

**COMMISSION FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY AND DIALOGUE
REPORT 2020**

Hot Topics: Anglican Networks; Representation on International bodies

MEMBERSHIP

A Bishop (Chairman): The Bishop of Clogher	The Bishop of Cashel
WCC Representative: The Bishop of Connor (Until December 2019)	Rev Canon Patrick Comerford
ACC Representative: Rev Katharine Poulton	Rev Canon Dr Ian Ellis
ACC Representative: Mr Wilfred Baker	Rev Canon Dr Daniel Nuzum
Porvoo Contact Group Person: Rev Helene Tarneberg Steed	Rev Suzanne Cousins
An Honorary Secretary of General Synod: Rev Canon Gillian Wharton	Rev Cathy Hallissey
Hon Records Secretary: Rev Ken Rue	Rev David White
Hon Secretary: Very Rev Niall Sloane	Ms Georgina Coptý (Resigned November 2019)
The Bishop of Tuam	Ms Cate Turner
The Bishop of Limerick	Dr Kenneth Milne
	Rev Canon Elaine Murray (From November 2019)

INTRODUCTION

The Commission for Christian Unity and Dialogue was first established by the General Synod as the Home Reunion Committee in 1905 and assumed its current name in 2007. The Commission was previously known as the Committee for Christian Unity.

Its terms of reference are:

- To promote within the Church of Ireland the vision of Church unity;
- To promote and support movements in Ireland towards co-operation among the various Christian bodies;
- To maintain Church of Ireland membership of, and participation in, national and international ecumenical bodies;
- To address, in consultation with the Standing Committee, developments within the Anglican Communion;
- To encourage and engage in inter-faith encounter and dialogue;
- To report annually to the General Synod.
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The membership consists of up to 20 members elected annually by the General Synod.

The Church of Ireland has a rich network of relationships with fellow Anglican churches and other Christian traditions within Ireland and overseas. It is a member of the Anglican Communion and the following ecumenical networks:

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- the Irish Council of Churches (ICC);
- the Irish Inter Church Committee;
- Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (CTBI);
- the Conference of European Churches (CEC);
- the World Council of Churches (WCC);
- the Porvoo Communion (which brings together Anglican and Lutheran Churches); and
- the Reuilly Common Statement (between Anglican and French-speaking Protestant Churches).

As an observer on the Meissen Commission, the Church also has links with the Evangelical Church in Germany.

The Commission on Christian Unity and Dialogue's three working groups focus on Anglican, European and inter-faith matters.

The **Anglican & Ecumenical Affairs Working Group** considers the Church's relations within the Anglican Communion and within the Porvoo Communion, and with the Moravian Church. More information on the Anglican Communion is available at www.anglicancommunion.org

The **European Affairs Working Group** works closely with the ICC's European Affairs Committee and the CEC to discuss and consider common concerns for European Churches. The **Inter-Faith Working Group** seeks to build relationships and encourage dialogue with people from other faiths who are living in Ireland.

The Church of Ireland is in full communion with the other members of the Anglican Communion and Porvoo Communion, the Methodist Church in Ireland, the Union of Utrecht of the Old Catholic Churches, and the Mar Thoma Syrian Church. Relations between the Church of Ireland and the Methodist Church in Ireland are covered by the Covenant Council.

The Commission's members attend the annual conferences of other Christian denominations in Ireland and hold regular meetings with the Roman Catholic Church and with the Presbyterian Church.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

At its meeting in Dun Laoghaire in 2016 the General Synod approved a Resolution to reform the make-up and working methods of the Commission. Prior to 2016 all bishops had been members ex officio. The 2016 Resolution made provision for one Bishop to chair the Commission and for its Working Groups on Anglican and Ecumenical Affairs, Inter Faith matters and Europe to be convened by three other Bishops. The Commission is grateful to the Bishops of Cashel, of Limerick and of Tuam for their work in this regard and to Canon Ian Ellis for chairing the group on Anglican Affairs.

Each of the Working Groups has 3 members who are also then members of the full Commission. Each may also and often does co-opt expertise from beyond the Commission membership. The Commission also includes the Church's representatives on the Anglican Consultative Council (ACC) and the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches (WCC). We trust that the reorganisation has also allowed the Commission and Working Groups to refresh and widen their membership, endeavouring to bear in mind gender, age,

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clerical/lay, and geographical spread. The reforms initiated in 2015 are now firmly embedded and have provided a serviceable framework for the Commission to undertake its largely “outward facing” work on behalf of the Church. The Commission is indebted to its Honorary Secretary, the Very Rev Niall Sloane who largely devised the reorganisation and who has worked tirelessly to ensure its smooth operation.

The Commission has been in existence in one form or another for 114 years and in that sense at least might be considered something of an Institution. If so, it is one which ensures a continuity and an accountability of ecumenical activity across those years without, we hope, being hidebound. Members of the Commission and others approved by Standing Committee represent the Church of Ireland on National and International Ecumenical Instruments such as the Irish Council of Churches and the WCC. In Ireland at least, these bodies provide an opportunity for different Christian Traditions to engage on a regular and basis and to jointly speak into the public space as well as to consult with one another.

The Church’s membership of the Irish Inter Church Meeting (IICM), which is the formal means whereby we engage with the Irish Episcopal Conference of the Roman Catholic Church, has provided an invaluable forum to address, in a constructive way, the many perplexities across the whole island, arising from Brexit. In similar vein, and at the request of the Church Leaders Meeting, the Irish Council of Churches (ICC) has organised extremely well attended and well received consultations through Northern Ireland where (in the absence of a functioning Legislative Assembly or Executive), representatives from civic society have been able to engage with politicians on many matters in addition to Brexit.

Occasionally a question is raised about the appropriateness of European Affairs as a constituent part of CCUD. There are many good reasons why it should be so, not least the significant recognition which the European Union (EU) gives to religious bodies and the formal mechanisms, through Article 17 of the Lisbon Treaty, which it provides for formal consultation, both at EU and Member State level, with such bodies. Indeed, there is a strong case to be made that it is through neglect of this important aspect of the Social Pillar that much of the positive potential of the Union has been undermined. The Christian churches of Europe, speaking together, have still much to offer our troubled continent.

In addition, the Church of Ireland’s membership of the Council of European Churches provides us with both an influential forum within a and beyond the EU and an important formal point of with the Orthodox churches in Europe, who have often provided much of the material and spiritual support to many caught up in the migration crisis. The Churches’ ecumenical involvement in European affairs will continue to grow in importance and perhaps in prophetic witness in the years ahead.

As you will see from the reports of the Working Groups below, this has been a busy year in every area of activity and the Commission is grateful to all who have contributed to its work and especially to its Hon Minute Secretary, the Rev Ken Rue for his concise and diplomatic recording of our deliberations.

+John Clogher:
The Rt Rev FJ McDowell, Bishop of Clogher
Chairman of Commission for Christian Unity & Dialogue

ECUMENICAL INSTRUMENTS

Considerations of space allow for only limited coverage of the work of the ecumenical instruments to which the Church of Ireland belongs. Their respective websites (given below) should be consulted for detailed reports. Full particulars of Church of Ireland membership of ecumenical organisations and their remit may be found in the appropriate directory on the Church of Ireland website (www.ireland.anglican.org).

ANGLICAN & ECUMENICAL AFFAIRS WORKING GROUP

Membership

Rt Rev Michael Burrows, Mr Wilfrid Baker, Rev Julie Bell, Canon Dr Maurice Elliott, Canon Dr Ian Ellis (Chair), Canon Dr Daniel Nuzum, Rev Katharine Poulton, Rev Helene Steed and Ms Cate Turner

The Anglican and Ecumenical Affairs Working Group held a study day on the report of the Third Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC-III), *Walking Together on the Way*, on 10th June 2019. Following this, the working group drafted a response for the consideration of the Commission for Christian Unity and Dialogue (CCUD). Also following the study day, the Working Group organised an open, public seminar on the ARCIC-III report. This was held at the Church of Ireland Theological Institute on 9th October 2019. The keynote speakers were ARCIC members Bishop Christopher Hill of the Church of England and Monsignor Mark Langham, Roman Catholic Chaplain at the University of Cambridge. Receptive ecumenism, which is central to the thinking in *Walking Together on the Way*, is the principle that asks first what one's own tradition can learn from another rather than asking what other traditions can learn from one's own. A brief report on the seminar, which was attended by approximately 50 people, lay and clerical and from across the denominations, can be found on the Church of Ireland website (<https://www.ireland.anglican.org/news/9122/receptive-ecumenism>). During the year the Working Group also considered the resolutions of the 17th meeting of the Anglican Consultative Council which was held between 28 April and 5 May 2019 in Hong Kong. This is an ongoing task at the time of writing and the Working Group will in due course present its responses to the resolutions to the CCUD. The Church of Ireland was represented at ACC-17 by the Rev Katharine Poulton and Mr Wilfred Baker, both of whom are members of the working group.

THE IRISH COUNCIL OF CHURCHES (ICC: www.churchesinireland.com)

The ICC is an ecumenical Christian body and is a sister organisation of Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (CTBI). The Church of Ireland is a founding member of the ICC, which was established in 1923.

The 96th Annual Meeting of the Irish Council of Churches took place in the Jethro Centre, Lurgan, on 4 April 2019. At this meeting, in addition to the regular business, the Indian

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Orthodox Church was welcomed to full membership of the Council, while the Syrian Orthodox Church began the first stage of the membership process taking observer status on the Council for the coming year.

The keynote address was given by Professor John Barry, specialist in green political economy, responding to the publication by the Irish Inter-Church Meeting of a series of affirmations on climate justice. Professor Barry highlighted the unique role churches can play in the response to climate breakdown by providing a narrative of hope, courage and creation to motivate people to both individual and collective change. Church representatives were challenged to have courage in the face of this crisis and to use their resources and credibility to promote changes, big or small, throughout their congregations. It was noted that churches do not have all the answers but have so much to contribute when it comes to inspiring and mobilising people into action. Prof Barry explored Climate breakdown as cultural and ethical, not just a physical phenomenon and began to draw on the rich frameworks found in faith communities for addressing this ethical challenge and opportunity of the ecological crisis. He presented the cardinal virtues as a guide to action with justice understood in terms of a 'just transition' to a more environmentally ethical way of living; fortitude and courage to overcome the feelings of despair that can inhibit responses; temperance as a challenge to the culture of materialism that fuels abuse of the planet; and prudence as a reminder to exercise wisdom in the decisions we make about the future of our planet. The address concluded with a call to action and an opportunity for participants to share ideas about practical initiatives and awareness-raising campaigns churches could undertake.

The AGM concluded with a panel discussion with representatives of local churches in the Lurgan area. It was an opportunity to hear about the major social issues impacting the community and the unfinished work of peace and reconciliation. Church representatives shared their reflections on how inter-church cooperation and the forming of friendships across traditional boundaries supports and encourages them as they seek to bring Christian witness to the surrounding community.

IRISH INTER-CHURCH MEETING (*IICM: www.churchesinireland.com*)

The Irish Inter-Church Meeting (IICM) was established in 1973 as a forum between ICC's member churches and the Roman Catholic Church. The current Co-Chairs are Most Rev Brendan Leahy, Bishop of Limerick, and Rev Brian Anderson, President of the Irish Council of Churches.

The 30th Irish Inter-Church Meeting took place in Dromantine Conference Centre, Newry, from 21st to 22nd November 2019. Choosing the theme 'Church in a Changing Public Square', the Inter-Church Committee sought to focus participants' attention on the common themes underlying many of the challenges facing Christian churches in Ireland today, and explore how we can work together to bring a Christian witness to a society in need of hope and healing.

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At the outset, the IICM Joint Secretaries, Very Rev Kieran McDermott and Dr Nicola Brady, gave an introduction to the IICM and its theme. Fr Kieran reminded participants that the IICM follows a tradition that dates back to the Ballymascanlon talks of the 1970s and, since that time, has provided a safe space for the Irish churches to come together and build relationships as they discussed some of the most challenging issues facing the churches and wider society. Dr Brady explained that the focus on ‘Church in a Changing Public Square’ provided an opportunity to build on the work that had been done in recent years — notably the ongoing collaboration between the churches’ Communications offices, engagement with the two Public Service Broadcasters on the island (BBC and RTÉ) and the churches’ joint public initiative to raise awareness of issues of housing insecurity and homelessness.

The preparatory group which helped shape the programme for the meeting highlighted three critical questions to be addressed in the sessions:

What are the models of relationship that define how churches currently relate to society?
What is distinctive about the voice Christian churches bring to the public square?
How might we best support each other and make best use of resources in this engagement?

Speaking on the theme of ‘Engagement and Outreach in a Post-Digital World’ Mr Ryan Feeney spoke about his experience working with major public institutions: the GAA, Queen’s University Belfast and now the PSNI. He outlined the current media landscape and the crisis of trust that impacts all major institutions. Sharing examples of effective community engagement initiatives he has worked on, he challenged the churches to think collaboratively about the key messages they want to communicate to society, notably a focus on the church-community connection, and how they could work together to ensure this message is repeated in order to impact public discourse.

Theological reflection is central to the shaping of the churches’ engagement in the public square. In a panel discussion entitled ‘Reimagining Public Theology’ we heard perspectives from different areas of work and from both jurisdictions on the island. Rev Abigail Sines, from the Church of Ireland’s Christ Church Cathedral, Dublin, reflected on the biblical principles that underpin the opening of that space as a place of community and encounter. Ms Karen Jardine, Public Affairs Officer for the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, spoke about the responsibility of the churches to think creatively about how to communicate biblical principles that speak to the complexity of the cultural moment in a way that will be accessible to the wider society.

When we think of the public square the role of the media in shaping public discourse will feature prominently. At this IICM we wanted to recognise that this is also an area where Christians are giving leaderships, and one where journalists face increasing challenges as a result of the evolution of the digital space and the threat posed by “fake news”. Mr Sam McBride, Political Editor with The Newsletter, shared some of the challenges from his work in seeking to hold elected representatives, in particular, to account. Ms Judith Hill from UTV described how she seeks to give voice to local communities impacted by

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violence and injustice in her work, and highlight the examples of courageous leadership that can give hope, citing the response to Church Leaders in East Belfast to paramilitary violence as an example.

