

Interschurch Families

REVIEW 2008

Still going at 40!



Heralding the 40th anniversary of interchurch families at the 2008 Conference.

Photo: C Bitaud, France

Forty years ago a small group of mixed marriage couples came together at Spode House and decided to start an informal association of 'interchurch families'. It was a term we coined ourselves, to distinguish our marriages between two

Christians, each partner loyal to his or her own church, from other kinds of 'mixed marriages'. It is now a term that has been adopted in many parts of the English speaking world.

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"You live in your marriage the hopes and the difficulties of the path to Christian Unity. Express that hope in prayer together in the unity of love." *Pope John Paul II, York, 1982*

The 40th Anniversary Conference

Our annual conference at Swanwick in Derbyshire is the most important event of the year for interchurch families. It is subsidized from General Funds to ensure there is a comprehensive programme (with really good invited speakers) and proper supervision of the children, and, to enable the maximum number of families to attend, there is a Bursary Fund to help members meet the conference fees.



Anniversary Dinner

In 2008 the theme was *Interchurch Families - Making a Difference in the World* and over 150 people attended. Our speaker-respondents were Revd Canon Gregory Cameron, Deputy Secretary General of the Anglican Communion; Revd Canon Bob Fyffe, General Secretary of Churches Together in Britain and Ireland; Dr Thomas Knieps-Port le Roi, a German lecturer in the Theology Faculty at Louvain University, Belgium (each of whom is in an interchurch marriage); and Fr Gerard W. Hughes SJ, from the Lauriston Jesuit residence in Edinburgh, where he pursues his work on ecumenical spirituality.

We were also joined by Fr Robert Kaggwa, a missionary priest who is lecturer and Roman Catholic chaplain at Roehampton University; Dame Mary Tanner, Chairperson of the Faith and Order Commission and European President of the World Council of Churches; and Fr Robert Murray SJ, both long-standing friends of AIF.

Several members gave their 'Reflections on our Ecumenical Journey over the last Forty Years' and our speakers responded by considering "Where Interchurch Families have made a difference." Thomas Knieps presented the keynote speech, 'Being One at Home: Interchurch Families as Domestic Church', based on research to which several local groups of interchurch families had contributed.

During the weekend we made time for worship and prayer in the different traditions of the Roman Catholic, Anglican, and the Free Churches, the highlight being the communion service in thanksgiving for the 40 years of the work of the Association of Interchurch Families. This was followed by a celebration dinner and thoroughly enjoyable barn dance. As usual there were separate but parallel programmes for the children and the Young Adults.

"Thank goodness some forward thinking people had the 'gumption' to take the necessary steps forty years ago in England so that this could become the international world wide movement that it is today. We are thankful for our relationship during these past years and for the friends that we have made through this Association."

Mary Jane Glauber, National Co-Chair American Association of Interchurch Families

Open Meeting in London

The annual London Meeting took place at Heythrop College in February and saw the launch of the "AIF 40th Anniversary Year". The 46 participants heard one of our founding members, Ruth Reardon, give a history of the Interchurch Family movement in Britain (see pp 6-7), while another couple, Peter and Ruth Bentall, who were also at the first national meeting at Spode House in 1968, talked about their experience as an RC-URC family 40 years ago. Later on we spent time reflecting on the life of the Revd Canon Chris Bard, our late Anglican co-chair who had died in September 2007. Obituaries from Paul Docherty, AIF; the BBC (for whom he was a Religious Affairs producer); the Bishop of Chelmsford; and Capel College (where he was chaplain) were read out alongside many moving individual tributes. The afternoon was concluded with a family Eucharist led by one of our members, the Revd Bev Hollins.



Peter and Ruth Bentall at Heythrop College

"I thank God for 'Interchurch Families' and the work you do to help people in similar situations. And I thank God for the signs that, in God's own time and in God's own way, the witness you give will make a real difference to our search for that unity which is Christ's gift to 'his bride, the Church'."

