

TOGETHER IN CHRIST



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EDITORIAL

We renew our congratulations to Bishop Charles on his Jubilees, and are happy to bring you a report of the celebration. This issue, we feel, is an impressive and encouraging one. packed with accounts of the sterling work of Churches Together in Coulsdon, Crayford and Mitcham; the moving stories which were shared at l'Arche and persona! experience of the charisms of the Holy Spirit. For the first time, we are delighted to include an insight into ecumenism and life at a seminary - and Ushaw is clearly an excellent example.

Last March, the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity published a study document, with a particular focus on the ecumenical formation of theological students and seminarians, but also asserting: "Ecumenical formation is necessary for all the faithful." The document was published in Briefing, vol 28, Issue 3, in March 1998. It repays careful study by all, and especially those involved in education.

Our gratitude is due to all contributors; to our distributors; to Ms Jackie Morris and Mr John Ratcliff for their assistance in word-processing and production; and to our faithful and efficient printer Mr Bob Stratful. We offer grateful thanks to you, our readers, for your regular support. It would be most helpful if you could renew your subscriptions as soon as possible. Thank you again.

THE WEEK OF PRAYER FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY, 1999, has the theme "God is With Us " as chosen by the Council of Churches of Malaysia, based on Rev 21 v7: "I will be their God and they will be my children."

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BISHOP CHARLES HENDERSON'S JUBILEES

The Mass on 9 May at St George's Roman Catholic Cathedral, Southwark, to celebrate Bishop Charles Henderson's Silver Jubilee as Bishop and Golden Jubilee as Priest was a happy blend of the grand and the homely. Twenty one of his fellow bishops and almost a hundred of his fellow priests concelebrated with him. The cathedral was packed with well-wishers and the arrival of the many civic

dignitaries and representatives of Other Churches was marked by glorious fanfares from a group of brass musicians.

The gathering music from the choir and musicians, directed in his unique style by Fr Alan McClean, raised the feeling of expectation and the "Sing, O People " which accompanied the entrance procession was sung by them indeed!

All present were appropriately welcomed by Bishop Charles, but particularly touching was his delight at the presence of members of his own family, of civic representatives of Waterford, his native city, of Dr Michael Russell, former Bishop of Waterford and one of his co-consecrators those twenty five years previously, and of a former rector of the college at which he trained for the priesthood. He warmly welcomed the many dignitaries from the Christian Churches with whom he had enjoyed the privilege of working for the fullness of unity.

Mass proceeded on its familiar path but with the added dignity and splendour of the occasion, the building, the music and the impressive number of concelebrants. The plainsong Credo and Salve Regina at the Prayer of the Faithful were reminders of our heritage.

In his homily, Bishop Charles said he was very conscious of the presence of so many whose love and friendship it had been his privilege to share throughout his years of priesthood. He gave thanks to God for His love to him by grace and sacramental enablement. He spoke of the Mass as thanksgiving, as a way of Jesus uniting Himself with us, of His uplifting, forgiving and comforting us. Through faith and the power of the Holy Spirit, at every Mass Jesus uses the bread and wine as the means by which we receive his Body and Blood and become conformed to Him and enabled by Him.

Bishop Charles said that his fifty years of priestly ministry in Southwark had been a great happiness for him and he had been privileged to have been called to that service. His joy and happiness were due to God's loving forgiveness for his short-comings, and the realisation of that joy had come through the love and friendship of those with whom he had worked and prayed.

At Communion, it was poignant to see the humility of those from other Churches who came forward to receive a blessing. It prompted

many to more fervent prayer for the fullness of unity for which Bishop Charles has so long striven.

Before the final blessing, Archbishop Michael spoke briefly but warmly of Bishop Charles and of his ministry in the Diocese of Southwark. Archbishop Amigo, he said, would have little realised the value of the gift his diocese was receiving when Bishop Charles had arrived as a newly ordained young man from Ireland. Nor indeed could he have realised how much our Bishops' Conference was to benefit from that coming. "Charles, you have been a tower of strength to me and a true friend in every way", he concluded.

After the joyous exit we removed to the car park, transformed beyond recognition by carpets and canopies, to be plied by willing young people with a constantly renewed array of refreshments. Many old acquaintances were renewed and many a parish priest was embarrassed by tales of his curacies by former parishioners. All this in glorious weather gave Bishop Charles, we hope, a day he will long remember. Ad multos annos vivat!

John Wilkinson

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THE CHARISMS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT AND OUR COMMON SONSHIP

The following is the text of a talk given at the Christian Unity Commission (Kent area) meeting at West Malling on 6 June 1998.

In the last few moments of 1899, before the turn of the century, Pope Leo XIII was praying in his private chapel that God would bless the Church with a new outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Six hours later in America, in a Pentecostal Church, this outpouring took place. And a great revival and renewal occurred in that Church and rapidly spread through the surrounding States. New leaders were inspired to pray with people that they also would receive the Baptism in the Spirit, as it is called.

