

**THE GENERAL SYNOD
COMMITTEE FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY**

REPORT 2004

1. MEMBERSHIP OF THE COMMITTEE

The Archbishops and Bishops (The Rt Rev PF Barrett – Chairman)

Very Rev Herbert Cassidy	Rev Canon Walter Lewis
Mr George Clarke	Ven Gregor McCamley
Rev Canon David Crooks	Mrs Roberta McKelvey
Rev Canon Ian Ellis	Dr Kenneth Milne
Very Rev Leslie Forrest	Mr Trevor Morrow
Very Rev David Godfrey	Rev Daniel Nuzum (Honorary Secretary)
Rev Robert Gray	Rev Derek Sargent
Rev Sandra Hales	Rev Gillian Wharton
Mrs Ruth Heard	Rev Canon Trevor Williams
Rev Iain Knox	Mrs Andrea Wills

The Archbishop of Dublin stepped down as chairman of the Committee during 2003. We express our thanks to him for his leadership and significant contribution to the ecumenical movement both in Ireland and indeed on the world stage. He will have completed two terms on the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches in 2006 and recently stepped down as one of the Presidents of Churches Together in Britain and Ireland. This is in addition to his involvement as Co-Chair of the Porvoo Contact Group.

The Bishop of Cashel and Ossory was elected Chairman of the Committee in June 2003.

The Church of Ireland is committed to the cause of Christian unity both locally and internationally. It is a long standing and committed member of the Irish Council of Churches, the Irish Inter-Church Meeting, Churches Together in Britain and Ireland, the Conference of European Churches and the World Council of Churches. We are well represented and indeed well served by each of these bodies.

2. IRISH COUNCIL OF CHURCHES/IRISH/INTER-CHURCH MEETING

2003 saw the departure of Dr David Stevens as general secretary of the Irish Council of Churches and Executive secretary of the Irish Inter Church Meeting after many years service to take up the position of leader of the Corrymeela Community.

The Irish Inter-Church Meeting met in 2003 to consider 'The implications of the new immigrant presence in Ireland'. As well as dealing with the social plight and conditions of those seeking asylum the meeting also heard about the increase of new churches on the island and the changing makeup of longer standing Christian

denominations due to a greater immigrant presence. Many congregations are now multi cultural. Clearly this is but the start of a new journey for the churches.

A copy of the ICC Annual Report will be available at the General Synod.

3. CHURCHES TOGETHER IN BRITAIN AND IRELAND

The Church of Ireland continues to be represented at the bi-annual Church Representatives Meeting of CTBI by the Bishop of Clogher and the Rev Robert Gray with the Dean of Derry and the Rev Daniel Nuzum as alternates. The Rev Sonia Gyles was elected to the Steering Committee of CTBI at the Assembly in 2002.

CTBI is preparing for its next assembly which will be in 2005.

4. CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN CHURCHES

The highlight of 2003 for the Conference of European Church was the CEC Assembly which took place in Trondheim, Norway from 25 June-2 July. The theme of the 12th Assembly was *Jesus Christ Heals and Reconciles in Europe*. The theme of the Assembly helped the delegates to reflect on the various ways in which Jesus brings healing and reconciliation – to individual people, immigrants and asylum seekers, churches which have been divided, to relations between faith groups, countries where there is, or has been, violent conflict, and also to the natural environment which has suffered abuse and neglect.

The Church of Ireland was represented at that gathering by Canon Walter Lewis and Mrs Andrea Wills. A report of the Conference and the preceding North Sea Sailing Seminar are appendixes to the Standing Committee Report. The Geiranger Declaration appears as Appendix B to this report.

5. WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

The Central Committee for the World Council of Churches met in the Autumn of 2003 at which the Church of Ireland (and the Methodist Church in Ireland) were represented by the Archbishop of Dublin. The Archbishop produced a comprehensive report which was considered by the Committee and published in *The Church of Ireland Gazette*. Dr Konrad Raiser who has been General Secretary of the WCC for the past eleven years retired at the end of 2003 and has been succeeded by Dr Samuel Kobia who is a Methodist Minister from Kenya and former Assistant General Secretary.

