

## **The Sanctuary Marquee will again be at the Glastonbury Festival**

Applications are invited for Volunteers to join the group running the Churches' Sanctuary Marquee at the Glastonbury Festival. The Festival is the weekend of 24<sup>th</sup> to 26<sup>th</sup> June 2005.

Our Mission Statement reads: 'as part of the Christian Church we intend to demonstrate the love of Christ in action by offering festival goers a warm welcome, space to reflect and a willingness to listen '. This year the approach is that volunteers are coming to join a community for the weekend rather than coming to do a job for someone else.

Volunteers need to be able to attend two training sessions, one on Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> April and the other on Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> June. Both will probably be in Wells. The training sessions are essential and people who cannot attend both sessions cannot be considered as volunteers.

If you would like to be part of the community that is running the Sanctuary marquee, please send a stamped addressed envelope to: Doug Lowe, Lilac House, Henlade, Taunton, TA3 5LS.

Closing date for receiving completed application forms is 2 April.

### **COPYDATE FOR NEXT EDITION**

**10 March 2004**

Somerset Churches Together Newsletter appears four times each year in **October, January, April and July.**

Please post or e-mail copy to: Robin Dixon, County Ecumenical Officer, 25 Claverton Road West, Saltford, Bristol BS31 3AL. Phone 01225 872903.

E-mail: [sctog@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:sctog@blueyonder.co.uk)

## A Small Step in a Larger Journey

*On 30 October 2004 in Wells Cathedral, Somerset Churches Together held a Service of Thanksgiving and Dedication for the Anglican-Methodist Covenant For England. Revd William Morrey, the President of the Methodist Conference, preached the sermon which was based on Mark 9.38-41. A slightly edited version of the text follows.*

Thank you for the invitation to be with you today at this time of Thanksgiving and Dedication as, in Somerset, you seize the opportunity given by the Anglican Methodist Covenant for England to work more closely together. I travelled across the Severn Bridge to be here and bring greetings from your sisters and brothers in Wales where we have twenty eight years experience of a similar covenant. I remember that when the news of the positive votes for the Covenant in England reached us in Wales, the Archbishop of Wales expressed pleasure that their daughter church in England was following Wales' example.

That reference to the Church of England as the daughter church may seem strange to many ears and may send some scurrying to re-read history, but I use it to illustrate the idea that we all make our journeys from differing perspectives. Coming together in covenant is about a commitment to a relationship together. It is not a legal contract that spells out the precise commitments and obligations required of the two parties to the contract. Rather it is a much more open ended commitment to journeying together, to a deepening of relationship, a shared exploration which recognises the integrity of the participants, their histories and their gifts.



(L to r) Revd Wendy Baskett (Vice-Chair, Somerset Churches Together),  
Revd William Morrey, The Dean of Wells

I want to encourage you to explore what the Covenant offers with imagination and flair. It can make a very real difference in local communities. I think of the way in which churches share their resources together to offer food and shelter for the homeless in Cardiff; of the community development work at Broadlands on the outskirts of Bridgend; and of the range of projects and

centres of worship in Cardiff East, and I'm thankful for how the Covenant has enabled local vision.

So our experience in Wales tells us that a covenant with its affirmations and commitments can be hugely enabling for people with a vision in ministry and mission.

Turning to the Covenant in England, I read that it was signed 'in a spirit of penitence for all that human sinfulness and narrowness of vision have contributed to our past divisions...And in a spirit of thanksgiving and joy for the convergence in faith and collaboration in mission that we have experienced in recent years.'

Such a commitment contrasts with the words of John, the brother of James, in the gospel reading, 'Teacher, we saw someone casting out demons in your name, and we tried to stop them, because they were not one of us.'

Many of us sympathise with John. Isn't there something within us all that thinks in terms of 'one of us' and consequently, of course, 'one of them'? Ponder for a moment how you set boundaries of those considered 'one of us'. 'Whoever is not against us is for us. For truly I tell you, whoever gives you a cup of water to drink will by no means lose the reward.'

Reading on in the New Testament pushes the boundaries further, indeed transforms the whole idea of setting boundaries. For example, the vision expressed in the letter to Ephesians 1.9-10 speaks of how 'with all wisdom and insight God has made known to us the mystery of his will...*to gather up all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.*' It resonates with the claim of the death of Christ outside the city and his exaltation, '*breaking down the dividing wall of hostility and making in himself a new humanity.*'

I seriously doubt whether such vision of the love of God made known in Christ leaves a place for human determination of insiders and outsiders. Rather it challenges us to see the steps we take forward in the Covenant with each other as small steps in a larger journey.

