



THE ARK

A Publication of the American Association of Interchurch Families

AAIF IS A NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION,
REGISTERED IN THE STATE OF NEBRASKA

Earlier editions of the ARK may be found at

<http://www.interchurchfamilies.org/>

Select "Other Publications" ~ Then scroll down to find the ARK

AAIF is an official affiliate of the Interchurch Families International Network - IFIN

The ARK©
Copyright 2014
AAIF
all rights reserved



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 2015

Theme:

Being Profoundly Connected
to One Another;
Community Building;
God's Love for Us

***Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for
by so doing some people have shown hospitality
to angels without knowing it. ~ Hebrews 13:2
New International Version (NIV)***

"Love each other as I have loved you" ~ John 15:12

***Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been
born of God and knows God. Anyone who does not love does not know God,
because God is love. ~ 1 John 4:7-8***

"Listen with the Ear of Your Heart" from the Rule of Benedict

**"The biggest communication problem is that
we do not listen to understand. We listen to
reply." ~ anonymous**

Contents

Page 1	Theme: Being Profoundly Connected to One Another; Community Building; God's Love for Us
Page 2	Contents Page and AAIF Contacts: AAIF 2014 OFFICERS:
Pages 3-5	What's Love Got to Do With It? Reflections about and Implications found within: 1 Corinthians 12, 13 & parts of 14 for Interchurch Families, Ecumenists, and everyone else by M.J. Glauber
Pages 5 - 6	Is love an action verb? - Considering Luke 10:29-37
Pages 6 & 7	What is love? by M.J. Glauber
Pages 7 - 13	A Discussion of "Japanese bishops: Vatican mindset doesn't fit Asian church" by Joshua J. McElwee for NCR Today With Implications and Comparisons for Americans by M.J. Glauber
Page 11	2015 NWCUC and Ecumenical Advocacy Days
Page 12	Many Thanks



Kentucky-Japanese Friendship Garden

MJG©

"Love is our true destiny. We do not find the meaning of life by ourselves alone - We find it with another."

~ Thomas Merton

For more information on EAD's 2014 National Gathering, visit <http://advocacydays.org/2014>.

AAIF Contacts: AAIF 2014 OFFICERS:

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.

The 2014 election results will be posted in a later 2014 edition of the ARK.

What's Love Got To Do With It?

Reflections about and Implications found within:

1 Corinthians 12, 13 & parts of 14 for Interchurch Families, Ecumenists, and everyone else:

What do 1 Corinthians 12, 13 & 14 say? Please see the full Bible passage either beginning at the link below or in your own Bible.

<http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Corinthians+12&version=NIV>

The title to the Tina Turner song: **“What's Love Got to Do With It?”** caught my attention just as it always has. The song also has a captivating tune. The only part of the lyrics that actually stay in my memory long after the song has ended are the lines that are repeated, **“What's love got to do, got to do with it.”** Ike and Tina Turner were both very talented, but their lives weren't easy. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ike_and_Tina_Turner I believe that the question that Tina Turner really was asking in this song may have been more about how do we know what love is if we have never experienced love. Love is as much an action verb as it is an emotion.

“What's Love Got to Do With It?” When reading 1 Corinthians, I was reminded of the fact that love is talked about a great deal. We have a Hollywood image of love, but that image isn't real love. The Hollywood image of falling in love and living happily ever after is more of a fairy tale image of love; it is entertainment. We need the message about love, and the true

LOVE AND OUR DOMESTIC CHURCH, OUR LITTLE CHURCH OF THE HOME:

“Love begins at home, and it is not how much we do.... but how much love we put in that action.” ~ Mother Teresa

nature about love that can be found in 1 Corinthians.

There are three main parts to 1 Corinthians 12:

- Concerning Spiritual Gifts
- Unity and Diversity in the Body
- Love Is Indispensable

Highlights from the text itself:

I was drawn in especially by the following verses:

Regarding Spiritual Gifts:

4 There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them.

5 There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord.

6 There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work.

7 Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.

