

Churches
in Ireland
Connecting
in Christ

Irish Council
of Churches



2013
Annual Report

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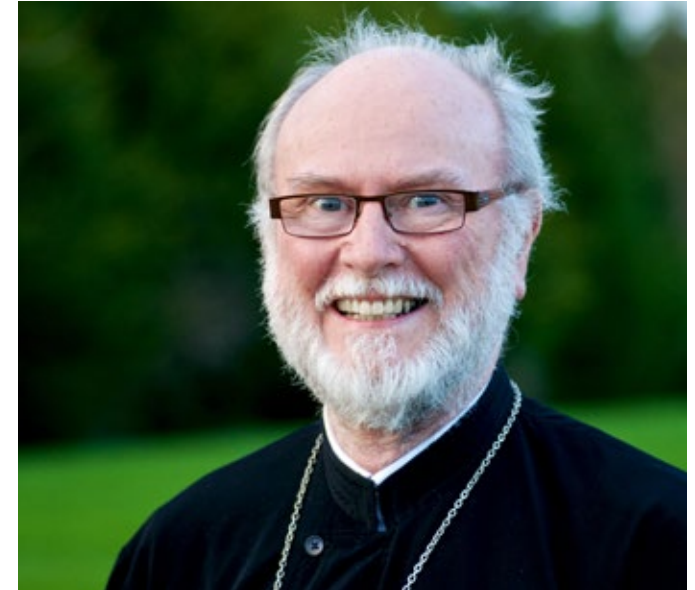
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ICC CONSTITUENT COMMUNIONS 2013

	Year Joined ICC
Church of Ireland	1923
Methodist Church in Ireland	1923
Moravian Church, Irish District	1923
Presbyterian Church in Ireland	1923
Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church	1923
Religious Society of Friends	1923
Salvation Army (Ireland Division)	1965
Lutheran Church in Ireland	1972
Greek Orthodox Church in Britain & Ireland	1997
Cherubim & Seraphim Church	2001
Russian Orthodox Church in Ireland	2003
Romanian Orthodox Church	2004
Antiochian Orthodox Church	2005
Redeemed Christian Church of God	Proposed for full membership AGM 2014



PRESIDENT —*Report*

WRITER
Rev Fr Godfrey O'Donnell

When I look back over my years as Vice-President, leading into my two year Presidency, it is amazing how many themes have reached their culmination.

Our annual meetings have explored climate change, the church in the public square, Europe and finance and of course that wonderful walk exploring Christian heritage in Derry~Londonderry as part of the City of Culture last year. The combined reflections of all the participants were incorporated into a painting of the city and the newly founded Christian Heritage Trail, which was painted by the prominent Belfast artist Jonny McEwen as the day unfolded. This painting was formally presented to Rev Peter Murray and the local clergy fellowship at the end of the event.

But it is perhaps the themes identified at the meeting in Lisburn in 2011 that have proved particularly significant. Fintan O'Toole, Irish Times journalist, certainly was provocative in his

critique, entitled 'The Church in the Public Square', of the social media's attitude to the churches in Ireland. The tone of his address was encapsulated in the notion that 'secularism is not an anti-religious idea'. He added that 'the public square is today defined by its fluidity, uncertainty, and ambiguity; it is a difficult space for people of faith, notably because the public square is allergic to notions of authority'. However, he pointed out that Christians don't have to enter that space defensively. Commenting on Church-State relations, he remarked that the culture where churches took authority for granted was over and cannot be reconstituted! Yet, he highlighted five points of contact which are common to all the churches and can connect with public affairs: (1) the ethical voice, (2) courage, (3) humility, (4) love, and lastly (5) spirituality, where people of faith can bring to bear respect for what surrounds life.



01

In a sense, Fintan was highlighting, perhaps, something that we already knew– the need for institutional change to enhance our relevance on the one hand and more active engagement on public affairs, including greater contact with government, on the other.

To address the former, we established an ICC Constitutional Amendment Committee to consider what changes were needed to ensure compatibility with new charity legislation, membership and other issues. This is still a work in progress. We rebranded the organisation under the banner ‘Churches in Ireland, Connecting in Christ’. We have refined our vision and clarified our core values to more appropriately express the way we work today. All of this activity laid the foundations for productive internal discussions going forward. Over the past year, we established a working group to reconsider the functions of the various forums, boards, committees, and the overall strategic

drive of our Council. This work has reached its culmination in recent months and it is clear that we are moving away from static, standing committees towards more dynamic task-focussed working groups.

These working groups represent our greater engagement in public affairs. Fifteen years on from the signing of the Belfast Agreement an inter-church working group under the chairmanship of Professor Colin Harvey produced a report: *Reflection, Renewal and Positive Change in Ireland*. This represented the potential to put the church on the front foot of positive public engagement. The report caused us to consider:

- How might the churches re-enter the public sphere with a common voice on the promotion of a culture of peace, non-violence and reconciliation?
- Do the churches bring an authority and integrity to discussions that others cannot provide?

- What are the gaps in our focus/resources that may be impeding effective engagement on these issues?
- What are the key messages that churches need to be communicating at the present time?
- How do we reach those who are alienated from churches?
- How can we keep peace and reconciliation issues on the agendas of our individual churches in a meaningful and provocative way?

