**Churches Together in England**

**Forum held 23-25 October 2012**

About 270 people, representatives of member churches, of intermediate ecumenical bodies and of bodies in association, together with staff and guests, met at Swanwick for the CTE Forum in the year which has seen the 50th anniversary of the opening of the second Vatican Council and the 25th anniversary of the Swanwick declaration which brought CTE into being. We were reminded of how the ecumenical movement has changed over those years, with more diversity as more churches come into membership, but also with steadily growing friendship and trust. We have a story to celebrate.

Our worship and study was grounded in the scripture, chapters 12 and 13 of Paul’s first letter to the church at Corinth. Based on this we celebrated the connection between unity and diversity in the one body, and appreciated the gifts which are found in traditions different from our own. From this scripture came our overall theme, ‘What does love require of us?’

Helped by our Presidents’ panel we began to consider the way forward for the ecumenical movement in England, recognising that at the moment there is often a tension between the local where there can be a freshness of energy and activity, and the national where progress can appear to be slow. We were reminded of the importance of prayer. We need to pray together more intentionally and more deeply. In being faithful to our own traditions we need to recognise and honour each others’ faithfulness and commitment to seeking the will of God. It may be time to revisit our understanding of visible unity, realising that it is God’s gift which we can only make visible together.

As we considered what love requires of us we trusted that our relationships were strong enough for us to look at questions which have the potential to divide our churches. We tried to do this in ways which encouraged us to listen to each other and to find the gifts of the Holy Spirit in ways and views which differ from our own.

Helped by this and by all our conversations together we were able in our final session to agree the following minute of the Forum which we send to CTE for the Trustees and the Enabling Group for consideration, and to all participants to be shared with their local churches and the bodies which they represent, trusting that the loving Spirit which was present with us will also guide those who read and hear it.

**Minute of the CTE Forum 2012**

**What does love require of us?**

We live in a world of great need, with poverty and inequality exacerbated by economic crisis and the challenge of climate change. There is a need for the good news and the life of the kingdom to be brought to our nation and our world so that our own and future generations may live life in its fullness. There is much evidence of churches already working together, of local cooperation in projects and the building of strong and trusting relationships. We celebrate also the work on national projects and the reconciliation which is happening between our churches. There is a call for us to find our courageous voice to speak out for the poor and the marginalised. Our ecumenical structures need to help churches to grow and to herald the kingdom, as well as moving to hold one another accountable.

There are still issues which divide us, in ethics and in faith and order issues. We need to celebrate each other, and to accept the gifts which each brings. Our variety is a God-given gift which we need to appreciate and honour. We are all God’s children. Love requires us to listen to each other, to continue in dialogue even when it is difficult, to share what we have and to learn from each others’ traditions. We have to recognise each others’ integrity and faithfulness even when we disagree. We need patience and wisdom. We have a strong call to continue to work together but also to pray together.

We are not only called to be one but also sent to be one. This is risky, for we open ourselves to our lives and our churches being changed. We have to be able to confront our own churches and accept God’s challenges. But we are not alone. God journeys with us and the Holy Spirit holds us and leads us and provides for our needs. Love comes from God’s gift to us of himself. Let us receive it and live it together.

Janet Scott

Moderator