Each of us forms part of the whole. We each have our own special talents or own gifts. Working together we are able to accomplish far more than any one would be able to accomplish on their own. All of these gifts come from the same God and are for the betterment of all, that is for the common good. Imagine a world of cooperation and collaboration for the common good.

Imagine a world where the need to be right at all costs is surpassed by an even greater need to love

our neighbor as ourselves.

Unity and Diversity in the Body: 12 Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. 13 For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body

The key issue here is being baptized in the Holy Spirit that defines us as Christians. The issue of being baptized in the Holy Spirit matters. The issue of immersion versus sprinkling, or the issue of infant baptism versus believer baptism, are not what is highlighted. “We were all baptized in the Spirit so as to form one body” is the key phrase that unites us all as Christians.

“...and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. 14 Even so the body is not made up of one part but of many.”

Pause for a moment to consider that each person's body is made up of specialized parts that work together in harmony to form a miraculous human body. This was God's design, and it also serves as an analogy for how we all have specialized gifts and talents that help to create the whole of society. We all need each other. Diversity is necessary for the survival of all of us.

In verses 15 through 21, and 25 and 26 we see a more complete version of the analogy that is

being made: **"15 Now if the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. 16 And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. 17 If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? 18 But in fact God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. 19 If they were all one part, where would the body be? 20 As it is, there are many parts, but one body. 21 The eye cannot say to the hand, "I don't need you!" And the head cannot say to the feet, "I don't need you!" '....."25 so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. 26 If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it."**

If we consider this analogy more fully, we see the need for specialized talents and that individual gifts are necessary for the human body to work properly. If one part of our body becomes injured, that injury affects all of the rest of our human body and our overall; ability to function until the injury is healed. Of course, the real message is that all parts, all skills, all understandings of the

LOVE:

"The whole idea of compassion is based on a keen awareness of the interdependence of all these living beings, which are all part of one another, and all involved in one another." ~ Thomas Merton

Divine are needed for us to have a complete church body.

In verse 27, we read: **"Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it."** In verses 29 through 31, we read **"29 Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? 30 Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in different languages? Do all interpret? 31 Now eagerly desire the greater gifts."**

Society needs diversity. Society needs people with various skills and talents which are gifts to be cherished. It seems obvious that if everyone was only talented at doing one thing that some important and necessary services would be lacking. For example, if a society only produced waiters, and no cooks, nor any dish washers, nor any farmers to grow the food then restaurants wouldn't be able to exist. A fully functioning society needs people with many talents and skills. The analogy that is being made is that the church also is to be composed of many parts.

Love Is Indispensable

"And yet I will show you the most excellent way." In the following Chapter, I Corinthians 13: 1- 13, the importance of love is more fully explored

"1 If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. 2 If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. 3 If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing."

The next verses, 4-13 are frequently read at weddings:

4 Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. 5 It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. 6 Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. 7 It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. 8 Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. 9 For we know in part and we prophesy in part, 10 but when completeness comes, what is in part disappears. 11 When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child.

When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me. 12 For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known. 13 And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love."

It is the final words that pull the entire concept together for me: **"13 And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love."** What exactly is love? Do we all define love the same way? All that we do should be done out of love so that we can show that of God through our actions, but do we understand how to show the action of love in our very ordinary lives?

It may be that we need to focus more on how love is mutually beneficial. Love is not a power struggle for control or dominance. The work, the very action of showing love may need to be taught. If someone has never experienced love, how will they be able to demonstrate love or how will they be able to discern what the action of love really is when they encounter it.

We live in a society where we are encouraged to stay competitive, but what is really needed are collaborative endeavors that build up society and all of God's Creation.

What we view as love may be compared to finding a safe place from the storm?

On the other hand, how do people who are wounded or broken find

LOVE: "The hunger for love is much more difficult to remove than the hunger for bread." ~ Mother Teresa

love and learn how to give love in return? Anyone who has tried to pull a porcupine quill from their favorite pet dog will know that their beloved dog will try to nip or bite at their caregiver's hand, the same hand that is trying to help save the poor animal's life. The poor wounded animal feels the pain, but is unable to realize that his human friend is trying to help the poor animal. Do we act more like a wounded animal or do we seek that of God? We may need some assistance in being able to find that of God if we have never experienced and taken note of what is of God and what will simply bring us more and more pain. Even though we may claim to be seeking ways to avoid pain, we may not really know yet how to love and what love would look like. How would our understanding of the work or action of love change what we think, do and say? What if our hand got bitten when we tried to help, or to show love? How do we respond then? How do we separate the pain we feel if our hand is bitten by our favorite pet when we are trying to help because we see they are wounded and in pain from the reason why the dog is biting at the hand of love that is trying to help it?

