

arc uk prayer

Lord God,
whose son Jesus prayed that
all his followers might be one,
help us to love one another
as you love us.
May all people everywhere
be united with the bond of peace,
journeying together on the
adventure of faith,
this day and always.

Amen

ARC UK NEWSLETTER 2008

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Accueil, Rencontre, Communauté

WELCOME

to the ARC UK Annual Newsletter



100 years ago something extraordinary began: a group of Christians set aside a week in January to pray for the unity of the Church. It became an annual event and very soon was observed worldwide by people of many different denominations. 2008 marks the centenary of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. Praying for unity is commonplace now, but we should not forget that at that time it was a radical concept. Many barriers have been dissolved, and long-lasting relationships formed that would have been unthinkable then.

ARC has recently also celebrated an anniversary. It is 30 years since the first project at Canterbury when French students welcomed visitors to the Cathedral. Most of the students were Catholics and at the time such an Anglican-Catholic exchange was almost unheard of. Over the years, ARC has changed considerably. Today young people from a variety of denominations and from across Europe spend several weeks living, praying and working together. I wonder if those who founded that first ecumenical project had any idea what would come from it.

The centennial theme for the Week of Prayer was 'pray without ceasing'. It is partly in response to this that ARC UK has composed the prayer you will find on the back of this newsletter. It is an acknowledgment of the fact that without the Week of Prayer, ARC would possibly not exist. Secondly, it is an affirmation that

prayer is at the centre of what we do as an organization.

Someone recently mentioned that the ARC's most important feature is its humanness. By this I think they meant that ARC fosters long-lasting relationships and warm friendships that embody what is meant by Christian unity. The ARC UK prayer is intended as an expression of that sharing spirit, and I hope that those associated with us will use it whenever opportunities arise.

Fr Couturier, a French ecumenist and ardent supporter of the Week of Prayer, conveyed it perfectly when he said, "In our contacts with other Christians, we discover unity with each other through becoming closer to Christ through our respective spiritual traditions. We learn so much more about growing in holiness through sharing with other Christians in the simplicity of friendship."



A...is for welcome

– or, at least, it is if you speak French! ARC's values are encapsulated in its name:

Accueil, Rencontre, Communauté
Welcome, Encounter, Community

These are values, too, which are fundamental to all Christians, and have their roots in the God who has come close to us in Christ, and who invites us to share in the eternal life and love of the community of the Trinity – Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

At ARC projects, the host Church community welcomes those who will be working at that project, and shares something of their life with them. Those working on the projects become a 'temporary' community, diverse in language, culture and some details of their Christian belief, but united in a common life together of work, prayer and exploration of new things.

There is something prophetic, too, about Christians from different backgrounds sharing something of their faith with each other, with total respect for difference and diversity – a foretaste of that unity amongst Christians that is the aim of our Churches more widely, in accordance with the prayer of Jesus in St John's Gospel that his disciples might "be one, as I and the Father are one". The theme of 'welcome' is an essential part of the work of ARC project workers, as they seek to welcome visitors to the church or cathedral, and share with them their love and knowledge, both of the building and of its wider context in the life of the community throughout history.

So in taking part in an ARC project – or indeed, any other ecumenical project that brings together Christians from different Churches and backgrounds – we are fulfilling that example of Jesus: "Welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you" (Romans 15: verse 7).

Jules Cave Bergquist
ARC UK Chaplain

'Welcome one another, as Christ has welcomed you'



WHAT IS CASA?

The name CASA in French stands for 'Communities Welcoming Visitors to Artistic Sites'. As an organization, it is very similar to ARC, taking part in the same activities and being a member of Ars et Fides. Moreover, the two organizations share a common spirit: their members are Christian and volunteers.



Each summer, 170 young people (from 18 to 35 years old) are present in 20 churches all over France. The more famous sites are the cathedral of Notre Dame de Paris, or the cathedrals of Bourges and Bayeux, or the basilica at Vézelay...

