



1994

Annual Report of the Irish Council of Churches

Submitted to the
Annual Meeting of the Council
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Introduction from the General Secretary

The last year has seen both despair and hope. We have plumbed the depths of sectarian atrocity and during the year loyalist paramilitaries again killed more people than their republican counterparts. It was in this context that the paper on loyalist paramilitaries was reissued in the autumn (see appendix I). As we came to the end of the year the hopes for a cessation of violence were high with the Downing Street Joint Declaration. It is not clear whether an end to violence is in sight. What can, perhaps, be said is that the past year has shown us that we could not go on in the way we were going. Things are on the move — it is not yet clear to where. However, we have no alternative but to find new ways forward. And this is a challenge to everyone in Ireland, including our Churches.

One thing is also clear: an end to violence is not the coming of peace. It will require decades for the slow healing of hurts and memories and the gradual development of trust and new relationships. Programmes like the Churches' Peace Education Programme will have much work to do and the relevance of the module which is currently being prepared on non-violence — seeking to help schoolchildren deal constructively with conflict — is obvious.

There seems to be a greater willingness for Churches to engage in community relations and ecumenical activity at the local level. The responses to the atrocities in October and November brought clergy and laity together in the most surprising of places. Attendance at the 'other' community's funerals was unprecedented. The Irish Inter-Church Meeting in October showed a capacity for open and honest discussion on the sensitive and difficult issue of sectarianism. The paper on 'Local Ecumenism in Ireland' (appendix III) shows, however, that we have a long way to go in many places.

In the area of inter-church relations — as in the wider Northern Ireland community — things are also changing. It is also not clear where exactly we are heading. Part of the response to the fact of change has been the process of looking at its future vision, aims and structure that the Council, in consultation with its member Churches, has embarked on. One of the issues that has been debated is the relationship and the balance of activities between the Council and the Irish Inter-Church Meeting. It may be that the evolution of inter-church relations will make it desirable and feasible to create one inter-church body in Ireland. The consensus, however, has been that this should not be looked for at this point of time but, instead, another step should be taken to further the process of understanding and cooperation which has been underway since the first Inter-Church Meeting

in 1973. The Council is looking at the possibility of only one community affairs/social issues body in the inter-church area where there is currently the ICC Board of Community Affairs and the Department of Social Issues of the Irish Inter-Church Meeting. Discussion is under way within the Irish Inter-Church Committee about a revamping of the Department. It has also been agreed to make the Irish Ecumenical Church Loan Fund Committee more fully ecumenical.

Development of relationships between the Churches has enabled the creation of Youth Link: Northern Ireland between the four major Churches in Northern Ireland and the Religious Society of Friends. As a consequence it has been decided to stand down the ICC Youth Committee which, with its earlier incarnation the Youth Committee of the Irish Churches, has had a distinguished history in inducting many young people into the ecumenical movement. It is, therefore, right to note its passing.

The Rev. Donald Elliott's reflections on the visit to Ireland of the Four Nations Forum on Evangelisation (appendix II) shows that we are in a rapidly changing religious situation — both North and South. This, in turn, reflects rapidly changing societies. Old worlds and certainties are disappearing. How is the gospel to be proclaimed and incarnated in the new Ireland which is emerging — more secular, more materialistic, more pluralistic — where Churches and religion are frequently criticised and belief can no longer be assumed? We even have to start now to grapple with the issue of relating to other faiths on our own shores.

The world is also changing. Other conflicts have taken more hopeful directions — in particular, South Africa and the Middle East. A meeting of General Secretaries of Councils of Churches in Europe, which took place in Hungary in November, made it clear to me that there can be a very considerable pain in change. Many Eastern European countries and their Churches are going through this. Life can be tough — as many Eastern European and Third World Christians can usefully remind us. Their stories may, however, give us courage on the Way ahead.

Meetings

The Annual Meeting was held in March in Dublin. The evening session looked at the 'Future Vision, Role and Structure of the Council' and the Rev. Dr. Eric Gallagher provided a perspective based on involvement over forty years in the ecumenical movement in Ireland. The Autumn gathering was held in Dublin and the theme of the afternoon session was 'Inter-Church Marriage in the Parish Context'. The speakers were the Rev. Paul Colton and Monsignor Alex Stenson.

