Jeffrey Gros, F.S.C., and Harold H. Saunders

Permeable Borders: Lay Christians in a Changing World

(This article is excerpted from a volume of the Roman Catholic-Reformed [Presbyterian, Reformed Church in America and United Church of Christ] dialogue on the laity, to be published soon. This dialogue, contributing to the goal of full communion among these Churches, began in 1967.)

Christian laity have the capacity and the opportunity to lead in the movement toward Church unity as it may appropriately be defined in the twenty-first century. The foundations for rethinking the character and role of the lay Christian must be built from fresh thinking about the nature of the changing world where the whole Church of Jesus Christ lives and works.

We start by placing our thoughts about the character and role of the laity in the context of the wider world and broad human experience. We begin with this world perspective because this is the setting in which the unity of the baptized must ultimately be realized and with which smaller communities of believers must find harmony. "Go, ye, into all the world. . . ." Then we proceed to examine today's political communities and Christian churches where Christians first form the relationships through which they work in national and international settings.

New insights emerge in each of these three arenas. These three will outline our consideration of "the lay Christian in a changing world" below.

• First, profound changes in how states, governments, and peoples interact in our increasingly interdependent post-Cold War world challenge traditional thinking about the capacity of states and governing authorities acting outside partnership with their own citizens to envisage new relationships.

• Second, as countries new and old seek to build, strengthen, adapt, or rejuvenate civil societies and participatory polities, fresh perspectives on politics within states enlarge political capacity among citizens outside government.

• Third, Christians within and across political boundaries are jarred by these changes and help shape them. They take this experience into their Churches where they further shape change in light of their experience within those Churches.

In each of these arenas, the spotlight falls afresh on the individual citizen—the individual Christian. In that perspective, our attention is drawn from the institutional to the human dimension of our lives together.

The mobilization of the whole People of God, the *laos,* is a critical dimension of answering God's call to restore the unity of the Church in mission, faith, witness, sacrament, and life. If we see the Christian community as a reconciler in the modern world, that community must be reconciled within itself.

This article highlights the central role to be played by citizens outside government—including the Christian laity—in guiding our world and the body of Christ through an era of profound change. The conceptual lenses Christians use to bring that secular world into focus will be the same lenses that determine how they take their faith into that world.

It makes a difference, for instance, whether we see the world through the lenses of competing institutions of state and competing Christian Churches or through the lenses of interacting bodies politic and a uniting Christian community. It makes a difference whether we see conflict as a contest of material power or as a creative tension among essential civil and Christian values. It makes a difference whether we see the resolution of our differences in the state or the Church as the work of political or ecclesial institutions and negotiators or whether we see it also as an act of reconciliation that changes conflictual relationships among groups of citizens or among baptized believers.

It also makes a difference when we see that concepts used to bring the secular world into focus have their direct counterparts in the ecumenical world. We speak of the total relationship among citizens across permeable national boundaries to pursue shared interests. At the same time, we have found need for the biblical word *koinonia*—communion, community, solidarity, fellowship—to capture the total pattern of interactions across permeable boundaries that divide the whole People of God.

Shifting our conceptual lenses also opens the door to the most human course to reconciliation—dialogue as contrasted to the formal tools of negotiation and mediation. We find that the capacity to relate at a human level through various forms of dialogue is an essential building block toward reconciliation—one that is yet to be fully developed (John Paul, 1995). We recognize that the Holy Spirit is present when Christians come together in honest dialogue, discerning God's truth and his word for action in the world. Dialogue is the instrument of citizens outside government and, therefore, of the laity. Formal theological dialogue and institutional collaboration also have their appropriate contributions to make. Dialogue and shared action among the baptized can lead the way to unity.

THE LAY CHRISTIAN IN A CHANGING WORLD

Rethinking How Countries Relate

We are living in the midst of a fundamental shift in our understanding of how the international world works. It is a shift in the perspective of three and a half centuries of thinking about the nation-state. The body of Christ has played and is playing a pervasive role in that shift—spiritually, conceptually, and politically—in those parts of the world where Christian believers are at work. Because it is essential to be concrete in placing the Christian laity in that larger context, we begin with three observations about our changing world:

First, governments of nation-states increasingly face problems that no one of them can deal with outside relationships with other partners. Those partners include other governments. Even at the height of the Cold War, the governments of the Soviet Union and the United States learned that neither could enhance security in a nuclear world without cooperating with its adversary. Governments acting alone cannot deal with problems of the larger environment, with disease, or with a global economy. But increasingly, governments are also realizing that many problems are beyond their reach unless they develop new partnerships with their own citizens.

