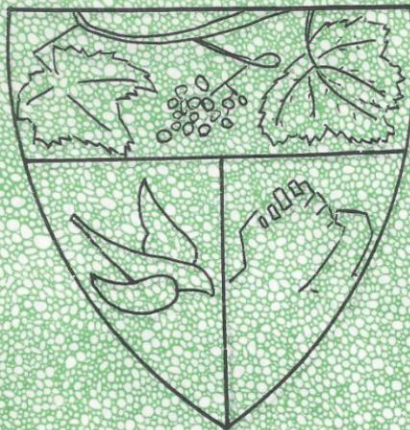


Together in Christ *50p*



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EDITORIAL

August Bank holiday (which is almost upon us at the time of writing) will surely set 350 hearts aglow with the memory of that historic event which began on Bank holiday Monday, August 1987, and which took place at Swanwick, culminating in the "Final Declaration" from the delegates who "reached a common mind", convinced that the Churches must now "move from co-operation to clear commitment to each other" and who "looked forward to sharing with our own Churches the joys of this historic conference."

The anniversary of Swanwick should, we feel, be prayerfully and confidently celebrated. The spirit of Swanwick must be kept alive. The experience of "koinonia" should be shared among all Christians. The gift of Christian unity which, as Cardinal Hume said, is a gift from God, and which the Cardinal felt God had been giving in abundance at Swanwick, is one to be "fanned into a flame" (cf. 2 Tim.1:6). "One step at a time" concluded the Cardinal, "and Swanwick has been a very decisive one."

Much work has been done in the past year by the Working Parties set up after Swanwick. The responses by the Churches will be received, and following their decisions, it is hoped that in September 1989, a new "Commissioning Committee" will be formed to implement agreed proposals for the new ecumenical instrument. The aim for September 1990 is to "Ring in the new".

Swanwick laid great stress on local ecumenism. Many of the writers in this bulletin bring you a variety of examples of practical ecumenical activity which may give ideas to be tried out elsewhere. The gathering of Unity Contacts in the S.W. Area is to be commended as an event which would be fruitful in and beyond the diocese. The voice of One Unity Contact speaks of his experience in this venture.

Warmly welcome are two new contributors — Canon Roger Greenacre and Father Plummer; equally welcome are two Methodist friends — Rev. Douglas Maw and Mr David Carter. Douglas will shortly be leaving our shores to take up ministry in the Ivory Coast; our prayers go with him. David has been most generous in sharing his knowledge and insights with us, and Mr Anthony Lobo brings us up to date on the work of CARJ, with its widely ecumenical spirit of cooperation in an area of concern to all Christians.

Two outstanding promoters of unity have enjoyed special celebrations this year. We offer them our hearty congratulations: Bishop Charles Henderson who celebrated the 40th anniversary of ordination to the priesthood on June 6th and Canon Edward Mitchinson who celebrates the Golden Jubilee of his priestly ordination earlier this year. May they continue to inspire and animate us in our efforts for the unity which is the will of Christ.

CHISLEHURST CHURCHES FESTIVAL OF FAITH



The Chislehurst Churches Festival of Faith (8-22 May 1988) was an exciting time for the Christians involved. Though not the first joint action of the Churches (we have a Good Friday procession and an annual distribution of Christmas cards) it was the first large-scale operation undertaken by them. First suggested in partly to challenge the Churches after their poor response to the Luis Palau mission to London, the project matured as the clergy and some lay representatives spent two days in quiet retreat at St Mary's Abbey, West Malling, at the beginning of 1987. The result of that retreat was the unanimous decision to invite all the Churches in Chislehurst to

join together in a period of outreach and celebration of the Christian Faith, with the aim of showing that Christians can work together and celebrate a common faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour, however different they may seem to the outside observer.

In the event, six of the eight Churches of Chislehurst took an official part: St Mary's Roman Catholic Church, the three Anglican parishes (Annunciation, Christ Church and St Nicholas), the Methodist Church and Freshwater (the local branch of the Ichthus Fellowship). The group who met at St Mary's Abbey continued to meet for prayer, talk and lunch for several months and gradually reached the conclusion that instead of having a "star" preacher, each Church would find a "missioner". This produced a rainbow of ecclesiastical colour. The missionaries were Father John Murphy (RC), Dom Giles Hill, prior of Alton (Anglican Benedictine), Brother Donald (SSR, Anglican), Rev. Michael Rees (Chief Secretary Of the Church Army) and Mr Graeme Young (Ichthus Fellowship).