The WCC faces many challenges in a changing Ecumenical scene and there is much talk of 'reconfiguration' of the Ecumenical movement. The WCC continues to review its financial structure and has prepared a plan to improve its situation over the next number of years. As well as some painful cutbacks it also means that a new

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system of membership payment will be put in place. For many churches this will mean an increase in contribution.

The WCC is preparing for the next assembly which will be held in 2006 in Porto Alegre, Brazil.

6. INTER-FAITH ISSUES

The Committee continues to allocate time at each meeting to discuss Inter-Faith issues. Following consultation with experts in this area it is hoped that concrete proposals for dealing with Inter-Faith Issues will be produced during the coming year and presented to General Synod in 2005.

7. RELATIONS WITH OTHER CHURCHES

1. A sub-Committee produced a paper in response to further questions relating to the ARCIC document *The Gift of Authority*. These questions are part of an Anglican response to the document. They appear as an appendix to the report of Standing Committee.
2. The Bishop of Clogher delivered a paper to The National Congress of Priests in Ireland International Conference, Dublin entitled *Ecumenical possibilities in Ireland today*. This was published in *The Furrow*.
3. The Bishop of Clogher serves on The Anglican Oriental Orthodox International Commission which has been in place since 2002. This commission produced an agreed statement on Christology which is being considered by the churches at present. The response of the Committee for Christian Unity to this statement appears as Appendix C to this report.
4. The Committee continues to allocate time at each meeting to report on local Ecumenical developments and is heartened by the many ‘good news’ stories from around the Island.

8. THE INTER-CHURCH CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE FOR LOCAL SCHEMES OF CO-OPERATION

The Inter-Church Consultative Committee is included in this report as Appendix A.

APPENDIX A

INTER-CHURCH CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

Membership of the Committee

Rev Des Bain
Rev Tom Kingston
Rev Iain Knox
Rev Canon Gregor McCamley
Rev Alan Martin
Rev Dr Edmund Mawhinney
Rev Canon John Mayes
Mrs Heather O'Neill
Mrs Cherry Poynton
Rev William Ritchie
Rev Harry Robinson
Dr Donald Watts

The committee met twice during 2003.

The committee continues to monitor churches where there are shared ministries.

In the light of the new context of the covenant between the Church of Ireland and the Methodist Church in Ireland it is hoped that the Covenant Council and the Alternating Ministries Committee would be able to work closely. A sub committee will be looking at this during 2004.

The committee also hope to look at guidelines for the use of churches by other Christian Groupings.

The Rev Des Bain has completed his three year term of office as Chairman and will be succeeded by a Presbyterian nominee.

APPENDIX B

THE GEIRANGER DECLARATION

25 JUNE 2003

Representatives from churches in eight countries on 25 June 2003 signed the “Geiranger Declaration on Responsible Stewardship.” The Declaration was adopted by participants in the North Sea Sailing Seminar from 22-25 June which gathered church leaders, environmentalists, politicians and representatives from scientific institutions.

THE GEIRANGER DECLARATION ON RESPONSIBLE STEWARDSHIP

“The sea is his, for he made it, for his hands formed the dry land” (Psalm 95:5)

Approaching the 12th General Assembly of the Conference of European Churches and in the International Year of Water, we, representatives of the churches in countries around the North Sea, the Nordic countries and the British Isles, together with His All Holiness the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, have sailed the waters from Egersund to Trondheim with the North Sea Sailing Seminar “Protecting the Riches of the Seas”.

Engaging in dialogue with scientists, environmentalists, representatives of fisheries, sea-farming and the petroleum industry, coastal communities, politicians, and governmental representatives, we have witnessed the stunning beauty of the North Sea. However, we have also heard about the daunting problems of threatened fish stocks, pollution from land-based activities, petroleum deposits, oil transport, and the consequent threat to local coastland communities. We therefore acknowledge the need for repentance for our abuse of the North Sea and commit ourselves to working for change in our relationship with it.

Historically the North Sea has offered the gift of travel, communication, and pilgrimage that brought our peoples together. At times it provided routes for warfare and invasion, but it also facilitated the spread of Celtic spirituality in which nature, including the sea, played a very central role in understanding the mystery of God, the way of salvation, and the transformation of the whole creation. The ecological problem is not simply economical and technological, but also deeply spiritual and moral. In gathering, we recognise the urgent need to unite in responsible stewardship to protect the complex ecosystem of the North Sea, and thereby to sustain the development of life and culture along its coasts.