The second day opened with a session from media consultant Ms Angelina Fusco about effective communications, outlining the factors to be considered when deciding how to respond to media enquiries, and where to allocate resources. This was followed by an opportunity for church representatives to share questions arising from their own media engagement and some of the challenges they face in communications and public engagement.

Following a very impactful youth session at last year's IICM it was agreed that future meetings should give space to youth perspectives. This year youth workers and young people working in Church communications shared their reflections on the impact of the digital space on the lives of young people. There was a strong challenge to churches to think critically about how they communicate with a generation that responds to engagement rather than authority, and how they create space for young people's leadership.

The final session addressed another major area of public engagement — advocacy to Government. Mr Dermot McCarthy from the Irish School of Ecumenics, shared some of the learning from his distinguished career with the Irish Civil Service, with a particular focus on the Irish Government's framework for Church-State dialogue and how churches' can maximise opportunities to pro-actively set an agenda.

At the conclusion of the IICM participants were agreed that the programme offered rich and varied material for reflection and that there were real practical implications for how we work together. The Irish Inter-Church Committee will now reflect on the measures that might be adopted to integrate this learning into our future work. This was only the beginning of a conversation that needs to continue and develop with a focus on anticipating future challenges, but it provides a solid foundation for that work.

CHURCHES TOGETHER IN BRITAIN AND IRELAND (CTBI: www.ctbi.org.uk)

Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (CTBI) is an ecumenical organisation. The members include most of the major churches in England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland. It was formed on 1 September 1990, as the successor to the British Council of Churches, and was formerly known as the Council of Churches of Britain and Ireland.

Report from Ms Georgina Coptly on the Annual General Meeting of Churches Together in Britain and Ireland held at St Andrew's Church Centre, London, 8th May 2019

The meeting commenced with worship during which the delegates were invited to reflect on the idea of creating inter-religious unity in response to tragedy. In the wake of the bombings in Sri Lanka, introspection and self-criticism emerged from the local churches. The delegates were asked to learn from Sri Lanka about coming together. Mr Bob Fyfe

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gave a short overview of the work of CTBI. He highlighted that a four nations conference will be held every November with the next one taking place on 11-12 November. CTBI will also have a new website. Once the CTBI accounts were presented, the issue of accountability for the members was discussed. Questions were raised regarding ethical investments, in particular in relation to the arms trade and environmental impact. CTBI reassured the delegates that it has ethical investment criteria and has a commitment that all new investments will be ethically and environmentally sound. As this was the last AGM for Archbishop Angaelos, Mr Fyfe thanked him for all his commitment and hard work. The Archbishop in turn, expressed his gratitude to the members of CTBI who have become his wider family. A nominations committee was appointed to select a successor.

The keynote topic for the day was “Serious Youth Crime.” Mr Richard Reddie, Director of Justice and Inclusion at CTBI, ran a packed afternoon session and spoke passionately of his work in this area. Richard discussed his involvement with the Standing Together Coalition, an ongoing cross-denominational church initiative to tackle the problems of youth violence. The coalition held a rally in Trafalgar Square on 6 April 2019. CTBI was one of the organisers of the rally, which was well attended by church leaders. Mr Reddie shared a video of the rally. Mr Les Isaac, CEO of the Ascension Trust gave a short but comprehensive talk on the role of the Trust. Les explained that one of the challenges of Christianity is that we often focus more on what we are against rather than what we stand for. He noted the need to implement better communication between the church and the public sphere. Mr Isaac highlighted the fact that churches cannot run away from the problem by asserting the claim “not in my back yard” as violence happens everywhere. Churches therefore need to take ownership by identifying the problem and putting in place the mechanisms to deal with it. Mr Reddie shared some of his experience working in Belmarsh Prison. There he looked at the area of youth who attend church but still commit violence. Although churches have a presence in the prisons, the churches often fall short of their duty once prisoners are released back into society. Thus a holistic approach needs to be employed. Mr Isaac highlighted that the perception on the streets is that the church does not care. The challenge for churches is to formulate a vision then devise a strategy to deliver that vision. It is imperative that churches recognise they cannot do this alone and collaboration is the only way forward.

The second speaker was Rev Canon Dr Rosemary Mallett, Director of Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation at the Diocese of Southwark. Dr Mallett highlighted the direct correlation between those who are permanently excluded from school and serious youth violence. She discussed the initiatives currently being explored within the Church of England’s secondary schools. She pointed out that churches deal with current issues depending on how they are impacted by them. Therefore there is no set formula. However as a member of the Church of England she stated “we have no rights as head church but responsibilities.” She believes that the church needs to earn its right at the table not demand it. Dr Mallett also emphasised that churches should work across a national perspective, but implement their work on a parish level. She also talked about the need to relate to people on a personal level. One of the initiatives she was involved in was to place a knife bin outside of her church. She also does a lot of work with women in the church as they

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often carry the burden and the pain that results from youth violence. She also highlighted the need for days of prayer as everything needs to be fuelled by prayer.

Echoing Mr Isaac's sentiments of the need for churches to engage with the issue of youth violence, Dr Mallett warned that if we don't engage with these issues, they will come our way. She concluded with stark words that churches should find a way to work with the living young rather than administer to the young that are dead.

At various interludes throughout the afternoon the delegates were divided into small groups and asked to explore pertinent questions. These questions included issues such as the role of the media and whether churches have been reluctant to engage with issues of youth violence. The small groups were asked to note their views down. Their answers are to be collated by CTBI in order to gauge the current views within the churches on serious youth violence.

CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN CHURCHES (CEC: www.ceceurope.org)

The Conference of European Churches (CEC) was founded in 1959 to promote reconciliation, dialogue and friendship between the churches of Europe at a time of growing Cold War political tensions and divisions.

CEC is a fellowship of some 116 Orthodox, Protestant, Anglican, and Old Catholic Churches from all countries of Europe, plus 40 National Council of Churches and Organisations in Partnership.

The CEC Annual Report 2018 titled "You Shall be my Witnesses" is now available online in English, French, German and Russian. The report records highlights from the activities undertaken by CEC during 2018 and following the Novi Sad General Assembly of CEC held in June 2018.

"2018 was a pivotal year for the Conference of European Churches," says CEC President Rev Christian Krieger. "It was marked by CEC's General Assembly in Novi Sad, which provided the opportunity to report with gratitude on the work accomplished since the 2013 Budapest General Assembly and pursue the theme of 'You Shall Be My Witnesses' working on hospitality, justice, witness, and hope," he adds in an introduction to the report. An electronic copy may be found at:

http://www.ceceurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/ANNUAL-REPORTS-2018_FINAL_WEB.pdf

WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES (WCC: www.wcc-coe.org)

The World Council of Churches (WCC) is a worldwide inter-church organization founded in 1948. Its 349 members today include the Assyrian Church of the East, the Oriental Orthodox Churches, most jurisdictions of the Eastern Orthodox Church, the Mar Thoma Syrian Church of Malabar, the Old Catholic Church, Anglican Communion, most mainline Protestant churches (such as the Lutheran, Mennonite, Methodist, Moravian and Reformed) and some evangelical Protestant churches (such as the Baptist and Pentecostal).

Report on WCC, Inaugural Meeting of Inter Faith Officers, in CARDIFF, 31st Oct – 3rd Nov 2019

The Rev. Suzanne Cousins attended

Introduction

The World Council of Churches' Inaugural Meeting of Inter Faith Officers took place from 31st Oct to 3rd Nov 2019 at Cornerstone Centre, Cardiff, hosted by Cytun ('The Churches Together in Wales'). The title of the event was 'Towards Fostering Dialogue Ecumenically', sub-title (Romans 14:19) 'Let us pursue what makes for peace and for mutual up building'. The primary objective of this new initiative was the bringing together of people within churches and ecumenical organisations who hold responsibility for interfaith relations and engagement, to both widen networks and to deepen the WCC's and the churches' understanding of the shape and scope of interreligious engagement in our changing contexts. That interreligious engagement of the churches was a priority for the WCC was reiterated by the participation of WCC General Secretary the Rev Dr Olav Fykse Tveit, Geneva, who reminded the meeting of the importance of understanding inter faith work in terms of *accompaniment and accountability*. The meeting was also to explore how we can move forward in IF meaningful engagement.

In the first formal session a Bible study on Gen 33.1-7 was led by Dr Muthuraj Swamy. Presentations were then given by the Rev Dr Olav Fykse Tveit; and by the Rev Dr. Peniel Jesudason Rufus, Programme Executive Interreligious Dialogue and Cooperation, WCC.

Bible study on Genesis 33:1-7 Jacob and Esau meet

Dr Swamy stated this story has modern echoes and is of contemporary relevance for the church in its inter faith dialogue and relations. Jacob and Esau meet after years of estrangement, coming from different communities with different histories. They are two different characters, with different attitudes and values but have a shared heritage. In Esau we see magnanimity. He is the one who has been wronged yet he runs to meet his brother, embraces him, falls on his neck, and kisses him. He is spontaneous and generous. Jacob is more cautious. His approach and thinking is preplanned. At the end it is Esau who utters the very powerful words: "Let us journey on our way and I will go alongside you."

Concerning gifts and equality, Esau declines the gifts Jacob offers. Our IF/IR partners may not always want or need to be recipients of the gifts we offer. Concerning fear and lack of trust, Jacob is on the one hand deferential and respectful in referring to Esau as "my lord". On the other hand, this is perhaps also Jacob's means of keeping Esau at a distance. It suggests that Jacob's fear and mistrust are still operating. In the end they don't journey together because Jacob doesn't trust Esau, even though Esau has welcomed, embraced and forgiven his brother.

Comparisons may be made between Jacob's early actions of stealing his brother's birthright and some Christian

missionary activity and imperialism towards other religions. Jacob's realisation of the injustice he did to his brother is accompanied by fear of acceptance. He promises to follow Esau but changes direction and ends up in Succoth. Like Jacob and Esau, inter faith dialogue partners come together with a history of woundedness and with fear of suffering and fear of acceptance. Inter faith engagement therefore requires self-awareness, self-understanding and courage.

Concerning the claim to birthright: If Jacob represents us, the Church, he is a picture of the reality that we can have a kind of jealousy of other religions. With us, inequality comes to the table. (An example is the challenge of IF engagement in India, and the caste system.) Trust-building is therefore crucial. In the end, Jacob has taken a risk in his move towards reconciliation and relationship but perhaps has not gone far enough. A questions relatedly for the church concerning IF dialogue is how far do we go? How great is our commitment? How great should it be? To which social, practical and ethical areas of life does dialogue relate? Group discussions which followed were on IF/IR dialogue in relation to migration, forced migration, rejection of refugees and asylum seekers, violence and gender based violence, populism and nationalism.

Taking Stock and Moving Ahead: Who we are, the gifts we bring; accompaniment and accountability

Reflections by WCC Gen Secretary, Rev Dr Olav Fykse Tveit

Rev Dr Olav Fykse Tveit spoke first on *Accompaniment and Accountability*. He stressed that we ourselves together (those present and the churches and bodies we represent) are the WCC, and that a key part of what we were doing was building a network. He commented that we often think of our theology and its outcomes in terms of "heads, hands, heart". When it comes to dialogue and engagement this can be helpful. We also think in terms of *a genuine sharing of the gifts that we have and bring*, and the gifts of the Eucharistic table. These WCC IF and other meetings are to feed our imaginations and to keep us hungry for peace and justice. This is Christ's work. Rev Dr Tveit spoke of the need for unity in the Church and the need for unity of purpose in carrying out Christ's work. Incarnation and Christ's love must be seen in terms of God's reconciliation for and with the whole world. This is what Christ's love today means, for the world torn apart by nationalism, racism, discrimination, and other dividing forces. We are reminding and encouraging ourselves that Christ's love is able to transform difficult situations in the world.

Rev Dr Tveit reminded the group of the **three main controversies** over IF/IR, and gave an example based on our use of language in inter faith encounters. The three main controversies are (i) the charge of religious syncretism; (ii) compromise on the uniqueness of Christ; and (iii) differences between people who want to do IF and those who do not, and relatedly the charge of betrayal of the church's mission. In our IF relations we may be tempted to use the language of *God's love* rather than *Christ's love*, so as not to be exclusive, but as Christians we must say that we believe in *Christ* – that is our task. Christ is the most inclusive. Christ is God, the Creator. As God among us he is in solidarity with us and the whole world. So we should not step back and say that we cannot talk about Christ when we talk with people of other faiths. This is important. Our focus as Christians

is Christ. Dr Olav continued, that some bishops in the past have described this approach as syncretism, but the contextual reality is pluralism. There is no escape for us as Christians from pluralism in the world in which we live. More, it is also the way we want to live – with and in *plurality*. We have to ask what it means to live nationally with the dimension of religious pluralism. This has an impact on our theology. It brings new dimensions, affects how we see our own identity, and affects how we practise, for example, our own religion and approach others. It causes us to ask how we are to be the Christian voice in the pluralist reality. There are many examples; for example, one church suspended its membership of WCC because it thought that WCC was promoting syncretism. The General Secretary countered this charge, emphasising that the WCC needs all the churches.

All this raises the key question, of what it means to be Christian in the IF world and context. WCC is a way of working together, of finding practice and structures for cooperation. We are here in a mutual reality, no partners are here to dominate. There is a sense of accountability and sharing, and of what we share and why. Some do not accept accountability except to their own religion or church, but mutuality requires accountability. In dialogue we bring our minds together, make agreements on how to work together and create structure. WCC is a way of working together in an atmosphere of dialogue and critique, self-critique. The ability to self-critique is crucial, otherwise our dialogue becomes defence. There is only a way forward if we ask the difficult questions, e.g., about how our faith traditions and texts have been used and misused in the past. We have to recognise the wrong that has been done in the name of Christianity. We then have to ask the same of other faiths, for example, Judaism, without demonising them. This opens the possibility of progress and a more fruitful way of living together. We, the church, are part of a fellowship in which we have to support those who have to live in situations of occupation and oppression (e.g., Palestinians in Jerusalem). We may be unhappy with occupation but we cannot as Christians have no relationship with Jews. This is a concrete example of what walking together and mutual accompaniment and accountability means. Walking together and mutual accompaniment and accountability requires courage.

