

Together in Christ

60p



MAY THEY ALL BE ONE

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FORUM OF CHURCHES TOGETHER IN ENGLAND

STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENTS OF CHURCHES TOGETHER IN ENGLAND

Three years ago our Churches, African, Afro-Caribbean, Anglican, Free Church, Orthodox and Roman Catholic, committed themselves to seek a deeper unity with Christ and with one another In response to our Lord's call. We, the Presidents of Churches Together In England, hold to that commitment. We meet frequently to pray together, and to discuss matters of common concern, and we shall continue to do so.

We have begun to face frankly the differences which still sadly divide us and our Churches. We have discovered respect and deep personal friendship for one another as fellow disciples of Jesus Christ. Even though there are differences between us, nonetheless we have so much in common that we shall not be prevented from engaging together in Christ's mission - a mission of reconciliation in the world, and of shared witness to the Christian values which undergird our nation.

We want our nation to rediscover a sense of God, obedience to him, and the moral values which can hold society together:

- respect for all human life and dignity;
- responsibility for others, especially those who are vulnerable and disadvantaged;
- reconciliation of people of all ethnic and racial groups.

In particular, as we approach the International Year of the Family, we are concerned for family life - a concern which we believe we share with people of other faiths.

We shall work together for the strengthening of family life, for it is particularly in family relationships that the moral values, that can sustain our society, are learnt and nurtured.

George Cantuar
Archbishop of Canterbury

Basil Hume
Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster

John Newton
Moderator of the Free Church
Federal Council

Desmond Pemberton
Formerly National Superintendent
Wesleyan Holiness Church

18th July 1993

EDITORIAL

People are Treasures" was a notion re-echoed around the C. T. E. Forum at Swanwick (especially in Section 2) and we bring you a glimpse of that special event in this issue of our bulletin. We feel sure you will discover many such treasures as you "meet" our contributors, and enjoy their writings, including book reviews, unity events and personalities. We welcome and thank them all.

One member of Swanwick's Section 2, in considering people as treasures, echoed a quotation from Cardinal Newman saying

"lay people are treasures . . . the Church would look funny without them"!

Our greatest treasure of course is the Person of Jesus Christ. As St Paul says: "I live now, not with my own life but with the life of Christ who lives in me." (Gal.2:20) . Christ, living in each Christian unites us ever more deeply in His love: may He lead us, responsive to His will, into the fulness of unity.

CHURCHES TOGETHER IN ENGLAND FORUM 1993

3p.m. Registration at Swanwick was one notice to remember among the pile of papers which inevitably precedes a big Forum for over 300 participants! Sidney and I arrived in time for afternoon tea, meeting other delegates, renewing former acquaintances and making new ones. Wandering on to the lawn in the sunshine, the atmosphere was leisurely and refreshing for the travel-weary. But not for long! More papers to be studied; some attended meetings, Moderators, Scribes , Convenors and Rapporteurs met with the General Secretary (I was a Scribe).

7 p.m. Supper time. Then to the large hall for the opening service of worship led by the chaplain, Rev Flora Winfield. All Forum gatherings are enfolded in a pattern of worship. Canon Martin, with the Moderator, Rev Hugh Cross and Deputy Moderator, Mrs Terry Garley, greeted us all and introduced those new to the Forum, representatives from the World Council of Churches and the Council of European Churches; also the C.T.E. staff. Warm applause greeted them all. A video was then shown, newly produced by C.T.E. indicating many areas of ecumenical cooperation and commitment (in contrast to former hostile attitudes)

9.15 p.m. No, not bedtime! It was time to go to one of the 28 groups to which one had been allocated, with about 12 in each, from differing churches. This was for introductions, sharing of our areas of ecumenical work and expertise and considering our task.

SATURDAY 7.30 a.m. The day began in the chapel for "WORSHIP IN THE GREEK ORTHODOX TRADITION" - a first experience for many people. Only about 5 Orthodox were present, yet the liturgy was celebrated with its elaborate and symbolic ceremonial and was sung in its entirety, the young cantor's rendering being especially memorable. The Greek Orthodox feel unable to invite non-members to Communion, but invite them to receive some of the Antidoron or Agape bread which is unconsecrated, at the end of the service.

After breakfast, work began in earnest, The overall theme was "Signs of Commitment to Unity", and there were four main sections (deriving their theme from the Swanwick 1987 Constitution):

- SECTION 1 Together in Consultation, Setting Priorities and making decisions.
- 2 Together in Managing and Sharing Treasures and Resources
- 3 Together in Study, Learning, Education and Training
- 4 Together in Evangelisation and Response to the needs of Society.

