



Hope for the Planet

Saturday 10th June 2006
The Kings of Wessex School, Cheddar.
9.30 am to 4.00 pm



Chaired by The Rt Revd. Declan Lang –Diocese of Clifton

Cost £6.00

To include tea & coffee

Organised by
Somerset Churches Together & A Rocha

Brochures and Booking Forms from Robin Dixon at 01225 872903 or
sctog@blueyonder.co.uk or download from www.sctog.org.uk

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Somerset Churches Together Newsletter appears four times each year in October, January, April and July. Please send copy to: Robin Dixon, County Ecumenical Officer, 25, Claverton Road West, Saltford, Bristol BS31 3AL or sctog@blueyonder.co.uk

A Mission Strategy for Today

When I am not travelling around the West of England (my patch stretches from mid-Somerset and mid-Wiltshire up through Bristol and to the top of Gloucestershire), my wife and I usually worship in our local parish church at Rodden near Frome. Worship here is based on the old Prayer Book and is a marvellous occasional experience for me. It links one to the timeless, worshipping community of the people of God through ages and generations. There is, too, a sense of the otherness of God mediated through 'King James' language. To read the rubric of some of the services is to be put in touch with a time when the majesty and awesomeness of God really counted for something and individual accountability to God mattered. All this does something for me in my own spiritual journey.

My visits to Rodden are usually in the evening. In the morning I may have been in the heart of Bristol, Gloucester or Swindon with their streams of traffic coming to the material cathedrals of their shopping centres or in Weston-Super-Mare teeming with trippers (even on a January weekend) worshipping the sun (or praying for its appearance). As I walk or drive through those crowds I'm conscious how so much of what we do in our churches sets us apart from some 60% (so the statistic currently inform us) of the population who think we come from another planet. That 60% can make little sense of what goes on within Christian communities.

Ever since the Second World War, the mainstream denominations have struggled to 'be relevant' for those who do not link into what we are about. In Methodism we tried caravan missions, film services (sponsored by Lord Rank) and a whole range of what were in their time novel ideas. Very often, the emphasis was on getting people 'over the threshold' of our churches – 'if only we can get them in, we will be away' Perhaps the most successful example of this actually working was the first generation (in the 1970s) of what we called 'Family Services'. Parents of children who were sent to Sunday school often came to worship once a month. That wasn't too huge a step for them. After all, they had grown up in an age when so many of them had gone to Sunday school. Today, even those links rarely exist among people outside the Church. All of which poses the question 'How do we engage with the 60%?'

Well, for me it is about a 'Both-And' strategy. BOTH, working with those who are already in, or on the fringes of the Church, AND also looking for new ways to 'be Church' or be the body of Christ in the world beyond our own doorstep. Too often the suggestion has been made that we should abandon Church as we know it, either insisting 'it doesn't do anything for those outside' or insisting 'we must change our worship and everything else we do so that it

will appeal to those outside'. The outcome is usually total disillusionment of the faithful and few, if any, new Christians.

All those who follow Christ today are key players in mission – the Church has to be a place where the faithful are firmed up, nurtured and grown in their faith. For some their contribution to mission will be prayerful support, for others it will be actual engagement. Together, all the people of God need to develop the Church of today to be a powerhouse-resource for all Christians: offering the very best of worship to God and ensuring those already on the 'inside' are built up and not put off. For some this will be the sum of their contribution to being Church. They should not undervalue their contribution, neither should others belittle it. In many ways they will be mirroring the Remnant of the Old Testament: holding fast to the faith, looking for the ways in which they can 'speak a word in season' or do something which helps and challenges someone else.

AND there will be those who can engage in new ways of being Church. One of the privileges of my peripatetic role in the life of the Church is to visit and learn of some really exciting examples of where Christians are going out among that 60% and effectively engaging folk with God and the things of God.

