

TOGETHER IN CHRIST



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Main Contents.

- | | |
|--|-----------------|
| 1. Editorial | |
| 3. Beckenham's Shop & Advice Centre | Rev D Carpenter |
| 7. The Northfleet Churches
Neighbourhood Centre | John Tuggey |
| 13. Unity Contact's Examination of
Conscience | Alfred Kenyon |
| 14. Reviews | David Carter |

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EDITORIAL. Two articles in this issue highlight superb examples of ecumenical co-operation - one from the SE Area of our diocese (Beckenham) and one from Kent (Northfleet). They arouse admiration for the initiatives and achievements, and, one hopes, inspiration to others who have not yet undertaken similar enterprises, and who might be encouraged to assess the needs of their community and the possibility of joint Christian action to meet those needs. We are grateful to Rev Derek Carpenter and John Tuggey for their interesting presentations and illustrations. Alfred Kenyon, Secretary of the SW Area Commission has produced a "Unity Contact's Examination of Conscience" a spur to everyone to step out more briskly on local ecumenical pathways of co-operation; even one step at a time is a valuable one. David Carter, our industrious Methodist writer, in his reviews will surely stimulate us to deepen our ecumenical knowledge and study. Many thanks to all our contributors.

Please keep in your prayers the "Called to be One" process and all other items of news and events in this issue, and do send in your own experience, responses and news to share with our readers.

CELEBRATE MISSION 1997

As announced in our issue of February 1996, from Pentecost 18 May 1997, for three weeks, a special opportunity is offered to celebrate missionary faith and renew our commitment for the future to continue our practise of our faith and share it with others. some people will be taking part in PILGRIM'S WAY, beginning with a group leaving Rome - the point of departure of St Augustine, and others (500) will travel from Canterbury through the British Isles to Derry in N. Ireland near the birthplace of St Columba.

It is emphasised that everyone is urged to participate in this celebration of missionary faith and commitment - it is not only for the walkers - and it is hoped that plans are now being made for an appropriate celebration in all areas.

One focus of attention is on two saints especially linked with the year 597; St Augustine who landed in England in 597 and St Columba who died in 597. Both had a considerable impact in their time and made a significant contribution to the whole Christian Church tradition. To assist in local preparation (as requested) here are a few biographical notes:

ST AUGUSTINE Augustine has been referred to as "the Apostle of the English". One might be tempted to think of him a native of this country, as it is the time he spent here receives special emphasis and provides most of the information we have about him. He was in fact, Italian by birth. He became a pupil of Felix, the Bishop of Messana, and a companion of Gregory (later to be Pope Gregory). He entered monastic life and eventually became Prior of St Andrew' s monastery on the Celian Hill in Rome.

As Pope, Gregory had for quite a time envisaged and later prepared for a mission to the Anglo-Saxons, and had corresponded about it. It was in 596 that Augustine was chosen by Pope Gregory to lead a company of 40 monks to set out for our island. They hesitated in Gaul - how much easier and safer it would be for them to return home and abandon the task! Yet Augustine encouraged by Gregory and consecrated Bishop by him, and group proceeded on their journey, landing at Ebbsfleet in in 597.

The monks were received by King Ethelbert of Kent who permitted them to preach their message and to live in a house in Canterbury. The King's wife, Bertha (a French Princess) was a Catholic, but Ethelbert took time for reflection and study. Four years later, in 601, he was baptised and received into the Church, and many of his subjects also accepted the Catholic faith.

Augustine continued to be helped and directed by Gregory in various matters. Gregory, (in a letter written to Mellitus) advised Augustine to destroy pagan idols but not their temples; these could later be used as centres of Christian celebrations. Augustine worked in a comparatively small area of England, but his achievements included the building of the first Cathedral at Canterbury; the founding of the monastery of SS. Peter and Paul (later called St Augustine's): the establishment of two episcopal sees - in London and Rochester; the founding of a school in Canterbury, and assistance given to the King in the compilation and drafting of Anglo-Saxon laws. This was all done in the space of a few years. Augustine died about 604 A.D.

