

SOCIETY FOR ECUMENICAL STUDIES

NEWSLETTER

**SEPTEMBER 1999.**

**Secretary's Notes**

I begin this newsletter in the middle of August when, thankfully, many other activities are in abeyance. I hope that you will all have had a good and restful break by the time that this reaches you.

**Obituary**

We are sad to record the death of one of our founding and most loyal members, Rev. George Braund, OGS. George was a keen participant in our London seminars and contributed a paper on the Lambeth Conferences. For much of his ministry he was a missionary. He then worked as an officer of the USPG and also as a secretary for ecumenical affairs at the Anglican Consultative Council. His ecumenical knowledge was profound and his commitment deep. We thank God for his contribution to the Society and to ecumenism in general.

**Subscriptions**

Sister Fidelis has already indicated to me that there are many people behind with subscriptions. If you have not already sent your sub to her, due in April, please do so as soon as possible. The rates remain unchanged at £12 ( £6 for those retired or students, £14 for married couples and £8 for retired couples). If for any reason ( which we hope will not be the case) you wish to cease to be a member, please let either me or Sister Fidelis know.

If you are apparently behind with subscriptions I have underlined this paragraph title in red and placed an asterisk by it. My apologies to anyone where there is a mistake. We should be grateful, though, in such cases, if you would tell Sister Fidelis.

**Future events**

I can now give you the date of the 2000 AGM which will be at Church House, Great Smith St, London SW1 at 4.45 pm on 3 February 2000, by kind permission of Paul Avis. We hope to have a speaker on the most recent ARCIC report, 'The Gift of Authority'.

There is no specific national meeting planned for the autumn, but we draw your attention to a seminar on 'the ecumenical international dimensions of Continuing Ministerial Education' to be held at Westhill College, Weoley Park Road, Birmingham, 829 6LL, on Tuesday 12 October, commencing with a buffet lunch at 12.30 pm and continuing till about 4pm. This

is being organised by the 'Friends of Bossey' in the UK. The chair will be taken by Dr David Goodbourn, the newly appointed General Secretary of Churches Together in Britain and Ireland, Speakers include Ken Howcroft, secretary for initial ministerial training in the Methodist Church, Dr Christine Dodd of the Catholic diocese of Hallam and Fr Ioan Sauca, a Romanian Orthodox priest on the staff of the Bossey Institute. The cost of participation is £10, including the buffet lunch. Participants should notify Rev Michael J Davies, 13 Savill Road, Lindfield, W. Sussex, RH16 2NY, by 30 September. Prior booking is essential.

### **The London seminar.**

I am glad to tell you that we have been able to fix three more seminars. All will take place at Heythrop College at 5pm on the dates specified.

On Wednesday 20 October, Faith Bowers, one of our members who is very heavily involved in Baptist history and ecumenical work, will talk to us about divergent Baptist views of

religious liberty and the separation of Church and State.

On Wednesday 24 November, Fr Michael Evans, Roman Catholic parish priest in Tunbridge Wells, and a member of the international Catholic-Methodist Commission will talk to us about the ongoing work of that Commission which is currently studying teaching authority.

On 9 February 2000, Fr Bernard Longley, who is secretary for ecumenism of the English and Welsh Bishops' Conference, will lead a seminar, exact subject still to be determined.

### **Student competition**

The Committee are anxious to recruit more younger members, especially amongst current theological students who will be the ecumenists of the future. Plans are currently afoot for a competition open to teams of students from the colleges in which they will give presentations on the theme 'Sign, instrument and first fruits of the kingdom'. What is the challenge to the practice of the churches in this description of the Church's nature?.

The details of this are still not entirely fixed, but the date of the final of the competition is provisionally fixed for November next year. In the next newsletter, which will certainly be before the AGM, I hope to give full details.

### **Recent meetings**

An excellent, but, unfortunately, rather thinly attended meeting, was held at the lovely venue of St Alban's Abbey on May 2. We are extremely grateful to Canon Bill Ritson for his hospitality on this occasion. The theme was the relationship between the search for European unity and the search for church unity. Rowena Loverance, a Quaker and a President of

'Churches Together in England' spoke first and her paper, originally published in the 'Woodbrooke Journal' is reproduced and circulated with this newsletter by kind permission of Rowena and the Journal.

Brian Heck then talked to us with his usual acute verve about the European ecumenical situation. He pointed out the extreme complexity of the European ecumenical situation. Different countries had very different ecumenical agendas. Different church families had very varying characteristics as between different countries. Thus, much of European Methodism had a different ethos from British and Irish Methodism; Lutheranism of course, contained great variety. Within British Methodism there was an increasing awareness of our responsibilities towards our fellow Methodist churches on the Continent and this had led to the British and Irish Methodist churches associating with the Leuenberg Agreement which was there to solve problems that did not really exist in Britain. Some agreements had only been slowly implemented; thus, the recommendation of the international Lutheran-Methodist Commission for pulpit and altar fellowship had only been quickly implemented in Germany, though much more recently it had been ratified in Norway and Sweden.

Extremely lively discussion followed both papers. We are most grateful to Rowena and Brian for an extremely stimulating and informative day.

#### **The Conference and the Forum.**

This summer, I attended, for the first time in both cases, the Methodist Conference and the Forum of 'Churches Together in England'. The former did relatively little ecumenical business this year, but the bishop delegated to attend by the United Methodist General Conference from the States was Bishop William Boyd Grove. Bishop William has recently retired from being bishop in West Virginia, where he enjoyed an extremely close relationship with his Anglican, Lutheran and Catholic brother bishops. He now acts as ecumenical officer to the Council of Bishops of the UM Church. He told me of the forthcoming visit of the Archbishop of Canterbury to the General Conference in 2000 and of renewed dialogue between American Methodist and Episcopalians. The Archbishop is very keen that the Anglican-Methodist relationship develops globally and not just in Britain and the States.

At the 'Churches Together' Forum, we heard an extremely strong ecumenical challenge from Bishop Michael Doe. In the final session, Bill Snelson, as General Secretary of CTE, said he hope that over the next two years, the churches would reflect on four key points, viz- the joys of collaboration, the boundaries of collaboration, the cost of reconciliation as churches and the cost of commitment to each other. With such a

wide diversity of traditions represented, the Forum is naturally an extremely rich learning experience.