Receptive Ecumenism and Interchurch Families

Listening with the Ear of Our Hearts:
Continuing the Theme from the last AAIF Conference

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Interchurch Families “Listen with the ear of your heart”
- Carrying Forward the theme from the 2012 AAIF Conference held in Minnesota

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A Bible Verse to Reflect Upon:
Matthew 22:35-40 New International Version (NIV)

35 One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question:
36 Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?”
37 Jesus replied: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.”
38 This is the first and greatest commandment.
39 And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’
40 All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”

Important Dates for USA Ecumenists
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National Workshop on Christian Unity in Louisville, KY, April 18-21, 2016 http://nwcu.org/
Interfaith Curriculum for Peacemaking (Kindle Edition) http://www.amazon.com/Interfaith-Curriculum-for-Peacemaking-ebook/dp/B009OUY9MC
What is your earliest experience of the presence of God in your life?

“Finding That of God in Our Midst”

I was young. I was really little. Moreover, I don’t remember exactly how old I was when I first encountered that of God in my ordinary life. God seemed to exist in all of those places where we connected either with others or with the natural world. I continue to encounter that of God in similar ways even now that I am no longer a young child.

My father liked to go into the forest. Sometimes all 5 of us kids, my siblings and I, would go with him into the forest. Sometimes I would go with him as his sole companion.

My father built a primitive cabin deep in the forest. To get us there, he would drive his car until the pavement ended; then he turned off onto a dirt and rocky road that continued deep into the forest. That road was intersected by the Appalachian Trail, but my father would drive until the dirt and rocky road simply ended. When that dirt and rocky road ended, there was a view of a calm reservoir that was surrounded by a forest. Then we would begin the hike into the cabin he had built. It was just us and the forest that now embraced us. That was such a long time ago now.

My father carried an old style pack basket. When we came to a rocky and fast running creek that we had to cross on our way. My father would cross the creek, stepping on stones to make his way across it; then he would put the pack basket down. I waited on the bank of the creek; my father would always come back for me so that he could pick me up and hold me in his arms as he carried me safely across the creek bed to the other side. I was very tiny then. I felt very safe in my father’s arms as he carried me across that rocky creek bed.

Once across the creek, we would find an old cord road that had once been used by a logging company, but that had been many years before. The old cord road had become a soft path through the forest because the old logs that made the cord road had all already rotted into the earth.

The cabin my father had built would appear in the filtered forest light off to the right soon after that. It was a welcomed sight.

A large fallen log had been made into a sort of step for us to climb into the cabin. Inside my father had placed an old Franklin stove for heating on cold days and also for cooking meals for us. If all of us kids were there with him, we would play in the forest. There were large boulders which we could hide behind; we used them to play made up games of one sort or another. This made the time pass quickly.

continued on the next page
I would always be sure that my father’s cabin was always in my line of sight. Knowing that my father was in there made me feel safe, and, in fact, I was safe in his care and under his watchful eye.

Sometimes after a long rain, the forest floor would stay wet for many days. That didn’t matter to us. It seemed like we always got wet one way or another anyway. Once we had become wet playing out side on the wet ground, we no doubt also began to feel cold.

For moments like this, my father had on hand, in metal storage cans to protect them from the mice, what he called “camp clothes.” “Camp clothes” were what amounted to being the old clothes that my brother’s had already outgrown, and they were dry and clean. We would change out of our wet clothes into some warm ones; I liked wearing “camp clothes” and being warm and dry. My father would get a fire going in the wood stove. Our wet clothes were hung up from nails on the rafters where they began to dry out for our trip home to the city.

My father would cook us a warm meal from on top of the wood stove as our clothes were drying. I think that the food had come out of tin cans that he had brought with him in his pack basket. The food always tasted so good to me. I was hungry and my father fed me.

After the meal, we would most often go back outside. I noticed the leafy duff of the forest floor, the moss on shaded rocks, and the trees. Many different kinds of trees lived side by side and they were all beautiful. I marveled at how the roots of trees would weave around huge boulders just to be able to put down roots in the earth. The twisted roots that found their way under those huge boulders allowed the trees to grow tall. These tree roots served to stabilize the trees as they competed for sunlight with all of the other trees of the forest.

On hot summer days, we placed cans of fruit juice in the fast running creek up the hill in a creek that ran behind the cabin in an effort to chill the juice before we drank it. That creek water was always cold so this was a reliable system. Even though it was summer, the water in the reservoir where we would swim was icy cold. On hot summer days that icy cold water felt really nice on our warm bodies.

It felt so calm and safe there in the forest. I thought that it was perhaps paradise.

In my father’s cabin we had no electricity, but my father did have a kerosene lamp which he would light when it got dark. There was no running water in the cabin. We had to fetch water from the creek and boil it before using it. Frequently we would fish for perch. My father would prepare the perch for our breakfast. He kept the perch in a pail of water over night. He would be up before any of the rest of us getting a warm fire started, and he would already be preparing our breakfast, before any of us got out of our sleeping bags.

Although that cabin that my father built lacked modern conveniences, we did have our father who was clearly watching out for us while also allowing us to explore the forest, which was a place that he clearly preferred to any other place in the world.
What is your earliest experience of the presence of God in your life?

Had I experienced that of God through the nurturing and protective care of my own father, that is the love of my own father for me and how he loved God’s creation that he found in the forest? Had my father discovered that of God in the forest, God’s own garden? I think so. However God exists everywhere, especially where two or more people are gathered.

~ Mary Jane Glauber, 2015 ©

Sharing Our Stories of the first time that we became aware of God’s presence in our lives:

That was my earliest recollection of my first experience of that of God in my own world, in my own life.

What is your story? When did you first become aware of the presence of God? Where were you? Who were you with? How did you first perceive that of God? When did you first perceive that of God in your lived experience?

