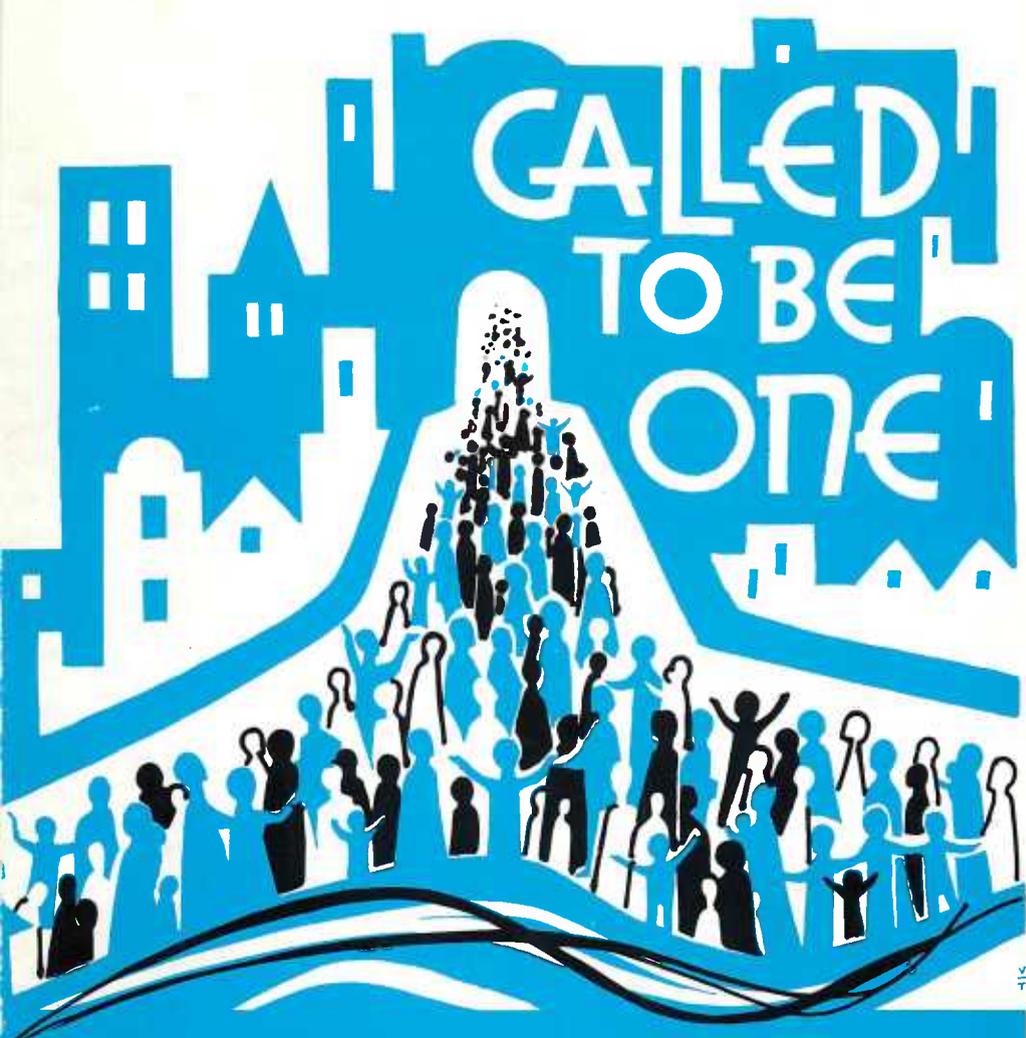


CALLED
TO BE
ONE



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**THE
WORKBOOK**

CALLED TO BE ONE

THE WORKBOOK

Helen Lidgett

Churches Together in England

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CONTENTS

	PAGE NUMBER
Introduction	1
A Five-Session Study	
Leaders' notes	3
Session 1 : Renewal	8
Session 2 : Church	12
Session 3 : Unity	18
Session 4 : Visible Unity	22
Session 5 : Mission Together	28
One Day Study	32
An All-Age Single Session	
The River	37



Design of the Rublev Ikon
(see Meditation on pages 21 and 33).

INTRODUCTION

Jesus prayed to his Father that all his disciples might be one, as he and the Father were one, so that the world might believe (John 17: 21). St. Paul taught the Christians in Corinth that God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, and that he had entrusted the church with the message and ministry of reconciliation in the world.

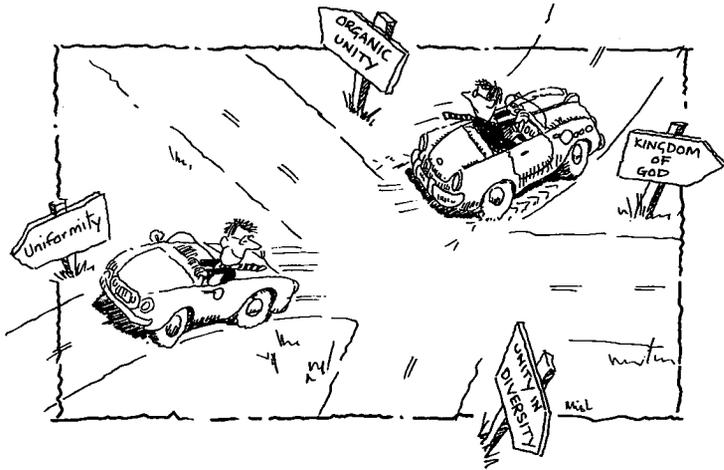
For centuries churches throughout the ancient world struggled to maintain their unity and spread their message of God's reconciliation more widely in the world. Sadly, as the second millennium began, Eastern and Western Christians divided from one another. In the sixteenth century Catholics and Protestants divided. Further divisions occurred right up to and in the present century. The churches have not always been good ambassadors for Christ's ministry of reconciliation.

That ministry is needed more than ever in the world today. The press, radio and TV are full of stories of terrible divisions – sectarian violence in Ireland; attempts at peace in the Middle East shattered by bombing and shelling; the former Yugoslavia torn into pieces with 'ethnic cleansing'. Caught up in these conflicts and sometimes contributing to them are divisions between Christians of different denominations, and between Christians and people of other faiths. We have sometimes helped to reinforce division, and have not always been part of the healing and reconciling process.

The task today

In the present century many of us in the churches have been trying to overcome our own divisions so that we may be more credible when we preach the gospel of reconciliation in the world. The theologians in our various churches have worked hard to re-discover basic agreements between our churches on such matters as baptism, eucharist and ministry. But relatively little work has so far been done on what we **all** mean by *the visible unity of the church*. Churches Together in England, the ecumenical body created by the churches in England in 1990, therefore inaugurated in 1993 a process entitled *Called To Be One*. It focuses on the kind of unity that God wills for his church now, so that the churches may begin to discern the next steps they should be taking together.

It is intended that this process will tackle the sense of frustration which has arisen among those working for Christian unity. Perhaps this frustration is caused not so much by disillusionment or apathy, as by *confusion over the goal*. If different churches have different interpretations of that goal and are therefore wanting to go in different directions towards that goal, *and are wanting to go there together*, it is no wonder that there is a certain confusion, frustration and lack of progress.



Playing your part

Churches Together in England now wants to know the views of local churches across England. It has therefore produced this Workbook to help churches to discuss with one another in ecumenical groups what they mean by the visible unity of the church and what they are doing about it. We are asking such groups to join in the sessions, and then to consider the four questions at the end of Session 5. Groups are asked to send their responses to these questions to their county ecumenical officers who will then pass them on to Churches Together in England. Responses will also be sent by ecumenical bodies in counties and metropolitan areas and by the member churches/denominations nationally who will discuss the issues at their various Conferences, Synods and Assemblies.

