

**COMMISSION FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY AND DIALOGUE
REPORT 2023**

Hot Topics: ACC, Orthodox Relationships

Proposer and seconder: Rev Christine O’Dowd-Smyth (Proposer), Ms Cate Turner (Secunder)

Election of Commission – That the following be elected to serve on the Commission

The Archbishop of Dublin

The Bishop of Derry

The Bishop of Tuam, Limerick & Killaloe

Very Rev Niall Sloane

Rev Canon Dr Daniel Nuzum

Rev Suzanne Cousins

Rev David White

Ms Cate Turner

Canon Dr Kenneth Milne

Ms Gina Coptý

MEMBERSHIP (20)

A Bishop (Chairman): The Rt Rev Michael Burrows

WCC Representative: VACANT

ACC Representative: Rev Canon Katharine Poulton

ACC Representative: Mr Wilfred Baker

Porvoo Contact Group Person: The Rev Canon Helene Tarneberg Steed

An Honorary Secretary of General Synod: Rev Canon Malcolm Kingston

Hon Records Secretary: Rev David White

Hon Secretary: Very Rev Niall Sloane

The Archbishop of Dublin

The Bishop of Derry

Rev Canon Patrick Comerford (Resigned March 2022)

Rev Canon Elaine Murray (Resigned July 2022)

Rev Canon Dr Daniel Nuzum

Rev Christine O’Dowd Smyth (Appointed March 2022)

Rev Suzanne Cousins

Rev Cathy Hallissey (Resigned 2022)

Ms Cate Turner

Canon Dr Kenneth Milne

Mr Glenn Moore

Vacant x 2

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;

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- 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.

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:

- 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 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

The following pages testify to the range of work of the Commission and its derivative sub-groups over the past year, and the Church owes a considerable debt particularly to the indefatigable secretary of the CCUD, the Very Rev Niall Sloane, and to those who chair the individual working groups to which so many tasks are devolved. We continue to conduct our business using structures now well familiar to the members of the General Synod, and which enable us to bring the perspective and voice of the Church of Ireland to an enormous variety of contexts, many of them far beyond the geographical limits of this island. In all of this Zoom and similar platforms have been great friends to our work; yet there is no substitute for the building up of relationships through face-to-face encounter. As is so often said, the conversation over the coffee after the meeting very often does more

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to build trust and common purpose than the meeting itself! Sometimes our critics tell us that ecumenical activity is often academic, committee- focused and somewhat removed from the priorities of the real world. But we are convinced that not only are we striving in all things to discover that unity which is Christ's will and gift for his people we are also giving shared impetus and energy to tasks which are basic to the Anglican Marks of Mission and to the safeguarding of creation itself. To give but one small but significant example. I am honoured to chair the governors of the Anglican Centre in Rome and I would want to acknowledge the consistent generous support of our work by the Church of Ireland. My involvement in Rome has not simply exposed me to the abiding value of what might be called nuts and bolts ecumenism. It has also opened my eyes as never before to what churches and faith communities can do together to be voices for those who are the particular victims of climate change and rising sea levels. I think of the island nations of the global south, many of which could simply be overwhelmed by the rising waters of chaos within relatively few years. At the heart of the work of the CCUD is a very practical and energetic ecumenism which aims to make a difference, and which is always outward - looking.

I want to mention a few matters of special interest and concern. As I write the Anglican Consultative Council, one of the main instruments of Communion across Anglicanism, is about to meet in Ghana and in due course we will be hearing much from our representatives there, Mr Glenn Moore and Dean Susan Green. The ACC is the main channel through which the Anglican Communion 'receives' the work of its own ecumenical commissions ... it is also the nearest thing we have to any kind of international 'synod' (although its role is essentially consultative), comprising as it does the representatives of clergy and laity as well as bishops. In its own sometimes understated way the ACC often sets the course for the ecumenical agenda of the Communion and determines priorities. To host the ACC is a significant event for any province, offering huge opportunities for international encounter and building of relationships. The next meeting of the ACC after Ghana is due to be held just a few years down the road in Ireland - there has not been such an event here since the 1970s. This is a significant moment for which we must prepare fully and generously, and sometimes we forget that for all sorts of good reasons the Church of Ireland has always punched considerably above its weight in the counsels of international Anglicanism! Our long history, distinctive perspective, and constant willingness to participate whenever our involvement is sought in countless tasks not least of an ecumenical nature, do command respect and we should be gratefully conscious of this.

Secondly, we have all been concerned with the plight and the spiritual as well as practical needs of refugees from Ukraine. Parish communities across the land have been doing all they can to offer welcome and empathy, and in some situations this has involved assisting with the provision of opportunities for, usually Orthodox, worship. The CCUD has been asked on occasions for informal advice concerning what is sensitive and appropriate and how the complexity of Orthodox structures and relationships within Ukraine are manifested in the diaspora community. It has to be said that church/state relationships in their home country are labyrinthine and we need to remember that those complexities are often conveyed to us through the distorted lens of a propaganda war. The Commission has been very aware of its limited knowledge in this area, and of how easy it might be to act insensitively when one is striving to act hospitably. We have been seeking the best advice available to us through persons widely experienced in these issues, and through engaging with communities/ parishes on the ground in Ireland who are already facing such challenges head-on. We are also in contact with other bodies in Irish society who are at the forefront of practical response to the refugee crisis. We realise that there are also challenges here in the areas of Safeguarding and protection of the vulnerable which are best addressed by other expert bodies within the Church, but which have to be considered in so far as is practicable as we all do our best to offer genuine hospitality including at times in our places of worship. The Commission acknowledges that all this is a work in progress, a response

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to a war in Europe such as we did not envisage happening in our generation, and we regret when requests for our advice have only revealed how much we ourselves still need to learn. All of us are navigating, and seeking the Spirit's wisdom, in an area where all we can do is our best - but do so with generosity respect and sensitivity in what is truly an appallingly painful situation.

Thirdly, and without wishing to enter into an even more sensitive area, the European affairs working group which labours under our umbrella engages constantly with the implications of Brexit - including in the pastoral area and recognising the sensitive issues of identity and economic policy which have been thrown up by the Northern Ireland protocol. The working group presents its report elsewhere in these pages, but suffice it to say here that Brexit places the Church of Ireland in the strange position of being the major Anglican Church within the EU. The EU through its very treaties recognises that the myriad of church voices within its boundaries offer opinions which need to be heard via its structures in the pursuit of the common good. In Ireland we have engaged particularly with events organised by the European Commission office in Dublin, and we are aware that the Archbishop of Canterbury has had a Brussels - based representative to speak for the Communion there. We also know that these voices truly do not fall simply on deaf ears. Given that, outside of its diaspora diocese in Europe, the Church of England is no longer a church within the EU, those who have represented Anglicanism in Brussels know now that it is to the Church of Ireland that they should largely turn for insights, ideas and voices. Conversations in this area have tentatively begun; it is both an opportunity and a responsibility for us, and this task may considerably develop the work of our European Affairs group in the times ahead. And I say all this truly conscious of the sensitivities continuing to surround the protocol within the world of our own church and shared island.