CASA's projects are called 'communities'. A community lasts for about two weeks at each location and is made up of about 4 or 5 guides (except in Notre Dame de Paris where the community is larger, about 10 or 12 guides). To participate to a community with CASA, you need to speak French because it's the common language and the language of your training. CASA was founded in 1967 and founded with ARC and Ars et Fides during the eighties.

Over the last few years, the several branches of ARC have been working together with CASA. Some of ARC's members have taken part in CASA's communities. What's more, CASA and ARC France share the training. So CASA and ARC have to work together. If a member of one association wants to participate to a project of the other... it's possible. CASA is a sister of ARC. Find out more at www.guidecasa.com

Christian Michel / CASA

WHO ARE ARS ET FIDES?



In autumn 1984, ARC UK was represented at the first 'international meeting of volunteer guides in religious places' by Nicolas Elder. That meeting in Bruges brought together just 6 associations, but it was the start of the later Ars et Fides. At that time, ARC only had branches than France and England, but would grow in the years that followed. And so would Ars et Fides.

From 1986 onwards, there was an annual meeting (in 1991 in Canterbury) and while ARC could not be represented at each and every one, the presence of young people was always – and still is – very much appreciated by the other groups of volunteer guides from the different countries, whose members are generally (much) older than the average ARC guide!

The people in charge of ARC UK may have changed in the course of the years, and that is also true for the board of Ars et Fides, but the common spirit remains the same: we make the stones speak.

It is important for all of us, whether we guide in cathedrals, churches or even small chapels, to meet regularly, to exchange ideas, documentation, skills, and – why not – even our guides!

Ars et Fides has a website, we communicate via email, etc., but the annual international meeting is the platform for exchange and meeting. This year we will welcome Stephen Stavrou, and in 2009 our annual assembly will take place in the UK. Also, from this year onwards, Ars et Fides will award a scholarship to young people attending the international meeting.

Mieke de Jonghe / Ars et Fides



Could YOU Help ARC UK?

- ✘ Could you organise a cake sale? A coffee morning? A music recital?
- ✘ Could you make a collection at your church in aid of ARC UK?
- ✘ Does your college or chaplaincy have charitable funds we could apply to?
- ✘ Would you like to help out at a fundraising coffee morning at St Alban's this year?
- ✘ Maybe you have an old mobile phone no longer in use. We collect them and can raise money for ARC UK with them through the Community Fonebak scheme!

In 2007, many supporters donated their time to help raise money for ARC UK. One of the highlights was an ecumenical prayer run organised by our President, Stephen, and our Treasurer, Louise. The course around central London took in some of the city's most well-known places of worship of a range of denominations. At each of these, the pair stopped to say a prayer for Christian unity. Would you like to join them this year? If so, contact **Stephen** at arc_england@yahoo.co.uk

If you would like more information about raising money for ARC UK and helping it to grow and develop, please contact our Treasurer, **Louise**, at arctreasurer@yahoo.co.uk. Remember: every penny helps!



Farewell Rebekah! Welcome Christa!



In 2007 we said a sad goodbye to our Recruitment Officer, Rebekah McKeown. Rebekah had worked extremely

hard for ARC UK for a number of years, coming into her own each spring and summer, organizing recruitment, interviews, shortlisting and the training day – not a job for the faint-hearted! Rebekah has now become one of our first ARC Angels so we are sure to see more of her in the future!

Stepping into Rebekah's shoes is Christa Neudecker who is currently researching a DPhil at Oxford University. Christa oversaw applications as the Recruitment Assistant last year, and has already proved herself more than capable of taking on the challenging role of Recruitment Officer. If you have any recruitment-related questions, please don't hesitate to contact Christa at arcrecruit@yahoo.co.uk.

Beautiful Bordeaux



It was with trepidation that I boarded my flight to Bordeaux that wet July morning. To be honest, I was happy to escape the dreadful English weather, but at the same time I was very nervous about how the project would go. Whilst the training day in June was eye-opening and reassuring, it was an entirely different matter to actually be going abroad to a new city, and into the unknown: was my French up to scratch? Were the other volunteers easy to get along with? Was I suited to the work of tour-guiding? It took a while for such questions to be answered, but by the end of the project, they were answered with a resounding yes.