In more modern times, Pope John XXIII invited people to pray at the start of Vatican II the Council Prayer which included the words "Renew your wonders in this our day". He called for a New Pentecost in the Church. And it was through the Pope's exhortation and through

the encouragement of Pentecostals and Charismatics of other traditions that Catholic Charismatic Renewal was born in the late 1960s.

In February 1967, at Duquesne Catholic University in America, students met to study the Acts of the Apostles and to consider the claims made by Pentecostals in two books - *The Cross and the Switch blade* and *They Speak with Other Tongues*. One night they had a deep spiritual experience and a group of them were Baptised in the Holy Spirit and began experiencing the working of the New Testament charisms in their lives.

Pope John Paul has said of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal: "The emergence of the Renewal following the Second Vatican Council was a particular gift of the Holy Spirit to the Church It has been estimated that 72 million Catholics have been touched by Charismatic Renewal and been Baptised in the Spirit. I came into it in September 1993 through a set of coincidences - that weren't! I was on a visit with my two sisters to the Westminster Pastoral Centre at London Colney as we went into the Chapel for prayer. I had one sister on each side of me and when we left, I said that I knew that they had been praying for me. I felt a bit light-headed and was aware something special happened to me. As we got back into the car, I said "What do I do now?" - meaning how do I channel this power that I seemed to have received. My elder sister, Veronica, started the car and a tape which was in the cassette recorder started at the same time. It was the voice of Charles Whitehead, from Charismatic Renewal and his first words were also "What do I do now?"!! That was the start of my journey in the power of the Holy Spirit.

I have since been very much aware of this power of the Holy Spirit in my ministry and it was when I recognised this power that I started to grow further in my spiritual life. Currently, I attend a prayer group each week and another every month, and exercise my prayer ministry at these and others when called upon to so. Next Saturday, I have been invited to Aylesford to speak on 'Reconciliation' - the title of the talk is 'Come Back To Me' - and I have been asked to pray with people afterwards. People say they have received blessings through such prayers, and some have told me they have received healing. And I thank God for His presence among His people.

I was at a Conference of Deacons in Bournemouth recently and met the Italian Monsignor Silvestrini there. We were having a chat through an interpreter and I asked him if he thought that the gifts that the Holy Spirit gave to the Church at the first Pentecost were still available to the Church today. He gave an emphatic "Yes" - twice, to confirm the point. The gifts are shown in I Cor 12: 7-11. Many people have tried to discredit this part of Scripture and to say that these gifts were only available at the initial period after the First Pentecost, as they were so necessary then. They appear to be very necessary now also!

Are these gifts just for the Pentecostals, the Anglicans, the Catholics - or are they for everyone? 1 Cor 14 says *that "The body is made up of many parts"*. And at the first Pentecost *"Jews as well as Gentiles, Parthians, Medes and Elamites etc, heard the apostles speaking in their own languages of the wonderful works of God"*. Not just the Jews or just the Gentiles, but all those who were there were blessed by God in this way.

The Christian Church is united in the common understanding of the truth of this piece of Scripture and that God is working in His world and among His people.

But when we look at what is happening in the world, it is easy to see that Unity is not one of the 'hot' topics - perhaps the subject of women clergy is 'hotter' - or scandal hotter still!

Recent history and occurrences have led people away from that complete trust and respect for their clergy that they once had. So interest in God working through His people has waned. People have looked for different wonders to inspire them, rather than religion. One of the main arguments people seem to use to avoid coming to a Church is that we have a divided Christianity. If this is the case, what will bring people back to a level of understanding that God is above all these divisions - after all Jesus prayed *"That they all may be one - so completely one"*?

We have taken part in many initiatives like ARCIC, and there are many other local covenants and national bodies who devote much time to following the example of Christ, the Leader, and endeavour to lead others into an appreciation of Him and His call to oneness. But where has this left us? Yes, we have come a long way towards some kind of unity since we fought and killed each other in the cause of following the right path.

But is the right path through the Catholic Church, the Anglican Church, the Methodist, Baptist or a House Church? Or is it through the Christian Church? In our Christian Churches we recognise each other as being created by the one God and loved by Him. He loves all His people and if we turn our back on anyone, we turn our back on Him. In our parish, we are considering holding a service of reparation, remembering those difficult times when Catholics and Anglicans penalised each other for their respective religions.

I know that the Holy Spirit is calling all the Churches to meet and to pray with one another. The Holy Spirit unites us and helps us not to concern ourselves with the 5% of things that divide us, but to concentrate on the 95% that unites us. Great things are happening where local clergy and people meet and pray and work together. It has led to a respect and trust which has hitherto been lacking. We have just started, in Dartford, a Town Centre Clergy Group which meets approximately fortnightly to eat and to talk about current events in our Churches, to arrange joint participation in services, to look at the Celebration of the Millennium together, to make ourselves known to the local Council and try to see that there is a Christian presence at Council functions.

