

Somerset Churches Together Annual Gathering



Originally arranged for 20 November 2004, this meeting is postponed to

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)

COPYDATE FOR NEXT EDITION: 10 DECEMBER 2004

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

Please send or e-mail copy to: Robin Dixon, County Ecumenical Officer at 25,
Claverton Road West, Salford, Bristol BS31 3AL

Phone: 01225 872903 or e-mail: sctog@blueyonder.co.uk

SIGNING UP

It is my privilege to offer the greetings of the Plymouth & Exeter Methodist District to our ecumenical partners in Somerset, a relationship we value greatly.

As I write, I am very aware that Somerset Churches together has taken the Anglican Methodist Covenant very seriously and in recent weeks there have been gatherings around the area to explore the implications for this Covenant and the challenge it offers which will culminate in a Service of Thanksgiving and Dedication at Wells Cathedral on 30 October when the President of the Methodist Conference, The Revd William Morrey, will be our preacher. It is easy to feel that this is just an Anglican, Methodist thing and others are excluded, but the warm and gracious encouragement I receive from other denominations is because I believe we can see this Covenant between two churches as a significant step and encouragement to all Christians who are serious about the challenge of mission in post-Christian twenty-first century Somerset.

It was almost twelve months ago that the leaders of our two churches signed the Covenant and they did so on our behalf.

Putting your signature to anything is always an important moment. It is setting down your mark of acceptance, agreement and contract. Think of the things you are asked to sign – a cheque or credit card payment slip, a card of greeting are all putting your name to significant things. Collecting signatures for a petition, or to say you will sponsor someone running the marathon is a sign of commitment to an idea, identifying with a cause. Bride and groom make their vows in church but their marriage is not legal until they have both signed the marriage registers and certificate. It is a covenant between them.

Our two churches have made that commitment and in doing so we are, I believe, signing up to the Jesus way and that's most important.

We have signed up to Jesus' prayer that we might be one. Why? That the world might believe. We are about a covenant for mission. Jesus prays not for ecclesiastical, organisational unity, but for the unity of personal relationships, the unity of love, as the Father and Son are in a loving unity, one with the other. Of course, we need administrative, organisational structures to make this Covenant work, but the best witness will not just be the Covenant document, or congregations worshipping together, or changes to notice boards. The best unity will be by the community seeing the unity of love we have with one another, in the street, in the pub, the shop, the clubs and societies where we live.

It is a unity born out of personal relationships. The unity on which Christ's prayer is based is the unity between Father and Son, a unity of love and

obedience, a unity in which Christians love one another because first and foremost they love Him. It will never be that Christians will organise their churches all the same way. It will never be that they will worship God the same way. It will never be that we will all precisely and exactly believe the same things but our witness needs to be one that transcends all those differences and joins us in love. The test is this. Do we love our ways, our denominational structures, our liturgical rites, our favourite hymns, our ways of church government more than we love one another. Only the love which Christ gives allows us to be together in all our divergence and difficulties. The way to true Christian unity does not lie in pieces of paper, valuable though they are. It does not lie in committee rooms or debating halls but in a personal relationship with Christ whose love is translated to our personal relationships with each other.

Sadly, as we look at our world, we see all too clearly that it is bitterly divided. One of our strongest witnesses to Christ in a divided world must be our unity, 'See how these Christians love one another.' My typing is not good. I tell people that I have the gift of typing in tongues. Several times, as I typed the word 'unity' in this letter, it appeared on the page as 'untie'. Perhaps there is a lesson here. How easy it would be to allow the unity we celebrate to untie, to unravel, if we stop loving one another. That unity is best preserved when we are one in Christ, when our fellowship is not Church or Denomination centred but God centred. It would be my prayer that over the coming years together we might display such a unity based on love that we grow in a number of ways: warmer through growing fellowship, deeper through serious discipleship, stronger through inspiring worship, broader through unconditional service and larger through practical evangelism.

The Covenant was signed by our Church Leaders, but I hope that we will come to see it as our Covenant. It carries our hopes and hesitations. It invites us to make new relationships. It is a significant marker for all Christians who are serious about the ecumenical journey for we all exercise a measure of control over it. It is up to us where it leads. It is our Covenant.

Let's own it, trust it and live it in the unity of love, which is Christ's gift to his Church.

With every blessing in our journey together,

John Carne

(Chairman: Plymouth & Exeter District of the Methodist Church)

SCT - NEW WEBSITE ADDRESS

Somerset Churches Together's Website Address has moved to

www.sctog.org.uk

LOG ON NOW!