In a world whose finite resources are subject to ever-increasing demands, we are reminded of the virtue of self-restraint, an essential element for human fulfilment. Our God-given human responsibility is to care for creation, sharing and not simply exploiting its resources (Genesis 2:15). We are stewards and not proprietors of God’s gift of creation (Rom 8:19-20).

As part of this responsibility, the needs of future generations must be heeded. They should not be ignored or sacrificed in favour of present commercial demands and short-term consumer interests. Likewise, the well-being of the ecosystem of the North Sea basin and its rich community of different species remains an intrinsic concern for responsible stewardship. Finally, concern for the North Sea should be seen in a global perspective, recognising that economic justice depends on sustainable management of the environment.

Therefore, remembering the challenge of the Johannesburg Summit and our commitment to Charta Oecumenica, we agree that the following objectives must guide the development of a sustainable North Sea region:

- biological diversity and the productivity of the ecosystems must be maintained;
- emissions and discharges of pollution into air, soil and water must not exceed the limits nature can sustain;
- renewable natural resources must be protected and utilised efficiently within their capacity to renew themselves;
- the precautionary principle must be applied when making decisions about exploiting the resources of the North Sea.

Building on these principles and values, and drawing on our knowledge of the many pressing issues, such as the depletion of fish stocks, unsustainable and polluting aquaculture, exploitation and consumption of petroleum and gas resources, safe transport and shipping, and emission of radioactive substances by human agency, we challenge:

The Conference of European Churches:

- to facilitate further dialogue between churches on stewardship of creation, and especially of the North Sea;
- to continue to develop a theology of sustainability, rooted in our common heritage of North Sea spirituality, which guides the careful utilisation of natural resources without depriving other peoples, other species, or future generations of the capacity to live fulfilling lives;
- to strengthen European Christian Environmental Network (ECEN), including ensuring adequate financial resources, and work through it to raise awareness in the churches and encourage radical action to protect the riches of the seas.

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Our churches and congregations:

- to set aside a period or day in the church calendar as a time of celebration of God's creation and prayer for the protection of the environment, celebrating the richness of our diverse theological and liturgical traditions. We suggest 1 September, already established as a day of prayer by the Ecumenical Patriarchate, and adopted by the World Council of Churches;
- to undertake regular environmental audits of the churches, and to make consequent changes;
- to challenge and inspire each others as church members to lead lives of greater self-restraint and responsible stewardship;
- to work with organisations in the wider environmental movement, and promote implementation of Local Agenda 21;
- to support and care for those in our fishing communities who are suffering hardship as a result of decreased catches and legislation limiting their activities.

Our respective governments and the European Union:

- to improve the Common Fisheries Policy by applying the ecosystem approach to ensure recovery of depleted stocks and damaged marine ecosystems, sustainable harvesting of marine resources, and equitable access to fish stocks following the recommendations of the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea. Effective and equitable enforcement is crucial. The fishing industry needs to be included in these processes. Regulatory authorities should particularly consider the establishment of Marine Protected Areas;
- to secure sustainable small-scale coastal fishing with its attendant local economy and culture; we suggest reduction of the total fishing effort within each zone and segment;
- to regulate the aquaculture industries to ensure that no part of the production line threatens local or global biodiversity;
- to prioritise the development of renewable energy sources, as well as energy saving and energy efficiency technology, in critical dialogue with the petroleum industry;
- to reduce the risks associated with the transportation of hazardous substances across the North Sea. Double-hull and clean-ship technologies are urgently needed to avoid oil-spills. Action is required to halt the spread of invasive species through ballast water, and to establish a North Sea Marine Corridor in the whole of the North Sea;

- to exercise the precautionary principle and end radioactive discharges to the sea. The UK government's moratorium on discharges from the Sellafield plant is a positive development, and we urge that it be made permanent.