When I meet and speak to a member of another Christian Church, I immediately have something in common with him or her. Our Christian heritage binds us together. But when I speak to someone who has experienced the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and recognises that in me, then our sharing of experiences is on a much deeper level. The power of the Holy Spirit draws us out of our seclusion into a oneness in our appreciation of Scripture, in the presence of Jesus in our lives and the desire to pray together and work for the evangelisation of the people of God. we have common aims through our renewal and Baptism in the Holy Spirit which do not require us to compromise any article of our faith. Thus, the Holy spirit plays a very active part in our understanding of each other and in our efforts at evangelisation - just as He did at the First Pentecost and during the journeys of St Paul and the other Apostles and Disciples.

At that Conference of Deacons, Archbishop Kelly of Liverpool spoke of the whirlpool of the Holy Spirit. This whirlpool drawing us all in - sucking us into the love of God so that our experience is deep and penetrating. A whirlpool excludes nothing - we are all drawn into it - it is overwhelming. And last Saturday I was at a day of renewal at

Blackfen and someone spoke of the dew of the Holy spirit - falling on all - the lightness of touch and refreshment given to all who are open to receive it.

Being a Christian is obviously not about blindly following the set of rules of a God we are not in contact with, so that we get to heaven through our merits - the points gained through keeping these rules. No, our faith is not so shallow. God loves each of us and desires to make personal contact with us, but on a much deeper level. Our faith in this loving God, guided by the Holy Spirit, is a response to His love. It is my firm belief that we must all, in the Christian Churches, be more open to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and be ready to do what He calls us to do. He knows the difficulties which we have put in His way and He can overcome them. Our vocation is to do precisely what He asks of us.

Deacon Maurice Williams

A HISTORY OF THE COULSDON COVENANT

The story of the growth of ecumenism as observed by one family who have lived in Old Coulsdon since 1934

Coulsdon comprises the old village of Coulsdon (now called Old Coulsdon) up on the Downs, and the new town dating from the last century, built in the valley below, originally called Smithambottom but now called Coulsdon. Hence it comes about that the church of St John the Evangelist built at Old Coulsdon in the 12th century is the ancient parish church of the area and the incumbent is the Rector of Coulsdon.

Before the war, there were in Coulsdon two Anglican churches, two Methodist churches, two Baptist churches, one Elim chapel and one Catholic Church (St Aidan's). In the village of Old Coulsdon, the sole evidence of Christian worship was the parish church of St John. It is shameful to admit that, although we lived next door to the Rectory for the first four years of our married life in the village, we never spoke to the Rector or his family. As far as we knew, we were the only Catholic family in the village. To attend Mass on Sundays, we had to walk two miles either to St Aidan's in Coulsdon or the Sacred Heart in Upper Caterham: the first involving a steep hill and the latter a walk on the level. Buses were either non-existent on Sundays or infrequent. Few people owned cars on those days. We made plenty of friends in

the village but none was a regular churchgoer. Ecumenism never entered our heads. We belonged to the one true church (the OTC!) and that sufficed.

We were away during the war. When we returned in 1946, there had been great changes in Old Coulsdon. In addition to a Mass centre for the main Sunday worship, there was an 8am Mass at the Caterham Guards' barracks a mile away. This was a great boon, for in those days the custom was that you could only receive Holy Communion fasting from midnight. The population of the village had by now increased very considerably and it was a heart-warming sight to see a hundred or so fellow Catholics making their way across Coulsdon Common on a short cut to the Guards' Chapel before breakfast. We were no longer one family alone, we were a Catholic community.

By the early 1950s, Old Coulsdon had its own Catholic chapel under the title of St Mary Help of Christians. In 1960 it was established as a parish separate from St Aidan's and by 1967, the permanent church was built. During the same period, the local Congregationalists had built their own church, so we now have three Churches in the village. We have a strong inter-Church relationship. How has this come about? Every one will have their own recollections. For our family, the drive came from Pope John XXIII and the Second Vatican Council and specifically from a writer in *The Tablet*, a little dog, and the women of Old Coulsdon.

The article in *The Tablet* suggested that we broke the ice by getting our Anglican neighbour to invite us along to Evensong. Our problem was to find a church-going friend. We had a Methodist friend but her church was not in our area. The solution was quite easy; we simply went to Evensong and sang the Magnificat with great gusto. We used to take a dog walking on Sundays in the interval between Mass and lunch. One day, we noticed the Rector's wife getting tangled up with the lead of a boisterous Jack Russell. We offered to take over, and from then on became, as it were, dog walkers to the Rectory; an office we held until there came a Rector without a dog. By that time it little mattered because we were very welcome at the Rectory. We and other Catholics were invited to share in seminars on social and political matters and we reciprocated by inviting Anglicans and Congregationalists to attend with us seminars held at Worth Abbey.