For those of us who are interchurch spouses or the children of interchurch parents, when did you first become aware of the presence of God in your life as an interchurch family? This is the story others want to hear about how your lived experience of being interchurch has brought you to a deeper understanding of God being in your midst as a Domestic Church.

~ M.J. Glauber

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“Yours is the day, O God, yours also the night; you established the moon and the sun. You fixed all the boundaries of the earth; you made both summer and winter.” ~ Psalm 74:15,16
“Listening With The Ear of Your Heart” ....  InterChurch Families

Some thoughts to reflect upon:

"If I have gained any spiritual maturity in my life, I think it is reflected in some of the ways I try to live my religious life. I am secure enough in my faith to be open minded about the faith of others. I am curious to learn more and never anxious about encountering an idea that seems contrary to what I hold true. I laugh a lot. I still find myself standing under starry skies, wondering what is out there. I believe everything in creation is holy. I respect all living things and am grateful for what they have to teach me. I hope to never stop studying. I am old enough in my faith to be young at heart. I see God in you and pray you see God in me too."

~ The Rt. Rev. Steven Charleston, Choctaw

“The angels of God guard us through the night and quiet the powers of darkness. The Spirit of God be our guide to lead us to peace and to glory.” ~ A New Zealand Prayer Book

“Preach the Gospel at all times and when necessary use words.” ~ quote attributed to St. Francis of Assisi

“I remind myself every morning: Nothing I say this day will teach me anything. So if I'm going to learn, I must do it by listening.” ~ quote attributed to Larry King, American Interviewer/Entertainer

“There is a difference between listening and waiting for your turn to speak.” ~ quote attributed to Simon Sinek, English Author

“One of the most sincere forms of respect is actually listening to what another has to say.” ~ quote attributed to Bryant H. McGill, American Author

“While you are proclaiming peace with your lips, be careful to have it even more fully in your heart.”
Quote attributed to Saint Francis of Assisi

“Listening is a magnetic and strange thing, a creative force. The friends who listen to us are the ones we move toward. When we are listened to, it creates us, makes us unfold and expand.”
Quote attributed to Karl A. Menninger, American Psychologist

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I like to listen. I have learned a great deal from listening carefully. Most people never listen.
Quote attributed to Ernest Hemingway, American Novelist

“Love is our true destiny. We do not find the meaning of life by ourselves alone - we find it with another.”
Quote attributed to Thomas Merton, American Theologian and Philosopher

“Our understanding of the world around us is constantly being redefined and expanded, and so therefore, it is wiser to be passionate about seeking for truth than knowing it.”
Quote attributed to Bryant H. McGill, American Author

“An agreement cannot be the result of an imposition.”
Quote attributed to Nestor Kirchner, Argentine Statesman

“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.”
Quote attributed to Thomas Merton, American Trappist Monk

Implications for Interchurch Families and for those who give us Pastoral Care:
Quotes may only be bits of information that reflect a lifetime of experience or only a single thought based upon a lifetime of many experiences. There are varied life experiences, life stories that accompany the quotes that precede this section.

Our experience as interchurch families may produce varied life stories even among us. We live in different parts of the United States and all over the world.

How has “Listening with the ear of your heart(s)” been beneficial to you as an interchurch family or interchurch couple? What difficulties have you encountered when you have tried to listen with the ear of your heart? Once having encountered some kind of difficulty in being able to listen with the ear of your heart(s), how did you respond? How did you move forward? Are there things that you may have done differently as you look back over the past? Are there things that turned out to be better than expected simply because you had listened with the ear of your heart? ~ M.J. Glauber
Is the concept of “Receptive Ecumenism” a form of “listening with the ear of your heart”? 

What is Receptive Ecumenism?

Churches Together in England observe that “A new concept gaining respect and popularity, Receptive Ecumenism is essentially very simple. Instead of asking what other traditions need to learn from us, we ask what our tradition needs to learn from them.”

Churches Together in England continue explaining that “The assumption is that if all were asking this question seriously and acting upon it, then all would be moving in ways which would both deepen our authentic respective identities and draw us into more intimate relationships.”

This conceptual definition of “Receptive Ecumenism” clarifies the goal that ecumenists should be seeking at this time and place in history, I thought. Further reading can be found at the following link:  

Our lived experience as interchurch families often relies on a form of Receptive Ecumenism, and one that has allowed us to become truly interchurch. This is a link to a discussion of the updated Ecumenical Directory:  
http://www.interchurchfamilies.org/journal/93su10.html

Fr John Coventry, SJ, has shared information regarding the up-dating of the Ecumenical Directory which was originally published a few years after the end of the Second Vatican Council by the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity in two parts in 1967 and 1970. Since 1970, many new documents with a bearing on ecumenism have been published from Rome.

Fr. John Coventry, SJ, sums up his report by stating that “One has to recognise with gratitude very considerable progress, even if there is still some way to go, particularly in consideration of interchurch children. And it is a pity that almost exclusive stress is laid on the wedding as an occasion for eucharistic sharing, even though it is seen that there are other "exceptional cases". As AIF members well know, such sharing is a growing need in a united Christian life and does not exist only for certain highlight occasions near the start of a marriage; the couple and the family need lifelong nourishment if they are to be "builders of unity". However, the Directory banishes for ever the mistaken and oft repeated answer, always in conflict with Vatican II's Decree on Ecumenism, n. 8, that eucharistic sharing can only be a sign of full communion and never an expression of partial...
Receptive Ecumenism

 communion as a means towards full communion.”


At the link above, an interchurch couple exams their lived experience of being an interchurch family as it may relate to Receptive Ecumenism.


