

*Diocesan Bulletin for Christian Unity
Archdiocese of Southwark*

October 2002

Vol. 20 No. 64
80p



TOGETHER IN CHRIST



CONTENTS

Editorial

3. CTBI Conference

5. Another quiet weekend in Beckenham

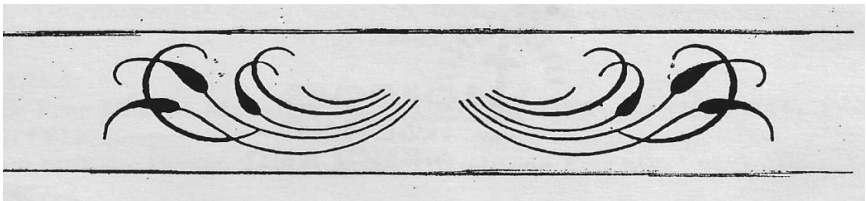
7. The Covenant Relationship

11. Why Celebrate?

13. A Personal Covenant: A Historic occasion

15. “Steps Forward”

18. An Ecumenical Summer



EDITORIAL:

Welcome to our October issue, and we offer our deep gratitude to all who have contributed to it. We include a variety of material relating to ecumenical activity at various levels.

At local level, Terry Davies shares his experiences of being a Unity Contact in Beckenham, and he is working very energetically in that role.

Canon Derek Carpenter writes with great insight about the Covenant Relationship, a very important commitment, one involving great trust (as all forms of ecumenism implies) and emphasising it "must be central to the life of the Church in a given locality"

At national level, Gwen Chiosso relates her experience of the week of the popular "Celebrate" at Ilfracombe, which attracts crowds, and this time presented the important theme of "Evangelisation", with "brilliant speakers".

Fr. Lovell has guided us through the event for Churches Together in Britain and Ireland, with its challenge to 'stand on holy ground'. We are reminded that 'we need to take the missionary risks which St. Paul took'. The delegates have much to share, and to encourage others to put into practice all they have experienced.

The Personal Covenant signed in the presence of Queen Elizabeth at Windsor, is indeed 'a historic occasion.' The commitment and undertakings need to be repeated at all levels of ecumenical endeavour.

In 'Steps Forward' Anne Howes gives us a graphic account of the Focolare Conference in Italy - at international level with 2,200 attending. We note 'the significance of the parish in the life of the whole Church'.

David Carter's busy 'Ecumenical Summer' has also taken us to international events, and his own many commitments reflect themes and issues for our consideration and action. He gives us clear and helpful guidance on the important Anglican/Methodist Covenant.

CTBI CONFERENCE 2002

'Christians in search of Holy Ground'

"We're standing on Holy Ground" the members of the Conference sang together in the Swanwick chapel in Derbyshire. This brought to mind the reality that when we pray together in God's name, He is there in our midst. The world around us needs the reassurance that there are holy times and places available for everyone. When we are together in these times and places, Christians can make a difference. They can help to bring about justice and peace.

Our keynote speaker, Professor, John Drane, spoke in a lively way about the current approach of people towards the various Christian Churches. Certain characteristics were common among them. He referred to the research by David Hay which showed that in the 1990s, church attendance had decreased by 20%, whereas 'spiritual' experience had increased by 60% in the same period. In a later speech, Dr. Grace Davie spoke about a Northern European study which had shown that the institutional church was weakest in Scandinavia but that there was a definite interest in spirituality among young people in that same study, especially relating to the soul and the afterlife.

the notion of 'belonging' in many different institutions has gradually declined. This is as much true of the political parties in our country as in the churches. People are still strong on 'belief" and will give themselves belief labels whilst not wishing to be paid up members of the various institutions. John Drane pointed out that people are now less certain of their identity. Today's fragmented families are a sign of this. Large numbers of people in their 50s are leaving the mainstream churches at the moment.

Grace Davie spoke about the recent experiences which have been out of the ordinary and reactions to them. Princess Diana's death and the events in New York on September 11th last year are two examples. Is it something cultural which makes us turn to the church in large numbers when the normal parameters of life are suddenly changed? Church leaders also seem to speak with greater force on these occasions. They become the mouthpiece for belief and articulate that belief for many otherwise unable to do so.

The image of St Paul in the city of Athens sharing the Christian message with all who passed by was an effective one for John Drane. "There are no 'no go' areas for God" he reminded us and the Divine perspective is

global. In the biblical studies which were part of the Conference, we learned how the telling of peoples' stories really mattered in the settling of conflict. Clearly, Paul always listened to others in order to engage in dialogue with them. He was entering into the 'supermarket' of faiths and addressing peoples' concerns with them, doing so without fear.