Staffing

Mr. Rob Fairmichael was appointed part-time Associate Secretary and took up his appointment at the beginning of March. He services the Inter-Church

Emergency Fund, the Irish Ecumenical Church Loan Fund and the Board of Community Affairs.

Mrs. Debra Stewart was only able to stay a short time with us as part-time Secretary/bookkeeper before returning to the USA at the end of May. She was replaced by Mrs. Doreen McFarland.

Terms and conditions of employment and disciplinary rules and procedures for staff were drawn up. Permanent members of staff are now included in a permanent health insurance scheme. Pension provision for administrative members of staff is currently being looked at.

Resolutions, Representations and Expressions of Concern by the Council, its Boards and Committees

Guidelines for these were drawn up and agreed during the year.

The Role of the Council

The May Meeting of the Executive looked at the views of the Member Churches and of Council Members concerning the 'Future Vision, Role and Structure' of the Council. A working party was set up and following its report to the October meeting of the Executive it was agreed to put a number of proposals to the Irish Inter-Church Committee regarding local ecumenism and the relationship between the ICC's Board of Community Affairs and the IICM's Department of Social Issues. A revamping of the Irish Ecumenical Church Loan Fund Committee is also being looked at.

Inter-Church Centre Company Ltd.

The Inter-Church Centre Company Ltd. owns 48 Elmwood Avenue. Following consultation with the solicitors and accountants of the Company a more simplified and tax advantageous arrangement for the owning of the property is being explored. The insurances and rents were reviewed during the year and some repairs were carried out to the roof.

COMMUNITY AFFAIRS

(A report on the Churches' Peace Education Programme appears at the end of this Report).

Moderatorship: John Lampen will be retiring as Moderator as from the Annual Meeting. As he and his wife return to England we pay tribute to all John's energy and commitment to the work of the Council and the Board.

Inter-Church Emergency Fund for Ireland:

The following grants were agreed in 1993:

	£
Waterside Community Choir - towards costs	250
Grosvenor Development Association - to summer scheme costs	500
Shantallow Ballyarnett Cross Community Group - to cost of residentials	500
The First Step, Belfast - to setting up costs of drop-in centre	1,000

Glenstar Boys Club - to costs	500
Peace and Reconciliation Group, Derry - to community relationships programme	600
Urban Missions Trust - to costs of moving premises	2,000
Long Tower Trust, Londonderry - to insurance on premises	250
Glen River YMCA National Centre - to fitting out costs of chalet units	3,000
The Boulevard, Bangor - for mobile counselling and information service	500
PFRC Charitable Youth Trust - towards fitting out youth centre	500
Belfast Youth Cross-Community Club - to setting up costs	500
Lower Ormeau Residents Action Group (LORAG) - to play equipment	500
Brookeborough & District Community Development Association - seeding grant	500
Owen Roe O'Neill Youth Club - renovation costs	500
Wishing Well Family Centre - to cross-community summer scheme	500
New Mossley Council of Churches - to fitting out costs of community centre	3,000
YMCA Employment Services - towards building renovations	500
Alliance-Ardoyne Playscheme - towards summer scheme	868
Streetbeat Youth Project - towards activity costs	1000
Creggan Community Care - equipment costs	650
Woodvale/Ardoyne Youth Group - activity and visit costs	800
'Cheers' Drop-in Centre, Ballymoney - equipment costs	1,000
Glebe House/Harmony Community Trust - towards new accommodation block	3000
Springhill Youth Action Group - to programme costs	700
Committee on the Administration of Justice - towards civil liberties handbook	1,000
Inverbrena Community Centre, Strangford - towards equipment	800
Neighbourhood Development Centre, Belfast - to resource people visit	100
Lurgan YMCA - towards equipment for new youth centre	600
Brownlow Play Association - for summer scheme costs in Ardowen	400
Drumcree Community Trust - to equipment for work with children	2,000
Trillick Enterprise Group - towards setting up community and leisure centre	2,500
Phoenix Interchange, Lurgan - towards summer playscheme costs	600
Drumalane Fathom Park Community Association, Newry - to summer gala	300
Crossfire Trust ACE Scheme, Darkley - towards fun fare fundraising trailer	500
Speedwell Project, Dungannon - towards equipping new classrooms	1,500
Rathcoole Self Help Group - towards residential centre renovations	3,000
Corpus Christi Services, Ballymurphy - to environmental awareness programme	500
Shankill Youth Group, Lurgan - to office equipment for parent and child scheme	1,500
Coleraine Community Project - towards equipment for drop-in centre	500
Greystone Rovers Youth Club, Antrim - to activity costs	500
PACE/Protestant And Catholic Encounter - to ecumenical education programme	500
Ballyclare Community Concerns - towards centre costs	1,000
Fintona Development Association - to youth club expenses	250