Riccardo Larini, in his presentation at the first Conference on Receptive Ecumenism, held in Durham, England, in 2006, said. “Whenever two different Christian communities meet, what actually occurs is the encounter between different cultural-linguistic worlds.”

Interchurch Families can wholeheartedly agree with that statement. Actually, single church married couples most likely also experience some form of an encounter between two different cultural-linguistic worlds when they marry too, but the circumstances related to being and to becoming truly an interchurch marriage adds an exciting dimension for Ecumenical discussions that single church couples may never get to explore nor to consider simply due to their own circumstances.


Rebecca and Anthony Spellacy wrote about Receptive Ecumenism in their report entitled: Divided We Stand: How "Mixed Marriages" Can Teach Ecumenism


Rebecca and Anthony Spellacy begin by saying that “Receptive ecumenism in a nutshell, according to David Carter (in a paper from 2007 titled Receptive Ecumenism- An Overview), calls us to “accept one another as Christ accepted us", not at the minimal level of simple tolerance, but at the level of true reception in love, preferring one another in honor". That is a very tall order. It is also a very practical order.”

We need to find ways forward with each other at this time and place in history.
Receptive Ecumenism

Fr. Gerard Kelly states that Receptive Ecumenism calls on the churches to make a ‘programmatic shift’. He indicates that we must move, “From asking what do our dialogue partners need to learn from us to asking what can we learn / do we need to learn from our dialogue partners.” This is a significant change in perspective.

Receptive Ecumenism takes “A step beyond theological dialogue” through “Openness to practical conversion, growth & development” and provided that there is a “Given” that ‘the consensus reached in dialogue,” that allows us to ask "what can my church learn from the other?‘ “ Kelly indicates that “Receptive ecumenism offers a way to learn from others in facing these challenges – hopefully breaking through impasse.” Kelly observes that ‘Reception begins with various acts of recognition.”

First, there is ‘A spiritual process leading to renewal & reform” during which “The achievement of unity will involve nothing more than a death and re-birth of many forms of church life as we have known them. We believe that nothing less costly can finally suffice’ (WCC Assembly, New Delhi 1961)” We recognize this as a very Christian concept that allows us to grow in our understanding of God. Kelly observes that “Churches need to be self-critical and open to conversion and renewal” This is based on the “principle of semper reformanda or semper purificanda.”

Kelly discusses, “Reception and ecclesial learning” He cautions us to, ‘Be aware of theological and non-theological factors that prevent ecclesial learning.” Kelly highlights, “Ladislas Orsy’s (three) criteria for authentic reception:

- Identity and its preservation
- Truth and falsity
- Prudent judgement

Kelly observes the need to, “Become a creative agent” and that this can be accomplished if, “a church develops the inspiration it received all over again, out of its own resources.” His complete presentation can be found in its original format at http://www.catholic.org.au/commission-documents/bishops-commission-for-ecumenism-inter-religious-1/celebrations-and-events-1/1225-receptive-ecumenism-by-g-kelly-1/file

At the link above, Peter J. Leithart discusses “Receptive Ecumenism”. He states that, “If the Church is going to face the challenges of this new century, she will have to face them as a united Church. Nothing has so weakened our witness as our tragic divisions. Nothing has made the Gospel so implausible, if not preposterous. Division has deprived us of the weapons we need for the spiritual battles that are on the horizon.” continued on the next page
Then he adds, “We don’t pursue unity for pragmatic reasons, so we can win the culture wars. The Gospel demands that we live at peace with our brothers. John Williamson Nevin, the German Reformed theologian for whom this lecture series is named, said that the “unity of the church . . . is a cardinal truth in the Christian system,” involved in the very “conception of Christian salvation itself.” When we lose sight of the unity of the Church, we “make shipwreck of the gospel.” We share Nevin’s vision. We are passionate for the truth of the Gospel, and for that reason passionate also for the unity of the Church.”

Leithart cautions us, “Receptive ecumenism is an ecumenism of hospitality, welcome, and listening, an ecumenism of gift exchange. It is rooted in our acknowledgement that we do not know or possess everything we need in our own branch of the Church. Every Christian church is tempted to think it possesses all the resources to be healthy and faithful. Catholics, Orthodox, Anglicans, Presbyterians, Lutherans, Baptists” “we all think that the Church will be perfected when everyone else is enlightened enough to become like us.”

Leithart explains, “We are deluded. We are all Laodiceans, boasting of our health and wealth when we are poor, blind, wounded, and naked. No tradition has been spared the desolation of division. Every Christian tradition is distorted insofar as it lacks, or refuses, the gifts that other traditions have. Every Christian tradition must be as ready to receive as to give.”

Leithart indicates that, “Receptivity does not involve diluting or abandoning our identity. In receiving from others, we are enriched as the particular kinds of Christians we are. Murray suggests that Catholics become more fully Catholic as they become appropriately Anglican, Lutheran, Methodist, Orthodox. We listen to each other to answer the question, “What can we learn, or receive, with integrity from our various others in order to facilitate our own growth together into deepened communion in Christ and the Spirit?” Pursuing receptive ecumenism, Christians fall in love with the presence of God in the people, practices, and structures of other Christian traditions.”

Further implications regarding the role and potential that Receptive Ecumenism holds can be found at: http://www.paulist.org/ecumenism/third-international-receptive-ecumenism-conference-report

Implications for interchurch families
Leithart has summed up the essential experience of what it means to be interchurch as we have discovered it in our homes as interchurch families. With two Christian traditions in our interchurch family homes, we experience first hand that our sharing of the faith is a form of “Receptivity” that “does not involve diluting or abandoning our identity. In receiving from others, we are enriched as the particular kinds of Christians we are.” This is what it is to be truly interchurch families for us.

