



LERNing

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A newsletter of the Lutheran Ecumenical Representatives Network

In This Issue

The theme of this issue of *LERNing* is Ecumenical Formation. You will notice from the articles that we are defining ecumenical formation broadly, to mean any experience that seeks to understand or to express in action the unity of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church more clearly and fully. The articles cover the waterfront from classical ecumenical dialogue and study, to dialogue among ecumenical youth on issues related to globalization and poverty, to middle judicatory ecumenical mission work. This definition of ecumenical is based on an integrative understanding of Christian witness and mission.

John Kreidler expresses this understanding well in his reflection, which focuses on how "every part effects the whole." This is ecumenism in action, especially when the participants are committed to discern what is best in the participating traditions, and an excellent complement to traditional ecumenical dialogue and study.

Jerry Folk, editor

Young Adult Ecumenical Forum 2005



Elizabeth Campbell

People often find themselves doing ecumenical work because they oppose "religious-based" conflict. Such conflict perverts religion, because in the liber-

ating sense of the word, religion bears no relationship with humanity's obsession with power, which is what conflict so often reduces it to. And thus, to awaken a vibrant spirituality and to disempower cultural paradigms that kindle attitudes of superior-

ity and exclusion, like contemporary - Thomas Merton, ecumenical formation enables individuals to flow with a different rhythm, one that forum planner Vy Nguyen calls "respect, openness, and embrace."

Nonetheless, when we began the task of organizing a forum where young people from across the United States could dialogue around issues of globalization and poverty in an ecumenical context, I do not think that we felt like modern-day Mertons.

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Every Part Effects the Whole

The Rev. John D. Kreidler

Recently synodical leaders from the four ELCA synods participating in the Missional Systems Project gathered at Luther Seminary to receive the results of the project as they have been developed to date. This project of the Gospel and Our Culture Network includes middle judicatories from differing Christian traditions to answer the question "How can middle judicatories help congregations become missional churches?" During the last year I have attended several workshops and training events that are asking similar questions related to how to sustain and build Christ's church with and for others who are different than us. Other examples included anti-racism where the discussion centered around "re-framing the dialogue" and, of course, the National Workshop on Christian Unity where the concern was raised regarding developing the next generation of ecumenists.

Not only were the questions similar, but at least one answer to the various questions was the same. Each identified better understanding and appropriate valuing of our own identity as a critical factor for entering into a hospitable relationship with the other. In a very practical way I am experiencing this as I work with representatives of

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A New Generation

The Rev. David A. Anderson

Raising up a new generation for ecumenical leadership is vital for the churches today as many clergy and lay leaders who exercise ecumenical leadership recognize their responsibility to pass the torch to a new generation. I use this phrase, “pass the torch”, because ecumenical education at its best is a passion of the heart. It is as much “caught” as taught from those whose lives have been shaped by a vision of the one Church of Jesus Christ. I am talking about Mentors who open the door to offer us a wider vision of the Church and its mission to all who inhabit God’s world. As for me, I still remember the words of a seminary professor and one of my ecumenical mentors, the Rev. Dr. Ross Mackenzie, a Scottish Presbyterian, who said at my ordination: “Today, the Presbyterian Church ordains David Anderson to serve the Church of Jesus Christ universal, wherever God’s Spirit leads him.” That weighty, yet humbling, charge set me on a journey of ecumenical ministry that continues to this day.

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Every Part *(continued from p. 1)*

the Heartland Presbytery, Presbyterian Church, USA, and lay representatives of Kaw Prairie Community Church as we are developing a constitution for this new mission start in the Kansas City area which is beginning life as a federated congregation of the ELCA and the PCUSA. All of us are having to dig deep into our own identities to understand and bring together even the more mundane aspects of our structural identity.

