

# TOGETHER IN CHRIST



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## EDITORIAL

With this issue of Together in Christ, we have completed 17 years of publication! In our first editorial in 1983, we wrote that our aims were to "encourage prayer for unity; stimulate interest and study in it; impart information on ecumenical topics; and to give news of ecumenical events and people."

We hope we have fulfilled at least some of these aims in each issue, and that you will find them reflected in this last issue of this millennium.

As always, our gratitude is extended to all our contributors, and to those who assist in any way, especially to those who help in distribution, word-processing, and to our printer, Bob Stratful.

We echo the many tributes paid to the late Cardinal Basil Hume, so well loved and admired, whose prayers, encouragement, and vision for Christian unity have been of immense value. He was "achingly missed" (to quote from the homily at his Requiem) at the Forum of Churches Together in England, of which he was one of the four Presidents. We missed his presence, spiritual input, and the scene on the lawn at Swanwick wasn't the same without the Cardinal playing Frisbee on it with the young people! May he rest in the peace of Christ.

Our own Area Bishop Charles Henderson, (now 75) has offered his resignation, and at this time of writing is awaiting the reply from Rome. As well as numerous other commitments, Bishop Charles has tirelessly worked and prayed for Christian Unity, and given so much spiritual help, guidance, information, encouragement and the support of his presence at countless meetings and gatherings. We offer him our very deep gratitude, with best wishes and prayers for the future, and we look forward to his continued presence with us.

As we now look forward to the Jubilee Year, we pray for renewed faith, hope, love and commitment, and for "the peace of Christ which is beyond all understanding" to permeate all hearts.

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RANDOM REFLECTIONS ON THE CHURCHES TOGETHER IN  
SOUTH LONDON FORUM, 22 MAY 1999

*It is not possible to do justice to this Forum in the round, so the following thoughts will not be representative of a great unity event, which inspired all of us to greater efforts.* In the elections to the committee I noted that our Commissions will be strongly represented, for example by Celia Blackden and Joy Peck.

**BISHOP CHARLES HENDERSON**

Bishop Charles marked the end of his two-year term in the Chair with a moving plea for solidarity not only among Christians, but with the whole human race of all faiths and none. This, and his phrase 'structures must not become strictures' was picked up by other speakers later. His guiding hand will be sadly missed.

**THE ENTHUSIASTS AND THE REST**

Unity gatherings tend to engender a warm feeling that it is all happening, that we are all in a loving relationship, which somehow has not yet led to visible unity. David Barrett gave us a useful reminder that we are all of us a minority in our own Churches. Our urgent task is to infect our fellow parishioners with our own zeal. If we fail in that, unity will take a long time to become visible.

**INCLUSIVE vs EXCLUSIVE**

A book which has opened my eyes about the state of play in this country, is Adrian Hastings' *A History of English Christianity 1920 - 1990 (SCM 1991)*. Its recurring theme is how within all the Churches there has been a tussle between an inclusive and an exclusive tendency. There are those who want to find common ground with others, without necessarily abandoning their own traditions, and those who want to shut themselves off in their sectarian citadels, preserving the purity of the faith as it has come to them.

The reality of this divide was brought home to us by the Catholic lady who told the Forum that the other Churches had left the Catholic Church, and that the door for their return was always open. Like too many of us, she had never read *Called to be One*, and was therefore unaware of para 3.8 on page 18. Yet she performed a valuable service by reinforcing David Barrett's point. Another form of exclusivity came with the story about the Kenyan surgeon who had come to South London. He attended his nearest Church on Sunday. The minister spoke to him afterwards and suggested that the Church for him was

down the road-with an all-black congregation... Do our exclusionist brothers and sisters really believe that the blood of the new and everlasting covenant was shed for us 'and *for all*'?

Bishop Charles' inclusive note was strongly picked up by the main speaker of the day, Aruna Gnanadason of the World Council of Churches. Her theme was the need to look outside the Churches, not to focus too hard on our internal situation. She picked up Bishop Charles' point about the need to be open to the whole human race. In her own country, there are two million Christians, but that is in a population of a billion - should we be indifferent to all the others? She made a powerful case for inclusivity, and was strongly applauded.

### **INCLUSIVITY AND SPECIAL ISSUES**

Aruna took her case one step further, into the feminist issue. Other participants extended this to other special issues such as gay Christians. Aruna told us about an important occasion where the WCC met in Rustenberg, South Africa. Out of three days proceedings only two hours had been allocated near the end to the issue of women. The resolutions which were to sum up the entire proceedings were to be voted on after that session. One less than skilful gentleman then asked whether that important matter should really be held up for the issue of women. Thereupon, without any further words, all the women walked out, and had then to be begged to rejoin by Archbishop Tutu and others.