Leithart observes that “Receptive ecumenism pursues truth, recognizing that the truth of the Gospel may be distorted by hardened confessional formulas. We must be prepared to remove our tribal badges when they inhibit our life together, which is life in the Gospel.” These are the kind of dialogues we have in our own homes as interchurch families.
Receptive Ecumenism

Receptive Ecumenism is a form of conversion back into our own understanding of the faith. Leithart explains that “More than enrichment, more than clarification or mutual understanding, receptivity aims at transformation, at conversion.” Conversion is not necessarily to another Christian denomination in this context, but toward a deeper understanding of the faith we already have as Christians.

Interchurch families ask their churches of origin to pursue “Receptive Ecumenism” so that our churches may “pursue receptive ecumenism in the hope that we will all find ourselves in a place where “apparently irreconcilable differences” . . . “become genuinely navigable,” and “where impasses of long standing can be overcome.”

This is the journey that truly interchurch families have pursued and we are asking our churches to follow this path with us. ~M. J. Glauber

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Stay Curious, Learn New concepts, We are Made in God’s Image

"I think one of the most important spiritual gifts we have is curiosity. I know there are some people who believe that faith is rock solid belief, the notion that we have all the information and ideas we will ever need. There are religious traditions that press the point and discourage questions from the floor. But faith without questions is just memorization. I feel that a curious mind is one of the greatest blessings we have as humans. I find myself in that wow-isn't-that-interesting moment on

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Lamar Burton 2006

“Thank you, Lamar, for your dedication to Ecumenism and to Interchurch Families.”

MJG ©
Implications for Ecumenists and Interchurch Families: The Rt. Rev. Steven Charleston observes that one of the most important spiritual gifts that we have is curiosity. This allows us to put God in charge and for us to keep an open mind that God will and does intervene to show us the way forward. God sheds that Holy Light on things or events that bring us those “Ah-ha” or “Eureka” moments. We can change and grow into the image that God, Our Creator, has in mind for us. God speaks to us through those ordinary moments in our daily lived experiences. There is so much hope that accompanies this image of our God. May we all be inspired by what God has to show us every day! ~ M.J. Glauber

God’s Creation:
“To Love the Earth is to Love the one who made it”

“No hymn is more inspiring than the wind rustling the leaves of the deep forest, no sanctuary more hallowed than the snow touched mountains, no prayer of praise more glorious than the sweep of birds before the morning sun. The holy lives all around us, the sacred grows beneath our feet. To love the Earth is to love the One who made it. Creation writes its own testimony of faith, presenting us each day with a reason to believe and a mission to fulfill. Here, on this brilliant blue planet, on this emerald ball dancing before the stars, is our temple, our place of worship, our spiritual home and our once and future heaven.”

Implications for Interchurch Families, Those who Give Pastoral Care to Interchurch Families, Ecumenists and Those Who are seeking Christian Unity: Loving God’s creation is to love God. Protecting God’s Creation is to protect the natural resources in a way that all of humanity may enjoy God’s Creation and God’s Love. All that we do must be done with love, inspired by God’s love for us and our love for God. ~M.J. Glauber
At the following link, you will find a discussion of one person’s opinion in response to efforts she has seen to attract young millennials back to church. Rachel Held Evans observes that “In response to the decline in church attendance and affiliation as highlighted in a recent Pew Study, many churches have sought to lure millennials back by focusing on style points: cooler bands, hipper worship, edgier programming, impressive technology.” Evans points out that “Recent research from Barna Group and the Cornerstone Knowledge Network found that 67 percent of millennials prefer a “classic” church over a “trendy” one, and 77 percent would choose a “sanctuary” over an “auditorium.” Because church attendance and affiliation has changed significantly since 1950, I believe that many will find Evans’ opinion and insight to be of interest. ~ M.J. Glauber

http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/jesus-doesnt-tweet/2015/04/30/fb07ef1a-ed01-11e4-8666-a1d756d0218e_story.html?postshare=571430425649860

Also, of interest on this same topic or a very similar one:

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Sharing the Eucharist with Other Baptized Christians

Many interchurch families and those who are actively seeking Christian Unity have asked repeatedly for permission to share in the Eucharist with their spouses or close friends and family members at Mass. Although Vatican II provided guidelines for exceptionality, how those guidelines are interpreted at a local level varies from place to place. Being rejected by the church that otherwise sustains their spouse is a problem, a problem that could be completely avoided if the ramifications of rejecting some was considered from the perspective of Christian Hospitality and other theological reasons. The following quote is from the website: www.interchurchfamilies.org and specifically at http://interchurchfamilies.org/journal/pdf/1997V05N02Summer.pdf.

Many thanks to Ray Temmerman for sharing this quote with us: ‘It is a sacrament which binds us in our marriage, and we continually need the sacrament of the eucharist to sustain, build up and deepen the unity of our marriage and family life. That is why we too have to go on insisting and insisting and insisting.’ From a report of a meeting of interchurch families addressed by Cardinal Basil Hume’ Also many thanks go to Cardinal Hume for his insight and wisdom. ~ M.J. Glauber
“Our goal is not to create new ecumenical structures, but to make more ecumenical the structures that already exist through the church’s various ministries.”


**Diversity in Unity**

“Diversity in Unity” is a concept worth exploring at this time and place in American and Global history. We live in a society that seems to be so polarized that no real issues can be discussed nor explored any further between us so that we can examine more fully any concept that differs from an understanding that we may already hold.

All of us have our own unique set of life experiences that serve to form us and our opinions and world views. This is why it is imperative that we learn to live with and to embrace diversity while finding ways to create acceptable unity within our diversity.

Ideally our churches would model how to do this. At a time when church memberships have declined, finding ways to be relevant to our society based on how we live and in the ways we must seek that of God in our cultural context may become the new way or manner in which our churches reach out to us.

