

THE ARK

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A Publication of
the American
Association of
Interchurch
Families



God of All Creation, Teach Us to Tend to All of Life With Your Love: “We are all on this journey together”

Please, pause for a moment.

Ask yourself, “and how might I tend to all of life with love?”

Ask yourself, “How might the God of All Creation go about teaching me, each of us together because we are a community?”

“What would tending to all of life with our Creator’s love entail? What would be asked of us?”

“Would tending to all of life with our God, the God of All Creation be a natural action or reaction? What would be required of us? Our lives are so ordinary, so profoundly

human, what would we be able to do that may make a significant difference? Does how we think affect what we choose to do? How do we spend most of our waking hours of the day? Does how we spend our time correlate with what we believe and what we envision as being receptive to learning from our God of All Creation about how to tend to all of life with God’s love? Are we being attentive to what God is asking of us?”

Let us pause for a moment to discern how to find that of God in our ordinary lives. ~ M.J. Glauber



American Association of
Interchurch Families

Interchurch Families: Christian Unity Made Visible in our Homes

Contents

Page 1	Theme: God of All Creation, Teach Us to Tend to All of Life With Your Love: "We are all on this journey together"
Page 2	Contents; How to find earlier editions of the ARK on line
Page 3	AAIF Contacts: AAIF 2014 OFFICERS; Quote by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.
Pages 4 & 5	Finding that of God in That Very Ordinairiness of Our Daily Lives
Pages 5 - 11	We Are All On This Journey Together
Pages 12 - 13	From Genesis To Today: The Importance of "Now"
Page 14	God, the nature of God, Allows and Encourages Us to Laugh; quote by THICH NHAT HANH
Page 15	Life in the Spirit; "...The Spirit of God Dwells in You.."
Page 16	Receptive Ecumenism 2014
Pages 17 - 20	"The Pastoral Challenges of the Family in the Context of Evangelization- Instrumentum Laboris" with implications for Interchurch Families and those who give us pastoral care
Pages 21-22	Ideas for Interchurch Families from the work of Brene Brown
Page 24	Many Thanks !!!!



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

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Flowers in bloom at the
Pittsburgh Botanical Garden
-2014

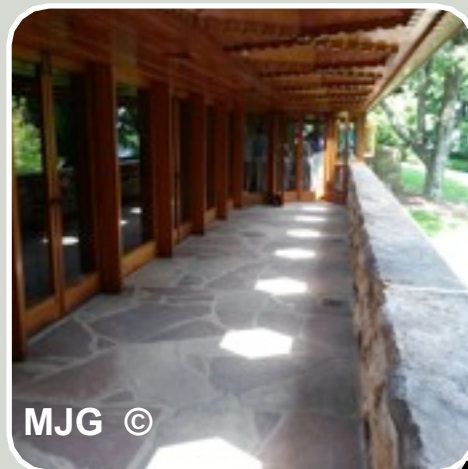
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A WALK IN THE FOREST

"Finding that of God" in the forest
near Ken Tuck Knob in Pennsylvania
~ Hiking in the Forest with Friends

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"Ken Tuck Knob": a house designed by Frank Lloyd Wright
Creativity? Genius? Or God working through a human being, even an
imperfect human being?

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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*"I refuse to accept the idea that man is mere flotsam and jetsam in the river of life,
unable to influence the unfolding events which surround him. I refuse to accept the
view that mankind is so tragically bound to the starless midnight of racism and war
that the bright daybreak of peace and brotherhood can never become a reality."*

quote by Martin Luther King, Jr.

Finding that of God in That Very Ordinairiness of Our Daily Lives

I entered one of those plain ordinary governmental offices. It is distinguished by its lack of ornamentation, save for the required photos of the currently elected government officials, and rows and rows of neutral colored file cabinets. On top of one of those file cabinets, a single small sign had been placed. It said:

“What if the Hokey Pokey is what it is all about?” I read what the sign said out loud as I first noticed it. The office clerk and I laughed about the sign, then we took care of the business that had brought me into that office in the first place, and I left.

“What if the Hokey Pokey is what it is all about?” I thought to myself.

That question would sit in my brain for perhaps years as I muddled over it, and I also muddled over why such silliness, such playfulness, something so ordinary and perhaps trivial had grabbed so much of my attention. As trivial as it seemed, I felt there was something more to it.

Life moved on. The question: *“What if the Hokey Pokey is what it is all about?”* got pushed far back in my mind someplace, but it was never forgotten.



Occasionally, I would think of it and smile to myself. And, that is how that Hokey Pokey Question about the meaning of life stayed with me in my mind someplace, but more as a kind of an afterthought waiting in the wings off stage for its cue to resurface so that this thought come out to perform whatever part it had been given.

Life continued to move on. I began to do some Bible Studies with my faith community. We read and studied various books written by the Apostle Paul. Some of them make a reference to the parts of the body and our connectedness, one to the other, and all to each other, in a profound and necessary way. I found Ephesians 4:16 and 1 Corinthians: 4-27 to be of particular interest to me. I had no real understanding of why at first.

Then I got back onto to Facebook. I usually do. Someone had posted *“I did the Hokey Pokey, but I turned myself around.”* I laughed, but I also took note that this whole “Hokey Pokey” issue had once again moved into the forefront, both in my mind and my thoughts.

