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**TOGETHER  
IN  
CHRIST**



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Dear reader the October edition has fewer articles than usual. We are covering the *Roman Catholic – Methodist International Report*, published every five years, which was accepted by the World Methodist Council in July 2006. David Carter has provided a valuable assessment of its contents and recommendations for future development. It is a long read but I found studying it fruitful in my understanding of the progress being made. I hope you agree.

Justice and Peace has not been regarded as an ecumenical tool but the experience of the Bearsted Kent J&P group shows how broad its influence can be. Joan Brown sheds light on how a group of committed Christians have worked together promoting Social Justice and issues of Charity, Love and Freedom. This article provides a practical and effective solution where parishes lack the resources to campaign alone. Their purpose, she tells me was not ecumenical but to strengthen their role in service to the poor and for change.

The talk given at a Unity Service by Fr Lovell has some serious questions for us and for our churches to find answers to.

Thomas Cranmer is linked inextricably with the turmoil of the English Reformation. Terry Davies reports on the anniversary with a Masse in Old English.

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Pray that Jesus will change hearts and minds and make us all His people

Michael

## **A Review of the Eighth Report of the Roman Catholic-Methodist International Commission**

*The Grace Given You in Christ:  
Catholics and Methodists Reflect Further on the Church*

The Roman Catholic-Methodist international dialogue began in 1967, at about the same time as ARCIC. Sadly, it has received less attention than it deserves both within the Catholic and Methodist churches and the rest of the *oikoumene*. Throughout, a fine balance has been maintained between a clear acceptance on both sides that the goal is and must be full communion in faith a sacramental life and mission while accepting that, despite growing mutual esteem and very real convergence on some issues, others continue to be problematic. One such issue is that of women's presbyteral and episcopal ministry where the fifth report, *The Apostolic Tradition*, made it quite clear that Methodists were of one mind on the issue and the Catholic Church of another. Realism, however, is balanced by the conviction that we are called to continue the dialogue with faith in Christ's promise that the Holy Spirit will lead us into all truth, even if, at this stage, we cannot see how some of the remaining problems may be resolved.

The particular emphasis of the most recent report is that there is much to learn from each other, a lot that we can give to and receive from each other because, as the present report makes so clear at the beginning, we recognise in each other that which is of Christ and the Gospel and, thus of necessity, of the Church.

The World Methodist Council met in Seoul, South Korea, at the end of July 2006. At the conference, the eighth report of the Roman Catholic-Methodist International Commission was unanimously received. Potentially, if properly

received by the two churches concerned, it represents a very significant step forward in the Catholic-Methodist relationship. The seven previous reports were concerned to show Catholics and Methodists how much of the core of Christian faith they held in common, much more than most of them would have realised in previous eras. They were to help the two churches understand each other, that being particularly the case with the seventh report (2001), *Speaking the Truth in Love*, which dealt with the exercise of teaching authority in the two churches.

The approach of the present report is to help the two churches be more aware of the spiritual gifts and riches each has in order that there may be the exchange of gifts between them. This was implied in the *Decree on Ecumenism* of Vatican II and then forcefully underlined by the late John Paul II in *Ut Unum Sint*. A vital part of the context of this report is the current rediscovery of the emphasis upon spiritual ecumenism that was so strong in pioneers of the Ecumenical Movement such as Paul Couturier.

Another part is the emphasis upon the reconciliation of memories and the need for a re-reading of our common history, the first fifteen centuries as one, and of the later period in which the Catholic and Methodist churches existed separately. A feature of the report is the extensive interweaving of quotations from key contemporary Catholic and Methodist sources. Prominent amongst these are the *Decree on Ecumenism*, *Ut Unum Sint*, *Through Divine Love* (the most recent report of the Roman Catholic-United Methodist dialogue in the States), the *Book of Discipline*, and the most recent ecclesiological statement of the British Methodist Conference, *Called To Love and Praise*. This shows Catholics and Methodist seeking to learn from each other's distilled wisdom as witnessed in authoritative teaching.

This new report is entitled *The Grace Given You in Christ: Catholics and Methodists Reflect Further on the Church*. It begins with a biblical passage, Paul's greeting to the Church at Corinth in his first letter (1 Cor 1:1-10) which, as the Commission states, 'resonates with our experience' since it is an appeal to 'be united in the same mind and the same purpose'. The report is then divided into four chapters.

