

TOGETHER IN CHRIST



Vol. 15, No 47. June 1997
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60p

Together in Christ is published by the Christian Unity Commission for the Archdiocese of Southwark

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Price 60p per copy, Annual subscription £1.80
For postal subscriptions £2.70

Material for publication and all correspondence to be sent to the Editor: Mrs Una Ratcliff.

(Copy dates: 15 December, 15 April and 15 August for the February, June and October issues respectively)

The opinions of contributors are not necessarily those of the Editor nor of the Commission.

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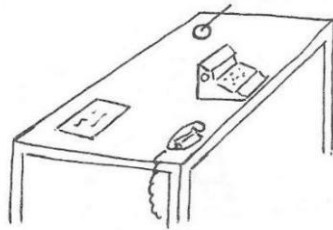
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EDITORIAL. Welcome to our June issue, and thanks to all contributors. Fr. Standley gives us very helpful guidelines on the 'Art of Communication' - a priority for study and practice in all churches. Sr Benedict, OSB, presents a splendid account of the East West Monastic meeting; Piers Player is "very excited" as he sets out as a community worker: we wish him every success. The ESBVM report is stimulating: if you missed the event, watch out for the next one! Tributes to two ecumenists - Canon Richards and Sidney Ratcliff — who died recently are moving and inspiring: the address of Sidney's Requiem is published in response to several requests.

THANK YOU to so many people who have sent messages of sympathy and assurance of prayers following the death of my husband, Sidney Ratcliff, whose hard work on *Together in Christ* has been invaluable. Your love and support is deeply appreciated.
Una M Ratcliff



CHURCHES TOGETHER IN ENGLAND: FORUM 1997 (16-20 July)

More than 300 people are registered for the Forum, with a wide variety of representation. The organisers have planned a varied and stimulating programme. The journalist and broadcaster, Mark Lawson, will give the keynote address, The World on our Doorstep. All four Presidents will attend. Times of worship, as always, are well planned, and there will be opportunities for all present to "explore how the Churches can move together in the light of their responses to *Called to be One* and to identify practical steps that could be taken" .

Your prayers are asked for this important Forum to be fruitful and to bring us closer in unity and love.

LENT ' 98 .• "Hope in a time of change" .

It seems very early but it gives churches the chance to plan well ahead. The aim of the course is to "reflect on hope as a Christian resource as we approach the Millennium" .

EAST-WEST MONASTIC MEETING

An East-West Monastic meeting was held at Minster Abbey in Kent from 27th September to 3rd October 1996. This was a response to the Apostolic Letter *Orientalis Lumen* (May 1995) . In his letter the Holy Father said: "I hope that monasteries will make a particular effort (at meeting one another regularly) because of the unique role played by monastic life within the Churches and because of the unifying aspects of the monastic life experience, and therefore spiritual awareness, in the East and the West."

The meeting was open to monks and nuns from the Orthodox, Roman Catholic and Anglican Traditions, the aim being to explore together some aspects of our rich monastic heritage and to share from our own personal experience. The emphasis therefore, was on lived monastic practice rather than on ecumenical dialogue.

The bulk of the talks was on St Basil (died 379), focussing on his Rules, as they provide a basis for the monastic life, most especially in the East, but also in the West. St Benedict, in the final chapter of his Rule recommends the writings of 'Our holy father St Basil ' .

The response was most encouraging and our little guest house soon became overbooked, so we were grateful when the monks from St Augustine's Abbey agreed to accommodate the 'overflow' . However, some last minute cancellations came, providentially allowing us to invite some of the local Bruderhof Community whom we were then pleased to welcome for a few days. This was our first meeting with this group and we look forward to our next one.

Our dean, Canon Clements, joined us for the first evening, bringing with him Fr Archelaos, a Coptic monk who had come to celebrate Mass for the local Coptic community in the Canon's Church at Birchington. It was a real joy to receive Fr Archelaos and to have a special Coptic blessing with which to begin our days together.

In all we numbered 18 full time participants with several coming on a part time basis.

When planning the meeting we were keen that the Minster community and the guests should be able to join together, in prayer, as much as possible, so the days were structured around the liturgical life of the nuns.