ST COLUMBA: This Saint (known by the Latin name of Columba, or to the Gael as Columcille) was an illustrious figure of the 6th century A.D. who has been revered throughout the succeeding generations, and associated especially with Iona. He was born, however, (probably) in 521, on 7 December in Gartan (Donegal), of noble parents - his father was Fedilmith, son of Fergus, and his mother Ethne - in the royal line of Ui-Neill. He was baptised, but his name, Columcille, was very probably a monastic name .

Columcille became a monk, and founded the monasteries of Derry, Durrow and probably, Kells. He was ordained priest in his mid-twenties and in 563 left Ireland to go to Iona, the rest of his life being spent in Scotland, mainly Iona.

Adamnan's *Life of Columba* which, though not a strictly historical document, nevertheless gives a vivid impression of an impressive figure, a scholar, poet and ruler; one with an ardent faith and commitment to God. His activities included the building of monasteries, the conversion of Brude, king of the Picts, the consecration of the Irish king Aidan of Dalraida and spiritual counselling.

He loved manuscripts and worked hard in transcribing books. The cathac of St Columba, a Psalter, which is said to have been copied by him, dates from the 6th century, and still survives. He died in church, just before .matins, in Iona, in 597 and his feast is celebrated on 9th June.

BECKENHAM'S SHOP AND ADVICE CENTRE AN EXERCISE IN ECUMENICAL CO-OPERATION

The establishment of a Bookshop, Traidcraft Centre, Coffee Lounge, Listening Ear Centre and Advice Centre, opening in stages over the last nine months, has been a real exercise in ecumenical partnership by thirteen churches which form "Churches Together in Beckenham" within the London Borough of Bromley.

The initial idea for such a project came when the local Citizen's Advice Bureau closed: the Borough would fund only three instead of the four which had served the local communities over a long period of time, and church folk in Beckenham realised that although the C.A. B. had gone, the problems and people who had made their way to it had not. It was decided to try to establish some sort of Information Service to serve the local community, but that would need appropriate premises, they would need money, that might involve income through trading and so the project developed.

Premises in the High Street, which were owned by the Anglican Diocese of Rochester, were earmarked, protracted negotiations took place (with excellent co-operation from the Anglican authorities) and an appeal was made to Churches and individuals within them. The cost of converting the four story building, which had originally been a hairdresser's with accommodation above, was in excess of £90,000, but within months that had been obtained by generous individual gifts, donations from the member-churches, interest free loans, and a grant of half the amount from a local charity. Church members with particular pieces of expertise offered their services, the project was registered with the Charity Commissioners, the renovation set in hand, training undertaken for those who would staff the premises, and the Shop opened in October of last year.

Christian books only are sold, thus ensuring the co-operation of a local bookseller, but the main income on the 'ground floor' is from the sale of Traidcraft goods and other items which are 'fairly traded'. the concept of fair trade, and the provision of stable work and a more decent wage for those who have hitherto been the subject of exploitation, has appealed to the churches, and it has been a good exercise to promote the vision and engage in educating a public who are increasingly realising the problems of inequality - many are now even looking for the 'Fair Trade' mark on goods in local Supermarkets

Income benefited from a pre-Christmas boom (and a pre-Easter one too!) and enables us to keep our heads above water: it is supplemented by the Coffee Shop on the first floor, delightfully furnished with pine tables and dressers, and with lovely views over Beckenham Green. Those who come once come again!

Morning coffee is served from 10 a.m., light lunches from mid-day until 2 p.m., and afternoon teas until 4 o'clock. All the Staff work in a voluntary capacity with the exception of a Co-ordinator for the Coffee Shop who is employed for a flexible 20 hours each week.

The Listening Ear Service, which opened at the same time as the Coffee Shop (a month after the Bookshop) has three dozen volunteers, working in pairs, and trained by the Acorn Healing Trust as Christian Listeners; their aim is not to offer advice but to be available to sit alongside any who may bring problems and concerns to share. The service is available but not intrusive, and problems can be discussed and shared over a coffee or in a well-furnished, comfortable room, where there is privacy and confidentiality.