In **1 Corinthians 14:1-2**, we are told **"Pursue love, and earnestly desire the spiritual gifts, especially that you may prophesy. 2 For one who speaks in a tongue speaks not to men but to God; for no one understands him, but he utters mysteries in the Spirit."**

What we say must be understood by others if they are to be able to learn. We also must be able to understand when we listen. Listening carefully may be the most important part of any conversation that is if it is to lead to a deeper understanding and bond between human beings. As humans we are seeking to hear the Word of God in our lives. Are we listening intently or are we already trying to come up with a quick response?

In 1 Corinthians 14: 3-5, 23,31-33, we learn, **"On the other hand, the one who prophesies speaks to people for their upbuilding and encouragement and consolation. 4 The one who speaks in a tongue builds up himself, but the one who prophesies builds up the church. 5The one who prophesies is greater than the one who speaks in tongues, unless someone interprets, so that the church may be built up. 23 If, therefore, the whole church comes together and all speak in tongues, and outsiders or unbelievers enter, will they not say that you are out of your minds?.....31 For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all be encouraged, 32 and the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets.. 33 For God is not a God of confusion but of peace.**

In 1 Corinthians 14, we are urged to speak in ways that will allow newcomers to join in the worship

Continued from the previous page

LOVE:

“Let us always meet each other with a smile, for the smile is the beginning of love.”

~ Mother Teresa

with us. We must be welcoming and show hospitality, but one may wonder why hospitality is so important. In Hebrews 13:2, we learn **'Do not neglect to show hospitality, for by that means some have entertained angels without knowing it.'** The thought of entertaining angels is quite delightful. It is surely the dynamic of our diversity that we enjoy and celebrate!!

What is holy should be available for anyone and everyone who desires to find that of God. In the early church of Corinth, they were urged to be sure that what is spoken should serve to build up, to encourage and to give consolation to others. This will allow the Word of God to be known to the world. What should we do as the church

today, in this time in history? We should be seeking the same goals that were given to the early church at Corinth. Returning to the roots of our faith may help us to find that pathway forward toward Christian Unity.

What's Love Got to Do With It? Everything, according to 1 Corinthians.

~ M.J. Glauber

What is Love?

We are asked to love our neighbor as ourself, but what does this mean? Who is our neighbor? I looked at Luke 10:29-37 (ESV) for an answer to these questions; it says:

“29 But he, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, “And

who is my neighbor?”
30 Jesus replied, “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers, who stripped him and beat him and departed, leaving him half dead. 31 Now by chance a priest was going down that road, and when he saw him he passed by on the other side. 32 So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. 33 But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was, and when he saw him, he had compassion. 34 He went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he set him on his own animal and brought him to an inn and took care of him. 35 And the next day he took out two denarii[a] and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, ‘Take care of him, and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back.’ 36 Which of these three, do you think, proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?” 37 He said, “The one who showed him mercy.” And Jesus said to him, “You go, and do



Kentucky-Japanese Friendship Garden in May

Continued from the previous page

LOVE:

“When ambition ends, happiness begins” ~ Thomas Merton

likewise.”

Footnotes: Luke 10:35 - A denarius was a day's wage for a laborer

How would you define love now? Is love an action verb? How does being profoundly connected to another person factor in to this story in Luke? How we listen may affect our ability to be able to connect with God and the rest of humanity.

