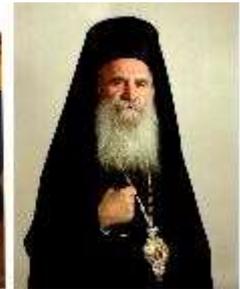




CTe-News from Churches Together in England June 2014

Pentecost Message from the Presidents of CTE

This is a message for general distribution and intended for anyone enquiring about 'Pentecost'. It is part of an initiative called 'Speaking to the Seasons'.



'The world doesn't have to be as it is'

On the day of Pentecost the gift of the Holy Spirit was given to the Church. This same Spirit had brooded over the chaos waters at the time of creation, inspired the prophets, poets and kings of the Hebrew people, and descended on Jesus at his baptism. Now the Spirit fell like fire on the Apostles of Jesus so that his message of God's kingdom of love, justice and hope might reach the ends of the earth.

On the Day of Pentecost, the gift of the Spirit brought understanding, for all found they could understand each other's languages. In our divided world we pray for that gift, that there might be understanding between divided nations and conflicting ideologies, that the unreconciled might begin to walk the path of reconciliation.

Artists often depict the Holy Spirit as a dove. Doves have come to symbolise peace. This Pentecost, amidst conflict and tension in the Middle East, parts of Africa, and on the edges of Europe, we pray for all who are suffering, and for all who work patiently to lessen tension and fashion peace rather than war.

Pentecost is an announcement that the world doesn't have to be as it is. God offers us a different way. The Bible speaks of the fruit of the Spirit as love, joy, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (Gal 5:22) - those are some of the qualities which create and sustain good societies. Christians don't have a monopoly on those qualities, but they do know that they are evidence of the Spirit's presence and activity. They also know that the power of the Spirit enables them to do the will of Jesus, so our prayer this Pentecost is that all Christians everywhere will live out their love of Jesus by working to build good and healthy societies where all may flourish as God intends.

To find out more about the Christian faith visit www.christianity.org.uk

To find out more about 'A good Society', visit <http://agoodsociety.org/>

Archbishops of Canterbury and York initiative for Pentecost: www.usewords.org

The Presidents of Churches Together in England

The Ecumenical Call



This Reflection is written by Kelvin Moon, a member of Kings Church Eden, in Cumbria. It first appeared in the May 2014 newsletter of Churches Together in Cumbria.

Sitting at my discussion table as a “new church” member amongst those from several of the long established church traditions, my heart was stirred for them in their struggles to pursue ecumenical goals in their various Cumbrian locations. Time and again the hindrance to progress emerged from the incompatible denominational structures and forms within which they were operating. Conversely, their successes invariably arose from small-scale, person-to-person relationships sharing a common calling from the same Father God.

Over the centuries, God, through moves of his Spirit, has brought revelation and restoration to his church across the globe. And each such move has brought an injection of fresh energy, enlightenment and vision for the time. Unfortunately, it seems our human way is to reify these revelations into structures and forms that we then contend to bolster with ever more elaborate and substantial defences.

These defences may well be seen as establishing the kingdom, defending the truth, progressing the work, and protecting the people of God. But, over time, they so easily come round to just the opposite – dividing the kingdom, fragmenting the truth, hindering the work and making fearful the people of God. They produce a kingdom and people that are stationary, like a castle, and not advancing like an army.

God’s Spirit is, at heart, a moving Spirit and, as a body, we need to move with him. We cannot afford to respond to every revelation he brings by turning it into a permanent institution. We no longer need to build a temple, we are the temple. We need to rejoice in the revelation, live in the freedom of it, and look to him, hungry for more, ready to move on as a people.

It is so clearly in the heart of God that his church should be united in Christ. The ecumenical call, at least in essence, is a heart-to-heart call upon each of us as individuals within his universal church – a church of which there is only one head, namely, Christ. It is a call from the head, directly to each individual member.

An ecumenical call, then, is a call that needs specifically not to be heard through the filters of denominational interpretation and implementation. If it were, then it would most likely lead to yet another point of conflict and disagreement. It needs to be a call that transcends denomination – a call that comes from the heart of Christ as head of the church, directly to the heart of each of his individual members.