The three Sundays saw united evening services at Christ Church, the largest church building in Chislehurst. On the opening Sunday the Bishop of Tonbridge gave a charge to the whole congregation, declaring that anybody could sow a seed. The second Sunday evening was a celebration with songs of Praise, under the leadership of Brian Sibley. Six people (one from each Church), with a wide variety of age and experience, spoke movingly of the hymn they had chosen. The final service was an act of rededication on the Day of Pentecost, which this year coincided with Aldersgate Sunday on the 250th anniversary of John Wesley's evangelical conversion. The scene in the Upper Room was mimed by a mixture of

missioners and local clergy, and this added to the dynamism of a service at which Dr Peter Graves gave a powerful exposition of John Wesley's doctrine of the Holy Spirit, ending with a call to personal surrender to Jesus Christ.

A full programme of events was offered during the fortnight. The mere list is impressive - a Women's Day, with Rowanne Pascoe, a mums and toddlers' lunch, a matinee and evening performance of telling sketches by the *Riding Lights theatre company*, a breakfast at Chislehurst Golf Club, the beating of the bounds round Chislehurst, with stops for prayer at different places, visits to schools by missioners and the *Footprints theatre company* from Nottingham, meetings for engaged couples, married couples and singles, a series of midday meetings dealing one week with Basic Christianity and the second week with problems people have to cope with, an open-air meeting in Chislehurst High Street, music festivals, a youth evening, a Children's day (with about 250 children), talks at St Mary's a united eucharist at St Nicholas' on Ascension Day simultaneous Mass at St Mary's, a Flower Festival, and about 60 meetings in private homes...

The Festival was launched by a three-hour vigil of prayer in the Methodist Church hall, led by the different traditions in turn. Over 70 prayer groups and communities in different parts of the country and abroad held us in their thoughts and prayers. The pre-publicity included badges and stickers for cars and house windows. It was good to meet so many people wearing the distinctive badge, and to realise that there were more Christians in Chislehurst than appear at first sight.

So what was achieved by this massive effort, with all its working groups and sub-committees? Certainly not the conversion of Chislehurst. That remains a constant task. In fact the take-up rate of the response cards was very low and in the majority of cases represented a deepening of experience or a re-affirmation of loyalty to Christ on the part of already committed Christians. There was, however, further breaking down of barriers, some at a subconscious level, an ease of communication, a readiness to share, a discovery of mutual treasures, and a renewed determination to press forward with the evangelic task. Serious discussion is taking place as to what must continue to do together and what new ground there is to break. To have been able to get this far, when a mere eight years ago there was no Association of Churches, is something for which to be immensely grateful. The present writer will have moved on to other fields, in Methodist fashion, by the time this account is read, so he asks the prayers of readers for the Churches in Chislehurst, that they may press forward, in ever growing unity of purpose and action, for the conversion of Chislehurst and the glory of God.

Douglas Maw

THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS IN METHODISM

The work of the International Roman Catholic/Methodist Commission is not as well known generally as that of ARCIC. However, studying their latest Report "*Towards a Statement on the Nature of the Church*" one can only feel that that is a pity, and that, their excellent work does deserve to be more widely known and appreciated, and not merely within the two communions immediately concerned.



David Carter

On November 7, 1987, the S.W. Aroa Ecumenical Commission and its Methodist counterpart organised a Study Day to look at some of the themes in "*Towards a Statement on the Nature of the Church*." What follows in this article is a series of reflections on the nature of the Church as communion of saints, prompted by the work of the International Commission, the thoughts shared at the Study Day and personal reflection on the understanding of the Church as Communion in the Methodist tradition.

The International Commission refers to the Church as a "visible koinonia." Koinonia is something of an 'In' word in ecumenical and ecclesiological circles. It is a word with rich shades of meaning that is not instantly nor easily definable. The words and phrases "common life" "fellowship", "participation" and "sharing" all capture something of its flavour. Christians have koinonia or fellowship with each other when they share together in the life and gifts that God has made available to them in and through Christ and the Holy Spirit. It is in and through this koinonia that we are joined to each other and to the Lord. Koinonia is expressed and realised in all the acts of fellowship and worship of the Christian Church, but above all it is focussed in the Eucharist, since, as Paul reminds us, we share in being the Body of Christ because we all share in the one eucharistic loaf.