The results of all these ecumenical and denominational discussions will come to the Forum of Churches Together in England in July 1997. This will be attended both by representatives of member churches/denominations and by representatives of County and Metropolitan Area Ecumenical Bodies. The Forum will explore what the various churches understand by visible unity, and what further steps they might take towards it.

Please help us in this by discussing the issues and sending your responses to your county ecumenical officer. If you do not know who your county ecumenical officer is, telephone the Sheffield office of Churches Together in England on 0114 268 2151 if you live in the north of England or the Didcot office on 01235 511622 if you live in the south.

MARTIN REARDON
General Secretary, Churches Together in England.
5th June 1996

LEADERS' NOTES

I An Ecumenical Process

This Workbook is designed to help local congregations throughout England to become more deeply and creatively involved in the search for visible unity. The studies take groups through the *Called To Be One* process and encourage them to think through its practical implications locally and nationally. They rely on exchange, interaction, challenge and mutual learning between people of different denominations. Therefore groups need to be ecumenical. Those organising groups are asked to ensure that as far as possible each group includes people from several denominations. Ideally each group should have between six and ten people: if the group is too small different denominations will not be represented; if it is too large, there will be no time for real exchange. They should also encourage people who are sceptical about ecumenism, people who think it is irrelevant, people who feel it is a distraction from the church's work of mission and service, to become involved, as well as those with a strong ecumenical commitment.

- * **Ensure each study group is ecumenical**
- * **Encourage the participation of those suspicious of discussions about church unity as well as the ecumenically committed**

The Workbook includes quotations, excerpts and summaries from *Called To Be One* which provide some insight into the issues the churches were asked to consider: 'church', 'unity' and 'visible unity'. They also report the experience Christians around the country have of visible unity. It will be extremely helpful for every member of the group to have a copy of the Workbook. This will enable the group to run more smoothly and give members an opportunity to study the material in more depth between meetings. Group leaders will find it helpful to prepare themselves by reading *Called To Be One*. This will give them insight into the process and help them to answer questions which may arise. **Copies are available from CCBI Bookroom, Inter-Church House, 35-41 Lower Marsh, London SE1 7RL, price £2.50 + 75p postage and also from bookshops.**

- * **Make sure every group member has a copy of the Workbook**
- * **Group leaders need a copy of *Called To Be One***

Please read the Introduction to this book to see how your group's responses can be fed back.

* **Send your responses to your county ecumenical officer**

II Some practicalities

Read *Called To Be One* and the Workbook through in advance and make sure you understand what is expected. Make a note of anything you need to prepare for each session. Then carefully re-read the session notes a few days before each meeting, study the bible passage, prepare the items you need to bring, and go over in your mind the issues, questions and problems the session may raise. You will find this easier to do as you get to know group members better. If you feel there is too much material, take time to adapt it and choose the sections most helpful to your group.



* **Prepare yourself**

Each study includes a bible passage. These are not quoted in the text, so please bring a Bible and encourage group members to bring one too.

* **Bring a Bible**

Before the meeting starts check there are enough chairs in the room and adequate lighting. If you are using a flip chart, set it up or put out paper and pens. If refreshments are to be offered, arrange the timing to suit people's commitments.

* **Prepare the room**

At the beginning of the first session agree the dates, starting and ending times of each meeting and make sure everyone knows them. Keep to the times you have agreed, or you might find people having to rush away before you have finished the session. Make sure everyone has your telephone number and you have theirs.

✱ **Agree arrangements**

Each study is timed to take 1½ hours although you can of course spend longer on them. Approximate timings are given for each section. Do not worry if you do not get through all the material in each session – in-depth discussions (without *too* many red herrings!) can be more valuable than rushing through the session without giving people time to think and talk together.

✱ **Give people time to get involved**

As discussions develop watch how people are participating. If one or two people are dominating discussions and others are very quiet, try to draw the quieter members into the discussion through tactful questions or going round the group to seek responses from everyone. Be prepared for sharp differences of opinion, and make sure everyone is able to say what is in their hearts without feeling threatened.

✱ **Encourage everyone to participate**

III Notes on the text

Introduction: At the beginning of each session allow time for people to settle back into the relationship of the group and turn their minds to the theme. Each session begins with a brief introductory exercise to assist this. You may also like to start each session with prayer.

Lists: The group is sometimes asked to make lists. You might prefer to ask someone else to do this, leaving you free to lead the discussion.

Quotations: In every session, you will find quotations from the book *Called To Be One*. The numbers in brackets after each quotation refer to the chapter and paragraph number in *Called To Be One*. You do not need to read all the quotations out yourself. Ask members of the group to read them in turn. Where appropriate ask members to read the comments made by their own denomination or church.

Meditation: Do not be afraid of silence. The meditations provided are simple, often just a bible reading and a brief comment or prayer. If people wish to speak or pray, that's fine. If they wish to be silent, that too is fine. God is there in our silence and our words.

Making notes: In Session 5 the group is asked to look back over the work it has done and respond to the questions at the end. You may well find it helpful after each session to make a few notes of the main issues discussed and conclusions reached and bring them to the last session.

Action: Brief ideas for action are given at the end of each session. Encourage people to see these as a way of carrying their ecumenical thinking into the everyday life of their churches. However remember that some people will not have time or opportunity for extra activities, so be careful not to ask too much of them.

IV Sessions

1. Renewal

Preparation: Re-read Chapter 1 of *Called To Be One*. Bring a large disposable street map of your town, village or local area, a flip chart or large sheets of paper and some coloured marker pens. If you wish to illustrate the discussion about your community, cut out some newspaper and magazine pictures of issues you anticipate members of the group will raise or which you think will inspire some ideas. Bring paper and pencils for drawing.

Introduction: Welcome everyone and introduce yourself. Ask everyone to introduce themselves in turn, giving their name, the church they attend and perhaps one thing about themselves. Although some people may know each very well; others may be strangers. Take care to bring everyone fully into the group. The introductory exercise about your local churches will help, because everybody will have something to say about their own church.

Action: The visits will take time. They could be spread out during the five weeks of study which would help your group to grow closer together.

2. Church

Preparation: Re-read Chapter 2 of *Called To Be One*. Bring the map prepared last week, a flip chart or large sheets of paper and coloured marker pens.

What denominations understand by 'church': These quotations are essential, but lengthy. You might prefer to stop after each one and discuss it, using the three questions given at the end of this group of quotations each time.

Meditation: Choose the story you feel will be most helpful to your group.

3. Unity

Preparation: Re-read Chapters 3, 6.28 and 7.12-13 of *Called To Be One*. You could enliven this session by bringing along some pictures giving different images of 'unity' and 'united'. Bring paper and pencils for drawing. Bring a picture or object as a focus for the closing meditation.

4. Visible Unity

Preparation: Re-read Chapters 4, 5 and 6 of *Called To Be One*.

'Living sculpture'/tableaux: This exercise may be new to you, and a bit frightening! However those who have used it find it a very creative way of helping people to understand their own and other people's perceptions – and it can be fun!

Suggest the person creating the sculpture imagines the people they are working with are a lump of clay, or flowers for a flower arrangement, or dancers in a ballet. Ask them to visualise the theme and then place each person where they would like them to be to create the picture they have visualised, just as they would place the flowers or mould the clay or choreograph the dance. For example, for 'uniformity' they could ask everyone to stand in a line with their arms, legs and heads in exactly the same position as each other and tell everyone to have the same expression on their faces, or they might create a moving sculpture by playing a brief round of 'Simon Says' (ask the children if you have forgotten this game!). For 'communion of communions' you could ask one person to stand in the centre and ask the others to take a variety of positions around them while holding with one hand on to the person in the centre.

Think about possibilities for each model beforehand so you have some hints to offer the people asked to create each tableau or 'living sculpture' if they need help. One word of warning – be aware that some members of the group may be less able physically than others, so do not ask them to do things which might be difficult.