The working group report can be found on our website at www.irishchurches.org/resources

The ICC Executive and the Irish Inter Church Committee have approved a number of opportunities for engagement with government and public policy on an inter-church basis. Last year, during the Irish Presidency of the EU, a meeting took place between representatives of CEC (Conference of European Churches), COMECE (Commission of the Bishops’ Conferences

of the European Community) and the ICC with the Taoiseach and the Irish Government. A number of meetings have taken place with the Taoiseach’s advisors looking at items such as a mutually agreed agenda for a Christianity plenary meeting and it is clear that the Irish Government is keen to hear a variety of voices that are present within the full spectrum of the Inter-Church membership. A lot of work went into getting as many people as possible involved in the IF campaign (Enough Food for Everyone IF) in the lead-up to the G8 summit in Fermanagh. In the aftermath of the conclusion of the Haass talks with our agreement, the ICC, along with the four larger Church leaders, issued a statement encouraging politicians to continue to seek a workable solution, while committing to wrestling with the issues under consideration themselves.

The Irish Churches Peace Project (ICPP) is a unique partnership project between the Irish Coun-

cil of Churches and the Presbyterian, Methodist, Church of Ireland and the Roman Catholic Churches in Ireland. The project is gaining real momentum and some exciting initiatives are springing up. The ICPP is working with the local churches, communities and agencies to build a shared future and to help churches to continue to address local needs. They are working across a range of communities in Northern Ireland and the border counties of the Republic and represents a significant development in peace building by the churches. The strong representation from the partner denominations and organisations is itself a signal of intent. Keith Hamilton acts as director, alongside 6 staff members. The project is funded by the EU, as well as by the Northern Ireland Executive and the Irish government.

As all this has been going on, we have had three highly stimulating Inter Church Meetings, with last year’s discussion on the Second Vatican Council going to

FAITH

The goal and grounding of all that we do is our shared Faith in Jesus Christ; we seek to be faithful to God and committed to our journey together

the very heart of the theological questions of our unity in Christ together.

In January 2014 we lost a great friend and serving member of the Executive Committee, Dr David Poole from the Religious Society of Friends. A veteran ecumenist from the time of the Ballymascanlon Talks from 1973, his faith and analytic mind were a constant stimulant to us all. First elected to the ICC in 1980, David served as president from 1984-1986. Amongst his many achievements was the spearheading of a process of rotational representation for smaller churches on ICC groups, as well as his involvement as an intermediary between Dunne’s Stores workers/ trade unions and management and the Department of Foreign Affairs during the 1984 strike action over handling South African goods. We will miss his extraordinary compassion, his dogged persistence, his wisdom, and his strong faith in Christ. Eternal memory!



02

At the end of my tenure I want to thank all those friends and colleagues that helped out and shared their vision of ecumenism with the team and myself over these last number of years, particularly those involved in the Joint Management Committee, which did trojan work, often way beyond the call of duty. The most heartening thing I have experienced are the comments coming from various people on the Executive and the Inter-Church Committee about the growing frankness and affection among members in furthering God's unity.

I wish all of God's blessings for Rev Dr Donald Watts of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, my worthy successor, as he starts his presidential journey. He will bring a mountain of experience and ideas to the Lord's work. May the Holy Spirit guide and direct him.

A big thank you is also due to Robert Cochran, our Treasurer since 2010. He has been instrumental, along with Mervyn

McCullagh, in getting the finances on an even keel: streamlining the layout, making them more audit-friendly, creating a clear demarcation between income and expenditure specific to ICC and IICC, clarifying the costs of running the Inter-Church Centre and our key staff.

One of the highlights of my time was engaging with the work of our former project staff based in Dublin: Philip McKinley promoting local ecumenism in the Republic and Adrian Cristea promoting migrant integration. Not only was their work important but their physical presence in Dublin enabled a broad spread of activity that we have sadly lost with the conclusion of their projects. Nevertheless, we are very conscious of the need to be energetic about maintaining our all-island focus and personally I hope and pray that as soon as finances allow, we can reopen an office in Dublin.

Needless to say, we are all deeply indebted to Mervyn for his amazing strategic overview

and energy in the last number of years, in getting us back on track, together with Karen Kelly (the living archive and heart of our organisation), Mark Thompson who filled in so ably while Karen was on maternity leave, and more recently Alison Meagher, our new Communications Officer.

Captions

- 01 The Peace Bridge in Derry~Londonderry part of the Christian Heritage Trail
- 02 The Christian Heritage Trail, painted by Jonny McEwan during the Annual Meeting 2013 incorporating contributions from delegates.



**HONORARY
TREASURER**
*—Report
Year 2013*

WRITER
Robert Cochran

This year, further advances have been made in the way the accounts are shown. Principally, most of the previously active special projects have now been finalised and thus the restricted or designated funds associated with those activities no longer require presentation (except historically in relation to the prior year figures for 2012). In addition, the auditors have prepared, at our request, a set of consolidated accounts for internal management purposes only at present, which cover both the Irish Council of Churches and the Irish Inter Church Meeting financial information together. This format has value in itself, but also emphasises that from an administrative and financial perspective, the ICC and IICM activities can be regarded as being administered and serviced centrally, while their individual identities of course remain. This has been done to facilitate and prepare for the requirements for Charity Status which will arise under new legislation shortly.

As can be seen in the formal accounts, we ended 2013 with

a small surplus, this being a significant improvement on our budgeted estimate of a small deficit. It is hoped that we can continue this pattern in 2014 and future years, thus allowing us to rebuild our reserves to a more prudent level. In accordance with the policy proposed and approved last year, we are budgeting for an increase in member church subscriptions for 2014 of 2%, the same increase as last year. This, along with the on-going careful monitoring and minimising of costs, is intended to bring us very close to a break-even position again for this year, and if possible to achieve another small surplus.

