

# TOGETHER IN CHRIST



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## EDITORIAL

The first issue of 1999 brings together a stimulating range of articles, reflecting ecumenical activity at all levels. David Carter's talk is informative, realistic yet encouraging in its authoritative account of the position at which the ecumenical movement currently finds itself. Sister Mary Clare's article recounts a moving ecumenical service of prayer; and our other contributors inspire us greatly by showing the real fruits of Christians working and praying together in daily life. As well as our contributors, our thanks must as always go to those who work hard to produce our copies of Together in Christ. In particular, this is a double labour of love by Jackie Morris - she experienced a computer crash after typing up all the articles. Most of us know what frustration that causes, and many of us would have given up! But Jackie is made of sterner stuff and patiently retyped the whole of this edition. Our thanks too to Bob Stratful for his professional printing work.

I am sure you will find your copy of TiC informative and stimulating. May I wish a very Happy New Year to all our subscribers, readers and contributors!

## RED CROSS DAY AT ST MARY'S PRIORY 12 AUGUST 1998

*"Where two or more meet in my name, I am there among them"*

Our home, St Mary's Priory, Fernham, is situated at the foot of the White Horse hills in Oxfordshire. We have a beautiful church and grounds. It is ideal for a Benedictine Community in whose lives prayer, both public and private, are of first importance and hospitality finds a prominent place.

Many years ago, the Red Cross people at Faringdon, two miles away, asked if a group of their members could come for an afternoon. We gladly invited them, and the second Wednesday in August became and still is 'their day' - a regular fixture for us all.

We like to make each occasion a little different, something special for each one. This year, five Sisters of the Anglican community of St Mary the Virgin at Wantage joined us: one played the organ, and the other four, one of whom was a guitarist, augmented our schola. We were glad - as they were - of this further link between our two

communities; we well remember some of their number coming to welcome us just a few days after our arrival here from Princethorpe in 1966.

Even the weather favoured us. We had warm sunshine and a gentle breeze, which suited everybody. As usual, visitors began to arrive about 2pm and were taken straight into our lovely church. Nine people were in wheelchairs and several others relied on help from their devoted carers. Half an hour later, over fifty of us were assembled in His name to begin our service of song and prayers.

Mother Prioress warmly welcomed all guests - including that silent, unseen guest who was with us in a big way: "where two or more meet in my name, I am there among them" then expressed our hope that, by this service, our hearts would be raised up and we would be drawn ever closer to God our Father who unceasingly loves and cares for each one of us.

After the hymn *Praise to the Lord, the Almighty, the King of Creation*, Mother Prioress spoke briefly of the role of Motherhood - a major influence on one's life; the closeness of conception and the sacrificial care and love which follows on. No wonder God arranged that His Son should have a human mother, who would become for all Christians the caring Mother of the world. She plays a central role in all our lives: at St Mary's, Wantage; and here at Fernham as our Abbess she presides over us and is our constant advocate: "Behold God's handmaid, second only in worth to her Divine Son, the Blessed Christ"

The schola then sang *Mother and Son*:

*Mary the Dawn, Christ the perfect day;  
Mary the Gate, Christ the heavenly way;  
Mary the Root, Christ the mystic vine;  
Mary the Grape, Christ the sacred wine.*

*Mary the Wheat, Christ the living bread;  
Mary the stem, Christ the rose, blood-red;  
Mary the Font, Christ the cleansing flood;  
Mary the cup, Christ the saving blood.*

*Mary the Temple, Christ the temple 's Lord;  
Mary the Shrine, Christ the God adored;  
Mary the Beacon, Christ the heaven 's rest;  
Mary the Mirror, Christ the vision 's blest.*

*Mary the Mother, Christ the Mother 's Son;  
by all things blest while endless ages run.*

Mother Prioress next put to us a few thoughts on Christ the Good Shepherd, particularly his caring for the sick and suffering as each day he guides us further forward, nearer Home. We all sang *The Lord is My Shepherd*; the schola sang *Of One that is so Fair and Bright, velut maris Stella*; then we all sang *Praise My Soul the King of Heaven*. Following prayers for the sick and suffering, Sister Alison Julian CSMV, Wantage, then spoke of their joy in sharing this time with us; led us in prayer; and introduced the next two pieces composed by Sisters of her community.