Second, citizens outside government—working through public associations they create—increasingly participate in the conduct of politics and international relationships. What citizens acting in new relationships with each other did in East Central Europe in 1989 helped end an empire. Citizens acting together in Latin America at the same time brought nations out from under authoritarian rule. People working together have forced change in South Africa. The Christian community and ecumenical common witness have contributed to this process.

Many of the conflicts that preoccupy the world today have flared out of the needs of human beings—out of clashes of human identity, grievance, fear, and hatred. These conflicts sometimes seem beyond the reach of governments. Non-governmental organizations are increasingly stepping in to do what governments alone often cannot do.

Third, the traditional concepts of international relations—state, power, national interests—are not broadly enough defined to describe how the world works today; the traditional instruments of statecraft—military force, economic power, propaganda, and negotiation—do not reliably produce the results expected of them.

As United Nations Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali wrote in 1992 of the state: "The foundation-stone of [building peace] is and must remain the State. . . . The time of absolute and exclusive sovereignty, however, has passed; its theory was never matched by reality"(Boutros-Ghali, 1992). In Bucharest, Budapest, Prague, Berlin in 1989, as well as in Poland over a longer period, those who held raw power were dismissed by those armed only with the political power they themselves created. Interests are defined not only analytically in government offices but also by people in the political arena; they are defined politically to reflect what people care about and need as well as objective requirements of the state.

Among the instruments of state, the U.S. in Vietnam, the Soviet Union in Afghanistan, and both Israel and the U.S. in Lebanon, for example, all learned that military forces are not equipped to restructure political life or to sustain governments that do not have broad popular support. The Arab-Israeli peace process has not been negotiation alone but a series of negotiations embedded in larger political processes that have gradually changed individuals' perceptions and relationships.

The traditional state-centered way of looking at the world could be put like this: Leaders of nation-states amass economic and military power to pursue objectively defined interests against other nation-states in a zero-sum contest of material power. This is often referred to as the "power politics model." The metaphor often used to capture this view was the strategic chess game.

An emerging view that more accurately describes our changing world can be stated in a formulation such as this: *Relationships between countries are increasingly a political process of continuous interaction among significant elements of whole bodies politic across permeable borders. To capture that political process of continuous interaction going on simultaneously at many levels, it is necessary to focus on the dynamics of the total relationship—the overall pattern of interactions. We have chosen the word* relationship *to denote this process.*

Governments continue to be major actors, and the nation-state remains the primary unit of organization in international life. But governments increasingly discover that they are only one actor among many because other elements of the bodies politic of which they are part increasingly influence or actually carry out the conduct of international relationships. Governments are discovering their need for a new partnership with citizens outside government who claim responsibility for their own future.

As significant elements of whole bodies politic interact using the modern technologies of communication and transportation, governments are less and less able to control what crosses borders once considered exclusive boundaries of a sovereign state. Increasingly since the Helsinki Final Act was signed in 1975, the world community has considered gross human rights violations within a state the proper concern of all humankind. The so-called sovereignty of the state is being rethought to preserve what is essential but to take account of increasing interdependence among peoples.

Why is this material on international developments important to the lay Christian? *Relationship* is a theological and human word, rather than a technical or political one. It captures the complexity, humanity, and dynamism of this simultaneous interaction among human beings and groups on many levels and across permeable boundaries. A human word rather than a legal or academic word is critical because this choice of vocabulary moves thinking about international relationships from a state-centered focus to a focus on the interaction of groups of human beings. As will be noted below, this relationship among all human beings is mirrored in the community to which Christians are called in the Church. Likewise, by its very nature as sign, foretaste, and sacrament of the Kingdom of God, the Church is called to serve the reconciliation of all Christians.

For those who practice the conduct of international relationships, the message is that they must give as much attention to the human dimensions of conflict and the constructive conduct of international relationships as they do to the institutional and governmental. Political strategy may be even more basic than military, negotiating, or economic strategy.

For Christians, the message is that lay persons and organizations can have a significant impact on the conduct of international relationships. That is no longer the exclusive province of the institutional Church.

If one focuses on the interactions among groups of human beings, it is not enough to think only of resolving differences among those groups by negotiation. In today's ethnic and racial conflicts, for

instance, people are not ready to negotiate because people do not negotiate their identity, fear, historical grievances, misperceptions, and hatred. Only fundamental changes in relationships can deal with these human feelings.