During this summer the Advice Centre will open in a room at the rear of the ground floor; the fifteen voluntary staff will have access to C.A. B. resource material as well as to information about many of the Agencies within the Borough. Much of the learning here will be 'on the job' but we have been fortunate in receiving some training from groups such as Age Concern, Mind, the Citizens' Advice Bureau and the DHSS: where particular problems cannot be answered, we will at least know someone who can!

Over a hundred church members, from all thirteen churches, are involved in the premises during the week, working on a rota basis, and there is a continual need to attract more voluntary help. The whole project is something which no one church could have accomplished on its own - it has only been possible because we are 'Churches Together' and we are finding that unity comes not only as we tackle matters of faith and doctrine, important though they are, but as we roll up our sleeves and get down to a real job of work together. Nobody is label led as to denomination, but interesting and enlightening conversations take place, and real friendships are formed during the quieter moments.

Perhaps the greatest joy is seeing the attractive fascia board above the shop which proclaims "Churches Together in Beckenham". that in itself is a real witness to the local community, and the activities within the premises bear out one of our stated aims: to initiate and support projects which benefit the local community.

And if you are in Beckenham any Monday to Saturday between 9 am, and 5 pm. why not call in and see us yourself at 26-28 High Street?

Rev Derek Carpenter



* * * * *

If our life in Christ means anything to you, if love can persuade at all; or the Spirit that we have in common, or any tenderness and sympathy then be united in your conviction and united in your love with a common purpose and a common mind. That is the thing that would make me completely happy . . . in your minds you must be the same as Christ Jesus. Phil 1:1, 2, 5

CALLED TO BE ONE : The process of response to this important document is now under way in the member churches of **CHURCHES TOGETHER IN ENGLAND**. The report sets out the ways in which the churches understand the meaning of "Church", and of visible unity; it notes where views converge or diverge, and looks ahead to "The Way Fore ward Together". Important appendices refer to Church and Mission, Christian Initiation and church membership; eucharistic communion, ordained ministry; authority and decision making, and suggested rules of good practice.

The Report along with a Workbook, edited by Helen Lidgett, designed to help ecumenical groups, is available from CCBI , Inter-Church House, 35-41 Lower Marsh, London SE1 7PL.

Some churches have published other helpful material. For Catholics there is *CALLED TO BE ONE: n Study Guide for Catholics*.

The next **FORUM** of **CHURCHES TOGETHER IN ENGLAND** will take place at the Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick, Derbyshire, from Wednesday 16 July to Sunday 20 July.

The **FORUM** will bring together the responses to the **CALLED TO BE ONE** process, and will reflect on the way forward together.



THE NORTHFLEET CHURCHES NEIGHBOURHOOD CENTRE WORKING TOGETHER FOR THE COMMUNITY

This article describes how four churches of different denominations have taken up the challenge to work together to provide practical support to their local community. What is reported is by no means unique, but hopefully, of interest.

1. BACKGROUND

It was in 1983 that the Wood Street Methodist Church in Northfleet, Kent, decided with their minister to take practical action to serve the local community and to make the area a better place to live in. So in Spring 1984 the Wood Street Methodist Neighbourhood Resource Centre opened its doors for the first time.

At about the same time the four churches - Anglican, United Reform, Methodist and Roman Catholic - serving what is popularly known as Old Northfleet, made the commitment to work together through joint worship, clergy fraternals and joint action, including operating, for a period, a local information centre. This growth in unity came to fulfilment in 1991 with the signing of a local covenant registered with Churches Together in Kent .

Once the covenant was established, built on a commitment not to do anything apart which could be done together, it became a natural progression for the Neighbourhood Centre to become an ecumenically run project. In early 1993, thanks to the generous and open spirit of the Wood Street Church Council, the Centre, renamed the North fleet Churches' Neighbourhood Centre, became the shared responsibility of the four covenanting churches. A united service of dedication led by the Bishop of Rochester, the Very Rev. Michael Turnbull, cemented the new arrangement .