At about the same time, the Catholic ladies of Old Coulsdon became aware of "The Women's World Day of Prayer" - an event held annually worldwide in March. In the village, this was celebrated alternately at St John's and at the Congregational Church. The Catholics found that they were very welcome to attend and very soon were part of the system, and became hosts every third year to the other two churches. This was a significant step forward in ecumenism, for although the event itself only took place one day each year, there were arrangements to be made, speakers to be invited etc. Most importantly, in the ordinary course of village life, shopping, taking children to and from school etc we recognised and greeted our fellow Christians and made new friendships.

Down the hill in Coulsdon there had been a local Council of Churches comprising the two Anglican churches, the two Methodist Churches, and the Congregational Church from Old Coulsdon. This always met at St Andrew's with the Vicar in the Chair and his curate as secretary. The Catholic priest of St Aidan's seems to have had observer status. We in Old Coulsdon were only dimly aware of this Council which seemed to us to be an Anglican arrangement to co-ordinate the local activities of the Coulsdon churches. The break came in 1971, when quite fortuitously there was a new vicar at St Andrew's followed shortly by a new curate, a new Methodist minister and a new Rector at Old Coulsdon - all very much ecumenically minded. These decided to open up the Council, including the sharing of offices, Chairman, Secretary etc. in rotation and securing, if possible, recognition by the British Council of Churches, the parent body. St Aidan's was invited to join, shortly after Fr Garry Pierce (now Canon) was appointed Chairman and a Catholic was elected as secretary.

The Coulsdon Area Council of Churches (CACC) as it was now called set about getting to know each other without delay by doing things together wherever possible, such as an Amnesty group, house groups, studying the Bible or discussing social matters such as juvenile delinquency, and religious matters such as the falling church attendance affecting all of us. A pilot scheme was launched whereby teams of two members from different denominations called on all the households in a sample area of Coulsdon to try to interest them in the mission of the local churches. Although the effect on church attendance was small the effect on the visiting teams was substantial

for we got to know our fellow Christians well and to appreciate how very much we held in common.

Fr Garry Pierce had recently come from Edenbridge and was able to inform us of the progress being made there towards a Covenant of the local Churches. We were inspired by their example and set about planning a Covenant for the Coulsdon churches. Eventually the form of Covenant pledge which evolved read as follows:

We pledge ourselves:

- to joint prayer and worship, not only for the unity of Christ's people, but such as will provide for each tradition the opportunity to learn and value the spiritual traditions of all the churches to the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ, endeavouring never to do separately what we can do together;
- to support each other in deepening and renewing our several traditions for the enrichment of the life of the church of the individual believer;
- to explore our Christian convictions and their practical applications;
- to co-operate as churches in ministry and pastoral care;
- to work as a team in caring concern for the community;
- to co-operate in Christian witness;
- to co-operate in Christian education and training.

It was hoped that all the ten churches in the Coulsdon Area would feel able to join this covenant. By 1984, seven churches signified their willingness to enter the Covenant; the remaining three were, for various reasons, not yet ready. Thus on the Feast of Pentecost, 1984, the seven churches solemnly affirmed and signed the Covenant.

It had always been agreed that all the churches, covenanting or not, would continue to belong to the fellowship of the CACC and take part in all matters as far as the non-covenanting churches felt able.

Amongst these was the Catholic parish of St Mary, Help of Christians at Old Coulsdon, which in April 1998 decided to join the covenanted churches and was warmly welcomed at the Covenant Renewal service on Pentecost 1998.

Brigadier (retired) John Clemow

ECUMENISM AT USHAW COLLEGE

When 'ecumenists' meet together and begin to discuss how the activity of ecumenism can reach more deeply into the lives of our congregations, the discussion regularly turns to the question of the clergy: "How can the clergy be encouraged to make Christian Unity a higher priority?" Recently Fr Bernard Longley, secretary to the Committee for Christian Unity (a committee of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales) and Mrs Bernadette Askins (ecumenical officer for the Diocese of Hexham & Newcastle) visited Ushaw College to discover what was happening in our most northerly Catholic seminary.

In the north east of England there are four centres which provide training for Christian ministry:

- Ushaw College is a seminary which serves all the dioceses of the north of England (Hexham & Newcastle, Middlesbrough, Leeds, Liverpool, Salford and Lancaster) and the Diocese of Shrewsbury. Ushaw College is four miles outside the City of Durham;
- St John's College, one of the constituent colleges of the University of Durham, is an Anglican foundation. Within St John's is Cranmer Hall, a training college for Anglican ordinands;
- Wesley Study Centre is based at Cranmer Hall and trains Methodist candidates for the ministry;
- North East Ordination Course (NEOC) is basically an Anglican institution for non-residential students.

