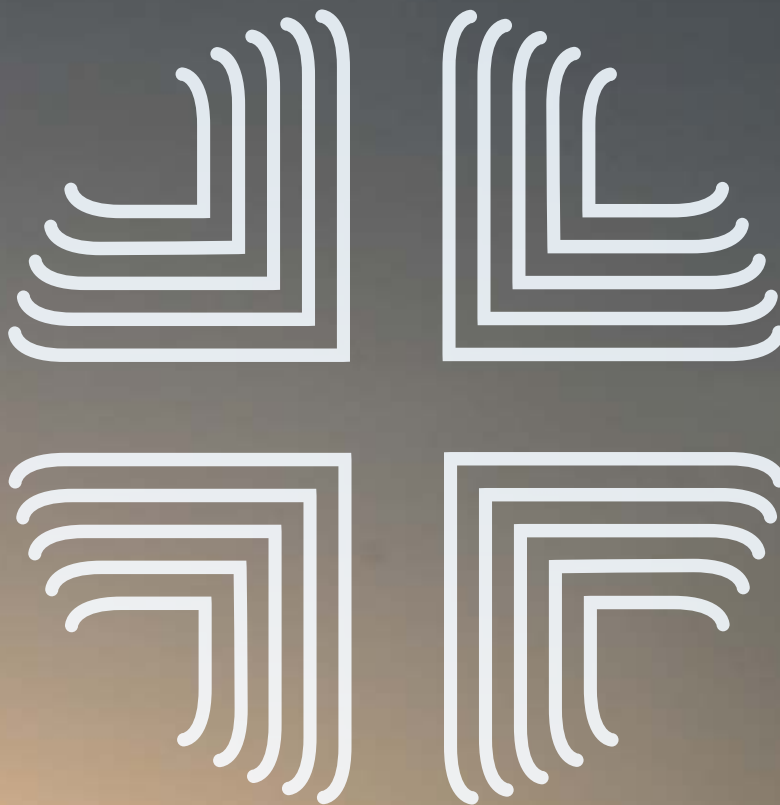


**Churches  
in Ireland**  
Connecting  
in Christ

**Irish Council  
of Churches**



2012  
Annual Report

# CONTENTS

**Core Reports**

President's  
—Report  
04.....*Rev Fr Godfrey O'Donnell*

Honorary Treasurer  
—Report Year 2012  
08.....*Robert Cochran*

Executive Officer  
—Report  
09.....*Mervyn McCullagh*

**Supplementary Report**

Church in Society  
—Report  
*i–viii.....Ethical Investment Study*

**Boards and Forums**

Church in Society  
—Forum  
13.....*Eileen Gallagher*

Theology  
—Forum  
15.....*Gillian Kingston*

Overseas Affairs  
—Board Report  
16.....*Rev Colin Campbell*

**Associated Organisations**

Women's Link  
—Update  
17.....*Phyllis Watters*

Christian Aid  
—Update  
18.....*Rosamond Bennett*

CTBI  
—Update  
20.....*Canon Bob Fyffe*

## ICC CONSTITUENT COMMUNIONS 2012

	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'S**  
—*Report*

WRITER  
*Rev Fr Godfrey O'Donnell*

As Churches in Ireland we are working hard to be truly for one another in Christ, working together to make known that 'Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners' (1Tim 1:15), our 'God and Saviour, who desires everyone to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth' (1Tim 2:3-4). But, in this enterprise it is essential that we have some awareness of the context in which we work, and what the Holy Spirit is saying to us today.

In two fine articles 'Minimal Religion' and 'Post-Atheism: From Apophatic Theology to 'Minimal Religion'', Mikhail Epstein, Professor of Russian and Cultural Theory, Durham University, UK, introduces the

1 M Epstein, A Genis, & S Vladiv-Glover, Russian Postmodernism: New Perspectives in Post-Soviet Culture, Oxford: Berghahn Books, 1999.

notion of 'minimal religion'. He also makes mention of an overlapping classification: people who declare themselves 'just Christians' in surveys of religious allegiance, as against those who adhere to one or other Christian confession, such as Orthodox or Catholic. This kind of religious positioning Epstein sees as 'post-atheist'; and this in two senses. One, people brought up in a militantly atheist regime which denied and repressed all religious forms, so that they are equidistant from, and equally ignorant of all confessional options. The second, another group that is also post-atheist in the stronger sense, that they have reacted against their training, and have acquired in some fashion a sense of God, which however ill-defined places them outside the space of their upbringing.

'Minimal religion' is a spirituality lived in one's immediate circle, with family and friends, rather than in churches, one especially aware of the particular, both in individual human beings, and in the places and things that surround us. In response to the universalist concern for the 'distant one' stressed in Marxist communities, it seeks to honour the 'image and likeness of God' in the particular people who share our lives. But because this religion was born outside of any confessional structures it has its own kind of universalism, a sort of spontaneous and unreflective ecumenicism, in which the coexistence of plural forms of spirituality and worship is taken for granted. Even when people who start with this kind of spirituality end up joining a church, as many do, they retain something of their original outlook. These people who have found God in the wilderness feel that the walls of the existing temples are too narrow

**Reason growing dim**

Does your reason now grow dim?  
Do you now find it hard to think clearly?  
Does logic seem like a hammer in your head,  
Battering your soft brain into a pulp?

Perhaps age is weakening your mind.  
Perhaps your Reason is fading with the years.  
Or perhaps you have seen the limits of logic,  
And recognised how little logic can discern.

Whether age or wisdom is the cause,  
Welcome the confusion of your thoughts.  
Out of chaos God created the world.  
Out of confusion truth appears.

R Van de Weyer

for them and should be expanded. Does some of this sound reminiscent of many young Irish adults who are going through or have gone through the education system, affected by the unreflective capitalist system of the 'Celtic Tiger' and 'post-tiger'?

Something analogous can be said of the situation in 'post-secular' Europe, states Charles Taylor, a Canadian Roman Catholic philosopher. He uses the term, not in the sense of an age where the declines in belief and practice of the last century would have been reversed, because this does not appear likely for the moment, but rather of a time where the hegemony of the mainstream master narrative of secularisation will be more and more challenged, which seems to be now happening. Reading the situation in a positive light, he asserts that just as the hegemony has helped mediate the decline, our overcoming of it will open new possibilities.

Being 'spiritual but not religious' is one of the western phenomena which has some affinity with Mikhail Epstein's 'minimal religion' in Russia. It usually designates a spiritual life which retains some distance from the disciplines and authority of religious confessions. Distance here reflects a reaction to religious authority claims and a wariness of confessional leadership, whereas, the reaction in Russia was against the 'wasteland' left by militant atheism and distance from the confessions was at first due to ignorance and lack of familiarity. In both cases, a certain diffuse ecumenical sense is widespread, and even those who subsequently take on some confessional life, and thus become 'religious', retain something of this original freedom from sectarianism. What also remains important, in both East and West, is some ongoing awareness of the value of following one's own spiritual itinerary and an appreciation that, quoting Nicholai



Berdyayev, a Russian philosopher (1874-1948): ‘Knowledge, morality, art, government and the economy should become religious, but freely and from the inside, not by compulsion from the outside.’ In any case, we are just at the beginning of a new age of religious searching, whose outcome no one can foresee.<sup>2</sup>

Another aspect of all this is the way the Christian churches, in general, still approach their teenage and young adult ‘Sunday School’ or catechetical programmes. When it comes to the Christian religion, as G K Chesterton of Father Brown stories fame used to affirm: people are given the answers long before they have asked the questions. I think Chesterton’s remarks have enormous implications for our churches’ way of handing on the faith in our catechetical programmes. Far too often we are so keen to push a particularly organised plan of articulating the Christian faith that we forget to elicit the specific experiences of those hungering to deepen their search for faith, and first listen to the their questions that arise from such an enquiry to mediate knowledge of the faith to where they are at. So key to the approach is learning to listen to the individual and where s/he is at, and holding off on drowning the person with a cartload of undigested information.

In September and November 2011 two ecumenical meetings were arranged through the auspices of Philip McKinley, our ecumenical officer in the Republic. This was one of many dialogues that he initiated during his term. The first was held at Archbishop Diarmuid Martin’s House, Drumcondra, Dublin and the second at Corrymeela in Co Antrim. Examples of what came up for this

<sup>2</sup> Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age*, The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, Cambridge MA, 2007, p.535.

“ We need to be able to recognise the presence of the Holy Spirit alive in us. Then with his help we can bit by bit discern what he will show us.

