

GRASS ROOTS ECUMENISM

"You didn't go to the United Service?" said a good friend of the family disapprovingly. "But I would have thought that you particularly" implying that a mixed marriage partnership would find such a service of particular value.

In fact ecumenism at the liturgical level has always struck me at the best as a friendly emptiness, at the worst as a squeezing of old well-loved services into a new and awkward shape. I have respected and learned from a deep Quaker silence, the enthusiasm of a Methodist service, the solemn reverence of a Roman Catholic mass. I return to my own Church of England services like returning home after visiting friends. "Home" is changing - perhaps it is right that it should, but I hope its changes, with full appreciation of the good things that neighbours have, is not just for the sake of uniformity.

But having said this, I do believe in the unity of the Christian family, and that it should show its unity not by uniformity of worship but by its common Christian concern for those in need. Is there more in this co-operation than co-operation with secular organisations? If Christians show their brotherhood in this manner are they sharing any more unity one with another than unity with a humanist working for the same objective? The answer is a clear one I believe.

Our fellowship as Christians in working for the needy is based on a belief in the real help and instruction of a loving God in our work. We know that without His help nothing worthwhile will be achieved, but that acting for Him we are invincible. Our methods may well differ from those of the humanists because of this. We have a fellowship with workers who do not share our Christian faith, but it is not based on the same foundation.

As a parishioner of St. James's Church I believe I speak for many of us when I say that the St. Francis de Sales Justice and Peace group with its threefold plan of learning, prayer and action is something that we admire and would like to help forward in any way that we can. Perhaps we should form a group of our own. We have tentative plans of our own for Christian action, and we would be grateful for your prayers and perhaps other help if our plans mature.

Perhaps at this grass-roots level our fellowship can develop, and our worship together can take place as we visit friends' homes - not asking them to shift the furniture to suit us.

R.W.W.

(Reprinted from 'Parish Matters' 17 February 1974 - the news sheet of the Church of St. Francis de Sales).

CRUSE

The Cruse movement, as I expect you know, is devoted to widows and their children and works through a number of local clubs, of which Twickenham Cruse Club is one. The Twickenham Club aims to cover the Borough of Richmond upon Thames and tries in particular to offer a counselling service on an individual or small group basis.

It is now seeking to extend its work locally and to this end is looking for visitors who will visit and befriend individual widows; and to be told of widows, especially the younger ones and those recently bereaved, whom it might be able to help. The Club finds that it can often give most help during the first year or so of bereavement.

It runs a Parents' Circle for mothers with young children and a Social Club.

It will very much appreciate offers of help in this worthwhile work. For further details please contact the Club's Secretary, Mrs. Ledwidge, 43 Talma Gardens, Twickenham, telephone number 892 0629.

ST. MARK'S CENTRE, WANDSWORTH

On Friday, February 15, the Rev. Kenneth Bale from St. Mark's Church, Wandsworth, spoke to the Richmond Community Care Association lunch-time Forum Meeting about this rehabilitation centre which he has started in premises which he has turned into a workshop near his church.

St. Mark's Centre provides work for men and women whose lives have been shattered by physical or mental illness, prison or some other disaster. Many of them have not been able to work for some time, many have lost their self respect, confidence and abilities, and need to be encouraged to work again in an environment where, although entirely business-like, there is care taken to suit jobs to the capabilities of the workers until they are fit to leave the centre and go out with confidence into the normal labour-market.

All the workers are expected to work an 8-hour day, and after a trial period of 3 weeks are taken on and are paid the normal wage for the job done. Kenneth Bale obviously gives the place much energetic personal encouragement, and has been successful in securing suitable work contracts. The work and the companionship promote self-confidence and overcome the feelings of failure which can be very handicapping after an enforced period of unemployment. There is no other therapy. There is a Manager, a Shop Foreman, etc., and the place is a going concern and pays its way.

St. Mark's Centre only supplies positions for 25 workers, and there is a theoretical waiting list of nearly 6000. Kenneth Bale is hoping to open a factory run on similar lines in Battersea shortly, and more ventures like this are needed.

What needs to be stressed is that both mentally and physically handicapped men and women are welcomed, and benefit mutually from the stimulation of feeling that they are making a contribution to society again. The centre is becoming widely known, and many social workers, mental health workers, probation officers and doctors are aware of its value for men and women who, after breakdowns, need half-way houses back to normal life.

Hannah Stanton.

DANCE IN WORSHIP

On Sunday May 5, at the invitation of the Hampton Council of Churches, Mrs. Margaret Stevens of the Reigate Liturgical Dance Group, is bringing her dancers to All Saints' Church in Hampton to a United Service at 6.45 p.m.

Mrs. Stevens is planning to incorporate two or three dances illustrating themes of worship and concern into Evensong, and we have asked her if she will give a few words of introduction before the service.

I have seen this group dance in Westminster Abbey and was very impressed with their sincerity and joy.

