

# ALCUI NEWS

NEWS AND VIEWS FROM SAINT ALCUIN OF YORK  
THE ENGLISH-SPEAKING CHURCH IN TOURAINÉ

## 500 YEARS OF REFORM

**O**N WHAT WAS TO BECOME ONE OF THE MOST MOMENTOUS DAYS IN THE LIFE OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH, IT WAS ON 31ST OCTOBER 1517 that monk and university lecturer, Martin Luther, published his ninety-five theses on the reform of the Church.



Churches, Catholic and Protestant, have much changed, sadly the rupture continues today. This may be why, in spite of all the gains, that the Archbishops of Canterbury and York said recently that the Reformation was something to be regretted.

However, we can thank God that, although the Church is still divided, old suspicions are dying and there is growing co-operation between different confessions.

In this edition of *AlcuiNews* (pages 4, 5, 6 & 8) we give some examples of this, whilst continuing our earnest prayer for a continued growing together of the Churches at all levels,

The Catholic Church, to say the least, was unimpressed, branded Luther a heretic and so the Reformation began.

Although five centuries have passed and the

local, national and world-wide.

Jesus prayed that we all may be one. Let that be our prayer – and our task – too.

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## WHO'S WHO

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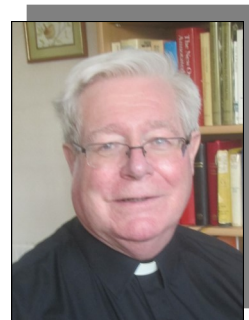
## HEROES OF THE FAITH

### Martin Luther Reformer

Martin Luther was born in 1483 at Eisleben in Saxony and educated at the cathedral school in Magdeburg and the university in Erfurt. He joined an order of Augustinian hermits there and was ordained priest in 1507, becoming a lecturer in the university at Wittenberg. He became vicar of his Order in 1515, having charge of a dozen monasteries. His Christian faith began to take on a new shape, with his increasing dissatisfaction with the worship and order of the Church. He became convinced that the gospels taught that humanity is saved by faith and not by works, finding support in the writings of St Augustine of Hippo. He refuted the teaching of the Letter of James, calling it 'an epistle of straw'. Martin sought to debate the whole matter by posting ninety-five theses or propositions on the door of the Castle Church in Wittenburg on this day in the year 1517. The hierarchy chose to see it as a direct attack on the Church, which forced Martin into open rebellion. The Protestant Reformation spread throughout Germany and then Europe, many seeing it as liberation from a Church that held them in fear rather than love. Martin Luther died in 1546, having effected a renaissance in the Church, both Protestant and Catholic.



## FR JOHN WRITES



### *Thy Kingdom come*

ONE OF THE IMPORTANT THINGS IN THE LIFE OF A PARISH PRIEST IS FORWARD PLANNING. As far as St Alcuin's is concerned, this means especially the service sheets—sometimes ready a month in advance.

Early preparation is particularly the case with *AlcuiNews*. This issue which covers the season to Christmas and beyond started its life in July! Planning is very important: a badly prepared church service is hardly the best thing to bring people closer to God.

But there is a danger in too much planning: there is the temptation of thinking we ourselves control our destiny. But none of us can know what the future holds. It is entirely in God's hands. We forget that at our peril.

The season of Advent will be on us quicker than we realise. It is the time which we think of principally as preparation for God's intervention in the world as a tiny baby. But Advent starts out by thinking of a quite different coming—God's coming in judgement at the end of time. We are reminded powerfully that God is in control of time, our futures.

This doesn't mean, of course, that we are to do nothing because God is in control, like the mother I heard of many years ago who let her small children play near a very busy main road "because God will look after them". Far from it: God calls us to act responsibly and prepare for our future carefully.

But, at the end of the day, it is his future we are preparing for. He may have unexpected plans for us.

After all, our goal is his reign, his kingdom.

