

## **“May They All Be One ...”**

God is in a hurry – of that I’m convinced. Maybe it’s because of the state of the world. If it’s true, the 21st anniversary of the Anglican Methodist Covenant is more important and urgent than ever. According to the prayer of Jesus in John’s Gospel (17.21-3), God has already given both the divine glory, and with it, the unity (divine and human) to his Church. The wording is unmistakable, and God the Father always hears the prayers of the Son. So, if there is a ‘blockage’, it’s entirely on our side.

With the Incarnation of God amongst us, a new vision and, with it, a new phrase entered our language and our world: **each other**. ‘Each other’ occurs again and again in the letters of the New Testament: “Bear each other’s burdens”, “forgive each other”, “encourage each other”... on and on it goes, and it’s all summed up in the ‘legacy’ of Jesus: “Love one another as I have loved you” John 13.34.

“Each other”, you might say, is in the Church’s DNA. The golden rule is this: How can we draw nearer to God unless we draw nearer to one another? The converse is true: How can we draw nearer to each other unless we draw nearer to God? God and ‘each other’ are the heart of the Church, and “each other” includes everyone.

If we say “We’re already united in spirit”, or “We’re alright as we are”, or “We’re worried we might be ‘taken over’ and all end up the same”, we must ask the Holy Spirit to help us lose our fears and to see more clearly our brothers and sisters in the other Churches.

The test of our unity can be found in the last phrase of the prayer of Jesus: “May they be one ... that the world may believe”. That, it seems, is the one and only test. It’s what God has set his heart on; therefore it will happen. But God is in a hurry, because the world’s need of the Gospel is greater than ever.

A couple of suggestions for all the churches: Why not re-start the ecumenical house groups in Ludlow for Lent 2025? Can we all include each other’s churches in our intercessions each, or most, Sundays?

***Rev Dr Neil Richardson***