

Living the Visible Unity of the Church
Joe A. & Nancy Vaughn Stalcup Lecture on Christian Unity, June 10, 2007
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Introduction

I am deeply honored to be with you today for the 9th Joe A. and Nancy Vaughn Stalcup Lecture. I want to thank the Stalcup's for the depth of their ecumenical vision and their generous hospitality. I'd also like to express my gratitude to the Council on Christian Unity of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the U. S. and Canada, and The Stalcup School of Theology for the Laity at Brite Divinity School for their joint sponsorship of the lecture.

How dangerous is this? You've given me a wide open space in which I may range freely "reflecting my own experience in the ecumenical movement...from your work with CUIC, and now as President of the National Council of Churches and 'head of a communion' in light of the current challenges and opportunities... in the quest for Christian unity..." I'm quoting Robert Welsh who extended this kind invitation to me well over a year ago. I am sorry that Robert cannot be with us and I look forward to his full recovery and return to his important work.

Mine is a curious journey from a small independent Pentacostal Church on Western Ave in Los Angeles to the Presbyterian Church, my ecclesiastical home. I've been a pastor, spent 14 years in a theological seminary, serve now a small Council of "community" churches, a phrase which today can describe either nothing accurately or just about anything that isn't nailed down by one of our many—now follow me carefully here—churches, communions, denominations, families. The International Council of Community Churches has long considered itself "post-denominational," a phrase I

always found presumptuous until it became clear to me that it describes something that is emerging, if it is not already a confirmed reality—however reluctant those of us in main stream historic traditions might be to abandon center stage in a rapidly, profoundly altered and continually changing religious landscape.

But to return to my particular journey for a moment; as a seminary student, in 1973, I was appointed a member of the Presbyterian delegation to the Consultation on Church Union. My involvement with COCU/CUIC, this ecumenical dimension, has been the longest thread of my ministry, woven throughout every garment of service I've worn. My appointment was by Clinton Marsh, the second African American to serve as moderator of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church—so you see I understand it as part providence/part accident. I'm who I am professionally and I am here because of that appointment. That is not a boast, rather a plea for a diligent intentionality in shaping representation at the tables where we talk about who we are in the human family and what it means to be created in the image of God.

I am not a scholar of ecumenism, nor have I been employed in ecumenical service to any organization, though the ICCU comes close. I've spent countless hours as a volunteer in these God-blessed endeavors. I'm the beneficiary of priceless experiences. I cannot thank God enough for the people and the places, the new insights, the struggles, the wisdom of elders, the kindness of persons for whom no one is a stranger, *and* God's enduring and surprising grace—so very much evident in ecumenical work. So, I have some things to say. I want to talk about the present context in which we engage in ecumenical ministry, about CUIC and the NCC, and about my own view of the ecumenical agenda as this new century unfolds.

Our Present Context

Immigration; Southern Christianity

On Friday a conference on "The impact of migration on the church and the ecclesial context" ended in Nairobi, sponsored by the Global Ecumenical Network on Migration and hosted by the All Africa Conference of Churches. The WCC press release that announced the conference said that migration in today's globalized world "raises questions about inter-faith relations, identity, justice, racism, advocacy and diakonia and, inevitably, affects the contexts in which churches live."¹ While this conference was focused mainly on the effects of global immigration in Africa, the implications for the US ought to be obvious to us with the added dimension of our own cultural, economic, and political struggles with immigration, legal and illegal to the U.S.

In A Multitude of Blessings: A Christian Approach to Religious Diversity, Cynthia Campbell reminds us that God's first covenant with humankind, the covenant with Noah, "...precedes the selection of one group to be 'God's own people' and is for *all* creation and *all* humanity, for *all* time. In the biblical view...there was a universal covenant before there was a particular relationship with Israel."² She quotes the Jewish theologian Irving Greenberg who, based on the covenant with Noah, concludes that, "every religion that works to repair the world---and thus advance the triumph of life---is a valid expression of this divine pact with humanity."³ From the New Testament, Jesus says in John (10:16), "I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold." And Peter, "our

¹ WCC Press Release,

² Campbell, Cynthia, A Multitude of Blessings: A Christian Approach to Religious diversity, Westminster John Knox, 2007. pg. 24

³ Greenberg, Irving, For the Sake of Heaven and Earth: The New Encounter between Judaism and Christianity, Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2004, pg. 57

rock” says in Acts: 10:34-35, “I truly understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him.”