~M.J. Glauber

A Discussion of “Japanese bishops: Vatican mindset doesn't fit Asian church” by Joshua J. McElwee for NCR Today With Implications and Comparisons for Americans by M.J. Glauber

On February 19, 2014, Joshua J. McElwee, writing for NCR Today, reviewed the Japanese Bishop's public response to a Vatican survey of global Catholic's views on family issues. His article can be found at the following link: <http://ncronline.org/blogs/ncr-today/japanese-bishops-vatican-mindset-doesnt-fit-asian-church>

The Japanese Bishops created a 15 page report for the Vatican



Kentucky-Japanese Friendship Garden in May

that bluntly stated “church teachings are not known in Japan and that the Vatican's Europe-centric view hampers efforts at evangelization in places, like Japan, where Catholics represent a small minority of the population.” McElwee said that “the Japanese (Bishops) explained that the church “often falls short” by “presenting a high threshold for entry and lacking hospitality and practical kindness.”

In the United States, Roman Catholic Lay Church Leaders, have told us that they wish that they could invite their non-Catholic,

baptized Christian friends from other denominations, to come to worship with them at their Roman Catholic Church. These Lay Church Leaders first explained that the church building and the rituals that they practiced may seem so different to their Christian friends that their guests may feel uncomfortable rather than welcomed. These American Roman Catholic Lay Church Leaders explained that they were frequently being invited to worship in other Christian

Continued on the next page

LOVE:

“Love alone is capable of uniting living beings in such a way as to complete them, for it alone takes them and joins them by what is deepest in themselves.” ~ Pierre Teilhard de Chardin

Churches, but that they felt they couldn't invite the other Christians to worship with them in return.

One problematic issue that these American Roman Catholic Lay Church Leaders mentioned had to do with the fact that other baptized Christians would not be able to share in the Eucharist at their Roman Catholic Church.

The Japanese Bishops who have indicated that the church "often falls short" by "presenting a high threshold for entry and lacking hospitality and practical kindness." may have already been reflected to us in the comments we heard these American Roman Catholic Lay Church Leaders make several years ago now.

McElwee said that the Japanese Bishops had stressed "many times that Japanese Catholics represent only about 0.35 percent of the country's population and that some 76 percent of those Catholics marry non-Catholics, the Japanese ask the global church to "go beyond" a series of norms and rules that separate Catholics from one another." In the United States, in an average year, we understand that approximately between 40 to 60% of all marriages that take place in the Roman Catholic Church are with Christians from other denominations. Historically, as interchurch families in the United States, we often hear people lament that a marriage

LOVE: "Love seeks one thing only: the good of the one loved. It leaves all the other secondary effects to take care of themselves. Love, therefore, is its own reward."

~ Thomas Merton

Kentucky-Japanese Friendship Garden in May

MJG©



between a Roman Catholic and someone from another Christian denomination, is a problem. The problem is actually that our churches are divided not that the couple has fallen in love across historic denominational divides. In our interchurch family homes, we live a form of Christian Unity that has eluded our churches, and yet by definition, as interchurch families, we continue to be faithful and observant Christians.

According to a recent Pew Study on Religion in the United States (<http://religions.pewforum.org/reports/>) (<http://religions.pewforum.org/>), our religious practices are in a state of change. As recently as July 2, 2013, the Pew Research Center reported, regarding the leap in the growth of the non-religiously affiliated adults in

recent decades, saying, "The number of Americans who do not identify with any religion also has grown in recent years; indeed, about one-fifth of the public overall – and a third of adults under age 30 – are religiously unaffiliated as of 2012. Fully a third of U.S. adults say they do not consider themselves a "religious person." And two-thirds of Americans – affiliated and unaffiliated alike – say religion is losing its influence in Americans' lives." This report also noted that "Younger adults also are less likely than their older counterparts to be affiliated with a religion." I wondered what this implies for the future.

(<http://www.pewforum.org/2013/07/02/growth-of-the-nonreligious-many-say-trend-is-bad-for-american-society/>)

Couples who have the potential to become Interchurch couples face some difficult decisions close to the time of their marriage. The real options that may seem viable simply so their marriage can succeed may include:

- dropping out to become non-affiliated,
- finding a ‘neutral’ third church option,
- or the conversion of one spouse to the religious denomination of their spouse for convenience but not from a spiritual belief. For interchurch marriages between Roman Catholics and other Christians, the conversion may go 50-50 either way.