In this changing world the instrument for transforming destructive relationships is not just mediation or negotiation; the instrument is dialogue. In dialogue the focus is not only the technically defined issues that lawyers and diplomats negotiate over; the focus is the total relationship. In dialogue important words in a process of changing human relationships also include sensitivity, compassion, love, caring, pain, common ground, deliberation, forgiveness, feeling, "we" rather than "they." Genuine dialogue by its very nature is a process of building, deepening, changing relationships. Pope John Paul speaks of the "dialogue of conversion," as an central element of the Christian life. Dialogue itself is an essential element in Christian formation.

The challenge to change destructive relationships in the world is central to the Christian calling. It is not different from Christ's call to bring unity to the Church, nor less taxing than the relational commitment and skills needed to reconcile Christian divisions.

In short, an accurate conceptual framework for understanding how countries relate in our changing world opens the door to—indeed demands—the active, sensitive, insightful participation not only of Christian institutions as institutions but of individual Christians as well (Saunders, 1990, 1993, Chufrin and Saunders, 1993).

LIFE WITHIN BODIES POLITIC

Two threads of thinking about democracy have woven through Western democratic thought. They have taken different forms in different ages and places. At best, they should work in close partnership.

In the Secular Order

The more familiar thread of political thought for us has been our institutions and practices of elections, one citizen/one vote, representative government, majority rule, checks and balances to curb the power of government and protect individual rights. It is the form of democratic practice enshrined in the Constitution of the United States, and it is what U.S. citizens—and many others around the world—think of when they think about "politics" or "democracy." It relies on those institutions to deal with a society where citizens' interests are normally in conflict, where large societies must be governed, and where the political system is akin to a legal system in which the adversarial proceeding is often thought to be the best method of getting at the truth.

The other way of picturing the practice of democracy is to go back to the Greek and Roman forums, to the New England town meeting, to the workings of many of the "associations" to which de Tocqueville referred, or to the workings of many community groups in today's United States. Instead of simply voting, people sit down in dialogue until they find the best way of dealing with the problems they face—often without waiting for government to address those problems. The emphasis is on finding shared interests underlying legitimate differences on which to base common approaches. The method is face-to-face dialogue rather than confrontation. The aim is to probe and experience the dynamics of the relationships which must be changed in order for people to work together in dealing with their problems (Mansbridge, 1980 3–22. Mathews, 1994).

In the Church

The biblical doctrine of the Church, its lived experience in history, likewise shares similar trends. We see in both the Hebrew Scriptures and the New Testament emphases on a variety of ways of ordering communities with definable borders and an institutional order, emphasizing leadership under God's will and Christ's revelation. We also see an emphasis on the responsibility and participation of all God's people, linked in the New Testament by baptism and the Eucharist. As in society, so in the Church, order is seen in the context of the full communion of the faithful. Conceptually, these two dimensions of Church are best understood in partnership.

The process of building the unity of the Church can be seen from these two standpoints. If one begins from the institutions that embody the Church's faith and structures, we might expect mergers more characteristic of secular corporations. On the other hand, the unity of the Church can be envisioned as a set of relationships rooted in common sacramental life, common faith, and bonds of accountability and communion, all oriented toward a common mission in the world. While full unity must rest on deeper levels of agreement than now exist, relationships among Christians create the communion on which agreements and institutional renewal can flourish. Reception of theological agreements rests on their theological truth, but also on the trust and relationships that have developed in the receiving Christian community.

THE ROLE OF THE PERSON

Each of these threads of thinking about the practice of community embodies a different view of the role of the individual citizen. Again, the two are complementary, not mutually exclusive.

In Society

Often accompanying the first view of democratic politics has been a concept of citizenship which emphasizes fulfilling legal obligations such as paying taxes, obeying laws, and voting. Going beyond that basic, somewhat mechanical view has been a concept of the citizen as a political actor. It is a concept of the citizen joining with others in the give-and-take of dialogue and political exchange in order to change the relationships they must change to transform the course of their lives (Boyte, 1993; Mathews, 1994).

This view of the citizen as political actor is gaining momentum as citizens in many parts of the world are voicing disillusionment with both newfound and established democratic machinery. Research shows U.S. citizens as angry at their exclusion from the political process by what they call a professional political class which, citizens feel, ignores their views once elected or appointed to office. Those citizens are voting less but working more in communities where they can make a difference (Harwood Group, 1991).