“The cathedral was what really bound us together, and grounded us in our new home”

It is hard to think that four young people from very disparate backgrounds, awkwardly sitting in silence on that first day in our new home could be moulded into a close group of friends, some of whom still keep in touch with each other. It was a gradual process of learning, of course – such as finding out exactly why the Spanish girl had warmed up all our milk at breakfast (“It's for your cereal”, we were told). This process was not always smooth, but somehow we managed to overcome most problems we as a group encountered.

In the end, it was rather sad to say goodbye, not only to new friends but also to the cathedral – our place of work and familiar environment in Bordeaux. The cathedral was what really bound us together, and grounded us in our new home. Going there nearly every day and meeting new people became so much a part of life that it was difficult to return to England and the dissertation that awaited me. Leaving Bordeaux was not just coming home; it was leaving a place we could call home.

Mark Corbyn



B.R.I.E.F.

The British Region of the International Ecumenical Federation

Susan Armitage is the President of B.R.I.E.F., an international ecumenical organization which offers interesting opportunities for young people...

IEF and ARC learned about each other about two years ago, and as a result Stephen Stavrou accepted our invitation to speak about ARC at our 40th Anniversary Regional Weekend last year. In response we were ready to support ARC financially in exploring the possibility of extending ARC's work to Russia.

IEF is a grass-roots, international fellowship of Christians with groups in Belgium, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Great Britain, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Spain and individual members in a number of other countries. We meet together – lay and ordained, young and old, Orthodox, Catholic, Anglican and Protestant – for worship, study, reflection and prayer. From this we come to recognise our unity in Christ, we make friends with Christians from other traditions and countries, and are inspired and strengthened to work for unity back in the places where we live.

Regional meetings take place in the various countries and we meet together each year, usually at an International Conference of

around 300–350 people. In 2005 we were in Bratislava, in 2006 in Trier (we saw ARC volunteers in Luxembourg on our day out) and last year in Pisek (Czech Republic). This year there will be 'mini-conferences' in six different countries. These smaller events are a good way of getting to know people as well as exploring a place or a theme. Look on our international website www.iefnet.info and see if there is one that might interest you. If you have enjoyed ARC, you might also enjoy IEF! In 2009, the International Conference will be held in Cluj in Romania; in 2010 we will be in France and in 2011 in England.

An opportunity particularly designed for young people is being planned for the Spring of 2009. This is a visit to Jerusalem on the theme of ecumenism and will be followed by the group all going to the Conference in Romania. This should be a good way into IEF and financial support is available. If you are interested, don't hesitate to contact me.

IEF is wonderful in the way that it enables us to break down the barriers of language, culture and church confession and to learn from others more about ways of worshipping and the church in other countries. It has widened my appreciation the richness of the Christian faith and the World Church. If you would like to find out more or to look at some pictures, go to the website www.iefnet.info



In the summer of 2007, ARC UK launched a brand new category of membership. Could you be an ARC Angel?

Many of you reading this newsletter are already members of ARC UK. You may have taken part in a project last year, or maybe it was a few years ago. You've probably got some great memories of your last project!

If you are a current member, you probably know that your membership is valid for three years. During this time, you'll receive updates from ARC UK (including this newsletter!) and you're more than welcome to join in another project.

But what happens at the end of these three years? Is this when your relationship with ARC UK comes to an end? Members who wish to participate in another project, and are still eligible to do so (you need to be under 30!), may renew their membership for another three-year term. If you're no longer in a position to take part in another project, or if you're no longer eligible to do so, you can still keep in touch with ARC UK and continue to support the charity. You can become an ARC Angel!

Membership of ARC Angels costs just £10 for for two years. You will continue to receive regular updates from ARC UK, our newsletter, and invites to all events, and we also plan to arrange an annual dinner. We love to keep in touch with all of our past members and supporters, so we're really excited about the launch of ARC Angels. We have our first members already!

ARC Angels was created with past members in mind, but is open to all supporters of ARC UK. If you are interested in becoming an ARC Angel, or would like to know more, please get in touch with our Secretary, Rebecca Hodgson, at arcuksec@yahoo.co.uk