I began to think more intently about how that Hokey Pokey question related to the meaning of life. Then I remembered that very last time that I had done the Hokey Pokey. I had been with young adults and refugee kids. We were teaching the refugee kids English, trying to welcome them, and trying to make them feel comfortable. The “Hokey Pokey” had helped us to reinforce English words for body parts, but it had also connected and united a diverse group of people, otherwise separated by age, by cultural

(Continued on the next page)

differences, by linguistic differences and by differences in age and life experiences. Somehow, by the Grace of God, we were all together for that moment in time to celebrate life itself. We were all having fun together. Most of the refugee children had fled from war torn areas so it felt good to see them smile and to laugh as we did the “Hokey Pokey” together.

Surely, the Hokey Pokey is what it is all about, and everything is about that of God in our midst. Sometimes God comes out in dance and in song to connect us one with the other.

Most certainly it is in all those places in our very ordinary lives where we are able to connect with each other in love, when we put love into motion that is God in action among us, between us, and with us.

~ Mary Jane Glauber, 2014 ©

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.”

1 Thessalonians 4: 7 - 10 NIV

7 For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life. 8 Therefore, anyone who rejects this instruction does not reject a human being but God, the very God who gives you his Holy Spirit. 9 Now about your love for one another we do not need to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love each other. 10 And in fact, you do love all of God’s family throughout Macedonia. Yet we urge you, brothers and sisters, to do so more and more.

**Rush Hour Traffic - July 2014..... “This American Life”
.... We are all on this journey together.**



We Are All On This Journey Together

We had all decided to take the bus into the city together. There were a number of us so it made more sense to take the bus together. It would be more efficient and far easier for all of us in so many ways. In many cities around the world, many people take a bus into the city for various reasons. The problem of trying to find our way around an unfamiliar city and then to find parking once we found our destination had been eliminated by taking the bus together.

So there we were, all of us

together on the same bus going into the city center. Then, we would all get back on the same bus that brought us into the city a few hours later for our return back to where we had first boarded the bus. Our return trip would be during rush hour in that city so we would be joined by many more people on the road that day who also would be returning to the place where they had begun their day.

We were clearly all on the same or a similar journey on that city's streets and highways.



"This American Life"
.... We are all on this journey together.
Hosta Flowers in bloom

MJG ©

Most of the people driving during rush hour that day would be returning to their homes and families that evening. In a very simple way, we were sharing the same or a similar journey that day.

Sitting on a bus, waiting for the traffic to move forward, gives passengers time to think. It can be nice. It can be calm. It can allow you, as a passenger, to reflect a bit, and that is the nice part because it allows us the time to reflect and perhaps to give some meaning to the ordinary events of our daily lived experience. For me, personally, I felt a connection to every other person who was in the bus and who was traveling on the road with us; we were all stuck in a traffic jam together.

I thought that it can be quite a comforting feeling to be welcomed and affirmed for the gifts that you may bring to a community of people who are traveling along side you at any given moment in time, and for you to be able to recognize the gifts that others bring to you by their presence in your life. The reality of our lived experience is that "we are all in this together" whether we may recognize this or not. Riding on the bus from one place to another is only a glimpse into the greater journey that we share with the rest of humanity.

If the bus drives fast or slow, we, who are on the bus, also must go fast or slow. By way of comparison, if we think of the Titanic when that ship sank, that affected everyone on that ship no matter what their class, their place of origin, or their position on that ship. Our ship is the earth and we are traveling around the universe with every other person, plant or inanimate object that is part of our global society.

We all belong to each other. What happens to one of us, happens to all of us. How does this relate to the rest of our lives I wondered.

Pulled from the headlines in American Newspapers in 2014: "*Drunk Uncles Shape America's Image*" This isn't an image of our nation that we would wish to show to the world; this isn't really who most of us are. The title makes me shudder because the image is awful; the title was meant to grab our attention and it had done just that. By December 2014, we will have the 20-20 hindsight vision to see what happened next and perhaps to have found some kind of meaning in these events.

Background information follows: The full article can be found at:

<http://www.courier-journal.com/story/opinion/contributors/2014/07/19/drun-uncles-shape-americas-image/12849529/>

One of the paragraphs in that article by Rex Huppke for the McClatchy-Tribune News Service in July 2014 says, "Per a recent report by the Women's Refugee Commission: "Children from Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador cited the growing influence of youth gangs and drug cartels as their primary reason for leaving. Not only are they subject to violent attacks by the gangs, they explained, they are also targeted by police, who assume out of hand that all children are gang-affiliated. Girls also face gender-based violence, as rape becomes increasingly a tool of control."

The title of Huppke's article was: "It's time 'drunk uncles' stop being the face of America." Huppke observes that the majority of Americans "favor sensible gun laws, care about the environment, would like to see our immigration system reformed and generally steer clear of yelling at busloads of children."

At the link above, columnist Rex Huppke explains the reasons why the children are fleeing their homes and their homelands. He also observes that the majority of Americans are actually sympathetic to the plight of others and especially to children who are suffering.

