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# RURAL ECUMENISM

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Ecumenical Congregations

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# Catch the Vision report to General Assembly

*“Together, making a difference for Christ’s sake.”*

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Bring your tradition's richest store  
Your hymns and rites and cherished  
creeds;  
Explore our vision, pray for more  
Since God delights to meet fresh needs.

Psalms

Richard G Jones: Hymns &  
No. 765

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## ■ Ecumenism:

“...like watching the pubs turn out at night – everyone held arms, because if they didn’t they would collapse into a heap....”

Malcolm Muggeridge (broadcaster and commentator)

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The huge redwood trees in California are the largest living things on earth and the tallest trees in the world. Some are over 2,500 years old. You would think that trees that large would have a tremendous root system reaching down hundreds of feet into the ground. But no, redwoods have a very shallow root system. The roots of these trees are, however, intertwined. They are tied in with each other - interlocked. Thus when the storms come and the winds blow the redwoods still stand.

They support and sustain each other.  
They need each other to survive.

So do we!

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# Ecumenical Principles

- Why should not churches act together in all matters except those in which deep differences of conviction compel them to act separately? (Lund 1952)
  - There is no virtue in doing things together that we ought not to be doing anyway. (Nottingham 1964)
  - We shall do nothing apart that we can do together. (Florence Christian Partnership)
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# PROBLEMS with being a single small rural church.....

- Small buildings
  - Limited facilities
  - Aging congregation
  - Lack of young people
  - Unable to offer variety of programmes
  - Church shopping
  - Finance
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# Ecumenical Dimension – what is it?

- Rural Ecumenism is about **MISSION** not **MAINTENANCE**
- It is **NOT** about preserving Church buildings – or even Church traditions – or about keeping the village parson.
- It **IS** about fulfilling the prayer of our Lord that *“They may all be one.....that the world may believe”* (John 17:21)

*Turning the Sod*

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# Ecumenical Dimension – what is it?

- Christian unity in the village therefore is not an end in itself – it is a necessary means to an end, which is the redemption of the whole world.....we want our rural communities to express more fully the nature of the Kingdom of God

*Turning the Sod*

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**Flore United Reformed Church**



**Flore Parish Church**

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# Flore Christian Partnership

## The Covenant

- We, the Anglican and United Reformed Churches in Flore, together with Roman Catholic and other Christians in Flore, believe that it is God's wish for Christians to be truly united and seen by the world to be so.
  - We are thankful for all that we have in common, and for the richness of our diversity, but where our differences are contrary to what God wants for His people in Flore, we repent and ask for His forgiveness and the power of His Holy Spirit to overcome whatever separates us.
  - We therefore commit ourselves to God and to each other, so that we may work together to bring about this visible unity.
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# Flore Christian Partnership

## The Covenant

- We undertake:
    - To explore ways in which worship can be shared so as to deepen our love for God and for each other and for those who do not recognise Jesus Christ as the way to fullness of life for God.
    - To work and pray together in harmony in the name of Christ and to care for the people of our community, in the power of the Holy Spirit.
    - To come together regularly to review the progress of our unity.
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# Flore Christian Partnership

## The Covenant

- ...The Flore Christian Partnership...shall consist of the ordained ministers and elders, lay officials, and people of the said denominations.
  - **Those members of other denominations of the Christian Church who live or come to live in Flore can, if they so wish, be welcomed as associate members with the agreement of the church where they worship and with the encouragement of their denominational authorities as part of the Flore Christian Partnership irrespective of their regular places of worship.**
  - The United Reformed Church Minister will be welcome at the parish church to celebrate the Eucharist according to the rites of the United Reformed Church.....The Anglican Vicar will be welcome at the Flore United Reformed Church to celebrate the Eucharist of the Church of England in Flore United Reformed Church.
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# Flore Christian Partnership

## The Covenant

- We shall endeavour to share our places of worship as fully as possible within the disciplines allowed us. Clergy will still be subject to the disciplines of their own denomination.
  - Future appointments of Ministers shall be made by the appointing authorities **only after consultation** with the other denomination involved in the Covenant.
  - Signed 24<sup>th</sup> January 1993
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**A group of porcupines marooned one bitter cold night in the middle of a large frozen field. There was no way to escape the biting wind. They could not burrow into the ground. As they huddled together to keep warm, their sharp quills began to pinch and hurt. The closer they moved together, the more the pain increased. Some of the animals could not bear the pain and drew apart to sleep alone – in the morning they had frozen to death.**