The whole life of the Church, in all its love, mutuality and care is a sharing in the new life of Christ. This sharing brings as the a new human quality of life, a life of reconciliation, peace and communion, as the human barrier's that can so easily separate us are transcended in Christ and walls of division are taken away. In the Creed, we confess our belief in the Communion of Saints.

The word saint can be used in two different, but essentially related ways. In the Catholic and Orthodox traditions, it is used primarily of those who, within this life have received the gift of holiness, have been given the grace of perseverance, and

are now believed to be in the presence of God in heaven. But St Paul also uses it to denote Christians who are still alive, and, in many cases are still struggling towards the gift of sanctity. Both uses of the term are legitimate. All Christians are called to be saints, and all who remain in the fellowship of Christ's Church are in greater or lesser degree, as a result of God's gracious drawing and influence, on the way to what Wesley calls "full perfection," however far they may seem, especially to themselves, to be from the goal. All practising Christians may trust the Lord's promise, "No one comes to me except the Father draws him." We hope for holiness not because of ourselves, but in spite of ourselves. We hope for it because of Christ. As Wesley puts it

The most impossible of all
Is that I e'er from sin should cease;
Yet shall it be, I know it shall:
Jesus, look to thy faithfulness.
If nothing is too hard for thee,
All things are possible to me.

The relationship between the saints in both senses is intimate. Those who "have obtained the prize" (Paul and Wesley) are examples and inspiration for "believers seeking full redemption". (The latter phrase is one of many used by Wesley as a synonym for sanctification, and a whole section of hymns in past Methodist hymn books was traditionally entitled, "*For believers seeking full redemption.*") Both those "who have obtained" and those who are yet to do so pray for all who seek full redemption.

In Methodism, however, commemoration of individual saints in worship is rare and their invocation in public worship practically unknown. This is partly due to historical reasons, partly to an emphasis on the whole communion of saints rather than individual saints. Methodists do have a vivid awareness of the whole Communion of Saints. We are aware that our worship transcends the limitations of time and space and that it is offered in association with the angelic choir and the Church triumphant. Like Catholics, we treasure the words of the great Eucharistic prayer, "therefore with angels and archangels and all the company of heaven, we praise and glorify Thy holy name."

In Wesley's great Trinitarian hymn, "Father of everlasting grace" we find these verses :

So shall we pray and never cease,
So shall we thankfully confess
Thy Wisdom, truth and power and
love;
With joy unspeakable adore,

And bless and praise thee evermore,
And serve thee as thy hosts above.

Till added to that heavenly choir
We raise our songs of triumph higher
And praise Thee in a bolder strain, Out
soar the first born seraph's flight
And sing, with all our friends in light
Thine everlasting love to man.

In another hymn we sing:

Come, let us join our friends above
That have obtained the prize
And on the eagle wings of love
To joys celestial rise;

Let all the saints terrestrial sing,
With those to glory gone;
For all the servants of Our king,
In earth and heaven are one.

One family, we dwell in Him
One church, above, beneath.

These lines stress the strong sense of identity felt by the Methodist people with their predecessors in the faith, both Methodists and other Christians. Great emphasis has always been put on the care and encouragement Methodists give each other in the Christian life, as in:

He bids us build each other up
And, gathered into one,
To our high calling t s glorious hope,
We hand in hand go on.

This care is embodied in the life of the class-meeting, the small group of Methodists meeting regularly for prayer, bible study and fellowship, in the life of the congregation, and the wider Methodist body. But, what is shared is not just human fellowship, it is the common experience of the grace of God, and it is that which gives Methodist hymnody its characteristically rapturous quality, as expressed in these lines of Wesley's:

We all partake the joy of one
The common peace we feel,
A peace to sensual minds unknown,
A joy unspeakable.

In this common experience of the grace of God, received and expressed in worship, the very life of heaven is, in a very real sense, anticipated. The early Methodists sometimes used to hold "love-feasts", common simple meals at which worship was shared. These verses, written for a love-feast, express Methodism's understanding of the Communion of saints as experienced in the present reality of the Church's worship and fellowship:

Come and let us sweetly join
Christ to praise in hymns divine
Give we all with one accord,
Glory to OI-Jr common Lord.