Given this, it is perhaps not surprising that the success of ecumenical initiatives appears to hang upon grass-root movements, personal relationships between church leaders, bottom-up, rather than top down. Isn’t it the institutional structures and forms themselves that have been built to defend identity, difference, separation? It is perhaps not surprising that it is in these that we are finding the greatest difficulty in moving toward ecumenical goals.

But the very clashes we are finding at this level are, in fact, the sounds of true engagement with one another. And, in that context, they are sounds of hope and encouragement. They are the sounds of a groundswell of movement that contrast vividly with the long, long silence of contented resignation. And, they are sounds being accompanied by a mounting chorus of small-scale victories and local stories of fruitful perseverance.

We are on the move, at last! We are picking up the skirts of our highly embellished tabernacles, and advancing through the wilderness ...together! Hallelujah!

Kelvin Moon.

Intercultural ecumenism: Culture as ecumenical agency



This is the Introduction to a paper given by Bishop Dr Joe Aldred at the University of Roehampton.
April 2014

In this paper I begin to explore how culture, including ethnicity and faith, might be appropriated as ecumenical agency. Engaging culture in the service of ecumenism requires rethinking about both the nature of both. At least two acts of deconstruction is called for; deconstructing the hegemony of western Christian culture that impacts profoundly on relationships between Christians in Britain from different cultural camps is a priority, and understanding the inadequacies of structural ecumenism based on an ideology of a 'search for unity rather than appropriating a gift already given to the church. A new approach to ecumenism is called for with realised unity as its central thesis and cultural agency as its expressive arm. I approach this inquiry against the background of my own multiple cultural identities as a Black African-Caribbean British Christian from a non-mainstream British church tradition. My identity is an example of microcosm of culture's complexities and its close proximity to the epicentre of human self-understanding.

Download the paper 'Intercultural Ecumenism: Culture as ecumenical agency'

Rabbi David Rosen on the Pope's Visit to the Holy Land

The Point of the Pope's Visit
What Was the Most Successful Part for Israel
By David Rosen, the American Jewish Committee Director of International Interreligious Relations.

Published May 29, 2014.

Israel, Jordan and the Palestinian Authority have all hailed Pope Francis's whirlwind pilgrimage as a success -- and indeed, the very fact that it went as smoothly as it did was no small achievement for all involved. Pope Francis's global superstar status guaranteed media focus on local voices and images wherever he went.



For the State of Israel, the happy paradox is that a Papal visit is no longer a historic breakthrough. For most of the 20th century, the Vatican bitterly opposed the Zionist idea of Jewish sovereignty in its ancestral homeland. Now, not only has it enjoyed full diplomatic relations with Israel for 20 years, but three Popes have paid their respect and esteem to Israel's highest elected political and religious officials. That this is now almost taken as a given is itself a stunning historical triumph.

The primary declared purpose of Pope Francis's visit was to meet in Jerusalem with the head of the Christian Orthodox world, celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of the first meeting of reconciliation between the two separate (and for most of history, mutually hostile) strands of Christianity. He also sought to convey a message of peace and empathy for the peoples of this region. However, in addition, Francis intentionally used his visit to Israel to reiterate the Church's special bonds with Judaism and the Jewish People. Not only did he state this explicitly at the meeting with Jewish religious leaders at Hechal Shlomo, but it was also powerfully reflected at the impressive event hosted by President Shimon Peres.

Read the full article:

http://www.cte.org.uk/Articles/404686/Home/News/News_articles/Rabbi_David_Rosen.aspx

Common Declaration of Pope Francis and Patriarch Bartholomew I

Courtesy of 'Zenit' zenit.org

"Our fraternal encounter today is a new and necessary step on the journey towards the unity to which only the Holy Spirit can lead us, that of communion in legitimate diversity"

ROME, May 25, 2014 (Zenit.org) - Here is the common declaration made by Pope Francis and Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I, as they met today in the Holy Land, marking the 50th anniversary of the meeting of their predecessors, Paul VI and Patriarch Athenagoras.

