

Restoring our unity

The sermon given by Mrs Mary Kidd, a Methodist Local Preacher as well as a member of the St Margaret's choir and congregation, on 25 January 2023, which fell within the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. The readings were: Isaiah 9.1-4; 1 Corinthians 1.10-18; Matthew 4.12-23



Have you ever noticed, the older you get the clearer your earliest memories appear to become?

Today is the Sunday that comes during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. Sheila kindly invited me to give the homily this morning: I can't think why, except maybe because I belong to two denominations.

In recent years maybe we haven't given much importance to the Week of Christian Unity here in Rosyth, but let me share with you one of my earliest memories going back 40 years, long before the closure of the Naval Base and St Margaret's Church at the Base. The idea of Local Ecumenical Partnership was then not even in our everyday vocabulary. Our new Methodist minister, Malcolm Trew, wanted to do 'something a bit different' to spark the imagination of all churchgoers in Rosyth. He came up with the idea of inviting all the Rosyth clergy to come here on the Sunday afternoon to form a panel called the 'Brains Trust' with a congregation made up of local worshippers who asked

the questions and then awaited a reply from the front. I had been invited to chair the meeting, collate the questions and see fair play. The clergy sat here at the front - I can remember them to this day - Archie Young, pastor of the Baptist Church, Rev Stanley Scoular of the Parish Church, and, Father Daniel Boyle from St John and St Columba's. The Naval Base churches were represented by the Free Church Chaplain, Marcus Robinson, well-known for his sense of Welsh humour and strong singing voice ('Taff the Laff!').

Today I can remember only one of the questions. "When I get to heaven what will be your first question to St Peter at the gate?" The answer was, and I can't remember who said it, "Oh, God, have I made it?"!

On other years during the late 80s we had a Songs of Praise at St Margaret's Church with the Royal Marine Band, and one at this church.

Why is church unity important?

When a team comes together, they can succeed together as a team. Unity is key and it's essential to get everyone in a team moving in the right direction.

It's rare though, because bringing people together can be difficult due to personal agendas, egos, politics, power struggles and negativity.

Unity happens when leaders are committed to and engaged in moving in the process of building a united, winning team.





In the Millennium we became the first Local Ecumenical Partnership between a Methodist Church and a Scottish Episcopal Church in Scotland. Now, in 2023, we are wondering how and why we can restore unity in our partnership, and we await decisions made by our leaders.

My life of faith has been so enriched over the years by fellowship with people across the so-called denominational boundaries. It's how I became involved with the World Day of Prayer, a world-wide ecumenical movement. It's a great feeling to meet with the Scottish National Committee with over 16 denominations represented. And there was our beloved Wednesday Fellowship, though sadly this had to cease as covid spread across Britain.

Cardinal Suenens, a cardinal of the last century, oversaw a charismatic renewal within the church. He perceived a revival and a return to the Acts of the Apostles which had always been his dream. He said "We have to encounter one another to know one another, and to know one another we have to love one another to unite. May there be many other 'encountering' opportunities."

Cardinal Suenens was also an excellent meteorologist. Every morning, as day dawned, he could predict the weather for later that day. One of his quotations he regularly used was "If we are powerless to change the wind, we can at least adjust our sails"!

Weather, we know, was of great importance in early NT times to those travelling – we hear regularly of St Paul's travels. While he was travelling he was also writing letters to various young churches who were struggling to hold it together. He wrote to the Corinthians, Galatians, Thessalonians, Ephesians, and Philippians and so on.

We, at Rosyth, might well have welcomed a letter from him, to help and guide us to restore our unity within our partnership with Methodist friends, so please allow me to read to you seven verses from Paul's letter to the Rosythians.

1. Dear friends, observe for yourselves that uniformity does not exist in nature, but only in the minds of men and women.
2. Recognise that God loves diversity, for diversity is the key to survival in all that is alive. Therefore celebrate your differences.
3. Reflect on your different ways and see how they can bring strength to all who are living in his service.
4. Waste no time on things which may bring you negativity, but build upon the same foundations of the many good things that prevail amongst us.
5. Be confident that, in God's sight, your individuality makes a good servant but is a poor master.
6. Therefore put your ways to good effect and be united only in Christ and in your faith in his teaching, that you may prosper according to God's holy will.
7. And may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God, be with your spirit, my brothers and sisters.

Amen.

The picture by Wylylly Suhendra was made available on the Unsplash platform.