Hands and hearts and voices raise;
Sing as in the ancient days;
Antedate the joys above,
Celebrate the feast of love.

Strive we, in affection strive
Let the purer flame revive
Such as in the martyrs glowed
Dying champions for our God.

We, like them, may live and love
Called we are their joys to prove,
Saved with them from future wrath,
Partners of like precious faith.

The model of Christian life and unity, in all generations is the life Of the Blessed Trinity and the perfect fellowship of the Father and the Son. Wesley puts it thus :

One the Father is with Thee;
Knit us in Like unity
Make us, O uniting Son,
One, as Thou and He are one.

So, Methodists treasure their sense of unity with the saints of all ages and all churches. Though individual saints are not normally invoked in public or private prayer, their memory and example are treasured, and it has been a feature of Methodism in each generation to treasure those saints who have recently departed from us and whose inspiration speaks especially to our condition. In the nineteenth century the *Methodist Magazine*, published monthly, used to contain short obituaries of ordinary, humble Methodists from all over the Country who had been venerated for their fervour, for their qualities in some cases as spiritual

directors, usually in and through the class-meeting, or even for plain and unostentatious holiness, that shone all the more brightly for the lack of self-advertisement or even the occupation of even the most minor office within the Church. Many of these saints were poor; many of them were generous after the pattern of the widow with her mite in the Gospel. Some are still venerated for their holiness even though almost all detail of their secular lives has been forgotten. In my own family, four or five generations back in Somerset, lived a building labourer who worked for a pittance six days a week in Bristol, and then walked almost every Sunday distances of up to twenty miles in the surrounding countryside in order to fulfil his appointments on the preaching plan as a Local Preacher. Perhaps the most famous Methodist saint of this period was Billy Bray, Cornish miner and Local Preacher, who also tramped miles to his services. He was a man of radiant and joyous holiness; as he put one foot in front of the other he would say "Glory" and "Hallelujah", truly a man of "prayer without ceasing." Today, Methodism still has its living saints in most of our churches and it is they who are the soul of the Church, still letting Christ serve and witness through them.

Methodism has always taken seriously the call to Christian holiness. The greatest Methodist preacher of the 1940s and '50s, the Rev Dr W. E. Sangster, preached this call incessantly, and wrote about the importance of the example of the saints in his book, *The Pure in Heart*. He writes:

"No branch of the Church could exist without saints. indeed, their presence is one proof that it is a true branch of the vine. Only God can make a saint. God is, therefore, in any branch of the Church in which they grow."

He also sees the saints as playing a major role in ecumenism:

"The saints are the chief hope of reunion . Deep calleth unto deep. All the saints belong to one communion . . holding up the saints before the people helps them in a dozen different ways. They see the Lord reflected in his servants. They see what God can do with human nature, The saints are not obstructions to Jesus but interpretations of him... the saints speak to the problems of the Church as well as to those of the world. The more the saints of all communions are known in all communions the sooner will the dismembered body of Christ be made whole again."

I believe the Abbé Paul Couturier was trying to say the same sort of thing when he said : "The walls of division do not reach up to Heaven."

The ecumenical challenge to the Roman Catholic and Methodist people in all this is, firstly, to recognise in each other the common life that have in Christ and unites us to Him; secondly, to study each others' saints and treasures of spirituality; thirdly, to entrust ourselves to each company,

believing that in and through our common convergent search for the things of God, that He will crown our endeavour by giving us the grace of unity, after the pattern of the fellowship that the Father has with the Son. Then we may be able to sing with Charles Wesley :

Love, like death, hath all destroyed,
Rendered all distinctions void;
Names and sects and parties fall:
Thou, O Christ, art all in all.

David Carter

A LAYMAN'S VIEW OF THE ROLE OF THE PARISH UNITY CONTACT

"We have always been taught in the past that we Catholics had the full deposit of Truth, and that if others wanted to share our Faith, then they had to submit to Rome, so why now bother with Unity or ecumenical matters?"

This attitude could well sum up the way that many Roman Catholics view the present situation in Unity matters, especially those born into the Faith, and I must confess that I can understand their predicament and really sympathise with this line of thought! However, all is not lost, thank God, and what is happening now is that we are on the move - in the right direction.

Change, there certainly is taking place, but in my view this is because the Holy Spirit in the fulness of time has taken hold of the whole Christian Church (by the scruff of the neck, so to speak) and is gently leading us to where He wants us to be.