1) ***Mutual Reassessment*** deals with the way in which Methodists and Catholics over more than a couple of centuries have understood and evaluated each other. For much of that time, mutual attitudes were largely, though not wholly, ill informed and prejudiced. Methodists misunderstood much of Catholic teaching on the veneration of the saints and Mary, Catholics believing that Methodists were just one more fissiparous Protestant sect. Occasionally, there were flashes of real appreciation of the other: as when Newman remarked, in 1850, that Wesley had the qualities that 'make up the notion of a Catholic saint.' Since Vatican II there has been a radical change of attitude. Catholics are learning that the Methodist Movement was characterised by a desire to make known the love of Christ, to reform the inner life of the Church, to encourage participation in the celebration of the Eucharist, to serve the poor, to impassion professed Christians into articulate witness for Christ's sake. Equally, Methodists have come to recognise the importance of the Catholic witness to unity as essential to the Church's mission. They have come to appreciate the Catholic emphasis upon continuity across time and to recover Wesley's own deep appreciation of the holiness of so many catholic saints, a view that he continued to hold despite his many attacks on aspects of Catholic faith and practice. In the words of the Commission both sides have come to realise that 'separated Christian communities must eventually grow toward one another if they are to grow closer to Christ. They are formed by the Spirit to be one and not divided.'

This first chapter has an importance beyond Catholic-Methodist relationships. It demonstrates the need for the reconciliation of memories of the history of separated Christians to come to an appreciation of how ecumenical partners have formed and need positive re-evaluation in the common process of growing together in Christ.

**2) *Together in Christ*** deals with the common understanding of Church that has developed as a result of the earlier stages of the dialogue. It begins with an emphasis upon the Church as both visible reality and invisible mystery. ‘Its visibility is essential to its nature and mission. But . . . only the eye of faith can discern its deepest reality, its invisible mystery.’

It illuminates, (a) ecclesiastical convergence that has taken place within the general context of the Ecumenical Movement as a whole, and (b) identification of themes that are particularly, though not exclusively, common to the two partners, the most obvious being the *connectional* nature of the Church. (This term is usually spelt *connexional* in British English but in Methodism everywhere it reflects the understanding that there is one mission to God’s one world and that in that mission, the sharing of resources by and between all local churches is essential.)

In particular, the work from the twentieth and twenty-fifth years of the dialogue, *Towards a Statement on the Church* and *The Apostolic Tradition* is harvested and there are the emphases on the trinitarian basis of ecclesiology and on *koinonia* that one expects. There is a detailed examination of common missionary emphasis of both churches in the section entitled *Sharing the Divine Mission* which recalls ‘our common understanding of graced cooperation’ and participation in God’s work, which allows us with St Paul to call Christians ‘God’s co-workers’. Paragraph 60 stresses that ‘The Church is by nature a connectional society’, ‘a web of interactive relationships.’ Methodists and Catholics have an essentially ‘connectional

understanding of Christ's call to discipleship, to holiness and to mission . . . This connectional principle derives from the understanding of holiness common to Catholics and Methodists: holiness is never a private affair, but a call to perfect love of God and of one another.'

Agreement on the essentially pastoral nature of ministry has characterised the earlier stages of the dialogue. The issue of understanding the relationship between the unique priesthood of Christ and the royal priesthood of all the faithful (often referred to within Methodism as the 'priesthood of all believers') on the one hand, and the priestly dimension of episcopal and presbyteral ministry remains an issue for further exploration as the present report stresses. The Catholic team commend the sensitive treatment of the issue in *Called To Love and Praise* but point out that its teaching is not fully congruent with Catholic understanding.

Paragraph 61 states 'The dynamic of communion belongs not only to local disciples gathered together in community, but also to the world-wide community of those local communities united together as one Church, the Body of Christ. The Church of Christ is truly present in and effective in some way in all local congregations of the faithful who are gathered together by the preaching of the Gospel and for the celebration of the Eucharist. But to be truly ecclesial, each community must be open to communion with other such communities . . . The Church of Christ is an interdependent whole . . . Such a connectional understanding of the Church means that both Catholics and Methodists recognise the need for effective pastoral ministries of unity and oversight within the one Church of Christ. Catholics and Methodists firmly believe that Christ wills one visibly united Church, even though they may differently identify the structures needed for such full communion'



