



June 2013

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## Walking uncomfortably!

Over last few months I have noticed a growing feeling of discomfort for many. Events in the news both at home and abroad, have led to concern about the future and personally I admit to feeling challenged, vulnerable and exposed in work, family and church life.

It is tempting to spend my energy on the complex reasons for my discomfort, looking for sources of blame and rationalising my own emotional response but I find instead that the discomfort is itself is a gift from God.

Please do not misunderstand me. It is not pleasant; it does not comfort me and it would be easier if this feeling would pass. However it enables me to move forward, to ask for help and, as I am exposed and vulnerable, there is room for God to move in an unexpected way.

Throughout history God has asked his people to be uncomfortable; the Old Testament is full with examples and Jesus called the fisherman to leave the familiarity of their nets and follow him. For all of us this discomfort means something different - and in our efforts toward increasing Christian unity there are times when we can feel angry, hurt, frustrated and immobile.

But our discomfort can also give us passion and strength alongside the vulnerability. It inspires creativity allowing us to reach out to others in new ways, to be open to the Holy Spirit and to each other.

Discomfort and the resulting vulnerability can lead to change, both big and small. Without the discomfort of William Wilberforce and others like him we might still have the slave trade. Today, Pope Francis challenges us to feel uncomfortable about the poverty in which many still live when all around them – but out of reach there is so much wealth. In so doing he is also making himself more vulnerable.

We are often at our most vulnerable within our families for; in the words of Walter Anderson "we are never so vulnerable as when we trust someone". Our families are the trusted place, the safe haven where we show our soft underbelly, our most secret fears, and where we are loved just as we are. This should bring out the best in us but such safety means that we sometimes share the darkest aspects of our nature with our families too.

In my new role with the Association of Interchurch Families I have been privileged to hear many stories of members' experiences. As the late Canon Martin Reardon (co-founder of the Association and the first General Secretary of CTE) wrote, "We fell in love with each other and found, whether we liked it or not, that we were part of the ecumenical movement". Such stories from interchurch families tell of challenges that are at least uncomfortable, often painful, and even in the most loving of families cannot always be fixed. But they do not end in despair but rather with a positive response in love, fellowship and unity, showing to the churches a living example of hope and Christian unity in action. Pope John Paul II recognised this when he said interchurch families "You live in your marriage the hopes and difficulties of the path to Christian Unity".

So as I reconcile my small daily discomforts and as I am made vulnerable, I thank the Lord who calls us all out of our comfort zones, that he was prepared to take on the greatest of all discomforts and be separated from God so that we might never have to do so.

*Doral Hayes is the new Executive Development Officer for the Association of Interchurch Families*

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## Churches call for arms treaty backing

Nearly 70 governments signed the world's first Arms Trade Treaty at the United Nations during the first week it opened for signatures this. Churches in dozens of countries urged them to do so in order to keep up the momentum from successful negotiations until the new treaty takes effect. Signatories included states that export arms and states where imported arms fuel violence.

The high turnout on the first day of signing mirrored the broad support for controlling arms sales, which brought nearly 100 churches and related organizations into the World Council of Churches' (WCC) two-year campaign for the treaty. "Sign early" was the message that ecumenical campaigners gave to 24 governments in recent days – 14 of them in Africa, the continent that has suffered most from unregulated arms sales. Major arms exporters Germany, United Kingdom and France took part in the first day of signing, as did smaller exporters such as Norway and Sweden. The world's largest arms producer and exporter, the United States, said it would sign later. Russia, China, India and others abstained from the treaty vote and have not indicated if they will sign.

The human cost of illicit arms trading has been the focus of church advocacy for the arms treaty to as many as 47 countries when negotiations peaked earlier this year. In April, 156 countries voted for the treaty, a milestone in bringing the multibillion-dollar arms exports under control. The treaty will take effect once 50 countries have ratified it. In the meantime, without these new binding global controls, some 2000 people will continue to die each day from

armed violence. When the treaty is in force and working, it will be more difficult to supply the arms that are fuelling the on-going bloody conflict in Syria. Until then it remains easier to sell bullets, bombs and deadly weapons than it is to sell bananas or pineapples.

Given the geographic location of WCC member churches and related organizations in different regions, the WCC-led campaign was able to speak with one voice to four different kinds of governments, those that make and sell the most weapons; those that have suffered the most from irresponsible arms trading; those that want the arms trade to be reformed, and those that may not be focused on the issue but see its value. The "Ecumenical Campaign for a Strong and Effective Arms Trade Treaty" developed out of a WCC Central Committee action in 2011. A campaign network was formed in mid-2011 during the International Ecumenical Peace Convocation Churches in Kingston, Jamaica.