We as Christians should be those who use the expression “the one Cn family” because we believe in it, in the principle and theology of “the one Cn family”. It is a faith perspective that we have to bring forward, bringing the churches tog for common witness in the real world. This is the real meaning of dialogue – about how our being human together comes together. How do IF relations get mixed into new dimensions of racism, segregation, etc.? The IF dialogue approach is one of the strongest ways of showing what it means to follow Christ, and be the human family. Pope Francis calls this ‘fraternity’ but ‘family’ is a better term, being gender-inclusive. Love is key, Christ’s love.

Q&A

Q1: How will the WCC from the Geneva office rearticulate the relationship and distinctiveness between classical ecumenism and interreligious dialogue.

A: One type of dialogue (ecumenical) exists within the dialogue of bringing the one humanity together through IR dialogue. (Needs to be awareness of different contexts.) The two co-exist.

Q2: 'IF' can be a divisive issue: Can dialogue with the common good co-exist with an evangelistic approach?

A: Brief answer was 'yes'.

Q3 How can IF dialogue further public theology?

A: IF relations and dialogue is controversial in the church as well as in the wider world. Therefore we have to do it in the most qualified, proper and decent way. 50 years ago it was more difficult.

Q4: How do we use it as a means of working for peace and justice in the world?

A: This is the key Q, rather than the theological discussions. Considering the European context: Europe is resistant to The Muslims being here. We as Christians have to be clear as to the Christian approach. We are opposed to exclusivism and nationalism. We defend freedom of religion and belief. We are opposed to xenophobia and those harmful things that emerge from populism. The 'DNA' of WCC is to work towards religious freedom and human rights. Recognises the churches' guilt in this area, historically. Quote: "Be aware that you don't use dialogue to cover up the dangers of religious discrimination and exclusivism."

Called to dialogue: IR Dialogue and Cooperation in the WCC

Reflections by Rev Dr Peniel Jesudason Rufus

History

Rev Dr Peniel Jesudason Rufus outlined the history of WCC and its major conferences since 1910. He referred to the Second Vatican Council (1965) and to *Nostra Aetate*, RC document and statement on other faiths, and the significant influence of these in setting the scene for the WCC and IR dialogue. He suggested that WCC has a sense of adventure and taking risks, since 1971. He also admitted that IR Dialogue and Cooperation is complicated, quoting the 1975 Dialogue Controversy (WCC Nairobi, 'Seeking community with people of other faiths'). From it came accusations against IR dialogue that it was a betrayal of the Christian mission, citing three classical fears: syncretism, compromise on the uniqueness of Christ, and loss of urgency in mission. This led to questions about dialogue, e.g., is it a substitute for mission? The public discussion had to be closed, with Ms Lynn A De Sliva explaining the importance of IR dialogue.

How do we do dialogue?

Rev Dr Peniel asked, "How do we (WCC) do dialogue?" The short answer is, "Shoulder to shoulder" and face to face, with an emphasis on strengthening relationships. WCC has initiated Christian Buddhist dialogue, Christian-Jewish, Christian-Hindu dialogue [– tried scriptural reasoning last year], and Christian-Muslim dialogue – with Sunni and Shia Muslims. With the Shias, the topic for dialogue was 'Religion, peace and violence'. Christian-Confucian dialogue has also recently been initiated, begun in Seoul, with the hosting of meetings in homes. WCC-led Christian-Sikh dialogue began in May 2019. And Christian-Taoist dialogue has been undertaken by the Vatican. In short, WCC is trying to cover as many religions as possible, so its IR/IF dialogue is a living dialogue. It is also

concerned with finding access to those who don't have a voice, and it considers gender representation. WCC is seeking to further Christian self-understanding in a multi-religious world. To this end it has many useful publications, including:

- The WCC IR Dialogue Study Guide;
- *Many Yet One* - on multiple religious belonging;
- *Interreligious Theology and Liberation Theology* – from Crescent conference in Kenya;
- Mapping exercise (completed by delegates);
- A document is underway on Religion and Violence;
- An interreligious training programme - being developed;
- New journal - to be launched.

Friday, Session 3: 'Who we are. The gifts we bring'

A number of bishops and other speakers reported and gave insight on inter faith dialogue and relations in their contexts, including New Zealand and the Pacific, Sri Lanka, Asia, including Hong Kong, Myanmar and Indonesia, Lebanon, Africa, Europe, and USA. There were numerous examples of real and practical IF/IR; for example, in Asia, an international conference for social cohesion, hosted by Singapore, and an approach to discourse event/programme called 'Your religion in 60 seconds'. Challenges and difficulties in each context were also discussed; for example, that there is lots of IF work going on in Asia but it is *ad hoc* and sporadic. In Lebanon and the Middle-east, especially since the Arab Spring, there is great uncertainty, a sense that anything can happen at any time, and some people are questioning the benefit of Christian-Muslim cooperation or IR dialogue. Conversely, they see the need for deeper and deeper cooperation, in light of the uncertainty. WCC and IF relations have a key role in relationship-building and reconciliation between Christianity and Islam. (Other details and examples will be shared with the COI IFWG.)

Saturday, 2nd November

Morning Prayer for *All Saints* was followed by a Bible study, called "*Unusual kindness*"

Bible study, Acts 27:27-28:10 *Unusual kindness*

"Unusual kindness" is the title of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity conference to come in Malta, taken from this passage: "The natives [of Malta] showed us [Paul and the other shipwrecked] unusual kindness." For the sake of brevity, this report ends here, with the full text. Key elements of the remainder of the meetings will be shared with the IFWG. However, an important theme that surfaced repeatedly is the question for the churches of how we connect with the 'Nones' (those who answer 'None' with regards to their religious affiliation), and the issue of statelessness was recognised as pressing.

Unusual Kindness: A Bible Study Acts 27.27-28.10 Rev. Peter Colwell (CTBI)

The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity occupies a central place within the ecumenical movement when Christians pray for the visible unity of the church. Often the themes chosen by different contexts have resonances with interreligious work. Sometimes this has been explicit as in Indonesia this year, or implicit as with the Caribbean the year previous. So this Bible Study offers a reflection on part of the passage that has been chosen by the

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Churches of Malta for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity in 2020 and was given at a meeting of inter faith officers convened by the World Council of Churches, 31 October – 2 November 2019.

Paul, along with other prisoners, is being transported to Rome but the ship encounters a storm and the story is one of turmoil and fear. They are adrift and thrust about in the midst of a storm. No-one feel secure, they are afraid and most probably convinced that this is how they would end their days, drowned or dashed against the rocks! Paul however has faith that they would reach the shore unharmed and it is his act of breaking bread that is a tangible sign of Paul's absolute faith that they would reach the shore.

In the church we usually read the breaking of bread in scripture as a sacramental act, yet the unavoidable truth of this passage is that Paul breaks the bread in the midst of a community that is clearly not the church! For this reason we might be inclined to resist a sacramental interpretation, as we did when we prepared this text for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. We might note that the eating of food together is something common to all faiths and cultures, and bread is significant in the rituals of many faiths; it is a sign of that which we share together, basic hospitality and mutuality. In some respects the Eucharist affirms that which binds humanity together, that is celebrated in the person for Jesus Christ, the incarnate of God.

Yet the Lukan arc is one of greater and greater inclusion. Our ecumenical sensibilities would lead us to resist the Eucharistic overtones to this passage, as it is bread broken amidst those that included the un-baptized, yet the Eucharistic implication seems obvious, even if it leaves us with a theological question about this invitation to ritual participation! Following Rabbinic tradition we may wish to interrogate the scripture and also allow scripture to interrogate our traditions. Yet, regardless of how one reads Paul's breaking of bread, there is a sacramental quality of this remarkable incident, that Paul in the midst of this extreme danger demonstrates in word and deed that not a single hair from their heads will be lost. The reality in this story is one without a firm foot on solid ground. Not unlike the experience that some of us might have had in mid-air flight turbulence, the fear that results when one's feet are not planted on the security of firm and solid ground.

This sense of being at the mercy of turbulence has tremendous resonance with contemporary events of political and social turmoil that threaten the planet and human life. In the words of Willie James Jennings in his recent commentary on the Acts of the Apostles: "Even in our time no one's feet are on solid ground. This is not an allegory but reality. We are always on this ship, and the question for the church is not whether we will eat but when and where we will offer food and under what conditions will we invite those fear laden and troubled to eat".

Paul's insistence that they will survive is no vague reassurance, it is more than mere spirituality that divorces the spirit from the flesh: here Paul's faith in God's faithful deliverance is manifested in his determination to feed the body as well as the soul, for if they are to survive they must eat! The words of Guru Nanak spring to mind – what is the use of your spirituality if my stomach is empty?

But returning to the Lukan drama, the significance of Paul's words and deeds are all the more remarkable as the ship disintegrates and the soldiers prepare to kill the prisoners once they realize they are not able to deliver them to their ultimate fate. Willie Jennings sees echoes of the Transatlantic Slave Trade and cites the incident of the slave ship *Zong* when in 1781, running low on water and food, 132 African (soon to be) slaves were mercilessly thrown overboard. The turbulence and terror of the storm is only outdone by the historical backdrop of imperial cruelty and dehumanizing action.

Ashore they are welcomed by the inhabitants of the island which we are told is Malta. For the churches of Malta today it is to these events that the churches trace their origin. As the unfortunate travellers from the ship make their landing, Luke tells us that they encounter "unusual kindness", a phrase that stands out as curious to many. What is "unusual" about "kindness"? Can it be that in the midst of the cruelty of these times, kindness was usual? Or was it because the travellers had experienced so much that lacked gentleness that acts of kindness felt so unusual? We might be tempted to see an echo of the welcome of refugees today on another Mediterranean island, Lampedusa, where tormented and trafficked people were warmly welcomed ashore by the island's mayor. Or perhaps the example of Muslims who have offered sanctuary, solidarity or protection in the aftermath of terrorist incidents targeted at Christian communities.

But the church often imagines that it alone owns the "copyright" on acts of kindness, love and forgiveness. As Jennings observes "the Maltese actions towards the shipwrecked was a surprise of grace and kindness that would be repeated in so many other contexts and with so many other peoples in the centuries that followed, and the church has never learned to see such kindness as what they actually are – signs of the Spirit's presence with peoples as a precursor to a holy joining being orchestrated by God."

The interesting aspect of this story from an inter-religious perspective is that we are left with an unresolved question about the nature of the divine economy: who are these people on this ship and on the shore and how are we to view them in relation to God's grace? The encounter with other faiths has long begged important ecumenical questions about the place of other faiths in the divine economy, what John Parry, in his book on the Christian-Sikh encounter, calls the "koinonia outside the gate". Just as in the encounter with other faiths we are frequently left humbled by acts of hospitality and human service that many of our traditions assume are only Christian impulses. Hospitality is a human motivation that is intensified in the cross of Christ. It cannot be the case that there is no love of neighbour without the cross, for that would be to suggest that only Christians can do good in the world.

Acts of hospitality are however much easier to approach when they are common to almost all. The events recorded in Acts also pose difficult challenges for Christianity's dialogical and missional engagement with the world. The incident with the snake biting Paul's hand, his destruction of the snake and the assumption that because he has not died means for the islanders that he must be a god! Indeed, there is something rather messianic about this passage that might cause us to step back: Paul is the one with faith on a boat amidst a

violence storm, echoing Jesus stilling the storm on the Sea of Galilee, he takes bread and blesses it in what could be their last meal together, he cures the father of Publius, and here he is mistaken for a god. We might deduce that Paul represents the church, Christ's body in the world, to witness and to act God ways of justice, hope and reconciliation, even in a world of hunger and hatred where the acts of the church in dialogue and service might sometimes be misconstrued.

For the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity in 2020, the churches of Malta naturally invite to us walk with them as they reflect more deeply on the apostolic roots of Christianity on their island home. "Unusual kindness" is the theme that they have chosen to draw out. Many of you are guests on our island home and I hope you have experienced at least a little unusual kindness! But many here do not experience that unusual kindness – if you are refugee, a migrant worker or anyone identified as "outsider" and "threat" whether that be Jew, Muslim, black, LGBT who are suffering the destabilizing and threatening territory that comes with rise in hate crime. Will the church today recognize the unusual kindness of those they have "othered" and learn to offer it in the name of Christ who welcomed the stranger? The 11th Assembly will be held in 2021.

MEISSEN

(www.europe.anglican.org/ecumenical-information-and-links/agreements-and-partners)

The Church of England's relations with the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD) are based on the Meissen Agreement, signed in 1991. The Church of Ireland is an observer at meetings and is currently represented by the Rev Markus Dünzkofer of the Scottish Episcopal Church.

Meissen Commission Meeting 2019

Church Of England/Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland (EKD)

Report of the Celtic Churches Observer

(Representative: Rev Markus Dünzkofer (Scottish Episcopal Church))

The Meissen Commission met this year at Wrexham Abbey in Northumberland from 26-29 September. The meeting was framed by daily worship and prayer, culminating in the celebration of the Holy Eucharist at Wrexham Abbey on the Feast of St Michael and All Angels, which this year fell on a Sunday. The Bishop of Huddersfield presided and the Bishop of Hanover preached.

Throughout our time together, members and observers engaged in honest and fruitful ways, embodying Psalm 133:1. Both during formal business meetings and also during more social get-togethers, relationships were strengthened, bonds of mutual affection were formed, and a deeper understanding of our commonalities and our differences was reached. Once again, we realised and celebrated that though we are distinct, we are united in our submission to the triune God and in following the way of Christ Jesus in our mission and ministry as baptised members of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church. We also enjoyed the beauty of Northumberland with a trip to Hadrian's Wall and an evening of generous and kind hospitality by the Bishop of Newcastle.

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While there was a range of topics discussed, we focused this year predominantly on four areas:

- Visible union in Christ;
- Brexit;
- Public Theology; and
- Safe-guarding.

For over three decades, the CofE and the EKD have been engaged in conversations, theological explorations, prayer, Bible-study, worship, bridge building, and twinning. However, it is fair to ask if there has been any progress in overcoming the theological divide about the understanding of the church's ordained ministry. While much has been accomplished, there is still no full exchangeability of orders. To use Anglican terminology: the CofE and the EKD are not in "full communion." Stumbling blocks remain about such questions of lay presidency and the historic episcopate: Is ordination a functional licensing, a sacramental act, neither, or both? How do we exercise oversight?

