

Distributed: November 2018

Dear Member,

This AIF News Bulletin contains:

1. A report of the AIF Jubilee Weekend 2018
2. Good News for an Interchurch Couple - report by Helen Connell from "Adoremus" the Roman Catholic Eucharistic Pilgrimage and Congress.
3. Ruby Wedding Celebrations are Better Shared by Margaret Minoletti
4. Letter from AIF Member Robert Baxter in response to Ruth Reardon's recent papers on Eucharist Sharing
5. Report from the CTE Forum (separate attachment)
6. Report from the World Meeting of Families (separate attachment)

As the memories of our highly successful Jubilee Weekend fade, some of us are beginning to turn our attention to the **2019 Weekend**. The theme has yet to be finalised but, at the moment, we expect it to have a more spiritual focus, and, for your diaries, **the date has been confirmed as Saturday 12 and Sunday 13 October 2019**. More details in due course.

Similarly, we are working to arrange the London Meeting and AGM. We have contacted a potential speaker but until we hear back from them about their availability we are unable to confirm a date and venue. I will send out an email as soon as we have details.

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

Doral

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



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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 2019

October 13th and 14th saw the weekend celebration of fifty years of the Association of Interchurch Families and it was wonderful to spend the weekend with so many AIF member and friends.

After the weekend we submitted a press release to several publications and articles have been published in a handful - particularly about the Jubilee Evensong service that was led by Bishop Tim with prayers offered by Archbishop Bernard Longley and a sermon preached by Free Church Moderator, Revd Dr Hugh Osgood. The service booklet is now available on the AIF website for those who were unable to attend.

Thank you to all the members who have helped spread the news about our Jubilee; please see attached a recent article from the Catholic Universe or follow the link here to the CTE News page.

https://cte.org.uk/Articles/532153/Home/News/Latest_news/Interchurch_Families_celebrate.aspx

Those who were at the Jubilee Weekend who contributed to the appeal for funding for Sarah Bard's wheelchair would wish to know that we raised the magnificent sum of £268 which Paul sent to Sarah in the following week. She was immensely grateful and sent a lovely note of thanks, asking to be remembered to "all the very kind members of AIF". Anyone who wasn't at the weekend but who would wish to read about Sarah's appeal can visit her fundraising page at <https://www.gofundme.com/wheelchair-tennis-sarah>

Thank you to all those members who have already sent in their reflections on the weekend - if you would like to contribute your thoughts to a report that is being compiled about the weekend there is still time to send them to the office. A full report of the Jubilee Weekend will be available in a later edition of the AIF Bulletin.

2. Good News for an Interchurch Couple – by Helen Connell

When the Eucharistic Pilgrimage and Congress (Adoremus) was first announced in our parish newsletter at the beginning of the year, Richard pointed it out to me as something in which I would be interested. Later, he wondered if he could participate as well. Several weeks passed and eventually the parish priest asked if I was genuinely interested in attending. I said I was, and he brought me the registration forms. Looking over them there was nothing about denomination so we asked for a second set so Richard could register as well. The Congress was a three-day event. Friday was designated as the Symposium Day and the morning consisted of three keynote addresses. These focused on the scriptural context of the Eucharist; the Eucharist in the life of the Church and on teaching the Eucharist. The full texts or podcasts of these are available at <http://catholicnews.org.uk/Home/Special-Events/Adoremus-National-Eucharistic-Pilgrimage> and we recommend you take a look.

On Friday afternoon everyone was encouraged to sign up for one of three presentations. We were delighted that we were able to attend the one led by Dominic Robinson on One Bread One Body. He was joined by Rev Callan Slipper (Anglican) Major David Evans (Salvation Army) and Rev Neil Stubbens (Methodist). It was interesting to listen to the other denominations share their position on the Eucharist especially as Fr Dominic, whilst stating the official RC position, spoke of his personal friendship with Interchurch Families and its influence on his personal beliefs. Canon John O'Toole who is working with the National Board of Catholic Women on a revision of the document 'May my husband ever receive ...' primed Helen Mayles to ask a question about eucharistic hospitality for interchurch families which she did.

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On Saturday (which was Congress day) we listened to American Bishop Robert Barron on the Eucharist. His presentations were inspiring (and are also available at the above website). As well as the talks there was a market place available throughout the Congress for organisations to exhibit their actions inspired by their faith. Parallel to the event in the Arena, there were workshops and seminars all over the city.

We signed up for an Ecumenical conversation held in Liverpool Parish Church on the Saturday evening. It included Paul Bayes, the Anglican Bishop of Liverpool; Sheryl Anderson, the Chair of the Methodist District and the Archbishop of Liverpool, Malcolm McMahon. The Archbishop arrived late but the discussion was interesting and Bishop Paul said he accepted the pain of separation in the spirit of receptive ecumenism. Archbishop Malcolm stated the official position of the RC church but said personally he never refused to give communion to anyone. (If you would like a copy of the statements from the participants of the event please email me and I can forward copies to you.)

It was a privilege to be a part of all these events but most inspiring were the people we met. From the priest who was struggling to find the Arena with his sat nav to the crowd gathered for the 11.15 Mass in Liverpool Cathedral, everyone was joyful and expectant. We were made welcome wherever we went.

I was particularly moved at the stall for Missio (the official Catholic charity for overseas mission). One of the priests asked if we had a red collecting box and when I said we have he thanked us for our support. I went on to explain that it was in memory of my Great Uncle who was a Mill Hill Missionary. He asked his name and it was wonderful to hear that they remembered my uncle. It was rather special to be able to save seats for the Missio staff on the Saturday.

