



NECCT News

January 2005

Under Review!

Churches Together – what it's all about!

This article recently appeared in *Living Waters*, the magazine of Tynedale Methodist Circuit.

Betty Hargreaves writes:

" On September 4th Lucy Clarke and Alistair Clark were married in the Catholic Church at Haydon Bridge.



"Lucy's family own the village news-agent's shop and are a Catholic family. Lucy's mother had asked earlier in the year if the Methodist Choir would sing

during the signing of the register at the marriage service. The Methodist Choir had ceased to meet, but it was felt that this was such an honour that it couldn't be refused.

"In the weeks prior to the wedding Alan Howard got together a group of singers from Anglican and Methodist congregations. Together we rehearsed *Be still, for the presence of the Lord* (the chosen item). We took part in the rehearsal for the wedding service and were privileged to be part of the ceremony on the day.

"It was a beautiful service conducted by Father Pyle, and both families were so appreciative of our singing.

"The Churches in Haydon Bridge have worked together for many years, but to be a privileged part of a happy family celebration was the icing on an ever-growing cake."



The NECCT Forum met at St Anthony of Padua Roman Catholic Church at Walker on November 20th 2004. Worship was led by welcome guest Jenny Bond, CTE Field Officer for the North & Midlands, after which Forum members were greeted by parish priest Fr Michael Conaty, who gave a fascinating overview of the extensive work of the parish in the life of the community (see back page).

New Secretary for NECCT

The Forum greeted Paul Southgate, and gladly elected him as secretary to replace Malcolm Porter in the new year. Paul is currently working for Durham County Council as a Community Development Officer, and brings with him a wealth of experience of church life both in this region and beyond – as far even as East Africa. Paul will be helped in his duties by Nigel Oakley, who was appointed assistant secretary.

From the chair, Nina Gwilliam, Vice-Moderator, thanked Malcolm for his sterling work as first secretary of NECCT, and made a small presentation.

The Regional Commission

Ian Zass-Ogilvie reported on positive conversations that have taken place between NECCT and the Churches Regional Commission for the North East. It was hoped that a favourable reply would soon be received from the Charity Commissioners which would then allow the Regional Commission to function as an agency of NECCT, and bring about the original hope that all ecumenical work in the region might be fully co-ordinated through a single body.

NECCT Review

The main business of the Forum was a conversation opportunity for the Review Team to hear the views

and insights of Forum members. David Herbert, leader of the team, explained that the NECCT constitution requires a review three years after its inauguration – and the time is now up!

David asked Forum members to try to answer three questions:-

To what extent, in your opinion,

- is NECCT serving the vision outlined in its foundation document (= constitution)
- is NECCT's present agenda energised and sharply focused?
- and what do you perceive are the achievements and shortfalls of the past three years?

Although there had originally been a time limit on asking for responses, David has since indicated that the review team would be happy to hear from anyone in the churches, and not just those who have been formally consulted, well into the new year.

Please pass on your thoughts to Jenny Bond at her office via her assistant Tracy Neil. Email is preferred, tracy-neil@cte.org.uk, but you may also write or fax, marking all correspondence *NECCT Review*, to Luther King House, Brighton Grove, Manchester M14 5JP (fax 0870 121 5613.)

NECCT – North East Christian Churches Together (pronounced Next) is the coordinating body that brings together the Churches of our region.

NECCT News is published twice a year, after Forum meetings, and is aimed at all Christians in the North East who are committed to the cause of Christian Unity. Copies are sent to LEPs and Churches Together Groups: please make further copies to pass on to all who are interested.

@ The Gathering

Kirsty Thomas was one of several people from the North East who attended the November CTE (Churches Together in England) Gathering. Here she reports on an event that aimed to bring together loyal enthusiasts from the ecumenical grassroots, and gave them the opportunity to engage with national figures like CTE Secretary Bill Snelson, Baroness Kathleen Richardson, Jenny Ayres from Christian Aid, Martin Thompson from the Bible Society, and CTE's Field Officer for the North and Midlands, Jenny Bond.

The Gathering met at Stoke Rochford Hall, near Grantham in Lincolnshire. The Victorian country mansion is set in 1000 acres of parkland, just off the A1. The interior is magnificent, with stately rooms, entered through solid oak doorways, long casement windows and highly decorative ceilings. This was the place where 200 participants chatted, exchanged stories and lingered over coffee.