Churches and church ministries in 40 countries joined the campaign. Uganda, DR Congo, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Brazil, Mexico, Canada, Sweden, Germany, Norway, India, South Korea, Australia and Papua New Guinea were some of the countries involved. There was close collaboration with Catholic and Evangelical groups. African churches and governments played a key role in the campaign. Countries heavily affected by decades of irresponsible arms sales stood together and made their voices heard.

A key demand was that the treaty must include small arms and light weapons, plus ammunition, or it was not the treaty that Africa needed. Two major players in the negotiations, the U.S. and China, both took note of the African position. Changes in their stance followed, and the negotiations were able to continue. In the end, the treaty that opened for signature this week addresses much of what the WCC adopted as policy for the campaign, even though it falls short at various points.

For the first time, a global treaty covers small arms and light weapons, ammunition, human rights violations, international humanitarian law and gender-based violence. It bans exports of conventional arms where there is knowledge that weapons could be used in war crimes, genocide, attacks against civilians and other grave breaches of international humanitarian law. Support for the treaty from so many states, including major arms exporters, will put pressure on states that abstained to reform their practices. Members of the ecumenical campaign continue to work so that more governments will sign and then ratify the long-awaited treaty. [\*Back to top\*](#)

### 'Aim even higher'

A report proposing a new development agenda to succeed the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in the period from 2015 to 2030 has sparked mixed reactions from the Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance (EAA). While appreciating the major focus on ending extreme poverty in all its forms, an integrated approach to sustainable development, and the incorporation of human rights language and principles, EAA members and partners are concerned about "inadequate" language on HIV and AIDS which lacks ambition when the possibility of ending the pandemic is in sight.

"The aim to 'leave no one behind' in eliminating extreme poverty resonates with us as people who are called by our faith to seek justice and a sustainable world for all," stated Peter Prove, EAA Executive Director. "We welcome the aspirations lifted up in this report but think we can – and must – aim even higher."

The report released the High Level Panel (HLP) on the Post-2015 Development Agenda, "A New Global Partnership: Eradicate Poverty and Transform Economies through Sustainable Development," sets out a universal agenda to eradicate extreme poverty by 2030 and deliver on the promise of sustainable development. The Panel was established by United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon to advise on the global development framework beyond 2015, the target date for the MDGs. The Panel was co-chaired by Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, Liberian President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf and United Kingdom Prime Minister David Cameron.

The cross-cutting issues of inequality and human rights are fundamental, Prove noted, especially the need to address the structural barriers that lie at the root of inequality. "What we have learned from the current MDGs, and particularly in the HIV response, is that if we are to meaningfully address extreme poverty and marginalization, we must place the most affected communities at the centre of our efforts," he said.

### **Hunger, food, nutrition and agriculture**

Those involved in EAA's Food for Life Campaign have welcomed the comprehensive approach to the interlinked challenges of hunger, food security, nutrition and agriculture, especially in the context of climate change, and the explicit incorporation of the human right to food in the proposed target "End hunger and protect the right of everyone to have access to sufficient, safe, affordable and nutritious food". The proposed targets regarding reducing post-harvest loss and food waste and on increasing agricultural productivity via a focus on "sustainably increasing smallholder yields" have also been key objectives in EAA campaigning.

"Many of the central issues, such as price volatility, land rights, rights to property and other productive assets for women and men are included, which are vital components of ending extreme poverty and hunger," stated Minnie Anne Calub, Programme Secretary, National Council of Churches in the Philippines. "The link between poverty and

hunger is key," said Christine Campeau, EAA's Food Campaign Coordinator. "I was pleased to see that the text not only includes the important role of small-scale food producers but also that it highlights the need for better investment to help farmers earn a better living and therefore be able to provide nutritious foods for their families and communities."

Campaigners though also highlighted missed opportunities in the report to address long-term food security. "I appreciate that the panel struggled with the transition to sustainable large-scale agriculture and intensification, but I wish that they would have put a greater emphasis on how we manage the food that we already produce – which could already feed 10 billion people – rather than on the need to produce more food," noted Duane Poppe, Program Officer at The Lutheran World Federation. Poppe also noted, "the report lists the competitors for agricultural land, such as biofuels, but they unfortunately do not encourage the return of those lands to food production."