On the first morning our Prioress, Mother Concordia, took the group around the Abbey, telling our story from our early Saxon foundations to the present day. A

tale of a two-fold foundation and destruction and of our return here, as Benedictine nuns from St Walburga's Abbey in Germany, some 60 years ago. St Mildred's Priory, a place of prayer, work and study. A living community of sisters for whom hospitality is a special grace.

The first talk was titled 'Early English Monasticism' and given by our Sr Nikola. Fr Anthony Meredith S.J. then gave an introduction to St Basil the Great. Dom Augustine O.S.B. from Pluscarden Abbey gave several interesting and well researched conferences on the Rules of St Basil, and Fr Athenase, a Hungarian Greek Catholic monk from Chevetogne spoke about St Basil's ascetical teaching. We spent one day with our Anglican Benedictine sisters at Malling Abbey, where we were made to feel very much at home. Abbess Mary John gave a talk comparing profession rites East and West, whilst Sr Mary Paul gave a fine account of the community's rich contacts with various Orthodox churches over the years, and of Mother Maria, an Orthodox nun who lived with them for some years, having made her profession in Malling according to the Orthodox rite. The schola chanted a most beautiful piece from the rite, in Slavonic, which somehow seemed to bring East to West as we listened in awe.

The next day, Sr Marina from the Orthodox community at Tolleshunt Knights in Essex, explained the practice of Spiritual Guidance in her tradition. After each talk we had time for questions and discussion and this latter one seemed to provoke the most interest, particularly on the level of 'compare and contrast'.

Towards the end of the meeting, after the Eucharist, Fr Athanase prayerfully took the relic of St Mildred from its casket on the sanctuary for us to venerate whilst the community sang a thirteenth century sequence in her honour. The Eucharist itself had been an experience of the divisions that exist. When we all came into the sanctuary to venerate the relic a profound sense of unity seemed to descend as we remembered the life of this holy woman who is with us now as our intercessor. The veneration of relics is surely one of those 'unifying aspects' of monastic life of which Pope John Paul II wrote.

It seemed right that our St Mildred (d. 727) be honoured in a special way, not only as the patron of Minster Abbey (and indeed, the whole of Thanet), but as a Christian who pre-dates the painful Schism and the Reformation of the 11th and 16th centuries.

The atmosphere throughout was prayerful and cordial. Conscious as we all were of the deep and fundamental unity that does exist between monks and nuns, East and West, it would be hard to imagine that anyone present escaped the deep pain of division and this more from the heart than from the head. It was almost as if with the deepening of understanding came a deeper pain.

During the Eucharist on the morning of our visit to Malling Abbey, Fr David, who had joined us from Sheppey, blessed a loaf of bread which our Sister Johanna had made as a gift. to the community there. A symbol of both unity and division. The Minster and Malling Benedictines live the same Rule and inhabit pre-Reformation buildings. Our Monastic heritage not only acts as a bridge between East and West, but also between the Roman and post-Reformation churches. Our day at Malling was described by one participant as the high point of the week.

In his homily during our final Eucharist, Fr Denis O.C.S.O. expressed the sentiments of the group so well that we would like to conclude this summary with the full text :

"In today's Gospel we hear that the Lord appointed 72 disciples and sent them ahead of Him. His instructions were that whatever house they went into, their first words were to be "Peace to this house." Those of us who are becoming wayfarers, like the disciples, would wish to use the Lord's words as they leave Minster. "Peace to this house" and peace to this community, and I, for one, would like to thank the community for the peace I have received from them especially in their singing of the Divine Office. Besides peace we have received much instruction most of all from our speakers, but I think we have, all of us, learnt much from each other. It has been an informative time, in all sorts of ways. In his Apostolic Letter *Orientalis Lumen* the Pope writes:

"The first need of Catholics is to be familiar with the ancient traditions of the Eastern Churches so as to be nourished by it and to encourage the process of unity."

This meeting has done much to allow us to explore together our monastic heritage. It is for us to go back to our own monasteries with the seeds we have been given and to plant and nourish them so that we and our Church may become more and more open to unity. The Psalmist tells us that "as far as the East is from the West so far does He remove our sins."

Let this be our prayer and let us ask the Lord to pardon our sins."

Sr Benedict Gaughan OSB: Minster

CANON MICHAEL RICHARDS

Canon Michael Richards, who died in February at the age of 72, was a noted Catholic scholar and ecumenist. He became Catholic while a student at Oxford. His evangelical Anglican background gave him an understanding of Protestantism that stood him in extremely good stead for his later ecumenical work.