During this year's meeting, the Commission was rather blessed to receive thoughtful and profound input from the Rev Dr Philip Plyming (Warden, Cranmer Hall, Durham), the Rev Prof Simon Oliver (Van Mildert Professor of Divinity in the Department of Theology and Religion, Durham University), and the Rev Canon Prof Mark Chapman (Vice-Principal & Academic Dean, Ripon College Cuddesdon).

Dr Plyming's presentation provided a historical, theological, and liturgical overview of ordained ministry from a particular CofE perspective. This included an examination of contemporary trends in the Church of England, such as the challenges and opportunities of shared and different missional contexts, the question of ministry as leadership, the empowerment of lay ministers, and the ongoing specialisation of ministers. In our discussion with Dr Plyming, critical questions about these trends were raised, particularly about hierarchical and managerial understandings of leadership in the CofE. Focusing on Archbishop Michael Ramsay, a self-professed "Catholic Lutheran," Prof Oliver shone a slightly different light on the question of episcopate within the Anglican Communion: The Historical Episcopate as part of the "esse" of the universal church – without trying to overstate this aspect. It is indeed Baptism and living out the baptismal commitment that incorporates us as living members into Christ's body. Episcopate, on the other hand, focuses on the unity of the church and how to make that unity visible. Ramsay acknowledged that 1517 was necessary; it returned the Gospel to the church. However, Luther missed something, not unlike the Corinthian church to which the Apostle Paul addressed two of his letters: Church is not just a contemporary expression of the Gospel in a particular geographical space, but church is the living Body of Christ throughout space and time. The apostolic faith is the foundation of the unity of this sacred and sacramental community. The historic episcopate "incarnates" this unity linking it beyond the confines of the Corinthian as much as the German church. "In Luther the Gospel is heard again; the Church as the Body is known again. Yet the witness to both is incomplete." (Michael Ramsey, *The Gospel and the Catholic Church*, pp. 192-193).

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“The big fish” is what Prof Chapman called the exchangeability of orders. He lamented that the EKD and CofE “are exactly where [they] were 20 years ago,” despite the fact that the Meissen Declaration calls for moving to “full, visible unity.” Prof Chapman challenged both churches to change the methodology – it needs, for example, to be different from the Anglican-Roman Catholic dialogue, because both CofE and EKD recognise each other as “full” churches. The history of Meissen challenges both EKD and CofE to (re)consider what constitutes the essences of each tradition, not overlooking the fact that both churches come from a particular cultural/historical setting and both are interlinked diversely within their confessional families and other ecumenical relationships.

In our discussion, we focused on exploring theology as much as culture and context. The relationship, for example, of the CofE with the English/British monarchy significantly impacts the CofE’s understanding of episcopate. Here, the insights and traditions of the Celtic Churches might provide additional input and enlightenment. There have been forms of Anglicanism not linked to current political realities since 1689! It was also made clear that the historic episcopate is a significant and deeply theological, if at times irrational aspect of Anglican identity. However, it is not the supposed inflexibility of the Catholic wing of Anglicanism that creates the stumbling block. But the Historic Episcopate is intrinsic to Anglican ecclesiology.

For the EKD, on the other hand, questions of ordained ministry might be an *adiaphora*, however, Anglican ecclesiology and demands might sound like a “Romanisation” of ordained ministry to EKD-ears – a danger that does truly exist in some parts of the Anglican Church.

At one point in our discussion, Bishop Meister asked a pertinent question: What do Anglicans expect of him as an EKD bishop? I believe that this kind of questioning is something that should be explored and followed up on – in both directions. For 30 years the relationship of EKD and CofE has grown and ripened. It has created a trust where honest and at times difficult conversations, dialogues and disagreements can be had. Add to this the willingness of the members and observers of the Commission to expand the dialogue to include social, historic, and cultural paradigms (and the question of human sexuality) and it is easy to see how Meissen is more than a gift. It is a blessing that could provide an avenue to catch and fry “the big fish” – not just for the CofE and the EKD.

Meissen is also a gift when it comes to the current political developments. Both Germany and England have seen a rise in populist movements and it will be no surprise to hear that the ongoing Brexit debate was a main conversation topic during the conference. It even found its way into our theological and ecclesiological discussions. We all agreed that the churches must continue to be bridge-builders between nations. There is a rich and multifaceted tradition on which to build. A further (and maybe more difficult) challenge, though, will be making real necessary leadership and input from the churches in intra-national discussions. Continuing secularisation, the ever-decreasing relevance of the churches in society, as much as the diversity of voices particularly within These Isles

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demand extra effort and careful considerations. Yet, the statement by bishops of the CofE in the wake of rancorous parliamentary debates, published while we met, was very much welcomed by all as an example of prophetic leadership.

It must be said, though, that while England will continue to be a dominant voice (and force) in all of this, the voices of the much smaller Celtic churches and nations need to be heard, too. The significantly different situation faced by the Irish, Welsh, and Scottish nations and churches and our different historical context cannot just be “folded into” a pan-British identity and might offer creative alternatives and unconsidered options.

It is finally important to note that all of our churches are faced with working through historic sexual, religious, emotional and physical abuse not just of children and implementing new guidelines to prevent harm in the future. It is something we can all learn from each other and listen to each other’s experiences as we are trying to keep all of God’s children safe. This also must include the safety of clergy, who are often overlooked in these developments.

Finally, can I say that we owe a big thank you to the staff and clergy of Wrexham Abbey including the Bishop of Huntingdon, sometime Rector of Wrexham, and to Ms Angeline Leung, who provided the administrative and organisation support without which the conference would not have happened.

The next Meissen Commission meeting will be held in Hamburg, 15-18 October 2020. It will be the fourth time the SEC has represented the Celtic Churches and the baton will be passed back to the CofI in 2021.

Kirchentag, Dortmund, 19-23 June 2019

Report by the Re. Canon Dr Ian M. Ellis

The opening service for the German Protestant Church's 2019 Kirchentag was held on 19 June in the open air in Dortmund's city centre, with an estimated 80,000 people attending. Such a large number of participants – in fact, the total estimated attendance at the Kirchentag over the full five days reached 100,000 – meant that there was a noticeable, but nonetheless discreet, police security presence, quite apart from requiring mammoth organizing. One local newspaper reported that despite so many Kirchentag participants thronging the streets and city's transport system, a survey of local people did not draw any adverse comments.

A Kirchentag is essentially a festival of Christian faith and is characterized by a mixture of devotion, informality, togetherness and thinking through a wide range of issues. Over the five days there were 2,000 events, some large-scale and others much smaller, and it was necessary to choose the topics one found of interest and to plan ahead as smaller events were held at various locations across the city. The overall theme of the Kirchentag was 'trust', referencing II Kings Ch. 18 v. 19 and the trust and confidence in God shown by King Hezekiah, despite all the odds, in face of the demands of the Assyrians for Jerusalem's surrender to them. The theme of trust was explored in countless directions, not least in

Bible studies and at worship times.

The fact that so many people attend a Kirchentag – mostly from parishes up and down the country – makes the event a very public one and, perhaps because of the predominance of social justice issues in the programme, attracts attention from the media. Politicians attend, and after the opening service concluded, the German President, Frank-Walter Steinmeier, gave an address in which he stressed the themes of looking to the future, the preservation of democracy and the promotion of justice and peace. There was some comment in the national media regarding the decision of the Kirchentag committee specifically to invite representatives of all political parties in the German parliament except the Alternative for Germany (AfD) party. The AfD has been described as “right/far right”. No doubt the organizing committee thought long and hard in making its decision. I spoke to a number of people about the issue and there seemed to be a mixed view, some thinking the AfD should have been given a voice even if only to be challenged, while others felt that because of far right aspects of the party and some of its members it had crossed a certain line of acceptability.

After the opening service, there was a meeting for all guests, who were welcomed to Dortmund by Kirchentag officials and by a representative of the city of Dortmund, who described it as well known for coal, steel, football - and beer! A main session I attended focused on a planned European Christian Convention (ECC). The vision is for “a participatory, large-scale gathering ... A Christian event – fully ecumenical – open to everyone – bringing together people from all over Europe and beyond”. This seems like a Kirchentag-style occasion but for the whole of Europe, and the organisers intend holding it in 2023/24 at an as yet undecided location or locations. It is intended that the ECC will be an occasion for sharing spirituality, engaging in dialogue and addressing burning issues of the day. The ECC committee states: “Coming from a diversity of national, cultural and social backgrounds, Europe is our common home. Living our faith in different church traditions, we are united by the same gospel. Our diversity enriches us and we want to celebrate our faith together.” Perhaps the concept of the planned ECC is an example of how being church is developing, however gradually, from institutional expression to a form more akin to that of a faith-inspired movement with leadership and government structures decidedly 'lite'.

At this ECC event, one speaker was Mr Peter Liese, a German MEP, who spoke about the European Union's role in preserving peace. He referred to Brexit and, in this regard, stressed the need to avoid a 'hard border' in Ireland and defended the Withdrawal Agreement negotiated between the EU and the UK government under Mrs Theresa May. This reminded me of an interview I conducted when I served as editor of *The Church of Ireland Gazette*, with former Northern Ireland Secretary of State Theresa Villiers, in the run up to the 2016 referendum, in the course of which she responded to a question I posed about potential difficulties of a Brexit for the border. Ms Villiers told me with absolute confidence that “with a bit of common sense and goodwill we can maintain a border which is just as open after a Brexit vote as it is today”. In light of events as they have unfolded one might observe, easier said than done. A Kirchentag event related to this theme was a

prayer vigil focusing specifically on the divisiveness of the Brexit debate within the UK.

At the time of the Kirchentag the process of electing a new leader of the UK's Conservative Party, and hence Prime Minister, was consuming much British airtime and newspaper column inches. However, it was interesting to note how relatively little attention was being given to the matter in the German media, where instead there was much focus on who would be the next Presidents, respectively, of the European Commission, the European Council, the European Parliament, the European Central Bank, and the High Representative on Foreign Affairs - all posts of immense importance. A particular aspect of that challenge was getting a proper gender, political and regional balance across these areas of EU leadership. Having attended previous Kirchentags, there seemed this time to be greater representation of foreign guests from Africa and the Indian sub-continent. More generally, Kirchentag participants, although crossing generational and gender divides, are overwhelmingly white. Perhaps this is understandable, given that a Kirchentag is a German Protestant event, but the racially monochrome appearance of a very public event struck me as somehow at odds with the multiracial nature of European society today - perhaps an issue that comes as a reminder to the mainstream churches in western Europe that, racially speaking, their membership in this respect reflects a now bygone era. Several other sessions I attended were on social justice and international affairs themes, all set within the context of faith and witness.

The Middle East, of course, is a region in which there is untold violence and suffering. The complexities are enormous. However, Prof Volcker Perthes, director of the Berlin-based German Institute for International and Security Affairs, gave a masterly overview of the current situations in Syria, Iran and Yemen. In relation to Syria, he spoke about military decisions and military consequences and the need for the international community to build up social infrastructure and services, such as education and health, without actually enriching the government. Regarding Yemen and its current conflict, Prof Perthes said it was especially difficult in particular as far as delivering humanitarian aid is concerned. Regarding Iran, he was anxious about the danger of an accidental war with no clear purpose or end in sight. Prof Perthes referred to moral questions surrounding conflict resolution and, where that was elusive, conflict management. He spoke about the potential of trust, the leading theme of the Kirchentag, in all of these most challenging situations.

It was a particular privilege to attend a session in which Dr Denis Mukwege, a Nobel Peace Prize laureate from Bukavu in DR Congo, addressed the issue of violence against women and children in his homeland which, he said, is in a state of virtually permanent warfare. Dr Mukwege, a gynecologist who operates on raped and severely maimed women in the eastern Congo, urged a decisive commitment by the international community to act against rape as a weapon of war, and for the churches to play a more prophetic role.

In a packed 10,000-seater congress hall, Chancellor Angela Merkel spoke animatedly to the theme of 'Trust as the Basis of International Politics'. She said that without trust, international politics could not succeed, pointing to how Europe had suffered hundreds of years of wars but how peace had come through compromises and trust between citizens.

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She said that the historic EU and transatlantic partnerships had only been possible because of shared values and mutual trust. Mrs Merkel said that modern European history would have been very different if, after World War II, the Allies had not trusted the German people. The welfare of the world depends on trust, she asserted, stressing that no nation can achieve the highest goals on its own. She said that to trust is not naïve or to forget one's own interests, but that it is in one's own interests to be ready to trust. On a challenging note, recognising the manifold difficulties of the world today, Mrs Merkel concluded with a call to action to “improve what is imperfect”.

The Meissen Commission, a body on which I have served in the past as an observer from the Church of Ireland, is a specifically Church of England – German Protestant Church body. The Commission held a bilingual service during the Kirchentag, which I attended. The preacher was the Bishop of Huddersfield, the Rt Rev Jonathan Gibbs, who spoke about the need for the churches not to spend their energies on issues of structure and institution, but rather on communicating the good news of the Gospel and reaching out to the surrounding world in love and service.

The closing service of the Kirchentag was held in the Borussia Dortmund football stadium, which was packed for the worship event, in gleaming sunshine, and was followed by a generous reception for those of us who were guests. At the reception, held in the Borussia Dortmund stadium's hospitality suite, the President of the football club, and of the German Football League, Mr Reinhard Rauball, spoke. He said, to applause, that he had never before attended a Kirchentag but that he now would do so again.

In conclusion, the theme of trust is undoubtedly engaging. It raises questions and it challenges. For the person of faith, trust in God is virtuous and perhaps is mostly seen not as a particularly risk-taking act but more as an act of devotion. Trust in other people or between nations does, however, necessarily involve risk because, unlike God, not everyone is actually trustworthy. Yet, if the Kirchentag's many reflections on the theme of trust taught one thing, it was that trust, exercised with eyes open, is entirely necessary for progress in relationships, whether they be personal, family, church, community, business, national or international. It was a privilege to represent the Church of Ireland at the 2019 Kirchentag in Dortmund and I thank the Standing Committee for asking me to do so.

REULLY

(<http://strasbourginstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/Reully-Declaration.rtf>)

The Reully Common Statement calls for a closer relationship between the Anglican Churches of Britain & Ireland and the Elgise Réformée (a grouping of four French Protestant Churches, namely the Lutheran and Reformed Churches of France and the Lutheran and Reformed Churches of Alsace and Lorraine).