This suggests that within ecumenical formation, as well as anti-racism and evangelism, a basic ecological principle must be considered. Every part effects the whole. Not only do anti-racism and ecumenism go hand in hand, as Bishop Thomas L. Hoyt, Jr. pointed out in his ECCO-LERN-EDEO luncheon presentation at the NWCU, but the best of practices in worship, education, social awareness, confessional and Biblical studies and all other aspects of our life as church in all its expressions will provide a religious identity foundation out of which present and future ecumenists may willingly and effectively act out the

ecumenical principle of mutual affirmation and admonition.

Application of this principle means consciously considering how to involve church people in ecumenical endeavors whose primary interests may be in areas other than ecumenism. Of the five people involved writing the constitution for Kaw Prairie Community Church, two have a primary interest of evangelism and outreach, two were appointed because of their elected administrative positions and one has a primary ecumenical interest. The people were selected first because they had a passion for or well-developed skills in some area that was desirable to ensure the best input and resulting constitutional content (i.e. missional vision and organizational structures). Whether or not they had a particular interest in ecumenism, they will become more ecumenically grounded, and ecumenism will benefit through a resulting constitution that has both ecumenical vision and the best of the identities of the two traditions to support the vision. This could be contrasted with the example of a youth leader who has a certain ecumenical passion and so took the youth group to experience worship within a variety of Christian and non-Christian traditions. Unfortunately this person had little specific interest in or knowledge about the best principles of worship. What could have been a good ecumenical activity was diminished because the person with the other additional skills (i.e. worship) was not included. Further, the youth’s valuing of their own worship identity was also diminished.

Ecumenical formation will be increased both in depth and breadth as it includes and participates in the entire life of the church. And, with this ecological mind set, the entire life of the church will be enhanced as ecumenism works with other disciplines towards valuing the best of who we are.

*The Rev. John D. Kreidler
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“Receive one another...”

Hospitality in ecumenical perspective

Diane Kessler

WCC RISK series publishes book by MA Council of Churches working group

In many parts of the world, ecclesial rites of passage—weddings, baptisms, funerals—increasingly involve Christians from different traditions. When the experience is positive, it enables Christians to see the unity they share through Christ. When the experience is negative, especially at such tender times, participants may leave with bitter memories not easily released.



Several members of the MCC's ecumenical hospitality working group paused for a photo opportunity as they put finishing touches on the text.

Encounters like these led the Board of Directors of the Massachusetts Council of Churches (MCC) to authorize a project developing guidelines and good practices for the exercise of ecumenical hospitality. Initially the Board members envi-

sioned a project modest in scope and practical in application, but the project evolved into something far more ambitious, with potential ripple effects beyond what originally had been imagined. The results now are scheduled for publication this fall by the World Council of Churches as part of its RISK series.

(Hospitality continued on p.4)

YAEF *(continued from p. 1)*

We were just people who take our work and vision seriously. We wanted to perpetuate this forum, which was initiated in 2004 by young adult WCC stewards. We also wanted to get the word out to the wider, ecumenical Church community that young adults take issues of ecumenism, globalization, and poverty seriously and to create a space where young adults could learn more about these issues. Thus, one year later, with many late-night conference calls, grant requests, and schedule scrutinizing behind us, we are on our way to reaching our goal, and the 2005 Young Adult Ecumenical

Forum (YAEF) will take place August 11-14 at Eden Theological Seminary.

Forum planning involved several stages. We had just over \$500 in our account when we began, and now with grant money raised from sources like Church World Service, the Louisville Institute, the Episcopal Church, ELCA, and others, we have enough funding for this year's forum and some to ensure our vision's longevity. We also assembled an astounding collection of speakers for the event, including the Rev. Dr. Larry Bropleh, Dr. Toddie Peters, Dr. Daniel Deffenbaugh, the Rev. Dr. Michael Kinnamon, the Rev. Lynne West, and YAEF founder, Wilson Dickinson.

One of my favorite forum stories involves planners Laura Phillips and Sara Critchfield, who spent an entire day working on a grant application. At that point, we did not even know if the forum would happen. But they sat down and, with incredible perseverance, wrote our dream. In planning this forum, we have been dream-writers. I consider my fellow forum planners (Vy Nguyen, Sara Critchfield, Laura Phillips, Anna Kaydor, Rev. Cephas Davis,) and their rhythm of openness, respect, and embrace astounds me. Now we pray that our dream-in-the-flesh will know such wonder.