Michael trained for the ministry at the *Institut Catholique* in Paris at a time when great French theologians, such as Henri de Lubac and Yves Congar were enriching not just the Catholic Church but the whole of Christendom with their profound spirituality and scholarship. Michael retained a lifelong interest in communicating the riches of French theology to the church in England.



Fr. Michael Jackson

He was a highly respected teacher of Church History for many years at Heythrop, and editor of the *Clergy Review* (now *Priests and People*). He produced a stream of books and articles explaining changes in the Catholic Church and in ecumenism. I treasure a copy of *The Church 2001* which he gave me. It contains a set of penetrating essays on the present and future.

Michael sat on the preliminary commission for Anglican-Catholic dialogue that preceded ARCIC though he was not a member of the latter. He was, however, a long-term member of both the International and English Catholic-Methodist dialogues, to both of which he made significant contributions. His last book *A People of Priests* reflected all his concerns. First was his concern that the insights of Vatican II should be

well received and the function of the ministerial priesthood within the context of the royal priesthood of all the faithful properly appreciated and acted upon. Second, was his drawing on the riches of contemporary French theology to illustrate this. Thirdly, he exemplified both his influence on the International Catholic-Methodist dialogue and its contribution to his own thinking. His emphasis on the 'pastoral' nature of the ministerial office and its key role in 'service of the word' paralleled the classical Wesleyan understanding of the 'Pastoral Office'. When Methodists read this, and other works of Michael's, they realise how much we have already converged in thinking.

It was my privilege to sit with him on the English Commission and to share the leadership of two local study days with him. Michael's friendship and scholarship were always at our service. I know he was looking forward to the next, the seventh, round of the International Catholic-Methodist dialogue.

Michael shared with me two of his key convictions. One was that the Catholic-Methodist International Commission had made outstanding progress, even by the standards of other fruitful dialogues. He felt there was still work to be done on the question of orders, but felt that if this could be settled, we would be very close to the restoration of unity. The second was that, granted the breadth of spiritual approaches in the Catholic Church, especially since Vatican II, there was no reason why Anglicans and Free Church people should not be able to preserve all that is positive in their traditions in communion with the Catholic Church, which would, in turn, be enriched by them. Those of us who treasure Michael 's memory will want to work towards this, which is, after all, only part of the "mutual enrichment" for which the Pope, and others, have called. We thank God for Michael 's contribution, collegueship and inspiration.

David Carter

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RACIAL JUSTICE SUNDAY - 14 SEPTEMBER 1997

The need to pray and work for racial justice has never been more urgent. Whatever the social indicators - poverty statistics, housing, prison population, school exclusions it is evident that many minority ethnic groups suffer serious inequities within our present systems. The scandals of immigration procedures, detentions and deportations bring shame on British society.

CARJ (the Catholic Association for Racial Justice) asks for your help to spread the word about Racial Justice Sunday through the organisations you belong to or work with, in your own parishes, schools and among your friends. This is the one day a year when all the churches of Britain are asked to reflect on racial justice issues, pray for their resolution, and contribute to an appeal for the churches' work in this area.

THE ART OF COMMUNICATION

Text of a talk given at a meeting of the Kent Area Commission for Christian Unity in November 1996 by Father David Standley.

Let me open by giving a brief ecumenical weather report from the Isle of Sheppey. In general it has been warm, windy, with a few icy patches .

Warm: We have a very friendly clergy fraternal (with women now - what is the correct alternative to 'fraternal?'); we have our local CHURCHES TOGETHER IN SHEPPEY with eleven member groups; we have several joint services in the year (Advent Sunday, Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, Palm Sunday evening, Good Friday witness carrying three crosses to the top of a local hill, Pentecost evening, Swale Festival Songs of Praise (July) , Blessing of the Sea, Open-air service on August Bank Holiday Sunday).

Windy: Two of the four Anglican parishes struggle to take part, unsupported by their clergy. The Sheppey Evangelical Church keeps its distance, perhaps because its charter comes from the Countess of Huntingdon's Connection, which may not allow fraternising with certain other churches.

Icy Patches: We have a colony of Lefevbrist Catholics who choose to have no contact with the official parish, and would want even less to do with 'heretics' The Sheppey Community Church so far keeps to itself.

