



ARCHDIOCESE OF SOUTHWARK CHRISTIAN UNITY COMMISSION

REPORTS FOR 2020

1. REPORT ON THE COMMISSION'S WORK IN 2019-2020

The Commission's work this year has, like all other aspects of church life, been very much overshadowed by the Covid 19 lockdown. The Commission has continued to meet remotely via Zoom, but we have had to cancel or postpone a number of our planned activities. In particular, we were not able to go ahead with the event planned for 25 April 2020 about the differences between interfaith and interchurch dialogue, which we were organising jointly with the Southwark Diocesan Committee for Inter-Religious Relations. We are planning to reinstate this in an online format later this autumn. The lockdown has also interrupted, temporarily we hope, our plans to encourage young people to get more involved in ecumenical activity.

We were sad to have had to say goodbye to our recently-appointed vice-chair, Ann Gavin, who left us at the end of 2019; the Focolare Movement has transferred her to Ireland to take up a senior position there. We wish her well in her new life. We shall also miss Canon John O'Toole, who was national ecumenical officer for the Roman Catholic Church in England and Wales for five years and a good friend of the Commission. We congratulate him on his appointment as episcopal vicar for the Kent area of the archdiocese, and look forward to working with his successor as national ecumenical officer Fr Jan Nowotnik, who will be taking up his appointment in September 2020.

Communications and publicity

An important project for us this year has been to look again at how we communicate with those in the diocese and elsewhere who have an interest, or a potential interest, in our work. With the agreement of the diocese, we have now set up our own website, <http://christianunity.rcaos.org.uk>, Thanks to Gwen Chiosso, our secretary, and her daughter Juliet for their skill and hard work in setting this up, and to Fr Philip Glandfield, Jo Driver and Aaron Dennis at the diocese for their assistance and support. The site is

still very much ‘work in progress’ and we hope to improve and enlarge it in response to feedback from those who use it.

The Commission’s bulletin *Together in Christ (TiC)*, containing a wide range of material on Christian unity originating in Southwark and beyond, has been published since 1983, when it was launched under the editorship of the late Una Ratcliff. Hitherto it has been produced and circulated three times a year as a hard copy publication, at a current price of £1 per copy; latterly it has been edited by Deacon Michael Baldry assisted by Gwen. We have decided to stop publishing it in this format; issue 116 (February 2020) will be the last, and refunds have been sent to those who have paid a yearly subscription. We shall however continue to invite people to send us material of the kind which *TiC* has included but in future it will be published, in a separate section, on the website. The website will also provide free access to an archive of digitalised versions of earlier editions.

We shall be sorry to say goodbye to the old *TiC*. We know it has been much appreciated by readers, including some from outside the diocese. We hope that in its new guise it will be accessible to a wider readership and will be just as interesting and informative as it has been for the last thirty-seven years.

There will also be a section on the website for current news about events or visits being organised by the Commission and other items which we hope will be of interest to our readers. Our current newsletter, *Called to be One*, will no longer appear, but we shall continue to send emails to those on our mailing list drawing their attention to new items of interest on the website.

‘Walking Together on the Way’: open meeting on 28 September 2019

This very successful and enjoyable event to discuss ‘Walking Together on the Way: Learning to be the Church – Local, Regional, Universal’, the latest report from the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC) was held at St Andrew’s, Short Street, SE1 8LJ. The report considers the ways in which the Roman Catholic and Anglican Churches live out their communion in Christ at local, regional and international levels, and how much they have in common with one another. Our discussion was led by Canon John O’Toole and by Canon Dr Jeremy Worthen, Secretary for Ecumenical Relations and Theology at the Church of England’s Council for Christian Unity. The text of Canon John’s presentation can be found in the October 2019 issue of *Together in Christ*

'Review of the year' meeting on 28 September 2019

This was held immediately after the 'Walking Together on the Way' event and was attended by 17 people, including members of the Commission. The annual reports for 2018/19 had been previously circulated, and were formally presented by the chair. As there were no comments from the floor, it was agreed that no minutes of the meeting need be prepared.

The Commission has subsequently decided that as the meeting to 'review the year' has become something of a formality, and there is no evidence that parish unity contacts and others find it valuable, it should be discontinued with effect from 2020. The Commission's constitution has been amended accordingly. From this year (2020) the annual reports will be made available on the Commission's website rather than circulated by email and it will be open to parish unity contacts and others to send us comments if they wish.

Churches Together in England conference at Swanwick on 14-15 October 2019

Our vice-chair Ann Gavin and our secretary Gwen Chiosso represented us at this event. You can read Gwen's full and very interesting report in the February 2020 edition of *Together in Christ*.

Visit to the Greek Orthodox Church in Welling on 14 November 2019

This visit followed that to the Russian Orthodox Cathedral in Chiswick in May (see last year's report) and continued our exploration of Eastern Orthodox Christianity. These two Orthodox churches were different in many ways, but very obviously part of the same tradition. Twelve of us were warmly welcomed by Fr Gerald Hopkin and his wife Elizabeth. You can read Sister Beatrice Garnett's full account of the visit in the February 2020 edition of *Together in Christ*.