” Young Adult Ecumenical Forum are interesting:

- People need to know that God loves them
- There’s a need for sharing projects together. The fact is that many denominations still do not want to work together
- Church structures can get in the way of trying to work together, there’s too much red tape
- There is still too much negativity in speaking church divisions
- We must teach people how to pray at a deeper level—and ecumenically!
- There is need for a greater understanding of the faiths represented on the island of Ireland
- Faith must be presented in a way that recognises people’s need to see an active, not passive, faith
- Churches needs to allow lay people to be their public representatives, not just clerics
- The church is facing understandable criticism in the light of scandal. But it also needs to recognise that there is a general apathy regarding faith and church in society
- Alternative voices within the church are not actively sought out. There is need to hear per-

spectives of teenagers and people under 40

- ‘I don’t participate much in church life anymore, but see my work with the homeless as a demonstration of the church. How can the church harness this? I know that I am not alone in being someone whose strong Christian witness is shown in my work, and yet I feel utterly disconnected from church life.’

These conversations provide a sample of the concerns of young Christian folk in Ireland and their hopes for a Christian future. Theirs is a different response. There is real sharing of faith and listening here; yet something is still lacking. Part of it is the deeper felt faith experience described by Paul in Romans 5, 5: ‘The love of God has been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit who has been given us’. We need to be able to recognise the presence of the Holy Spirit alive in us. Then with his help we can bit by bit discern what he will show us. But above all we need to pray in this manner, ecumenically. For God’s vision is ‘the salvation of all’.

So what is the Holy Spirit saying to us through these voices within the Christian communities of our own country?

James Hanvey SJ holds the Chair in Catholic social thought at the University of San Francisco. In a quite prophetic article written in the shadow of the papal conclave to elect a new Catholic Pope in early March, he has this to say:

*‘We live in a church that is mourning... Mourning can generate anger toward those who we feel have taken away something from us. One can detect this in a strange anger that marks the Western Church at the moment. We see it in the internal polemics between different schools claiming to have the answer to our problems, but mainly it is directed against a secular culture, as if it is the secular world that has betrayed and robbed the church of its mission. Anger stops us from seeing the good in others; it stops us from seeing the great good and noble desires of our own culture, hearing its deeper longings, recognising its fears and deep anxieties and recognising its own searching. Only anger at the loss and desecration*

*of human life, the exploitation of the poor, the destruction of creation and suffering ignored can serve the Gospel of Christ.*

*A decisive moment in the Conversion of St. Augustine was his recollection of the words of the angel at the empty tomb: “Why seek the living among the dead? A church that lives from the resurrection does not need to mourn; it needs to follow its risen Lord with joyous, calm and unshakable faith along all the unknown roads of history. It carries within itself the Easter proclamation, “All time belongs to him.” No matter how bleak the age, the church cannot go back; it must never lose its Easter eyes – with these it sees the abundance of graced life even in the desert.’<sup>3</sup>*

<sup>3</sup> ‘Quo Vadis: Reflections on the Shape of the Church to Come’, [www.americamagazine.org/issue/article/shape-church-come](http://www.americamagazine.org/issue/article/shape-church-come)

We need to pray for hope and wisdom to read God’s world more effectively, and not lose our nerve and the gift of faith that Jesus gave us. It is in resurrection hope that we serve and it is for the glory of God that we seek the redemption of his creation and the restoration of his church and his creation. ‘Come Lord Jesus’ (Rev 22, 20).

In closing can I, on your behalf and that of the Executive Committee, thank Mervyn McCullagh, Karen Kelly and Mark Thompson for their dedication, imagination and energy in developing the work of the Irish Council of Churches over this past year. Two exciting projects reached their successful conclusion and we said goodbye to Philip and Adrian. The work continues to grow and our staff work heroically for us all, way beyond the call of duty. God bless them!

**Caption**

01 Members of the Executive 2012



## HONORARY TREASURER —Report Year 2012

WRITER  
*Robert Cochran*



Continuing the process set in place in the previous years, we have a clear demarcation between the income and expenditure which is specific to ICC (and IICC) and the costs of running the Inter-Church Centre and of the core staff. This latter cost for the Inter-Church Centre is then of course charged 50/50 to each of the two ecumenical entities involved.

Our special projects – the Dublin office and the two staff employed there – are also shown separately. Both of these unfortunately came to an end during the year, due to the completion of the project timescales (with the associated special funding), and with no available sources of funding to carry things forward. As a consequence the Dublin office no longer exists, but hopefully the momentum initiated by Adrian and Philip can continue in other ways. The accounts for 2012 do of course reflect the final elements of both of those projects, but will not be part of the financial picture from 2013 onwards.

As can be seen from the accounts, we continue to make progress in our policy of reducing the operational deficit. This process, however, was complicated by some one-off costs in 2012 arising from expenditure

due to redundancy payments, as well as a staff member being on maternity leave. In addition, the final winding up of the Peace Education fund allowed the remaining balance there of ICC funds to be brought back as an internal fund to be used as deemed appropriate.

Having considered the matter carefully, we are budgeting for an increase in member church subscriptions for 2013 of 2%. Our aim is to keep annual increases to be not more than, and preferably less than, the relevant rate of inflation each year. We are also hoping to realise in this coming year having some like-minded tenants in our office building, which will also make an important contribution towards running costs. These measures, along with the on-going careful monitoring and minimising of costs, will allow us to continue towards our goal of achieving a break-even situation.

Finally, and most importantly, I wish to pay tribute to the enormous amount of work put in by Karen Kelly, and then Mark Thompson (after Karen went on Maternity Leave) throughout the year in the day-to-day operation of the financial function, along with Mervyn McCullagh's oversight.



## EXECUTIVE OFFICER —Report

WRITER  
*Mervyn McCullagh*

'Beyond Anger' was the title of the 89th Annual Meeting of the Council which focussed on the social crisis in Europe. Our Keynote Speaker, Tony Brown reminded us, as Churches in Ireland, that the current economic crisis should warn us to fundamentally rethink the development of the moral framework and the regulatory mechanisms that underpin our economy, politics and global interconnectedness. We need to bring to an end the perception whereby the European Union is *over there*, and not *here* in Ireland. In developing and providing a voice for Ireland's Churches to connect through a common belief in Christ, our interconnectedness with Europe has been a constant backdrop. Yet we have this year engaged at local, municipal, national, European and international levels.

Ireland has now assumed the Presidency of the Council of the European Union and last week we were privileged to coordinate a delegation of church representatives from across Ireland and Europe to meet with the Taoiseach Enda Kenny in Government Buildings.

We highlighted the social consequences of the severe economic crisis in the European Union and stated that those consequences were evident in the parishes and congregations of all of the churches forming a key concern for Churches at local, regional and national level.

We stressed that development aid transforms lives and underlined the importance of EU member states recommitting to meeting overseas development aid targets by 2015. However, the churches also spoke of the importance of

using aid to work towards a situation where countries no longer need aid. To reach that point, revenue authorities in developing countries need to be able to collect the correct amount of tax from multinational companies operating in their jurisdiction. Strengthening the capacity of revenue authorities in these countries is important, but tackling the accounting rules and financial regulations that enable this to happen is crucial. The meeting was organised by us on behalf of the Conference of European Churches (CEC) and the Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of the European Community (COMECE).

This concluded a year of political engagement that began with an invitation from the leaders of our four larger member Churches to join with them in meeting, in public and in private, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, the Minister for Social Development and subsequently Lord Freud, Minister for Welfare Reform on the important issues surrounding the Welfare Reform Bill. These meetings have led to a wider recognition that ongoing meetings between the Churches and government are of real value. We are similarly in the process of negotiating a regular plenary dialogue of the Christian Churches with the Irish Government and there are many positive signs that this will shortly become a part of the structured dialogue process.

However, not all of our work this year was political. In June 2012, Philip McKinley concluded his project on local ecumenism. The project aimed to bridge the gap between national leadership and local grassroots ecumenism. Philip completed a directory of





inter-church groups throughout Ireland, supported numerous local initiatives and presented new innovative models of working together, such as in the exemplar Blanchardstown Churches Together Young Adults Forum, but perhaps most critically built relationships with the many hundreds of people throughout Ireland who are co-operating and collaborating on a wide variety of local inter-church initiatives. He kept a constant monitor on the rapid and intense pace of change in Irish society and Christianity which at times presented real challenges for churches and his communication skills helped us speak together with a voice that was effective and impacting. A full report on his work will be available on our website. The results of this project exceeded our expectations and we are keen to establish how such work can be maintained on a long-term, sustainable basis within the organisation.