It has to be said that the ecumenical activists are relatively few in all the churches, and ageing, weather-beaten, perhaps. But there is a richness of Christian experience, and the Holy Spirit is forever young.

But what is it we want to share, and how do we communicate?

We try to remind ourselves of some of the basic principles behind ecumenical dialogue and practice:

1. Unity is the will of Christ himself: "Father, I pray that they may be one in us, as you are in me, and as I am in you." And Pope John Paul II has said: "Restoration of unity among Christians is one of the main concerns of the Church in the last part of the 20th century, This is a task for all of us. No one Can claim exemption from this responsibility.
2. Concern for unity makes us more Catholic, not less. We need sometimes to remind ourselves that to be Catholic is to include all truth, all truth has a home in the Catholic Church. And because of our divisions, there is real lived truth growing in other places. With John Wesley we can say: "Your truth illuminates my truth".
3. Striving to be a better Catholic, a better Methodist, a better Anglican is itself a contribution to unity. And having an active concern for unity makes me a better Catholic, better Baptist, etc.

4. The so-called Lund Principle (World Council of Churches, 1952) :

"We would therefore earnestly request our Churches to consider whether they are doing all that they ought to do to manifest the oneness of the people of God. Should not our Churches ask themselves whether they are showing sufficient eagerness to enter into conversation with other churches - and whether they should not act together in all matters except those in which deep differences of conviction compel them to act separately."

5. The Pervasive Principle:

This means that ecumenism is not just a priority which we should aim to be higher up the agenda of the Church, even of every parish. Rather, it should be a dimension of every aspect of the life of the parish. Whatever we plan, we should constantly be asking the question - can this be done with other churches? It might be a Baptism or Confirmation programme, a prayer group, marriage preparation, a youth initiative, a justice and peace group, discussion on parenting. Just as we need someone to ask us all the time: "Is this activity accessible to people with a disability?" - so we need someone appointed to remind us to ask ourselves: "Could we do this ecumenically?"

6. Swanwick Declaration (1987)

"It is our conviction that as a matter of policy at all levels and in all places, our Churches must now move from cooperation to commitment, in search of the unity for which Christ prayed, and in common evangelism and service to the world."

The spectrum of the ecumenical journey that emerges now is:

COMPETITION - COEXISTENCE - COOPERATION -- COMMITMENT -
COMMUNION

If Swanwick can be trusted, the Churches seem to have stated that they are actively moving from stage three to four, from Cooperation to Commitment. From where we are we must continually remind our leaders of this statement, and call them to account. And in our local 'Churches Together' we need to ask ourselves where we think we are on this spectrum, and where we are going.

On the Isle of Sheppey, I would say that we are stuck on stage three.

How good are we at communication in practice?

A. Within our own parishes

Take every opportunity to remind the parish that we belong to the local Churches Together. Advertise events, encourage people to take part. One regular reminder is for the Churches Together to agree that all members will pray for the

same one church on a given Sunday on a rota basis; so we announce each week (just before the 'Our Father' in Sheerness) : "This week all the local churches are praying for the Methodist Church in (There is a noticeable shine when we hear that all the others are praying for us!). The sheer regularity works its effect.

Be sensitive to the continuing but often unspoken unease people still have about where all this ecumenism is leading. Some people's sense of security and identity is threatened. Older people were formed in such a different theology of Church and truth: on the other hand, some are disillusioned by the slowness of it all. We must keep the lines of communication open to all.

— We need to appoint someone within the parish to keep asking the awkward question: Could we be doing this activity in partnership with another local church?

— Create a special section of the notice board for joint events or information from the local Churches Together. If there is an agreed Churches Together LOGO, then this should be displayed, including on the outside, public board.

— Send greetings cards to the other churches at Easter and Christmas. These are better coming from the whole parish than from the parish priest alone.

B. Among the local Churches Together:

— An 'Ecumenical Directory' giving names and addresses and phone numbers of people holding offices (including clergy wives/ husbands where applicable!) in all the local church communities, not forgetting hospital and prison chaplains. Each church community to hold a copy, very handy.

— Rota of Prayer wherein each member church in turn is prayed for by the others on a given Sunday (see above) .

— Possibly an ecumenical Newsletter two of three time a year. We can get rather too many newsletters but this might be useful!

— Publicity about Association for Inter-Church Families, encouragement of such local families to join, and share their experience with church groups.