In her concluding remarks, Mother Prioress said: "Let us never forget the Lord's generosity ... He gives to all who try to follow his precepts great courage and deep peace, and this strong certainty is the underlying strength in every phase of our life."

After silent prayer, petitions, and the Lord's Prayer, we had put everything in God's hands. We then sang *Abide with Me*.

During the next hour or so, we had tea and chatted in the nuns' Refectory, and some took a little stroll along our terrace. I was thus able to ask several people what they enjoyed most here. The most popular replies were: the welcome; quiet; peace; kindness; companionship; music; love; "it makes you feel better".

We cannot take each other's problems away; equally we hope no one leaves Fernham empty-handed. We aim to send people away feeling more able to cope with their problems, certain that life is for living. "It makes you feel better" - we could ask no more. God had indeed blessed each and every one of us that day.

Sister Mary Clare OSB

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## CELEBRATING AND GROWING TOGETHER IN CHRIST

*The day together under the above title began as an initiative from the Kent Area of the Archdiocese of Southwark; was promoted and advertised by Churches Together in Kent; was planned by representatives of all Christians in Minster-in-Thamet under the able leadership of John Couchman; and came to successful fulfilment in that delightful village on 25 July 1998*

The twenty or so people who had booked by ten days earlier swelled to over a hundred and fifty on the day. They came from all Churches and from all over Kent. After a welcome from Canon Bill Clements, Rev David Road, the local Methodist minister, led an opening service of prayer. The opening versicle: "*Behold, how good and pleasant it is when sisters and brothers dwell in unity*" was to prove a true forecast of what we were to feel that day.

The first address was by David Carter, a Methodist lay preacher and a member of the British RC/Methodist Committee. and someone well known to readers of *Together in Christ* (he included an excellent 'plug' for TiC early in his talk). David has transcribed his talk for publication in these pages for us, so I need mention only the main themes here.

As all who have heard him would expect, he gave a clear and ordered account of "where we are and where we are going" After summarising the progress made in later years at international, national, intermediate and local levels, he turned to our task of listening and learning from each other under four aspects:

Recognising that diversity of styles is not merely allowable, but good and enriching.

Taking care to protect, preserve and share these traditions, especially those of the smaller churches.

Biting on the 'hard Issues'.

Recognising mission as a joint task.

Developing these points, he referred to the diversity in the early Church, evident in Acts and the Epistles; the emergence of the Latin, Greek, Syriac and Celtic traditions; the Reformation - tragic in itself but not in all its consequences; the Anglican/Methodist split - regrettable but resulting in a rich Methodist spirituality that he himself had so valued. He instanced the "maxi-parish" scheme in Scotland as a means of preserving inheritance of past traditions in unity, He referred to some of the 'hard issues', the Salvation Army and the Society of Friends, both profoundly Christian, must be challenged about sacramental baptism. Eucharistic hospitality remained a big problem: partly because of the different emphases of the RC and Orthodox Churches regarding the Eucharist as a sign of achieved unity; and of the Anglican and Free Churches looking upon it as a sign of the Lord's openness and invitation to sinners.

Effective mission required a reconciling of the extreme Protestant view of individual conversion and the extreme Catholic one of accepting the Church as a 'package'. Full evangelisation involved praying that Christ will reconcile the whole world to himself - not just individuals. Our salvation has to be experienced and celebrated communally. The wide church is a pilgrim, future-related body. It had to point forward to something not with us yet: the Kingdom was only partly achieved. The Church had to so structure itself as to achieve the full realisation of the Kingdom. Our understanding had to develop so that we might grow to the full stature in Christ referred to in *Ephesians*.

He referred to the report on Faith produced by the Methodist/RC committee and to *Ut Unum Sint*, where the Pope asks leaders of other Churches to talk to him about how he might better serve them in promoting unity and to discuss what initiatives would be fruitful. David spoke of the challenge to Christians in general of working for a just society; to Catholics to accept that fruitful apostolic witness exists where a strict apostolic succession cannot be traced; and to Protestants to recognise in episcopal succession a sign of God's love and care for his Church.

