

Dear Member

This AIF News Bulletin contains several articles, including tributes to several dear AIF friends as well as up to date information about the AIF Jubilee Weekend. Booking is now open for our special Jubilee Weekend - please join us and let us have your booking form as soon as possible.

Thanks to all those who have returned their GDPR Consent forms to the office. For those who have yet to complete their forms I have attached another copy of the letter that Paul Docherty sent to everyone about the GDPR regulations, setting out how the new rules relate to AIF. I have also sent a another copy of the form that needs to be signed **please note we need a signed consent form from you if we are going to be able to keep in touch with you after the 25th May 2018.**

This AIF News Bulletin contains:

1. Booking Now Open - AIF Jubilee Weekend – 13th and 14th October 2018
2. Counting our Blessings – A marriage resource reviewed by Ruth Reardon
3. Two Long Lives Well Travelled – A tribute to Bev Hincks and Rudolf Lauber by Melanie Finch
4. Robert Murray SJ – A tribute by Ruth Reardon

If you have any news or articles to share with members, please continue to send them to me.

Please also continue to check the website and our Facebook and Twitter pages for information and articles between the bulletins.

Thank you for your ongoing prayers and support for the Association and its work. If you have any questions about any of the information in the bulletin, please contact me.

With best wishes - and I look forward to receiving your booking form for the Jubilee Weekend!

Doral Hayes
Executive Development Officer

'You live in your marriage the hopes and the difficulties of the path to Christian Unity.' Pope John Paul II, York, 1982



Association of Interchurch Families, 10 Aldersgate Street, EC1A 4HJ
info@interchurchfamilies.org.uk Tel: 020 3384 2947. www.interchurchfamilies.org.uk

Registered Charity No. 283811

Presidents: The Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster, Bishop Tim Thornton, The Free Churches Moderator, Rev Dr Hugh Osgood and Dr Ruth Reardon

1. AIF Jubilee Weekend 2018 – 13-14 OCTOBER 2018

Plans are now well underway for the AIF Jubilee Weekend which will be a very special weekend marking the 50th Anniversary of the Association.

The weekend will take the theme of Jubilee and we hope that many friends and members will join us to celebrate the work of the Association. The programme is still being finalised but there will be a drinks reception on the Saturday evening followed by a celebratory dinner with our special guests. Our list of special guests is growing with the following friends of the Association having already confirmed their attendance:

- **Archbishop Bernard Longley**
- **Bishop Tim Thornton**
- **Dame Mary Tanner**
- **Rev Dr Callan Slipper, National Ecumenical Officer Church of England**
- **Bob Fyffe, General Secretary of Churches Together in Britain and Ireland**
- **Rev. Dr Paul Goodliff, General Secretary of Churches Together in England**
- **Fr Dominic Robinson**
- **Dr Elizabeth Davies, Marriage Care**
- **Prof. Thomas Knieps Port Le Roi, Chair of INTAMS and Co-ordinator of the Interchurch Families International Network**
- **Brenden and Laura Thompson**

In the spirit of the biblical theme of Jubilee and to enable more members to attend the AIF Jubilee Weekend the trustees have agreed to keep the price for the weekend at the same level as last year for adults and to allow all children in full-time education to attend at no cost!

In addition, there is also financial help available in the form of grants (or loans) - applications are heartily encouraged as we want as many people as possible to be able to join us for this very special weekend. We don't want anyone to stay away just because of the cost. A leaflet explaining more about the fund that supports members to attend our weekend is attached.

A booking form for the AIF 2018 Jubilee Weekend is attached to this bulletin and is also available to download from the AIF website.

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Not coming to the AIF Jubilee Weekend because of the cost?

Let us help you!



Did you know?

- ❖ Over the years a special AIF fund has given many grants and loans to enable members – individuals, couples or families – to attend the AIF Weekend.
- ❖ This dedicated fund is separate from the general funds of AIF; it can only be used to assist members to attend the AIF Weekend and other similar events.
- ❖ The Christian Conference Trust (which runs the Hayes Conference Centre at Swanwick where the AIF Weekend is held) also has a fund to assist people to attend events there, and often reimburses part of the cost of grants given by AIF, reducing the net cost to the AIF fund. In the last two years, grants totalling £1300 have been awarded, of which £580 has been reimbursed by CCT.
- ❖ If you receive a grant to enable you to come to Swanwick, it won't just be you that benefits. Everybody at the Weekend gains from gathering more of our AIF "Family" together – especially in this, our Jubilee Weekend.