Please book the date and make the event widely known among your friends.

Hannah Stanton.

THOUGHTS ARISING FROM THE DISCUSSION ON EVENSONG

(1) Because I am fond of Evensong, with its simple if sometimes illogical pattern, the timeless dignity of the set prayers, the occasional beauty of the psalms and of the music; because it is for me a comforting end to one week before the uncertainties of another: for these and many other reasons I was glad that there emerged from our discussion a strong consensus in favour of keeping it.

Keeping it, but not necessarily unchanged, though there were many hoping for just that: I felt that the call which came through above the requests for oratorios, plays, recitals, dancing, and other "one-off" items which I lump under the heading of entertainments, (and think none the worse of for that;) - above all there was the call for information and communication.

As a framework within which to accommodate these many opinions and wishes, I would suggest that one Sunday each month we should have an "entertainment" and on the remaining three, the normal Evensong (in which we could perhaps take note of the requests for more singable hymns and psalms) followed on two occasions by sermons of instruction which could be the subject of debate or discussion on the third Sunday. Properly publicised such a programme should not result in the polarisation which the Vicar seemed fearfully to anticipate, but rather in increased interest and renewed loyalty.

One nagging reflection prompted by some remarks in the discussion - is there a view that the Eucharist is the only essential service, and that attendance then would benefit if a sickly Evensong were to be abolished? I hope not, and a heartening attendance of 50 people at an ordinary no-gimmicks Evensong on Septuagesima would seem to show that the alleged invalid isn't quite ready yet for burial.

(2) In my opinion there is still a great deal of misunderstanding about the use of the word "Evensong" - to many people this means a form of worship at 6.30 p.m. on Sunday; to others it means the full formal prayer book version. I believe we are often at cross purposes with each other over this.

Surely our aim at 6.30 p.m. should be to enable those of us who prefer to do so to worship on a Sunday evening. As formal Evensong seems to fulfill this need for fewer and fewer people, something will have to change. The process of change may be rather painful and unpopular to some, but if they will bear with experiment for a while, I'm sure we will arrive at something acceptable in the end.

It occurred to me after the discussion that one thing was certain. We want our Sunday evening service to include music, traditional and modern. I really feel this is the service at which we can keep church music alive.

(3) Evensong for me is a valued pause between the end of one week's work and the beginning of the next. The familiar ritual and phrases grow in significance in time of need and bring their own peace; and always there is the remembrance of things left undone, a time for amendment and the final instruction to be of good courage. Habit in itself is not enough though, and I welcome the suggestion that sermons and lessons could prepare the way for discussion once a month. Perhaps we could read through the Psalms and select for singing the joyous ones and those that still have some meaning.

(4) Church-going has to become a habit. If one has to make time for it specially, every Sunday, one easily finds it cannot be planned in. With that in mind I have always regarded it as a very welcome luxury to have several services to choose from in the morning and evening. I have noticed this all the more coming, as I do, from a Lutheran background, where there usually is just one Sunday service, in the morning. Our evening service is to be taken even less for granted considering the small number of people often attending.

Precisely for that reason the recent attempt was made to find a way of making the service more attractive. One outcome of our experiment is the clear awareness that there is no simple way of up-dating or varying Evensong. The question at the moment is whether to have traditional Evensong or quite a different kind of service - a really new form of worship. We can see no satisfactory compromise.

One of the important and best-loved features of the original form of Evensong is the choir. Possible threats to its use make people shy away from any experiments. In this context an innocent outsider might be forgiven for asking why the choir could not be used at the communion service, in which case the argument for the retention of traditional Evensong loses some of its power.

I do, however, not mean to advocate an abolition of Evensong. Personally I love singing familiar tunes of hymns, liturgy and prayers again and again. I would be very sad to lose this opportunity. (Psalm singing incidentally is an art I have so far not mastered; for the sake of those psalms whose words are beautiful I should like to remedy this - may be a lesson in psalm singing could form a subject for one "special evening service" (see below)

(The traditional Evensong would benefit greatly from a well-trained congregation).

Love for singing cherished tunes - and words - might seem a feeble reason for retaining Evensong as such. I feel, however, that I am not alone in this and that it is a valid enough reason for celebrating Evensong on some Sundays at least.

Newcomers to worship may find the form of service too stylised or rigid to want to take part. Regular church goers may need the occasional challenge of something quite different, or a straight talk, to jolt them out of any complacency, or to make their worship more meaningful. For this reason I would fully support the suggestion made at the discussion on February 3, that in each month we might have two traditional Evensongs, one discussion evening with prior short service similar to the one on that day, and one "new form of worship", where all sorts of experiments could take place. The discussion could be based on the two sermons of the preceding Sundays, or on topical subjects of general interest. The "experiments" could include bible study in small groups, plays, maybe church music - although here one must not forget that it should be worship rather than a pure concert.