1. Like our venerable predecessors Pope Paul VI and Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras who met here in Jerusalem fifty years ago, we too, Pope Francis and Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, were determined to meet in the Holy Land "where our common Redeemer, Christ our Lord, lived, taught, died, rose again, and ascended into Heaven, whence he sent the Holy Spirit on the infant Church" (Common communiqué of Pope Paul VI and Patriarch Athenagoras, published after their meeting of 6 January 1964). Our meeting, another encounter of the Bishops of the Churches of Rome and Constantinople founded respectively by the two Brothers the Apostles Peter and Andrew, is a source of profound spiritual joy for us. It presents a providential occasion to reflect on the depth and the authenticity of our existing bonds, themselves the fruit of a grace-filled journey on which the Lord has guided us since that blessed day of fifty years ago.

2. Our fraternal encounter today is a new and necessary step on the journey towards the unity to which only the Holy Spirit can lead us, that of communion in legitimate diversity. We call to mind with profound gratitude the steps that the Lord has already enabled us to undertake. The embrace exchanged between Pope Paul VI and Patriarch Athenagoras here in Jerusalem, after many centuries of silence, paved the way for a momentous gesture, the removal from the memory and from the midst of the Church of the acts of mutual excommunication in 1054. This was followed by an exchange of visits between the respective Sees of Rome and Constantinople, by regular correspondence and, later, by the decision announced by Pope John Paul II and Patriarch Dimitrios, of blessed memory both, to initiate a theological dialogue of truth between Catholics and Orthodox. Over these years, God, the source of all peace and love, has taught us to regard one another as members of the same Christian family, under one Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, and to love one another, so that we may confess our faith in the same Gospel of Christ, as received by the Apostles and expressed and transmitted to us by the Ecumenical Councils and the Church Fathers. While fully aware of not having reached the goal of full communion, today we confirm our commitment to continue walking together towards the unity for which Christ our Lord prayed to the Father so "that all may be one" (Jn 17:21).

3. Well aware that unity is manifested in love of God and love of neighbour, we look forward in eager anticipation to the day in which we will finally partake together in the Eucharistic banquet. As Christians, we are called to prepare to receive this gift of Eucharistic communion, according to the teaching of Saint Irenaeus of Lyon (Against Heresies, IV,18,5, PG 7,1028), through the confession of the one faith, persevering prayer, inner conversion, renewal of life and fraternal dialogue. By achieving this hoped for goal, we will manifest to the world the love of God by which we are recognized as true disciples of Jesus Christ (cf. Jn 13:35).

4. To this end, the theological dialogue undertaken by the Joint International Commission offers a fundamental contribution to the search for full communion among Catholics and Orthodox. Throughout the subsequent times of Popes John Paul II and Benedict the XVI, and Patriarch Dimitrios, the progress of our theological encounters has been substantial. Today we express heartfelt appreciation for the achievements to date, as well as for the current endeavours. This is no mere theoretical exercise, but an exercise in truth and love that demands an ever deeper knowledge of each other's traditions in order to understand them and to learn from them. Thus we affirm once again that the theological dialogue does not seek a theological lowest common denominator on which to reach a compromise, but is rather about deepening one's grasp of the

whole truth that Christ has given to his Church, a truth that we never cease to understand better as we follow the Holy Spirit's promptings. Hence, we affirm together that our faithfulness to the Lord demands fraternal encounter and true dialogue. Such a common pursuit does not lead us away from the truth; rather, through an exchange of gifts, through the guidance of the Holy Spirit, it will lead us into all truth (cf. Jn 16:13).

5. Yet even as we make this journey towards full communion we already have the duty to offer common witness to the love of God for all people by working together in the service of humanity, especially in defending the dignity of the human person at every stage of life and the sanctity of family based on marriage, in promoting peace and the common good, and in responding to the suffering that continues to afflict our world. We acknowledge that hunger, poverty, illiteracy, the inequitable distribution of resources must constantly be addressed. It is our duty to seek to build together a just and humane society in which no-one feels excluded or emarginated.

