

CHURCH OF ENGLAND'S ECUMENICAL RELATIONS 2020 ANNUAL REPORT

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INTRODUCTION TO THE ANNUAL REPORT ON ECUMENICAL RELATIONS 2020

What a year it has been. The issues that have gripped the nation have also gripped ecumenism. The health crisis has dominated everything. Obviously for a Spirit-filled activity, like ecumenism, that is so relational there have been some real challenges. Forging new relationships and deepening old ones is so much more difficult when not meeting in person, and some pieces of work have had to be put off until it is possible to meet again physically. Perhaps the most remarkable thing, however, has been how the conditions brought about by lockdowns and restrictions have also favoured other kinds of working together. Zoom means less travel and opens the possibility of presence at meetings to people who would otherwise find attendance difficult.

One good example has been the meeting of the so-called Coronavirus Roundtable, which has come into existence under the aegis of Churches Together in England. It began during the first lockdown as a way of exchanging information among National Ecumenical Officers and those of similar responsibility within the churches together with representatives of the ecumenical instruments in the four nations of these Isles. One wonderful thing about the Roundtable was that it served to extend the range of contacts among a wide variety of churches. Until the summer it was meeting weekly, but it has been felt to be so useful with the variety of issues facing the churches that it will continue meeting even as, thankfully, the need for a focus on the pandemic ebbs away.

Another issue that has hit the nation and that has had a significant impact upon the churches and upon their relationships is the fallout from the killing of George Floyd in the United States. In truth many churches were already working for racial justice, but the Black Lives Matter movement that arose after George Floyd's death galvanized them into greater action. Five Presidents of Churches Together in England (among whom is the Archbishop of Canterbury), with the support of Churches Together in England's Fourth Presidency Group, issued a statement in July 2020. The text highlights one thing in bold type: **'We call upon all churches to travel together on this journey of racial justice so that together, as one community of churches in England, we may reach out in love and respect to one another in pursuit of our common witness.'**¹ This is an issue with considerable ecumenical importance since the overcoming of racial divides is a fundamental feature of our unity in Christ. As the letter to the Colossians puts it: 'In that renewal there is no longer Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and free; but Christ is all and in all!' (Col 3:11). It is significant that in December 2020 the Council for Christian Unity has published its report *Welcoming Ethnic Minority Congregations: Church-Sharing and the Church of England*. It sees the as yet not fully developed opportunities for mission where Church of England parishes have ethnic minority congregations worshipping in their premises. Not only does this offer the chance to learn from one another, but partnership with an ethnic minority congregation

¹ 'CTE Presidents call all churches to address racial injustice in church life and wider society,' 28 July 2020, https://www.cte.org.uk/Articles/584547/Home/News/Latest_news/CTE_Presidents_call.aspx (accessed 10/12/2020).

offers the Church of England a chance to fulfil its mission to the nation by bringing the gospel to people it often finds hard to reach.

The turn of the year also brings with it another major issue for the nation: Brexit. Wherever we stand individually in the debate, it is clear that the deepening of relational bonds with our European neighbours is necessary even as the weakening of institutional connections comes into force. Here too ecumenism has a role to play. The various agreements with our neighbours of other churches now have an added value; Porvoo, Meissen, Reuilly are all opportunities to bring Christians closer to one another. Who knows? perhaps in this way, as the letter to Diognetus from the late second century CE has it, Christians can be seen effectively as the 'Soul of the World' in bringing reconciliation among people outside whatever may be their political structures. For Christians, as resident aliens whose homeland is in heaven, are linked across the world and across time. This deeper unity means they have the ability, and share the duty, of working together for the good of all.

The year, however, has not been simply one of challenge. There have been exciting and welcome growths in the ecumenical life of the country. One thing that is likely to prove significant in the years to come is the Toolkit applying the insights of *A Flexible Framework for Local Unity in Mission*. This piece of work offers the opportunity of helping Christians as they seek to come closer together, and especially in their cooperation for mission, find the correct fit in how they organize themselves. The mentality is not to set up bureaucratic structures that must be complied with but to provide the means to find the right forms for supporting the initiatives undertaken. It opens up the prospect of new and innovative cooperation and, at the same time, of deeper mutual understanding and of more intense relationships. It is a solid basis for further healing the rifts in the body of Christ in the very process of his body working, in mission, to transform the world.

This context of relationships, indeed, gives particular hope. Covid-19 has not halted their growth. What seems to become always more evident, however, is that the current in inter-church relations of seeking to explore and promote the spiritual basis for ecumenism can ground these relationships in God. Such relationships are the truest fulfilment of Jesus' prayer on the eve of his death 'that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me.' (Jn 17:21). This is the context for reading the reports that follow. They are both the outworking of a growth in relationship and the means for relationship to grow.

The Rt Revd Tim Thornton
Bishop at Lambeth

The Rt Revd Dr Martin Warner
Chair, Council for Christian Unity

RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHER CHURCHES

BAPTISTS

Lead bishop: the Rt Revd John Holbrook, Bishop of Brixworth

Overview

1. There is almost invariably a very warm welcome and a deep sense of Christian fellowship with Baptists, even though their views on Church order, and especially episcopal leadership and the baptism of infants, a national church and involvement with the state as a rule are markedly different from those of the Church of England. Nonetheless, there are Baptists who recognize with appreciation what the ministry of bishops can bring to the Church and many who express gratitude for the role of the Church of England in the affairs of the country. Conversations with the Church of England and internationally have also deepened mutual understanding, and even brought about some rapprochement, on the question of Christian initiation.
2. The organization of the Baptist Union of Great Britain (BUGB) is far looser and more light touch than the Church of England. BUGB has a small national team based in Didcot in Oxfordshire with a role of influence and of speaking for Baptists, at least those who belong to the Union. It provides resources, help with safeguarding and legal issues, and financial advice. In a similar fashion, about a dozen regional Associations offer help in the same areas. The Associations have a fair degree of autonomy, including how they allocate mission and ministry funding. Each local church has autonomy too, to call or dismiss their pastors, to pay and house them as they think fit, and even to leave or join the Baptist Union.
3. Despite the existence of these organizational supports, nothing at the national or regional level is described as a church. Hence while there may be a national Union and there may also be regional Associations, only the local worshipping congregation can be described as 'church'.

Key place of dialogue: the BUGB Council

4. The BUGB Council meets twice a year for a two-day residential at Swanwick. There are about 80 people representing the regional Associations. They invite two ecumenical representatives, currently Anglican and Salvation Army, but in future years it might be Methodist and RC. The Anglican representative to the Council is the Rt Revd John Holbrook, Bishop of Brixworth, whose period of on the Council is to finish in 2022.
5. The Bishop of Brixworth has made fruitful visits to the Baptist Union at Baptist House, Didcot, where he met the General Secretary, to Bristol Baptist College, and to a local

Ministers' gathering. He also attended the BUGB Council and the Annual Assembly which was held online this year because of covid-19 restrictions.

6. There is considerable cooperation of the Church of England's National Ecumenical Officer with the Baptist National Ecumenical Officer as part of a group of National Ecumenical Officers with similar concerns. They have worked to train County and Denominational Ecumenical Officers, produce new model Constitutions for Local Ecumenical Partnerships (currently with the Charity Commission), formulated ways of applying a more flexible approach to mission in unity at local level, and supported in various ways the work of Churches Together in England.

Reflections

7. Baptists make up 8% of Christians in the country (just below the Methodists and the Pentecostals who each have 9%),² and so they are a significant partner for the Church of England. The two churches work together on a range of issues, especially mission.

CHURCH OF SCOTLAND

Lead bishop: the Rt Revd James Newcome, Bishop of Carlisle

Key dialogue group: Church of England – Church of Scotland Contact Group (Columba Declaration)

Background

8. The Contact Group was established under the Columba Agreement and held its inaugural meeting in November 2017. In 2019, two new co-chairs were appointed: the Very Revd Dr Russell Barr for the Church of Scotland and the Rt Revd James Newcombe for the Church of England.
9. The other current Church of England members of the Contact Group are the Revd Catherine Pickford and the Revd Dr Gavin Wakefield. The Bishop of Edinburgh, the Rt Revd John Armes, is the representative from the Scottish Episcopal Church.
10. It has been agreed in principle that the biennial staff consultation between the two churches, which pre-dates the Columba Agreement and has previously been attended by the Archbishop of York, might be integrated with the annual meeting of the new Contact Group, for example by taking place immediately beforehand at the same venue and with overlapping participation. The next such event is expected to take place in 2021.

² <https://www.eauk.org/church/research-and-statistics/english-church-census.cfm> (accessed 2 July 2019)

11. An important strand in this relationship is the annual meeting between the Moderator of the General Assembly and the Archbishop of Canterbury when the Moderator visits London during St Andrew's tide. This was held in 2019 at Lambeth Palace, and subjects covered included significant developments within both churches and areas for mutual learning and support, such as training for lay and ordained ministries.

Key activities for the year

12. The Contact Group met in Carlisle in February. As well as being the first meeting for the new co-chairs, there were new members from both churches.

13. The Contact Group reviewed a range of issues, including:

- The use of provision for Covenant Partnerships in Extended Areas in Cumbria, and what learning might be taken from this for the situation in Scotland.
- Key developments within each church, e.g., structural reform within the Church of Scotland.
- Developments in ecumenical relations with other churches and how this might have a bearing on relations between our churches, including the CCU report on *Doing Mission Together* and the current situation regarding the proposals set out in *Mission and Ministry in Covenant*.
- Plans for the establishment of a new Ecumenical Instrument in Scotland, the Scottish Christian Forum, to take the place of Action of Churches Together in Scotland.
- Engagement in public affairs at the national level, with some reflection on the UK's departure from the European Union and on the FCO report on the persecution of Christians.

14. Amongst matters to be taken forward, it was agreed to give some attention to understanding and practice of the diaconate in the Church of England, the Church of Scotland, and the Scottish Episcopal Church.

15. The Contact Group also discussed initial plans for the staff consultation between the two churches due to take place in 2021.

16. A meeting was held chaired by the Archbishop of York to begin planning for the biennial staff consultation. It will take place at Bishopthorpe Palace on the autumn of 2021 on a date yet to be decided.

17. The annual meeting between the Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland and the Archbishop of Canterbury took place again this year. Normally this is held at Lambeth Palace during the Moderator's visit to London during St Andrew's tide, and this year, after a postponement by a few days, it was again able to take place. Topics covered Brexit, the United Kingdom Internal Market Bill, the environment and COP26, the good relations between the Church of Scotland and the Scottish Episcopal

Church, and South Sudan. As he had been the previous year, the Bishop of Carlisle was also present, facilitating communication with the Contact Group.

Reflections on the year

18. Towards the beginning of the year, there was a very productive meeting of the Contact Group. In part because of the covid-19 pandemic, it has not been easy to take forward plans for further work together, but it is hoped that next year's biennial staff consultation can be a good opportunity to continue building relations between the two churches.

EVANGELISCHE KIRCHE IN DEUTSCHLAND (EKD)

Lead bishop: the Rt Revd Dr Jonathan Gibbs, Bishop of Huddersfield

Key dialogue group: Meissen Commission

Background

19. The Meissen Commission oversees and promotes the implementation of the Meissen Agreement, which exists between the Church of England and the Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland (EKD). It meets once a year, alternately at the invitation of the Church of England and the EKD. Additionally, the English and German Committees each meet separately three times a year.

20. The Meissen Commission members are:

Co-Chair: the Rt Revd Dr Jonathan Gibbs
Co-Secretary: the Revd Dr Matthias Grebe
The Ven Robert Jones
The Revd Professor Morwenna Ludlow
The Rt Revd Dr Dagmar Winter
Mrs Helen Page

Key activities for the year

21. The proceedings of the 10th Theological Meissen Conference have now been published as *Revisiting the Meissen Declaration after 30 years*, edited by Mark Chapman, Friederike Nüssel and Matthias Grebe. The Conference sought to address key themes such as the significance of the historic episcopate and the mutual recognition and interchangeability of ministries. The papers focus on significant ecclesial and historical/theological developments. They attend to questions about the Church and the episcopate with regard to ecclesial identity, and in the light of contemporary European ecumenical developments as well as sociological changes over the last three decades.