Again I thank my colleagues on the CCUD for their most prolific work and commend these pages to the careful attention of the Synod. In ecumenical affairs, as in political ones, one never knows what is around the corner and members of the Commission invariably rise to every task with verve and wisdom

Michael Tuam, Limerick & Killaloe
The Rt Rev MAJ Burrows,
Chair

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

Mr Wilfred Baker, Rev Julie Bell, Rev Canon Dr Maurice Elliott, Mr Glenn Moore, Rev Canon Daniel Nuzum, Rev Canon Katharine Poulton (Convenor), Rev Canon Helene Steed and Ms Cate Turner (Hon. Secretary)

The group continues to meet via zoom which is convenient for the scattered membership.

During the year, members of the various Anglican Networks on which we have representatives met with us on zoom. Whilst some have had very good engagement with the networks, others have found it more challenging. The working group will meet with them again in 2023 when there may be some updates following the ACC meeting in Ghana.

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The working group concluded looking at the resolutions from ACC 17 and looks forward to working through the resolutions of ACC18 during 2023.

ANGLICAN AFFAIRS

FOUR NATIONS FAITH AND ORDER CONSULTATION 2022

Communiqué

Representatives of the Church of England, the Church of Ireland, the Scottish Episcopal Church and the Church in Wales met in Gladstone's Library, Hawarden, Flintshire, Wales between 11 and 13 May 2022 for the biennial Four Nations Faith and Order Consultation. It was hosted by the Bishop of Asaph, the Rt Rev Gregory Cameron, on behalf of the Church in Wales, and benefited from the expertise of the delegates from the four nations as well as that of the keynote speaker, the Rev Dr Susan Durber, Convenor of the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches (WCC).

Owing to several major meetings which are due to take place during 2022-3, this year's Consultation had a distinctly international focus. Delegates were enriched by Dr Durber's presentation of the WCC's major paper on ecclesiology, *The Church: Towards a Common Vision* and her introduction to the theme of the forthcoming WCC General Assembly, *Christ's love moves the world to reconciliation and unity*. There was also a focus on the theme and shape of the Lambeth Conference which will bring together bishops from each part of the global Anglican Communion in Canterbury between 27 July and 8 August. Consideration was also given to the work of the Inter Anglican Standing Commission on Unity, Faith and Order and the way in which Anglican churches worldwide receive the fruit of bilateral dialogues with other Christian traditions. Delegates also discussed the plans for the General Assembly of the Conference of European Churches which is to be held in Tallinn, Estonia, between 15 and 22 June 2023, as well as other ecumenical agreements in Europe to which Anglicans are committed such as those of Porvoo, Meissen and Reuilly.

As well as these international themes country reports were received from each of the four churches, highlighting Faith and Order issues of particular interest in the national context. Among the common themes was an understanding of how the individual churches are rebuilding following the challenges of the pandemic and the benefits received through a more prominent and intentional digital presence.

The Faith and Order Consultation will next meet in May 2024 when the Church of England will be hosting.

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.

I had the pleasure of attending the above meeting on 31 March 2022. This is the third such meeting I have attended.

I was particularly happy to attend this year for a number of reasons: -

- it was held in the Skainos Centre in East Belfast, a large active community outreach project under the auspices of the Methodist East Belfast Mission connecting church with a disadvantaged community - we heard a little of their story;

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- the keynote address was given by Dr Tony Davidson, the soon to retire minister of First Presbyterian Church, Armagh and an ecumenical canon of St Patrick's Cathedral. His topic was "the Unfinished Work of Peace", a subject close to my heart and which we then discussed in small groups;
- in the light of our own General Synod business but a few weeks later, the election of Bishop Sarah Groves of the Moravian Church as Vice President and President Designate for the period 2022-2024; and
- the transfer of the ICC Presidency to Bishop Andrew Forster and his first President's address as he began his 2-year term.

The opportunity to meet and chat to Christians of a number of traditions formally and informally is always interesting and appeals to my "nosiness".

Naturally many tributes were paid to Dr Nicola Brady, former General Secretary and recently moved to take up post as General Secretary of Churches Together in Britain and Ireland.

*Ken Gibson
March 2022*

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 the Most Rev Brendan Leahy, Bishop of Limerick, and the Rt Rev Andrew Foster, Bishop of Limerick, President of the Irish Council of Churches.

The thirty second Irish Inter-Church Meeting (IICM) was held at Dromantine Retreat Centre on November 10-11th, 2022. The theme was "creatively reconfiguring our post-pandemic understanding of church." The pandemic has changed so many aspects of society, including the way churches operate and conduct their ministries. The objective of the meeting was to help explore the long-term implications of the pandemic on churches across the Island.

The keynote speaker was Prof John Fitzgerald, an adjunct professor of economics at Trinity College. Fitzgerald provided an analysis of the impact of the pandemic on various aspects of society such as the elderly, work practice, poverty, education and migration. The session was engaging and provided a good starting point for the participants to delve deeper into how various members of their churches were impacted.

Sr Breige O'Hare facilitated a session to explore the changing landscape of the local church. Sr O'Hare led the participants on a spiritual journey to help them consider the pastoral and spiritual impact of the pandemic on the local church. Sr O'Hare created a space in which participants felt free to share intimately about their own personal challenges and those experienced within their churches. It was a very moving session.

The experiences of the global church were explored through a panel of speakers representing Christian Aid in Kenya, and Trocaire in Guatemala. It was helpful for the participants to hear about the challenges faced by sister churches. The speakers shared how they struggled to meet the needs of the people due to a shortage of clergy, issues with internet, shortage of food supplies and oppressive government behaviour in which some people were killed for being seen as not conforming to Covid rules. On a positive note, the speakers shared how faith prospered through smaller group meetings.

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A panel representing leaders of small member churches, shared their experiences. Fr Anish John of the Indian Orthodox Church shared that many members of his church were frontline workers during the pandemic and who suffered greatly as a result. As migrant workers, they lacked much of the necessary support to enable them to do their jobs and their church had to step in to fill the void. The panellists shared how their churches were forced to adapt and evolve and how new support systems were created as a result. This was followed by a roundtable discussion with young people from across Ireland exploring the impact of Covid on the lives of the youth. One of the young people highlighted the importance of building relationships with the young people. He emphasised the importance of “connection before content.” The participants took that message on board.

The meeting was brought to a close with reflection time led by Bishop Andrew Forster. The aim was to provide a space for the participants to examine what the spirit is saying to the churches and to reflect and share from their time together. It was felt that the meeting was very constructive and the overall sentiment was that people were encouraged from their time together.

*Gina Copty
November 2022*

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.

The CTBI AGM took place in Luther King House, Manchester on Monday 3rd October 2022. In addition to the formal business of the AGM there was a thematic session focussed on racial justice and a working session seeking member feedback on CTBI's new strategic plan. For the thematic session CTBI's Justice and Inclusion Officer Mr Richard Reddie spoke about his new edited book *Race for Justice: The struggle for equality and inclusion in British and Irish churches*. Inspired by the 25th anniversary of Racial Justice Sunday, which occurred in 2020, the book brings together a range of voices from Britain and Ireland to share different perspectives on the engagement of churches with the work of racial justice in recent years. Mr Reddie then interviewed ICC General Secretary Mr Damian Jackson who was one of the contributors to the book, writing about the work of Ireland's national ecumenical instruments in this area. For the working session CTBI General Secretary Nicola Brady presented a draft strategic plan developed through a programme of engagement with CTBI trustees and staff. There was an opportunity for discussion in small groups on each of the five priorities outlined and feedback was recorded. The final version will be published in 2023.

