

**Newsletter**January 2010

#### many churches, one purpose

“There are many different Christian churches and denominations, but all have the same basic calling - to worship God, to share the good news about Jesus Christ and to work for the good of all people.

So they often need to work together, as well as co-ordinate the work they each do separately. When they do, they are acting as Churches Together.

But being Churches Together means more than that. It means commitment by each church and denomination to deepen its fellowship with the others and, without losing what makes each interestingly different, to work with them towards a greater visible unity.”

Churches Together in Britain and Ireland. website

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| **The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2010**  Our annual gathering to mark this took place on 19th January, hosted by the United Reformed Church, Allen Street.  In a radical and generous gesture, Kensington Deanery Synod (C. of E.) shared their event – a lecture by **Dr Peter Vardy**, the eminent philosopher, theologian and author who, since 1999, has held the post of Vice Principal at Heythrop College, University of London. Introduced by Deanery Synod Lay Chairman, Howard Evans, the speaker’s subject was  ***Genetic Engineering – the Ethical Challenges Ahead***  Dr Vardy put the unavoidable evidence before those listening that the challenges are with us now. Facts and statistics were presented in academic staccato urgency of the means to process procreation and also the prevalence of easily choosing to prevent the development of life. We were challenged with dilemmas that we could be faced with in our life time where genetic engineering now offers solutions to Cancer developing in our children, to suffering being alleviated, to the creation of children by our design. Statistical information about the power we have and the level of our maturity was not amusing. The KCC Chairman, Fr Matt Blake, gathered all present in a common heartfelt prayer that placed all these difficult issues that are now exist before God, our Creator.  Refreshments were provided for this combined event by our friend, Tania (Armenian Church) who runsJakob’sOrganic Café in the Gloucester Road. The food was delicious, conversations flowed. Our faith renewed? Yes. |
| **Homes or Assets. Restoring faith in Housing. Arthur Rank Centre, Stoneleigh, Warwickshire 11am – 3.30pm, Monday 1 March 2010**  In the face of the unprecedented economic crisis, it is important for all of us to reflect on the many challenges that we are now faced with – and which are likely to have profound impacts on families, communities, jobs, housing, financial services and wider economies.  Our Churches have rich resources to draw on – not least the succession of commissions and reports on church, society and economy, from *Faith in the City* and *Unemployment and the Future of Work* through to *The Common Good* and *Faithful Cities*.  What insights can we gain from revisiting this work – and how much does the new situation require new thinking?  **Church Action on Poverty** and **Housing Justice** invite you to this round table event. All are welcome. (Our thanks to Mary Corral URC for bring this event to our attention)  **Booking arrangements;** The cost of attending the event (including lunch) is £20 (£5 unwaged).  Cheques payable to Church Action on Poverty.  For a booking form please email [info@church-poverty.org.uk](http://uk.mc276.mail.yahoo.com/mc/compose?to=info@church-poverty.org.uk)  About Church Action on Poverty  Church Action on Poverty is a national **ecumenical Christian social justice charity**, committed to tackling poverty in the UK. |
| **Book Review: Coming Closer to Christ – Confession and Forgiveness – Metropolitan Anthony of Sourozh**.  In giving guidance about how to prepare for communion by first confessing our sins, Metropolitan Anthony of Sourozh – doctor, monk parish priest, broadcaster and spiritual writer who became the leader of the Russian Orthodox Church in Britain, replied “One should not *indulge* in confession. One should not be careless about it” In another section he rebukes gently “It’s not just about being washed to go back into the mud.” All of the churches comprising of the Kensington Council of Church’s practice the necessity of confession and repentance in order to be in communion with Christ and the community of disciples. This deeply wise and mature compilation of talks, sermons and responses to questions about confession and forgiveness can only lead us closer together to union with Christ. The emphasis is on healing rather than Hell and is a reminder Christ came to restore damaged relationships and to enable us to love, not to condemn us. The holy and compassionate guidance is not clichéd or shallow but comes from a life of prayer from a pastor who perceives the truth and complexity of the human condition. Confession and forgiveness, is not underestimated nor are the blessings that are there eternally at the end of this process. It starts from awareness that something is wrong. Perhaps there is a message and an ecumenical method of meeting for us in these words; “But in order to become friends anew we must open our soul, tell Him everything for Him to know *from us* what is wrong with us, what is the infringement of our friendship.” What a good way to start the New Year. This book can be bought from Pauline Book and Media, Kensington High St. I recommend it heartily. *Lorcan Bale* |
| **Christian Churches in China.**  China was mentioned more than once by Dr Vardy during his lecture. To find out more, please go to the Churches Together in Britain and Ireland website and then to the China Online Study Centre. It provides information and current news about Christianity in China today.  “Christianity was first introduced into China in the 7th century. Today Catholicism and Protestant Christianity are two of the five recognised religions. Christian believers represent a small minority of today’s Chinese, but the numbers have grown rapidly in the past three decades, as restrictions on religions have gradually eased in China. Registered Christian churches belong to the China Christian Council and the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association. Many Christians also meet in unregistered churches and homes  Freedom of religious belief is guaranteed by the Chinese constitution provided that it is exercised within the law and does not threaten state security. Although freedoms given to Chinese Christians have improved greatly in the last thirty years, restrictions do remain. Traditionally, Chinese Christianity has flourished in rural areas, but with increased urbanisation and the conversion of professionals and intellectuals, many urban churches are thriving.”  The previous editor of KCC Newsletter, Mr Danny Teller, is now teaching in China. He has given up the comforts of his flat in Kensington and his job to pursue his vocation. We are asked to pray for him and for those in his care. |