22. Before the covid-19 outbreak, a Meissen-led Colloquium was planned for Cambridge on 10-11 September 2020 at Westminster College. As the organizers were ready to make the final confirmation for the venue, it became necessary to postpone the meeting until July 2021.
23. The Colloquium will seek to bring together ecumenical colleagues, joining with the Meissen partnership to discuss the theme of *Identity* in relation to an exploration of the mutual recognition of ministries between the two churches. Invitees from the CofE, EKD, CCU, CEC, Reuilly and CPCE will come together with those from the Methodist Church, the United Reformed Church, the Porvoo dialogue, and the Roman Catholic Church, as well as with others from the Church of England who are involved in ecumenical and doctrinal bodies, and one or two external speakers and facilitators.
24. The 30th annual meeting of the Meissen Commission took place from 16-17 October 2020 via Zoom. To retain the momentum of previous years (especially as the September Meissen-led Colloquium could not take place due to the pandemic) the meeting's primary focus was the mutual recognition of ministries and the nature and meaning of episcopacy. On the Saturday, Professor Friedericke Nüssel gave input on ecclesiastical orders of ministry within the EKD. The Terms of Reference were signed off.
25. The EKD will host a Partnership meeting on 30 November in Church House, Hannover.

Reflections on the year

26. Covid-19 clearly impacted the Meissen-led Colloquium and the Commission meeting. Apart from this, Brexit remains a key future concern in terms of the relationship between the Church of England and the continental churches. Questions remain about the unity of European churches, the best means of building and sustaining bridges in this area, the role of the church in political debate, the voice the churches might have in the public square (including as agents for reconciliation and dialogue in society), and the practical support that churches might offer to each other and society during this turbulent time.
27. The next Meissen Theological Conference is planned for July 2021 and will take place in Oxford.

FRENCH PROTESTANT CHURCHES

Lead bishop: the Rt Revd John Stroyan, Bishop of Warwick

Key dialogue group: Reuilly Contact Group

Background

28. The Reuilly Contact Group (RCG) monitors and promotes relations between the four British and Irish Anglican Churches and the French Protestant Churches (the Union of Protestant Churches in Alsace Lorraine/Union des Eglises Protestantes en Alsace Lorraine (UEPAL); and the United Protestant Church of France/Eglise Protestante Unie de France (EPUDF)) under the Reuilly Agreement.

29. The current membership in the two French churches comprises:

- UEPAL: the Lutheran President is Mr Christian Albecker
- EPUDF: the President is the Rev. Emmanuelle Seyboldt

30. The RCG members are:

Anglican delegation

Co-Chair: the Rt Revd John Stroyan, Church of England

Co-Secretary: the Revd Dr Matthias Grebe, Church of England

Representative of the Diocese in Europe: the Ven Meurig Williams

Scottish Episcopal Church: the Revd John McLuckie (also representing the Church in Wales)

Church of Ireland: the Revd Dr Christine O'Dowd Smith

French Lutheran and Reformed delegation

Co-Chair: the Revd Christian Krieger, Communion Protestante Luthéro-Réformée

Co-Secretary: the Revd Claire Sixt-Gateuille, Église Protestant Unie de France

Communion Protestante Luthéro-Réformée: the Revd Alexandra Breukink

Église Protestant Unie de France, Lyon: the Revd Pierre Blanzat

Église Protestante Unie de France, Menton: the Revd Richard Cadoux

Observer

The Revd Anne-Laure Danet (Ecumenical officer of the Fédération Protestante de France)

Key activities for the year

31. The Reuilly Contact Group, between the French Protestant Churches (Lutheran and Reformed) and the Anglican Churches of the British Isles, met for the 13th time from 17–19 February 2020 in Edinburgh, under the leadership of its co-chairs, the Rt Revd

John Stroyan (CofE) and the Revd Christian Krieger (Communion Protestante Luthéro-Réformée).

32. In the light of the United Kingdom's exit from the European Union, the representatives of both churches reaffirmed their dedication to strengthening the partnership, and restated their commitment to witnessing and serving together wherever possible, especially between the Anglican chaplaincies in France of the Diocese in Europe and the French Protestant churches.
33. In the light of the 20th anniversary of the Reuilly Agreement, which was drawn up in the summer of 2001 and signed in both Canterbury and Paris, two events are proposed for 2021: a spring meeting in France and an autumn event in England. In spring the plan is to have a Contact Group meeting, followed by a day of prayer and meditation, as well as a celebratory church service the next day.
34. For the autumn event, the Group has planned to have the first Theological Reuilly Colloquium, where topics such as the history of both churches, their ecclesiologies, and church polities will be presented and discussed, with experts attending from both sides.
35. The decision was made to have annual meetings rather than biennial meetings of the RCG.
36. Preliminary conversations have begun regarding the significant overlap between the work of RCG and the Meissen Commission and the opportunities this could afford to progress the call to unity.
37. Conversations have begun about the appointment of an Anglican Priest who would become Chaplain of an Anglican Chaplaincy and of an EPUDF parish.
38. The next meeting of the RCG will take place from 2021 in Paris

Reflections on the year

39. Covid-19 clearly impacts the plans for 2021 (Theological Reuilly Colloquium, 20th anniversary celebration and Contact Group meeting). Apart from this, the decision of the United Kingdom to leave the European Union remains a challenge, though here also lies an opportunity for the churches to be bridge-builders and moderators of the discussion, and not collude with language that is alienating. A further remaining challenge is to find ways to consolidate the relationship between Anglicans, and the French Lutheran and Reformed Churches, so that they may work together and grow their relationship through common witness and engagement, to serve the poor and marginalized, and to find opportunities of worshipping and praying together.
40. Bishop John Stroyan will be stepping down from his current role as ecumenical lead bishop for the French Protestant Churches early next year, at the end of a seven-year term, and a successor is therefore being sought.

LOCAL UNITY

Key Dialogue Group: Methodist-Anglican Panel for Unity in Mission

Lead bishop: the Rt Revd Dr John Thomson, Bishop of Selby

Overview

41. Local ecumenism is remarkably resilient despite not always being seen by all as important. While in some places ecumenical relations feel rather stale, going through the same round of things with little energy, even here relations at the very least are cordial. Nonetheless, these places could gain by having a renewed vision. This is on its way. More and more thinking is going into why we do ecumenism. Of course, there is simple fidelity to the explicit desire of the Lord that his followers should be one as he and the Father are. But also, at the same time, there seems to be a growing awareness of the need for a healed and healthy church to be able to do the Lord's work. To be effectively the body of Christ active in the world, to carry on his mission, we need the unity he prayed for because this is what makes us healthy, because it gives us access to the core experience of the living church: human beings sharing together in God, through the work of Christ and in the power of the Spirit.
42. Of course, during the year the application of this growing awareness has been deeply affected by the covid-19 pandemic. While for some churches it has been a body blow, especially since it has resulted in substantial financial loss, for others it has sparked creativity. Zoom worship appears to have increased ecumenical participation. As much as possible churches have also attempted to carry on working together in their service to the community. One thing, however, tends to characterize all such activities: the recognition that we are already members of the one body, whatever divisions may still afflict us. This is the starting point for entering more deeply into the experience of being united in God together, that core experience of the living church.
43. Nationally the variety of ways in which Christians express together their growing unity is supported by improved structures. The year 2019 saw significant developments in this in the Church of England which, in February of that year, brought its new ecumenical legislation into force. This fresh look by the Church of England was based in understanding how Christianity is changing in this country. It was also deeply influenced by a significant piece of work undertaken by a core group of National Ecumenical Officers in collaboration with Churches Together in England: *A Flexible Framework for Local Unity in Mission*. This year sees a significant development in the flexible framework since the National Ecumenical Officers have devised a Toolkit to facilitate its application. They have also thoroughly revised the Constitutions on offer for Local Ecumenical Partnerships, bringing them into line with the latest work of the Charity Commission. In the light of this, we can look forward to exciting possibilities for facilitating local ecumenism.
44. At the same time, ecumenism at regional (diocesan) level continues to cause concern. Churches Together in England is facilitating a process to see how best to support this

level of ecumenism since its reduction negatively impacts local ecumenism. One factor behind the reduction is the patchy support that sometimes can be seen at regional level from denominational authorities, which do not always appear to share the vision of a church united as both a goal in itself, because of the spiritual life it brings, and as the bedrock of effective mission. Nonetheless, the network of County Ecumenical Officers (CEOs) works very well in some areas, even though in others it is fragile or non-existent.

45. Overall the experience of the churches during the pandemic that has dominated this year has been of resilience in the face of difficulty. Among the Church of England's ecumenical partners some smaller churches look likely to close primarily as a result of the loss of income during this period but also, in some cases, because of falling attendance. Nonetheless, the fact of simply carrying on and serving the local community in these difficult conditions is, in a powerful sense, symbolic also of how the churches have continued to work together in good times and in bad.

Methodist-Anglican Panel for Unity in Mission (MAPUM)

Background

46. MAPUM was formed in July 2009 when, as a result of the Anglican-Methodist Covenant, the Council for Christian Unity's Local Unity Panel and the Methodist Connexional Committee for Local Ecumenical Development were brought together. The two committees had had very similar briefs and it was thought beneficial to do ecumenical things ecumenically. So it has proved. There are participant observers on the Panel from the Baptist, Roman Catholic, and United Reformed Churches
47. MAPUM's Mission Statement says 'MAPUM affirms the inseparability of unity and mission in the context of theology, spirituality and practice. It bridges the central and the local, interpreting one to the other and enabling joint ecumenical work. Its priority focus is to progress the Anglican-Methodist Covenant relationship, seeking to embed it in the lives of the two Churches and to make full use of what is already possible.' This is summed up in the strapline: *Promoting the unity in mission of the whole church at local level, especially through the Anglican-Methodist Covenant.*
48. MAPUM meets twice a year, residentially in the Spring and for a day in the Autumn. Its members are:
- *Anglican*: the Rt Revd Dr John Thomson (co-chair), the Ven. Moira Astin, the Revd Canon John Robertson, the Revd Sarah Gower, the Revd Canon Cameron Butland, the Revd Dr Andrea Russell, the Revd Dr Callan Slipper (co-secretary)
 - *Methodist*: the Revd Dr Jonathan Pye (co-chair), Mr David Phillips, Ms Miriam Moules, the Revd Nicola Reynolds, the Revd Alan Anderson, the Revd Graham R Kent, the Revd Leao Neto (co-secretary)

- *Participant observers from other churches:* Hilary Treavis (Baptist), the Revd Dr Geoff Cook (Roman Catholic), the Revd Philip Brooks (URC)

Key activities for the past year

49. MAPUM's residential on the eve of the first lockdown was a fascinating look at the possibilities for future ecumenism. Two significant ecumenical experiences were considered: the ecumenical county of Cumbria and Milton Keynes. Both have a great deal to teach us. Mission Communities in Cumbria are the bedrock of a new approach that deepens relationship while enabling all that is best in the current focus upon Mission to take place. The spiritual dimension of ecumenism is strongly felt and undergirds all that is done. Milton Keynes, on the other hand, is in the process of a profound reorganization. It too has a great deal to teach us, especially since it has such a long history. It shows the need to be attentive in three areas in particular: the need to find ways of handing on the vision to new generations while allowing, at the same time, for new thinking, the need to ensure financial stability once initial funding has ceased, and the need to have realistic plans in place to organize church life differently once growth has happened. Bringing the newer and the older experiences together stimulated creative thinking, which was further encouraged by listening to the first draft of an essay on ecumenical vision, which has subsequently come to be called: *A Threefold Vision or Jesus the Ecumenist: Rethinking Christian Unity*.
50. The residential was also an occasion for MAPUM to pay close attention to developments in *Mission and Ministry in Covenant*, as was the one-day meeting in November. While it may be that it is possible that work could be done on MMiC in future, in the present the focus has to go on strengthening the Covenant.
51. The need to strengthen the Covenant led to discussion of the relationship of MAPUM with the Joint Covenant Advocacy and Monitoring Group (JCAMG). What emerged was a clearer awareness that even though the Covenant and work related to it remain a priority for MAPUM, its brief is broader since it covers the whole range of local ecumenical engagement of the two churches. In this light it would seem that there still need to be two committees since their roles and required personnel remain distinct.
52. MAPUM has continued to consider the future of local ecumenism. While the residential early in the year was crucial for thinking about that, the November meeting was also a creative moment. As a result of looking at the round of events in the 'ecumenical year' a letter was sent by the co-chairs of MAPUM to the General Secretary of Churches Together in England proposing greater ecumenical investment in the Season of Creation. This was warmly received and will spark further work in the new year. The topic of Creation, of course, has strong missional implications since it touches upon the fifth of the Five Marks of Mission: treasuring creation.
53. While the year was challenged by the pandemic so that resources supporting local ecumenism were delayed, it has also proved to be a time of fresh thinking. MAPUM was pleased to note the development of a Toolkit to assist the *Flexible Framework for Unity in Mission*. This has become available at the same time as the aforementioned

new Constitutional arrangements for Local Ecumenical Partnerships were produced by a group of National Ecumenical Officers, including those of the Methodist Church of Britain and of the Church of England.

