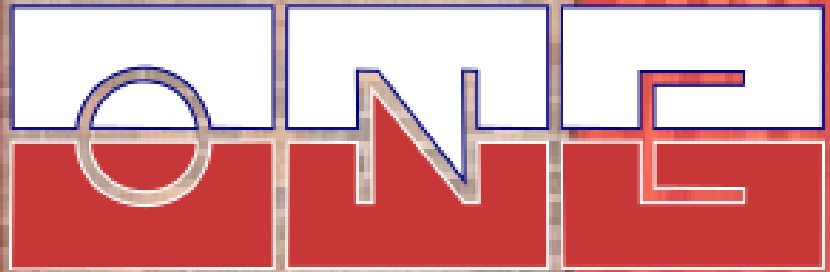


INSIDE:

+ The importance of
ecumenical work



A Publication of the Ellis County Ministerial Alliance
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ONE is the official publication of the Ellis County Ministerial Alliance (ECMA) which guides its mission, content, and theme. The ECMA encourage submissions from ECMA congregations. Photographs, stories, testimonies, and other submissions should be directed toward your church leaders or sent via email to

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The ECMA ONE Advisory Board will choose appropriate and timely submissions for publication. The columns in ONE represent the views of the author.

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Editor's Note:

This month we asked our writers, "What is the importance of ecumenical work in your ministry/our community?"

Why I Am Involved in the ECMA

Written by:

Father Damian Richards

Pope John Paul II's thoughts on ecumenism are a wonderful summary of why it is important to me to be involved in the Ellis County Ministerial Alliance. St. John Paul II was Pope from 1978 to 2005. He became Pope when I was in eighth grade and died after I had been a priest for 13 years. He is the most traveled Pope in history, visiting 129 countries. Each time the Pope visited a country, he would give a speech, homily or reflection. With 129 countries and 27 years of travel, those are a LOT of comments.

I am currently reading a book with highlights of the Pope's statements to various groups during his travels (a sign of how long John Paul II was Pope is that the book only covers the first 20 years of his

Papacy). Many of these statements involve exhortations for people of goodwill to work together to solve common problems and to make their countries better places. There are four main themes to the Pope's statements on ecumenism: Common Belief, Common Action, Common Prayer, and Common Witness.

We unite on items of Common Belief. "We are all baptized in Christ, whom we confess as our Lord and Savior," John Paul II said. "We acknowledge Christ as 'one Mediator between God and men,'" as it says in 1 Timothy 2:5 (KJV). The Bible and especially the Gospels are dear to us all, because they are the word of God and the revelation of his saving love." The Cross of Christ is a wonderful banner to be united by.

We unite on items of Common Action. "We also share common views on fundamental human rights, on justice and peace, on development, and on the need to live according to one's faith," John Paul II said. This, I believe, is where Ministerial Alliances shine. We see our neighbors in need. We encounter travelers who need help. So, we pool our resources and work together to assist them.

We unite on Common Prayer. Again, John Paul II pointed out, "We should witness to our worship of God, by our adoration, our prayer of praise and supplication. Man cannot live without prayer, any more than he can live without breathing. We should witness to our humble search for his will; it is he who should inspire our pledge for a more just and more united world."

Why I Am Involved in the ECMA (Continued)

Ellis County Ministerial Alliance meetings always include prayers for each other and for the work each church is doing. We ask God to take care of those in need, we thank God for how He has worked in our lives and in the lives of our parishioners. We pray for our country.

We live a Common Witness to being People of Faith. It is important for believers to witness to their faith in our increasingly non-religious world. "A believer's witness to

the power of faith is vital in our secular world," John Paul II says. The actions of Ellis County Ministerial Alliance witness to our common life as believers. So, we are praying for our country on the National Day of Prayer, hosting Thanksgiving Dinners, and offering assistance to people in need.

There is a famous, often over-used phrase: "Think globally, act locally." John Paul II, in his travels, encouraged people to think globally and

unite for the good of all Mankind. In the Ellis County Ministerial Alliance, we strive to unite for the good of our community.

