



Our Position on Forming an Ecumenical Christian Organization

Sundial Classical Farmstead (SCF) is founded on the historic and universal Christian faith as described in the [Nicene Creed](#) which serves as a faithful summary of Christianity accepted (with disagreement over a later [Western addition to the text known as the Filioque clause](#)) by Catholic, Orthodox, and most Protestant Christians. Our aim is to bring *all* of our students into contact with the riches of classical Nicene Christianity, as it infuses and undergirds our approach to education.

We hope SCF may come to resemble the “hall” described by C.S. Lewis in the following passage from *Mere Christianity*, that can bring Christians from different confessions together in our mission to form virtuous people: savoring beauty, cultivating gifts, pursuing knowledge, loving wisdom and truth, and practicing hospitality.

I hope no reader will suppose that ‘mere’ Christianity is here put forward as an alternative to the creeds of the existing communions—as if a man could adopt it in preference to Congregationalism or [Eastern] Orthodoxy or anything else. It is more like a hall out of which doors open into several rooms. ... But it is in the rooms, not in the hall, that there are fires and chairs and meals. The hall is a place to wait in, a place from which to try the various doors, not a place to live in. ... It is true that some people may find they have to wait in the hall for a considerable time, while others feel certain almost at once which door they must knock at. ... When you do get into your room you will find that the long wait has done you some kind of good which you would not have had otherwise. But you must regard it as waiting, not as camping. You must keep on praying for light: and, of course, even in the hall, you must begin trying to obey the rules which are common to the whole house. And above all you must be asking which door is the true one; not which pleases you best by its paint and paneling. In plain language, the question should never be: ‘Do I like that kind of service?’ but ‘Are these doctrines true: Is holiness here? Does my conscience move me towards this? Is my reluctance to knock at this door due to my pride, or my mere taste, or my personal dislike of this particular door-keeper?’

When you have reached your own room, be kind to those who have chosen different doors and to those who are still in the hall. If they are wrong they need your prayers all the more; and if they are your enemies, then you are under orders to pray for them. That is one of the rules common to the whole house.

- Lewis, Clive Staples. *Mere Christianity*. Harper, 1952.

For families who want to supplement the instruction and formation their children receive at home or church and beyond what *all* children receive at SCF, optional Christian Education classes will be offered where students will go deeper into the riches of the Christian Scriptures, Theology, Spirituality, and Tradition. For example, there might be a class for Anglicans, one for Lutherans,



one for Orthodox, and another for Catholics, each consisting of some combination of catechesis and devotional practice appropriate to their tradition as overseen by its clergy.

SCF recognizes two particular advantages to studying in an ecumenical environment. First, as students grow up alongside other students and faculty from other denominations while attending catechesis in their family's faith tradition, they will gain a refined and resilient understanding of their church's teachings in the same way that iron sharpens iron. And second, non-Christian students may grow toward Christ in a place like SCF where faithful Christians prioritize the humble pursuit of truth together.

When it comes to friendships between Christians of different traditions who all affirm one of the two variants of the Nicene Creed, we should strive to be as charitable as [St. Gregory Nazianzus](#) (AD 330-389) who said the following when speaking even of those who *denied* God's Trinitarian essence as articulated in the Nicene Creed:

For we are not seeking victory, but to gain brethren, by whose separation from us we are torn. This we concede to you in whom we do find something of vital truth, who are sound as to the Son. We admire your life, but we do not altogether approve your doctrine. . . . I will even utter the Apostle's wish. So much do I cling to you, and so much do I revere your array, and the colour of your continence, and those sacred assemblies, and the august virginity, and purification, and the psalmody that lasts all night and your love of the poor, and of the brethren, and of strangers, that I could consent to be anathema from Christ, and even to suffer something as one condemned, if only you might stand beside us, and we might glorify the Trinity together.

-St. Gregory the Theologian (Nazianzus), *Oration* 41, 8; quoted in *Orthodoxy and Heterodoxy* (p359) by Andrew Stephen Damick

However, we acknowledge that we must not compromise truth in search of a diluted and false unity—a common symptom of ecumenical dialogue over the past 100+ years. This kind of ecumenism is not a fulfillment of Christ's prayer in [John Chapter 17](#), but a betrayal. We believe a robust, patient, and careful ecumenism over the long haul is right and profitable in our pursuit of Christ. We must be wise as serpents and gentle as doves and never require unity in this life, but simply be faithful to Christ. Hope for unity is not an expectation, knowing that over five hundred years have passed since the [Reformation](#), nearly one thousand years since the [Great Schism](#), and more than fifteen centuries since the [Chalcedonian Schism](#). We lament the disunity between Christians, who affirm one of the two slightly different versions of the Nicene Creed, in humility just as Saint Gregory did with those Non-Nicenes who denied the Trinitarian nature of our Lord articulated in Scripture and summarized in the Creed.