

*Louisiana Interchurch Conference
2023 Annual Assembly
March 14, 2023 8:30am
Catholic Life Center, St. Joseph Chapel
1800 S. Acadian Thruway/ Baton Rouge, LA
Ecumenical Celebration of the Word of God*



DO GOOD; SEEK JUSTICE.
(Isaiah 1: 17)



Call to Worship (from the Preamble of the Constitution of the LA Interchurch Conference)
Leigh Rachal, Executive Director of the LA Interchurch Conference (Elder, Presbytery of S. LA, PCUSA)

One: In His unfailing providence, God our Father calls us to demonstrate the oneness we already share through faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. The Holy Spirit summons us to that perfect oneness which Jesus wills for His people.

All: In joyful response we do hereby [assemble] the Louisiana Interchurch Conference as a contemporary instrument of our obedience.

Opening Hymn *The Church's One Foundation (vs. 1&2 only)*
The Rev. Consuella "Connie" Breaux (Retired Deacon, Louisiana Conference of the United Methodist Church / Campus Ministry)

THE CHURCH'S ONE FOUNDATION

AURELIA

1. The Chur-ch's one foun - da - tion Is Je - sus Christ her Lord;
2. E - lect from ev - 'ry na - tion, Yet one o'er all the earth,
3. 'Mid toil and trib - u - la - tion, And tu - mult of her war,
4. Yet she on earth hath un - ion With God, the Three - in - One,

1. She is his new cre - a - tion By wa - ter and the word:
2. Her char - ter of sal - va - tion, "One Lord, one faith, one birth!"
3. She waits the con - sum - ma - tion Of peace for - ev - er - more,
4. And with the saints, com - mun - ion With those whose rest is won.

1. From heav'n he came and sought her To be his ho - ly bride;
2. One ho - ly Name she bless - es, Par - takes one ho - ly food,
3. Till with the vi - sion glo - rious Her long - ing eyes are blest,
4. O hap - py ones and ho - ly! Lord, give us grace that we

1. With his own blood he bought her, And for her life he died.
2. And to one hope she press - es With ev - 'ry grace en - dued.
3. And the great Church vic - to - rious Shall be the Church at rest.
4. Like them, the meek and low - ly, On high may dwell with thee.

Text: 76 76 D; Samuel J. Stone, 1839-1900. Music: Samuel S. Wesley, 1810-1876.

Confession and Forgiveness

from Isaiah 1:12-18

The Very Rev. Annie B. Etheredge (Rector, The Episcopal Church of the Epiphany in New Iberia, LA; Ecumenical Officer, the Episcopal Diocese of W. LA; Secretary and Lafayette Regional Coordinator, the LA Interchurch Conference)

One: We are invited to confess our sins with the words of the prophet Isaiah. When you come to appear before me, who asked this from your hand? Trample my courts no more; bringing offerings is futile; incense is an abomination to me (12 – 13a).

All: Forgive us Lord when we come to worship without walking humbly before you.

One: New moon and Sabbath and calling of convocation—I cannot endure solemn assemblies with iniquity. Your new moons and your appointed festivals my soul hates; they have become a burden to me, I am weary of bearing them (13b – 14).

All: We ask forgiveness for the complicity of churches in the evils of colonialism felt around the world.

One: When you stretch out your hands, I will hide my eyes from you; even though you make many prayers, I will not listen; your hands are full of blood (15).

All: We ask forgiveness for our sins of injustice and oppression that suppress the diverse harmony of your creation.

One: Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean; remove the evil of your doings from before my eyes; cease to do evil, learn to do good; seek justice, rescue the oppressed, defend the orphan, plead for the widow (16, 17).

All: As we have been washed clean in the living waters of baptism, forgive us anew and reconcile us to one another and to creation.

One: Come now, let us argue it out, says the Lord: though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be like snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool (18). May God in his mercy, free you from your sins so that you can do justice, love kindness and walk humbly with your God. Almighty God hears our prayers, has mercy on us and forgives our sins.