Christians are not alone in the world, not even in the nation. The U.S. may be the most diverse nation on the earth, though Egypt and Syria may well make the same claim. 9/11 did more elevate the need for ecumenical and interfaith relations than all the talk and text of the last century strung together in a streaming video on satellite radio.

Europe has over 15 million Muslims today; 3 million in Germany, 2 million in France, a million in Britain.⁴ About half of those who attend church in London are reported to be black. The Kingsway International Christian Centre in London boasts a sanctuary that seats 5,000, double the capacity of Westminster Abbey. The founder and pastor came to London in 1992 as a missionary from Nigeria and began with 300 people.⁵ He has suggested that the Anglican Church ought to “die gracefully” and give its property to new and vibrant churches like his own.⁶

W.E.B. DuBois characterized the problem of the 20th Century as “the problem of the color line.” While it is clear that skin color will continue to play a critical role in this century the issues are entirely more complex encompassing now the North-South economic divide. It’s clear that in the west we do not understand Islam, we’re ignorant of its basic premises and this venerable tradition is subjected to gross distortions by those who understand it least and seem determined to exploit their ignorance and the apathy of

⁴ Jenkins, Philip, The New Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity, pg. 97-98, Oxford University Press, 2002

⁵ Ibid. pg. 98

⁶ BBC World Service, Emily Buchanan, July 6, 2000

a silent majority so that the gap between Christianity and Islam is made all the more deep and perilous in a world armed for unlimited chaos and destruction of life.

We are experiencing this, altogether too painfully, in Iraq, Lebanon, Palestine and Israel, to name those places and conflicts that garner the most frequent and chilling headlines. But the effects of this are evident throughout Europe, Asia and the United States. And if that isn't already considerably more than we can handle, to use a phrase from Philip Jenkins in The New Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity, "...perhaps the great political unknown of the new century, the most powerful international wild card, will be that mysterious non-Western ideology called Christianity."⁷

Jenkins describes the characteristics of this "Southern Christianity," as "...enthusiastic and spontaneous, fundamentalist and supernatural-oriented..."⁸ As the population in Asian, African, and South American countries explodes while the white west declines, it is this Christianity that may well come to be predominant. A less objective view of the Christianity of the South would describe it as "...fanatical, superstitious, demagogic...politically reactionary and sexually repressive."⁹

It is growing more common for African Churches, as well as churches from other nations, to evangelize in the United States. There are 80,000 Nigerians in Houston, many of them in thriving Christian churches and part of a denomination. Since 1981, the *Redeemed Christian Church of God*, a Nigerian based denomination, has started churches in Houston, Tallahassee, New York, Washington, Chicago, Atlanta, Detroit, and right here in Dallas. The website of the Dallas congregation speaks of their global initiative as

⁷ Jenkins, pg. 161

⁸ Ibid pg.78

⁹ Ibid. pg. 161

“...in fulfillment of the vision that had been given to the founder ...that this church would spread to cover the whole earth,”¹⁰

In 1960 only 3% of the population of Houston was born on foreign soil, today that figure is 25%. Several years ago at a meeting of the US Conference of the WCC, I was startled hearing Diana Eck say that there are more Muslims in the US than there are Episcopalians. In 2000 there were 35 million Americans counted as Hispanic, (60% Mexican). By 2050 the estimate is there will be 100 million Americans of Hispanic decent. “They will then constitute one of the world’s largest Latino societies, more populous than any actual Hispanic nation with the exception of Mexico or Brazil”¹¹ Such a population will “...very likely have a far more Southern religious complexion than anything we can imagine at present.”¹²

Look for a moment at the current crisis in the Episcopal Church, where we see conservative congregations aligning with, joining the non-geographical diocese of an Anglican communion in Nigeria. These trends will only become more pronounced as we move toward the middle of this century. They will command serious attention in our ecumenical deliberations and in our practice of Christian hospitality.

The economic divide

Our present context is also characterized by profound economic disparities. In a nation so dominated by a media that sees white American as the dominant reality, and of course that is true in all the measures that define power and influence, we think of the typical Christian as a middle class white person of evangelical persuasion. But the fact is, if there is such a thing as a typical Christian, in our world that

¹⁰[http://www.dhc.net/rccg/history\(1\).htm](http://www.dhc.net/rccg/history(1).htm).

