

'ONE SPIRIT, MANY GIFTS' CHRISTIAN ECUMENISM

PENTECOST, YEAR A

Lectionary Texts: Acts 2:1-21 Numbers 11:24-30 Psalm 104:24-34, 35b John 20:19-23
John 7:37-39 I Corinthians 12:3-13

Focus Text: I Corinthians 12:3-13

³ Therefore I want you to understand that no one speaking by the Spirit of God ever says "Let Jesus be cursed!" and no one can say "Jesus is Lord" except by the Holy Spirit. ⁴ Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; ⁵ and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; ⁶ and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. ⁷ To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. ⁸ To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, ⁹ to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, ¹⁰ to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the discernment of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. ¹¹ All these are activated by one and the same Spirit, who allots to each one individually just as the Spirit chooses. ¹² For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. ¹³ For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body — Jews or Greeks, slaves or free — and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

NRSV

ADDITIONAL TEXTS

I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.

John 13:34-35

I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.

John 17:20-23

If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give away all my possessions, and if I hand over my body so that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing. Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends... And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love.

I Corinthians 13:1-13

[Christ] is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers -- all things have been created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him God was pleased to reconcile to [God's Self] all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross.

Colossians 1:15-20

Therefore be serious and discipline yourselves for the sake of your prayers. Above all, maintain constant love for one another, for love covers a multitude of sins. Be hospitable to one another without complaining. Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received. Whoever speaks must do so as one speaking the very words of God; whoever serves must do so with the strength that God supplies, so that God may be glorified in all things through Jesus Christ. To [God] belongs the glory and the power forever and ever. Amen.

I Peter 4:7-11

SCRIPTURE COMMENTARY

BY CHRIS LIU BEERS, PROGRAM ASSOCIATE
NC COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

I Corinthians represents, in part, Paul's attempt to respond to a series of crucial issues facing the nascent Corinthian church. How does wisdom relate to discipleship (see 1-4)? What are the ethical implications of Christian living when it comes to sexuality and family (see 6-7)? How should Christians respond to food that has been sacrificed to idols (see 8)? And, most relevant to today's lectionary passage, how are spiritual gifts to be properly exercised in the church (see 12-14)? Here, Paul "informs" his sisters and brothers about the work of the Holy Spirit in creating one body with many diverse parts. It is in this context – a fractured Christian community that is confused about the Spirit's gifts – that Paul famously demonstrates the truth that *agape* love is indeed "a more excellent way" (12:31).

Throughout I Corinthians 12, Paul utilizes the metaphor of a body to explain what it means to live into a community that is worthy of the name "Christian." "For just as the body is one," he says, "and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ" (12:12). The body is animated only through the combined and unified efforts of its many parts; diversity is not a hindrance to the proper functioning of the body, but rather is completely vital to it. The body metaphor captures the dynamic relationship between diversity and unity, between varieties of gifts and the same Spirit, between varieties of services and the same Lord, between varieties of activities and the same God.

In addition to the notion of the body, Paul interweaves two other key themes into his pastoral wisdom for the Corinthians. First is the notion of the "common good," which Paul invokes in verse 7: "To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good." The sense is clear, yet profound, as individual Christians receive the Spirit not for themselves, but for the benefit (or "profit" or "advantage") of all. The activity of the Spirit is for the good of the church, not to be claimed as "private property." Paul's emphasis on what he calls the common good – here animated by the Spirit – drives much of his advice in I Corinthians.

Another theme that Paul skillfully incorporates is that of baptism. In fact, right in the very beginning of I Corinthians, Paul appeals to baptism as the theological foundation that lends support to the genuine unity among Christians. Even while acknowledging the discord among believers (in 1:12 some say, "'I belong to Paul,' or 'I belong to Apollos,' or 'I belong to Cephas,' or 'I belong to Christ'"), he appeals to the fundamental unity that really exists for them all, for all were baptized, as Paul later says, "into one body-- Jews or Greeks, slaves or free-- and we were all made to drink of one Spirit" (12:13). While even the earliest Christians experienced serious divisions in their midst, Paul emphasizes the notion that the unity to which they have been called, and indeed baptized, in Christ is ultimately more determinative than their disagreements. They are the very Body of Christ.