Conference was challenged to stand on ground made holy by world events and the Christian response to them. Professor Mary Grey had the unenviable task of summing up Conference and discerning future directions. Although her time was limited, she brought a remarkable focus which was widely appreciated. She began by asking where we could find holy ground in our world. Often this was contested territory such as Rwanda, or Auschwitz. It could be anywhere in need of God's presence, healing or deliverance. It need not necessarily be a peaceful, rural, place of pilgrimage. It could be the secular city.

What characterised holy ground for Mary Grey was activity of the church within it. There must be something of the sacred in the holy. We should not be ashamed to hope given to us by the risen Christ.

Mary Grey said three main issues of concern had emerged from Conference which we should address as those standing together on holy ground. The first of these was justice. Idolatrous capitalism had led to oppressive economic structures, supported by ever increasing consumption by the wealthy.

Global terrorism was the second area of concern for us all. We need to develop mechanisms for the healing of memories. Hearing others tell their stories is one way to bring about healing. In this way, the recognition of difference is seen to be more important than the difference itself. We should trust in the healing grace of holy ground.

Lastly, we should engage with pluralism. This involves being outward looking. We need to take the missionary risks which St Paul took. Being disciples of Jesus means putting faith into action in difficult times and not retreating. The Church of Christ must be Christ-like in the world today. As Vatican II reminds us, the gifts of the Holy Spirit can be found among us all, working in different ways in the world. Can we transfigure holy ground by helping to bring about peace and justice for all people?

Fr Michael Lovell

Another quiet weekend in Beckenham

A year ago I became Unity Contact for Beckenham. The only advice my PP gave me was to "build better relations!". So I started a pilgrimage round the 15 churches in CTI Beckenham by making an ecumenical visit to the main weekly service at each one, introducing myself to the minister, and saying I have come to pray and worship with him and his (or her) congregation.

I finished on December 23rd and was asked to stand up by the Vicar. The church, St. John's, Anglican, was packed for a special Xmas event. So, recalling Sam Goldwyn's dictum that "There's no such thing as bad publicity", I stood up, feeling like St. Paul. The Vicar, who is a keen ecumenist, said, "Terry has just completed a pilgrimage round all the 15 churches in Beckenham." So I got a round of applause - and was then glad to sit down! But that helped me in the coffee session afterwards where the folk were eager to discuss.

Next Sunday will be my 9th Station on my 2002 pilgrimage, so I am just ahead of schedule.

But last weekend was very special. It marked the last service, followed by the retirement of the Rector offset. George's, which has been the Parish Church of Beckenham for the past 900 years, though it has six other Anglican churches due to the demographic growth in the last two centuries and the construction of the railways. Canon Derek Carpenter has served here with great distinction for the last 12 years. He is a keen cricketer, a member of the MCC and of the Surrey Club. He had a fond farewell letter from Ted Dexter!

On Saturday night he arranged a farewell concert in the church, since the Hall would have been too small. There were performances given by talented artistes the Canon had met and known. That filled two hours, after which there was a very welcome finger buffet and interval of half-an-hour. Then the expert choir provided the second half of the concert with 12 items taking another hour. So the concert occupied four hours - I know, because, like Max Boyce, "I was there!" The church was packed and the pew got harder and harder but I found that dextrous use of a hassock was not only uplifting but - miraculous!

On Sunday morning I went to my normal Mass at 0800, then drove up to St. George's so that I could attend Canon Derek's "Farewell" Eucharist at 09.30. I squeezed into the last seat in that large church. The music was set to Mozart's "Spatzen Messe". During the service, Derek gave the most hilarious sermon I've ever heard. At the Communion, about everyone went up, discreetly marshalled by the two Church Wardens, one female. I went up for my final Blessing from Derek, which I always find profoundly moving and saddening. Then the service ended, followed by a Presentation to Derek. Then he climbed up to the pulpit again and gave his thanks to all. Then, to my great surprise, he said "I have a large photo of the Pope hanging on the wall in my study, which I value highly. I have decided to give it to Terry Davies as he is one of the most ecumenical people I know. He's from St. Edmund's but often prays and worships here with us!

The previous week I had sent him a copy of the "Catholic Herald" drawing his notice to a reproduction of an article about the Pope's visit to Canterbury Cathedral 20 years ago. It pointed out that the Pope not only greeted each of the 20 or so Anglican bishops there, but EMBRACED each one! Is it possible that my small act, 3 days before his retirement, led to Derek's greater act in giving me that picture'? If so, does it indicate that such smaller acts may have greater effects than bigger ones in bringing us to final unity?

So it's now in the most honoured place in my lounge. It was a typical ecumenical gesture of Derek's, who was always working to make Christ's prayer a reality in Beckenham and in Rochester Diocese. He had signed a personal covenant with the nearby Methodist Minister and he had got the two Methodist parishes to join in a covenant with his own. The URC Church has since joined,

Nigel Groome, who is the talented Director of Music at St. George's, said that he had missed me at Compline for two weeks. I try to go most weeks and I did go again this week. After the service ended there was a welcome coffee and wine session giving time to mix and chat. Then, after bidding a sad farewell to Derek, I left the church at 12.30, after 3 hours.