Finally, and most importantly, I wish to pay tribute to the enormous, and very efficient, amount of work put in by Karen Kelly on the day-to-day handling of the accounts throughout the year, along with Mervyn McCullagh's budgeting and oversight. Their combined hard work is demonstrated in the excellent financial outcome reported in the 2013 accounts.



EXECUTIVE OFFICER —Report

WRITER
Mervyn McCullagh

One of the things that we can take too easily for granted, especially as we stop time and reflect on what we have done in a given year, is the importance of our regular meetings. Since 1922 we have been convening meetings of the churches in our capacity as the formally established all-island body through which our member churches engage, dialogue and act on a wide variety of shared concerns. Taking into consideration the work of the Council and the work of the Irish Inter-Church Meeting, which began in 1973 and incorporates the Catholic Church, our overall membership reflects the contemporary landscape of Irish Christianity across Protestant, Orthodox, Reformed, Catholic, Independent and Migrant-led Churches and encompasses the vast majority of professing Christians within Ireland today. The importance of bringing these churches together on a routine basis several times a year should never be underestimated.

What the churches have discussed and how they have done so has varied widely over the years, at times more productively

than others. In my three years in post I have been privileged to watch these dialogues and styles of working deepen and develop. In one sense, this has been our busiest year, although it has been a year where we have stopped doing some things and begun doing others. Part of this refocussing of energy emerged from the awareness that the more complex the organisational structure, the easier it is to assume that someone else is making decisions. We have spent considerable time looking back to our fundamental purpose, attempting to describe the proper task of inter church cooperation and ecumenism today and reflecting on the values that underpin this action. We have highlighted these values through this report and have, in the past few weeks, agreed to simplify our structures so as to ensure that the Council Executive and the Inter-Church Committee have a considerably more active role in determining the policy direction of the organisation. The article on transition indicates some of the implications of these decisions.

We believe that the high level of representation and participation across the churches at our meetings and the openness for cooperation and dialogue in new and exciting ways is a great privilege, and one small manifestation of God's reconciling love for the church.

Finance

I'm delighted to report that we are displaying encouraging improvements in our finances. Last year we broke even, and this year we are returning a small surplus on our operational budget. This can be set against a previous 5 year average trend of 20% deficit and begins to relieve the pressure on our reserves. A combination of aggressively reducing expenditure while gradually increasing income has enabled this to be realised. Our thanks are due to all the member churches for their strengthened commitment to the organisation and to Karen Kelly for her meticulous work in ensuring that we are getting value for money at every opportunity. Mark Thompson provided most effective cover for

Karen during her maternity leave and was a great friend and colleague. We wish him well in his new role with Scripture Union in Scotland.

As part of an ongoing process of improvement, we clarified and reviewed many of our governance and financial procedures over the year, this is of particular importance as Robert Cochran will be stepping down as Honorary Treasurer in the Autumn. I wish to thank Robert for his tireless work, support and probing attention to detail over the past three years and look forward to welcoming his successor in September.

Website and communications

We launched a new website in September. This website puts our members to the forefront and is a further medium to enable us to communicate what we, and our members, are engaged in. Site traffic and visitor numbers have trebled against the previous year with the majority of visitors downloading resources or learning about our members. We have

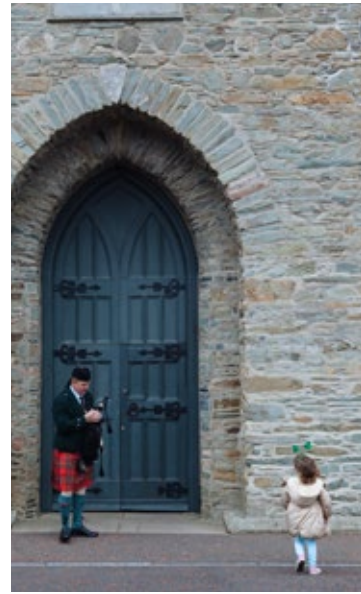
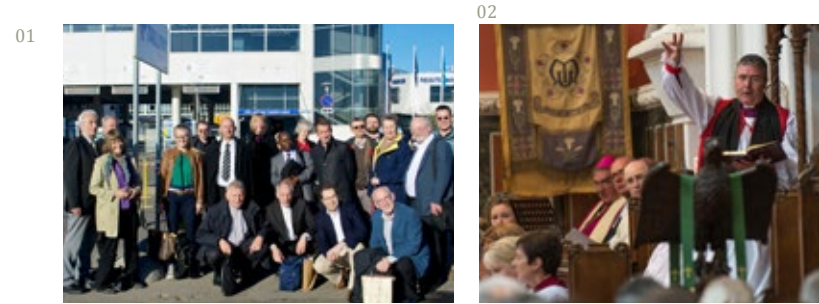
HOLINESS

Willing to be opened and changed by God as we connect with each other and meet together in the Lord; Experiencing God's holiness as we spend time together in prayer and seeking to be reconciled in Christ

also aggregated news release across many of our churches. It is our aim to continue to grow this resource along with our social media presence over the coming year and we are particularly encouraged by the high levels of engagement that currently exist through our Twitter feed. We are being ably assisted in this area by Alison Meagher who joined the staff team in September, with specific responsibility for developing our communications.

