



# **International Ecumenical Fellowship**

## **British Region Newsletter**

FEBRUARY 2025



### **In this issue:**

|   |       |
|---|-------|
| Spring Weekend at Park Place                    | 3     |
| Local Expressions of Unity                      | 7     |
| Cluj 2024: Ecumenical Journeys                  | 11-19 |
| ‘Nobody apologises for preaching<br>the Gospel’ | 20    |
| News from the German Region                     | 22    |
| For our prayers                                 | 23    |
| Canon Richard Orchard R.I.P.                    | 24    |
| BRIEF Reflections                               | 28    |



# **International Ecumenical Fellowship**

*'Living today the Church of tomorrow'*

## **British Region Officers**

### **President**

*vacant*

### **Co-Chairs**

Deacon Gwenllian Knighton  
21 Hatherleigh Road  
Abergavenny, NP7 7RG  
Tel: 01873 737818  
Email: gwenllianknighton@gmail.com

Canon Richard Hill  
40 Grove Park Crescent  
Gosforth  
Newcastle upon Tyne, NE3 1BP  
Tel: 07597 933 367  
Email: collis.rick@gmail.com

### **Secretary**

Kate Grand  
78 Grange Road  
Chorlton  
Manchester, M21 9WX  
Tel: 0161 881 0958  
Email: kategrand@tiscali.co.uk

### **International Representative and Representative to the Theological Commission**

*vacant*

### **Treasurer**

George Morton  
4 St Anne's Road  
Chorlton-cum-Hardy  
Manchester, M21 8TD  
Tel: 0161 881 8195  
Email: g.morton50@ntlworld.com

# Please join us for our Spring Weekend

Park Place, Wickham, Hampshire

3<sup>rd</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> April 2025

## Addressing the Needs of God's World – Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation

This year's British Region AGM and Spring Weekend will see us revisit the beautiful setting of The Park Place Centre, Wickham.



Those of you who have been there with us before will recall that it is a Roman Catholic Conference and Retreat Centre run by Franciscan Sisters from India.

We are offering a **Quiet Day** from Thursday evening to Friday afternoon and then our **Spring Weekend** begins on Friday evening, and we will be sent forth refreshed after Sunday lunch.

This is an extraordinary year. We celebrate the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of *Laudato Si'* and Laudato Si' Movement, a global Jubilee of Hope, and 800 years of the *Canticle of the Creatures*.

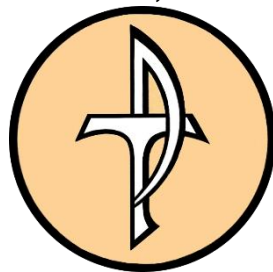
St Francis of Assisi's timeless hymn of praise invites us to see every element of the natural world – sun, moon, wind, water, fire and earth – as our siblings, part of one sacred family.

Our unity is our strength. We enter this year inspired by what so many have accomplished and we remain committed to raising hope for all creation.

Igor Bastos says ...

“Through the Laudato Si’ Movement, I discovered a profound connection to the Franciscan charism that has guided me since childhood: a deep, unwavering commitment to caring for the most vulnerable and for our shared home. This connection wasn’t just inspiring; it was transformative. It provided a tangible way to respond to one of humanity’s most pressing challenges – the climate crisis – through faith, action and hope.

Being part of this incredible journey is both blessing and a sacred responsibility. I has reminded me daily that caring for our common home is far more than an environmental cause; it is calling, a mission rooted in love, justice and the harmony of God’s creation.”



Given the current set of threats which are facing our world we felt that an exploration of these three themes, Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation seem to address the main ills of humanity and our planet. Although we do not see ourselves as of any major influence, the more we can be informed and moved in our hearts on these three topics, the more we can contribute to movements, campaigns and charities, local or broader, which make a difference. We are called to be peacemakers, people who do justice and co-workers in the care of God’s creation. It is our intention that this year’s Spring Weekend will inform, further and inspire that intent.