2. THE AIMS OF THE CENTRE

The aim of the Centre as set out in the Constitution is 'to give practical expression to the love and concern of God for the People of Old Northfleet by being aware of the spiritual, social and material gifts of local people and by working in partnership with them and others to enable such gifts to be shared for the benefit of the neighbourhood'. Key tasks arising from this aim are to: —

- * identify the needs of the community and to secure human and financial resources to enable these to be met;
- *encourage and co-ordinate opportunities for voluntary Service by church members and others within the community;
- *provide a place where people feel welcomed and valued;
- * co-operate with other agencies and individuals whose aims broadly coincide with those of the Centre; and
- *enable and encourage the development of local people's skills, gifts and talents.

The Area served by the Centre has changed radically over the past forty years from a close knit, self-contained community with its own shops, employment opportunities, amenities, leisure facilities and support mechanisms to what is now little more than a housing complex isolated between Gravesend and Dartford. Local Authority rented accommodation features strongly with significant pockets of severe deprivation. With the decline of traditional local industries, on which the former prosperity of Northfleet was built, unemployment has risen steeply, particularly among young people. Generally Old Northfleet shows many of the signs of inner city type deprivation; low incomes with a high proportion of single families, vandalism, a lack of job opportunities, low educational standards, and a fear of crime and loneliness, particularly among the elderly.

3. CENTRE ACTIVITIES

The Centre is normally open for three days each week with a mixture of the formal and informal. A flavour of the core activities is given in the following paragraphs.

Drop-in Facility. Anyone from the community can call into the Centre for a chat or to seek advice. Users find a friendly face - people they know - to talk with about their troubles, the weather, last night's TV, the state of the country etc. Guidance on financial matters cannot currently be given or actual counselling, but the Community Worker will give more general advice or direct the enquirer to where they can obtain the correct answers. One day each week lunch facilities are provided at low cost on an open house basis. Again the Community Worker with members of the Management Committee is on hand to listen, give advice and encourage both users and volunteers.

Home Visits. An important part of the Community Worker's role is to visit the sick and the housebound who come to her attention. On lunch days she is able to take a meal to those not receiving meals on wheels or who would like a change of diet. Many other individual services are provided by the Worker and it has been no surprise that she has been chosen in 1996 as the Gravesend Soroptomists' Woman in the Community.

After School Club. In the absence of other facilities a youth club is provided for 9 to 14 year olds. It offers a range of activities agreed upon with the users. A recent major development has been the setting up of a Garden Project to renovate waste ground around the Centre for the benefit of the local people. The value of the Project has been confirmed by success in two environmental competitions, one run by Tesco's and the other by British Telecom, each with prizes of £500. It was with great pride that two members attended the House of Commons to collect their Tesco award. Support for youth work received a boost last year when a grant was

received from the Bishop's Fund to Mission (Rochester Diocese) which met the cost of employing a part time youth worker for a year. This appointment has proved so successful that the Management Committee has decided to continue to fund the post from its own resources.

Adult Education. Partnership arrangements with the Kent Education Service have resulted in limited provision appropriate to local needs in an area which has no other education facilities. Following consultation, the Centre applied to *North Kent Success* for a community grant to set up a reminiscence group in which older residents can share their stories and memories and create a picture of the Northfleet of yesteryear. Two Adult Education tutors are working with them with the aim of publishing their findings. Basic Education classes are also being offered, attended mainly by mothers with young children, providing an opportunity to develop a variety of interests and skills.

Summer Play Scheme. Responding to demand and the dearth of leisure opportunities a Summer Play Scheme has been operated for a number of years in conjunction with the local Borough Council. This runs in August and has the benefit of equipment and entertainers provided by the Council. To operate successfully the scheme depends heavily on volunteers and it has been possible to offer senior students in local schools and colleges an unique opportunity to gain valuable work experience with younger children. For volunteers and participants alike the Scheme can be the highlight of their Summer break.

Community Lunch Club. A monthly Lunch Club provides a meeting place and network for members of statutory and voluntary organisations active in Northfleet together with other carers and Centre staff and users. The Community worker organises an interesting and varied programme of speakers. Attendance fluctuates between twenty and thirty, with the record held by the local Police Inspector who spoke earlier this year on police reorganisation.