A walk of a few hundred yards brought us to Minster Abbey where, sitting in warm sunshine on chairs on the lawn, we heard Mother Concordia, the Prioress, talk with gentle humour of the Abbey's history. We gathered on the very site of the church of the monastery founded by St Domneva in 670, and the shrubbery behind us was the original burial place of her daughter, St Mildred. In their time, the sea that made Thanet an isle would have been a hundred yards off. To our left was the Saxon wing built forty years before the Conquest, while in front of us was the Norman wing erected in Lanfranc's time. After joining the sisters in their simple midday office, we remained to eat our and to feel the peace of a spot so steeped in prayers over so many centuries.

Reassembled in the village hall, we were heartened by a vigorous, humorous and Optimistic address by Rt Rev Laurence O'Keefe. His opening reference to the 'Tartar Frigate' in Broadstairs, and the lobster lunches it advertised, was an arresting but apt introduction! Lobsters, living in the sea but having no fins, were forbidden to Jews and might have been included among the unclean food that Peter was bidden to eat in his vision at Joppa. The vision led to the realisation that baptism

must be extended to non-Jews. This was a turning point. Thereafter, Mission became world-wide and it is that Mission that engages us ecumenically today.

The Ecumenical Movement, he said, was not just to do with theology and commissions: it is about people getting to know and love each other. We are all segments of a circle with Christ at the centre. He advised us to go back to Acts, to see how the members of the early Church evangelised and lived out their Christian life. Like that Church, we should be one which perseveres in the teaching of the apostles, in prayer and in the breaking Of bread. A church which shares, which proclaims resurrection and the gifts of the Spirit, which witnesses with signs and wonders, which suffers and which strives to extend to the ends of the earth.

We must get to know each other in small groups, to study the scriptures and to find in them a great awareness of the presence of Christ. We must come together in prayer. We had, he said in a neat return to his opening, to crack the shell of our prejudices.

Just across the road was the lovely church of St Mary the Virgin, a happy blend of additions and enlargements from Saxon to Norman and through the centuries to the Victorian. Rev Bob Coles, the Anglican Parish Priest, welcomed us there to the closing act of worship. This, like the building, was a blend of old and new, from Haydn to Graham Kendrick and from the mighty organ to the guitars of the nuns.

In the course of the service, Rev Dr Michael Cooke, Ecumenical Officer for Kent, gave the final address. He neatly pulled together all that had gone before, saying what a joy and privilege it had been to share in a truly ecumenical day - which had succeeded beyond all expectations. Though a wide variety, we had all recognised each other as Christians. We hoped to find ourselves together in heaven, there not because of our own efforts but through the saving grace of Jesus. Our eating together had been a foretaste of eucharistic sharing. We would take home with us a renewed desire to give to the whole world the Word of God - a truly ecumenical task.

rejoicing in the progress made in our ecumenical pilgrimage, we should not be content to rest where we are. He quoted *Zephaniah 3:16*: "*do not let your hands fall limp*". There are no easy answers in ecumenism; it had not been easy for Jesus to reconcile the world to

himself. But his quotation continues: "*The Lord your God is in your midst. a victorious warrior He will renew you by his love*". After a blessing from Bishop Charles Henderson and parting cups of tea in the village hall, we departed on our various ways yet, as Dr Cooke had said, with a feeling of journeying together, knowing that the Lord had rejoiced with us.

John Wilkinson

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## VISIT TO 'CHURCHSTRIFE'

### *The Passion play at Kirchsschlag, Austria*

At about 11 O'clock one morning in the late summer of 1972, a group of about twenty-five people with their luggage struggled down onto the slow platform at Vienna West station, soon to be transported to the Hotel Hohenstrasse in Klosterneuburg, on the outskirts of the Vienna Woods, where they were to spend the next seven days. I was to be their conductor. It was not for the lovely capital city of Austria that we had made this long journey, but for a different place. Seventy miles south, in a district of hills and forests on the border with Hungary, there is a little market town called Kirchsschlag, which literally means 'Churchstrife' - most inappropriate for such a peaceful spot! It was not all that peaceful the day we went there; but bustling with visitors who had come to see its Passion play - one of the few remaining, the best known being that at Oberammergau.

On our way to Kirchsschlag, we stopped at an English church where the chaplain had arranged a Eucharist for our party. This was an ideal prelude for what was to follow, and we felt strongly that Christ was with us on the coach and for the rest of the day. We were indeed *together in Christ*.