Reully Contact Group Composition

The group is supposed to be composed of five delegates from each side, though a balanced composition is difficult to achieve.

- The delegation for the Lutheran and Reformed Churches is established.

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- The delegation for the Anglican Church is still to be defined, though there is a current resources problem. The suggestion was made for a delegate from an Anglican community in France? (i.e. Debbie Flach, Mark Barwick?). For gender balance, another female Anglican delegate would be welcome.
- ⇒ Ven Meurig Williams will discuss the issue of a 6th Anglican Delegate with Bishop John Stroyan
- ⇒ A brief report will be sent to the Church of Wales shortly after the Reuilly meeting

Agenda

Small rearrangements are suggested. The date for a meeting within the next 12 months will be set.

Minutes from the previous meeting (2017)

Comments:

- The conclusion of session 2 requires correcting.
- Session 6 requires reviewing with Bishop John Stroyan..
- ⇒ Rev Dr Matthias Grebe will correct and send the amended minutes.

Session 1 – Church reports (since 11.2017); Chair: Rev Christian Krieger

Rev Christian Krieger:

- 2017 was the 500th anniversary of the Reformation.
- 2018 was the 100th anniversary of the end of WWI, unfortunately there was no ecumenical ceremony organized in Strasbourg.
- A terrorist attack was committed in Strasbourg in December 2018. An ecumenical prayer for peace was said in the cathedral.
- One of the main issues for UEPAL is “what Church in the future”
 - One reflection on “*Union and Sectorisation*” talks about how available human resources can be better used.
 - Another reflection on “*Churches and Evangelisation*” highlights how priests must now take a more missionary role, since today Protestants are more likely to be newcomers.
 - In November 2019, the blessing of same-sex married couples will be discussed. In preparation for this, UEPAL published a brochure called “*Couple, Parenthood, Family*”, setting out the key changes witnessed in family life.

Rev Alexandra Breukink:

- The Lutheran Church in Alsace Lorraine also produced a book on liturgy.
- Les “*Rendez-vous de la pensée protestante*” is a newly-created platform designed for theological debate to occur within Protestant sensibilities, in partnership with Protestant faculties.

Rev Claire Sixt-Gateuille:

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- In 2017 a drive called “Read the Bible” was launched to help promote new ways of reading the Bible, with mixed success.
- The nationwide and foreign mission (DEFAP) underwent a time of crisis last year, leading to the president’s proposing a revision to the foundation.
- EPUDF is facing financial difficulties, particularly at a national level, and partly due to changes in the French tax law.
- Président Macron wishes to change the 1905 Law on separation of Church and State, in order to establish a legal framework for Islam in France. In the draft law, every religious association is required to have an expert accountant, which is discriminatory since non-religious associations are not subject to the same obligation, which involves a cost. Protestant organisations will probably raise a case before the Constitutional council.

Rev John McLuckie:

No information to share from the Churches of Wales and Ireland

- In the Episcopal Church of Scotland, same-sex marriage couples have been taking place with the special permission of a bishop for the last one and a half years, with no distinction in the ceremony between civil and religious benediction and no specific liturgy. This issue is highly sensitive, and entailed two major consequences:
 - o A prohibition to represent communion at the international level for a period of three years
 - o The resignation of the co-chair of ecumenical dialogue
- At an ecumenical level, there have been some significant changes:
 - o There has been progress in relations with the Roman Catholic Church and the Church of Scotland, with a suggestion that the churches share ministry at a local level when permitted for ecumenical cooperation.
 - o A decline across the country, a struggle for the Church of Scotland to provide ministries in rural communities
 - o Conversation with the Methodist Church: when leaders are accepted by both of Churches, sharing the resources is an option. however, such occasion is rare.
- Brexit: there is a lot of resentments, even more for Irish people.

Ven Meurig Williams (also sharing Bishop John Stroyan’s notes)

- Big issues include finance and ecology.
- Ecumenicalism: the Church of England took part in the CEC General Assembly in Novi Sad.
- Social action: after the statement last December on “Striving for the common good”, the bishops fear Brexit will affect the most deprived areas of UK: the very people who voted to leave the EU.
- Sexuality: an important theme for years, added to which the transgender question is also contentious. A paper published in December caused a stir especially in evangelical communities, for specifying that liturgical resources are available for these contexts.

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- Growth: Church of England attendance in 2017 was at its highest point in a decade.
- Vocation: there are now more women training than men. This represents a considerable change (from the 1st woman trained in 1974 to 54% now).
- BAME: a new link is being forged between Church of England and the black community.
- Clergy well-being: a group is working on the health issue. Clearly clergy are isolated, lonely, and suffering under stress. This can cause of conflicts, bad behaviour, lack of willingness to listen. Ministry has changed, so has society.

Rev Dr Matthias Grebe

- Staff: Sarah Elisabeth Mulally was appointed Bishop of London on the 8 March 2018.
- Church and society: one report highlighted that over 60% of undergraduate students at Oxbridge are affected by mental health issues at some stage during their three years of studies.
- Safeguarding: a number of clergy have been found to have been involved in child sexual abuse, with some cases going back decades. As part of the UK government's independent inquiry on child sexual abuse (IICSA), 25,000 documents and witness statements have been collected. How the Church should police itself remains a challenging question, even with the presence of diocesan safeguarding officers. The Diocese in Europe has five officers, and development reviews with clergy are scheduled every three years (questions remain as to whether this is sufficient). Visits to parishes are also rare.

Session II - Report on Lyon Meeting on pilot sites in France; Chair: Ven Meurig Williams

Report on Lyon meeting, March 2018

Representatives of six sites were invited, with positive responses from three: Grenoble, Lyon, Strasbourg. The meeting was fruitful and all attendees expressed genuine desire to move forward. Some difficulties arose, however, when in cases like Grenoble and Strasbourg, only one side was represented (Lutheran-Reformed from Grenoble and Anglican from Strasbourg).

Lyon was a significant experience; it showed potential

- Progress was made with the service, which was an excellent family celebration, though took hard work to execute. How repeatable this is remains to be seen.
- Collaboration really depends on the chemistry between individuals. In Lyon, relations between the two ministers is excellent, but question marks remain as to whether this would extend to the congregations when they leave.
- A top down process was implemented. The Reuilly contact group identified parishes to invite, but some were unable to join. It was suggested that a wider invitation to all parishes would generate better results, and a weekend meeting in 2021 (perhaps including lay people?) may have particular impact. Supporting

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homegrown projects rather than top down initiatives might represent another successful approach.

Overview on the pilot sites invited but not present

- Nice: no response at all. During Ven Meurig Williams' visit, the Anglican chaplain of Saint Raphaël sounded enthusiastic about the project.
- Lille: a good relationship between the chaplaincy and Protestant parish.
- Strasbourg: organising a common celebration to welcome Bishop John Stroyan was very difficult, for reasons of logistics and prior commitments.

What next?

COE Method to develop enthusiasm

In October 2018, the first francophone meeting of the Global Christian Forum was organised in Lyon, with 250 attendees. This could be used as a model for future meetings.

Sites and individuals involved

Questions include: whom should we invite – only key representatives or also members of the community? Which languages should be used for which elements? How should invitations be issued?

Sharing things, and more

In Alsace, some churches are simultaneum, with a Roman Catholic and a Protestant parish sharing a church building. In France, Anglican churches often share buildings with other communities. Could this sharing of buildings encourage deeper partnerships?

Is there a lack of will to meet culturally? Is there an ignorance of what the Reuilly agreement proposes?

Conversation with the Roman Catholic Church

Reuilly conversation has seeks conversation of both Anglican and Protestant Churches with the Roman Catholic Church. Very often, Anglican chaplaincies will engage locally with the Roman Catholic Church more than with Lutheran or Reformed Churches. The major church is seen as the logical partner.

Building friendship

Several options are suggested for this:

- Attending each other's churches
- Meeting in a community centre and sharing faith together. (The capacity of the Hohrodberg Community centre is limited to 27, but other Protestant monasteries are available in France [Versailles, Strasbourg, Paris, Pomerol, Mazé St Bois])
- Hiking together (an experiment for a pilot site?)
- Duplicating the Lyon experience with a better structure, a clearer program
- Organising a theological conference in 2021 for the 20th anniversary of the Reuilly Agreement.

Session III Situation in France and ‘Gilets jaunes’ movement

Chair: Ven Meurig William. Input: Rev Christian Krieger

Every Saturday since mid-November an increasing number of demonstrators have taken to the streets in France to denounce austerity measures and the increase in fuel tax. The movement is coordinated over social media, is relatively fragmented, and covers a vast territory across social classes. The lack of coherence gives it an ambiguous, contradictory character, which also strengthens its ability to speak to different groups. Complaints are heterogeneous, apolitical and sometimes radical. There is no apparent hierarchy, no rules to guide action and no sanctions for non-compliance. The organisation is based solely on the criterion of belonging, on the symbol of wearing a yellow vest and the shared need to be seen and heard. The movement has tried to structure itself but failed (i.e. spokespersons designated to negotiate with the government or to coordinate the movement were very quickly accused of not representing the people).

A lasting movement with repeated outbreaks of violence

The movement has lasted for months. The numbers involved are not large compared to other social movements in history, but it nonetheless occupies people's minds, the media and social networks, and has degenerated, with outbreaks of violence (with images of riots, the Arc de Triomphe vandalised, police officers and demonstrators seriously injured). On 10 December, President Macron spoke in front of more than 23 million television viewers to announce new measures to increase purchasing power, the cost of which was estimated at 10 billion euros. The measures adopted did not ease tensions, and the gilets jaunes for more direct involvement in the development of public policies (Citizens' Initiative Referendum [RIC]).

Great National debate, Democracy 2.0?

The government responded to the request of participatory democracy with an online consultation. President Macron announced the organisation of a Great National Debate from 15 January to 15 March, 2019. Four key themes guide the consultation:

1. Taxation and public spending
2. The organisation of the State and public services
3. The ecological transition, the question of its financing
4. Democracy and citizenship institutional reform, and the Citizens' Initiative Referendum (RIC),

Debates can be organised at the level of the district, the commune, the region, etc, and citizens could submit their contributions directly. Conferences will allow exchange on the analyses and proposals resulting from the various local debates. However, many "gilets jaunes" deny the legitimacy of this initiative, convinced that the real debate is "in the street".

The movement is questioning the representative democracy, the increasing inequalities between rich and poor, large metropolises and empty peripheries, the mistrust of the elites, and the feeling of abandonment and injustice.

Session 4 - Report on Meissen; Chair: Rev Christian Krieger. Input: Rev Dr Matthias Grebe

Meissen, sense, context

In 1983, the Meissen agreement emerged from the reconciliatory efforts between two countries and was signed in 1991 by the Church of England and the EKD (Reuilly is broader, encompassing the Episcopal Scotland of Scotland and Church of Ireland). The Meissen agreement understands itself as a step on the journey to full visible unity. Paragraph 1-7 deals with the context (statement), paragraph 8 onwards the agreement (declaration).

The sense of Meissen:

- 1) Acknowledgement of the other church,
- 2) Acknowledgement on word and sacrament given
- 3) Acknowledgement of each other ordained ministries
- 4) Acknowledgement on visible sign of the unity/on episcopate. Voluntarily or not, Meissen misses the communal episcopate, has only personal and collegial episcopate.

Meissen contains seven commitments.

Two means of engagement on the way towards full, visible unity
> *Meissen commission meetings*

There are three meetings a year for each church, and one common meeting between them. It is usually a time of fellowship, to learn about and from each other.

Bishop Nick Baines, who was the previous Meissen co-chair, focused on topics like mission and Christian fellowship, rather than the episcopate issue, and this allowed Meissen to promote the building of real friendship. Every two years sees a partnership meeting (jumelage) in Germany, and Bishop Baines was regularly invited to the German Kirchentag. Every five years sees a delegation visit, and the last one happened before the Brexit conference in December 2018.

> *Theological conferences*

Meissen organises a theological conference every two or three years. The last one revisited the Meissen Agreement after 30 years and the proceedings will be published.

The missing link to full visible unity

The UK Act of Uniformity (1662) stipulates that the sacrament of eucharist can only be celebrated by an episcopal ordained priest. Under Canon B43, the service of an EKD pastor celebrating in an Anglican building would then simply not be recognised as Anglican, and therefore full interchangeability would depend on the Act being changed (this is what happened to enable the ordination of women).

Discussion

The differences between Reuilly and Meissen were discussed, as well as how Meissen might reinforce Reuilly. Ven Meurig Williams recalled the witness in Belfast of Methodist and Anglican exchange of ministries.

The nuances in each language were noted: in English, “we acknowledge” is lower than “we recognise” (nous admettons, confirmons ≠ nous reconnaissons)

Full, visible unity is also a sharing of life and mission of the church, which includes (ministry), and John McLuckie highlighted that while historical episcopate is non-negotiable for a unified church, there is nonetheless probably space for a sign toward visible unity

Ideas for the Colloquium 2021

- Evaluation of 20 years of Reuilly (two speakers)
- Free ticket for theologians: how to move further toward full visible unity
- Tackle the issues brought by the Act of Uniformity as well as that of “historical apostolity”
- Deepen the understanding of the wording of Reuilly agreement (recognise ≠ acknowledge)
- A consideration of how we understand “full visible unity”
- Interchangeability with Episcopal Church of Scotland and the Irish Church, not bound by the Act of Uniformity

Session 5 - Developing theological dialogue ; Chair: Rev Christian Krieger

How strong and binding is the Act of Uniformity? This is a political issue which reflects the status of Anglicanism in UK. Historical episcopate is non-negotiable for the Church of Scotland, but full visible unity is wider than just the interchangeability of ministry. One of the goals for 2020 or 2021 is to find a way to deepen the collaboration. For the 20th anniversary of the Reuilly Agreement the group proposed to organise a colloquium, to discuss and continue the work started in Lyon and to make space for signs of full visible unity as well as an exploration of unity within diversity, and unity as serving beyond the Eucharist. Structure is important, but not the goal per se. 2 projects will be further discussed:

- A meeting in the beginning of July for evaluation and feedback
- A colloquium for the 20th anniversary in 2021

Session 6 - Where we are in the light of the Brexit

Chair: Rev Christian Krieger. Input: Ven Meurig William, Rev John McLuckie

The divisions in the UK are not new, and tensions have been present for decades. Scotland and Ireland have a strong regional/national identity and voted to remain within Europe, while Wales and England to leave. The power is located in London, Oxford and Cambridge. Those who are against any agreement do so for various reasons, some for political opportunism. The idea should be to leave on the best possible terms and the agreement should have been settled much earlier. If Brexit does come to pass, the great

question for both France and the Diocese of Europe is the administrative task of dealing with for UK citizens who have lived abroad for decades and the repercussions for chaplaincies. Questions arise about residency or citizenship, right to work, to drive, and access to education/health care/medical insurance/pensions. How will applications for vacant congregations be handled?

