

CHURCHES TOGETHER IN ENGLAND

Draft

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NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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CHURCHES TOGETHER IN ENGLAND INAUGURATED

Churches Together in England will be inaugurated at a service in St George's Roman Catholic Cathedral in Southwark at 12 noon on Saturday, 1 September 1990.

The Christian Churches in England have created a new body to help them to grow closer together, Churches Together in England. This is one of the four ecumenical church organisations beginning in September. The others are for Scotland, for Wales and for Britain and Ireland as a whole.

England has never had its own Council of Churches but has relied on the British Council of Churches. (The successor body to the British Council of Churches will be called The Council of Churches for Britain and Ireland.)

The four Presidents-designate of Churches Together in England, the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster, the Revd Dr John Newton (former Moderator of the Free Church Federal Council), and the Revd Desmond Pemberton (a leader of the Wesleyan Holiness Church, one of the Black-led Churches) will all be present, and will commission the staff of the new body.

The preacher at the service will be the Archbishop of York. He has chaired the Interchurch Meeting of Church leaders which has for the past five years been reviewing relations between the Churches in Britain and Ireland.

At the service the Archbishop of York will read the Basis on which the Churches are agreeing to relate to one another; and a youth representative will read the declaration which the leaders of the Churches already agreed at a national interchurch conference in Swanwick in 1987; and which the decision-making bodies of their churches have since endorsed.

Then one representative of each member church will sign the agreed 'basis and commitment' on behalf of their church.

The local churches in Lambeth North, which already work very closely together, will host the official representatives of the churches and special guests to lunch. After lunch there will be the first meeting of the Forum, at which some 350 representatives will complete formal business, and also briefly discuss priorities for future relations between the Churches.

Celebration and picnic

At 3.30 pm there will be a less formal Celebration of Christian Unity in St George's Cathedral.

Both the Inaugural Service and the Celebration are open to everyone. Those who are not official representatives are invited to bring a picnic lunch to eat in Geraldine Mary Harmsworth Park (next to the Imperial War Museum).

Initially nineteen churches will be in full membership, and these will include the larger traditional English Free Churches, several of the 'Black-led' Churches (Churches whose leaders come from the communities originating from Africa, Asia or the Caribbean), the Church of England, the Greek Orthodox, Russian Orthodox, and Oriental Orthodox Churches, the Lutheran Council of Great Britain, and (for the first time in England) the Roman Catholic Church.

The General Secretary will be Canon Martin Reardon, at present Rector of Plumpton in Sussex, and formerly Secretary of the Board for Mission and Unity of the General Synod of the Church of England.

The Field Officer for the North and Midlands will be Mrs Jenny Carpenter, formerly Vice-President of the Methodist Conference, who will work from Sheffield.

The Field Officer for the South will be the Revd Roger Nunn, at present Minister of Manvers Street Baptist Church in Bath, and formerly Youth Secretary of the British Council of Churches, who will work from Didcot.

Background note for editors

Churches Together in England is expected to focus particularly on three things:

- 1 The search for closer unity between the Christian Churches, including the theological and doctrinal issues involved;
- 2 Joint witness to the Christian gospel, as several of the Churches begin ten years focus on evangelisation;
- 3 Local work for Christian unity.

Gordon Riots

St. George's Roman Catholic Cathedral is built upon the site where the Gordon riots broke out on 2 June 1780. 'Lord George Gordon, an eccentric and fanatic, marched to Parliament with a petition for the repeal of the Catholic Relief Act of 1778 (which began Catholic emancipation). The huge procession of demonstrators carried flags with the legend 'No Popery', and, after pillaging the houses of Catholics, the rioters became completely out of hand and held the City of London until, at the personal command of George III they were dispersed by the military. 210 persons were killed in the streets and another 75 died of wounds'. (Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church, Ed F L Cross, OUP).

Attached:

Further information as sent to all the clergy and ministers of member churches inviting their congregations to commit themselves to work and pray for Christian unity, using the form provided on page 4 on 2 September. Details about Churches Together in England are on page 3. General background in on page 1.

For further information:

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