A Section comprised about 5 small groups. A Convenor chaired the small group; a Rapporteur was its Secretary. A Moderator chaired the whole Section (of about 60 to 80 people); the Scribe its Secretary. Groups worked all morning on their allotted area of work; each Section came together for the whole afternoon and received the deliberations from the groups. I was Scribe for Section 2; the task was to collate the presentations at the Section meeting, write up a report, and having agreed it with the Moderator take it to the meeting which began at 9.30p.m. to prepare for the Plenary Session. The four reports were then printed (during the night) for presentation to the Plenary Sessions the next morning.

Before supper on Saturday, there was an hour's period of worship "IN THE QUAKER TRADITION" - again a new experience for many. What a contrast it was to the Orthodox liturgy! No vestments, candles, incense, symbols. No set liturgy, no ordained ministers. Only a small, bare table on which was placed a Bible and a book of meditations. Like the Orthodox, only a handful of Quakers were there; one gave a brief introduction, inviting anyone to pray or read as the Spirit moved them. Silence fell. Deep prayerful silence. Openness to the promptings Of the Holy Spirit. Surrendering to Him. Resting in Him. The worship was guided occasionally by just one or two prayers and a Scripture reading, meditation, reflection. The hour ended with the exchange of a sign of peace - that peace of Christ and unity in Him which had been experienced

SUNDAY: We entered the peace of the chapel at 6.25 a.m. . The Cardinal was by the altar, immersed in prayer with a few others. The Mass began at 6.45 and the chapel filled up. Bishop Leo McCartie was the chief celebrant, along with the Cardinal, Bishop Howard Tripp and several priests. Bishop Leo gave a delightful

homily about the leaven and the bread. A blessing was offered to non-communicants.

Following close upon the R.C. Mass came the celebration of the Anglican Eucharist, with Archbishop George Carey officiating. The Archbishop preached on love: on our failure to love; on hope which never gives up, and on generosity. The whole theme was LOVE, and readings from *Hosea* and *1 Corinthians 13* were reflected in the very moving homily. The passage from 1 Corinthians was sung by Rev Flora which was really heavenly. The Archbishop invited all to receive communion if they so wished, or to come forward for a blessing the latter invitation being accepted by Catholics including Cardinal Hume, Bishop McCartie, priests and laity.

After breakfast, two plenary sessions were held at which the Section reports were the main consideration. The future work of C.T.E. will include taking up the issues presented.

Following lunch, Constituency meetings were held. The Catholics united in a small Conference hall to share their evaluation of the Forum and to see how it could be communicated. (That's what I am trying to do!). Then the Presidents spoke, finally there was worship in the Afro-Caribbean tradition

The Forum is over, but the quest for visible unity goes on. As we heard, love never gives up, and it is in a loving encounter that we move forward to follow the will of Christ. The work of C.T.E. needs our prayers; please keep praying hard.
Una M Ratcliff.

POST-FORUM REFLECTIONS OF AN OBSERVER

It was a satisfying Forum. Its overall theme was "Signs of commitment to Unity", and there were plenty of those, both in the record of accomplished and current work and in the suggestions for possible future action. We started off by watching a video showing some of the major achievements of CTE - the building of premises for joint use, social work shared, united witness and so on; I would hope that this video will get a wide circulation so that it may be generally seen what is being achieved. Groups were then convened for discussion on suggestions related to possibilities for further combined action. The reports of the various sections will provide CTE with material to work on for the next two years.

When I wrote about the last CTE Forum (*Together in Christ* October 1991), I mentioned that one report announced: "However, there was no agreement about the characteristics of visible unity". In spite of so much effort on the part of CTE there was unfortunately, but not unexpectedly, no change in this situation. CTE has, however, inaugurated a process "Called to be One" (expected to take about five years) involving wide consultation with the Churches on visible unity. In the absence of a consensus here, our theme "Sharing resources" could not be discussed as a means to an agreed end, but as an end in itself.

