

## **Historical Notes on the Committee for Relations with People of Other Faiths (CRPOF) and the Churches' Commission for Inter Faith Relations (CCIFR) 1977-2003**

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### **1. The Beginnings: a response to the changing face of Britain and Ireland**

1.1. In 1974 Lamin Sanneh was commissioned by the former British Council of Churches (BCC) to write a survey of Islam in the United Kingdom. As a result, in the same year, the BCC and the Conference of British Missionary Societies (CBMS) set up a Presence of Islam in Britain Advisory Group. The Chair of the Group was Rt Revd David Brown, Bishop of Guildford. In 1976, he wrote *A New Threshold: Guidelines for the Churches in their Relations with Muslim Communities*, published by the BCC and the CBMS. It contained a Code of Practice. At this time, there was also an informal 'Inter-Faith Staff Group' within the BCC. A paper by Lesslie Newbigin, written in January 1977, *Christian Responsibility towards those of other faiths and ideologies*, became influential.

1.2. In April 1977, the Assembly of the BCC instructed the Executive Committee, in co-operation with CBMS 'to establish a means of helping the Churches and their agencies: -

- To increase awareness of the facts and the implications of the religiously plural character of the world community and
- to promote creative Christian response.'

A Steering Group was set up and, as a result, the Committee for Relations with People of Other Faiths (CRPOF) came into being. Its original mandate is given in Appendix 1. Its first meeting was held on 23 May 1978 with Rt. Revd David Brown in the Chair and Revd Kenneth Cracknell, Methodist presbyter, as Executive Secretary. At the first meeting it was decided to discontinue the advisory group on Islam in Britain.

1.3. Important to note about the early CRPOF is: -

- Its place within the ecumenical structures was within CBMS – the Conference of British Missionary Societies
- It was not funded by the central budget of CBMS but from hard-won donations. Its main funders were the Methodist Church Overseas Division (MCOB), the Church Missionary Society (CMS) and the United Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (USPG), with smaller grants, eventually, from the Council for World Mission, the Church of Scotland, the United Reformed Church, the Board of Mission and Unity of the Church of England and the Mission to Seamen.
- The composition of the Committee was set down in the original mandate (Appendix One). In practice, the first members were not nominees of the churches and mission agencies but were invited, from the different categories, because of their known expertise and experience. They tended to be people whose initiation into inter faith issues happened overseas, in Africa and Asia.

- Since the BCC did not include the Roman Catholic Church, Roman Catholics were observers in the Committee. Another observer was Patrick Sookhdeo, representing the Evangelical Alliance.
- Most of the first members were experts and enthusiasts. They realised there was a massive task to be done in educating the churches about inter faith issues and were determined to make an impact on the churches. They were pioneers and knew it.
- The smaller churches in Britain were not represented.
- The enthusiasm of Kenneth Cracknell helped to mould its ethos. He produced a quarterly newsheet, which detailed his travels and the issues that he considered important.

## **2. CRPOF: the first decade**

2.1 At the second meeting of CRPOF, the following three Consultative Groups, mandated to draw members from outside the Committee, were established:

- Theological Issues.
- Legal and Parliamentary Matters (which became the Society Policy Consultative Group).
- Religious Education in a Multi Faith Society.

A Women in Inter Faith Dialogue Group came later, in 1984.

The first meeting of the R.E. Group was held as an R.E. Consultation in November 1979.

2.2. After one year of existence, CRPOF reflected on its achievements, its objectives and its possible future tasks. Seeing a massive communication gap between the Committee and the starting point of most churches in Britain, it sought 'to penetrate every departmental life of the Church with a multi faith dimension'. One of its suggestions was closer working with the Community and Race Relations Unit (CRRU) of the BCC. It saw citizenship as a major issue and proposed a major Conference on 'One Nation'.

2.3. The networking of groups and individuals involved in inter faith relations was an important function of CRPOF and Kenneth Cracknell, the first Secretary, was very good at this.

He saw four major groupings:

- National groups, committees and agencies e.g. the World Congress of Faiths (WCF - founded in 1936), the Council of Christians and Jews (CCJ - founded in 1942); the United Reformed Church Mission and Other Faiths Committee (the first denominational inter faith relations committee established in 1972); the Scottish Council of Churches Community and Race Relations Group; and the Centre for the Study of Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations in Birmingham.
- Local inter faith groups: in November 1979, there was a conference in London organized with the WCF for regional inter faith group representatives ( 27 reps from 19 groups attended)
- Individual pioneers of inter faith encounter
- Groups in other countries with the same concerns e.g. the World Council of Churches sub-Unit on Dialogue with People of Living Faiths and Ideologies; the Conference of European Churches; the Islam in Africa Project; the Study Centre for New Religious Movements in Denmark; the South African Council of Churches (a fuller but not exhaustive list of these contacts can be found in a report written by Kenneth Cracknell for the BCC in December 1979 when the Committee was bidding for more funding for 1981 – 1984).