Becoming an interchurch couple where each spouse stays active in their own denomination while also participating in their spouse’s denomination as much as possible, and so that each spouse may encourage the

other to explore and grow in their faith as an adult can happen, may seem to be such a huge task that it may appear to be too overwhelming to be able to be considered.

The great likelihood that interchurch marriages will happen already exists, but there seems to be no form of remote marriage preparation in existence at this time that even addresses the high probability that Roman Catholics and other Christians will marry each other. After a couple has met and fallen in love, it is too late to introduce for the first time what married life will be like. Once a couple is engaged, they should be discussing wedding plans; it is normal and to suggest otherwise is unrealistic. Even for same church couples, but especially so for potentially interchurch couples who may often times feel isolated and rejected by the communities from which they come and which

have nurtured them, remote marriage preparation is essential, but it seems to be ignored for the most part at this time in the United States. Their own church communities also need to know the best ways to be supportive to interchurch couples so that becoming a genuinely interchurch couple can become a truly viable option for newly weds. Remote marriage preparation is for those who will most likely marry at some point in their lives and for their church communities who will be expected to nurture them as a newly forming family.

McElwee states, “In response to a question on couples who live together before marriage, the Japanese say, ‘The pastoral practice of the Church must begin from the premise that cohabitation and civil marriage outside the church have become the norm.’ Research done by Rutgers University and match.com noted that in the United States that it is becoming far more normal for couples to live together, sometimes also to live together and to have children while co-habiting, without becoming married. What is now acceptable in our American culture had not been considered acceptable 50 years ago.

McElwee pulls from the Japanese Bishops Report to the Vatican that, “In developing a pastoral orientation, it is perhaps important to recall that the only time in the gospels that Jesus clearly encounters someone in a

Continued on the next page



**Kentucky Japanese
Friendship Garden in May**

Continued from the
previous page

LOVE

"The beginning of love is to let those we love be perfectly themselves, and not to twist them to fit our own image. Otherwise we love only the reflection of ourselves we find in them."
~ Thomas Merton

Volume 25; Edition 3
July, August and September 2014
The ARK, A Publication of the American Association of Interchurch Families



Kentucky Japanese Friendship Garden in May

situation of cohabitation outside of marriage (the Samaritan woman at the well) he does not focus on it," they state. "Instead, he respectfully deals with the woman and turns her into a missionary." We are asked to give pastoral care to each other.

We are asked to love our neighbor as ourselves. We are not asked to judge others; that is for God to do as God sees fit. This frees us up to do the work of love. In the United States, the pastoral care of humanity as we find humanity will become more and more necessary if we are to be the hands and feet of God in the world around us.

McElwee notes, "The Japanese Bishops also call for a rethinking of church procedure for those seeking annulments, stating "a simplified procedure for annulments is not only needed, it is essential." and that "While simplification is needed along with compliance with the legal provisions, a realistic response to the situation people actually face is essential," they state. McElwee adds that "Simplification of the legal proceedings will be the salvation of those who are suffering." In the United States, I am aware of several couples who found the annulment process to be

difficult. Some have told us that they simply refused to go through an annulment process, after they had been divorced. They had no desire to re-visit and to re-open an old wound. In this way, Americans and Japanese may be experiencing similar difficulties with the annulment process. It may come as a great surprise for a divorced Protestant who later marries a Roman Catholic, who themselves may or may not also have been divorced, to discover that as a Protestant they must also go through the annulment process.

Continued on the next page

LOVE:

"I have decided to stick with love. Hate is too great a burden to bear."

~ Martin Luther King, Jr

McElwee points out that " In other areas, the Japanese respond to the questionnaire's inquiries by focusing on unique challenges faced in their country, stressing particularly a work ethic among the population that does not encourage making time for family needs and the varied problems faced by many Japanese Catholics married to non-Catholics." In the United States, the number of hours that we must work can also detract from having quality family time available to us to be able to nurture what we value most in our own domestic churches. A larger number of homes in the United States require that both parents work outside of the home just so that the family can live from paycheck to paycheck; there may be more American families now who are struggling just to get by than earlier generations may have ever known.