Paragraph 85 stresses the common acceptance by both churches of the need for continued reformation and renewal under the guidance of the Spirit of Truth. The process involves development in understanding of its teachings but involves more than that. ‘There must be growth in love to achieve more insightful knowledge of the riches of faith. In other words there must be growth in holiness’. Here we have an echo of the teaching of the great Benjamin Gregory that the order is ‘not first understand in order to love, but love in order to understand’. (cf. Gregory, B. *The Holy Catholic Church*, London, 1873, p 172 – the leading classical Wesleyan statement on ecclesiology)

### **3) *Deepening and Extending our Recognition of Each Other***

Having dealt with commonly accepted ecclesiological perspectives, the report looks at what the two churches might be able to give to and receive from each other. Para, 97 puts the point movingly when it asserts, ‘It is time now to return to the concrete reality of each other, to look one another in the eye, with love and esteem to acknowledge what we see truly to be of Christ and the Gospel, and thereby of the *Church* in each other’.

A degree of stress is put on the fact that the contrasting approaches of the two churches are not necessarily incompatible. Thus, the Methodist emphasis upon the faith of the individual is complementary to rather than incompatible with the traditional Catholic emphasis upon the faith of the community. Historically, Methodists have been unwilling to un-church others, Catholics have tended to stress the defects or lack of full ecclesial status of other churches; the gap between these emphases has narrowed since Vatican II with its teaching on the authentic ecclesial elements within other bodies and the very real importance of those ecclesial bodies in the salvation of their members. The report suggests that the two churches are edging towards a common understanding of Church as sacrament, citing both the report *Through Divine Love* of the American Catholic-Methodist

dialogue and the teaching of the British Methodist ecclesiological statement, *Called To Love and Praise*. It asserts, 'the idea of a sacrament is ideally suited to holding together internal and external, visible and spiritual and both Methodists and Catholics have begun to speak of the Church itself in a sacramental way.'

Two sections are then devoted to the exchange of gifts. First, the Methodist perspective is examined. Methodists recognise the common trinitarian faith of the two churches. They accept that the eucharistic teaching of the Roman Catholic Church resonates with that in the classical hymns of the Wesleys. They see many of the 'emphases' of Methodism paralleled in the Catholic Church, especially those on regular attendance at worship, the regular and faithful use of holy communion and other means of grace, the commitment to justice and peace and, above all, the common stress on the call to holiness. Methodists recognise that the time has come to take seriously some Catholic forms of devotion of which they have previously tended to be wary. 'Greater awareness of the communion of saints and the Church's continuity in time, the sacramental use of material things and sacramental ministry to the sick and dying are also ecclesial elements and endowments that Methodists might profitably receive from Roman Catholics.' The emphasis upon the Church's continuity in time is reinforced with the statement that Methodists can now see the episcopal succession as a sign (but not a guarantee) of the unity of the Church in space and time. They are also reminded of the statement about the Petrine ministry in the earlier report *Towards A Statement on the Church*, in which Methodists accepted that whatever was essential to the unity of the Church must by its very nature be part of God's will for it. (cf. para 58)

Methodists 'invite Roman Catholics to receive afresh from the common Christian heritage certain ecclesial elements

and endowments that currently may be more evident in Methodism than in the Roman Catholic Church.’ These include the gift of Christian conference as a means of discerning God’s will for the Church, a greater lay activism and leadership in the mission of the Church and a greater flexibility and pragmatism in mission. They invite Catholics to consider the role of the ministry of the Word, Bible reading and study and ‘meeting with others in small groups for fellowship, extempore prayer and mutual pastoral care.’

Catholics acknowledge the commitment of Methodism to holiness and to the connectional understanding and practice of Church. They recognise the emphasis common to both traditions upon ‘responsible grace.’ They accept that they can learn much from Methodism about the value of Scriptural devotion, hymnody and lay ministry. They believe that they can find inspiration in the example of the Wesleys. They commend to Methodists a re-examination of many of the issues that were divisive at the Reformation and subsequently, such as the nature of eucharistic sacrifice, priesthood and the issue of ‘absolute confidence in Christ’s work through the ministry of word and sacrament.’

**4) *Principles and Proposals for Developing Relations between Catholics and Methodists*** admits that there are still many hard theological issues to be resolved but begins by stating that ‘If relations between Catholics and Methodists are to develop further, gestures are required from both our communions that are both realistic and appropriate at the present time.’ It is important to deepen the already existing degree of communion between the two churches and to advance ‘unity by stages’.