2.4 Interesting to note is that CRPOF and its Secretary undertook the kind of networking that today is done by the Inter Faith Network for the United Kingdom (IFNET). In fact it was through this networking that the need for IFNET emerged. The possibility of a Network was first mentioned in CRPOF in 1985 leading to a meeting in January 1986. Brian Pearce, invited onto CRPOF in May 1984 as Treasurer/Financial Adviser, pioneered the Network.

2.5. Whether people of other faiths should become members of CRPOF was discussed more than once in the Committee's history. Whenever it was brought up, the majority view was against this on the grounds that it might restrict freedom to discuss sensitive issues. Early on, however, it was accepted that a full committee should occasionally 'have the experience of working in the presence of people of other faiths' (4<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Committee)

2.6. Encouraging the use of existing publications on inter faith issues and writing new ones was most important within CRPOF. By 1980 the Committee was offering 6 aids to the churches: the WCC Guidelines finalized at the Central Committee in Kingston 1979; a 26 page pamphlet by Kenneth Cracknell, *Why Dialogue?*; an 80 page booklet published by the URC Committee; a booklet published by the Archbishop's Consultants on Interfaith Relations on interfaith services and worship; *Interfaith Worship?* by Peter Akehurst and R.W.F. Wootton, Nottingham Grove Books; *Facing Reality: Aspects of Christian-Jewish Understanding*, published by CCJ in 1974. By 1982 the Committee was offering 18 publications, including the BCC response to the WCC Guidelines: *Relations with People of Other Faiths: Guidelines on Dialogue in Britain*. See Publications List and 2.7.

2.7. In ? Bishop David Brown died. He was replaced as Chair by Rt Revd Jim Thompson, Bishop of Stepney.

2.8. In 1985 the Commission received £10,000 from one of the Cadbury Trusts for publishing. The products that resulted included, *What is Idolatry?* and the journal, *Discernment*. Launched in 1986, it had 150 subscribers by 1987.

2.9. Major themes/issues in the first decade of CRPOF within the main Committee and the Consultative Groups included:

- Inter Faith Marriage. In 1979 it was agreed to produce guidelines on this. Christopher Lamb of the Church of England was the main resource person and writer. This led to the publication, *Mixed Faith Marriages: A Case for Care* (1982)
- The 1979 WCC Guidelines on inter faith dialogue. CRPOF's work on this led to the groundbreaking 1982 publication (see 2.6), which detailed four principles of inter faith dialogue: Dialogue begins when people meet each other; Dialogue depends on mutual understanding and mutual trust; Dialogue makes it possible to share in service to the community; Dialogue becomes the medium of authentic witness.
- Inter Faith Worship. A resource, *Can We Pray Together? Guidelines on Worship in a Multifaith Society* was worked on. Roy Pape, Methodist, was one of the main writers. It was presented to the BCC in 1984. CRPOF was quite surprised that there were no dissenting voices!
- Theological Education. In 1979 Kenneth Cracknell wrote to all theological colleges to ask how they were providing training in inter faith issues. Christopher Lamb and Kenneth Cracknell then wrote a booklet, *Theology on Full Alert*, which was offered to the conference

of the Association of Centres of Adult Theological Education in 1984. The publication led to the formation of the Association for Ministerial Training in a Multi-Faith Society.

- The use of church premises by people of other faiths. Kenneth Cracknell contributed to a paper that was made available through CRRU, 1980, *The Use of Church Property in a Plural Society*.
- Hospital Chaplaincy. A Handbook for Hospital Chaplains was worked on, entitled, *Ministry to Others*. By 1983 this was in the hands of the Hospital Chaplaincy Board.
- Religious Education in a Multifaith Society. A booklet was prepared together with the Christian Education Movement: *Educational Principles in Religious Education* (1986).
- Explaining Christian faith to people of other faiths. The Theological Issues Group worked on this, hoping to produce a series of leaflets. In 1983 the list of papers they were discussing included: How to explain the Cross to a Sikh inquirer; How to explain creation, history and man to a Hindu inquirer; How to explain divine sonship to a Muslim inquirer; How to explain the concept of land to Jews and Muslims.
- Dialogue with New Religious Movements. The United Reformed Church was the first church to have had a formal meeting with the Unification Church (reported at the Commission in February 1985). Kenneth Cracknell championed the right of NRM's to be involved in inter faith dialogue.
- Dialogue with 'Ideologies'. This concerned how the Committee should relate to the WCC Unit, which included dialogue with 'ideologies'. The Committee's eventually decided that this part of the WCC remit was not a priority for the Committee.