The root meaning of 'ecumenical' (the Latin, *oecumenicus*, translates the Greek *oukoumenikos*) is 'of the whole inhabited earth'. I would suggest that to speak of the Ecumenical Movement is not primarily to concern ourselves about inter-church relations, important as they are; it is about the whole inhabited earth and its oneness.

As we rejoice at the opportunity the Anglican Methodist Covenant gives us, let us also however falteringly sense that scripture is pointing us to much more than the church and to see that God in Christ, through death, resurrection and exaltation is declaring that all things in heaven and on earth will be brought together.

The former Secretary of the Methodist Church, Nigel Collinson, told of how he and his wife came to be present at the induction of their local Church of

England priest. Nigel was in the habit of calling at a local news agency run by an Asian couple who are Muslims. The shopkeepers got to hear of a service at the large church nearby and asked, 'Will you be going to the service tomorrow evening?' So it was that the invitation to the induction came from Asian Muslims – that illustrates something of the changing face of the world we live in.

I sense that the question, 'How do we change as churches?' which we are each asking in a variety of ways, is to be addressed in the context of the question, 'How is God already bringing into one whole?'

God is not confined to the ministry and life of the church. The Spirit is shed abroad in the world and is gathering all together.

George Bernard Shaw, in *Pygmalion*, says 'Independence? That's a middle class blasphemy. We are all dependent upon one another, every soul of us on earth.'

He is right to use the word blasphemy because we are not concerned with an option but with a divine imperative. To work against an interdependent sharing of ourselves and our living is to blaspheme the name of God who has not made us choose isolation but mutual interdependence.

God is at work in all that draws humankind together in interdependence. It is out of that belief that we become deeply concerned about the nature of the society we create with its increasing disparities of opportunity and widening social divisions.

It is an expression of worship and thanksgiving to God to welcome the gifts of another person. That is why being hospitable, truly open and accepting of another, is so important.

In such things we cooperate with the Spirit of God who is working *to gather up all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.*

The future of the institutional life of the churches in Somerset will be determined by our faithfulness to that activity of God. Therein lie our judgment and our hope.

May the Covenant and the commitments celebrated today help us to respond with faithfulness. Amen.



## Renewing Commitments in Pill

There are many ways in which the Spirit leads Christians to grow together in the unity which Christ wills for his church. One is the Local Ecumenical Partnership (LEP) – there are well over 800 LEPs in England at this time, ten of them in Somerset. In an LEP, Christians of different denominations formally commit themselves to become more fully the one church of Christ. They make a covenant with one another to share their worship, congregational life and mission together, based on a formal written agreement approved by their church structures.

In December, at a special service in Pill, in North Somerset, Anglicans, Baptists and Methodists from the three village churches renewed their solemn pledge, originally made in October 1995, to share together in worship, outreach and education.

The rededication service drew about 90 worshippers from village. Revd Nicholas Maddock led the intercessions, Revd Nigel Coles, Senior Minister of the West of England Baptist Association gave the blessing and Revd Ward Jones, Chair of the Bristol District of the Methodist Church, gave a focussed address linking the rededication service objectives to those of the whole church on Advent Sunday.

The Methodist Minister, Revd Barry Bishop, took the service, assisted by the Rector, Revd Ruth Legg and Revd Brian Scott, the Baptist minister, with singing from an ecumenical choir.

Robin Dixon, County Ecumenical Officer, reminded everyone that the common life of the churches in Pill should be one of harmony, not unison, where the uniqueness of the different denominations was to be valued and celebrated.



(L to r) Revd Brian Scott, Revd Nicholas Maddock, Revd Nigel Coles, Revd Ward Jones, Cllr Glynn Duck (Chair, North Somerset Council), Revd Ruth Legg, Revd Barry Bishop, Mr Robin Dixon.

## Through The Year With Taunton Christians Together

Taunton Christians Together (TCT) is a local expression of Churches Together in England and Wales and comprises nearly forty member churches and some 'observer' churches in the Taunton area, who have all agreed to the basis of faith and are committed to the aims of TCT.