In another article found in the American press in the summer of 2014 at: <http://www.sacbee.com/2014/07/07/6538892/2-street-gangs-divide-up-el-salvadors.html> , we read an article by Tim Johnson of The Los Angeles Times where he discusses the gangs that control El Salvador *(Continued on the next page)*



“This American Life” We are all on this journey together. -
Glass art in the botanical garden by Dale Chihuly blends in with
the Tropical plants:



and how their presence affects the lives of ordinary citizens. In December 2014, what is the situation now by comparison to 6 months ago?

Johnson wrote: “Her (referring to a woman from El Salvador) modest home is in a part of San Salvador controlled by the Mara Salvatrucha, a gang so ruthless and sprawling that the [United States Government] has labeled it an international criminal organization.”

Johnson explains that “As insecurity extends across El Salvador, gang bosses reach for younger and younger kids to fill their ranks.” These gangs are taking, stealing away from their families and intimidating children as young as age 10 to do their dirty work. Johnson reports, “As the gangs deepen connections with regional organized-crime groups involved in drug, weapons and human trafficking, they present a direct challenge to state control over the tiny Central American nation.” At the link earlier in this article, Johnson gives the background history and an explanation for how this problem began. The history of this problem, about which, it is well worth reading.

Implications: We are never alone. God is always with us. Are we listening for what God is trying to tell us? Are we attentive to that of God in the world around us? Are we looking for that Holy Light shining through the shadows and the dark places in the world around us? Are we seeking to do God’s will or are we hiding behind fear?

I wondered if these news reports were one of those “new occasions that teaches us new duties” about which Susan Elizabeth Stark speaks, and who states that “We know that God uses imperfect people who are open to possibilities?”



“This American Life”
... We are all on this journey together.... garden
flowers: Columbine

MJG ©

Most people wouldn't leave their home towns, I reasoned, if there were adequate opportunities and a sense of security and safety there.

Personally, I am aware that when neighborhood kids would seek out our home, to be present in our home with their peers, that is with our children in our home, they would sort of plant themselves in our home for a full day from time to time. These children may have sat in front of our television set or playing with toys in our unfinished basement side by side with our children all day long. I wondered a bit about why they had come and stayed; invariably I would learn later that there was one problem or another going on in their homes.

I only learned something close to the full reason for why these children had sought out another family, that is our family home, where they could spend a calm day, much later on. These young children simply needed a calmer place to be. No questions were ever asked about why they showed up, nor for why they kept showing up. Then, as time went on, they grew up, or things became calmer in their own homes, and they no longer needed to come for the day and stay. They really never got in the way.

I have often thought back about these young children over the years who showed up very early some mornings at our front door and who then stayed to spend the day. The closest analogy that I can ever come up with is that we are, along with all of humanity, sitting in our own seats on a bus. We are all headed in the same direction because we are on the same metaphorical bus. What happens to one person on that bus may affect all of us. If that bus gets a flat tire, on its back left tire, that affects all of us on the bus, even those who may be seated in the front right side of the bus.

It is in our best interest to see that everyone on the bus, or on the same planet with us, has what they need to meet their needs and to live a full and complete life. Sometimes we are the ones who need help and other times someone else needs help, but our needs are essentially the same or similar. How we accomplish that is a complex solution. Identifying the complete problem may be our starting point.

Competition between human beings has no real place on this metaphorical bus. When the bus arrives, we all arrive together. How we care for the others who are around us, near and far, matters. Their welfare is intertwined with ours. The Ebola Virus outbreak in 2014 only serves to further highlight how connected we are with every other human being on earth.

Central America has been plagued by a series of civil wars of one sort or another over many years; the area appears to continue to be unstable. None of us have any control over where we were born nor into which family we were born. We could have been born into a war torn area. Instead, we, as Americans, live in a country where others seek asylum.

We are taught in Matthew 22:37-40 that the greatest commandment in God's law is to
37 "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.' Furthermore, we are taught that "40 all the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

These verses should be reflected upon regularly. Being able to love our neighbors as we love ourselves may not be as easy to do nor as simple to do as it sounds. Or, there may be times when loving our neighbor is as simple as opening the front door.

History, even history that began and supposedly ended long before we were born, lingers around in society and it may be affecting us in far many more ways than we may realize. Old stories repeated over and over again, whether they are true or not, help us to form opinions, correct and helpful opinions or opinions that only serve to keep us separated, they all help to form us. These old stories and opinions may serve to keep us isolated from gaining further insight into the world around us, and to be able to see the world as it exists now so that in effect we may have become paralyzed by them. Some stories may give us a clearer insight. We do have some choices in this case but clear and correct information is always needed.

The Apostle Paul informs the Thessalonians in **1 Thessalonians 4: 7 - 10** and us today in this time and place

"7 For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life.

8 Therefore, anyone who rejects this instruction does not reject a human being but God, the very God who gives you his Holy Spirit.

9 Now about your love for one another we do not need to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love each other.

10 And in fact, you do love all of God's family throughout Macedonia. Yet we urge you, brothers and sisters, to do so more and more."

More and more is required of all of us. As simple and as straight forward as this advice may appear; putting it into action adequately and effectively may have eluded us. However, this should



be our foremost goal and the guidelines by which we decide how to act or to react. If ever there was a need for Christian Unity, it is now, in this time and place. We have the option and the obligation to follow the advice given to us by God.