5. Mission Together

Preparation: Re-read Chapter 7 of *Called To Be One*. Bring the map you prepared in the first session, your own notes on the previous meetings and a flip chart or large sheets of paper and coloured marker pens.

Looking back over the work you have done: Encourage members to recall this themselves. Only use your notes if you find none of you can remember enough.

Sharing your conclusions: Try to get agreement on the answers to these questions. They are meant to be the group's responses rather than your own thoughts on what the group discussed.

SESSION 1 : RENEWAL

AIM : To learn about the churches in our community and discover how they are seeking to fulfil the ministry of reconciliation.

Introduction [10 mins]

As this is the first session, begin by introducing yourselves. Then ask one person to read the following message from the Presidents of Churches Together in England from the Preface of *Called To Be One*.

What kind of church is required to bear witness to the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit in our divided world today? What kind of church can help a country with racial tensions, with a growing gap between rich and poor, employed and unemployed and with a very high divorce rate? What kind of church can serve a Europe struggling to overcome the enmities of past centuries, but finding them breaking out afresh where the established order has been overthrown? What kind of church can bring reconciliation in a world in which a few powerful nations dictate the terms of trade to the poor nations, and in which ethnic and racial conflict is increasing?

*If the churches are to be more faithful and effective ambassadors of reconciliation in the world, they must no longer ignore the inherited divisions which have prevented them from being reconciled to one another, and renewed together for common witness. The purpose of *Called To Be One* is to start a widespread, ecumenical discussion in all our churches, undergirded by the persistent prayer of Jesus **That they may all be one that the world may believe.***

Your study group is part of this widespread, ecumenical discussion. Spend a few moments in prayer for your own group and for all the other groups sharing in this discussion.

Our churches [20 mins]

Place in the centre of the group a large (disposable!) street map of your local area.

Mark on the map the location, name and denomination of the church each of you attends. Add any other churches in the area. [Do not forget there may be Black Majority churches, house churches or other Christian groups which do not have their own building to meet in.]

Tell each other a little about your own church eg. worship, size of congregation, children's groups, mission outreach, community work.

What do you feel are the most important features of your church's life?

Our community [15 mins]

Around the map create a picture on large sheets of paper of the experience of people living in your area. You can do this by drawing pictures, pinning on photographs from newspapers and magazines or simply writing key words. In your picture try to show:

- ♦ what is good about life, people's joys and hopes
- ♦ what is difficult about life, people's needs and fears

Think of individuals and communities, of work and school and leisure activities, of the elderly and the young, of spiritual needs, of the economy, of the environment..... .

Our churches in our community [15 mins]

Look at the map and the picture of the community you have created.

Discuss the following questions:

- * What are the joys and the needs of local people?
- * What do the churches in the area offer to celebrate those joys and meet those needs?

As you find out what is happening use ribbons or string to join the local churches which you have marked on the map to the joys and needs they meet.

Churches together in a ministry of reconciliation [20 mins]

Read the following stories from *Called To Be One* of ways churches are working together in mission.

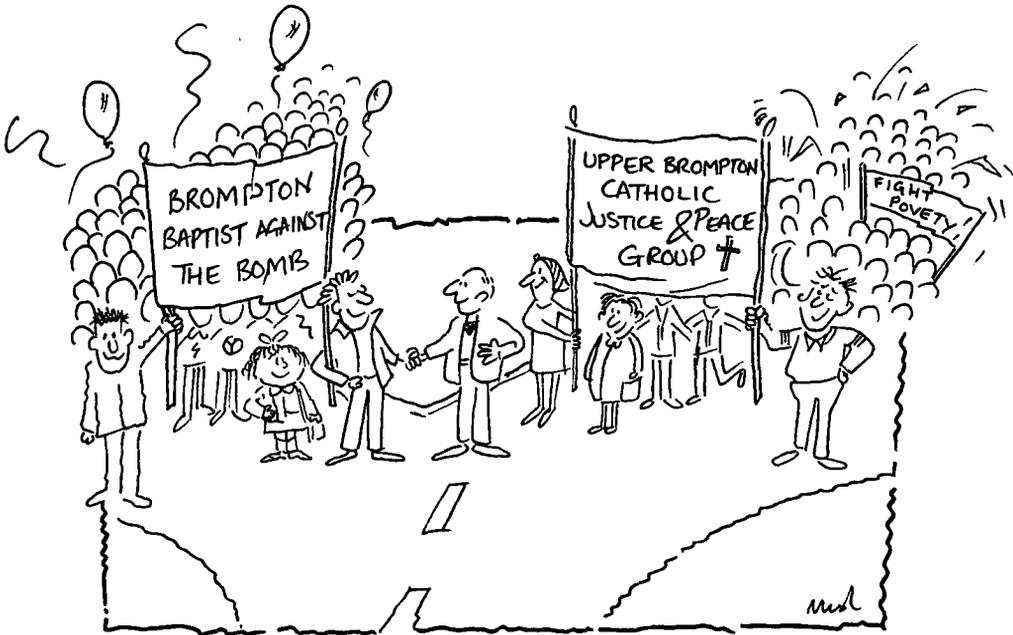
A. In Wickersley, Rotherham, evangelism is now part of the ongoing agenda of the churches severally and together. The local churches – Anglican, Roman Catholic and Methodist – announce 'Open House' to their community for a month each autumn. Regular worshippers are expected to bring a non-Christian friend to 'sample' what is on offer and opportunities are then provided for enquirers to attend an introduction to the Christian faith. (5.12)

B. At their best, local churches together are capable of prophetic action. One example is the recycling project pioneered in Milton Keynes as early as

the mid-1980's. This simultaneously provides employment and self-worth and signals the importance of caring for the planet and maximising its resources. (5.11)

C. The Churches National Housing Coalition is challenging local churches to tackle together issues of inadequate housing and widespread homelessness. This has the benefit of stimulating local action, in raising knowledge and awareness of the locality. In Swindon, church members who have made a commitment to campaigning on homelessness form the core of the management committee for a rent deposit scheme enabling homeless people to make a secure move into rented property. (5.10)

D. Large numbers of people bring their children to church for baptism or dedication, probably more come to church for weddings, and certainly more are brought to church for funerals. Many of these are on the fringe of the church. All need pastoral care, but most need preparation and education which will often be done better by local churches sharing resources and working jointly. This is beginning to happen in some areas. There may be a case for establishing regional ecumenical centres which could be a focus for the provision of resources for all those who minister to people throughout the life cycle. (7.28-9)



What kind of church is required in our divided world?

Read the following passage from *Called To Be One*:

The goal of unity is the reconciliation of the world to God and to itself. The unity of the church is to be visible to the world. The church has been entrusted with Christ's message and ministry of reconciliation, and, to be credible, the church itself should be seen to be reconciled. This ministry of reconciliation includes the proclamation of the gospel by common witness and service in a world beset by injustice, oppression and pollution. (6.28i)

Think about this statement, look at the map and picture you created and the stories you have read.

In what ways are the churches in your area making the love of Christ known to local people? In answering this you might find it helpful to think about the following questions:

- ✱ How do the churches share the love of Christ?
- ✱ Are there any examples of the churches working or witnessing together?

Can you suggest any new ideas for your locality, perhaps inspired by the stories you read?

If your churches are separate, do you think this ministry would be more effective if the churches were united?

Closing Meditation [10 mins]

Read II Corinthians 5: 17-20

Each member of the group who wishes to do so may share briefly what this passage means to them, not for discussion but for silent reflection.

Pray for the churches represented in the group and their ministry of reconciliation.

Action

During the coming weeks try to find out more about the churches in your neighbourhood and what they are doing. Arrange to visit each other's churches, either as a group or as individuals. When members of the group come to your church encourage them to share in the worship and meet and talk with members.

SESSION 2 : CHURCH

AIM : To share our understandings of the word 'church' and explore what difference this makes to the way we work.