Reflections on the year and future developments

54. For the moment the process of supporting Mission and Ministry in Covenant rests mostly with the Faith and Order bodies of the two churches, assisted by JCAMG, since the next stage is mostly theological in emphasis.
55. MAPUM still has a role to play in supporting the fragile network of intermediate level ecumenism. This is under review by Churches Together in England and the Churches will need to attend to what is suggested.
56. Attentive to the work done to support all forms of ecumenical engagement and especially new initiatives (Type A and Type B Local Ecumenical Co-operative Schemes, in the language of the Code of Practice 2019), MAPUM will have to play a part in grounding within local practice the development of ecumenical thinking both among the churches and within the Methodist Church and the Church of England. It is an exciting time to be involved in ecumenism. Part of this will be keeping an eye on developments with what is being called the *Three Rs Project* of the Church of England (Rationale – looking at the vision for ecumenism; Reception – considering all aspects of the receiving of ecumenical texts within the Church of England; and Reconciliation – looking at how the Church of England wishes to go about the process of reconciliation of ministries as churches come closer together).
57. Work needs to be done on thinking about how to learn the lessons of the ecumenical county of Cumbria, bringing this into conversation with work already under way to study ecumenical ventures that have a long history, and in particular Milton Keynes.

METHODIST CHURCH

Lead bishop: the Rt Revd Paul Bayes, Bishop of Liverpool

Overview

58. Since November 2003, the Church of England and the Methodist Church of Britain have been in Covenant. The Covenant was made by the two churches ‘in a spirit of penitence for all that human sinfulness and narrowness of vision have contributed to our past divisions, believing that we have been impoverished through our separation and that our witness to the gospel has been weakened accordingly, and in a spirit of thanksgiving and joy for the convergence in faith and collaboration in mission that we have experienced in recent years.’ This spirit has animated all the work that has taken place since the Covenant was signed.

59. Key to the vision of the Covenant is the first of its seven affirmations, in which the two churches recognize 'one another's churches as true churches belonging to the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church of Jesus Christ and as truly participating in the apostolic mission of the whole people of God.' From that flow all the subsequent acknowledgements and significantly for what has happened since then, the fifth and seventh affirmations, respectively that 'We affirm that one another's ordained ministries possess both the inward call of the Holy Spirit and Christ's commission given through the Church' and 'We affirm that there already exists a basis for agreement on the principles of episcopal oversight as a visible sign and instrument of the communion of the Church in time and space.' At the same time, among the six commitments made, the Covenant committed the two churches to seek '*as a priority, to work to overcome the remaining obstacles to the organic unity of our two churches, on the way to the full visible unity of Christ's Church. In particular, we look forward to the time when the fuller visible unity of our churches makes possible a united, interchangeable ministry.*' (Emphasis added)
60. A Joint Implementation Commission (JIC) was set up to further this work towards further unity and it ran for two five-year periods, 2003-2008 and 2008-2013. It made great progress in many areas (its papers can be found in the Anglican-Methodist website: www.anglican-methodist.org.uk). Its Final Report came out in 2014, and it made three recommendations. The second sharpened the focus of some of the commitments made in the Covenant, calling upon the churches at local and regional level, supported and advised by the Methodist Anglican Panel for Unity in Mission (MAPUM) to 'give priority to making full use of what is already possible for them to do together, and especially to plan together for mission and worship, deployment of ministry and the use of resources.' There have been many manifestations of this across the country, particularly where Methodists are more numerous, and it can be seen in Local Ecumenical Partnerships, cooperation within Churches Together groups, and in the joint work by the National Ecumenical Officers, especially in collaboration in rethinking ecumenical practice in what has come to be called *A Flexible Framework for Local Unity in Mission*.
61. The third recommendation of the JIC's Final Report was to set up a Joint Covenant Advocacy and Monitoring Group, a report of which can be found below.
62. The first recommendation was the most radical. It drew upon the affirmations already made in the Covenant and called for the Faith and Order bodies of both churches to bring forward proposals for
- i. the Methodist Church to consider afresh expressing the Conference's ministry of oversight in a personal form of connexional, episcopal ministry and the Church of England to recognize that ministry in the Methodist Church as a sign of continuity in faith, worship and mission in a church that is in the apostolic succession.
 - ii. the Church of England and the Methodist Church to address the question of reconciling, with integrity, the existing presbyteral and diaconal ministries of our two churches, which would lead to the interchangeability of ministries.

63. This recommendation led to *Mission and Ministry in Covenant* (MMiC), which has now been discussed twice by General Synod. In 2018, following MMiC's publication the previous year, it was discussed first by the General Synod, in February, and by the Methodist Conference, in July. Both asked for further reflection. This was duly done and in July 2019 MMiC came again to General Synod. There was affirmation of the work that had been done and recognition of the priority of engaging together in mission. The Synod, however, voted for a more measured time frame than originally proposed for implementation of the proposals and requested the faith and order bodies of both churches to undertake further work drafting texts for the 'formal declaration', the inaugural service or services and the service of welcome of ministers into the other church. The House of Bishops was required to report back on the work done and to bring forward proposals for implementation to the Synod in the next quinquennium (2020-2025).
64. Following the decisions of the General Synod, the Methodist Council, meeting in October 2019, affirmed the work done and the priority of engagement together in mission. The Council, however, did not direct the Methodist Faith and Order Committee to undertake additional work at this time but invited it to pause the work, to revisit it once the General Synod had begun the legislative process, and to bring consequent proposals to a future Conference.
65. Clearly the decisions of the General Synod in July and that of the Methodist Council in October, taken together, mean that work will not, at this time, progress on Mission and Ministry in Covenant.

Key dialogue group: Joint Covenant Advocacy and Monitoring Group (JCAMG)

Background

66. JCAMG works in a spirit of fellowship and mutual understanding, and so feels that it manifests the Anglican-Methodist Covenant in its own life. It works in conjunction with the Faith and Order bodies of the two churches.
67. JCAMG meets twice a year and seeks to encourage and enable both churches to live and grow in their Covenant relationship. While significant time is given to monitoring the ongoing processes in relation to MMiC the group also wishes to affirm and advocate the important opportunities for mission already afforded by the Covenant, and to affirm the work of MAPUM in identifying and sharing these.
68. Co-chairs: the Rt Revd Paul Bayes (Bishop of Liverpool), the Revd Richard J. Teal (President of the Methodist Conference); Church of England Members: the Revd Mike Booker, Mrs Margaret Swinson; Methodist Members: the Revd Dr Caroline Wickens, the Revd Michaela Youngson (President of the Methodist Conference 2018-2019). Co-secretaries: the Revd Dr Callan Slipper (National Ecumenical Officer); the Revd Ruth Gee (a former President of the Methodist Conference and currently Assistant Secretary to the Conference and Connexional Ecumenical Officer).

Key activities over the past year

69. The Joint Covenant Advocacy and Monitoring Group (JCAMG) has met twice this year, continuing its work of encouraging and enabling both churches to live and grow in their covenant relationship. Significant time has been given to consideration of the response to Mission and Ministry in Covenant (MMiC) by the General Synod in July 2019 and subsequent decisions of the Methodist Council. The group continues to advocate the important opportunities for mission already afforded by the Covenant and affirm the work of the Methodist Anglican Panel for Unity in Mission (MAPUM) in identifying and sharing these.
70. The Joint Covenant Advocacy and Monitoring Group recognizes that following the decisions of the General Synod and the Methodist Council for now there can be no work on Mission and Ministry in Covenant. Nonetheless, the commitment to work towards a united, interchangeable ministry remains, as agreed by both churches in the first commitment of the Anglican Methodist Covenant.
71. It is clear that work needs to continue in response to the first affirmation of the Covenant and in order to enable this in a way that is acceptable to both churches. For the Church of England, with the extension of the current General Synod by a year as a result of the disruption caused by covid-19, the appointment of the current Joint Covenant Advocacy and Monitoring Group will likewise be extended by a year. The Methodist Conference, meeting virtually this summer, also extended the group's appointment by a year. The Conference, furthermore, directed the Joint Covenant Advocacy and Monitoring Group to bring proposals for the continuing support of the Covenant to the Conference in 2021. Given that the year extension will finish at the same time for the Church of England, proposals will also need to be brought to the General Synod in July 2021.
72. On 1 June 2020, there was a meeting between the chairs of the Faith and Order bodies of both churches, the co-chairs of JCAMG, and their respective officers. It resolved to support the Covenant by engaging in further theological work together. It was also resolved both to support the Covenant and prepare the ground should MMiC be revived, and with these goals in mind it was also thought that there should be more work to explore the understanding of full visible unity. Resolution 29/4 of the Methodist Conference picked up on the same idea and said:
- The Conference directs the Faith and Order Committee to work with the Faith and Order Commission and others to overcome the remaining obstacles to the organic unity of our two churches. This work will include exploration of our understanding of organic unity and full visible unity.
73. The production of video resources to support the Covenant and conversations around it had begun, but it has had to be postponed because of the covid-19 pandemic.
74. The resource *The gifts we receive*, which supports the work of the Covenant, has been finalized and posted on the Anglican-Methodist Covenant website. It grows out of an actual experience of Receptive Ecumenism and provides a course that can be tailored

to the time a group can make available. Although it was designed within the context of Anglican-Methodist relations, it could be used with any mix of churches.

Reflections and future developments

75. The exploration by the Faith and Order bodies of both churches of the remaining obstacles to organic unity and their consideration of the understanding of full visible unity are crucial to the further development of the Covenant, and especially to reaching the goal of the interchangeability of ministry. Following the disappointment of the impasse of MMiC, this at least offers the hope that as some time in the future this process might, in some way, be picked up again.
76. Nonetheless work still needs to be done to increase awareness of the Covenant and enthusiasm for it. That is, alongside the 'head work', there is a need to touch hearts. There is a continued need to find stories of experiences of working together, both when this is positive and encouraging and when it is more challenging.
77. JCAMG will come to the end of its existence in the summer of 2021. Consideration will need to be given by the General Synod and the Methodist Conference as to whether it should continue or be replaced with another body. Relevant to this will be the work that JCAMG is engaged in to explore the different kinds of engagement between the two churches:
 - i. Harmonic and contrapuntal relationships (i.e., in support of the gospel, maximizing the different possibilities of the two churches – able both to work closely and relationally with the powers that be, and to sustain a critical distance from which to exercise a prophetic voice to challenge)
 - ii. The spirituality of ecumenism (grounding ecumenical work in a living experience of unity, rooted in our relationship with God)
 - iii. Intentional meeting together on things that matter (often with a missional focus but also regarding other concerns, so that the value of cooperation is seen in its outworking).

OLD CATHOLICS OF THE UNION OF UTRECHT

Lead Bishop: the Rt Revd Peter Eagles, Bishop of Sodor and Man

Background

78. The Old Catholic Churches of the Union of Utrecht are based entirely in continental Europe. There are Old Catholic Churches in the Netherlands, Germany, Switzerland, Czech Republic, Poland and some isolated congregations in Belgium, France and Croatia, all served by a small 'International Bishops' Secretariat' (IBC) based in Utrecht.

These churches have been in communion with the whole Anglican Communion since the Bonn Agreement of 1931.