On our arrival in Kirchsschlag, we were first taken to a *Gasthof* where a sumptuous meal was prepared for us. It seemed a shame to hurry over it, but we did not wish to miss the beginning of the play. When we emerged, it was to find ourselves surrounded by a vast throng of spectators; and what a welcome they gave us, with "*Gruss Gott*" all the way to the theatre and everybody pausing to shake hands. It seemed that they were really delighted and not a little flattered that these strangers had travelled 1,000 miles over land and sea to come



and join them in what was an act of devotion as much as a play. On entering the theatre, there were more handshakes and we were shown to the best seats in the front row of the circle.

The play, which was 3½ hours long and in two acts, started with the anointing of Jesus by Mary and continued with the washing of the disciples' feet, the breaking of bread and the pouring of the wine and instruction of the Eucharist, and ended with the arrest in the garden of Gethsemane. To me, the most moving part was Christ's agony in the garden. The alternatives were stark. Now was his last chance to save his life by escaping before the Temple guards found him. But that would be the end of his mission to bring men back to God's rule. He had to choose between saving himself from a hideous death on the cross and abandoning God, or putting his own will - a very natural urge - before God's. that men might accept God's rule and be reconciled to him.

It set me thinking, How would I react in that situation? Would I give my life in loyalty to my father or deny him and so escape the cross? I sought to evade the question by saying that the challenge is most unlikely to come in this country in our lifetime and I will never have to make that decision. But what of the little sacrifices that come to all of us sometime or other? How would you react for example if you were to called upon to give up all the weekends in the summer to witness to your faith? We would not have been sitting here watching this play if the good folk of Kirchsschlag had not put their witness to their faith in Christ above their weekly enjoyment of a day of rest and recreation.

Between the acts, there was a short interval during which you could go to a nearby barn used as a cafeteria and take refreshment. It was here that we saw Jesus and his disciples enjoying a cup of tea - or dare I say probably something stronger - with Pilate, Annas and Caiaphas before continuing the play and the story of man's salvation.

The climax of the play is, of course, the Crucifixion - perhaps the cruellest mode of capital punishment ever devised by cruel men. In the passion play at Kirchsschlag, this is enacted in the most detailed way. There is no attempt to smooth our feelings. Strong, rough working men were seen with tears running down their cheeks, so deeply are feelings stirred. Our European cousins show their feelings far more than we do. Any Passion play that you might see in this country is very unlikely to include a scene depicting a cross with Jesus hanging

on it. The actual crucifixion is 'off stage'. Even so, they conjure up the cruelty and horror of what is to come. We may lose a little compared with continental plays, but the feelings are there, just as strong though less strongly expressed. I cannot believe that there can be any one who sees a Passion play who has not felt the love of Christ in their hearts and been brought closer to God.

My party went back to the coach in silence. Thoughts were too strong for words. It was not until we reached the motorway with the lights of the city ahead of us that we came back to the real world. But was it the real world? I myself felt far closer to God and reality among the good folk of Kirchsschlag than I have ever done in the business of the big cities.

Canon Arthur B Dalton

(Retired Canon Emeritus of Southwark C of E Cathedral)

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*'That they all may  
be one'*

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## A NEW COURSE IN ECUMENISM

*A new distance learning course in ecumenism has been developed by the Methodist Open Learning Centre*

I mentioned this course briefly at the Aylesford AGM of the commissions in early September. The course is part of the Christian Studies Diploma run by the Centre and validated by the Open University. It can, however, be studied independently of any other commitment. A tutor gives guidance by post and by telephone. Students are encouraged to make it a 'hands on' course in the sense of discussing the issues with local members of other churches, and researching ecumenism in their own area through visits to local ecumenical partnerships and observation of other forms of ecumenical activity.

The course contains nine units. They begin with basic definitions and go on to an account of the history and development of the movement in Britain and abroad. The second part of the course concentrates on key issues, grass-roots ecumenism, the national and international dialogues and the future hopes and prospects. All that is required is interest and commitment - the course does not assume a high level of previous theological knowledge. It should prove particularly helpful to Commission members, parish unity contacts and clergy who want to be updated on more recent developments. The course was written by an interdenominational team. The Catholic representative on it was Dr Marion Smith, a lay member of the Arundel and Brighton Ecumenical Commission. I am confident this will be a useful addition to materials currently available for ecumenical formation.