The weekend will follow usual outline. Thursday evening and Friday morning and afternoon will follow a Quiet Day programme, subject to sufficient demand. The weekend programme itself will start on Friday evening with an Introduction. There will be two further input sessions on the theme during Saturday morning with opportunity for questions and discussion. One of these will be led by the Resident Alim of the nearby Shia Islamic Centre, Sheikh Fazle Abbas Dattoo. After lunch there will be the possibility of a local excursion or quiet time at the Centre. Our AGM will be later on Saturday afternoon and we hope to have some informal time together in the evening, spending some time sharing experiences of Cluj. On Sunday we hope to share a Mass with the chapel congregation before enjoying our Sunday lunch together.

You will find a full programme and booking form, with prices, enclosed with this edition of the Newsletter. **Please make your decision and respond as quickly as possible.**

*John and Jenny Spatchet*

## **CANON RICHARD ORCHARD**

As we go to press, we have received word that Choral Evensong at Derby Cathedral on Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup> March at 5.15pm will be a Memorial Service for Richard Orchard. Those gathering for the service are invited to tea and cakes at 4.00pm. All are welcome.

You can read a tribute to Richard on p.24 of this Newsletter.

## From the Editor

I know now how frustrated our late Editor, Robin Gurney, used to feel when he appealed to members to send contributions for the Newsletter, but received very little. This time, I am grateful to Gwen Knighton and Kate Grand who have provided two reports about what is happening ecumenically in their parts of Britain. I hope their contributions might inspire others to write about what is happening in their area.

I am living in an area where, frankly, there is very little regular ecumenical activity. Members of local churches are perfectly civil, even friendly, towards each other. But I fear that trends like the shortage of full-time leadership, the shrinking of many congregations, and the internal concerns of our churches (I speak as an Anglican!) have led to a situation where ecumenism has slid down the list of priorities. I have heard from people in many situations who say that local churches are just too preoccupied with 'keeping their show on the road'. I want to take issue with that mindset, not least because working ecumenically might help to relieve some of the pressures. But we are where we are.

Even BRIEF is experiencing decline in numbers. We are not attracting new members. We have now several vacant positions on our modest-sized committee. I do hope that all who can will sign up for our Spring Weekend, so that we can consider together ways forward on a number of issues. I hope too that you will consider whether you have local experiences which you could write about for a future Newsletter. If you can be more involved in any way, please let us know!

*Richard Hill*

collis.rick@gmail.com

## Reflections on this year's Week of Prayer for Christian Unity in one locality

With over 100 years of history of this week of prayer, we might be forgiven for asking why such prayers for unity haven't been answered – except that, at least in part, they have! But prayers are not always answered, we know, exactly in the way we have expected.

Here in Abergavenny, a fairly small but growing Monmouthshire market town in the Black Mountains, the week is marked in usual ways – with lunchtime prayers and soup lunches and a fuller service on the Saturday. These meetings in a different church with different worship styles daily, are attended nowadays by between 20 and 30 people in an atmosphere of friendship, and perhaps a touch of healthy rivalry about the soup which follows! This year, reflecting together on the Nicene Creed (1,700th

anniversary this year) by using the CTBI material worked well. There was some interactive discussion and prayer at the Salvation Army and Methodist Church, and more formal worship elsewhere, including saying the creed together (ecumenical version without the filioque clause, added to strongly refute the Pelagian heresy).

North Monmouthshire was a strong area of Roman Catholic recusancy, especially in the country houses. There is a local martyr saint - with the house containing his secret chapel now being renovated as a tourist and pilgrimage attraction. Later, in nearby industrial valleys, nonconformist churches and those of the evangelical revival had proved flexible enough to transfer easily from the countryside to the rapidly growing populations. There

were further revivals such as the one in 1904, and the influence of early Pentecostalism in some of Abergavenny's churches can still be discerned. So, it is prayers for unity answered that most of us can pray and worship together in friendship, even though not yet meet as one family around the Lord's table. Churches Together in Abergavenny also supports a youth café and centre (the brilliant manager is from the Salvation Army).

I can't help wondering, however, whether those of us

committed to ecumenism between different traditions need to pray particularly to bridge a divide which could be just as difficult, namely between those of conservative, fundamentalist or traditionalist persuasion (whether of doctrine or ethics) in each of our traditions, and those in the same traditions who find a need to relate Faith, Scripture or Church more closely to the context in which we find ourselves and seek the presence of God and His Spirit there too.

