."

Hibbert reports that Medici told his friend Vespasiano da Bisticci, "Before fifty years have passed we shall be expelled, but my buildings will remain." Future generations would be able to enjoy the public art that Cosimo di Giovanni de' Medici created in his lifetime."

Hibbert observes that "all appear to have benefitted from

Cosimo's munificence and from his undoubted knowledge of architectural matters, to which even the leading craftsmen and designers seem to have deferred." Cosimo di Giovanni de' Medici also assisted in the renovation of significant buildings in Paris, in Assisi, in Jerusalem and elsewhere.

Implications for Interchurch Families and Ecumenists:

The Oecumenical Council, with the oecumenical compromise that it created and which was "solemnly" signed on 5 July 1439, had at first appeared to be a great success. The promise to give assistance to the Christians of Constantinople never materialized so in this sense it had failed to the great detriment of the church located in Constantinople. From a military and political stance, the agreement failed horribly. On the other hand, the dialogues and personal

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exchanges of knowledge among citizens in Italy, influenced by Classical Greek Scholars began to flourish immediately following the Oecumeical Council of 1439.

Education became valued and more accessible than it had been in previous centuries. Languages so that people could communicate across former cultural barriers now were being studied. Universities were created at this time where students were trained in a broad array of science, philosophy and theology. Being curious about creation, God's creation, was also being encouraged in the time period of the Renaissance. This arose from the exchange of ideas and knowledge between Greek scholars and philosophers with Italian scholars and philosophers, especially in Florence.

It has been observed that there was a new emphasis on humanism, but what is this humanism?

Wikipedia states that "Humanism is a movement of philosophy and ethics that emphasizes the value and agency of human beings, individually and collectively, and generally prefers individual thought and evidence (rationalism, empiricism) over established doctrine or faith (fideism)." The problem surrounding the term humanism seems to be based on the fact that "The term humanism can be ambiguously diverse, and there has been a persistent confusion between several related uses of the term because different intellectual movements have identified with it over time."

So we should be cautious not to automatically discount anything to do with the term "Humanism" because its meaning holds different implications for different time periods and/or by different people at different times.

"In philosophy and social science, humanism refers to a perspective that affirms some notion of a "human nature" (contrasted with antihumanism)."

"In modern times, many humanist movements have become strongly aligned with secularism, with the term Humanism often being used as a byword for non-theistic beliefs about ideas such as meaning and purpose; however, many early humanists, such as Ulrich von Hutten, a strong supporter of Martin Luther and the Reformation, were religious."

Fideism? Fideism is defined as a reliance on faith alone rather than scientific reasoning or philosophy in questions of religion.

Rationalism? Rationalism is defined as the principle or habit of accepting reason as the supreme authority in matters of opinion, belief, or conduct. In regard to philosophy, rationalism means the doctrine that reason alone is a source of knowledge and is independent of experience. The philosophers: Descartes, Spinoza and others perceived "rationalism" to be the doctrine that all knowledge is expressible in self-evident propositions or their consequences. From a theological perspective, "rationalism" is the doctrine that

human reason, unaided by divine revelation, is an adequate or the sole guide to all attainable religious truth(s).

Empiricism? Empiricism is defined as the view that experience, especially of the senses, is the only source of knowledge, and the employment of empirical methods, as in science.

Balance and moderation is needed; they will always be needed.

Even without taking into consideration the advances made during the Renaissance, it would seem that we are locked into a human body. This is our starting point from which we seek and are able to perceive that of God at work in our lives. It should be noted that Cosimo di Giovanni de' Medici was a very spiritual and devout person who spent a great deal of time reflecting over his actions and deeds.

We should be cautious not to be distracted by the ambiguity that surrounds the term "Humanism" so that we can focus on the real implications coming from the actual outcome rather than the expected outcome. Following the oecumenical compromise of 5 July 1439, which technically failed, but which allowed and encouraged a form of re-birth, based upon human interactions and intellectual exchanges on a personal level, so that growth in understanding could begin to happen, is a good thing.

The Renaissance was a time period when diversity of approaches coming from

various studies, including the arts, allowed solutions to be found that had previously eluded society. Architectural advances seemed to take off at this time period. This outcome was to become more like an Easter moment when we are born again into a new life; the Renaissance began to flourish with the input of the Greek Scholars who had been welcomed among the Italians in Florence.

Technically, the oecumenical compromise of 5 July 1439 failed as a political, or military endeavor or as a form of jockeying for power, but the human and cultural advancements that followed, and which are referred to as the Renaissance are, in general, considered to be something positive.

The unexpected outcome from this Oecumenical Council contributed to the flourishing of the Renaissance.

Conclusion:

Sometimes what we believe we are seeking through Oecumenical Dialogue may not be the same plan that God has for us.

God may be working with humanity at a very personal level, and perhaps in another direction from the one we think we should be taking. God may be directing where and how we each may be able to see how we should be in a completely new light that comes from personal interaction with others who bring their gifts of a new and different perspective with them. This is God's Light working through us.