*Father John*

## AT THE HEART OF OUR LIFE

### THE EUCCHARIST



7.00 pm  
on the 1st Sunday of the Month  
in the Protestant Temple  
32 rue de la Préfecture, Tours  
(tram: Nationale; bus: Gare Vinci)

11.00 am  
with Junior Church  
on the 4th Sunday of the Month  
in the Parish Church of St Michel  
Le Bourg, Savigny-en-Véron

## THE ST ALCUIN CALENDAR

### *Our worship in the coming months*

October	1st	Harvest	7.00 pm	Sung Eucharist	Tours
	22nd	Trinity 19	11.00 am	Sung Eucharist	Savigny
November	5th	All Saints	7.00 pm	Sung Eucharist	Tours
	26th	Christ the King	11.00 am	Sung Eucharist	Savigny
December	3rd	Advent 1	7.00 pm	Sung Eucharist	Tours
	24th	Advent 4	11.00 am	Sung Eucharist	Savigny
January	7th	Epiphany	7.00 pm	Sung Eucharist	Tours
	28th	Epiphany 4	11.00 am	Sung Eucharist	Savigny



# WEDDING BELLS

**A** LREADY IN A CIVIL PARTNERSHIP, YOUNG ENGINEERS ADRIEN MULLER AND RACHEL WELLAND DECIDED TO CEMENT THEIR RELATIONSHIP WITH A CHURCH OF ENGLAND WEDDING IN AUGUST. They chose to make their vows in the historic church of Ste Julitte, St Cyr-sur-Loire, Adrien's home town.

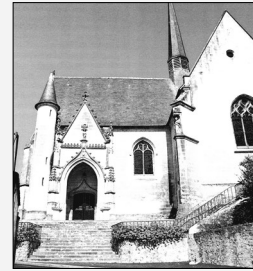


The Bach piece 'Jesu, joy of man's desiring' was included in true English fashion and, appropriately, the last hymn was "One more step along the world I go" showing Rachel and Adrien's commitment to each other in their future life together

Fortunately, in spite of a lack of sun, the weather remained dry for the couple, who now live in Oxfordshire.

The church was full with family and friends from both sides of the channel for the service in which the music was provided by our own Tours organist, Alix Devienne.

After the service the wedding party went to the Chateau de Bidaudières at Vouvray for the *vin d'honneur* – Vouvray, of course, but also glasses of Pimms (so British!).



Having no church premises of our own, we are reliant on the generosity of others for our worship.

This occasion was no exception and we are most grateful to the Archbishop of Tours and père Thibaut Bruère for letting us use the beautiful church of Ste Julitte.

Particular kindness was shown to us by the ladies of the parish, who were unstinting in their welcome.

## BEFORE THE THRONE OF GRACE

**T**HREE READINGS FROM SCRIPTURE STAND AT THE HEART OF THE FIRST PART OF EACH EUCHARIST WE CELEBRATE. We are given these, not as historical texts, but as teaching for our daily lives. These are to set the scene, and the motive, for our thanksgiving over bread and wine and sharing Holy Communion together.

Between the two, we are called to make our response first in reciting together the great traditional statement of belief, the Nicene Creed, and then by showing our concern for others in the Prayers of Intercession.

Usually at St Alcuin's we have as the framework to our prayers one of the templates provided by the Church of England in Common Worship.

But these are only templates. It is rare that they are fully-fledged prayers, complete in themselves.

The generalised concerns are fleshed out by praying for particular concerns: the wider Church, secular authorities, particular needs.

We also like to mention for people of our own community at the time of their birthdays, so that everyone is individually prayed for at least once in the year.

Mind).

Some churches have places where you can write the names of those you would like prayed for. We can't do that. Without our own building, we have to rely on word of mouth.

It is important that we make this time of prayer together our own, expressing *our* concerns.

So that we can do this, we make our heartfelt plea for you, whether you are near

or far, to let Fr John know of those who you would like prayed for, so that they can be the concern of us all as we seek to make our response to the word of God in the scriptures.



Amongst our concerns in the intercessions are individuals with particular needs. They may be sick, or housebound. And we also commend the departed to God's mercy, both when they have just died and at their anniversary (Year's

# A CATHOLIC PICKS UP THE ANGLICAN BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER

A WEATHERED AND WORN PRAYER BOOK REVEALS A SPIRITUAL LIFE WELL LIVED

by Jeffrey Essmann

**EVER SINCE I FIRST LEARNED THE HAIL MARY, I HAVE LOVED PRAYER. Perhaps Sister taught us the Glory Be first. It's shorter, more repetitious; if you know the sign of the cross, you're halfway there.**

But it's the Hail Mary I remember, specifically the pleasure of the word *amongst*. It was the mystical heart of the prayer for me—at least when I was six. I also loved the *hallowed* in the Our Father, and that *ignominious* lurked somewhere among the stations of the cross.