Are we listening to God's message? This message is not just for interchurch families who already live an example of unity in their own domestic churches; the Apostle Paul asks all people to do more and more.

The message is for everyone. Are we listening to God's message? God's message is also for those who have never had to live in close proximity with diversity, nor been asked to cherish diversity in their own homes, nor been expected to love the stranger. God's message is also for those people who have never themselves been the outsider, the stranger in our midst, nor the yet unknown neighbor, so that they do not yet know what it feels like to be rejected or ostracized for any reason whatsoever.

Are we all listening to God's message? Are we being hospitable?

In Hebrews 13:2, we read: "2 Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for by so doing some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it." Have you met any angels lately?

Welcoming the others, those strangers who appear on our doorsteps, may bring some pleasant, albeit unexpected, results. Are we paying attention to God? ~ M.J. Glauber © 2014

***Some Bible Verses to consider
and upon which you may wish
to reflect:***

Philippians 4:8

English Standard Version
(ESV)

8 Finally, brothers,
whatever is true, whatever
is honorable, whatever is
just, whatever is pure,
whatever is lovely,
whatever is commendable,
if there is any excellence, if
there is anything worthy of
praise, think about these
things.

Matthew 18:20

New International Version
(NIV)

20 For where two or three
gather in my name, there am I
with them."



From Genesis To Today: The Importance of “Now”

Genesis 25:19-34 English Standard Version (ESV)

The Birth of Esau and Jacob

*19 These are the generations of Isaac, Abraham's son: Abraham fathered Isaac,
20 and Isaac was forty years old when he took Rebekah, the daughter of Bethuel the Aramean of Paddan-aram, the sister of Laban the Aramean, to be his wife.
21 And Isaac prayed to the Lord for his wife, because she was barren. And the Lord granted his prayer, and Rebekah his wife conceived.
22 The children struggled together within her, and she said, “If it is thus, why is this happening to me?” So she went to inquire of the Lord.
23 And the Lord said to her, “Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples from within you shall be divided; the one shall be stronger than the other, the older shall serve the younger.”
24 When her days to give birth were completed, behold, there were twins in her womb.
25 The first came out red, all his body like a hairy cloak, so they called his name Esau.
26 Afterward his brother came out with his hand holding Esau's heel, so his name was called Jacob. Isaac was sixty years old when she bore them.
27 When the boys grew up, Esau was a skillful hunter, a man of the field, while Jacob was a quiet man, dwelling in tents.
28 Isaac loved Esau because he ate of his game, but Rebekah loved Jacob.*

Esau Sells His Birthright.

*29 Once when Jacob was cooking stew, Esau came in from the field, and he was exhausted.
30 And Esau said to Jacob, “Let me eat some of that red stew, for I am exhausted!” (Therefore his name was called Edom.)
31 Jacob said, “Sell me your birthright now.”
32 Esau said, “I am about to die; of what use is a birthright to me?”
33 Jacob said, “Swear to me now.” So he swore to him and sold his birthright to Jacob.
34 Then Jacob gave Esau bread and lentil stew, and he ate and drank and rose and went his way. Thus Esau despised his birthright.*

Implications from Genesis 25:19-34 for Us Today

From our earliest recollections and from the stories that have been passed down in our culture from one generation to the next, it appears that personal relationships are rather difficult at best. As human beings, we live messy lives filled with misunderstandings, divisions, parents' favoring one child over another, sibling rivalry, people with different talents and skills, people who may have more than they need and those who are needy, people who can't seem to hear us when we reach out to them, numerous forms of other conflicts, wars. The list seems endless for all that is wrong or that could go wrong.

I was struck in particular by verse 23, that says: ‘And the Lord said to her, “Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples from within you shall be divided;’ I wondered if God created and then chose to divide them into two nations in order to give us a gift of some kind by being “divided” historically. How is being divided a gift, I wondered. Could it even be possible that being divided is a gift? I am also reminded that God's ways are often very different from human ways.



Sculptural Installation at Ken Tuck Knob in Pennsylvania in a meadow in the forest - July 2014artists who are inspired to create; to help us to seek that of God who works in us, with us, and through us.

I also thought about any given internal debate that I may have ever had with myself. We all ask ourselves from time to time, if not daily, some form of the question: “Should I or shouldn’t I?” Which is the best answer?

How often has humanity wondered, “How did we get to this place?” or “Have others been in this same place before us? and “Why?” It seems that we are most apt to ask these questions when things get to a crisis point. Then we may ask, “How do we turn things around so that we can create a sense of stability and hope?” It is at moments like these in our lives when we are most likely to call out to God, Our Creator, in prayer and to ask for God’s help and guidance. We are not alone. God is trying to get our attention. Are we listening? Are we watching? Are we paying attention?

Being attentive and alert to that of God, as God may be revealed to us in our lived and very ordinary daily experiences of life in the United States seems to be the first step.

What if God is present to us, but in a way in which we had never expected? Are we adequately alert to be open to seeking that of God in our daily and most ordinary lives? Will we find that of God in all the ways and places where we may imagine to find God. What if the presence of a stranger helps to show us that of God in our midst? If “the Samaritan” stopped to help us, as we had been left wounded on the road, would we allow the Samaritan to even approach us or would we stop them from even getting near us? Are we open to that of God in our midst?