Rt Revd Stephen Venner, Bishop in Canterbury

"Those of us who have seen its work at first hand through friends and colleagues are in no doubt as to the Association's important contribution to the ongoing quest that, one day, we shall indeed 'all be one'."
Rt Revd Martyn Jarrett, Bishop of Beverley

AIF into the Fifth Decade

Principal amongst the issues facing AIF is the fact that as a membership organisation, and with just two part-time paid positions, the level of activity undertaken by, or in the name of, the Association depends essentially on volunteer involvement and effort. In recent years the degree of member involvement in the Association has decreased, but members make a considerable contribution to the ecumenical scene through a range of other (often local or denominational) forums. Those efforts directed at the output of the Association will continue to be focussed on the core activities associated with the Mission Statement, which remains as valid today as when first written. [see back page]

In particular -

- **A support network**, including the offer of pastoral care to enquirers, and the provision of an annual London Meeting and a Conference. With a couple of exceptions, local groups no longer meet regularly although several have met on an ad-hoc basis to discuss specific topics.

- **An information service**, to be provided principally through the new website.

- **A voice in the Churches**, now often provided by members in a personal capacity, empowered by their membership of the interchurch families community, rather than as formal representatives of the Association.

Working for Unity

One of our members, Pauline Johnson, holds positions on both **Churches Together in England** (as a convener) and **Churches Together in Britain and Ireland** (where she is a trustee). She and Keith Lander represented AIF as a Body in Association at the Senior Representatives Meeting and AGM of CTBI in Edinburgh, where leaders of the 37 member churches met to discuss what we can all do TOGETHER.



Adrienne & Ian Gordon

Helen Connell, George Walsh, and Adrienne and Ian Gordon, all proudly wearing AIF T-shirts, joined 180 people from across the country at the Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick, for the Churches Together in England Gathering, entitled *Engaging Spirituality*, at the end of May. In a busy 'Market Place' of displays and stalls "show-casing" the activities of groups and individuals, the AIF stall provoked wide interest, and an invitation to speak at a Churches Together Meeting.

The Revd David Cornick, newly appointed General Secretary of CTE, described the weekend as "a journey into the generosity of God with the richness of our various traditions to savour" and he urged us to go out to do things together and to be surprised at the gifts God has in store for us.



At Westminster Cathedral with Mgr Langham are Rosy Baker, Melanie Finch, Ruth Reardon, Paul Docherty and Keith Lander

Our relationship with the **Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity** at the Vatican continues to grow on a personal basis. In August, **Mgr Mark Langham**, the Administrator of Westminster Cathedral, was appointed Assistant General Secretary to the PCPCU at the Vatican in succession to Mgr Don Bolen who had participated in the international interchurch families' conference in Edmonton, Canada, in 2001. Several AIF members met Mgr Langham at Westminster in July before he left for Rome to take up his new responsibility for dialogue with Anglicans and the Methodist Church.

At the **Church of England General Synod** in February, Lucy Docherty made a speech in which she drew attention to the pastoral needs of interchurch families and made special mention of AIF in its 40th anniversary year.



Lucy Docherty commending the IARCCUM document, Growing Together in Unity and Mission

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity

Many of our members attended the celebration service in Westminster Abbey for the Centenary of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity on 18 January. The address was given by Commissioner Betty Matear, one of the presidents of AIF, and Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O'Connor and Archbishop Rowan Williams also participated. Two days later there was an even bigger event at St Albans Cathedral and the AIF 'roadshow' was there, courtesy of Pam and Mike McElroy. There were over 1000 people present at the opening worship. Nearly 30 stalls from organisations with ecumenical roots were placed around the nave in a 'Unity Trail' which included our Interchurch Families display in a very prominent position. The stall attracted a steady level of interest over the course of the afternoon.



Pam McElroy and AIF stall

The theme for the Week of Prayer 2009, *Reconcile your People*, had been chosen by the churches of Korea, using the biblical texts Ezekiel 37:22 and 24, and John 10:16. The prayers have been compiled by a CTBI working group which included AIF member Diana Simons.

