

Let's Start with Breakfast

2017 Annual Conference Presentation

Commission on Christian Unity and Interreligious Relationships

A five-minute drama including a male pastor (Paul) and a female Lay Member of Annual Conference (Cathy) having a discussion on the floor of Annual Conference.

Cathy Congregant: You know, Pastor Paul, I come to Annual Conference every year and experience these inspiring worship services, and hear about all the wonderful mission and outreach programs that all these other churches are doing, but I just don't know how our little ol' church is able to put any of these ideas into practice.

Pastor Paul: Oh, Cathy, Cathy, Cathy, you think that Annual Conference is supposed to be about getting ideas that we can put into practice? I just come to Annual Conference so I can go golfing with my seminary buddies and eat ice cream after every meal without my wife being here to nag me about my cholesterol.

Cathy: No seriously, Pastor, I mean I don't see how anyone could sit through all these informative presentations and emotional videos and not be inspired to go back home and try and help our congregation to do something *more* than what we're doing right now. There are hungry people right in our community that we could help to feed, and there are children and teenagers who don't have a church home, and there may not be that many people from ethnic minority groups in our little town, but there are more than you might think, and I don't see why our church can't at least try to do *something* to share the good news of Jesus with people outside our walls.

Paul: Let me tell you a story, Cathy, about the last time that I came back from Annual Conference and tried to implement one of the Big Ideas I had learned in the church I was serving.... The year was 1982... I was fresh out of seminary, and I heard that some of the other pastors were using these things called "overhead projectors" in their congregations to project the words of hymns on the wall instead of using a hymnal... and some pastors were even inviting a guitarist to lead a few "contemporary praise choruses" at the beginning of worship. So I tried it one Sunday. The choir refused to sing...The organist broke down crying right in the middle of worship...And my Lay Leader had a heart attack... literally... I performed the funeral later that week. And Cathy, that's why I haven't tried out any new ideas in the churches I have served since 1982.

Cathy: That sounds terrible, Paul. But I don't think we should let a few negative experiences in the past stop us from doing what we can to make a difference in our community. You know, we may not have very many people in our church who are interested in Contemporary Worship Music... but maybe if we got together with some of the other churches in town a couple times a year... you know like the Lutherans and the Baptists... we might be able to have a worship service together that was a little bit different than what we do in church on Sunday.

Paul: You know, I was walking through the Vendor Room a little while ago, and I saw the table for Christian Unity and Interreligious Relationships. There were photos of a lot of other churches who get together with other people of Faith in their community for ecumenical worship services... on

Thanksgiving and Good Friday and even the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. I could just tell from the photos that they were doing all kinds of creative things that our Worship Committee would never go for... like sensory prayer stations... and colorful banners and even.... LCD projectors!

Cathy: But you know, it would take so much work to organize a worship service like that... and what if we reached out to the Baptists and they weren't interested, that would be a bummer... and maybe our choir and organist would be offended... and we wouldn't want that.

Paul: Well, I guess you're right. See, that's why I don't listen to any of these new-fangled ideas I hear at Annual Conference. Just have the Youth deliver some more candy and pop and enjoy it while it lasts... and then go back home and get ready for another year of the same-old-same-old. Nothin' wrong with that.

Cathy: But Pastor, maybe our congregation wouldn't want to do an Ecumenical worship service, but that doesn't mean that we can't do something to reach out to children and teenagers in our community. You know, I also walked past the Christian Unity and Interreligious Relationships table in the Vendor Room and I saw some photos of churches working together to host Vacation Bible School and After-School Programs and Community Youth Ministries and even ministries for Children with Disabilities. I have some friends who go to the Catholic church, and they have been wanting to reach out to kids in town, maybe even reaching out to the low-income neighborhood near our church...you know the one I'm talking about... but their church is small like ours and they don't know where to start. Maybe we could work together and start something, like once a month, to be a blessing to the kids in our community.

Paul: Cathy, are you out of your mind? Where would we get the funding to start something like that. I mean, I know that there are grants available from the Conference.... But then you have to think about Safe Sanctuaries...and I know there's training available from the Conference... but then what if one of the kids falls down and scrapes their knee, and mommy and daddy get upset, and next thing you know we're on the front page of the paper!

Cathy: Well, I guess you're right, I mean you're the pastor, and the pastor always knows best...

Paul: But you know, when I walked past the Christian Unity and Interreligious Relationships table in the Vendor Room... I did see those photos about Calvary United Methodist Church in Somerset... I know pastor Arnie and he's just a regular down-to-earth guy like me... and his church received the first ever Ecumenical Achievement Award... because they participate with several other churches in Somerset Area Ministries... which has a Mobile Food Bank that brings food all over the county to people in need... and a Medical Van to get people to their doctor's visits... and an annual CROP Walk and 5k. Their church is really making a difference by partnering with other people of faith to accomplish far more together than they ever could on their own. Now that's something that I could get excited about!

Cathy: Pastor Paul, that's what I've been trying to tell you all along. We may just be a little old church in the country... and there will always be a hundred reasons why we shouldn't try some new idea. I agree that maybe we don't have enough people and all the necessary resources on our own, but maybe if we just reach out to a few of the other churches in our area we could really make a difference by working together. Not to mention...if it doesn't work out, you can just blame it on Pastor Tom at the Baptist Church.

Paul: Oh okay, maybe it's time I came back from Annual Conference and tried out *one new idea*. But how can we even get started?

Cathy: How about we start with breakfast.

Paul: Breakfast?

Cathy: Yah, why don't you reach out to Pastor Tom and Pastor Cynthia and Father Steve... and I'll invite my friends from the Baptist and the Lutheran and the Catholic church, and we can get together for breakfast at the Diner and see if they might be interested in working together... to make a difference together in our community in the name of Jesus.

Paul: Ok, Let's start with breakfast!

[Walk together offstage]