It seems to me that the ecumenical movement really took off after the second Vatican Council (initiated by good Pope John) and since then things have slowly progressed along the Unity path, more so, it would seem, in some areas than others.

So we are all embarked on this great venture of faith, whether we like it or not, and we should not be fearful, but like Abraham when he obeyed God's call and departed from Haran (Gen. 12) not knowing where he would finish, so likewise, we believe the Holy Spirit is guiding His Church and will not let us down.

The situation in our modern world of today demands that the Christian Church presents a united front to those who do not know Christ our Saviour and we

should be seen as a people who genuinely love and care for each other, as the Gospel of Christ proclaims.

What then, is the role of the Parish Unity Contact and where does he or she fit in? First and foremost, the Catholic Unity Contact should be a person who believes sincerely in their own Catholic faith and feels secure in it, but who nevertheless appreciates that even the holy Roman faith cannot contain the Almighty, for as Scripture informs us, neither can the "Heaven of Heavens" contain Him either.

By way of illustration of the point I am trying to make here, I would refer to the *Songs of Praise* episode shown on BBC I on Sunday June 5th, which took place in the Church of the Resurrection at Moscow. A most moving and beautiful service full of deep spirituality, which was not only reflected in the music but also on the faces of all participants. (Surely the Lord was in that place and we knew it not? *cf. Gen 28: 16*)

Secondly, the other Christian Churches with whom we are involved in the unity movement, contain our brothers and sisters in Christ, and for that reason alone, we should meet with them, pray with them and seek to love them as Our Saviour commanded us to do.

Thirdly, things that Christians of different denominations can do together, without compromising their beliefs, should be done together, - working for *Christian Aid* is one example.

Finally, the Unity Contact person should always work closely with the Parish Priest, keeping him fully informed of all ecumenical activities involving other Christians in the area. He or she should submit regular items to the parish newsletter or magazine, informing the parish about unity matters, and also subscribe to, and receive regularly, the excellent Diocesan publication, *Together in Christ*, and seek to promote and encourage, ideally on a one to one basis, the interest of as many parishioners as possible in this very worthy booklet.

Lastly but by no means least, pray regularly for unity.

At St Gregory's

In my own parish of St Gregory's in Earlsfield, I am honoured to be the Unity Contact person, and also to have recently taken over the role of lay Co-ordinator with all the other Earlsfield churches.

To carry out this task efficiently, means that to start with, I have to possess the names, addresses and telephone numbers of my opposite numbers or Unity Contact people in all the other Christian churches in the area. involved in unity they are ; St John the Divine(CoE); St Andrew's (CoE); Earlsfield Baptist Church; United Reformed Church; Congregational Church and St Gregory's (RC). The Earlsfield Assembly of the Bible Way church join in our activities from time to time. We have a clergy Fraternal which meets several times a year, and a Lay Unity contact group which meets usually after the clergy meetings, and which meets sometimes in member's homes.

This year, the Earlsfield Churches have been involved in the following activities: *Week of Prayer for Christian Unity Jan 1988*

A midweek "*Brains Trust*" session, with a panel of clergy from Earlsfield answering questions submitted by parishioners of all the churches.

Lent '88 -the Lent course based on the book, "*Who on earth are you?*", with weekly meetings in the different Earlsfield churches.

Good Friday 1988: open air United Procession of Witness by all churches, carrying of a life-size wooden cross by the clergy, ending in an open air service the grounds of St Andrew's, this was well attended.

Anniversary - United Church Service in March; local U. R.C. Anniversary United Service in St John the Divine (CoE) in May.

Full co-operation of all Earlsfield churches in *Christian Aid* week.

Anticipated activities for the rest of the year are:

United Service in local Baptist Church, July 24.

United Service (*Feast of St Gregory*), St Gregory is R.C. Sept. 4th.

Christingle United Service, St Andrew's, Nov. 27th.

Distribution Unity Newsletter in December informing the residents of Earlsfield of Christmas Services and times, and inviting them to a joint united Carol Service around Christmas time. (Newsletter distributed by hand to 3-4 thousand homes in Earlsfield).