If you are interested in exploring this 'Both-And' idea further, one of the best examples is the 'Fresh Expressions' project (www.freshexpressions.org.uk), currently being sponsored jointly by the Church of England and the Methodist Church

People look at the statistics and fear that the Church is in terminal decline. Well, I think it is fair to claim that the Church of Jesus Christ is actually going through a time of re-formation or re-shaping. Not any easy time to be a Christian, but an exciting one – a 'Both-And' time?

Ward Jones, Chair, Bristol Methodist District

Ammerdown

Ammerdown is a place of hospitality, goodwill and learning for people of all faiths and none. The centre and its mission are served by a lay resident community of people with a praying heart who which to continue and extend Ammerdown's work to foster understanding, tolerance and peace between people of different beliefs. The existing community is inviting those who might be discerning a call to join their work at Ammerdown to contact them and begin the journey of discernment. For more information, contact Anne Stevens on 01761 433709 or e-mail a.stevens@ammerdown.org.uk

The Anglican-Methodist Covenant

The Anglican–Methodist Covenant now has its dedicated website: www.anglican-methodist.org.uk. It contains background material, information, future events, shared stories and resources for all to use. Please have a look at it if you have the capability.

Our region was host to the first of a series of national workshops that give a presentation of the covenant. Entitled 'Living God's Covenant', it concentrated on the practical outworking of the Covenant rather than faith and order issues. Primarily for the leaders and resource personnel from the Church of England and the Methodist Church – the 'movers and shakers' in our districts and dioceses – about 70 people attended. Other denominational members were present including the chair and vice-chair of Somerset Churches Together, Bishop Declan Lang and Revd Wendy Baskett.

The programme themes were:

- Catching a vision for a covenant lifestyle
- Sharing in God's Mission
- Exploiting possibilities and addressing obstacles
- Working at our own shared participation in a covenant lifestyle

The day was structured on an act of prayer and worship and involved sharing individual experiences, small group work, discussions and an open forum.

A report on the Taunton workshop is available on the Anglican-Methodist Covenant website. The Power-point presentation used at the workshop is being made available for local adaptation and use. The Covenant Development Group that works on behalf of Somerset Churches Together is considering how it can cascade the 'Living God's Covenant' down to circuit and deanery level. One thing being considered is to organise meetings of deanery and circuit officers at several convenient locations in the region. The group is also encouraging local churches to make use of the material available on the web or through your ecumenical officers.

Meanwhile at a national level the work of Joint Implementation Commission (JIC) continues. The text of their interim report to General Synod and Conference last year is available on the web. It covers the following topics: Covenant Living, Bread and Wine at Communion, Presidency at the Eucharist and Inter-changeability of Ministry. The JIC has a large amount of serious issues to address and is appointing a consultant from each denomination to help them. Some of the topics the JIC are working on at present are: Episcopal ordination and confirmation, the diaconate, lay ministries, Christian initiation, theology of the Eucharist, Arminianism and Calvinism. That gives an

idea of the workload that the JIC is administering. As it works on these general issues I was told that the JIC is encouraged to hear of the increase in specific initiatives prompted by the Covenant at a local level.

Two important debates that will significantly affect the Covenant are 'Women Bishops' in the Church of England and 'What sort of Bishops?' in the Methodist Church. In our Covenant discussions it is important to recognise the pain being felt in the Church of England over the issue of woman bishops and the way forward on how the Methodist Church takes episcopacy into its system is far from clear. We must respect each others position as we seek to move closer together. But then that is just what the outworking of this Covenant calls us to do.

Finally may I again encourage you to look at the Anglican-Methodist website, there is a lot of useful information for you there

John Emmett, Methodist Ecumenical Officer



AN ANGLICAN-METHODIST COVENANT

Some Practical Suggestions

Anglican and Methodist Ecumenical Officers and other church representatives from all over the country met in November to talk about the progress of the Anglican–Methodist Covenant.

The following were among the steps forward they discussed. In certain areas, some of them have already been taken.