I loved the heightened language of prayer. As I grew older and my prayer matured, I loved the place to which the heightened language brought me, a place where I felt transfigured, fed, guided, and brought closer to God. I've stayed, with greater or lesser success, as close as possible to this place throughout my life. I've filled a timeless space with my life story. I have a history in prayer.

For over 30 years, I've prayed the daily office in the Book of Common Prayer used in the Church of England (the Episcopal Church here in the United States).

One of the nice things about the Church of England is that it knows good English when it hears it, and I love the cool, solid voice of Episcopal prayer. I need God's mercy, but I also need God's elegance.

In the 1980s, when I bought my first copy of the prayer book at a New York City Catholic bookstore in the Village, I was initially drawn to its quiet, Protestant good taste: an unassuming volume with a cover of fine-grain black leather, gilt page edges, and three sturdy black ribbons.

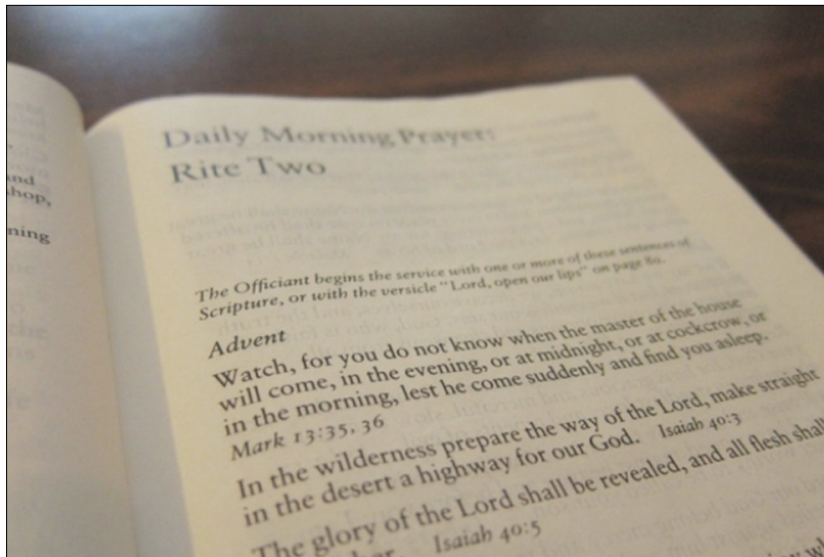
It was love at first sight ... and smell. That firm, clean smell of fresh leather would, I thought, be like praying inside a new car.

Time has taken its toll. I noticed a few weeks ago that decades of my thumb and forefinger turning the pages and depositing grains of New York grime has colored them mustard yellow at the lower edges and corners. There are random stains, including a partial fingerprint made in coffee. The bottom edges are so frayed and tattered, they seem more pirate map than prayer book.

I decided I should retire it before it dis-

solved in my hand, so I went to the publisher's website and ordered a nearly ex-

about cosmic transparency)—bear wrinkles largely absent from their neighbors.



And I seem to have accidentally dog-eared Psalm 22, the psalm Jesus prayed on the cross: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" There's a strange pinch in the paper at Psalm 74, a rippled crimp near the top of the page, as if I'd been gripping it too tightly. It's an affliction psalm that starts off "O God, why have you utterly cast us off?" and pretty much goes downhill from there. There's a pretty bit toward the middle ("Yours is the day,

act replica. But before I put the old one on the shelf, I wanted to have one more walk through it. I wondered if there were pages that said something about me, hinting at who I was and what I was doing as I moved among them day after day. Would the stains and fingerprints, the ragged edges, the creased pages, the torn ones reveal a spiritual history, an archeology of my prayer?

The pages—once crisp, translucent onion skin—have faded to pale ivory and now seem nearly damp to the touch. The gilded edges struggle on to little avail. Held in the light, they still manage a faint shimmer, but it's the luster of a bottle blonde. And while the leather smell is long gone, there simmers now among the pages something a little musty and sweet. When I dig my nose right in, I am transported for a moment back to my grandmother's house: There is a mantle clock ticking on the sideboard. There are the African violets.