#### 2.10. A Snapshot

In a residential meeting held at the end of 1984, the following concerns were expressed: that racism had a growing religious dimension; that there existed a splintered sense of nationhood; that there was a communication gap between CRPOF and the churches. Among the objectives determined were; 'to sweeten the land in which we live'; to guide the church on the distinction between mission and evangelism in a multi faith context; to look again at a theology of creation as well as redemption; to give proper pastoral care to converts.

2.11. The first decade of CRPOF was a pioneering decade. An incredible amount was achieved, informed by a sense of mission to the churches. The issues discussed, and the resources produced, included the practice of inter faith relations and theologies of inter faith relations. By 1987 the largest Christian denominations in Britain and Ireland were taking inter faith relations seriously. Some had adopted statements on it e.g. commending the four principles put forward by CRPOF in 1982. A gap remained, however, between the enthusiasts and the people in the pew.

### 3. CRPOF: 1987 – 1992

3.1. Kenneth Cracknell retired from the Commission in 1987 and was replaced by Revd Clinton Bennett, Baptist. By this time the Church of England, the Methodist Church and the Roman Catholic Church had established inter faith committees or consultative groups: The Scottish Episcopal Church and the Religious Society of Friends would soon do so.

3.2. Clinton was soon faced with the possibility of a new ecumenical instrument informed by the 'Marigold Proposals' (which aimed for a more inclusive ecumenical structure that would enable

churches to work together or on behalf of each other). As a result of the review process, major questions concerning the future of the Committee arose, which included:

- Does the existence of denominational committees duplicate the work of CRPOF?
- Where was inter faith relations best located? Within the missionary agenda (CBMS), the community relations agenda (CRRU) or neither i.e an independent unit?
- Should CRPOF be located in England, leaving Scotland, Wales and Ireland to develop their own structures? (only one Consultative Group had a member from outside England; the main committee had one Scottish member and 2 Welsh).
- How should CRPOF be staffed? Was a full-time person needed? Should there be a Co-ordinating Secretary for Inter Faith Affairs within CCBI alongside other co-ordinating posts?
- How should CRPOF be funded given that the missionary societies wanted to reduce their contribution?

3.3. These questions took several years to be answered. In November 1989, in this context of change, CRPOF included in its agenda a 'Time for Dreaming' about the future work of CRPOF. Among the tasks/concerns noted as important were: dialogue with those responsible for the Decade of Evangelism; that the 'white highlands' might be educated; that more Christians at local level should learn about other faiths; that CRPOF should learn from those who had become Christians from other faiths; that CRPOF's remit should not be taken over by people who were 'un-influenced by encounter with other faiths'. At the same meeting the idea of merger with the CRRU was rejected.

3.4. In 1990, the Venerable David Silk replaced Bishop Jim Thompson as Moderator. In August of the same year, the BCC was replaced by the Council of Churches for Britain and Ireland (CCBI), which now included the Roman Catholic and Orthodox Churches. Since not all the questions in 3.2 had been answered sufficiently, CRPOF, funded by the BCC legacy, became a unit of CCBI and was given two years to determine its future. The suggestion that there should be a Co-ordinating Secretary for Inter Faith Affairs within CCBI alongside other co-ordinating posts, however, had been rejected.

3.5. Within CCBI there were three recognised models: networks; commissions; agencies. In a paper that stressed a theological imperative for inter faith relations, CRPOF eventually made a bid to become a Commission after 1992 (a body that could sometimes act, not instead of, but on behalf of the churches), although some influential voices had recommended a network (i.e. a body that would act simply as a co-ordinator, not doing its own work). The bid was successful. The Commission would be independent of the successors to CBMS and CRRU and four-nation. It would complement denominational committees. The Commission's existence was secured by a Church of England decision to appoint a staff member in inter faith relations, who would work half-time for the new Commission.