The programme included Bible study, discussion, seminar groups, a key-note address given by Cardinal Cormac Muphy-O'Connor, one of the Presidents of CTE, all interspersed with worship and music led by a member of the Iona Community.

In the first informal group, I picked up some good ideas:

1. **Services** Week of Prayer for Christian Unity: hold a service in a different church every day, and one service during the daytime.
2. **Regular Monthly Sunday Evening Ecumenical Service (Melton Mowbray)** held in a different church in the town, with invited speakers and a range of subjects eg. Trade-Justice, Orthodox Worship, Muslim-Christian Relations etc.
3. **Outreach Sundays** such as Mothering Sunday, Bereavement Sunday when outsiders are invited to attend.
4. **Bible-Come-to-Life Exhibition (Ashford in Kent)** with a beautifully bound Gospel written out by hand by members of different churches: one verse each.
5. **Grantham Christmas Day Free Lunch**
6. **Free Barbecue Outreach (Melton Mowbray with help from Leicester Christian Fellowship)** This was an agreed approach to evangelism by all

the Churches in Melton Mowbray.

7. **Media** Always be ready to contribute to phone-in programmes on relevant issues. Peter Blackman, Churches Media Council, urged support for the media and encouraged participants to respond with 'good news' stories relating to faith.



Stoke Rochford Hall

The Revd. Bill Snelson raised a number of issues in his opening address. He indicated an awareness that clergy have so many other priorities that Churches Together activities sometimes get left out. He drew attention to the Anglican *Hind Report*, which offers a new approach to training formation in regional partnerships. He raised these questions about the clergy:

1. Do they tell you about other churches?
2. Do they know you expect them to collaborate?
3. Can they see it might be less work for them?
4. Do they care for one another?
5. Do you and they pray for other churches?

General discussion ranged round a number of cultural concerns such as the interest in inter-faith dialogue being more 'cool' than the exploration of denominational traditions; the fascination for spirituality without the anchor of belief, and the 'unchurched' younger genera-

tion. The local church, it was suggested, should be 'a place of hospitality where we can explore how to make a better world; a place which is not materialistic; a place which allows for ideas about God to be discussed in safety.'

Two seminar groups I attended were on 'Church Tourism' and 'Spirituality for Ecumenism'. The 'Church Tourism' group was led by the Revd Terry Miller. A Cascade Scheme of churches open to the public is in operation in the diocese of Lincoln. It is very well organised and starts in Lincoln Cathedral, with information about the first nine Cascade Churches. The Cascade Churches have information about the 44 Stream Churches and they have information about the 300 Pool Churches.

Leaflets are provided with attractive designs and details about opening times etc. Each church has a delightful Cascade Scheme notice board and awards are given to the best churches in the scheme. Partnership has developed with Local Authority Tourist Officers who are very enthusiastic about the scheme.

The seminar group on 'Spirituality for Ecumenism' was led by a team from the Focolare Movement. I have known about this movement, started in Italy during the Second World War, which has attracted many Catholics. I appreciate that it has a vital contribution to make in raising the profile of our common Christian heritage in Europe and in the EU. Terry Miller pointed out that many people like to visit churches even though they are not necessarily members. Some are involved in tracing their family roots, as family history has become so popular.

The music was mainly Iona in style, although I attended an excellent Taizé worship session. The key-note address, given by Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O'Connor, is now available on the CTE website. An excellent bookshop was open with a wide variety of reading matter, including reports referred to during the weekend - The Hind Report; Mission Shaped Church; Building Faith in Our Future

Kirsty is a member of the NECCT Forum, and is Secretary of Durham Churches Together

NORTH EAST SHINING!

What kind of region do we want in 2016? And what part will the Faith Communities play? This was the question posed by Phil Shakeshaft to representatives of NE churches at Durham County Cricket Ground, at an event organised by Revd Ian Zass-Ogilvie, Chief Officer of the Churches' Regional Commission.