Coupled with this second view of democratic practice and citizenship is a distinctive view of authority—that sovereignty in human society rests in citizens themselves acting to constitute themselves as a body politic with governing structures of their own design. In this view, one thing that government cannot do is to create its own legitimacy; that can only be created by people acting in relationship with each other.

In the recent history of the United States, this second approach to secular democratic society was nourished by, among others, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference which in the early 1960s in the U.S. South ran a citizenship school at Dorchester, Georgia. Individuals from the rural South were brought into this school to understand what it means to be a citizen of the United States and what their powers as a citizen are. Individuals left those schools to teach others, and from that impetus came the voter registration drives and many of the sit-ins that became the hallmarks of the civil rights movement. In the late 1960s a younger generation rebelled against the establishment and, in part, turned to communal organizations which paid more attention to the human basis of governance and to consensus-building as more appropriate forms of politics.

The women's movement not only emphasized the equality of women but focused on a form of political activity that emphasized building, nurturing, and changing relationships through face-to-face dialogue rather than on accomplishing objectives through the use of power and confrontation.

These changes have led many in the United States today to recognize that the existing system of confrontational party politics, active

interest groups and lobbyists, and a media which highlight confrontation, no longer fulfill their expectations of what politics should be. No one would throw away the structure of institutional politics, but many believe it is not enough by itself.

In the Church

In the context of the Church, the first approach leads to a sense of duty about attending worship, serving the organization of the Church, financially supporting its mission efforts, and viewing the Church as a source of personal spiritual nourishment. This view recognizes the priesthood of all believers, entered into by baptism, but leaves responsibility to church professionals.

The second approach corresponds more nearly with the view of the Christian citizen as one who joyfully carries faith into everyday life and acts as citizens claiming responsibility in the body politic out of a sense of Christian commitment and enthusiasm. In this view, the baptized Christian takes full responsibility for leadership in the Church, according to her or his gifts and calling. At the same time, the Christian citizen will bring into the Church some of the same questions about authority that pervade life outside the Church's walls.

Our thinking about the role of the lay Christian in the body politic beyond the doors of the church must develop in this context of a new emphasis on citizens claiming responsibility for changing their environments and the course of events, working in associations and communities to that end, and seeking a new relationship with government. Within the Church a greater emphasis on community, lay participation, and bonds among divided Christians signals a renewal of the biblical understanding of the People of God, and the communion of local churches within a Church understood as universal.

THE CHURCHES IN A CHANGING WORLD

Contemporary thinking about the role and capacity of the leadership of organized Churches has also been evolving steadily through this century. Questions have increasingly been raised about its ability to cope with our changing world, and increased attention has been given to the role of lay Christians in meeting those challenges. The history of the ecumenical movement could be written in terms of the institutional Churches responding to lay initiatives.

This shift in thinking about the institutional church and its relationship to all who are baptized has taken place alongside but not necessarily because of the shifts in the secular world. Beneath centuries of division have developed other complex links of interdependence.

For 1000 years the Churches of East and West and for 400 years Catholics and Protestants in the West have seen themselves as exclusive of one another. At the same time, we claim never to have fully lost communion with one another in that we have acknowledged one another's use of the Scriptures, the historical creeds, the pastoral care provided for our people, and the sacrament of baptism. By the mid-twentieth century, the ecumenical movement represented a new reality in ecclesiology, in the experience of Christians and their identity, and in the conduct of the lives of the Churches as institutions.

Lay Christians in different Churches have increasingly developed relationships with each other to deal with problems that seemed beyond the reach of the organized Church. In the twentieth century, the experience of lay Christians has led them to conclude that divided Churches do not respond adequately to the challenges of today's world or to God's will for the Church.

Several experiences of major lay groups have given rise to this change in perspective. Some of the more significant instances of lay people moving ahead were:

• The Sunday School Movement of the nineteenth century in the British Isles and the United States as well as social ministries in communities began to bring laity together.

• The modern mission movement, after 1910, learned that a witness to one Christ was undermined when preached to prospective Christians by openly competing missionary groups.

• The theological community recognized that common research—biblical,liturgical, and historical—was unearthing more common ground than previously realized.

• Sensitive Christians in the Churches increasingly saw that divisions among them were incompatible with the Gospel of Jesus Christ on ethical, social witness, sacramental, and historical grounds.