Effective links, of which the Lunch Club is but one example, are vital. The Community Worker is fully involved with local organisations in order that she can be the "eyes and ears" of the Management Committee in ensuring that new needs of the community are identified and that no chance is lost to maximise external resourcing and support.

4. ORGANISATION. Overall responsibility for the Centre's operation is in the hands of a Management Committee. Membership comprises the Minister and two lay members from each Church, two representatives of Centre users and two of the volunteers. In addition, appropriate local organisations (e.g. the Volunteer Bureau, Age Concern) are invited to attend meetings as consultants in an advisory

capacity. The Ministers chair the Committee on an annual rota basis. Other officers, including the Treasurer and Secretary, come from lay representatives.

The day to day running of the Centre is dependent on a team of highly committed paid and voluntary staff led by a Community Worker, a lady with a wealth of knowledge and experience in community affairs. Useful and interesting work has been given to a succession of helpers on Community Service and it has been particularly pleasing that some of these have continued to support the Centre once their Court requirement was completed.

Funding the Centre. Current turnover is approximately £7,000. The main sources of funds come from the activities, the majority of which are self funding, and grants. The importance of grant income for the effective operation cannot be underestimated. The Methodist Church provided the initial resourcing. The development of the Project on an ecumenical basis has enabled sources in the other churches to be tapped. Mention has been made earlier of the grant from the Bishop of Rochester's Fund for Mission and support has also been received from the Council for Social Responsibility. In 1995 the United Reform Church Advisory Group on Grants and Loans agreed to make an annual grant of £2, 500 for a three year period 1996—1998. The Roman Catholic Church does not seem to have similar grant making bodies but the Management Committee lives in hope of support. Other major sources of funding are an annual grant from Kent Social Services, which fully recognises the importance of the work being undertaken in this deprived community, and, thanks to the assiduous activity and persuasive powers of the Community Worker, grants from various local and national businesses and other organisations.

Looking Forward. Both when operated by the Wood Street Methodist Church and now consolidated as an ecumenical project with the four churches much has been achieved by the Northfleet Neighbourhood Centre in responding to local needs. With a number of important changes in prospect it is now time for the Management Committee to look forward to the next stage of development. Northfleet as part of the Thames Gateway initiative will not only have the Bluewater Shopping Complex just down the road but will also see built on its doorstep the Ebbsfleet International Rail station with large scale industrial, commercial and residential





development. The pressures and strains on a poorly organised and represented community will be tremendous and the Centre must plan to be able to take a major response and support role. Alongside these developments there is expectation that current accommodation can be expanded. This will afford the opportunity to expand services, but will have a major impact on funding and other resourcing.

In response the Management Committee is currently drawing up a three year Development Plan. This follows the first of what will be annual public meetings at which users, volunteers, residents, statutory and voluntary organisations and the Churches were asked to make their contribution to the planning process. The Plan is expected to be ready for endorsement by the Annual Meeting in November 1996. Features will include proposals for new activities, identification of further sources of funding, strengthening of existing partnerships and the establishment of new ones, and action to increase the use made of the Centre by way of improved publicity spearheaded by a regular newsletter. These are exciting times for everyone involved with the Centre.

5. CONCLUSION. The stability and future growth of the Northfleet Neighbourhood Centre presents a significant challenge to the four churches and their congregations. At this time when key decisions are to be made which will need much wisdom and understanding, there is no better way to end this article than in a request for help and guidance in the words of the prayer which marked the signing of the local covenant:

Lord Jesus Christ, you prayed that your people might be one.
We are your people in Northfleet.
We pray for our community and we pray that you will bless the
covenant we share with you and with each another.
Strengthen our resolve to worship and work together at every
opportunity.
May our churches be united in their love for you and for each
other . . . and may the gentle persistence of your Holy Spirit
remove the barriers that still divide us. Amen.

John Tuggey.

Pictures: Summer Play & Home - Some winners of 'Make a Monster'
Youth Club members working on the Garden Project

A PARISH UNITY CONTACT'S EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE

A. Have I today

*prayed for Christian unity?

*prayed for my non-Catholic brothers and sisters?

*prayed for my fellow Catholics, especially those not dedicated to the cause of unity yet?