ALL: Thanks be to God.

Scripture

1 Cor. 12:4-7; 12-21; & 26-27 (NRSV)

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.

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.

¹⁴ Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many. ¹⁵ If the foot would say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,” that would not make it any less a part of the body. ¹⁶ And if the ear would say, “Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,” that would not make it any less a part of the body. ¹⁷ If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole body were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? ¹⁸ But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. ¹⁹ If all were a single member, where would the body be? ²⁰ As it is, there are many members yet one body. ²¹ The eye cannot say to the hand, “I have no need of you,” nor again the head to the feet, “I have no need of you.”

²⁶ If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it. ²⁷ Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.

Sermon

The Rev. Shelton C. Dixon (Founder and Pastor, Greater Mount Olive Missionary Baptist Church in Baton Rouge, LA; President, LA Home and Foreign Missions Baptist Convention; General Secretary, National Baptist Convention of America International; 2022-2023 President, LA Interchurch Conference)

Ecumenical Litany

The Rev. Emile "Buddy" Noel (Pastor, Our Lady of Prompt Succor and Holy Guardian Angels; Ecumenical Officer, Roman Catholic Archdiocese of New Orleans; New Orleans Regional Coordinator, LA Interchurch Conference)

One: Let us now rise as we give thanks to God for the gifts of our various communities united in the faith of the Son of God...

For the Roman Catholic Church: its glorious traditions, its disciplines in holiness, its worship, rich with the religious passion of the centuries; its noble company of Martyrs, Doctors, and Saints;

All: We thank you, Lord, and bless your holy Name.

For the Orthodox Churches: their treasure of mystical experience; their rich liturgies; their regard for the collective life and common will as a source of authority;

All: We thank you, Lord, and bless your holy Name.

One: For the Lutheran Church: its devotion to the grace of God and the Word of God, enshrined in the ministry of the Word and Sacraments;

All: We thank you, Lord, and bless your holy Name.

One: For the Anglican Church: its reverent and temperate ways, through its Catholic heritage and Protestant conscience: its deep concern over the divisions of Christendom, and its longing to be used as a house of reconciliation;

All: We thank you, Lord, and bless your holy Name.

One: For the witness among Methodists to awaken the conscience of Christians to our social evils; and for their emphasis upon the witness of personal experience, and upon the power of the disciplined life;

All: We thank you, Lord, and bless your holy Name.

One: For the Presbyterian and Reformed reverence for the sovereignty of God and their confidence in God's faithfulness to the Covenant; for their sense of the moral law, expressing itself in constitutional government;

All: We thank you, Lord, and bless your holy Name.

One: For the Congregationalist jealousy for the rightful independence of the soul and of the group;

All: We thank you, Lord, and bless your holy Name.

One: For the stress in the Baptist Churches upon personal regeneration and upon the conscious relation of the mature soul to its Lord;

All: We thank you, Lord, and bless your holy Name.

One: For the witness to the perpetual real presence of the inner light in every human soul borne by the Religious Society of Friends, and for their faithful continuance of a free prophetic ministry;

All: We thank you, Lord, and bless your holy Name.

One: For the Pentecostal tradition, with its emphasis on the gifts of the spirit, of enthusiasm and emotional release;

All: We thank you, Lord, and bless your holy Name.

One: For the numerous Free Churches, many humble and without ostentation, in slums and country places and towns, speaking the Gospel to those unwelcomed or uninspired in other congregations;

All: We thank you, Lord, and bless your holy Name. O God, grant to all these families within your great Church, that as we come from the east and from the west to sit down in your Kingdom, each may lay at your feet that special gift and grace with which you have endowed it.

The Lord's Prayer (unison)

You are invited to say the words used in your own tradition or follow one of the versions below:

*Our Father who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name.*

Thy kingdom come.

Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread,

and forgive us our debts,

as we forgive our debtors,

and lead us not into temptation,

but deliver us from evil.

*For thine is the kingdom and the power, and the glory,
forever. Amen.*

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.

Thy kingdom come.

Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread,

and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who

trespass against us,

and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from

evil.

Amen.

Hymn

They Will Know We Are Christians By Our Love

We are one in the Spirit, we are one in the Lord (repeat)

And we pray that all unity may one day be restored:

*(Chorus: And they'll know we are Christians by our love, by our love;
yes, they'll know we are Christians by our love.)*

We will walk with each other, we will walk hand in hand, (repeat)

And together we'll spread the news that God is in our land:

(Chorus)

We will work with each other, we will work side by side (repeat)

And we'll guard human dignity and save human pride:

(Chorus)

All praise to the Father, from whom all things come,

And all praise to Christ Jesus, God's only Son,

And all praise to the Spirit, who make us one:

(Chorus)

Commissioning

Those who have been elected to serve as officers and those beginning a new term with the Louisiana Interchurch Conference Board of Directors are asked to come forward.

Officers

President – The Most Rev. Michael G. Duca (Roman Catholic Church)

President Elect – The Rev. Richard Williams (Presbyterian Church, USA)

Immediate Past President - The Rev. S. C. Dixon (National Baptist Convention of Amer)

Secretary - The Very Rev. Annie Etheredge (The Episcopal Church)

Treasurer - The Rev. Dr. Van Stinson (United Methodist Church)

Regional Coordinators

Shreveport - The Rev. Dr. Kristina Peterson (Presbyterian Church, USA)

Lake Charles - Mr. Winfield Little (Roman Catholic Church)

At Large Board Members -

Mrs. Jessica Trahan (United Methodist laity) – NEW - - Class of 2024

The Rev. Dr. Kristina Peterson (Presbyterian Church, USA) – NEW - Class of 2025

Mr. Winfield Little (Roman Catholic laity) – renewing - Class of 2025

Mr. Harold Petteway (Christian Methodist Episcopal laity) – renewing - Class of 2025

The Rev. Dr. Glenell Lee-Pruitt (African Methodist Episcopal)– renewing - Class of 2025

The Rev. Dr. Kenneth York (African Methodist Episcopal Zion)– renewing-Class of 2025

Mrs. Katrena Ann King, Esq. (United Methodist laity) – renewing - Class of 2025

Charge to the Officers: You have been elected as the officers of the Louisiana Interchurch Conference. Do you covenant to work together as members of one another in the Body of Christ?

Response by the Officers: Reaffirming our oneness in Christ, we covenant with each other and with the staff to support these ministries and services, to the end that the Lordship of Christ may increase both in us and in the world.

Charge to the Assembly: As God's people, will you share with the officers of the Louisiana Interchurch Conference in the responsibility of equipping the churches to minister to all persons? Will you participate in and support the work and ministry of this unity effort? Do you covenant to work together so that the congregations of Louisiana will share in the task of the whole Church?

Response of the Assembly: In the spirit of Christ, we reaffirm that unity is rooted in the mission of the Church. We covenant with each other and with these officers to participate in the mutual services and ministries of the Louisiana Interchurch Conference and to be God's people who are called to serve God in Louisiana.

Closing Prayer and Blessing

One: Everlasting God, look upon these faces gathered together in holy community and send them anywhere you would have them go. Encourage them by your Holy Spirit to continue to tell their stories, to do good, and to seek justice for the sake of your Creation through their actions. Sustain them that they may be one, so the world may believe that you sent your only Son Jesus for the life of the world. We pray this in the name of The One, in whom we find Unity with You and one another, your Son, Jesus Christ. Amen.

All: The Lord bless you and keep you; The Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you. The Lord lift up his countenance upon you. And give you peace. Amen

Sending Hymn

As You Go

As you go, tell the world (repeat)

Tell the world about Jesus, tell them about His Love (repeat)