David Carter

### CHRISTIANS TOGETHER IN THE VILLAGES OF MINSTER AND MONKTON *some personal reflections*

Over 200 Christians gathered together in St Mary's Church for the service which concluded the *Churches Together in Kent* day of celebration and thanksgiving on 25 July. Gazing down from my place in the 15<sup>th</sup> century choir stall, I marvelled at the working of the Holy Spirit and the power of prayers. Members of the Salvation Army and Benedictine community joined St Mary's choir - singing together for surely the first time ever in this former monastic choir.

During his warm welcome that afternoon, the Rev Bob Cokes, Vicar of St Mary's, told us that the Ministers fraternal had been wanting to bring their people together for about two years, but it took the prompting of lay people to actually spin their aspiration into effect! I had heard earlier from Rt. Rev. Abbot Laurence O'Keefe about the model of 'the circle' for ecumenical growth - with Christ at the centre - drawing together members from all segments of the Churches, focusing on the Word of God and realising their unity in Scripture and in prayer. It seems to me that our group *Christians Together in Minster and Monkton* has achieved so much in a short space of time, because the Holy Spirit has moved so directly among the various segments and has given us all the ability to listen to God speaking through the Word and each other.

Sometimes it takes the newcomer to ask a question like "what do you do here for Lent?" to make an old-timer realise that we really do need to start afresh. As a result of a chance meeting between a Minster nun and a Salvation Army layman, a letter was sent to the Ministers' Fraternal. Within six weeks, the Fraternal met at the Abbey and from a meeting on 1 December 1997, ministers and Church members began to plan a Lent course and to discuss Unity Week. From Unity Week until Pentecost, so much happened that a remark was made that "this has been a unique year!"

For Unity Week, we planned three formal services. The first, held in the Abbey Chapel, drew about 60 people! The second was a prayerful preparation for the Lenten meeting held at the Salvation Army; and for the concluding meeting, we joined the Methodist community for their annual Covenant Service.

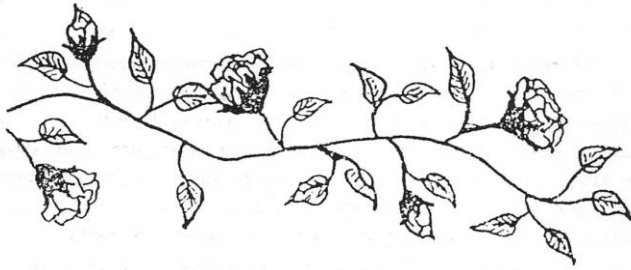
For our Lent course, we followed the CCBI booklet *Hope in a Time of Change* with a different minister or lay person leading each meeting. The first meeting was dedicated to Jubilee 2000. Enough interest was aroused to organise two coaches from Thanet to the Birmingham meeting on 16 May; meanwhile a prayer vigil was held at the Abbey. I do not believe that even the greatest optimist among us was prepared for the initial turnout of over 560 people. I think we averaged about 50 people each week throughout Lent.

At Pentecost, a beautiful service in St Mary's included two prayerful dances, some Gregorian chant and the joyful accompaniment of the Salvation Army Band! All these events have been planned by our ministers and members of our lay congregations. All denominations have been involved and all Christians have been welcomed. Whilst Rev Bob Coles gave credit to the lay initiative, we lay people have been humbled by the openness and encouragement shown us by our ministers.

After reading part of the Cardinal Hume's address at Aylesford in June, I was Challenged to conclude this article with the words:

*'I would like in every village, town and city, events to bring people together not only to explore the Gospel, but with other denominations and faiths, to work out what are the wholesome and decent values by which our society should be living'*

Sr Benedict Gaughan OSB  
St Mildred's Priory, Minster. Abbey, Minster, Kent,



## CRAZY IDEAS AND HAPPY ENDINGS

### *The story of a quilt.*

It all started in One World Week 1996. Thirty people from the local churches were enjoying a bring-and-share meal in a church hall. Hazel, the Methodist minister, suggested that we worked together to design and make a quilt for one of the black led churches in America which had been burnt down by the Ku Klux Klan. We wanted to send the message that there real love in the world, and that love will one day win. Lots of people have asked why we did not do it for a church in Northern Ireland. My only answer to that is we would have had to have made two!