*carried out my unity resolution for this week: this week it is to speak to at least one person a day about unity, with whom I have not discussed it before, and to listen carefully to that person's views?

B. Have I this week

*kept my parish priest informed about what is happening in the Commission?

*informed individual fellow parishioners about what is going on in unity?

*worked on how to keep my fellow parishioners informed, in co-operation with my parish priest, about the Pope's message concerning unity in his Millennium letter in *Ut Unum Sint*?

*again in co-operation with my parish priest, made *Called to be One* better known in the parish?

*talked to other local Christians about the Millennium message, *Ut Unum Sint*, *Called to be One*?

*encouraged discussion inside and outside my parish of what we mean by visible unity?

C. Have I in the last three months

*networked copies of *Together in Christ* to all in this place who are interested in unity?

*taken part in local unity events?

*shown a copy of the last Commission minutes and other papers to my parish priest?

*informed the Commission of unity events and concerns in my parish and locality?

*taken part in ecumenical prayer groups?

*done some positive work for unity in the locality, perhaps in a Fish scheme or some other joint project, or by initiating such joint efforts?

*made the unity effort better known in my parish, especially among those who do not attend unity events?

*deepened my own dedication to, and understanding of Jesus' call to unity?

Alfred Kenyon.

RECEIVING THE VISION - THE ANGLICAN/ROMAN CATHOLIC REALITY TODAY.

By David Bird and others (Liturgical Press, 1995)

The distinguished American Lutheran theologian, George Lindbeck hails this book as 'representing a new and much needed genre of ecumenical literature'. It explores the development of Anglican/Roman Catholic relationships in the United States over the last twenty years. It is not primarily concerned with high level dialogues; it is about inter-church marriages, about local covenants and developing grass roots relationships. As such, it should have an intrinsic interest for all of us who are interested in local ecumenism in England.

The last person named of the six co-authors is a person rightly esteemed in English ecumenism, viz : Rev Emmanuel Sullivan SA, the episcopal vicar for ecumenism in the diocese of Arundel and Brighton. Knowing him as I do, it is easy to guess for which chapters he was especially responsible. However, I understand that all six worked carefully over the contributions of each individual writer. There was extensive rewriting, with the aim that each of the others should be able to 'own' fully the contributions of the others. The product is, certainly, an harmonious whole.

There is a good survey of *episcopate* and episcopacy within the two traditions concerned. This makes a good backdrop for the consideration of the particular topics studied. There is also an excellent study of the concept and practice of authority within Anglicanism.

Few will be surprised by the attention given to the problems caused by the ordination of women to the priesthood in the Episcopal Church. Fewer, perhaps, will be aware of the ripples that the disciplining of the Catholic theologian, Curran, had in the Episcopal Church. Many American Anglicans wondered whether they could sustain a dialogue with another church that seemed repressive! One of the aims of the book is to show how developments in churches that are ecumenical partners can cause grave concern to each other. It is a point for reflection. We should be aware of our partners' sensitivities even when we feel that we cannot in conscience, act otherwise.

An excellent chapter 'Receiving the Vision - the Spirit at Work' concludes the book. It contains much to ponder. Thus, for example, 'The Holy Spirit has led Christians to discover a rich variety of gifts in the centuries of separation. . . But (they) were meant to be shared in the whole Church'. Or, 'Theologians and Church leaders ought to listen to what the Holy Spirit is saying in the daily experience of Christians growing together'.

This last is a vital point; if the Church is a circulation of love, then reception should flow 'up' and 'down' as it were, from leaders to people and people to leaders. This is a book to buy and study, especially the concluding chapter.

David Carter

RECENT DEVELOPMENT IN ECUMENICAL THINKING

Towards the end of 1995, an important report and an important book appeared, both of which may have very considerable ecumenical implications .

The Report was *The Word of Life*, the sixth quinquennial report of the International Catholic-Methodist Commission. It is a study of how the two churches together understand revelation and faith.

The technique of the Commission has been to study difficult questions together in the hope of finding common new ground that might help to transcend old divisions and prepare the ground for later unity. This method was followed in the two previous reports on the nature of the Church and on the Apostolic Tradition. The present report reveals a very rich interpretation of Catholic and Methodist insights.