- Getting to know each other better, e.g. denominational representatives at circuit and synod meetings.
- Possible mutual recognition of Local Preachers and Readers.
- Beginning to make use of one another's service books.
- Progress on mutual recognition of ministry
- Appointments shared by districts and dioceses
- Joint meetings of circuit superintendents and rural deans
- Ecumenical education for clergy and lay leaders

Local Churches Together in Somerset

Local Councils of Churches have existed in cities, towns and villages since the end of the First World War but most were created in the years which followed the birth of the British Council of Churches at the end of the Second World War. Some are formal with constitutions and committees while others are more informal. Varying considerably in size, they are a very important part of the churches' work for unity in England. There are more than one thousand of them in England and, in the Somerset area, there are over thirty.

In many areas, they have come to be called local Churches Together or Christians Together groups but some have continued to be known as Councils of Churches. The purpose of the change of name is to move beyond the development of an ecumenical life which is separate from the lives of the churches and, instead, to bring the lives of the churches together so that they can share their lived experience of faith, life and witness with one another.

Some local Churches Together groups in Somerset face enormous challenges. Because they are sometimes seen to be something for the enthusiasts rather than the concern of all Christians, the number of people actively involved in them can be very small. Rather than releasing energy, some people see them as voracious consumers of it. Other groups have successfully enabled the local churches to develop and share a common life of prayer, worship and mission to the local community. As they have grown closer together, some local churches have found that their lives have been transformed. The work of local Churches Together groups has also helped the churches to become more effective agents of change in their communities.

Part of the role of Somerset Churches Together, along with the many other county and metropolitan Churches Together groups throughout England, is to help and support the local church groupings. Somerset Churches Together keeps in touch with Churches Together groups throughout the Somerset area through visits from the County Ecumenical Officer, a website, letters, phone calls and the newsletter. It also arranges an annual gathering for all in the area who are concerned with the unity and mission of the churches.

SOMERSET CHURCHES TOGETHER

ANNUAL GATHERING

SATURDAY 21 OCTOBER

WELLS UNITED CHURCH

9.30 am until 1.00 pm

Churches Together Groups in the Somerset Area



Bruton and Area Christians Together
Burnham and Highbridge Churches Together
Chard Churches Together
Chew Magna Ecumenical Group
Christians Together in Street and Walton
Christians Together in Bridgwater
Christians Together in Glastonbury
Christians Together in Minehead
Christians Together in Wells
Christians Together in Backwell
Christians Together in Bath – Central Zone
Christians Together in Bath – North East Zone
Churches Together in Bath – Oldfield Park, Southdown and Twerton Zone
Churches Together in Bath – South East Zone
Churches Together in Bath – Western Zone
Churches Together in Castle Cary and Ansford
Churches Together in Clevedon
Churches Together in Keynsham and Saltford
Churches together in Martock
Churches Together in Nailsea and District
Churches together in South Petherton
Churches together in Winscombe
Crewkerne Churches Together
Evercreech Ecumenical Group
Frome Area Churches together
Langport Christians Together
Paulton Churches Together
Prayer and Action in Portishead
Radstock Churches Together
Shepton Mallet United Church Action
Somerton Churches Together
Taunton Christians Together
Weston-super-Mare and District Churches Together
Wincanton Churches Together
Wrington Churches

Some Useful Websites

www.churchsurvey.co.uk Summary of the 2005 survey of what helped people find faith in a secular society
www.church-poverty.org.uk Website of Church Action on poverty. Information and background to campaigns on doorstep debt and asylum poverty. Prayer material available.

Churches Together in Bath

Churches Together in Bath spent some time last year discussing the weak attendance at united mid-week services in the Week of Prayer for Unity each January. The Central Churches zone decided to look for a higher profile preacher, and with some personal contacts persuaded the Archbishop of Westminster, Cardinal Cormac Murphy O'Connor, to come and preach at a service at Bath Abbey on 19 January. This was soon accepted as a service for all the city of Bath, and of course for Roman Catholic parishes in the wider deanery.

