

## **The Council for Christian Unity: An Introduction**

### **What is the role of the Council for Christian Unity?**

The Council for Christian Unity forms part of the Church and World Division of the Archbishops' Council and reports to General Synod through the Archbishops' Council. The focus of its work is to implement the Church of England's commitment (re-affirmed in the Fundamentals of the Archbishops' Council) to seek the full visible unity of Christian churches. It helps to forge and to sustain partnerships with other Christian churches and advises on inter-church relations.

### **How does the Council for Christian Unity carry out its work?**

The work is carried out in the following ways:

- It engages in and promotes theological reflection on the Church and its unity, especially through the Faith and Order Advisory Group.
- It facilitates informal, exploratory theological conversations with churches at home and abroad and supports Formal Conversations that have been set up by the General Synod. The nurturing of the relationships brought about by these conversations, which sometimes take the form of a signed agreement, is also a major area of the Council for Christian Unity's work.
- It co-ordinates the network of Diocesan Ecumenical Officers and European Links Officers and provides advice, support and encouragement to dioceses and parishes for working with other churches at various levels.

- It services the Church of England's membership of the ecumenical instruments (the World Council of Churches, the Conference of European Churches, Churches Together in Britain and Ireland and Churches Together in England).
- It fosters co-operation and collaboration with ecumenical partners at all levels of the Church's life.
- It works on behalf of the Church of England in ecumenical matters affecting the Anglican Communion.

### **Who is involved in the work of the Council for Christian Unity?**

The Council for Christian Unity consists of a Chairman (The Rt Revd Ian Cundy, Bishop of Peterborough), Vice-Chairman (Mrs Elizabeth Fisher), six General Synod members, four members of General Synod appointed by the Appointments Committee, four persons chosen for expertise, together with several episcopal consultants and a number of ecumenical observers.

The staff team consists of The Revd Prebendary Dr Paul Avis (General Secretary), The Revd Flora Winfield (Local Unity Secretary), The Revd Dr Charles Hill (European Secretary), Dr Martin Davie (Half-Time Theological Secretary), Miss Linda Foster (Part-Time Administrator) and Mr Francis Bassett (Assistant Secretary). Their work is supported by two secretarial staff.

### **The Council for Christian Unity's work in the present quinquennium**

A few of the specific areas of work in which the Council for Christian Unity expects to be involved during the present quinquennium are as follows:

- The Formal Conversations that the Church of England has been involved in with the Methodist Church have almost finished their work and are due to report to the General Synod and the Methodist Conference in the Summer of 2002. If the report is approved, the Council for Christian Unity will be involved in initiating the process of evaluation and reception of the report at all levels. If final approval is given it will be occupied with the further nurturing of the relationship through a joint implementation commission.
- The formal signing and celebration of the Reuilly Agreement with the French Lutheran and Reformed Churches has now taken place and the Council for Christian Unity will seek to ensure that this Agreement is implemented and "owned" by the churches at every level of their lives.
- The Council for Christian Unity will continue to train, support and advise all engaged in ecumenical relations on behalf of the Church of England.
- The Council for Christian Unity will play its part in following through the initiatives of the Forum of Churches Together in England which is to be held in July along the theme of *All Together in a Common Life*.
- The Council for Christian Unity services the English Anglican-Roman Catholic Committee (English ARC) which monitors the relationship between our two churches both locally and nationally. In the present quinquennium it expects to make a formal response to the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission document, *The Gift of Authority* and English ARC will play its part in

implementing the action plan agreed at the meeting of Anglican and Roman Catholic bishops in Toronto in May 2000. It will also continue to monitor and support joint Anglican-Roman Catholic initiatives in the field of education, especially joint schools.

- There are several fresh challenges that the Council for Christian Unity hopes to embrace in the current quinquennium, including the further development of relations with the Church of Scotland, evangelical churches and particularly the Evangelical Alliance, Black Majority Churches, the Old Catholic Churches, Orthodox Churches, and further work in the field of ecumenical education.

### **The presentation to General Synod on 8 July 2001**

The Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Council for Christian Unity, the Chairman of the Faith and Order Advisory Group (the Rt Revd John Hind, Bishop of Chichester) and the General Secretary of the Council for Christian Unity will make a Powerpoint presentation of the ecumenical scene and of current issues and tasks as they concern the Council for Christian Unity. The presentation will be followed by an opportunity for questions and comments from the floor of the Synod.

### **The Revd Prebendary Dr Paul Avis General Secretary of the Council for Christian Unity**

Published by the General Synod of the Church of England and on sale at the Church House, Bookshop, 31 Great Smith Street, London, SW1P 3BN

---

**50p**