Phil leads a small team called SHINE, *Shaping Horizons in the North East*, which is linked to the Regional Development Agency – One North East. We began with a salutary story of the textile industry. Leading North East textile manufacturers met in 1984 to consider how things were going for that industry. But because no one planned and worked together for the future, twenty years later we find that there is virtually no textile industry left in the region. (The small pockets that have survived took note of the writing on the wall and planned ahead!)

Phil asked us to name the biggest challenges facing Faith Groups in the North East between now and 2016, and to look at ways to maximise their contribution to the future of the region. NECCT is already engaged in collecting statistics to identify trends in church growth and decline, and the Churches' Regional Commission has just carried its 'Faith in the North East' survey (see below), giving a total picture of our resources and showing how churches and other faith communities contribute to the region (what the jargon terms *social capital*.)

Reporting on the day, Bernadette Askins said 'It is apparent that the churches make a very significant contribution to the life of region – about 4 million volunteer hours each year – but this is mostly invisible to wider NE society. Among the challenges that the SHINE event identified was getting a Faiths Network up and running so that the various Faith Groups can communicate with one another and with the regional authorities.

'There was also a strong feeling that the faith communities should try to take positive steps to address the issue of growing polarisation in the North East, where some people and places are developing rapidly while others are excluded through poverty and lack

of confidence, aspiration and investment. We have been given

the task of bringing the good news to the poor.'

By the end of the SHINE session those present had carried out an exercise turning some of the challenges into practical steps that could be taken by the North East churches to begin preparing for 2016. This is a discussion that needs to involve many people at many levels in our churches, including NECCT and our Churches Together groups. Further information from Bernadette Askins (0191 5361110) or Ian Zass-Ogilvie (0191 3735453).

FAITH IN THE NORTH EAST

December 10th saw the official launch of this seventy page survey by Vince Robinson, Director of Jobcentre Plus NE, at the Cobalt Business Park in North Tyneside. Some sixty people heard him and Bishops Martin Wharton and Kevin Dunn introduce a report that puts churches and other faith communities in the region firmly on the map, indicating where they are and what they are doing to enrich the lives of their communities.

The report is the work of the Churches Regional Commission, and is based on responses to a 37 point questionnaire which achieved a very high 50% response rate. As well as giving solid information, the report also examines ways of using what has been discovered. One section, entitled "A Vision of a Creative Future" suggests

- The need for new partnerships between and across faith groups
- Their need for information to access funding and resources
- The need to support volunteers
- The need for faith groups to develop understanding of community leadership
- The need for policy makers to develop their understanding of the distinctive contribution of faith communities

The printed report is available from the Churches Regional Commission, price £5. It may also be accessed on the website – www.northeastchurches.org.uk

L'Arche Prayer Group

established in Durham

In the summer of 2004 a L'Arche Prayer Group was established in Durham. The group is meeting to discern whether at some point in the future a L'Arche Community can be established in the North East region.

L'Arche is an international network of 115 communities in 29 countries where men and women with learning disabilities are welcomed, and it is they who create the heart of the community life.



L'Arche was founded in 1964 when Jean Vanier invited two men who were in a local hospital in northern France to live with him. In 1974 the first L'Arche community in the UK was established in Canterbury. Further communities in this country have been established in Lambeth, Brecon, Bognor, Liverpool, Edinburgh, Inverness and Preston.

A new community is about to start in Ipswich. This Ipswich community began their process of discernment fifteen years ago so you can see that the journey of establishing a community is one that is not rushed!

If you would like to become a member of this Durham L'Arche Prayer Group or you would like a member of the group to come to your church and share about L'Arche please contact Trish George on 0191 3868379 or trishmg2001@tiscali.co.uk or Chris Hughes on 0191 3738525 or Chris.Hughes@ushaw.ac.uk

If you would like more information about L'Arche please go to www.larche.org.uk

Your prayers for this venture would be most appreciated

St Anthony of Padua

The November Forum met at the St Anthony of Padua Community Association in Walker, and members were very impressed to learn of the wide range of services and activities which take place there. We heard from staff of the following:

The Day Care Service, promoting independent living, where up to 50 elderly and disabled local residents receive support in a homely and caring environment. The trained care staff ensure that all clients' physical, social and emotional needs are fulfilled with care and sensitivity. They are also a vital link to medical services, social services, organisations and relatives. Facilities at the Centre include specialist transport, cooked meals, specialist bathing suites, a laundrette and stimulating daily activities, each weekday.

