

Prayer and Liturgy Opportunities

Occasions such as the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity (January), National Marriage Week (February), Women's World Day of Prayer (March), and National Parents' Week (October) are useful opportunities to organise inclusive services and celebrations.

Churches Together have local networks across the countries (CYTUN in Wales) that organise joint prayer or social action activities. Check the website for contact details.

Try to get together annually with members of other local Christian churches at the local pub for a meal.

Encourage home-based prayer, reflection and social groups. Many family-centred organisations have an ecumenical dimension eg Marriage Encounter, Teams of Our Lady, Passionist Family Groups.

God our Father,
you achieve your purpose through love.
Look not on the sin
which divides us
but on the love you have given us
for one another;
may it be a reflection
of your love for us,
so that in love
we may be drawn nearer to you,
and be used for
the greater unity of your Kingdom.
We ask this
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, that they may be one. As you, father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. John 17:20-21

More information and resources available at:

[www.everybodyswelcome.org.uk/
dualbelonging.html](http://www.everybodyswelcome.org.uk/dualbelonging.html)

For local information please contact:



This leaflet is one of a series devised to assist parishes to become more welcoming, friendly and family-sensitive.

For further information contact:

Marriage and Family Life Project Office, CBCEW
39 Eccleston Square, London, SW1V 1BX

Email: everybodyswelcome@celebratingfamily.org.uk



what is life like if you
and your family *share*
your Christian
faith within two
different
Church
traditions?

...and what can your
parish families do to
make a difference?

*"You live in your marriages the hopes
and the difficulties of the path to
Christian unity"*
(John Paul II, York, 1982)

What is Life Like?

'We sometimes feel we are always expected to be the token ecumenical representatives.'

'It is hard work when we try to take part in the life of both our churches. We cannot be together in both all the time.'

'Why are we accepted more as a family in our other Christian community than we are here in our Catholic parish?'

'Sometimes I seem to be treated as a second-class Christian in my partner's Catholic church.'

'Our children want to be confirmed, but they are delaying because they do not want to choose one denomination over the other.'

'Sometimes we go to my church, sometimes we go to her church, but we do not feel either is our church.'

'Both our clergy and communities could get together at our wedding, and for the baptisms of our children.'

'Sharing communion on occasions has had a huge positive impact on our relationship.'

'We feel enriched as a family by our experiences within both our churches.'

'Being close creates difficulties but also opportunities – we picture ourselves walking from our different starting points up the mountain, becoming closer to each other the closer we draw to the summit, to God.'

Challenges for Parishes

People in interchurch families have impressive amounts of loyalty – to their denominations, to their spouses, to their children and to their wider families and communities. They long for their parishes to welcome, encourage and affirm the shared experience and gifts of the *whole* family.

Language is important. Technical terms and acronyms are best avoided unless they are explained. Take care when using 'Catholic' – do you sometimes actually mean 'Christian'? The term 'non-Catholic' usually offends.

Interchurch family life is not only a challenge but an opportunity – for both denominations. It's important to work together to explore this.

What opportunities exist for joint marriage preparation, house groups, prayer groups? When and how can both spouses and children become more involved in the life and worship of both Christian communities?

Offer more information about Catholic teaching on Holy Communion, explain what it means and the range of experience eg full; partial. Talk about the times when a 'grave and pressing need' to share the Eucharist occurs – see One Bread One Body para 106.

Design pastoral care for the whole family and not just for the Catholic members.

'We want to be recognised for what we are rather than for what we are not.'

Useful Resources

Books:

Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms on Ecumenism. Pontifical Council for the Promotion of Christian Unity, 1993
www.vatican.va

Mixed Marriages: A Revised Directory. Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, 1990
see www.catholic-ew.org.uk

One Bread One Body: A teaching document on the Eucharist. Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, 1998

Churches Together in Marriage: Pastoral Care of Interchurch Families. Churches Together in England / CYTUN, 1994

May my husband/wife/parent/child ever receive Holy Communion with me? How? National Board of Catholic Women, [n.d.]

How to Survive being Married to a Catholic. Michael Henesy & Rosemary Gallagher, Redemptorist Publications, 2001

Carefully Prepared; an ecumenical guide for marriage preparation. Available from Churches Together in England

Support groups:

Association of Interchurch Families, Bastille Court, 2 Paris Gardens, London SE1 8ND
Tel: 020 7654 7251 or
email info@interchurchfamilies.org.uk

Websites:

www.interchurchfamilies.org
www.churches-together.org.uk
www.ctbi.org.uk
www.cytun.org.uk
www.churchesandfamilies.org