*Dr Nicola Brady,
December 2022*

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 General Assembly of the Conference of European Churches was convened virtually on June 30. However, a quorum was not reached, and the Assembly could not make valid

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decisions. Therefore, the Governing Board decided that the General Assembly would reconvene on 30 September 2022.

A webinar was held afterwards where Sergii Bortnyk spoke about the current experience of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. Other speakers were Archbishop Yevstratiy Zoria, representative of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine and Christine Schliesser, director of the Centre for Faith and Society at the University of Fribourg, Switzerland.

The 2023 General Assembly will take place in Estonia in June 2023.

*Canon Helene Steed & Rev David White,
September 2022*

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).

The 11th Assembly of the World Council of Churches was held in Karlsruhe, Germany from the 31st August to the 8th of September. The WCC meets once every eight years, and this was the first time it was held in Germany with over 4000 delegates and participants from all over the world attending the huge Congress Centre and listening, speaking and praying together. The theme of this Assembly was “*Christ’s Love Moves The World To Reconciliation and Unity*”.

Due to the Dean of Belfast being unable to attend, the Rev Dr Christine O’Dowd-Smyth attended as the Church of Ireland delegate.

The Assembly opened with the Moderator of the WCC, Dr Agnes Abuom and the Vice Moderators Rev Ioan Sauca and Bishop Mary Ann Swenson emphasising the unity statement of the WCC: that all human beings have equal dignity; human dignity above all, regardless of gender, race, colour or sexual orientation, for every human being is made in God’s Image.. Christ’s love moves the world to peace and recognition, a Love that doesn’t accept wars of aggression. We as Christians are called to work with people of other churches – and other faiths to advance *the Politics of Radical Compassion*. Emerging from the Pandemic and post isolation, the churches, in response to God’s call, to hold a light of hope and to ask of one another “How does a church – in whom the love of Christ is pleased to dwell – organise, speak and act in this season?” and “How, at this moment, shall we share together in God’s mission of love to the world?” Pastor Christian Krieger of the European Council of Churches expressed the hope that the Assembly would be Christocentric and Missional but not Exclusionary. Delegates from 295 churches were present at the Assembly along with 277 guests and participants. Guests from the Ukraine were warmly applauded.

The themes of the Assembly: Christ’s love moves the world to reconciliation and unity” is directly inspired by 2 Corinthians 5:14:

- Responding to the challenges of our times moved by Christ’s love: An ecumenism of the heart;
- Covid 19; (Fear, stress, devastation; revelation of inequalities);
- Climate Change (the challenge to care for God’s creation);
- Inequalities: The world cries out for peace and justice;
- The digital revolution;
- A loss of hope and confidence in the possibility of a better future;

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- God's first and foremost attitude towards the world is love – for every human being and indeed, for the whole of creation.

The various speakers called for a life-transforming journey for the Churches and for greater unity in the power of the Holy Spirit. Cardinal Koch read a message from Pope Francis in Spanish – “the language of the heart”, urging us all to work together in unity.

Each gloriously warm sunny day began under the big tent outdoors with prayer and worship from different Church traditions (Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Anglican, Pentecostal, etc.) followed by the Plenary Talk of the day in one of the big halls. Then after coffee outside (long queues for coffee breaks, lunch and dinner gave people a chance to greet those around us; look at each other's ID badges and hear one another's stories) the delegates divided into smaller Home Groups for Bible Study & discussion. The people in my group were from different countries and traditions: Anglican, Reformed Evangelical; Coptic; Ukrainian Orthodox; Egyptian Orthodox.

The Bible Studies were grouped thematically:

1st September: Day Theme: *The Purpose of God's Love in Christ for the Whole of Creation – Reconciliation and Unity* (Col 1:19 (Eph 1:10 and Mt 9:35 (Christ's compassion)

Worship was Orthodox as tied in with the Feast of Creation in the Orthodox calendar;

Friday 2nd: Day Theme: *Europe* Luke 10:25-37 (Good Samaritan);

Monday 5th: Day Theme: *Christ's Love – Compassion for Life* (Affirming the Wholeness of Life) John 9:1-12;

Tuesday 6th: Day theme: *Christ's Love: Transforming Discipleship* Matthew 15: 21-28 (Canaanite woman) Affirming Justice & Human Dignity;

Wednesday 7th: Day Theme: *Christ's Love – The Bond of Christian unity and the churches common witness* (Matthew 20:20-28) Let Christ's love move the world to reconciliation and unity.

Each day after lunch, the Ecumenical Conversations meetings that each delegate had chosen to participate in, were interesting and statement documents were drafted, and then issued, to be voted on in the Business Plenaries. The Ecumenical Conversation I chose was EC 01: Mission Reimagined: Transforming Disciples, Challenging Empire.

Some of the Documents brought before the Business Plenaries were controversial, such as Document PIC 01. War in Ukraine, Peace and Justice in the European Region: “This Assembly strongly affirms the position expressed by the central committee of the WCC (deploring the war as “illegal and unjustifiable”) and denounces this illegal and unjustifiable war and we renew the call for an immediate ceasefire...” (the Russian Orthodox representative present protested vociferously). Also PIC 01.4 Seeking Justice for All in the Middle East. Syrians, Lebanese and Iraqi delegates demanded why they had not been included more in the largely Israeli-Palestinian focus of the document. The revised document PIC 01.3 REV The Things that Make For Peace: Moving the World to Reconciliation and Unity, contained a very powerful statement: “The calling to dialogue, encounter and the pursuit of mutual understanding is the very essence of ecumenism and central to peace-making. It is the role of churches to embody “*Christ's love (that) moves the world to reconciliation and unity*” The issue of climate change was given top priority “We must act together”

The Business Plenaries were halted several times by protesting young people's representatives who demanded access to the microphone and lamented the fact that their voices were not heard. They demanded a larger proportional representation going forward. There was broad consensus that the churches NEED to listen to the voices of young people. Women also had to demand that Gendered violence and silencing of women be included when listing injustices and inequalities. Also, there was a call for the churches to be more

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inclusive to people with disabilities. We need *Metanoia* – a change of heart, to not accept exclusion.

Representatives from the International Jewish Council spoke on the need for repentance as a basis for reconciliation. Imam Purlu from the Coordination Council of Muslims in Germany also spoke of the importance of peace. The Federal President Steinmeier and the Lord Mayor of Karlsruhe also addressed the Assembly.

Some of the Plenary addresses were given via satellite, such as the Patriarch of the Greek Orthodox church, for instance. Some of the speakers were from United Churches (Presbyterian; Pentecostal; Evangelical) Brother Alois of the Taize community was at the Assembly and he spoke about the Practice of Unity and his prayer was: “That they may all be one.”

His Grace the Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby spoke in person at the conference on Wednesday 7th September and addressed all of us Anglican delegates in a private meeting in the afternoon. He spoke about the Lambeth Conference “There was a movement of the Spirit that enabled us to disagree better”

He praised the Church of Ireland for our very inventive and progressive steps in partnership with the Methodist Church in Ireland. He spoke on the need for an Ecumenism of service and spoke about Anglicans being a Communion of Churches – not a church. He welcomed the idea of Regional Synods – Lambeth costly to run (12 million sterling). He said that Scripture is the pre-eminent basis for the Anglican communion but how it interacts with reason and tradition for the 21st century needs to be looked at. As a Communion we must turn outwards, not look inwards. Anglicanism is contingent, never permanent. If Anglicanism becomes part of a wider tradition in the global church if and when the Church achieves more unity then so be it! Praise God!

