

## Acts For Today

### The Growing Church in the Acts of the Apostles: Jerusalem

'We have to learn what it means to be a church on the margins rather than at the centre, to operate as a movement rather than an institution, and to become unconventional and surprising rather than predictable' (Stuart Murray).

By looking at the church in Acts we can see vital ways in which today's church can become more of a movement rather than an institution. The first Christians saw themselves as agents of the *missio dei*, being sent out by God to live and proclaim his kingdom and Christ's lordship to the world. Therefore, the life of their church was shaped by its mission, rather than the other way round, as we see today!!

The Jerusalem church began when Peter preached to the crowds at Pentecost and 3000 people were added to the embryonic church. We should note that as a community they kept a balance of worship, community and mission (Acts 2:42-47). This can be pictured as a triangle, with each point representing a different aspect:

**UP: Worship**

'they continued to meet together at the temple courts, and broke bread in their homes'

**IN: Community**

'all the believers were together and had everything in common'

**OUT: Mission**

'they gave to everyone as they had need and enjoyed the favour of all the people'

Significantly, as a result of this balance the church grew spontaneously: 'the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved' (47).

Therefore, for growing churches today we need to maintain an emphasis on each one of these three directions in our church life. In terms of our own church, are we achieving such a balance? Where are our strengths, and what aspects do we need to be developing?

*By the Rev Paul Hardingham*

## Lambeth Cross for Brother Roger of Taize

The Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Rowan Williams, has awarded a Lambeth Cross to Brother Roger of Taize for exceptional services to the causes of Christian unity.

Brother Roger founded the Taize community in 1949 with seven brothers, committing themselves to a life of celibacy, the common life, simplicity and reconciliation. Now over 50 years later there are over 100 brothers made up of Catholics, Anglicans and various Protestant traditions from over 25 countries. The community has spread to other parts of the world, with small groups living in poor areas of Africa, Asia, South and North America.

Regardless of location the community's life is always based on prayer three times a day. Since 1958 the community has welcomed young adults in increasing numbers to Taize, drawing up to 6,000 each week in summer months.