Key Activities for the year

79. Archbishop Joris Vercammen retired as Archbishop of Utrecht at a celebration of the Eucharist on Saturday 11 January 2020. The Bishop of Sodor and Man attended as incoming Anglican co-chair of AOCICC. Archbishop Joris' successor was announced as the Very Revd Bernd Wallet, and he was consecrated as Archbishop on 7 November 2020, this event having been postponed from June.
80. The Old Catholic Annual International Bishops' Conference, planned for June 2020 in Utrecht, was cancelled due to covid-19.
81. The International Old Catholic Bishops' Conference has appointed Bishop Harald Rein (Switzerland) as Old Catholic co-chair. Travel restrictions arising from covid-19 mean that reciprocal familiarization visits for the new co-chairs continue to be postponed until 2021.
82. The AGM of the UK Society of St Willibrord is to take place virtually on 10 November, at which the Bishop of Sodor and Man takes office as Chair.

ORTHODOX CHURCHES

Lead bishops: the Rt Revd Christopher Chessun, Bishop of Southwark (Round Table and Oriental Orthodox)

The Rt Revd Jonathan Goodall, Bishop of Ebbsfleet (Eastern Orthodox)

Key dialogue groups: Orthodox Round Table

Anglican-Oriental Orthodox Regional Forum (AOORF)

Anglican-Eastern Orthodox Regional Forum (AEORF)

Internationally the Church of England is represented in the International Commission for the Anglican-Orthodox Theological Dialogue (ICAOTD)

Overview

83. Both Eastern and Oriental Orthodox Churches are present in England and the larger part have bishops resident in and around London. This allows for a close relationship to develop with the local bishops which aids relations with the churches in their canonical territories. Relationships between the Archbishop of Canterbury and the heads of a number of churches are strengthened and maintained by the Apokrisiarioi, the Archbishop's official representatives, to the heads of a number of Orthodox churches.

Orthodox Round Table

Background

84. The Lambeth Orthodox Round Table was first conceived by the Right Reverend Richard Chartres before his retirement as Bishop of London and Lead Bishop for Eastern Orthodox Relations.
85. The first annual meeting of the Round Table was on 2 July 2018, with the second meeting then held on Monday 17 June 2019. The Chair is the Bishop of Southwark, the Rt Reverend Christopher Chessun.

Key Activities for the year

86. Covid-19 has curtailed a number of important activities. Not least among these was the postponement of the Lambeth Conference which would have welcomed delegates from the canonical Orthodox Churches.
87. In January 2020 the Archbishop of Canterbury visited Amman and Jerusalem as part of the Anglican Communion's Primates' Meeting. He held a private meeting with His Beatitude the Patriarch of Jerusalem in Bethlehem. Later in January His Beatitude paid a visit to Lambeth Palace for a breakfast meeting with the Archbishop.
88. Internationally, ICAOTD finalized its latest agreed statement at its meeting in Canterbury in October 2019. 'Stewards of Creation' deals with questions of ecology. The Bishop of Norwich and Canon Alison Joyce are members of ICAOTD. The document will be published in early autumn 2020.

Reflections on the year

89. The world's attention turned to Hagia Sophia in Istanbul during June and July 2020 when the Turkish government took the decision to change the status of Hagia Sophia from a museum to a mosque. Muslim prayers were held there on 24 July. Five Presidents of Churches together in England released a statement expressing sadness at the 'lamentable and painful' action.³

Anglican-Oriental Orthodox Regional Forum (AOORF)

Background

90. AOORF began under the chairmanship of Bishop Geoffrey Rowell as a means by which the Church of England could engage with the Oriental Orthodox Churches present in England. The Rt Revd Christopher Chessun, Bishop of Southwark, is currently

³ https://www.cte.org.uk/Articles/583374/Home/News/Latest_news/Hagia_Sophia_CTE.aspx

accompanied as co-chair by His Eminence Archbishop Angaelos of London (Coptic Orthodox).

91. The business of the forum is informal and principally consists of information sharing, discussion of areas of concern and facilitating support for the (often small) Oriental jurisdictions in this country.

Key activities for the year

92. The situation of the Church in the Middle East is always at the top of the agenda. The final report of the Independent Inquiry into UK Foreign Office policy on the Persecution of Christians, chaired by the Bishop of Truro, continued to be an important agenda item this year.
93. The Forum has continued to meet during the time of covid-19 via video conferencing, which has been a source of support, comfort, and useful sharing of information.
 - a. Following the video meeting of 12 May the co-chairs of the Forum sent a message, signed by the participants in the Forum, to the member churches because it wished to share its encouraging experience of communion and 'notwithstanding the distressing and painful circumstances surrounding us all, to share a message of hope and encouragement with all our members'.
 - b. Following the video meeting of 30 June the co-chairs of the Forum sent a message, signed by the participants in the Forum, to the Most Revd Mouneer Anis, Archbishop of Alexandria to welcome the birth of the forty-first Province of the Anglican Communion, the Province of Alexandria.
94. Following the demise of Archbishop Abuna Gorgoryoes, the Bishop of Southwark met with members of the Medhanialem Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church on 27 July 2020.

Reflections on the year

95. Covid-19 has had significant impact upon the Forum. It has, however, highlighted the Forum's role in building up good relationships and allowing for an exchange of information.
96. The plight of Christians in the Middle East has resounding significance around the region. In many ways the position of Christians is a barometer of wider religious freedom in the region and their presence (and their flourishing) can be understood as guaranteeing wider freedom of religion and belief in Muslim-majority countries.

Anglican-Eastern Orthodox Regional Forum (AEORF)

Background

97. There are a number of Orthodox jurisdictions present in England. Many have resident bishops, but some have oversight from bishops based in other countries. Representatives of the various churches are invited to the Lambeth Orthodox Round Table.
98. The CCU has made provision for the setting up of an Anglican–Eastern Orthodox Regional Forum to monitor and encourage Anglican–Orthodox relations.

Key activities for the year

99. The new body has Terms of Reference. Its coming into operation has been delayed by the health crisis brought about by covid-19.
100. The Bishop of Ebbsfleet has maintained contacts and had an informative meeting with Archbishop Nikitas, Archbishop Gregorios of Thyateira and Great Britain.

Reflections on the year

101. A visiting delegation from Russia due to take place at the beginning of the year had to be cancelled because of the exigencies of covid-19. This indicates something of the toll of the pandemic on normal relations.
102. It has been possible to have a single representative for the Eastern Orthodox to General Synod, Archpriest Stephen Platt. He was present at the February group of Sessions and has been a valued member of the group of ecumenical representatives.

PENTECOSTAL CHURCHES

Lead bishop: the Rt Revd Keith Sinclair, Bishop of Birkenhead

Key dialogue Group: the Anglican-Pentecostal Theological Steering Group (APTSG)

103. Relations nationally between the Church of England and an increasing number of Pentecostal churches have been deepening steadily at both national and local church level. The rapid growth of Pentecostal and charismatic Christianity demands a response from the Church of England, for several reasons: to appreciate what God is doing among these churches, to learn from them, and to see how best to cooperate in serving the nation. In England, Pentecostal Churches now equal the Methodist Church of Britain in the numbers of those worshipping on a Sunday (about 9% of Christians). Furthermore, Pentecostal spirituality has a growing importance in Church of England congregations, often appealing to those at the beginning of the Christian journey, especially younger people. Given the need for renewal and the mission

imperative of the Church of England, this appeal is instructive. There is much to learn in the sphere of evangelism and about the dynamism of the Holy Spirit.

104. On the Pentecostal side there is a keen desire that conversation and the deepening relationship with the Church of England should bear fruit in terms of public witness, the strengthening of local joint evangelism and outreach into communities, and in growing disciples. Theological dialogue is important, but it must be grounded in praying together, a living relationship, and joint action. Pentecostal leaders relate very positively to the ministry of the Archbishop of Canterbury. The Archbishop's themes (renewing prayer and religious life, evangelism, and reconciliation) resonate with their aspirations as well as within the Church of England and create, therefore, a synergy for shaping Anglican-Pentecostal relations.

105. There are many places and ways in which the Church of England relates to Pentecostals. Locally many parishes have warm relationships with their Pentecostal brothers and sisters. Nationally there are also warm relationships fostered by Churches Together in England. Nonetheless, the work done by the APTSG has given a significant contribution to Anglican-Pentecostal relations.

Key dialogue group: the Anglican-Pentecostal Theological Steering Group (APTSG)

Background

106. The Church of England has been relatively late in having an official dialogue with Pentecostals. Nonetheless, valuing the work already done to increase understanding between Anglicans and Pentecostals, the Council for Christian Unity and the leaders of the Pentecostal churches in membership of CTE set up the APSTG. Its first meeting was on 25 May 2016. Its aims were revised and simplified when its Terms of Reference were clarified and adopted in March 2018. They were:

- i. Deeper mutual understanding between Anglicans and Pentecostals
- ii. Greater visibility of relations between Anglicans and Pentecostals
- iii. Expansion of the range of and an increase in joint mission initiatives.

107. The membership of the Steering Group varied slightly, even though the pattern remained the same, with co-chairs, co-secretaries, two others from each constituency, plus two consultants, that is, the Secretary for Ecumenical Relations and Theology, on the Anglican side and, on the Pentecostal side CTE's Principal Officer for Pentecostal, Charismatic and Multi-cultural Relations.

Key activities for the past year

108. The group was privileged to participate in the inauguration of the Institute for Pentecostal Theology (IPT) at Regents Theological College, West Malvern, Worcs. This is a significant event, marking a step ahead in the development of Pentecostal

theology. The inaugural lecture was entitled: *Pentecostalism and the Theological Academy: A Global Challenge*. The APTSG's subsequent discussion recognized the importance of the academy in general within the life of the Christian community and in particular for Pentecostals who are articulating what they experience within a biblical framework using sophisticated theological tools. This both enhances Pentecostal self-understanding and deepens the possibility of ecumenical insight, since it allows traditions to become increasingly mutually comprehensible. The opening of IPT and the archives that will accompany it bring about realistic possibilities for further mutual understanding.

109. Building on the profitable use of Receptive Ecumenism as a method of deepening dialogue, the meeting in Malvern, following the lecture, was especially illuminating. It began to touch upon some sensitive and key issues to do with power, worship, baptism, and the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of a Christian.
110. The group continued to monitor practical ways of drawing Anglicans and Pentecostals together in mission. The experiences of Pentecostals were heard. What began to emerge was a deeper theological understanding of mission, consonant with the Five Marks of Mission.
111. Lessons coming out of lockdown were observed, especially the usefulness of a 'mixed economy' of in-person meetings and online gatherings.
112. During the year the editorial work on the papers from the previous year's Consultation *Pneumatology & Baptism in the Spirit* continued with a view to publishing them on the CTE website. Covid-19 caused delay. It is hoped that they will soon be posted.
113. The group was very much aware that its term of office is coming to an end. At the last meeting considerable time was given to how to proceed. What emerged was the need for a deeper theological conversation exploring the wide range of points where experience, doctrine, and institution meet, with a special focus on where, at least apparently, the two traditions diverge. Ways of future working were also outlined.
114. The APTSG welcomed the birth of a local body in Roehampton in the borough of Wandsworth, centred around Whitelands College, growing from and carrying out similar work to the APTSG. It calls itself the Anglican-Pentecostal Pastoral group (APPg) and wishes to explore the *theologies* and *traditions* of the two ecclesial communities, so that they can engage in mission *together* locally.

Main achievements of the APTSG during its four-year existence

115. As the current phase of the work of the APTSG comes to a close and a new dialogue group is in the initial stages of being set up, we can look back over its four years and see that its key achievements have been:
 - i. The Anglican-Pentecostal Consultation, *Pneumatology & Baptism in the Spirit*, 2 April 2019, which was perhaps the single most effective piece of work that the APTSG undertook. Thirty-four people, half of them Pentecostal, met in the

Centre for Pentecostal and Charismatic Studies in Birmingham. Three Pentecostals and three Anglicans addressed the gathering, followed by discussion. It was an enlightening and excellent encounter.