25% of English churches have no young people. We can do much better in hearing the voices of young people without being patronising & using them as tokens. People go to Synod to hear about the big issues, not to hear about the workings of the PC. I personally had a brief meeting with Archbishop Justin where he said he said how it was to meet a delegate from the Church of Ireland at the WCC.

Each day ended with evening prayer and worship under the big tent, before dinner, often at 21.30-21.45. These were times for fellowship and conversation.

The sense of pride amongst the citizens of Karlsruhe that such a huge event was taking place in their city was palpable. People were friendly and talkative and above all, very helpful to the delegates.

What I took home with me was the tangible sense of God’s peace and the love that He has for us all, and that our journey towards unity is perhaps just as important as the unity that we seek. We are called to be vehicles of reconciliation and to be witnesses of Christ’s love and radical compassion, bringing His love to all people. What would also be worthy of consideration, is to send a young person as a delegate for the next 12th Assembly of the WCC.

*Rev Dr Christine O’Dowd-Smyth,
September 2022*

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

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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 2022
Church Of England/Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland (EKD)
Report of the Celtic Churches Observer
(Representative: Rev Canon Dr Maurice Elliott (Church of Ireland))

The 32nd meeting of the Meissen Commission convened in-person in Exeter from 6-9 October. As usual there were representatives from the Church of England and the Evangelische Kirche Deutschland, with observers from the German-speaking Synod of Great Britain and on behalf of the Celtic Anglican Churches (the Diocese in Europe delegate was unable to attend). The meeting engaged with a range of significant topics and substantial reports, gathered here under the following headings – Ecclesial and Cultural Context; Chaplaincy and Rural Ministry; Ecumenical and Theological Issues.

Ecclesial and Cultural Context

For reason of 'a much more secular-minded government' the EKD reported its uncertainty in relation to future statutory tax benefits. It is possible that the whole system of church-life within Germany may change markedly over the next ten years. Membership of the church is continuing to fall, and yet, against this backdrop of apparent public disinterest in religious affairs, there is the perceived anomaly of societal longing for some sense of consolation following the pandemic.

For its part the COE noted the potential significance of the recent Lambeth Conference discussions concerning human sexuality for its own internal discussion on 'Living in Love and Faith', and, in the wake of Queen Elizabeth's death, the challenge of coming to terms with the implications of such 'overwhelming national outpouring of emotion'. This sense of 'vicarious religion' was taken up in a highly stimulating address by Professor Grace Davie of Exeter University. Grappling with the subject of 'Religion in Modern Europe', and the many questions that arise as a result of the pandemic, the war in Ukraine and the royal death, Professor Davie suggested that inherited social theology may not be up to the task required of it, and that there is manifest danger for the churches if 'the shell of religion lacks a solid theological core'. For meaningful societal dialogue to take place, religious communities need to be able to see issues from the perspective of their adversaries, and they will require a profoundly renewed sense of imagination. Where this can be realised, religion can have significant power for good; however, in the absence of it, religious dogmatism will continue to cause harm and even do damage.

The other matters reported consistently by all Meissen participants were the ongoing, and deeply negative, consequences of Brexit for faith communities right across Europe; real anxieties over the increasing cost of living; and a sense of sheer exhaustion within very many clergy as a result of coping with the pandemic.

Chaplaincy and Rural Ministry

Much of the Commission agenda this year focused on matters of chaplaincy. In the English context chaplaincy is grounded in a multi-faith approach, with the main emphasis of the chaplains' role being on pastoral support to staff and students. Those who spoke, representing both second and third level institutions, reported a deep sense of regret, anger and loss amongst current generations of students in the shadow of Covid.

In relation to rural ministry, the Diocese of Exeter has developed some impressive resources such as *Lightening the Load* and *How Village Churches Thrive* (both published

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by Church House Press). Identified priorities here include the need to build confidence; to use rural festivals; and to find means of delivering strong leadership, theological formation, central assistance, peer support and lay training. Some of these materials could very usefully be transposed into the Irish, Scottish and Welsh contexts.

Ecumenical and Theological Issues

The COE reported a renewed willingness amongst its senior leadership to prioritise ecumenical dialogue. This in turn has realised an enhancement of dedicated staffing within central church structures and represents a notable reversal of more recent policy. As with any ecumenical work, much of the effectiveness of the Meissen Agreement rests on a system of local partnerships. The evidence here would suggest that, whereas there may have been a flurry of interest in the project at some point in the past, the reality is falling some way short of widespread meaningful engagement with what Meissen is intended to promote.

Arguably one of the most important pieces of work is the ongoing work of the Meissen Joint Theological Conference. Noting the aspiration of the Agreement to ‘the full visible unity’ of the two churches, and the ongoing obstacle to this of a, perhaps, overly rigid interpretation of what is meant by ‘the historic episcopate’, Professor Mark Chapman suggested that a potential way forward might be found in re-visiting the COE formularies. According to both the Thirty-nine Articles, (and indeed, correspondingly, the Augsburg Confession), a true church is discerned simply in its adherence to the ministry of the word of God and its administration of the two dominical sacraments, with nothing further being explicitly prescribed. From the inception of Anglicanism in the mid-sixteenth century to the period of the Restoration in 1662, there were ‘many exceptions to the absolute requirement of episcopal ordination’ for ministry with the COE. On the recommendation of the JTC, the Commission endorsed a proposal to seek further advice from English canon lawyers. It will be fascinating to see what either may or may not result from this, and indeed to follow the potential wider consequences of this aspect of the Meissen conversation for other Anglican ecumenical dialogues with both episcopal and non-episcopal partners.

The Commission will meet from 12-15 October 2023 in Loccum, Germany. Possible themes for consideration will be the further theological work; democracy in crisis; and how to make the work of the Meissen Commission more effective at a grass-roots level.

M. J. Elliott
October 2022

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

The Reuilly 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).

(Observer: Revd Dr Christine O’Dowd-Smyth (Church of Ireland))

The Reuilly Agreement Committee met in Lyon, France between the 23-26th November 2022 – the first in person meeting since the Edinburgh meeting in February 2020, two weeks before the first lockdown of the pandemic. The venue of the meeting was the Centre Valpre in the suburbs of Lyon, a retreat centre run by a religious community.

The Reuilly Contact group meets once a year and operates on a quinquennial cycle. The membership comprises of a co-chair from each side; a co-secretary from each side; and a representative of each of the member churches. The two original co-chairs have since retired: Bishop Stroyan and Pastor Christian Krieger have now been replaced by Bishop

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Robert Innes of the Diocese of Europe and Pastor Esther Linz of the United Reformed Churches in Alsace.Lorraine (UEPAL) The co-secretaries are Pastor Claire Sixt-Gatueille and Revd Dr Isabelle Hamley.

Members present: (The French Lutheran & Reformed Delegation (UEPAL-EPUDF); Claire Sixt-Gatueuil; Dr Jean-Gustave Hentz (UEPAL), Pastor Pierre Blanzat. United Protestant Church of France (EPUDF). Pastor Richard Cadoux Observer: Pastor Anne-Laure Danet (Federation Protestante de France).