PASTORAL REFLECTION

BY REV. BILL McELVEEN, PASTOR OF
VISITATION, TRINITY MORAVIAN CHURCH,
WINSTON-SALEM

Have you ever wondered what Jesus thinks is most important? It can be argued that there are four main things which Jesus considers most crucial. First, he wants us to have a trusting and saving relationship with God through him. Why do we say that this is one of the most important things? It's because he became incarnate to live among us and died to atone for our sins and to win our trust and faith in himself. Second, he wants us to live a Christian life as his followers and disciples. Jesus spent much of his ministry teaching about the Christian way of life and inviting people to follow him. Third, Jesus wants to meet the human needs and problems of hunger, illness, physical deprivation, and injustice. The evidence for this is that he performed miracles in relief of hunger and illness and he reminded us that, in the final judgment, we will be judged based on whether we met the needs of the hungry, the thirsty, the naked and the prisoner. For in meeting those needs, we minister to Jesus himself. There is a fourth and final thing that Jesus considers among the most important of all. It is that his followers be one as he and the Father are one. Why is this on such a short list of things that are most important to Jesus?

On the night before he died, in what is now known as his "High Priestly Prayer" recorded in John 17, Jesus prayed: "...that they may all be one: even as thou, Father, art in me and I in Thee, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that Thou has sent me" (17:20-21). It seems to be a prayer that we who love Jesus may be at one with him and with the Father and that, somehow, the world's believing in him depends on our witness to him in unity. That is to say, if his followers are splintered into many varying and conflicting entities, the witness that could draw people to him is greatly diminished. This is not an accident – this is crucial to Jesus!

We Christians give a lot of attention to salvation, Christian living, ministering to the needy and seeking justice, but we often give too little attention to Jesus' desire that we, his followers, be "one" as he is with the Father. A short retelling of the history of Christ's followers reveals periods of greater and lesser Christian unity. To begin, there was a period of three or four hundred years of oneness as the Church struggled with its basic understanding of its faith and wrote the "Ecumenical Creeds," such as the Nicene and Apostles' Creeds, which have helped to bring Christians together through the centuries. The latter years of the first millennium, however, saw the alienation between the Church in the West and the Church in the East, climaxing in the "Great Schism" in 1054 – the first official division in the Church. Later the Church was splintered during the Reformation of the 1400's and 1500's, resulting in thousands of denominations by the early 21st century. Beginning in the early 20th century, particularly with the efforts of world missionaries who experienced the ways in which division between them diminished their witness, the modern "Ecumenical Movement" was born.

Here in North Carolina, the ecumenical movement manifested itself in the organization of the North Carolina Council of Churches in 1935. The World Council of Churches was formed some thirteen years later, in 1948, with the National Council of the Churches of Christ following on its heels in 1950. Later, the movement received welcome support during Vatican II, which was held in the 1960's. In 1982, the World Council of Churches published a groundbreaking ecumenical study entitled "Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry." To this day the ecumenical movement continues in bi-lateral and multi-lateral talks between and among denominations who are entering into "full communion" covenants and inter-changeability of clergy.

The various "statements of purpose" of these entities of the conciliar movement are both edifying and unifying: "The World Council of Churches is a fellowship of churches which confesses the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Savior according to the Scriptures and, therefore, seeks to fulfill together their common calling to the glory of the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit." The NC Council of Churches asserts that it "is a spiritual fellowship and cooperative agency of and for Christian churches in North Carolina. In the Council, member churches are brought together in study, prayer and action... The Council welcomes to its membership all those judicatories that accept Jesus Christ as the incarnate Son of God and Savior of the World, and that sincerely purpose to bear ecumenical witness to him..."

These statements continue to be embodied by these different groups in their acts of service and unity. The NC Council of Churches, for example, undertakes work in the areas racial justice, child and family advocacy, restorative justice, the treatment of farmworkers, public education, legislative advocacy, and efforts to promote Christian unity in North Carolina. The National Council of Churches organized Church World Service, which in the spirit of solidarity "meets basic needs of people in peril, works for justice and dignity with the poor and vulnerable, promotes peace and understanding among people of different faiths, races and nations, and affirms and preserves the dignity and integrity of Creation."