In the evening I felt the need to give thanks for Derek, and for myself. so I walked down to St. George's, for Evensong, tired as I was. When it began, the chancel filled up with about 35 people; the choir and organist, 2 Lay Readers (both women) and with the curate, Fr, John from Calcutta. In the nave there were just 12, just like the 12 Apostles. On the way out, I said to Fr. John not to be downhearted, as the parishioners must have been punch-drunk, after spending so long in church in the last 24 hours, He was clearly glad to agree.

Doesn't this remind you of that old film called "Saturday Night and Sunday Morning"?

Terry Davies

[Editor's Note: - Mr Davies has now arranged for the picture of John Paul II to be presented to his Parish Priest It is expected to be placed in the Lady Chapel and, with the following Inscription "Presented on the occasion of his retirement by Canon Derek Carpenter, Rector of St George's Church to Mgr. Canon Jack Madden Parish Priest of St Edmund's Church to symbolise the slowly growing rapprochement between the Anglican and Roman Churches."

The Covenant Relationship - A way forward for the local Church.

Seventeen years ago I wrote a paper that very title for a mid-Service Clergy Course at St George's House, Windsor - I believed the title then, and as my full-time ministry comes to a close (much of which has been spent, in a variety of roles, arguing the case for, and practically working for, Christian unity) I believe it no less today. Nor is it insignificant that the way the Anglican and Methodist Churches, with the United Reformed Church also on board. have chosen to advance their relationship together is in the form of a covenant.

My Research Project published in November 1984, discovered 34 Local Covenants throughout the county at that time - today there are literally hundreds. and 'covenanting' has been the growth industry of the Church in the latter years of the last century It continues to offer a way forward for those of differing denominations - any denominations - who are willing to cooperate, pray, work and learn to grow together, sometimes putting aside their own agenda to share in promoting what might be for the good of a wider constituency. Jesus' prayer for unity was 'that the world might believe': for some that is to paint the picture on too wide a

canvas - we are often, after all, consumed by what happens in our little corner - but if we were to work together 'that this local community might believe' then that seems to put it all into a more manageable perspective,

And the Covenant need not simply be between church congregations. Some while ago I and my Methodist colleague publicly made a covenant to encourage each other in our ministry, to pray for each other and, where possible, to work together. It may be that similar deepening of commitment and relationships in other places might in themselves prove to be 'a way forward for the local Church'.

The word 'covenant' is a strong biblical word. It is a solemn binding, in Old and New Testaments sealed with blood. When Moses brought God's people out of Egypt and they set up camp on Mount Sinai, a covenant relationship was ratified by animal sacrifice, by reading from the 'book of the covenant' (Exodus 24:7), by the assent of the people, and by the sprinkling of blood - "This is the blood that seals the covenant which the Lord made with you when he gave all these commands" (24:8). The covenant therefore demanded commitment on the part of those who were parties to the agreement, and obedience to its demands "we will do everything that the Lord has said" (24:3). In the new covenant which Jesus made, the same elements were present - "this is my blood which seals God's covenant, my blood poured out for many" (Mt. 26:29). It is, moreover, something to be valued, and there is an implicit warning for those who regard it cheaply - "What, then, of the person ... who treats as a cheap thing the blood of God's covenant?" (Heb. 10:29) Nor is it a matter of a written set of rules - more important is the spirit which pervades the sealing of the agreement (2 Cor. 3:6). The covenant in biblical terms, therefore, is binding, demands commitment and obedience, is valued, and cannot be treated lightly. That is no less true of local covenants made between Christian communities.

In a Local Covenant, Christian congregations commit themselves first to God and then to one another - it is a commitment with great potential, for ecumenism implies trust. and where there is trust the Churches can do anything: where there is no trust they can do nothing. Those who may be tempted to think of it as a publicity gesture overlook the tremendous amount of careful thought and preparation which needs to precede it. Local Churches can only move forward together in consultation, and in all this the Church leaders themselves need to be

heavily involved, for their decisions affect their own ministry as well as the life of the local church. The leadership will need to express clearly what a covenant will mean and into which areas of community concern, pastoral care, and church life, work and worship they and their people will move. Councils of Churches have often been fringe to the life of many churches, but a Local Covenant must be central to the life of the Church in a given locality. If such a covenant enables the Churches to present Christ to the people of its area then it is fulfilling its task, and so often the reality of a Local Covenant is determined by the activities which take place in the week, both in Church and community; within these, such programmes as youth-work, Christian training and discipleship, and sick-visiting may well find a place. If a local Church looks carefully at its mission to its neighbourhood, and begins by a study of the locality in which it is set to bear it's then there will undoubtedly be revealed areas of mission in which there can be some united action; indeed, more than that, local churches may well discover, as a result of their common activity, that they can do no other than adhere to the great principle set forth at the Lund Faith and Order Conference 50 years ago 'that we only do on our own that which we cannot do together'.