One of the most distressed sections of the book is the Psalter. The pages of some of my favorite Psalms—2 (where God laughs), 45 (so wri-erly), and 139 (all

yours also the night; you established the moon and the sun."), but you have to slog through a lot of misery to get to it: defiled holy places, innumerable adversaries, not a prophet to be seen. Toward the end, in the don't-just-sit-there-do-something section, the psalmist makes a rather pointed reference to the covenant, and in case that doesn't work, he reminds God that "fools revile you all day long." The marvelous thing about Psalms, of course, is the book's wide emotional range, which makes it the most human book in the Bible. There is, they say, a psalm for every mood. And by God's grace I'm very rarely in the mood corresponding to Psalm 74.

But clearly there was a time when I was in a mood that had me gripping the page. I wondered if Psalm 74 was part of the cycle during the year and a half I was unemployed during the recession—easily the most frightening, most alienated, most unhinged time of my life. Prayer in general, and the office in particular, took on a deeper resonance. In prayer I could remember the things I was grateful for: the love and support of my friends and



family, sustained hope, and a greater sense of God's presence in a life that was slowly hollowing out. Prayer was also the place where I could allow myself to be as frightened as I really was. (I've always loved the agony in the garden because Jesus is so human in it, so afraid.) And the office gave my day markers: signposts in the abyss of time that stretched before me every morning, buoys in the stream of anxiety that carried me through the day, an undercurrent running even beneath my prayer. Small wonder there was a crease by Christ's last words on the cross.

But I was gripping Psalm 74. There was a folding and clenching going on inside me at the time, too, a caving in. Something in me was cowering in the face of life because it was simply too empty and painful.

There are no creases and no stains on the pages containing Psalms 113, 114, and the first chunk of 115. But toward the bottom, tucked into the fold where the two pages meet, I noticed a small eyelash, the tips of its curve pointing to the first line of 114: "Hallelujah! When Israel came out of Egypt ...". I'm old enough that I imagine random bits of me fall off with some regularity, but still I wondered how the eyelash landed on this page. Maybe I was rubbing my eye. (If the psalm was part of evening prayer, I'd have just gotten home from the office; my eyes would be tired.) Maybe I closed my eyes in prayer and it fell out. Maybe I was crying.

And there are certainly weep-worthy moments in these psalms—at least in 113 and 114 (115 is pretty much a you're-so-much-better-than-an-idol psalm). Psalm 113 is a wonderful ode to God's power and kindness: five verses that fairly rattle in praise of his majesty, and then three tender couplets about how much he loves the lowly. The final verse is "He makes the woman of a childless house to be a joyful mother of children," and just about every time I read it, I get tears in my eyes. And when you have a sense of your own redemption, you're ready for Psalm 114: pure, earth-shattering praise and the delirium of newfound freedom—with a catch. The follow-up to the opening "Hallelujah! When Israel came out of Egypt ..." is "Judah became God's sanctuary/and Israel his dominion." In other words, we were freed, but we were also claimed. We're God's now. Our freedom is the freedom of God, the freedom to be holy.

For four verses, faced with God's liberating presence, the earth itself trembles. Mountains leap, the sea withdraws, rivers change their course. It's at the final verse, praising the God "who turned the hard rock into a pool of water/and flint-stone into a flowing spring" that my own waterworks begin. It's when the psalm moves to the desert, to the hard rock at the heart of me, and recounts how God, whose mercy is even more dizzying than his freedom, turned it to a pool of water, a flowing spring, that my joy and gratitude bring me to tears.

There's a tiny rip near the bottom of one of the pages in evening prayer, and I think it's there because I was in such a



hurry to get to the prayer on that page, one of my favorites: O Gracious Light, or, in the original Greek, *Phos hilaron*, a Christian hymn going back to at least the third century. *Phos* is "light"; and *hilaron* is a marvelously flexible little adjective. "Gracious light" can also be "cheerful light," "joyous light," "gentle light" and, my favorite, "gladsome light." ("Giddy" would work, too.) Whatever it is, it's to be said by someone smiling and a little stunned in the sunset glow of vespers.