The project seemed impossible to me, but a few weeks later a group met and a design was completed - a 6 foot by 4 foot map of the Atlantic ocean showing the west coast of Europe and Africa and the east coast of the Americas. Each person involved was asked to make a personal square - 8 inches by 8 inches - as a special message to go on the quilt. After much thought, I appliquéd my name 'Joy' diagonally across the square as a prayer for spiritual happiness. The spaces in the corners were filled by a World Council of Churches Oikoumene symbol and a whale embroidered on the sewing machine.

The next time we met, the hessian backing and green and blue cord for the coast and the sea had been acquired. Work began in different corners, some stitching the cord to mark the edges of the continents, others working to create a colourful red and silver binding to form a frame for our quilt. The group involved became a hard core of five with others who popped in for different evenings when they could. Lots of photographs were taken while we worked.

I wish I could adequately describe the lovely, quiet evenings spent with a group of women stitching while sharing a thought or a joke. All of us are busy people, but making the quilt was not another chore: it

was blissfully relaxing. We all grew to know and love members of different churches in a way which would not have been otherwise possible.

Lots of people of different colours and in different costumes were created to form a chain of love linking the land masses. The individual squares were attached and, just in time for One World Week 1998, the final stitch was done. We celebrated by admiring our handiwork over a glass of wine and some very fattening cake. The completed banner spent a week in each of the East Hill churches before being sent across the Atlantic to its destination.



The working party: from left to right they are Hazel Forecast, Doreen Daley, May Flood, Francois Murphy, Annette Jeffries, Gladys Francis and Joy Peck

Our covering letter read:

*Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,*

*Last autumn, our East Hill group of Churches became aware of the terrible suffering you and other Churches in the south of the United States had endured in recent years. In One World week, we began to make this wall-hanging as a symbol of hope and reconciliation.*

*The eight churches in our East Hill group are from seven different denominations, and have members from all over the world, particular/y white and black British, West African and Caribbean. We rejoice in our rich diversity and together we seek to work for and*

*celebrate the Kingdom of God within our individual churches and ecumenically. As have worked on the wall-hanging, we have talked together about the differences between our churches and the many more things we have in common. We have grown closer to each other.*

*This wall-hanging is our gift to you and to the other churches burnt down since 1990. It is a prayer that the flame of love and hope and peace may burn brighter than any other flame. A prayer that by our witness of reconciliation, the world around us may be reconciled to one another and to God through Jesus Christ.*

*May God bless you and keep you,*

*From your sisters and brothers in: East Hill Baptist church; East Hill United Reformed Church; St Anne's C of E church; St Faith's C of E church; St Mary Magdalen RC church; St John 's Methodist church; The Salvation Army: The Society of Friends.*



The finished article was sent first to a theological college in the States, and from there began a tour of the local churches. Photographs of the group were sent as well, showing that people from different races and countries of origin can work together in love.

The photo shows May Flood with the finished wall-hanging

Joy Peck

SW Unity Commission

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## WHERE ARE WE NOW? WHERE ARE WE GOING?

*The first of a two-part transcript of a talk on 'the ecumenical movement by David Carter*

Cannon Bill Clements has invited me to talk to you now about where - presently - we are in the Ecumenical Movement; and where we are going. The second topic is necessarily speculative, but I will do my best.

Ten years ago, the Canon himself wrote an illuminating article in *Together in Christ*. He marked the stages on the ecumenical journey as follows: Confrontation - Competition Coexistence - Co-operation - Covenant - Commitment - Communion. The recent CTE Forum underlined the last as the final goal. Its consummation is eucharistic communion, but it will involve communion in all aspects of the Church's life at every level; sharing in mission, in each other's gifts and in that constant sharing of burdens and concerns that is at the heart of the fellowship of every local church. One of the most important factors in our increasing closeness is a common acceptance that the Church is above all a communion, a partnership, a sharing created in and by the Holy Spirit.

In 1988, we had already, in most places, moved to varying levels of co-operation. Since then, deeper commitment has come in some. There is, of course, still considerable variety, from place to place, in the degree of shared life and this creates continuing problems. We are not all, even within our-separate denominations, at the same point. Some are straining on ahead; some are further behind. A lot has happened at every level, from the growth of LEP's to the setting up of *Churches Together*. Internationally, we have the 'Porvoo Agreement' between Anglicans and Nordic Lutherans, and the Papal encyclical *Ut Unum Smt*. I believe that we are on the verge of an Important new consensus on ecumenism that may ultimately help us resolve many problems that, presently. seem intractable.