Open interdisciplinary dialogue and collaboration, such as we have experienced during the North Sea Sailing Seminar, is vital to enable the adequate analysis of the environmental crises and the struggle over resources, and to find sustainable solutions for the future. We offer and encourage the method of dialogue, already employed by some of our European churches, and highlighted by the Religion, Science and Environment Symposia under the auspices of His All Holiness the Ecumenical Patriarch, and taken forward also by the North Sea Sailing Seminar. Communities of science, business, religion, and environmental activists should work together to analyse, understand and propose solutions to sea pollution, environmental degradation and sustainable harvesting of marine resources. Together, with God's grace, we can work to heal a broken world.

*Help us to save the ocean, Lord.
O God, how beautiful the light over the water,
the soft line of the shore,
the high clear heavens.
Our heart rejoices!
And yet, beneath the surface,
life is suffering from human destructiveness.
Our heart is crying; help us to save the ocean,
Lord, the mighty waters of the earth.
Amen*

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Signatories, Geiranger 25th June 2003:

Rev Karl Mathíasson, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Iceland
Ms Morag Mylne, Church of Scotland
Rev Canon Dr. Emsley Nimmo, Scottish Episcopal Church
Rev Canon Walter Lewis, Church of Ireland
Rt Rev Richard Chartres, the Lord Bishop of London, Church of England
Rev Dave Tomlinson, Church of England
Ms Jenny Carpenter, Methodist Church in Britain
Rev Ruth H. van Gilse, Church of Denmark
Rt Rev Ilkka Kantola, Bishop of Åbo/Turku, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Finland
Mr Dan Melander, representing the Archbishop of Sweden/Ecological Committee of the Church of Sweden
Mr Magnus Andersson, Christian Council of Sweden
Mr Thor Bjarne Bore, moderator of the Church of Norway National Church Council
Ms Tina Strømdahl Wik, vice moderator of the Church of Norway National Church Council
Rev Gen. Sec. Dr. Olav Fykse Tveit, Council of Ecumenical and International Relations of the Church of Norway
Erlend Rogne, Council of Ecumenical and International Relations of the Church of Norway
Rt Rev Dr. Ernst O. Baasland, Bishop of Stavanger, Church of Norway
Mr Preben H. Lindøe, Diocesan Council of Stavanger, Church of Norway
Rt Revd. Ole D. Hagesæther, Bishop of Bjørgvin, Church of Norway
Very Rev Øystein Bjørdal, Dean of Molde, Church of Norway
Ms Ann-Mari Aas, Moderator, Diocesan Council of Nidaros, Church of Norway
Very Rev Tor B. Jørgensen, Dean of Bodø, Church of Norway
Rev Gen. Sec. Ørnulf Steen, Christian Council of Norway
Rev Father Johannes Johansen, HI. Nikolay Orthodox Church in Norway
Rev Olav Westad, United Methodist Church, Nordic and Baltic Episcopal Area
Rev Dr. John Chrystavgis, Ecumenical Patriarchate
Dr Hans Herman Böhm, European Christian Environmental Network

Supporters, who also participated in the North Sea Sailing Seminar:

Randi Alsos, Nature and Youth, Norway
Victoria Beale, Society, Religion, and Technology Project, Church of Scotland
Øystein Dahle, Wordwatch Institute
Astrid Fylling, Diocese of Bjørgvin, Church of Norway
Gary Gardner, Worldwatch Institute
Inger Lise Gjørvi, County Governor, Nord-Trøndelag, Norway
Britt Arnhild Lindland, Diocese of Nidaros, Church of Norway
Odd Halvor Moen, Church of Norway
Bjørg Sandkjær, Church of Norway
Hans-Jürgen Schorre, Church of Norway
Jan Thulin, International Council for Exploration of the Sea
Kristen Ulstein, Green Living, Norway
Stig Utnem, Church of Norway
Michael Wohlenberg, Church of Norway

APPENDIX C

RESPONSE TO THE STATEMENT ON CHRISTOLOGY OF THE ANGLICAN-ORIENTAL ORTHODOX INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION ON THE PERSON OF CHRIST 2002

The Church of Ireland welcomes the joint statement on Christology by the Anglican-Oriental Orthodox International Commission. In so doing it recognises the historical contexts out of which the families of churches which form Oriental Orthodoxy come. It also recognises that, within the overall aspirations of ecumenical dialogue, there is an urgent need for a commonly agreed expression of the nature and person of Christ for the Church. This will greatly enhance active relations between both groups of Churches. Such a hope stems from the Church of Ireland's conviction that the mission and dialogue to which it is committed as part of the world-wide Anglican Communion requires active partnership with others particularly those with whom we share a common history. A significant part of this is a dynamic understanding of tradition whereby faith in Jesus Christ is lived out in a contemporary setting. In this way our inheritance in the faith expresses a new definition of human life with Christian focus and purpose in the contemporary world and with an eschatological urgency.