Church leaders of all the traditions in Kent have recently renewed* at Aylesford Priory, a covenant which they made 18 years ago - then, it read, 'We share in common our Christian faith and its responsibilities, and have much to offer and receive from each other in meeting these responsibilities. We believe that, led by the Holy Spirit, God is calling us to greater efforts in our Christian mission. We need the help and co-operation of every Christian, and we encourage local co-operation in every place, we promote the positive need for genuine prayer for the fullness of unity, and we call on all our brothers and sisters in Christ to ponder locally the decisive steps they are prepared to take to promote ecumenical understanding and commitment'.

So - might the local Covenant continue to be a way forward for the local Church?

We are part of a pilgrim church which does not stand still, and which is part of a changing world. Its stability is in its faith that the One who governs its life does not change - God is the same yesterday, and for ever. Here in time the Church proclaims truths which are timeless, here in the world it speaks of things which are eternal, in a changing world and a changing order the Church - and that means Christian people -

bear witness to things which do not change because they are the things of God. The notion of the pilgrim is something which has influenced the onward march of the Church in recent years - the inter-church process of the 1980s was called 'Not Strangers but Pilgrims', and did not Pope John Paul II invite us to share that pilgrimage together?

'We are only pilgrims on this earth, making our way towards that heavenly kingdom promised to us as God's children. Beloved brethren in Christ, for the future can we not make that pilgrimage together hand in hand, bearing with one another charitably, in complete selflessness, gentleness and patience, doing all we can to preserve the unity of the spirit by the peace that binds us together? This would surely bring down upon us the blessing of God our Father on our pilgrim way'.

As I reflect upon the 39 years of my ordained ministry, I am more than ever aware that my own Christian pilgrimage has been shaped by others, for none of us is called to make the journey alone: I am conscious of many friends who have shared that pilgrimage with me in the congregations in which I have been privileged to minister. But I am also aware that my own spiritual journey been taken alongside those of other traditions, some with very different views and attitudes from my own - but God has called us to be together on that journey.

I have often been moved and encouraged by what a Roman Catholic priest in France wrote "A (Protestant) Pastor comes to mind, a companion of this time of discovery, this ecumenical springtime. He died in 1972. We always found ourselves in complete pastoral fellowship. I had given him a small icon of the Last Supper. It went with him during his last illness. I accompanied him on his last journey to the cemetery and gave thanks for his life. In loyalty and respect to our ecclesial disciplines we could never take Holy Communion together. We were just at the threshold of the adventure of unity. Nevertheless I must say that with what I experienced in depth with men and women of his spiritual quality already belong to the mystery of the community of saints, to the church of tomorrow, which is not as yet clearly revealed."

Canon Derek Carpenter -formerly Rector of Beckenham Parish Church.

[*Editors Note: the renewal of the Covenant did not in fact take place.]

Why Celebrate?

Celebrate has been held in Ilfracombe, Devon, at Easter time for the last 9 years. It lasts a week and is packed with events such as talks, seminars, worship and healing services. This family conference is essentially Catholic, but it is open to other fellow Christians and, indeed, a reasonable number of people from other denominations take part. Whilst the conference is organised by a team from Catholic Charismatic Renewal, some of the speakers are also from other Christian traditions. During the week, an Anglican service is held, particularly for the benefit of the Anglicans, but all are welcome. The theme is usually the same as the Pope has for the current year, with this year's being Evangelisation not one Catholics have usually been famous for!

The conference is held in a large secondary school, with accommodation at the nearby John Fowler Holiday Park in self-catering apartments. There is a swimming pool, crazy golf and play area for the children to enjoy when they are not otherwise busy in their streams with entertainment and activities suitable for their particular age. The young adults have their sessions held in the holiday park bar. Of the 1350 people took part this year, nearly half were below the age of 30 very encouraging for the future of the Catholic Church.

It is an extremely popular event and in order to be sure of a place, you have to book up almost as soon as the forms are sent out in September. I feel quite blessed because my family was invited to go by another family in our parish of St. Stephen's, Welling who had been going along since Celebrate first started. They needed another helper for the "Little Lights" (the 3-5 year-old group), which they were in charge of at the time As I love little children I was delighted to go along as a helper. This ensured that we again managed to get a chalet for the whole family this year.

Charles and Sue Whitehead are the wonderfully gifted couple who are in overall charge of Celebrate. They are an ecumenical duo, with Charles being the Catholic his is a practising Anglican. Sue is one of the few who go up for a blessing at Communion at the daily Masses held in the large school hall. Mass is held daily and lasts at least two hours. There are usually about twelve priests concelebrating. Despite such a length, it does not feel to be "dragging on", especially on

account of the enthusiasm displayed by the youth and the wonderful music ministry.