Introduction [5 mins]

Add to the map prepared last week any new information about local churches which group members have gathered during the week.

What do we understand by 'church'? [20 mins]



Tell each other what you mean by the word 'church'.

- * What and where is 'church' for you personally?
- * What does your own local congregation mean by the word 'church'?
- * What do you think the tradition or denomination to which your local church belongs means by the word 'church'?

On a flip chart or large sheet of paper make a list of the different understandings of 'church' shared in the group. Star any which are common to several members of the group – with a double star for any which are common to all members!

What do the churches understand by 'church'? [20 mins]

Read aloud the following summaries from *Called To Be One* of replies given by the denominations to the question 'How does your church understand the meaning of the word Church and how do you use the word?'. Where possible ask members to read out their own denomination's answer.

A. *Those churches which have a basic congregational structure (including **Baptists, Congregationalists, Independent Methodists**, and many of the **Black Majority churches**) emphasise their understanding of church as the local gathered and covenanted community of believers meeting together in one place for worship, nurture and mission. They also use the word to describe the universal communion of saints glimpsed imperfectly in the total reality of churches, denominations and Christian networks across the world and across time. They do not use the word 'church' to describe a denomination or any structure beyond the local. However they do value the wider interdependence of local Christian churches, linked in a national Union, Federation or Council, and the worldwide networks of solidarity in which they share. (2.2)*

B. *In **Roman Catholic** understanding the church is firstly present in every diocese (the local or particular church united to its bishop) and embodied in each congregation gathered to hear and proclaim the word of God and celebrate the Eucharist. Secondly the church is universal, a spiritual community of all those throughout the ages united to the Trinity, and also a worldwide society where unity is symbolised and sustained by communion with the see of Rome. Roman Catholics affirm that the unity and grace bestowed by Christ on his church are fully and dynamically present in the Roman Catholic Church. However the Second Vatican Council, in adopting the formula, the one church subsists in the Roman Catholic Church, acknowledged that the universal church extends beyond its boundaries. Roman Catholics therefore recognise that all who have been sealed in baptism are brought into 'real though imperfect communion' with the one catholic church. (2.3)*

C. *In **Orthodoxy** the basic unit which is given the title of 'church' is the eucharistic community gathered around its bishop. But each local church is united to every other in the universal church, and contains within it the fullness of what it is to be church. (2.4)*

D. *The **Church of England** similarly recognises the primary nature of the universal and local church. It uses the words 'local church' to refer both to the diocese with its bishop and to the parish. But it also uses the term 'church' of national and provincial churches. The Church of England was established by law at the Reformation and still sees itself as having a particular vocation to the nation as a whole. The Anglican Communion is comprised of autonomous, yet interdependent, provincial and national*

churches and the Church of England sees itself as part of the universal or worldwide church. (2.6)

*E. The **Methodist Church** emphasises the interconnectedness and interdependence of the church at every level (The Connexional Principle). The sharing of resources and fellowship across the local congregations, circuits and districts can be seen as integral to Methodist understanding of the church as communion. Methodists affirm the authentic churchly existence of sister Trinitarian churches, which are organised in other ways. (2.8)*

*F. The **Moravian Church** and the **Salvation Army** combine (in rather different ways) the sense of local congregation, held by many in the Free Churches, with the consciousness of being a world-wide church with an international structure. (2.5)*

*G. The **House Churches** pay at least as much attention to the meaning of apostleship for their missionary communities as they do to the meaning of church as a called-out assembly or meeting. **Black Majority** churches have a similarly strong missionary motivation. Their leaders are now concerned to bring about a greater mutual accountability among their growing number of local churches. (2.9)*

*H. The **Religious Society of Friends** does not usually use the word 'church'. However Friends do have a positive understanding of the church universal and local. The universal or catholic church, comprising the whole number of those who have been called out of the world and turned to the light by the Spirit of God, is made partially visible in particular or local assemblies of those gathered by the Spirit to worship God, to bear witness to the truth and to care for one another. (2.10)*

*I. The **United Reformed Church** understands the term 'church' to mean the universal church of Jesus Christ of all Christians in every land and age. It also uses the word of its local congregations of members (and their children) committed to its life and work. It uses the word 'church' of the wider councils of the United Reformed Church, and of similar congregations, councils and national bodies of other denominations. (2.11)*

(Fuller responses can be found in Chapter 2 of *Called To Be One*.)

Questions for discussion

Do you recognise what is said about your own denomination? How close is it to your own understanding?

If there are things you do not understand in the descriptions given by other denominations, ask members of the group from those churches to explain

them. In replying, try to give examples to demonstrate how the principle described works in practice.

Is there anything you have learnt from these quotations which you would like to add to your list of understandings of 'church'?

The local and universal church [15 mins]

Called To Be One discovered that for all churches "The reality of the church is to be found both in the local congregation of the faithful, and in the universal body of all Christians past, present and to come." (6.28ii)

Share a few ideas of what it means to you to belong to the local church.

Spend a few minutes thinking on your own of ways in which your own local church recognises that it is part of the universal church.

You could think about your experience of the world-wide church, for instance:

- * Have you worshipped in a church in another country, for example when you were on holiday or working abroad?
- * Does your local congregation have links with a congregation in another country?
- * Does your church have a world-wide structure or belong to a world-wide body?
- * Do you have any missionary links with churches in other countries eg. through your denomination, missionary society or a missionary order?

Think too about 'the whole body of Christians past, present and to come':

- * Do you ask the saints and martyrs to pray for you?
- * Do you celebrate your church anniversary?
- * Does your church have any special objects which commemorate people or events and are carefully preserved for the future (a Bible, a window, vestments, a communion cup....)?

Tell each other some of the things you have been thinking about.

In what ways do these experiences, customs and objects give you a sense of

belonging together in one universal church?

Add to your list any fresh understandings you have gained by thinking about the universal church – and star any which are common to members of the group.

Discovering differences [25 mins]

On a flip chart or large sheet of paper list some things on which you differ in your understanding of church. You might find it easier to do this if you consider some practical things, for instance:

- * Is 'church' primarily the local community of Christians, a national body or a world-wide body?
- * Does 'local' refer to the congregation or the diocese – or both?
- * Does your church have bishops?
- * At what level are decisions on matters of faith and morals taken – locally, nationally or internationally?
- * Who is involved in the choice and appointment of a minister or priest for your local church?
- * How do people become members of your church?

(You can find out more about all these and other issues in Chapter 2 and the Appendices of *Called To Be One*.)

Discuss whether the differences you have discovered make it impossible for the churches to unite.

Are there ways in which some or all of these differences could remain in a visibly united church?

Compare this list with your list of what we have in common – are the things on which we agree more important than the differences?

Meditation [5 mins]

Read I Corinthians 1:1-3.

Think quietly about the significance of Paul's greeting: the letter is written to a **local** community of Christians: God's church in Corinth. The very first sentence reminds them that they belong to the **universal** church: all God's

people in every place. It is because the Corinthians are a local community of Christians joined in Christ to all other communities of Christians that Paul implores them to resolve their differences and love one another.

Read **one** of the following stories of fellowship in the universal church.

A. The Russian Orthodox Bishop Basil of Sergievo, who visited the churches of Albania together with an interdenominational party from the British Isles, observed that the Baptist member of the party had a virtually identical experience of fellowship with Albanian Baptists to his own experience of visiting his fellow Orthodox. (7.7)

B. The World Alliance of Reformed Churches declared in 1982 that the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa was guilty of heresy because of its theological justification of apartheid. The World Alliance has no direct control over the Dutch Reformed Church, but its declaration effectively excluded it from the counsels of the Alliance and carried great moral authority. More recently the Dutch Reformed Church has retracted much of its teaching on apartheid. Other church groupings in South Africa declared that apartheid was too strong for a divided church, and appealed to churches across the world to support their struggle for freedom. Many churches and Christian world communions did this, and had considerable influence in the overthrow of apartheid. (2.35)

*C. Since the Second Vatican Council popular Roman Catholic thinking about mission has been transformed. Fifty years ago 'the missions' were a specialist occupation performed by priests, monks and nuns overseas... In 1975 in *Evangelisation in the Modern World* Pope Paul VI called for evangelisers everywhere to speak to the world of a God they themselves knew. He asked Catholics 'Do you really believe what you are proclaiming? Do you live what you believe? Do you really preach what you live?' Evangelisation is seen as the whole task of the whole church in every land. (Appendix A.11)*

Pray for the church throughout the world, remembering especially Christians in other countries known to members of the group.