*Gwen Knighton*

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## **Breaking down barriers and creating understanding on the road to unity**

On 16th January, just after the news of a probable cessation of hostilities in Gaza was announced, a group of 32 people and a toddler gathered at Chorlton Central Church (CCC) in SW Manchester to get to know each other. After mingling over light refreshments, they sat in rows facing each other, like a form of speed dating, to engage in individual conversations. Short introductions about the church (a Baptist/URC LEP) and the British



Muslim Heritage Centre were followed by instructions on how the evening would go: 5 questions, presented one at a time, would have 8-10 minutes each; after each question, one row would move on a seat so everyone had a new partner and a new question, deeper than the last.

So how did this come about? With the outbreak of war in Gaza, we, the members and friends of CCC, were concerned. Some joined the weekly Amnesty International vigils; some the solidarity rallies; and the church hosted a public Gaza evening to raise awareness and support with lawyers and a Gazan woman sharing her and her family's personal experience.

We were also concerned at the increase in antisemitism and islamophobia here in the UK. At the church meeting we decided to write to the synagogues and mosques in South Manchester expressing our concern and solidarity with them. We received letters of thanks from all of them, but it was with the British Muslim Heritage Centre, housed in the former Congregational, then United Reformed Church training college in Whalley Range, that a relationship began between just a few of our congregation and a similar number of Muslims. They visited our church last summer while I was away. From the report of that visit to the church meeting, an Interfaith group was set up and the idea of inviting them for dialogue at Central was born. A member's daughter had experience of the model we chose. It took time finding a date convenient to both groups and agreeing the questions, and in the meantime a few of us accepted an invitation to MNHD to their screening of the Al-Jazeera documentary claiming the Israeli Defence Force was committing genocide in Gaza. It was eye-opening, shocking and harrowing. (I recommend it, if you have the stomach for it.) But the welcome was warm.

How did our January meeting go? The format worked brilliantly! After the questions there was some oral feedback, then all were asked to write comments on post-its. The comments speak for themselves.

- Felt unsure of what to expect, leaving with a smile.
- I was quite nervous to begin with, but once we got talking, I really enjoyed listening and sharing our experiences. Thank you.
- Felt apprehensive. Once inside it was very welcoming. Faith in humanity again.
- How keen and open people are to share!
- The joy in connecting with each other!
- Respect and agree to disagree.
- We all sincerely want the best for each other.
- Built bridges, removed misconceptions.
- Sense of friendliness and laughter mixed with thoughtful messages that are uplifting to faith.
- Commonalities that unite us. Diversity among both Muslims and Christians.
- It is good to have opportunities to listen. We are more alike than different.
- We should have more meetings like this. Interesting.
- When the time was up on each question I had so much more I wanted to ask and learn about my partner.
- We can learn so much from each other.
- We're stronger when we're open and get to know each other.
- Stephen told me about St Stephen the first martyr!
- Enjoyed Lesley's input into prophet [sic] Job.
- So much goodness!

- Empathy, kindness and curiosity are the key to understanding.
- We all want to live in peace and harmony. Community. People are loving and caring.
- Faith in action! Inspired by Zakat etc
- Would love to take part in more interfaith projects.
- Chances of unity, friendship, creating bonds.
- Let's meet again!
- Visit the BMHC! The invitation is already there!

*Kate Grand*

## CLUJ-NAPOCA 2024

**IEF International Conference 23<sup>rd</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup> July**

**DAYS OUT FROM THE CONFERENCE**

*John and Jenny Spatchet wrote this report after last year's Conference.*

### **Day Trip from Conference – 26<sup>th</sup> July**

Quite early on Friday morning we set off from Cluj in two coaches to explore some of the spiritual and multicultural nature of Transylvania.

Following a drive through largely wild and agricultural scenery we arrived at Gherla which is a microcosm of much of the religious and racial mix that has made Transylvania what it is. The major influence in Gherla was an influx of Armenian refugees from Moldavia who were encouraged to settle in this area by the Austro-



Hungarian Emperor in the 18th century. We spent some time in the spacious Baroque Armeno – Catholic Holy Trinity Cathedral of the Ordinariate. Other refugees had sought to retain their eastern traditions and had joined the Greek Catholic Church set up by the Pope

to offer the Eastern tradition within the oversight of the Holy See in Rome.