Wednesday is a day off from talks and workshops, giving everyone a chance to explore the surroundings of the Devon coast and countryside. It is meant to be a *holiday* after all! However, the day still begins with a long Mass and a concert of modern Christian music in the evening.

We have heard some brilliant speakers at Celebrate such as Lord David Alton, James Mawdsley, David Wells and Myles Dempsey. We particularly enjoyed somebody straight from the States, Dr. Marcellino D'Ambrosio, a very knowledgeable Catholic theologian who liked to introduce himself as an Italian cowboy from Texas. One of the things he said during a talk that really impressed us was that we should actually prepare spiritually before we attend Mass, instead of rushing into church with our mind still full of the noise and distractions of our material lives. On Sundays, he and his family pray in the car on their way to church.

We were also treated to the wonderful gifts of mime artist, Steve Murray, who added pathos and entertainment to the week. A number of talented musicians led the singing throughout, especially the duo CJM and the Irish band Emmaus. A lot of hymns are modern and, although many were unknown to us, we soon became familiar with them. When we entered the hall on the first night and saw everyone singing, praising and raising their arms, my husband couldn't believe these were predominantly Catholics, and thought there was a huge number of Low Church Anglicans! Although it wasn't the type of worship we were used to back home, we soon entered into the spirit of the event.

An Anglican couple from Welling had been invited along to Celebrate some years ago by the same friends who asked us to join them. They had previously been regulars at the inter-denominational Spring Harvest celebration which is also held at Easter. They feel that this has now got too big for their liking it attracts over 60,000 Christians annually and they much prefer the more homely atmosphere of the mainly Catholic conference, where they have been going ever since. Nevertheless, the organisers are looking into ways of being able to take in more people each year, as they are always so over-subscribed. Whilst it seems a great shame to turn people away, and of course it would be wonderful to be able to open up Celebrate to more and more

families, it is very difficult to find a suitable place which would be any bigger both for the accommodation and for holding the activities. However, selfishly speaking though it may be, we are very happy with the present size of Celebrate and look forward to returning next year, God willing.

If you would like to know more about Celebrate, there is a website: www.celebrateconference.org

Gwen Chiosso

A PERSONAL COVENANT: A HISTORIC OCCASION

Queen Elizabeth's Golden Jubilee Service (a very ecumenical one) was held at St. George's Chapel, Windsor on June 2: the photo shows The Queen, Prince Philip, and the four Presidents of Churches Together in England, after the service. The Presidents are: Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O'Connor, Archbishop George Carey, Esme Beswick (Joint Council for Caribbean Churches), Antony Burnham (Free Churches Moderator).



After the service, The Queen, and Duke of Edinburgh, joined leaders from Member Churches of Churches Together in England, leaders of other Churches and other friends, in the medieval Vicars' Hall, Windsor Castle, to witness the signing of the Presidents' Personal Covenant. Here is the text of the Covenant:

We believe in the Triune God, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Because we confess 'one, holy, catholic and apostolic church', our paramount ecumenical task is to show forth this unity, which is always a gift of God. Jesus Christ revealed to us on the cross his love and the mystery of reconciliation; as his followers we intend to do our utmost to overcome the problems and obstacles that still divide the Churches.

We rejoice that the Churches in England are steadily growing closer in mutual trust and respect. As Presidents of Churches Together in England, we have in common many joys and hopes, and we have much to offer and to receive from one another in the rich diversity of our traditions.

We believe that in our common pilgrimage we are being led by the Holy Spirit, and that God the Father, through our Lord Jesus Christ, is calling us to a deeper unity and to a greater sharing in our mission in his world.

We therefore commit ourselves

- to persevere in seeking a common understanding of Christ's message of salvation in the Gospel*
- in the power of the Holy Spirit, to work towards the visible unity of the Church of Jesus Christ in the one faith, expressed in common discipleship, worship, witness and service.*

We undertake to develop our mutual friendship and support,

- to pray, study and work together for the unity and mission of the Church,*
- to consult together on issues affecting the common good,*
- to promote justice, integrity and peace,*
- to speak with one voice to give common witness to Jesus Christ, as far as we are able.*

We pray God to lead us, with all our sisters and brothers in Christ, towards communion in faith, life and witness; so that, united in one body by the one Spirit, we may together witness to the perfect unity of his love.

Afterwards the four Presidents commented on the historic occasion Cardinal Cormac Murphy - O'Connor 'The ecumenical path we are engaged on is a serious one. What does matter is what unites us. What divides us is still to tackle.

Archbishop George Carey: It is a very historic moment in the journey of the Churches. I can still recall when I started in the ministry a degree of elitism on the part of the Church of England. We have come a long, long way on that journey.