Redeemed Christian Church of God

After undergoing a complete membership application process, we now propose the Redeemed Christian Church of God for full membership of the Council. In Ireland, the Church has 116 parishes and well in excess of 10,000 members. The application for membership comes from their Republic of Ireland section. We have worked with them closely for over two years now and have developed excellent working relationships.



IF campaign

In the first half of 2013, the Irish Council of Churches was a member of the Enough Food for Everyone IF campaign. The UK wide coalition consisted of 19 organisations from Northern Ireland including international development NGOs, trade unions and church bodies.

The campaign aimed to influence the agenda and outcome of the G8 summit in Enniskillen in order to win commitments from world leaders on aid, land grabs, tax and transparency. These issues were identified by the campaign as being some of the root causes of global hunger.

We were particularly involved in helping to coordinate a joint letter signed by 15 senior Irish church leaders, addressed to the Prime Minister and the Taoiseach in support of the IF campaign. The letter was printed in the Belfast Newsletter on the first day of the G8 summit.

The IF campaign also held an ecumenical service at St Macartin's Cathedral in Enniskillen, with a live video link-up to St Michael's Parish Church across the road. The service was attended by over 1,000 people and included music from the Ulster Orchestra and The Priests; prayers from local school children; an interview with, the president of the Zambian Council of Churches, Rev Suzanne Matala, a partner of Christian Aid; and a sermon from the Archbishop of York, Rev Dr John Sentamu. As well as being a poignant moment on the eve of the G8 summit, the service generated significant media coverage for the campaign, with 12 television crews attending the post-service press conference with Archbishop Sentamu.

The extensive media coverage helped to raise public awareness about the impact of tax dodging and land grabs on development. The Lough Erne Declaration G8 Communique incorporated many of the IF campaign's policy positions including calls for

greater tax transparency and for consideration of the rights of poor farmers in land deals.

Conference of European Churches Assembly

The Conference of European Churches Assembly took place in Budapest from 3-8 July 2013. Over 400 participants attended the assembly, including upwards of 200 church delegates. The theme was: "And now what are you waiting for? CEC and its mission in a changing Europe".

Archbishop of Dublin, Michael Jackson, was elected as one of the co-convenors of the Assembly. The Irish delegation included Rev Dr Donald Watts and Rev Lorraine Kennedy-Ritchie (PCI); Mr Mervyn McCullagh (PCI and ICC); Rev Donald Ker (MCI); and Dr Kenneth Milne (CoI), who are all members of the ICC Executive.

A significant proportion of the conference was taken up with examining and approving a revised constitution for CEC. It

was clear that this was an organisation in transition, and patience was necessary as the assembly found its form and voice. Crucially for us, the role of the national Councils of Churches has been reaffirmed as a key entry point into each nation, and the Councils continue to have right of attendance at Assembly. This came as a result of an amendment brought forward by the ICC along with some energetic lobbying from the entire Irish delegation.

European National Councils of Churches Meeting

This year the Secretaries of the National Councils of Churches in Europe met in Helsinki and Talinn. This is a most valuable meeting and facilitated thorough preparation for the CEC assembly, as well as enabling us to learn Europe wide issues being faced by our churches and specifically about the growth and challenges facing the church in Estonia.

Blasphemy in the Irish Constitution

Ahead of the Constitutional Convention's debate on the proposal to remove the offence of blasphemy from the Constitution of Ireland in November 2013, we made a joint submission to the Convention highlighting that it is vital for the State to ensure that the rights of individuals and communities to practice and live out their faith openly are protected by law. We suggested that these guarantees may be better achieved through constitutional and legislative provisions for the protection for freedom of religion, belief and expression, as well as legislation against discrimination and hate crimes. The submission garnered wide media interest and we were pleased to note that the ultimate recommendation of the Convention was largely in line with our submission.

RESPECT

Respecting and seeking to understand each other's beliefs; we are aware of our diversity while recognising the presence of Christ in each other as we seek to understand the fulness of God's revelation for the world

Scottish Referendum

A five person delegation from Ireland, two of whom attended under the auspices of CTBI, participated in a two day church consultation entitled 'Churches and Nations: challenges and potential of the Scottish Referendum for the Future of Scotland, Britain and Ireland'. Organised by ACTS, and held in Edinburgh, this conference considered the implications of the upcoming referendum on independence, both for Scotland and the rest of the UK and Ireland. A lively and engaging debate was facilitated across the two days and the ICC would like to sincerely thank the outgoing General Secretary of ACTS, Stephen Smyth, for providing our delegation with the opportunity to contribute to this significant discourse.

World Council of Churches Assembly, Busan, Korea

We were represented at the World Council of Churches Assembly in Busan, through CTBI and have asked working groups to reflect on two the resulting documents over the coming months. Rt Rev Alan Abernethy has been appointed to its central committee representing the Church of Ireland.

Conclusion

In conclusion, may I offer my heartfelt thanks to all the members of the Executive and the Inter-Church Committee for their work over the year, but most particularly to our out-going president, Fr Godfrey O'Donnell. His presidency has not only been highly significant for the Orthodox community in Ireland, but his pastoral care and deep spirituality have been a constant source of strength to me personally, and he has opened more doors that I care to imagine with the government in Ireland. Thank you for all that you have done.

May we give thanks to God for all his blessings to us and pray that through the power of the Holy Spirit, and following the example of Christ our Saviour, we may bring glory to God as we work for the extension of Christ's kingdom.