But, on consideration, is this not how it should be dealt with? Pope Paul said that our unity would be a gradual process - a coming together like that of a Gothic arch. There can be no doubt that our joint action and witness together with our joint prayers have drawn us closer together in mutual love and service to the world over the past 25 years, and there is no doubt that it will continue to do so, however, they cannot resolve our conflicting fundamentalism's. Which brings me to the question of our joint worship at the Forum. We all took part, as far as conscience permitted, in each other's worship, and an abiding memory is that of Cardinal Hume approaching Archbishop Carey for his blessing at the Anglican eucharistic service, but I think there is a tremendous lesson to be learnt from our sharing in the meeting for worship after the manner of Friends - the Quaker traditional worship. As this method of worship would have been unfamiliar to many of us we had been briefed about it beforehand. The opening paragraph of the brief said: "Meeting for worship is not a dialogue or a discussion, but a humble waiting for guidance, and faithfulness in testing the promptings of God in a worshipping group, within a community of faith."

The hour we spent, mainly in silence, in worship after the manner of Friends gave us all a marvellous feeling of unity, from which I conclude that the message from Forum No 3 should be to continue and increase our own work and prayer for the unity of all Christians, but also to wait on the Lord, to be open to the awareness of His voice and His promptings, so that In His own good time He may set the keystone of our Gothic arch In its place. After all:

"Unless the Lord build the house those
who build it labour In vain. (Ps 127)

*'That they all may
be one'*



ONE IN THE SPIRIT

Until a few years ago the word "ecumenical" was found in the dictionary and did not have much relevance in my life. Ecumenism was for for bishops, clergy and laity with time to "get involved". If changes were to be brought about this is where they would occur, they would then filter down to me, comfortable in the pew!

Two years ago I was asked to join the Broadway Fellowship of Churches and later became the Unity Contact for St John Vianney Church Bexleyheath, in which capacity I liaise between parish and the Christian Unity Commission. How did I have such a change of heart on this issue?

In the mid-1980's Father David was appointed to Bexleyheath. One Sunday, after Mass he asked if I would give some thought to becoming an assistant Minister of the Eucharist. At that time, being a traditionalist, I was not entirely sure that the laity should have such a role, but after prayer and consideration I agreed, and in April that year went to Aylesford to be commissioned.

A few months later Father David 'wondered' if I would accompany him to the Digby Stuart College for the 'Journey in Faith' Summer School, as the parishioner who had originally been invited was unable to go. Much to my surprise I accepted.

That "Journey" has many memories including having breakfast on one occasion With a Bishop. During the course of the meal I mentioned that I could never address a group of people: his reply was 'the Holy Spirit works on the ears of those who listen as well as on the heart of those who speak.' Eight weeks later those words were a great comfort. When, along with Father David, we reported back to the parish and invited them to join us on our "Journey in Faith". Over the next two years this experience, shared with twenty-five others, deepened my faith and it became clear that with the Holy Spirit in your life you cannot remain static, but must be open to change.

It was whilst on this "Journey" that I attended my first local Christian Unity service, the cold, wet evening did not offer much encouragement and I have to say my heart was not entirely in it. However, after joining in the hymns and prayers then sharing refreshments with the people from the local churches, I felt that I had made an effort for Christian Unity.

The time drew near for the Good Friday "Walk of Witness" and I knew this was something to avoid. Besides, there was so much to do in preparation for Easter, how could I fit it in? I couldn't take part in everything! But there I was on yet

another cold wet day, present in the United Reformed church. As we started out, struggling to sing "There is a green hill far away" I tried to ignore the gaze customers leaving "Fads" with their rolls of wallpaper and tins of paint. Somewhere between the United Reformed Church and Christ Church our first stopping point, my perception of the occasion changed. Embarrassment left me as I acknowledged that it was not my that was important, but that we were giving UNITED witness Christ's passion and crucifixion and calling at all places of worship along the Broadway, thereby linking each community. After a closing service in the Methodist Church, hot-cross buns and coffee were shared with people whose faces and names were now familiar.

At the Christian Unity service the following year the atmosphere for me was very different, now I was aware as we sang our praises we were indeed one in the Spirit, and that the divisions were cause for sadness.

The Good Friday Witness Walk has now become very much a part of my Easter celebrations and, as of last year, I am now a Unity singer in the shopping precinct at Christmas.

In May this year we at St John Vianney were invited, along other local church choirs, to join the Salvation Army for their annual Choir Festival, in aid of the Mayor of Bexley's Appeal. There I was being conducted by a member of the International Staff Band of the Salvation Army. This was a very enjoyable evening and I felt privileged to be part of such a happy ecumenical group in such perfect harmony! I would like to quote from one of the hymns we sang that night :

"When we cannot see our way,
Let us trust and still obey;
He who bids us forward go,
Cannot fail the way to show.

And it's from the old I travel to the new
Keep me travel ling along with you. "

Margaret Bacon.