The recommendations are addressed to the Methodist conferences, to the Catholic bishops’ conferences, to bishops and equivalent church leaders, to the theologians of both traditions and to those responsible for ministerial formation.

They include the caveat that, in neither case, should anything be done which breaches the discipline of either church but that both accept that there are very real gifts to be shared with the partner church. Both churches are encouraged to consider carefully what is essential within their respective traditions and what might, with integrity be changed or ‘let go of’.

Catholics are encouraged to give concentrated attention to lay leadership within the Church, to the contribution of women to the Church’s ministry and to ‘the Church’s corporate assurance as the context for the infallibility of the Pope.’

Methodists are encouraged to consider the historic succession of bishops and the individual exercise of episcopate within a collegial ministry of oversight and to consider the exercise of universal primacy for the sake of unity and as an expression of the universality of the Church.

Both churches are encouraged to invite members of the other to experience their forms of worship and spiritual devotion and to examine the bounds of legitimate diversity within the Church. Catholics are invited to be inspired by the example of the Wesleys and to promote the place of evangelical preaching, Bible study and hymn singing. Methodists are encouraged to consider making a weekly eucharist the norm in their pattern of Sunday worship, as well as exploring Catholic forms of devotion such as the Stations of the Cross and the veneration of Mary. Both churches are encouraged to co-operate in mission and in peace and justice projects.

These practical suggestions may, prove to be the most significant aspect of the report. If faithfully acted upon, they will lead to a much greater degree of growing together than has resulted from other reports.

Fuller mutual reception of each other’s authentic insights into Christian faith and gifts may produce a vision of the

catholicity of the Church fuller and richer than its previous embodiment in either communion. A point made both in the Methodist ecclesiological statement of 1937 and in the teaching of the late Yves Congar. The catholicity of the Church is dynamic not static and thus develops under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

A key statement of faith in the ultimate guidance of the Holy Spirit occurs in paragraph 144 where we read:

Full communion between Catholics and Methodists will also depend upon a fresh creative act of reconciliation which acknowledges the manifold yet unified activity of the Holy Spirit throughout the ages. It will involve a joint act of obedience to the sovereign Word of God.

The way in which this report combines serious theological reflection with a concern for practical and practicable initiatives in Christian life and witness, represents an important methodological advance in ecumenical dialogue. It deserves to be deeply pondered not just within the Roman Catholic and Methodist churches but by all committed to the Ecumenical Movement. The report is itself the fruit of a profound group experience, on the part of the Commission members, of the exchange of gifts.

David Carter

From an article originally published in The Methodist Observer



## **AN ECUMENICAL JUSTICE AND PEACE GROUP**

Our Justice and Peace group began its life in the early 1980s as a Catholic group for the two Roman Catholic churches in the villages of Bearsted and Harrietsham. In 1995 we were joined by members from the Bearsted Methodist Church and in the later 1990s by Anglicans from Holy Cross, Bearsted and later still from St Mary's Thurhham – the next village, We also have a relationship with St John's Anglican church in Harrietsham and find ways of including them whenever appropriate. Right now the group has eleven members – six Catholics, three Anglicans and two Methodists who meet monthly to plan our activities.

All year round we are aiming to *educate* our parishioners about issues that ought to be the concern of Christian people and about which our churches at national level are active in a variety of ways. In part this is done through promoting the various Sundays and weeks of prayer through Newsletter/Pew Sheet material and through exhibits which explain why we ought to be concerned: Human Rights Day, Homelessness Sunday, Peace Sunday, Racial Justice Sunday, Poverty Action Sunday, One World Week, Refugee Week and so on. Another prayer related activity is the lay led annual service at Aylesford Priory in August commemorating the nuclear bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. This is organized by Kent Justice and Peace groups. We have planned the whole service in some years, shared in the planning in others, helped to lead the service or have been readers, in each case with our various churches involved. Attendance by all churches is encouraged.

Another year round activity is the running of Traidcraft stalls in five of our churches enabling parishioners to purchase fair trade goods and so benefit poor farming families in developing countries. Naturally we also promote FairTrade Fortnight as part of this and provide additional information about

fair trading and how to identify such goods in the supermarkets and local shops. The *Make Poverty History* campaign was year round in 2005. As well as writing Newsletter/Pew Sheet material about the various events and encouraging involvement, we joined in various post card campaigns on poverty, fair trade, aid, debt etc, usually by distributing cards for all individuals and families in the parishes to send, though sometimes just sending them ourselves when we judged we were expecting too much of our parishioners. We tell our people how many cards a Minister received – with the help of their contribution – for example, the 27,534 cards the Minister for Trade and Industry received urging action at the Hong Kong meeting on fair trade – and we tell them of his response.