Captions

- 01 The European Councils of Churches' Secretaries General in Talinn
- 02 Rt Rev John McDowell at the IF campaign ecumenical service in Enniskillen
- 03 Mervyn McCullagh, Revs Donald Watts and Lorraine Kennedy-Ritchie at the CEC Assembly in Budapest

04



03



01



02

TRANSITION TO NEW WAYS OF WORKING —Report

WRITER
Mervyn McCullagh

Preface

Our boards, forums and working groups have been a vital component in realising our purpose of 'developing and providing a channel for Ireland's churches to connect through a common belief in Christ'. This past year has marked their transition from standing groups to dynamic working groups.

Over the past year our boards, forums and working groups have engaged in a wide variety of activities. As part of our efforts to ensure appropriate and relevant ways of working in our present context, the work of these standing bodies has consistently pointed towards the real value of appointing working groups to perform specific tasks and liaison groups which bring together key personnel across the churches with responsibility for particular issues. This transition reached its culmination at the end of this year, with both the Inter-Church Committee and the ICC Executive taking on a greater role in policy and strategic direction to enable these dynamic groups to work more productively. This report shows some of the highlights of the standing groups and the new work that the dynamic groups have begun.

Caption

01 Rt Rev Silvans S Christian, Bishop of the Gujarat Diocese of the Church of North India

Board of Overseas Affairs Chair: Colin Campbell

As well as keeping a close eye on ongoing developments in the Middle East, the Board received a visit from the Rt Rev Silvans S Christian, Bishop of the Gujarat Diocese of the Church of North India, and co-ordinated a meeting with Isaac Munther who describes himself as a Christian, Palestinian, Arab, Evangelical, Reformed, Lutheran – a unique combination! He is a teacher at Bethlehem Bible College, director of the Christ at the Checkpoint Conference, and a member of Musalaha, a reconciliation initiative between Israelis and Palestinians based on the life and teaching of Jesus. The meeting also included Professor Patricia Barker, Professor at Dublin City University, recently returned from IOPT as part of the EAPPI programme, and Sorley McCaughey from Christian Aid.

As part of our review, it was felt that the brief of the Board was too broad and it was agreed that,

in the future, the Board will return to its original purpose as a World Mission Committee, bringing together the mission secretaries of our member churches and focusing on:

1. Creating opportunities for collaboration and action on world mission
2. Keeping abreast of changing trends, learning from the experiences of others and developing best practice in World Mission
3. Developing a Christian response to international affairs that impact on the global mission of the church
4. Helping to educate and inform the churches in Ireland on issues of world mission

As European Affairs never had a natural home within the Board, it was agreed to establish a new committee for this specific purpose.

European Affairs Committee Chair: Dr Kenneth Milne

It was agreed that a Christian critique of matters ethical, economic and social, as they relate to European Union policy and directives, was required under the auspices of the ICC. It is important for our Churches to be aware of how the EU and its agencies operate, and to have channels of communication. Help and support in grappling with these issues is readily available from several sources. The Church and Society Commission of CEC constitutes a well-informed link. So also do local bodies like the Institute of International and European Affairs in Dublin which provides well-researched papers and almost weekly meetings and seminars in which high-ranking

WITNESS

Witnessing to God's kingdom of justice, peace and reconciliation through word and action; and to our common discipleship in the way we live and work together; and also as we listen to the world in which we live and serve

EU personnel participate, as do politicians from the continent, the UK and Ireland. There are EU offices in both Northern Ireland and the Republic and these are only too ready to assist with information – this is especially the case as Spring 2014 will see elections in both political jurisdictions of the island to the European Parliament.

Our member churches began to appoint representatives to this committee in early 2014 and the committee will begin its work in earnest in April of this year. The purpose of this committee is to:

1. Bring a Christian judgement to bear on European affairs;
2. Help to inform and share developments in European Affairs with the Irish churches;
3. Assist in educating the Irish member churches about the European Union and its structures
4. Stimulate and maintain contact with ecumenical organisations in Europe and European institutions in Ireland;

5. Assist the ICC in developing policies, submissions and advocating on relevant aspects of European Affairs

Two forums have existed under the auspices of the Irish Inter-Church Meeting:

Theology Forum

Co-Chairs: Ms Gillian Kingston & Most Rev Brendan Leahy

The Theology Forum met once this year in order to consider two documents produced by the World Council of Churches and launched at the Busan Assembly: 'The Church: Towards a Common Vision' and 'Together Towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes'.

As the first document is of such fundamental purpose to our organisation, the forum recommended that a thorough discussion of these documents form the basis of the next Irish Inter-Church Meeting. The Forum will not meet again in its present form, but the Irish Inter-Church Committee has asked the chairs to form a working group to take this issue forward.



01

Church in Society Forum

Chair: Ms Eileen Gallagher

The Church in Society Forum met regularly through the year, considering issues such as Shannon Airport and Irish neutrality, refugees in Ireland, the 15th anniversary of the Good Friday Agreement and the spiritual underpinnings of social action. Most importantly, the forum has inspired the creation of both the Finance Officers Liaison Group and the Working Group on Reflection, Renewal and Positive Change.