6. It is our profound conviction that the future of the human family depends also on how we safeguard – both prudently and compassionately, with justice and fairness – the gift of creation that our Creator has entrusted to us. Therefore, we acknowledge in repentance the wrongful mistreatment of our planet, which is tantamount to sin before the eyes of God. We reaffirm our responsibility and obligation to foster a sense of humility and moderation so that all may feel the need to respect creation and to safeguard it with care. Together, we pledge our commitment to raising awareness about the stewardship of creation; we appeal to all people of goodwill to consider ways of living less wastefully and more frugally, manifesting less greed and more generosity for the protection of God's world and the benefit of His people.

7. There is likewise an urgent need for effective and committed cooperation of Christians in order to safeguard everywhere the right to express publicly one's faith and to be treated fairly when promoting that which Christianity continues to offer to contemporary society and culture. In this regard, we invite all Christians to promote an authentic dialogue with Judaism, Islam and other religious traditions. Indifference and mutual ignorance can only lead to mistrust and unfortunately even conflict.

8. From this holy city of Jerusalem, we express our shared profound concern for the situation of Christians in the Middle East and for their right to remain full citizens of their homelands. In trust we turn to the almighty and merciful God in a prayer for peace in the Holy Land and in the Middle East in general. We especially pray for the Churches in Egypt, Syria, and Iraq, which have suffered most grievously due to recent events. We encourage all parties regardless of their religious convictions to continue to work for reconciliation and for the just recognition of peoples' rights. We are persuaded that it is not arms, but dialogue, pardon and reconciliation that are the only possible means to achieve peace.

9. In an historical context marked by violence, indifference and egoism, many men and women today feel that they have lost their bearings. It is precisely through our common witness to the good news of the Gospel that we may be able to help the people of our time to rediscover the way that leads to truth, justice and peace. United in our intentions, and recalling the example, fifty years ago here in Jerusalem, of Pope Paul VI and Patriarch Athenagoras, we call upon all Christians, together with believers of every religious tradition and all people of good will, to recognize the urgency of the hour that compels us to seek the reconciliation and unity of the human family, while fully respecting legitimate differences, for the good of all humanity and of future generations.

10. In undertaking this shared pilgrimage to the site where our one same Lord Jesus Christ was crucified, buried and rose again, we humbly commend to the intercession of the Most Holy and Ever Virgin Mary our future steps on the path towards the fullness of unity, entrusting to God's infinite love the entire human family.

"May the Lord let his face shine upon you, and be gracious to you! The Lord look upon you kindly and give you peace!" (Num 6:25-26).

Jerusalem, 25 May 2014

Draft Report for Methodist Conference and CofE General Synod

The following is from the website for An Anglican-Methodist Covenant: <http://www.anglican-methodist.org.uk/>



A Draft Report to the Methodist Conference and the General Synod in 2014 outlines what steps need to be taken to meet the challenges identified in the Report.

Quick Guide accompanying the Report provides an introduction to the material in both reports.

Jointly launching the report, Professor Peter Howdle, the Methodist Co-Chair of the JIC, said:

"We are pleased to present this Report. The JIC sees many signs that the Covenant between our two Churches has strengthened during this period. However, there is still a long way to go before our two churches are acting, and are seen as acting, together in visible unity for the mission of the church.

I believe both churches will need to act ever more graciously towards each other as they seek to overcome the obstacles which prevent a deepening of our Covenant relationship. Our Report challenges our churches to greater efforts in their search for this visible unity. "

The Church of England Co-Chair, the Bishop of Coventry, the Rt Revd. Christopher Cocksworth said:

"John Wesley's passion and project to 'reform the nation...and to spread scriptural holiness over the land' is in urgent need of renewal. This important Report challenges the Church of England and the Methodist Church to work wherever possible in common purpose and to take definite steps towards a common life in Christ, and in his ministry and mission. "

Visit the website of An Anglican-Methodist Covenant for further details and document links with the opportunity to comment: <http://www.anglican-methodist.org.uk/>

'A Good Society' launched

A report examining what makes a "good society", and the part that faith communities can play in creating it, has been released by Churches Together in Britain and Ireland and Church Action on Poverty.