The Integration Project, led by Adrian Cristea, concluded in October 2012. This EU funded project enabled us to partner with Dublin City Council to pioneer a model of faith-city engagement to promote the integration of third country nationals. It was borne out of our *Ten Principles for Migrant*

*Diversity and Inter-Culturalism* affirmed by our member churches in 2010. The tenth principle affirms that we work together as Christian Churches and other faith communities to promote a greater understanding between denominations and other faiths, ensuring the growth of a society based on respect, dignity and equal rights for all its members. The Dublin City Inter Faith Forum is the beginning of a tangible realisation of this affirmation. From the moment of the forum's inception it was never short of ideas and it has pioneered key public square activities that have served to educate, inform and promote awareness of what faith communities can bring to the integration strategy of a city. This forum is a unique model of engagement and we are very proud of our involvement with in. Adrian's commitment to the work is such that he is continuing to work for the Forum in Dublin. We wish them well in their continuing journey and hope that many can take inspiration from this initiative and learn from the valuable lessons they have gained. The full project report, *Integration and Interfaith: Faith/City Engagement in a Multicultural Context* will be available for download on our website. We were also very proud to have successfully passed through the evaluation and auditing processes administered by Pobal and this is testament to the quality of leadership from the Council and the excellent administrative support provided by Mark Thompson and Karen Kelly to the project.

With the conclusion of both of these projects, we have closed our Dublin office yet our focus remains rigorously island-wide.

We are now challenged with finding the best means of following up on the work of our Dublin office and of finding a sustainable means of working, communicating and building relationships with Church and civil society throughout the island. Karen Kelly our administrator is on maternity leave and we were delighted to welcome Mark Thompson onto the team. He very quickly gelled with the rest of the team to become a key part of the organisation. Karen and her new family are keeping well and she looks forward to coming back in mid 2013.

As well as personnel changes within the office, there have been numerous personnel changes within our member churches. Maj Alan Watters of the Salvation Army has been re-stationed and we look forward to welcoming Maj Elwyn Harries to the Executive. Archbishop Alan Harper retired in September and our immediate Past-President Most Rev Richard Clarke has been enthroned as Church of Ireland Primate. We also look forward to working with Msg Eamon Martin through the Irish Inter-Church Committee after he is ordained as Coadjutor Archbishop of Armagh in April.

We are delighted to have joined the IF Campaign, a coalition of major development agencies and faith groups. The campaign says there is enough food in the world for everyone – IF we stop land grabbing, give aid, enforce international transparency and prevent tax dodging. The campaign highlight will be the holding of the G8 summit in Co Fermanagh in June.



**Captions**

- 01 Rev Fr Godfrey O'Donnell meeting with An Taoiseach Enda Kenny, T.D.
- 02 Adrian Cristea's report *Integration and Interfaith: Faith/City Engagement in a Multicultural Context*
- 03 Rev Fr Godfrey O'Donnell being installed as President by Most Rev Richard Clarke
- 04 Orthodox Priests attending the 89th Annual Meeting of Council
- 05 Major Alan Watters preaching at his Farewell Service
- 06 At a public meeting to discuss Welfare Reform hosted by Church Leaders with the Rt Hon Owen Patterson MP, Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and Nelson McCausland, MLA, Minister for Social Development
- 07 Members of the Irish Inter Church Committee with Most Rev Alan Harper on his retirement





This year saw the start of the Irish Churches' Peace Project which is funded by the European Union Peace III Programme. This programme is another means for our Churches to engage together and we are excited about the possibilities of creating new tangible local initiatives that will contribute to the work of peace and reconciliation in Northern Ireland and the border counties. The Presbyterian Church in Ireland is the lead partner and Keith Hamilton has recently been appointed Director. We wish Keith well as he builds his team and begins implementing this important work.

The work of our Boards and Fora continues to extend the reach of our organisation and can be read in their individual reports. We are delighted to publish the Church In Society Forum's Ethical Investment Paper and this will lead to a new initiative in 2013 bringing together the finance personnel within our Member Churches. We have also worked hard with Women's Link to explore what models of ecumenical women's engagement are most appropriate at this time. We have fully redesigned our website and are very excited by the opportunities it will provide

us. It will be launched later in the Spring of 2013. The Redeemed Christian Church of God have been journeying with us for the past 10 months and we expect to bring their name forward for membership for the Council to next year's Annual Meeting.

The Council Executive and the Inter-Church Committee have met regularly throughout the year. While it is tempting to list actions, our meetings also serve a broader purpose. In the holiness of our worship together we present a reconciling witness to the fullness of God. Our communion embodies the soul of the Church in today's world. Flowing from this worship we dialogue with courage and hope and seek to understand each other with deep respect. Our dialogue develops a language through which we are enabled to present a credible witness to a needy world of our shared faith and of the all-encompassing love of Christ.

As I present this report, after a very successful year in the life of the ICC, I thank the Executive for their support in every aspect of the organisation. Can I particularly thank our President Rev Fr Godfrey O'Donnell for his sensitive and encouraging

leadership at a strategically important time. He has a deep understanding of Orthodoxy that has helped us draw ever closer links to the many Orthodox churches in Ireland and has opened doors for us with government in the Republic in his typically quiet, humble, unassuming and highly effective manner. We have been blessed with an excellent staff team, each of whom has given their all to the work of the ICC. We thank Mark for seamlessly learning an enormous job in a very short space of time. We bid a fond farewell to Philip and Adrian who in the outstanding quality of their work have left indelible marks on the organisation and whose work will continue to have impact long into the future. Finally, can I thank members of the Joint Management Committee who have had a particularly heavy workload this year and whose dedication and support to ICC is unerring.

Our prayer is that our work in the Council would continue to assist the Churches in Ireland to be a model of unity in Christ for churches and communities globally as we connect together for the glory of God and the extension of Christ's Kingdom.



## CHURCH IN SOCIETY FORUM

*Ethical Investment Study*

JUNE 2012



## Introduction

In April 2011 the Church in Society Forum of the Irish Inter-Church Meeting discussed the impact of the economic crisis. A key issue to emerge from the discussion was the considerable extent to which the Churches too have been participants in a capitalist economic model which has now been shown to have failed our society, particularly the most vulnerable. Indeed, taken altogether, the financial reserves of all the Christian Churches in Ireland, together with their various constituent parts and associated bodies, represent significant investments. It was therefore decided that ethical investment would be the focus of our study. Showing leadership in this area will require the Churches to engage in critical self-reflection as well as articulating the ethical principles that should guide decision-making in the wider society.

The members of the Church in Society Forum believe that the matter of 'ethical' investment is one that the Churches would do well to explore more fully, sharing resources and examples of good practice. There is a common impression that the financial returns from investments that are deemed 'ethical' or 'socially responsible' may be significantly less than those that come (or used to come) from more traditional investments, but in fact an analysis of the performance of such funds indicates that – in addition to the benefits to society – they may be equally financially remunerative, especially over the long term.

This paper represents a contribution from the Church in Society Forum to this debate. Following approval from the

Irish Inter-Church Committee, Forum members met with senior finance personnel and trustees from member Churches, from July-October 2011 to learn about their Church's approach to ethical investment. These consultations took place under Chatham House rules and so, in the report that follows, individual Churches will not be identified and specific details of individual ethical investment policies will not be disclosed.

We believe that reflection on this topic of ethical investment is timely and that public opinion, widely disenchanted with current economic thinking and a system that has so clearly let us down, would be receptive to a prophetic voice from the Churches.

Our core aims in publishing this document are to:

- Stimulate reflection and discussion on why ethical finance is important to Churches;
- Raise awareness of the need for ethical guidelines in relation to investment;
- Highlight the important work that is already being done in this area;
- Suggest further initiatives that Churches might consider with a view to increasing their engagement on both a national and local level, while also encouraging engagement from individual members.

## INTRODUCING THE DEBATE<sup>1</sup>

### Defining Socially Responsible /Ethical Investment

The philosophy of Ethical Investment combines the financial objectives of the investor with concerns about environmental, social and governance issues. It seeks to maximize social good, while also protecting financial returns. Current estimates suggest that ethical investments have now been extensively incorporated into the mainstream and may represent as much as 15% of European institutional financial markets.

The four key aspects of Ethical Investment are:

- Avoidance of investment in areas with moral or ethical issues (commonly referred to as negative screening);
- Application of social responsibility criteria (commonly referred to as positive screening);
- Return Enhancing Approach – looking at environmental, social and governance issues and regarding superior performance in these areas as evidence of good management;
- Shareholder engagement, involving dialogue between investors and management e.g. utilisation of leverage through voting rights.