Involving parishioners in the way described so far is always worth doing. But sometimes we can add to it. One batch of the *Make Poverty History* CAFOD post cards included a special batch for older children. These were eagerly taken up. Later, CAFOD asked each Catholic parish to sign white sashes to be taken to the Edinburgh *Make Poverty History* demonstration. The Justice and Peace group encouraged any child who could sign his/her name to join the signing – and they did so in numbers, along with adult parishioners. Christian Aid did not have an equivalent scheme, but at the time of the Edinburgh demonstration a huge white banner – *Make Poverty History* – encircled the tower of Holy Cross in Bearsted. Another instance of direct parishioner involvement is the sending of Christmas Cards to Prisoners of Conscience. The Justice and Peace group provides a list of around forty names with details of their situation. The list is broken down into sheets of four prisoners to be distributed as a manageable task for each family. This project is carried out in all six of our churches – where it receives very good support – and we also supply the lists on request to other Justice and Peace groups in Kent.

But there are a number of issues on which the group acts alone and does not claim to be representing out parish churches but is simply taking a Christian position. We have taken part in the Clean Investment Campaign, run by the Campaign Against the Arms Trade (CAAT). It provides an annual list of certain types of organization with arms trade investments in companies which sell arms to countries with a poor human rights record or who are involved in conflicts within or between poor countries. Individual members of the group have written over the years to Roman Catholic and Anglican Dioceses and Methodist groups urging disinvestment, with apparent success, to charities which we as individuals have supported and to pension funds – with rather less success. A related issue is landmines – weapons which create so much suffering among innocent civilians going about their daily work or play. Some years back we collected the signatures of parishioners in all our churches on petitions supporting a Land Mines Treaty – playing our part in a successful campaign. Now we write as a group - at the request of Landmine Action – to countries which have failed to sign the Treaty and are still producing and laying mines.

On actions by our own government, we also play our part where it seems right to act. We have as a group written to the Home Office on a number of occasions about their treatment of asylum seekers. Last year we were writing about Section 55 of the Immigration and Asylum Act which required asylum seekers to claim asylum within 72 hours of arrival in the UK or forfeit the right to food and shelter. No regard was taken of their confusion, lack of English, or state of fear which made them slow to approach the authorities. Many hundreds of asylum seekers were, as a result, thrown destitute on the streets. We were a small part of that campaign which ended in a House of Lords finding that Section 55 was against the human rights of asylum seekers. We also wrote last year about Section 9 of the Act which



was withdrawing support from failed asylum seekers with children, until then protected until they were 18 years of age. If the family finished up homeless on the streets, it could mean that the children would be separated from their families and taken into local authority care as neglected. Most local authorities also opposed it, as well as other groups like ours, and it seems to have been dropped. More recently we have written to oppose the return of the use of vouchers instead of cash for food and other essentials. These were largely abolished in 2002 after a long campaign, in which we played our part. We always get replies from the Home Office and sometimes write again, challenging their excuses. Late last year, we wrote to the Prime Minister, opposing the renewal of Trident Nuclear Missiles – given the failure of such weapons to distinguish between armed opponents and innocent civilians of all ages, and their legacy of illness and disability affecting generations to come. We urged instead active support for the Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty. We got a polite reply from 10 Downing Street and our letter was passed to the Ministry of Defence which replied in more detail. We are watching this for any useful further action. Other letters have been sent locally on issues related to housing and homelessness.

In all these cases we do not claim to be writing on behalf of our parishes. My letter (as Chairman) typically begins ‘I am writing on behalf of the Justice and Peace group of Bearsted and Harrietsham, a group consisting of Catholics, Anglicans and Methodists’, adding ‘our views are based on the moral issues involved’. But because we make ourselves aware of the views of our churches at national level, we are often able to quote from their statements in support of our position.

I have not mentioned any ‘giving’ programmes. These are left to the individual churches who support a range of organizations working in developing countries as well as local organizations for the homeless or other good causes. Some of

our churches have parishioners working in developing countries on projects needing support, or have contacts with clergy there who have visited Bearsted and then seek our help with their projects. There is a good deal of generous giving all year round.