Finance Officers Liaison Group

Following on from the 2012 Church and Society Forum (CSF) paper on ethical finance policy in the church there was a clear consensus that there are significant areas of common concern and discussion around issues of church finance and investment in an Irish context. Those consulted during the research felt there was real value in establishing a meeting for regular exchange and sharing of

information between key church finance and investment personnel. We convened this meeting in 2013 with the principal objective to provide a space for networking and information-sharing but also to explore the possibilities of establishing joint working groups to develop policy recommendations on specific issues and/or the of sharing resources, including the acquisition of external analyses. We convened the first of these meetings in 2013, with the finance officers from across the churches. Representatives from the CSF, Trocaire, Christian Aid and Mr John Arnold from the Ecumenical Council for Corporate Responsibility also joined the meeting.

Working Group on Reflection Renewal and Positive Change

Chair: Professor Colin Harvey

To mark the 15th anniversary of the Good Friday Agreement, the IICC established a working group to reflect on ways to advance an agreed basis for an inter-church discussion 15

years on from the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement, with a view to endorsing principles that promote an agenda of renewal and positive change. It was felt that any inter-church engagement on this issue should be embedded in a framework of Christian principles, that respond to current questions with voices, concepts and proposals that give practical life to mutual respect. The principles should have application throughout the island of Ireland, with specific recommendations for positive application, both North and South. After many meetings and wide-ranging discussions, the working group produced a report for the Irish Inter-Church Committee that is available on our website.

Their findings were wide-reaching, compelling and significant. A key theme running through the report's recommendations is the further development of dialogue within our member churches in order that we may evidence God's reconciling purpose for all and in doing so awaken faith in Christ and

promote understanding of the will of God based on our shared Gospel values. The report highlighted that institutional change is necessary in order to build a genuinely peaceful and reconciled society. This added further momentum for us to review our working structures.

Liaison Group on Reconciliation

Chair: David Gallagher

The finalisation of the report on Reflection, Renewal and Positive Change dovetailed with the conclusion of the Haass process, which ended without agreement at the beginning of 2014. In the interim, Rev. Donald Watts requested that the Catholic Church, Church of Ireland, Methodist Church, Presbyterian Church and the ICC send representatives to a meeting convened on 2nd January 2014.

That group drafted a press statement which was issued by the leaders of those four churches, plus the ICC president. This statement garnered a satisfactory amount of press coverage. They also committed to wrestling further with those issues which inhibit the development of a peaceful and reconciled society in Northern Ireland. This commitment also served to meet two key objectives of the Irish Churches Peace Project, where leadership of the the five partner church organisations would engage on peace, reconciliation and policy issues. Two more all-day meetings were held with the support of the ICPP. The first of these meetings was held in Armagh, and dealt with values. The second, held in Belfast Castle, looked at a future vision.

HOPE

Hoping in Christ and living in the power of the Holy Spirit sustaining us and fuelling our courage; We are courageous in our vision and mission having the strength together to fulfil our reason to be

This group recommended that it could operate more effectively under the auspices of the Irish Inter-Church Meeting. Following a meeting in February, the Inter-Church Committee agreed to establish a liaison group on reconciliation with David Gallagher agreeing to chair. The purpose of this group is:

1. To be a resource for the member churches in thinking about and analysing issues that relate to the forthcoming elections, the Haass process, as well as issues of reconciliation throughout the island of Ireland.
2. To connect with other faith-based groups and initiatives that have also sprung up during this period.
3. To meet with, listen to and learn from key stakeholders in government and civil society in an effort to advance peace and reconciliation.

Communications Officers Liaison Group

Finally, and also under the auspices of the Irish Churches Peace Project, we brought together the Communications Officers of the churches to explore if it

is possible to develop a set of protocols and processes that make 'joint inter church statements' more effective. The initial meeting helped understand the current processes within each of our own churches/organisations for issuing public statements. A series of further meetings have been planned.

Conclusion

As an organisation, we are really excited about the possibilities that this new way of working brings. But we are also deeply conscious of the hard work and dedication of the all the forum and board members who have given freely of their time and expertise over many years. We offer particular thanks to the chairs and conveners for their tireless work in seeking consensus and ways forward on a range of complex and often very difficult issues. It is our prayer that as we transition from forums to working groups that we will be enabled to work with you all and that the quality of all of our work will be greatly enhanced.



01

IICM —Report

Preface

On 25th November 2013, representatives of the Roman Catholic Church and of the member churches of the ICC gathered at Dromantine Retreat Centre in Co. Down to celebrate the 26th Irish Inter-Church Meeting.

Against the backdrop of the recent fiftieth anniversary of the Second Vatican Council, delegates participated in an all day reflective session alongside guest speakers James Corkery, an Irish Jesuit and Associate Professor of Systematic Theology at the Milltown Institute of Theology and Philosophy in Dublin, and Dr Patrick Mitchel, Director of Studies at Irish Bible Institute, Dublin.

We were keen to give credence to the spirit of the historic Ballymascanlon talks of 1973. Against the backdrop of the Northern Irish ‘Troubles’, Ballymascanlon became the first occasion on which these two groups met to explore, discuss and act on issues of mutual interest, a structure which, in succeeding years became formalised as the Inter-Church Meeting. A conscious effort was therefore made to provide an inclusive, participative and interactive space for those present to reflect, share ideas and to connect through a common belief in Christ. The structure of this round-table plenary also purposefully reflected the spectrum of tradition, age and gender of the delegates who

gathered to discuss this issue of deep ecumenical resonance.

The Second Vatican Council (1962-65), called by Pope John XXIII (1881- 1963), is considered by Catholics to be the twenty-first ecumenical council. It is widely regarded as the most important religious event of the twentieth-century. Meeting for one session under Pope John and three under Pope Paul VI (1897-1978), the Council aimed at *aggiornamento* (Italian ‘updating’) of the Church’s life and doctrinal formulations. Instead of defining new dogmas it wanted to teach pastorally and encourage the cause of Christian and human unity.