We also visited an example of the Roman Catholic Church in Gherla. Previously a Franciscan Friary it now acts as a parish church for a mainly Hungarian speaking congregation. All these varying faith traditions and cultures give rise to a vibrant and active Christian community.

Just outside Gherla sits Gherla Castle. First built in the 16th century it became a prison 200 years later and is still one today. During the Communist Era it became a notorious centre of torment within the Romanian Gulag where the elite and masses alike were imprisoned, tortured and killed during a tragic period of persecution and “re-education”. Here thousands were incarcerated, and many killed. On a small hill, nearby, once the site of a mass grave from the prison, local Christians, under the leadership of the Orthodox



Bishop, have created a peaceful memorial to those who suffered there. We found a small museum, a simple chapel and a beautiful wild garden with graves. Under the care of a small monastic community and run by volunteers they try to cast off the shadows of the past to retain the dignity of the people whilst education work keeps alive the memory of those who suffered and creates a mutual understanding of the need for peace and dignity. Among the inmates at Gherla was Richard Wurmbrand, who was quoted in our reflection in May and at the British Region Evening Prayer at Cluj. His name was deliberately misspelt in his admission document. Our experience here was soulful and reflective and we were united in singing a Kyrie.



Moving on, our next visit was to the Nicula Monastery. Founded by the 16th century as an Orthodox monastic settlement, it had become deserted by the late 17th century and was handed over to the Greek Catholic Church in the late 18th century. It became an important centre of pilgrimage due to the Icon of The Mother of God with the Child, painted in 1661 by Luca of Iclod, which wept in 1699. Under Communist rule the Greek Catholic Church was outlawed and

the monastery passed back to the Romanian Orthodox Church who still hold it today. They have built a new church, started in the late 20<sup>th</sup> Century to replace the Greek Catholic one. Like many monasteries around Romania, this is a place of life and growth. They are an inspiration to many in this strongly faithful people. At the centre of the monastic complex lies a tiny timber church from the 17th century brought in in 1973 to replace a similar original



building destroyed by fire. The inside was full of exquisite primitive iconography and on the outside were examples of the local icons which are traditionally written on glass.

From Nicula we moved on to Sic, a Magyar settlement where we visited a remarkable nature reserve of UNESCO significance. Hundreds of miles inland, in a low-lying area surrounded by hills we walked on boardwalks across a saltwater delta

landscape, a habitat of reed beds, often towering above us and filling the air with a breeze driven rustling. A time just to be alive and surrounded by God's creation, well cared for.

We enjoyed a good lunch that day, beautifully served and reflecting the cultural diversity of the area, returning to Cluj for the Festive Dinner, served in style at the Rao Hotel!

## **Post Conference Day Trip to Sibiu and Sibiel - 29th July**

After the conference, six members of the BRIEF group stayed on for this excursion.

After an early start the journey to Sibiu afforded us an opportunity to view the countryside of Southern Transylvania dominated by mountain territory covered with wild deciduous and coniferous forest, pastures, hayfields and orchards, quite often abandoned in a post-communist flight to the cities. Amongst many cultural influences there was a strong influence from Saxon merchants arriving from the 12th century onwards and establishing villages protected by fortified hilltop churches, some of them UNESCO

world heritage sites, along with Sibiu itself. Sibiu became the Saxon cultural hub for trade and administration. These Saxons brought with them their Catholic faith and later the Lutheran tradition so both have a strong hold in this area, alongside the Reformed tradition which arrived with the Magyars. Sibiu was the first European Capital of Culture along with Luxembourg in 2007.



On arrival in Sibiu we were taken to the Piata Mare, the main Square, and given time to explore its historic heritage. For a city with the most tourist attractions in the country this time was inadequate, but we were struck by the welcoming atmosphere and the way in which so many cultures and denominations seemed to blend in a purposeful way. We managed to visit three principal churches.

Firstly the Roman Catholic Parish Church of The Holy Trinity which graces the north side of the *piata*. It is an attractive Baroque church of Jesuit origin. Behind this and in the Piata Huet stands the markedly different Lutheran Evangelical Cathedral.