When you start a Justice and Peace group or bring your church into an ecumenical group, there is often a certain amount of suspicion and hostility from parishioners – and clergy – who think that typical Justice and Peace issues are not the business of churches or who fear they are being dragged into politics, and party politics at that. We have happily passed that stage into general acceptance and even a quiet pride in the fact that our churches are standing up for Christian values. But there have been hurdles to overcome.

When we started as a Catholic group our projects were mainly geared to Catholic organizations. When the first Methodist joined us this had to be reviewed. We began looking at the work and views not only of the Catholic Bishops' Conference and CAFOD, but also of the Methodist Relief and Development Fund, Christian Aid and relevant church authorities, and we modified our programme accordingly. As the number of churches represented in the group increased, we often found that our timetable for activities clashed with individual church timetables. Members have to work out with their churches when particular projects or prayer days can be fitted in, perhaps later or earlier than in the other churches. Support from the clergy has been variable. When we had a change of Anglican clergy, I arranged to meet with the new vicar to discuss the role of the Justice and Peace group and how it should operate. Relations have been better since. Another issue has been the numbers from each of the churches in the group. At the two Catholic churches the work is currently shared between six people and other volunteers can readily be called upon. For a long time, all the work in the other churches fell on only one or

two people each. A further complication was the frequency with which the Anglican members changed, often with gaps between them. Here again we have seen a great improvement – more help available and three excellent Anglican members. So there are bound to be problems – serious and petty including relationships with other church committees and their priorities – but they can be overcome.

Within the group we have never had any serious clashes. Our churches at national level are in substantial agreement on Justice and Peace type issues and at our level we can use this in our planning. Group meetings are lively and often argumentative, but agreement can always be reached. We are at one with the view that a Christian base must always be at the forefront of any decision on action to be taken. Each year we report to the parishioners of our churches on what we, and they, have done during the year. The report is usually well received.

Joan C. Brown  
Chairman  
Justice and Peace

May God be with me and with his messenger  
whom he has sent to greet me and lead me to heaven  
May the Lord who is Great and blessed look upon me,  
have pity on me and grant me peace.  
May he give me greater strength and courage that I may  
not be fearful or afraid.  
For the angels of God are about me and  
God is with me wherever I may be.

**A Jewish prayer**

## **SERMON FOR 'SIDCUP CHURCHES TOGETHER' UNITY WEEK SERVICE, JANUARY 2006**

'Where two or three are gathered together' Jesus is in their midst. At this Service we bring together our different traditions, each has value, each is authentic, and each bears witness to the call of Jesus to be his disciple. Certainly prayer and praise are common to us all and for this Service we have pooled our resources in our efforts to pray and give praise together.

We are all called, as the disciples were, to go out in Christ's name into the unknown. We do not know what tomorrow will bring. We do know that we need an understanding of one another and a measure of trust between us. We all have to leave things behind and this process is not easy for us. Let us recall how the early Church was built by the first Spirit-filled followers of the Lord.

The new Archbishop of York in his inaugural address challenged us to identify whether we are disciples or consumers in the Church of today. I wish to add another question: does this have an effect on the work for Christian unity? I believe it does. Sometimes Christians look for what suits them, the pick and mix option so prevalent in our consumer society. We tend to judge what is offered instead of asking what we can contribute. This may lead to a lack of cohesion and purpose. Division within any group makes for disunity and unity with those outside the immediate group even more difficult. Unity begins at home!

If we are to walk into the midst of our present society and speak for Christ, we have to show that He has transformed our own lives. We have to be seen to choose for Him and not for ourselves alone. We are, together, his witnesses. We can, together, proclaim the truth of His Gospel, which we share.

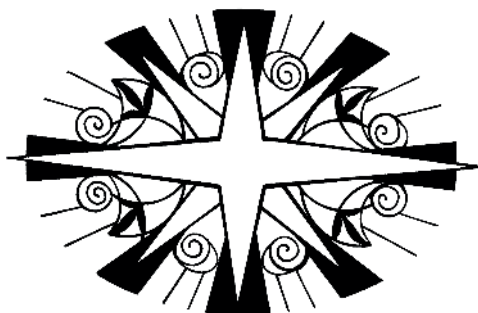
Last week I watched a television programme showing how a Norfolk Anglican wanted to preserve and defend his local

country church. It had fallen into disuse, which was especially sad since it contained rare Norman paintings that were an inspiration. To make matters worse, devil worshippers had desecrated it. Could these followers of Satan be cast out? Yes, with help from others, our Norfolk Christian managed it and now the church has been restored. This was, in its way, a modern parable of determination and clear witnessing.