The concept of Socially Responsible Investment is also widely referred to in this context, with some commentators positioning 'ethical investment' as a specific concern of investors with a religious motivation.

<sup>1</sup> Adapted from a paper prepared for CSF by Tony Brown, Economist and European Affairs Analyst.

### How do we define 'ethical'?

There is a dilemma at the heart of the Ethical Investment concept, centred on two questions: 'What is or is not ethical?' and 'Who decides?'

Responding to these questions will require the establishment of criteria, such as:

- Product categories deemed unacceptable (e.g. weapons, tobacco, gambling, alcohol, pornography);
- Undesirable practices in raw material sourcing (e.g. worker exploitation, animal cruelty, environmental degradation);
- Meeting agreed standards in areas of corporate governance, including tax compliance and employment practices;
- Respect for principles of human rights;
- Environmental sustainability;
- Respect for local communities;

### Levels of Engagement

Ethical Investment cannot be merely negative in the sense of refusing to invest or disinvesting; nor should it be passive. Engagement with companies and industry sectors can prove significant in advancing the ethical agenda. This implies giving active support to companies that operate successfully and sustainably and which follow broadly ethical principles of governance and human relations. It further requires a commitment to dialogue with these companies, encouraging best practice, influencing corporate behavior and pointing to areas of potential improvement. It equally implies readiness to engage with companies that are operating on the limits of acceptability under any of the

criteria listed above with a view to education, persuasion and the option of disinvestment in the case of an inadequate response.

### Performance

Investment decisions should not negatively affect performance unless there is a clear acceptance that financial outcomes can be sacrificed. In many investment situations there are trustees or boards which have the responsibility to achieve the financial best interest of those who expect to benefit from the investment. While there may be acceptance of the incorporation of social or ethical objectives into schemes or investment products, this must be undertaken in a fully transparent manner. The education and information dimension is therefore important.

Achievement of an optimum outcome in terms of both ethics/social responsibility and financial results will require a balanced, diversified approach to building an investment portfolio. It must be understood and accepted that all investments carry risks of loss and that the traditional warning against putting too many eggs in one basket must be seen as a fundamental principle.

Doing good and making a good return are not mutually exclusive.

### THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

As a forum of Christian Churches, a core element of our approach to ethical investment is an attempt to discern how the light of the Gospel might shine on this complex subject. Applying biblical values – our shared normative values – to the subject, we strive to respond to the challenge to

discover in our own place and time what it means to "hunger and thirst for righteousness."

The Christian social ethics which permeate the Bible are embedded in a covenantal worldview rooted in the biblical revelation of God as a God of love and justice. We are heirs of the biblical prophets who summon us

*"To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God"*  
(Micah 6:8).

This is the foundational ethical injunction for Christians who see their calling to discipleship as a call to love God and make his love known in the world through the creation of a just and compassionate social order.

The story of Israel and the entire Judaeo-Christian tradition provides the anchor and framework for the development of this social order.

### The Hebrew Testament

The dignity of all of creation and of each and every human being is affirmed in the book of Genesis. In addition to possessing an inherent worth as part of God's creation, human beings are created in God's image and are given stewardship of creation (Gen 2:15).

*The earth is God's earth and therefore the goods of this world are not meant to belong only to the groups of people who are able to pay for them. Those who own capital and goods have to be aware that their possessions also have to be used for the well being of all.... With gratitude churches and their members understand themselves as part of*



*God's redeemed people, thus accepting the responsibility that goes along with it: To witness to the rest of humanity the ethical principles of Old Testament law and living by God's values and priorities*<sup>2</sup>

The above statement, from the Conference of European Churches, reminds us of the ethical principles according to which we must live and articulates the requirement for 21st century responsible stewardship of the earth – enjoined on all in Genesis. Human beings are part of the created order and are not radically distinct or separate from it. As a result, the interests of humans cannot be achieved at the expense of the rest of God's creation. The biblical covenant reinforced the conviction that all human beings possess a special dignity and as 'imago Dei', are called into an active partnership with God. The covenant underlines the values of both human dignity and the centrality of relationships.

The biblical concept of justice is understood in terms of right relationships with God, with people and with the environment and a just society is seen as one which promotes right relationships, where human dignity is protected, human development facilitated and the environment is protected. Justice is expected by God in response to his loving kindness. The prophets of the Hebrew Testament denounced all forms of privilege, confronted the religious and social elites with the demands of justice and

<sup>2</sup> 13th CEC Assembly, Called to One Hope in Christ. Globalisation and Financial Crises. Faith-Ful Investments – Churches and Sustainable Investments (2009).

urged Israel to return to the way of the Lord. Amos urged:

*"Let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream"* (Amos 5:25).

This justice is no mere mechanistic norm to be fulfilled but is an ever changing and evolving challenge.

The evolving challenge remains at the heart of the mission of the church today and in a time of economic and financial crisis impels Christians to search out means of supporting sustainable development of economies in which human flourishing is facilitated and the rights of the most vulnerable protected.

#### **The New Testament**

The Gospels tell us that Jesus preached that the reign of God had already broken into human history. Jesus first public words affirm his mission:

*"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, therefore he has anointed me. He has sent me to bring glad tidings to the poor"* (Lk. 4:18).

The kingdom announced by Jesus requires radical conversion and a prioritization of justice. As Professor Enda McDonagh puts it

*"The story of Christian new creation is a story of the breakdown of self – indulgence"*<sup>3</sup>

The beatitudes (Mt 5:3-12) are the template for God's agenda in the world and their upending of worldly values challenges Christians both at a personal level and at a communal level – we are

<sup>3</sup> Quoted from a report on a conference on 'Socially Responsible Development' Dublin March 2009

challenged to assess lifestyles, policies and social institutions in terms of their impact on people, especially on the poor. This challenge does not pit one group against another but rather promotes the strengthening of the whole community by assisting those who are the most vulnerable. The values of the Hebrew Testament are echoed here:

*By privileging the outcast, the Gospel challenges us to see the inherent and inalienable dignity and worth of each person. The heart of the gospel message is that each person, no matter how despised and abused, is special in God's sight, possesses a value which can never be extinguished.*<sup>4</sup>

Alongside respect for the inalienable dignity of each person and respect for all of creation is the recognition of the importance of relationality which is central to our humanity. As relational beings we are called to live in community and in order to do so well we struggle to create the institutions and conditions which best serve human interests and the healing and protection of planet earth. This involves confronting those things which thwart human flourishing and which undermine relationships and destroy solidarity. The present economic and financial crisis is – partially at least – the result of a loss of solidarity and communal values which allowed rampant unrestrained capitalism and consumerism to flourish enriching the few while impoverishing many.

In May 2009 the President of CEC stated at the occasion of

<sup>4</sup> Linda Hogan, Human Rights, (Dublin: Veritas, 1998)

the European Church leaders meeting:

*'People have lost confidence in a system which is mainly based on individual profit. The present crisis is an ethical crisis in which churches and religious communities need to highlight ethical values such as human dignity, freedom with responsibility, solidarity and sustainability'*<sup>5</sup>

Last year the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace called for the establishment of a global authority to regulate the international financial and monetary system, underlining that the causes of the current financial crisis have been both technical and moral.<sup>6</sup>

This study aims to assist Irish churches to once again highlight those ethical values which are at the heart of Christian living.

#### **A GENERAL OVERVIEW OF CURRENT PRACTICE**

The combined financial reserves of all the Christian Churches in Ireland, together with their various constituent parts and associated bodies, represent significant investments. This money – obtained through various forms of donation – needs to be properly managed in order to ensure that the Churches have adequate funds to pay the salaries of the clergy, finance the various forms of work and outreach – pastoral, educational, social – they may be engaged in, and maintain Church property. Management of these investments requires the

<sup>5</sup> President of CEC May 2009

<sup>6</sup> Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, Towards reform of the international financial and monetary system in the context of a general public authority (October 2011).

Churches to give consideration to ethical criteria in order to ensure that their practice in this area is in line with their Christian beliefs and their commitment to the creation of a just and compassionate social order. This presents considerable challenges which may be exacerbated as incomes fall as a result of the economic crisis.

Although not all Churches have been affected to the same extent, or in the same way, by the crisis, the impact has been felt everywhere. Churches reported losses from shares, bank accounts and property investments. Some Churches found themselves exposed to excessive risk and were forced to re-examine investment practices as a result. At the same time, income levels were difficult to maintain in some areas as members of the congregation were experiencing the impact of the crisis on their personal finances. As a result of the rising age profile in the leadership structures of the Churches there is also an increased proportion of retired clergy and ministers requiring financial support, resulting in further demand on Church resources.