This new consensus was embodied in the response of the 1997 Forum of CTE to the whole Called to Be One process. It emphasises the nature of the Church as communion. It calls on us all to deepen that communion by "listening more attentively to one another's concerns



and values"- The biggest task will be in ensuring the reception of this understanding in all our Churches.

So, on what does this new approach rest? I think on four things. Firstly, an acceptance that diversity of styles in church life is not only legitimate, but enriching and desirable. Secondly, as a rider, that we take care to preserve the riches of all our traditions, particularly those of some of the smaller churches that might get 'swamped' in a wider unity. Thirdly, the acceptance that we need to wrestle with and address each other's concerns. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, that we recognise mission as a joint task that cannot be adequately done in separation.

We start then with enriching diversity. Modern biblical scholarship recognises that there was diversity within the New Testament Church. The church described in Acts, in Paul's early epistles, in the pastoral epistles, were clearly not uniform in organisation or ethos. Nor were later churches. Inculturation, that is earthing the Gospel and worship in the styles appropriate to people of different civilisations, produced contrasting heritages. Not merely did a Greek and a Latin Christian culture develop, but the Syriac and Celtic cultures produced distinctive styles of worship and church life. Incredible diversity came about in the wake of the Reformation. Though the splits as such were tragic, not all their results were. The Pope made this clear in *Ut Unum Sint* when he said that "the Spirit has allowed conflicts to make explicit certain aspects of the Christian vocation" and that "in spite of fragmentation, which is an evil . . . there has resulted a kind of rich bestowal of grace which is meant to embellish the Koinonia". Thus, for example, the separation of my own Methodist tradition from the Anglican Church was a tragedy, but the rich tradition of Methodism, in itself, should be an enrichment for the life of the whole Church, and, indeed, will only reach its fulfilment as such.

In Scotland, a unity scheme is currently under discussion involving six Churches. It envisages the creation of 'maxi-parishes' with several worship centres. The people of each 'maxi-parish' will be in intimate communion and co-operation with each other, while preserving the riches of their particular traditions of worship in the separate worship centres.

I mentioned the increasing feeling that we must not ignore the gifts of the smaller Churches. Until the mid-80s, it was the case that English ecumenism was largely the work of the 'Big Five', that is the Anglican, Catholic, URC, Methodist and Baptist churches. CTE saw a broadening out, most especially in the totally new involvement of the 'Black-led' Churches. It also saw increased emphasis on the role of the Salvation Army and Society of Friends. These Churches have their very precious gifts from which we should all learn. The last two also present us with a new ecumenical conundrum. Neither practices baptism, which previously the rest of us have emphasised as the foundation of our communion as Christians. Yet both are transparently Christian to the core in their life and witness. We dare not deny them that name, lest we be rebuked as the Lord rebuked the disciples when they tried to restrain strangers from healing in his name (Mark 9:38). At the same time, the rest of us should not be inhibited from insisting that baptism is the normative sacrament of entry to the Church, and challenging them as to whether they can now accept this sign of unity in Christ.

Particularly important is the radical way in which we are now addressing each Other's concerns in the light of the call of the Forum. In the past, we tended to say just that we could not agree on certain topics. Increasingly now we are prepared to argue that though Churches hold certain truths in trust for the rest of Christendom, which we cannot abandon, we also accept that our traditions have been distorted by overemphases which may now need to be complemented by the insights of others. So, Roman Catholics, once so emphatic on centralised universality, now emphasise the Church as communion of local Churches, each with its legitimate traditions, Baptists, once so emphatic on the independence of the local church, are now exploring the need for wider links between their churches.