The Cathedral Church of St Mary is of 14th century Gothic style

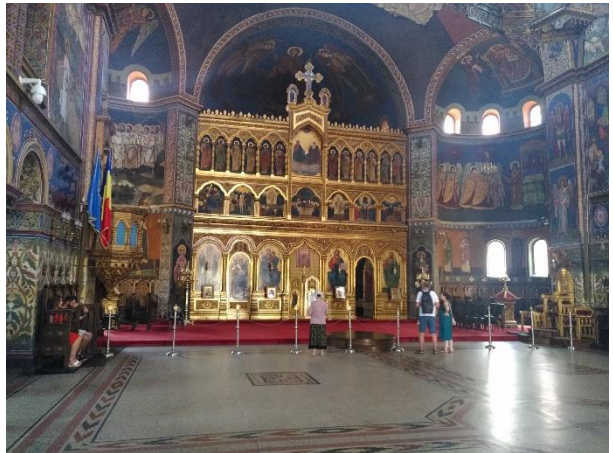


having been built as the Roman Catholic Parish Church on the site of a previous Romanesque church. In the mid 16th century it became a Lutheran church and later



cathedral when the majority of Saxons in Transylvania converted under the leadership of Johannes Honter. Externally its appearance is stunning with a multi-gabled roof decorated with coloured tiles in a similar style to St Stephen's Cathedral, Vienna. Inside it was simple light and airy with two fine organs, one very historic, a mid 18<sup>th</sup> century Johannes Hahn instrument and the other a recently restored Sauer, the largest in South Eastern Europe. Above the cathedral is a tower with fine views across the city, and beneath the east end the apse of the previous building can be seen through a glass floor.

After a short walk, passing the Reformed Church, which was closed, we were able to visit the Orthodox Metropolitan Cathedral of the Holy Trinity. Constructed in the style of the Hagia Sofia, on the site of an earlier Greek



Church, the Cathedral is the seat of the Metropolitan of Transylvania. Although an early 20<sup>th</sup> century building the interior was stunning with a beautiful iconostasis and walls and ceiling decorated by Iosif Keber and Anastase Demian. The whole interior was both uplifting and inspiring with an atmosphere of living daily worship.

After an excellent lunch at the Astra Park Museum we explored its woodland glades and lakes, exhibiting vernacular architecture from across Romania in what is Europe's largest open air museum. The



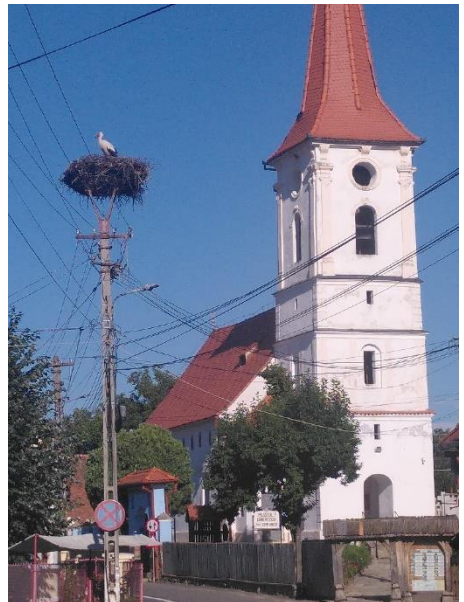


exhibits varied from *troitas* (crosses which were places of worship in villages where no churches were built), and barns to homesteads and even a whole village. The exhibition of mills, of both wind and water was outstanding in its variety, even including a floating tidal mill. The

whole atmosphere was further enhanced by several groups of music workshops where the ethereal music of the Nai (Romanian shepherd's curved pan pipes), floated through the woods and across the lake. The whole museum showed a respect for the breadth of Romanian heritage and its natural environment.

Arriving in the picturesque streamside village of Sibiel we were greeted by the sight of a stork nesting on a telegraph pole.

In the grounds of the 18th century Orthodox Church we visited the Glass Icon Museum. With over 700 icons it is the largest collection in Europe. The Museum was founded by Fr Zosim Oancea, a local priest, who had been imprisoned for 17 years under Communism. The glass icons are some of the remarkable folk art to come out of Transylvania. Like so much else in this exciting are the result from a fusion of cultural traditions, and



their obvious symbolism created no language barrier for our group in appreciating their simple sincerity.