In reality, the only moment we really have in which to act, to do anything is in the “now” where we are right at this very moment. What we do now is what matters. The past is over. The future is only tentative. We only really have this very moment now.

~ M.J. Glauber © 2014

God, the nature of God, Allows and Encourages Us to Laugh

http://www.slate.com/articles/arts/culturebox/2007/05/signs_from_god.html

This link above will take you to a BuzzFeed site on the topic of amusing church signs that reflect American culture in a playful way.

Enjoy!

Job 8:21 ESV

He will yet fill your mouth with laughter, and your lips with shouting.

Psalm 118: 24 ESV

This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.

John 16:24 ESV

Until now you have asked nothing in my name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full.

Psalm 126: 2 ESV

Then our mouth was filled with laughter, and our tongue with shouts of joy; then they said among the nations, "The Lord has done great things for them."

James 5:13 ESV

Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praise.

Ecclesiastes 3:4 ESV

A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance;

MJG ©

**The Natural World that
surrounds us
- A Pollinator at work, that
of God at work**

←

*"Everyday we do things, we
are things that have to do
with peace. If we are aware
of our life..., our way of
looking at things, we will
know how to make peace
right in the moment, we are
alive."*

quote by THICH NHAT HANH

Life in the Spirit

8 There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

2 For the law of the Spirit of life has set you[free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death.

3 For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh,

4 in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

5 For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit.

6 For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace.

7 For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot.

8 Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

9 You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.

10 But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness.

11 If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.



“.....The Spirit of God Dwells in You.....”

“The Spirit of God Dwells in You” is a concept worthy of further consideration; so the phrase stayed with me. It can be found in Romans 8:1-11, and I reflected on those words for some time.

How would this concept apply to our lived experience as Americans and especially as interchurch Americans, I wondered.

All that we create or do can help to serve humanity, to help others, to enlighten, to improve the condition of those who are less fortunate than ourselves. Therefore what we do, what we think, and what we say matters. How well we listen may matter even more though, I thought.

We can serve as the hands and feet of God in our ordinary lives. We can make “love” into an action verb.

It involves letting go of our ego in favor of the greater community so that all of our lives are improved by what we do or choose not to do.

How has God shown you love in your lived experience as an interchurch family? How have you shown that of God to others, those who may be near or far?

~ M.J. Glauber © 2014

Receptive Ecumenism 2014

The topic of “Receptive Ecumenism” came to the forefront in 2014. “Receptive Ecumenism in International Perspective Contextual Ecclesial Learning” was held at Fairfield University, Connecticut, USA from 9-12 June 2014

The Centre for Catholic Studies explains, “The central conviction of Receptive Ecumenism is counter-intuitive: we do not set up one example for all the other groups to imitate, but rather we ask each group to identify what kind of organizational enrichment they seek to obtain and investigate whether that can be provided by learning from the good practices of the other groups. In other words, it is a move away from consultancy and a move towards genuine conversation—what theologians call ‘communion’.”

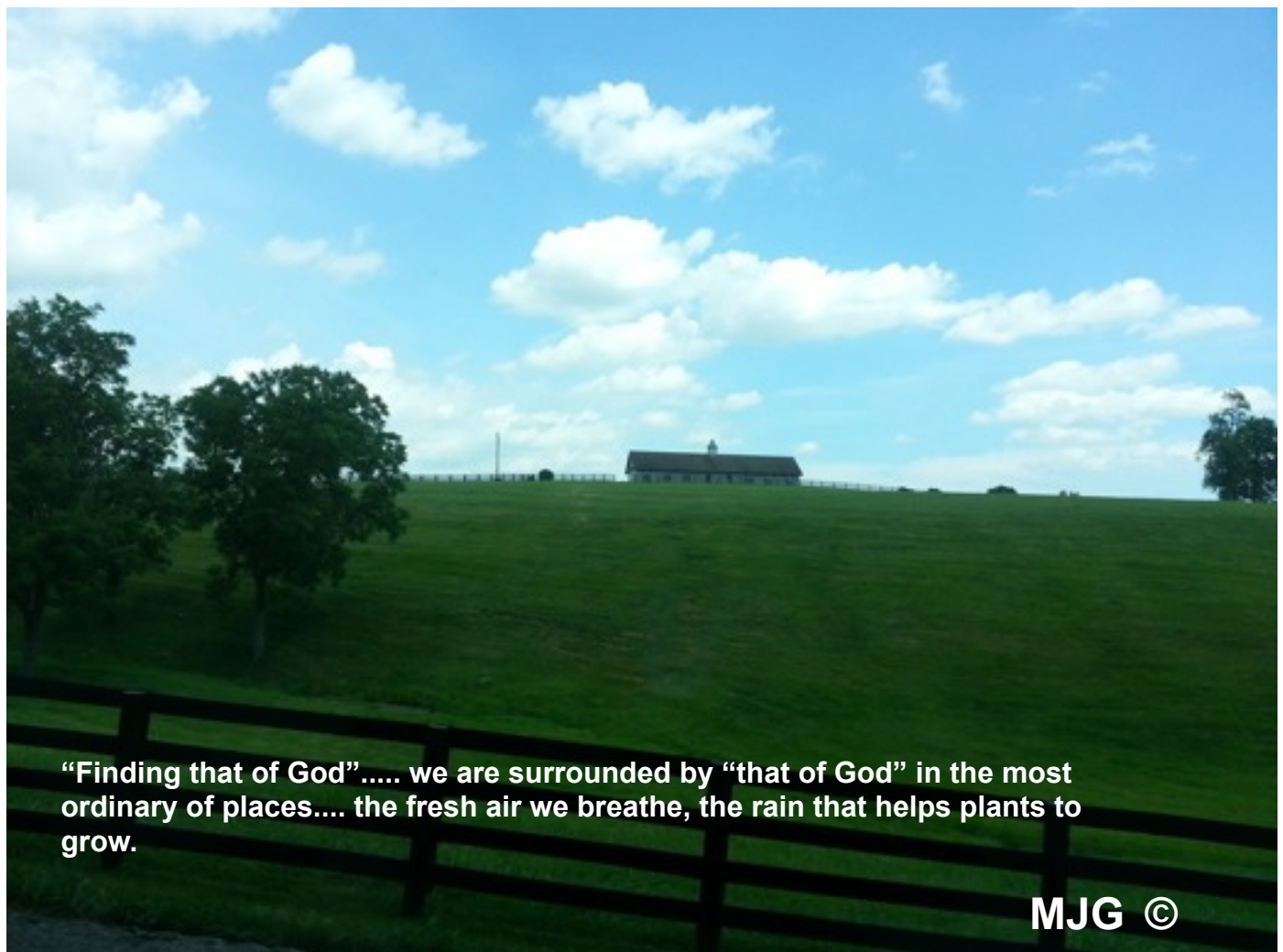
Please see the following link for further information about “Receptive Ecumenism.”