I am one of those who believe absolutely in gender equality, but is that cause best served by making women a special issue? Women are people -Period. To make women a special issue seems to treat them as less than people. Discrimination against women should be resisted and condemned, but so should any discrimination against any section of the human race. Must we have 'special issues'?

Alfred Kenyon 24 May 1999

### **FOR THE JUBILEE YEAR :**

Looking towards the year 2000, we pledge ourselves to deepen our understanding, our celebration, and our witness of what it means to be Christ in our world.

A community of love, partners in service, a source of hope for all, through God's power working in us.

(This is displayed in a Catholic Church in Sussex)

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WALK KENT 1999 (8 May - 6 June)



"Through Faith Missions" was set up in 1985 by David Couzens and Peter Adams to conduct Christian missions including "The Walk of 1000 Men". They recognised that there are fewer men committed to Christ at a time when they desperately need Jesus in their lives. Consequently, they have completed several missions in various parts of the country, seeking invitations to visit pubs, clubs and other places where men gather.

Outreach to men is a major feature but not the exclusive aim of the missions. The Walk of 1000 Men look to bring the Good News of salvation to anyone who will listen. This may include visits to supermarkets/shops, schools, factories, retirement homes. Street witness, door to door evangelism, prayer meetings; special events for children, teenagers, the elderly etc. are often part of the schedule. At the request of the Kent churches "Through Faith Mission" agreed to organise a mission entitled "Walk Kent" starting on May 8 1999 in Canterbury Cathedral and ending with a celebration service at The Esplanade, Rochester on June 6. Over 1000 men and women from all over Britain and beyond, in their distinctive purple sweatshirts descended upon "The Garden of England". People from all walks of life volunteered to share their faith with the people of Kent and to invite them to have a personal relationship with God.

Starting on the Kent coast on May 8, Walk Kent arrived in Belvedere, Erith, Northumberland Heath, Slade Green, Welling and other places in West Kent on May 29. The teams stayed in each area for 8 days and had 7/10 members, with varying outreach experience, from various Christian backgrounds. The message was clear: "God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not die, but have eternal life" (John 3:16). The method was simple, the one used by the woman at the well: "Come and see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Christ". They came out of the town and made their way towards him (John 4:29/30). By explaining what God had done for mankind and what an effect it can have for a person, many people committed their lives to Christ and countless others took their first step towards salvation.

Having seen how God had blessed the people on the Isle of Sheppey, I was filled with excitement thinking of what the Lord had in store for

Northumberland Heath. Two Teams (collected from St.Barnabas church Orpington) were to work here: a team of Walkers (8 men), staying in N. Heath Baptist church, and a team of Walk Associates (3 men, 6 women) lodged with local hosts; (these were driven to the hosts).The Walkers were dropped off at Foots Cray meadows and walked the rest of the way. As they crossed the railway at Barnehurst, they stopped to commit themselves to God's service, and to pray that God would move powerfully in this area.

Very few people in Northumberland Heath could have failed to notice God's purple army, as they handed out balloons to the children and spoke of God's love to those passing by the tables set up on the corner of Mill Road. We were greatly encouraged by the personal belief survey which was conducted door to door; 50% of those asked "would they like to know God personally" answered "yes". During the week 21 people either accepted Jesus into their lives for the first time or recommitted themselves; over 50 others would like to know more. Therefore, a great deal of follow up work is still to be done. "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest therefore to send out workers into the harvest fields".(Lk.10:2) The special events went very well; several people said they had been greatly blessed. The Tea Dance was particularly enjoyable with over 30 local senior citizens coming together for tea and cakes, to dance, sing, chat and to hear what a difference Jesus can make to lives. 35 men got up early on Sat. June 5 to attend the Men's Breakfast. They were served with a full cooked breakfast, followed by a generous helping of Jesus' love as they heard of His care and concern for us as He died on the cross.

None of what has been achieved could have been possible without prayer. For 2 years Christians all over Britain and the World have been praying for Walk Kent; 70 local people committed themselves to pray. It is not surprising therefore, that many of the team members commented that the ground had been well prepared, and that the Holy Spirit had opened up many hearts in advance. Walk Kent is finished but the ministry goes on.

