

'LIVES SHARED – LIVES TRANSFORMED' – NEW BEGINNINGS AT SCARGILL HOUSE

Many people across the UK, but especially in the North of England, were dismayed to learn in the summer of 2008 of the closure of Scargill House, located north of Skipton, in the beautiful Yorkshire Dales.

Rather than simply accepting this and being the end of the story, three bodies combined to see if there could be a future for Scargill: the Diocese of Bradford, 'Save Scargill' and the Lee Abbey Movement.

Cutting a long story short, a steering group was set up, made up of representatives of the above three bodies. As a result of a £1 million interest free loan from Lee Abbey, and some generous individual gifts, that group negotiated the purchase of the house and 80 acres of land from the former Trustees.

Once the offer had been made and accepted, the steering group's work came to an end, and the beginning of a new Council for Scargill came into being. With my recent experience of being Warden at Lee Abbey, Devon, and now as a Bishop in the North of England, I was asked to Chair this body.

During the course of 2009, we have added people with appropriate skills to the Council, including our very own Youth Officer, Susie Mapledoram! In June, there was an amazing open-air service on site to which over 600 people came. This marked



both the 50th anniversary of the founding of Scargill, and an opportunity of re-dedication for the future.

Key appointments have been made – including Project Director, and more recently that of the new Director (Warden), the Revd Phil Stone, who begins work in February. Along with

the Project Director and his wife, Adrian and Bridget Plass who are already on site, Phil and Di Stone will begin to build the core community which will be at the heart of Scargill's renewed ministry.

A business plan is in place; architects are working on the master-plan and first phase of building development work; a major fund-raising appeal will be launched during 2010.

I'm very grateful to many across the north, but not least in West Yorkshire, who have expressed delight that Scargill will once again be a resource for individuals and parish groups.

It will be some time before the House is fully open for guests, but meanwhile, please keep Scargill in your prayers. For more information, and also how you can support Scargill's future financially, please go to the website www.scargillmovement.org

More than anything else pray that the renewed vision of 'LIVES SHARED – LIVES TRANSFORMED' may be the experience of many in the future.

+ Chris Edmondson, Bishop of Bolton

STOP PRESS: Sunday February 21st 2010 – 8.10am. Sunday Service on Radio Four, from Scargill House.

GROWING INTEREST IN WEEK OF PRAYER FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY

Statistics indicate that interest in the annual Week of Prayer for Christian Unity has increased, and that British and Irish churches are imaginatively using materials made available on the Internet, with a 99% increase in the use of a PowerPoint presentation for 2009.

Revd Peter Colwell, secretary for church life and inter faith relations for Churches Together in Britain and Ireland, said, "At a time when ecumenism is undergoing great change, with anxieties about an apparent lack of enthusiasm - even an 'ecumenical winter' - it is encouraging that thousands of clergy and worship leaders are making full use of the resources produced by the Four Nations Writers' Group in services, bible studies and other events that bring together Christians of different traditions to worship together and pray for the full visible unity of the Church."

Figures for the 2009 Week of Prayer for Christian Unity show that 2965 visitors downloaded the special PowerPoint presentation from the CTBI website compared to 1487 last year. There was a 70.5% increase (1317 to 2246) in the number of website requests for an order form for Week of Prayer resources. Demand for downloadable versions of an English language booklet rose by 25.2% (11501 to 14401, an increase of 2900). The booklet contained daily commentary, plus prayers and actions,

together with an order of service for the Week of Prayer, which takes place each year from 18 to 25 January between the feasts of St Peter and St Paul. The theme for 2009 was "Reconcile your people", based on a text from Ezekiel chapter 37.

In 2008, CTBI sold 32,000 printed copies of its Week of Prayer booklet. The 2009 figure was 22,000, representing a decrease of 10,000 copies. CTBI has no data for how many copies of the website materials were subsequently printed for use in either year. However, assuming the extra 2900 people who took the booklet off the CTBI website for 2009 used it for group activities, and each downloaded booklet was printed, say, 20 times, that would represent 58,000 extra copies against the decrease of 10,000 sold copies, or an extra 48,000 copies overall. It may be that this is a too-conservative estimate and that the increase in the extra number of copies of the booklet used, and hence the extra number of individuals involved, are much higher.

Feedback on the 2009 materials has been good. One correspondent to CTBI wrote, "May I thank all those who contributed to the excellent material in the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity booklet? We found a very special blessing in what we shared each day ... Thank you once again for the real spiritual enrichment received."

How Do You Mark WPCU?