- ii. Services for *Thy Kingdom Come*. A vibrant Pentecostal service for over a hundred people in May 2017 was held at the New Testament Church of God's Brixton Community Church. There was a good representation from the church congregation as well as from a wide range of church leaders, including the local Roman Catholic priest, alongside the local Anglican vicar, the Archdeacon and (at the end) the Bishop of Woolwich. Some Pentecostal pastors had travelled considerable distances in order to be present. Then in May 2018, there was an Anglican Eucharist in St Peter's Church, Walworth, in the diocese of Southwark. It was attended by about ninety people, at least thirty of them from the local school. The bells pealed for half an hour before the service began, and they rang out again as people left a church filled with the scent of incense. People commented that it had been a satisfying moment of intense prayer.
- iii. The work of the APTSG was rooted in study of the Bible and a growing fellowship. This spiritual root was deepened as time went on. The group began to develop a way of working, centred in the spiritual dimension and living prayer, suited to cooperation between Anglicans and Pentecostals. This is something to bear in mind for the future.
- iv. Possibly one of the most significant advances of the APTSG was within the group itself, where a profound relationship of trust was built up. It meant that some frank talk and clearer mutual understanding became possible as time went on. It almost seemed that the point the group reached at the end was where it should be beginning – not that there were relational problems at any stage of the APTSG's existence, but the depth of relationship grew tremendously as time went on.

Reflections and future developments

116. The Council for Christian Unity meeting on 15 October 2020 was of the mind that the work of the APTSG should continue. A lead bishop is thus being sought.

117. Given that Anglican and Pentecostal mission usually takes place in a multidenominational setting, the growth in mutual understanding potentially has a broader effect than just a bilateral improvement of relations. It functions, rather, as a catalyst for cooperation in mission among larger groups of churches. The missional context runs through all the work of the APTSG. The expansion of the range of joint mission, and related issues, such as church planting, and the understanding of mission within the context of the Five Marks of Mission (a focus for the APTSG's thinking) remain relevant. This means that mission and evangelism will always be key to the agenda.

118. Thus, in the context of exploring the possibilities of cooperation in mission and evangelism, three areas can be identified as arising from the past work of the current APTSG as central to what may be done in the future:

- i. Theological reflection, especially relating experience and doctrine
- ii. Future work on chaplaincy, especially prison chaplaincy
- iii. Cooperation in theological and ministerial education

PORVOO COMMUNION OF CHURCHES

Lead bishop: the Right Revd Dr David Hamid, Suffragan Bishop in Europe

Key Dialogue Group: Porvoo Contact Group

Background

119. The Porvoo Agreement was signed in 1996 and brought the Anglican Churches of the British Isles into communion with the larger part of the Nordic and Baltic Lutheran Churches. The Church of Denmark, the Lusitanian Church, the Spanish Reformed Episcopal Church, the Latvian Church Worldwide and the Lutheran Church of Great Britain have entered the communion subsequently. The Evangelical-Lutheran Church of Latvia remains outside the communion but sends representatives to some meetings. The Church of England had pre-existing relationships with a number of the signatory churches.

120. The relationships between churches are monitored and encouraged by the Porvoo Contact Group. The co-chairs are the Most Reverend Dr Michael Jackson, Archbishop of Dublin, and the Right Reverend Matti Repo, Bishop of Tampere (Finland). The co-secretaries have both changed this year with the Revd Dr Thorsten Rørbæk (Denmark) replacing the Revd Dr Erik Berggren (Sweden) who had taken over from Johannes Zeiler and the Revd Dr Callan Slipper (England) replacing the Revd Canon Dr Jeremy Worthen who had taken over from the Revd Dr Will Adam.

121. The CCU's Porvoo Panel is chaired by the Right Reverend Dr David Hamid and exists to monitor and encourage the relationship between the Church of England and the Porvoo Churches, including linking with Nordic and Baltic congregations and chaplaincies in England.

Key activities for the year

122. The Steering Committee (co-chairs and co-secretaries) of the Porvoo Contact Group met in London on 23 January and then online several times over the summer. The focus of their discussion was planning for the Theological Conference, which had been planned to take place in Sweden in October. It was eventually agreed to move the

Theological Conference and the Porvoo Contact Group meeting online given continuing restrictions on travel and gatherings. The title of the Conference was *A Vision for Communion*, and the Church of England's delegation comprised the Revd Dr Julie Gittoes, the Revd Dr Anderson Jeremiah and Dame Mary Tanner (who was one of the presenters), along with Dr Worthen in his capacity as co-secretary.

123. The Conference reflected on the vision for communion that has animated the Porvoo Agreement, and how the communion of churches it has enabled may develop in the future. It is hoped that the material and insights it has generated can inform planning for the four-yearly Primates Meeting in 2021, which will coincide with the 25th anniversary of the initial signing of the Porvoo Agreement.

124. The Porvoo Contact Group considered formal Terms of Reference at its meeting for the first time. As part of this process, they reflected on the process of appointment for co-secretaries, both of whom were due to move on from their roles as part of national ecumenical staff teams and with that their responsibilities as co-secretaries soon after the meeting.

125. The Porvoo Panel met twice in 2020, in keeping with its usual pattern. They met online on 20 March and again on 20 November when also, later in the day, a symposium was held. Given that the symposium was online it was possible to have truly international participation with more than a hundred people booking (though just slightly fewer able to attend on the day) from sixteen countries as far apart as North America and Poland. The speakers were Dame Mary Tanner, the Rt Revd John Hind, the Rt Revd David Tustin, and the Rt Revd Christopher Hill. They spoke on *Apostolicity, succession and episcopacy*, and *The impact of Porvoo upon the life and mission of its participant churches*. It was a good preparation for the 25th anniversary in 2021.

126. Canon Jonathan Collis from the Diocese of Chelmsford had hoped to organize a day for dioceses and parishes with Swedish church links in October 2020, but unfortunately this had to be cancelled.

Reflections on the year

127. Both the Contact Group and the Panel had wanted to focus this year on preparations for the 25th anniversary of the initial signing of the Porvoo Agreement in 2021. The restrictions relating to covid-19 have perhaps hit activities relating to the Porvoo Communion more seriously than some other areas of the Church of England's ecumenical work, because of the importance of face-to-face encounter for building and sustaining relationships. Nonetheless both the online Theological Conference and the Panel's online symposium were highly successful, so that, even though the depth of sharing of an in-person meeting could not take place, valuable thinking about Porvoo's history and about hopes for its future did come about.

THE PROTESTANT CHURCH IN CHINA

Lead Bishop: the Right Reverend David Urquhart, Bishop of Birmingham, the Archbishop of Canterbury's Episcopal Link with China

Introduction

128. Archbishop Justin is the fourth Archbishop of Canterbury in succession to have visited China and the only one to have returned for a second time while in office. The purpose of this link, unique in World Christianity, is to deepen support for Christians in China and to understand and reflect upon the complex context in which they live and worship.
129. Between visits, the Archbishop of Canterbury's Round Table shares knowledge on religious and geopolitical developments in the People's Republic of China, bringing together a broad spectrum of opinion and profound expertise. In addition, a smaller China Steering Group provides specific strategic advice to the Archbishop. They are very ably coordinated by Mr Stephen Knott, Assistant Chief of Staff at Lambeth Palace.

Background

130. China's Basic Law from the early 1950s recognizes five 'religions' Daoism, Buddhism, Islam, Catholic and Protestant.
131. The Archbishop relates directly to Protestants across China through the post-denominational National Committee of the Three Self Patriotic Movement and China Christian Council (TSPM/CCC). This friendship gives access to a wide range of Chinese faiths, institutions and communities at all levels of society. During and between visits particular interests of the Archbishop are pursued and frequent opportunities are taken for public and private dialogue with the government of China.
132. Catholic relations have been a focus too in recent years in connection with the Chinese Patriotic Catholic Association and China Catholic Bishops' Conference (CPCA/CCBC).
133. Unregistered Churches are also widespread and have the Archbishop's attention.
134. The current Five Year Plan for Religion 2018-2022 is in the context of a stronger role played by the United Front.
135. According to China's official figures, there are estimates of around 23-35 million Protestant Christians, with 38,000 pastoral personnel, 150,000 preachers and lay workers, 21 Bible seminaries and Bible schools teaching 2,500 registered students. Adding unofficial figures for other Christians might treble the total.

Key Activities for the Year 2019-20

136. The Right Reverend David Urquhart's planned visits to China as Archbishop's Episcopal Link were thwarted by covid-19 related travel restrictions and are postponed until 2021.
137. A group of Catholic delegates, including leading bishops, from the Chinese Patriotic Catholic Association, was welcomed to Lambeth Palace, in late 2019, by Archbishop Justin and hosted by Bishop Graham Tomlin, President of St Miletus Theological College.
138. In summer 2020 there was a meeting with representatives of the Anglican Communion and Lambeth Palace staff to share experiences of engaging with China and to explore opportunities for greater China-related collaboration across the Communion.
139. China's heightened geopolitical situation (specifically with Xinjiang, Hong Kong and covid-19) has brought about an unprecedented level of specific engagements, briefings and other communications. Mr Stephen Knott and the Revd Dr Will Adam have held numerous conversations with bishops (including Lords Spiritual), ecumenical partners, non-governmental organizations, and CofE staff on specific issues concerning China. These have been important, and at times robust, discussions helpful for appraising the Archbishop's approach, and testing the best way of navigating the complexities of the current global real-politic, legal, moral and ethical landscape, whilst sustaining a strong, long term relationship with the thriving Christian church in China.
140. The Archbishop has met the Chinese Ambassador in London, Liu Xiaoming, has appreciated the wise counsel of the outgoing UK Ambassador to China, Dame Barbara Woodward, and will take an early opportunity to meet her successor Caroline Wilson.
141. Before the initial decision to postpone this year's Lambeth Conference, the Archbishop was delighted that the TSPM/CCC had not only accepted his personal invitation but also confirmed a significant delegation to attend the gathering:
- The Revd Wu Wei, President of China Christian Council
The Revd Shen Xuebin, Vice President of China Christian Council
Mr Gu Mengfei, Secretary General of National Committee of the Three-Self Patriotic Movement of the Protestant Church in China
The Revd Lin Manhong, Associate General Secretary of China Christian Council
The Revd Wen Ge, Associate General Secretary of China Christian Council
Ms Gu Jingqin, Interim Director of the Overseas Relations Department of China Christian Council and National TSPM.
142. The objective for the attendance of these senior overseers of a post-denominational Church was to further strengthen the relationship between the Anglican Communion and the Church in China, encourage Chinese Christians in their leadership, and enable other Lambeth Conference delegates to learn from the Church in China.

143. This prompt response and historic commitment to attend for the first time is evidence of the strength of the relationship between the Archbishop of Canterbury and the TSPM/CCC and a result of the significant investment made in furthering that relationship in recent years.

Next steps 2021-2023

144. Engagement between the Anglican Communion and China will continue to develop including participation in a reshaped Lambeth Conference. There will also be a deeper understanding of the role of the Province of Hong Kong.

145. There remains serious geopolitical and ethical concern around the treatment of the Uighurs in Xinjiang, Hong Kong's instability and the handling of the covid-19 pandemic. Other matters will arise, no doubt.

146. The Archbishop of Canterbury's specific strategic approach to highly sensitive and complex issues has been one of quiet diplomacy, seizing the opportunities and access provided by the friendship generated over several years to speak in a forthright manner to the Chinese authorities precisely and robustly. At the same time, he is consistently mindful of the Church's and British Government's historic weaknesses and failures in public policy making and delivery.

147. It is hoped that Archbishop Justin will make an unprecedented third visit to the People's Republic of China in order to learn from and give support to a significant part of the Body of Christ in a fast-changing and uncertain world.

ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

Lead bishops: the Rt Revd Christopher Foster, Bishop of Portsmouth (EWARC and IARCCUM Bishop at Large for England)

The Rt Revd Dr David Hamid (IARCCUM)

The Rt Revd Dr Robert Innes (Belgian & French ARCS)

Key dialogue Groups:

English and Welsh Anglican-Roman Catholic Committee (EWARC)

International Anglican-Roman Catholic Commission for Unity and Mission (IARCCUM)

Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC)

Belgian and French Anglican-Roman Catholic Committee

Overview

148. Relations between the Church of England and the Roman Catholic Church have two distinct strands. There is the relationship with the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, which finds its regular national focus in the English and Welsh

Anglican-Roman Catholic Committee (EWARC) and in the biennial Joint Bishops Meeting. And there are, within the Diocese in Europe, relations with other Bishops' Conferences, also supported by national Anglican-Roman Catholic Committees in the cases of Belgium and France.