*'That they all may
be one'*



ECUMENICAL TWINNING



I have lived in my parish for 23 years now, and during the last twelve or more, my wife and I have taken part in the Ecumenical Lenten House Groups. As a result of one year's discussions, a project was proposed in the group that I led, and in the fulness of time I placed the plan in front of the local CHURCHES TOGETHER meeting.

This was the plan:- "That all of the churches in the area be paired up for one year. During that year the congregations should be encouraged to worship together on perhaps four to six occasions and share social functions. The various groups of one church would, hopefully, make contact with similar groups at the other church (Scouts and Guides - Youth clubs - women's groups, etc.), and by the end of the year the two congregations might know each other quite well. Then at the end of the year, the partner would change to a different church and the process start all over again."

Since leading my own House Groups in Lent each year, I had always encouraged the members to worship in each other's churches on one occasion in each church during Lent. As time passed it got to the stage that whenever my wife and I visited a church in our area, practically any church, we were always greeted warmly and enthusiastically by friends. I felt that if the churches in our area twinned for a few years, eventually all of the Christians in Orpington would feel as welcome in any church as my wife and I did. To me, this is how Christians should feel, members of one community. The advantage of this would be that there could be a local Christian response to the needs of the area poverty, elderly, homeless, AIDS, bereavement, counselling and so on, rather than lots of separate initiatives with Varying success. The Church of Orpington would then have a much stronger voice and influence and should be much better able to evangelise as a whole for the benefit of the member churches.

The CHURCHES TOGETHER immediately asked me to canvass the member Churches and at the same time made me a vice-president without consultation!!

The response was most interesting. All of the ministers of churches with larger congregations gave a positive response, sometimes without reservation, sometimes guardedly. Some of the smaller churches were totally opposed to any participation. and the remainder all said that it was a wonderful idea but they were too busy keeping their heads above water to actually take part. We therefore eventually ended up with ten churches agreeing to "Twin" of which five were Anglican, two Roman Catholic and the remainder were Methodist, Baptist and United Reformed. I offered them three suggested sets of pairings just to help the discussion along as to who would start with whom. One suggestion was on the basis of the Anglican churches versus the rest, one was on geographical proximity, and the third was my idea the "least strain of faith". This last one caused much hilarity. In a surprisingly short time we worked out :

Middle of Road Anglican with main Roman Catholic.
Middle of Road Anglican with Methodists .
Small sister Anglican with smaller Roman Catholic
Evangelical Anglican with Baptists.
Main Anglican parish with U. R.C.

In at least two of these pairings the enthusiasm and mutual empathy of the main ministers was so marked that they very quickly decided that one year was not long enough, and we have already agreed that it will now run for two years before switching. By this time I anticipate that the relationship may have developed to such an extent that the two churches will be reluctant to cut their bonds. I have therefore suggested that if this is the case, when they are re-twinning the old bonds might stay and the new partner be added in, in which case it will be less of a progressive twinning and more of a snowball effect. We will have to see.

Pressure was put on me to commence in Unity Week in January so that the twinned ministers could exchange pulpits, and that is what we did. It is now mid-April, barely three months on, but I have circulated all the churches a summary of all the events planned so far, to give ideas for consideration.

A cross-section of ideas is now listed:

Joint Youth service.	Safari supper.
Passover dinner.	Joint Stations of the Cross.
Cricket match.	Visit to Walsingham.
Joint leaders' day.	Joint programme for training.

It is early days yet, but the idea appears to be getting off the ground. I will let you know in one year's time, with God's grace, how we have progressed.

Austin Martin (Deacon)

Holy Innocents Church Orpington.

BOOK REVIEWS

One in 2,000? Towards Catholic-Orthodox Unity

Paul McParlan; (St Paul's Press, 1993.)

In this symposium on the current state of Catholic-Orthodox relationships and dialogue, Fr McParlan, firstly, has brought together the three agreed statements so far produced by the Catholic-Orthodox dialogue, and made them easily available in England for first time. These statements will continue to have abiding significance despite the hiccups caused more recently in the dialogue by the tension between eastern-rite Catholics and Orthodox in eastern Europe. The statements are prefaced by an introductory article by Mgr Fortino a co-secretary of the Catholic-Orthodox Commission, They are followed by four papers given by speakers at a study course on Orthodox-Catholic relations organised in Fr Paul's home parish of Our Lady of Victories in Kensington, papers which include an excellent summary, by Fr Paul himself, of the progress of the dialogue to date, and contributions by other experts on aspects of Orthodox-Catholic relationships. Finally, as an appendix, we have the text of the Holy Father's irenic letter of 1991 to the Roman Catholic bishops on the subject of Catholic-Orthodox relations in the light of the current situation in eastern Europe.