Somerset Churches Together

The Anglican Methodist



Covenant

The **Methodist** Church

A SERVICE OF THANKSGIVING AND DEDICATION

Wells Cathedral
30 October 2004
2.15 pm

Preacher: The Revd William Morrey
President of the Methodist Conference

A Service for the Diocese of Bath & Wells and the Somerset Circuits of the Bristol and Plymouth & Exeter Methodist Districts to further the Anglican-Methodist Covenant for England.

Admission by tickets available from Circuit Superintendents, Rural Deans, Local Ministers and Clergy

DOWN TO EARTH

Commitment to action is the only way to help build a sustainable world for our children,' said Rt. Revd Peter Price, Bishop of Bath and Wells, at a recent environmental conference in the Bishop's Palace in Wells. The conference, held in September, was jointly organised by Somerset Churches Together, the Conservation Foundation, DEFRA and Somerset County Council.

Hosting the ecumenical 'Down To Earth' conference on behalf of all the denominational Church Leaders in Somerset, Bishop Peter welcomed over one hundred participants and recalled the words of Dag Hammarskjöld: 'the road to holiness passes through the world of action.' Everyone, said the Bishop, should 'love our world and treat it with reverence and care.'

Later, three keynote speakers helped to build a vision of how the church and the community can respond to the challenge of sustainable issues. Claire Foster, policy adviser on environmental and other matters to the Church of England's Archbishop's Council, developed a theological perspective on faith and the environment. 'Sustainability' she said, 'was at the core of our faith.' Pete Grainger, Community Initiatives Officer for Somerset County Council, defined sustainability as 'a form of development which met the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.' With its social, environmental and economic aspects, it was rather like a three-legged stool, he said.

Short presentations followed from some of the many people committed to environmental care and sustainable development in Somerset. Hamish Craig from the Carymoor Environmental Centre spoke of the 'terrifying destruction' of the countryside and the need for the church to 'take back care for God's creation.' Pat Hill-Cottingham described the work of the Somerset Wildlife Trust and urged all present to ensure a wildlife haven in their garden, avoid pollution and remember that they are dependent on other animals and plants. Cathy Horder talked about the environmental work of churches engaged in the nationally co-ordinated Eco-congregation project and urged Somerset churches to join others throughout the country. The session concluded with a presentation of a Wessex Watermark Award to John Bishton of the Bruton Trust. James Rider of Wessex Water presented a £1,000 cheque for the Trust's current project – the ongoing regeneration of the medieval Abbey Park.

After a lunch using locally grown produce, special interest groups focussed on particular issues including recycling, education, energy and conservation. Later, David Shreeve chaired a question and answer session with a speakers' panel. At the end of the day, pupils from Wells Blue School, which has put sustainable development at the heart of its community, led closing worship in the Bishop's Chapel. Through readings and prayer, all were reminded that '*the earth is the Lord's and all that is in it.*'

Robin Dixon

Beslan or Boscastle in Bristol, Bath or Burnham?

The Faith Communities' Major Emergency Plan

When a major or critical incident occurs, the emergency services respond swiftly utilising well-prepared and practised plans. Faith communities and voluntary organisations have an important part to play in the aftermath of a disaster. We hope and pray that one will never strike in our area, but if it does we need to be prepared for effective and coordinated action.

Major incident plans for a faith communities' response have existed for about sixteen years in the Greater Bristol and the Bath & Wells areas. Both plans, prepared in cooperation with Avon & Somerset Constabulary, were activated for the M4 coach crash in May 1995. Earlier this year the two plans were amalgamated to provide a single Major *Emergency Plan* (MEP) for the entire Avon & Somerset area. The shift from 'Major Incident' to 'Major Emergency' brings the new plan's name in line with the latest Civil Contingencies Legislation. The MEP is coordinated by Andy Paget, Senior Chaplain to the Avon and Somerset Police.

Telephone exercises are held from time to time and representatives of the faith communities are invited to multi-agency events. One such event, *Exercise Hawk*, was held at the end of January this year on the West Somerset Railway near Taunton and was staged around a simulated collision between a bus and a train on one of the level crossings. The response involved the three land-based emergency services, Musgrove Park Hospital, body recovery teams, a survivors' reception centre, a casualty and information bureau, a temporary mortuary and a friends and relatives centre. The scenario involved some twenty organisations and nearly six hundred participants over two days.

Due to the gradual loss of volunteers as clergy move out of the area, there is a constant need for new recruits. Familiarisation events take place every year and are an essential preparation for anyone who is willing to respond if an incident occurs in this area. Two introductory familiarisation days have been arranged for November 3rd at Creech St Michael and for November 10th at Avon & Somerset Police HQ in Portishead. Church leaders or their nominees are welcome to attend and should contact Jane Hathway of ISR (Tel: 0117 955 7430 or e-mail: jane@ccisr.org.uk) or Andy Paget (Tel: 0117 954 1715 or e-mail: andyp@bcisgnet.co.uk).