That's why I'm involved in the Ellis County Ministerial Alliance.



Fr. Damian Richards, Pastor of St. Nicholas of Myra in Hays & St. Francis of Assisi in Munjor.

Let's All Pray Together

Written by:
Cheryl Glassman

"It takes a village." Have you heard that expression before? I have heard it many times, either while working as a nurse at the nursing home or hospital, teaching at TMP-Marian, caring for a loved one, or planning music for a liturgical event. Most recently I said it while watching and being part of the nurturing of my grandson.

"It takes a village," could have been said when I was going to school. When I think about it, each one of my classmates came from different upbringings and different religious beliefs; yet there we all were, creating -

being - part of a village of sorts. To me, being part of a faith-village is how we can know what it means to be ecumenical. We all come from different walks of life and faith journeys. We are all at a different place in our personal faith journey.

I think the word ecumenical might have been misunderstood back in the day, and even by some folks now. Ecumenism was present within the bible. John 17:21 (NIV) says *"I pray that they may all be one Father! May they be in us, just as you are in me, and I am in you. May they be one, so that the world will believe you sent me."* As Christians, we truly can be one united village when it comes

to knowing and accepting the message of Jesus. He asks us to be brothers and sisters, willing to share His presence with those in need.

We can join together as one in so many ways! One wonderfully profound way is through the National Day of Prayer (NDP). I have personally been involved in the NDP many times over the years. Each time I attend, it is a powerful statement of the presence of Christ in ALL who believe!

Planning the National Day of Prayer truly DOES take a village! As a board member of the Ellis County Ministerial Alliance (ECMA), I have come to know and appreciate the Christian unity within our

Let's All Pray Together (Continued)

community. ECMA provides hope and help for those who despair. ECMA supports entities within our Christian community that provide for the needy.

It is such an inspiration to be part of a ministerial group that accepts each person and their faith journey. I think that is what evangelization really is: sending a message of love, acceptance, and God's grace to all. This is why I believe the National Day of Prayer is so important. It allows each person to pray from their own space, so to speak, and join

their prayers with those of others. Other folks may not have the same way of celebrating the presence of Christ in their lives, but we ALL send our prayers to the same Christ, the same God! I cannot imagine how happy God is to see us praying together!

I am, by nature, quite introverted. Now if you have seen me perform on stage, you may not think that is true; however, it is through performing I can "let go" of my inner self. It is also through my prayer life and faith journey that I feel compelled to join

others at an event such as the National Day of Prayer. I am not there to say, "look at me" but rather to say, "pray with me, and let me pray with you." I am hoping you will take the time to join us May 2, 2024 from 12:00 pm until 12:45 pm at the Hays VFW Ballroom. We are a village...a community in Christ. Alleluia! Amen!



*Cheryl Glassman
is the Director of
Music at St.
Nicholas of Myra
Catholic Church in
Hays.*

Better Together

Written by:
Anna Towns

"The ECMA is a group of Christian ministries and churches that have gathered together for the betterment and enrichment of our community." You'll find those words of welcome in the opening sentence of the Ellis County Ministerial Alliance (ECMA) website (ourecma.com). We truly are better together. Through the ECMA's shared resources of support, ideas, and love for this community, we come together to support First Call for Help, host a FREE Community Thanksgiving Dinner, offer opportunities for

worship and fellowship to locals, and more.

We live in a thriving community that is made up of individuals of varying ethnicities, faiths, backgrounds, occupations, socioeconomic levels, etc. Many times, these categories are separated out by their differences. In the ECMA, there are churches and ministry groups from a wide range of denominations. The work we do together, however, highlights our sameness-our oneness in the body of Christ.

At times, this is hard. After all, these denominations arose because of differences in our

faith practices, rites and sacraments, interpretations, and traditions but we are all Christians. Part of the mission statement of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, the denomination Trinity belongs to, titled "We Are Church Together" reads, "Just as God has joined us to the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ in baptism, we are also joined to others...in all communities of Christian faith around the world. In Christ none of us lives in isolation from others. Jesus is our peace and has broken down the walls that divide us - walls of judgment, hatred, condemnation, and violence - and has made us

Better Together (Continued)

into one, new, human community" (elca.org/about).