We have an Executive of ten, lay and ordained from different denominations, and sub-committees developing our commitment to social concerns (in particular the Open Door charity working among the homeless, Taunton Youth for Christ and Somerset Family Partnership) and to planning united acts of worship and education. Each member church has three representatives including their minister and we have 'Reps' meetings' four times a year. These are open meetings, so any church member is welcome.

In our Reps' meetings, we have heard speakers from Somerset Family Partnership, 'Open Door' work for the homeless, Taunton Youth for Christ, the House of St Martin, Mendip YMCA and 'Still Waters', a counselling and training resource. We have also discussed and ratified a new Constitution, replacing the interim basis on which we previously worked. 2004 was a busy year.

### January:

'Jewish Awareness' month when we had a series of lectures by some excellent speakers on aspects of Judaism, and a visit to the nearest synagogue in Exeter, so oversubscribed that other visits have been arranged since.

The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, with lunchtime opportunities for prayer in various churches and a Sunday evening service in the United Reformed Church, with the Reverend John Carne, Superintendent of the Plymouth and Exeter Methodist District, preaching.

### February:

AGM time, to review the year past and be greatly encouraged for the year to come by the Reverend Geoff Treasure, a local Anglican clergyman.

Lent: Weekly lectures on different aspects of 'The Local Mission'.

Good Friday: One crowd of people gathered near a simple cross in the town centre to sing appropriate songs, led by 'Reflections,' a local ecumenical group, while another crowd walked silently through the town to join together in a simple act of worship around the cross, followed by a formal service in the nearby Congregational church and a more family-oriented service in a neighbouring Anglican church.

### May:

TCT had a stand at the annual Charities Fair, especially big this year, to celebrate 1100 years since Taunton received its Charter. They were represented in the Civic service commemorating the granting of the Charter.

August:

We had a stand at Taunton Flower Show and supported a 'Songs of Praise' there.

November:

We united for worship on Advent Sunday, enhanced by the New Horizons Choir from a Ukrainian school. We ran out of chairs that night.

December:

TCT and Taunton Town Centre Partnership put on a 'Living Nativity' in the town centre on a late night shopping evening. Member churches made donations to cover the cost, provided supporting cast, singers and marshals. Primary schoolchildren sang for us, local celebrities took major roles and around 1500 people witnessed what Christmas is truly about.

**Christabel Agar**

**The Spirit of Taize**

**Music-Readings-Silence**

**6.30 – 7.20 pm**

**First Friday of Every Month beginning 7 January  
at St John's Park St, Taunton**

I will hear what the Lord God has to say, a voice that speaks of peace.  
Peace for his people and his friends, and those whose hearts turn to him.

*The congregations of the Temple Methodist Church and St John's Church  
working together to serve all the people of Taunton*

**Resources for Lent 2005**

**Voices from the South** is a five week study guide for Christian groups which invites us to hear the voices of some of the ordinary people living in the developing countries of 'the South' and, in so doing, to discover where God's interventions to set his people free are happening in the world. Published by Action of Churches Together in Scotland (ACTS) and Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (CTBI) in association with Christian Aid and SCIAF, the guide costs £3.95 from Methodist Publishing House (01733 325002).

**Better Together** is the title of this year's Lent Course produced by York Courses, consisting of a booklet with questions for discussion and an audio tape or CD. The theme is relationships. The course booklet costs £3.50, the Audio Tape £8.95 and the CD £10.95, all including p & p. Details from York Courses on 01904 481677.

**Share the Light**, launched by Scripture Union last Autumn, has now produced resources for the second phase of the programme which enables a journey of Bible discovery in 40 days. To reserve a church resource pack or for more information, contact Scripture Union on 01908 856029.

## **Ecumenical Accompaniment in Israel and Palestine**

Introductions first! My name is Andy Hall. I am a Quaker from Castle Cary. I attend Meeting at Wincanton and I am well known among friends for my woodwork and fruit cakes (a strange combination that sometimes confuses me!).