The Church of Ireland appreciates the emphasis given in the 2002 revival of the work of The Anglican-Oriental Orthodox Forum as begun in 1985 in relation to the divine origin and human proclamation of the Good News of Jesus Christ. Life today, lived in a primarily Christian way, is an outworking of revelation and inspiration. It is the activity of the Trinity of God in the totality of creation. It is given through the people of God as a gift to the people of the world. Such a conviction that God is concerned with the whole of creation is given explicit expression through the recognition in the 2002 Agreed Statement of suffering as the crucible of redeemed life. This recognition reflects the contexts from which participants in the Commission come as well as the experience they bring to the meetings of the Commission. Such realism serves effectively to earth criticism of the work of the Commission as abstract and intellectually superior by rooting it in the humble circumstances of the Church as servant of Christ and His people locally. Such an involved doctrine of the incarnation informs and infuses a spirituality which is truly Christian. It offers to humanity the grace to be like Christ along with the challenge to be like Christ to others.

The clarification of the Oriental Orthodox Christology as miaphysite rather than monophysite is welcomed as a genuine breakthrough. It corrects a misapprehension long perpetuated by Western-based text books of theology. It uses clearly the term 'one' (mia-) to mean 'at one/united' rather than 'alone' (mono-) in terms of exclusive/separated. The Christology of Oriental Orthodoxy is rescued from the whirlpool of Chalcedonian definition and its origin in the orthodox Christology of Cyril of Alexandria rightly discerned. At the same time this accuracy of definition has important repercussions for the understanding of the will of Christ as conjoint-and-inseparable after the Incarnation. This pre-Chalcedonian clarity in relation to the will of Christ in its impact on the will of the Christian gives a dynamic to the Christian life and informs the human will as responsible and responsive to God in the life of the Spirit.

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We welcome the agreement on Christology outlined above. This may be cross-referenced with Agreements made by the Oriental Orthodox families with other families of churches. The specific exploration of the theology of Richard Hooker alongside the theology of Cyril of Alexandria is particularly to be commended because it draws out and draws together the wide open fields of patristic theology as lying at the base of Anglican theology properly understood. In particular we wish to welcome the creativity, the newness of definition, the freshness of application which lies deep within a proper understanding of Orthodoxy. With the Fathers we see orthodoxy primarily as a prospect rather than as a retrospect. It's concern is more with the task of faith which lies ahead of us than with constantly revisiting work already done as an end in itself.

The concerns of Oriental Orthodox Members of the Commission in relation to the Assyrians, commonly called Nestorians, are noted with respect as an expression of honesty. However it would be our hope that the discipline of theological enquiry might work hand in hand with charity of respect for the theological formulations of others when understood critically in their primary historical context. It would further be our hope that there be integrity of dialogue and understanding of intention within an appreciation of tradition as something which itself develops. We are given hope in this regard by the Commission's own admission of the ultimate limitations of language *per se* in the articulation of the being of God. In this respect we submit that the Anglican doctrine of development, as expounded not least by the late Richard Hanson, sometime bishop of Clogher, might avail. Tradition is the Church interpreting, not the Church reminiscing. We consider it as important to see tradition as a tool of witness rather than as an academic end in itself.

In commending the work of the Commission on the person of Christ we urge that work on the person of the Holy Spirit begin in earnest as soon as possible. We suggest that substantial agreement in this area, in line with the work on Christology as witnessed to by the 2002 Agreement on the person of Christ, will give impetus and strength to something equally important in the life of the Church. The common recognition of the operation of the Holy Spirit in the life and witness of both families of churches as a globalised world draws us into closer proximity to one another can only enhance our expression of the presence of God in the world today.

Mrs Linda Clarke
The Rev Canon Ian Ellis
The Rt Rev Michael Jackson

March 2004