#### **4. The Churches' Commission for Inter Faith Relations**

4.1 The new Commission came into existence in 1993 with secured funding until 1996. Revd Canon Dr Christopher Lamb was its first Secretary, sharing the post with Church of England responsibility. Its mandate was 'to enable the Churches to engage effectively in relations and dialogue with other faith communities in Britain and Ireland'. The Moderator was Mrs Rosalind Goodfellow of the United Reformed Church. Its Terms of Reference were:

- To be a point of reference in the Churches for faith to faith encounter
- To facilitate a network of information and experience among Christians about inter-faith relations and to maintain close contact with parallel bodies both internationally and also nationally.
- To enable critical reflection on the religiously and socially plural society in Britain, to offer relevant advice and to help clarify Christian thought in relation to other faiths.
- To speak and write on behalf of the churches to representatives of other faith communities.

4.2 . As with the other CCBI commissions, it was funded by those churches that decided to participate in it. In other words, it was funded directly by churches that 'bought into' the Commission. These churches nominated representatives to the Commission and paid their expenses. By March 1994 the Commission had the support of 14 English, Scottish and Welsh churches. In addition CCIFR could nominate five members, appoint three consultants and receive representatives from the two other commissions (Mission and Racial Justice). The Commission was, therefore, more representative of the churches that supported it than CRPOF. Smaller churches that could not afford to 'buy in', however, remained unrepresented. By 1997 the Commission had 35 members representing 15 churches and councils of churches.

4.3. Three sub-groups were appointed by the Commission keeping some continuity with the previous Groups: Theological Issues; Educational Issues; a Women's Group (the decision was taken in 1994 not to make it a Women's Issues Group). In addition, an ad hoc media group was appointed. The journal *Discernment* continued to be published with Clinton Bennett, now based at Westminster College, Oxford, as editor. In 1996, about 300 people subscribed to it. In contrast to CRPOF, however, publications were not at first a priority for the Commission because of its changed role.

4.4. The role and strategy of CCIFR was a topic that was discussed many times. Appendix 2 gives a draft mission statement for CCIFR, written by Christopher Lamb in 1994, which was accepted by the Commission. In October 1995, when the first review of the Commission's work took place, the Commission recognised that more work had come to the Commission than had been anticipated, and that the churches seemed to be doing less because of the existence of the Commission. A minute declared 'It was not surprising that there was some uncertainty as to what the Commission should be doing when there was corresponding uncertainty within the member churches' (1995/Minute 103).

4.5 The issue was re-visited in June 1996 when it was recognised that there was an in-built imbalance between the capacity of larger and smaller denominations, which made 'the Commission's task of enabling and co-ordinating work difficult'. The minute continued, 'The structure of CCBI was such that the agenda for work in general should be set by the churches, but they were not always doing this. Agenda items for the Commission were often responses to external requests or events rather than internally generated from the churches. The Commission therefore needed to address the question of where it should initiate work rather than being reactive' (minute 1996/136).

4.6 Financial support was renewed for the Commission until 1997 following a review that identified the following, far from reactive, priorities: ministerial training; encouraging awareness and sensitivity, particularly in educational institutions; linking inter faith practitioners in a

network; enabling publications to stimulate debate in the churches; enabling inter faith encounter (1997/158).

4.7 Conversations that could have made the Commissions networks or groups happened within CCBI in 1998 but came to nothing. The Commission model continued. A balance was eventually developed at meetings of the Commission between: reports from the denominations, CAIRS (Churches' Agency for Inter Faith Relations in Scotland), CYTUN, the Inter Faith Network for the UK and CIPA (Christian Inter Faith Practitioners' Association see 4.8); reports from the sub-groups; discussion of issues of common concern; planning conferences and publications.

4.8 In 2002, there were further changes at CTBI level that affected the funding and membership of the Commissions. Whereas churches had previously become members of the Commissions by buying into them, they would now automatically be members of the Commissions unless they opted out. Commission members first discussed this new way of working in December 2002. The main implication was that the Commission would become larger. The Working Agreement for this is Appendix 3. The last meeting under the 'old regime' was in July 2003. Appendix 4 is a record of the 'Looking Back and Looking Forward' that was done at that meeting. The CCIFR meeting of June 2004 in Preston was designed as an introduction for new members to inter faith issues on the ground. The Commission in March 2007 is the inheritor of this Agreement.