<https://www.dur.ac.uk/theology.religion/ccs/projects/receptiveecumenism/projects/localchurch/methodology/>

Ray Temmerman has created links to copies of the presentations that were made at the conference in Fairfield, CT in June 2014. They can be found at <http://interchurchfamilies.org/REIII/PanelIndex.html>

We would like to express our gratitude to everyone who contributed to making this conference: “Receptive Ecumenism in International Perspective Contextual Ecclesial Learning” in Connecticut such a success.

~ M.J. Glauber





“Finding That of God in the world
that surrounds us” - Phlox in bloom

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The Pastoral Care of Families

The Roman Catholic Church has been seeking input from their Bishops around the world about the status of the family. As a result from that input, The Roman Catholic Synod of Bishops has created the following document: “The Pastoral Challenges of the Family in the Context of Evangelization- Instrumentum Laboris” - through the III Extraordinary General Assembly at Vatican City in 2014. That report can be found at the following link: http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/synod/documents/rc_synod_doc_20140626_instrumentum-laboris-familia_en.html

The document notes that “The family is acknowledged in the People of God to be an invaluable asset, the natural setting in which life grows and develops and a school of humanity, love and hope for society.”

In Part II of that document, the title indicates that it will address “The Pastoral Program for the Family in Light of New Challenges. In Chapter 1, it addresses “The Pastoral Program for the Family: Various Proposals Underway” It begins with “The Responsibility of Bishops and the Clergy and the Charismatic Gifts in the Pastoral Care of the Family”

At item #50 it states: “At work in the pastoral programme for the family is a beneficial mutual exchange between the responsibility of the bishops and other members of the clergy and the various charisms and ministries of the ecclesial community. This synergy results in many positive experiences. The engagement

[page 17]

The ARK, A Publication of the American Association of Interchurch Families
October, November and December 2014 Volume 25 Edition 4

(Continued on the next page)

of so many brothers and sisters in the pastoral care of the family can lead to new effective forms of service for the Church community, which, because of the presence of the Holy Spirit, is emboldened to “go out” of itself in mission. The richness in this field is revealed by considering various subjects and reviewing some initiatives and approaches found in the responses.”

Hope can be found in the emphasis on pastoral care in this document. It would also appear that most of humanity at this time and place in history are seeking a sense of hope. May the actions arising from the creation of this Vatican document bring hope to a people living in a society that structurally tends to isolate and polarize us.

The next section, #51 includes in it a reference to the break down of family life as we have previously known it, and yet they see that somethings still exist and that they continue to nurture families. In Chapter 2, the Pastoral Challenges of the Family are addressed. One problem for families that is highlighted pertains to Critical Situations within the Family: Difficulty in Relationships and Communication.

Communication or rather a lack of proper communication seems to be a pervasive problem for modern

human beings who wish to be connected one with the other, but find that communication has failed them. The document indicates, “The dramatic aspect of these situations is that they lead to the gradual disappearance of the possibility of dialogue as well as the time and opportunity to work on relationships. For want of sharing and communication, each one is forced to face difficulties in isolation without an experience of being loved and, in turn, loving others.” The break-up and break down in family systems is discussed. Consumerism and individualism are addressed in this document as they affect families.

Marriage Preparation, including what we may refer to as “remote marriage preparation is addressed in this Vatican document. Critical Situations within the Family are highlighted and then discussed.

Violence and abuse, and Dependence, the Media and the Social Network are discussed. External Pressures on the Family are also discussed. Some of the highlighted external pressures include: The Impact of Work on the Family, Migration and the Family, Poverty and the problems associated with the Struggle for Subsistence

are also discussed in this document.