Ecumenical pilgrimage to the Holy Land in March 2020

A major event for Southwark this year, with the arrangements for which we were not directly involved, was the ecumenical pilgrimage to the Holy Land in March 2020, jointly led by Bishop Christopher Chessun, the Anglican Bishop of Southwark, and our own president, Bishop Paul Hendricks. You will find accounts by Bishop Paul, Robin Orton, and Barbara Wood (our ex-vice-chair) in the '*Together in Christ* online' section of the new website. The Commission has been reflecting on the powerful experience of joint prayer and worship, including (non-communicating) attendance and participation in each others' Eucharists, which those on the pilgrimage have reported and we hope to have discussions with our Anglican brothers and sisters in Southwark about how we might build on this in developing relations between us in future.

Roman Catholic/United Reformed Church dialogue

Robin continues to be a member of the Catholic side for the current cycle of dialogue, of which Bishop Paul is co-chair.

Churches Together in South London (CTSL)

Robin continues to represent the Catholic archdiocese on the CTSL enabling group. We continue to be grateful to Claire Crowley, the ecumenical officer for CTSL for her help and advice.

Churches Together in Kent (CTK)

CTK is not active at the moment. However we hope things may look up now that Canon John O'Toole has been appointed as episcopal vicar for the Kent area of the RC archdiocese (see earlier) and the Rt Revd Rose Hudson-Wilkins has taken up her position as Bishop of Dover in the Anglican archdiocese of Canterbury.

Finance

A summary of income and expenditure for the Commission's account for the period from September 2019 to August 2020 is attached at the Annex. Since this was prepared, the Commission has received a grant of £500 from the Diocesan Finance Office to top up our account.

2. STATEMENT (2020) OF THE COMMISSION'S MEDIUM AND LONG-TERM OBJECTIVES

A. To continue to organise study days and forums to provide formation in Catholic ecumenism for lay people in the parishes, and to promote the wider ecumenical agenda within the diocese.

B. To encourage local ecumenical activity, by communicating with ecumenical representative in parishes within the archdiocese and others who wish to be involved; to keep them in touch with the Commissions' activities, to inform them about what is going on in the ecumenical field at local, diocesan and national level, and to encourage them to share news about ecumenical activity in their own areas..

C. To arrange visits to other Christian denominations with a view to joint prayer and to encourage friendship with other Christians.

D. To try to get the ecumenical dimension more prominently recognised and reflected across the whole spectrum of diocesan activities, for example in ongoing formation for clergy and laypeople, in evangelisation and in the work of the other diocesan Commissions.

E. To build contacts with those involved in ecumenism in other Christian denominations at diocesan or equivalent level in south London and Kent (for example the Anglican dioceses of Southwark, Rochester and Canterbury), with a view to exploring the possibility of organizing joint activities and events.

3. THE COMMISSION'S ACTION PLAN FOR 2020/21

The Commission plans the following specific activities for 2020/21:

A. To introduce ourselves and our work to Archbishop John and ask whether there are any changes he would like us to make to our aims and objectives or the way we operate.

B. To continue our discussions with the Anglican diocese of Southwark about how we might build on the experience of joint prayer and worship shared by those who participated in the ecumenical pilgrimage to the Holy Land in March 2020

C. To develop and promote the Commission website.

D. To try to rearrange online the event about the relationships between ecumenical and inter-faith activity at diocesan level, originally planned for 25 April 2020

E. To develop our work with young people despite the restrictions that remain in place because of the pandemic, in particular by trying to set up an online forum for discussing theological issues from an ecumenical perspective (a virtual 'café théologique').

This report has been approved by the members of the Archdiocese of Southwark Christian Unity Commission, below, in September 2020

The Rt Revd Bishop Paul Hendricks (president)

The Revd Deacon Michael Baldry

The Revd Deacon Jolyon Vickers.

Sister Beatrice Garnett OSU

Robin Orton (chair)

Theresa Fox (treasurer)
Marie Bullard
Alessia Cesana
Jenny O'Neill
Gwen Chiosso (secretary).

Annex

ARCHDIOCESE OF SOUTHWARK CHRISTIAN UNITY
COMMISSION

ANNUAL FINANCIAL REPORT 9TH AUGUST 2019 – 9TH AUGUST 2020

| Date | | In | out | Balance |
|-------------------|---|----|---------------|---------------|
| 9 Aug 2019 | | | | 464.86 |
| 10 Sept 2019 | Swanwick Conference (4 th Oct 2019) | | 173.70 | |
| 23 Oct 2019 | The Bridge at Waterloo St Andrews Church | | 273.00 | |
| 9 Aug 2020 | | | 446.70 | 18.16 |

Theresa Fox - Treasurer