The making of icons in this style originated when pilgrimages started to the Nicula Monastery in its Greek Catholic period, resulting from when the Mother of God Icon was reputed to have cried tears. Pilgrims to the area wanted a keepsake from their visit and a reproduction of the icon would be perfect but in a time before colour printing, icon copying was expensive. There was a folk-art form in Austria which produced pictures painted on glass. As part of the Empire Romanians picked up on this tradition and many peasant artists in the Nicula region found that they could write simple icons on glass to offer as souvenirs to pilgrims. They gradually developed into a folk art form and were used in peasant homes as items of reverence thus promoting a whole cottage industry of their production. The art form is naïve or primitive in the technical sense but the sense of religious devotion and joyous fervour that they capture is very refreshing. There are several recurring motifs in the tradition, two of which were particularly



endearing: the representation of Christ the True Vine (*pictured*) and the image of George and the Dragon.

Our final experience of the day took us on a walk along the stream to a local farmhouse with a barn converted into an alfresco dining area. Here we were served the most delightful menu of homemade traditional fayre, wine and *tuica* (homemade plum

brandy). Hospitality is the other cultural speciality of Romania and this place had it in spades. We felt as if we had been invited to a spread by friends offering us lots of lovely food and a very warm welcome into a beautiful homestead's compound.

In addition to giving us great pleasure, the experience of both these days served to remind us of how deeply embedded the Christian faith is in Romanian society, not just in its cultural museums and tourist places of interest but as a lively and faithful adherence in everyday life. Perhaps the most endearing example we had was the number of times, whilst on public transport, that we encountered local young people who, because of our English conversations or our conference bags or lanyards, struck up conversations with us about matters of faith and theology. The sort of encounter one might hope for in the UK!



Both these days of encounter had given us an insight into the cities and countryside, the culture, hospitality and friendship of a beautiful part of the world.

Mulțumesc pentru primire. (Thank you for your welcome.)

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*When the church hears the cry of the oppressed it cannot but denounce the social structures that give rise to and perpetuate the misery from which the cry arises.*

*Oscar Romero*

## 'Nobody apologizes for preaching the Gospel'



The Gospel must not be instrumentalized by politics – and churches should never apologize for reading the Bible or for preaching the Gospel, the World Council of Churches moderator Bishop Heinrich Bedford-Strohm has said at a prayer service.

Bedford-Strohm mentioned in a Jan. 27 reflection at the WCC, criticism by President Donald Trump after an Episcopal bishop made a plea to the U.S. leader during his

inauguration service on January 21<sup>st</sup>.

Trump demanded an apology from Mariann Budde, the Episcopal bishop of Washington after she made a direct appeal to him during a prayer service marking his inauguration to have mercy on the LGBTQ community and migrant workers who are in the United States illegally.

Referencing Trump's belief that he was saved by God from assassination, Bishop Budde said, "You have felt the providential hand of a loving God. In the name of our God, I ask you to have mercy upon the people in our country who are scared now."

After he returned to the White House, Trump said, "I didn't think it was a good service" and "they could do much better." But later, in an overnight post on his social media site, he sharply criticized the "so-called Bishop" as a "Radical Left hard-line Trump hater," The Associated Press reported.

"She brought her church into the world of politics in a very ungracious way. She was nasty in tone, and not compelling or smart," said Trump, a Republican, adding that Budde didn't mention that some migrants have come to

the United States and killed people.

"Apart from her inappropriate statements, the service was a very boring and uninspiring one. She is not very good at her job!" Trump said. "She and her church owe the public an apology!"

The Presbyterian Church PC(USA) advocacy committee issued a statement supporting Bishop Budde saying her "courage and truth-telling has echoes in pioneering Presbyterian women."

In his reflection, Bedford-Strohm said, "The bishop was not politicizing the gospel but – quite the opposite - infused some gospel into politics at an occasion where this was desperately needed. The president demanded her to apologize. She didn't apologize. Nowhere in the world will we apologize for reading the bible and preaching the Gospel!"