149. The ecclesiology of the Roman Catholic Church means that the relationship between the local and the universal 'levels' of church is especially close (to use the terminology of the latest ARCIC report, *Walking Together on the Way*), and therefore attention to international dialogue is especially important for the Church of England in this instance. This includes both the theological work of the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission and the development of partnership in mission through the International Anglican-Roman Catholic Commission for Unity and Mission (IARCCUM). Indeed, the Terms of Reference for EWARC reflect those of IARCCUM and include among its purposes 'attending to the processes of formal response and ecclesial reception for agreed statements of ARCIC'.

English and Welsh Anglican-Roman Catholic Committee (EWARC)

Background

150. The English and Welsh Roman Catholic Committee (EWARC) is a national body which acts as a bridge between the international work of IARCCUM and ARCIC and the regional and local work being done in parishes and dioceses in this country. Members are appointed for a five-year period, with the current quinquennium beginning in 2018. The purpose of English and Welsh ARC is to support, coordinate and promote relations between the Church of England and the Church in Wales, and the Roman Catholic Church in England and Wales. This includes encouraging and exploring growth in the communion that already exists and identifying and advocating practical ways to live out that communion.
151. The Rt Revd Christopher Foster, Bishop of Portsmouth, was appointed as co-chair in 2017 ahead of the new quinquennium. The Roman Catholic co-chair is Bishop Robert Byrne, now Bishop of Hexham and Newcastle. They were also appointed as IARCCUM Bishops at Large for England in January 2019.
152. The group meets twice per year for overnight residential meetings. Anglican Representation to this body is: the Rt Revd Christopher Foster, Bishop of Portsmouth; the Rt Revd Mike Harrison, Bishop of Dunwich; the Revd Canon Dr Andrew Davison; Ms Doral Hayes; Dr Elizabeth Hoare; the Revd Canon Maggie McLean; the Revd Andrew Moughtin-Mumby; the Revd Dr Matthew Hill (Church in Wales).

Key activities for the year

153. Due to the covid-19 lockdown, the residential meeting planned for April to be held at Oscott College in Birmingham was cancelled. The second residential meeting, planned to be held in Portsmouth in October was re-imagined as an online Zoom

meeting, taking place on the afternoon of Tuesday 6 October and the morning of Wednesday 7 October. The key areas of focus were the Saints John Henry Newman and Thomas Becket. Contributors included the Revd Canon Prof Mark Chapman and Fr Daniel Seward on Newman, and the Rt Revd Rowan Williams on Becket. The Committee also considered the place of the saints in theology and spirituality more generally with reflections from the Most Revd Bernard Longley and the Revd Canon Dr Andrew Davidson.

154. Planning has commenced for the next Joint Meeting of Anglican and Roman Catholic bishops, which was due to take place in Liverpool in January 2021. It was hoped to draw on the local experience of the Liverpool Archdiocese in planning for a diocesan synod, and to address topics of current interest to bishops from both churches. The co-chairs and co-secretaries of EWARC have been an integral part of the small planning group for this. As a result of the covid-19 pandemic, however, the meeting has been postponed to the beginning of 2022.

155. The key areas of focus in the first phases of the current quinquennium of EWARC continue to be as follows.

- i. ARCIC III's statement *Walking Together on the Way* – the committee will continue to reflect upon how best to aid in the reception of this document, which was published in July 2018. This is likely to be through resources for use in different contexts. A formal request has now been made to the Business Committee for time to be allocated at the General Synod for a presentation accompanied by group work with Roman Catholic participation.
- ii. Joint Schools – the Committee has drafted a Statement of Principles for joint schools and has commissioned the education departments of the two churches to update the guidelines for joint schools.
- iii. Interchurch Families – the committee has suggested it could produce pastoral guidance resources, in conjunction with the Association of Interchurch families.
- iv. The environment is also a topic that members are keen to explore.

156. The Committee hopes to meet in different locations of pilgrimage around England and Wales in the current quinquennium and will seek to engage with the local community whilst *in situ*.

Reflections on the year

157. EWARC's way of working is bound up with the possibilities offered by residential meeting for sharing in worship and informal fellowship as well as learning and planning together. The online meeting in October, nonetheless, was highly successful with excellent talks and successful small groups. It offered some interaction as well as the opportunity for thinking and praying together about sainthood in the context of two individuals who have been significant figures for both churches. The disruption to the normal pattern of General Synod has also made it impossible so far to schedule

the kind of activity that would be needed for serious engagement with *Walking Together on the Way*.

International Anglican-Roman Catholic Commission on Unity and Mission (IARCCUM)

Background

158. IARCCUM is an episcopal body, established in 2001, to carry forward in life and mission the agreements reached in the ARCIC dialogue. The co-chairmen are Archbishop Donald Bolen (of Regina, Saskatchewan), and Bishop David Hamid. The co-secretaries are the Revd Dr Will Adam (Anglican) and the Revd Anthony Curren (Catholic). The mandate is threefold:

- i. promote and monitor the formal response to and reception of the statements of ARCIC.
- ii. facilitate relations between ARCIC and national ARCs, and between different national ARCs, providing support and resources to foster an exchange of information and practice.
- iii. encourage Anglican Provinces and RC Episcopal Conferences to establish ARC dialogues where they do not exist.

Some activities and developments in the past year

159. In the last year the Steering Group, consisting of the co-chairs and co-secretaries has met roughly monthly.

160. The process of identifying and appointing new pairs of bishops in different places is ongoing.

161. There will be a plenary meeting of the bishops at large between 29 October and 5 November 2021, beginning in Rome and then moving to Canterbury. This plenary has been made possible by a significant grant from the Porticus Fund.

162. The IARCCUM Steering Group has also been approached by the organizers of the Malines Conversations to take part in a Symposium in Belgium in December 2021 to mark the centenary of the first Malines Conversations.

Related to the Church of England

163. Bishop Christopher Foster and Bishop Robert Byrne (Bishop of Hexham and Newcastle) are IARCCUM bishops at large for England. Bishop Robert Innes and Archbishop Robert Le Gall (Toulouse) are IARCCUM bishops at large for France.

164. The IARCCUM website, www.iarccum.org, contains ARCIC, IARCCUM and some national ARC documents; Common Declarations; local, regional & national covenants; examples of best practice; case studies; articles on ARC relations; liturgical celebrations/prayer services; joint pastoral statements; twinnings; news archive, photos and historic preparatory material from the dialogues available under the 30 year rule, material from the IARCCUM summit.

Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC)

165. Beginning with its plenary meeting in Jerusalem in 2019 ARCIC III is fulfilling the second part of its mandate following the publication of *Walking Together on the Way* in 2017. The second part is to examine, on the basis of the ecclesiology outlined in that report, how the Church makes right ethical decisions.

166. The 2020 plenary meeting was due to take place at Bose Monastery in Italy in May but was cancelled. Instead, the commission met for four two-hour meetings during the time that it would otherwise have been in session in-person.

167. Subsequently a drafting group was appointed and is working on the introductory chapters of a report on moral and ethical decision-making. These drafts were presented to the plenary commission in two online seminars at the beginning of October and the beginning of November 2020.

168. The co-chairs are Archbishop Bernard Longley (Birmingham, Catholic co-chair) and Archbishop Philip Freier (Melbourne, Anglican co-chair) and the co-secretaries are Fr Tony Currer (PCPCU) and the Revd Dr Will Adam (Anglican Communion Office).

169. The Members of the Commission are as follows:

Anglicans:

The Most Reverend Philip Freier, Australia (co-chair);
Dr Moeawa Callaghan, Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia;
The Reverend Dr Isaias Ezequiel Chachine, South Africa;
Dr Paula Gooder, England;
The Revd Canon Garth Minott, West Indies;
The Most Revd Linda Nicholls, Canada;
The Revd Dr Alexander Ross, Australia;
The Revd Dr Peter Sedgwick, Wales;
The Rt Revd Christopher Hill, KCVO, England (Consultant);
The Revd Dr William Adam, Lambeth Palace (co-secretary);
The Venerable Jonathan Gough, England (Minute taker);
The Revd Neil Vigers, England (ACO Staff).

Catholics

The Most Revd Bernard Longley, England (co-chair);
Sister Margaret Atkins, OSA, England;

Father Albino Barrera, OP, USA;
Father Paul Béré, SJ, Cote d'Ivoire;
The Most Revd Robert Christian, OP, USA;
Dr Kristin Colberg, USA;
Professor Sigrid Müller, Austria;
Dr Emmanuel Nathan, Australia;
Fr Vimal Trimanna, CSsR, Sri Lanka;
Professor Paul Murray, England (Consultant);
The Revd Anthony Curren, PCPCU (co-secretary).

UNITED REFORMED CHURCH

Lead bishop: vacant

Key dialogue group: Church of England–United Reformed Church Contact Group (CEURC)

170. Relations are warm between the United Reformed Church (URC) and the Church of England. Cooperation takes place in several ways. First of all, they participate together in Churches Together groups both locally and at intermediate level. Related to this, the Church of England and the URC also cooperate with other churches in unity in mission initiatives, such as Street Pastors, Foodbanks and Christians Against Poverty. There are a number of Local Ecumenical Partnerships in which the Church of England and the URC participate, and in some they are the only two churches. In these latter it is possible that different approaches to liturgy can cause tension but, by the same token, they can be a real source of mutual learning and deepening relationship. Of particular interest is the ecumenical county of Cumbria where the URC is one of the churches that have signed a Declaration of Covenant Partnership together with the Methodist Church of Britain, the Salvation Army, and the Church of England.
171. Nationally, relations are excellent. The URC fully participates in all national structures and there is an excellent relationship between all the National Ecumenical Officers. The URC is following with great interest how the Anglican-Methodist Covenant develops. It is to be hoped that this may give some light and encouragement for future growth in understanding between the URC and the Church of England. The Church of England's National Ecumenical Officer is a participant observer of the Methodist United Reformed Church Liaison Group, which meets twice yearly. He is also an active participant observer of the URC's Faith and Order Group and has written a paper contributing to discussions about Ordination and Eldership.
172. The context of these relations is rooted in the various attempts in the twentieth century to bring the Church of England and the churches of the Reformed tradition closer together, both before and after the inception of the United Reformed Church in 1972. After that date the United Reformed Church entered into various dialogues with the Church of England, beginning with the informal tripartite Anglican, Methodist and United Reformed conversations, which started in 1999 and were published in 2001 as *Conversations on the Way to Unity*; followed by the report *Healing the Past –*

Building the Future (2010), which led to a service of reconciliation in Westminster Abbey in 2012 on the occasion of the 350th anniversary of ‘the Great Ejection’ in 1662; and then the subsequent document *Unity, Identity and Mission* (2016).

173. The greatest disappointment this year has been the inability so far to find a lead bishop for the Church of England members of the Contact Group, which is ready to start when that person has been found.

Key dialogue group: Church of England–United Reformed Church Contact Group (CEURC)

Background

174. To carry ahead conversation begun in the twentieth century, a Contact Group has been established by the Council for Christian Unity of the Church of England and the Mission Committee of the United Reformed Church for a five-year term in the first instance. Its work will be carried out particularly with reference to the Anglican-Methodist Covenant.

Key activities for the year

175. The group will meet once a year. Its members are:

Anglican: a co-chair is being sought, the Revd Dr Jamie Hawkey, the Revd Canon Rebecca Swyer, the Revd Glenn Coggins, the Revd Dr Callan Slipper (co-secretary)

URC: the Revd Ruth Whitehead, Moderator of URC SW Synod (co-chair), Mr John Ellis, the Revd Dr Susan Durber, the Revd Timothy Meadows, the Revd Philip Brooks (co-secretary)

Reflections

176. The Contact Group’s four primary functions will be to promote, not necessarily by doing these itself:

- i. work by the two churches in consultation with Churches Together in England that identifies and enables structures capable of sustaining shared commitment to mission (including sharing of physical resources, ministry resources, financial resources and strategic planning, at local, regional and national levels);
- ii. in the light of what occurs between the Church of England and the Methodist Church regarding the interchangeability of ordained ministries within the Covenant relationship, a review of the understanding of the nature of ordained ministry that seeks to discern potential for progress towards reconciliation and interchangeability of ministries between the Church of England and the United Reformed Church (if appropriate involving other churches also);

- iii. a process to explore the relationship between Elders and Church Related Community workers in the United Reformed Church on the one hand, and deacons in the Church of England and elsewhere on the other;
- iv. study of the scope for receptive ecumenism between the two churches, especially in worship, looking both at theology and practice, and the opportunities and challenges of worshipping together.