Bible stories show that Biblical people like Abraham had a personal relationship with God. We all want that kind of a God walking with us and nudging us in the right direction as God did for Abraham.

Interchurch Families find great hope in articles like “A Transforming Ecumenical Initiative: Ministry to Interchurch Engaged Couples” by Fr. George A Kilcourse, Jr., 2004. May we always be so blessed as to have this kind of encouragement to pursue our faith lives more fully while nurturing that of others who may come from a different denomination. ~ M.J. Glauber
The Pastoral Care of Interchurch Families

Interchurch Families wish to nurture and to enrich existing church structures that would in turn nurture Interchurch Marriages and Families. We like much of what has been handed to us by our respective church traditions.

Interchurch family ministry involves sometimes complex pastoral questions and issues; many ecumenical officers frequently refer these wives and husbands to the parish priest. In an ideal world, this could be appropriate and effective. Engaged couples who have the potential to become truly interchurch couples would benefit greatly if they are able to find someone to give them pastoral care who enjoys a degree of ecumenical literacy and is knowledgeable about the applicable principles, norms, and criteria for making pastoral decisions about the care of children and spouses in interchurch families. The need for proper training of all clergy who may be brought in to give pastoral care to interchurch families should be a priority for all of our churches. The pastoral care of interchurch families cannot be done by anyone who favors canon law over other Vatican Documents that are more pastoral.

It is our understanding that seminaries from both sides of this great historical Christian divide use the same materials or very similar materials to instruct clergy on how to give pastoral care to engaged interchurch couples. Suggesting that the couple decide which of the two spouses is the more religious and raising the children in the faith tradition of that one parent serves to demote one of the child’s parents to the rank of being a second class citizen. Couples should feel as if they are being equally yoked. If one spouse dominates the marriage or the other spouse in that marriage, this is establishing an unhealthy psychological dynamic for the newly forming family.

Some couples wish that the churches would not interfere. Some churches do not have available readily visible guidelines for what an engaged interchurch couple should do to be able to survive while others have what appear to be rather rigidly enforced rules that govern all aspects of their members’ lives. One historic path has been to urge couples to explore their faith and to find solutions; while another historic path has been to present engaged couples with what appears to be a long list of rules.

We would urge engaged interchurch couples to read Vatican Documents directly rather than have them be interpreted through the filter system of another person who may present various aspects of any given rule while omitting any exceptions and failing to observe that these rules can and should be applied or not under varying circumstances. All people have a filter system created by their own life

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experiences; it becomes that person’s bias and we all have biases even if we are not actually aware of our own biases.

Our God is a loving God who urges us to find solutions, to make necessary changes in our understanding, and to love one another. We have been given example after example of people in the Bible who were faithful, and who carried out God’s will. Discerning God’s will comes best through our own personal relationship with all that we encounter that is of the Divine in our daily lives.

Examining what exists, exploring our understanding of what already exists so that we can find all of its potential is not the same as changing what exists. We simply are asking that we all look with renewed awe and enthusiasm for what already exists so that we can nurture all that is good in our churches ecumenical structures and move forward to serve our faith communities by allowing them to grow in their own understanding of all of God’s potential in our lives.

We are guided and inspired by John 17:21-22 New International Version (NIV)
“21 that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. 22 I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one—”

Pope John Paul II identified the lived experience of interchurch couples and their families in these pastoral and ecumenical terms when he described them during his May 1982 visit to York, England: “You live in your marriage the hopes and difficulties of the path to Christian Unity.”

continued on the next page
Some Humor with some Genuine Truth within that Humor...

Theology students in Rome were asked to share a theology joke. Here is one of them, in part, that is: “The Dominican, Jesuit, and Franciscan superiors general decide that it is time once and for all to put aside their differences and squabbling, and just ask God who His favorite Order is. So they dedicate an octave of prayer and fasting in silent retreat together, at the end of which spend a night in vigil at the altar in the chapel, beseeching God for an answer.

At the end of the vigil, in the still quiet hours of the morning, a sudden clap of thunder and a blinding light fill the chapel. When they can see again, the three notice a beautiful golden scroll atop the altar.

“My dear little Children, I love each of you equally and have endowed you each with different charisms for a reason. There are many gifts but only one Spirit – to be united in me does not require uniformity....” It goes on for some time extolling the virtues of each, and their particular place in the infinite design of God.

After moving each to tears, the scroll concludes, “Remember, my children, I have no favorites among you. Please put aside these questions, and go forth in love and service to each other. Your Loving Father, God, (omitted twist at the end)”

At that point, a very short twist was added to the original that would have make it into a funny joke, but I have omitted that part here. Why? Jokes can make a point that other formats may seek and fail at making; that is the part I like about jokes. Jokes can pare down the truth and reformat that truth so as to grab our attention like nothing else can; I like that part. On the other hand, when telling a joke to any group, half of the group may laugh while the other half may feel offended. For this reason, I left off the short twist that makes all that is said before that into a joke. This joke elicited one written response indicating that one person had not perceived it to be a funny joke at all.

I found there to be so much truth in what was written that to include the short twist at the end of it would have distracted from an important message, I thought.

Many thanks to A. J. for sharing this humor with us and for those students of theology who first shared their theology jokes with A.J. Although it was intended to be a joke, and like many jokes there is also an underlying truth to be found within the humor.

It is the underlying truth that I want to focus on rather than the added ending which for some may make what was said into a joke and help to drive home a point.

What I want to highlight is the truth for interchurch families, for those who give us pastoral care and for all ecumenists who are seeking Christian Unity, that can be found in this bit of humor in this joke rings especially true for us who live a life time vocation of seeking Christian Unity.