The Anglican delegation: The Rt Rev Robert Innes, Church of England; The Ven Peter Hooper (Diocese of Europe) (Replacing the former Archdeacon Ven Meurig Williams – now a Rector in the Church of Ireland); The Rev John McLuckie, Scottish Episcopal Church (also representing the Church of Wales); Rev Dr Christine O’Dowd-Smyth, Church of Ireland; Mr Jack McDonald from the Diocese of Europe in Belgium.

The business of the meeting started on Thursday morning with Opening Worship, followed by a reading of the minutes of the previous 2021 meeting on zoom, and a reading of the “Summary of Reuilly” written by Pastor Christian Krieger (now President of the European Council of Churches). Pastor Krieger had emphasised the importance of the mutual recognition of our respective ministries; the importance of theological reflection – and that reflecting on practice informs a living theology; we must not lose the practice of reflecting theologically as well as sharing our practice.

There was a discussion around this document, circulated in French, and the future vision for the Reuilly Group. The importance, post Brexit, of maintaining and deepening relations between British churches and European churches.

We must encourage the participation of young delegates in Reuilly going forward. We should encourage our young ordinands to come and study in our respective countries and do part of their training/their placement. The importance of shared ministry was highlighted.

Lengthy discussions on the Lambeth conference and its significance for ecumenism. Different patterns of governance continue to be a barrier to unity (Episcopal governance: the French Protestant churches have a similar structure without having Bishops). There was broad agreement on the fact that ethical questions are more divisive than theological questions, such as human sexuality. The big issues are those of social justice and climate change. There was an important discussion and resolve to work on a common Reuilly liturgy.

After lunch the meeting resumed with news from the Churches.

The St Andrew’s Declaration – signed by the Scottish Episcopal Church and the Church of Scotland as an agreement of friendship. There is scope for shared ministry and closer cooperation.

The French Reformed Churches are looking at the importance of mission post -Covid. The French prefer words like “witness” and “hospitality” rather than “mission. In France there is a close link between the economic decline of a region and a decline in church attendance. There are huge economic and social problems in France, and problems of racism. The question is how to use the theological tools in order to fight against church decline? In France the explosion of civil partnerships brought the French churches to agree to bless all marriages. The question is how to be tolerant and inclusive.

The Church of England delegates discussed the document “Living in Love and Faith” on human sexuality and the importance of “disagreeing well”.

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On Friday after Morning Prayer the main theme was Cooperation in France with the shared ministry pilot sites in Lyon and Strasbourg. In Lyon there is a Church of England priest who serves part time in the Anglican chaplaincy in Lyon and halftime in the Reformed Church of France.

There was a wider discussion on how to share the CPE of priests and pastors. There is scope for shared ministerial training in new forms of mission, church planting & fresh expressions for example.

There was discussion on curates doing part of their placement in one of the other countries. Could the Anglicans become members of the French Protestant Federation?

On Friday afternoon there was a shared discussion on the political situations in Europe. There was general agreement that at the meeting of the World Council of Churches there had been a missed opportunity to discuss the situation of the churches in Europe and how to address decline?

The French delegates spoke of rising unemployment and poverty as well as social unrest and a general sense of hopelessness. Scottish & English delegates spoke of the terrible consequences of Brexit and the worsening economic and political situation in Britain. The Church of Ireland delegate spoke of the crisis in the health service and the housing crisis. There was also a discussion on the consequences of Brexit on the border between the UK & the EU on the island of Ireland. In Britain the migrant crisis is overwhelming. The C of E diocese in Europe is establishing chaplaincies in Calais dealing with the migrants.

There was agreement that the next meeting of the Reuilly contact group will be in February 2024 in Leicester.

There will be a Reuilly Group sub-committee (AL Danet; R Cadoux and C O’Dowd-Smyth) to develop a common liturgy.

There will also be moves to create a common training programme (CME)

Aim: a full and visible communion.

Friday evening, we visited the joint shared ministry project, and all is going well. Other common shared ministry pilot projects are being envisaged.

On Saturday morning the Eucharist was celebrated.

*Rev Dr Christine O’Dowd-Smyth,
November 2022*

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).

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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), met in person again after two years of online gatherings. The 2022 meeting took place in Tampere when the Primates in the Porvoo Communion met and marked the 25th Anniversary of the Porvoo Communion, a year after the actual anniversary. The celebration was entitled Portrait, Unity and Vulnerability.

The conference opened with papers tracing a portrait of the Porvoo Common Statement. These were prepared by Dame Mary Tanner, Rt Rev Christopher Hill, and Rev Dr Tiit Pädam, all of whom were involved in the original working out of the Porvoo agreement.

The Most Rev Stephen Cottrell, Archbishop of York, and Rt Rev Dr Olav Fykse Tveit, Presiding Bishop of the Church of Norway, introduced the theme of the role of the churches in Europe during times of tension, particularly the role of national churches. This session focused on the theme of unity.

The theme of vulnerability addressed insights and challenges from the Covid-19 pandemic. The Most Rev Dr Antje Jackelén, Archbishop of Uppsala, and Rt Rev Jorge Pina Cabral, Bishop of the Lusitanian Church offered presentations on what they have learnt for the future.

Meeting in nearby Finland, participants shared their horror at the Russian war in Ukraine. All continue to pray for peace and for a just outcome for the people of Ukraine, and for the return of stability to the whole region. At a separate session, the primates and presiding bishops agreed to send a letter to the Patriarch of Moscow, the Russian Orthodox Church,

The Porvoo contact group also met in Tampere and discussed the current situation in our churches. The group also discussed transitivity and the difficulties regarding recognition of Lutheran and Anglican pastors from churches outside the Porvoo communion.

The Church of Ireland was represented in by:
Archbishop Michael Jackson, Anglican Co-chair of the Porvoo Contact Group

Work plan for the next three years:

October 2023: Thematic conference, Madrid, Spain.
Life in the Eucharist / the Eucharistic life in our churches.

October 2024: Church Leaders' Consultation in Sweden.
Environment and Eschatology - Hope for Future Generations.

October 2025: Theological Conference in Wales.
The 1700th anniversary of the Nicene Creed (Council of Nicaea 325)

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 2022 is found on-line at:
<https://porvoocommunion.org/prayer-diary-2022/>

*The Rev Canon Helene Tarneberg Steed
December 2022*

EUROPEAN AFFAIRS WORKING-GROUP
Membership

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Vacant (Chair), Rev David White (Hon Sec), Canon Dr Ken Milne. Co-opted - Canon Adrian Empey, Ms Maxine Judge, Canon Eithne Lynch.

While it is understandable that the attention of the Irish Churches should be focused on the Northern Ireland Protocol which is a consequence of Brexit we should be aware of the fact that the member states of the European Union have other priorities as well and our participation in the programmes of the Institute of International and European Affairs (IIEA) and the Brexit Institute at Dublin City University have enabled us to keep informed of the variety of major issues confronting the continent. High on the EU's agenda are 'the Green Deal', recovery from the economic and financial crisis earlier in this century, the increasingly assertive role of China and the turbulence created by the Russian invasion of Ukraine and immigration- all of them related in one way or another.