Action

During the coming week talk to other members of your congregation and find out what they most value in your own tradition.

SESSION 3 : UNITY

AIM : *To explore what we understand by the word 'unity'.*

Images of unity [15 mins]



Share some images you have of the words 'unity', 'united' and 'union': to get you started – a family, an orchestra, a football team, a group of nations.....

Share some personal experiences (good or bad) you have of being united with others.

Looking at all these images and experiences, what factors do you think create and maintain 'unity'?

Factors which are often identified include shared experience, a strong leader, a common objective, acceptance of diversity, a common enemy. Can you think of any more?

A biblical picture of paths towards unity [20 mins]

Read I Corinthians 1:10-13; 12:4 – 13:13 and the following brief commentary.

Share the readings around the group.

We have already looked at the beginning of Paul's first letter to the Corinthians. There he acknowledges their Christian calling, but he quickly comes to the main purpose of his letter. The Corinthians are quarrelling and divided (1:11,12) and Paul challenges this with a reminder of the message

he brought them of Christ's death for their salvation. He tells them that it does not matter who brought them the message, Apollos, or Paul, or indeed anyone else. Apollos and Paul were simply 'God's agents in bringing them to faith' (3:5).

In subsequent chapters he offers advice on the matters about which they were quarrelling. If you read this advice you will discover many of the factors you identified as helping to create and maintain unity. There is the shared experience of salvation in Christ (chapter 1), Paul's apostolic leadership (Chapter 9), regulations on matters that troubled them, like marriage (Chapter 7) and eating meat consecrated to heathen deities (Chapter 8), recognition of 'varieties of gifts and service' (Chapter 12) and throughout, the struggle to achieve a Christian way of life amid the threat of a return to 'pagan' ways.

When we read the letter in context, we realise what Paul is doing. He is working out ways for the Corinthians to heal their divisions. In Chapter 12 he presents a powerful image of unity in Christ, which he compares to the human body. There is great variety and diversity, but all parts contribute to the life and unity of the whole body. He declares that the strongest binding force of this unity is love (Chapter 13). Love, with faith and hope, will endure eternally when all human endeavour fades. Ultimately it is love, the greatest gift, which he urges upon them.

Questions for discussion

Can we learn anything from Paul's letter for ourselves as we seek Christian unity?

In what ways is the image of the body a helpful way to understand unity?

Experiencing unity [30 mins]

Read the following quotation from *Called To Be One* which recalls the bible passage we have just been studying.

Archbishop Robert Runcie and Pope John Paul II declared together in 1989 that the way forward to unity was not only about the removal of obstacles, but also about the exchange of gifts. This requires Christians of different churches to get to know one another, and to be willing to enter sympathetically, but not uncritically, into one another's history, traditions and ongoing life and to forge deeper and stronger bonds of love. This... can happen in any local group of churches together, or wherever Christians of different churches meet, and particularly as they are willing to learn to worship in one another's traditions. (7.12)

Take a few moments to think what is the gift you most value in your own

church or tradition.

Get into pairs with someone from a different denomination.

Ask each other:

✳ What do you like about my church?

✳ What do you find difficult in my church?

Tell each other what you most value in your own church.

In the full group, draw up a list of riches from the different traditions which members of the group value and the difficulties they mention. Make sure all the churches represented in the group are included.

Look together at your list of the gifts and difficulties. How might our different ways of doing things reflect different ways of understanding truths we all hold?

Read **one** of the following passages from *Called To Be One* and share any similar experiences you may have.

A. A Pentecostal minister testified that, during a united service in the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, she suddenly realised that the Anglican bowing to the altar and the Roman Catholic genuflecting to the reserved sacrament were reminding themselves and the whole congregation of the presence of God in the church, just as she did when she began by greeting her brothers and sisters with the words 'Give honour to the Holy Spirit'. (7.13)

Think about this story.

Share with each other any experiences you have had of times when you realised the meaning of something you found difficult in another church?

B. Called To Be One speaks of the experience many Christians have of 'koinonia'. This is a Greek word used in the New Testament. It has many meanings – community, communion, sharing, fellowship, participation, solidarity. It expresses the divine origin and goal of all ecumenical work. It places the Holy Trinity in unity at the heart of all unity. It allows for the active role of the Holy Spirit in work for unity. (3.13)

Are there any members of the group who have experienced 'koinonia': times when sharing in worship or activities with Christians of other traditions has been a very deep experience, 'leaping across the gaps between our different practices as a revelation from God' (3.13)?

Tell each other what those experiences felt like and how your faith has grown or developed because of them.

Christian unity [20 mins]

In their responses to *Called To Be One's* questions about unity, the churches demonstrated that they shared many similar understandings. There are ten main points. Here are the first five. Ask a different member of the group to read each one. Think quietly about what each statement means to you before moving on to the next one.

i. The goal of unity is the reconciliation of the world to God and to itself.

ii. The reality of the church is local and universal.

iii. Unity is God's gift: it is fundamentally a spiritual unity and not primarily based on human organisation or ecclesiastical institutions.

iv. The word 'koinonia' provides an excellent description of this unity, which is experienced by Christians as they live and work together.

v. This unity is not uniformity, but includes legitimate diversity. (6.28i-v)

Draw a picture or diagram illustrating the idea of Christian unity you have gained during this session.

Show your pictures to one another – explain them if necessary!

Are any of the five points of agreement given above reflected in your pictures?

Meditation [5 mins]

Spend a few minutes in silence meditating on the theme of I Corinthians 13: "There are three things that last for ever: faith, hope and love; and the greatest of the three is love." To focus your thoughts you might like to use an object illustrating unity, such as a lighted candle, a Bible, a Celtic cross or the Rublev ikon of the Trinity (see illustration on page iv of this book).

Pray for tolerance, understanding and trust in your relationships with people from other churches.

Action

During the coming week gather examples of ways your local churches are working together.

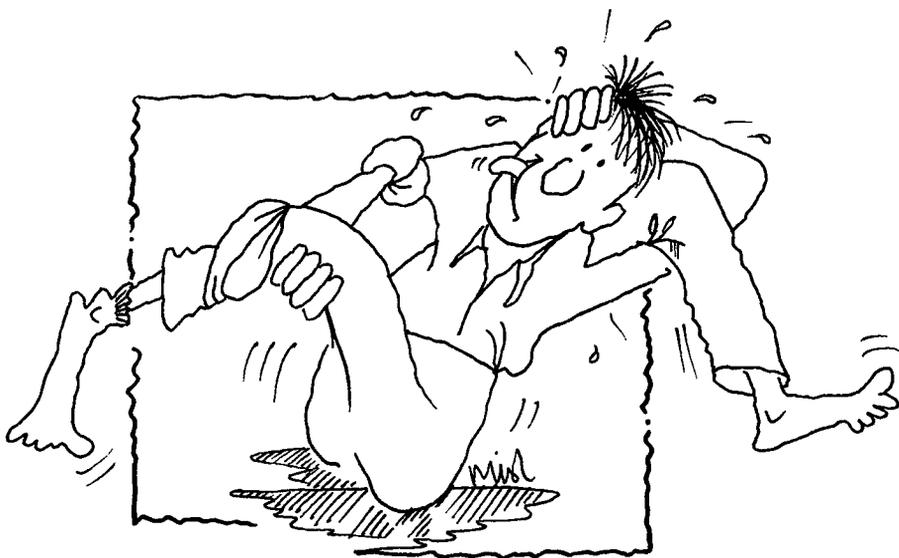
SESSION 4 : VISIBLE UNITY

AIM : *To explore our visions of visible unity.*

Introduction [5 mins]

Share the information you have gathered of ways your local churches are working together. This study group is one example.