In the report's support for moving to large-scale sustainable agriculture, there is also concern that despite talking about small-scale farmers, the emphasis is placed on technical innovations such as fertilizers rather than truly sustainable practices that use local, natural resources. "I especially welcome the strong emphasis in the report on the need to promote sustainable patterns of consumption and production," said Prove. "However, I think that the HLP places rather too much emphasis on business as the source of 'Much of the new technology and most of the new products' said to be required for achieving sustainable production and consumption patterns. While private sector-led innovation can be an important contributor in meeting this challenge, initiatives led by people and communities in low-tech innovation or in recapturing sustainable traditional practices, and in moderating their own unsustainable lifestyles will be a much greater factor in our search for just and sustainable production and consumption," he stated.

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### Taizé European Meeting in Strasbourg

The next European Meeting will be held in the region of Alsace and in the neighbouring region of Ortenau (Baden, Germany) from 28 December 2013 to 1 January 2014. The Taizé Community is preparing the meeting at the invitation of the Catholic dioceses and the Protestant churches on both banks of the Rhine. It will gather together several tens of thousands of young adults for the next step of the "pilgrimage of trust on earth" initiated by Brother Roger at the end of the 1970s. Young people from all over Europe and beyond will be hosted by the people and local church communities of the region.

As regions of dialogue, where people have multiple allegiances, Alsace and Baden have become signs of reconciliation in the centre of Europe. Strasbourg, a city enriched by being at the crossroads of cultures, has become an important sign of hope for building Europe in solidarity.

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### Theologians probe economic alternatives for common good

What sorts of changes can be made to render the present economic order more just? Are there religious roots or responses to the present economic structure and its recent crisis? Nine theologians met in Geneva 31 May and 1 June to explore critical theological tools and insights supportive of new economic arrangements. Several participants have also participated in the World Council of Churches (WCC) programme on Poverty, Wealth and Ecology and its "greed line" project. The conference was sponsored by the John Knox International Reformed Centre, Geneva, in celebration of its 60th anniversary, and participants were welcomed by Centre president Cyril Ritchie. Plans call for publication of the conference papers in the John Knox Series in collaboration with WCC Publications. Conference organizer Dr Tatha Wiley said, "We invited theologians to an intense conversation about the most critical problems of today's global economics, but they also shared the strong biblical, theological, and ethical resources for understanding and reforming the global economy."

The depth and breadth of the recent global financial crisis not only caused massive unemployment, housing foreclosures and economic refugees. It also laid bare some of the intractable systemic problems of the world economy, participants said, including growing economic inequality, widespread structural unemployment, commodification of the finance sector, and environmental stress. A key focus of discussion was the growth and evolution of economies and economics itself, along with the eventual triumph of the neo-classical or neo-liberal model. Traditional theological concepts appear in distorted ways in modern economic theory, said contributor Vanderbilt theologian M. Douglas Meeks. "This is a theological problem, not just an ethical or economic one," said Jung Mo Sung, a Brazilian theologian and Dean of Methodist University of São Paulo. Alongside core theological concepts, participants discussed practical and dynamic components of a more just, equitable, and sustainable economic. They included strong local focus, cooperatives, worker ownership, financial-market reform, democratic control of capital, and networks of congregations allied with civil-society organizations for effective advocacy. "The central Christian imperative is neighbour love," said Cynthia Moe-Lobeda, whose work explored the ethical dimensions of economic reconstruction. Moe-Lobeda is a Christian ethicist from Seattle University.

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## Emilio Castro honoured in Ecumenical Centre service

Revd Dr Emilio Castro was remembered and honoured on Friday 31 May in a memorial service at the Ecumenical Centre in Geneva, Switzerland. Castro, who died in his native Uruguay on 6 April at the age of 85, exercised leadership in the Ecumenical Centre from 1973 to 1992, first as director of the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism of the World Council of Churches (WCC) and from 1985 as the WCC's fourth general secretary.

Current WCC general secretary Revd Dr Olav Fykse Tveit preached at the memorial service, recalling these words of his predecessor: "We are not called to concern ourselves about our small individual world. The gospel is not the solution to our headaches, rather the calling for a transformation of all things in Christ." Within the kingdom of God as proclaimed by Jesus, continued Tveit, disciples in the ecumenical movement "must bear witness to those who cannot yet perceive this kind of hope. In the midst of struggles and when the pilgrimage seems to lead in circles rather than straight forward to desired outcomes, we are called to bear witness to this hope, even to one another." Shortly after his own election as general secretary, Tveit recalled, Emilio Castro approached him "with a glimmer in his eye" and said: "I am hopeful. The best of the ecumenical movement is still to come."