Growing the Kingdom The Anglican Methodist Covenant and Its Development

In September, at the Methodist Church in Midsomer Norton and at St James's Church, Taunton, in October, over one hundred people gathered on each occasion to hear keynote speakers explore the current progress and future prospects of the Anglican Methodist Covenant, signed in Westminster Abbey on 1 November 2003.

The Rt Revd Peter Price, Bishop of Bath and Wells, Revd Nick Williams, Bath and Wells Ecumenical Officer and Robin Dixon, County Ecumenical Officer were present on both occasions. At Midsomer Norton, they were joined by Revd Ward Jones, Chair of the Bristol Methodist District and Revd John Emmett, Bristol Methodist District Ecumenical Officer. In Taunton, they were joined by Revd John Carne, Chair of the Plymouth & Exeter Methodist District and Revd Haley Moore, Plymouth and Exeter District Ecumenical Officer.

All speakers saw the covenant as a commitment by both denominations to realise more deeply their common life and mission together. The Covenant, said Bishop Peter, was about the kingdom, not the church and we needed to keep the mission of the church at the forefront of what we did together. For both Ward Jones and John Carne, the Covenant was a great opportunity for joint strategic planning. However, the speakers made clear that the historic episcopate, interchangeability of ministry, and women in the presbyterate and episcopate remained unresolved issues for further discussion and exploration, particularly at national level.

Ideas for ways to further develop the Covenant emerged from both meetings:

VISIONARY

- Develop a church which faces the challenge of post-modern society
- Encourage the relational before the structural
- Be engaged with God's mission together. Involve and be open to other denominations in the process. Avoid exclusiveness

PRACTICAL

- Develop a system of licensing for the inter-changeability of ministers of each of the churches, using and extending the existing instruments (e.g. Canon B43/B44) and the experience already gained from them. Encourage inter-changeability of Anglican Lay Readers and Methodist Local Preachers.
- Work towards the integration of local decision-making bodies at deanery/circuit and diocesan/district level.
- Develop joint strategic planning, locally and nationally

A Common Life in Ministry

Key Relationships among Ministers

The relationship of clergy and ministers in a local neighbourhood is a major influence on the life of the churches in their work and witness together. Friendship and fellowship among the ministers can enhance their ministry and be a strong support to them and to their families.

Ministers' Groups can be the focus for a common life of ministry. How do they function? What are the issues? How could they work better?

First – Mind Your Language

Fewer groups now call themselves *Fraternals*; they search for something less gender-specific, *Group*, *Fellowship*, *Meeting*, '*The Complement*'.

Not all *ministers* like being called *clergy*; not all *clergy* like being called *ministers*. Not all *priests* are pleased to be called *ministers* and not many *ministers* are pleased to be called *priests*. *Pastors* may or may not be ordained. Not all *Catholics* are Roman Catholics, not all *Roman Catholics* are comfortable being called *Roman Catholics*, and none appreciates being called a *Roman*.

Building up One Another

Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together...but let us encourage one another. Hebrews 10.23-25 (NIV)

Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfil the law of Christ. Galatians 6.2 (NIV)

Modelling Unity

'I have discovered that the church leaders must 'buy-in' to ecumenical endeavour in a big way to role model ecumenical unity to their flocks, if it is going to be any more than a damp squib and a half hearted commitment that is accomplished.'

An extract from *A Common Life in Ministry*, a leaflet published by Churches Together in England in 2004. Copies of the complete 4 page leaflet may be

obtained from CTE, 27 Tavistock Square, London WC1H 9HH, 10 for £3 incl. p&p, preferably in stamps to save handling costs and bank charges. The leaflet may also be downloaded at www.churches-together.org.uk

Resources

Cherishing Life. The Roman Catholic Bishops' Conference recently published a teaching document covering a wide range of moral issues. *Cherishing Life* is available in a variety of formats from www.catholicchurch.org.uk/cherishinglife

Shattered Love...Broken Lives. Churches Together in the Merseyside Region have produced a booklet and CD for the churches on domestic violence which the Merseyside Church Leaders have commended for use in all churches. The pack contains ideas for the practical support of those experiencing Domestic Violence, suggestions for their pastoral support, material for theological reflection and resource information. Available from CTMR on 0151 709 9722.

A new survey shows that **Norwich churches** are employing the equivalent of 80 people full-time in City Community Projects, a contribution valued at over £650,000. Full results of the research can be found at www.churchesnorwich.org.uk

Connect – Different Faiths Shared Values. The Interfaith Network for the United Kingdom has published an action guide designed to help young people get involved in building bridges of respect and understanding between people of different faiths and beliefs. It can be downloaded from its website www.interfaith.org.uk or printed copies can be obtained from 8A Lower Grosvenor Place, London SW1W 0EN. Send a self-addressed C5 envelope with a 35p stamp for a free copy or phone 020 7931 7766.