There is no doubt that the basic documents and worship literature of our various denominations call us with inspiration to the ecumenical calling - a calling we share because of our need to fulfill Christ's prayer for unity and the Apostle Paul's vision of a united Body. I will conclude by offering some of those words of inspiration from my own Church, the Moravian Church in America. I encourage you to discover what your own denomination has said about Christian unity and our ecumenical calling.

"We confess our share in the guilt which has manifest in the severed and divided state of Christendom. By means of such divisions we ourselves hinder the message and power of the Gospel. We recognize the danger of self-righteousness and judging others without love... We realize that it is the Lord's will that the church of Jesus Christ should give evidence of and seek unity in him with zeal and love. We see how such unity has been promised us and laid upon us as a charge. We recognize that through the grace of Christ the different denominations have received many gifts and that the Church of Christ may be enriched... It is our desire that we may learn from one another and rejoice together in the riches of the love of Christ and the manifold wisdom of God. We welcome every step that brings us nearer the goal of unity in him." This doctrinal position and this standard of Christian living gives rise to the following prayer in a liturgy of Christian unity: "May the variety of traditions and customs of your whole church become a multitude of lights to reveal the good news needed by people everywhere. May the variety of our ministries and service convey your redemptive love and bind us ever closer to one another. *Grant us grace to unite in essentials, to accept diversity in non-essentials, and to love one another in all things. Amen.*"

WORSHIP AID - 'ONE SPIRIT, MANY GIFTS'

RESPONSIVE READING

God of all creation, we gather together this day in the name of the risen Lord, your Son Jesus Christ.

You call us into fellowship with one another through the Holy Spirit,

And yet we - your church - are not united as one whole body.

Together we confess that we are divided by doctrine, by race and class, by historic wounds that have not been healed,

And we know that we cannot make ourselves whole.

Grant us, Lord, an ecumenical spirit that would see all churches throughout the world as part of the body of Christ.

Forgive us, Lord, for the ways in which we allow our doctrinal differences to be more important than your calling to love, generosity, hospitality and unity.

At the same time, Lord, grant us courage to genuinely address our differences as we engage in meaningful dialogue with one another, in prayer and in acts of worship and service together.

Together we confess that there are indeed varieties of gifts in your church,

But the same Spirit.

There are varieties of services in your church,

But the same Lord.

There are varieties of activities in your church,

But it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone - to each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.

Together we confess that reconciliation is possible, but only because God has made peace through the blood of Christ,

And because the Holy Spirit dwells among us.

Give us strength for the difficult road ahead,

Give us grace to engage each other across the lines of division that scar the Body of Christ,

That we would fulfill your commandment to love one another,

And in so doing, that our unity would bear witness to your love throughout the world. Amen.

(by Chris Liu Beers)

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Lord, you are peace and reconciliation!

Forgive us Lord, for often choosing jealousy and animosity rather than confidence and respect between churches.

Lord, you give us an abundance of blessings in the unity of faith.

Forgive us Lord, for often choosing isolation and refusing to be a blessing for each other, between churches.

Lord, you have given joy to the afflicted, liberation to the captives, pardon to sinners.

Forgive us Lord, for having closed our hands and turned our faces away from those who need help.

Lord, you have gathered us together as a shepherd gathers his flock and then goes to seek the one sheep that is lost.

Forgive us Lord, for having often strayed far from you, and pushed you away, thus underlining our divisions.

Almighty Lord, no one can lay any foundation other than the one that has been laid. That foundation is Jesus Christ. We admit that we have not been able to finish building on this foundation in such a way that we may become the dwelling place of God. We have sometimes even been the cause of its ruin. Even if our work should be lost, save us, Lord and give us a fresh chance to work for unity.

Create in us, we pray, an ardent longing for the unity of your church and enable us to work towards it. Amen.

(adapted from the World Council of Churches, "Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, 2005," www.wcc-coe.org/wcc/what/faith/wop2005-5.pdf)

Alternate Prayer of Confession

Lord, you are the way, the truth and the life.

We praise you for the gift of your Spirit who liberates us in our uncertainty.

Forgive us when we raise barriers that divide us or prevent us from seeking the truth which is the unity offered to us in Christ Jesus.