Understanding visible unity [15 mins]



A 'Living Sculpture'!

Over the years the churches have focused on different 'models' of visible unity. *Called To Be One* lists eight. Listed below are a few of them. As each one is read out, ask one person to arrange the other members of the group into a 'living sculpture' or tableau which represents the model. You will find ideas about how to do this in the leaders' notes.

Uniformity All churches are the same. There were attempts to impose this

in England in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries by Acts of Uniformity. (6.11)

Federal unity The denominations agree to co-operate with one another but remain distinct and autonomous. The Free Church Federal Council is an example. (6.12)

Organic unity or union Distinctive gifts and traditions are retained but the denominations die to be reborn within the unity of a living and integrated fellowship. The Church of South India and the Church of North India are examples. (6.13)

Communion of communions The concept of all communions (denominations) being in communion with the Bishop of Rome, sharing the same dogma, sacraments and ministry, but with a diversity of theological interpretation, canon law, liturgy and spirituality. An idea developed by Cardinal Willebrands in 1970. (6.15)

Conciliar fellowship Local churches in each place in relationship with local churches in every other place, with representatives meeting together when necessary to fulfil their common mission. A model developed at the Nairobi Assembly of the World Council of Churches in 1975. (6.16)

Think about the living sculptures you formed – in which of these models of visible unity did you feel happiest – and in which unhappiest?

Have you discovered any helpful understandings about Christian unity through the sculptures?

Examples of visible unity [20 mins]

Read the following examples of visible unity from Chapter 5 of *Called To Be One*. Ask a different person to read each one.

A. Single congregation Local Ecumenical Partnership

A single congregation LEP may include members of three or four different congregations, usually Anglican, Baptist, Methodist and United Reformed. Many of these are in new town or new housing areas. These churches have seen the building up of the local community as a priority, and the local people have recognised the one visible church as a symbol and an agent of unity in their community. (5.16-20)

B. Multiple congregation Local Ecumenical Partnership

In these LEPs churches of different denominations usually retain their own identity, buildings, forms of worship and ministers, but agree to work very

closely together, to share resources and to meet regularly for joint worship. Sometimes these are called 'local covenants' in which the churches have covenanted with God and with one another to live out their common calling to proclaim the gospel and serve their community. Roman Catholic parishes are able to be full partners, because eucharistic communion is not the focus. Worship styles remain distinctively denominational – so House Churches and others with different forms of worship, such as the Religious Society of Friends, can participate. (5.21-2)

C. Ecumenical Centres

In some new towns such as Telford and Milton Keynes ecumenical centres have been established where the churches in a wider than neighbourhood area can make ecumenical resources available to the community. These include a great variety of work such as industrial mission, ministry in a shopping centre, youth work or Further Education Chaplaincy as well as regular worship. (5.25)

D. Churches Together at Intermediate Level

One of the key developments in the ecumenical scene in England during the last ten years has been the growth of intermediate ecumenical bodies covering virtually every part of the country. Their activities vary, but can include:

- ♦ *regular meetings of representatives and leaders*
- ♦ *shared prayer and theological discussion*
- ♦ *sharing resources and the development of common strategy*
- ♦ *one church acting on behalf of all on issues on which it has special expertise*
- ♦ *integrated structures, as in United Reformed/Methodist Area in Wiltshire*
- ♦ *ecumenical oversight, as in Milton Keynes. (5.27-32)*

E. Churches Together at national level

Churches Together in England and the Council of Churches for Britain and Ireland, together with ecumenical bodies in Scotland and Wales, were formed in 1990. The aim of the new ecumenical bodies is to bring churches together. Their activities include corporate worship, meetings to plan common action, networking of denominational staff with similar responsibilities at national level and support for local and intermediate ecumenical

work. They do not make decisions on behalf of the churches but refer major decisions back to the decision-making bodies of all the churches. Denominational patterns continue but with increasing interaction and mutual influence. (5.33-40)

F. International ecumenical work

Churches in Britain are involved in several international bodies. These include the Conference of European Churches, which works very closely with the Council of Roman Catholic Bishops Conferences in Europe, particularly on peace, justice and reconciliation, and the World Council of Churches. Although the Roman Catholic Church is not a member of the World Council of Churches, it is a member of its Faith and Order Commission. Through persistent work in the World Council the churches have considerably developed their understanding of visible unity. (5.41-44)

(See also the chart at the end of Chapter 5 of *Called To Be One*)

Questions for discussion

Do any members of the group have experience of these or other forms of visible unity? Invite them to tell the group what difference that experience has made to their understanding of 'church' and 'unity'.

Think of the examples of joint activities you shared at the beginning of this session. Have these made a difference to the life and witness of churches in your area?

Read the following summary of visions of unity from *Called To Be One*.

Organic union looks forward to the end of existing denominations and their separate structures in favour of a union of them within one church.

Unity in reconciled diversity looks forward to the continuation of existing denominations and churches with their distinctive characteristics, but with mutual acceptance of one another's members, ministers and sacraments, and a much closer working together than is common at present.

However there is evidence that these two visions are not sharply polarised. Christian unity is as much a **process** as an event, and even those committed to organic union recognise that unity in reconciled diversity may well be one of the stages on the way to visible union. (6.26-7)

Which vision of visible unity do members of the group have? Can you agree?

Visible bonds of unity [45 mins]

Called To Be One provides a 'common vision' of the visible unity of the church. It suggests that most (but not all) churches would regard certain elements as vital for their life and therefore vital to a visibly united church. We looked at the first five in the last session and are now ready to look at the second five. Ask a different person to read each one. Allow a pause between each one so group members can think about it.

vi. *Unity is found in the common confession of the apostolic faith, revealed in the Holy Scriptures and summarised in the creeds of the early church.*

vii. *God unites all Christians in baptism by grace through faith, and thus brings them into membership of the one church of Jesus Christ.*

viii. *In the eucharist God gives communion with Christ himself, and thus renews the communicant's union with Christ and with his body, the church.*

ix. *God gave gifts of ministry to each member of the church. Among these gifts are the ministry of the word and the sacraments; the church sets aside and ordains ministers for this particular ministry. This ministry is exercised in the church in a personal, collegial and communal way. It should be personal, as the minister's role in the congregation is often exercised by one minister acting alone. It should be collegial, since ordained ministers should consult one another and share their common task. It should be communal since the ordained minister's task cannot be exercised apart from the participation of the community of the faithful.*

x. *The church is bound together under the authority of Christ, its head, and reaches decisions under the guidance of the Holy Spirit in particular ways. These ways vary from church to church, but they are not purely functional. They express the mutual accountability of the members of the body and are designed to maintain fellowship (koinonia). (6.28 vi-x)*

Take **one or two** of the five points noted above and tell each other what your church's practice is – what you do, why you do it and what effect it has on other churches, for instance:

- * What steps does your church take to maintain agreement in faith?
- * Does your church recognise the baptism of other churches?
- * How do people become members of your church?
- * Who can be admitted to communion in your church?

- * Do your ordained ministers work cooperatively with your congregation?
- * How does your church make decisions?

(You can find discussion of all these issues in the Appendices of *Called To Be One*.)

How important do you think the differences are?

Which ones stop you from coming into closer unity locally?

What do you think has happened to these differences in areas where churches have developed closer relationships eg. local ecumenical partnerships or ecumenical oversight?