It begins with a study of revelation, the way God communicates his nature and will to us. In the past, both churches tended to see it as 'propositional' in form as though God unveiled laws like a Maths teacher teaching a new type of sum. Modern studies, in both churches, stress it as involving real communication and response. 'This revelation comes not simply through words but also by what believers have become through their calling by Jesus and their empowering by the Holy Spirit.' This opens the way for seeing both Tradition, as emphasised by Catholics, and Experience, as emphasised by Methodists, as important in the process of human appropriation of God's truth.

Section 2 deals with faith. It emphasises that there is a close link between the act of faith and the content of faith. They both affect Christian behaviour. 'The faith by which we believe and the faith that is believed come together in the life of faithful obedience' . This is perhaps a neat modern adaptation of what Trent affirmed when it talked of 'faith working by love' and what Wesley meant by 'faith that sweetly works by love'. This leads to an appreciation of the dynamic consequences of lively faith being lived out in the tradition and experience of the Church. 'The Church itself, as a seed which grows with the support of the Holy Spirit and in response to God, has an inherent dynamic . . . Development is an ecclesial process based on the experience and holiness of the faithful'. Questions of discernment are raised and great emphasis is placed on the sense of the faithful in 'proving and approving' what is acceptable to the will of God'. It is argued that the authority of the teaching ministry and that of the people of God should be seen as being in harmony, not conflict.

Section 3 deals with mission and echoes the traditional Methodist teaching that the Church by its very nature is missionary since 'mission springs from the Triune God's loving design for all humanity'. Section 4 deals with sacramental life, relating the sacraments to God's self-communication through Christ and his use of 'signs'. It links sacramental life and the life of Christian service. 'As the faithful meet the image of Christ in their neighbour, they acquire and develop a

sense of the pervading sacramentality of the life of faith. The sacraments and other 'means of grace' are not to be played off against each other'.

The last main section deals with koinonia. It recognises that there is still some way to go before Methodists and Catholics can acknowledge full koinonia in doctrine and ministry. It accepts that the two churches have differing views as to how far there should be doctrinal agreement. Both accept that there are certain 'non-negotiable' fundamentals, but some that Wesley called 'opinions' about which he thought Christians might differ, Catholics would regard as divinely revealed truths which must be believed, even though they might be relatively 'secondary' within the hierarchy of truths. It is clear more work needs to be done on this. Perhaps a key question in determining whether something is a matter of opinion or a 'necessary belief' is to ask how far it is indispensable in the search for real holiness. But perhaps that is too methodist a way of putting it!

The Report will be presented soon at the World Methodist Council in Rio, and will obviously also be examined in the Vatican. One feels it represents a further stage in the 'mutual enrichment' for which the Pope called in *Ut Unum Sint*.

The book is *L'Eglise Locale*, by Jean-Marie Tillard, I am not suggesting that every reader of *Together in Christ* will feel up to reading a 550 page book in French, though, with only 'O' Level French from nearly 40 years ago, I found it a lot easier than I thought I might.

Fr Tillard, a French Canadian Dominican, is the world's leading ecumenical theologian and ecclesologist, In December he gave the Richard Stewart Memorial lecture, arranged by the Diocese of Arundel and Brighton, and spoke mainly of the future of ARCIC. Having heard Fr Tillard in the flesh was a great help when reading his book. One could imagine the gestures and the liveliness of an attractive and vital personality. The argument in the book sweeps one along.

Fr Tillard has long been concerned to argue that the Church Universal is not monolith, but to use the title of an earlier book of his (now in English) a 'church of churches', or communion of churches. The purpose of the present book is to emphasise the importance of the 'Local church', a theme long dear to the heart of the Orthodox, and of Baptists and Congregationalists, though, of course the former, like Catholics define the 'local church' as 'diocese' and the latter as 'congregation'.

