

GENERAL INTRODUCTION: A WELCOMING CHURCH

Unit One is founded on two convictions about the Church. The first is that the Church is a welcoming Church not an exclusive brethren. We come to the Church not through any good works of our own but because the Lord has invited us. The grace of God touches our lives and we are on our way to becoming Church. It is useful to reflect on Our Lord's attitude to the wide variety of people who had easy access to him. He got into awful trouble by allowing 'sinners' to have such access to him. All sorts of needy people went to him and found some form of redemption in their contact with him. This quality of Jesus flows into his Church. The only group of people who met another side of Our Lord were the judgemental and the self-righteous.

The other quality of the Church that is relevant to this unit and indeed to all the units of this project, is that she is a pilgrim Church, a Church on a journey. This conviction is crucial for the pastoral ministry of the Church. Unless we do actually believe this, the pastoral ministry is a dead duck. People come to the Church at all stages of their life's journey and she has to accept them where they are, walk with them, encourage the growth and development of what is good and life-giving and the abandonment of the negative and destructive elements in their lives. There must be a genuine pilgrimage of faith here. Again, we can learn a great deal from the way in which Christ handled his disciples - He gradually formed them, stayed with them as they let him down, and eventually entrusted to them the message of the Kingdom.

Bishop Christopher Budd
Chairman
Committee for Marriage and Family Life