How it works

- ❖ The service to members is confidential. Only the fund administrators and AIF's independent examiner know the names of those who have received help. (Any claim to CCT does not include names.)
- ❖ You apply directly to the fund administrators. If your application is accepted (and most are) we will send you a cheque, payable to you; you then send your payment together with your AIF Weekend booking to the AIF office.
- ❖ We normally expect you to pay a proportion of the cost of attending the Weekend.
- ❖ You need to apply in good time so that you can make payment with your booking.
- ❖ The fund administrators are obliged to retain records for six years but they destroy information about requests older than that.
- ❖ Please note that a decision to give a grant is subject to the discretion of the fund administrators.

The AIF Weekend is for **all** members, so **please** don't let the financial concerns prevent you from coming. We're here to help.

Contact the Fund Administrators:

Andrew and Helen Granger-Bevan, 109 Holmes Avenue, Hove, East Sussex BN3 7LF
andrew.granger-bevan@ntlworld.com, 01273 779022.

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2. Counting our Blessings – A marriage resource reviewed by Ruth Reardon

The Marriage and Family Life Office of the Catholic Bishops' Conference has produced a very good resource book to stimulate group discussion: *Counting our Blessings: a Scripture Resource Exploring Real Questions in Family Life*. It is a response to Pope Francis' encyclical *Amoris Laetitia*, encouraging us all to share our experiences of family life and reflect on them in the light of Scripture. There is material for seven sessions (which can also be used for stand-alone sessions) headed by questions, the first being 'How did you know that he or she was the one for you?' Other questions cover resilience in difficult times, forgiveness, illness and death, feeling like an outsider, a deep sense of joy, and being listened to.

The introductory pages explain what Catholics mean by 'blessings', encourage Catholics to read the Bible; and describe how to use the *lectio divina* method of reading Scripture in a group. There is useful advice for new group leaders, and plenty of material and helpful suggestions. The goals for each session are spelled out, and detailed timed outlines are given for each under the headings of welcome; looking and listening; that reminds me ...; God speaks; sharing the blessings; gathering it together; and closing prayer. The resource book itself costs £9.99, but the suggested hand-outs for group members (including the Scripture texts) can be photocopied or downloaded and printed free (www.catholicfamily.org.uk).

It is clearly intended for Catholic groups – for 'small groups in a home, parish or school setting' (p 12). It seems a pity that the possibility of using the resource in ecumenical groups is not specifically mentioned at this point. In any case it is to be hoped that lots of interchurch families will take part wherever groups are set up in Catholic parishes etc. All kinds of families will be able to share their stories and count their blessings in these groups, and maybe the more diverse the families the richer the experience. From an interchurch family perspective I notice that families with members from different ethnic backgrounds are well represented in the illustrations, while 'families with gay members' and those who are 'divorced, separated, remarried' get a mention (p 87). But why do interfaith and interchurch families so often seem to be left out?

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3. Two Long Lives Well Travelled – A tribute to Bev Hincks and Rudolf Lauber by Melanie Finch

AIF lost two very dear friends during 2017: Professor Rudolf Lauber from Weil der Stadt near Stuttgart, Germany, and Bev Hincks from Newcastle, NSW, Australia. They knew each other, and were well-known to many of us over the years AIF has been working with colleagues around the world. Both lived long lives: Rudolf reached 87 and Bev 89 years (she always said she was born the same year as Mickey Mouse.) They were both extremely well travelled, in fact if you mentioned a country, you could be pretty sure that one or both of them had visited it, and could give you all sorts of helpful hints.

Our favourite Aussie aunt



Married to pharmacist Kevin (Anglican) for 55 years, Bev (RC) trained as a metallurgist, then worked in a laboratory and later taught Chemistry. She then added three Theology degrees to her CV as their four children grew. She and Kevin started their two-church life during times when 'mixed marriages' were not encouraged or seen positively by the churches. It was Bev's attendance at the World Council of Churches Assembly in Canberra in 1991 which gave her a vocation for ecumenical work locally, and after hearing about a group of interchurch families in Brisbane in 1994 they contacted AIF in Britain, and then formed a group in their own area. Bev joined the Reardons and the Leaches at the WCC Assembly in Harare, Zimbabwe, in 1998, and she and Kevin attended various gatherings of interchurch families: Geneva 1998, Northern Ireland 2000 and Edmonton Canada 2001. In 2005 they organised a conference nearer home in Newcastle, well supported by their Anglican and Catholic bishops, and attended by the Reardons, the Landers and the Finches from the UK, as well as other couples from Canada and New Zealand. Most significantly, it also brought together for the first time Australian interchurch couples from across that vast continent. Later in 2005, in Rome, Bev and Kevin joined the group of interchurch families' representatives meeting informally with staff at the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity. And in 2010 they were in Leuven Catholic University, Belgium, with a number of interchurch couples from other countries for a conference on the Family, which included much discussion between theologians and practitioners within the fields of ecumenism and marriage and family life.