The service became a great celebration of unity; the Abbey was filled with about eight hundred present, and splendid music from the choir helped to create a powerful but often informal sense of occasion. Early in the service, Roger Nunn interviewed the Cardinal about his recent trip to Sri Lanka, and about some of the major issues facing Roman Catholics. In his sermon, the cardinal gave much humorous and down-to-earth encouragement to persist in following the vision of unity, even if we seem to be on something of a plateau at present. Reflecting on the enthusiastic response to the service, Churches Together in Bath have decided to look for such a big occasion for the whole city each alternate year.

Methodist minister, the Revd Dr John Emmett, has become chair of Churches Together in Bath, and at his inauguration last year he gave an address encouraging us to think more widely about the various ways in which Christians and churches in Bath relate to each other, apart from the traditional ecumenical ones. This has led to an exercise in 'mapping' the city, particularly noting the many evangelical links, mostly informal, which claim the allegiance and energy of many of the ministers. Alpha has been notable in bringing people together in a major initiative, largely lay-led. The fresh thinking about the Anglican Deanery in the context of the diocesan initiative 'Changing Lives' has led to the formation of Local Ministry Groups (LMGs) as the basic unit for the deployment of clerical ministry; our ecumenical groupings may need to change if these parish groupings become effective.

A successful day conference 'How Green is your Church?' has led to several significant responses in local congregations to the urgent issues of climate change. The Good Friday Cross Walks continue to be a major point of united witness all over Bath, with walks to Twerton Roundhill, Solsbury Hill and Abbey Church Yard, where for the first time the service was held in front of the Abbey west doors. It focussed on the suffering of Palestinian and Israeli people today in the light of the suffering of Christ on the way to the Cross, using material from the ecumenical group 'Sabeel'.

Roger Nunn

ROYAL BATH AND WEST SHOW

You may not be aware of the ecumenical witness of the Church Tent on the Village Green at the annual Royal Bath and West Show. For 30 years the Church has been visibly and faithfully present at this major, if not most important event, in the South West. All those years ago it was not envisaged that it should be an ecumenical venture yet, through the course of time, that is exactly how it has developed. If church unity was not the original purpose of the Tent then maybe it has come about as the result of the activity of the Holy Spirit.

The purpose of the Tent has always been seen as a channel by which visitors to the show can be given the possibility of meeting with God. This is presented through a simple message in a carefully prepared display but most of all through an atmosphere of welcome. That welcome is extended to all regardless of how far their journey of faith has progressed or if it is yet to start.

Of the thousands who have visited this special and unique Church over the years there is no way of knowing how many of them may have been touched by God's love. The present small planning group remain convinced that they are involved in something which may well be one of the most important opportunities for Christian witness within Somerset and beyond.

We are always open to new ideas and involvement by members of any church denomination most especially in the planning prior to the show. It would be good to hear from you if you would like to be involved even if only in a limited way. There is something very special about the fact that every year we join together to share in the experience of something which is uniquely Christian and where the barriers of denomination become extremely blurred if not non-existent.

If you feel you would like to give support to this important venture then please contact **Rev Trevor Farmiloe, The Vicarage, 10, Water Street, Martock TA12 6JN (revtrev.martock@btinternet.com)**

Challenge and Change?

An Introduction to Rural Ministry for those concerned for rural churches and rural communities. 15-17 May, St Gildas Christian Centre, Langport, Somerset. The course will include a keynote speaker, countryside and ministry, past and present and future and local visits. Cost: £95. Contact Revd Robert Widdowson on 01749 841688 or ruralrobert@fsmail.net

Where Do We Get Our Energy?

A future without electricity is unimaginable for most of us. The big question is; how will that future electricity be generated? With the nuclear energy debate all set to hot up in the months ahead it is a question to take seriously. Currently, 20 per cent of electricity in the UK comes from nuclear power stations. Some people see it as the future, not least because compared to gas or coal it is a low carbon technology.