I shall be working from December to March on the World Council of Churches' Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI). 'What on earth does that mean?' I hear you say. That is a reasonable question. The programme is now two years old, operates in Israel and Occupied Palestinian Territories and is an effort to:

- Provide accompaniment (i.e. protection by presence and solidarity) to those in all societies that are suffering and working towards a non-violent resolution
- Carry out advocacy work while there and on return

What on earth does all that mean? Accompaniment is literally being with others, but I will be located somewhere in the West Bank or Jerusalem where there is a need for non-violent protection or a solidarity presence. The jobs performed might include: house rebuilding, checkpoint monitoring, working peace organisations such as B'Tselem or Women in Black or escorting school children past settlements and through Israeli Defence Force checkpoints.

What's the point as there is no chance of success? This project is about tiny improvements to ordinary people. The support which communities receive is offered to all: Jew, Christian, Muslim. It is an effort by the outside world to say you are not forgotten, but we demonstrate our empathy for you with a message that the way to lasting peace must include non-violence and respect for all. I am aware that the international situation will not change after my visit, but, as a result, some will have different experiences and have seen examples of help and respect that they can learn from. An experience of one of my colleagues who was able to get water to a line of Palestinians, held for hours in the hot sun at a road block, is a good example.

The project is funded by several organisations – the Methodist Church, the United Reformed Church, Quakers and Christian Aid, for example

You, as a reader, should know about this project. It will inform you of a different perspective on this continuing problem. I, unlike most of your sources, have no need to sell you a newspaper or inform you as part of a company policy. I would urge you to consider doing something such as writing letters to an MP or learning more. My experiences will be personal, factual and, I hope, unbiased. On my return, I shall be inviting you to attend a presentation and talk about my experiences. I hope I will give you some raw material for thought and reflection.

You can follow the experiences of the team and myself on [www.eappi.org](http://www.eappi.org) Click on 'accompaniers reports'.

## **The Ministry of Spiritual Direction**

Are people asking you to walk with them in their journey of faith? Do you find yourself caught up in discussions with others about prayer and God? Have you been used by other people to face what is happening in their faith? If so, this may be a calling to you into the ministry of Spiritual Direction? May be there is a course just for you?

Companionship on any journey is a special relationship. Companionship on our spiritual journey is what is meant by the ambiguous title 'Spiritual Direction'. Throughout history, there have been those in all faith traditions who have enabled others to deepen their relationship with God and helped them to live their lives more effectively.

This accompanying/enabling of another has always been there and the need continues for such a ministry. To serve this need, many courses have been set up since the 1980s. Some courses follow Ignatian Spirituality; others are more eclectic in their style and teaching. The courses are not so much courses in spirituality; they are not purely theoretical, nor are they courses for those who would like to be spiritual directors. These courses are for those who have been recognised by others as having this vocation.

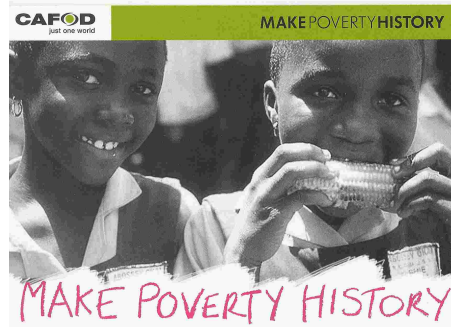
Such a course began in Bristol in 1983. From its beginning, it was ecumenical for lay and ordained people which reflected the composition of the tutor group. Since its establishment, it has trained Anglicans, Roman Catholics, Methodists, Baptists, URC members and Quakers, all mainly from the South West and the Midlands. It has been a joy and a delight to see God's gifts being discovered and developed alongside the discovery that God might not be asking all who have engaged with the course to practice spiritual direction.

This is a two year part time course and the next course will run at Abbey house in Glastonbury beginning in October 2005. The course meets on one Monday each month from 10.00 am to 4.00 pm; each year commences with a 48 hour residential. The cost of the course, including residential, is £400.00 per year.

Taster Day, Saturday 19 March 2005, 10.00 am – 4.00 pm  
Abbey House, Glastonbury, Somerset

For more information and application forms, contact: Sue Lloyd, 36 Windrush Road, Keynsham, Bristol BS31 1QP (0117 986 6503)

Applications need to be with Sue Lloyd by 2 July 2005, after which references will be taken up and interviews arranged.



CAFOD and Christian Aid are joining with more than 40 organisations, including all the other aid agencies to call on the UK government to use this opportunity to **MAKEPOVERTYHISTORY**. It could be one of the most powerful coalitions ever against world poverty.