This is a book both valuable and readable. Certainly, it can be skimmed fairly quickly, and it is easy to get straight to the information that one requires, but, equally, it contains passages, in almost all sections to which any reader will want 'to return time and time again, for reflection, meditation and prayer, the last being a clear sign that one is encountering theological work of quality.

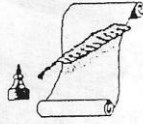
Many, including the present Pope himself, see the current dialogue as the most important and fundamental of the dialogues in which the Roman Catholic Church is currently involved. They see it as vital to transcend and heal a division which goes back to before the Reformation, and which would help to restore to the church both eastern and western the fulness or its heritage. The present Pope has often said that the Church must learn to breathe with its two lungs, eastern and western. It is interesting to note that at the beginning of the dialogue a policy decision was taken to concentrate on matters where there is already substantial agreement between the two churches in the hope that the discovery of common ground will make it easier, subsequently, to find solutions to the remaining

difficulties. In a way, this mirrors the practice adopted at the beginning of the Catholic-Methodist, and more recently, Catholic-Baptist dialogues.

I hope particular attention will be given to the three dialogue papers, not just by Catholics and Orthodox, but also by Anglicans and Free Churchmen. The 1990's are going to be an important decade for ecclesiology, and Churches Together in England is encouraging all its members to engage in serious ecclesiological reflections at all levels. All three dialogue papers contain illuminating insights into the mystery of the Church, and especially into its relationship to the sacraments. There is much which Anglicans and Protestants will wish to affirm, and also much about which they will wish to ask further questions so that the dialogue can be widened. one of the current needs in all the major inter-confessional dialogues is to move towards a greater sharing of each other's findings. There has, of course, already been a certain amount of cross-fertilisation, especially in respect of the concept of *koinonia*, which has played a major role in Catholic dialogue with Anglicans, Orthodox and Methodists that Fr Michael Richards feels strongly that much of the work on the 'Apostolic Tradition' in the latest round of the Catholic-Methodist dialogue could be fruitfully shared with other dialogues. The Reformation churches may want to ask questions about the exact relationship of ecclesiology and sacramental theology. If there is a sense in which the Eucharist makes the Church, is there a sense in which it also expresses the ongoing, under-girding experience of *koinonia* with the Trinity which is present in the whole of the Church's life and witness? A thought with possible significance for Catholic-Methodist dialogue, and, in due course, Orthodox-Methodist dialogue. appears in paragraphs 31 and 32 of the Bari statement of 1987. where the Report measures legitimacy of doctrinal formulation and variation in terms of faithfulness to the central truth about Christian destiny enshrined in the doctrine of *theosis* (the term used eastern theology for what we in the west would call the doctrine of sanctification or Christian holiness). Since the doctrine of Christian perfection has always been at the centre of Methodist concern, this has vital implications for mutual reception within the Methodist dialogue with the other two churches.

I commend this book most warmly. Paul has rendered a most welcome service to ecumenism. Incidentally, the choice of the date 2,000 as a target date for Orthodox-Catholic reconciliation is not Fr Paul's. but is derived from a hope expressed by the Pope when setting up the dialogue in 1979.

David Carter



THINGS OLD AND NEW; an ecumenical reflection on the theology of John Henry Newman, by Emmanuel Sullivan S A (Foreword by Dr Mary Tanner) (St Paul's Press, 1993).

Fr Emmanuel Sullivan, the ecumenical officer of the diocese of Arundel and Brighton, and a member of the Society of the Atonement, has written a short paperback of rare quality, a book to which readers will wish to return time and time again, since it is so full of insights that it will not yield up all its riches at one reading.

His book is subtitled 'an ecumenical reflection on the theology of John Henry Newman'. Newman's seminal influence on Vatican II and its theology has long been recognised. Fr Emmanuel demonstrates the particular relevance of Newman's thinking on the development of doctrine to current ecumenical problems. He argues that Newman pioneered the eirenic technique of trying to resolve past controversies by posing new questions which could hopefully yield consensus answers. For example, he refers to the way in which Newman tried to achieve consensus in his 'Lectures on Justification' by invoking the then largely neglected New Testament teaching on the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Fr Emmanuel also emphasises the future as well as the past orientation of the Tradition, stressing that it is always open to the incorporation of new insights and that it is, to use a phrase of Fr George Tavard, concerned with a 'more perfect imaging of the kingdom'.

