All You Need Is Love

Those who say, “I love God,” and hate their brothers or sisters¹ are liars; for those who do not love a brother or sister whom they have seen, cannot love God whom they have not seen. (1 John 4:20, NRSV)

Those who grew up in the 1960’s heard the English Rock Group, The Beatles, sing “All You Need is Love,” a very whimsical song with the refrain lingering long after the song was sung! It was produced as a single in 1967, and on June 25th of that year was a contribution to a program called Our World, broadcast via satellite link to 25 countries and an audience of 400 million people. Wikipedia described the song as a tribute to the counter cultural “flower power” movement of the 1960′s. “All you need is love, love is all you need.” The sentiment may be naïve, but millions and millions listened and sang along.

Fifty years later the Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church, the Most Reverend Michael Curry, is often quoted for his words, “If it is not of love, it is not of God.” As I write this article today’s session of the United State Congress was canceled because Capitol Intelligence received credible information that an immanent attack on Congress by an unnamed right-wing militia might be possible. The mob overrunning the Capitol on January 6th came to my mind once again, and the threat of another attack should lead us to ask if we are not losing another bedrock of normalcy and the very roots of our democracy.
It is so subtle how patriotism and religion can be so poisoned that it becomes a Big Lie. Without understanding the full thrust of Christian Nationalism and other such movements in history, such movements need to be accountable by asking if what is driving the movement of Love, the Love of God? And, yes, we all need constantly to be asking ourselves that question. We have lost our way as a people, and in some of my reading recently, Henri Nouwen’s work comes to mind. Nouwen talks about dancing with God, and he suggests the first movement in that dance, is forgiveness. In a compilation of quotes from his works, Nouwen in The Only Necessary Thing, affirms that when we can forgive our enemies and the can forgive, the Evil One is defeated.

Among other actions humans take, activism incited by anger, needs to pass what I might call the James Baldwin litmus test. Baldwin in The Fire Next Time reflects on a meeting he has just had with Malcolm X, who in many ways he admires. However, he expresses a note of concern not only about this pivotal figure among those raising Black consciousness, but for all of us. Baldwin says, “People always seem to band together in accordance to a principle that has nothing to do with love, a principle that releases them from personal responsibility.” Forgiveness is a way back to love, the love of God.

In reading the lyrics of their song, my sense of All You Need is Love is that everything that a person can do has been done by others already. However, the one thing we need in our lives both to give and to receive is love. The love of God is what we all need, and without it we are nothing. Can we as a diverse group of churches and faith communities and individuals witness to that Love to a world filled with hate and hungering for love?

Rev. Dan Krutz

Prayers and Sympathy

Get well Prayers for Mrs. Mary Collins
LIC Board Member and President of Church Women United in LA, Mrs. Mary Collins, recently had a fall with a deep gash on her head and injury to her hip. She had surgery and is rehabbing in a facility on the West Bank of New Orleans. She still attended the LIC Annual Assembly via Zoom on March 2nd – way to go Mary!

For Those in Bereavement

Prayers for Rev. Michael Otkins and family
We are greatly saddened to report that Michael Otkins, Jr., the 20-year-old son of Rev. Michael Otkins, Sr., passed away on February 19th. Please continue to hold up this family in this tragic and unexpected loss. Obituary and condolence link: https://www.najamesfh.com/obituary/michael-otkins-ii
Rev. Michael Otkins, Sr., currently serves as a Board Designate to the LIC for the Louisiana Home and Foreign Mission Baptist State Convention and also as a Regional Coordinator to the LIC for Region Seven.

Prayers for the Mackintosh family
A consistent friend to Ecumenism and Interfaith relations: The Reverend Dr. William Mackintosh passed away on February 4th at the age of 96. He had Degrees in Theology, Divinity, English Literature, and Philosophy. He completed master’s degrees in Divinity and English Literature at Yale and Pennsylvania Universities, and his Doctorate in Church History at Mansfield and St. Catherine Colleges at Oxford University in England. He was ordained to Ministry in 1958 by the Presbytery of London and the Church of Scotland, then returned to the United States in 1962 to become the Director of Communications for the Colorado Council of Churches. Moving to New Orleans afterwards, he founded Interfaith Communications International in 1976 to bring together communities of different faith for prayer, healing, and celebration. Obituary link:
Annual Assembly overview and remembering S.W. LA

The 51st Annual Assembly of the Louisiana Interchurch was held via Zoom on March 2, 2021. Original plans were to hold it in Lake Charles. However, COVID restrictions and the recent hurricanes that devastated the area, required a change in plans.

In remembrance of our brothers and sisters in Lake Charles, a portion of the meeting focused on the needs in South West Louisiana.

We are grateful to Sister Miriam MacLean of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Lake Charles for creating a video for all to watch regarding the impact of the hurricanes on South West Louisiana. It's going to be a long road to recovery.

We encourage you to donate through the LIC (at Contribute Now) or through the charity of your choice, to help those trying to recover from the impacts of last year’s hurricanes on South West Louisiana.

We also encourage you to watch Sister Miriam’s video at: https://youtu.be/vGWBcyPeySo

Other highlights:

Rev. Dr. Nadine Burton, Executive Regional Minister of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) -Great River Region, was installed as the incoming President of the LIC. Rev. Shelton Charles Dixon, President of the Louisiana Home & Foreign Mission Baptist State Convention will now serve as President-Elect. Other Officers and Board Members-at-Large were re-elected and Ms. Leigh Rachal (of the Presbytery of South LA) was elected to once again serve as a Board Member-at-Large after a brief break. Welcome all!