### **Why is 2005 so important?**

- ◆ The UK will host the G8 summit of world leaders in Edinburgh in July
- ◆ The report from Tony Blair's Commission for Africa reports in April
- ◆ The UK holds the EU presidency from July to December
- ◆ Peter Mandelson is the new EU trade commissioner
- ◆ It's the 20th anniversary of Live Aid
- ◆ In September, there will be a UN General Assembly Special Summit on the Millennium Development Goals, and it will be just 10 years to the 2015 deadline for achieving those goals
- ◆ There may be a General Election next year—a chance for all of us to make sure that poverty is on the agenda.

Last time the UK hosted the G8 in Birmingham in 1998, 70,000 people formed a human chain around the city centre, forcing poverty on to the G8 agenda and bringing significant debt relief for poor countries.

### **What can I do to help?**

- ◆ Sign the Make Poverty History card. Order more cards (***which are available from January 2005***) and ask your family, work colleagues and fellow parishioners to sign them
- ◆ Come to Edinburgh on July 2
- ◆ Pray for the success of Make Poverty History

In a world where millions of poor people live on less than 60p per day, you can play your part in making poverty history.

**Contact CAFOD on 01823 338903 or Christian Aid on 0117 9505006 or [www.MAKEPOVERTYHISTORY.org](http://www.MAKEPOVERTYHISTORY.org)**

## **The Gathering – Churches Together in England (CTE) at Stoke Rochford, 5 –7 November 2004**

200 or more of us gathered to be ecumenical for the weekend. Some 'big' names included Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O'Connor, Revd Baroness Kathleen Richardson, Stephen Timms MP (Financial Secretary for HM Treasury) and lots more interesting people. These are some key comments and opinions from what I heard.

On the first evening, the Revd Bill Snelson (General Secretary of Churches Together in England) spoke about where the ecumenical movement is now, highlighting that we are in a post denominational age – people 'out there' are just not interested in our differences. He also said that today's progress with ecumenism is through interest groups across the denominations, while there are some new emerging divisions all too often within each denomination.

Bishop Joe Aldred said that the disaffection of young people with traditionally organised Church goes beyond our historic Churches and includes Moslems as well as Afro-Caribbean young people and their black-led churches. He also reported that the most successful churches are all too often the least co-operative ecumenically!

On Saturday morning, the Revd Martin Thompson led us in a fascinating Bible study about Naaman, bringing the story into a very real reflection of how it could be written today, about today.

Cardinal Cormac Murphy O'Connor gave a keynote view of the vision we are sharing. His starting point was the focus a new pontificate would need to take. His main points were

:

- The de-christianising of Europe and how to counteract the sociological problems of a Godless society – starting with the family,
- A new dialogue with Islam, the majority of whom are not terrorists. We must avoid 'demonising' all Muslims,
- A fresh grasp of the problems of poverty in so much of the world. For the gospel to be Good News, there must be Good News for the poor as well as for the rich.
- Church 'Governance'. For example while the Church of England is good at consultation and the Roman Catholic Church is good at making decisions work, the Church of England is weak on implementation and the Roman Catholics are seen to be not particularly consultative.
- There is a new crisis in the ecumenical imperative. There is no way back to our old denominational fortresses and there is debate about how to go forward. There is no such thing as an ecumenical status quo, and it is vital that being ecumenical should not be an arbitrary pluralism or a 'grey' compromise discounting our separate roots.
- So many of our church divisions are not doctrinal. The sin of a 'fallen' membership and the continuing sin of our developing histories of

being separate remain. Academic debate will unite no one. It is friendship across the barriers that will overcome our differences.

The Cardinal reiterated that our separate receiving of Holy Communion is a continuing symptom of differences which need to be resolved, not avoided.

After dinner on the Saturday, Stephen Timms MP spoke of the need for the churches' involvement in public life and asked for more respect from the Christian community for those who raise their heads above the parapets in the difficult political 'jungle'. The churches can show that it is the way we do politics that is so much more important than the politics themselves. He thanked us all for the building of a climate for change with such important work as Faith in the City/Countryside reports, and the Drop the Debt campaign. He pointed out that in 2005, the UK will have the presidency of both the EU and the G8. It is a significant opportunity for the pressure of the Church to make a difference. It is up to us 'to test the safety valves' (my words, not his).