"...The impact of your work has helped enormously in improving ecumenical relations and understanding between churches, whilst supporting families who have at times felt isolated. Your work has moved into the sphere of supporting clergy couples who serve different denominations. This has been a real blessing, obviously in Local Ecumenical Partnerships but also within Churches Together groups and clergy meetings. Today there is a greater understanding and respect for couples who worship in different church traditions and the high regard in which the Association of Interchurch Families is held, is testimony to the work that has been done and the support given to couples over the years."

Revd Anne Brown, Chair, the Methodist Church, Beds, Essex & Herts. District

International Networking



Panel in Lviv

Photo: J Perusko

In July AIF supported Anton & Jill Perusko, members from Milton Keynes, to attend an interchurch families' conference organised by the Institute of Ecumenical Studies at the Catholic University of the **Ukraine** in Lviv, where they were joined by French and Ukrainian couples. Interchurch families in the Ukraine are most usually RC/Orthodox, but there are some in which one of the spouses is a Protestant.

Then & Now

[continued from p1]



Interchurch Family members and guests at the Annual Conference at Spode House in 1984 Photo: C Bard

"I am grateful for all the work you are doing and will continue to support you in my prayers."
(an enquirer)

"...I am certain that without the support of AIF our marriage would not have stood the strain."
(from a members survey)

In those days anyone wanting to marry a Roman Catholic had to promise that all the children of the marriage would be baptised and brought up as Catholics, if the marriage was to be recognised by the Catholic Church. But things were changing in the wake of the Second Vatican Council, and already in 1970 this requirement was dropped. Old attitudes remained, however, and there was much ignorance about the changes. In the Association we were able to support one another through hard times, and also to inform others of what had become possible. A mixed marriage could become a more equal partnership, with both churches involved in the life of the family. Both clergy were able to take part

in the wedding, and the ceremony could take place in the church of the bride, if the couple so wished – something unheard of in earlier days. Many weddings were much happier occasions than they would have been without the help and support that AIF was able to give. The same was true of baptism. We pioneered shared celebrations of baptism, although this sometimes meant a long delay before couples could share fully in celebrating the gift of a child with the participation of both their churches. The Association was able both to support and inform. Gradually it came to be more generally understood that shared celebrations of baptism are both possible and desirable.

"My family and I were very grateful for the helpful information and advice you were able to give us about arranging funerals for Christians of other denominations."
(bereaved)

"AIF has been very supportive during difficult times in our lives ... We found great friendship and support both in our regional group and attending a conference."
(a 'Friend')

"The boys, like us, have benefited tremendously from growing up in two cultures and they will carry their ecumenical experience into the rest of their lives. We will continue to publicise AIF in the marriage course."
(leaders in Marriage Preparation courses)

A shared Christian life at home meant that many couples deeply desired to give expression to their experienced unity by eucharistic sharing. Sometimes wise pastoral care and understanding has made this possible in an unofficial way, and now it has been recognised by the Catholic Church as lawful, at least on limited occasions. Much persistence and patience has been required over the years by the Association as a body and by particular couples, and much more will be necessary before the needs of interchurch families are fully and publicly recognised.

"... her RC parents were appalled when Suz married an Episcopalian minister – if only all the differences in this tempestuous world could be solved in the manner your interchurch families undertake their acceptance."
(former subscriber)

Forty years ago mixed marriages were generally regarded as stumbling blocks to ecumenical progress. Now however some interchurch families have come to be seen as making a vital contribution to the movement for promoting Christian unity.

"We value the resources we have received over the years and shall continue to recommend AIF to pastors and couples."
(retiring member)

"I have read with delight about the progress made since I joined AIF (sic) and wish everyone involved the best of everything for the future."
(former member)

Some have worked hard in local, national and international ecumenical structures, and many have become the human face of ecumenism just by living as a couple within both the churches of the partners, and by integrating within their one domestic church the diversity of both their ecclesial traditions.