¹¹ Jenkins, pg. 100

¹² Ibid. pg.

would be a poor person, poor beyond the limits of our everyday experience in the United States. And that person would live in Africa, or South America.

Worldwide: 2 billion people live on less than \$2 a day; that is 7 times the population of the United States.¹³ 150 million children are malnourished. 10 million children under 5 die each year. 40 million people infected with HIV/AIDS

Jenkins quotes a CIA report, “In Sub-Saharan Africa, persistent conflicts and instability, autocratic and corrupt governments, over-dependence on commodities with declining real prices, low levels of education, and widespread infectious diseases will combine to prevent most countries from experiencing rapid economic growth.”¹⁴

The Census Bureau reports that in the U.S. there were 37 million people living below the poverty line in 2005. The poverty rate for whites is 8.3 and for blacks and Hispanics, 24.9% and 21.8%, respectively. Do you know that in Washington DC, 1 in every 20 persons is infected with HIV/AIDS? And that in Harlem, 1 in 7 black males is infected with HIV/AIDS?

We can't begin to be serious about ecumenism and interfaith relations if we do not see the world as it is and are not actively engaged in tending to the needs of “the least of these” in whom we encounter the living Christ. And does it need to be said that to confront the problem of the economic disparity that poisons the human family and effects us all, whether or not we acknowledge it, we must act cooperatively—across religious and national borders? What are the Methodists going to do about poverty? The Lutherans about global warming? We're going to solve these global crises together or be overwhelmed them together.

¹³ Campbell, Martha, Cleland, John, and others, “Return of the Population Growth Factor” Science, Vol. 315 March 16, 2007

¹⁴ Global Trends 2015; online CIA publication

CUIC

We may either be witnessing the demise of CUIC and the compelling vision that created it 47 years ago or a dramatic revival that could anticipate a move toward full communion among the now ten. It is ironic that not long after a tenth communion has joined, with still others poised to consider joining formally, there is the threat of internal disintegration around several issues that have not all fully come into public view outside the coordinating committee. We must find ways to rebuild and strengthen the relationships that are so tenuous now in CUIC. I continue to believe that CUIC is an inspired witness to the unity that God wills for Christian community in our nation. It is a circle, grown from 4 to 10 parts that can be widened, like God's mercy. This present crisis is an opportunity to boldly confront again the issue of race--the fault line for division in the fabric of our national and religious life. We have the challenge of trying to address an issue with deep historic dimensions in a time when change so rapidly layers our context with ever greater complexity and urgency.

And while it cannot be denied that race and racism are a factor in the current tensions, the complex of issues around episcopacy are prominent as well. That seems utterly obvious, but I mean here, episcopacy related to the African American churches as well as those, Presbyterians for example, we have become accustomed to thinking are most at odds with where CUIC has been committed to going from its very Presbyterian beginning—with thanks to none other than Eugene Carson Blake.

The actions, and theological rationales for those actions, proposed in the several documents that have approached this issue have been perceived as “making right” or “correcting” some flaw in the consecration of African American bishops. When at a

recent CUIC meeting hosted by one of the African American churches, the presiding African American bishop was unable to serve as the principal celebrant at the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, in deference to an Episcopal Bishop, a profound wound was inflicted. This weaving of racial and theological dimensions is toxic and profoundly compromises any ability to resolve the issue and move further toward the reconciliation of ministries.

Beyond this, there is the issue of human sexuality. Clearly, the member communions hold starkly different views about homosexuality, and there is the difficult task of living in community with one another with integrity and respect for profound church dividing differences. Here, once again, race, now woven with issues of biblical authority and interpretation challenge the fabric of Christian community. Silence about these matters won't do anymore in the heated climate of today even though there would seem to be some agreement about this in the inclusive language of Churches in Covenant Communion (see Chapter 4 The Elements of covenanting). As Michael Kinnamon put it so simply in a dialogue at the Governing Board of the NCC this past February, "*Can the ecumenical movement ever become a place where we name our toughest differences?*"

How do we move through this difficult moment to the reconciliation of ministries? In our ecumenical organizations, how do we make real progress in the stalled evolution of our ability to deal with the intractable issue of race—America's original sin? You can't believe I could actually answer a question like that. Here's a fresh construction that you might find intriguing.