4.8. Key developments in the Commission's work between 1993 and 2003 included:

- 1995: At a meeting of the Association for Ministerial Training in a Multi-Faith Society, the formation of a solidarity network for Christians working in inter faith relations was agreed: the Christian Inter Faith Practitioners' Association (CIPA). Although a formal distinction was drawn between CCIFR and CIPA, the Secretary of CCIFR became ex-officio consultant to CIPA and at first edited its newsletter. In 1999, a representative from CIPA came onto the Commission to fill one of the CCIFR-nominated places.
- 1996: The future of *Discernment* was uncertain. Negotiations started with T & T Clarke for *Discernment* to be taken over by them, but eventually stalled. Then, in 1998, Clinton Bennett left Westminster College. Although Methodist Publishing House expressed interest in the journal, it stopped publication because an editor could not be found.
- 1997: CCIFR welcomed its first representative from the Irish Council of Churches.
- 1999: Revd Canon Michael Ipgrave took over as Commission Secretary. In February of that year CCBI became CTBI (Churches Together in Britain and Ireland).
- 1999: CCIFR welcomed its first representative from CAIRS.
- 1998/9: The Theological Issues Group was terminated at this time - the first of the Groups to do so. It had produced a bibliography and was attempting to compile a dossier of all the reports/statements on inter faith issues produced by the churches. A book called *Inheritance and Challenge: Christian Reflections on Religious and Social Identities in the New Millennium* had also been planned but it was never published. Theological issues thereafter came into the main business of the Commission. The Educational Issues Group published *Sensitivity and Awareness* and was working on material for schools on inter faith marriage. By 2001, it also had ceased to function, at a time when the Commission was moving to the view that a Task Group model was preferable. The Women's Group remained.
- 2000: Baroness the Revd Dr Kathleen Richardson became Moderator of the Commission.

- 2000: An ecumenical newsletter on inter faith issues was suggested. This eventually became *Inter Faith Exchange*, which was published first from the London Inter Faith Centre and then from Churches' Together in England.

#### 4.9. Themes/Discussion points in the Commission's work: a selection

- 1999: The 900<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Crusades. Whether there should be an apology by Christians for the Crusades was discussed. A CCBI Press Release in March 1999 stated that the Commission, after careful deliberation, 'felt an apology would not be the best way forward in furthering inter faith relations.'
- 2000: Religious discrimination in the light of potential Government legislation. A publication on this resulted, which argued that Christians should in principle respond positively to legislative provision to protect people from religious discrimination.
- 2000: Holocaust Memorial Day. An ecumenical group was convened to prepare worship material that could be placed on the CTBI website.
- 2000: Multiculturalism. A discussion was held on whether there were negative consequences of an uncritical attitude towards multiculturalism.
- 2000: Theological issues. A major discussion was held. One question was whether CCIFR saw itself as having a mission to the churches (in a similar way to CRPOF) or whether its role was to recognise the genuine divergence of theological opinion in the churches. This led to *Yr Ysbryd* (see under conferences) and the discussion on the principles (see below).
- 2000: In the light of critical world events in which religion was implicated, it was proposed that a resource bank should be created of people with particular expertise in particular countries/regions.
- 2001: The 4 Principles for Inter Faith Dialogue put forward by CRPOF in the early 1980s. A wide ranging but indecisive discussion took place on whether these should be revisited and a series of theological reflections on them, published. It was agreed in June 2002 that the best way forward was to collect examples of the practical issues faced by churches and to reflect on these (Minute 2002/407).
- 2001: The aftermath of 9/11. Members reported on the variety of initiatives they were aware of and Dr Ata'ullah Siddiqui was invited as a guest to reflect on Christian-Muslim relations.
- 2002: The Religious Offences Bill. The Moderator, Baroness Kathleen Richardson, was on the Select Committee for this.
- 2002: The war in Iraq. The Commission made available guidelines on responding locally to a war in Iraq.

#### 4.10 Conferences/Consultations: the following conferences were organized by the Commission, alone or in partnership:

- September 1999: *Christology: A Conference for Practitioners and Theologians*, The Hayes Conference Centre (speakers Dr Thomas Thangaraj; Fr Christian Troll; Professor James Dunn; Professor Ruth Page) The conference made a financial surplus.
- 1999 & 2000: Two conferences on inter-religious relations in South Asia in the light of violence against Christians in India - together with CCOM (Churches' Commission on Mission) and CTBI International Affairs. An informal report was produced.
- July 2000: Joint meeting with CCOM on evangelism and dialogue. This was a small meeting that should have lead to more meetings. It did not.



- December 2001: *Gathered Ground* - a day conference on inter faith dialogue and the arts organized jointly with the United Religions Initiative. Attendance was small.
- July 2003: *Yr Ysbryd: The Spirit in a World of Many Faiths*, University of Wales (speakers: Dr Amos Yong; Dr Elizabeth Harris; Dr Tarek Mitri; Revd Colin Chapman) The conference was a success but did not attract as many as the Christology conference.