Esme Beswick: We must use the time creatively, in the knowledge that the time is always right- now is the time to make a real promise of ecumenical unity and transform our covenant into a creative psalm of pilgrimage. Now is the time to lift our banner high!

Antony Burnham: When I was ordained over forty years ago, I committed myself to be ready to receive from God the gift of unity. We are still searching but the covenant is a significant milestone on that journey.

(We are grateful to Churches Together in England for permission to reproduce the text, and to the Press Association for permission to copy the photos.) (Ed.)

Steps Forward

The taxi arrived at 4.15am on April 19th 2002. At that time of the day the thought runs through one's mind that, surely, there are easier ways to work for Christian Unity! After picking up two more people, we arrived at a deserted Terminal I in Heathrow at 4.50am. It appeared that we had even preceded the BA ground crew! We were heading off to Castelgandolfo in Italy, just outside Rome, for a conference organised by the Focolare at their International Centre. The

conference was entitled: "**Jesus Crucified and Forsaken, *the Way to a Community in Dialogue***".

Eight of us left Heathrow that Friday morning and in Castelgandolfo we met the other thirteen from England, who had spent a week touring Italy before the conference itself. In all there were thirteen Roman Catholics and eight from the Church of England, coming from both North and South of England.

As we arrived in the hall, a very lively band, made up of young people from an Italian parish, was singing. They were full of enthusiasm and joy and gave an immediate impression that something special was happening. We were met so warmly by other delegates that, even though we didn't know them, there was a sense that we were all one family. The 2,200 people attending the conference came from parishes all over the world. From the input at the meeting, they were to discover how they could help their parish communities to be communities in dialogue. Dialogue is a very broad subject, so it was broken down for us into four specific areas. We looked firstly at dialogue with the people in our own Church, then at dialogue with people from other Christian Traditions, then with people from the great World Religions, and finally with people who work for a greater sense of solidarity and unity in the world, but who do not profess any religious belief.

The main address was given by Chiara Lubich, the foundress of the Focolare Movement. She started by reminding us that being in dialogue is an inherent characteristic of the Christian Church, since the life of the Church is based on the communion of the three Persons within the Trinity. This implies that in order to enter into communion and dialogue with other people, we must first and foremost ensure that our communities live in communion themselves, so as to be able to share it with others. We have to start, she explained, by entering into a relationship of love and dialogue with each person we meet, from whatever background that might be. She then went on to explain how Jesus Crucified and Forsaken can be a model for dialogue, whether at an individual level or at the level of community. She quoted from St. John of the Cross: "This was the greatest desolation... he had suffered in his life. And thus he wrought the greatest work that he had ever wrought, whether in miracles or in mighty works, during the whole of his life, either upon earth or in heaven, which was the reconciliation and union of all people, through grace, with God". (*The Ascent of*

Mount Carmel 11: 7, 11, Image Books, 1958, New York, p193) Chiara explained that Jesus had suffered that tremendous sense of abandonment, of separation from the Father, precisely for unity, to reunite all human beings to God, and to reunite us to one another. So, she continued, we can understand that Jesus Forsaken, having reunited heaven and earth, and people with one another, had accomplished the most difficult and important dialogue, a dialogue which only he could have accomplished. He was able to do this because he is Love and so He showed us how we should love: we have to go into dialogue at whatever level, ready to give of the whole of ourselves, and not to count the cost of our love.

This talk helped us all to realise that dialogue was not only a "good thing to do", but it was a way of responding to the life that God had placed within each one of us at Baptism; the reflection of the life of the Trinity. I felt that in dialogue we fulfilled our Christian vocation, and nothing less than this.

After the talk Cardinal Stafford from the Pontifical Council of the Laity celebrated Mass. This was a very important occasion, where he underlined the significance of the parish in the life of the whole Church, explaining its ecclesial origins and its potential to be a real powerhouse for good in the local community.

As the Conference unfolded, there were many talks and reflections on dialogue, together with personal testimonies from different parts of the world. One of the Anglican priests with our group spoke about his efforts to create a greater sense of community in his parish. He said that, often, we look at our parishes and feel that things are going ok, but, at this point recently, he had felt that he needed to ask himself what he could do to establish greater dialogue and communion with others. He described how, by encouraging more consultation amongst his parishioners, ideas had been born that were causing the parish to move in new directions. These new ideas had not been born from any one person's inspiration, but from the discussions together, and thus those involved felt responsible and totally committed. It seemed to everyone that this guaranteed that the Holy Spirit was at work there. Particularly moving were testimonies from people working in areas where there were very few Christians. The situations that people found themselves in were often very challenging, but by keeping the "door always open" to dialogue and friendship, ways had been found to help in many difficult situations. Some people had been so

impressed by the love that they had experienced within the Christian community, that they had found the courage and strength to face their situation and work through the difficulties.