Fr Tillard states the paradox thus, 'The local church has the fulness of the Church, but is not the whole of the Church'. What he means by this is that each diocese, grouped around its bishop, has everything it needs to be 'fully church' in its situation. He emphasises that it is the meeting point of what he calls two 'plentitudes' or 'fulnesses'. The first being the possession of the full Gospel, and the second being the presence of the fulness of local human life and culture at the time which needs to be taken up and sanctified and redeemed In the Church, in order that, in every time and place, the 'whole design' of God might be fulfilled.

Each Local Church in its time and place thus fulfils a vital role in God's plan. However, local churches are called to communion with each other. They cannot exist in isolation. They have to be open to each other. They have to share each other's concerns. The ministry of the Pope is one of keeping them in communion with each other. It is not primarily a negative one of repressing error, but a positive one of seeing that the integrity of each local church and its unique contribution to the whole is maintained and cherished.

Fr Tillard has much to say about what he calls the 'synodality' of the Church. The bishop leads and keeps it in communion with the other churches, but his people also have the duty of 'speaking back' to him the needs of the local community and its concerns, those of non-Christian as well as Christians. Other clergy, and laity, have vital roles in the sharing of life, mission and decisions. The Church must live, he says in synodality . Such thinking tunes in with the Methodist understanding of 'Connexionalism' and the 'ministry of the whole people of God'. There is no doubt that this book is a valuable contribution towards ecclesiology in general and the specific stated desire of the Pope (in *Ut Unum Sint*) to take very seriously the concerns of other churches. I urge any one who thinks they could possibly tackle this book to do so. I devoutly hope that it will soon appear in English translation, since in the coming ecclesiological debate no ecumenist would want to be without the stimulus of Fr Tillard's book. We are all talking about the Church as Communion. We need to share the insights of our varying traditions in the hope that we may come to a fuller and richer appreciation of koinonia. Fr Tillard presents us with the Catholic vision, brilliantly and eirenically stated.

David Carter



CELEBRATING LITURGY, ECUMENICALLY.

"A bold and exciting initiative" was the description given by Mgr Tony Rogers of the Bishops' Conference Liturgy Office, in relation to the new ecumenical institute opening in September at Sarum College, Salisbury.

Courses in liturgy for all Christian traditions will be available, and parishes may wish to take advantage of visits offered by staff members to assist those concerned with parish liturgy, by giving advice or information needed.

"A stimulating programme at an exciting venue" hosted by the Joint Liturgical Group, has been arranged for 24-26 September at the college. The theme is "The Future of Christian Worship in Britain" - surely one of great importance. "Worship and Ecumenism" is one of the eight sessions. I hope to bring you an account of the conference in our next issue.

U,M,R.

THE WEEK OF PRAYER FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY, 1997

The theme originates from the Nordic Christian Council and bears witness to the "Gospel of Reconciliation" its title is AMBASSADORS OF CHRIST, and is based on the passage from St Paul's second letter to the Corinthians, chapter 5.

All are invited to gather together, in union with Christians throughout the world to celebrate a joint service, and pray the daily prayers and meditations during the Octave - 18 - 25 January.

VISIT TO THE VATICAN

Archbishop George Carey, with his wife, Eileen, is to visit the Pope in December 1996. They are expected to stay at the English College in Rome (3-5 December). The Archbishop's last meeting with the Pope was in May 1992.

Please pray for a fruitful visit and the continued fostering of ecumenical relations.

BISHOPS' CONFERENCE COMMITTEE FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY

Bishop Cormac Murphy-O'Connor has chaired this Committee since 1984, but is now relinquishing this position. He continues to be Chairman of the Bishops' Conference Department for Mission and Unity. Bishop Philip Pargeter is his successor on C.C.U. and is warmly welcomed.

We are indebted to Bishop Cormac for his spiritual leadership, and for the guidance he has given to the C.C.U. and diocesan representatives. From his vast store of knowledge and ecumenical experience he has shared much valuable

information, and our discussions have always been enlivened by his keen sense of humour: we are pleased to express our deep gratitude to him.

The present membership of C.C.U. is:

Bishop Philip Pargeter (Chair)
Rev Bernard Longley (Secretary)
Dr Margaret Harvey
Rev Sean Healy

Mrs Una Ratcliff
Canon Michael Richards
Mgr William Steele
Rev Emmanuel Sullivan, S.A.