But there are many features of nuclear energy that do not recommend it, as a newly published report by the Sustainable Development Commission makes clear. In fact, at the end of a well-balanced critique, the report comes down firmly against building any more nuclear power stations. Even so, nuclear could still prove the most viable option; that is, unless more encouragement is given to renewable energy.

And here Somerset churches could play an important role.

The South West has the potential to become a major region for renewable energy generation. Experts say it could contribute between 12 and 19 per cent of the UK's renewable energy output by 2020. And not just from wind farms, which are now almost as controversial as nuclear energy. While they will dominate in the near future, there are other technologies that can be more effective long-term, if encouraged.

And it is as encouragers that the churches can have a role to play. How? Quite simply, by giving consideration to switching their electricity supply to a renewable energy tariff. Done in sufficient numbers this could give powerful encouragement to those commercial operations that have made it their business to invest solely in renewable energy of a variety of kinds.

Somerset Churches Together's Sustainability Group has begun looking into this, taking its lead from Swindon Churches Together, which has already gone a long way down this road with its Renewable Energy Affinity Scheme. Our own findings so far suggest that churches in Somerset would be willing to make the change even though electricity will probably cost them marginally more from a green supplier. Ethically, it makes sense as a good way of combating climate change.

It is early days yet and there are many factors to be weighed up. Some electricity suppliers offer an optional green tariff simply to retain market share. Some have committed themselves to just one kind of renewable energy source, wind farms. Others offer a broader choice. It is a complex business and the Sustainability Group will be looking into the whole subject before making any recommendations.

But, on the face of it, by changing to a green tariff, churches and their individual members have the chance to feel virtuous while at the same time giving financial support to what could prove to be the only sensible alternative to nuclear power.

If you have any views on the subject let us know. Write to the Robin Dixon, County Ecumenical officer, or e-mail me at BCK@brianckellock.plus.com.

Brian Kellock, Somerset Churches Together Sustainability Group.

News and Resources



Holy Trinity, Cleve has won the Eco-Congregation award. To make an application for your church to enter for the award, phone 024 7685 306 or download the application form at www.ecocongregation.org

Environment Sunday 2006 is on 4 June (World Environment Day is on 5 June). A Rocha UK, the Christian environmental organisation, has produced a 'Hope for the Planet' 2006 Environment Sunday pack which contains a CD-ROM with service orders, OHP masters, specially written songs and drama sketches etc. Order for £10 including postage and packing from A Rocha UK, 13 Avenue Road, Southall, Middlesex UB1 3BL by sending a cheque made payable to A Rocha UK.

Have you begun to look at environmental issues and want now to study in more depth? **The John Ray Initiative (JRI)** enables you to study at home for a university module, Christian Faith and the Environment, with the Open Theological College, University of Gloucestershire. Contact OTC on 01242 532837.

Scottish and Southern Energy plc is offering a great opportunity to give away free low energy light bulbs to low income households. Contact Jan Hudson, Customer Liaison on 029 2024 9127.

Caring for God's Acre in Leominster is now taking on the national role of supporting agencies who run Living Churchyard projects. Contact the project at 6, West Street, Leominster, Herefordshire HR6 8ES or e-mail to info@cfqa.fsnet.co.uk (01568 611154)

God, the World and Us

Five seminars to engage Theology with the Environmental Crisis

If Christians are to respond with integrity to the earth's ecological crisis, then our actions must be informed or shaped by our faith in God. But that is not straightforward. When the Bible was written and much Christian theology was developed, people understood the world differently. Some green activists argue that Christian attitudes are partly to blame for the problems that we face now. So how do we respond?

In this series of seminars five theologians will respond to the challenge. Drawing on different theological traditions they will address the question: What is the relationship of humanity, the cosmos and God?

Melvyn Matthews was until recently Sub-Dean of Wells Cathedral and is author of *Delighting in God* and *Both Alike to Thee*.

Margot Hodson is Chaplain of Jesus College, Oxford. She is a director of the John Ray Initiative and on the board of A Rocha.