McElwee points out from the Japanese Bishops' Report that "In situations where both parents work, many children return to an empty house." This same statement could also be said about many, if not most, American homes.

McElwee observed that in the Japanese Bishops' Report that "Shared meals are rare,.... Consequently, there are no opportunities to share conversation. Each member of the family faces difficulties, but since there is no fellowship each is lonely and has little experience of loving or being loved." This same

statement could define American life as well.

McElwee observes that "... the Japanese offer a small critique of the questionnaire itself, stating it has "been developed with the mindset of Christian countries in which the entire family is Christian." In the United States, the incidence of interfaith marriages is also great. In the United States, we live in a multi-cultural society and it appears that we are becoming even more diverse.

The American Association of Interchurch Families recognizes that interfaith marriages exist and that they are equally valid marriages. We simply recognized that if we were to be able to accomplish anything that we should focus our attention and efforts on one area and that it should be in an area in which we had some knowledge. The issue of sharing in the eucharist between all Christian denominations has been a major topic, and concern for interchurch families in the United States. Not being welcomed at the table feels like being rejected. Ironically, it seems most painful for Roman Catholic spouses to witness the rejection of their own spouse by their own church, especially when they love them both.

Infant baptism and believer baptism is also an issue that may need to be resolved within an interchurch family.

American interchurch families

are often lumped into the same category of being "a mixed marriage" along with interfaith families in spite of the fact that our needs would be different. The issues that a Christian may face when marrying a Hindu, or a Jew may be far different than when two Christians marry across denominational divides, I am surmising. By focusing only on interchurch marriages, we had hoped to be able to better address at least one issue to our mutual satisfaction. We have found great comfort in many of the documents created by Vatican II that encouraged the pursuit of Christian Unity.

McElwee notes that the Japanese Bishops state: "For example, religiously mixed marriages seem to be considered a problem. However, in Japan, the overwhelming majority of marriages involve mixed religions." In the United States, many interchurch couples have told us that they are also perceived to be the problem, but

Continued on the next page

Save the Date! Ecumenical Advocacy Days 2015 National Gathering & Lobby Day - April 17-20, 2015, Washington, DC

Save the Date:
The 2015 National Workshop on Christian Unity (NWCU) will be held in Charlotte, North Carolina. April 20-23, 2015 at the Omni Hotel, Charlotte. As usual, registration for the NWCU will be made available online through their website.

LOVE:

“For Small creatures such as we, the vastness is bearable only through love.”
~ Carl Sagan

that the real problem is that our churches are divided. Interchurch couples live a form of Christian Unity in their homes.

Given the reports done by the Pew Research Center and by match.com with Rutgers University, we have learned that interfaith and interchurch marriages are considered to be acceptable by young American adults. However, the greatest increase in membership in recent years has been among the “non-affiliated” in the United States; this study also indicates that the now “non-affiliated” had been raised in some kind of a faith tradition as children. This is a change in the USA.

The Japanese Bishops have pointed out that they have “a small critique of the

questionnaire itself, stating it has "been developed with the mindset of Christian countries in which the entire family is Christian." In Europe some if not many countries have a state religion. Taxes are often used to support the state church. In the United States, we do not have a state religion. The United States isn't and never has been a Christian Nation in the same sense that they are found in Europe either today or historically. In the past, there may have been many Christians living in the United States, but officially the United States has never been a Christian Country or has it had any other official religious identity. Historically, Americans have referred to ourselves as a “melting pot” of cultures and traditions. Being an interchurch couple may bring together in marriage what may appear to

others to be the same religion, but various Christian denominations may emphasize certain aspects of the same faith whereas other Christian denominations may emphasize other aspects of the same faith; herein lies the difficulty for our churches. In our homes, there seems to be a richness of gifts that are shared.

It would seem that many faiths find that of God through their own cultural history and traditions, but that in the end we are all basically discussing the same Divine Creator, and that this is ultimately what unites all of humanity.