• One of the more profound changes is the interchurch family, in which Christians both remain deeply committed to their still separate churches, yet live and work for the reconciliation of these Churches, witnessing in their family and community to the real communion that can exist.

• Major social issues such as racism, poverty, multi-culturalism, global violence, and feminism also brought Christians together across church lines.

• One can see all of these and other factors in the lives of "naturally" ecumenical Christian groupings such as the Focolari, base communities, and faith sharing groups.

In short, it became clear to lay Christians living in a Christian, pluralistic environment that the religious debates of the eleventh to the sixteenth centuries were not theirs, no matter how deep the residue of those debates might lie in the faiths of the separated communities that nurtured them. The contemporary ecumenical movement has, in effect, brought an end to some religious wars but has only just begun to build the peace for which we search.

A Shift in How the Church Is Viewed

The changes in thinking that have resulted from these experiences have amounted to the most fundamental shift in our understanding of the Church and its mission—the ecclesiology—that we have known in four hundred years of thinking about our ecclesial identity following the Reformation. This is a paradigm shift. As Churches absorb the many ramifications of this shift in thinking, it may be that the experience of the laity will offer a significant path toward a reconciled Church. The traditional aim of common witness and theological exploration may not be large enough to take account of how the Church of Jesus Christ is working in today's world. Lay Christians are acting from the premise that they are **already** in real, if yet imperfect, communion.

The initial response in the early ecumenical discussions (1927–1952) showed church officials and theologians pursuing a methodology of "comparative ecclesiology," looking at our differences, comparing our doctrines and rituals, and clarifying mutual interpretations. This was an important trust-building phase for those who studied or experienced it. It was essentially an institutional response and an effort to negotiate toward formal mergers. Visible unity institutionally conceived was the goal.

The next stage has been one of "Christocentric methodology" (1952–early l990s) in which scholars from different traditions working together have studied texts of Scripture and the developments of Christian history using modern tools of research, taking account of the identities of various communities in the contemporary context. Those engaged in this work addressed one set of resources and methodologies with a commitment to laying the grounds for a reconciled Church. This approach to church unity presumed God's will for unity, Christ's gift of unity by grace and revelation, and the Holy Spirit's presence in the common search for unity. All of these spiritual realities were, indeed, part of the vision of each Church prior to the ecumenical movement of our century. However, in these Churches Christ's gift of unity, the presence of the Spirit, and search for unity were seen through lenses of each separate Church.

A new shift is taking place—namely, a shift that comes about by conversion of individual and Church, setting aside negotiated approaches to merger and allowing the Spirit to transform us and our institutions through open dialogue with the other Christian individual and Church (Groupe des Dombes, 1993). Building on the convergence unearthed by the theologians and the history of relationships, Christians work with one mind and heart to realize in their personal and institutional lives the unity in sacramental, faith, and church life for all Christian believers (Hotchkin, 1995).

This work proceeds with the recognition that Christians in the world have already worked together in many ways regardless of denomination. Essentially, Christians discover that the issues of Christian faith and the order of the Church can only be resolved by common study of Scripture and of the heritage of the Church in the context of contemporary challenges. They feel that the new issues posed by the changing world must be addressed together in common mission and witness based on their common commitment to Christ and to reconciliation of the faith and sacramental life within the Church.

Lay Leadership

In many sectors of church life, the experience of lay Christians already far outstrips what church leadership is able to accomplish or what theologians are able to articulate. One problem that emerged is that theological ecumenical research over 25–50 years has been so fruitful that there is too much to be assimilated. Church leaders are faced not only with such conflicting forces in the world but also in their own communions and in the ecumenical movement that they sometimes seem almost paralyzed. Others feel we have moved too fast.

Christians hold that the relationships between churches are rooted in relationships between the whole people of God, whose baptism and confession of Jesus Christ already provide a level of communion yet to be achieved among our still divided Churches. Baptism into the Church of Jesus Christ, this view holds, affects the entire life of a Christian. By sharing a common baptism, we are impelled to a hunger for common communion at the Lord's Table that is not yet possible. This sharing of the Eucharist is such a profound act for some Christians that it cannot be entered into until there is a higher degree of communion in faith and relationship to warrant such a deep communion, even though our common baptism cries out for Eucharistic sharing (Cor 11).

At times, some theologians, particularly Roman Catholic theologians, have emphasized the baptized Christian's role only in the secular sphere, leaving the intra-church sphere as the mission of the cleric. At times, other theologians and thinkers, particularly in the United

States, have so emphasized the separation of Church and state that one's religion is portrayed as "out of bounds" whenever a baptized Christian attempts to bring religious values to an area beyond the merely private area of one's personal life, or beyond the specifically ecclesiastical area of one's church life.