Where Brexit and the Protocol are concerned, we were represented, by zoom, at a webinar on 'The future of the Northern Ireland Protocol' at St Catharine's College, Cambridge, held in November 2022 under the auspices of the University of Cambridge Centre for Geopolitical Studies and the IIEA. The speakers included the former Lead Official on Brexit of the Northern Ireland Executive, the Director of the IIEA (formerly Secretary-General of the EU), and the Professor of Political Sociology at the Queen's University of Belfast. While there was some degree of difference between the speakers as to the possibility of the Protocol being achievable there seemed to be little dispute as to the facts of the situation

We participated, likewise by Zoom in the previous month, in an IIEA webinar on 'Europe's place in the World' where response to the pandemic and to the Russian war had shown the vital importance of European partnership in facing crises.

A two-day conference on 'New Generation EU' (NGEU), arranged by the Brexit Institute of DCU, took place on January 2023 at the offices of the European Parliament in Dublin. Among the themes that emerged in discussion were the problems posed by member states whose commitment to the EU's fundamental values (such as an independent judiciary and media freedom) was questioned, and, where citizens of the Republic are concerned, the concept and practice of 'neutrality. While it was stressed that the EU is not a military alliance, it was interesting to hear that, despite Brexit, the United Kingdom was still perceived, not least by the Baltic states and Poland, as an important military power, as seen in its role in the Ukrainian conflict.

*Ken Milne,
December 2022*

INTER FAITH WORKING GROUP

Membership

Rev Suzanne Cousins (Chair), Rev Abigail Sines, Rev Christopher West (Hon. Secretary)

The **Inter-Faith Working Group** (IFWG), with the Commission for Christian Unity and Dialogue (CCUD), seeks to serve the Church of Ireland (COI) by supporting its people and parishes in dialogue and the building of positive relationships with members of other faiths living in either jurisdiction - Ireland or Northern Ireland.

Membership of the Working Group was somewhat depleted in 2022, not least by the retirement of former Chairperson Bishop Kenneth Kearon, whose knowledge and leadership in matters IF-related was a great asset. Similarly, the dedicated work of the Reverend Canon Elaine Murray, former Secretary to the IFWG, is gratefully acknowledged. The Reverend Christopher West and the Reverend Abigail Sines have joined the working group in 2022 and the input of both is appreciated greatly.

The remit of the Working Group includes the encouragement of Christ-like, loving and informed encounter. The group seeks to keep abreast of developments and publications in the sphere of IF dialogue, in order to facilitate growth in the COI, in our abilities and confidence in everyday IF engagement. It seeks to strengthen existing good relations with other faith communities, their leaders and personnel. Additionally, it seeks to facilitate appropriate partnering with other groups and bodies which specialise in inter faith relations - in particular, the World Council of Churches' Interreligious Dialogue and Cooperation ('WCC IRDC'). In these ways, the IFWG aims to support parishes and dioceses in local inter faith engagement and in building bridges of friendship across religious difference.

In the carrying out of its remit, the IFWG bears in mind **the Mission of the Church**, as summarised in the **Five Marks of Mission** of the Anglican Communion. These "express the Anglican Communion's common commitment to, and understanding of, God's holistic and integral mission. The mission of the Church is the mission of Christ." (See <https://www.anglicancommunion.org/mission/marks-of-mission.aspx>.)

The first Mark of Mission, identified with personal evangelism at the Anglican Consultative Council in 1984 (ACC-6) is a summary of what all mission is about, because it is based on Jesus' own summary of his mission. This should be the key statement about everything we do in mission.

The Five Marks of Mission

The mission of the Church is the mission of Christ

1. To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom
2. To teach, baptise and nurture new believers.
3. To respond to human need by loving service
4. To transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and pursue peace and reconciliation
5. To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation, and sustain and renew the life of the earth

(<https://www.anglicancommunion.org/mission/marks-of-mission.aspx>).

Inter Faith ministry is situated, then, in the context of the mission of the Church which is the mission of God, the *missio Dei*. The group's remit, with the CCUD, was extended in 2022 to include **concern for Refugees**, it having become uncomfortably clear that, within our structures and committees, no single group has been acting as the voice of compassion in this regard for some time. (More in relation to Sanctuary, below.)

Solidarity and Publications

Inter faith dialogue is increasingly understood as relevant to contemporary everyday life in our contexts, whether urban or rural. It is no longer seen as belonging chiefly in the academy. Rather, not least on account of demographic developments, it inhabits the public square and is a meeting of equals.

Peace-making and reconciliation, the pursuit of justice and fairness, and standing and speaking in solidarity with our brothers and sisters of other faiths and religions, are important aspects and foci of our inter faith work and witness to Christ. *Serving a Wounded World in Interreligious Solidarity: A Christian Call to Reflection and Action During COVID-19 and Beyond*, published in 2019 by WCC and the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, continues to be pertinent to the work of IF dialogue and cooperation. The emphasis being on solidarity and justice-seeking *together* in a fractured world which is burdened with injustices and inequalities and consequent suffering. Key emphases are on dialogue as mutual service; for example, the Covid pandemic has exposed the need for solidarity and mutuality in highlighting global inequalities in access to vaccines. The IFWG commends to all members of the COI then, this readable publication,

which places IF dialogue squarely as the determined and, of necessity, courageous expressing of solidarity with oppressed or neglected communities and persons, of any faith or none.

Holocaust Memorial Day

For the Christian community, the opportunity to stand in solidarity with the Jewish community in Ireland and Northern Ireland arises every year when we mark publicly our support of Holocaust Memorial Day (HMD). The COI's engagement with HMD was made explicit again this year (2023), not least through an engaging interview recorded in St Patrick's Cathedral Armagh between Archbishop John McDowell and Mrs Shirley Lennon (HMD Trust NI), through local observations in many parishes, and by means of pertinent reflections for HMD published for the COI and for Dublin City Inter Faith Forum by Archbishop Michael Jackson (see below).

A REFLECTION FOR HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL DAY

Holocaust Memorial Day reminds us every year of the importance of remembering.

We remember individuals each of whom had a life for living; we remember communities all of whom had a culture, a dignity and a vibrancy to share; we remember a people chosen by God whose place in history brought to the pinnacle of achievement the dynamic of individual and community everywhere on earth they lived.

We remember how such people were cruelly and cynically cut down – women and children and men, young and old – tortured and killed in the cause of an ideology that could not, nor would it, make room for The Other in the open space of existence.

Many of our ways of understanding human motivation have changed. Nothing can cause us to un-remember The Holocaust. Hatred of Jewish people is on the rise worldwide. We all must remain careful and caring, exercising the voice of vigilance in the face of anti-Semitism. Such anti-Semitism is a very specific and historic hate crime that takes to itself an entitlement to obliterate those whose existence it cannot tolerate and whose flourishing it cannot endure.

It is for this reason that Holocaust Memorial Day is a day for all to pause, to remember and to change our ways and our attitudes.

Internal publications

The COI's *Guidelines for Inter Faith Events and Dialogue* (May 2007) is in process of being updated, the Working Group, in consultation with CCUD, having agreed that important pastoral areas such as chaplaincy in hospitals and prisons, require attention, alongside eco-focused engagement in light of the pressing need by all our communities for climate-action.