It therefore appears that it is at the human interpersonal level, those ordinary interactions, are where we may find the greatest potential for Oecumenical Advances. How are we exploring our world and looking for new solutions today?

Interchurch Families are active in their respective churches of origin while they live this kind of Oecumenical Unity that seems to elude our churches.

“Is Having A Goal To Achieve Christian Unity Enough?”

Yes and no. “Yes” because this is what may help to move all of us forward. Of course, we may experience one step forward and two steps backwards which may seem to be discouraging, but the goal of seeking some kind of unity according to Christ and God's wish for us has merit.

And, “No” because we need to be cautious to take God's lead in all that we do while setting aside our own egos, while recognizing that this task may prove to be a very great challenge as we try to identify which is which.

“What Will Christian Unity Look Like When It Is Finally Achieved?”

We need to be open to seeking God's will for us and carefully scrutinize all of our actions on a personal level. A sense of personal humility along with God's help and guidance may bring us to the goal that God has in mind for what Christian Unity will ultimately look like.

May we all be open and alert to the great potential, possibility and hope that God has faithfully provided to us for being able to find God's desired outcome for how Christian Unity will look when it is achieved.

I believe that achieving Christian Unity could be very close, if we are able to let our triune God guide us. It is a question of letting go of old ways and of accepting that great Easter message that allows us to grow and become reborn in the image that God has wished for all of us.

~ M.J. Glauber



Certain terms appeared in the discussion above; below you will find links to further reading on several of these topics:

Further reading about “Polymath”

Frost, Martin, [“Polymath: A Renaissance Man”](#)

Mirchandani, Vinnie, [The New Polymath: Profiles in Compound-Technology Innovations](#),

John Wiley & Sons, 2010 Grafton, A, 'The World of the Polyhistor: Humanism and Encyclopedism', Central European History, 18: 31–47. (1985)

Waquet, F, (ed.) 'Mapping the World of Learning: The ‘Polyhistor’ of Daniel Georg Morhof' (2000)

Herbert Jaumann, "Was ist ein Polyhistor? Gehversuche auf einem verlassenen Terrain," Studia Leibnitiana, 22 (1990), 76-89



MJG ©

← "This American Life"

...A view of Ocean Drive in the South Beach area of Miami Beach, Florida; January 2014

... This area is known for its ART DECO Architecture, and it has been designated as an historic preservation district

Further reading about the Renaissance:

["Online Etymology Dictionary: "Renaissance"](#). Etymonline.com. Retrieved 2009-07-31.

BBC Science and Nature, [Leonardo da Vinci](#) Retrieved May 12, 2007

BBC History, [Michelangelo](#) Retrieved May 12, 2007

Burke, P., The European Renaissance: Centre and Peripheries 1998)

Strathern, Paul The Medici: Godfathers of the Renaissance (2003)

[Peter Barenboim, Sergey Shiyon, Michelangelo: Mysteries of Medici Chapel, SLOVO, Moscow, 2006. ISBN 5-85050-825-2](#)

Encyclopædia Britannica, Renaissance, 2008, O.Ed.

Har, Michael H. History of Libraries in the Western World, Scarecrow Press Incorporate, 1999, [ISBN 0-8108-3724-2](#)

Norwich, John Julius, A Short History of Byzantium, 1997, Knopf, [ISBN 0-679-45088-2](#)

Brotton, J., The Renaissance: A Very Short Introduction, [OUP](#), 2006 [ISBN 0-19-280163-5](#).

Panofsky, Renaissance and Renascences in Western Art 1969:38; Panofsky's chapter "Renaissance— self-definition or self-deception?" succinctly introduces the historiographical debate, with copious footnotes to the literature.

Further reading about "The saeculum obscurum or "Dark Age" of the Roman papacy can be found at:

[Will Durant](#) refers to the period from 867 to 1049 as the "nadir of the papacy"

Cristina La Rocca (Ed.): Italy in the Early Middle Ages: 476-1000 (Short Oxford History of Italy), Oxford 2002.

Note: Nadir means "the lowest point"

Further reading about "Humanism": An account of the evolution of the meaning of the

word humanism from the point of view of a modern secular humanist can be found in Nicolas Walter's Humanism – What's in the Word (London: Rational Press Association, 1997 [ISBN 0-301-97001-7](#)). From the same perspective, but somewhat less polemical, can be found in Richard Norman's On Humanism (Thinking in Action) (London: Routledge: 2004). For a historical and philologically oriented view see Vito Giustiniani, "Homo, Humanus, and the Meanings of Humanism" (1985), cited above.

As J. A. Symonds remarked, "the word humanism has a German sound and is in fact modern" (See The Renaissance in Italy Vol. 2:71n, 1877). Vito Giustiniani writes that in the German-speaking world "Humanist" while keeping its specific meaning (as scholar of Classical literature) "gave birth to further derivatives, such as humanistisch for those schools which later were to be called humanistische Gymnasien,



← This American Life 2014
.... Street Scene;
8 PM after evening worship
in a church, nearby “The
Fine Art Gallery” in
February. How do you
define “Fine Art?”

