

The Reuilly Agreement
Deeper communion and exciting opportunities for ministry and mission

Reverend Christine Bloomfield and Catherine Emezie, Reader in training attended a three day meeting in Lyon with the Eglise Unie de France et l'Eglise d'Angleterre (Diocese en Europe) from 2nd to 4th March 2018. It was an exciting weekend as we met to share our past and present experiences and to look for a way forward to a greater and closer visible unity, ministry and mission.

The Anglican priest, Ben Harding, and the reformed ministers Pierre Blanzat (see photo below) and Vera Ezumah represented Lyon, and other pastors came from around France. Our archdeacon, Meurig Williams, was present as were the co-chairs of the Reuilly contact group, Christian Kreiger also vice president of UEPAL and the right Reverend Bishop Stroyan, Bishop of Warwick in the diocese of Coventry. We were also blessed when the Presidente de l'Eglise Uni de France, Emmanuelle Seybolt, joined us.

Our time together was punctuated with Bible study, praise and prayer.

Catherine and I presented our past and present activities celebrating the last 18 years during which we have had meaningful and joyful collaboration with both the Protestant Church of Bischheim, Saint Mathieu and Horbourg Wihr. Our good relationship with Christian Albacher (President of UEPAL) and Christian Kreiger are solid and we have had sustained representation in the Council of European Churches.

It was uplifting to see a well-established and still growing collaboration between the churches in Lyon with joint projects including a French/ English Alpha course.

There is a real desire for the Reuilly agreement to bear fruit on the ground and there are many opportunities and possibilities to witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ both in our churches and our cities.

Towards the end of the meetings we divided into groups to explore the following questions:

1) How can the fact that we speak different languages be a strength?

- Anglican churches can act as a bridge for English speaking newcomers who are not Anglican but who pass through Anglican churches as they look for a home church.
- Deepen the theology of Christian hospitality as we learn to live and rejoice in a shared unity and diversity.
- Respect the spiritual and personal importance of the language in which we pray.
- Move from weakness of not understanding to the strength of understanding.
- Learn to listen and to leave room for the Spirit.
- Keep and celebrate our own identity while seeking openings to inclusive ministry – perhaps through young people.
- Deepen our calling to unity so as to grow in acceptance and to value being together. Be open to stepping out of our comfort zones while respecting the comfort zones of others.
- Use creative forms of worship using silence, space and movement.

2) What are the pillars of our respective Churches, and how can we share and learn from them?

Anglican

- The liturgy of Common Worship and the many ways it can be used. Anglican biblically based liturgy prays what it believes and offers opportunities for creative worship.
- Our experience of living with difference and seeing diversity as a gift. This is particularly the case on the Diocese in Europe as our churches are multi cultural, multi lingual, multi everything!
- Our experience of being a bridge church between Catholics and Protestants. We are good at being bridges.

Protestant

- Solid Biblical foundation and knowledge.
- The gift of being a church which is organised and grows from the base.
- Catechism and teaching.

What is our witness?

- Our witness is to all Christian people and to the people of our cities who are not of the Church.
- Visible work on the ground where there is need in our city. This could be with the homeless, the hungry, the elderly, the young, refugees.
- Multiple experiences of shared ministry, pastoral care, mission while seeking our own specification. We need to pray to perceive God's particular call to his churches in the place that we are.
- We can dare to "think big" and to keep the vision of the Kingdom of Heaven before us.
- The possibilities of common training should be explored. Could Anglicans who are for the most part formed ecumenically, join the CPLR (formation continue des pasteurs)

What can the Anglicans offer?

- Explore chaplaincy ministry. The French state requires a university certificate for prison and hospital chaplains.
- Possibility for Anglican clergy, readers and other lay members to join in specific local university courses and other pastoral training. (This has been done in the past and contact made about future collaboration).
- Encourage our children and youth to grow together: sharing, learning and worshipping together (The UEPAL has very good material for the Catechism).
- Preach in each other's churches
- Envisage the possibility of an Anglican priest working within a protestant parish.

Meetings ended on the Saturday evening and we enjoyed a meal in the beautiful historic city. On Sunday 500 people met to worship in the Protestant Temple. It was an uplifting service, a splendid witness to unity and a great celebration of diversity. The service went smoothly from French to English and from English to French and enabled all to participate in word, music movement and dance.

We were greatly encouraged by all that we learnt and experienced and we both feel that there is great promise for the future.

Christine Bloomfield and Catherine Emezie