The Domiciliary Care Service, which provides a much needed service to the elderly and disabled members of the community, and in doing so allows them their determined wish to carry on living independently in their own homes. During the last ten years a highly regarded care service has been developed, which currently delivers up to 3,000 hours per month of personal and domestic care. The domiciliary office runs an on-call facility which allows clients and care staff the ability to call for assistance 24 hours a day.

Slimming World meets twice a week, encouraging many people not only to lose weight but more importantly to learn how to eat for an improved healthy life.

Walker Credit Union provides straightforward, affordable financial services to more than 3,000 people in the East End of Newcastle. Members are encouraged to save for their futures and in return receive affordable credit. The Union provides a much needed alternative to the high interest rate charges of credit companies and high street stores.

The Hair Salon holds sessions every week and allows the elderly the opportunity of getting their hair

done in a relaxing and unrushed atmosphere. It does a great deal for their self esteem and gives people a real boost.

The Walker Food Co-op project, which was set up to tackle the problem of making inexpensive, good quality food available to local disadvantaged people. This successful community-based shopping scheme now operates weekly from the Centre and allows people on lower incomes the ability to have easy access to good food.

The Out of School Club, which is Ofsted approved, consists of the After School Club which operates Monday to Friday 3pm-6pm and the School Holiday Club covering school holidays from Monday to Friday 8am-6pm. The Club involves both educational and leisure activities which are carried out in a safe and secure environment.

The Community Centre is increasingly seen as a focal point for the people in the East End of Newcastle, supporting many groups that pursue a variety of activities. These include:

► **Adult Literacy and Numeracy Class** - Meeting weekly and benefitting people with learning difficulties and mental disabilities. Classes are run by volunteers who also provide transport and home tuition as required.

► **A Multi-Sensory Room** - This facility is available to local groups, organisations, individuals and their families.

In addition there are a number of groups connected to the church, meeting in the community centre:

► **Baptism Group** - Weekly support for families involved in preparation for baptism course.

► **Prayer Group** - Meeting for spiritual support and praise group.

► **Enquiries Group** - A volunteer support group for people interested in exploring matters of faith.

► **Women's Guild** - A weekly meeting for the women of St Anthony of Padua parish who are also involved in organising fundraising for the Community Centre.

New CTE publication

Hospitality of the Heart, a 12-page A5 booklet, consists of four bible studies to help inter-faith understanding, with notes, questions, illustrations, and useful ideas for follow-up. Produced by Michael Ipgrave just before he left his post as Secretary of the Churches Commission on Inter Faith Relations (CCIFR), 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 CTE's London office: 10 copies cost £3.50 plus £1.50 p&p; for single copies send a sae and 50p in stamps.

Find a Church

Visit www.findachurch.co.uk, which is linked to the Evangelical Alliance and to Christian Research, publishers of the UK Christian Handbook. Although it comes from an evangelical stable, it includes churches of all Christian traditions in the UK and Ireland. It would be useful if local Churches Together groups checked out the information on it for the churches in their area and corrected any inaccuracies. Entering basic contact data for a local church is free; a full entry, including a page with a description of the church's activities and a picture, costs £15 p.a.

MakePovertyHistory

We hope that everyone will know by now of the significance of this coming year of campaigning – and not just through the Vicar of Dibley. Christian Aid and CAFOD are among the lead players, and will be encouraging us in a week of special activity in April as preparation for the G8 Summit later in the year. Look out for what's happening locally!

Martin Reardon

We have been sad to hear of the death at the beginning of January of Canon Martin Reardon, the first General Secretary of Churches Together in England, and a leading figure in the ecumenical movement in this country up to his retirement in 1997.

This Newsletter is published by North East Christian Churches Together as a means of communication with the Churches and Churches Together Groups in the Region. It may be freely copied and distributed to all who have an interest in the Pilgrimage on which God is leading his people.

The current Moderator of the Forum of NECCT is Major Mervin Baker, Divisional Commander of the Northern Division of the Salvation Army. The Secretary of NECCT is Mr Paul Southgate, 72 Denbigh Avenue, Wallsend, NE28 0PR (Tel: 0191-263-8299, e-mail: mlangos@aol.com) to whom all correspondence should be sent.