In Hipperholme, there is a Saturday morning Prayer Breakfast; in Wakefield over fifty sermons are preached in a huge Pulpit Exchange across thirty-eight places of worship; in Silsden there is a 'joint' (!) Sunday lunch and service together; the churches of Golcar are making a Covenant Declaration together.

The Week of Prayer is marked in different ways all across Yorkshire. How do you pray for Christian Unity where you live, not only this week but every week of the year?

Our actions are as important as our

prayer. There is an old saying that churches should do everything together except that which, in conscience, they have to do apart. In practice, there are not many things which fall into that last category. So, do you have that mindset?

Perhaps your prayer, during this Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, is that you might play your part, by seeking to do almost everything alongside other Christians from different traditions in your community.

Christian Unity: pray for it; mean it; do it, where you live.

The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity

The general secretary of Churches Together in Britain and Ireland, Revd Bob Fyffe, has called upon Christians to mark the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity in 2010 with 'renewed passion'.

Churches around the world mark the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity from 18 to 25 January in the octave between the feasts of St. Peter and St. Paul. Each year, a different country provides worship material, which can be adapted for local use. The 2010 resources are slightly different from previous years in order to appeal to a broad range of Christians, as well as provide more reflective and meditative material.

The global organisers of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity asked Scotland to host the week in 2010 to mark the centenary of the first world mission conference that met in Edinburgh. This gathering is traditionally seen as the beginning of the modern ecumenical movement, which seeks the visible unity of the world's divided churches. Scottish churches are also involved in celebrations for the anniversary of the 1910 conference on the theme, 'Witnessing to Christ today'. Scotland therefore suggested as the theme for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2010, 'You are witnesses to these things', which is what Jesus told his friends and followers.

Materials made available by Churches Together in Britain and Ireland centre on chapter 24 of St Luke's gospel, where the quotation is found (v.48). The passage

begins with the women who were the first witnesses to the resurrection of Jesus, and continues with two travellers who meet a mysterious stranger. Finally, there is the account of Jesus appearing to a wider group, who thus, as Jesus tells them, are also witnesses to the Resurrection.

In an introduction to the CTBI materials, Bob Fyffe, who is from Scotland and a priest in the Scottish Episcopal (Anglican) Church, speaks of an opportunity for spiritual renewal. He writes:

"The resurrection stories in the Gospel have immense power that touches upon so many different aspects of human experience - dashed hopes, disappointments, grief and loss. But they also speak of a difficulty to accept change and recognise new realities ... The unity in Christ that we seek and pray for implies that we are called to embrace something new, something that will change us and the church from something disunited to a Church that is one in Christ."

The 2010 CTBI Week of Prayer for Christian Unity materials contain two services - one liturgical, the other informal - for public worship. The daily study material is more meditative than in previous years, and will be suitable for group and individual use. Each day, there is a poetic reflection followed by a prayer. All the resources are available as free downloads on the CTBI website - www.ctbi.org.uk.

ENJOYING OURSELVES ...HELPING OTHERS

The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity attracted lots of people from Churches Together in Settle and District to a diverse range of events.

On the 17 Jan at the monthly "Big Breakfast" held at the Friend's Meeting House over 30 people heard Gillian Gape talk about VSO and her trip to South Africa next month. The same evening over 70 people danced to the music of the Three Peaks Band, with caller, Alison Service, at the Barn Dance held at St John's Methodist Church Hall. A great time was had by all!

On Sunday afternoon at Giggleswick Parish Church Rev Paul Fisher talked about The SMILE Project of reconciliation in East Lancs and the Skipton area. A

good number from various Church communities attended.

The Hunger Lunch on Tuesday 20th was well supported, with home made soup, and bread kindly donated by Ye Olde Naked Man Cafe, this year organised by Christian Fellowship. The Lunch, held at St John's Church Hall, raised £120 for Christian Aid. Throughout the week there have been services in most of the churches. All were welcome at these and it was an opportunity to see different styles of worship.

Mrs Sally Waterson, who took on the role of Chairman of Churches Together in Settle and District last November said:

"It's great to be part of a community which can enjoy doing things together, and help others too."

FOCOLARE MARIAPOLIS IN YORK 2009

Light shone out through any remaining grey clouds over Yorkshire in August, at the annual Focolare Mariapolis as the theme was 'Love is light'. This referred to the Christian search for wisdom and the light that comes from living the Gospel.

Nearly 700 people attended, including many families with small children and over 100 day visitors. The countries represented included Kazakhstan and China, Congo and Mexico, Korea and Japan as well as Finland and other European countries.

