

SOCIETY FOR ECUMENICAL STUDIES NEWSLETTER. November 2002.

Future Plans.

I am pleased to be able to give you rather more information than was available in September.

The AGM will take place, by kind permission of Revd. Dr Paul Avis of the Commission for Christian Unity of the Church of England at Church House, Great Smith St, SW1, on Feb. 12 2003 at 5pm. As usual, there will be a short business meeting (including a chance to air any ideas for future work and plans), followed by a talk and discussion introduced by Revd. Mark Woodruff, who has kindly agreed to talk to us about the influence of that great ecumenical pioneer, the Abbe Paul Couturier and the plans of the ecumenical organisation, CLEF (Couturier Links of Ecumenical Fellowship) to perpetuate his memory and foster links in the style he adopted.

The *provisional* agenda then, is as follows.

1. Opening Prayer.
2. Apologies etc.
3. Minutes- as issued in the newsletter after the previous AGM.
4. Financial Statement by the Treasurer.
5. Election of officers and Committee.
6. Ideas and future plans.

Subscriptions. The Committee recommend that, for the year 2003, these be fixed at £10 per individual member, £12 per married couple, £5 for individual concessions (retired and students etc) and £6 per retired married couple. This reflects the fact that more meetings now require a payment to another organisation eg. the St Alban's meeting. (see enclosed flier)

Proposed new Secretary. You will remember that, in an earlier newsletter, I intimated my desire to stand down as secretary in the near future. I am delighted to say that I have found an enthusiastic volunteer who is prepared to take over. He is Revd. Mark Woodruff, a priest of the Archdiocese of Westminster, who has had particularly strong ecumenical links with Belgium. The Committee are happy for his name to go forward at the AGM and he is likely to take over fully after the May meeting at St Alban's (I have agreed to finish off the business relating to St Alban's)

The May meeting. The main details for the big meeting at St Alban's are in the accompanying flier, issued conjointly by the three sponsoring organisations. Please don't forget that you *must* register, for the main meeting *directly* with the authorities at St Alban's rather than with me.

The 'contextual' meeting. This, however, is our *direct* responsibility and for this you *must* register with me, using the form at the end of this newsletter. Please note very carefully the deadline dates for registration. I have to be able to tell the Authorities at London Colney how many places we need by Friday, Jan 24. If we have to cancel

paces subsequently, we will have to forfeit more money than the present £5 per place deposit with which we are holding 15 places.

That number means of course, that the number of places is limited, though I understand that a few rooms are double ones and therefore, if people are willing to share, it may be possible to have more than fifteen present. Naturally, I shall assume any married couple coming wish to share- would anyone else willing to do so please indicate as on the form.

The programme is as follows.

Friday evening. Supper is at 6.30 pm, so please arrive a little earlier. After supper, we will have mutual introductions and everyone will be asked to share their concerns for the future of the Ecumenical Movement.

Saturday. After breakfast, we shall go into St Alban's for the main meeting. Don't forget, we have our own sub-meeting at lunchtime to discuss issues. Please bring your own food for this, or grab something at one of the many local shops, take-aways etc! We return to London Colney in time for supper. In the evening, we discuss our first reactions to the three main speakers.

Sunday morning. There will be an act of worship and discussion of proposals for future work by the Society. We finish with lunch and departures.

Books etc.

My own book on Methodist ecclesiology in the British tradition, has just been published by Epworth. It is entitled, *Love Bade Me Welcome-A British Methodist Statement on the Church*. Price \$14.95. ISBN 0-7162-0557-2.

Obviously, I cannot say anything about it except purely descriptively. It describes how British Methodist ecclesiology has evolved since the time of the Wesleys. I try to recover some of the rather neglected riches of nineteenth century Wesleyan ecclesiological thought as well as looking at more recent developments and, in particular, the Conference ecclesiological statement, *Called To Love and Praise of 1999*. I end with a short chapter on ecumenical possibilities.

The Holy Spirit and Ecumenism.