The following monies were donated by donors:

From Methodist Relief and Development Fund –

Currach Community	£2,000
Youth Link: Northern Ireland	£2,000
Per Dr. Eberhard Spiecker, Germany	
Youth Link: Northern Ireland	£3,996

Mr. Fred Jeffery resigned as co-Chairman and from the Committee during the year. He was replaced as co-Chairman by Mrs. Olive Marshall and as a Committee member by the Rev. Dr. Johnston McMaster. The General Secretary replaced Mr. Joe Campbell. Mr. Rob Fairmichael took over the Secretaryship of the Committee after the March meeting.

Irish Ecumenical Church Loan Fund:

The Committee agreed the following loans in 1993:

Cornerstone Community – £5,000 for 3 years @ 5% towards renovation of property

Share Centre – £10,000 for 5 years @ 5% towards additional accommodation

Bridge Community Trust – £12,000 for 4 years @ 5% towards purchase of staff accommodation

Mr. Rob Fairmichael became Projects Officer of the Committee during the year and also a member of the Committee. Irwin Pearson became Chairman in succession to Miss Hazel McMillan.

Loyalist Paramilitaries

The study document on this topic produced by a working party of the Board early last year was revised in the autumn and reissued (see Appendix I).

Pastoral Care for Members of the Security Forces

Meetings and correspondence took place during the year with the RUC and the senior Army Chaplain in Northern Ireland. The Methodist and Presbyterian Churches have produced names of contact people at District and Presbytery level to whom the RUC and the senior Army Chaplain can refer. Work continued on this issue.

Speakers

Mr. Maurice Kinkad, Ms Christine Acheson and Mr. Sammy Douglas spoke at the May meeting on community development in Protestant areas and the proposal for a conference of clergy. Mr. Roger Courtney also spoke at the May meeting concerning a proposal to set up a local Churches National Housing Coalition network. Mr. Andy Pollak, former coordinator of Initiative '92, spoke at the October meeting on the Osphal Report and, in particular, its recommendations concerning the Churches.

Future Work

Proposals for future work have been considered. These have included: the impact of GATT on the Churches, North and South; society in the South; caring for creation; developments in the health service; employment pressures; the effects of advertising; Churches and working class people; Roman Catholic-Protestant residential divisions in Northern Ireland; local Churches and violence in Northern Ireland; Churches as providers of care and community services as against pressing for necessary changes in provision of these services for people; current political dialogue; the power of the media; Churches in different worlds, North and South; the recommendations of the Osphal Commission Report on religion and the Churches; charity lotteries and their effects. It was decided to look at the developments in the health service and to start some preliminary work on the Churches and working class people.

The Northern Ireland Committee of the Christian Education Movement

Mr. Derick Woods was appointed as the Council's representative on the Committee.

INTER-CHURCH AFFAIRS

Women's Link

The Annual Fellowship Day was held in Dublin in May with the keynote speaker being Dr. Edith Loane. There was an increase in the total numbers attending and in the number of different groups represented. The Women's Desk has continued to operate in the Inter-Church Centre two mornings a week. Contact has been reestablished with the Women's Desk in the United Christian Council in Uganda.

Decade of Solidarity with Women

Mrs. Sally Ayling, Mrs. Muriel Gallagher and the Rev. David Godfrey attended the Selly Oak Summer School which was held to mark the halfway point of the Decade. The idea of a survey of women's attitudes to the Church is being considered as one practical action in relationship to the Decade.

Youth Committee

During the year the Member Churches were consulted about the future of the Committee. The consensus was in favour of the Committee being disbanded as many of the Member Churches were putting their energies into Youth Link: Northern Ireland. The Committee will, therefore, be wound up as from the Annual Meeting.