As we seek your will, release us from all prejudice so that we may be eager to journey more closely with one another and with you. **Amen.**

(adapted from "Prayer for Christian Unity, 2001")

SUGGESTED HYMNS

✠ <i>The Church's One Foundation</i>	AM 519/CH 272/MW 511/UMH 545/ TH 525/PH 442/BH 350/NCH 386/ CM 377
✠ <i>One Bread, One Body</i>	CH 393/GC 830/UMH 620
✠ <i>Una Espiga</i>	UMH 637/PH 518/CH 396/NCH 338
✠ <i>Where Charity and Love Prevail</i>	TH 581/MW 785/NCH 396/GC 625/ UMH 549
✠ <i>We Are Many Parts</i>	GC 733
✠ <i>What Brought Us Together</i>	MW 675

♦ *Hymnal Legend* ♦

† AM	— African Methodist Episcopal
† BH	— Baptist Hymnal
† CH	— Chalice Hymnal (Disciples of Christ)
† CM	— Christian Methodist Episcopal
† GC	— Gather Comprehensive (Rom Cath)
† LW	— Lutheran Worship
† MW	— Moravian Book of Worship
† NCH	— New Century Hymnal (UCC)
† PH	— Presbyterian Hymnal
† TH	— The Hymnal 1982 (Episcopal)
† UMH	— United Methodist Hymnal

ADDITIONAL PRAYERS

Confession of Disunity

Merciful Lord,

We confess that we have sinned against you in thought, word, deed and through omission. Pardon our sins of disunity through pride, our sins against our brothers and sisters of other faiths, cultures, peoples, those whom we have oppressed and excluded. Pardon our apathy and our blindness to the distress of the immigrants among us. Christians of different denominations, we must ask ourselves if we have diligently sought ways of common witness "for Jesus' sake" to struggle against the suffering and injustices suffered by our immigrant brothers and sisters in our homeland. Forgive our superficiality and laziness, ignoring or even denying the riches offered by *the other*, rather than seeking a true sharing of values and faith.

(continued on next page)

**We have not loved you with our whole heart,
We have not loved our neighbor as ourselves,
We sincerely regret and humbly repent of our sins.
For the love of your Son, Jesus Christ,
Have pity on us and forgive us,
That we may joyfully follow your will, walk in your ways,
and lead a life which shows forth your mercy to the glory of your name. Amen.**

(adapted from World Council of Churches, "Week of Prayer 2003," <http://wcc-coe.org/wcc/what/faith/wop2003-6.pdf>)

For Churches in North Carolina

Holy God, whose love has been poured into our hearts through Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit, and who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish far more than we can ask or imagine, infuse us with a longing for reconciliation.

Help us, Christians living in North Carolina, maintain the unity of your Spirit in the bond of peace. In these days when people across our state are affected by strife and its threat, make us light to the world. When we get tired and confused, take us by the hand and show us the way forward. Help us transform barriers into bridges.

Together this day we lift up the churches of our own town, that we would learn to work together in our community. We pray for all churches in North Carolina, from the coastal plains to the mountain heights, that we would learn to live together in Christian unity and thereby bear witness to your peaceable kingdom. And we remember that we are only one small part of this vast communion of the saints that stretches across the whole world and fills the heavens, praising you forever.

We give thanks for the spiritual gifts our sisters and brothers in Christ share with all your people. Remind us that these ministries are for your whole church in your whole world. This we pray in the name of the One who calls us to be one, your Son our Savior, Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

(Adapted from a prayer by Diane C. Kessler, Massachusetts Council of Churches, www.nccouncilofchurches.org/resources/downloads/EcumenicalPrayerCalendar2006.pdf, with additional material by Chris Liu Beers)

Thanksgiving Prayer

In peace let us pray to the Lord:

O Lord our God, we give you thanks for uniting us by baptism in the Body of Christ and for filling us with joy in the eucharist. Lead us towards the full visible unity of your Church and help us to treasure all the signs of reconciliation you have granted us. Now that we have tasted of the banquet you have prepared for us in the world to come, may we all one day share together the inheritance of the saints in the life of your heavenly city, through Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, ever one God, world without end.

(adapted from the World Council of Churches, "The Lima Liturgy," www.wcc-coe.org/wcc/what/faith/lima-e.html#7)

ADDITIONAL HELPS

▫ QUOTES ▫

Christian unity is a demanding vocation. Speaking the truth in love is a demanding vocation. But it is the vocation of all Christians, and it is a precious gift.