I was recently introduced to the work of The Rev. Byron Bland a minister member of San Jose Presbytery. Rev. Bland is a fellow at the Stanford Center on

International Conflict and Negotiation and the Center for Democracy, Development and the Rule of Law at Stanford University. He's been a part of the back channel diplomacy efforts that brought resolution to the "troubles" in Northern Ireland. The text I'm going to quote refer to the possibilities for peace in the Middle East, but they seem useful to me in the environment of ecumenical conversation as well. He was asked about the possible of finding a "Palestinian Mandela."

Israelis need to find a Palestinian Mandela, and Palestinians need to find an Israeli Mandela. However, the Mandela they need to find is not the leader who will make the concessions they seek but the one to whom they can make the concessions they say they cannot offer, Mandela was this kind of leader because his repeated actions and unequivocal words gave witness to a future that Afrikaners could embrace without fear.

Mandela presents leaders today with a twin challenge, First, how do we find the person on the other side to whom we can make the concessions that we feel we cannot afford to make? Second and much more important, how can we become the persons to whom the other side can make the concessions they say they cannot make? Both are important, but the second is critical in a time when each, standing back, looks to the other to perform the difficult actions needed to move the peace process forward.¹⁵

The basic negotiating principle at the heart of this strikes me as in the spirit of Christ. How do we find, how do we become the person to whom the other side feels they can lose and yet feel safe, respected, and provided for. The intractable ecumenical divides, in CUIC for example, between Episcopalians and Presbyterians suggest themselves as in need of something like this principle. And of course in such a context

¹⁵ Bland, Byron, *Finding Mandela*, Presbyterian News Service, April 12, 2007

we may not be talking about an individual--but traditions that offer some sense of security to others that fear the loss of something precious.

Presbyterians followed Eugene Blake into COCU knowing Bishops, in some form, were in the future. In about the mid-nineties, representing the Presbyterian delegation to COCU, Dottie Barnard and I took a proposal for a corporate Bishop to the catholicity committee of the General Assembly. We were very well received and the proposal very thoroughly defeated. We couldn't get it out of the committee and onto the floor of the assembly. Presbyterians couldn't "lose." Episcopalians can't lose, AME's can't lose. None of us can lose what it is we think makes us who we are. Though our savior lost it all on a cross.

O, if we could only value this great sovereign God of all as highly as we value and guard our particular perspectives. Remember Paul's remarks to the Athenians in Acts 17:24ff, "The God who made the world and everything in it, he who is Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in shrines made by human hands...from one ancestor he made all nations to inhabit the whole earth...For 'In him we live and move and have our being'; as even some of your own poets have said, 'For we too are his offspring.'" There's a fine Christian contribution to ecumenical and interfaith dialogue.

National Council of Churches/Christian Churches Together

Eight years ago many thought the NCC would not survive, morale was low, the endowment had been depleted, there was tremendous tension between the Governing Board and the Board of Directors of Church World Service, and its sense of mission was clouded and unclear, staff was reduced by one half. What has now become Christian

Churches Together was conceived in that climate, with some of the leadership of the NCC involved.

I think CCT is a good idea and has potential to become an important ecumenical instrument for the future, but it will take time to build trust and to find an effective voice and witness with the great diversity present among the participating families and individual communions. It is hard to argue against an organization that brings together Roman Catholics with the Church of God in Christ, the Orthodox, and the National Baptist Convention.

But CCT has erred in not taking sufficient care to engage constructively those African American Churches, AME, AMEZ, and CME, that have been so much involved in ecumenical work since the 1970's, and who pleaded for patience and careful deliberation before beginning a bold new thing without their presence and in the context of an agreement made to begin only with the representation of the "families" that constitute the broad sweep of religious life in America.

The NCC has begun to rebuild by living within the new reality—member communions are unable to support the Council at the same levels before internal pressures began to reduce budgets and staff at the national level. Other sources of funding have to be found for programs that are desired by member communions working together in NCC Commissions and on the Governing Board. The Environmental Justice work of the NCC is almost entirely funded by grants from foundations. We will likely see more of this in the future.