As usual different Christian traditions were represented: Anglican, Lutheran, United Reformed Church, Roman Catholic, Salvation Army, Methodist, Russian Orthodox, but there were also people of other faiths, Muslims, Hindus and a Buddhist. People who do not have a particular religious approach to life also felt at home in the Mariapolis.

A keynote talk was on the light and strength that come from the presence of Jesus in the midst of those gathered in his name. (cf Mt 18:20) An illustration of this was the personal experience of a German speech therapist living in Glasgow who needed to pass a language test and find a job. It was a great struggle re-taking the exam and finding work. At the point of giving up she was able to persevere encouraged by the light of Jesus in the midst with her friends. And both goals were achieved.

Another talk focused on finding light in darkness, explained by the mystery of Jesus on the cross who felt forsaken by the Father. In a

very moving experience, a grandmother shared how she had recognized an aspect of this suffering in the helplessness she felt when her daughter had pre-eclampsia prior to giving birth. Thankfully, both baby and mother were fine.

A teacher and a management consultant gave a joint presentation on how the light of the Gospel can be brought into the different aspects of our working life and into society. There was also a session on how the 'Economy of Communion' a new economic strategy developed by members of the movement, is bringing new light in businesses across the world. One afternoon there were also seminars on the family, education, interfaith relations, economics and health.

The York venue was very popular and whether it was a guided tour of the walls or of York Minster, playing with the children in Rowntree Park, walking in the countryside or visiting Ripon Cathedral, the outings were a great success.

People went away re-charged and wanting to take what they had learnt at the Mariapolis back home with them. One participant said "We gained so much, fun, fellowship, and an opportunity for reflection on how we can live more fully as part of a family, in friendship and as members of society. For me the Mariapolis strikes the perfect balance for those who seek spiritual enrichment and for those who wish to spend a week with lovely people spending time together having fun."

Celia Blackden



Focolare background

The Focolare Movement is one of many newer spiritualities in the Church today that strengthen spiritual life and help people to translate faith into action in the family, workplace, parish, or sphere of interest.

Focolare began in Trent, Italy in 1943 during the war and was a rediscovery of the love of God who counts the hairs on our head and of the Gospel that can be lived in every day life. On reading the testament of Jesus 'May they all be one' Focolare's founder, Chiara Lubich, and many people who followed her, offered their lives to God for the fulfilment of that prayer. The monthly Word of Life, which offers a reflection on a sentence from the Gospel is lived by Christians of many denominations.

Focolare spread all over the world, present in 185 nations and contributes to building unity across the generations, amongst Christians, amongst people of different ethnicities and different religions, bridging the gap between rich and poor. Focolare emphasises mutual love and the life of the Word, which brings the presence of Jesus amongst those gathered in his name.

For further information: www.focolare.org.uk

REAP Benefits

Roundhay Environmental Action Project (REAP) developed out of the Roundhay Environment Week in June 2006, which was organised by Churches Together in Roundhay.

Several people continued meeting to discuss environmental issues, such as climate change, more sustainable living, and local food production. After months of research and planning they set up REAP, a limited company, an umbrella organisation for activities around sustainable living. Their first initiative was a farmers' market by the Oakwood Clock, which takes place on the third Saturday of every month and has been extremely well received.

The farmers' market generates income to invest in other activities. These include:

- An energy group, which runs a library with energy saving devices such as energy monitors
- A transport group, which promotes cycle routes and has worked with Metro on surveys regarding public transport
- A gardening group, which partners people who love gardening with people who want to share their gardens, promotes growing your own food and operates a tool share
- An education group, which runs a programme of seminars on issues such as climate change and local gardening

REAP has become firmly rooted in the community, with over 300 members. There is a monthly email bulletin and regular newsletter. Members are also entitled to some discounts, such as on the Whizzgo car scheme. Find out more at www.roundhayaction.org.uk.

Stressbusters

Huddersfield Town Centre Workplace Chaplaincy team (representing Methodist, URC, Pentecostal and Anglican traditions) opened an empty shop, in order to offer some respite for shop workers in December.

Chaplains identified the long hours and great pressure of working in our shops at Christmas time as something they would like to address and came up with this as a way of offering something practical at a time when workers would otherwise have no time to relax or chat. The shop, in the Packhorse Centre, also houses the Nativity Scene which has recently been given to the town so it is easy to identify and proclaims the true meaning of Christmas.

In the 'Chill Out Zone' staff were able to escape the working environment, listen to relaxing music, chat if they wished, enjoy a cuppa and generally enjoy a time of refreshment and quiet reflection.