The heart of Brexit voter was discontent about austerity and immigration, but English nationalism was also in the background. In the context of the Reuilly agreement, what practical solidarity can be arranged for chaplaincies facing difficulties in finding a minister? Could support be provided by the EPUDF? In the case of a no-deal Brexit, Claire Sixt Gateuille would show solidarity with the Anglican chaplaincy. William Meurig will prepare a prayer to be shared in the prayer of general intercession, to raise awareness of the communion of the Churches and stay in contact.

COMMUNITY OF PROTESTANT CHURCHES IN EUROPE

(CPCE: <https://www.leuenberg.eu/>)

The CPCE is the umbrella organisation of the protestant churches. 94 Lutheran, Methodist, reformed and united churches from over thirty countries in Europe and South America belong to it. With that the CPCE represents altogether around 50 million Protestants. The CPCE exists thanks to the Leuenberg Agreement of 1973. The next General Assembly of the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe is due to take place in 2024

PORVOO (www.porvoocommunion.org)

The Porvoo Communion of Churches, (with members from the Lutheran Churches in the Nordic and Baltic countries and the Anglican Churches in Britain and Ireland and on the Iberian Peninsula), continued its work of bringing the Porvoo Churches and its member closer together in mission and ministry during 2018.

Porto 2019

During 2019 the Porvoo Communion gathered in Porto, Portugal for a Church Leaders' Consultation as well as for the annual meeting with the Porvoo Contact Group. The 2019 meeting focused on *The Church in the Public Square*. The consultation took place at the Roman Catholic Seminário de Vilar in Porto where delegates were made welcome by the Rt Revd Jorge Pina Cabral and the Lusitanian Catholic Apostolic Evangelical Church. Over the two days, the consultation shared insights about secularism; digital presence; and the church's involvement and contribution to the climate change discussion. The Church of Finland's profound work on climate change, built on a foundation of Christian theology and ethics was discussed. The goal in the Church of Finland was a carbon neutral church by 2030. All Porvoo meetings are inspired by the local context. The consultation was fortunate to hear from Mr Antonio Marujo, an experienced Portuguese journalist who gave his perspective on the public square in Portuguese society. The religious landscape of Portugal is diverse, but with a dominant Roman Catholic Church. In Portugal, there are expectations among the public that the churches should contribute to public discourse and that the churches had to speak. Mr Marujo gave examples of where the churches had contributed in the public debate but also when the churches had declined to speak.

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The Consultation took place shortly after the death of the Rt Rev Dr Tore Furberg, sometime Bishop of Visby in the Church of Sweden and Lutheran Co-Chair of the conversations that led to the Porvoo Agreement. The consultation recognised with gratitude his ministry and the legacy he leaves. The 2019 meeting saw some new members in the contact group, among them the Lutheran Co-chair, Bishop Matti Repo (Church of Finland) and the Lutheran Co-Secretary, Rev Dr Erik Berggren (Church of Sweden).

In addition, the members of the contact group shared information from each other's churches and planned for future events.

The Church of Ireland was represented in by:
Rev Helene T. Steed, Church of Ireland member of the Porvoo Contact Group
The Most Rev Dr Michael Jackson, Anglican Co-chair of the Porvoo Contact Group

Work plan for the next three years:

2020 – Theological Conference, 8th to 11th of October. Theme: Ecclesiology. Venue: Sweden

2021 – Primates' Meeting, 14th to 17th of October. Venue: Finland.

2022 – Consultation. Venue: The British Isles (possibly Wales or England), tbc.

Every day Porvoo

The Porvoo Communion has no budget, no office and no paid staff, and hence the members Churches contribute as they can. In many respects it operates as a network. To facilitate the work and fellowship, the member Churches have appointed two co-chairs and two co-secretaries, one from each tradition. In addition, each member Church has a contact person.

The Churches in the Porvoo Communion pray for each other. Every Sunday, Diocese, its bishop/s, clergy and people are remembered in prayer by congregations and parishes, as well as by individuals. The prayer diary for 2020 is found on-line at: <http://porvoocommunion.org/resources/prayer-diary/>

For more information about the Porvoo Communion, please see the homepage: www.porvoocommunion.org.

THE INTERNATIONAL REFORMED–ANGLICAN DIALOGUE

(IRAD: <https://www.anglicancommunion.org/ecumenism/ecumenical-dialogues/reformed.aspx>)

2015 was the first time that the Anglican and Reformed Communions have met in a formal dialogue at the global level since 1984, when the dialogue finalized its agreement statement, God's Reign and our Unity. The Church of Ireland is represented by the Rev Helene T. Steed.

Communique 2019

The International Reformed–Anglican Dialogue (IRAD) between the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC) and the Anglican Communion met for the fifth time,

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between 23 and 30 August 2019 in Hiroshima, Japan, under the leadership of Co-Chairs: The Rev Dr Elizabeth Welch (WCRC) and The Most Rev Dr Howard Gregory (Anglican Communion).

This bilateral dialogue, the first that the Anglican and Reformed Communion have had globally since 1984, which then led to the report *God's Reign and Our Unity*, was mandated to take as its theme a study of the nature of communion (koinonia) and the pressing issues which emerge for both Communion out of such reflection. After meetings in India (2015), England (2016), South Africa (2017) and Canada (2018), this meeting in Japan concluded our focus on koinonia as God's gift and calling. Engaging with the theme has been both exciting and challenging. The report examines the foundations of koinonia in scripture, theology and history, and how it is expressed in ecclesiology and mission. We looked at what our understanding of koinonia is, and how we see koinonia lived out. We have explored how koinonia helps us address the diversities within and between our communions. Meeting in Hiroshima, we were deeply moved to hear atomic bomb survivor Ms Keiko Ogura share her story of 6 August 1945, and to visit the Peace Park and the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum.

The dialogue opened with a celebration of Holy Communion in the Anglican tradition and closed with a celebration of Holy Communion in the Reformed tradition. The members of the dialogue prayed together mornings and evenings. The Commission participated in the Anglican Eucharist at the Church of the Resurrection where we were welcomed very warmly. This round of the dialogue was generously hosted by the Anglican Communion. The hospitality of the diocese of Kobe was greatly appreciated. Greetings were brought from the Church of Christ in Japan and the Korean Christian Church in Japan. We were kindly received by the Primate of the Anglican Church in Japan, The Most Rev Nathaniel Makato Uematsu, and the Bishop of Kobe, The Rt Rev Augustine Naoaki Kobayashi. The Commission is particularly grateful to The Rev Dr Renta Nishihara, The Rev Shintaro Ichihara and Mrs Miki Hamai for their work setting up and supporting the meeting.

EUROPEAN AFFAIRS WORKING-GROUP

Membership

Rt Rev Patrick Rooke (Chair), Dr Ken Milne, Rev David White (Hon. Sec.), Rev Cathy Hallissey,

Co-opted - Ms Janet Barcroft, Canon Patrick Comerford, Canon Adrian Empey, Ms Maxine Judge, Canon Eithne Lynch.

Conference of European Churches (CEC) Draft Strategic Plan: 2019-2023

The European Affairs Working Group welcomed the Draft CEC Strategic Plan: 2019-2023 *Together in Hope and Witness* and congratulated those responsible for putting it together. It is an ambitious programme with many exciting and imaginative initiatives envisaged. We were also grateful for the opportunity to be part of the wider consultation process.

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CEC was founded in 1959 and is a fellowship of some 115 Orthodox, Protestant, Anglican, Old Catholic and other reformed churches from countries around Europe, plus 40 National Councils of Churches and partner organisations.

The European Affairs Working Group felt that the range of issues in each of the three areas, were already wide-ranging enough without us adding to them. (AIM 1: CEC promotes peace, justice, and reconciliation in Europe; AIM 2: CEC deepens church communion and ecumenical fellowship and AIM 3: CEC raises the Churches voice in Europe and toward the European Institutions)

There were, however, two issues we commented upon. We noted with enthusiasm the inclusion of youth at the CEC General Assembly in Novi Sad through a parallel ‘Youth Assembly’ and active engagement of some of these delegates in the overall Assembly. Our Group welcomed this direction which it is hoped will be further implemented in the CEC Strategy. We noted that the Governing Board’s intention is to enhance the presence and involvement of young people so as to have 20% of persons of the age 18 to 30 in all the thematic groups, task forces and events. We remarked with some concern that there is no specific field of work on youth. We look forward, however, to learning how this intention to include younger people will manifest itself in practical terms.

The European Affairs Working Group welcomed the proposal for a global communications strategy. We look forward to further details of the working out of this strategy and its longer-term implementation. Today we have more means to communicate than ever before in human history. The benefits are enormous and include clarity of vision and this will serve CEC, its member churches, partner organisations and the communities it seeks to serve well over the next few years. We wished the Working Group well with the task of developing a communications plan.

Brexit

The European Affairs Working Group welcomed Standing Committee’s statement on September 17 2019 which noted ‘the decision of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to leave the European Union on a date determined but yet to be finalized.’

As time passes, the complexity of Brexit is becoming obvious which only clarifies the emptiness of the Election slogan – ‘Get Brexit done!’ Standing Committee urged ‘the Government of Ireland, Her Majesty’s Government, and the member states of the European Union to do everything in their power to ensure the continuity of peace, stability and economic security for those on the island of Ireland affected by Brexit, and to uphold such international treaties and agreements as are in place in order to secure the above outcome.’ After the 31 January deadline the United Kingdom’s exit from the European Union became a reality. During the extendable transition period, we can expect more difficult conversations about the EU-UK partnership until 31 December 2020 when the UK will leave the European Customs Union.

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The European Affairs Working Group has been concerned with how it might assist members of the Church of Ireland, north and south, to adjust to the changes Brexit will bring. With this in mind:-

1. The Working Group invited Dr Paul Gillespie, Deputy Director of the UCD Institute for British Irish Studies (IBIS) and Irish Times columnist to speak to them. Dr Gillespie had many interesting insights to share and kindly agreed to return to talk to the wider Commission for Christian Unity and Dialogue.
2. Under the guidance of Dr Kenneth Milne, the Working Group put together the following observations....

Where are we now?

- (a) The departure of the United Kingdom from the European Union on 31 January 2020 does not mean that EU rules (including those pertaining to membership of the Common Market and the Customs Union) no longer apply in Northern Ireland. On the contrary, for a 'transition period' of at least a year the UK will continue to be subject to EU regulations. The UK government has insisted that this period will be restricted to a single year, though the EU doubts if this will suffice if all aspects of 'withdrawal' are to be settled. During the transition period negotiations will take place on the future relationship between EU and UK, and in particular the putting in place of a comprehensive trade agreement, the terms of which will be of particular importance for Northern Ireland.
- (b) The Northern Ireland and Welsh Assemblies, like the Scottish Parliament, voted to reject the 'Withdrawal Bill', which, however, received the royal assent on 23 January. Of particular concern to Northern Ireland representatives at Westminster is whether or not the Prime Minister's assurance that 'unfettered access' for Northern Ireland businesses to the rest of the UK market also applies to goods moving from Great Britain to the North; however, all attempts by Northern Ireland members to amend the bill at Westminster were defeated. So far as the 'remaining' members of the EU (not least Ireland) are concerned, the closer that EU and UK regulations remain the better, though the UK government has sent out ambiguous signals on this issue.
- (c) Both political jurisdictions on the island of Ireland will have a keen interest in the negotiations between EU and UK during the transition period, and the Irish Churches particularly will be conscious of the impact that Brexit and the ensuing EU-UK relationship has on the most vulnerable of our members. Churches will also need to be vigilant where citizens' rights and human rights in general are concerned.

Consultation Paper

The Churches, having pastoral responsibilities in both North and South, have an obligation to scrutinise the workings of the EU post-Brexit. A consultation paper, 'Brexit and the Irish Churches-pastoral dimensions', was prepared jointly by the Irish Council of Churches and the Irish Inter-Church Committee and circulated among the Churches in 2018 in which, as convenor of the ICC European Affairs Committee, Dr Kenneth Milne wrote:

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‘Having adjusted to the creation of two distinct political jurisdictions on the island almost a century ago our Churches should be confident of overcoming whatever stresses lie ahead, and we believe that as part of civil society we have a role to play in supporting our members in what is likely to be a protracted period of some difficulty. But to do so we need to be well-informed and energetic in maintaining our contacts with the European institutions and to sustain our commitment to doing so’

Writing in the same document, the General Secretary of ICC, Dr Nicola Brady, referred to the fact that Brexit entailed significant risks with regard to community relations in Northern Ireland and the Most Rev Noel Treanor, bishop of Down and Connor wrote of the vocation of the Churches, ‘espousing no interest other than the common good of the entire human family...’ and as having ‘a shared responsibility to create contexts and spaces of encounter, exchange and understanding.’