A conference took place at the Community of Bose on the Holy Spirit and Ecumenism from 14-20 October. Over twenty ecumenists, more or less equally divided between North America and Europe, gathered. The British contingent consisted of Mary Tanner, Alan Sell, Geoffrey Wainwright (still a minister in connexion with the British Methodist Conference, despite his long sojourn in the States) and myself. The Conference was sponsored by the Suenens Foundation, which is located at the John Carroll University, USA, and organised by Professor Doris Donnelly of the same university. Each speaker gave a short summary of his or her paper which was then followed by lively discussion. The following traditions were represented by one or more speakers, Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Anglican, Reformed, Lutheran, Methodist, Mennonite, Quaker, Pentecostalist, though no specific paper was devoted to the Methodist or Lutheran traditions. At the end, a

statement was issued offering a summary of key points on the work of the Spirit within the Church and the search for unity.

The whole Conference was marked by a beautifully eirenic spirit, undoubtedly enhanced by the privilege of sharing in the very moving worship of the Community. Great stress was laid by several speakers in two key points, the sheer abundance of the varying gifts of the Spirit both within the particular churches and across the spectrum of the traditions. There was an attempt to comprehend within the totality of our understanding of the Spirit's work in the Church not just the traditional 'Catholic' concerns with continuity in ministry and order and the 'Protestant' ones of the central role of the preached Word, but also the witness of the 'peace' churches to the importance of the lived witness of the local congregation and the Pentecostalist emphasis upon life transforming gifts. There was a common acceptance of a degree of disfigurement in all our churches on account of sin and separation.

Great emphasis was placed upon the spiritual aspect of ecumenism. Professor Fameree, a Catholic expert on Vatican II from Louvain-la-Neuve emphasised the importance of a dialogue of love as being as great, if not greater than that of the theological dialogue. Sister Lorelei Fuchs, of the Greymoor Institute of the Friars of the Atonement stressed ecumenism not just as a duty laid upon us but as a faith to be lived and celebrated.

We were privileged to have with us, at the beginning, Cardinal Danneels, who gave an introductory paper in which He stressed the importance of the Spirit as God's self-gift to us and also emphasised that what we are most concerned with is not a quantity of doctrines but the quality of truth deriving from the self-revelation of God in the suffering of Jesus Christ. Later, we had a visit from Cardinal Kasper, who charmed us all with his friendliness of manner and again pointed to the gift of the Spirit as the central constitutive feature of the Church's life. Metropolitan John Zizioulas gave an impressive paper on the Orthodox understanding of the work of the Spirit in the Church and Fr Boris Bobrinskoy, of the Institut St Serge in Paris, spoke of the total interrelatedness of the Trinity, focusing on the prayer, Abba, Father, as prayer first of Christ and then of the adopted children of God.

Great emphasis was placed on pneumatic ecclesiology, always balanced however, by the simultaneous acknowledgement of the role of Christ. The nature of ecumenism as a process of joint discernment and learning was emphasised as was the importance of reception. It is hoped the papers will eventually be published by Peeters of Leuven.

David Carter.

The Conference at London Colney.

Below please find the booking form. Please note that it is essential to book with me at 119 Woodmansterne Road, Carshalton, SM5 4EG (TN. 020-8643-5871, e-mail cac@fish.co.uk) by Friday 24 January. I have to let the authorities at London Colney know *at least twelve weeks* before whether we are taking up the full complement of places provisionally booked (and, should more of you apply that there are provisionally booked places whether they could let us have any additional places. In that case, it would be a matter of 'first come first served')

I should also let you know that if you have for any reason to withdraw within the twelve week period, you may be liable to forfeit between 30% and 50% of your payment. Further details, re transport and other practicalities will follow with the next newsletter which will be issued shortly after the AGM in February.

BOOKING FORM FOR LONDON COLNEY. (cut out and return to me)

I/we would like to book for the London Colney week-end, 16-18 May 2003.

I/We enclose a cheque for £78.55p, per person, payable to All Saints Pastoral Centre.

I would, if necessary, be willing to share a room . Yes/No.

Name.

Address.

Signed.