

Feast! Celebrating our Life Together'' Multicultural Celebration

Imagine one of those harvest cornucopias spilling over the communion table and sanctuary with fantastic bumper-sized fruit and veg. Some of it is humble and familiar like a cauliflower or a cascade of potatoes, some of it exotic, highly coloured and perhaps a little out of our comfort-zone like a dragon fruit, custard apple or sharon fruit. Now you have a notion of the experience Mike and I had when we attended the Multicultural Celebration at Carrs Lane URC in Birmingham last weekend.

There's no getting round it; Trinity is a white middle class church, our partners are white middle class churches; that is who we attract. What was tremendous about going to this event in Birmingham was to discover (if we hadn't sufficiently known it before) the diversity that is the wider URC.

The theme of the event, introduced by Michael Jagessar, was 'Feast! Celebrating our life Together' and it was indeed a cornucopia of riches. There were two keynote speakers, but the real celebration was felt in the presentations and performances given by groups from churches up and down the country. There was a variety of choirs and singing groups, contributing almost every possible type of music from old school gospel from High Cross URC, gospel rock from Upper Clapton URC, mesmeric repetitive Indian airs from Walthamstow Asian URC, Welsh hymns from Beulah URC, blues and rap as well. Maybe our singing group should go next time?

But it was not just singing. There was thought provoking drama from the home church's Carrs Lane Players and Wimbledon URC, there was Chinese dancing from Bournemouth International Church and baroque classical music performed by a Korean string quartet from New Malden URC.

Then there was the participation! A team of demonstration dancers in full Scottish regalia led a squashed, chaotic and hugely fun semblance of a Scottish knot-work dance which worked around the seating in the church. The thanksgiving offering was in Ghanaian style: to loud African rhythms and singing everyone joined in enthusiastic, chaotic, hilarious, joyful, bum-wiggling, hanky-waving dancing as they moved forward to put their offering in the basket. There was also congregational singing, led by a combined choir, of newly composed hymns. And there was the food! Serving 400+ people was a feat as well as a feast. Suffice to say, it was well organised, plentiful and delicious.

"What about our the art-work?" you may ask. Mike and I were there early to rig the display and it had pride of place at the front of the church. No-one would have missed it. As it didn't fall into any of the judging categories, and didn't comply with the set theme of 'Feast' it was no surprise that it wasn't judged as part of the competition, but it did receive special mention and acclaim. Other artwork was displayed around the church and included some very interesting and individual pieces. Particularly noteworthy, I thought, was a scrapbook submitted by Rotheram URC which had been done, like ours, within worship by the whole church. This was the only other group entry, and particularly exciting because of it. (I shall be pinching some of their ideas!!)

So, yes. Our experience at the Multicultural Event was indeed a rich feast, a melting pot, a 'pilau'. (Michael J. suggested this last metaphor... in the Caribbean this is a dish where anything and everything is chucked into the one pot, and tastes all the better for it!) Do try and join in the next one... you won't regret it.

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