

## Interchurch Families International Network

### August 2007 Newsletter

*Dear friends*

Here is some of the news over the past year from groups and associations of interchurch families around the world which are part of the Interchurch Families International Network (IFIN). Follow the links in brackets to the different reports.

#### Worldwide

Following the conference in Newcastle, NSW, Australia in 2005, the Association of Interchurch Families in the UK announced that it would be holding the next international English-speaking conference in Swanwick, England, in August 2008. Due to considerable family difficulties among some of the members organizing this conference, we are going to have to scale back our ambitions for a full international conference with significant speakers, as the planning has been considerably held up during this year. Also, the theological work preparing the paper 'Interchurch Families as Domestic Church', which is in preparation, is going more slowly than anticipated, and it is unlikely that the paper will be finished by next August.

The AIF Executive Committee has discussed this, and has decided that AIF will host a **40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Conference at Swanwick from 23 - 25 August 2008** (a day shorter than the original dates), but we do hope our friends from around the world will still feel welcome to join us to celebrate our work over the past 40 years since interchurch families first started to meet together in England in 1968. Professor Thomas Knieps-Port Le Roi from Louvain, Belgium, who has been coordinating the theological work for the International Network of Interchurch Families, will come to give details of how the work is progressing, and other church leaders and clergy who have supported us over the years will be invited. It will be a time of reflection on the past, and encouragement and hope for future work among groups and associations of interchurch families, which have come together over the past decades in many countries. If enough overseas visitors come, we may be able to meet as an international group for consultation for an additional day before the main conference, and I am sure that members of AIF will volunteer to host overseas visitors at other times while they are in the country.

We are sorry to have to cut back on what we were originally planning, but it has been necessary to avoid administrative and financial complications for AIF that we make this decision at this time. We are confident that this will be a great event, and hope to see some of you there! I will send details of prices, accommodation and booking forms round soon.

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#### Europe

A group of interchurch family representatives will be attending the **Third Ecumenical Assembly in Sibiù, Roumania, in September 2007**, organized by the Conference of European Churches (CEC) and

the Roman Catholic Council of Episcopal Conferences in Europe (CCEE). Sibiu is a fairly small town, and the numbers of delegates to this Assembly will be limited, so we were delighted to be invited by Don Aldo Giordano, Secretary to CCEE, to send a representative group. Those attending on behalf of IFIN come from groups and associations of interchurch families in Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, and Switzerland. We look forward to hearing their report afterwards. You can read more about the Assembly on [www.eea3.org](http://www.eea3.org).

### Australia

One of the speakers at the 2005 interchurch families conference held in Newcastle, NSW, Australia, was Gerard Kelly. Here is an **article by Gerard** on the subject of interchurch families, which has actually been sent in by Ray Temmerman in Canada. [\(1\)](#)

### Austria

ARGE Ökumene will be holding **this year's conference** near the beautiful city of Salzburg. It will run from 26 - 28 October 2007, and the theme is: Living through the Bible: creative contact with the Word of God.

The ARGE Ökumene website [www.arge-oekumene.at](http://www.arge-oekumene.at) contains the German text of many ecclesiastical documents, which are posted regularly. The latest is the recent **document from the Vatican** which mentioned the status of non-Catholic churches, which caused much comment in the Press around the world.

### Canada

Darrel and Maureen Chastkiewicz write with news of **activity in Regina, Saskatchewan**: [\(2\)](#)

### France

Several members of the Association Française de Foyers Mixtes Interconfessionnels Chrétiens (AFFMIC) will be attending the European Ecumenical Assembly in September, the Thomases representing IFIN, the Vielles representing the French Roman Catholic church and Frédéric Martin representing the French Reformed church.

Members of AFFMIC are also involved in preparing for a **meeting of interchurch families** to be held at the Institute of Ecumenical Studies in Lviv, Ukraine, 17 - 21 July 2008, the first time such a meeting has been held in this part of the world, and where there will no doubt be strong representation from the Orthodox church.

### Germany

Rudolf Lauber writes with a report of **activities of the Netzwerk Ökumene**: [\(3\)](#)

The **German conference** in March 2007 was attended by Melanie Finch and Claire Malone-Lee from AIF UK, and also by two young members of AIF, who wrote their own report: [\(4\)](#)

### Great Britain

AIF members were delighted to welcome David and Joyce Makumi from Nairobi, Kenya, at the **annual conference in August 2006**, which gave everybody a fresh viewpoint: [\(5\)](#)

**A symposium to explore the spirituality of marriage and family life** was held at Ushaw College in October 2006, and was attended by Ruth Reardon and Helen Connell from AIF. One of the speakers was Thomas Knieps-Port le Roi, and Ruth ran a workshop: [\(6\)](#)

The biennial John Coventry Lecture was organized by AIF in February 2007. The speaker was Rev David Coffey, AIF's Free Church President, and the President of the Baptist World Alliance. His address '**Voices from the World Church**' reflected his wide-ranging travel and experience of ecumenical work: [\(7\)](#)

The AIF annual conference will be held this year from 25 - 27 August 2007 on the theme: Interchurch Families: Making a Difference in the Churches.

### Kenya

David and Joyce Makumi write their **report from Nairobi**: [\(8\)](#)

### Italy

Among the group of interchurch family representatives in Roumania in September will be **Andrea and Maria Lari** who were involved in the planning for the Rome 2003 conference.

### Northern Ireland

Following serious worries about continuing funding, and lots of prayers offered, NIMMA were delighted when the Dublin Department of Foreign Affairs Anglo-Irish Division's Reconciliation Fund **awarded funds** to cover another year's expenses in running the office and paying salaries.

NIMMA held a **one day conference** on 28 April where members heard from Trevor Ringland of the 'One Small Step' campaign, which supports and encourages the building of a shared future and a shared society in Northern Ireland, free from the threat of sectarianism. The group also worked on producing a plan for the future of the Association. A reprint of leaflets and posters has been carried out, and a mail-out to Northern Ireland clergy has taken place, with some response. Much work remains to be done, however, as there are still some clergy totally opposed to mixed marriage.

NIMMA continue to have input into the **Northern Ireland Housing Advisory Group**, and **Conflict Studies Group**. Their community outreach over the past decades is quite unique among interchurch family groups and associations around the world.

### Switzerland

The Association des Foyers Mixtes de Suisse held a **conference in April 2007**, where Melanie Finch joined them. [\(9\)](#)

### United States

The **2006 AAIF conference** was held just as last year's bulletin appeared, so this report has been a bit delayed: [\(10\)](#)

Mary Jane Glauber writes with **the latest news from the United States**: [\(11\)](#)

### Conclusion

Thank you very much indeed to all who have sent reports and information for this newsletter. I hope you will continue to send news from your groups and associations, so we can all keep in touch and learn from each other, in order to make our work as effective as possible. There is a good deal of useful information on the website [www.interchurchfamilies.org](http://www.interchurchfamilies.org), where you can find details of international contacts, and links to websites of several national groups and associations. Please keep interchurch families and their priests and pastors in your prayers. We look forward to several international encounters between interchurch families over the coming year!

*Melanie Finch*

*Coordinator, International Links, Association of Interchurch Families UK*

*August 2008*

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