Fr Emmanuel is deeply concerned with the processes of reception, particularly in regard to ecumenism, which he regards, sadly, as still very imperfectly assimilated into the life of the mainstream Churches. There is a challenge here for all of us who are involved in ecumenism, at whatever level, to see that it is indeed received at grass roots level. He has a valuable and eirenic chapter on the controversial subject of the ordination of women to the presbyterate in which he argues that the Tradition is open to change, while admitting that there are weighty theological reasons that could ultimately predispose the Universal Church against such a change as reasons that might lead to such a development being 'received'.

This is an excellent book. It is tightly written, and legitimately makes demands on the mind and the heart. It represents a distillation of much that is best in contemporary Catholic ecumenism, and will, I believe, be essential reading for ecumenists, Catholic and non-Catholic for some time. Unlike many short religious paper-backs, it will not be ephemeral in significance, but will repay continued long term study.

David Carter.

SHALOM!

A SPECIAL PILGRIMAGE REUNION

"Was; it really ten years ago?" we wondered, as Group A of the Radio Medway Holy Land Ecumenical Pilgrimage in May 1983 gathered together for our annual anniversary reunion on Saturday, May 15th, at Christ Church, Bexleyheath, the church from which we set off originally on coaches to Gatwick.

Yes, it was indeed, our tenth anniversary and so, quite a landmark. Group A has met in May each year since 1983, and for several years has had an extra meeting in November (thanks to Vera and Doug Riley for their welcoming hospitality) . The 1983 Holy Land Pilgrimage, under the expert and inspiring leadership of Canon Derek Palmer, comprised about 450 people, but sub-groups of 50 were formed. The whole group of 450 came together for quite a few special occasions, including the service on Ascension Day on the Mount of Olives and the service on the Mount of the Beatitudes overlooking the lovely Sea of Galilee shortly before leaving to travel home together on the one plane.

At our annual reunions, Group A has had a service of worship held in different churches, recalling our pilgrimage through reflections, hymns, readings and prayers. Each member of the group receives a personal invitation (thanks to the secretaries and coordinators) . The letters of those unable to come are displayed for those who are present, and always give an assurance of being united in thought and prayer. Our Holy Land photos are often visible at reunions.

There has been a wonderful bond of love, friendship and concern as we share our joys and sadness, our work for unity, our family news and so on. We have attended together the funeral services for those few of our group whose earthly pilgrimage has ended and whom we commended to our Father in heaven. Group A was under the guidance of Bishop Henderson and Mgr McGettrick and included Mgr John Shane from Ireland, Rev Tony Randall who was then the vicar at Christ Church Bexleyheath, and Christians of differing denominations most of whom had never met before the pilgrimage. We understand that ours is the only group from the original big pilgrimage which has continued to unite through prayer and meetings, and the many initiatives in which members are involved has demonstrated unity in a positive and enriching way. Of course, we have had refreshments (not Sea of Galilee fish!) but various sandwiches, fruit flans, savouries etc. Which are brought by members and shared.



On our tenth reunion, and indeed on previous occasions, Arthur Wells kindly and expertly, made a beautifully iced and decorated cake which we enjoyed immensely. 'Shalom' with all its richness of meaning has been our constant greeting expressed at our gatherings and on our Christmas cards and invitations.

Our hosts at this tenth reunion were John and Edna Passmore who led us in worship, which included these prayers: -

Dear Lord, we come into your presence this afternoon and thank you for enabling us to meet together again to remember our visit to Israel ten years ago. We thank you for our journey together following your footsteps along the Way of the Cross; visiting your birthplace and the place of your glorious ascension into heaven.

We remember also the companionship and fun we had together and the love for each other shown in our reunions.

We pray for those unable to be with us here today, let us remember them and mention them by name

We hold in our prayers those who are no longer with us but who shared in our pilgrimage to Israel. Grant that we may all dwell in your presence for ever. (We prayed too, for our families, friends, the sick, the Holy Land guides and other pilgrims and those who care for the Holy places churches, shrines, memorials.)

Enable us to continue to lead our lives according to your will, that sharing our faith together and supporting each other in prayer we be strengthened by your Holy Spirit.

Remembering our first big occasion in Jerusalem when we celebrated your Son's glorious ascension on Ascension Day on the Mount of Olives. we pray (in the words of the collect for Ascension Day:

"Almighty God. as we believe your only-begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, ascended Into heaven, so may we also in heart and mind thither ascend and with him continually dwell, who is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God now and forever. Amen.