— Use of local press to publicise joint events, and to provide a notice-board display (½ page?) of all the local church services at Christmas especially, and possibly Easter. In Sheerness the local paper has a weekly column called 'Faith in Mind', to which all clergy and others contribute on a rota basis.

— 'Churches Together' banner for outdoor events, and a well designed logo, can be useful symbols for a variety of occasions. - Share the best of publications and articles that appear from different church traditions, e.g. Catholic Bishops' Statement *The Common Good*, contributions from The Tablet or Church Times etc

Communication at times can be a chore, with very little to show for it. But without it, we remain or retreat behind the old barriers. At best it can be creative and revealing.

There is yet another kind of communication, at the level of feelings. Clifford Longley has spoken of this 'emotional convergence':

"Each church is a religious 'tribe' defining itself as 'us' and the rest as 'them'. Each tribe has its own foundation myths and historic memories which give it its identity and collective personality. It has its dates, its famous names, its martyrs and its victories, grievances and prejudices, all making up an oral tradition of how 'we' held to the truths in spite of all the difficulties.

The emotional convergence demanded by church unity is nothing less than the gradual possession by one tribe of the story of another, making it its own, so as to enlarge the category of 'us' to include those who are 'them'. Church unity cannot possibly happen without some such process, and it will be fraught at times."

(The Times 22. 7.85)

Communication is an art, and hard work. In all of this, we must never lose sight of the message — the Good News of the Gospel that we are one church, one people, one humanity, loved and redeemed in Christ.



SIDNEY MAXWELL RATCLIFF

An adapted extract from the funeral address by his son, John



Sidney Ratcliff

I always warned my father that I would have the last word - so here it is!

Sometimes you do not appreciate what you have until you lose it. Maybe you do not always appreciate someone until you start thinking about their life at their funeral. One thing I know that I will always be very grateful for, is the fact that I did appreciate the depths that there were to my father whilst he was alive. That does not necessarily make the loss easier, but it does help to know that I have been able to learn and to gain so much from his life.

Mention the name Sidney Ratcliff, and you will all think of an exceptionally friendly man with a razor sharp, intelligent wit and a mischievous sense of humour: just look back over some of the articles he wrote for *Together In Christ*. I want to give you an insight into some of the depths I mentioned through a few details of his life.

My father was a Londoner. He was born during the First World War within the sound of Bow-bells. He was always known as Max from his middle name, and still is by his friends from those days. He grew up in North London together with his elder brother John - after whom I was named. John was in his twenties when he died, and that was an early painful loss for my father; a loss which he felt right throughout his life.

Max served in the Army during the Second World War - as an artillery instructor. He always blamed his standing too near the test firing of a cannon as the start of his later deafness. He also knew just about every seaside town in the country - and reminded us of that fact every time we went to one on holiday! - as he was involved in establishing coastal defences.

Despite the horrors of the war - or perhaps because of those horrors - my father had a stock of amusing anecdotes of his time in the army. Many of his wartime stories showed the incompetence which, understandably, often prevailed at the time: for instance, he enjoyed talking of his time in west Africa where the Army posted him - by mistake. A mistake which took several months to rectify before they could transport him back to Europe. But his tales mainly showed the normality and humanness of his comrades and, yes, their failings. They weren't born heroes, but ordinary folk - the sort of people he always loved.

His army service meant that for the first time in his life he had little opportunity to see his father, and that was a real wrench for him. My grandfather died when I young, and I remember little about him. But I have always known how important

his influence was to my father throughout his life, and how strong the bond between them was.

After the war, my father began working as a tax officer for the Inland Revenue and he was sent to their Leeds office. I rather think he would have thought it ironic that he died on the first working day of the new tax year! Anyway, the Civil Service did him proud as they were also employing at the Leeds office a young woman called Una. Despite the unromantic setting of a provincial tax office, the rest is history - about 50 years' worth of very happy history. It was also at Leeds that Max started to become known as Sidney.

My father's family background was non-conformist. He was of no faith or religion; some of his family were in the Salvation Army. As an adult, he did a lot of heart searching and gave a lot of thought to the religious feelings which he had and to the beliefs he learned about from all Churches. Before they were married, Una had a dispensation from the local Roman Catholic bishop for her to marry him in church, as he was not baptised. In the event, the dispensation was unnecessary as his developing convictions led him to become a Catholic before they were married in Leeds.