The keynote speaker was cardinal Vincent Nichols who said, **"The Good Society always starts with listening at the periphery – it is in the peripheries that you will meet the person of Christ most clearly".**



The 'Big Society' was one of the flagship ideas of the UK's Coalition Government. Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (CTBI) and Church Action on Poverty instead wanted to learn about the UK's Good Society - the thousands of people who are motivated by faith to ensure that those

on the margins of society are included, cared for and supported.

What challenges do they face? Why do they do what they do? What are the values they feel are really important for a good society? How can the voices of those who feel marginalised be heard more effectively? And – as the spiritual landscape of Britain continues to shift - what does the growing Good Society mean for the future of the Churches?

Researchers visited seven very different UK destinations to investigate how churches are tackling a huge range of social issues; homelessness, worklessness, conflict, mental health problems, religious and ethnic tensions, poverty, lack of access to services, old age or merely loneliness.

"What has emerged from our research provides a challenge to the accepted role of faith and the Church in seeking the common good," explains Bob Fyffe, General Secretary of CTBI.

"Faith leaders are becoming mediators and community leaders. They are being seen as voices of truth, values and integrity, rather than holders of power. They are leading by creating possibilities, and seeing buildings as places of sanctuary and community."

"The Good Society is increasingly stepping in to fill the gaps created by austerity," said Niall Cooper, Director of Church Action on Poverty.

"But as our research has shown, the Churches are much more than a place of last resort. Their work is central to the lives of some of the UK's most vulnerable communities."

Communities and churches across the UK are now being encouraged to have their own debate about the Good Society. CTBI will be gathering these views, and using them as the basis for what the Churches say on a range of issues in the run-up to the 2015 General Election.

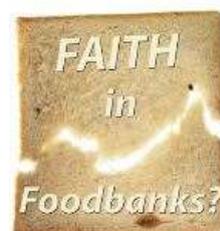
To download the free toolkit and for more information, go to www.agoodsociety.org or email info@agoodsociety.org

CTBI link page

CAP link page

New resources: Faith in Foodbanks?

Faith in Foodbanks? is a new resource website from the Joint Public Issues Team of the Baptist, Methodist and United Reformed Churches. The Joint Public Issues Team have resources available from <http://www.jointpublicissues.org.uk/faithinfoodbanks/>



"The situation is complex, and few of us will feel equipped to fully engage in the debates that emerge. But we have stories to share, and some of those stories are extremely powerful. When presented with honesty and integrity they have the power to challenge all of us, to change hearts and minds. They most definitely have the power to change the policies and attitudes of those who do have the direct power to make a difference."

Revd Ruth Gee, President of the Methodist Conference 2013-14

These resources from the Baptist Union of Great Britain, the Methodist Church, the United Reformed Church and Church Action on Poverty have been put together to help churches explore issues raised by foodbanks, and to make connections between the work of these foodbanks and the life, worship and witness of local churches and fellowships.

<http://www.jointpublicissues.org.uk/faithinfoodbanks/>

Cardinal Vincent appointed to Pontifical Council for Christian Unity

Pope Francis has appointed Cardinal Vincent Nichols, one of the Presidents of Churches Together in England, to the department of the Roman Curia which oversees Christian unity.



Today, 22 May 2014, Cardinal Vincent was appointed to both the Congregation for Clergy and the Pontifical Council for Christian Unity – which is also responsible for the Vatican's dialogue with Jews. This means he is now a member of four bodies of the Roman Curia, the other two being the Congregation for Bishops (which oversees the appointments of bishops across most of the world) and the Congregation for Oriental Churches, tasked with relations with Eastern Catholics. **Listen to Cardinal Vincent talking (in 2009) about the importance of praying for Christian Unity.**

British Black Churches back legislation to outlaw modern day slavery

Press Statement, 15 May 2014

At a meeting in the House of Lords, representatives of the UK's African and Caribbean churches committed themselves to join the struggle to expose and outlaw modern forms of slavery. It is estimated that between 20-30 million people world-wide are enslaved; more than at the height of the transatlantic slave trade. Today's slave trade is thought to be worth around 40 billion US dollars. However, Black Christians in Britain are largely unaware of the extent of it. Co-convenor of the meeting, Bishop Dr Joe Aldred of the ecumenical agency Churches Together in England said, 'I and people like me from the Caribbean are the descendants of enslaved Africans. Surely, of all people, we must now do all we can to liberate today's enslaved victims'.