I should like to close by repeating the other very valuable point made, namely that the main question is possibly not how we worship but whether we worship. If we feel that by introducing new forms of worship we give more people a chance of finding their way to God we should not be afraid of exploring such innovations.

(5) Although the discussion which took place after Evensong on February 3 was very rewarding and gave us all much food for thought, I am afraid the main thing that struck me was how one-sided it appeared. The whole exercise circled around Evensong and how it could be improved, altered and adjusted to everyone's needs.

Should not such compromises be made in a spirit of love, each side not merely giving assent in principle to an idea, but promising in their hearts to overcome all prejudice which might hinder the success of a venture? What both sides want are large, joyful congregations on Sunday evenings, not a divided parish.

Finally, some suggestions. Why not consider Series 2 Evensong? Although not differing markedly from the present version it does offer some variation in canticles. And what of the new 'Psalm Praise'? This book contains modern settings for over half the psalms which are paraphrased to facilitate comprehension and meaning. These are two minor changes which would considerably lighten the present Sunday evening gloom.

(7) I hope that we shall always have some sort of evening service on Sunday to give us "the peace the world cannot give" and help us through the following week but please not accompanied by the boiling of the 'cauldron' during the service or coffee being poured out during the blessing, both of which are very distracting.

FUTURE SOCIAL EVENTS

Visit to Ideal Home Exhibition on Thursday March 21. Tickets, price 75p. inc. fare and entrance fee from Mrs. Bridges 19 St. Jame's Road. Coach will leave the church promptly at 6.15 p.m. and return after the close of the exhibition:

On Saturday April 27 for the first time we are running a Barn Dance! Here are a few tips for those of you who have not been to a dance of this type before. "Casual wear is normal and light clothing is better than heavy. It is better for ladies not to wear high-heeled shoes. Barn dances are unlike ballroom dances in that they usually start on time and with most of the dancers there. The Caller usually begins with the basic movements which new dancers will need to know during the evening. Generally speaking it is not satisfactory to have young children taking part in the dancing". The tickets for this function are 40p. including refreshments, available from all members of the Social Committee.

In May we hope to have an organ recital.

Our outing this year has been fixed for Saturday June 8 and will take the form of a visit to Guildford Cathedral, a picnic and a trip on the river from Guildford to Godalming. Remember the date, the details will be announced later.

THE WORLD OF Y.P.F.

At the stroke of 3.0 o'clock 5 shady looking members of the Y.P.F. the "Butch Bridges Brothers" and - by appointment - Power House Taylor, courtesy of Mowlem moved through the gloom of the sunny afternoon (grunts and groans were audible in Teddington). A well-known typing error (all will be revealed if you come to Y.P.F.) held up the flow of tortuous steel while the cross was plucked on high by Butch Bridges & Co. After a century of being wedded to the church it was divorced at the peak of its career and has been put out to stud at 106 Park Road.

Enough of this sophistry. Although the cross was on the way downwards Y.P.F. is at last on its way upwards, reaching such peaks as the Y.P.F., dinner and the singles evening (records!) Sundays have been quite successful in that we have had talks on parables, forgiveness and repentance and joined in with several church meetings. The date of our annual holiday, this year to Yorkshire, is drawing near. If young people would like to know more about Y.P.F., and its activities please ring Martin Edmonds at 979 1589 or Ian Fisher at 979 4893.

Ian Fisher (with help of Roger)

To the uninitiated the first paragraph means "Members of the Y.P.F. including Roland and Vernon Bridges, urged by Alan Taylor moved the cross, grumbling and groaning under its weight. Carolyn Bolt held up the traffic while they crossed the road. The cross, having been on top of the spire for 100 years was finally found by experts to be unsafe and has been placed in the cellar of 106 Park Road - to rest?"

Note The cross was moved by the Y.P.F., at the request of the P.C.C. who felt that to put it on a scrap heap after 100 years of loyal service was really too final.

SOCIAL SERVICES EXHIBITION

You may recall that a very successful exhibition about the Borough's Social Services was held at Richmond Town Hall at the end of October 1973.

A colour-slide show linked with a commentary clearly explained how the Council's services care for the young and the old, the mentally and physically handicapped.

It has now been possible to arrange to show the exhibition at six other centres throughout the Borough, so that the many people who were unable to see it before will have these further opportunities to visit the exhibition during March this year. Admission is free, and the performance, which lasts about 20 minutes, runs continuously from 12 noon until 8 p.m. each day.

The programme for the exhibition is as follows:-

York House, Twickenham	Tues 12 - Thursday 14 March
United Reformed Church Hall, Hampton Hill.	Monday 25 - Wednesday 27 March.
Craig Hall, Teddington.	Thursday 28 - Saturday 30 March.

SOME DATES TO NOTE

March

13	10.45 A.M. Mothers' Union Open Meeting - 'Battered Wives and Babies' (W)
16	2.30 P.M. Mothers' Union: Jumble Sale (Hall). Goods received from 10.30 A.M.