Let us join together In the prayer Our Lord taught us, remembering when we said it together in the Garden of Gethsemane: "OUR FATHER . . . "

Remembering our wonderful service by the Sea of Galilee, our final hymn was (of course) 'Dear Lord and Father of all mankind.'

SHALOM! Ad multos annos!

Una Ratcliff.

A V.I.P. AT WHITSTABLE



John Reardon

On Sunday, 7th February, the Rev. John Reardon was a special guest at the Whitstable United Reformed Church to help celebrate some important anniversaries in the life of that Church. In the afternoon he addressed a meeting at which he spoke of his work and answered questions from the floor.

He commenced his talk by describing the world level ecumenical scene as going through a period of breaking down rather than building up; he attributed this to the events of the last few years when the freeing of relationships between the different religions had created disputes. He also pointed out that there had been more martyrs in the late Soviet Communist area than in the whole history of Christianity - 20 million having been killed for their faith.

Rev Reardon explained why it had been necessary to close the British Council of Churches and replace it with with 5 ecumenical bodies. The Church of England existed only in England the "Anglican" Church was worldwide — the Scottish

Church was Presbyterian and Methodists were divided into England, Scotland and Ireland.

When asked what we could do as individuals, he replied that he thought it better to act in a group and from our own Churches and invite others to join us in our own different celebrations and services. He related how his own Church in St Albans had started prayer meetings at 7a.m. for peace in the Gulf followed by breakfast. The participants had included one Muslim Iranian working in London and 6 Catholics. They still continued after the war was over.

Joy Thomson

Kent Area C U Commission.

Picture of John Reardon by Whitstable Times)

WHAT'S HAPPENING IN THAMESMEAD

T, C. C.

Before St Paul's opened, there was Erith marshes and then Thamesmead. In 1967 building started and the first families moved into the first homes with a Clergy team based at William Temple Church together with the churches on the Abbey Wood Estate and Abbey Wood itself started ministering to those families. From the beginning the different denominations have met and worked together in a variety of ways. Members of most of the denominations decided to come together in a *LOCAL ECUMENICAL PROJECT (L.E.P.)*. So on a day to day, year in year out basis, we said that we would work together. The Churches involved in this project are - Roman Catholic, Anglican, Methodist and United Reformed.



As Thamesmead developed, both House services and services in community buildings started. It was for these people and the future people North and Central Thamesmead that in June 1977 St Margaret Clitherow RC school was opened and then St Paul's church opened and had its first service on Christmas Eve 1977.

On the 1st April 1978, Thamesmead Ecumenical Council first met. The Council was made up of elected members from the congregations of St Paul's, St David's, St John Fisher, William Temple and Church of the Cross: and it meets regularly.

On Whit Sunday 1978, St Paul's officially opened, and on Christmas Eve of that year the first shared service was held there. St Paul's became the headquarters for the work of the L.E.P. known as the Thamesmead Christian Community (T. C. C.). The T. C.C. clergy team comes together each Friday for prayers, study and planning. Throughout Thamesmead's development the members of the T. C.C. have been involved in its life and its planning and the administration of the town.

On the 10th July 1981 the Bishop John Robinson C of E Primary School officially opened, and this school with the St Margaret Clitherow school are St Paul's church schools and they are closely linked with St Paul's. With the Inauguration of THAMESMEAD TOWN LTD. on 30th September 1987, the company took over responsibility for this area from the former G. L.C. .and the opening of H. M. Belmarsh prison at Easter 1991 brings us up to date with our history. As Thamesmead has developed so have we. the L. E. P. now works closely with the Baptist church in South Thamesmead and the prison chaplains, who now join in the T. C.C. meetings each Friday. The L. E.P. is now seen by the bishops and the leaders of the Free Churches no longer as an experiment but the continuing mission of the churches of Thamesmead, and "that is how they do things in Thamesmead".

This all brings us to St Paul's today! St Paul's is a young church in a young town. It is a shock to some people when they come to Thamesmead to realise how new everything is in comparison with some towns and churches with centuries of roots and history behind them.

Many people go by without even realising St Paul's (the building) is the local Church for this part of Thamesmead. It may not look like a traditional church but it has many rooms and chapels which makes it adaptable for both Church and Community use throughout the week. We try to make sure that it is a friendly, welcoming place for all. We hire out one of our main chapels and our four side chapels plus our offices for Community use. both for one-off hires and regular hires.