Gradually, over the past thirty years, the ecumenical dimensions of the study programmes have been developing. What were once optional courses have become part of the main core of the teaching programme. Relationships between the staff of all four centres have been built up over the years. Today, these relationships were described by Mrs Christian Smith, a Pastoral Director on the teaching staff at Ushaw College, as "enriching and very co-operative". Chris said, "We have a joint working group which meets occasionally to reflect on the progress of degree work. This has proved to be a valuable and productive place to get to know each other and to identify problems and plan future developments. Both staff and students meet in a variety of different ways in the course of the year, and we get to know

each other as colleagues and friends establishing relationships of mutual trust."

Each term, staff and students from colleges occasionally meet together for evening prayer and supper, and there have been joint days of recollection hosted by Ushaw College. The staff from the colleges meet together for an evening seminar and meal. There is a growing programme of shared teaching:

- some courses are taught and marked jointly by staff from the three institutions which have residential students. This has resulted in frequent contacts between staff on both a professional and social basis;
- students from all three centres travel to attend lectures in the other centres;
- some students from Ushaw College read for a Degree in Theology, alongside students from the other colleges, in the Department of Theology at the University of Durham;
- some students have chosen to do an 'exchange' for one week at St John's College, while students from that college have come to Ushaw;
- all 4th Year students at Ushaw College have been engaged in a course on Ecumenism, along with students from the other centres. They jointly planned and implemented a practical project, which was assessed of part of their course.

A member of staff from Ushaw College commented on the complementarity of the colleges. "When I go to St John's, it is like a family. There are children and married couples in the dining room. There is bustle and chatter. When students and staff from the other colleges visit Ushaw, they comment on the peace, atmosphere of quiet study, and resources in the library, which they use".

Currently staff collaborate to present the following courses: Year 2 - a course on the Synoptic Gospels is taught jointly; Year 3 - a course in Personal Growth and Pastoral Care is taught jointly; Year 4 - a course in Ecumenism, covering two trimesters is planned, taught and marked jointly by the three centres.

Chris said, "The programmes of joint study fostered good hard-working relationships, and provided students with a context in which to face up to and struggle with differences. At Easter, there is a big celebratory dinner for all staff and students, which is an excellent

occasion, as the academic teaching is coming to an end and students begin to look towards exams.

Last year, a group of students organised a joint service, which was held before the meal. A member of staff from each centre was instrumental in leading the Service. Symbols of water and candles were used to celebrate the common Baptism of all who participated. It was delightful to see some liturgical dance performed in St Cuthbert's Chapel!" The Service was organised by an ecumenical group of students as part of their course. Working together on a practical project has proved to be one of the most innovative and exciting parts of the programme.

Jim and Steve, two 4th Year students, described their projects. Jim's group wrote a joint journal, sharing the treasures of each other's traditions. (Originally, they had planned a Mission, but then realised that there was insufficient time to implement plans, so had to switch their focus.)

Steve's group had been working at the Ecumenical Chaplaincy at Durham Prison. They decided to look at ecumenical chaplaincies in hospitals and prisons in Durham City. They did a survey and found that doctrinal issues were not a major problem and that problems arose from organisation, management and style issues.

At present, staff from the three colleges are currently looking at ways of resolving timetable issues. Travelling between sites causes hassle, and there can be transport problems for students (although the distances themselves are not great; Ushaw College is four miles out of town.)

This visit to Ushaw College demonstrated how successful ecumenical work develops slowly alongside the establishment of good working relationships and friendships. A striking feature is the importance of joint prayer, study and sharing meals together in addition to the planning, organising and discussions. From such a basis, Christians can wrestle with those things which divide us; hearing each other without feeling threatened.

It is very encouraging that our future priests and ministers are being formed in ways which will enable them to work confidently with other Christians when they are eventually ordained.

Bernadette Askins

FACING THE FUTURE (Part 2)

"This is clearly a moment of great and special opportunity for Crayford Churches Together. All five Christian denominations or affiliations have some degree of commitment to working together in Christian mission and ministry. They are set in an area remarkably similar in profile to the population at large, with the notable exception that there is a marked degree less movement in housing and therefore a touch more stability within the community than is to be found elsewhere. This suggests a unique opportunity for shared mission"

The above quotation is taken from the consultant's report that was delivered to 'Churches Together in Crayford' as a result of the project they undertook with the help of the British and Foreign Bible Society, outlined in the previous edition of *Together in Christ*. As anticipated, it has given us an opportunity to begin taking a long hard look at our attitudes and assumptions about our mission and purpose which must give us cause for much thought and prayerful consideration. This article gives an idea of what the report said, and how we are attempting to stimulate discussion and ideas to translate our talk into action.

