



The Society for Ecumenical Studies

Registered Charity Number 1096515

A Body in Association with Churches Together in England
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February-March 2011

Dear Friends,

Since our last Newsletter in August last year we have had an interesting six months. Prior to that was effected the beginnings of a new unified Assembly for the Orthodox Churches in our country, partly in preparation for the long awaited and painstakingly planned Pan-Orthodox Great Synod, partly to strengthen the Orthodox Church as a vital part of Christianity in Britain and thus its role in service and mission to society. Secondly was the visit of Pope Benedict and, from New Year, the foundation of the Ordinariate of Our Lady of Walsingham for those members of the Church of England who now wish to transfer to the fellowship, connexion or communion of the Roman Catholic Church. It poses some important ecclesiological and ecumenical questions that will be in the air for some time.

In the midst of all this, our new President, Rev Elizabeth Welch, has conducted a survey of our members' thoughts on the future role and direction of the Society – we thank all those who responded for such a helpful range of insights, which have encouraged us to plan ahead with some enthusiasm. We are grateful, too, to the new blood which has been helping our committee to do this. Elizabeth writes on this further ahead, but here is the place to ask you to support our major spring event that will be part of it.

The Ecumenical Theology of Archbishop Rowan Williams

A lecture given by

Dame Mary Tanner DBE

with a response by

The Revd Dr Oliver Rafferty S.J.
Heythrop College

at

Westminster Abbey

on

Thursday June 9th

5 p.m. - 8.00 p.m.

By kind invitation of the Dean and Chapter

Programme

5.p.m. Evensong in the Abbey

6 p.m. Reception in the Jerusalem Chamber

6.30 – 8.00 p.m. Papers and discussion

Invitation is by a free ticket, please apply to paul.avis@churchofengland.org

Prebendary Paul Avis, Council for Christian Unity, Church House
Great Smith Street, London SW1P 3AZ, 7898 1481

At the end of the Newsletter are three papers. First, David Gamble (page 4) develops the thoughts he shared at our 2010 AGM on “Christian Unity – will it ever happen?” Secondly, David Cornick, General Secretary of Churches Together in England, kindly offers us a paper surveying the ecumenical landscape (page 13). He delivered this during the course of the last session of the Churches Together in England Enabling Group, which coincided with the visit of Pope Benedict. Last come my own reflections on the wider significance of the Pope’s visit and what he said about faith and society, and the future direction of the Churches in this country (page 17). This formed the basis of a longer and more substantial address to the Theology and Unity Group at Churches Together that will be available on our website.

The Ordinariate

During the course of last year there were many questions about the ecumenical and ecclesiological significance of this new configuration within the Catholic Church in this country, as well as its ecumenical and mission implications. And what was meant by “Anglican patrimony”? To a Roman Catholic eye, whatever the other issues, it is interesting that the Ordinariate will not be a “particular church” ruled solely by its ordinary: he will have to govern with his Council and consult them before major decisions are made (including who is to be ordained). Lay people can be involved in this Council, too. There is an ongoing provision for married clergy to be ordained, assessed “on a case by case basis”. And it will be the Council – not the nuncio – who makes the recommendation to the Vatican about the appointments of successive ordinaries. Whether this is going to be a pattern for other Catholic dioceses now, it’s an interesting acknowledgement of the value of aspects of the Anglican synodical system of governance embraced within a Catholic ecclesiology. A collection of essays and articles on various themes and concerns relating to patrimony, unity and mission, as provoked by the Apostolic Constitution *Anglicanorum Coetibus* was edited by me for another charity. For those who are interested, a complimentary copy of “Anglicans and Catholics in Communion” is available to any member of the Society for Ecumenical Studies. It is available from David Chapman, St Paul’s Bookshop, Morpeth Terrace, London SW1P 1EP (by Westminster Cathedral). Telephone 020 7828 5582 or email manager@stpauls.org.uk

Hilary Martin, Treasurer and new Trustee Chris Sissons

We are enormously grateful to the sterling work of Hilary Martin on behalf of the Society for over 7 years as Treasurer. She is stepping down to take on some stimulating work concerning the relation of theology and science and we wish her well on all her endeavours. That just leaves Elizabeth and me as trustees, so we are fortunate to be able to co-opt Chris Sissons to join us. Chris is Development Officer for Local Mission and Unity with the Methodist Church. The committee has also benefited from the involvement of Paul Avis, Keith Clements, David Tatem, Donald Norwood and John Bradley. We now need a Treasurer: if you would be willing to take on this role, with light duties, please let us know.

Martin Conway

Our much loved and long serving past president, Martin Conway, sadly suffered a stroke recently. His speech is good, but he is currently recuperating from other effects. We wish him and Ruth well and assure them of all our love and prayers.

Membership Subscriptions

At the very end of this Newsletter you will find a membership Gift Aid form. Please can I implore everyone to make sure that they make the effort to fill this in and make sure your subscriptions are up to date. A large part of our struggle recently has been because we have lacked the resources to conduct our business and events – but if we all subscribed by standing order it would considerably enhance what we can do.

As you will see, this Newsletter is coming to most of you by email. This not only keeps costs down, it is part of our hopes to make the Society better equipped as a community thinking and working for unity more dynamically through the means available to us nowadays.

Please therefore make sure you let me have your updated Membership Form, your email address, your bankers order and (if possible) Gift Aid forms. Please let us know either way if you want or do not want to remain involved with the Society, as for privacy protection legal reasons, I won’t be able to retain personal records of those who don’t respond or subscribe going forward from this point

With all good wishes. Yours ever,

Fr Mark Woodruff, Secretary

Elizabeth Welch, our President writes:

Dear friends

Thank you very much indeed to all those who responded to the questionnaire that I sent out in the autumn. We received nearly 40 responses, including several letters and encouraging emails. While one or two people had questions about the future of the Society, and a handful felt that age was preventing them from further involvement, the vast majority were supportive and indicated a great range of topics for future consideration.

The interest in ecumenism is clearly still alive and well amongst our members! There was a good diversity of responses, including interest in the national and international Dialogues, a concern for local ecumenism, a willingness to reflect on the range of ecclesiological issues before us, a desire to pursue the spiritual dimension of ecumenism, a recognition of the need to be in dialogue with charismatic and 'new' churches, including listening carefully to the concerns of those of varying ethnic origins, a highlighting of mission issues and an interest in a 'sideways' look at ecumenism through such areas as the arts. (If you would like a full copy of the responses, please let Mark Woodruff or myself know.)

We are now enthusiastically looking forward to our programme for this year. There is a special event courtesy of Westminster Abbey, on the 9th June, when Dame Mary Tanner will speak on the 'Ecumenical Theology of Rowan Williams'. In the autumn, we are looking at holding an event to mark the Anniversary of the King James' Bible, with guest speaker Pauline Quirk, who will help us reflect on 'the King James' Bible as a Unifying Force in the English Church'.

Now that we are developing our future programme, I would like to encourage you both to renew your membership and to consider whether there are other people you know who might be interested in joining. In order to help our funding flow for planning future events, we are inviting people to sign standing orders. (Please find membership forms and standing order forms enclosed with this newsletter)

I believe it is a key time in this country to reflect seriously on our ecumenical calling, in the context of the changing nature of our society and the challenges of mission. Above all else, we seek to be obedient to Jesus' prayer that his followers might be one, and to give glory to the God who leads us together into life.

With Christian greetings

Elizabeth Welch