A formulation that may well describe the churches in the ecumenical movement, particularly in the laity's experience in the United States, is the following: *Relationships among Churches are increasingly an ecumenical process of continuous interaction among whole bodies of believers, lay and ordained, across permeable borders.* The real, but imperfect, communion realized in baptism becomes incarnate in the relationships among Christian believers.

In this context, church leaders—if they are sensitive to their people and to the world in which they live—are discovering that they are only one element in the ecumenical process of reconciliation and the activities of the Christian community in the world.

The Biblical View of the Church

The biblical word we have begun to use in the ecumenical movement to capture this total pattern of interactions between the whole people of God is *koinonia*—communion, community, solidarity, fellowship. This communion is grounded in a deep-rooted shared conviction and sacramental reality. For the Christian, the relationship of the three persons of the triune God, distinct yet coequal, is the foundation for all life and relationships within the Church and with the world (Best, 1993).

Christians have come to identify, together, certain structural elements that would be needed for full communion: (1) common confession of the Apostolic Faith, (2) mutual recognition of baptism, the Eucharist, and the ordained ministry, (3) common bonds of accountability and decision-making, and (4) common mission in the world. *Koinonia* is a relational word used to speak of the relationships of the three persons in the one God—a word that implies shared faith, sacramental life, and witness to the world.

An essential element of the catholicity of the Church is the diversity and universality of different cultures. Throughout the world, Christianity is expressed in different ways. While we are speaking of the unity of the Christian Church here, we realize that interaction with the other religions of the world also is a part of the Christian mandate.

It is by the mutual understanding and richness of this diversity, in Christ, that relationships between the variety of Christian people become one *koinonia*. This process builds on the relationships among individuals, congregations, cultural groups and Christians in different nations. The unity of the body of Christ is impossible unless there is an

enabling process for people from divided Churches to find relationships that bring healing to the body of Christ and common witness in a polarized world.

Christians will do well to examine whether we see the world through the lenses of competing or complacent Christian Churches or through the lenses of a uniting Christian community. We need to analyze whether we see conflict as a contest of power or as a creative tension among essential Christian values. We are called to reflect on whether we see the resolution of our differences in the Church as the work of ecclesial institutions and negotiators or whether we see it as an act of reconciliation among baptized believers. The quest for the unity of the Church is God's work, to which we as believers are called to be accountable.

A CALL FOR DIALOGUE AND LAY LEADERSHIP

The lay Christian is a whole human being who lives at once in a changing world, in changing bodies politic, and in changing Churches. This Christian cannot respond to these challenges of change except by integrating his or her role as Christian and as citizen of country and the world. Just as Christians see the need for the state to organize national and international life, we may see the continuing need for the institutional Churches to help organize the religious dimension of life. At the same time, citizens and lay Christians may find fulfillment through associations that cut across many jurisdictional borders. It may be that the religious identity of many is becoming simply that of baptized Christian.

The differences among Christians, where they remain divisive, are not differences that can be resolved solely by mediation or negotiation; they are differences that stem from deep-rooted human concerns—identity, fear, historical grievances, fidelity to beliefs, misperceptions, and misconceived hatred. Christian differences in faith and Church cannot be solved by theology alone, though theology must address these problems. These differences represent profound parts of human life that cannot be formally and rationally negotiated. Only fundamental changes in relationships—human, theological, ecclesiastical—can deal with them.

The laity can lead. They can provide the spiritual, missionary, and communitarian openness and practical experience that create leadership and receptivity for reconciliation. The laity can design realistic steps for translation of theological proposals into concrete relationships that express underlying unity. With prayer and shared commitment they can imagine ways of preserving what Christians from different traditions value while bringing down the walls that exclude one another.

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Jeffrey Gros, F.S.C., associate director of the Secretariat for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, served 1981–1991 as director of the Commission on Faith and Order of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. He is a member of the Midwest Province of the DeLaSalle Christian Brothers.

Harold H. Saunders, director of international affairs at the Charles F. Kettering Foundation, served 1961–1981 on the National Security Council staff in the White House and in the State Department, finally as assistant secretary for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs during mediation of the Camp David accords and the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty. He is a ruling elder in the Lewisville Presbyterian Church in McLean, Virginia, of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).