The extract quoted above gives a good idea of the approach and 'flavour' of the report. It is divided into ten sections including a report or profile of the community at large, that is statistical information about the area served by our five churches. There is a section giving factual details of the churches themselves, for example, membership, attendance, financial and physical resources and activities. Two sections are concerned with 'Mission Issues', showing first, how each church perceives the opportunities and constraints it faces in fulfilling its mission and purpose and second, how the church communities perceive these factors in connection with their work together.

The report goes on, very helpfully, to reflect upon the information and perceptions provided so far and without drawing significant conclusions points out some areas that we might be well advised to target in our future deliberations. It may be self evident, but good nevertheless to have it pointed out, that one of our key resources *"lies in the already existing relationships between the churches and their leadership teams"*. The consultation process itself is evidence for this *"and of the degree to which shared ventures and risks may be*

undertaken ". There is a need, however, for "*this to be built upon without too much delay in order to take best advantage of the present momentum* ".

Finally, there is a detailed description of a recommended process for creating new strategies, which is designed to prevent the churches focusing on issues in a way that takes them around in circles. It requires patience and discipline, and the rest of the article is about how 'Churches Together in Crayford' are attempting to follow it. One of the first hurdles to overcome was to make sure that as many people as possible had an opportunity to read and absorb the report so that they could give some constructive reaction to it. Then the plan was to organise a gathering of all those who had read the report so they could compare notes and think about how to take the project forward.

Accordingly, on the evening of Wednesday 15 July 1998, about forty people from the five churches in Crayford met in St Paulinus Church to start what is intended to be a process of discussion, prayer and reflection which will need to be widened out to include many more people than read the report or attended the meeting.

The first thing was to get some idea of the impact of the report and the consensus seemed to be that there was a great deal of work to be done in trying to reach out to the majority of people in the area who seem to have no contact with the church at all. Our Churches appear to be somewhat inward looking, although the Christian Fellowship and recently the Methodist Church have been attempting to interest people through a series of 'Alpha' courses. The whole process is one of raising peoples' awareness and getting some positive reactions from them.

The meeting then considered the procedure that was recommended in the report for the development of strategies and plans for the future, the first step of which was to look at the present situation, that is to say, what 'Churches Together in Crayford' are doing together now. To help with this, a calendar of ecumenical events planned in Crayford during 1998 was circulated together with a list of current and on-going projects, such as Crayford Information Centre and our monthly newsletter and the people who are involved with running them.

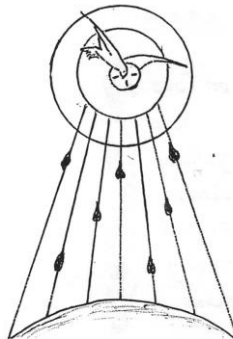
We then looked at the question of our values. What do the Churches value in common? It is here that the different Christian denominations sometimes tend to be over-cautious in their dealings with one another

for fear of causing offence or becoming confrontational. But we need to know what other Christians value and why. For example, how do the various church traditions value Holy Scripture? If we are prepared to listen and learn, we might find we share a lot more than we think. If we are not prepared to do so, how can we grow together as our Lord wishes for his Church?

Next we considered the concept of 'Vision'. in the sense of thinking about and imagining what 'Churches Together in Crayford' might be like in a few years' time. Can we arrive at a shared vision? How close might that vision be to the reality that our Lord wishes for his Church? We tried to capture our ideas d»out all this by having each person present attempt to write down a kind of 'Mission Statement' for 'Churches Together in Crayford' that we could use to act as a focus for our thoughts and help to take our discussions forward.

Clearly, it is going to take a long time and take a great deal of effort to achieve practical results from this process. There are many difficulties, not least of which is trying to capture peoples' imagination of what we are trying to achieve. However, as Christians our motivation is, and should always be, love. That is the only valid reason for starting a project like this, and the only way it can succeed is for us all to realise that true unity begins and ends, not on paper, but tn our hearts. May that always inspire our efforts and prayers.

David Goodhind



CHURCHES TOGETHER IN MITCHAM

I was invited thirty years ago to chair the newly formed Men's Social Club for our Parish! That touched my vanity and my ego at the time (I was 28). Weekly meetings took place, guest speakers were often invited and all seemed to be going well. We accepted an invitation to a talk by a London Transport Spokesman to be sponsored by the St Mark's Church Men's Fraternity.

St Mark's Fraternity Meeting, 1968

Six of our members met at the clock tower on the Fair Green and went together to St Mark's Hall where we were welcomed. Following an interesting talk, the Chair thanked the Speaker and all who attended. Not knowing the form, I waited for someone to stand up and leave. Well someone toward the front stood up all right, but it was to say 'thank you' to our hosts on behalf of 'he named his church', then a couple of rows back the performance was repeated and so on. I knew it was going to be my turn soon. The words that remain with me to this day were added by one delegate: "Is it not noticeable how the Papists never join us?"