On every Sunday and some days throughout the week there is a Catholic Mass here or at the R.C. school, and there are two Church of England and one Free Church Tradition services within a month. At least once a month the Roman Catholic, Anglican and Free Churches all join together in a 'SHARED

SIMULTANEOUS EUCHARISTS SERVICE. This is an expression of what we are trying to achieve. So you will find at St Paul's what is familiar and also that which is new to us all.

We try to describe who and what we are:- we have named the building 'St Paul's Ecumenical Church Centre', this is also to describe both our Church background and services also our community involvement. We have also produced a pamphlet introducing St Paul 's to the people.

At this moment we have a Catholic priest, a Roman Catholic sister, a Church of England rector, a U. R.C. minister and a Methodist minister; all are part of the clergy team at St Paul's. Our Church Council is made up from representatives from the Roman Catholic and U.C. Congregations at St Paul's. (U.C. means United Congregations are all of the C of E., URC and Methodists which worship in one of our two main chapels at St Paul's.)

What we are about and how we go about achieving our mission, and whether it is all working is not always clear or easy. There are people who do not agree with what we are doing or how we are doing it; also there are people who would not have it any other way. This is true of people within St Paul's and others in the wide Churches. I know it challenges even the most enthusiastic of us in our perceptions of Church, our faith and then on to what is important and right to hold on to and what we should let go of, of our Traditions and our canons etc. We have a complex Church in which things are not always straightforward, for example, our finances are very low and we work with four different denominations' financial set-up's which makes things very hard sometimes.

We are currently looking at all aspects of our mission so that we may have an idea of our way forward, one of which is that we may share our mission with other Ecumenical Projects and the wider Church.

Gerry Bothwell 9/6/93

Member of the United Congregation at St Paul 's.

COME AND SEE

In the October, 1992, number of Together In Christ we spoke of a decision of the various Churches in Birchington (Anglican, Catholic, Methodist, United Reformed and Baptist) to visit one another' s churches, not for a service, but simply to look around and to learn about one another's customs and traditions.

Methodist Church:

On Saturday, 3rd October, 1992, we visited the Methodist church and met the minister, the Rev. John Pike, who also has the care of another congregation in Ramsgate. He has been married for 31 years and a Methodist minister for 26 years. He has three children and is a grand-dad .

There was a Primitive Methodist church in Birchington from 1778. The present building dates from 1835 and was modified with the addition of a clock tower in 1966.

John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, was born in 1703. On the 24th May, 1738, as a young Anglican clergyman, he had a profound Evangelical conversion experience which changed his life. Remaining within the Church of England, he began to preach a simple, radical Gospel message in fields and barns, in an effort to reach out to the poor and the unchurched. Rousing hymns were an essential part of their services, many of them written by John's brother, Charles Wesley. At first there were Methodist societies within the Church of England and Methodists continued to receive Holy Communion in C. of E. churches.

Eventually the break came and John Wesley began to ordain his own ministers. This was a reaction against hierarchical government, but Methodists have their own structures of democratic government, and decisions are reached at local church meetings, Circuit meetings, Synod meetings at District level and at the annual Methodist Conference. Methodists believe in the priesthood of all believers, and the laity are greatly involved in the day-to-day affairs of the local and national Church and in decision making. Methodists have had women ministers since 1975. Lay persons can become accredited preachers after examinations and trial services.

Their theology is largely that of the Church of England, but they are a "Free Church" but with the emphasis on the assurance of personal salvation and the need for sanctification. Faith is based on the 'three-legged stool' of Scripture, Tradition, and the Inner Light.

Their services consist of hymns, prayers, Scripture readings and sermon. There is greater emphasis nowadays on the Sacraments and most Methodists practice monthly Communion. When necessary, a lay person can officiate at Holy Communion.

Methodist churches are grouped in Circuits, and a feature of Methodism is the quarterly "Plan" which assigns ministers and Local preachers to different churches in turn, Sunday by Sunday, and thus provides variety in the pulpit! A

Superintendent Minister presides over the Thanet circuit. A number of circuits are grouped within the S.E. District. presided over by a Chairman, the Rev. T. Mervyn Willshaw. The district roughly corresponds to our Diocese of Southwark.

Ministers are appointed by the annual Methodist Conference, and take office from 1st September. There is an unofficial system to fill vacancies. Since 1747 Methodists have celebrated an annual covenant service, at which they make a solemn re-commitment to the Lord's service .

About 100 people of all four denominations listened to the Rev. John Pike's talk, which was followed by questions. We then adjourned tor tea in the neighbouring hall.

These talks are helping us to understand each other better in a friendly non-threatening way.

Canon William Clements.