(Please read and meditate on Romans 10:13-15)

Dorothy, and Jack Merrifield

( Catholic Church of Our Lady of the Angels, Erith; this Church participated, and held a Celebration Service on June 5, followed by a party)



16-18 JULY

CALLED TO MAKE PEACE: REPENTANCE, RECONCILIATION, RENEWAL.

At the heart of the Forum, as always, is PRAYER and WORSHIP. That is the first to be arranged and the work of the Forum is planned around it. Our Chaplain, this time, was Fr. Tony Hodgetts. We arrived - over 300 of us, from all parts of the country, on a sunny afternoon at the beautiful Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick, in Derbyshire.

We met in denominational groups; then there was the induction of new members; and briefing of group leaders, presenters, and Lens Group Facilitators (I was a Facilitator)

At 6 p.m. we all assembled for the Welcome and Opening Worship in the Chapel. Hymns, a Litany of Easter Faith, Prayers, a hearing of Gospel - the Vine and the branches, and the commandment "Love one another" ; a quote from the 1997 Forum on reconciliation and unity; and a reflection by the Rev. Tony Burnham made a memorable start to our worship together.

After supper, and keynote addresses on "Already and not yet: vision in today's world " we divided into "Home Groups" for prepared night prayer, leading into a Vigil in the Chapel (9.45 - 11 p.m.) A member of each group brought a lighted candle to be placed at the front of the chapel.

On Saturday: Mass at 7 a.m. (Some others joined the Catholics) Monsignor William Steele was the celebrant and gave a stirring homily based on the Reading from Exodus. This was followed by a time of Morning Prayer for all with the theme : " Discerning and Speaking the Truth." We recited (antiphonally) a Song of God's Praise Psalm 63:1-8 and Psalm 133; there were prayers, hymns, Readings from Jeremiah 1:4-9, and Matthew 28:18-20, and silent reflection. Finally, we prayed together the Lord's Prayer.

Breakfast time at 8.30 a.m. was followed by a Full Plenary "Pursuing the Vision; Seeing it Whole" when 3 parables were set before us of POVERTY, PREJUDICE and RELATIONSHIPS.

1. POVERTY: Paula Clifford, (Christian Aid) gave a moving presentation of her visit to Rwanda, illustrated with various scenes. We saw the beauty of the country, the mountainous scenery - 7,000 feet up; but sadly, there was desperate poverty, and the terrible effect of happenings when nearly every family had someone put in prison awaiting trial - the prisons were bursting, or a member had been killed. Many people from Rwanda fled to Congo. We were told about the social transformation project to help to build a reconciled community, and to enable people to rely on themselves. We saw a picture of Esperance, a teacher, with children, encouraging them to talk about their hopes and fears, and of the idea for children to contribute whatever possible - about 2P (in our currency) - with which, eventually, a rabbit was bought. Rabbits multiplied and were sold. Toys, for children, were a luxury; they delighted in the balloons which they were given.

2. PREJUDICE: Beth and Joel Tarbutton (Racial Justice) gave a fine performance in mime: a couple, happy, in love, engaged; but then suddenly the situation changed; what was it - racial prejudice? or was someone being lynched by a tree? Music and hymns were played and sung.

3. RELATIONSHIPS: Philip Richards told a story of a young man who had a motor bike accident; was 18 months in hospital; an arm amputated. He couldn't find work; he was in prison for theft. He lived with a partner and a little girl was born. The partner deserted him. Other tragic happenings occurred; other relationships came to grief. We had silent reflection and hymns.

We then divided into three groups, on each of the areas on which we had been focussing: poverty, prejudice and relationships. This led into division into small groups, exploring the parables through one of four lenses: theology, spirituality, justice and evangelism.

I was the facilitator in a group focussing on prejudice in ageism, through the lens of spirituality. We had the opportunity before the Forum of choosing our areas and perspectives. Questions were set for our responses to be made and discussed. Each small group had two questions in common.

a. What are the challenges to the Churches?



b. What related issues should the Churches be addressing?

Other questions for the Spirituality lens included How can what is here inform and expand my prayer?

What are the challenges or affirmations for me?

Where do we ache? Where do we rejoice?

Does liturgical worship adequately take account of the complexity of these situations?

After just over an hour in the groups, there was a frugal lunch - a vivid reminder of poverty, and a collection was taken for CAFOD/ CHRISTIAN AID.