Mary Colwell is a lay member of the Roman Catholic Church and a Producer with the BBC Natural History Unit in Bristol.

John Bimson is Lecturer in Old Testament at Trinity College, Bristol.

David Osborne is Chair of the Diocesan Environment Working Party and a Member of the Iona Community.


7.30pm at The Old Deanery, Wells

Tuesday 9th May	Melvyn Matthews	Bradfield Room
Tuesday 20th June	Margot Hodson	Carey Room
Tuesday 4th July	Mary Colwell	Carey Room
Thursday 7th September	John Bimson	Bradfield Room
Tuesday 10th October	David Osborne	Carey Room

Anyone is welcome to attend. There is no charge. For more information contact David Osborne on 01749 890423 or Cathy Horder on 01934 833152.

Noticeboard

Act To End Slavery Now is a resource for churches, groups and individuals wanting to learn about modern slavery and the campaign to eradicate it. The forthcoming 200th anniversary of the Abolition of the Slave Trade Act (1807-2007) will concentrate attention on the history of slavery and the Atlantic trade. But it should also allow us to think, and act, about the continuing scourge of global slavery today. The publication is available from Churches Together in England on 020 7529 8141 at £3.00 plus postage and packing.

 **Rejesus.co.uk** is probably one of the most successful current evangelism initiatives in the UK. Up to 1600 people use the site daily. An estimated 500 or more of these are without Christian faith who are exploring or connecting or wanting to discover more. It is a resource for you and your church to add value to all your communication work.

In the Spirit of the Covenant is the Interim Report of the Joint Implementation Commission under the Covenant between the Methodist Church of Great Britain and the Church of England. It is meant to help Anglicans and Methodists make the Covenant a practical reality now and to chart a direction in which we need to move towards fuller unity. Available at £6 from Methodist Publishing House.

Fresh Expressions of Church



Fresh Expressions is committed to encouraging fresh expressions of church in every diocese and district in the next four years.

Go to www.freshexpressions.org.uk for a range of resources including details about training events for your circuit or deanery.

The Sheffield Centre, part of the Church Army, was established to research this area for the wider church. Go to www.encountersontheedge.org.uk for

- Details of the **Encounters on the Edge** series: over 25 extended stories highlighting lessons about fresh expressions of church
- A contact person for consultancy
- A database

For extra resources on mission and Fresh Expressions visit www.chpublishing.co.uk/mission

Dates for Your Diary

APRIL

26 April Faith Communities Response to Major Emergencies. Familiarisation Day at Zion Baptist Church, Creech St Michael, Taunton. Contact Sheila Tubey at ISR in Bristol on 0117 955 7430 or Sheila@ccisr.org.uk

MAY

14-20 May Christian Aid Week. www.christian-aid.org.uk or **Christian Aid** eperry@christian-aid.org or phone 01935 850849

24 May Planning for Presence: South West Conference on New Housing Areas at St James, Taunton from 10.30 am to 4.30 pm. Information from sctog@blueyonder.co.uk

26 May Faith Communities Response to Major Emergencies. Familiarisation Day at Avon and Somerset Police HQ, Portishead. Contact Sheila Tubey at ISR in Bristol on 0117 955 7430 or Sheila@ccisr.org.uk

JUNE

4 June Environment Sunday. Contact A Rocha UK at www.arocha.org.uk or phone 020 8574 5935

10 June Hope for the Planet? A Day Conference on the Environment at the Kings of Wessex School in Cheddar. Information from sctog@blueyonder.co.uk or at www.sctog.org.uk

17 June Nationwide Quiet Day. Information from the Retreat Association on 020 7357 7736 or at info@retreat.org.uk

New Resource

Fresh Expressions DVD. A new DVD looking at new ways of reaching people. Fresh Expressions is presented by Diane Louise Jordan and features a 30 minute feature suitable for home groups, church councils and other small groups. Available at £12.99 from Church House Publishing on 020 7898 1451.