On the Sunday morning, after our separate Roman Catholic and 'Protestant' celebrations of Holy Communion followed by breakfast, it was back to Martin Thompson with another Bible study, this time about blind Bartimaeus. Once again, Martin made the story very contemporaneous. His conclusion was that we have to choose whether we want to be healed of our symptoms or be prepared to let God into our lives, so removing the causes of those symptoms. The two may not be the same. He was very careful not to imply that our individual illnesses are the direct result of our sins.

Bill Snelson's parting comment to us was - do we want to be ecumenical or are we prepared to be ecumenical?

A very good two days in comfortable surroundings, with excellent food and company.

**Nick Williams**

**SOMERSET CHURCHES TOGETHER  
ANNUAL GATHERING**

**7 May 2005  
10.00 am – 3.00 pm**

**At  
Wells United Church**

**Keynote Speaker:  
Revd John Cole, Church of England National Adviser (Unity in Mission)**

## Noticeboard

**Cathy Burton** is performing live at Clevedon School at 7.30 pm on 22 January. Tickets for the event, organised by Living Waters church, are £5 each. Phone 01275 797999.

An increasing number of blind, blind-deaf and partially sighted people surf the Web and communicate through e-mail. **Echurch-UK** brings them together in an email community, wherever they may live. Echurch-UK also has information for local churches on access and support for visually impaired people. Log on to [www.echurch-uk.org](http://www.echurch-uk.org)

**Churches Together in Bath** will hold a public meeting on Christian Zionism: Road Map to Armageddon on Wednesday 2 February at 7.30 pm at Manvers Street Baptist Church in Bath. The speaker will be Revd Stephen Sizer, Vicar of Christ Church, Virginia Water, evangelical scholar and author of the recent major book on the subject. All are welcome.

**Hospitality of the Heart** is a 12 page A5 booklet which consists of four Bible studies to help interfaith understanding with notes, questions, illustrations and useful ideas for follow-up. Produced by Michael Ipgrave as Secretary of the Churches Commission for Inter Faith Relations, it is intended for Christian groups but can also be used by individuals and is suitable for Advent, Lent or any time of the year. Copies are available from Churches Together in England's London office: 10 copies cost £3.50 plus £1.50 p&p; for single copies send a sae and 50p in stamps.

A useful website is [www.findachurch.co.uk](http://www.findachurch.co.uk), an initiative from UK Church Directory Ltd which is linked to the Evangelical Alliance and to Christian Research, publishers of the UK Christian Handbook. It includes churches of all Christian traditions in the UK and Ireland. Local churches with their own website can link to it.

**Life for the World Trust** is launching a University Certificate in Substance Misuse Care and Counselling at Bristol on 8 February 2005. The course has been developed in conjunction with the University of Gloucestershire School of Health and Social Sciences to enable churches to help victims of drug and alcohol abuse. Covering eighteen days formal training plus fifty hours of voluntary project placement in a rehabilitation setting, the course is both practical and Biblically based. The launch of this course coincides with opening a new Training Resource Centre in Bath and key staff appointments, including a new Head of Training and Training Coordinator, which puts the Trust in a strong position to equip and support churches reaching out to vulnerable groups of people. For further information contact Life for the World Trust, Genesis House, Green Park Road, Bath BA1 1XE (01225 426265)

## **Dates for Your Diary**

### **JANUARY**

- 18-25      Week of Prayer for Christian Unity
- 23          Education Sunday. [Education@cte.org.uk](mailto:Education@cte.org.uk)
- 28-30      Weekend of Services for World Peace. 0131 446 9545
- 30          Homelessness Sunday. 020 7723 7273

### **FEBRUARY**

- 6            Unemployment Sunday. 0161 2369321
- 13-20      National Marriage Week. Organised by Future Way Trust.  
01202 883887
- 18          CAFOD Family Fast Day. 020 7733 7900

### **MARCH**

- 1-14        Fairtrade Fortnight
- 4            Women's World Day of Prayer: Let our Light Shine. 01892  
541411
- 10          Rural Ministry: A Practical Introduction. Dulverton. Contact  
Revd Robert Miller on 01398 324217

### **APRIL**

- 8-14        Teaching Theology Ecumenically. International Conference,  
Cambridge

### **MAY**

- 10          Somerset Churches Together Annual Gathering, Wells United  
Church
- 15-21      Christian Aid Week