On Saturday afternoon there was a welcome opportunity for some free time which could be spent in the glorious sunshine - although some people would still have work to do! Tea (with bread and jam and chocolate cakes) could be brought out on the lovely lawn with its attractive flower beds, and meeting and chatting with other delegates was always a pleasure. From 4 p.m. there was a variety of "Special Interest Groups"; we were invited to make our own choice. At 5.30 p.m., continuing the idea of "Becoming Whole", we went to our Home Groups to discuss issues which had emerged during the day. After supper, "Becoming Whole Act of Worship" was held in the chapel, led by Rowena Loverance in the Quaker tradition, a Service of Hope and Penitence.

Finally, there was "Informal Relaxation" from 9.15 p.m, with Pat Madden and the Youth Forum.

Sunday morning began for the Catholics with Mass at 7 a.m. when the celebrant was Bishop Philip Pargeter, who preached a thoughtful and moving homily on the Gospel of the day.

The Eucharist in the Anglican tradition was at Swanwick Parish Church at 8 a.m.

Home Groups began at 7.45 a.m. with Prayers, and Bible Study based on 2 Corinthians 5: 16-21. In our group we found it a fruitful time for sharing our thoughts on the Bible passage, pondering on it; and for recollection and praying with thanksgiving.

After breakfast, the final Plenary session in the main Conference hall included general notices and election results, following the voting, held on Saturday. The new Moderator is Rev. David Lavender, who is from Telford Christian Council, the Deputy Moderator is Miss Anne Doyle, a Catholic, and member of the Bishops' Conference Committee for Christian Unity. The Enabling Group now includes Miss Celia

Blackden who was one of the Focolare representatives; congratulations to all. (I was pleased to have the presence and support of Celia in the Lens Group.

There was encouragement to apply the method (originating from Bishop David Hawtin) of presenting parables, and using the 4 lenses, as we had experienced in the Forum. This could be done with churches together, drama, mime, telling a story, could be effective; it could be used in worship and with Scripture. We were encouraged to look outward and see how together we relate to the world around us. How well equipped are we? How can we respond to the complexity of real life situations, and the brokenness, the powerlessness etc.? Yet, we must let the Risen Lord engage with us.

Rev. Bill Snelson, (General Secretary) in his address, looked to our world with its secularity and plurality, and said that one of the main questions often asked in groups was not a theological one, but the practical one of what are we doing in such a world? He referred to declining membership in churches, and of rifts which occur within churches. There may be different perceptions, for example, regarding authority and decision making, and the will of God may be discerned - differently! He spoke of new Christians coming to faith without any denominational base or background; it is hard to adjust our ecclesial structure to that. The Year 2000 should give us an opportunity to evangelise and create a context in which people can come to Christ, who has so much to offer - giving hope and meaning to life. With Repentance, Reconciliation and Renewal, we should make the NEW START - with Churches Together.

He mentioned the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity - this should be WEEK, not just one service; the Lent Course; Pentecost 2000, March for Jesus. Our social concern should not be an option, but seen as a way of working out our Christian faith. What sort of society do we want to bequeath to the next generation? We need to make a new start with God, a new start at home, a new start for the world's poor; we need a new vision for the future, doing together what is possible.

Bishop Pargeter brought a message of greeting from the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, we heard from Pauline Huggan from the Council of European Churches, and from the President of the Council of Christian Churches in France.

The final Worship was Communion in the Methodist Tradition in the Chapel. Bishop Noble was expected to give the homily but was unable

to be with us; At short notice, Fr. Tony Hodgetts, gave an impressive homily, following the Readings (Genesis 28: 10-19a; Romans 8:12-25, and Matthew 13:24-30.

A great deal of commitment and hard work went into the preparation of the Forum and gratitude was expressed to all concerned; especially Terry Garley, Moderator; Bishop David Hawtin, Deputy Moderator; and the staff of Churches Together in England, and many others too numerous to mention! The Hayes Centre, as always, gave us splendid service, food and welcome. Above all, we praise and thank God for all we shared and experienced together, and continue to pray for the fulness of unity.

Una M. Ratcliff

(Catholic Delegate for Southwark Diocese)

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*'That they all may  
be one'*

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## HOW ONE HUNDRED BECAME FIVE HUNDRED

I am Italian, a second-year Psychology student at Swansea University and I am a Roman Catholic. I share a house with five other students, all girls, from Spain, Italy and Greece. Although we know each other very well and have shared many things in our lives, there was one thing that I did not like to share with my house-mates, and that was my faith in God - we never talked about religion.