He was received into the Roman Catholic Church on the Feast of the Annunciation in 1950. The timing of my father's death is not lost on us - he died last month on that same Feastday.

His spiritual feelings found their home in the Catholic faith. That faith became, and remained, immensely important to him. He was a great one for the soap-box in his early days as a Catholic. He would publicly speak about his faith with the Catholic Evidence Guild, and his time with the Guild gave him what he acknowledged to be one of his most powerful spiritual influences. He later became an active member of the Prayer Group.

Despite belonging to a firmly Roman Catholic Guild, he was unusually progressive for his time, by actively working from the 1960s for unity among all Christian Churches. His dedication to - and enthusiasm for working on - *Together In Christ* was an indication of the importance which he placed on the aim of Christian unity.

He never forgot his roots, and really believed and understood that faith was a gift, not a birthright. Although his religion was so important to him, my father always treated everyone exactly the same, whether they shared his beliefs or not. He never judged; he hated hypocrisy.

My mother chose the reading from St Paul's letter to the Corinthians for the funeral service with good reason: it summed up the way my father lived his Christian religion. It bears repeating:

Love is patient and kind; love is not jealous or boastful; it is not arrogant or rude. Love does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the right. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

There is no doubt that it was St Thomas More's parish that was the major influence on him. He loved it ever since moving there forty-six years ago. He was involved in virtually every aspect of parish life, including editing the Parish Magazine every month during its forty-three years of existence. One of the real sadnesses for him since the beginning of the year was that he was unable to get out to go to the church.

He got recognition and appreciation in his lifetime from many people. It was a proud day for us all some six years ago when the parish priest, Fr Reynolds, pinned on him the medal "Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice" from the Pope in recognition of his work for the parish and for the Church.

But it was not his papal medal that he had on the mantelpiece and kept looking at proudly during his recent illness at home: it was the great pile of Get Well cards and messages that neighbours, parishioners and numerous friends in the ecumenical world sent him over the past three months. He read and re-read those messages frequently at home. They touched him tremendously, and I have thought that it was only then that he really understood how well loved he was by so many people.

We are of course immensely sad at our loss. But we have equally immensely happy memories. Foremost of those memories today is of a man who is loved and happy - despite his incapacity - having fun with all his family one Sunday evening, sharing his witty humour with us. That Sunday night he kissed goodnight to Una - the person he so dearly loved and who meant so much to him for nearly fifty years - and went off to sleep.

We know that he died peacefully and painlessly during that sleep - a man happy with his family, happy with his friends, neighbours and fellow parishioners; and happy with God.

Let us be happy now for him.

Sidney Maxwell Ratcliff: born Hampstead 22 March 1916, Royal Engineers 1939-45, Civil Servant 1947-78, Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice 1991. Married 195(), one daughter and one son. Died Bexleyheath 7 April 1997.

Requiescat in pace

CHURCHES WORKING TOGETHER IN CLAPHAM

Residents of the Notre Dane estate, Clapham, and Churches Together in Clapham, are celebrating the start of a new community development worker Piers Player, to work on the estate. For nearly two years this Churches group together with residents have planned and secured funding to provide a full time worker for the next three years. The funding is being provided by local churches, trust funds, charities and other grant giving bodies. The project is particularly indebted to the large grants made by the Church Urban Fund and the Diocese of Southwark.



Piers Player

The estate has suffered in recent years from a sense of inertia, together with a reputation for violence and drug problems. There is, however, a strong will on the estate to improve community life. Initially the Council was approached to provide a community worker, and while sympathetic, claimed to be paralysed by lack of funds. Into this vacuum of need, the Clapham Churches stepped in. The new appointment represents the culmination of two years careful planning and fund raising by residents and Church representatives. We asked Piers how he felt at the start of his new job, "I'm very excited" he said. "There is a lot of good will here. People are planning and building their futures here."

The project's planning group are also excited by what the project has already achieved. Preparing for the arrival of Piers has necessitated residents meeting and acting together more regularly. This has led to residents now having more frequent use of their community hall. A regular Wednesday club is now up and running. The summer saw the first summer play scheme for kids on the estate, and there have been several special events and parties.