ECUMENICAL INSTRUMENTS

CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN CHURCHES (CEC)

Lead bishop: the Rt Revd Nick Baines, Bishop of Leeds

Background

177. The Conference of European Churches (CEC) was founded in 1959 to promote reconciliation, dialogue, and friendship between the churches of Europe at a time of growing Cold War political tensions and divisions. Membership currently includes 114 Orthodox, Protestant, Anglican, and Old Catholic Churches from all countries of Europe, plus around 40 National Councils of Churches and Organizations in Partnership.
178. Responsibility for the governance of CEC resides ultimately with the five-yearly Assembly, which last took place in 2018 in Novi Sad, Serbia. The Assembly appoints the Governing Board that oversees CEC's work between meetings of the Assembly. In 2018, the Bishop of Loughborough was appointed as one of the two CEC Vice Presidents and the Bishop of Leeds was also appointed as a member of the Governing Board. The Bishop of Loughborough also serves on the Executive Committee of the Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME) as CEC's representative.

Key activities for the year

179. Dr Jørgen Skov Sørensen took up the role of General Secretary at the beginning of the year. Dr Sørensen received his PhD in Missiology, Ecumenics and Systematic Theology from the University of Birmingham and has served as general secretary at Danmission and held various senior roles within the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Denmark.
180. Before the current restrictions, the Bishop of Loughborough attended a Governing Body meeting on 11 February in Brussels. Both the Bishop of Loughborough and the Bishop of Leeds had been able to attend meetings in Strasbourg in May 2019 and in November 2019 in Brussels. They also participated in a virtual meeting in June 2020.
181. The gathering of ecumenical officers from member churches of CEC in Finland in September 2019 helped to initiate a new stream of work in the area of theological dialogue relating to the priorities identified at the Novi Sad assembly in 2018 and to the strategic plan subsequently produced by the Governing Board. A Thematic Group on 'Ecclesiology and Mission' was set up to oversee this work, with Dr Worthen as one of its members.
182. Subgroups have been created to address some of the key areas for the Ecclesiology and Mission Thematic Group. These include Evangelization, Baptism and a conference

to mark the combined centenaries in 2020 of the Appeal to All Christian People issued by the Lambeth Conference and the encyclical letter on unity from the Orthodox Synod of Constantinople. It is hoped to have an initial online seminar before the end of the year to prepare for the main conference, which will take place in 2021.

183. In response to the covid-19 pandemic, presidents of CEC and the Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of the European Union (COMECE) issued a joint statement titled *Let Us Remain United* on 2 April 2020, calling all churches, communities, and political leaders to show their 'commitment to European values' and urging a demonstration of 'joint commitment to common European values of solidarity and unity' that would encourage political decision-makers to establish 'measures alleviating social, economic, and financial shocks'. It has also been gathering resources for member churches in facing the current crisis on a dedicated webpage.

184. In September, Dr Sørensen initiated a process of consultation with Governing Board members and others to explore what he described as 'current challenges related to "ownership, coherence, and visibility"' which I believe are key notions that need our attention and action.'

Reflections on the year

185. The combination of the arrival of a new General Secretary and the covid-19 pandemic has provided the context for a significant opportunity to review CEC's priorities. The Church of England's involvement in CEC continues to be a sign of its commitment to partnership with churches across Europe.

CHURCHES TOGETHER IN BRITAIN AND IRELAND (CTBI)

Lead bishop: the Rt Revd Dr John Perumbalath, the Bishop of Bradwell

Background

186. Following the outcome of the Swanwick Declaration in 1987, the British Council of Churches emerged as the Council of Churches in Britain and Ireland, developing alongside ecumenical instruments – Action for Churches Together in Scotland, CYTUN (Churches Together in Wales), Churches Together in England, and the Irish Council of Churches – to help embrace other Christian churches in smaller communities. The Council of Churches in Britain and Ireland subsequently became Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (CTBI).

187. Acting as an 'instrument' by which the churches can journey together towards full visible unity, CTBI provides information and guidance to bridge understanding of issues in today's society and develops publications and free resources with other organizations and members to offer reflection, prayer and study materials to celebrate key Christian events.

Key activities for the year

188. Thanks for all his excellent work go to the Rt Revd Dr David Hamid, Suffragan Bishop in the Diocese in Europe, as he leaves his trusteeship of CTBI. The new lead bishop for relations between the Church of England and CTBI, the Rt Revd Dr John Perumbalath, the Bishop of Bradwell, was elected as a trustee at the AGM of CTBI on 23 September 2020.
189. His Eminence Archbishop Angaelos stepped down this year as Moderator for CTBI. He was warmly thanked at the AGM on 23 September for his work and for having brought with him his enormous range of contacts and his energy. The new Moderator was announced at the same meeting as the Revd Graham Sparkes, a Baptist, President of Luther King House, Manchester, a Free Church Theological College.
190. Despite the difficulties caused by covid-19, which have also seen the reduction of the charity's investment assets, CTBI has sought to maintain its service to the churches. It has used the time during the pandemic to engage in research, especially considering the meanings and lessons to be drawn from the experience of covid-19 for our religious life and, drawing on some of the anxieties around Brexit, our understandings of Church, identity, and nation. Furthermore, a project looking at the overlap and the conversation between faith and theology with the arts and social justice, called the *Wall of Motives*, was adapted to the coronavirus lockdown. The new version by the artist Micah Purnell, called *Belonging through Lockdown*, developed work named *I long to belong* that grew out of the Manchester Arena attack in May 2017.
191. The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity was well received, with widespread take-up of the resources initially prepared in Malta on the theme of *Unusual Kindness*. The 2020 Lent resource, written by Dr Clare Amos, entitled *Opening the Scriptures*, was in harmony with the 'Year of the Word' kept by a number of churches in Britain and Ireland.
192. There has been an extensive programme of webinars, especially during the period of lockdown, focusing in particular upon racial justice. Significant themes have also been the Grenfell Tower tragedy and Brexit. Webinars are increasingly useful and relevant in times when in-person meetings are difficult.
193. In late 2019, the CTBI Environmental Issues Network took the decision to appoint a development worker to support and resource congregations leading up to a special 'Climate Sunday' and then to the COP26 meeting in Glasgow.
194. A particular focus has been upon serious youth crime, with a national conference held in central London on 22 February 2020, the creation of the Churches Standing Together Coalition (encouraging and equipping churches in Britain and Ireland to address serious youth violence), the holding of a Senior Church leaders' summit, and the launch of a website in the spring of 2020 dedicated to the issue.
195. Racial justice was important for CTBI even before the events surrounding the death of George Floyd. This crosses over into other areas of activity, including that

surrounding the Churches' Refugee Network, another area of significant work for CTBI, as well as touching upon issues of discrimination within the field of serious youth crime. CTBI has promoted Racial Justice Sunday and revamped the resources it offers. A planning group has been set up to mark the twenty-fifth anniversary of Racial Justice Sunday. Work has been undertaken together with Christian Aid to enable churches, mission agencies, and individual Christians to have a better theological understanding of reparation.

196. There has been a great deal of interfaith work, with the Christian Zionism Consultation in Edinburgh, with a focus on meetings and encounters as part of the *Invest in Peace* programme which supports work in the Middle East and especially in Palestine and Israel, and a focus upon Christian-Hindu relations, supporting local relationship between Mandirs and Churches, and promoting dialogue both theological-philosophical and political in the sphere of justice and reconciliation. A particular area of concern is the apparent tension between dialogue and evangelization.

197. CTBI has continued its involvement with international ecumenical work beyond the Middle East, in China through the China Forum which focuses upon the themes of sinicization and environmental protection, in Korea setting up a group seeking to find practical ways of supporting the National Christian Council's work for a peace process in the Korean peninsula, and in Sri Lanka, building upon a close working relationship with the National Council of Churches in Sri Lanka, a project is being set up to assist post-conflict resolution.

198. The Mission Theology Advisory Group has been active in projects, delivering resources, and supporting CTBI's member churches with prayer and practical help for their mission work. Its main fields have been: spirituality (particularly via the Excarntion Project, the Blessing Every Day Project, Spiritual Journeys website); theology (particularly looking at the Theology of Gift-Giving and a social media campaign on theological themes); reconciliation (particularly offering sixteen resources for refugees and resourcing mission in the post-Brexit era); and evangelism and mission (particularly the Theology of Confidence in Evangelism and Missional Ecclesiology Project). At the same time, it has engaged in ongoing work in conjunction with others, such as the Church of England's Evangelism and Discipleship Team, to develop resources and be active for change.

199. Further information about the many facets of CTBI's on-going work can be found via the various websites it supports:

- Main CTBI website (ctbi.org.uk)
- CTBI archive website (ctbiarchive.org)
- Week of Prayer (weekofprayer.org)
- Centre for Theology and Justice (theologyjustice.org)
- Church of Sanctuary (churchofsanctuary.org)
- Churches Standing Together (churchesstandingtogether.org)
- Churches Together websites directory (churchestogether.org)

- Churches Election (churcheselection.org.uk)

Reflections on the year

200. CTBI supports the unity of Christians directly through resourcing the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity and the Lent course, but a great deal of energy is devoted to another track: assisting the growth of unity by means of working together to transform society. This combines mission and ecumenism. While it is no substitute for theological and interpersonal dialogue, these would be almost meaningless without it since they would be reduced only to be an internal Church discourse unrelated to the Church's presence in the world as the instrument of God's love. This shows the value of CTBI's hard work in resourcing and building up ways in which the churches cooperate.
201. Two significant areas of work have been in racial and in climate justice. These are set to be major commitments in the future, enhancing also the work undertaken internally within the churches on the same issues. Similarly, in a post-Brexit UK, CTBI may have a vital role to play as an instrument of the churches' work to build harmony in the world, particularly with regard to the UK's relations both with the Republic of Ireland and with the continent of Europe
202. CTBI is continuing to ensure that it works in concert with the churches. Greater awareness among its member churches of the resources it produces would greatly help that process. They can be accessed via CTBI's website.

CHURCHES TOGETHER IN ENGLAND (CTE)

Lead bishop: the Rt Revd Dr Michael Beasley, Bishop of Hertford

Background

203. Churches Together in England (CTE) was set up as the body enabling the churches to cooperate ecumenically in England. It is a means for the churches to act, and its voice and its structure seek to serve the agenda set by the churches. CTE is in touch with all forms of ecumenical practice, including other networks by which Christians cooperate (for instance, the Gather Network and Hope), and it rightly has a certain primacy of place. It is one of the ecumenical instruments set up officially by the churches themselves. And no other body in this country brings together such a range of churches and organizations or groups with real ecumenical engagement. It seeks to function at once as a 'safe space' where churches can be in dialogue and, so far as is possible, as a platform for Christians to speak with a united voice into the life of the nation, while at the same time providing a vehicle by which the churches can engage in outreach to society. It has a small but highly effective staff and works in conjunction

with ecumenical officers nationally and in counties across the land as well as within the various churches.