On Sunday morning, we all went to St Peter's for the Angelus with the Pope. I think it was a real tribute to the relationships built, that those from the Church of England insisted on coming with us. The Holy Father mentioned our group and encouraged us in our work for unity. It was a fitting end to a very special meeting.

That very early start on the first morning now seemed a small price to have paid for what turned out to be an important and joyful experience of unity with all the people on the trip. We all realised, I think, that when there is true "communion" among people, then our differences are an enrichment and not obstacles. I came away thinking that I no longer wanted to "do" ecumenism, but to aim at building the communion that we are all called to as Christians, because of the life of the Trinity within each one of us.

Anne Howes

AN ECUMENICAL SUMMER

The summer of 2002 may have been a bit disappointing weather-wise (I am writing this in mid-July and in advance of any great improvement that may occur later on!) but has been rich in ecumenical stimulus.

A key matter for my attention has been the proposed Anglican-Methodist Covenant. The new Editor of the journal *One in Christ*, asked me to write about it for the journal. A little later the Focolare invited me to talk about it at their ecumenical day in Welwyn, which I did, in tandem with my friend Callan Slipper, who is both an Anglican priest and a member of the Focolare movement. The proposals have also been discussed with the British Roman Catholic-Methodist Committee. Recently, both the Methodist Conference and the Church of England Synod have commended the proposals for study to the dioceses and districts.

A welcome feature of recent ecumenism has been the desire of churches involved in negotiations for closer unity to consult other ecumenical partners. Anglicans and Methodists alike no longer see any unity scheme between them as a purely domestic matter for the

two churches alone. We know that there remains a yet wider unity to seek. We hope and pray that our coming closer will enable further steps towards unity, including others. In particular, we both have longstanding and serious relationships with the United Reformed and the Catholic Churches which we are bound to continue to develop at the same time as our own bilateral relationship. Both the URC and the Catholic Church will be consulted for their reactions to the Covenant.

It is important to understand what the Covenant is. It is *not* a scheme for complete unity, though many of us ardently hope that it will lead to such a scheme within the foreseeable future. It is a commitment to a *closer* relationship than hitherto. Three key points within it are: firstly, mutual recognition as churches. We begin by saying, "We affirm one another's churches as true churches belonging to the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church of Jesus Christ.' Next, there are commitments to work more closely together and towards 'full, visible unity.' There is commitment to the development of joint structures of oversight, and most significantly, in my opinion, 'We commit ourselves to listen to each other and to take account of each other's concerns,' especially in areas that affect our relationships as churches'. Finally, there are important commitments to share each other's' riches and to re-read the history of our divisions together in order to overcome inherited prejudices and misunderstandings on both sides. The second and third suggestions are, I think, of potential value for any two churches seeking a closer relationship. We can't, I think, expect to jump from absence of relationship into full unity at one bound. We need, as the great ecumenical pioneer, Cardinal Mercier said, to come to know and love one another first. Of course, to a degree, this is already possible within Local Ecumenical Partnerships especially, but what is good practice in a few areas needs to become far more general. We need to understand how and why our partners think and act as they do in order that there may be real dialogue and sharing at every level in the Church's life.

It is important to stress that the Covenant is not a scheme for complete unity.

It does not yet allow full *interchangeability* of ministry. Certain matters are highlighted as needing further attention before the two churches can proceed further. The advocates of the Covenant do believe that its acceptance would make it much easier to make

progress on these remaining problems. It is hoped that, in the light of the response from the 'grass roots' in both churches, the Conference and the Synod can make a decision on the Covenant in 2003.

Another matter that is beginning to receive attention is the joint Christian approach to those of other faiths. The recent Vatican document *Dominus Jesus* was devoted to this subject.

The Theology and Unity Group of Churches Together in England (of which I am Secretary) devoted a considerable amount of time to this at their meeting in June. We agree that it is important that, as far as possible, there should be a united Christian approach. It is confusing to followers of other religions when they hear very different Christian approaches to other religions, some very affirmative of the truth and goodness in them, some far more negative. We talked in particular about the work of the Holy Spirit in other religions and about the question of 'inter-faith worship', in other words, whether, when and in what ways it is possible for Christians to join in prayer with the followers of other religions.

The issues involved in interfaith relationships are going to become increasingly important right across the country. Some even talk about them as a 'wider ecumenism'. I think it is important to maintain a clear distinction between ecumenical and interfaith activity. The former takes place on the basis of a common acceptance of the uniqueness and divinity of Christ and entry into prayer for the unity of his disciples. The latter, however, demands many of the same spiritual disciplines, the willingness to listen to others, an openness to real elements of truth and beauty in what they have to say (a point that was affirmed at Vatican II). It demands a healing of memories and an acceptance that some of the behaviour of our Christian ancestors towards people of other faiths was bigoted and blind.