The UK is a destination, origin and exporter of modern day enslaved people, which include children, young people, women and men; from Eastern Europe, Africa, the Caribbean and Asia. Among forms of slavery identified were: child trafficking, sex trafficking, domestic servitude and debt bondage. Although the level of public awareness is low, modern day slavery is evident in such as tending cannabis farms, begging, benefit fraud, petty crime, ATM theft and domestic servitude.

Cross-bench Peer Baroness Elizabeth Butler-Sloss, co-convenor of the meeting and joint-chair of the Parliamentary Group on Modern Slavery said, 'I am so pleased that we have now forged a partnership with the Black Christian community to tackle this scourge on humanity. More than two hundred years after the passing of the Parliamentary Bill to end the Atlantic Slave Trade it now falls to us to do the same for Modern Slavery which is the second largest illegal trade in the world'.

The Churches congratulate the Government in putting forward a Modern Slavery Bill, but wish to have a dialogue with Government and members of both Houses of Parliament to ensure that Parliament passes the best possible Bill which will help to stamp out the evil of slavery and give appropriate help and support to its victims.

http://www.cte.org.uk/Articles/402772/Home/News/News_articles/British_Black_Churches.aspx

The search for unity is part of the nature of the Church

Robert Byrne, until now the Catholic National Ecumenical Officer, was ordained bishop in Birmingham yesterday by Archbishop Bernard Longley, himself a former National Ecumenical Officer.

The Prayer of Consecration was said as the Book of the Gospels was held over Robert's head. Cardinal Vincent Nichols (a President of Churches together in England) was the preacher, asking God to 'bless this new bishop with the gift of joy in its fullness, and kindness in its true depth, for then he will truly be a shepherd of your people, an apostle to your people and a cause of our joy'.



The ordination was attended by many ecumenical guests, including Bishop Christopher Foster (Anglican Bishop of Portsmouth and Chair of the Directors of Churches Together in England), David Cornick (CTE's General Secretary) and some of Robert's National Ecumenical Officer colleagues. Speaking at the end of the service, the new bishop spoke warmly of his time as Ecumenical Officer, saying that the search for unity is part of the nature of the Church and therefore of the ministry of every priest.

Visit the Birmingham diocese's website for a **video of the ordination**, for **Cardinal Vincent's homily** and **other addresses**.

'Near Neighbours' initiative and grants available

Near-Neighbours is a government/Church Urban Fund funded programme working in selected parts of the country to bring people together across faiths and ethnicities to get to know each other and engage in projects together that improve their local community, thereby fostering better community relations.



NN operates in areas such as Bradford, Burnley, Leicester, some areas of Birmingham and Oldham; Bury, Rochdale, Leeds, Dewsbury and the Black Country (Walsall, Wolverhampton, West Bromwich), Luton, and West London (Hackney, South Newington). These areas have in common: high deprivation levels, and are diverse multi-ethnic and multi-faith. To check if your area is included, input your postcode at: www.cuf.org.uk/near-neighbours/grants/eligible-areas

Among what's on offer, NN supports training of young leaders/facilitators, local initiatives, and make small grant awards of between £250 - £5,000 to bring people together either across faiths or cross-ethnicity to improve communities. NN is actively seeking participation/applications from Pentecostals (black and white), Black and Minority Ethnic Christian communities. For further information and how to apply, visit the NN or Church Urban Fund websites...

Contact

www.cuf.org.uk or www.near-neighbours.org.uk

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CTe-News collates information from the website of Churches Together in England: www.cte.org.uk

Articles for consideration can be sent to jim.currin@cte.org.uk

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