Notre Dame Tenants Community

REPORT ON THE XIIth INTERNATIONAL ECUMENICAL CONGRESS OF THE ESBVM: *held at Wills Hall in the University of Bristol from Monday 23rd to Friday 27th September 1996, on the theme of Mary the obedient "Behold I am the handmaid of the Lord" (Luke 1.38)*

In some sense the international congress was a continuation of the Dromantine ESBVM Conference of Autumn 1995 in its commemoration of the Golden Jubilee of the concluding of the Malines Conversations (1921-1926) between Anglicans and Roman Catholics, but it was also a commemoration of a beginning of the Society of St John Chrysostom, whose undertaken task was to enhance mutual understanding between Eastern and Western Christendom. Indeed, begging forgiveness for plagiarising another's brilliant line, 'to make an end is so very often to make a beginning, for the end is often where we start from'. The ESBVM gathering at Bristol had an eye on the anniversaries of the past, but also on the thirtieth anniversary celebrations of our own society around the corner of the new year, from which we hope the ESBVM will go on from strength to strength.

In the region of a hundred participants were with us through the days of the congress and the usual pleasant atmosphere, which we have now rather come to depend on though never taken for granted, held sway and made the days very enjoyable. Our three congress patrons, the Rt Revd Eric Kemp, Anglican Bishop of Chichester, the Revd Dr John Newton, formerly Moderator of the Free Church Federal Council, and the Rt Revd Mervyn Alexander, RC Bishop Of Clifton, encouraged us with generous greetings, valued presence and able contribution in presentation of papers and guidance. Old and young friends renewed acquaintance and newcomers hopefully felt able to find a good welcome.

The Bristol Congress Committee was generous in its help and our indefatigable Hon. Associate General Secretary, Mr Joe Farrelly, was, as always indefatigable! Unwittingly for most of us, our Hon General Secretary, the Revd Dr Edward Yarnold, SJ, presided in that role for the last time over the International ESBVM Congress and was, as ever, gracious and perceptive in his timely interventions and especially entertaining in his after-dinner speech at the celebratory dinner. The Revd Gerald Tedcaster (Liturgy Adviser) succeeded in ensuring the participation of all traditions by turn in the role of leaders at ecumenical prayer and facilitating the celebration of the liturgies and devotions of all the congress members. The failure to list the wonderful efforts and contributions of so many other generous souls is in no way to slight them, but having thanked all one leaves their reward to the Lord.

The nature of the Congress is always to pursue our goal advancing the study, at various levels, of the place of the Virgin Mary In the Church, under Christ, and in

the light of study to promote ecumenical devotion. We were ably served in the distinguished range of speakers who honoured us with their and a rich fare of stimulating papers. Their flexibility and accommodating spirit helped the congress organisers considerably.

The Malines theme was directly addressed by three speakers. Dom. Alberic Stacpoule OSB in speaking on five *Ecumenical Heroes* offered a fascinating linking of figures of the ecumenical past whose influence was seminal in much that has happened. The Ecumenical Officer for Cardinal Danneels, Archbishop of Malines-Brussels, M. L'Abbe Pierre Parre, coming from the recent celebrations at Malines itself, riveted our attention with his insightful and entertaining *The Malines Conversations: What do they mean for us today?* The Revd Fr Bernard M Barlow OSM completed the trio with a masterly presentation entitled *Corporate Reunion - Dream or Nightmare? The Legacy of Malines*, derived from his recent doctoral dissertation on the Malines Conversations recently published .

The Orthodox Chaplain at Cambridge University, the Very Revd Archimandrite Maximos Lavriotis, in his paper *The Orthodox View of the Theotokos* brought a challenging new look at his own tradition and stimulated much exchange. Equally, the Rt Revd Archbishop Isidore Battikha, the representative of His Beatitude Maximos V Hakim, the Melkite Patriarch of Antioch, Alexandria and Jerusalem, in his presentation *Catholic/Orthodox Dialogue in the Levant*, stirred us with the news of important developments and new hopes there, and a demand for fresh approaches. It was this item alone of the congress that commanded any press

interest, being reported in the Tablet through the efforts of our own ESBVM member, the Revd David White.