When it came my turn. I stood up and thanked our hosts and said that I hoped that from now on a comment about Papists would be a thing of the past; and that those present would join us on a future occasion. There seemed to me to be a very loud round of applause That was thirty years ago and now after so many exciting and shared occasions between our churches there is trust and understanding. This is a real testament to Unity in Christ (not uniformity of religious practice). Thank you for that remark thirty years ago, whoever made it. Thanks are due in no small measure to our Priests and lay for embracing our fellow Christians.

What's in a name?

Churches Together In Mitcham is the latest in a line that started as the *Northern Ireland Holiday Group*. At its height, 36 youngsters and their carers would spend two weeks away from trouble-torn Belfast and be billeted with host families in Mitcham. Some friendships between youngsters and their host families have lasted to this day. As

parishes in USA began offering similar holidays, the numbers coming here diminished.

Mitcham Charity Carnival started life in St Mark's Church over 20 years ago, when the Gladstone Mission, Mitcham Round Table and ourselves pooled our organising experience.

The *Taize visit* in 1985 was another occasion when we shared the experience of 35,000 young people between the ages of 16 and 30 in London. They came from all European countries and we had 50 in Mitcham. Thank goodness for the multi-lingual skills of Henry Frim (who retired to the Isle of Wight recently).

The street Pageant of **The Way of the Cross** in 1993 is an experience which will not be forgotten by anyone who came to or took part in it. Certainly many comments were made. The two that have stayed in my memory are "*I am so proud to be a Christian*" and "*I did not know the Churches had so much in common; I thought they were always fighting*". It was our Decade of Evangelism project.

Present and future plans

The past is behind us but the annual *Good Friday Service* at the clock tower at Mitcham Fair Green gets more popular each year.

The **Millennium Jubilee 2000 celebration** will take a variety of forms: the National Candle Distribution and Lighting at 11.58 on 31 December 1999; and the outdoor event for the whole community with a Christian theme - "St George Lives On" - involving everybody. If the plan is adopted, it is as exciting a concept as they come: Care Avenue centred on St George's Hospital and care services; Faith Avenue - St George's Cathedral Diocese and all Faiths; Youth Road - Scouts (Patron St George) and all Youth Groups; Merton Road - St George's Road and all LB Merton Services to us.

All Roads and Avenues start at a Large Marquee where exhibits and displays of the variety of professional and voluntary work the section is engaged in it are displayed. The Avenues and Roads are lined with fund raising or stalls showing the work of charities associated with the name of the Road. All lead in a straight line to a central Arena of Peace. Many things will take place in the Arena - a Dragon may appear. How about the Peace of Antioch between Moslem and Christian?

Much work has got to be done to bring real substance to the event, which could be staged on 22/23 April 2000 - St George's Day. The

Jubilee 2000 souvenir magazine will allow our children and grandchildren to look back and wonder what it was like back in 2000, this publication will give a picture of how each church relates to the people and the other churches of Mitcham (and probably Pollard Hill). Thank you to all the priests, ministers, bishops, vicars and leaders of other faiths for bringing us together in peace.

Joe Woods

SW Area Commission: co-ordinator of Unity Contacts in Merton Deanery

AN ECUMENICAL GATHERING HOSTED BY L'ARCHE LAMBETH

"Christians together telling our different stories "

Since *L'Arche* first put down roots in the United Kingdom, near Canterbury in 1974, Christians of different traditions as well as those who belong to other Faiths or have no specific religious affiliation, have lived, worked and prayed together in each of the now eight communities in the UK.

L'Arche Lambeth, now 21 years old, decided to share our experience and to learn from others in South London who are finding ways of 'Moving on as One' among Christians living locally. On 20 June, some fifty people spent the day together at Emmanuel Church and Community Centre, one of our Anglican parishes.

That morning, three groups told their stories: first, as the host community, eight of us gave an account of our history in words and in mime. David, who is a Roman Catholic priest, and Tony, a Methodist minister, both of whom regularly preside at the Eucharist in our *L'Arche* community, spoke of what this meant to them: of the pain of division and also the healing power of receiving and giving blessing. Tony's words conveyed a sense they both have that "... here the Church becomes herself.... the rich diversity of people that makes up the Body of Christ is somehow reflected among those present; we are there together, from different denominations, different parts of the world, and among us are vulnerable men and woman, sometimes neglected and pushed to one side but who, it seems to me, tend to be those who lead the rest of us to an encounter with the presence of God".

Paul took part in the mime that told how we live each Holy Week in our community, in our neighbourhood and in our different parishes. Paul it was who, 21 years ago, came to a service at Emmanuel Church where there was some uncertainty among the congregation about sharing a 'sign of peace'. He shook hands with everyone and it appears that this persuaded people to adopt a 'sign of peace' permanently!