Since the level of spend for Churches remains fairly constant, they are conscious of the need to minimise risk in their investments and protect income. When questioned about possible tensions between the need to maintain income levels, on the one hand, and uphold ethical policies on the other, all the Churches consulted in the course of this study were clear that their investment policy is not aimed at simply maximising return on investments. Ethical considerations will not be sacrificed in the pursuit of income. For this

reason, most Churches have declined to opt for passive fund management – where fees are significantly lower but investors have less control over how their investments are managed – choosing instead to pay higher fees in order to ensure greater levels of oversight in terms of where their money is invested.

All Churches consulted had given consideration to ethical guidelines in relation to investments, although the extent to which these have been formally developed varies. The focus to date has been primarily on the application of negative screening (i.e. refusing to invest in funds that do not meet specified ethical criteria). Positive screening (where investors actively seek out investment opportunities in sectors they would wish to promote for ethical reasons) has, to date, proved to be challenging for Churches as potential opportunities – such as, for example, renewable energy – are largely regarded as "untested". Mindful of their responsibilities as trustees, those tasked with managing investments on behalf of the Churches are unwilling to approve investments that might be considered risky. Negative screening can also be seen as more urgent and important; here Churches are often using their influence to try to stop harmful practices.

Legislation around financial regulation on the provision of financial advice prevents the central finance offices of the Churches from providing investment advice, or information which might be legally interpreted as advice, to other parts of the Church structure. This can lead to low levels of awareness among members, as well as subsidiary or



associated structures, regarding ethical investment policies and practices within the Church.

It was clear that the representatives of the Churches participating in this study welcomed the opportunity to share their experiences and are keen to learn more about how they might further develop and enhance their ethical policies. The section which follows outlines some of the key challenges and opportunities for Churches identified by representatives.

## CHALLENGES FOR CHURCHES IN DEVELOPING AND MAINTAINING ETHICAL INVESTMENT POLICIES

### Definition of ‘ethical’ investments

How accurately and concretely can we define the word ‘ethical’? This is an area where Churches are aware of possible contradictions. For example, all Churches consulted had a policy of not investing in arms production, but within this shared principle there is a spectrum of different views ranging from an uncompromising commitment to non-violence, which rejects all arms production, to the view that states have a legitimate right to arm themselves for defence. The latter view would imply that not all arms production can really be considered unethical, but can we really distinguish between purely defensive arms and wider military uses?

### Churches have different priorities

It follows then, that if there is no universally-applicable definition of what constitutes an ethical investment, different Churches will have different priorities. A

useful illustration is the drinks industry. Some Churches have a very strict, explicit policy on not investing in alcohol, while others do not consider it necessary to apply negative screening in this area. Different approaches were also noted in relation to Sunday trading and gambling. These differences mean that it would not currently be possible for all Christian Churches to adopt a common framework on ethical investment.

### Reliance on external fund managers

Lacking the resources to manage all aspects of their finances internally, Churches are forced to rely, to varying degrees, on external fund managers. In terms of ethical policy, this can mean that Churches are placing considerable trust in the fund manager to follow the agreed ethical guidelines, as independent verification may be beyond the resources of the Church. Often, fund managers will only be willing to apply ethical criteria to those funds that are large enough to be segregated. Smaller funds are ‘pooled’ and subject to criteria beyond the control of the investor. Some Churches have reported, however, that this can be overcome if Churches are sufficiently aware of their influence as potential investors.

### Obstacles to investigation of large multi-national companies

In an increasingly globalised world, the greater part of investment funds are likely to be directed towards large corporate entities. The complexity of these structures makes it very difficult to obtain accurate information about all the activities of all the component parts. Further complications arise in relation to ‘dual use components’, defined

by the European Commission as goods and technologies that can be used for both civilian and military purposes.<sup>7</sup> These products may be harmless in themselves, but are then put to use in a way that conflicts with the Churches’ ethical policies. An example might be a computer chip produced in one factory which is then sold to a second company which uses it to control a missile. Tracking and monitoring all aspects of a company’s activity and all applications of its products is beyond the resources of Churches.

### Responsibility as trustees

Several interviewees made reference to the Bishop of Oxford case (1991), which has had a significant impact in UK law. In summary, the Anglican Bishop of Oxford and others brought a case against the Church Commissioners for England, arguing that the model of financial management in operation did not give sufficient weight to ethical principles. It was argued that the Church should do more to invest in activities that were in keeping with its ethical principles, even when these did not offer secure financial return. The judge found that Churches have a legal obligation to spend their income in accordance with their charitable objectives (and thus presumably ethically) as well as their legal obligation to maximise the return on the investments. These two legal obligations have both to be complied with, and, if in conflict, some appropriate balance found.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> <http://ec.europa.eu/trade/creating-opportunities/trade-topics/dual-use/>

<sup>8</sup> Detailed information on the judgement is available from [www.eccr.org.uk](http://www.eccr.org.uk)

## FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES FOR CHURCHES IN DEVELOPING AND MAINTAINING ETHICAL POLICIES

### Increased public awareness and interest

The economic crisis has motivated people to seek greater accountability from financial institutions and inform themselves about what is being done with their money. Having experienced in their own lives and local communities the devastating consequences of unethical financial practices, many people are now more receptive to the promotion of ethical values in investment. Churches are well placed to show leadership in this regard, and stimulate dialogue, but it is vital that they are seen to practice what they preach. This consultation indicated that the results for the Churches from their engagement to date have been very positive.

### Investors have influence

In a challenging economic climate, those who have funds to invest can exercise significant influence with financial institutions and businesses. Ethical investment policies can provide an important channel for Churches to pursue social justice issues, using their position as share-holders or potential investors to challenge damaging or immoral practices. The Christian Churches in Ireland together represent significant investment potential and their collective voice would be difficult to ignore. Sharing expertise and experiences would help Churches gain confidence in this area, maximising their potential to bring about positive change.

### Dedicated ethical investment funds

As a result of increasing public awareness and interest in ethical investment, many financial institutions have now established dedicated ‘ethical’ funds which apply both positive and negative screening and follow stricter criteria in relation to investments.

### Ethical funds perform well

While it is true that Churches could potentially increase the return on investments through the relaxation of ethical policies, ethical investment funds have proved to be relatively stable throughout the economic crisis. Some have performed very well, showing significant potential for growth. It would appear that while the initial returns may not be as high, over time ethical funds can prove to be a sound investment.

## CONCLUSION

While the main thrust of this report has been about how churches (and church related bodies) manage, or should manage, their financial affairs, it is apparent to those involved in undertaking the study that this takes place within a wider context and set of questions. It seems appropriate in this concluding section to touch on some of these wider questions.

At its core, the focus of this study is to consider a moral, Christian, approach to financial management. So, for example, ethical investment strategies can be seen as good examples of this. Negative ethical screening seeks to avoid investing in organisations that are involved in activities with which we as churches do not agree. Using shareholder-

er power is a further step to promote corporate responsibility by seeking to ensure that our investments are only applied to activities we can morally accept. Positive ethical screening then takes this another stage further by actively seeking investments in companies engaged in the sort of activities that we want to actively encourage. But despite these valuable approaches, several questions remain.

Firstly, recent events would clearly illustrate that unrestrained capitalism has many undesirable effects.<sup>9</sup> It can be seen as fundamentally un-Christian with its focus on greed and maximising monetary gains for the few at the expense of wider goals. Particularly in the investment side of the banks, clearly a culture of essentially unrestrained gambling, with our money, became the norm in a large number of major organisations. This must be condemned. We would instead argue that the economy should be ultimately the servant of the common good, not its master. It is not too far-fetched to paraphrase the well-known saying of Jesus as ‘The economy was made for people, not people for the economy’.

What is the alternative? The answer to that is multi-dimensional, but would include at least some of the following: moving away from ‘bad’ capitalism towards ‘good’ or at least ‘fair’ capitalism; seeking to reduce the level of inequality in society

<sup>9</sup> An interesting analysis of this theme from a Christian perspective has been provided by Michael Schluter in *Beyond Capitalism: Towards a Relational Economy* (Jubilee Centre, 2010). In this paper, Schluter outlines what he considers to be the five moral flaws of capitalism, before going on to propose a vision for a new way forward, based on five key strategies.



which has been shown to lead not only to economic benefits but also improving many other aspects of life including health; shifting the focus of corporate value from a narrow focus on shareholder value alone to a more inclusive stakeholder (shareholders, employees, customers) value; and so on. The essence of all these points can be summed up in saying that a socio-economic system which takes the good aspects of both left and right perspectives would lead to a more humane and moral society (and, we would argue, more in tune with Christian perspectives). This sort of approach is often summed up in the phrase 'social market' recognising the need for market perspectives to ensure efficient use of economic resources, but seeking to ensure that the whole economy is structured in such a way as to serve the public good in a fair and equitable manner.