“Special Situations” are highlighted; they include: “The Weight of Societal Expectations on the Individual, The Impact of Wars”, and “Other difficulties affecting the family, in addition to physical illnesses, including



AIDS,” and/or: “mental illness, depression and the death of a child or spouse, all of which call for a pastoral approach which takes into account the unique family situation.”

Of special interest to Interchurch Families and to those who give us pastoral care is the section: “Disparity of Cult - # 78.” This section states that “In some geographical areas, like Asia and North Africa, given the low percentage of Catholics, a great number of couples in families is made up of one who is Catholic and the other who comes from another religion. Some responses, while recognizing that these couples bring great richness to the Church, highlight the inherent difficulties of these unions in the Christian upbringing of children, particularly where civil law has an influence in determining the religious affiliation of the couple's children. Sometimes, different religions in the family are seen as an opportunity or a challenge for growth in the Christian faith.”

Implications for Interchurch Families and those who give Pastoral Care to Interchurch Families

Of special importance, and a fact that needs to be cultivated for all that is good within it is the recognition that “interchurch couples have the potential to bring great richness to their churches” of origin. We share a similar Christianity although we may come from different Christian denominations.

As interchurch families, we would like to see the gifts that we have be recognized, developed, and nurtured. Interchurch couples indicate that they have far too often been met with either a rigid set of rules which apparently do not exist for single church couples, or they discover that one of the spouses is expected to convert. These kinds of approaches are at best off-putting to any potential interchurch couple or family.

In response to statements or regulations as they are improperly explained to potential interchurch couples,

far too often, so that interchurch couples feel they must exist “away from the scrutinizing view of the church, or completely out of the scope of the churches’ radar” so that they will not have unnecessary burdens imposed on them that single church families simply never have to face. Potential interchurch couples simply seem to stay out of view or even choose to drop out from being church members. Their ecumenical interchurch potential is therefore completely lost to both of their churches of origin who could profit from learning from their lived experience of unity.

Although, interchurch



“Finding that of God”..... we are surrounded by
“that of God” in the most ordinary of places.

Kids at play in summer: Two teams make a game possible, and there is something special in that. It is fun. God wants us to be happy, to enjoy life, to be a community, a team.

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families believe that our churches wish to nurture our interchurch marriages, we have often encountered well intended people who are poorly informed as to the best ways to nurture and to give pastoral care to interchurch couples. We would ask for pastoral care that notes the great “opportunity or a challenge for growth in the Christian faith” for all of our churches of origin.

Some interchurch families indicate that they feel an unnecessary pressure to raise their children in the faith tradition of only one of their parents so that their children are virtually cut off from half of their family on the other side of the church divide. The Ecumenical Directory is discussed at the following link:

www.interchurchfamilies.org/journal/93su10.html It is a discussion in reference to the Vatican’s Document from 1993: DIRECTORY FOR THE APPLICATION OF PRINCIPLES AND NORMS ON ECUMENISM. Conversion of one spouse is not necessary and if the spouse from another faith tradition has a strong faith and commitment to their own faith tradition, other provisions for raising the children exist so that both sides of the family can be equally involved in the faith development of the children in an interchurch family. The Roman Catholic Eucharist can be shared with other baptized Christians under certain circumstances.

In the Vatican document “The Pastoral Challenges of the Family in the Context of Evangelization-Instrumentum Laboris”, the problem of abuse and violence in the home and in our greater society are mentioned. It should be noted that in a marriage that the couple should be equally yoked so that the marriage can survive. If one spouse feels that they should dominate the marriage, even in one area, this is an unhealthy dynamic for the children to observe as they grow up. The pastoral care of interchurch families should nurture the equality of both spouses and validate each spouse so that they feel equal in the relationship. However, it seems that hope and love are what the people of the world seem to need the most at this time.

May this Vatican Document: “The Pastoral Challenges of the Family in the Context of Evangelization-Instrumentum Laboris” bring the dialogue and the pastoral care that will also bring interchurch couples and potentially interchurch couples, who may have previously felt that the only solution was to become a church drop-out, the pastoral care, the love and the hope they crave within their churches of origin.

~ M.J. Glauber © 2014

**“Finding that
of God”
..... we are
surrounded by
“that of God”
in the most
ordinary of
places... photo
taken at a rest
area along a
US Interstate**

→

[page 20]



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**“Vulnerability sounds like truth
and feels like courage.
Truth and courage aren’t always comfortable, but
they’re never weakness.”...
... “Maybe Stories are just data with a soul”**

Quotes by [Brené Brown](#)

Please click on the author’s name above for further information about her work.

Brene Brown’s TED Talks can be found online by searching using her name

or by clicking on the following links:

http://www.ted.com/talks/brene_brown_listening_to_shame

http://www.ted.com/talks/brene_brown_on_vulnerability

Implications for Interchurch Families and for those who give pastoral care to interchurch families:

Brene Brown explores topics that include: “courage, compassion, and connection”; she explores “the gifts of imperfection with the implication that we can live whole hearted lives.” She explores the power of love, belonging, and being enough along with the things that get in the way. Some of us refer to this as finding that of God in the face of others and in all of creation. Diversity and being unique are God given gifts both to us as individuals and for all of our communities.