I live across the street from The Cloisters museum, an extraordinary collection of medieval art on the northern end of Manhattan. I ran over there on an impulse late one November afternoon—a touch of cabin fever, but I also needed to pray—and headed for the stained glass gallery. The room faces west, and the setting sun was pushing a glowing red-gold through the pieces of glass, the fragments of angels, the

Virgins. Golden rose tones were easing through the yellows and blues and rubies, turning the room soft and mystical with color. People tend to whisper at The Cloisters, but suddenly no one was saying anything at all. It had all become too beautiful. I stood before my favorite window (one that, for some reason, I consider Cistercian), and prayed the *Phos hilaron*: "O gracious Light, pure brightness of the everliving Father in heaven, O Jesus Christ, holy and blessed ..."

*Phos hilaron* is one of the oldest hymns in the church and the first to approach our own sense of what a hymn should be. It's rhythmic; it has verses. St. Basil wrote about it in the fourth century—and even then, he says, it was very, very old. He tells of a ritual at the tomb of Christ in Jerusalem, where there was a lamp kept perpetually lit. Christians would gather to pray at the tomb, and at the end of their prayer they would sing *Phos hilaron*. Then a single candle would be lit from the lamp and carried out of the tomb into the world: the light of the resurrection. So, often as I say this prayer, I'll picture myself in the tomb, an image heavily influenced by John's description of it in his Easter account (the "face cloth rolled up in a place by itself" is just in the corner of my eye as I pray), and feel its cool silence wrap around me as I praise the Living Word: "You are worthy at all times to be praised by happy voices/O Son of God, O Giver of life/and to be glorified through all worlds."

I like that evening prayer should begin with a few moments at the very heart of Christian mystery, at the source and goal of all prayer. I like to be reminded that I'm still waiting in the empty tomb, wanting an angel to tell me what happened, wanting to carry that strange, gracious light into the world.

And tonight, although I've been using the new prayer book for several weeks now, it finally became mine. As I turned a page during evening prayer, I inadvertently bent it slightly. Then, smoothing it out, I noticed a tiny clump of something (from my fingernail?) lodged near the gilding. At first I tried to pick it off, but then smiled and let it be. Another life of prayer had begun.

*This article appeared in the March 2016 issue of U.S. Catholic (Vol. 81, No. 3, pages 29-31)*

# THAT THEY ALL MAY BE ONE

- Jesus Christ

**IF WE WERE TO BE TRANSPORTED BACK TO THE CHURCH OF A HUNDRED YEARS AGO, WE WOULD BE MORE SURPRISED THAN WE WOULD EXPECT AT HOW DIFFERENT IT WAS FROM TODAY.** Granted, we would recognise the familiar Book of Common Prayer services which still retain much of their popularity.

Apart from the style of worship, there was a very different attitude—one of great suspicion—to Christians of other traditions. It would have to be a very special occasion even to enter one of their church buildings.

A notable exception was actually in Tours when the local Church of England congregation started a ministry to French Huguenots and, when they had their own pastor, invited them to share their building. After the English congregation died out (having discovered that it is warmer on the Côte d'Azur than in the Touraine) it became solely the Temple of the Eglise réformée.

Ecumenism repeated itself there in the 1920s because the Reformed pastor also celebrated Anglican style services in English.

Co-operation between the Churches has moved on so fast, that it, thankfully, is considered normal.

There is such a close relationship between the Church of England and the Roman Catholic Church in France that at this year's Synod, there were more Catholic bishops than Anglican.

Ecumenism has changed the face of the local Church in the past century: it has been a remarkable journey.

Thankfully, this has not just been a co-operation of friendliness, but there has also been a concerted attempt at a central level to discuss our differences and try to resolve them.

Fifty years ago the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC) was established. Since then

our two Churches, the Reuilly Declaration calls for working together beyond mere friendliness.

But not all has been positive. Proposals for the union of the Church of England and the British Methodist Church failed, scuppered largely by Anglo-Catholics over the subject of orders. More recently, the ordination of women as priests and bishops has not helped progress with the Roman Catholic Church.

In spite of problems the direction of travel continues in the right direction towards its goal. This is not just for individual Christians to be in friendly dialogue together. It is to recognise the theological strengths of all four great Christian confessions—Catholic, Orthodox, Anglican and Protestant—and to see what we can learn from them as we draw together as Our Lord wills.

ARC France has also done some important work. Two years ago they produced a document aimed at encouraging saying Morning and Evening Prayer together and the Church of England services are being translated into French to facilitate this.