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| **West London Churches Homeless Concern.**  This charityis a practical collaboration of Christian Churches in Kensington and Chelsea. A church each night of the week opens its doors and provides a shelter. Thirty-five men and women access the shelters every night during the coldest months of the year, and many more share a warm meal. Last year, 13,000 meals were served and 5,450 bed spaces provided. They also offer showers, laundry facilities, and second-hand clothing at their base in the Chelsea Methodist Centre.  Many of the homeless guests are helped by a caseworker who is on hand to offer advice and practical support. Last year, they were able to help 32 guests move into more permanent accommodation. Many more are helped to find jobs or referred to appropriate services. The most important feature of the night shelter is the volunteers from the various churches and traditions who give their time to be present to the guests and restore a sense of hope and faith and dignity simply by being present with them during very dispiriting times. Our prayers are requested.  If you would like to volunteer in any capacity please contact the KCC Newsletter editor or WLCHC directly. Volunteers who can speak Polish, Russian, Serbo-Croat would be especially useful at the moment. |
| **Fair Trade – The Big Swap**  **FAIRTRADE FORTNIGHT 2010 (22 FEBRUARY - 2 MARCH)**  The theme is 'The Big Swap', with particular emphasis on swapping your cup of tea for a Fairtrade cuppa. There will be a Strictly Fairtrade Tea Dance on Saturday 27 February in Central London. Churches and communities are encouraged to celebrate locally: ideas from the Fairtrade Foundation, tel. 020 7405 5942 for resources or visit [www.fairtrade.org.uk](http://www.fairtrade.org.uk) or [www.thebigswap.org.uk](http://www.thebigswap.org.uk) (for registration) |
| **The Coptic Church in Egypt.**  **When any part of our community suffers we are concerned. We are hearing about the distressing outbreaks of sectarian violence seen in Egypt for years. Last year Copts expressed forgiveness and restraint in words and reaction to extreme provocations and but last month a murderous incident occurred which is creating a great deal of unease. On January 6 -- Christmas Eve according to the Eastern Orthodox calendar -- six Coptic Christians and a policeman were killed in a drive-by shooting while exiting church in Naga Hammadi, Upper Egypt. Fears of a return to the violence and persecution endured during the 1990’s come to mind.**  Coptic Christians constitute nearly 10 percent of Egypt's population at 8 million strong. That should make possible a re-discovery of common values linking Muslims to their Coptic co-nationals, which make up Egypt's social fabric. In other parts of the world where Christians are been violently persecuted some may explain it as a reaction against foreign evangelical Western type of Christianity but the fact that the Coptic church is Egyptian whose ancestors embraced Christianity in the first century. The word "Coptic" was originally used in to refer to Egyptians in general but it has undergone a semantic change over the centuries to mean more specifically Egyptian Christian. This semantic shift dates back to the time when Christians became an Egyptian minority, after the bulk of the Egyptian population converted to Islam following the Muslim conquest of Egypt in the 7th century. The **Coptic Christian** population in Egypt is the largest Christian community in the Middle East.  Christians lament discrimination in public positions and employment. They also complain of difficulty in obtaining permits for the construction of churches, and they fear of violence if and when a Muslim should convert to Christianity. There have also been accusations of forced conversion to Islam. Let us join in prayer for the Coptic Church in Egypt at this time. |
| **Women’s World Day of Prayer**  Friday 5 March, 11am, service at St Augustine's Church, Queens Gate, (South Kensington or Gloucester Road tube, 49 bus). Worship material provided by the women of Cameroon, on the theme of 'Let everything that has breath praise God'. Followed by refreshments. |
| **KCC Lenten Retreat – Feb 25 to Mar 25 – Thursdays 6.30**  We fondly remember the great hospitality of Monsignor Curry who provided the venue for the KCC Lenten Retreat last year in Our Lady of Victories at very short notice. It was a great success and was enjoyed by all. Thanks in particular are due to the Legion of Mary who gave up their meeting rooms and kitchen when our numbers grew and more space was required to seat everyone who joined.  This year **St Philip’s Church, Earls Court** Road is gracefully offering the use of their beautiful new halls. The theme this year will be “**Confession”** and we will draw heavily on the writing and guidance of Metropolitan Anthony. How is confession practised in our various churches? What about confessions in the tabloids and TV? The process of reconciliation in South Africa? Must we forgive others ? Should institutions, countries or churches confess? The Blessing of Confession and repentance and reconciliation. Those are some of the topics and questions we will explore this Lent. |
| **Invitation to contribute.**  Thank you to all who contributed to this 2010 edition. Now that we have started again we aim to continue and perhaps redesign with pictures and email options. Thanks in particular are due to **Mary Corrall** for news of events. I know that others are writing items and these will appear in the next issue. Please send suggestions and news from your church. |

**KCC Information**

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