We, as interchurch families already live this truth: ‘My dear little Children, I love each of you equally and have endowed you each with different charisms for a reason. There are many gifts but only one Spirit – to be united in me does not require uniformity....” It goes on for
For me, as a spouse in an interchurch marriage, and perhaps for many other Christians, those sentences sum up why we must seek Christian Unity. It isn’t funny; it is our life. This is our vocation as Christians, and our lived experience as interchurch families.

Everyone has been given a special and unique gift by God. May we be able to recognize all that is good and all that brings us together to do the real work of God. This concept has already been shared in a straight forward message many times times before. If humor helps to convey the message better than other means, then that is the work of God in our midst. ~ M.J. Glauber

INSTRUMENTUM LABORIS
The following link will take you to the full text of XIV ORDINARY GENERAL ASSEMBLY THE VOCATION AND MISSION OF THE FAMILY IN THE CHURCH AND THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD; known as INSTRUMENTUM LABORIS from VATICAN CITY 2015:
Please read the document found at the link above in full for yourself.
This Instrumentum Laboris was created between two synodal assemblies inspired by the pastoral creativity of Pope Francis. The III Extraordinary General Assembly, last Fall, in 2014 helped the entire Church focus on The Pastoral Challenges of the Family in the Context of Evangelization, while the XIV Ordinary General Assembly, scheduled for October 2015, will be called upon to reflect on The Vocation and Mission of the Family in the Church and the Contemporary World.

In the USA, it appears that 60% of all wedding masses each year are between a Roman Catholic and a Christian who was baptized in another denomination. That should be a significant number of marriages in the USA that have the potential to become fully interchurch if they are properly nurtured. It would be in the best interest of all of our churches to recognize the gift that being an interchurch marriage can bring to our communities.

Please see items #126. #127. & #128 which pertain to “Mixed Marriages and Marriages of Disparity of Cult.” Have these passages addressed all of the concerns, that you have about being in an Interchurch Marriage and Family, that you have experienced personally? Are your pastoral concerns been addressed in enough detail? What concerns or gifts would you as a member of an interchurch marriage wish to see be considered further?

~ M.J. Glauber
THE PEACE OF WILD THINGS

When despair for the world grows in me
and I wake in the night at the least sound
in fear of what my life and my children's lives may be,
I go and lie down where the wood drake
rests in his beauty on the water, and the great heron feeds.
I come into the peace of wild things
who do not tax their lives with forethought
of grief. I come into the presence of still water.
And I feel above me the day-blind stars
waiting with their light. For a time
I rest in the grace of the world, and am free.
— Wendell Berry

What We Need Is Here

Geese appear high over us,
pass, and the sky closes. Abandon,
as in love or sleep, holds
them to their way, clear
in the ancient faith: what we need
is here. And we pray, not
for new earth or heaven, but to be
quiet in heart, and in eye,
clear. What we need is here.
— Wendell Berry

A Timbered Choir

Even while I dreamed I prayed that what I saw was only fear and no foretelling,
for I saw the last known landscape destroyed for the sake
of the objective, the soil bludgeoned, the rock blasted.
Those who had wanted to go home would never get there now.

I visited the offices where for the sake of the objective the planners planned
at blank desks set in rows. I visited the loud factories
where the machines were made that would drive ever forward
toward the objective. I saw the forest reduced to stumps and gullies; I saw
the poisoned river, the mountain cast into the valley;
I came to the city that nobody recognized because it looked like every other city.
I saw the passages worn by the unnumbered
footfalls of those whose eyes were fixed upon the objective.

Their passing had obliterated the graves and the monuments
of those who had died in pursuit of the objective and who had long ago forever been forgotten, according to the inevitable rule that those who have forgotten forget that they have forgotten. Men, women, and children now pursued the objective as if nobody ever had pursued it before.

The races and the sexes now intermingled perfectly in pursuit of the objective. the once-enslaved, the once-oppressed were now free to sell themselves to the highest bidder and to enter the best paying prisons in pursuit of the objective, which was the destruction of all enemies, which was the destruction of all obstacles, which was the destruction of all objects, which was to clear the way to victory, which was to clear the way to promotion, to salvation, to progress, to the completed sale, to the signature on the contract, which was to clear the way to self-realization, to self-creation, from which nobody who ever wanted to go home would ever get there now, for every remembered place had been displaced; the signposts had been bent to the ground and covered over.

Every place had been displaced, every love unloved, every vow unsworn, every word unmeant to make way for the passage of the crowd of the individuated, the autonomous, the self-actuated, the homeless with their many eyes opened toward the objective which they did not yet perceive in the far distance, having never known where they were going, having never known where they came from.

— Wendell Berry

Deuteronomy 10:14 (NIV)
14 To the Lord your God belong the heavens, even the highest heavens, the earth and everything in it.

1 The earth is the Lord’s, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it; 2 for he founded it on the seas and established it on the waters.

Revelation 4:11 (NIV)
11 “You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being.”

1 Corinthians 8:6 (NIV)
6 yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live.

All of Creation was made by God. Everything and everyone was created by God. How we interact with all that God created, and everyone that God created is important. It is significant. It could also be an ecumenical or an interfaith accomplishment that unites us with one another and our God.

~ M.J. Glauber
The Family, American Families Today; Where to from here?

E.J. Dionne, Jr., who writes for the Washington Post on June 14, 2015 wrote an opinion article in which he discusses the common family values that we all share. Here is a link to his article: http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/our-common-family-values/2015/06/10/c93669c6-0fac-11e5-a0dc-2b6f404ff5cf_story.html

E. J. Dionne, Jr. met Beau Biden in 2007. Beau Biden died recently at the age of 46 after a battle with Cancer. In 2007, Dionne indicates that he was most impressed by how "Beau Biden was most animated (and spoke at much greater length) when he turned to describing what an extraordinary father Joe Biden had been." Dionne observes that it is highly probable that the 2016 election campaign in the U.S.A. will focus on some form of a debate over family values. He wishes that whatever debate happens that it will be about genuine family values and not on "family values" set apart in quotation marks that are "narrowly defined in a partisan way, aimed at claiming that some large number of Americans don't believe in family responsibility or love."