Brown seeks ways to cultivate authenticity that includes letting go of what people think. Brown also examines our human need to “cultivate self-compassion and to let go of perfectionism” so that we can be healthier and feel more connected one to the other. God creates us in God’s image. How many times have we observed that what some may consider to be a weakness is really an asset, not only to that person, but to all of us who may know that person. That which allows us to feel connected to one to the other is God in action, working among us.

Brown also discusses the need to cultivate a resilient spirit; she advocates and explains the need to let go of “numbing and powerlessness”, which she defines as she discusses this topic. Putting God in control is a Christian concept that unites all of us.

Brown explains the need for humanity to cultivate “a sense of gratitude and joy”; she does this by further examining our need to “let go of scarcity and fear of the dark.” Darkness can be more than nighttime darkness; it can be a spiritual darkness. Having a greater sense of gratitude and joy are consistent with cultivating and nurturing our own Christian identity.

Brown examines the role and importance of “cultivating intuition and trusting faith”; Brown discusses the importance for humanity to let go of the need for certainty. This way of thinking puts God in control and allows us to step back so that we can discern whether we are being guided by our own ego or a leading from God.

Brown discusses our human need to “cultivate creativity”; she advocates for humanity to “let go of comparison.” Creativity is God working through us to find God’s beauty and God’s way forward in a complex world. Creativity allows us to explore and to create solutions to problems that have previously alluded us.

Brown urges us, due to our human need, to “cultivate play and rest”; she notes the importance to our health and genuine well being by “letting go of exhaustion as a status symbol and productivity as self-

worth.” Brown urges humanity to cultivate calm and stillness. Observing that anxiety has become an intrinsic part of our American lifestyle. This is consistent with being a people of faith and our Christian values.

Brown urges us, as human beings, to “cultivate meaningful work”; Brown encourages us, as human beings, to “let go of self-doubt” and all those things we think we are “supposed to do or to be.”

Brown encourages us to “cultivate laughter, song, and dance.” Brown suggests that we are distracted by our human need to “be cool and always in.”



Some input from interchurch families over the years has served to highlight the issues that may prevent genuine cross denominational dialogue. Brene Brown's work and her insight regarding the underlying cultural components that appear to be separating us one from another at a time when we crave to become more connected, more compassionate, more loved, more understood, more faithful, while feeling less the need to always be in full control. Brown observes our human and spiritual need to become more creative, to have a greater sense of gratitude and joy, to be more intuitive and alert to that of God in our presence, to stop comparing ourselves one to the other so that we can find that of God in the face of others and in all of creation.

Interchurch families and those who give us pastoral care, I think, will find inspiration in the writings and the Ted Talks of Brene Brown.

May interchurch families, those who give us pastoral care, and those who are seeking a way forward toward finding Christian Unity, find inspiration and hope in the works and presentations of Brene Brown.

~ M.J. Glauber

Dr. Brené Brown is a research professor at the University of Houston Graduate College of Social Work. She has spent the past twelve years studying vulnerability, courage, worthiness, and shame.

Her groundbreaking research has been featured on PBS, NPR, CNN, The Washington Post, and The New York Times. Brené's 2010 TEDxHouston talk, The Power of Vulnerability, is one of the top ten most viewed TED talks on TED.com, with approximately 6 million viewers. Additionally, Brené gave the closing talk at the 2012 TED conference where she talked about shame, courage, and innovation.

Brené's newest book is, Daring Greatly: How the Courage to Be Vulnerable Transforms the way we Live, Love, Parent, and Lead (Gotham, 2012). She is also the author of The Gifts of Imperfection (2010), and I Thought It Was Just Me (2007), and Connections (2009); a shame-resilience curriculum being facilitated by helping professionals across the globe. Brené lives in Houston with her husband, Steve, and their two children, Ellen and Charlie.

Many Thanks!!!

We would like to express our gratitude:

To the Volunteer Board Members of AAIF and to our pastoral advisors.

For the lasting influence of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

For humor that enriches our lives and which comes from many sources through divine inspiration. For the holiness found in our ordinary lives and all that connects us with each other and with God. For the wisdom found in the Bible that helps to guide us in our ordinary lives. For the understanding that 20-20 hindsight vision gives us. For the awareness of God that we bring to our daily actions. For everyone who is on this journey with us toward Christian Unity. For those earliest experiences of God in action found through the actions of those people we meet in our ordinary lives. For this moment in time, now. For the Life in the Spirit; "...The Spirit of God that Dwells in You.." For the inspiration and hope that Receptive Ecumenism 2014 gives to all of us and for those people who are actively working toward Receptive Ecumenism. For those who give pastoral care to interchurch families and single church families around the world. For inspiring and hopeful Vatican documents. For the inspiration and sense of hope given to us by Brene Brown.

For the support and encouragement of my family and especially that of my husband, Peter, and all of those people who have made this edition of the ARK possible.
~ M.J. Glauber

The ARK,

A Publication of the
American Association
of Interchurch Families

October, November and
December 2014

Volume 25 Edition 4

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,

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A PUBLICATION OF THE AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF
INTERCHURCH FAMILIES

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The ARK,

a Publication of the American Association of Interchurch Families ©
Volume 25; Edition 4 October, November & December 2014

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