"Your material has been helpful to my sister and her husband; I think we have the beginnings of a dialogue. My hope and prayer is for reconciliation and a more joyful future Thank you for all your work – it is invaluable."
(Anglican Chaplain)

The Association has been a voice for such families within the churches, always pressing for the pastoral understanding and freedom they need both for the flourishing of their family life and for the sake of the contribution they could make more fully to the growing unity between their churches. A great deal has been achieved in the past forty years. There is still much more to be done.

"I was overwhelmed by the warmth of your response and by the painful stories of other people in similar situations to ourselves. My husband was told he should have married a Catholic and then these problems would not have arisen! May I thank you all very much for the support and information given which gives us some hope in a rather desperate situation."
(refused permission to the eucharist on occasion of daughter's First Holy Communion)

[International Networking continued from p5]

Richard and Melanie Finch attended a **French interchurch families meeting** in Versailles, enjoying the opportunity to renew old friendships and wonderful hospitality, and to share experiences with several young families and other couples attending their first interchurch families' meeting.

People

Our new volunteer administrative assistant, **Margaret Battley**, was welcomed at the Advisory Council Meeting at Bastille Court in May and has been helping in the office each week since



Diana, Margaret and Keith in the office

then. Margaret and her husband Bernard joined AIF in 1971 and printed the Journal, Annual Review, and the Rome Booklet at the family printing works in Clapham. Heartfelt thanks were given to **Diana Simons** for the help she had given in the office over the past 20 years. She was presented with an engraved glass bowl and flowers, and Ruth Reardon paid tribute to the contribution she and her husband Andrew had made since joining AIF in 1974. Diana has continued to help in the office on an occasional basis.

In March **Keith Lander** was elected to the Board of Trustees of the Christian Conference Trust which runs High Leigh and The Hayes Conference Centres.



Gill Walsh at her ordination Photo: M Finch

Several AIF friends joined **Gill Walsh** for her ordination as a minister in the Methodist church during the Methodist Conference at Scarborough; one commented on the joyous occasion, "I think her smile should be broadcast far and wide!" A former Co-chair of AIF, Gill celebrated the Eucharist at the annual conference in August and we wish her many fruitful years of ministry to come.

David Gardiner (who, with his wife, Sarah, joined AIF in 2007) was ordained priest in the Church of England on 19 June, while **Malcolm Bowers** celebrated 25 years of priesthood at St Blazey Church in Cornwall in November.



Malcolm Bowers (centre) with his wife Kathy and his son Uny (right)

New members welcomed in 2008 include: **Christopher and Rachel Hunter**, with their four children from Abingdon; **James and Sylvia Cassidy** who live in Bodmin; a new baby **Ellie** for Pauline and Andrew Johnson; and **Sophie Mitchell**, born to Adam and Melanie in Stevenage.

Several changes took place during the year amongst those involved in the running of the organization. As always we thank those who have joined the team or extended their period of responsibility (including **Alison Fawcett, Helen, Mayles, Malcolm Bowers, Adrienne and Ian Gordon**) and also give thanks for the contributions of those who have stood down from their commitment, in particular **Denis Rigg** who has been a long-standing member of both the Council and the earlier Committee.

Young Adults Group



The Young Adults Group at Swanwick

The Young Adults Group social weekend was held in February in Preston at the home of the Garsed family.

Sixteen members, aged 15 to 22, participated in the 40th Anniversary Conference at Swanwick where they enjoyed their own special programme facilitated by former YAG member, Helena Mayles. At their AGM The **Young Adults Group** appointed two new Co-chairs: **Mary Nugent and Lizzie Walsh**, and new Co-secretaries: **Isabel Fawcett and Anna Jeffries**.