I looked in the dictionary for the meaning of Prophecy; it is a noun that means “An inspired utterance of a prophet, viewed as a revelation of divine will; a prediction of the future, made under divine inspiration or such an inspired message or prediction transmitted orally or in writing.... The written message, but we aren't talking about a Bible message here. This is a commercial sign, an advertisement, positioned for us to see it as we leave from church where we actually read Biblical prophecies.

We may be talking about a new or different meaning for a word that has been used for centuries, or are we?

What does the word Prophecy mean for you? As it is being used in this sign may be neither right nor wrong, but just a sign of our times. What do you think?
~ M.J. Glauber

Further reading about “Humanism”: continued from the previous page ↓

with Latin and Greek as the main subjects of teaching (1784). Finally, Humanismus was introduced to denote 'classical education in general' (1808) and still later for the epoch and the achievements of the Italian humanists of the fifteenth century (1841). This is to say that 'humanism' for 'classical learning' appeared first in Germany, where it was once and for all sanctioned in this meaning by Georg Voigt (1859)", Vito Giustiniani, "Homo, Humanus, and the Meanings of Humanism", Journal of the History of Ideas

46 (vol. 2, April–June, 1985): 172.

Nicholas Mann (1996). The Origins of Humanism. Cambridge University Press. pp. 1–2. "The term umanista was used, in fifteenth century Italian academic jargon to describe a teacher or student of classical literature and the arts associated with it, including that of rhetoric. The English equivalent 'humanist' makes its appearance in the late sixteenth century with a similar meaning. Only in the nineteenth century, however, and probably for the first time in Germany in 1809, is the

attribute transformed into a substantive: humanism, standing for devotion to the literature of ancient Greece and Rome, and the humane values that may be derived from them."

Compact Oxford English dictionary. Oxford University Press. 2007. "humanism n. 2 a Renaissance cultural movement that turned away from medieval scholasticism and revived interest in ancient Greek and Roman thought."

Practical Tips for Actions That May Help to Sustain Our Lives; and Give Us Hope.....

Do Something for Someone with No Expectation of Acknowledgment or Appreciation

Giving without expectation can positively change the way each of us experiences life. It can enhance our personal awareness and allow us to see others as independent of who we are in their lives. As a result, we can feel increasing levels of compassion and gratitude because the entire encounter is without expectation, or need for recognition.

~ Dr. Dale Atkins

Seeking the Positive: Nurturing that which is Positive

Dr. Dale Atkins suggests: "Try these tips":

Share Memories - When we make time to sit down with someone else (without cell phones in hand) and share stories about how we first met, we generally bring ourselves to a place of harmony. We can then share with that other person a quality about him or her that always makes us smile. Doing both of these things can help us get back in touch with the happy side of any relationship.

Sometimes, over time, we get into a groove of focusing on the serious matters and don't spend time on the things that bring joy and levity to our relationship. This practice will bring you a sense of greater joy while you share joy with others.

Take Responsibility. - We each need to take responsibility for our own behaviors, actions and words. If we want to get into better shape, accomplish specific tasks, or work on a project, it is up to us to designate a specific time to do it. We need to look at our calendars and set aside the time to nurture what we consider to be important in our lives. If we wait around for others to do it, it may never get done and we can feel resentful. We need to see ourselves as being on the same a team, working toward the same goal.

Respond in a Way That is Good for the Other Person.

Practice the Golden Rule: -

When we examine our behaviors we can put into place small but important changes that will help others feel appreciated, noticed, loved, valued and supported. When we really think about what is important to any person you may know, we can respond appropriately. We may not be someone who likes to hear a compliment but most people thrive on it. Compliments need to be genuine. We need to remind ourselves that this is NOT about us but about our relationship with the world.

Increase Empathy For Each Other.

- When we are moving into a space where we feel critical, resentful, angry or judgmental, instead of following that path (and telling ourselves in our head why we have the right to feel this way) we can practice kindness, compassion, and empathy. When we attempt to switch places with that other person and imagine his or her perspective or state of mind or experience, we can look at them and the situation with a more compassionate heart.

Showing someone else, especially people we care about very much, empathy can prevent misunderstandings and disagreements.

Seize The Moment. - We can avoid "settling" for a relationship where things are just OKAY. Sometimes we get lost in the day to day and forget about delving deeper into nurturing the love, the joy, the contentment we once felt for others we have known for many years. Interest, excitement and fun can be re-ignited. Life is meant to be enjoyed. Create and seize moments to try new things together, practice healthy behaviors; these are the things that bond us. We can each be mindful about doing something good for others, especially those who matter to us or with whom we interact regularly so that everybody has a good day.

Implications for Interchurch Families and Ecumenists:

These are very practical relational tips created by Dr. Adkins that can work in the home or in the world for making things easier for everyone, including us. These are the foundational building blocks that are needed.

Below are some Bible verses that support all of Dr. Dale Atkins' suggestions

Romans 5:5 (NIV) And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.

1 Peter 1:21(NIV) Through him you believe in God, who raised him from the dead and glorified him, and so your faith and hope are in God.

It is God's love for us that sustains us and gives us hope.

~ M.J. Glauber

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