Richard found the unpacking of the Eucharist helpful and the many ways we can communicate and celebrate God through it. He felt re-energised and enthused for the Eucharist in his own, Anglican, tradition. Maybe the organisers would be pleasantly surprised to know that.

3. Ruby Wedding Celebrations are Better Shared - by Margaret Minoletti

There was a warm southerly breeze blowing, just as it had been on 9th September 1978. The only difference was that it ruffled greying hair rather than a long white veil forty years on! Peter and I this time arrived at St. James' URC, Buckhurst Hill for what was to be a very special, possibly historic service to celebrate our two-church marriage. The URC minister, Rev. Ulrike Bell and Father Quentin Jackson of the Friary at St. Thomas of Canterbury Woodford Green had generously spent time together planning a service that was to incorporate a permission, granted by our Bishop for Margaret to share communion on this occasion. We celebrated together with the attendees at the 9am Mass which is now conveniently held in St. James'. The URC congregation were invited but a 9am Mass is a challenge for those used to starting at 10.30!

The Mass began with the entrance as usual of the priest and altar servers, but with the exciting addition of Ulrike, dressed in her Lutheran robes. There was an air of anticipation within the congregation, amplified when Father Quentin began to introduce the service explaining that we were celebrating "Peter and Margaret's marriage of forty years" and then went on to make the unexpected comment "we Catholics are extreme". He then explained that within the Christian church there are many expressions of the love of Christ and the ways in which we commemorate His Last Supper, whilst "the Real Presence is central to the Catholic belief", he said "whereas this is not the case in most other churches". In his homily later Father Quentin expanded his thoughts further by using a simile - "imagine the Church is like a garden- some are

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daffodils, some maybe roses. They are all flowers and beautiful, making up the garden. They are not the same but can live and grow together”.

Peter and I read the First and Second Readings, following the Liturgy for the Sunday. However, following their discussions, Ulrike took a different Gospel reading, the story of the House built on the Rock, a theme then expanded by Father Quentin when he talked about marriage and the importance of firm foundations as well as facing the challenges created by being part of two church communities. We were then given a joint blessing from both ministers and shared an exchange of promises that Peter and I had written, adapting text written by Fr Quentin, highlighting the two church nature of our marriage.

However long we have been married when on special occasions we have been able to take communion together, the immense joy of sharing is never diminished. This occasion was very special indeed, especially when many others in the congregation as they went up to receive communion touched Margaret’s shoulder approvingly as she sat at the end of the pew and broke into spontaneous applause at the end of Mass. After the service we had many supportive comments, a suggestion that “we should do this more often” (not quite sure what - marriage, Ruby Weddings or simply worshipping together!) as Ulrike and Quentin stood to shake hands with everyone as they left for home. It felt energising and joyful, just as we should feel after church!

A tea party followed in the afternoon where family and members of both RC and URC congregations shared cake together- no permissions required there- just people enjoying life together, just as Christ would have wanted?



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4. A letter from AIF Member Robert Baxter in response to Ruth Reardon's recent papers on the German Bishops discussions around Eucharist Sharing.

I would like to express my sincere thanks to Ruth for persevering and putting together the recent document on the timeline of the debate that has arisen after the German Bishops attempt to formalise the Eucharistic practice between Christian married couples from different traditions. It seems a very long time ago since we were married in the 1970's with an Anglican and Catholic priest to bear witness and hopes were high that this was just part of the fruits of Vatican 2 that would see Christians of different traditions coming closer together and bearing a much stronger witness to the whole world of common faith amongst Christians.

The decades seem to have shown that the spirit and message of Vatican 2 have not been taken on board by many of our Clergy. Despite the fact that in John's Gospel 17 vv 20-23 Jesus prays that all will be one as He was one with the Father Church Unity does not seem to have as high a profile for the majority of the ordained members of our churches as Jesus was praying it would.

We read in Scripture 'that where two or three are gathered in my name I am in their midst' so, whenever we pray together in groups / Churches and with Christians of any tradition, then Christ will be in our midst. If we truly believe this, then it follows that Christ is amongst us throughout the Eucharist Service and in a special way in the reception of the Bread and Wine so I am not sure how we are to interpret the current situation where some are not allowed to receive Him in the form of Bread/Wine. I found a photograph earlier this year of Cardinal Nichols and Archbishop Justin Welby, both visibly upset when the Archbishop was not able to take Communion; I just wondered what Jesus would say to them as they are obviously both Men of God – the same God.

It is difficult not to become frustrated with the lack of concern/urgency that is common amongst the hierarchy - the Catholic Church takes decades where perhaps others would take less time to listen to the Holy Spirit. It comes to mind how long was Jesus's ministry that changed the World!

In Scripture we also hear how Jesus refers to His presence with his followers as being similar to a Bride and Groom - which I interpret as meaning having a close intimate relationship with God just like a married couple - so I feel that the current attitude puts something like a "glass ceiling" on relationships between couples of different traditions.

In Scripture we also read about how some scattered seed produces a harvest of thirtyfold (and in some cases even higher). Life is a journey of growth and we all grow through our lives and perhaps do not ever achieve 100% or full communion with God. I can relate much better to the Eucharist being 'food for the journey' rather than a reward.

5. Report from the CTE Forum – see attached as a separate document

6. Report on the World Meeting of Families – see attached as a separate document

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