The Strategic Plan of the NCC has put front and center the question of the meaning of Membership and the Council will begin the next quadrennium with a focus

on communion visits to strengthen relationships among us and encourage our mutual accountability. We must balance a renewed presence and credibility in the arena of social concerns with a renewed passion for the unity of the church: faith and order and life and work.

Bob Edgar has led us in a vigorous engagement of issues at the heart of the biblical message, to use his language, “peace, poverty, and planet earth.” The Council has been not just been involved in, but led significant efforts to raise the minimum wage through the *Let Justice Roll* campaign and to secure government benefits due to the poor through the innovative *Benefit Bank* initiative. But the Council has to address another of Michael Kinnamon’s piercing questions in our recent dialogue on ecumenism today, “*Do we have the will and energy for unity as we continue to defend denominational perogatives?*” And I think I’d want to add—*and defend ourselves from internal disintegration over red state-blue state issues—sexuality chief among them?*

We will need to begin to explore how through the Council, we can help to revive one another. Here I don’t mean simply clinging to one another to offer some remnant of a joint ministry, but to actively and creatively seek renewal in our separate places by confronting together the reasons for our decline and the hope of our renewal.

The Strategic Plan also envisions a coordinated, staff supported renewal of work in ecumenical networks. With some glaring exceptions, Wisconsin, Massachusetts to name two of several, state and regional Councils of Churches have either disappeared or are struggling. Scott Anderson, the executive of the Wisconsin Council of Churches has written an intriguing paper on *Departure Points for a New Ecumenism*. One of his points is the shift From Regional to Local:

Congregations—not denominations—are the new center of the ecumenical universe. As the mainline churches follow their trend lines towards decline and reinvention, the only constant in the shifting ecclesial equation will be the local church. Conciliar organizations which fail to develop new and vital relationships with congregations will not likely survive.¹⁶

In a meeting to discuss Re-entry programs for incarcerated persons returning to society, I was asked if the NCC could identify congregations at 30 sites around the country who could support such programs by providing mentors for men re-entering society. An initiative such as this demonstrates the need for links among national, regional and local partners in the one ecumenical movement—in response to the injunction to care for the least among us.

Who will lead?

Since the selection of Dr. Brian Blount as the next president of Union Theological Seminary in Austin, I've had occasion to think again about the leadership our seminaries are preparing for the church in the coming century. It must be clear that most of us gathered in this room and most of those engaged in leadership of the ecumenical movement in the latter part of the last century will not be among those who will chart the path deep into this century. In an editorial for the Richmond Times-Dispatch (to be published July 1st), Dr. Blount wrote that like John on the Isle of Patmos, we know trouble,

“...war in Iraq and Afghanistan; genocide; terrorism; the working poor; the uninsured; immigration; human rights; human sexuality; secularization; high cost of living; ethnic tensions; racial strife; economic disenfranchisement; impoverished inner cities; perilous

¹⁶ Anderson, Scott, *Departure Points for a New Ecumenism*, pg. 1

lack of involvement in a political process that tallies more votes for an American Idol than for an American president... We are not a place where people come for a period of years to find sanctuary from the storms; we do not whisk students away from the world, we inspire them to follow the lead of God's Holy Spirit in changing the world. And then we give them the tools to go do it. We simulate theological, social, and political storms even as we equip them with the biblical, theological, historical, ethical, practical, and spiritual resources to confront them, contain them, and convert their destructive reality into reconstructive opportunity.

Formal study of key ecumenical texts or of the ecumenical movement was in short supply when I was in seminary, not one single professor worked primarily in ecumenics. A position in Ecumenics and Mission was a revolving door of academic talent and the occupant of the position seemed always to have expertise in Mission, rather than ecumenism. Our seminaries need desperately to participate in equipping church leadership for ministry with the ability to lead in the ecumenical and interfaith context that awaits them.

Scott Anderson also suggests that leadership for our ecumenical future cannot be expected to come from professional ecumenists whose numbers are shrinking as rapidly as denominational budgets that support ecumenical work. We will have to look, he thinks, to the passion of the laity for the emergence of a new cadre of leadership for the future.

The search for people with passion inevitably leads us away from denominational structures and leaders and towards the grassroots church, to search out and equip those who are gifted for ecumenical witness.