One Sunday, however, I was getting ready to go to Mass when Natasha one of the Greek girls, asked me where I was going. I hesitated to answer, as many students are scornful about people going to church, and I was tempted to change the subject or lie. But I realised I would be lying to Jesus in her. So I told her the truth, and how God is the most important thing in my life and in my heart. I was prepared for her to take this very badly, so I was very surprised when she told me that she was a Christian too! She is a Greek Orthodox and,

as there are no Orthodox churches in Swansea, she had to go to Cardiff, almost an hour away by bus, when she wanted to go to church.



We talked about this and decided that the most important thing was to worship God. We agreed that when she wasn't able to get to Cardiff, she would come to church with me. I will never forget the joy in my heart that evening at being able to pray to God together, regardless of our denomination. As an Italian I had never had this kind of experience before, because in Italy nearly everyone is Catholic. Before that day I had never really understood ecumenism and how important it is.

The next Sunday, after Mass the priest came to greet the people and he asked Natasha where she was from. When he heard that she was Greek, and Orthodox, he invited us in for a cup of tea. He and Natasha talked for a long time, and the priest was very surprised that the many Orthodox students at the university did not have their own liturgy in Swansea. He told her that he knew the Orthodox priest in Cardiff, and

that he would suggest that the Orthodox liturgy could be celebrated in the Catholic church in Swansea.

Now, more than five hundred members of the Greek Orthodox church have their liturgy in our church every two weeks.

It was a very great experience for me that Sunday. I realised how important it is to love God in each person I meet during the day and to choose Him in every present moment of my life. I could never have imagined the consequences of doing so that day.

Laura Sisa

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## WHERE ARE WE GOING?

We are going into a new future. We are not returning to the past. Rather, we are going forward into a fuller future. In recent years our perspective has changed. We now understand the nature of the Church as essentially future orientated. The Anglican-Reformed dialogue of 1984 defined the Church as 'sign, instrument and first fruits of the Kingdom'. George Tavard, the American Catholic ecumenist, talks of the Church as 'progressively' imaging the kingdom of God. The Church is meant to proclaim God's future and Kingdom, and as far as is possible for fallible and sinful people, to embody that coming Kingdom in a corporate life of praise and service. We are a Pilgrim people. That means that we are not primarily about looking back; we are about looking forward, catching and transmitting a vision. The great common question is this; how, in the power of the Spirit can the Church so structure its life as to embody that partial vision of the Kingdom that should be apparent in its present life? What does this demand of us in ministry, sacramental life, fellowship and service? That is not to say that the past is unimportant. We are to 'guard the deposit of faith'. But not to bury it. If we do bury rather than building on it, we shall be accounted as faithless as the servant who merely buried his master's talent. We are, under the guidance of the Spirit, to enrich and develop it. We need certainly what the French Canadian ecumenist, Jean-Marie Tillard calls 'collective conversion to the apostolic tradition'. That tradition is bold and innovative, not afraid to make such radical breaks, such as admitting gentiles into the Church. Tradition is the creative work of the Holy Spirit in the corporate consciousness and discipleship of the Church. It is the progressive working out of the response of faith to the revelation given in Christ.

This point is made very strongly in the 'Word of Life', the most recent report of the international Roman Catholic/Methodist dialogue which completes its discussion of faith, both as act of response and content of belief, by talking of the 'fruitfulness of faith'. Faith becomes ever more fruitful as we follow the example of the mother of Christ in 'keeping and pondering all these things in our hearts' and then apply them within the developing situations that we face in our world, informed by a growing appreciation both of the Christian past and of the vision of the Kingdom.

We reflect on the whole package as it were. We reflect on the original events and message. Above all, we reflect on their appropriate embodiment in our situation today. Christianity is an incarnational religion. God, said St Maximus the Confessor, in the seventh century, was so concerned for His creation, that He willed his embodiment in it. In the time between the ascension and that 'restoration of all things' that was the subject of an early Petrine sermon. Christ is still, in a mystical sense, embodied in the two focal activities of the Church, around which all others are essentially related, that is, the preaching of the Word and the celebration of the Eucharist.

So, we ask ourselves, what sort of church is it that God is calling us to become? We each of us have preserved, in differing ways, important elements of the truth. To each of our traditions has been given a portion of the gifts of the Spirit. None of us has the whole. This is a very important fact for us to grasp. In the past, Catholics have tended to think that they had the whole; did they not have the magisterium and the infallible pope? Many Protestants felt they had the infallible Bible. But Paul reminds us that our knowledge in this life is but partial. He called the Ephesians to press on to the full maturity of the stature of Christ. Vatican II reminds us that the Church continues to meditate on the words of Christ till all His promises are fulfilled in us. At the Covenant service Methodists are challenged as to whether they have made 'new ventures in fellowship'. Latent within all our traditions is the understanding that they are not yet complete. To confess this does not mean abandoning key elements of our traditional witness, but it does mean putting them in a wider context. It does not mean Catholics abandoning the belief that the Petrine ministry has a key role to play in keeping all the Churches in communion.