The Committee came under ICC auspices in 1972. Before that there had been an independent Youth Committee of the Irish Churches dating back to the 1940s. Many people gained their first ecumenical experience through this Committee.

During the last twenty years the ICC Youth Committee has been involved in a variety of activities — prayer vigils; study tours; sixth-form conferences; international youth exchange; events and conferences in Ireland for young people; work-shops in Ireland; links with inter-church youth bodies, e.g. Ecumenical Youth Council of Europe and the British Council of Churches Youth Unit. Over the years there was a concern to establish links with Roman Catholic youth structures. There was a full-time Ecumenical Youth Projects Officer for a time in 1978-1981, but the Committee has been normally reliant on the commitment of a small number of enthusiastic young people plus occasional back-up from the full-time denominational youth officers.

Discussions have taken place with Youth Link: Northern Ireland on a number of issues including Irish links with EYCE, the all-Ireland dimension and the situation of the smaller Member Churches. It is also hoped that there can be some link between Youth Link and the Council.

Nicholas Lane attended the Global Gathering of Youth and Students in Brazil in July with 500 people from 81 countries. There is the possibility of a follow-up meeting for the European participants. He also attended the EYCE General Meeting near Prague in October.

A weekend exploring Celtic spirituality was organised jointly with the Down and Connor Youth Council in the Spring.

Child in the Church Group

The Group is monitoring the situation regarding a Children's Bill for Northern Ireland which has implications for the Churches' work with young people and children. In November a conference was held on the theme 'All God's Children' dealing, in particular, with children outside Church structures.

Four Nations Forum on Evangelism

The Rev. David Godfrey represents the Council of the Forum. The members visited Ireland — both North and South — in March. The Rev. Donald Elliott's reflections on the visit are appended in Appendix II. These were discussed at the October Meeting of the Board and the Member Churches and other bodies have been asked for their comments.

Ecumenical Spirituality Consultation

Mrs. Gillian Kingston represented the Council at the Consultation in Dunblane, Scotland, in November — she was also on the planning group. A follow-up meeting of Irish participants was held in January.

Local Ecumenism

The General Secretary produced a paper on 'Local Ecumenism in Ireland' in which he sought to give an impression of what is taking place (see

Appendix III). It was the subject of considerable and lively discussion at the May meeting.

The General Secretary has also been involved in the preparation by the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council of a handbook on how to go about local inter-church work. The actual writing is being carried out by the Rev. Dr. Johnston McMaster, a member of the Board. The production of the handbook follows the recommendation of Inge Radford's *Breaking Down Divisions: the Possibilities of a Local Church Contribution to Improving Community Relations* commissioned by the Community Relations Council and published in May. The General Secretary has continued to work closely with the Council to encourage support of local inter-church activity.

The twice-yearly mailing to local ecumenical groups has continued.

Faith and Order Conference at Santiago de Compostela

The Rev. Alan Falconer, Director of the Irish School of Ecumenics, attended the fifth World Conference in August. He reported both orally and in writing to the Board. Work is being done to identify the issues arising from the Conference which are relevant to Ireland.

OVERSEAS AFFAIRS

Moderatorship: The Rev. Dr. G. Gray indicated he wished to retire as from the Annual Meeting. He was asked to stay on for one further year to facilitate changes in the Board structures. This he agreed to do.

World Mission Committee

A joint study day with the Irish Missionary Union was held in Rostrevor in September when the Rev. Dr. Donal Dorr was the key-note speaker. A further study day in September is being planned for April with Dr. Okorochoa from Nigeria. The membership of the Committee is being reviewed. The Rev. Cecil Wilson has been replaced as Secretary by the Rev. Terry McMullan.

The Churches Commission on Mission

The Rev. David Godfrey represented the Council at the third meeting of the Commission in Durham in early October. The theme was 'Sharing Gifts in Evangelisation'.

Former Yugoslavia

The Rt. Rev. Dr. John Neill who was joint leader of a CCBI delegation to Serbia and Croatia in January spoke to the April meeting of the Board.

The Middle East

Following the peace developments in the Middle East a message of greeting was sent in October to the Middle East Council of Churches.

Sudan

The Board has participated in the Northern Ireland Sudan Support Group and the Moderator has acted as Chairman. A draft plan for the inter-church visit to Sudan has been passed to the Executive Committee for consideration and submission to the Irish Inter-Church Committee.