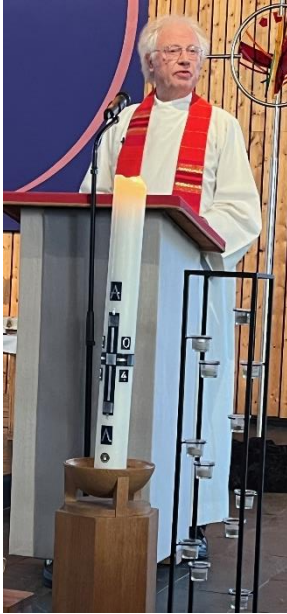
Referring to Trump's inaugural address the day before the service, the WCC bishop said, "How different was the tone of the inaugural address that we heard last Monday, just a week ago. Not the common good was in the centre of the inaugural address of the new president of the United States, but the exclusion of those who are especially vulnerable.

"And then came the bishop - a bishop with a soft and friendly voice, but strong words," the WCC moderator said, referring to Bishop Mariann Edgar Budde, Episcopal bishop of Washington since 2011, who made a plea to President Trump during an interfaith service at the Washington Cathedral.

"Bishop Mariann Budde spoke truth to power. And what she said was simply the words of the Gospel. ... This was a historic sermon - it gave new energy, it gave new hope to many people all over the world," said Bedford-Strohm.

*(from Ecumenical News.com ©*

## ***News from the German Region***



### **Hans Georg Link celebrates 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his Ordination as a Pastor**

There was a great gathering of family and friends in Köln-Porz on the first Sunday of Advent, when Hans Georg Link celebrated the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his ordination.

Before a long ministry as ecumenical pastor in Cologne, Hans Georg worked for many years at the World Council of Churches in Geneva. So it is no surprise that he chose to mark this landmark with a Lima Liturgy, which he has often urged IEF to use.

During the weekend of celebrations (including, of course, Kaffee und Kuchen!) there was music (Hans Georg is an accomplished violinist) and a lecture by a distinguished German Catholic theologian. Hans Georg also published a new book about 50 years of ecumenical encounters and experiences. We send our warmest congratulations from the British Region.





# FOR OUR PRAYERS

## **Reflection**

Christ has buried your past  
in the tomb with him  
so that you can rise  
in God womb of love to new life  
- begin again –  
rise ever more  
in Divine Yes to you.

God is taking care of your  
future.  
It is an eternal one.  
It has already begun.  
You are soaked in it, Christian,  
dripping with it.

## **Prayer**

With gratitude beyond all possible language

***we praise you, O Lord, and glorify your name.***

For having called us to the trusting of faith in baptism,  
for the communion we share in the New Covenant,  
for the unity we already enjoy and your presence in the Holy Church

***we praise you, O Lord, and glorify your name.***

For the witness of persecuted Christians,  
for the suffering of their martyrdom,  
for their participation in Christ's passion

***we praise you, O Lord, and glorify your name.***

For all servants of communion,  
for those who pray and work for the reconciliation of churches,  
for those who lay down their lives in the service of unity

***we praise you, O Lord, and glorify your name.***

Hasten the day, we beg you,  
of the full mutual recognition of our churches  
that communion you desire and for which your Son prayed.  
We ask this in the power of the Holy Spirit. **Amen**

*(from Churches Together in Britain and Ireland Week of Prayer 2025)*



## Canon Richard Orchard

1941 - 2024

*A summary from a tribute by the Revd Clive Thrower at Richard's funeral in Rye*

The honour falls to me to say a little about the ministry and life of my friend and colleague Richard in Derbyshire. Richard was a trail blazer in that when he arrived at Sinfin Moor the Church did not have a building, and worship was organised in people's homes. Melvin Worton fondly remembers going for a drink to the next-door social club with Richard after the morning services. He believed in theological education for thoughtful people, the community of the parish, church people or not. And from a later Church Report which commented that Richard was instrumental in developing Ecumenism in Sinfin Moor, pioneering the collaboration between the URC, Methodist and Anglican churches for establishing a new church in a new and expanding part of Derby - a work that continues today, 50+ years on with new expressions of Church being pioneered in further expansive new housing development in the parish.