How can we as churches address these questions? We can put our theology into practice by our actions and also by advocacy measures pointing the desired way forward for society. In the context of this study, however, it is clear that our approach to our own financial management will give the best indication of what we really believe. We need to start with how we manage our own affairs, before we can effective critique the wider society.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

In conducting this research the Church in Society Forum committee was greatly encouraged by the findings and recommend that Churches publicise, more generally, the work they are doing individually in the area of ethical investment to the wider society in which they serve.

There is a clear need to recognize that the Christian Churches in Ireland together represent significant investment potential. Therefore the churches together should devise strategies to harness and utilise collectively their potential to influence financial investment policy by:

1. Raising awareness of ethical finance issues, particularly through communicating, within their own structures, details of policies and initiatives in the area of ethical finance, with a view to informing and resourcing individual members of the Church. These communication strategies must necessarily comply with all relevant legislation in relation to financial regulation to ensure that Churches are not deemed to be providing advice in relation to personal investment choices of members.
2. Encouraging investors to examine the range of existing consumer-accessible ethical funds, while also urging the financial institutions to increase the range of ethical investment options available;

3. Establishing a meeting for regular exchange and sharing of information between key church personnel in the area of finance and investments, following the model of the Church Investors Group in the UK. Such a meeting might lead to the establishment of joint working groups to develop policy recommendations on specific issues and/or the possibility of sharing resources, which might extend to the acquisition of external analyses.
4. Examining ways in which, in addition to the negative screening already in place, Churches might develop models of non-binding positive screening that could encompass aspects such as:
  - responsible employment practices, including equal opportunities;
  - best corporate governance practices;
  - promotion of human rights, especially in countries with oppressive regimes;
  - sustainable environmental practices;
  - promotion of justice;
  - sensitivity towards the communities in which business operates;
  - positive attitude towards customers and the active monitoring of employment practice across the supply chain.

## CHURCH IN SOCIETY —Forum

### Preface

Over the past twelve months CSF has given attention to a number of issues which pose challenges for churches in the 'public square'.

WRITER  
*Eileen Gallagher*

The Ethical Investment Study, a core piece of work for CSF during 2011/ 2012 was formally accepted at the May 2012 meeting of IICC and is published in this report. It was agreed that implementation of the recommendations of the report would begin with the establishing of a meeting for regular exchange and sharing of information between key church personnel in the area of finance and investments. As part of the follow-up to the document meetings have taken place with staff members in Trócaire and Christian Aid who are working in the areas touching on ethical finance; they are keen to continue this dialogue. Possibilities for the development of materials for use at local congregational level are being explored - materials which could illustrate the importance of ethical finance and investment in practical terms.

At the CSF May meeting in Dundalk the guest speaker, Rev Dr Norman Hamilton presented an insightful reflection on the opportunities and challenges for churches in relation to engagement in public apologetics. He identified a number of issues which the Churches need to address if they are to raise standards and competency in relation to engaging with public issues.

The issues included :

(a) a need to upgrade theological thinking and the quality of social comment on public issues. Such 'upgrading' includes challenging theological colleges and theologians to engage with such issues;

(b) the need, on the part of the Churches, for a 'firm commitment to partnership in action'.

Dr Hamilton asked: 'Surely it is axiomatic that we should only do separately what we cannot do better together? Do we always have to show our competence – separately?'

(c) the need for relationships with the media to be built and kept in good repair. He suggested that 'the media are not against us' might be a good working principle. He said that most serious journalists see it as part of their role to build relationships with the Churches.

### Constitutional Convention

Professor Colin Harvey presented a briefing paper and led a discussion on the Constitutional Convention. He suggested it was a moment for a profound, deep and inclusive consensus building conversation on this island. He suggested that the Convention could offer a genuine opportunity for reflecting more expansive understandings of human dignity, respect for all human persons, and Professor Harvey emphasised the necessity for the constitution to embrace a more secure conception of social justice.

The constitution as a foundational document should reflect our most deeply held values for the express purpose of framing our collective political, legal and moral future together. In this common enterprise we have a shared responsibility on this island to learn the constitutional lessons from our past.

### Eco-Congregation Ireland

The October meeting received a report from Robert Cochran on the September conference, 'God's Creation—Our Responsibility?' Presentations covered a broad



The Church in Society Forum aims to:

- 01 Inform, advise and support the Irish Inter-church Meeting, its member churches and associated bodies in relation to societal issues (including social, economic, environmental, and public policy issues in both jurisdictions in Ireland, including EU matters which affect Ireland).
- 02 Seek to promote a common Christian response to relevant issues and maximise joint approaches to these by undertaking, where possible, joint or collaborative actions.
- 03 Reflect the desire of church members to play a part in building God's kingdom, transforming society through the application of Gospel values of justice, respect for the dignity of every human being, mercy, compassion and love to the context in which we live.
- 04 Be a visible sign of unity among the churches facilitating church cooperation on matters in which they can work together.

range of topics, some more directly focused than others on the environment. For him, it was striking how inter-related are the problems of environmental destruction and the current world-wide economic crisis. To a large degree both have their roots in human greed and a failure to recognise and respect limits. Summary conference presentations are on the website of Eco-Congregation Ireland.

The October meeting also heard an expert and detailed presentation from Margaret Burns on the referendum on children's rights held in the Republic of Ireland on 10 November 2012. The presentation alerted CSF members to key amendments proposed and prompted an informed discussion in which progress on the protection of children's rights was welcomed.

**G8 Meeting**

The June 2013 G8 summit in County Fermanagh offers a unique opportunity for those concerned with social and economic justice to advocate on behalf of those suffering most under present economic and social policies. Hence, CSF members have initiated

a conversation on how best to use this opportunity to bring to the attention of political leaders some of the social and economic justice issues about which all churches share a common concern. This conversation is ongoing and it is hoped a paper will be tabled at the next CSF meeting April 10.

“

we have a shared responsibility on this island to learn the constitutional lessons from our past

”

I want to express sincere thanks to members of the Forum for their commitment expertise and generous sharing of gifts which makes the work of the Forum possible. Thanks are also due to IICC and staff at the Inter-Church Centre for their support.

**Caption p23**  
01 Philip McKinley addressing young people at the International Eucharistic Congress

**THEOLOGY**  
*—Forum*

**Preface**

The Theology Forum was established by the Irish Inter-Church Meeting to create spaces for member churches and associated bodies to dialogue on theological issues and concerns. It is co-chaired by Ms. Gillian Kingston and Rev Prof Brendan Leahy

WRITER  
*Gillian Kingston*

The Forum met twice during 2012. Its membership continues to span a wide range of traditions and includes Society of Friends, Methodist, Anglican, Presbyterian, Roman Catholic and Romanian Orthodox. The co-Chairs are the Revd Prof. Brendan Leahy and Ms Gillian Kingston.

The members of the Forum offer their sincerest congratulations to the Rev Prof Brendan Leahy on his appointment as Bishop of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Limerick. We trust that this will afford him an even wider platform from which to witness to that fundamental unity of the Body of Christ which is both God's will for and gift to God's people.

We are grateful to Philip McKinley for having acted as secretary to the Forum since its inception; we wish him well following the conclusion of his contract with IICC.

During 2012, the Forum has focussed its reflection on the Decade of Anniversaries into which society in both jurisdictions on the island of Ireland is entering. It heard from Dr Kenneth Milne (Church of Ireland), the Revd Robin Roddie (Methodist Church in Ireland), the Revd

The Theology Forum aims to:

- 01 Create spaces for the Irish Inter Church Meeting (IICM) and its member churches and associated bodies to dialogue on theological issues and concerns that advance ecumenical relationships between the member churches of IICM
- 02 Resource the member churches with statements identifying the common ground and outstanding theological differences between the churches
- 03 Relate to overcoming divisions and deepening the cause of Christian Unity
- 04 Address the contemporary Irish context
- 05 Address world wide trends in bilateral and multilateral dialogues
- 06 Offer theological perspectives on issues referred by IICC or IICC's



Alan Boal (Presbyterian Church in Ireland) and Rob Goodbody (Religious Society of Friends) on the responses of their respective churches to the Decade. Discussion included reflection on the initiatives of the Governments of the Republic of Ireland and of the United Kingdom.