#### 4.11 Visits

The main visit organized by CCIFR was POLIN 2003, the aim of which was to give training to a new generation of inter faith practitioners in an area of concern that was often overlooked: Jewish-Christian Relations.

#### **Conclusions**

These historical notes, which cannot claim to be comprehensive, are completed as the Commission for Inter Faith Relations moves into yet another stage in its life. Its roots go back to the Committee for Relations with People of Other Faiths within the Conference of British Missionary Societies, and to the enthusiasm of its first members, who had a passion for educating, publishing and networking. It became an independent Commission as ecumenism advanced in Britain. At first the Commission's members were drawn from churches that had decided to buy-into what such a Commission could offer. Those nominated by these churches tended to be individuals who were actively and regularly involved in inter faith relations and who drew strength from each other. When the structure again changed so that all members of CTBI were entitled to membership of the Commissions unless they opted out, the nature of the Commission changed again. All this has taken place against changes within the churches and changes within society. Inter faith relations is no longer a marginal concern either within the churches or within society.

## **Appendix One**

### **CRPOF's Original Mandate**

#### **The Committee's terms of reference**

The main aim of the Committee will be to act as an ecumenical instrument of the British churches and missionaries societies to help Christian congregations and groups to learn from those of other faiths and to bear witness to their own faith. It aims to do this

- (a) by acting as a linking-body between denominational committees concerned with relationships between people of differing faiths.
- (b) by monitoring creative faith-to-faith engagement by the churches.
- (c) by helping to clarify Christian convictions and theological reflection on faith-to-faith relationships, our developing plural society in Britain, and in these contexts, the missionary calling of the Church.

It is recognised that the Committee will want, from time to time, to set up networks of consultants or ad hoc sub-groups in relation to one particular community of faith or a particular sub-theme of its concerns. The production of a periodic circular and other printed materials are envisaged.

This mandate was based on the more detailed proposals which were approved by the BCC Executive on 5th October 1977 and by the CBMS Executive on 12th September 1977.

### **The Function and Terms of Reference of the Committee**

1. To act as an ecumenical instrument to assist churches and societies to help Christians both to learn from those of other faiths and to bear witness to their own faith.
2. To act as a linking-body between such committees on the relationship between the faiths as might exist in the various member churches and societies rather than as a body to be engaged itself in academic study or research or in fieldwork throughout the country.
3. To help clarify Christian conviction and promote theological reflection on the following matters: faith-to-faith relationship, the plural society, and, in these contexts, the missionary calling of the Church.
4. To monitor and be a point of reference in regard to creative faith-to-faith engagement by the Churches and in connection with the Churches.
5. To be responsible for a periodic circular, giving relevant news and information, and stimulating the development of a network of relationships between interested organizations and persons.
6. To undertake initiatives helpful to the Churches in the light of comprehensive knowledge of what is being done.
7. To maintain appropriate contact with the WCC department on Dialogue with People of Living Faiths and Ideologies; with the Vatican Secretariat for non-Christians; with the expected Roman Catholic commission or secretariat in Britain on Inter-Faith Relations and Dialogue; with the Evangelical Alliance and the Evangelical Missionary Alliance, with other bodies and individuals including missionary agencies based in Britain; for inter-change on matters of common concern.
8. To establish from time to time a network of consultants and such ad hoc groups and/or sub-committees as may most conveniently secure progress in connection with particular faiths or subjects within the Committee's orbit.
9. To stimulate the production of printed and other material, and in other ways to contribute towards programmes or education on faith-to-faith matters in and through the churches.
10. To inter-relate as may be necessary with other BCC Division and Committees; and to work especially closely with the Division of Community Affairs, with particular reference to community and race relations affairs and to educational issues arising from situations in relationships between the faiths, it being recognized that the committee's work as defined above would overlap at many points with the DCA's work.

11. To have a close liaison with those working in the field of Christian relations with those of other ideologies, it being recognised that living faiths and living ideologies should not be approached as entirely separate entities.

(From: AGREED PROPOSAL (REVISED) FOR A BCC COMMITTEE FOR RELATIONS WITH PEOPLE OF OTHER FAITHS – CBMS/C/77/65).

## **Appendix 2**

### **CCIFR STRATEGY REVISITED: A DRAFT MISSION STATEMENT of 1994**

#### **WE SERVE**

- first and foremost the Churches of Britain, (Ireland is not yet directly represented on the Commission.)

#### **BY**

- enabling the Churches to think and act together (and where necessary, separately) in relation to all the issues arising from a religiously plural society.