The Life We Share: A Study Pack on Interfaith Relations is published jointly by the Methodist Church and USPG at £10.00. It provides insight into eight aspects of our life of faith: beginnings; learning and enlightenment; loving and being loved; suffering; community; struggling; hospitality; and ending, dying and letting go; with a final section for exploration on 'Why are we here?' Each section is resourced with a fifteen minute introduction on CD, a bible study, worship resources and a reflection sheet to help work through the theme. Available from Methodist Church Publishing on 01733 325002.

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2005. The theme for 2005 is 'Christ, the One Foundation of the Church' from 1 Corinthians 3. Chosen by the Churches of Slovakia, it is a theme they want to share with Christians around the world. For

information on how to obtain planning packs, worship resources and service pamphlets, see the CTBI website at www.ctbi.org.uk or phone CTBI Publications on 01733 325002.

Somerset Community Foundation is a grant-making charitable trust which aims to support voluntary and community groups throughout Somerset and focuses on disadvantage. SCF is asking for help to spread the good news that they exist, and to identify groups and organisations involved with the disadvantaged in the area which are in need of help. Phone SCF on 01458 833133.

Noticeboard

From Galilee to Gaza. John Rackley speaks about his recent visit to Christian Aid Partners in Israel, East Jerusalem and Gaza at 7.30 pm on 2 November at Manvers Street Baptist Church, Manvers Street, Bath.

The Road to Berlin...Global Gathering. Noel Richards will lead a worship concert at Nailsea Methodist Church on 25 November 2004 at 7.30 pm. Noel Richards has been involved in the UK Christian music scene for many years and has written many of the worship songs that are used today, including 'All Heaven Declares'. He will share his vision for young people and the young at heart to gather in Berlin to worship and pray at a very special event next June. Further details from Paul Carter, Area Youth Coordinator, on 07709 204797 or e-mail: aycnailsea@yahoo.co.uk

Striving 4 Excellence is a short course for those wishing to work with young people to be held at Silver Street Baptist Church in Taunton on 27 November from 9.30 am until 3.15 pm. It is a joint venture of Christian Resources Project and South West Baptist Association. This is Part 1 of a two part course. Part 2 will be held in 2005. £25 for both dates and £15 for Part 1. Phone 01752 791993/708090.

Rural Ministry: A Practical Introduction is a course to be held at Dulverton Residential Centre from 8-10 March which is open to anyone involved in or thinking of rural ministry. Hear local farmers, visit a farm, find out what works in a local church, learn about tourism, and discover what can be done ecumenically. What support is there? What does it mean to think 'rural'? The course costs £55 and includes the first evening meal in a rural inn noted for its cuisine. All other meals are at the centre. Limited to 14 residential but open to those who wish to make their own B&B arrangements. For booking forms, contact Revd Robert Miller, 2, High Street, Dulverton TA22 9HB (Phone: 01398 324217).

Jubilee Debt Campaign. The Somerset Regional Group of Jubilee Debt Campaign have invited Zambian campaigner Charity Musamba to speak about the impact of debt on her country on 3 November at 7.30 pm at the Old Deanery in Wells. Charity is a co-ordinator of Jubilee Zambia and based at the Jesuit Centre for Theological Reflection in Lusaka. All welcome. For further information, phone 01935 850849.

Homelessness Sunday is 30 January 2005. Resources, available from mid-October, are obtainable from Homelessness Sunday Partnership, 209 Marylebone Road, London NW1 5QT (Phone: 020 7723 7273).

Dates for Your Diary

OCTOBER

- 17-24 One World Week. Local Events. Phone 0118 939 4933
- 17-24 Week of Prayer for World Peace. Phone 0117 942 3454
- 30 A Service of Celebration and Commitment for the Anglican-Methodist Covenant. Preacher: Revd William Morrey, President of the Methodist Conference. Wells Cathedral at 2.15 pm. Tickets from Anglican and Methodist ministers and clergy.

NOVEMBER

- 3 Somerset Regional Group Jubilee Debt Campaign. 7.30 pm at the Old Deanery in Wells. Phone: 01935 850849.
- 5-7 Catching the Vision @ The Gathering 2004. Stoke Rochford, Grantham, Lincs. Phone CTE on 020 7529 8141.
- 25 Noel Richards Concert at Nailsea Methodist Church at 7.30 pm.
- 27 Striving 4 Excellence. Silver Street Baptist Church, Taunton. 9.30 am – 3.15 pm

2005

JANUARY

- 18-25 Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. Resources available from CTBI Publications on 01733 325002.

- 23 Education Sunday

- 30 Homelessness Sunday. Phone: 020 7723 7273