Moving Forward

2019 saw the appointment of new membership of the main EU institutions: the Commission, the Council of Ministers and the European Parliament (as a result of which Ireland now has in addition two of the re-allocated UK seats in the parliament). The new President of the Commission, Ms Ursula von der Leyen has identified the following issues as top of the EU’s agenda, each of which has an ethical dimension:

- (i) climate change and the environment (with which the question of migration is closely linked)
 - (ii) ‘the Future of Europe’
 - (iii) A thorough review of the structure and operation of the EU’s institutions
-
- (i) ‘The European Green Deal-preserving our Common Home’ is an ambitious initiative, involving all the EU institutions. It clearly is of huge concern to the Churches, and was the subject of a symposium held in Brussels in January 2020 under the auspices of the ‘Article 17’ programme (headed by Mairéad McGuinness, recently re-elected First Vice-President of the Parliament). It is proposed (subject to budgetary agreement) to provide very considerable funding for carrying out the plan, including local participation, which is vital. The recent elections in the Republic have revealed a situation by no means confined to Ireland, that while the population in general recognises that urgent action is required to save the planet, few are prepared to face up to their responsibilities as individuals. Here, surely, is a role for the Churches.
 - (ii) ‘The Future of Europe’ study is not confined to a concern for the member states of the EU alone, but for the continent as a whole. There are social and economic aspects of the matter, and many commentators detect a certain complacency on the part of a new European generation (some representatives in the newly elected European Parliament among them) who are slow to recognise the purpose that lay behind the establishment of the original Coal and Steel pact of 1951 (comprising six nations) in the aftermath of WW2, which was never intended to be simply a free trade area

but was a response to the horrors of war, and has developed into the present European Union. Here again, there is surely need for a Christian contribution.

- (iii) It has long been recognised that many citizens of the member states of the EU lack any sense of ‘belonging’. This is often called the ‘democratic deficit’, though it has to be admitted that disenchantment with more local political institutions is not hard to find. Where Euroscepticism is concerned, the credibility gap is to be attributed (particularly in the United Kingdom) to a hostile and aggressive press which successive governments have failed adequately to address. However, the EU itself accepts a share of the blame, and admits that it needs to give a higher profile to the positive, as compared with the more controversial aspects of its work. A particularly enlightening aspect of the visit paid by an ICC delegation to Brussels some years ago was to meet with officials who were working in areas of great social significance, touching the lives of many vulnerable people, yet whose activities were largely unknown to the general public. That legitimate criticisms can be levelled at the workings of the European Union is not denied by many of its warmest supporters but they would be among the first to claim that if it did not exist something akin to it would be called for if such major current issues as climate change, migration and international security, none of which can be tackled without international co-operation are to be tackled adequately.
- (iv) It is scarcely adequate simply to identify areas of concern for the Churches without considering the means whereby this concern is to be translated into action. And Churches, by virtue of their local presence, should be well placed to play their part- if they can come to some agreement as to what that part is. Many years ago, an Irish commissioner told a Church of Ireland group that we had at our fingertips, thorough our parochial system, a presence in every corner of the island!
- (v) The Salvation Army set a good example to other religious bodies when last year it published ‘The Brexit Toolkit’, which offered its members guidance on ‘how to respond to the possible impact of Brexit’. As was to be expected from that organisation, the booklet struck a practical note, highlighting such critical areas as increased unemployment, higher food prices, and an increase in homelessness caused by an economic downturn. The document cited Northern Ireland as among the parts of the UK most likely to be severely impacted because of their dependence on trade within the European Single Market. While recommending such highly practical measures as being prepared for an increased demand for food parcels and supporting EU nationals who might be anxious about their future, the advice included

advocating the need for awareness of, and co-operation with such relief agencies as exist. The European Affairs Working Group has asked the ICC if it might explore the possibility, when the future looks a little clearer, of producing something similar for the churches in Ireland.

- (vi) Bearing in mind the limited human and financial resources available to Churches, it is worth noting that the previously-mentioned ICC/ICCM consultation paper ‘Brexit and the Irish Churches’ drew attention to the importance of the EU’s obligations under ‘Article 17’ to ‘engage with Churches, Religions, Philosophical and Non-confessional organisations ‘and such liaison is particularly valuable where the monitoring of EU policy and legislation is concerned. Likewise, there are, nearer to home, important sources of information such as the Institute of International and European Affairs in Dublin (of which we are a member), the Brexit Institute at Dublin City University (which welcomes us to its events) and of the work of the inter-university body headed by Dr Paul Gillespie, and, which he has indicated, will in due course seek to involve the Churches in its work.

INTER FAITH WORKING GROUP

Membership

Rt Rev Dr Kenneth Kearon (Chair), Ms Georgina Coptý (Honorary Secretary), Canon Patrick Comerford, Rev Suzanne Cousins

Membership

Ms Georgina Coptý, who has served with the group for nine years, has submitted her resignation effective from June. Canon Elaine Murray will join the group as a full member in March 2020.

Engagement with the Jewish Community

The rise in anti-Semitic behaviour, compelled the group to reach out to the Jewish community. The group was eager to engage with members from the community and learn from their experiences of life in Ireland. A daylong event took place on March 5th which commenced with a guided tour of the Jewish Museum in Portobello, Dublin. The group received a very informative talk about the history of the Jewish community in Ireland, and heard personal accounts. During the afternoon, Rabbi Zalman Lent, Dublin Hebrew Congregation, met with the group at CITI. The Rabbi carried a constructive conversation with the group during which he shared his own experiences, and discussed some of the racial challenges facing the Jewish community in Ireland. The day had a positive atmosphere with the group expressing support to the Jewish community and learning of helpful ways for future engagement.

Engagement with the Moslem Community

As part of the group’s continuous effort to build relationships with our neighbours, a visit to the Clonskeagh Mosque, Dublin, was arranged. Dr Ali Selim hosted the group and gave a tour of the mosque and adjacent primary school. Dr Selim spoke of the experience of the

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Muslim community in Ireland and some of the challenges. He also gave a brief history of Islam and spoke on gender issues and the traditional role of women. The group was able to enjoy lunch at the Mosque and engaged in conversations with other members of the Muslim community.

Presence and Engagement

From 31st March – 5th April 2019, the Rev Canon Elaine Murray (Cork, Cloyne and Ross) and the Rev Suzanne Cousins (Armagh) made a trip to England on behalf of the IFWG and commissioned by CCUD. The purpose was to explore on-the-ground inter faith initiatives which take place under the banner of the Church of England's 'Presence and Engagement' ('P&E') ministry, and to see what learning might be extracted for the Church of Ireland with its growing multi-religious and multi-cultural context. They visited the Dioceses of Southwark (London), Birmingham, Leicester and Manchester as well as attending the annual P&E/Inter-faith Conference at Lambeth, and met with representatives of the Council of Christians and Jews. The trip came about following the 2018 Consultation, at which the keynote speaker was Bishop Toby Howarth, a significant contributor to the P&E ministry and programmes.

Summary of suggestions and recommendations resulting from the trip:

- The overarching recommendation was that the COI consider following the example of developing a customised resource for the COI, including an IF-designated website, and that the COI can usefully draw on the P&E experience, expertise and resources to develop our own contextualised resources.
- The observation was made that P&E-based projects have brought ordinary people of faith together in friendship and understanding, helping to contribute towards peaceful and reconciled communities. It was suggested that Mothers' Union potentially has a major role to play in such reconciliatory community-building work at grassroots level.
- It was impressed that interfaith engagement may/should be viewed as a gospel imperative to reach out to "the other". This was emphasised at the Lambeth P&E conference.
- A theological understanding of the Church's Inter Faith ministry is important: for example, a Trinitarian understanding of interfaith initiatives is significant, that we (the church community) are the body of Christ (the Son) wherever we find ourselves, transforming society (by the Holy Spirit), hence giving and receiving the blessing of God (the Father).

Future Work

The group is holding another event on April 27, at CITI. Rev Dr Ainsley Griffith, Director of Faith, Order and Unity, will speak to the group at CITI on interfaith work currently taking place in the Church in Wales. Dr. Griffith will also share his own experiences in matters relating to faith and order. In order to obtain a holistic view of interfaith work in the UK and Ireland, the group is considering inviting a member of the Scottish Episcopal Church to speak on interfaith work in Scotland. This event is provisionally scheduled to take place in September, 2020.

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Appendix 1 ~ Annual Church Meetings

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN IRELAND BELFAST, 3rd-7th JUNE 2019

The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland took place at Assembly Buildings, Belfast, from 3-7th June 2019. Proceedings began with the Installation of the new Moderator, the Rt Rev Dr William Henry, on the Monday night. This was the most formal event of the week, with an impressive procession of past moderators in full robes. Both the outgoing and incoming moderators gave addresses, with the outgoing moderator giving a review of the year and the incoming moderator expounding his chosen theme 'Enjoying God.'

Tuesday to Friday were given over to a wide range of business, interspersed with 'alternative presentations' which gave the opportunity for a more expansive engagement with key issues. These were entitled 'Beyond Ourselves,' dealing with outreach and evangelism, 'People on the Move,' looking at global migration, and 'Life Always Matters,' looking at adolescent mental health, dementia and palliative care. These highly professional presentations brought a depth of insight and inspiration to bear on the topics covered, and a number of excellent new resources were unveiled.

Notable debates during the week included the high-profile issues of the PCI's relationship with the Church of Scotland and the relationship between Queen's University and Union Theological College. Both of these subjects were discussed with intensity but with an attitude of respect for difference. Less newsworthy, but nonetheless significant, discussion topics included college and prison chaplaincy, pay scales for additional pastoral workers, dealing with the legacy of the past and the future of the Guysmere Residential Centre at Castlerock. All of these debates and the many resolutions considered and passed were handled with skill by the Moderator, ably assisted by the Clerk of the General Assembly, Rev Trevor Gribben, whose role is somewhere between the Assessor and the Honorary Secretaries at our General Synod.

In many ways the General Assembly and the General Synod are similar – the pattern of an opening address followed by reports, speeches, resolutions and amendments, punctuated by worship and prayer, is common to both meetings. However there are some significant differences. The presence of retired ministers at the General Assembly is significant. In particular the input of several notable former moderators including the Very Rev Drs John Dunlop, Gordon Grey, Trevor Morrow, Norman Hamilton and Ken Newell brought gravitas and experience to many of the discussions. At the other end of the age scale, delegates from the previously-held Youth Assembly brought fresh vision and dynamism to the debates.

Visiting delegates from Greece, Malawi, Indonesia and several other countries enabled the voice of the global church to be heard, to the great enrichment of everyone present. In

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particular, to hear first-hand from those dealing with the fallout of the refugee crisis and those at the interface between Christianity and Islam was eye-opening and prompted prayer and praise. The whole Assembly was conducted in an atmosphere of warmth with the feel of a family gathering. Appropriately timed humour lightened what could have been dull or fractious moments and the overall ambience was upbeat and positive. We are very grateful for the opportunity to attend and bring the greetings of the Church of Ireland, and for the hospitality shown to us and to all the visiting delegates from beginning to end.

Ven David Huss
Mr Mike Johnston

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THE METHODIST CHURCH IN IRELAND ANNUAL CONFERENCE CORK, JUNE 2019

I was privileged to attend the 250th annual Methodist Conference held in Cork as a Church of Ireland representative, at the request of Standing Committee. I was made to feel very welcome, and I felt I was among friends, as I know personally many ministers who have been stationed within the Dioceses of Limerick & Killaloe.

Compared to General Synod, I was much struck by how well everyone knew each other. This may be because Conference is smaller, with even numbers of ministers and laity, but also I think because Methodist ministers move more often. They have traditionally not been stationed in one circuit for more than 8 years. A working party established at Conference 2019 brought forward proposals for how stationing of ministers should be managed in the new District Structures, and a resolution was passed removing the 8 year limit on stationing from the Constitution to allow greater flexibility for reasons of continuity and mission, and to reduce the number of consequential moves across the Connexion, while maintaining the principle of itinerancy, which remains highly valued.

I was struck by the grace and mutual respect with which potentially divisive issues were handled, for instance sexuality. The Working Party on Human Sexuality, part of the Faith and Order Committee, reported that it was continuing its work, and plans a series of events during the next Connexional year as opportunities to engage with scripture. Circuits have previously been directed to hold conversations about human sexuality and give feedback to the working party. Those circuits which had not yet given feedback were urged to do so. I was also struck by the vibrancy of the daily worship and Bible Study led by Rev Dr Sahr Yambasu from Waterford.

The Report of the Covenant Council was received as 'En Bloc' business without discussion. Conference continues to encourage congregations to celebrate the Covenant relationship with neighbouring Church of Ireland congregations on or around John Wesley Day, 24th May. Conference reappointed Rev Dr Heather Morris as Co-Chair of the Covenant Council, and appointed the following as its representatives for the coming year:

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Rev Dr Heather Morris, Rev Andrew J Dougherty, Ms Gillian M Kingston, Rev Dr Thomas R McKnight, and Rev Dr Janet M Unsworth.

I was given an opportunity to say a few words in the context of the Covenant. I said that we in the Church of Ireland continue to cherish this relationship, in which we commit ourselves to share a common life and mission, and to grow together so that unity may be visibly realised. I noted that in my own diocese of Limerick & Killaloe, the diocesan magazine which I have edited includes news from Methodist circuits as well as Church of Ireland parishes - a great blessing for us, and I hoped for them too. Through this we see just how much we come together, for instance in ecumenical Good Friday walks of witness, Lenten courses and suchlike. I cited two examples from May 2019: in Kenmare, Methodists shared in Bible studies led by Rev Michael Cavanagh; and Rev Canon Patrick Comerford of the Rathkeale and Kilnaughtin group of parishes and Rev Ruth Watt of the Adare & Ballingrane Methodist Circuit exchanged churches, with the latter celebrating Holy Communion in one of the former's churches. The truth is that in my part of the world Church of Ireland and Methodist folk are already very close, in many cases friends from school and members of the same families by marriage. But there is so much more we could be doing to make a reality of the Covenant. For instance, we in the Church of Ireland have much to learn from Methodists about mission and outreach to new Irish communities. And if we mutually recognised the ministry of Diocesan Readers and Methodist Local Preachers, we could better support each other's scattered congregations in rural areas.

Mr Joe Sanders

RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF FRIENDS IRELAND YEARLY MEETING DUBLIN, 25th – 28th APRIL 2019

Report from Dr Kenneth Milne

I was only able to attend the Yearly Meeting on the opening day, 25 April 2019, though, fortunately, quite a substantial amount of business was transacted that afternoon and evening. As I have mentioned in my reports on previous Yearly Meetings, I find that the procedure whereby the devotional aspect of the programme is distributed regularly throughout the agenda is impressive. Likewise, the manner in which the assembly frequently goes into silent mode is quite striking, and I suspect that this is only possible as a result of the Friends being accustomed to the discipline of silent worship.

Much of the first session was devoted to receiving international letters of greeting from Quakers and epistles from Yearly Meetings in other countries, including Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden. Friends are very conscious of their worldwide presence, and their distinctive contribution to international bodies such as the United Nations is considerable. The British Quakers stressed that 'come what may' they would remain close to other European Quakers.