The Spires is a non-residential community in Streatham who have for six years run a day centre for people who are homeless, unemployed, lonely, marginalised. Their name refers to the spires of the Anglican and RC Churches which face each other at a street intersection. As they told the story of Spires, Margaret and Patrick each recalled a personal experience in which their hearts had been touched by a deprived and homeless man's care for them and for others.

Then we heard from Carol of Churches Together in Balham and Upper Tooting, which brings together people from 12 churches which include: Church of England, Roman Catholic, Baptist, Black led Churches, Methodist, Salvation Army and United Reformed. They came together as a result of the first ecumenical Lent house-groups initiated by the Interchurch process *'Not Strangers but Pilgrims'* many years ago. Responsibility for the group is taken largely by lay people who have a sense of 'building community within the community' through a growing network of relationships stemming from years of meeting in Lent groups.

Large numbers take part in the Good Friday march of witness through the street of their borough. Individuals and groups from across the churches are involved in work in prisons and with refugee networks and asylum seekers. At the time of the Gulf War, they established links with the local Mosque and local Jewish groups and organised a prayer vigil; and their concerns go further afield as for instance in campaigning for cancellation of Third World debt.

In the early afternoon, people divided into small groups to tell their individual ecumenical stories. Each participant had been reminded of essential elements in story telling: Chronos, telling the story in time; Mythos, searching for meaning in the events; Kairos or the sense of opportunity or 'special time'; and looking at our ecumenical journey, what makes our heart sing - or sink!

At the aid of the afternoon, we were all much encouraged by Dr Mary Tanner, an theologian steeped in the ecumenical movement. She

reflected with us on the three stories she had heard that morning: "What they tell me about the pilgrimage to visible unity has to do with hope at a time when people are speaking of an ecumenical winter. It has to do with unity described as a passion for reconciliation and healing of relationships - not a passion for 'ecumenical joinery'. They tell me of things I don't get from text books on ecumenism."

Mary spoke of healing in our stories descriptions of the sort of unity God is calling us to live and make visible in this world:

- Christians are being called to be a kingdom people in the local place, living the values of the kingdom where they are, caring for people who are 'different', on the margins, in the doorways... involved with those of other Faiths, concerned with the poor wherever they are, caring for justice and peace not only locally but in wider world community.
- We are called to be persons in relationship. The personal and relational is prior to the institutional and structural... the latter being at the service of the former.
- We are called to be a 'proclaiming community' in the local place, not primarily in the words we speak but in the lives we live. And our experience of this needs to be told over and over again because God has given the gifts of grace for Christians to live that life together. Our churches and church leaders need to hear it - over and over again. The day ended with a liturgy based on *Ezekiel 36: 26*.

*A new heart I will give you, and a
new spirit I will put within you;
and I will take out of your flesh
the heart of stone, and give you
a heart of flesh.*

The theme had been carried throughout the day: each of us had a name tag in the shape of a heart; on arrival people saw a huge heart on the floor, made up of stones of all shapes and sizes; and we were invited to pick up and keep on us all day one of the (smaller!) stones. By the evening, the heart on the floor had been replaced by a heart of flowers and each of us came to gather a flower and abandon our stone as we lit a little night-light. We were all touched by that symbolism.

There is a story told of St Francis of Assisi: in answer to a question from one of his followers concerning the appropriateness of preaching the gospel, he replied: "By all means preach the gospel and sometimes use words." I believe this Ecumenical Gathering was an opportunity for all the participants to 'sometimes use words' in telling their different stories and in understanding the considerable significance of who they are as individuals and as interdenominational communities and groups seeking to live Kingdom values.

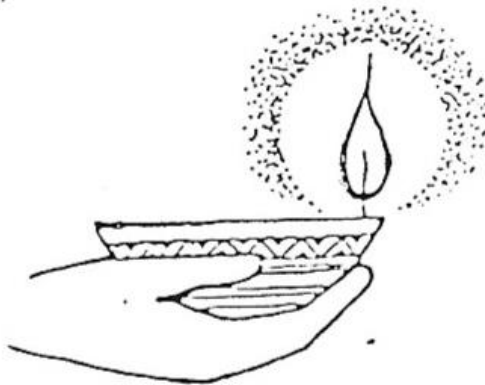
Therese Vanier

Notes for those who wish to know more of the ecumenical experience of L'Arche in the UK & world-wide:

An Ecumenical Journey (L'Arche in the UK) Therese Vanier, 1989;

One Bread. One Body (The ecumenical experience of L'Arche)
Therese Vanier, 1997; published by Gracewing

Blessing at the Time of Communion (Giving and receiving blessing when admission to Holy Communion is not possible)
Pastoral Ecumenical Committee of L'Arche UK, 1995.



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