

EDITORIAL

In Issue 12 it was intimated that The Revd David Mill would be taking over as Editor of The Record. Unforeseen circumstances have forced him to withdraw, and we are very sorry that this is so. But in the meantime The Revd David M Beckett has agreed to become Editor, as well as taking up his two-year stint as our President. We thank him warmly for shouldering this additional burden, and look forward to his sharing with us his considerable knowledge and experience of matters liturgical.

A letter from one of our members, written to our Secretary, contains food for thought. With his permission we quote this extract: "I'd been asked to conduct worship on one of the islands on the second Sunday after Easter. With the Order of Service which contained a children's address before one lesson, and the offering after the lesson, there was added: "Please feel free to alter any part of the service, the congregation are accustomed to the occasional surprise." Back came the reply: "Thank you for the Order of Service: as you say, not too many surprises!" (I had added two more lessons.) "However, I wonder if you might drop the Apostles' Creed - it has never been a feature of the service here, and it has 'connotations' which although groundless are best avoided for diplomatic reasons!"

It must be assumed that the principal stumbling-block would have been the word 'Catholic' - a term which has come to be viewed with suspicion in some quarters, even though it is found in the Westminster Confession. Despite repeated attempts to explain its meaning, its use in the Creed is still widely misunderstood. The argument that we must not abandon this word, and so let one branch of the Christian Church call itself, without challenge, the Church, seems to cut no ice whatsoever. In the popular imagination, Catholic = Roman Catholic = not us!

One of the most common occasions upon which the Creed will be encountered by those ignorant of its meaning is the Sacrament of Baptism. The word 'Catholic' also occurs within most current orders for this occasion. There is nothing to be gained by the almost provocative use of the word without some attempt being made to elucidate it. Prejudices and misconceptions will only be reinforced if we fail to explain ourselves. The pedantic "or Universal" inserted after "Catholic" is not the happiest solution. There are more satisfactory ways of making it clear that we, in the Church of Scotland, are only a branch of the true Church, and that that goes for every other denomination too. We must stop using the word 'Catholic' as a 'shibboleth', for that is to deny the catholicity of others. The good people of our unidentified island are as catholic as the rest of us, but we have to be careful in the way we remind them of this fact.