A third paper from the Orthodox tradition came from Professor Natalia Voulenko of St Petersburg entitled *Hierarchical Triads: Women's Spirituality and the Theotokos*, who spoke out of a newly emerging Russian situation which has all the excitements of new beginnings and the challenge of asking what might prove taxing effort from those of us less familiar with these approaches. An interesting presentation *Mater*

Misericordiae from Mrs Catherine Oates, who lectures in Art at Bristol University, introduced some of the congress members to a new area of representation of the Blessed Virgin Mary in medieval art, while the Marian Study Centre's Dr Sarah Boss's *The Immaculate Conception in the Light of the 'Theology of the Creation Stories in Genesis* employed the resource of visual art to convey an interesting thesis. The veteran ESBVM member and contributor, the Revd Dr

Ross Mackenzie, now of the Chautauqua Institute, New York, regaled us with his *Mary, Intercessor on our behalf: One with us in the Communion of Saints, and Witness to what we may become in Christ*, which enabled us to follow his own ecumenical journey. The Revd Dr John Newton's *Mary, Mother of the Lord: Sign of Grace*, Faith and Holiness brought us a beautiful reflection on progress to date between Methodists and Roman Catholics in their understanding of the Mother of the Lord, while the Revd Richard Butt gave us some fresh insights in his *Why should He send His Mother? Some reflections on the theology of Marian Spirituality*. Our speakers demonstrated a care and seriousness in their papers and the new practice of recording the papers and making copies of the tapes available proved a well anticipated need, since many availed themselves of the opportunity to buy. Most of the speakers were good enough to provide a text of their papers at the Congress or have them sent since, though not all. There is a serious hope to have the published papers available by July 1997 together with previously unpublished papers from past congresses. We shall always need speakers of ability to make presentations in this way, but it has been suggested that perhaps the present format of a talk or paper followed by questions from the whole floor could be differed on occasion to ensure that we are not missing a true dialogue at every level.

The now established 'say/ play/ pray' maxim of our congresses was well served in the main. Interesting visits to Glastonbury and Wells, and a marvellous visit to The New Room Chapel, John Wesley's first place of worship, where Mrs Rachel Newton's dramatic presentation in dress of the period entitled *The Spirit of Susanna: Scenes from the life of Susanna Wesley, Mother of John and Charles*, took us back to another world, were all very enjoyable. A richness of liturgical celebration drew on the able gifts of Congress Participants and strengthened us in our resolve to grow in unity.

There was a happy link for us with a wider world too in the greeting that came to us and was read out, among the many greetings received at our Congress, from the XIIth International Mariological Congress that was held in the great Marian shrine of Our Lady of Czestochowa during the octave of the Assumption of Our Lady in August 1996. These congresses are organised every four years in one of the great Marian shrines of the world by the Pontifical International Marian Academy (PAMI) at Rome, and the retiring President, the Revd Fr Paul Melada, spoke of his great regret that PAMI had lost its links with the ESBVM, whose founder, Martin Gillett, he remembered with affection and gratitude. He was glad to be reassured that the ESBVM sought to revive those connections and would continue to work, as does PAMI, for the true and worthy honouring of the Mother of the Lord, in the cause of genuine ecumenism.

As always, we give thanks to the Lord for the endeavours of all who helped to make the congress a happy and profitable time together, and we pray that the benefit of our time at Bristol may reach others through the recorded tapes and, with the help of God, through the speedy publication of the collected papers of this and other recent congresses. May the Blessed Virgin Mary watch over us with her Holy Child.

William McLoughlin OSM

(Thanks to Anne Donoghue for submitting this article and for obtaining permission for publication from Revd Fr W McLoughlin and from Revd Dr E Yarnold (General Secretary) Ed.

NEWS FROM THE AREA CHRISTIAN UNITY COMMISSIONS

The important notion of PILGRIMAGE has been prominent in the prayers, minds and work of all Commission members, particularly in regard to the St Augustine and St Columba celebrations. For Kent members especially, the big event in Canterbury in May engages their attention, and others are expected to attend from SE and SW Areas .

An ecumenical group of 50 pilgrims, after receiving a Papal blessing, leave Rome and arrive in Canterbury to be welcomed on 26 May by Prince Charles (with TV coverage). There will be a service in Canterbury Cathedral and the pilgrims will proceed to Derry etc. The work involved is tremendous, but we look forward to its successful outcome.

The publications - CALLED TO BE ONE, UT UNUM SINT, THE COMMON GOOD and PREPARING FOR THE MILLENNIUM keep members busy in study, discussion and attempts to communicate some of the main thoughts in them.

Efforts to appoint, welcome and support PARISH UNITY CONTACTS continue, and their valuable contribution to unity is much appreciated .