Do you think there is sufficient agreement between you on any of the things you have discussed for the churches in your neighbourhood to make progress in unity?

Meditation [5 mins]

Read Ephesians 4: 1-16.

Let the members of the group, who wish to do so, select from this passage one word or phrase which speaks to their heart and briefly say why.

Pray by name for people known to you who are engaged in ecumenical work.

Action

During the coming week talk with members of your own congregation and gather any ideas they may have for closer unity between your local churches.

SESSION 5 : MISSION TOGETHER

AIM : To discover how unity could become more visible locally in response to the churches' commitment to mission and to sum up what your local group wishes to contribute to the Called To Be One process.

Introduction [10 mins]

Place in the centre of the group the map and information about the churches you prepared in the first session. Briefly share with each other any ideas for closer unity locally which you gathered during the week and make a note of these.

Our missionary calling [30 mins]

Read the following passage from *Called To Be One*.

What has become crystal clear in England is that the churches today exist in a missionary situation. Many churches are discovering that the combining and working together of the churches in mission provides the strongest incentive to closer unity. It has been in the new towns and new housing areas, where the churches faced a clear mission challenge, that many of the best ecumenical partnerships have been developed. It is for example in Milton Keynes that the churches have jointly appointed an ecumenical moderator so that one church leader may exercise pastoral and missionary leadership and relate to the secular powers on behalf of all the churches. Why cannot other towns and cities follow this example?

There is convergence among the churches that evangelisation includes: proclaiming the good news; baptising and nurturing new Christians in the worshipping community of the church; serving those in need; seeking to transform the unjust structures of society, and conserving the environment. These must be a priority for the churches and therefore a priority for joint or coordinated work wherever that is possible in conscience. (7.25-6)

What are the mission opportunities which could encourage your local churches to closer visible unity? Use your map and the information you have gathered about the churches and local community to help you think about this.

Write the mission opportunities on a large sheet of paper or flip chart and look at them together. Agree which three or four are priorities for joint or coordinated work.



What sort of visibly united church does your neighbourhood need to respond to these mission priorities?

You could discuss:

- ♦ the work to be done
- ♦ the ministry needed (lay and ordained, paid and unpaid)
- ♦ the relationship between the churches
- ♦ what to do with your buildings
- ♦ what each congregation might be required to give up and take on to participate fully in this ministry
- ♦ what help you might need from your intermediate ecumenical body

If a workable scheme is developing, decide how these ideas could best be shared with your local church leaders. **Be Practical!**

Biblical Reflection [20 mins]

Read John 17:14-23 and the following comment by William Temple.

‘We are reminded how transcendent is the theme which alone deserves the name of Christian unity. We meet in committees and construct our schemes of union; in the face of the hideous fact of Christian divisions we are driven to this; but how paltry are our efforts compared with the call of God! The way to the union of Christendom does not lie through committee-rooms, though there is a task of formulation to be done there. It lies through personal union with the Lord so deep and real as to be comparable with His union with the Father. When all believers are truly “in Christ”, then their witness will have its destined effect – *that the world may believe that thou didst send me.*’

Readings in St John’s Gospel William Temple Macmillan 1939

Questions for discussion

What challenge does the prayer of Jesus make to our divided church?

What does this passage and William Temple’s comment say to you about our concern with such matters as church worship, structure and authority?

Do you think the present discussions about unity take seriously Jesus’ desire ‘that the world may believe’?

Is the church, are you, prepared for suffering in the search for the unity which will witness to the love of God for the world?

Sharing your conclusions [25 mins]

Think back over the work you have done during the past four weeks. Summarise on a large sheet of paper or flip chart what you discovered:

- ♦ what you believe the church should be doing in mission and service in your area (Sessions 1 and 5)
- ♦ what you understand about the churches represented in the group (Session 2)
- ♦ what you understand about unity (Sessions 3)
- ♦ what the possibilities are for greater visible unity (Session 4)

Using these points for reference, discuss the following questions. Send your thoughts on them to your county ecumenical officer.

- 1. What has your group resolved to do to encourage growth into closer unity in your locality? Are specific changes being recommended for any churches?**
- 2. Do members of your group believe in *organic union*, looking for the end of separate denominations, or in *unity in reconciled diversity*, looking for closer working together of continuing distinct denominations (See Session 4's discussions)? Is the latter a stage on the way to the former? Or do you have some other vision of unity?**
- 3. Does your group think it would be helpful for some (eg. two or three) churches or denominations to take steps towards closer unity, even though other churches and denominations may not yet be ready to join them?**
- 4. Have you any other comments you would like to make?**

Meditation [5 mins]

Reflect on the following words from the Preface of *Called To Be One*.

As they look forward to the beginning of the third millennium of the Christian era the churches in England have realised that they cannot preach the good news that God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, and expect to be believed, while they are not reconciled to one another.

Pray for forgiveness for our divisions and that we may become faithful and effective ambassadors of reconciliation.

ONE-DAY STUDY

AIM: To introduce the Called To Be One process and encourage people to become more fully involved in it.

This programme would be ideally suited to a joint gathering of the decision-making bodies of an ecumenical group of local churches (Parochial Church Council, Elders Meeting etc). It takes participants through the same process as the five sessions, although inevitably in less detail. Be prepared to adjust it to the time you have available and the number and experience of people attending the meeting.

Quotations are not given in the text, but reference is made to the relevant section of *Called To Be One* and this *Workbook*. In three places, one in each session, input is required from participants – check these and ask people to prepare short presentations in advance.

A flip chart and pens are essential. An overhead projector would be useful.

SESSION 1 : CHURCH [1 hour 15 mins]

Introduction to the *Called To Be One* process [15 mins]

Invite a speaker knowledgeable about the process, such as your county ecumenical officer, to introduce the theme. If this is not possible, read the Preface to *Called To Be One*.

What we understand by 'church' [30 mins]

Form into buzz groups of three or four, making sure at least three denominations are represented in each group (eg. Anglican, Roman Catholic, Free Church). Ask people to explain to each other what they understand by 'church'.

Come back together and ask three or four people to present their denomination's understanding of 'church'. If they wish, they can read or include the relevant text from this *Workbook* Session 2.

Record on a flip chart the understandings of the church local and universal which have been shared in the buzz groups and presentations.

Discovering differences [25 mins]

Ask participants for the main differences they experience between the churches. Suggest they think about specific things eg. concepts of 'local' and 'universal', the eucharist, Christian initiation and membership, authority in

the church, ministry. Record the differences on a flip chart.

In the buzz groups formed earlier, discuss:

- ♦ whether these differences make it impossible for the churches to unite
- ♦ whether all or some of these differences could remain in a visibly united church

In plenary record on a flip chart the main points of group discussions.

Meditation [5 mins]

To focus your thoughts during the meditations which follow each session you might like to use an object illustrating unity, such as a lighted candle, a Bible, a Celtic cross or the Rublev ikon of the Trinity (see page iv of this *Workbook*).

Read I Corinthians 1:1-3

Ask participants to spend a few moments in silence reflecting on their experience of the church local and universal and close with prayers for the church.

SESSION 2 : UNITY [1 hour 15 mins]

Pictures of unity [15 mins]

Ask participants for their images of 'unity', 'united' and 'union' and for biblical pictures of unity (see page 18 of this *Workbook*).

Then ask them to identify factors they feel contribute to unity in the images and biblical pictures. Record these on a flip chart.

Experiencing unity [30 mins]

Ask two or three people to describe briefly experiences through which they have come to a deeper understanding of Christian unity.

Read passage 7.13 from *Called To Be One* (pages 56-57).

Ask participants to take a few moments to think about the gift they most value in their own church or tradition.

Break into the buzz groups formed earlier. Each person in turn asks the others in their group: 'what do you like about my church?' and 'what do you

find difficult in my church?' When this process is complete they may then tell each other what they most value in their own church.