"AIF has helped to make me the Christian that I am and I certainly wouldn't be the same person if it wasn't for the fellowship we shared at conferences!"
Mrs Melanie Mitchell (nee Lander), former Chair Young Adults Group

"There are many couples and families that I know, and many of them are close friends, who are in interchurch relationships and we can give thanks for how they model Christian unity. However, it is by no means without spiritual and personal cost. That is why I am pleased that the AIF is there for those who need support and counsel."
Rt Revd Stephen Platten, Bishop of Wakefield

The IFYAG.org.uk website has been closed down as a separate site; YAG information, edited by George Walsh together with Ric Lander and Philip Garsed, can now be found on the main AIF website.

Publications & Resources

AIF has a **new website**. It has been developed by an IT company in Portsmouth who will host the site and maintain it on our behalf ensuring it remains in state-of-the-art condition and is constantly updated with news, views and information for couples and individuals who need our help. Visit www.interchurchfamilies.org.uk.



New china mugs and new T-shirts, suitably inscribed were produced for the 40th Anniversary.

AIF News, was issued three times in the year and circulated with other interesting notices and documents to members, in addition to regular e-mail bulletins. Issue no.8 of **Interchurch Families Issues & Reflections**, the internet broadsheet, was published in October.

Financial Support

January - December	2008	2007
	£'000	£'000
Direct Charitable Expenditure		
Education & spirituality	0.7	0.6
Local networking	0.7	0.6
Supporting marriage & family life	0.8	0.6
Promoting Christian Unity	1.3	2.4
International links & action	0.7	0.8
Interchurch children & young adults	0.7	0.5
Additional support costs re Swanwick & Heythrop	3.2	3.2
Other Expenditure		
Publicity & fund-raising	0.9	0.7
Management & administration of the charity	0.6	0.5
Cost of executive officer	16.5	16.1
Treasurer's Honorarium	1.8	
Conference accommodation	14.5	9.9
Purchase of items for resale	0.7	
Total Expenditure	43.1	35.9
Income		
Regular contributions from members	13.6	15.6
Other donations from members	0.4	0.9
Donations from supporters & Friends	1.2	1.9
Gift Aid reclaim	3.8	4.3
Donations from local churches & trusts	3.1	1.5
Sale of resources & equipment fees & sundries	0.8	0.3
Interest on deposits	4.2	3.2
Conference accommodation & subsidies	15.8	11.1
Total Income	42.9	38.8
Net Income or (Deficit) - General Fund	(0.2)	2.9

General Fund

Income into our General Fund for 2008 (£42,856) remained similar to 2007 (£38,787) with the additional income in 2008 mainly resulting from the higher attendance at the 40th Anniversary Conference. Overall income fell just short of expenditure (£43,101) giving a deficit of £246 compared to a surplus of £2,939 in 2007. As in 2007, the deficit in 2008 was much smaller than originally budgeted – principally due to continuing underspends in certain areas of work plus lower than anticipated costs of the 40th Anniversary Conference. In this connection reinstatement of the £3,500, transferred to a separate designated fund in 2006 against such costs, actually meant that the year-end General Fund balance showed an increase of £3,254 over that for 2007. We do not expect such surpluses, or year on year increases, in General Fund balances to continue in future years.

Fund-raising

The Association is funded principally by its members, with support from churches, trusts and Friends of AIF.

Reserves

Our Reserves Policy is to maintain funds in reserve to cover between one and two year's normal expenditure. At the end of 2008 our general reserves stood at just under £90,000 – more or less equivalent to two years' expenditure. Throughout the year the Trustees continued to investigate the best use of surplus funds and requested that Members suggest ways in which we could progress the Association's work by funding appropriate 'one-off' initiatives.

Our accounts are presented in terms of our 'areas of work', with administrative costs (office rent, telephone, postage, printing, etc.) apportioned across specific expenditure in each such area of charitable output. The breakdown of these costs is given in the Notes to the full accounts,

a copy of which will be supplied on request to the AIF Office.