The modern ecumenical movement began as a lay-led phenomenon. The development of Sunday Schools in the United States

and the expansion of foreign mission work in the 19th and 20th centuries were instituted, grown and underwritten by lay leaders. Since the passion for the church's ecumenical witness has left the denominational structures, the emerging paradigm may be leading the conciliar movement back to lay leadership as the primary locus of authority.¹⁷

At the Table

I was in a bible study group at the 9th assembly of the WCC with a young lay African man inexperienced in ecumenical settings. There was a Greek Orthodox bishop in our group. The young man could not understand our discussion about the problems related to a common table. *What do you mean we can't have communion together, why aren't we celebrating the Lord's Supper here? It's the Lord's table.* He just didn't get it.

I know you do understand the issues involved here, I wouldn't want to minimize them for religious traditions that have been divided for centuries now and where wars have been fought and lives lost over what were considered life and death issues. But I hope a kind of holy and troubled wonder accompanies the deep understanding; the wonder a typical layperson, a young person with quite normal interests and experiences, brings to this stone wall of division, this so far impenetrable boundary that guards access to the table of our Lord, like the 360 or 700 miles of fencing our government contemplates erecting on our southern border with Mexico.

What kind of witness can we make to the world if we cannot break bread together at the Lord's table? The whole truth is ecumenism and interfaith dialogue, understanding and cooperative action in local communities and hot spots around the globe don't just matter, they are essential to our present and future. The highly technical

¹⁷ Ibid. pg. 4

dialogues that are the mainstay of the last half of the 20th century make no sense to the younger generation in this country and around the world. While those kinds of discussions in the ecumenical arena must continue they are only, now, a part of the basic understanding and respect that must define our practice of religion today in cities like Dallas.

Pope Benedict XVI entered and perhaps prayed in a Mosque in Turkey! That's the kind of barrier breaking move our churches need more of. We ought to at least give one another signs now and then that we truly see in one another God's image.

Well beyond the rarified air of intellectual wrestling with ancient doctrinal disputes that continue to divide today are the down the block and around the corner mosques, temples, ashrams that share the neighborhood with the First Baptist and Second Presbyterian, St. Mark's Lutheran or Episcopal, or the storefront independent Christian congregation as vital as any. And of course there are the Mega churches, the Home Depots of the religious landscape that are playing an increasingly visible role in American religious life. How can we expand our speaking and acting in this direction?

A Final Word...

After the tragic events that took place on the Pettus Bridge in Selma, Alabama when many Blacks were beaten and James Reeb was murdered, Civil Rights demonstrators, not the mobs attacking them, were accused by some of undermining American society. Rabbi Abraham Heschel said that they were trivializing piety. Heschel said "To act in the spirit of religion is to unite what lies apart, to remember that humanity as a whole is God's beloved child."

Ecumenism is our future, however reconceived in light of present circumstances in our existing organizations and the inevitable pressures exerted by our volatile society and world. Ecumenism is our future, or our future or we will not be able to make much sense of the future. Interfaith work is essential and inescapable facet of an enlightened ecumenical agenda.

In a study conducted out of Hartford Seminary, 22% of congregations reported participating in an interfaith worship service in the past year (2005), and 37% reported joining in interfaith community service. Both up dramatically since a similar study done in 2000 when only 7% participated in interfaith worship and 8% in interfaith community service activities during that year. These numbers need to grow.

I want to see a muscular ecumenism for the 21st century; an ecumenism that continues the dialogues that have largely characterized the movement since early in the last century and that now builds upon the vibrant local manifestations of hands on, on-the-ground ecumenical and interfaith cooperation and action. We need an ecumenism that speaks and acts. We need an ecumenism that speaks around the conference tables as scholars continue to reconcile the theological divides of earlier centuries and that tragically settled into walled and warring religious communities through centuries of open hostility and absent of a compelling desire for dialogue and reconciliation.

We need an ecumenism that acts in the world to reconcile our broken humanity and halt the creeping hatred that is devouring human life like the flow of a molten stream of lava. We need an ecumenism that sees all of humanity as a child of God and that unites what now, so tragically, lies apart. We need an ecumenism that will help us gather at the Lord's table for that sacred meal, and that helps to end the poverty that leaves

cupboards bare all over the world. Paul tells us in Corinthians that “...in Christ God was reconciling *the world* to himself...” (2 Corinthians 5:19).