Others who spoke at the service included Professor Julio de Santa Ana, Revd Dr Roswitha Golder, Methodist Bishop Heinrich Bolleter, president Charlotte Kuffer of the Protestant Church of Geneva, Mr Roberto Collipal and WCC deputy general secretary Yorgo Lemopoulos. Tveit noted that the service was rich in music. He concluded, "I am sure that he, as a Methodist minister, would be pleased that we sang our theology – a theology of hope." [Back to top](#)

## Swiss Federation of Churches becomes Swiss Protestant Church

The Protestant Churches of the Swiss Cantons want to strengthen their collaboration and make the public more aware of their common goals. These are the two main aims of the draft Constitution of the Federation of Churches presented on June 4 at a press conference in Bern. "Unity in diversity is the aim of the new constitution. The Canton churches remain independent and yet together form the Protestant Church in Switzerland. Protestantism has finally gained an audible voice at national level. This strengthens the local churches and thus forms the Federal Church in readiness for the future," said the President of the Federation of Churches, Gottfried Locher.

As well as the new constitution, the Federation of Churches will receive a new name. In the future, it will be known as the 'Protestant Church in Switzerland (EPS)'. This new name underlines the communion and the sense of belonging together among Protestant churches, and reflects the new meaning of the EPS in ecclesiastical law.

The constitution envisages a Church leadership composed of the Synod, the Council, and a President. An annual synod, now established at national level, is the place for discussion of important issues and development strategies. Delegates to the Conference are elected by the cantonal churches. The Council, composed of nine members, represents the interests of the churches with the federal authorities, national institutions and international organizations. The Council takes responsibility for the Gospel witness at the national and international levels. Finally, the Chair represents the Protestant Church within and beyond Switzerland and in particular makes the Church visible.

In future, a Church Day will be held every two years at the same time as the national Synod. It will be a national public event for the people of the Church to speak on themes of society and participate in the development of the strategies of the Synod. Regarding this, Peter Schmid, Vice-President of the Council, said "the new constitution strengthens Swiss Protestantism by the clear responsibility of management to three bodies and the continuation of the democratic tradition. Opportunities for participation are enhanced."

The consultation procedure will last until November 30, 2013. The project will be reworked on the basis of feedback and will then be processed by the Assembly of delegates and adopted, probably in summer 2015. The new constitution should enter into force on January 1, 2016. [Back to top](#)

## Archbishop of Canterbury to address Methodist Conference

The Most Revd and Rt Hon Justin Welby, Archbishop of Canterbury, will address the annual Methodist Conference on Wednesday, July 10. It will be the first time he has addressed the Conference, which this year meets at Central Hall, Westminster. The Archbishop was invited by the President Designate of the Methodist Conference, the Revd Ruth Gee, who is chair of the Darlington District and worked with Archbishop Justin when he was Bishop of Durham.

Archbishop Justin will talk on the topic *Resourcing a Search for the Common Good*. An oil industry executive before he entered ordained ministry, and a member of the Parliamentary Commission on Banking Standards, the Archbishop has written widely on the ethics of business and finance. After his talk, he will take questions from members of the Conference. [Back to top](#)

## Black Pentecostal and Catholic leaders meet

An initial conversation took place between the Church Leaders of the Black Pentecostal Churches and the Catholic Church in England and Wales on Tuesday 21 May 2013 at the offices of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales in London. The eleven Bishops and Senior Pastors of the Black Pentecostal Churches were led by Bishop Joe Aldred and the seven representatives of the Catholic Church led by Archbishop Vincent Nichols, the Archbishop of Westminster and President of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales.

After a time of shared prayer and introduction the meeting acknowledged that both church communities find themselves working beside each other especially in the inner-city areas and that they face many of the same pastoral and social problems. Both church communities share a mutual regard for the Scriptures as the divinely inspired Word of God and there are many points of convergence regarding our convictions about the moral life and especially in the areas of marriage and family life.

Among the issues discussed were the value of fellowship, prayer and reflection together for those in Christian leadership, joint recognition of the work of our church communities, the profession of faith in the public forum, education and spiritual formation, the sharing of resources and Church buildings, the possibility of developing a memorandum of understanding at national level and the work of the international Pentecostal-Roman Catholic dialogue.