Wharfedale Welcome

Beautiful Upper Wharfedale is always welcoming, and from the start of 2010 it is more welcoming than ever. The Anglican parish church at Kettlewell has held a service to mark its new role as a Church of Ecumenical Welcome.

This means that it tries to be aware of the spiritual needs and diverse traditions of all Christians who might come to worship there, given that there would not be a local church of their own denomination. In particular, Kettlewell Church holds regular Methodist services. What makes this move even more welcome is that the Ecumenical Welcome applies to all the Anglican churches in Upper Wharfedale, and not only to Kettlewell itself. So whatever your tradition, you can be assured of a welcome in any of the churches of Upper Wharfedale.

Fruitful Sharing

In the autumn two departments of the Catholic Diocese of Leeds were privileged to be invited to work alongside a large Methodist Church in Leeds.

Everybody's Welcome

Through Christians Learning Across Yorkshire (CLAY) Rev Elaine Joseph, of Headingley Methodist Church, invited Linda Pennington, Diocesan Coordinator for Catechesis, and me to share with them an 'Everybody's Welcome' workshop on parish welcome. The 'Everybody's Welcome Workshop' has been developed as part of the 'Celebrating Family: blessed, broken, living love' initiative of the Catholic Bishops of England and Wales (www.celebratinglove.org.uk) and has already been shared with many parishes and church groups in and outside the Diocese of Leeds.

It was a great pleasure to be able to share with Elaine's church, which is very close to our offices at Hinsley Hall, some of the materials that had in fact begun life in different churches but were adapted for our particular, Catholic, use.

The principles of welcome are pretty universal, or as one colleague challenged me 'it's not exactly rocket science is it?' To which the only answer has to be the evidence of 'Listening 2004: My Family My Church' (www.listening2004.org.uk) which heard from Catholic people all over the country. One of the things reported that caught the Bishops' attention was that while families valued their local parish community they also sometimes felt less than warmly welcomed as family people, hence the focus on helping parishes to consider families and the riches and areas of need of their own more general welcome.

In terms of the resources that Linda and I were able to share that evening both 'The Ministry of Welcome' and 'Everybody's Welcome?' are free to download from www.everybodyswelcome.org.uk. They can be adapted as long as the originator is acknowledged.

Marriage Preparation

The other sharing is of the Leeds Diocesan Marriage Preparation Presenter Training. Every year the diocese offers training in the programme to lay people who are to work with their parish priest in their local parish or deanery, helping prepare couples for living the sacrament of marriage. An overview of the six module programme can be found at www.flm.org.uk/marriage/preparation.

Although this is the first time a pastor, Elaine Joseph, and her husband, Ewart, have taken our

training, ecumenical work in this area is not entirely unknown. While remaining thoroughly Catholic, the Diocesan Marriage Preparation Programme has benefitted from the insights of the Family Life Ministry Team in the Anglican Diocese of Wakefield. Also, the Diocese of Ripon has had some of their Marriage Preparation Presenters trained with us.

Comments from all those who took part in the training have been overwhelmingly positive: 'Practical exercises were extremely helpful'; 'Warm relaxed atmosphere'; 'Feeling increasingly more confident about what to do and how to prepare'; 'All very interesting and well delivered. Thank you'.

The training programme is one evening a week for four weeks and is held every November at Wheeler Hall in Leeds City Centre to accommodate travel arrangements for those coming from afar.

Benefits

I am sure that we are all learning from each other in both these ventures. Every parish Linda and I go to for 'Everybody's Welcome' has something good that works for them which we can gather and add to our stock of ideas. And discovering the different thinking and probable expectations and needs of people from different churches helps us in our work with engaged couples especially the many who find a spouse from a different faith tradition.

We also offer workshops on a new national resource produced for the 'Home is a Holy Place' component of the 'Celebrating Family' project. The 'Home is a Holy Place DVD Resource Pack' can be used in many, many situations from home to school to parish and other community groups see www.homeisaholyplace.org.uk.

Thanks to CLAY for these fruitful and enriching opportunities!

For more information on this or to find what else is happening go to www.flm.org.uk or www.dioceseofleeds.org.uk/evangelisation/catechesis or www.claycourse.org.uk

Breda Theakston

Being a Christian MP

There are Christian MPs in all political parties, and many share the same struggles as they address the challenges of their job. Greg Mulholland, MP for Leeds North West, is willing to talk to Churches Together groups in a non-party way about what it means to be a Christian MP. Contact him at the House of Commons, London, SW1A 0AA.