The Japanese Bishops say, "In this context, we must ask what a Christian household and family mean," they continue. "The increasing number of people who do not marry, the increase in single parent families, the situation of the elderly and the aging of society, the problems facing the children of the elderly are all problems that face family life today that were unimagined in the past." This statement could be said about our American society as well: marriage is on a decline, single parenthood seems to be increasing, and we have a large number of citizens who are



Continued from the previous page

aging. These are the practical and ordinary tasks and problems that we all must face in the United States too.

McElwee notes "Stressing the traditional role family has played in their society, the Japanese state that "the Church must make use of this." What has been the traditional role of the family in the United States? I wondered. I believe that my grandmothers grew up in a far different society than the one we currently encounter. What do we have as a concept of family upon which we can build up a future that is hopeful and filled with love for the next generations?

The Japanese Bishops say, "The Church often falls short in this, presenting a high threshold for entry and lacking hospitality and practical kindness," they state. "As Hebrews 13:2 teaches us, 'Do not neglect to show hospitality, for by that means some have entertained angels without knowing it.'

The Japanese Bishops note that "we must ask what a Christian household and family mean." In the United States, we may also need to delve deeply into this concept; I would add that in the United States that we may also need to study what makes for a healthy family, and that as a society we should strive to do all that we can to nurture families as they exist so that families will be able to find ways to be healthy. This would then become a form of putting God in charge

LOVE:

John 13:34-35

New International Version (NIV)

34 "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.

35 By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

Kentucky - Japanese Friendship Garden in May



and of allowing ourselves to be lead by that Holy Light.

"The Church must be a refuge for those worn by the journey of life, and ceremonial occasions are places where they can experience that refuge," the Japanese conclude their response.

The concluding paragraphs of the Japanese Bishops could equally describe the needs of our American Church as well. May we all help our fellow travelers on this road toward understanding, hope, love, and unity among all people, a unity designed and formed by God, albeit the God of our own understanding.

In reading the summary of the report of the Japanese Bishops to the Vatican regarding the pastoral care of the family, written by Joshua J. McElwee for the NCR, I felt profoundly connected to the people of Japan, and that was a very comforting feeling. Even though I saw that our cultures share many of the same or similar problems or issues that we will need to explore for ways to find pastoral care solutions. I found a sense of unity that created a sense of feeling profoundly connected, and that felt comforting.

~ M.J. Glauber

We would like to express our gratitude to those people who have made this edition of the ARK possible:

We give thanks for:

The Ecumenical Work of Fathers George Kilcourse and Ernest Falardeau, SSS, Pastor L. Elaine Hall, & Daniel Olsen Ph.D;
The Bible from which we continue to gain insight and to be guided by God's Will for us;
the work of Joshua J. McElwee;
the Japanese Bishops;
the creators and gardeners of the Official Kentucky-Japanese Friendship Garden;
For all the people, those philosophers, and all of those ordinary people who think about God, who have served to inspire us to love one another for the past 2000 years;
the AAIF Volunteer Board Members;
our church communities;
all who serve as ecumenical advocates;
my family and especially my husband, Peter, whose encouragement makes this edition of the ARK possible.

~ M.J. Glauber

The ARK,
a Publication of the
American Association
of Interchurch Families;

Volume 25; Edition 3;

July, August &
September 2014 ©

*AAIF IS A NON-PROFIT
ORGANIZATION,
REGISTERED IN THE
STATE OF NEBRASKA*

International Standard
Serial Number:
ISSN 1943-6467 (print)
ISSN 2160-682X (online)

THE ARK,

The ARK© Copyright 2014 AAIF all rights reserved

A PUBLICATION OF THE AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF INTERCHURCH FAMILIES

MARY JANE GLAUBER, VOLUNTEER & SERVANT ARK EDITOR THEARK.AAIFPUBLICATION@GMAIL.COM



A·A·I·F®

American Association of
Interchurch Families

TO:

The ARK,

a Publication of the American Association of Interchurch Families ©

Volume 25; Edition 3

July, August & September 2014

AAIF IS A NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION,
REGISTERED IN THE STATE OF NEBRASKA

International Standard Serial Number: ISSN 1943-6467 (print)
ISSN 2160-682X (online)

The ARK©
Copyright 2014
AAIF all rights reserved