The Forum heard with interest the plans for the International Eucharistic Congress and observed with appreciation the intentional ecumenical element in the programme at all levels. The ICC co-Chair had been invited to take part in several events.

For a variety of reasons the Forum has not met for an extended period. This does not, however, indicate any lack of commitment!

01



## OVERSEAS AFFAIRS —Board Report

### Preface

The Board met on a number of occasions during the year, both in Belfast and Dublin, and our intention to educate, update and inform the member churches has continued through both formal and informal meetings.

### WRITER

*Rev Colin Campbell*

Cecil McCullough has reported on the situation in the Middle East which continues to deteriorate and his papers have been circulated. Kenneth Milne has presented a paper on Europe which raised questions for ICC/ IICC about the Irish Presidency of the European Council. There was a meeting addressed by the recently appointed general secretary of the Church of North India which informed members of the situation there.

The new Executive Officer for Christian Aid, Rosamond Bennett, has also reported on the new campaign launched by a consortium of over 100 leading development charities entitled, “Enough food for Everyone IF...”

As well as highlighting the food needs of people it will focus on the underlying causes of hunger: tax avoidance by multinational companies, governments not keeping their promises regarding aid and investment, land being taken from small farmers to be used for biofuel production and the lack of transparency of governments and companies in their dealings with the developing world. On the Board’s recommendation the ICC Executive has joined this campaign.

During the year there has been reflection about the function of the Board. I believe that it serves a useful function as an information sharing and networking organisation. However, for this to be effective it is essential that the appropriate personnel dealing with international affairs, relief and development issues and world mission and evangelism from member churches are present at the Board’s meetings.

The Board is able to organise events relating to issues of concern to all denominations such as its recent seminars on Migration and Mission and Christian Zionism and it also provides a platform for Christian leaders from overseas visiting Ireland to have an opportunity to speak to an ecumenical audience.

The Board has monitored international issues in its three fields of interest and has been able to bring to the ICC Executive issues which it felt the Irish churches should consider. There are challenges for the Board, but it has the motivation and capacity to continue to serve its members.

### Caption

01 Church in Syria

The Board of Overseas Affairs aims to:

- 01 Bring a Christian judgement to bear on international affairs;
- 02 Help in the education process in Ireland regarding International Affairs;
- 03 Co-ordinate concern and action for world mission;
- 04 Stimulate and maintain contacts with Churches outside Great Britain and Ireland;
- 05 Work with agencies involved in overseas development, especially Christian Aid

01



## WOMEN’S LINK —Update

### Preface

Women’s Link meets to further communication and exchange of ideas between church women’s groups throughout Ireland. Phyllis Watters is the President and sits on ICC Executive

### WRITER

*Phyllis Watters*

The year 2012 started under the Presidency of Mrs Winnie Moffett and plans were made for our annual Fellowship Day which was held on Saturday 24th March in the Moravian Church, University Road. The keynote speaker was Mrs Hilary McClay who along with others, spoke on the theme ‘Showers of Blessing’. The day was indeed a great blessing for all who attended. It was at this meeting that the Presidency was passed on to Mrs Phyllis Watters and thanks were expressed to Mrs Moffett for her hard work over the past three years.

In August, we held a workshop in Edgehill, inviting the Presidents and Secretaries of all our associated church women’s organisations. It was helpful to reflect on our aims and objectives and the need to be relevant. It was agreed that Women’s Link continued to be the appropriate vehicle whereby all the organisations could get together. The Fellowship Day was highlighted as meeting that objective. It was thought that Women’s Link would produce a prayer letter that could include prayer requests from our organisations for 2013 and be circulated widely within those organisations.

In November, we were invited to take part in a day’s conference in London with women from CTBI, set up to explore the equality and community networks within the CTBI family of networks. Mrs Roberta Thompson was asked to represent Women’s Link and she felt she was able to contribute with reporting our findings at our annual review in August.

And now it is 2013 and plans are well underway for our next Fellowship Day on 27th April in Edenderry Methodist Church. The theme is on Wings of Faith and will be a day with a difference and be lead by Mrs Melanie McCloskey. The prayer letter has been prepared for circulation.

We are grateful for the full support of Mr Mervyn McCullagh and his wife, Raing who ably facilitated our workshop and also to Mr Mark Thompson, Administrator.

We look forward to continuing our work in God’s service throughout the coming year.

### Captions

01 Workshop, Edgehill Methodist College





01

## 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 was appointed as the new Chief Executive of Christian Aid Ireland in September 2012

### WRITER

Rosamond Bennett

### Caption

01 Manuel Bautista (11) goes to San Martin de Porres school in Guachupita, a deprived neighbourhood in Santo Domingo. He dreams of becoming a journalist, a lawyer and the president!

02 Campaigners in the Dominican Republic demonstrating for more to be spent on education. Their monthly 'yellow umbrella' protests were held outside the National Palace.

I still cannot quite believe how much my life has changed over the past 12 months. In January 2012 I left Northern Bank where I had been Head of Communications. It was a move prompted by the death of my mother the previous summer. It triggered a period of deep reflection and with it came the realisation that I wanted to make some changes. Friends from the Prayer Ministry team in church helped me on my journey. This journey led me to the understanding that I wanted a position where I could live and work as a Christian and where I could express my Christian beliefs openly as an essential part of my job.

My new role has been everything I hoped it would be and more. When I joined Christian Aid in September, I was impressed by the passion shown by volunteers and staff in our offices in Dublin, Belfast and Cork. Everyone was very clear about the organisation's goals and objectives. What can we do to help end poverty?

That was what was uppermost in everyone's minds.

Six months on and that first impression has not changed. In fact it has been reinforced by my trips overseas with Irish church leaders to see the work of our partners from India to Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory. I have been humbled by the strength and resilience of our partners and the communities we work with as they stand up for what they believe in and work together to change lives. I have learned that when you see something in the world is wrong and you stand up to say so, you can be heard. Your voice, especially when joined by others, can make a difference.

This is not just wishful thinking. Christian Aid has had many success stories on the road to ending poverty in the past year alone. One, which I would like to share with you, happened in the Dominican Republic just before Christmas.

02



### Victory for campaigners in the Dominican Republic

At 4pm on 4 December 2012 the Dominican government announced that 4% of its GDP in 2013 will be spent on education. This was a huge victory for Christian Aid partner Centro Bono, who have been campaigning for this to happen for over two years.

Back in 2010, Christian Aid gave Centro Bono a modest grant of €10,000/€12,000 to help establish the campaign, simply called '4% for education'. Its aim was to lobby the government to act on a law passed in 1997 decreeing that 4% of the country's GDP should be spent on schools.

### Transforming education

Until now, the Dominican Republic has invested just 2% in education – one of the lowest levels in Latin America. The limited funding affects large numbers of the population; 13% of people over the age of 15 are illiterate. Without enough funds, schools are overcrowded and understaffed and children do not have enough books and pens for their studies.

It's hoped these problems will become a thing of the past now that, since January 2013, the government is investing 4% of its annual budget on improving primary and secondary school education. Over the last two years, 200 organisations and millions of people have got behind the campaign.

On the fourth of every month, come rain or shine, supporters and activists across the country turned out in their signature yellow garb to demand adequate funding for the nation's schools.

From a small-scale movement, the campaign snowballed to become one of the largest public movements the Dominican Republic has ever seen. 4% graffiti was scrawled on walls, and taxis drove around the city carrying 4% stickers on their bumpers.

Thanks to the dedication of campaigners, every one of the presidential candidates in the 2012 elections included a promise to enforce the law in their manifestoes. This victory shows the elected President, Danilo Medina, has honoured his promise.

### A bright future

Mario Serrano, the director of Centro Bono, says: 'We have managed to double the investment in education. This will improve and increase the numbers of schools and the availability of school materials.'

*'It will also mean more literacy programmes, more availability of education for people with disabilities and more pre-school facilities.'*

The extra investment will also be put into teacher training and professional development. However, although the victory should be celebrated, Mario warned: 'The struggle hasn't ended, the commitment continues. We now have to monitor the huge investment next year and oversee that these resources significantly improve the quality of education.'