The meeting was greatly valued by all the participants and it was agreed that future meetings should be arranged on an annual basis. This is the first time that Black Pentecostal and Roman Catholic Church Leaders had met nationally.

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## Tackling the scandal of poverty - the power of the church

*From Steve Clifford, Director of the Evangelical Alliance and a member of [Serve](#):*

'A report from Church Action on Poverty and Oxfam showed that half a million people in the UK are reliant on food hand-outs to feed their family. Over the last three years the number of people turning to food banks to tide them over has rocketed. For Trussell Trust, the largest network of food banks, demand doubled from 2010 to 2011 and then nearly tripled the following year.

It is a scandal. It's a scandal when it happens overseas and a scandal when it happens on our doorstep. Around the world one in eight go to bed hungry, and the G8 meeting next month is a reminder it is time to end food poverty across the world. In the UK this is a scar on our nation's conscience. It's not just those out of work who are struggling. In fact 62 per cent of children in poverty live in families where at least one person works, and many of those needing food parcels are skipping meals so their children don't have to.

John Wesley, aged 82, wrote on 4 January 1785: "At this season we usually distribute coals and bread among the poor of the society. But I now considered they wanted clothes as well as food. So on this and the four following days I walked through the town and begged two hundred pounds in order to clothe them that wanted it most but it was hard work as most of the streets were filled with melting snow which often lay ankle deep so that my feet were steeped in snow water nearly from morning till evening. I held it out pretty well till Saturday evening when I was laid up with a violent flux."

It's outrageous that emergency food parcels are needed today in our neighbourhoods. But it is inspiring that the Church is standing up in response. And it is not just about providing immediate relief, it is about caring for all of a person, and it is about campaigning to stop degrading poverty ruining lives.

The Evangelical Alliance has been working with Christians in Parliament over the past year and will shortly publish a report on how local authorities work with faith groups. Time and time again we heard reports of the vital work churches were doing, present in every community, reaching the parts others could not, and above all, standing on the side of the poorest. Whether it is through food banks, debt advice centres or taking over a library destined for closure, churches are serving their communities. It's what churches have always done, and it's what we always will.'

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## Theatre of Witness

St Ethelburga's in Bishopsgate, London, is really delighted to welcome the renowned [Theatre of Witness](#) from Northern Ireland on 18th June for the premiere of their new production [From the Rubble](#)

It's a tremendous multi-media production telling the true stories of how The Troubles and their aftermath affected people's lives. It's performed by the people themselves - ex-combatants, former prisoners, a retired British soldier, the widow of man blown up by a paramilitary group, and a man who was caught in a car bomb as a child. They are shared with honesty and poetic insight and woven with music, puppetry and video into a tapestry of voices that reflect the strength, courage and vulnerability of the performers.

There are a limited number of tickets available for public sale at £10 which can be [booked here](#).

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## Middle East Day of Prayer organised by CSW

Join in an ecumenical day of prayer for the Middle East – a region where Christians face many hardships – on Saturday 22 June at HTB Queens Gate, 117 Queens Gate, London SW7 5LP, from 10 am to 3.30 pm (doors open at 9.30). Speakers will include senior church leaders from the region as well as the UK.

For more information please email [events@csw.org.uk](mailto:events@csw.org.uk) or call 0845 456 5464. You can register your place online at: [www.csw.org.uk/middleeastprayer](http://www.csw.org.uk/middleeastprayer)

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## Enabling Church Day Conferences

How did last summer's Paralympics change the way you think about disability? Did your thinking undergo a seismic shift? Lord Sebastian Coe said at the closing ceremony: ***'I genuinely think we have had a seismic effect in shifting public attitudes... I don't think they will ever see disability in the same way again.'*** If that's true, then what impact has it had on our churches?

Reaching out to disabled people and fully integrating them in the life and witness of the local church is not without challenges. Two major day conferences in the north east and the south west of the country called ENABLING CHURCH which aim to inform and equip Christians to make churches accessible to disabled people happen in the next few weeks – and there are still places. There's an impressive line-up of speakers – from Revd Roy Searle of the Northumbria Community, Revd Malcolm Duncan of Gold Hill Baptist Church, Catholic Bishop Paul Hendricks (Southwark) and theologian Roy McCloughry. The speakers also include people with first-hand experience of a wide range of disabilities – such as mental health issues, learning disabilities, deafness, autism, blindness and mobility disabilities.