Richard was throughout his ministry committed to building ecumenical relationships and saw it as a scandal and drag-anchor to mission that so often the denominations see each other as competitors. You can see a theme in Richard's ministry, that of reaching out to fellow Christians to work together for the kingdom. He firmly believed the tenet of Churches Together "One in Christ Jesus, engaged in God's mission, empowered by the Spirit". Richard continued his membership of Churches Together right into his retirement as well as the International Ecumenical Fellowship.



It was this same philosophy that meant he did his best to meet the differing traditions of the five churches of the Dronfield benefice. In population it was five times that of Rye, leading a team of four clergy and several readers. Here his interpersonal skills came to the fore as there was a range of traditions to be accommodated in the team.

Though I had been a curate at Derby Cathedral I moved on just before he took his canon residentiary post so didn't see him there but speaking to a former colleague at the Cathedral she particularly mentioned his gentleness and respect shown to others. The Dean's wife commented that it had been the best team of staff at the Cathedral. His great knowledge was not paraded as he quietly got on with the job of being canon residentiary. Part of that job was in building relationships with the other faith leaders in the City. There are significant numbers of ethnic minorities living in Derby as I experienced on the Council for Racial Equality. Richard's work in this area probably helped Derby avoid the unrest that beset other cities at the time of the Middle Eastern conflict.

It was his philosophy of mutual respect that meant Richard did his best to meet the differing traditions of the five churches when he was at Dronfield, three historic buildings and two new ones, and later in the Peak District villages of Balow, Curbar and Stoney Middleton. He entered ministry to serve the people not to bend them to his tradition. An annual event was the sunrise service on Curbar Edge on Easter Day, with 50 people plus dogs of whom lots came down to the Vicarage for breakfast. Jane very much supported the ministry in these parishes. Pondering on Richard's last appointment I wondered whether the Methodist Cliffe College being in the geographical centre of the benefice of Baslow, Curbar and Stoney had anything to do with his choice to go there.

Richard and I formed a partnership to lead pilgrimages to the Middle East - Jordan and Israel (1998), Turkey (2000), Egypt (2004), Greece (2011), and the Holy Land (2010).

On one visit we stayed at St. Catherine's monastery in the Sinai peninsular. We were privileged to join the community for their evening office and then enter its world-famous library to see the few pages still there of the Codex Sinaiticus, the bulk of which is the British Library. Our host politely asked us to return the stolen property to his monastery!

Pilgrimages bring the Bible to life and the encounter with fellow Christians from every corner of the planet helped us to realise that we are part of something much bigger than our own parish. Well, that is the history of where and when, but I must tell you that Richard was the brains in terms of Bible and Church history.

It has been my privilege to count Richard amongst my colleagues and friends, his gentleness, kindness and generally optimistic outlook will be missed by all who knew him. Psalm 23 tells us: *'Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.'*

#### FOOTNOTE

All Richard's qualities from his many years in Derbyshire, as outlined by Clive Thrower, are familiar to all of us who knew him in IEF, as a member, attending conferences with Jane, and especially as Regional President. We give thanks for his friendship, wisdom and indomitable ecumenical spirit, and continue to surround Jane with our love.

*Richard Hill*

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### **FOLLOW BRIEF ACTIVITIES ON THE INTERNET**

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### **BRIEF NEWSLETTER**

Deadline for September 2025: 15<sup>th</sup> August  
Contributions welcome; please send to  
[collis.rick@gmail.com](mailto:collis.rick@gmail.com). Thank you!

*Richard Hill, Editor*

## SEASONAL REFLECTIONS

all at 7.00pm British Time

Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> February

**Reflection as Lent approaches**

To be led by Richard Hill

Monday 17<sup>th</sup> March

**Reflection for Passiontide**

To be led by Fi Rosen

Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> May

**Reflection for Eastertide**

Leader: to be announced

Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> June

**Reflection for Pentecost**

To be led by John Sclater

Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> July

**Reflection on Fighting Modern Day Slavery**

To be led by Jenny Tomlinson

Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> September

**Reflection on Creation**

To be led by Cheryl Corney

Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> October

**Reflection for St Francistide**

To be led by John and Jenny Spatchet

Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> November

**Remembering Through Music**

To be led by Geoff Weaver

Zoom link sent to IEF members 2-3 days ahead