Ecumenical Christmas Concert in December (in different church hall each year) Includes a stage item (approx. 10 minutes) by each Church, interlaced with Carol singing. A very popular event played to a packed house last year. *Artists young and not so young*,

In conclusion, I have never forgotten the words of wisdom which my dear mother imparted to me in my youth — that it was not God who separated the Churches but man. Under the influence of the Holy Spirit, may we be all together in one Church, as the good Lord surely intended things to be.

Desmond Edwards

(Unity contact, St Gregory's)

CHARTRES TO CHICHESTER

The first diocesan pilgrimage from the diocese of Chartres to its twinned diocese of Chichester took place in Easter Week, when the Bishop of Chartres, Mgr Michel Kuehn, accompanied by his Vicar-General, the Cúré of the Cathedral, Canon Joseph Hercouet and 35 priests, religious and laypeople, arrived at Chichester Theological College late on Easter Monday.

On Tuesday the pilgrims went by coach to Brighton and Hove, visiting first the Evangelical parish of All Saints, Patcham where they were welcomed by the vicar and his woman deacon, then St Paul's, Brighton, where after lunch members of the Ecumenical Officers' Group gave a presentation of ecumenical relations in Sussex. They then moved on to St Patrick's, Hove, to meet the Bishop of Chichester, his suffragans and archdeacons over tea, to join in Evening Prayer with the vicar, some of his parishioners and the monks of the Monastery of Christ the Saviour, to see and hear something of the efforts made by the Christian community at St Patrick's to minister to the poorest and least privileged of their neighbours. The coach then returned to Chichester for a joyful bilingual Mass at the Roman Catholic church of St Richard and a buffet supper.

In this Marian Year the pilgrims from Chartres, itself a notable centre of devotion to Our Lady, had wanted to make a Marian pilgrimage, so on Wednesday the coach took them up to Westminster for a Mass first of all in Westminster Cathedral with prayers at the shrine of Our Lady of Westminster followed by a visit to Westminster Abbey. There the Ecumenical Society of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the Society of Our Lady of Pew were hosts at a buffet reception in the Jerusalem Chamber, to which the pilgrims were welcomed by the Canon-in-residence. An act of devotion followed in the Chapel of Our Lady of Pew and further prayers at the shrine of St Edward and at the shared tomb of Mary I and Elizabeth I with its memorial of the martyrs of the Reformation. After their return to Chichester the pilgrims were invited to a reception in the Bishop's Palace and the evening ended with compline (in French) in the Chapel.

On Thursday the pilgrims went to Arundel. They first visited the parish church and saw how the 'middle wall of partition' between the Anglican nave and the Roman Catholic chancel (the *Fitzalan Chapel*) had been suppressed and then went to the Cathedral where they were welcomed by Bishop Cormac and where the two bishops and their clergy concelebrated Mass. They were then the guests of Bishop Cormac for lunch in the castle.

After the Castle the coach returned to Chichester. A guided tour of the Cathedral in French led up to a Eucharist at the shrine St Richard, at which the principal celebrant was the Bishop of Chichester, who also preached in French.

The Bishop of Chartres, accompanied by his Vicar-General and the Cure of the Cathedral sat, robed in choir habit, near the Altar. Before the Blessing (given by the two Bishops together) the Bishop and Dean of Chichester presented to the Bishop of Chartres and the Cure of the Cathedral a framed and illuminated text of the Prayer of St Richard in French, executed by Brother Peter Douglas SSF of Chichester Theological College, and the two bishops led the congregation in the recitation of the prayer in English and in French.

The Dean and Chapter were then hosts to a *Vin d'honneur* at the Theological College, attended by the mayor and representatives of the friends of Chartres, and a final celebratory dinner with toasts and the presentation of gifts followed. The Bishop of Chartres assured his hosts that the text of St Richard's prayer would be prominently displayed in the Ecumenical Chapel of Chartres Cathedral.

At 6.30 on Friday morning the coach left Chichester for Portsmouth with a party of pilgrims no doubt exhausted but full of enthusiasm about the richness, variety and spiritual depth of the experience they had undergone and the warmth of the welcome they had encountered everywhere.

Canon R T Greenacre,

Chancellor of Chichester Cathedral. (This report first appeared in Arundel and Brighton News and is here reproduced by kind permission of Canon Greenacre.)

AN ECUTOPICAL QUIZ!