The Council was attended by over two thousand Catholic bishops and observers from the other main Christian traditions (Orthodox, Lutheran, Reformed, Anglican), enhancing its value as a platform for dialogue and a point of reference for all. The Council’s teachings are contained in its sixteen documents. The decree on ecumenism, *Unitatis Redintegratio* (Latin ‘The Reestablishment of Unity’), marked the end of the Counter-Reforma-

Captions

- 01 The Co-Chairs, Cardinal Séan Brady and Rev Fr Godfrey O’Donnell along with Rev John Brackenridge, Rev Dr Richard Clutterbuck and Eva-Maria Peper
- 02 Patrick Mitchel, beside Very Rev Dr Pádraig Murphy, Ms Eleanor Gaw & Canon Ian Ellis
- 03 Pastor Corinna Diestelkamp
- 04 Archbishop Richard Clarke with Lorraine Kennedy Ritchie and Eva-Maria Peper
- 05 James Corkery between Ms Gillian Kingston and Dr Kenneth Milne
- 06 Delegates in Dromantine



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tion mentality and committed the Catholic Church to the work of ecumenism.

James Corkery reflected on the reception of Vatican II in Ireland within the context of the perceived debate within the Roman Catholic Church as to how the Council should be interpreted, whether as *continuous* with preceding Councils, especially those of the modern period: Trent (1545-1563) and Vatican I (1869-1870), or as *discontinuous*.

Leading the theologians who saw it in continuity with Church teaching, was Joseph Ratzinger, who famously wrote ‘There is no pre or post Conciliar Church’. In assessments of Vatican II as Cardinal, and later as Pope, Benedict XVI emphasised the importance of looking at the actual texts of the council and not just its spirit.

‘This was a grave error, in his view,’ Corkery argues, ‘because people were referring to a so called, nebulous, ‘spirit’ of the Council rather than paying

careful attention to what its texts actually said.’

Those on the ‘discontinuity’ side, like John O’Malley pointed to the newness of its style, encapsulated by a ‘horizontal vocabulary’, which focussed on persuading and inviting. ‘Overall there is a staggeringly new vocabulary here, a different kind of ecclesial language.’

However, he concluded that the two camps have moved closer to each other in recent years, with Pope Benedict’s proposal of a “hermeneutic of reform”. The continuity of principles in Vatican II had not been abandoned, he said, and spoke instead of a process of ‘innovation in continuity’.

Patrick Mitchel dedicated the afternoon session to addressing Vatican II from a Protestant perspective.

‘Far from Rome never changing,’ he enthused, ‘Vatican II heralded a rate and depth of change that

was unforeseen even by the most enthusiastic proponents of the new Catholicism.’

Mr Mitchel pointed to the ‘sea change’ in the nature of Protestant-Catholic relationships since Vatican II as well as identifying an increasingly ‘evangelical language and theology’ in the Catholic Church. He re-iterated Pope Benedict’s reflections on modern-day Christianity being ‘not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with a person [Jesus Christ] which gives life a new horizon and definite direction.’

Bishop Brendan Leahy and Archbishop Richard Clarke led the responses to both speakers and the subsequent discussions harnessed an engaged and thoughtful input from all those present.



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CTBI —Update

Preface

The ICC is an associate member of Churches Together in Britain and Ireland. CTBI was set up to take forward the churches' ecumenical agenda on a strategic Four Nations basis. It works closely with Action for Churches Together in Scotland, CYTUN (Churches Together in Wales), Churches Together in England and the Irish Council of Churches. Bob Fyffe is its the General Secretary.

WRITER

Canon Bob Fyffe

Captions

01 World Council of Churches 10th Assembly at Busan, Republic of Korea

02 Kingsley Primary School, Toxteth

From Belfast to Busan

Ecumenism is changing because the world is changing! Although the unity of the church continues to be the focus of CTBI's work, the environment that we travel through continues to look different with every turn and twist in the road. What seems like the "old days" of the Swanwick Declaration with the idea that "we should only do separately what we must and together what we can" has given way to a much less structured and much more relational landscape. Like the other national structures we have moved further away from representative gatherings and Networks to a way of working that facilitates and resources local groups. The truth is that there is a lot to tell about what is being developed at local level that has importance for others, not only at a local level but also for others around the four nations and beyond. Part of our role is now to give voice to those people and places and communities who are breaking new ground in a time of great challenge and austerity.

Good Society

Telling the story of Christian communities around Britain and Ireland who are quietly building a good society has been one of this years highlights. We began by asking the question "what does it mean to live in a good society". The results so far have been challenging and far reaching. Communities from Belfast to Cornwall, Glasgow to Swansea have worked on the first report and this work is supplemented by a website at www.agoodso-society.org where as well as the report you will find a toolkit to undertake further conversations. So far, some of the outcome stress that faith groups want to share the Gospel in action, want radical leaders challenging accepted roles and status quo, want mediators, want community leaders rather than just faith leaders, want to stand for values, rather than specifics of different branches of faith, want to be seen as the voice of truth, values and integrity – the holders of the space rather than the holders of power. It also suggests that we

should be leading by creating possibilities and seeing buildings as opportunity for new thinking on meaning of sanctuary and community. How does your community live out its values? We want to share this through the Good Society project.

God of life, lead us to justice and peace.

