

# **BETTER TOGETHER**

This brief and occasional newsletter is produced to provide news and information of ecumenical developments, locally and nationally, for clergy, lay leaders and anyone who has a particular concern for ecumenism. It is put together by the Diocesan Ecumenical Officers, Barry Gilbert for the part of the Diocese in the Dudley Borough and David Ryan for the County of Worcestershire.

## **European Ecumenism**

An area of considerable growth in the Church in recent years has been in the development of European ecumenism. This of course is exemplified in our own Diocesan link with the EKD in Magdeburg. There are a number of formal structures that have been created, often reflecting the secular institutions for the continent.

An easy way to into this pretty vast area is through the Conference of European Churches' website at <http://www.cec-kek.org/> , which provides an excellent overview as well as useful links. One particularly useful and timely link is for the **European Parliament Elections on June 4<sup>th</sup>** entitled "Guide for Churches and Christian Organisations in the European Union".

There is considerable concern about extremist parties standing for these elections and the Churches' response to this; the Methodist, United Reformed and Baptist Churches nationally have produced some valuable resources on how local churches and Churches Together groups can react effectively to this problem. Details will be found at <http://www.jointpublicissues.org.uk/jpitpolitics.htm>

## **Courtesies. Guidelines for Anglicans when relating to Christians of other churches.**

A common misconception is that it is difficult and bureaucratic to share in the worship of other churches and for other church's leaders and members to share with us. Courtesies explains in 5 straightforward sections the hospitality we can offer and how we can share in the worship of other denominations. Follow this link to download or contact David or Barry for paper copies of Courtesies. [http://www.anglican-methodist.org.uk/ddeo\\_catD.htm](http://www.anglican-methodist.org.uk/ddeo_catD.htm)

## **The Anglican Methodist Covenant- update.**

In 2003 the 2 Churches nationally signed a Covenant committing each to share together in worship and mission at every level. Since then the Joint Implementation Commission for the Covenant has been tasked with bringing intention to fruition. This can be seen nationally, for instance through the Fresh Expressions initiative, which is a joint enterprise of both Churches.

In the Diocese a number of local partnerships have developed both informally and formally. One of the places that has been identified as having considerable potential is at the Deanery and Circuit level.

Members of churches in the Bromsgrove Deanery and the Bromsgrove and Redditch Circuits of the Methodist Church have worked together for some years. This continuing relationship through the careful guidance of a number of Anglican and Methodist Church leaders has now gone a stage further with the reforming of the Methodist Circuit to mirror that of the Bromsgrove Deanery.

Locally in Redditch, strong relations between Headless Cross Methodist Church and St. Luke's Parish Church have taken a big step forward with the 2 congregations coming together this Spring, to become one Church, worshipping together and sharing Christian mission and witness in the wider community. For the full story go to: [http://www.stlukes-redditch.btik.com/p\\_Home.ikml](http://www.stlukes-redditch.btik.com/p_Home.ikml)

Further information and stories about the Covenant will be found at <http://www.anglican-methodist.org.uk/>

### **The Declaration of Ecumenical Welcome and Commitment**

In many places, especially in rural areas, the Church of England parish church is the only church in the area. In these circumstances, many Christians from other traditions see it as their vocation to worship at the parish church – so that they can be part of the total community of Christian people bearing witness in that locality. Here is 'ecumenical partnership' by default!

It is good when a local parish church is able to acknowledge the relationship that these people continue to have with their church in their own tradition – and when it can agree with the authorities of these churches that it will cherish their members as part of its own fellowship.

A Declaration of Ecumenical Welcome and Commitment, overseen by 'Churches Together' county-wide, makes public this commitment to pastoral care and is a means by which even the most isolated parishes can experience what it is to be part of the wider Church of Christ. Please contact David or Barry for further information and resources.

### **An ecumenical question.**

Deanery Plans, Pastoral re organisation, working in clusters and teams. These are issues that many of us are facing and will continue to face in the coming years. Other denominations are also facing similar challenges and re organisations; in this time of change and flux opportunities and possibilities will be presented. Now is a good time to ask the ecumenical question, could what we do separately be done better together? As so often in matters between churches, it begins with a conversation.....

### **The Diocesan Ecumenical Officers.**

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