What it does do is remind us that we are not at the end of our pilgrimage. We have to ask, what is the shape of the Church that God

wishes us to be into the future. How are we truly to be that *Koinonia* that embodies God's gift and offer of salvation? In what ways do we need to develop and reform. This is where the Pope has given us such a good example. He has given us a start by saying that though he believes that his ministry is essential to the Church, he acknowledges that hitherto it has been imperfectly exercised both by himself and many predecessors. He freely accepts that, within the total communion of the Church, he needs the help and advice of other church leaders as to how his ministry can best be developed and adapted. In doing this, he has set an example to all other church leaders. They, like him, can only act in the context of communion, of listening to the witness of the deep spiritual instinct of the faithful. They too need to ask how, within the total fellowship of the Church, they are called to reform, adapt and develop. In this, he has proved himself a true Peter, a true and bold taker of the initiative. The first Peter took the bold initiative of opening up the Church to the Gentiles. We shall see, in due course, to what this latest initiative leads. Perhaps the essence of the universally acceptable form of the Petrine ministry lies precisely in an ability to recognise the authentic work of the Spirit in whatever style of Christian community it is found and to commend the excellence of what is found to the rest of the Churches. Understanding the Church as *Koinonia* implies, I think, a transcendence of all our old Oppositions, such as whether authority comes from 'above' as in old fashioned Catholicism and even in Wesleyan Methodism, or from below, as in Baptist and Independent congregations with their 'church meeting'. Authority always relates to two things, service of enablement and partnership. Paul talks of ministry as being 'for the equipping of the saints', for setting them free for responsible and effective mission in the world. Authority is also always authority in partnership. There is a partnership of ministers and laity, which does not deny the proper and essential role of the former. These perspectives have their deep origin in our understanding of the Church as communion, as communion mirroring, however imperfectly, that of the Trinity itself. The Church is a communion of the co-responsible friends of Jesus. We all share in the common 'anointing' of which John speaks (ch 2 v20) whereby we have the instinct of faith. Christ has shared with us, all that he has received from the Father. Both the structures and the day to day practice of the Church must reflect these facts.

Moreover, they relate to the Church as sign and first fruits of the kingdom. God's will for us as his sons and daughters in Christ is responsible freedom in communion. We are therefore called to show what living in communion means to the world. In the present century, our world has suffered both from political systems that refuse to respect the dignity of the individual, most precisely Communism and Nazism, and those that exalt individual licence to make money regardless of the social cost to those least able to stand up for themselves. There is only one resolution of this paradox and that is to commend the tradition of Christian social teaching which balances the rights of individuals against that of the community and emphasises the fact that there is no true development of the individual except in terms of the free giving and receiving of a true community.

There are those who like to try and offset ecumenism against evangelism, as if ecumenism were somehow a cop out from the latter or an inadequate substitute. It is a mistake to do this and also to set 'life and work' ecumenism, with its emphasis on common witness and service against 'faith and order' issues. Ultimately, they are linked. The faith we hold compels us to particular styles of service and mission. The needs of the life and mission to which we are called have implications for the understanding and developing structure of the Church. I do not conceal my Methodist belief that the Church must be connexion-al, that is interrelated at every level of its life. I do not conceal my belief that no church can be an island. We all have a duty of love, of sharing, of giving to each other, of reception of gifts and insights from each other. Nevertheless, I accept that we need more personal, sharply focused ministries of unity than have been common in my tradition. Above all, I accept that Methodists have often been weak in their sense of the total continuity of the Church across time. Sometimes, we have talked as if there is only the Apostolic Age, the miraculous work of Mr Wesley on horseback and then our present concerns, ignoring both our own developing tradition as well as that of the wider Church. Perhaps receiving the Episcopal succession would help us to that wider realisation.