As well many place around Britain and Ireland the journey through this last year has taken many of us to the WCC Assembly in Busan, South Korea. The division between north and south made a huge impact on the Assembly and the work of reconciliation and reunification continues against a hostile backdrop. However, any assembly that brings together 3000 people from every corner of the globe also bring a rich diversity of issues and experiences. The plenary presentations can be viewed at oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/assembly/2013-busan/plenary-presentation with additional video summaries at wcc2013.info/en/news-media/

video/recordings. One particular strand around mission came from Bishop Duleep De Chickera, who urged us to consider mission from the margins. God is constantly searching out the margins looking for those who can carry the Word most effectively. Bp Du Chickera urged us to see mission from the margins towards the privileged centre. This work is focused in a new WCC document called Together for Life. Another highlight was the daily Bible studies and these can be viewed at wcc2013.info/en/resources/documents/BibleStudies_en.pdf It is hoped that various streams of work will emerge from the Busan Assembly and that the Irish Churches will continue to play an important role in how this is shaped and moved forward. CTBI is a partner in the Ecumenical Forum on Korea and we hope to bring the Forum to Britain and Ireland for its next meeting.

As we have moved from Belfast to Busan, so we also note that

CTBI continues to bring together those who have a special concern for persecuted Christian communities. This continues to be true across the Middle East and we particularly focus our thoughts and prayers on the people of Syria. We continue to ask how Christians across the four nations can support and accompany other indigenous Christian communities who suffer persecution and death for their faith. CTBI will continue to resource this area of work in the coming months.

Along with that we continue to produce resources for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity (with Irish writers), Lent study materials and resources for the environment and Racial Justice Sunday. A free website is available for any local group to download and develop as their own local website at www.ctbi.org.uk/614/

There is lots to explore and share as we travel together. Join at www.ctbi.org.uk



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CHRISTIAN AID —Update

Preface

The Irish Council of Churches is a member of Christian Aid and Christian Aid is responsible to all its member bodies for its work. Rosamond Bennett is the Chief Executive.

WRITER

Rosamond Bennett

The best strategies are simple and straightforward. This is what we in Christian Aid Ireland have sought to achieve with our recently published *‘From Inspiration to Impact’*.

This slim 16-page booklet outlines how we intend to realise our ambitious vision of an end to poverty. I have summarised our strategy under five headings, each beginning with the letter ‘I’.

Inspiration comes first. To ‘love your neighbour as yourself’ is to place others’ needs and hopes on a level with your own. We want to inspire people throughout Ireland – whether they are in government or in church, in business or are members of the general public – to help us end poverty.

Impact is what we must achieve, and this makes up a major part of the strategy. It is divided into four parts.

- The first is supporting people to realise their rights. Essentially this means giving people the means to shape their own future and to strengthen their ability to hold those with power to account.
- The second is promoting gender equality. This is based on the belief that lasting peace and development is impossible when half the population is excluded. In practice it means getting access to both education and decision-making arenas for women and girls. It also means tackling gender-based violence, like the widespread use of rape as a weapon of war in countries like Colombia and the Democratic Republic of Congo, along with finding justice for the survivors.
- The third is challenging structures and systems. The thinking behind this is the fact that many people cannot

escape poverty because of decisions made by those with power, like governments and big corporations. This includes working in Ireland, the UK and the EU to highlight injustices, like unjust tax rules, that have a damaging effect on poorer countries.

- The fourth is humanitarian aid. When disaster strikes it is the poorest who are hit hardest. Our partners on the ground provide immediate help, while in the longer term we help communities to prepare for possible future disasters before they happen.

Income is a necessary part of the journey, but it is not just about money. We ask our supporters to ‘give, act, pray’, people can give money or time as volunteers; they can act by campaigning against injustice; and our supporters can pray for the work

we do and the communities we work with.

Image is a recognition that we could not do our work without our supporters and that we are accountable for the money they donate. Our strategy requires us to show that we work openly and above all transparently, and that we use the money received wisely.

Integrity is the fifth ‘I’ and perhaps the most important. On the final page of the document we say ‘We want to do our work with integrity and humility, reflecting our Christian faith. We are inspired by the promise of Jesus Christ of a world where all can “have life and live it abundantly” John 10 v10 (NRSV), which is why we work with people of all faiths and none.’

This is the foundation of all our work.

If you would like a copy of ‘From Inspiration to Impact’, it is available from Christian Aid’s offices in Dublin and Belfast. It can also be downloaded as a pdf document by searching for ‘Impact’ at christianaid.ie

03 Rosamond Bennet and Rev Dr Heather Morris, President of the Methodist Church, visited Ghana in July 2013. They are pictured here with primary school principal Insah Habiba.

04 The Moderator of the Presbyterian Church, Rt Rev Robert Craig, visited a number of Christian Aid-funded projects in Rwanda and Burundi at the end of August 2013

Dr Craig is pictured with Rosamond Bennett and the Bishop of Makamba Diocese in Burundi, Rt Rev Martin Blaise Nyaboho. The Diocese, a partner of Christian Aid’s, provides small loans, seeds, fertilizer and agricultural advice to women farmers.

Captions

01 Christian Aid supporters taking part in the annual Sheep’s Head Hike in West Cork.

02 Rojan Wahid, 15, lives in Zanan Bchuk, northern Iraq. Her village has been transformed after decades of violent conflict with the help of Christian Aid partner REACH. The community’s reservoir was stocked with fish last year.

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