#### **WE ARE NOT**

- a free-standing, independent organisation able to engage directly as a *Commission* with other faith bodies, claiming to represent the Churches to them,

#### **BUT**

- we hope to be entrusted by the Churches to represent their thinking to the media, when appropriate.

#### **ESSENTIALLY**

- we are a resource, ourselves drawing on other resources which are well-known to us, for the Churches to draw upon for advice, guidance and specialist information.

#### **THIS DOES NOT MEAN A PURELY REACTIVE ROLE**

- We have a proper ministry of calling Church and general public attention to the existence and rights of fellow-citizens of other faiths, especially through our publications.

#### **IT IS**

- for the Churches to act, through councils and synods, moderators and bishops, all of whom may have to be led, persuaded, argued and urged to take the things which concern us with active seriousness.

#### **THIS MEANS WE HAVE TO**

- a. maintain and extend the Churches' network of those Christians who have personal friendships with people of other faiths or relevant specialist knowledge
- b. elucidate and clarify the issues which arise for the Churches in a religiously plural society
- c. initiate discussion and debate within the churches on these issues and produce appropriate written material about them
- d. determine which issues must be handled ecumenically and recommend how, and which are appropriately dealt with on a denominational basis.

#### SO FAR

we have set up specialist groups to monitor Theological Issues and Educational Issues, and we have authorised a Women's Group to meet regularly and report back to us.

#### WE NEED TO DECIDE HOW TO RESPOND TO

- e. media misrepresentation and polarisation of interreligious issues, and plain distortion of other faiths
- f. the ways in which secular bodies are handling issues of religious pluralism
- g. the national and international significance of Islam for Christianity and western culture.

#### THERE ARE OTHER PRIORITIES FOR OUR AGENDA SUCH AS

- h. the role of churches and church leaders as brokers and gatekeepers for the access of other faith communities to consultation with national or local government bodies, and to religious facilities and freedom of worship (e.g. in hospital or factory)
- i. the pastoral care of mixed faith families from the time of marriage to funeral and bereavement.

Christopher Lamb, 4 October 1994

### **Appendix 3**

#### A New Working Agreement for CCIFR

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Title

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Churches' Commission for Inter Faith Relations

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## Remit

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- To enable the Churches to engage effectively in relations and dialogue with other faith communities in Britain and Ireland
  - To be a point of reference in the churches for faith-to-faith encounter. To facilitate a network of information and experience among Christians about inter faith relations
  - To enable critical reflection on the religiosity and socially plural society of these islands.
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## Membership

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There are two categories of member bodies:

- a) Churches;
- b) Associate members – including Agencies and Bodies in Association of CTBI, and such other bodies as the Commission shall choose to admit.

Churches appoint commissioners to represent them as follows:

- Larger churches, taking account of strength and resources contributed: 2 commissioners each
- Remaining churches; 1 commissioner each.

Associate members appoint one non-voting representative each.

Commissioners and representatives serve for as long as it pleases the member body appointing them to continue their role.

The Commission shall also have power to invite individuals as regular attenders on the basis of their expertise in inter faith relations.

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## Commission Meetings

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Commission meetings provide for:

- a) exchange of information and insights among the member bodies;
- b) briefing of member bodies on new and current issues concerning inter faith issues within the four nations;
- c) consideration of policy questions and theological reflection arising from Christian involvement in inter faith relations, their implications for the work of the Churches, and of the Churches together through the Commission;
- d) identification of key issues on which further work should be progressed by the Executive Committee;
- e) monitoring of the work undertaken by the Executive Committee on the Commission's behalf.

At least one meeting of the Commission each year will be residential. Decisions at Commission meetings will be made by consensus whenever possible. When a vote is taken, a majority present shall be required.

The Commission is accountable for its work to the Church Representatives' Meeting, to which it shall report regularly in the prescribed manner, and from which it shall accept such remits and instructions as the Meeting shall choose to give.

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## Office-bearers

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- a) Moderator, appointed by the CRM for a three-year term.
  - b) Financial Secretary, appointed by the Commission, and working closely with the CTBI Finance Officer and the CTBI Treasurer.
  - c) Commission Secretary, appointed by the CRM as a member of staff on an open contract. The Commission Secretary may be assisted by a Minutes Secretary, working on a voluntary basis.
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## Committees

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The Commission has a general power to appoint such Committees and working groups as it judges necessary for its work.

In addition, it appoints an Executive Committee, comprising:

- a) The office-bearers
- b) Three further people appointed by the Commission.

Appropriate ecumenical representatives, identified in partnership with the national ecumenical bodies, involved in the Churches' inter faith work in the four nations shall be invited to Executive Committee meetings.

