

Interchurch Families International Network July 2006 Newsletter

Dear friends

Here is some of this year's news from groups and associations of interchurch families around the world which are part of the Interchurch Families International Network (IFIN).

Worldwide

Pope Benedict's reference to interchurch families in Warsaw earlier in the year was a great encouragement:

'The second question to which I want to refer concerns married life and family life. We know that among Christian communities, called to witness to love, the family occupies a special place. In today's world, in which international and intercultural relations are multiplying, it happens increasingly often that young people from different traditions, different religions, or different Christian denominations, decide to start a family. For the young people themselves and for those dear to them, it is often a difficult decision that brings with it various dangers concerning both perseverance in the faith and the future structuring of the family, the creation of an atmosphere of unity in the family and of suitable conditions for the spiritual growth of the children.

*'Nevertheless, thanks to the spread of ecumenical dialogue on a larger scale, **the decision can lead to the formation of a practical laboratory of unity. For this to happen there is a need for mutual good will, understanding and maturity in faith of both parties, and also of the communities from which they come.** I would like to express my appreciation for the Bilateral Commission of the Council for Ecumenical Issues of the Polish Episcopal Conference and of the Polish Council for Ecumenism, which have begun to draft a document presenting common Christian teaching on marriage and family life and establishing principles acceptable to all for contracting interdenominational marriages, indicating a common program of pastoral care for such marriages. To all of you **I express the wish that in this delicate area reciprocal trust and cooperation between the churches may grow, fully respecting the rights and responsibility of the spouses for the faith formation of their own family and the education of their children.**'*

An article on this text was written by Nick Jesson in Canada, which you can read at www.ecumenism.net/archive/blog/2006/05/interchurch_families_a_laboratory_of_unity

[benedict_xvi.htm](#) and there has been correspondence in the press to which IFIN members have contributed. It is a text that can stand for interchurch families alongside the message which Pope John Paul II addressed to us in York in 1982.

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Rev. Beverley Hollins and Melanie Finch from the UK **represented interchurch families at the World Council of Churches General Assembly held in February in Porto Alegre, Brazil.** We were delighted to have posters and literature from several countries on our stand, and we talked to a wide variety of people while we were there. A full report can be found on the international website at www.interchurchfamilies.org/confer/porto-alegre/portoalegre.shtm.

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As reported in the last bulletin, **Thomas Knieps-Port Le Roi is coordinating theological work on behalf of IFIN**, following on from the Rome 2003 paper. This work is going to look at the subject of how interchurch families can be considered a 'domestic church'. We would like the theological reflection to be grounded as much as possible in real life experience rather than highly theoretical speculation, so we need the help of the national groups around the world, who are encouraged to engage in a **consultation process**. Different countries may do this in different ways, carrying out a survey among their members, or using it as material for a conference, for example.

What we want to know is how you as IF experience unity in your marriage and family life and how this affects your understanding of the church(es).

What matters is that the Theological Working Group which Thomas is convening is provided with material from real couples and families, so we hope as many people in as many countries as possible will be able to participate in the consultation, which will be taking place over the coming year till July 2007. The writing of a document will then follow, and it has been suggested that this could be completed and published by the **International Conference of Interchurch Families in England, which is being planned for 22-25 August 2008.** Thomas will be one of the speakers at that conference. It will be held in English, but we hope that representatives from many countries will be able to attend - please note the dates in your diaries now.

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Europe

Pastor Jean-Baptiste Lipp in Switzerland is responsible for IFIN contacts with the Conference of European Churches (CEC) and the Roman Catholic Council of Episcopal Conferences in Europe (CCEE), who are planning the **Third Ecumenical Assembly in Sibiu, Roumania, in 2007**. Sibiu is a fairly small town, and the numbers of delegates to this Assembly will be limited. We were delighted to be invited by Don Aldo Giordano, Secretary to CCEE, to send an **international delegation of interchurch families**. We have drawn up a list of delegates representing as many countries as we can, and we hope at least to be able to have an exhibition stand at the Assembly, as we have had at the last European Ecumenical Assembly in Graz, and possibly to run a workshop too. You can read about the Assembly on www.eea3.org. There is already much advance work going on in different countries among ecumenical organizations, so some of you may find yourselves participating in the preparations.

Australia

Kevin Hincks is recovering after back surgery and thanks people for their prayers and good wishes.

Austria

ARGE-Ökumene is preparing for its annual conference to be held in **Brixen (Bressanone) in the South Tyrol from 23 - 26 October 2006**. All friends will be welcome.

Canada

Canadian interchurch families and friends will be gathering at the 'Old Cow Barn' at Reesor Ranch in the Cypress Hills of southwestern Saskatchewan for a summer weekend gathering, July 28-30.

Joy and Edouard Bédard had their story as an interchurch couple [\(1\)](#) published earlier in the year.

France

AFFMIC held its bi-annual conference [\(2\)](#) in May.

Germany

The annual conference of the German Netzwerk [\(3\)](#) was held in **February at Braunfels bei Wetzlar**, on the subject of 'The Relationship between Word and Sacrament in Theology and in the Community.' Claire Malone-Lee attended from the UK. The Netzwerk was again involved in the national Katholikentag in Saarbrücken, where they spoke to many

interested people on their stand. The annual Dornstadt weekend for interchurch families will be held from 6 – 8 October 2006. The **2007 annual conference** will be held in the Methodist "Schwarzenhof" conference centre in Rudolstadt, about 30Km south of Weimar, from 16 – 18 March. By holding the conference in the eastern part of Germany, the group is hoping to attract participants from regions where it has not been represented before. All friends from overseas will be welcome.

Great Britain

AIF UK is holding its annual Swanwick conference from **26-28 August on the theme of 'View From the Other Side'**. **We are delighted to announce that David and Joyce Makumi from Nairobi, Kenya, will be speaking at this conference about their work with interchurch couples and families in their diocese.**

Rev Beverley Hollins, an Anglican curate working in an ecumenical parish shared between several denominations in Milton Keynes, is moving **to take responsibility for a small group of Methodist churches** in the same town. The Methodist circuit is happy to allow her time to fulfil her responsibilities to interchurch families. This creative appointment recognizes the existing and growing unity between the Anglican and Methodist churches.

Italy

Our friend Gianni Marcheselli died earlier in the year after a long illness, and those who knew him sent many prayers and good wishes to Myriam and the family. Their work for interchurch families in Italy goes back several decades [\(4\)](#).

Northern Ireland

NI MMA held its annual conference in May [\(5\)](#), and the Landers from the UK attended.

Switzerland

Jean-Baptiste Lipp was recently invited to preach at the First Communion Mass of the Lipp family's RC parish near Lausanne, at which their son Augustin was making his first Communion [\(6\)](#).

United States

The American Association of Interchurch Families held a conference recently at Virginia Wesleyan University, Virginia Beach.

Conclusion

Thank you very much indeed to all who have sent reports and information for this newsletter. Some of them are in translation. Please ask for more details if you would like

them. There are many useful links and a great deal of information on this international website. I hope you will continue to send news from your groups and associations, so we can all keep in touch with each other and learn from each other, in order to keep our work as effective as possible. Please keep interchurch families and their priests and pastors in your prayers.

Melanie Finch

*Coordinator, International Links, Association of Interchurch Families UK
Secretary/Administrator, Interchurch Families International Network*

August 2006

*The UK Association of Interchurch Families Advisory Council has
agreed to hold an International English-speaking Conference at
Swanwick, Derbyshire, 22-25 August 2008.
Please put this date in your diaries.*

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