1. Who were the three Roman Catholic observers at the recent Lambeth Conference (August 1988)?
2. Uhat do these initials stand for:
(a) CCLEPE (b) NACCCAN?
3. What did the Methodists celebrate on May 24, 1988?
4. Which 5 working parties were set up after Swanwick (Sept 1987)?
5. Which former Archbishop of Canterbury died this year, wearing the episcopal ring given to him by Pope Paul VI?

(Answers on p 15)

ECUMENICAL WEEKEND AWAY

The Abbey Wood Ecumenical Forum (Methodist, Anglican, Catholic) had come to an apparent impasse. After years of getting closer together the three congregations had reached a new peak of unity. There had been a Palm Sunday joint service, culminating in a Catholic Mass offered in the Anglican church with the participation of the Methodists. On the surface it seemed a marvellous idea with the people of the three congregations well pleased. Our joint forum was well attended too. Holy Week was on the agenda at one of these forums. Then it became apparent that underneath there were deep resentments and pastoral and liturgical difficulties experienced by the clergy. So no joint service for Palm Sunday nor for Holy Week!

Things looked glum, and people were very despondent. We had started the meeting praying to the Holy Spirit, so trusting in the Spirit we decided to find out what he wanted. maybe it was not to experiment with the Eucharist, but TO FIND OUT MORE ABOUT EACH OTHER.

We decided to have a weekend away. A sub group of three laypeople and the three clergy looked into planning it over a period of nine months. The former did the organising, the latter worked out the input.

St Vincent's at Whitstable was chosen. It seemed the cheapest. The organisers went there a couple of times and reported that it was sparse, might be cold, extra food would be needed, we would have to do some household chores, we would share rooms. The advantage was that it was only £18, Friday night to Sunday lunch. We decided to ask the people to pay for themselves but the parishes would pay for the coach. As St Vincent's offers 40 places, each church was to find at least 13 people. The prospect of the three clergy sharing a small room with no facilities did not commend itself. Was this part of the sacrifice necessary if ecumenism is to get anywhere? If we were still on friendly terms after the weekend, then Church unity couldn't be so difficult!

The first act of grace was that there was no lack of people to sign on from the Anglican and Catholic congregations, This included people who had never shown any interest in ecumenism beforehand. People went for all kinds of reasons.

The laity organised the weekend perfectly, transport, rooming list, washing up rota, spare food and drink etc. The clergy led three of the four religious services and the five sessions on: Worship, Prayer, Authority, Mission and Social Problems. So that the Catholics could fulfil their Mass obligation we held this on Saturday evening. The Methodists led a service on the Friday at 10 p.m. The Anglican Eucharist was on the Sunday morning. This satisfied all and in fact

everyone attended all three. A highlight of the weekend was the last service organised by the laity alone. It was marvellous to see that nearly everyone stayed to help prepare this one, though they had been hard at work all weekend and could well have left it to others. A sense of cooperation and responsibility was present that augurs well for the future.

The programme was very full. Those not used to study courses found it rather tiring, but all joined in everything. There was not much free time, but a do-it-yourself social had been programmed. This was optional and people took as much part as they wished. In fact this made it all the better as friendships formed quite naturally and no one was forced to be 'ecumenically' jolly. With a few old favourite communal songs on tape, one or two party turns and a little wine, the evening brought new insights and understanding.

Perhaps the discussions didn't get very far but one noticed that some who never normally speak up, found this setting such that they amazed all including themselves, by what they had to say. Many misunderstandings were cleared up about what we believe or do. We got to know each other. We can never get to know all about our own faith let alone that of another.

We found St Vincent's ideal as a fun place. With the need for everyone to share tasks, a community spirit formed immediately. This might not have happened as readily if we had all arrived independently at a smarter residence.

So enjoyable was the weekend that we have booked again for next year.

Postscript. The Abbey Wood Forum held since the weekend away was the poorest attended yet. maybe a lesson to be learned is that although few people relish ecumenical committees and the like, many are naturally community minded when thrown together with their neighbours no matter what religious background they may be. Anyway there must be a lesson there somewhere.

Fr Plummer.

ANSWERS TO QUIZ:

1. Bishop Cormac Murphy O'Connor, Fr Pierre Duprey, Fr Kevin McDonald.
2. (a) Consultative Committee for Local Ecumenical Projects in England and Wales.
(b) National Centre for Christian Communities and Networks.
3. The 250th Anniversary of the turning point in the life of John Wesley.
4. One for Britain and Ireland, one each for England, Scotland and Wales and one for Prayer, Education and Promotion.
5. Archbishop Ramsey.