One of the greatest challenges to the English churches today is to take the lead in transcending the old division of Catholic and Protestant. To Catholics, the challenge is one of 'apostolic recognition', of being able to recognise the authentic corporate life in Christ of communities that may lack the 'apostolic succession'. The apostles set the example in

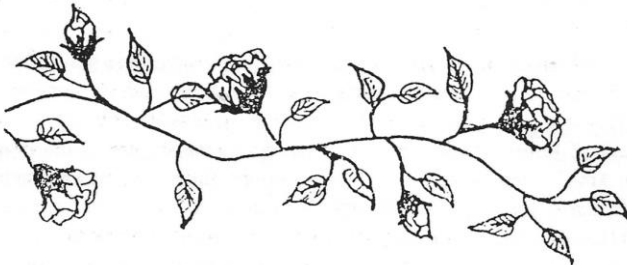


this when, after the first persecution in Jerusalem, recorded in Acts, they recognised the new churches established independently of them outside Jerusalem. To Protestants, the challenge is to follow the Scandinavian Lutherans in accepting the real value of the sign of the episcopal succession as a witness to God's faithfulness to his Church and its continuity.

Let me end, though by emphasising, once again, the great problem, and vital importance, of 'reception'. The understanding of the Church as communion, and circulation of love and insight must become central. All the faithful catch the vision of the Church as a total circulation of love, originating in the divine life and reaching out to include all the interconnected local churches of every tradition. We must catch and communicate the vision. The Prime Minister is fond of saying that his policy is 'education, education and education'. We must say ours is 'reception, reception and reception'. Which involves an educational component, but reaches far beyond that into a real receiving into our hearts and lives as well as into our minds.

Our future, I believe is exciting, yet in detail unpredictable. Let us remember that we walk by faith and not by sight. However, the hope we have is a sure and certain one, based on the power of Christ's resurrection and the gift of the Spirit. We cannot predict exactly how and when the Holy Spirit will lead us through the thorny problems that remain, such as those of Eucharistic communion or women's ministry. But we may be certain of Christ's promise, that the Spirit will lead us into all truth in his own good time.

David Carter



## THOUGHTS

"Father! May they be one, so that the world will believe  
that You sent me "

Well, it's August 1999 and there are only five months left before we celebrate the great Jubilee in remembrance of the birth of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Exciting isn't it? Well. I suppose so; but my impression is that apart from those people who are actively engaged in special projects for the Millennium, most of us are apparently, finding it difficult to drum up much enthusiasm for the whole event. Maybe I'm mistaken; I hope I am. Of course, there are all sorts of strange ideas being written about it and we are all familiar with the controversies about the 'Millennium Dome' and the rest, so perhaps its not surprising that some of us are taking a pretty 'jaundiced' view. On reflection though it seems to me that the events we will be celebrating were all very 'low-key', private, intimate in some respects. We might have known nothing about them at all, had it not been for St. Luke, who tells us that he "traced the story carefully from it's beginnings" and there is a tradition that much of what he wrote, he learned from Our Lady herself. Be that as it may, but perhaps to capture the real excitement, the things that should make our heart sing, we need to look for the unspectacular, unsensational things that are happening quietly around us. For example, on the 7th May this year, Pope John Paul II began a three day visit to Romania. Nothing special about that, you may think; John Paul is noted for being the most widely travelled Pope in history. But this visit was different, because he went there at the invitation of the Romanian Orthodox Church. Nothing like this has ever happened before. You may have read about it in our newspapers, but did its significance strike you? An eyewitness tells that at one point, the Holy Father celebrated Mass before 'a very warm and enthusiastic crowd' estimated at one million who had come from all over Romania. Patriarch Teoctist also participated with Orthodox and Greek Catholic priest and afterwards the crowd began to chant vigorously, "Unity! Unity!" And all this took place in the great square in front of the palace that President Ceoucescu had built to glorify his communist dictatorship. Isn't that amazing? There are other things too; talks about the date of Easter, so that this absolutely central Christian Feast may be celebrated by all Christians everywhere at the same time; agreement between the Lutheran Churches and the Roman

Catholic Church about the meaning of 'Justification' and even the relationship between our own Christian Communities here in Crayford. There is no doubt about it, old divisions, misunderstandings and the distrust are beginning to melt away. Let us pray that it won't be too long before they have disappeared altogether and the adventure can begin in earnest!

#### THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH (2)

During the last few weeks of his life, Cardinal Hume received a letter from Patriarch Alexei II of Moscow, consoling him in his illness and in appreciation of the work that they had been able to do together, contributing to the 'improvement of our inter-Church relationships on the way to Christian Unity'. In his reply, the Cardinal said, 'I believe there is an ecumenism of the heart. Unless it is rooted in the heart, ecumenism is just discussions between institutions'. And that is so important isn't it? Even now, I feel there is a good deal of cynicism around any display of excitement or enthusiasm on the part of those involved in ecumenical work. They are perceived to be on a 'hiding to nothing' because by and large most people are not interested; their hearts aren't in it! Well, if that is true, maybe it could be worth reflecting for a while on where this 'ecumenism of the heart' lies. Let me share some ideas with you.