The question of eucharistic inter-communion should particularly benefit from this new approach. At the Forum, Bishop Crispin Hollis committed himself to address the concerns of other Churches on this matter seriously. Naturally, he did not commit the Catholic bishops to any particular solution of the problem, but it is here above all that we need to recognise the real partiality of the positions we have taken. A partiality which has its roots in the fact that we have emphasised different aspects of the Eucharist in our teaching and practice. Thus,

Catholics and Orthodox have stressed the Eucharist as expressive of the existing communion of the Church, and from this standpoint their position on inter-communion is eminently reasonable. But is this all that the Eucharist is about? Is it not also, as Archbishop Carey stressed, the Lord's gift to the Church? Does it not also commemorate the Lord's openness to sinners? When we look at it from these angles, the Free Church discipline of the 'open table' has much to commend it. I am not suggesting that the solution of such problems is easy. There is a tension between the implications of the differing aspect of the one Eucharist for our practice of communion discipline. I think we can no longer say that one discipline is absolutely right and the other absolutely wrong. I do not know how we will resolve this tension, but I think we will all see it in a new light when we take a fuller, more rounded view of the Eucharist. This will come about as we share and reflect on each other's Eucharistic practice and understanding.

Finally, there is the question of mission. As we reflect more on the Gospel we offer together, we will see increasingly what sort of Church it is that we have to be in order to offer the Gospel. In the past, there was an over-simplistic division between 'Catholic' and 'Protestant' approaches which can be summarised roughly as follows. Protestants saw themselves as offering Christ, as challenging individuals to make a decision for him, but with little emphasis on his Church; Catholics saw themselves as offering the Church as an integral part of the package. We cannot sustain this dichotomy any longer. Certainly we must always challenge the individual with the utter seriousness of personal commitment and discipleship but, equally, we must insist, both with Mr Wesley and the Catholics that "the New Testament knows nothing of the solitary Christian". We cannot belong to Christ without also belonging to His people, a belonging that brings great enrichment. The very experience of salvation is communal. It begins in the fellowship of believers here on earth and will be consummated in the fellowship of the 'Church above'. Evangelism also means challenging people with the offer of a cosmic Saviour as well as a personal one. We pray and work that the Kingdom may be realised both in our relationships, in the country and the world of which we are part. Evangelisation, as *Called To Be One* and the Forum stressed is a total process. It involves bringing the world to Christ and developing to maturity in Him. This calls for us to bring all the riches of Christian tradition to bear on it.

So, I believe we are at a stage where we recognise that we need to learn from each other, search for a greater fullness of understanding of faith and mission with each other. we should be moving from discussion of our difficulties to integration of our insights.

*To be continued*

David Carter

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The Grace of Jubilee

Christians unite

in celebrating

Millennium 2000

Let all our celebrations :-

highlight anew God's love for humankind:

thank God for sending Christ as Saviour:

emphasise the faith which heals and saves:

promote worthy efforts for peace and justice.

Let true JUBILEE fill our hearts. + C.J.Henderson

## TOOTING YCW

*Tooting Young Christian Workers (YCW) is an ecumenical youth action group for 18-30 year olds.*

Our members include a print student, a lawyer, a student nurse, a music teacher and a part-time mental health support worker. The group itself is as multicultural as a bowl Of salad!

Over the year, members of Tooting YCW have worked hard to bring young people together to talk about the issues which affect them personally. Members also contributed to a Regional employment resource book entitled Nice Little Earner which we hope to promote for use with ecumenical, inter-faith and secular youth groups.

Tooting YCW is looking to build on its ecumenical commitment to find out where we can work together in the local community. A recent example of this was our Crime Prevention Evening held in May of

this year in conjunction with Wandsworth Borough, The Victim Support Network, Neighbourhood Watch and the Metropolitan Police.

Tooting YCW already has strong links with local denominational clergy.

Like our national movement, we hope to be the 'valuable resource' which the OCBI recently credited 'the Young Christian Workers' in its report on tackling unemployment.

So as you can see, Tooting YCW is not a talk-shop. It is relevant for all young people in keeping the mission of "Let them all be one" alive. Our group meets every Monday night at 8pm in the Priests' House of St Boniface Church. Tooting, just near Amen Corner.

We welcome our peers in other churches to come along and see for yourselves the quality of work Tooting YCW is doing to build the Kingdom in the local area. If you would like to come along and need directions or more information, contact YCW.

Anselm Lionel Rajah

Voluntary Development Worker for YCW in Southwark



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**CHAIR OF THE COMMISSION:**

The Rt Rev. C. J. Henderson,

**OFFICERS OF THE COMMISSION:**

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