204. CTE has been managing its finances responsibly since a reduction in funding from some of its member churches, and in particular the Church of England. It still faces financial challenges but by prudent use of its resources it has a strategy in place to cope over the coming years.
205. CTE continues to grow and it now has 50 member churches. Other churches are still asking to join, notably historic oriental churches and the newer churches now present in England. Likewise the number of Bodies in Association (groups that are not churches but that engage in what they do ecumenically) is growing. The number is currently 53.
206. CTE has continued to develop its response to the report by the think-tank Theos, published on 28 September 2017 as *That they all may be one: Insights into Churches Together in England and contemporary ecumenism*. The report commended much of the work of CTE, and especially its brokering of relationships among the churches, but registered the need for a clearer focus for what it does. CTE's response to that has been to sharpen its missional purpose, while seeking both to maintain the primacy of place given to relationships in God and to avoid restricting its work such that it becomes little more than another mission agency. This balanced focus can be seen in the strapline CTE has adopted: *one in Christ Jesus, engaged in God's mission, empowered by the Spirit*.
207. Currently the Church of England participates in the governance structures of CTE via the presence among its trustees of the Rt Revd Dr Michael Beasley, Bishop of Hertford, and the Revd Dr Callan Slipper, the National Ecumenical Officer. Both are members of CTE's Enabling Group where they are joined by Ms Annika Mathews who, alongside her various talents, brings a youthful dimension. The Enabling Group serves to give voice to the churches in setting CTE's agenda.
208. The 'Fourth Presidency issue', in which a number of churches in membership of CTE felt they could not be represented by a Presidency that had within it a person who was in a same sex marriage, still provokes some tension. Nonetheless, there is general acceptance of the new status quo that there is an 'empty chair' where the person duly elected as President of the Fourth Presidency Group would have sat had she taken up her office. CTE has thus survived intact because of the generous restraint of the elected President who has not taken up office and of the Fourth Presidency Group, which consists of the churches of the Lutheran Council of Great Britain, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of England, the German-Speaking Lutheran, Reformed and United Congregations in Great Britain, the Church of Scotland (Presbytery of England), and the Religious Society of Friends. The General Secretary of CTE keeps in touch with the group to ensure their voice is heard among the Presidents. Several of the churches that felt most uneasy about the appointment have expressed their relief. Possibly one significant fact can be noted in this keenly felt issue: churches otherwise ecclesologically and doctrinally far apart feel represented by the Presidency of Churches Together in England, despite its consisting of a wide range of traditions. This

shows the significant progress in relations among Christian churches and is a testimony to the vivacity of CTE.

Key activities for the year

209. The trustees have continued to meet regularly, even though due to the disruption caused by covid-19 they have adjusted their five meetings a year by spreading single meetings over two sessions on separate days. Shorter Zoom sessions leads to less fatigue and greater concentration. The Enabling Group has met for its allotted twice a year. The trustees have dealt with several issues connected to questions regarding the Fourth Presidency, covid-19, and especially its impact on working conditions and finances, and the concerns relating to the good running of the organization, including updating its policies and procedures.
210. CTE's staff are essential to its successful performance. A litany of praise could be justifiably offered for each staff member since all have given, in their various ways, a huge contribution to the work of CTE, assisting the churches during the pandemic, building up the outreach of the churches, ensuring excellent communications, enabling the work of county and national ecumenical officers, providing invaluable support to many online meetings. One bitter-sweet sadness this year is the retirement of the Bishop Dr Joe Aldred, Principal Officer for Pentecostal, Charismatic and Multi-cultural Relations. He will be sorely missed. CTE cannot but be proud to have had his services and be grateful for his significant contribution which, without exaggeration, can be said to have gone beyond CTE to touch the nation. He will be replaced by a full-time staff member.
211. Covid-19 has occasioned a great deal of work for CTE. Among this has been a highly successful Coronavirus Roundtable, as it came to be called. It is a gathering on Zoom of representatives of the national ecumenical instruments of the four nations of Britain and Ireland and the National Ecumenical Officers. It has been mostly chaired by the General Secretary of CTE, although sometimes also by the General Secretary of Churches Together in Britain and Ireland. Until the summer it met weekly, but since then it has gone to a monthly pattern. Not only has the Roundtable allowed information to be shared and action to be coordinated, it has also given a more regular point of contact, deepening relationships.
212. Covid-19 has indeed had a dramatic effect upon many areas of CTE's work, much of which normally takes place via in-person meetings. The important Consultation on Discipleship, Evangelism and Mission, booked for March 23-24 2020, had to be cancelled. It took place online in November 2020. The consultation, entitled *Discipling the Whole Church to Reach the Whole Nation*, provided an opportunity for people engaged in many forms of gospel outreach from all of CTE's member churches, as well as those involved in other missional unity activities and in various CTE Bodies in Association, to find new ways of prioritizing Christian unity in developing strategies for the churches' mission.
213. The CTE website has a huge number of hits each day and is a principle means for serving ecumenism. It is currently being redesigned. This should improve functionality

as well as refreshing its appearance. The launch date of the new website has, however, been delayed until sometime in 2021 because of covid-19. A refreshed logo for CTE has been adopted, which retains the familiar symbols of a ship, a cross, and waves.

214. CTE worked together with the National Ecumenical Officers who are responsible for Denominational Ecumenical Officers (DEOs) to hold an event for ecumenical training and consultation that attracted Ecumenical Officers from a wide variety of churches. It took place on 14-15 October, under the title of *Ecumenism Today*. Not only did this multi-church gathering mean that the training usually delivered within the various churches for their DEOs was delivered ecumenically, but it meant that others beyond the organizing churches could take advantage of it. That the consultation also included the County Ecumenical Officers, who normally receive training in the context of CTE, meant, furthermore, that the event provided significant opportunities for networking while, at the same time, sharing high quality input across a wide spectrum of Ecumenical Officers.

215. The major review of ecumenical working undertaken by a group of National Ecumenical Officers with the assistance of CTE, called at the time *A New Framework for Local Unity in Mission* has since been renamed *A Flexible Framework for Local Unity in Mission* on the grounds that it was no longer new but, in fact, a working approach across the churches. The Church of England's revised ecumenical legislation of 2019, for instance, was greatly indebted to its insights. CTE has been instrumental in promoting this important piece of work and in particular to publicizing the newly developed *Toolkit* that offers concrete and practical guidelines for the *Flexible Framework's* application.

216. CTE has begun a major consultation on the future of 'intermediate ecumenism', that is, the level of ecumenical activity between the local and the national. It has been under strain for a while. This level of cooperation is important for the churches and it is a major means by which CTE delivers its support to ecumenical endeavour not just in the intermediate level itself but also locally. A first meeting with interested church leaders took place on 9 September 2020. A meeting to learn from the success of ecumenism in the North West of England is due to take place next January. The name of the project, *Reimagining Intermediate Ecumenism*, is significant; it seeks to find creative ways forward.

217. CTE is in the early stages of setting up a group to assist the churches in their search for racial justice. A planning group has met, and the racial justice group is in formation. The focus will be upon outcomes more than discussion.

Reflections on the year

218. The questions surrounding *Reimagining Intermediate Ecumenism* are vital for the future development of ecumenism in England. Much will depend upon what happens as a result of this project. If it is unsuccessful the danger is of crippling vital areas of ecumenical and missional work. If it is successful it will function in synergy with the resurgence and energizing of ecumenical creativity assisted by *A Flexible Framework for Local Unity in Mission*.

219. Covid-19 puts a severe strain on any relational work such as that of CTE. Nonetheless, as elsewhere, new things are being learnt so, with due care, the result will be a strengthening of the ways in which CTE functions.
220. Work for racial justice is not new to CTE, but events in 2020 have offered a moment of opportunity to take this forward with new energy. It is a significant area of cooperation for the churches and will be important in the immediate future. CTE will be careful to ensure that its England-focused work will dovetail with what CTBI is already doing and will, at the same time, add value to the racial justice groups within the churches.
221. The need remains to stimulate the articulation of a sharper theological vision of unity, capable of facilitating the cooperation of churches with very different theologies and ecclesiologies.
222. The focus upon mission is vital. While unity as the first mark of the Church and as the living experience of the transformation brought about by God in Christ has value in itself, sharing this transformation with the world is a fundamental responsibility of all the churches. Indeed, the lovelessness of not seeking to offer to the world the unity experienced in Christ would be to lose contact with Christ himself. CTE assists the historic mission of the Church of England to the nation by helping that unity among the churches to deepen and by providing ways for cooperation, learning from one another and supporting one another. CTE remains vital to the Church of England because only by all the churches working together will it be possible to reach the entire nation.

WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES (WCC)

**Lead bishops: the Rt Revd Dr Robert Innes, Bishop in Europe (Central Committee);
the Rt Revd Dr Michael Ipgrave (Commission on Faith and Order)**

Background

223. The WCC describes itself as ‘a fellowship of churches which confess the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour according to the scriptures, and therefore seek to fulfil together their common calling to the glory of the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.’ When it was founded in 1948 it drew together the ‘life and work’ and ‘faith and order’ strands of the global ecumenical movement. In 1961, the International Missionary Council became part of the WCC.
224. Currently there are 350 churches in more than 110 countries that are members of the WCC as it engages in its quest for common witness to the good news of Christ, service to all the world’s people, inter-religious dialogue and cooperation, theological formation and spiritual renewal and transformation.

225. The Assembly, which normally meets every eight years, is the ‘supreme legislative body’ of the WCC. It appoints the members of the Central Committee and sets programmatic priorities for the next phase of the WCC’s work. The last Assembly took place in Busan in 2013 and launched the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace. The next Assembly was scheduled to take place in 2021 in Karlsruhe, Germany.
226. The Faith and Order Commission of the WCC is a multilateral, global forum of ecumenical theology and comprises official representatives of churches belonging to the main historical streams of Christianity, including the Roman Catholic Church. Theologians from thirty-three countries in five continents consider a wide range of issues and areas of ecumenical work.
227. There are two Church of England members on the Central Committee: the Bishop in Europe, the Rt Revd Dr Robert Innes, and the Revd Canon Dr Leslie Nathaniel, Archdeacon of the Eastern Archdeaconry in the Diocese in Europe. The Bishop of Ely was originally appointed to the Commission on Faith and Order, with the Bishop of Lichfield currently serving as his substitute.

Key activities for the year

228. Following the appointment of the Revd Dr Olav Fykse Tveit to be the presiding bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Norway, the process of appointing a new General Secretary was intended to conclude earlier this year. With no decision made, however, Fr Prof Ioan Sauca was appointed acting General Secretary from 1 April, and when the Executive Committee met online on 3 June it confirmed he will hold the post until the WCC central committee that is scheduled to meet in June 2021, God and the conditions of the pandemic willing.
229. Preparations continued in the early part of the year for the next WCC Assembly. The theme chosen was *Christ’s love moves the world to reconciliation and unity*. With the agreement of the General Synod Appointments Committee, the Church of England nominated a delegation of five members: the Rt Revd Dr Robert Innes, who will lead the delegation, Mrs Lucy Docherty, the Revd Duncan Dormor, the Revd Dr Rosemarie Mallett, and Mr Mark Sheard. A further nomination has been proposed to be one of the additional delegates for the Assembly ensuring diversity and inclusion in representation.
230. The executive committee of the WCC has now approved a new date for the WCC 11th Assembly, which has been postponed by a year because of the uncertainties around the covid-19 pandemic. It will now take place in Karlsruhe, Germany, from 31 August to 8 September 2022. While it is already known that one of those appointed to the Church of England’s delegation can no longer attend, it is hoped that the others will be able to do so. There will be pre-assembly meetings on 29 and 30 August.
231. There has been a focus on completing tasks and projects initiated following the last Assembly in 2013 in good time for them to be presented to the delegates at Karlsruhe. This includes the work of the Commission on Faith and Order, with publications expected on the main areas of its activity, including moral discernment and ecclesial

authority, and the reception of *The Church: Towards a Common Vision*, to which the Church of England has contributed. The extent to which this document, only the second 'convergence text' published by the Commission (the first being *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*) has contributed to growth in communion among the churches is an important question.

Reflections on the year

232. The covid-19 pandemic creates significant governance challenges for the WCC, with many staff working offsite. While the World Council of Churches (WCC) Executive Committee met online on 1-3 June, the WCC Central Committee meeting has been postponed until June 2021. Moreover, the postponement of the 11th Assembly represents a significant disruption in the work of the WCC.

233. Nevertheless, the WCC has continued its work of combining the pursuit of unity with advocacy for justice and peace, issuing statements on amongst other things: the peace process in Cyprus, Hagia Sophia, human rights in the Philippines and Zimbabwe, and pursuing a range of educational and theological programmes. Most recently, the WCC has issued an ecumenical statement timed to coincide with the publication of the EU's Migration Pact, launched 23 September, with signatories from all major churches including Archbishop Josiah Fearon on behalf of the Anglican Communion. And work continues on the 'Green Village' project that will transform the valuable Geneva real estate owned by the Council and release much needed capital for the organization.