The communication from North America included acknowledgments from New York and Ohio that there was need to address the fact that Quakers might have contributed to ideas of 'white supremacy', while others referred to growing concern over environmental issues

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and the existence of 'clear disagreement' on marriage issues (likewise in Dublin, where a Special Meeting was held to consider the question of same-sex marriage in the context of the referendum in the Republic).. From the North Pacific came concern about 'unconscious racism' Both Australia and New Zealand expressed the need for more contact with aboriginal peoples. There were also reports from Africa and South America.

The theme of the Yearly Meeting was 'Education', a contribution to society that Friends make in many parts of the world (not least in Ireland). Of especial interest was a report on the role of Quaker schools in the Middle East, which have played a critical role in intense situations for many years. The report on 'Ministry and Oversight' told of Friends pastoral care of the elderly and infirm nearer home.

I think it is worth mentioning that the book stall at the Yearly Meeting gave evidence of Friends' publishing activity, including that of Irish Quakers. The Friends have an enviable record where the care and publication of their archives are concerned.

Report from Dr Bridget Nichols

The annual gathering of the Society of Friends in Ireland took Education as its theme for 2019. This was reflected in a public lecture on education, ministry and renewal (towards recovering the inspiration of the founders of the Quaker movement), and in special sessions on adult education and young people's spiritual growth. Routine business, Bible studies, and opportunities for meditation on scripture were shaped around the larger presentations. Thirty minutes of silent worship at the commencement of each day's business will have come as a novelty to anyone unfamiliar with Quaker practice, but it has much to commend it.

A highlight of the gathering was a presentation on the Quaker schools in Brummana in Lebanon and Ramallah on the West Bank. Both institutions are thriving examples of interfaith co-operation and, of the vision and drive of the Quaker International Education Trust. A rather different, but also excellent introduction to 'personal data matters' by an IT instructor gave a fascinating overview of the development from the earliest computers to the technology used in modern national elections. A professional film-maker introduced work he has undertaken for Irish Quaker Faith in Action on documenting international social issues. This was complemented by a reflection on Ireland as 'a country of peace'.

I was unable to attend the full programme, but would like to record gratitude to the representatives of Quakers in Ireland, who welcomed me and explained proceedings, in particular, Pauline Goggins.

**Dr Bridget Nicholls
Dr Kenneth Milne**

**GENERAL SYNOD OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND
YORK, 5th-10th JULY 2019**

BACKGROUND

The General Synod of the Church of England has 507 members as follows:-

- 42 Diocesan Bishops who have automatic seats and 8 Suffragan Bishops who compete for places;
- 182 clergy elected;
- 17 clergy elected by “ring fenced” groups - chaplains, deans, religious orders;
- 250 lay people compete for places; and
- 8 lay people due to the office they hold.

Members serve for 5 years terms. Interestingly I was advised that demand far exceeds the places available - competition is often 5:1 and can be 10:1

The Synod meets residentially in York in July and non-residentially in London in February. A third session may be held, if required, in November. The York Sessions are residential at a University Campus with meals and accommodation provided.

INTRODUCTION

This report is divided into 2 sections - firstly it covers some of the ways the CoE Synod operates (given my role as Honorary Secretary this was of particular interest to me) and secondly it covers some of the content of the July Sessions.

OPERATIONAL MATTERS

Presiding

Neither Archbishops nor Bishops are required to chair sessions (though at least one of the Archbishops must be in the synod hall for the session to be valid.) Instead there is a panel of chairs, clergy, lay and bishops, who have expertise on the relevant subject area and/or are considered to be extremely competent chairs. Chairs are supported by a legal advisor (in gown and wig!!!) and, I think, an official of Church House.

Speaking Rights

Those wishing to speak in any debate may give their intention in advance in writing or electronically though spontaneous requests to speak are also allowed. At the appropriate time members may then rise to speak. The chair then acts almost like a speaker in Parliament in deciding who of those standing to call to speak. Guests are entitled to speak and are invariably called should they wish to do so.

Seating Arrangements

Bishops sit in the chamber but occupy the first rows. The dress code for bishops, clergy and lay was for the most part very casual. Committee members and subject experts - staff and volunteers occupy the platform behind the chair as required for each session/topic. Archbishops, their senior staff and what seemed to be key members of the Archbishops Council occupy a “booth” to one side of the hall with visitors and guests in one on the opposite side. Seating in the hall is tiered.

Questions

As in a parliamentary model, written questions are submitted in advance and printed in a booklet along with the answer from the relevant committee/official. The book is issued in

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advance of the Synod - almost 100 questions in the July booklet. Members seeking further information or more detail rise to ask a Supplemental Question.

Voting

Voting is electronic. Members have a device about the size of a mobile phone. They also have a pass which they insert into a slot on the device which recognises a unique code on the pass and they push the appropriate button - yes, no, abstain. Within seconds the result is displayed on the computer screen in front of the chair.

Legislative Process

The legislative process seems to be broadly as follows (I have left out the final stages of parliamentary consideration and royal approval):-

- Synod requests legislation (maybe after a report or motion);
- after work by a drafting group, Synod does First Consideration - general appraisal and a steering group established to champion the legislation through;
- a revision committee is appointed to work with the steering group. Synod members may submit proposed amendments to the revision committee;
- draft legislation goes back to Synod along with a report and members may submit further amendments. Synod considers the draft clause by clause and there is another option to table possible amendments; and
- final Synod debate and approval or not.

Guests

Guests included representatives of:-

- Pentecostal Churches
- Oriental Orthodox Church
- Moravian Church
- Roman Catholic Church
- Church of Scotland
- Methodist Church
- United Reformed Church
- Evangelical Lutheran Church in Denmark (Bishop)
- Episcopal Church of Sudan
- Iglesia Anglicana de la Region Central America (Archbishop)

A number of these representatives attend every Synod. The new World Wide President of the Mothers Union (Sheran Harper from Guyana) gave a keynote speech.

There is great emphasis on looking after guests and helping them understand the processes and issues. For example:-

- a dinner for guests plus the “great and the good” with the Archbishop of York at his palace on the Thursday night;
- a tour of York Minster on the Friday morning;
- a 90 minute review of the agenda over lunch on Friday before formal business began that afternoon; and

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- a reception hosted by the Secretary General of the Archbishops Council for guests and a number of bishops on the Sunday evening;

One host looks after all the guests. The residential format makes this relatively easy.

Synod Service

There was no specific synod service. Instead members attended the normal Sunday morning service in York Minister where the Archbishop of Canterbury preached.

Book of Reports

This did not seem to be available in paper form. Instead members either downloaded to their laptop or used a very good user friendly app on their phone.

Fringe Events

There is a series of meetings and presentations early in the mornings, at lunch times or in the evenings. Unfortunately, as the timetable for these was not in the papers and the notice board was tucked away in the reception area, I missed many of them. Some were by mission agencies, Mothers Union etc. Others were on topics - I did manage to attend the Fresh Expressions session - again a very helpful App - Godsend.

SYNOD BUSINESS

Routine

Inevitably much of the business was routine - pensions, Church Commissioners (investments etc.), property matters and so on. Some examples are:-

- rules for celebrating services including holy communion in multi church benefices to give greater flexibility;
- defining religious communities and setting the regulations they are bound by;
- clergy well-being; and
- a misc. “tidy up” of various rules e.g. funerals conducted by lay person, disused burial grounds, record keeping.

There were literally dozens of these routine items and most passed “on the nod” - they seem to pass without discussion unless someone raises a point.

Significant Issues

There were however 4 more specific and significant areas of business:-

- a topical debate on the upsurge in knife crime among young people;
- a change to the rules for submitting the names of prospective bishops to the Prime Minister. The current rule is to submit 2 names in preference order and the plan is to only submit the preferred name. It is assumed this will get parliamentary and royal assent;
- a proposal to enter into covenant with the Methodist Church and enable interchangeability of ministries. This has been on the agenda a number of times over the years and there was great expectation that it would now be passed despite ongoing opposition particularly it seems from the Anglo Catholic wing about the validity of Methodist orders. However the Methodist Conference the previous week apparently made noises about moving its position on same sex

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marriage and this meant that another significant grouping of Synod members had reservations. After debate, and no one seemed totally opposed but wanted further discussion/clarification, the matter was deferred by the synod. The rules mean it cannot come back until the next term in 2021; and

- half a day spent in a series of “listening” workshops on the whole issue of human sexuality. It is clear that the Church of England is following a similar path to the one we trod a few years ago

SUMMARY

I found the whole experience fascinating. It was tiring as business went on into the evening on most days and “proper” synod business stretched from lunch time Friday until lunch time Tuesday including business on the Sunday afternoon/evening. The residential format provided a great way to meet different people at meal times and so on. I found the informality helpful - perhaps it fitted my style.

Mr Ken Gibson

**GENERAL SYNOD OF THE SCOTTISH EPISCOPAL CHURCH
EDINBURGH, 6th-9th JULY 2019**

The Synod began with an opening Eucharist, all of the Bishops concelebrating, the Primus (The Most Rev Mark Strange) preaching.

The Synod is a small gathering of about one hundred delegates including all the clergy of the Province. This allows for all Synod members to be present at a dinner on the first night where they are joined by retired Bishops and spouses and where I was able to greet the recently retire Bishop of St Andrews, Dunkeld and Dunblane, the Most Rev David Chillingworth.

The delegates are seated at tables of about eight people during Synod sessions with a facilitator to manage contributions to some of the debates, but principally to assist with the Bible Study. All guests are assigned a “buddy”, in my case the Bishop of Edinburgh who I have known, but not well, for about 10 years. He was an attentive host and as delegates arrange their own lunch was able to fill in much of the context of the work of the Church in Scotland as we ate.

From these conversations and others during the course of the Synod I got the impression that the “measures” taken by the Communion to limit the participation in certain debates and councils in response to the SEC decision of 2018 to amend the Canons on marriage was rankling to a degree.

The following are some of the points which seemed to me to be noteworthy. They come in the order they arose as matters of report and debate during the Synod.

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- There had been a need to amend a Canon in relation to the meaning of “curtilage” to ensure compliance with the understanding of that word by Historic Buildings Scotland.
- A review of the Canons governing the election of Bishops is underway. There have been three elections in the past eighteen months and a fourth (Glasgow) which has failed to elect and is now being considered by the House of Bishops. There seemed to be a feeling that the shortlist (3-5) was too many and that the time lapse between the announcement of the names and the meeting of the Electoral College was unnecessarily long. The episcopal electoral procedure is very open and there was a feeling that due diligence was not an appropriate mechanism and that it was much more important to have begun a “discernment” process long before the electoral procedure began.
- For a very small Province the SEC seems to have substantial financial endowments and reported a surplus on the General Fund for the (I think) tenth year running. Mention was made of the fact that the Primus’s travel budget was overspent but was accounted for by the location of his Diocese (Inverness is a long way north) and the need to visit other Provinces of the Communion especially in light of the restrictive measures imposed on the SEC.

There is a great deal of central support for ministry including up to 50% of the cost of a curate and 60% of the cost of clergy pensions (still a Defined Benefit Scheme).

Perhaps the best quality debate of the entire Synod centred round a review of investments. The nub of the matter was whether or not SEC should continue to put money into pooled investments while the review was going on. The advice from the Investments Committee and the professional advisers was that it should. However a very cleverly worded amendment to prevent this was moved by the rector of Dunbar, the Rev Diane Hall. Her speech in support of the amendment was measured, technical and so persuasive that she managed to persuade a majority of the Synod (marginally against their own financial interests) to support her, against the increasingly shrill advice and to the discomfiture of the professionals.

Although the debate centred around total divestment in companies involved with fossil fuels the amendment was very technical in nature and it was a very impressive performance by someone who had never spoken before at Synod. Indeed throughout the three days of Synod there was a number of young, recently ordained, female clergy who made very striking interventions in debates.

Again, for a small Province the SEC produces very high quality liturgical and theological material, most recently on the authority of the episcopate and on ministry in general. A new Eucharist liturgy is in preparation and which was preceded by a conference on gender which (apparently) sought to move revision beyond the changing of pronouns. Revision of the Eucharistic Liturgy is clearly seen as the engine for the renewal of the Church.

- The methodology and results of a survey into clergy well being which appeared to show widespread bullying, were called into question. It seems the SEC is also

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encountering the many difficulties attending the introduction of “personnel” disciplines into clerical culture.

- The SEC are also grappling with keeping up to date with increasing regulation around Safeguarding (about 40% of clergy haven’t had updated training in the past 3 years)
- In terms of Ecumenical relationships clearly a great deal of effort has gone into bridge building with the Church of Scotland (in the wake of the slightly controversial Columba Declaration between the Church of Scotland and the Church of England) resulting in a document entitled “Our Common Calling” and warmly introduced by a senior minister of the General Assembly.
- In the interfaith presentation time was given to hear very softly spoken imam from the Akhul Byat tradition extol the warmth of relationships between Christians and Muslims in Scotland. Someone pointed out that there had been a 29% decline in SEC numbers over the past ten years.
- A great deal of time was given over to presentations from the Institute Council (priestly formation and theological education) and the intricacies of mixed mode learning. The incomparable Bishop of Argyll and the Isles spoke of “wisdom as a unique blend of vision and common sense”. Diocesan Readers seem to be resourced to a very high level of theological sophistication.

As of 2020 discernment for priestly ministry within the SEC is being conducted wholly by the Church itself and not sub-contracted to the Church of England. The key words emphasised in Selection were “realistic, informed and obedient”.

A truly fascinating and informed panel discussion was held involving scientists and theologians (all SEC members) about the ethics of genome editing.

Finally, I was asked (impromptu) to make a contribution on the current debate (as it then stood) on the possible outcomes for Ireland, North and South, of the Brexit process. The debate also widened into speculation about #indyref2 and the church’s role in any future campaigning. I gained the impression that it would not be quite as neutral as in #indyref1.

Conclusion

There is no doubt that a small Synod (for an admittedly small Province) provided for a much more workmanlike Synod with high quality debates and the business carried along smoothly. However as there were no big, controversial Bills or motions this year it may well have been rather unrepresentative.

The Rt Rev FJ McDowell