Networking, representation, conferences

Prior to the outbreak of Covid-19 an attempt was made to grow our IF networks by identifying and appointing, where possible, a suitable candidate from each diocese to act as the Diocesan Inter Faith Representative. It was envisaged that these representatives would most likely, but not necessarily, be clergypersons. Their role would be to: (i), attend conferences and events organised by the IFWG; (ii), help disseminate information provided by the IFWG; and (iii), help carry the torch for IF-related matters more generally. The IFWG is now, with the help of the House of Bishops, resuming this effort.

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An **Inter Faith Scriptural Reasoning Conference** was held online on 7th June 2022 with reasonable representation and participation. The next conference is to be in-person and is planned for May 2023. This will be the first in-person conference since before the pandemic. For this, the Working Group is delighted to be collaborating with the *Sanctuary in Faith* stream of the *Places of Sanctuary Ireland* organisation.

In relation to Sanctuary, congratulations are in order to Rev Canon Elaine Murray (Diocese of Cork, Cloyne and Ross) and her parishioners for their compassionate response to the need of refugees in Ireland to find sanctuary. Carrigaline Union of Parishes was recognised as a Place of Sanctuary on 11th December 2022, when it received The Sanctuary Award. Rev Canon Murray, Rector of the Carrigaline Union of Parishes, and formerly secretary to the IFWG, is quoted on the Cork, Cloyne and Ross website as follows:

We are delighted that we received Church of Sanctuary status on 11th December. We really hope that our parish journey will continue under the guidance of the Places of Sanctuary movement and that our efforts will make even a small difference in the lives of people seeking sanctuary in Ireland.

A significant difference will be made, undoubtedly, to those seeking safe haven and needing to experience the hospitality and generosity of God in such real terms. The example of faithful obedience to Christ's command to reach out in love to the outcast and the stranger, acts also as a powerful example and encouragement to others to do likewise.

Last but far from least, the IFWG is grateful to the Most Reverend Dr Michael Jackson for his astute observations and contribution to this report, as follows:

It is well over a decade since The General Synod of the Church of Ireland unanimously extended the remit of The Committee for Christian Unity to become The Commission for Unity and Dialogue. This year has seen significant anniversaries in the life of Inter Church activities in which members of The Church of Ireland have played a leading role from the outset and continue to do so.

Inter Faith concerns force themselves on us today in ways that we had never expected or predicted at the turn of the millennium, not least through elective migration and forced migration of people to Ireland South and North.

This is changing the human landscape of Ireland rapidly. This is asking new and difficult questions of those of us with inherited, settled religious status in Ireland. We are all part of this re-shaping of our societies locally and nationally and, as a church, it is important that we should be involved, sharing our Christian principles and our Christian practices with those we meet who are new to us and new to them.

Inter Faith engagement happens primarily in the workplace, in the community and in the education and healthcare sectors and increasingly within families.

What is important is that members of the Church of Ireland be equipped to contribute to the conversations, to stand for inclusive community and to stand against racial and individual intolerance and hatred.

Witness and advocacy were part of what enabled the Church of God to grow in its earliest years. They likewise enable us to grow today in a different world where we have much more say in the shaping of civic policy than the early Christians had.

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The Inter Faith Working Group takes its remit from the changing contexts in which members of the Church of Ireland live and express their faith in Jesus Christ. One of our dialogue partners is Christians of other traditions; another is the secular state and its members who, on principle, adhere to no faith; yet another is members of Faith traditions other than our own.

Members of the Church of Ireland serve on Inter Faith Fora right across the length and breadth of the thirty-two counties. Through the archbishop of Dublin and a range of other participants, the Church of Ireland is connected directly to The Anglican Communion Inter Faith Commission by virtue of consistently taking a lead in The Network for Inter Faith in Europe and North America and Canada (NIFENAC). NIFENAC meets annually and reports directly to The Commission. It is regularly hosted in The Church of Ireland Centre, DCU, by kind permission of the Director Rev Professor Anne Lodge.

The IRWG [/IFWG] cannot do all the work for the Church of Ireland on its own. It is dependent on individuals and communities of the Church of Ireland to take a leading role locally in presenting Jesus Christ and serving their community as that community of belonging changes and develops, grows and expands in embracing those who are neighbour to neighbour.

*Rev Suzanne Cousins,
December 2022*

Appendix 1 ~ Annual Church Meetings

PCI General Assembly

The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland took place at Assembly Buildings, Belfast, from Wednesday 22nd – Saturday 25th June 2022. Proceedings began with the Installation of the new Moderator, the Rev Dr John Kirkpatrick, on the Wednesday evening who introduced the theme for his year in office, ‘*Grace Works.*’

General Assembly follows a pattern like the General Synod in terms of its consideration of a wide range of matters considered by its various Councils. Each presents a report on its work and there is an opportunity for members to question and debate the appended resolutions to the report. I was very impressed with the quality of speeches of contributors both in presenting or speaking to the various resolutions. There were many eloquent and powerful speeches and included some from young people. The participation of retired clergy as convenors and members is notable.

A debate following the report of the Pandemic Response (Theological, Moral and Spiritual) Task Group was very interesting and impressive. This report reviewed PCI’s response to the pandemic setting out theological, moral and spiritual principles to guide the Church in any similar situation in the future. One speaker noted something that all churches learnt from the pandemic, that ‘*community was the beating heart of church life*’.

On Friday, the Congregational Life & Witness’s (CCLW) gave a presentation entitled ‘*The Turning of the tide*’. During the presentation, the Assembly heard how congregations are emerging from the pandemic, with stories focusing on pastoral care, discipleship and leadership for this season. Moving forward, it looked at opportunities and challenges for

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youth, children's and women's ministry and unveiled new resources to help support congregations. The Council also announced a two-year listening exercise across the denomination's 19 regional presbyteries to enable it to better resource the whole church, as well as to understand the impact of the pandemic more fully.

The Saturday session, which was a new departure for the Assembly, was well attended and, in the afternoon, received a very comprehensive report from the Council for Public Affairs. This has a very wide remit and covers all aspects of the Church's engagement in the public square. Its report and debate touched all the current key issues – health, social care, the cost-of-living crisis, and devolution matters including justice and legacy issues. This included a contribution from the State Education Committee which reports on the valuable work of the Transferor Representatives' Council, which represents the interests of the Church of Ireland, Presbyterian and Methodist churches in education.

Visiting delegates are graciously permitted to speak during debates and this gave opportunity to bring the greetings of the Church of Ireland, and to offer sincere thanks for the generous hospitality provided.

*+ Ian Clogher,
June 2022*

Yearly Meeting of Quakers Ireland, the Religious Society of Friends

Dr Ken Dunn and Canon Stephen Fielding from the parish of Malone attended the Ireland Yearly Meeting of Quakers Ireland, the Religious Society of Friends. It was held in Stranmillis College Belfast from 11-14 August 2022. The meeting took the theme of 'Hope Renewal Healing' 'Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind.' (Romans 12:2). The in-person meeting, the first in three years due to the Covid epidemic, was also the first time it had been held in a blended format, enabling those who were unable to attend in person to do so online via Zoom. We were welcomed at the start of the session along with other inter-faith representatives. This followed a half hour of worship grounded in silence.