CATHOLIC ASSOCIATION FOR RACIAL JUSTICE

CARJ has had a busy year, a year of facing real issues, involvement with and support for ethnic communities in particular need, and a year of patient hard work in reaching out to Catholic parishes, trying to increase awareness of what Christians can do about racism in British society.

A CONTROVERSIAL ISSUE: Everyone has some knowledge of the disturbance at Broadwater Farm following the death of Mrs Cynthia Jarrett in 1985. Few are aware of the despair, frustration and suffering the largely Black community who live on the estate have experienced since then. Grass-root groups have formed in the housing estate to provide mutual support and to give a voice to the feelings of the people who live there: people who mostly identify instinctively with Christian values. Two members of CARJ, Sister Helena Brennan who lives on the estate and Pat Ready, have been actively involved on a long-term basis as the community has organised and begun to express its feelings and needs. Members of CARJ, including all the Executive Committee, took part in the march for the Movement for Civil Rights and Justice organised by the Broadwater Farm Youth and Residents' Associations. A recent Amnesty International report endorses CARJ's sense that proper enquiry must be made into the facts of what happened, and what is happening at Broadwater Farm.

SUPPORT FOR BANGLADESHI FAMILIES: The action of the London Borough of Tower Hamlets in serving notice on a number of Bangladeshi families in council bed and breakfast accommodation caused suffering and hardship to the families. CARJ participated in investigating the council's action and in working with the community. Following the Court of Appeal's instruction to the council, we await the final outcome.

LIMITED RESOURCES, UNLIMITED OBJECTIVES: CARJ has resources; it has about 400 members, Its ordinary expenditure in the last year was about £14,000. much of the work is done by volunteers. But the aims of CARJ are to reach to every Catholic parish in the country; to help congregations to realize the urgent need to be aware of racial justice issues in Britain, and of the Gospel imperative to respond to this need.

FILM STRIP: CARJ has just released an audio-visual history of the Black presence in Britain 1500-1950, called "*Out of the Shadows*", an informative and visually striking programme which schools, colleges and parish groups can hire or buy. It focusses on the positive contribution of black people to British society, as well as on the struggle for recognition and equal opportunity.

SURVEY: CARJ is contemplating undertaking a sociological survey, to provide a factual picture of black Catholics nationwide and an analysis of their relationship with the Church. Research will be overseen by Dr Hornsby-Smith.

PARISHES: Raising awareness at parish level is one of the main thrusts of CARJ's work. An Ursuline sister, a volunteer, concentrates on parishes, running workshops, helping to form links between groups, arranging talks. CARJ is always willing to provide a preacher for Sunday Mass, and has a number of publications which are useful to parish groups.

INTER-CHURCH CONTACTS: Contacts between "mainstream" Christian churches are part of the scene these days. But CARJ has broken new ground in inviting the Black-led Churches to share their insights and their faith. A weekend last September was attended by more than 50 Christians from many different racial and cultural backgrounds, and the "Black-led Churches Working Party" continues to strengthen these links.

SEMINARIES: There are not yet any British born black Catholic priests. Soon, we hope and pray, there will be. CARJ was glad to have the chance to run a two-day programme exploring the field of racial justice with students from St John's also from the Anglican Theological College at Chichester, and in Racism Awareness programmes at Ushaw and Allen Hall seminaries.

SCHOOLS AND YOUNG PEOPLE: Local Education authorities, individual school and various youth groups continue to ask CARJ to run special days, book displays and exhibitions for them. A conference on "Catholic Primary Schools and Multicultural Education" was held in the North. A consultation with diocesan religious education advisers for England and Wales gave further opportunity for consideration of the responsibility of Catholic educators in this area.

WHY DOES CARJ EXIST?: There are many other organisations working for racial justice in Britain now. CARJ does not seek to duplicate or replace their work, but to support and accompany it whenever possible. CARJ exists to speak in the name of the Catholic community on racial justice issues, to bring Christian values and insights into the forum where these issues are addressed, and to work to make all members of the Catholic community conscious of the needs of the black community, eager to defend human rights and prevent injustices in great matters and in small ones. CARJ needs **members** to commit themselves to this work in their own individual ways; **money** to carry on the work. All donations are an encouragement and help.

Further information, from The Catholic Association for Racial Justice, Brixton.