Breakout Groups explored six themes surfaced by the work of the Transition task force: (Age Diversity, Public Relations, Racial Justice, Children and Poverty; the Environment, and Unity and Relationships). These themes provide the focus on continued and future priorities for ministry. Participants in Breakout Groups held insightful conversations to gather more focus on topic areas and offered concrete steps to reach
specific goals. The Transition task force will receive the fruits of the work of the breakout groups produced by Assembly participants to further its work in giving direction for the future of the Louisiana Interchurch Conference. Further work of the transition team will include developing a timeline during the coming year that will include a process leading to calling a new Executive Director. The LIC Executive Director, Rev. Dan Krutz, plans to retire in the Spring of 2022.

In light of still-existent Nazism, and the remembrance of the Holocaust and other atrocities done to the Jewish community, a motion was passed requesting the member churches of the LIC to offer more support and solidarity to Jewish synagogues and temples. There are annual holocaust memorial services held in various areas of Louisiana and we encourage you to attend/participate in these events.

Pope John Paul II’s document calling the renewal of the Roman Catholic Church to Christ’s call to the Unity, Ut Unum Sint (That All May Be One), has been examined by the LIC Faith and Order Commission. The Commission, led by Fr. Buddy Noel, is drafting on a Pastoral Statement to help guide the work of the LIC into the future. Picking on the language of John Paul II, LIC’s commitment to the work of ecumenism is irrevocable, and we have made many strides toward this goal of unity, with gains in ecumenical as well as interreligious dialog. Though good work is begun, the LIC still has work to do, including recruiting a new generation of ecumenical leaders to continue this ministry.

Reserve the dates for the Fall Board Meeting: Sept. 27-28, 2021 in Houma, LA (if not virtual)

Interfaith Federation – Braver Angels Workshops in March

Braver Angels is a national organization dedicated to overcoming polarization.

BRAVER ANGELS WORKSHOPS - virtual – in TWO sessions:
In our current polarized political environment, many of us avoid or dread political conversations with friends or family members whose politics differ from their own. Attend one or both workshops to increase your skills in dealing with tough conversations. Braver Angels is a national organization dedicated to overcoming polarization. Leader: John Fletcher

1) Depolarizing Within
Tuesday, March 16, 6-8:30 pm REGISTER
Designed to foster skills to help you lessen the effects of polarization when you encounter them in your political conversations. Polarization refers to how we regard and talk about large groups of ordinary people on the other side of the political aisle.

2) Skills for Bridging the Divide
Saturday, March 20, 3-4:30pm REGISTER
Designed to teach skills for having respectful conversations that clarify differences, search for common ground, and affirm the importance of the relationship. They also give participants a safe environment to practice those skills.

More info., go to: www.ifedgbr.com
Governor’s Prayer Breakfast – April 13th, Virtual
Program begins at 7:30AM and will conclude by 8:30AM
Virtual program is FREE this year

Dr. Jim Denison is returning as the keynote speaker, Nathan Sheridan as musical guest, as well as some other special guests that are sure to encourage and inspire you!

Register Today!

For more information or to be a sponsor, go to: www.lagpb.org

National Workshop on Christian Unity – Virtual, April 12-15

The National Workshop on Christian Unity will be held virtually this year during the dates of April 12 – 15, 2021. The cost is $75.00.

Theme: Abide in my love… You shall bear much fruit

The online registration process will be set up soon; keep watching the NWCU website. PLEASE NOTE that if you do a search and the link shows in CHINESE, you can just hit the TRANSLATE THIS PAGE section to see it in English.

The NWCU will be using the Whova platform for this conference and will provide introduction to the platform before the Workshop begins. Opening worship will be Monday evening, April 12th. On Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday (April 13-15), there will be morning devotions followed by the three plenaries. The Theologian in Residence will be Fr. William Skudlarek from St. John's Abbey in Collegeville, Minnesota. Tuesday will feature Msgr. Indunil Janakaratne Kodithuwakku Kankanamalage who serves as the Secretary of the Vatican's Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue. Wednesday's plenary will feature Bishops from several of denominations interacting about how our church bodies can abide in God's love working on issues around human migration. On Thursday, NWCU will take a boots-on-the-ground approach to the same topic with two people who are driving advocacy efforts, working directly with asylum and helping those in need at the border.

Offering thanks to our recent contributors – we couldn't make it without you all!
The majority of the LIC operating income is contributed through the leadership of our member Judicatories, whom we deeply appreciate and depend upon. Additionally, we depend upon partners to supplement the needs. Our thanks to the below contributors:

Contributions received from December 30, 2020 through March 4, 2021:

FRIENDS OF THE LIC contributions: Bishop James Proctor; and Mrs. Martha Boone in memory of her sister, Rev. Mary Moody

Consultant Fee / Social betterment programs: Union That Nothing Be Lost-Franciscan Friars of the Atonement; and Rev. Dan Krutz

Thank you all!

Please pray for this ecumenical ministry. If you would like to help financially, please mail contributions to: Louisiana Interchurch Conference, 527 N. Blvd., 4th Floor, Baton Rouge, LA 70802, or contribute online via PayPal at http://www.lainterchurch.org/contribute/index.htm.

Board Meeting Dates to Calendar

Fall Board meeting dates:

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<th>Year</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2021</td>
<td>Sept. 20-21, Houma, LA</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CHANGED to September 27-28, 2021</td>
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<td>2022</td>
<td>Sept. 19-20, Alexandria, LA</td>
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Annual Assembly meeting dates:

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<tr>
<td>2022</td>
<td>March 14-15, Baton Rouge, LA – 52nd Annual Assembly</td>
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“To live the faith we hold in common”

President: The Rev. Dr. Nadine Burton; President Elect: The Rev. Shelton Charles Dixon; Executive Director: Fr. Dan Krutz