During the meeting various speakers contributed in person and online from as far away as the United States. Representatives from The Religious Society of Friends were also present from countries throughout Europe. Tim Gee, General Secretary of the Friends World Committee for Consultation said, 'Inter-visitation is the connective tissue of our world body of friends.' As the secretary of FWCC, he makes representations to the UN on Friends' heritage and tradition. He also spoke on initiatives to bring together the 400,000 Friends worldwide. One such initiative was enabling members to meet together online on World Quaker Day on 2nd October. The founder of the Quakers, George Fox (b. 1624) will have his 400th birthday commemorated in 2024 with birthday parties, imaginative letter writing to him and resource packs. The challenge to make a song for these celebrations was put to those present as they would be the world over. Workshops would enable this song to be written.

Ms Jaqui Stillwell the General Secretary of the Right Sharing of World Resources group based in New Hampshire shared reflections and experiences on her role and spoke of her hopes and dreams for the future.

She recounted her visit to Sierra Leone to a project funded by RSWR. This enabled local women to start a successful agricultural project on ancestral land. She remarked, 'Remember that you are loved. Sharing that love will change your life and someone else's.' RSWR was a not-for-profit Quaker organisation sharing the abundance of God's love by working for equity in partnerships around the world. She spoke of the positive change the

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grants from RSWR brought to relationships within communities bringing together people of different creeds. She concluded ‘We mustn’t let fear stop us from acting.’

This year’s Public Lecture was held in-person and in online webinar format and was entitled ‘Embodying the Quaker Testimonies in Service of a Living Planet: The Challenge of asking beautiful questions. It was delivered by Ms Lynn Finnegan, an Irish Quaker and illustrator and was described as truly inspiring and challenging. Challenging listeners to find their own way of loving the earth she reminded them that faith and action nourish each other. The Eco-Congregation Ireland Climate Justice Candle was part of candlelit worship each evening.

As part of the programme a short report was delivered on Ministry and Oversight focussing on the legacy of covid lockdowns, the ease or otherwise of speaking as the Spirit moved in an online context, how online was better for some, and the challenges of fewer at meetings.

The Quaker novelist Ms Barbara Luetke joined the meeting on Friday evening from Missouri and spoke about her recent book ‘The Kendal Sparrow’ and her motivation for writing Quaker historical novels. The novel was written to inspire younger Friends and to give them a sense of history. In the novel two young women travel to Oxford where they preached. One of them had preached in St Audeon’s in Dublin and in Cork. Taking these young lives as her inspiration for the novel she believes there is a commonality between the youth of that time and the youth of today especially with regard to the environment.

The Friends approach to their meeting was often in sharp contrast to General Synod. A novel feature, to us, was the minutes produced immediately after each session and agreed on with proposed modifications if necessary. The North/South interaction, outside the formal business, was much like General Synod but the large international attendance brought fresh insight to debate.

We both left with a much greater appreciation of silent worship as a preparation for the day’s work. A concept that could usefully be applied to General Synod.

*Canon Stephen Feilding,
August 2022*

The Church in Wales’ Governing Body

The Church in Wales’ Governing Body met during Wednesday 7th and Thursday 8th September at the most impressive International Convention Centre, Newport. Attending was a most interesting experience, especially as it was my first experience of such a meeting, other than our General Synod. The use of the Welsh language featured a lot, but thankfully we were given headsets which allowed us to hear translations into English where required.

The Governing Body of the Church in Wales meets twice annually and consists of 6 Bishops, 61 Clergy and 86 Laity. Members sat around tables encouraging more of a conference style of meeting. The Governing Body opened with Holy Communion in the meeting room, before The Archbishop of Wales delivered his Presidential Address.

During his address, Archbishop John spoke of current circumstances which included ‘post covid’ consequences, the cost of living, increasing secularism and a changing political landscape. In response to local poverty, he pledged that the Church would work with Government to alleviate its impact. The Archbishop commended some responses made by supermarkets to help people amidst difficulty, but intended to write to supermarkets to extend the range of items considered to be ‘basics’ and therefore increase the eligibility of

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products available to donate to people in need. The Archbishop believes that people of the Church are at their best when asked to do something and spoke of an simple Advent initiative for each Parish to undertake to assist people struggling this winter.

Moving on to the Church's role in making disciples, the Archbishop referred to the development of a 10 year plan for the Church in Wales. This is a work in progress, for which he was seeking the participation of the Governing Body. To assist the Church going forward, he announced RB support for Dioceses without historical investments inherited by some Dioceses and he also announced the availability of £100 million over the next 10 years to assist the Church with evangelistic opportunities.

Following the Standing Committee Report during which the Church in Wales' Dignity in Life charter was adopted, the next item on the Agenda was 'Question Time' during which pre-submitted questions were responded to by people determined to have been in a position to do so. A right of response was held by the questioner. This was a very enlightening exercise which very much helped to gain a picture of the reality of the Church in Wales at present. A Report of the Bench of Bishops was then presented offering members some insight of the discussions of the Bishops and opportunity to make comment and suggestions.

The RB Report then followed with brief discussion and remarkably all was undertaken before lunch on the first day.

For the most of the afternoon that followed, members greatly enjoyed good news stories from the Church in Wales. First there was a presentation by the Diocese of Swansea and Brecon whose scope of ministry and initiatives was most impressive. One Vicar spoke of his ministry in a very rural area which included 18 churches. Another Vicar served in an urban parish in Swansea which involved a consolidation of 3 churches into 1 and is now experiencing considerable life and growth with community engaging initiatives. A brilliant Art Project which featured consisted of beautiful paintings based upon the life, death and resurrection of Jesus which could be displayed in schools or other places to prompt discussions and explanation. We also heard of very encouraging work by the Diocesan Evangelist using rugby as an opening for speaking about our faith.

The second presentation during the same afternoon was from The Evangelism Fund which arose from a £10 million Fund established in 2018 to encourage evangelism and church growth. Recipients of allocations from this fund included Hope Street Church (Wrexham) and Citizen Church (Cardiff). In both instances we heard of amazing growth of attendance in both worship centres, which was spilling out in very positive ways into their respective Dioceses. It is even more remarkable that these churches developed in the aftermath of the Covid pandemic.

Reports from the University of Wales and The Lambeth Conference, a 'Year in Prayer' (Sept 2022 – Aug 2023) Presentation and Evening Prayer completed what was a very encouraging day.

The second day of Governing Body began with consideration of Future Plans for the Church in Wales. After Morning Devotions, the opening remarks by a representative of the RB included a belief the Church should invest in ministries that are demonstrably fruitful, with clear criteria and mechanisms to guide, and where initiatives are not working to respond. It was stressed that the RB was not to set the Agenda, but support strategies arising from the Church.

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Members then split up into discussion groups to respond to set questions relating to Growth, Buildings and Sharing Faith. Responses from members were then summarised and to be brought to meetings arranged to help develop the Church in Wales' 10 Year Plan.

Before lunch, a presentation by the Bible Society was received, reminding the Church of the story of Mary Jones, and highlighting resources available.

During the lunch break, news headlines were of raising concern for the wellbeing of HM Queen Elizabeth II. After lunch it was therefore resolved that the remainder of the business would be undertaken at a time to be determined online and that members should return home.

I would like to thank the Standing Committee for approving my visit to the Church in Wales' Governing Body. It truly was a most enjoyable experience, to which I was made profoundly welcome. I hope that insights gained will be helpful to us all.

*Malcolm Kingston,
September 2022*