Rollin Russell

▪ PERSONAL VIGNETTE ▪

**WALKING TOWARDS A COMMON TABLE:
AN ECUMENICAL DIALOGUE BETWEEN UNITED METHODISTS AND EPISCOPALIANS**

BY PATRICIA N. PAGE, MEMBER OF THE NATIONAL EPISCOPAL-UNITED METHODIST DIALOGUE, SAINT TITUS EPISCOPAL CHURCH, DURHAM, N.C.
AND F. BELTON JOYNER, JR., RETIRED ELDER, N. C. CONFERENCE, THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

The center aisle of Bethany United Methodist Church in Durham is not particularly long, maybe fifty or sixty feet. But it took us a little over fourteen years to walk that distance to meet at a common, waiting Table. On November 27, 2006, for the first time in North Carolina, United Methodists and Episcopalians shared the Eucharist in a service presided over jointly by an Episcopal priest and a United Methodist elder. For us, the journey to this interim Eucharistic sharing began in May 1992.

In the spring of 1992, responding to the international Anglican-Methodist Dialogue, United Methodist and Episcopal lay persons and clergy met at Duke Divinity School to explore the implications of the common history and the times of division in the two denominations. Out of that conversation came the North Carolina Episcopal-United Methodist Dialogue, the only such statewide effort in the United States.

The Dialogue has offered engagement over a host of issues. How can we do campus ministry together? What is the meaning of episcopae in our two traditions? How do we confess the sin of racism in both denominations? What can we do together in establishing new congregations? How do laity view the relationship between faith and their life work? Are there special needs for the small membership congregation? What are our mutual concerns in terms of environmental justice? What are theological sticking points in moving toward a richer shared life?

The Dialogue has offered resources (video, booklet, guidelines) for local community dialogues. The Episcopal and United Methodist bishops led a service of reaffirmation of baptismal vows. Groups met to study theological documents on baptism, on apostolicity, and on mission. The Dialogue took a look at the movement toward common life between British Methodists and the Church of England.

The goal of the Dialogue is full communion, mutual recognition of one another's ministry, and acknowledgment of the apostolic journey for both traditions. There is no thought of organic union. The brokenness in the family has been most apparent at the Lord's Table. Each of us willingly invites the other to come to "our own" Table, but we have not found a way to have a common Table.

Until now. In the summer of 2006, the General Convention of The Episcopal Church approved a resolution opening the door to joint celebration of the Eucharist. (The United Methodist Council of Bishops had given similar approval.) Once the national Episcopal-United Methodist Dialogue established guidelines for implementing this interim Eucharistic sharing, our North Carolina Dialogue moved to have the service that found us in November at Bethany United Methodist Church in Durham.

So, it took us fourteen years to walk that aisle. Still, there remained questions of personal struggle (Do I go to drink from my traditional cup of wine or do I go to the line of those who will taste grape juice?). But the recognition of a common Lord who waited to greet us with His Real Presence at that Table made the journey a means of grace.

▪ CONTACTS AND OTHER RESOURCES ▪

- ✦ www.nccouncilofchurches.org/aboutus/members.html – North Carolina Council of Churches provides a list of the Council's twenty-five member judicatories and eight individual member congregations.
- ✦ www.nccouncilofchurches.org/areasofwork/committees/christian_unity/christian_unity.html – Christian Unity Committee of the North Carolina Council of Churches is devoted to the ecumenical task. While Christian unity is modeled and promoted through all of the Council's work, the Christian Unity Committee is the one body whose primary responsibility is to further Christian unity and wholeness. This includes bringing people together across lines of denominations in order to realize that we are more alike than different and that we can be enriched by many of our differences. This website contains a few of the Council's resources on ecumenism and Christian unity, including the work "A Reflection on the Churches' Doctrine of Humanity."

- ✦ www.nccouncilofchurches.org/resources/downloads/EcumenicalPrayerCalendar2007.pdf – *North Carolina Council of Churches'* Ecumenical Prayer Calendar, which identifies member judicatories and congregations to be the focus of your prayers each month.