E.J. Dionne, Jr. pointed out that "Beau Biden's sister, Ashley, and his brother, Hunter, spoke with a power and an authenticity about love, devotion and connection that said more about how irreplaceable family solidarity is than a thousand speeches or sermons." Dionne explains that "What the Biden funeral brought home is that the feelings and convictions that very nearly all of us — left, right, center and apolitical — have about the bonds between parents and children and brothers and sisters, truly transcend our day-to-day arguments. We so often wage political war around the family that we forget how broadly shared our reverence for it is."

Dionne requests that the 2016 political election in the U.S.A. focus on “Discussions of how policies on taxes, child care, family leave, wages and criminal justice affect the family’s well-being (and specific proposals in each area)” because he believes these topics “would be so much more constructive than polemics that cast one part of our population as immoral enemies of family life and the other as narrow-minded bigots. A politics of recrimination does a profound disservice to how much all of us care about family."

E.J. Dionne observes that “our discussions of family life need to recognize that love and commitment go beyond politics. Family is too precious to let it divide us.”

Implications for Interchurch Families, Ecumenists and those who give us pastoral care:

In recent years, we have observed that Americans have become polarized; this appears to have happened due to media broadcasts with little bytes of news as opposed to any kind of an in depth analysis of facts or events. These little bytes of news are designed to inflame listeners or viewers. Getting, keeping and increasing a listening or viewing audience is related to how broadcasters make money. We are not being encouraged to look closely for that of God in the world around us. Our thoughts are basically being manipulated by the media when those news bytes are used. Our lives are far more complex than what we can hear in a simple news byte.

Compassion for others and the daily battles others may have to face simply to be able to survive seem to have been omitted and overlooked. These news bytes seem to be distracting us, all of us, from being able to define the real issues that affect all of us so that we can make progress toward a shared goal.

These created, polarizing issues also tend to distract everyone from the positive role that interchurch families can and do play in our society. By the very nature of what makes interchurch families interchurch, we are united, as Christians, by all that is positive and good within our shared
American Families continued

historic traditions. We share the Bible as well as other Christian or Judeo-Christian traditions that should help us to find common ground and to reverse the polarizing trends or influences present in our society at this time.

Here is a Bible verse from:

**Philippians 4:8 New Living Translation (NLT)**
8 And now, dear brothers and sisters, one final thing. Fix your thoughts on what is true, and honorable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise.

This message is one worth considering for all the potential that it brings to help us to move our society forward toward all that is good.

Interchurch Families have been actively seeking Christian Unity for years for the communities we live in. Within our homes we already live a Christian Unity.

The following Bible verses have inspired and guided us:

**John 17:20-22 New International Version (NIV)**

Jesus Prays for All Believers
20 "My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, 21 that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. 22 I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one—

That we may be one as Christ and God are one is an excellent guideline for Interchurch Families. It would be an excellent guideline for all of us, especially at this time in our society when we seem to have been polarized by how information is shared with us by mass media and our broadcasting system’s economic needs rather than humanitarian or Christian principles.

In the Bible verse found in: **Matthew 7:12 English Standard Version (ESV)** is

The Golden Rule which states:
12 “So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.

The Golden Rule appears prominently in all of the World Religions. It is a concept that describes a "reciprocal", or "two-way", relationship between one’s self and others that involves both sides equally, and in a mutual fashion. In a marriage, each spouse should feel equal to the other in that delicate relationship. This is our domestic church; the “Golden Rule” is a concept learned in the home that all of us should be carrying out into the world with us. Ideally, we would like to see more of a focus on applying the “Golden Rule” in our society.

We may need to become more aware of how we are being distracted from doing God’s will. Being alert and attentive to that of God while seeking to become more aware of “what is true, and honorable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable.” From there, we should also, “Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise.” This is seeking the Light of God while turning away from all that is not of God. Discerning God’s will from our own fears may also be part of finding the way forward; we must find God’s way forward for us. Perhaps letting God be the judge while we simply explore love and how to love others. Sometimes “Others” can seem to be so different from us that we may have to work extra hard to find that of God within what they say or think or seem to believe. That effort may be what makes us more fully whole so that the effort would not be wasted, but so enlightening that we can find that of God in the world around us.

~ M.J. Glauber
NEW YORK – The Episcopal Church-United Methodist Church Dialogue Committee on Full Communion met at the United Methodist Building in Washington, DC from May 26-28, 2015. The United Methodist Church’s Office of Christian Unity and Interreligious Relationships hosted this conversation with support from the Episcopal Church’s Office of Ecumenical and Interreligious Relations. Bishop Gregory Palmer and the Right Reverend C. Franklin Brookhart co-chaired the Dialogue Committee meeting.

Following a welcome by the Rev. Dr. Susan Henry-Crowe, General Secretary of the United Methodist General Board of Church and Society (headquartered at the United Methodist Building), the Committee reviewed the work of previous dialogue conversations, which began in 2002 and resulted in an Interim Eucharistic Sharing Agreement in 2006. Over the course of three days of prayer, conversation, deliberation, fellowship, and long-term planning, the Committee adopted a Memorandum of Understanding to guide its work through December 2017. Conversations took place amidst a spirit of mutual respect, good humor, authenticity to our shared and different traditions, openness to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and deepening Christian friendship.

Building on an earlier committee’s affirmation that there are no church-dividing obstacles to the ratification of a full communion relationship, the Dialogue Committee received an internal document entitled Assist Us to Proclaim the Gospel: A Proposal for Full Communion.