Restricted Funds

● The balance brought forward on the **Bursary Fund** from 2007 was £1,992. Out of total income of £1,317, £696 was allocated during the year to help those who would otherwise have been unable to attend conferences or meetings, leaving a year-end balance of £2,613. The principal source of bursary funds (a charitable trust) has indicated it is unlikely to be able to continue its support but the Bursary Fund will be maintained by transferring funds from the General Fund.

● The **Martin Reardon Memorial Fund** set up in 2005 in memory of Canon Martin Reardon, former President and founding member of the Association, is used specifically to support members in undertaking any form of religious study whether denominational or ecumenical. Requests for support from this fund are welcomed by the Trustees.

● The **International Work Fund** was used during the year to support two members to attend an international ecumenical conference in the Ukraine. Again, requests for support from this fund are welcomed.

Trusts

We are grateful for the continued support we receive from charitable trusts and would welcome hearing from any reader who can suggest other trusts who might also be prepared to assist us – either in regard to the general work of the Association or in specific areas such as the Bursary Fund.

"I look back over those years and rejoice in the advances that have been made in ecumenical relationships. There is not only a new and different feel to those relationships but a real hope of future movement. The Association has made a tremendous contribution to deeper understanding, particularly of the need of families whose loyalties are to different churches."
 Revd Dr Kenneth G Greet,
 President AIF

Prayer

All the Association's activities are rooted in prayer and worship.



At the **AIF Prayer Weekend** in May members met in small groups to reflect on interchurch families' 40-year journey and pray that our gatherings and deliberations may continue to bear fruit. They also urged their clergy and congregations

to pray for the work of the Association and interchurch family members everywhere.

Richard & Helen Connell continued to receive requests for prayers for individual members and their friends and to pass them on by phone and email through the **AIF Prayer Net**.

Our Mission

The Association of Interchurch Families provides:

*a support network
and information service for*

- interchurch families (where the partners belong to different denominations – usually Roman Catholic and another Christian communion) for partners and parents, growing children and young adults
- clergy, ministers, relatives and all others concerned in the welfare of interchurch families (The Association is linked with groups of interchurch families in many parts of the world)

a voice in the churches

- by keeping the pastoral needs of interchurch families before church leaders and communities, at local, regional, national and international level
- by affirming the gifts of interchurch families and their potential as a catalyst for wider church unity

All these activities are rooted in prayer and worship.

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Association of Interchurch Families 2009
Compiled by Paul Docherty
and Keith Lander
Designed by Margaret Battley

AIF Officials

Association Officials in 2008

Presidents

The Archbishop of Canterbury,
the Most Revd Dr Rowan
Williams
The Cardinal Archbishop
of Westminster,
HE Cormac Murphy O'Connor
The Free Churches Moderator,
Commissioner
Elizabeth Matear
Revd Dr Kenneth Greet
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Panel of Reference

Bishop Christopher Hill
Bishop Crispian Hollis
Revd Ruth Matthews
Revd Robert Murray, SJ
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Kathleen Richardson
Revd Geoffrey Roper
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Trustees

Paul Docherty OBE
(Co-chair, Roman Catholic)
Malcolm Bowers
(Co-chair, Anglican)
Derek Finch
(Co-chair, Free Church)
Pauline Johnson
Stephen Walsh

Executive Officer

Keith Lander

Treasurer

Leon Herwig

Advisory Council Members

Richard Connell
Alison Fawcett (from 24 Aug)
Melanie Finch
Helen Granger-Bevan
Richard Jeffries
Helen Mayles
Denis Rigg (to 24 Aug)

Office Volunteers

Margaret Battley
Diana Simons

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RESPONSE FORM

Please send me more information about Interchurch Families, especially on this subject

Please accept £ _____ as a contribution to the work of the Association.

I am a taxpayer and wish my donation to be treated as Gift Aid. (Delete if not applicable.)

Please make cheques or CAF Vouchers payable to the Association of Interchurch Families; send to the address above.

Name

Date

Address

Postcode

E-mail

I am happy for my details to be recorded in order to receive subsequent mailings from AIF. (Delete if not applicable)