- ✦ www.wcc-coe.org – *World Council of Churches* is the broadest and most inclusive among the many organized expressions of the modern ecumenical movement, a movement whose goal is Christian unity. The WCC brings together more than 340 churches, denominations and church fellowships in over 100 countries and territories throughout the world, representing some 550 million Christians and including most of the world's Orthodox churches, scores of denominations from such historic traditions of the Protestant Reformation as Anglican, Baptist, Lutheran, Methodist and Reformed, as well as many united and independent churches. While the bulk of the WCC's founding churches were European and North American, today most are in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, Latin America, the Middle East and the Pacific. For its member churches, the WCC is a unique space: one in which they can reflect, speak, act, worship and work together, challenge and support each other, share and debate with each other. As members of this fellowship, WCC member churches: are called to the goal of visible unity in one faith and one eucharistic fellowship; promote their common witness in work for mission and evangelism; engage in Christian service by serving human need, breaking down barriers between people, seeking justice and peace, and upholding the integrity of creation; and foster renewal in unity, worship, mission, and service.

- ✦ www.nccusa.org – *National Council of Churches USA* represents the leading force for ecumenical cooperation among Christians in the United States. The NCC's 36 Protestant, Anglican, Orthodox, historic African American and Living Peace member faith groups include 45 million persons in more than 100,000 local congregations in communities across the nation. As they gather in the Council, member communions grow in understanding of each other's traditions. They work to identify and fully claim those areas of belief they hold in common; they celebrate the diverse and unique gifts that each church brings to ecumenical life; and together they study those issues that divide the churches. And they cooperate in many joint programs of education, advocacy, and service that address critically important needs and that witness to a common faith in Jesus Christ.

- ✦ www.geii.org/wpcu_index.htm – *The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity* has been celebrated around the world for nearly a hundred years. A complete version of the annual brochure jointly edited, jointly published and printed, and distributed by Faith and Order (WCC) and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity (Catholic Church) is available online from the Graymoor Ecumenical and Interreligious Institute. The brochure includes the outline of an ecumenical worship service, an introduction to the theme for the week, a description of the ecumenical situation in the region from which the original source material comes, and eight sets of daily Bible readings and meditations. Traditionally, the week is observed from January 18-25 in the northern hemisphere but in other parts of the world it is observed around Pentecost. The resources are offered in the hope that they will be appropriately modified to suit particular local situations and that they will continue to be used throughout the year.

- ✦ www.cuicinfo.org – *Churches Uniting in Christ* is an ecumenical movement among major American denominations. After forty years of study and prayer through the Consultation on Church Union (COCU), the nine member churches agreed to stop “consulting” and start living their unity in Christ more fully. On January 20, 2002, these churches inaugurated a new relationship to be known as Churches Uniting in Christ (CUIC). Each communion retains its own identity and decision-making structures, but they also have pledged before God to draw closer in sacred things – including regular sharing of the Lord's Supper and common mission, especially a mission to combat racism together. Each church also committed itself to undertake an intensive dialogue toward the day when ministers are authorized to serve and lead worship, when invited, in each of the communions. CUIC is not a new structure; rather, it is an officially recognized invitation to live with one another differently. Christians in the pews know that we belong together because we all belong to the same Lord. CUIC is a framework for showing to the world what we truly are – the one Body of Jesus Christ.

KEY FACTS

Ecumenism Around the World: A Brief History¹

The ecumenical movement is the name given to the movement aimed at the unification of the Protestant churches of the world and ultimately of all Christians. During and after the Reformation Protestantism separated into numerous independent sects. An early attempt to reverse this tendency was the Evangelical Alliance founded in England in 1846; an American branch was formed by Philip Schaff in 1867. Other organizations that crossed denominational barriers were the Young Men's Christian Association (1844), the Young Women's Christian Association (1884), and the Christian Endeavor Society (1881). In 1908 the Federal Council of Churches of Christ, composed of the larger Protestant denominations in the United States, was organized and strove to represent Protestant opinion on religious and social questions. The movement known as Church Reunion in Great Britain and as Christian Unity (1910) in the United States was active in seeking a creed and polity behind which all Christians could unite.