The Executive Committee will have power to invite observers in attendance.

All members of the Executive Committee will be counted as members of the Commission.

The remit of the Executive Committee is, while remaining accountable to the Commission, to exercise the prime responsibility for:

- finance and budgets;
- development of specific pieces of work identified by the Commission;
- planning Commission meetings;
- facilitating communication and meeting among Commission members.

The Executive Committee, which meets as frequently as it judges necessary but not less than twice a year, reports to the Commission under two heads:

- items of report (for accountability purposes);
  - items on which the Commission's reflection or guidance is sought.
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## SCHEDULE OF MEMBER BODIES

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Churches:

[most member churches of CTBI]

Associate members:

Churches' Agency for Inter Faith Relations in Scotland

Christian Inter Faith Practitioners' Association

## Appendix 4

### From the Minutes of CCIFR July 2003

#### 456: Looking Back and Looking Forward

An opportunity was given to look back on the recent Yr Ysbryd Conference, the role of the Commission in the past and to identify issues for the future in the new pattern of working. Members who knew they were retiring were particularly asked to offer their reflections. Among points that were made were the following:

- ❑ The conference had benefited from the presence of Muslim and Buddhist participants. There was a difference between theology done in a closed Christian community and that done in the presence of others. Similarly, it was important to get Christians of various traditions on the Commission. Being aware of others transformed the level of discussion. The conference had stressed the importance of human experience, prayer and spiritual growth, together with the issue of discernment. This had given the conference a different flavour than what some had expected. It made clear the importance of listening to practitioners describing the experience of lived encounter.
- ❑ It would be good in the wider membership of the Commission to encourage more participation by churches whose roots were in parts of the world where they had a longer history of inter faith relations.
- ❑ Scottish members felt that membership of a UK wide Commission was very supportive.
- ❑ The issue of disseminating awareness to the grassroots in both the pew and the pulpit was likely to be ongoing.
- ❑ As a retiring member Dr Cole thanked the Secretary for his support and expressed his delight that the Commission had not become too bureaucratic and hoped that this would continue to be the case. Tasks that he felt should be addressed included the preparation of candidates for the Christian ministry. In a mobile society training was needed for all and not just those expecting to work in multi faith areas. Research on what was available still needed to be carried out. RE in schools needed to be kept under scrutiny.
- ❑ The issue of continuing ministerial education, and the level of interest in inter faith relations sabbaticals would be worth monitoring.
- ❑ Bishop Charles stressed the importance of estimating the level of knowledge that was needed by the ordinary person. Often it was the common courtesies, rather than a great deal of technical knowledge, that was needed. In his work in the Catholic committee, he had worked to the primary principle of creating a change of awareness among Catholic people, following the thinking of Vatican II. It was important to work at a pace that people could accept. The work of the Inter Faith Network and the Commission had led to enrichment through offering the opportunity to meet people as individuals, who were desiring the will of God and the harmony of peoples and he was thankful for this. It was difficult to convey this outside of meetings, but one could hope that the enthusiasm gained from it would entice others. For the future, it was important to educate the ordinary person to the degree needed in daily living. People lived in a cocoon of fear, but the work of opening them up to the vision of harmony in society was worthwhile. Overall, he too felt it was important not to be bogged down in business at the expense of relationships.
- ❑ Comments from the churches suggested that people were exploring each others' spiritualities and help was needed on the meaning and appropriateness of 'inter faith worship.' This concern arose from meeting and encounter, but also related to the growing recognition of issues of public space.

- The relationship of mission/evangelism and encounter/dialogue. It was important to generate and sustain a dialogue within the churches on this.
- It would be useful to have in mind the underlying question of ‘what’s it all for?’
- The Commission could look at the conclusions of the IFN mapping exercise and how it should respond.
- The relationship of host and guest in society. Up to now the churches had been seen to be the host, but the situation had changed and in fact Christians were often in a minority. The particular role of the Church of England as ‘honest broker’ was affected by this. Ways needed to be examined as to how faiths could stand together in relation to issues in society. Christians needed to learn to share positions of power. This also related to those who in the 2001 census had identified themselves as Christians.
- Perhaps some documents in the past had been attempts to square circles. It was important to find ways of acknowledging differences of view within the churches as part of the global context. It might therefore be helpful for the Commission to do work on the theology of diversity, looking at levels of diversity e.g. in the churches, faiths and beyond institutions. There was still no clear view on how the churches should relate to NRMs, issues of inclusivity and exclusivity as regards membership patterns of inter faith organisations and how might one decide boundaries.