No doubt we could all make lists of reasons why everyone should be engaged in or supportive of work for Christian Unity; solidarity, a common approach to evangelisation, because it is God's Will, because it was Jesus' prayer for us, etc. But I believe the bottom line, so to speak, is that the key to Christian Unity lies deep within each one of us, with our personal relationship of love with our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; a love which enables us to feel His grief at the disunity of His Church.

I think of our Lord as a young man, growing in His humanity into a realisation of the dimensions of the mission he had been sent to fulfil and sitting with His Mother and pouring out His heart to her, His hopes, His fears, His burning love for His heavenly Father and for all of us and of what He had to do. What could she say to Him? She was well aware of the reception He would get. She knew, as any mother would, that He would be hurt, disappointed and rejected. Should she try to dissuade Him? No, she loved Him too much for that. She was so much at one with Him that she shared His motives and desires.

Knowing the cost, her heart bled for Him, but she understood that what He had to do was God's Will and her love led her to the foot of the cross!

I believe it is that depth of love that the Cardinal meant by 'ecumenism of the heart' and it means that we all need to look sincerely into our own hearts to find what the depth Of our love for Jesus really is. If we can't find much there or judge that it is lukewarm, we shouldn't be upset, but ask Him for His help. For those so disposed it may even be useful to look to Mary as a model and guide. Her heart and His, beat as one, as ours should too!

With these thoughts in mind, perhaps those of us who are active in work for Christian Unity, might realise that disappointment and disinterest are to be expected, but at the same time we should all take comfort in the knowledge that any attempt to promote and encourage it is a cause for great excitement and joy, because they gladden our Lord's heart too. Let's remember that as we approach the year 2000 when we will celebrate the Great Jubilee in remembrance of the Birth of our Lord. Let's banish negativity and go forward with optimism and hope into a new spring time for the Church and the World.

David Goodhind

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## THE MANNA SOCIETY

The Manna Society (featured in the June issue of Together in Christ ) is taking on a new full-time member of staff as from 1 September 1999, as Justice Worker; he is the Rev Ian Harker, and he has dedicated most of his life to campaigning work on behalf of the homeless. He will be a great asset to the Manna. Why do we need him? What will he do?

The Manna Society, in common with most others working in this field, has a two-pronged approach to the scandal of homelessness the first element is to provide for the immediate needs of the homeless on a day-to-day basis. The second element is to tackle the root causes of homelessness. Over the last 16 years we have been faithful to this commitment. However, we have had no one working full-time on the second prong. This we hope to remedy with Ian's help.

The Manna Society "Vision Statement" spells out in greater detail what we have in mind:

Our Vision is the creation of a just society that respects the dignity of every individual.

Whilst homelessness and long-term unemployment exist, we will

I. Obtain and provide resources to meet the immediate needs of people who seek our help.

2. Campaign amongst churches, schools and others within the Christian community to :

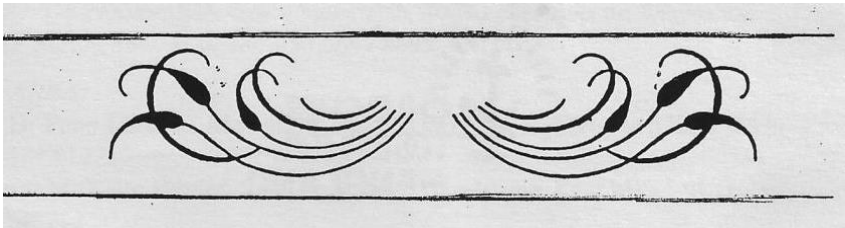
(a) Create greater awareness of homelessness and poverty within our society; and

(b) Work with the Christian community to bring about the eradication of poverty and homelessness.

Ian's job, as Justice Worker, is number 2 of this Vision Statement.

That's it. in a nutshell. He is to manage the Manna's campaign. He will be "our man" out on the road. He isn't meant to be a fundraiser. His job will be to help educate and inspire the Christian community to work even harder for justice. Justice for the homeless, justice for the poor, justice for the long-term unemployed. Justice in God's name. Justice as a response to the Gospel. Justice as love in action. Hence the name "Justice Worker."

(Donations for the Manna Centre are gratefully received. Thank you).



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The Rt Rev. C. J. Henderson,

**OFFICERS OF THE COMMISSION:**

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