There is an attitude in our society, which always expects someone else to provide the answers to our problems, usually the Government. Sometimes parents expect our schools to teach the truth to our children. It is parents who are the first teachers of their children in matters of faith and their witness matters. In the moral sphere, is it a clear Christian voice that we hear and is it spoken by Christians together?

In our work for unity, we must encourage each other; through friendship, understanding, listening and hearing, we can draw closer. We are ‘gathered in His name’ this evening to further the work in this way.

Fr Michael Lovell  
Brockley



## IN MEMORY OF THOMAS CRANMER

Terry Davies reports that on 21 March 2006 St George's Church, Beckenham commemorated the 450<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the death of Thomas Cranmer with a celebration of *The Supper of The Lord, and The Holy Communion commonly called The Masse* taken from the Book of Common Prayer of 1549.

Thomas Cranmer (1489-1556), was born into a squire's family at Aslacton, Nottinghamshire. He proved himself an able student at Cambridge. After the death of his first wife, he was ordained a priest in 1523 and elected a fellow of Jesus College gaining a reputation as a biblical and patristic scholar, but was not a member of the small group of Cambridge scholars actively interested in Protestantism. He believed that specifically English matters should not be subject to papal authority. Henry VIII sought his assistance in the divorce proceedings against Catherine of Aragon. Cranmer married Margaret Osiander, the daughter of a Lutheran theologian in secret in 1532. When appointed Archbishop of Canterbury in 1533 he 'annulled' Henry's marriage to Catherine and became Henry's chief instrument in ending papal supremacy in England. Together with Thomas Cromwell, Cranmer disseminated a vernacular version of the bible.

During the reign of Edward VI (1537-53) Cranmer revised church services in the 'tongue understood by the people'. A Prayer Book was issued in English in 1549 and revised in 1552, removing from the Eucharist anything that reflected the Catholic doctrine of the sacrifice of the Mass; the word 'table' or 'God's board' was substituted for 'altar'. In 1553 all clergy were required to give their assent to the Forty Two Articles, which included the denial of transubstantiation and the sacrificial nature of the Mass. However he did show concern for religious unity and sought to avoid popular unrest by checking extremist views.

Under Mary Tudor (1553) Cranmer was accused of high treason, tried and sentenced. The Queen spared his life. He was imprisoned, but later convicted of heresy for which he was executed.

In these last days Cranmer faced a serious moral dilemma. On the one hand he denied papal authority in matters of Church and State pertaining to England and on the other he believed in the God given authority of his Sovereign. Under Henry and Edward this posed no problem, but Queen Mary proclaimed the Catholic faith and accepted papal authority. Under duress he recanted, but on the day of his death he renounced his recantations and was burnt at the stake in Oxford on 21 March 1556 putting his hand into the flames he proclaimed: ‘This hand hath offended!’

Thomas Cranmer’s lasting achievement was the masterly English style of the Church of England’s liturgy and its scriptural spirituality which has stood the test of time.

**NOTE:** The information for this article, prompted by a report from Terry Davies, is primarily from *The Oxford Dictionary of The Christian Church* with additions gleaned from the Internet. JDM



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### ***Copy Dates***

1<sup>st</sup> Dec. for February, 1<sup>st</sup> April for June, 1<sup>st</sup> Aug. for October.

### **CHAIR OF THE DIOCESAN COMMISSION**

Rev. Mgr Timothy Galligan, M.A., S.T.L.,

### **OFFICERS OF THE COMMISSION**

#### **SE Area**

**Chair:** David Goodhind,  
**Secretary:** Mrs Margaret Moloney,  
**Area Distributor:** Rev. M, Baldry,

#### **SW Area**

**Chair:** Joy Peck,  
**Secretary:** Mrs Barbara Wood,  
**Area Distributor:** Mrs G Singarajah,

#### **Kent Area**

**Chair:** Sr K M Clapham,  
**Secretary:** Mrs M Jones,  
**Area Distributor:** Mr J. Wilkinson,