Centro Bono and other organisations will be involved in this monitoring, ensuring that the money promised goes to where it is needed. 11-year-old Manuel Bautista, a student at a Dominican state primary school, neatly sums up what the campaign victory means: *'The campaign is so that all children have what they need to learn... we are the future.'*

We in Christian Aid believe that poverty is wrong. If we all stand up to say so, we can make a difference. With the practical help and prayerful support of you, the churches in Ireland, we can end poverty.

If you want to find out more about Christian Aid and the work we do please give me a call. I would love to hear from you and to talk to you.

My number is +44 7714 626458 or simply visit our website [www.christianaid.ie](http://www.christianaid.ie)



01

## 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 it the General Secretary.

WRITER  
Canon Bob Fyffe

CTBI continues to respond to the on-going financial and societal challenges and to discover new ways of working within the small staff team and the Networks of CTBI. To achieve this we continue to work in partnership with the Irish Council of Churches in creating appropriate ecumenical programmes and opportunities where we are an expression of the churches' shared commitment to ecumenism.

The Secretariat has continued working towards the visible unity of the Christian Churches through the:

- Maintenance and development of relationships with member churches and organisations. This has been achieved through various programmes and the production of resources. We have responded to initiatives from the member Churches on a variety of issues and concerns.

- Christian Aid Board representation which includes work focused on Middle East issues and this has figured significantly in shared understanding and promotion of programmes to serve the Churches and to deepen their engagement and understanding. This has strengthened the work undertaken by a Trustee visit to Israel/Palestine in the recent past.
- Development of the Networking Conference and Senior Representative Forum into one coherent event for Networks and member Church engagement. This is being achieved through a new format of meeting and in 2013 will mean members engage around "Hearings" on a variety of subjects that include trafficking, engaging and supporting Christian minorities around the world, poverty issues and the Middle East.

- Development of Churches Together Connect and social media. This is a dynamic and changing resource which is being developed in an on-going way. Plans include linking our social media strategy to more of our web based initiatives. The use of social media such as Twitter has seen significant growth over the last year. We continue to see the growth of our web based resources which include engagement with 130,000 unique web visitors. This represents a doubling over the last three years.
- Development of partnerships with Church Councils outside Britain and Ireland. Much work has gone into developing and deepening the relationships with partners across the world. Contacts with the Middle East Council of Churches have deepened and have recently found a focus in growing partnerships with the Coptic Orthodox Church in Egypt. The relationship with the China Christian Council has also developed alongside the growing partnership with the Amity Foundation in China. Contacts have developed with the Australian Council of Churches and discussions have taken place around the sharing of resources and concerns. Further contacts are anticipated with some of the South American Councils and this will be developed later in 2013 through contacts and an Assembly with the World Council of Churches. During 2012 CTBI hosted the European Councils of Churches' Secretaries General at an event held in Edinburgh. During this week long event the General Secretaries were hosted in the Scottish Parliament and met politicians and heads of Churches.
- Participation in Network/Forum meetings and consultations. This



02

work has developed through proposals to move towards a more focused way of engaging with our members and stakeholders. We are planning to move to a more dynamic and outcomes driven approach which will see sponsored items of work undertaken by specialists in various fields. We anticipate making significant moves around this area of work during 2013.

- Continued development of the Faith and Order Reference Group. The work of theological reflection continues to be an important shared task for our membership. As well as the on-going work of faith and Order we have also developed an Inter Faith Theological Advisory Group who are busy scoping theological work that arises out of Christian engagement with people of other faiths.
- The work of building strong harmonious communities is central to the work of Churches. CTBI is playing an increasingly important role in facilitating this work. The Director of Programmes has played an important role in the Inter Faith Network UK

(IFN UK) for some time and is now playing a major role within the strategic review of IFN UK. This has been further developed through the General Secretary who has now been appointed as Co-Chair of the IFN UK. Significant resources are being applied to this area of work as we work for greater harmony and understanding between various faith communities.

At our next Annual General Meeting in May 2013 we will be presenting outcomes of our "Good Society" research. This has involved extensive engagement in seven different communities, including Belfast. Some important lessons are emerging from this research and resources are being produced for its on-going use and development within local communities.

### Captions

- 01 WCC General Secretary talking to Bishop Angaelos
- 02 European Councils of Churches' Secretaries General in Edinburgh



## ICC EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE 2012

### President

Rev Fr Godfrey O'Donnell

### Vice-President

Rev Dr Donald Watts

### Immediate Past President

Most Rev Richard Clarke

### Hon Treasurer

Mr Robert Cochran

### Executive Officer

Mr Mervyn McCullagh

### Antiochian Orthodox Church

Rev Fr Irenaeus du Plessis

### Cherubim and Seraphim Church

Most Senior Apostle Olusola  
Obube

### Church of Ireland

Dr Kenneth Milne  
Rev Daniel Nuzum  
Rt Rev Trevor Williams

### Greek Orthodox Church in Britain & Ireland

Fr Thomas Carroll

### Lutheran Church in Ireland

Pastor Corinna Diestelkamp

### Methodist Church in Ireland

Rev Donald Ker  
Ms Gillian Kingston

### Moravian Church Irish District

Rev Paul Holdsworth

### Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church

Rev Colin Campbell  
Chair of Board of Overseas Affairs

### Presbyterian Church in Ireland

Rev John Brackenridge  
Rev Lorraine Kennedy-Ritchie  
Rev Dr Donald Watts  
Vacant

### Religious Society of Friends

Dr David Poole

### Romanian Orthodox Church in Ireland

Rev Fr Godfrey O'Donnell

### Russian Orthodox Church in Ireland

Rev Fr George Zavershinsky

### Salvation Army (Ireland Division)

Major Elwyn Harries

### Co-opted until 2015

Phyllis Watters  
Women's Link Representative

## IRISH INTER-CHURCH COMMITTEE 2012

### Co-Chairs

Cardinal Seán Brady  
Rev Fr Godfrey O'Donnell

### Treasurer

Mr Eamonn Fleming KCSG

### Executive Officer

Mr Mervyn McCullagh

### Joint Secretary

Very Rev Kieran McDermott

### Roman Catholic

Most Rev Dr Diarmuid Martin  
Most Rev Dr Gerard Clifford  
Most Rev Dr Anthony Farquhar  
Rev Prof Brendan Leahy  
Rev Niall Coll  
Juanita Majury  
Rev Andrew McMahan

### Church of Ireland

Rev Canon Ian Ellis  
Dr Kenneth Milne

### Methodist Church

Rev Donald Ker

### Presbyterian Church

Rev Dr Donald Watts  
Rev Lorraine Kennedy-Ritchie

### Representing smaller churches from the Society of Friends:

Rachel Bewley-Bateman

### Orthodox church Representative

Rev Fr Godfrey O'Donnell

### Chair—Church & Society Forum

Mrs Eileen Gallagher

### Co-Chairs—Theology Forum

Ms Gillian Kingston  
Rev Prof Brendan Leahy

### ICC Hon Treasurer

Mr Robert Cochran

### ICC Past President

Most Rev Richard Clarke

## JOINT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

### Roman Catholic Church

Mr Eamonn Fleming KCSG  
(IICM Hon Treasurer)

### Joint Secretary IICM

Very Rev Kieran McDermott

### Irish Council of Churches

Most Rev Richard Clarke  
Mr Robert Cochran  
(ICC Hon Treasurer)  
Rev Fr Godfrey O'Donnell  
Rev Dr Donald Watts

### Co-opted

Rev Donald Ker  
Most Rev Dr Gerard Clifford

### Executive Officer

Mr Mervyn McCullagh

## ADMINISTRATION

**NI Charity Number**

XN 48617

**ROI Employer Number**

9582744F

**Address**

Inter Church Centre  
48 Elmwood Avenue  
Belfast  
BT9 6AZ  
028 (048) 9066 3145  
info@churchesinireland.com  
www.churchesinireland.com

**Auditors**

JR McKee & Co  
Ratheane House  
32 Hillsborough Road  
Lisburn  
BT28 1AQ

**Solicitors**

Cleaver Fulton Rankin Solicitors  
50 Bedford Street  
Belfast  
BT1 2QH

**Executive Officer**

Mr Mervyn McCullagh

**Administration**

Ms Karen Kelly  
Mr Mark Thompson

**Credits**

Annual Report 2012

Design and Layout by Mervyn McCullagh

Edited by Mark Thompson

Printed by Nicholson & Bass Ltd

All material © Irish Council of Churches 2013

except photos:

01, p10 © MerrionStreet.ie

01+02, p26 © Christian Aid/Susan Barry

01 p16, 01+02 p28 © CTBI

Used by kind permission





Submitted to the  
**90th Annual Meeting of the Council**  
March 2013