Our favourite German uncle

Married to Rosmarie, a Methodist whose family traces its church membership back to the first Methodist missionaries to travel from America to Germany in the mid 19th century, Rudolf (RC) was by profession an engineer who was Head of the Institute of Industrial Automation and Software Engineering at the University of Stuttgart from 1970 – 1995. Martin and Ruth Reardon first met Rudolf and Rosmarie when they shared an exhibition stand with French interchurch families at the Second European Ecumenical Assembly in Graz, Austria, in 1997. In 1986 Rudolf and Rosmarie had first started attending seminars in southern Germany for two-church families, which had been taking place since 1969, and in 1999, they set up the German Network of Interchurch Families, which continues to be very active under a new generation of committee members. The Laubers were also participants in many interchurch family gatherings: Geneva, Edmonton, Leuven, and most significantly working as the German speaking coordinators on the international PREPROMA planning group before the Rome conference in 2003. They were also members of the group who visited the PCPCU in 2005.



Friends and families

Bev and Kevin in Australia and Rudolf and Rosmarie in Germany were excellent hosts, offering a wonderful welcome to interchurch friends who visited their homes. Ruth and Martin were guests, and Martin preached

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(in English!) at the wedding of Rudolf and Rosmarie's daughter when she married an English Anglican, Melanie was frequently lodged and transported by the Laubers when she attended German conferences, and Richard and Melanie were invited to a splendid 75th and 70th joint birthday party in Weil der Stadt in 2005. After the 2005 Australian conference a group of us were invited to the Hincks' lovely home, overlooking a lake with black swans, to discuss where the next international gathering might be held.

Please pray for Bev's and Rudolf's families, and we thank Bev and Rudolf for their friendship and wisdom. Their work for ecumenism and interchurch families will live on.

4. Robert Murray SJ – A tribute by Ruth Reardon

Fr Robert Murray SJ died on 24 April 2018 at the age of 92. He had been a Jesuit for 68 years.

We in AIF have good reason to be grateful to him. 20 years ago Fr John Coventry died in 1998, also in April. Later in the year our Catholic Bishops issued 'One Bread One Body'. Not only was Fr John deeply missed on a personal level, but we had the practical problem of who we should ask to celebrate mass for us, an especially delicate question in the immediate wake of *OBOB*. Fr Joe Laishley SJ, who had ably backed up Fr John for many years, was not well enough to be with us at the 1999 Heythrop meeting. Fr Robert was teaching at Heythrop at the time, and very willingly came to our help, introducing himself as 'formerly a member of English ARC and someone deeply committed to the principles of AIF'. 'I miss him too', he said, 'as my one-time Provincial superior and an old friend, but I hope we shall all feel his spiritual presence with us today'.

'As a priest of the same Church functioning in public', he went on, 'I have to make a statement, as he used to, about sharing communion at this altar, and all the more so now that the Roman Catholic bishops of England and Wales, Scotland and Ireland have issued a teaching document about the principles relating Eucharistic communion to ecclesial communion. The practical rulings in this document have disappointed the hopes of many. Let me just say that I believe the principles are right, but the application of them is subject to pastoral decision, and there is some recognition that there are more than occasional pastoral situations where great spiritual need of shared communion is experienced. Priests who minister to interchurch families know well how deeply they can experience this need.

'In my place here and now I may not offer a general invitation to non-Roman Catholics, but I ask you to exercise your own spiritual discernment. For my part, I believe it is a deeper law for me not to turn away, but to welcome, anyone who approaches this altar out of evident love for our Lord. Of course, the option also remains to come for a blessing if that is preferred, or even to remain in your place.'

In the years that followed Fr Robert was eager to come when we needed him, and some of his homilies are recorded in AIF publications: 'You and your children' at Heythrop 2001, 'Shutting out or welcoming in?' at Swanwick 2002, 'Reconciliation' at Heythrop 2005 ('the sixth time I have celebrated AIF's family eucharist for you since John Coventry could no longer lead your worship on earth'), 'Transfiguration' at Heythrop 2007 ...

Ten years ago Fr Robert was one of the special guests at our Swanwick celebration of the 40th anniversary of AIF. This year at our Jubilee celebrations, we shall feel his spiritual presence along with that of John Coventry and that of so many others who have walked with us over the past half century.

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