Relations with the Eglise réformée in France are also good. An accord between

However, it is not something which we can leave on automatic pilot. We all have a part to play. Supporting ecumenical services and events is a good start. Even more we can respond to invitations to experience the liturgy of Christians of those who worship God in ways we are not used to.

*"Ut unum sint."*



## O LORD, OPEN THOU OUR LIPS

**WE ARE VERY DELIGHTED THAT A NUMBER OF PEOPLE, NOT ONLY FROM ST ALCUIN'S, HAVE EXPRESSED AN INTEREST IN BEING PART OF A CHOIR TO SING CHURCH OF ENGLAND SERVICES, NOTABLY EVENSONG.**

Choral Evensong is rapidly growing in popularity and is regularly sung, not only in Anglican churches and cathedrals, but also in those of other denominations, for example the Church of Scotland cathedral in Glasgow and the Lutheran cathedral in Berlin. Indeed, earlier this year it was even sung in St Peter's in Rome.

This will probably be a small group and we are not expecting to emulate anything like cathedral standard.



Rather we are coming together to express our faith through the ministry of music—and, of course, enjoy ourselves at the same time. And already this promises to be ecumenical, which is in the happy spirit of the age.

Would you, or someone you know like to join us? Just have a word with Fr John or one of our churchwardens. You will find their contact details are on page 2.

# FOR OUR YOUNGER READERS

## NEW TESTAMENT WORDSEARCH

M P H I L I P P I A N S S I R  
C A C T S N A I S E H P E O P  
O N T E D U J B Y H T O M I T  
L O T T M E A W S E M A J A H  
O M W J H W C V O P N H X P E  
S E S E G E K U L S E L A H S  
S L W S O K W J S C O T T E S  
I I E U D M D N O O P M E W A  
A H R S X G A B Q H W N M R L  
N P B O M I O K U T N O H C O  
S E E W T P R A C W T P O D N  
Z H H A U A Q M O Q S I E M I  
B W L Q M R U Z X U R W T B A  
A A L N O I T A L E V E R U N  
G I Y C O R I N T H I A N S S

See if you can find the names of 20 of the books of the New Testament. We've made a list to help you.

Matthew; Mark; Luke; John; Acts; Romans;  
Corinthians; Galatians; Ephesians;  
Philippians; Colossians; Thessalonians;  
Timothy; Titus; Philemon; Hebrews; James;  
Peter; Jude; Revelation



*No crossword this time – we've exhausted our supply!*

## A RECIPE FROM THE GOOD BOOK

*How many of you know what the following ingredients are without having to check up on the biblical references? If you do need to check them it may be advisable to look at more than one translation as not all of them translate the same.*

### Ingredients

1. 250g Judges 5.25
2. 250g Jeremiah 6.20
3. 1 tablespoon 1 Samuel 14.25
4. 3 of Jeremiah 17.11
5. 250g 1 Samuel 30.12
6. 250g Nahum 3.12 (chopped)
7. 50g Numbers 17.8 (blanched and chopped)



8. 500g 1 Kings 4.22
9. Season with 2 Chronicles 9.9
10. A pinch of Leviticus 2.13
11. A teaspoonful of Amos 4.5
12. 3 tablespoons of Judges 4.19

*Note: Leaven probably means baking powder*

### Method

Beat 1, 2 and 3 to a cream. Add 4 one at a time still beating. Then add 5, 6 and 7 and beat again. Add 8, 9, 10 and 11, having previously mixed them. Then add 12. Bake in a low oven for 1½ hours.

*Why not have a go at making this and then bring it along to our Savigny Eucharist on 26th November or Tours Eucharist on 3rd December?*



# GROWING TOGETHER

## Some delights of the ecumenical journey

*"The path toward Christian unity can't be found isolated in a laboratory hashing out theological differences, but rather by walking together on a common journey,"* Pope Francis, at his visit to the Anglican church in Rome in February this year.



*Laughter in the choir: a light-hearted moment at the Pope's visit to the Anglican church of All Saints in Rome*



*A building with a proud ecumenical history: first Catholic, then Anglican, now the Tours' Temple of the Eglise réformée where St Alcuin's is made welcome*



*Ecumenical smiles at the inauguration of St Alcuin's*



*Brothers in Christ: Bishop David Hamid with the Archbishop of Tours*

*Practical co-operation. A document published jointly by the Church of England and the French Catholic bishops to encourage shared common prayer*