ENABLING CHURCH is being run on Saturday June 22nd at Bethany Christian Centre at Houghton Le Spring, just north of Durham, not far from the A1. And it will also be run on Saturday July 6th at Westbury-on-Trym Baptist Church in north Bristol – with good access from the M4, M5 and M32.

ENABLING CHURCH – organised by a number of Christian disability organisations under the umbrella grouping Churches for All – is aimed at both church leaders and lay people. It's for anyone who is committed to opening up their programmes to people with disabilities and enabling the release of disabled people's gifting to the benefit of the church, and who wants to explore the biblical basis for increased integration. The programme will be varied, including keynote speeches, panel discussions and plenty of opportunity for interaction.

Full information on the conferences, which are being run with the support of Premier Christian Radio, is available [here](#). To book, go to [www.premier.org.uk/enabling](http://www.premier.org.uk/enabling) or call 020 7316 1349. The price for the day is £15. Delegates with disabilities are welcome. There will be BSL interpreting, loop system, large print and braille hand-outs, wheelchair access, quiet room and accessible toilet. Carers who are needed to facilitate delegates can attend free of charge.

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## Creation Fest 2013

Creation Fest is a Christian Music Festival and Bible Week held at the Royal Cornwall Showground in Wadebridge, Cornwall, from the 3-9 August 2013. Creation Fest is **FREE** to attend - day visitors can simply turn up and enjoy. If you want to camp, Creation Fest offers onsite camping from the 3-10 August 2013, with pitches available for you to bring tents and/or caravans. Online booking via PayPal will be available soon. Click here for [Camping information and booking](#) »

Creation Fest offers something for all the family with a full programme of [music](#), [Bible teaching and seminars](#), workshops, sport, film, 'Creation Kids' and [family fun](#). We also have a massive, undercover, [skate park](#) with pro demos and skate comps throughout the festival. Creation Fest is only possible through the support and prayers of individuals, youth groups and Churches. If you would like to be involved in Creation Fest please find out how to [Get Involved](#) » If you need to get in touch, phone 0844 8794 703 or [email](#).

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## Ecumenical Walking Pilgrimage to Walsingham

Saturday 10th August to Sunday 25th August 2012. The 39th Diocese of Arundel and Brighton Ecumenical Walking Pilgrimage, this year is from St Albans to Walsingham via Bedford, Ely and King's Lynn.

The theme for this year's pilgrimage is: "To be a Pilgrim", after the favourite hymn taken from Bunyan's allegorical work: "Pilgrim's Progress" (written while Bunyan was imprisoned in Bedford). Which is as much about a Christian soul on its earthly journey towards eternity, with all its spiritual adventures and dangers encountered, as it is about Bunyan's own life's pilgrimage in the turbulent times following that great upheaval of the English Civil War.

It is perhaps a great sign of how the ecumenical movement can set aside the painful and historic denominational divisions that have separated us; to see it as perfectly natural that an ecumenical group walking to Walsingham, can take The Pilgrim's Progress as its theme, full in the knowledge that the last thing puritan John Bunyan would have approved of is a pilgrimage to a Marian shrine! For more information and an application form, visit [www.thepilgrims.org.uk](http://www.thepilgrims.org.uk). [Back to top](#)

### The Origins of Tolerance

The Society for Ecumenical Studies met at St Ethelburga's, London, for a lecture to mark the 1700<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Edict of Milan. In 313, the Emperor Constantine issued a decree which permitted Christians to practice their faith openly. This marked a radical change from the policy of the previous Emperor Diocletian which saw widespread brutal persecution of Christians.

The lecture was given by historian Charles Freeman, author of *AD 381*, and a response was given by Canon Andrew Bowden, a member of Faith in Europe, outlining the contemporary context of tolerance. Charles Freeman distributed a translation of the text of the Edict and traced the development from 313 to 381 with particular reference to Gregory of Nazianzus. Andrew Bowden spoke about the Council of Europe and the Court of Human Rights. [Back to top](#)

### The Ecumenical Legacy of Vatican II

Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O'Connor will give a memorial lecture to mark the fifth anniversary of the death of Chiara Lubich, the Founder of the Focolare Movement. It will be at the Focolare Centre for Unity, 69 Parkway, Welwyn Garden City, Herts AL8 6JG, on Saturday 6 July at 3.00 pm. The lecture will be followed by refreshments. For further information, see [www.focolare.org.uk](http://www.focolare.org.uk), e-mail [cfu@focolare.org.uk](mailto:cfu@focolare.org.uk) or telephone 01707 323620. [Back to top](#)