In the full group, list on a flip chart the aspects of the different traditions which participants value and the difficulties they mention.

Discuss how our different ways of doing things might reflect different ways of understanding truths we all hold.

Christian unity [25 mins]

Using a flip chart or overhead projector present passage 6.28 i-x from *Called To Be One* (pages 50-51). Explain that these ten points outline a common vision of visible unity derived from the responses of the churches to questions about their understanding of 'church', 'unity' and 'visible unity'. In this session look at the first five points. Points vi-x will be considered in the next session.

Ask people to discuss in pairs how far they agree with the first five points.

In the full group discuss each one in turn. See how many people agree with them – and note any denominational differences.

Meditation [5 mins]

Spend a few minutes in silence meditating on the theme of I Corinthians 13: "There are three things that last for ever: faith, hope and love; and the greatest of the three is love."

Pray for tolerance, understanding and trust in relationships between people from different churches.

SESSION 3 : VISIBLE UNITY [2 hours]

Models of Unity [20 mins]

On a flip chart or overhead projector present the five models of unity given at the beginning of Session 4 in this *Workbook*. [Alternatively present all eight from *Called To Be One* 6.11-18 (pages 47-48).] Check that everyone understands them. Be prepared to answer questions – and to seek answers from other participants. [If you wish, use the 'living sculpture' exercise suggested at the beginning of Session 4 to present the models.]

In pairs discuss the models and their relevance to the search for visible unity today.

Present on the flip chart or overhead projector the descriptions of 'organic

union', 'unity in reconciled diversity' and both as part of a process, given in the next section of Session 4 in this *Workbook*.

Find out which vision group members have – perhaps by a show of hands. If there is time, discuss them together and see whether anyone wishes to change their mind.

Examples of visible unity [30 mins]

Ask your people present in the meeting to describe from their own experience some of the examples of visible unity (A - F) given in Session 4 in this *Workbook*. Allow time for questions and discussion about them and exchanging other experiences.

Visible bonds of unity [30 mins]

Return to the flip chart or overhead projector presentation of the ten points of a common vision of unity (6.28 i-x) used at the end of the last session. Draw attention this time to points vi-x.

Divide into new groups (eg representatives of neighbouring churches; church leaders at county level).

Ask each group to discuss **two** of the points (share them round so that all the points are discussed). Suggest they:

- ♦ tell each other what their own church's practice is
- ♦ discuss how important they think the differences are
- ♦ discuss what they think is happening to those differences in the examples of visible unity shared earlier

Ask each group to report back briefly to the full group.

Our missionary calling [30 mins]

Staying in these groups:

- ♦ consider how the process can be carried forward in their area
- ♦ discuss the four questions given at the end of Session 5 in this *Workbook* and make a written note of their responses

The organiser is asked to forward these responses to the county ecumenical officer, perhaps with a summary of the main points.

Meditation [10 mins]

Read Ephesians 4:1-16

Ask two people to reflect on what this passage teaches them about unity.

Close with prayers for those involved in ecumenical work and engaged in the search for visible unity.



THE RIVER

AIM : To enable Christians of different traditions to express to one another their beliefs and feelings about the life and ordering of their churches and their understanding of visible unity.

*The ecumenical movement has often been compared to a river. This all-age activity gives people the chance to create their own 'Unity River', using the image of a river and its features to represent issues from **Called To Be One**.*

This exercise is distinct from the five sessions. It can be done on its own or as an introduction or follow up to the sessions. For example if you have several groups going on in your area you could invite all participants to a joint meeting before or after their five meetings. It can involve people of all ages, it's fun and it may prove a good way of introducing children and young teenagers to the exploration of church unity.

Preparation

1. You might find it helpful to get a small group together to plan the event.
2. Read *Called To Be One* and make a note of the key issues it discusses.
3. Prepare a list of suitable river features eg. rocks, whirlpools, backwaters, waterfalls, underground streams, S-bends, swamps, pollution outfalls, islands, dams,..... and a list of issues from *Called To Be One* eg. bishops, church meeting, baptism, the pope, the eucharist, the scriptures, local ecumenical partnership, unity negotiations, Churches Together groups....
4. Discuss or think through the issues and decide which ones to use. Limit these to a number people can easily handle in the time and space available.
5. Choose your location: the more people you have the more space you will need. Use a large hall, or several rooms, or if the weather is fine (and not too windy!) use a churchyard or church garden.
6. Gather materials:

- ◆ Items to mark the river and its features. Use your imagination over this. The river could be marked out in ribbon, discarded paper chains, or long strips of material or card. Cartons, newspapers, chairs, potted plants, old curtains and similar things could be used to mark the features.
- ◆ Coloured marker pens and paper or card to name parts of the river and the aspect of church life they represent.

7. Decide how to organise the event – think about the number of people likely to come, the ages of children expected, the time you will need, whether to serve refreshments, how to advertise it etc.

8. If you do not want a large event, the exercise can be scaled down and done on a large table top. You will still need strips of card or ribbon for the river, and coloured marker pens and paper, but you could gather magazine and newspaper photographs of rivers, waterfalls, swamps etc. to mark the features.

The Event

1. Explain the purpose of the event and what people are going to do.

2. Label one end of the hall *The Sea of Visible Unity* and ask people to suggest how it should be portrayed – calm, or stormy, or out of sight, or...? Label the other end *The Source* – ask people for ideas about the springs of ecumenical movement and what name to give the source of the river.

3. Divide people into small groups (no more than four or five people in each) and make sure each group includes representatives of *at least* two different churches. Mix children in with the adults and remind people that everyone's views are important. Ask each group to create one section of the river, between the Source and the Sea, winding about as much as necessary.

4. Give each group the materials they need, a list of river features and a list of the issues you have chosen from *Called To Be One*. Ask them to use the features to represent the issues and create their river with them. Explain that this will give them an opportunity to discuss some difficult issues informally and see if they can agree what feature best represents each issue in the churches' progress towards unity and where it belongs in the river's long course.

Here are some examples.

People might see:

- ♦ the eucharist as bringing many different streams into the river or a dam which holds back the water (Appendix C)
- ♦ bishops as rocks which check the progress of the river or as banks which keep it on its course (4.19)
- ♦ independent local congregations as islands which the river leaves behind or the droplets which make it up (2.2.i; 4.29)
- ♦ shared spirituality, through worship, study and service together, as a deep channel within the rush and tumble of water or a backwater (3.12-13)
- ♦ the creation of new ecumenical instruments in 1990 as a swamp into which the river's energy is sapped or a waterfall which channels its power and pushes it forward (5.33-40)
- ♦ racism as polluting the waters (4.17; 5.9)
- ♦ solidarity with those who suffer as a whirlpool or a flood plane (5.10; 5.44)
- ♦ does the river ever reach the Sea of Visible Unity – or does it run away into the sands? (1.8-9;6.28)

5. Join together all the sections of your river. Ask each group to invite the others to walk along their section and explain the picture they have created.

6. In plenary discuss the exercise together. Did it help discussion on issues on which you differ and enable you to understand one another better? Did you gain a longer perspective – can you see places where the force of Unity River has changed the features which once marked it? Are there features ahead which could similarly be changed? Are there things you could do to deepen and direct the river's flow?

7. If there is an opportunity, invite others to view your river. Have stewards available to explain what you created and invite comments.

In the 1987 Swanwick Declaration the Churches in Britain resolved to 'move from co-operation to clear commitment to each other, in search of the unity for which Christ prayed'.

What kind of unity does Christ intend? What kind of unity will speak to our divided world?

Churches Together in England has asked its 22 member Churches nationally what they mean by the 'visible unity of the church'. Based on their responses as well as on the experience of churches working for unity and common mission locally it has published **Called To Be One** (ISBN 1 874295 10 7) price £2.50. This is available from bookshops, or by post from CCBI mailorder.

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