The ministries of the ECMA touch the lives of so many Ellis County citizens. When we come together to offer assistance to those in need through First Call for Help, to worship together during the National Day of Prayer, and to enjoy each other's company at the Community Thanksgiving Meal, we are showing what it means to be an alliance.

At Trinity, our mission is not to partition ourselves away from other members of this community but to be church together, with our neighbors, not apart from them. We believe we are called to be an action-based church, going out to meet the very real needs of our neighbors. We

do this through benefit BBQs for various community organizations; co-sponsoring a faith-based, service-oriented student organization on the FHSU campus (Us 4 U); and other ways, such as belonging to the ECMA.

By focusing on the greater call to love and serve our neighbors, we are hopeful that our community can rise above the petty finger-pointing and name-calling that the world so often uses to separate the "other" in our midst. I recently learned that one of our neighboring churches prays every Sunday for a local church or two. I love this practice of lifting up our friends in faith, so that their light can shine as a beacon to all.

The Christians of Ellis County do not all worship the same way. However, we all strive to make Ellis County a welcome and loving place where needs are met, friendships are formed, and people are supported throughout the highs and lows of life. The more entities that come together through the ECMA, the stronger that alliance, and the bigger the safety net for those who might otherwise fall through the cracks.



Anna Towns serves in many capacities as a lifelong member of Trinity Lutheran Church, ELCA, in Hays.

We Were Made to Love

Written by:
Terri Braun

The essence of Christianity is love, despite our differences. Jesus thought love was so important that He spoke this to His disciples when his journey to the cross first began: *"I give you a new commandment: love one another. As I have loved you, so you also should love one another,"* John 13:34 (NABRE). He speaks about

love on the way to his death!

We were made to love because we were created by the ultimate giver of a perfect pure love...God. We all were created by God in God's image, so He is our Father. That makes us each other's brothers and sisters in Christ. We are all family and family should be treated with love.

So, let's follow His teachings and look at each other through the eyes of God.

Love others and treat them with kindness and compassion. Give each other the respect and dignity we each deserve.

A little bit of love in this lost world can go a long way. There are so many people hurting, confused, and lost in the darkness. As children of God, we are to help pull them into the light and help them to see their value and their worth. We are to love so that they see Jesus through us.

We Were Made to Love (Continued)

Saint Teresa of Calcutta said that “the most terrible poverty is loneliness and the feeling of being unloved.” You have the power to make others feel loved and worthy by your simple words and actions. Sometimes just an acknowledgement makes someone’s day as they may have been shunned or ignored their whole life.

Love is such a small word yet is so powerful. Love changes everything. It drives people to do miraculous things and to take chances

and grow. It brings hope and joy to others. It melts away the hatred in your heart; it softens bitterness and resentment; it makes room in your heart for forgiveness; it chases away the guilt and casts out fear. Without all this negativity in your heart, you will find it easier to love others.

1 Corinthians 13:4-8 (NABRE) says, *“Love is patient, love is kind. It is not jealous, is not pompous, it is not inflated, it is not rude, it does not seek its own interests, it is not quick-tempered, it does not brood*

over injury, it does not rejoice over wrongdoing but rejoices with the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails.” Love should be the foundation of all we do, all we are, and all we hold true. Love is worth it.



Terri Braun is the ministry coordinator for St. Nicholas of Myra Church.



FROM THE COVER: Benjamin Houchen was ordained to the Sacred Order of Priests for the Episcopal Diocese of Western Kansas on Saturday, March 16, 2024. He is now the Reverend for St. Michael’s Episcopal Church in Hays, KS. Pictured from left to right is Rev. Christine Wagner (First Presbyterian Church), Rev. Cana Moore (Hays Christian Church), Rev. Shay Craig (Grace Cathedral, Salina), Rev. Benjamin Houchen (St. Michael’s Episcopal Church), and Rev. Chris Prater (First Baptist Church).