In May I attended the residential meeting of the British Roman Catholic-Methodist Committee, which was held at the splendidly refurbished Hinsley Hall in Leeds (once a Methodist seminary!). We had more discussion of the recent international report, *'Speaking the Truth in Love'*, of which I wrote in an earlier edition of this journal, and of the Covenant mentioned above. In May, I was also granted an extra session in the course on Methodist history and theology that I teach to the students at Wesley College, Bristol. This enabled me to put in some material on the Methodist pioneers of ecumenism and

show how ecumenism is integral to the Wesleyan tradition of understanding the faith.

I shall continue to be very busy over the next few weeks with three papers to deliver. The first, on ecumenical challenges to and from Methodism, will be at the Oxford Institute of Methodist Studies in August. This is a quinquennial gathering of Methodist theologians from across the world. I will be in the 'evangelism and ecumenism' group to be led by Bishop Walter Klaiber, Methodist bishop in Germany and our greatest ecumenical theologian, Geoffrey Wainwright. I shall be introducing my friend, Fr. Joseph Fameree, Professor of Ecclesiology and ecumenism at Louvain-la-Neuve in Belgium, as guest Catholic scholar. In September, I go to the Congress of the Ecumenical Society of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Chester, where I will give a paper about the early ecumenical pioneer, Hugh Price Hughes (1847-1902). Finally, in October, I am due to go to a consultation at Bose, on the edge of the Italian Alps. We will be staying at the monastery there, which, like Taizé, is a mixed Catholic-Protestant one.

The subject is, I believe, a very important one. We need to reflect more on our unity in the Spirit as well as that given in Christ. The Pope himself has said that, in dialogue the 'Holy Spirit makes surprising discoveries possible.' He talks of how the Holy Spirit is 'at work in our brethren' and through him we can discover 'new dimensions of holiness and open ourselves to fresh aspects of Christian commitment'. Scripture reminds us that the Spirit was given to Jesus 'without measure' (John 3:34), who then prayed that He might be bestowed on us. I hope later to be able to tell you that some exciting thinking came out of this consultation.

There is so much to be thankful for, to look forward to, and to pray for.

David Carter.

TWO BOOKS OF ECUMENICAL RELEVANCE:

The Christian Church, An Introduction to the Major Traditions, edited by Paul Avis, published by SPCK, for £19.95. ISBN 0-281-05246-8

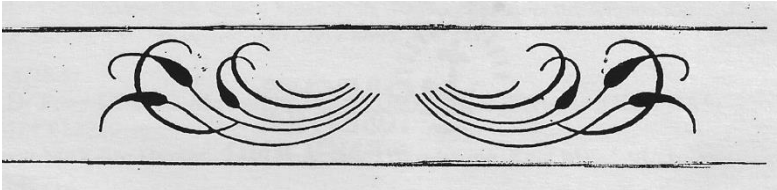
Eight contributors explain how the churches to which they belong understand the nature and purpose of the Church and how they

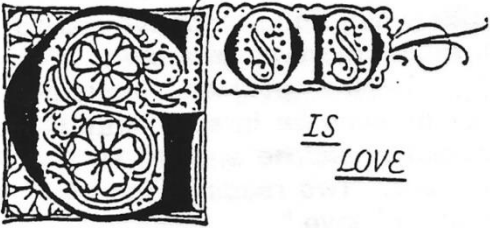
understand its call to unity, catholicity and apostolicity. The churches described are: Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Anglican, Lutheran, Reformed, Methodist, Baptist and Old Catholic churches.

And,

Love bade me welcome- a British Statement on the Church, by David Carter, Epworth Publishers, at £14.95.

This surveys the development of the Methodist understanding of the Church from its origins as a religious society in 18th century England to the present day.





TOGETHER IN CHRIST ©

is published by the Christian Unity Commission in the Archdiocese of Southwark. All rights reserved. Price 80p per copy. Annual Subscription £2.40. Postal Subscribers £3.30 (for one copy).

Material for publication and correspondence to be sent to:

The Editor, Mrs Una Ratcliff

The opinions of contributors are not necessarily those of the Editor, nor of the commission.

COPY DATES:

1st December, 1st April, 1st August, for the February, June and October issues respectively.

CHAIR OF THE COMMISSION:

The Rt Rev. CJ. Henderson,

OFFICERS OF THE COMMISSION:

S.E. AREA:

Chair. Rev Michael Lovell, BA, STB

Secretary. Mrs Margaret Moloney

Area TIC Distributor: Mrs Una Ratcliff, BA (Hons)

S W. AREA:

Chair: Mr David Barrett

Secretary: Barbara Wood

Area TIC Distributor: Mrs Grace Singarajah

KENT AREA:

Dr Peter Mitchell

Secretary: Mr Keith Hunter