On an international scale the modern ecumenical movement really began with the World Missionary Conference at Edinburgh in 1910. This led to the establishment (1921) of the International Missionary Council, which fostered cooperation in mission activity and among the younger churches. Other landmarks in the development of the movement were the Universal Christian Conference on Life and Work (Stockholm, 1925), inspired by Nathan Söderblom of Sweden; the World Conference on Faith and Order (Lausanne, 1927); and the first assembly of the World Council of Churches (Amsterdam, 1948). The World Council, bringing together Protestant, Orthodox Eastern (including the Russian Orthodox Church), and Old Catholic bodies, is now the chief instrument of ecumenicity; in 1961 it united with the International Missionary Council.

Progress has also been made in mergers between individual churches; notable examples include the Church of South India, established in 1947, the first union between episcopal and non-episcopal churches, and in the United States, where there have been many mergers, including the United Church of Christ. A proposal was made in 1960 to bring together the American Methodist, Episcopal, United Presbyterian, and United Church of Christ denominations; this led to the establishment (1962) of the Consultation on Church Union, whose discussions continued into the 1970s. A proposed merger between the English Methodists and the Church of England was rejected by the Methodists in 1969. The Anglicans did, however, reach several doctrinal accords with the Roman Catholic Church in the early 1970s. Several American Lutheran churches united to form the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America in 1988, which agreed in 1997 on a full communion (an arrangement by which churches fully accept each other's members and sacraments) with the Presbyterian Church (USA), the United Church of Christ, and the Reformed Church in America. The Lutheran group reached a similar agreement with the Episcopal Church and the Moravian Church in 1999. Under the terms of the full communion, the churches involved can hold joint worship services, exchange clergy members, and collaborate on social service projects.

The Vatican did not give formal recognition to the existence of the ecumenical movement until 1960, when it established the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity. Protestant and Orthodox Eastern observers were invited to the Second Vatican Council (1962–65), and the Decree on Ecumenism (1964) promulgated by that council encouraged new dialogues with Protestant and Orthodox churches. In 1969, Pope Paul VI visited the headquarters of the World Council of Churches in Geneva; the Catholic Church now sends observers to the World Council and is a full member of some of its committees. In 1995, in his encyclical *Ut Unum Sint*, Pope John Paul II reaffirmed the Roman Catholic commitment to Christian ecumenism; in 1999, he became the first pope to visit Orthodox nations. Catholics and Lutherans signed a joint declaration in 1999 on the doctrine of justification that resolved some of the issues that led to the Reformation in 1517.

ECUMENISM AND THE NORTH CAROLINA COUNCIL OF CHURCHES²

The North Carolina Council of Churches was founded in 1935 in order to "promote Christian fellowship, to serve as a medium of interchurch advice, and to associate the North Carolina communions in joint service." In its founding documents, the Council expressed the need to preach "the pattern of the Kingdom," to live together in the spirit of Christ "'in this temper-upsetting area' of race," and to work for peace in an era when "millions go hungry while our expenditures for militarism rapidly mount." These commitments became embodied in the midst of the realities of war, poverty, segregation and Christian disunity. The member bodies of the Council voted unanimously in 1943 to invite "the Negro churches" to enter as "full members." Throughout the racially-charged decades of the 1950's and 1960's, the Council continually advocated for the desegregation of public schools and the integration of neighborhoods, local governments, and public places. In 1957, *The Durham Sun* reported that the Council was still "the state's only interracial religious assembly." Later, in 1966 the Council hosted the "Statewide Churchmen's Conference on Civil Rights" and went on to elect its first African-American president. The executive director said at the time that the Council, through its efforts against segregation, was attempting "to make the incarnation real in human society." Just as the Council has worked tirelessly against forces that would separate Christians on the basis of race, it has worked to unite Christians of various denominations for the sake of justice in society and peace within the Church. Today, almost 75 years after its founding, the Council is made up of 25 judicatories of 16 denominations, plus an additional eight congregations.

1. "Ecumenical Movement," *The Columbia Encyclopedia*, 6th ed. New York: Columbia University Press, 2004, www.bartleby.com/65/ec/ecumen-mo.html.

2. Adapted from Evelyn Mattern, S.F.C.C., *We Come Together by Working Together: The First Fifty Years of the North Carolina Council of Churches* (North Carolina Council of Churches, 1985)