The Dialogue Committee committed itself to study of the existing full communion relationships enriching the life of each church, and looked in particular at a 2014 document proposing the recognition of a full communion relationship between United Methodists and the Northern and Southern provinces of the Moravian Church.

In its next meetings, the Dialogue Committee will agree to the content of resolutions to be submitted to the General Convention of the Episcopal Church and the General Conference of The United Methodist Church. The Committee will also seek to identify and encourage local expressions of existing unity in mission between Episcopalians and United Methodists—in congregations, theological education, advocacy, worship, and service. To these ends, the Committee agreed to a practice of coordinated and regular communication about its work through appropriate channels in each church, including a common social media strategy and the release of communiqués.

Respectfully submitted,

Richard J. Mammana, Jr.  Glen Alton Messer, II
Ecumenical and Interreligious Associate  Associate Ecumenical Staff Officer
The Episcopal Church  The United Methodist Church
Psalm 24:1 Of David. A psalm. The earth is the LORD's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it;

John 1:1-5 (NIV)
The Word Became Flesh
1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was with God in the beginning. 3 Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. 4 In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. 5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

Acts 17:24 "The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by human hands.

Genesis 1:1 In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.

Deuteronomy 10:14 Heaven and the heaven of heavens belong to the LORD your God, the earth with all that is in it.

Hosea 4:3 Therefore the land mourns, and all who live in it languish; together with the wild animals and the birds of the air, even the fish of the sea are perishing.

United By the Same Concern

http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html
Please read the Pope’s Encyclical in its entirety at the link above:

Continued on the next page
“Unity is greater than conflict.”

ENCYCLICAL LETTER; LAUDATO SI’ OF THE HOLY FATHER FRANCIS ON CARE FOR OUR COMMON HOME

Implications for Interchurch Families, Ecumenists and for those who give us pastoral care:

“Unity is greater than conflict” seems to be a most powerful statement for Interchurch Families. We are all well aware of the importance of “Diversity in Unity” because we live this kind of unity as interchurch families. This encyclical seems to build upon what we may already live and believe.

All of humanity is being asked to turn away from consumerism and toward that of God in the world that surrounds us. This is a conversion for all of us which may also serve us as a unifying force that is for the good. Protecting creation is being attentive to that of God in our midst. The communal action of protecting the environment can be nurtured as a unifying act and goal; this is important.

Although we may have spent most of our lives being distracted from that of God while being attracted toward consumerism and buying mindlessly, there is hope through our own increased awareness. We are being asked to come together in unity to do God’s will although we may be from varied backgrounds, this united effort can do so much good for the world and all of creation.

Of note is that God exists within every aspect of creation so that we can learn from some very ordinary encounters and from restful periods of time with God in the natural world. I find this concept to be very comforting.

The Eucharist seems to be central to uniting us with that Holy Light and with each other. Of significance, we are called upon to work with others in a united effort to protect all of God’s creation; this is our communion.

The message calls us to be united by our conversion toward protecting that of God in the world about us. Rather than being isolated, we will be united with each other and all of creation. This is a hopeful message.

May we feel inspired by this encyclical as we continue to work for Christian Unity as well as a unity with all that is, all that God created in the world.

We would enjoy hearing how this papal encyclical has inspired you. It seems to be quite thorough and well focused; you may have seen other aspects that need to be highlighted from it. Clearly it calls not only for a greater awareness, a conversion, but also a sustained effort based on our own attentiveness which will be beneficial to all of us.

~ M.J. Glauber

One discussion of the Papal encyclical can be found at the link above.
The National Workshop on Christian Unity
~ Equipping Church Leaders in the Quest for Christian Unity

http://nwcu.org/

The next National Workshop on Christian Unity will be held in Louisville, KY, April 18-21, 2016.
Please check back at this link http://nwcu.org/ for updates and further details.

“We have to work together”
~ Bill Nye
Many Thanks  We would like to thank the following people for helping to make this edition of the ARK possible: Our thanks go out to the volunteer AAIF Board Members. Many thanks to everyone who has been pursuing all of the implications to be found with in the concept of Receptive Ecumenism. We feel so much gratitude for the Bible. We would like to express our gratitude to The Rt. Rev. Steven Charleston, Choctaw, Larry King, American Interviewer/Entertainer, Saint Francis of Assisi, the work of Ladislas Orsy, Simon Sinek, English Author, the insight of Gerard Kelly, the work of Karl A. Menninger, American Psychologist, Bryant H. McGill, American Author, Ernest Hemingway, American Novelist, Thomas Merton, American Theologian and Philosopher, & Nestor Kirchner, Argentine Statesman. Many thanks go to Ray Temmerman for his work to help interchurch families internationally. Many thanks go to Cardinal Basil Hume and his ecumenical work. Many thanks go to Fr. George A. Kilcourse, Jr. who wrote; “A Transforming Ecumenical Initiative: Ministry to Interchurch Engaged Couples”. Many thanks go to A.J. Boyd for his ecumenical work and his understanding of humanity.” Many thanks go to Wendell Berry for his connection to creation and his Christian viewpoints along with his excellent ability to articulate his love of creation.

Many thanks go to E.J. Dionne, Jr. for his insight into the importance of family in this time and place in history. Many thanks go to Pope Francis and his insight on the environment and creation which he shared in an encyclical this year. Many thanks go to those who plan all of the national ecumenical meetings throughout the year so that ideas can be readily exchanged. Many thanks go to Bill Nye who speaks out in favor of protecting the environment.

Many thanks go to interchurch families everywhere who are sharing this journey with us.. A special thanks goes to my husband, Peter, whose support and encouragement make the ARK possible.

~ M.J. Glauber