Generation *(continued from p. 2)*

Over the past eight years, the Illinois Conference of Churches has focused its attention on providing opportunities for ecumenical learning and dialogue for clergy and laity. Beginning in 1997, the Illinois Conference of Churches focused on developing ecumenical leadership by offering annual daylong Clergy Ecumenical Forums that rotated around the state. The forums featured prominent ecumenical leaders with experience at the World Council of Churches and the National Council of Churches, as well as seminary professors with significant ecumenical education and experience speaking on current ecumenical topics. Participants from Protestant, Catholic, and Orthodox churches gathered to pray together, dialogue together, and share fellowship over a meal. As the forums developed, we moved from single presenters to one featuring two presenters that offered a Protestant and

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Roman Catholic perspective on the topic of “Church Authority.”

Growing out of these Clergy Forums, the Illinois Conference of Churches recognized that more needed to be done to lift up the “mentoring” dimension of ecumenical education that focuses on ecumenical formation to shape one’s faith and passion for ecumenical ministry in whatever setting the Church is gathered. Thus, the idea for a Midwest Academy for Ecumenical Leadership was born to offer a residential week-long ecumenical learning experience for clergy and laity that offers participants an experience to learn from ecumenical mentors, in presentations and by their presence, about the calling to ecumenical ministry as viewed from Protestant, Catholic, and Orthodox perspectives. “Panorama of Ecumenical Witness: Called to Christ’s Ministry of Reconciliation” is the theme of the Midwest Academy for Ecumenical Leadership scheduled for the summer of 2005 in Chicago. The Academy seminar will provide a snapshot overview of the ecumenical movement from Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant perspectives including its significance for the churches’ mission today. The Academy model, patterned after the Ecumenical Institute at Bossey in Switzerland, is centered on a one-week residential learning experience to nurture ecumenical community for clergy and laity across denominations by weaving together the threads of prayer, presentation, dialogue, and fellowship. Such a model of ecumenical learning and formation can offer a foretaste of experience of Church that the Nicene Creed points us to as being “one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church”.

The Rev. David Anderson is the Executive Director of the Illinois Conference of Churches.

Hospitality *(continued from p. 3)*

Titled “Receive one another...hospitality in ecumenical perspective,” the book defines ecumenical hospitality as those “generous and cordial actions between hosts and guests” that foster the healing of divisions among Christians and their churches for the sake of the world.

The authors—Anglican, Orthodox, Protestant, and Roman Catholic scholars, pastors, and ecumenical professionals whose roots are in Massachusetts

but who bring a wide variety of expertise to the project—address a variety of questions: what is the history of hospitality as found in the Bible? in Christian tradition? What are the theological reasons for its exercise? What does it look like when practiced well? What are some guidelines for the exercise of ecumenical hospitality for hosts? for guests? What is the relationship between hospitality and spirituality? What are its fruits in furthering the quest for Christian unity?

Commenting on the project, MCC executive director Diane Kessler said:

“Not much has been written on the subject of ecumenical hospitality. We hope that this book will stimulate conversation and heighten awareness about the ways that Christians can ‘receive one another...,’ thus laying the groundwork for further progress in the quest for Christian unity and human community.”

Diane Kessler is the Executive Director of the Massachusetts Council of Churches

Resource Update

The July-August 2005 issue of *Lutheran Woman Today* celebrates International Peace Day in 2005. Four women’s religious publications—Glad Tidings (published by the Women’s Missionary Society of the Presbyterian Church in Canada), Horizons (published by Presbyterian Women), Response (published by United Methodist Women of the United Methodist Church), and Lutheran Women Today—published a joint issue as part of their regular magazine cycle, reaching a combined audience of 200,000 women. Readers are encouraged to coordinate ecumenical gatherings to talk about how they can work together to promote peace. To learn more, visit the [Women of the ELCA Web site](#).



Links

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