Ecumenical Monitoring in South Africa

The Ecumenical Monitoring Programme in South Africa was set up in August 1992 as a result of a call by the Churches in that country. The Programme's mandate is: to monitor violence, the political transition process and elections. Monitors are being sought, particularly in the run up to the elections and information on being a monitor was circulated to suitable people in Ireland. A number of people from Ireland are going.

Sierra Leone

Correspondence has taken place with the UK Minister for Overseas Development, Baroness Chalker, concerning the situation in the country.

Endorsement of Fair Trade Charter

The following resolution was passed at the Annual Meeting:

“that the Council, noting how poverty is perpetuated and increased in the Two Thirds World by the present structures of trade, endorses the Fair Trade Charter, supports the effort to establish a Fair Trade Mark and urges Churches to encourage their members to become more aware of the issues involved and to purchase goods which give a fair return to the producers.”

Christian Aid Ireland

The year ending March 1993 produced a record income for Christian Aid in Ireland of £1,099,017 plus IR£537,766. 1993 has also seen yet another increase in Christian Aid Week in Northern Ireland (raising a total of £342,237). However, the response to the on-going urgent needs of Africa has been much less. It may be that people feel that the needs have diminished because the TV spotlight has moved to Bosnia. Christian Aid is concerned that the desperate suffering of many innocent people as a result of war in Africa does not get overshadowed or forgotten.

During the year the “Trade Campaign” has continued. This seeks to encourage awareness of the need for fairer trade which will enable the producers to benefit more from their labour. The sale of Cafe Direct (the specially produced coffee) by supermarkets has been encouraged. Many people have signed up on a mailing list to be kept informed on trade issues, have handed in cards requesting their retailer to stock more fairly traded goods, have written to governments or others about trade issues. In 1994

emphasis will move on to a campaign on the World Bank/International Monetary Fund under the title "Who Runs the World?". These bodies may seem esoteric, but they have an immense, and often destructive, influence on the poor of the world. Involvement of people and Churches in campaigning on such practical issues is sought because only by tackling them can the poor be offered new hope.

Education is another important part of the work. Many very useful materials, including some excellent ideas for worship with varying age groups, are produced and are available for use.

In August 1993 Mr. Tim Magowan took up the post of Youth Secretary for Northern Ireland. The appointment of the Rev. Dick Gordon to the Christian Aid Board was extended by the ICC for a further year to bring his appointment into line with other Irish people on the Board (Mrs. Gillian Kingston and the Rt. Rev. Roy Warke). Mrs. Muriel Gallagher was appointed by the ICC to replace Mrs. Carrie Barkley on the Irish Committee of Christian Aid.

Inter-Faith Issues

The Board and the World Mission Committee looked at the proposal to set up an Inter-Faith Forum in Northern Ireland. Their conclusion was that an informal gathering of people was best at this stage without formal participation of the Churches.

It has been agreed to invite the Canon Dr. Christopher Lamb of the CCBI Commission on Inter-Faith Relations to Ireland in November to help the Churches explore the issues arising in the inter-faith area.

COUNCIL OF CHURCHES FOR BRITAIN AND IRELAND

The following resolution was passed at the Annual Meeting to clarify the relationship between the two Councils.

"that the Council reaffirms the relationship established in 1990 'between the Irish Council of Churches and the Council of Churches for Britain and Ireland under its new Constitution as the legal successor to the British Council of Churches on the understanding that this be without prejudice to the future relationship between the Irish Council of Churches, the Council of Churches for Britain and Ireland and the Irish Inter-Church Meeting.' (Minutes ICC AGM 1990, 10(a) (ii) p.7). In response to the concerns of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, the Council affirms that its relationship with CCBI as an independent associate Council does not necessarily involve any ICC member Church in membership of CCBI, nor does it involve the ICC representing its Member Churches in CCBI, nor does it involve any financial contribution from ICC funds to the CCBI budget.'"

Mrs. Fee Ching Cameron was appointed as the Council's representative on the CCBI Commission on Racial Justice. The Rev. Keith Clements, the CCBI Secretary for International Affairs, visited Ireland in January.

EUROPEAN ECUMENICAL COMMISSION FOR CHURCH AND SOCIETY

The Rev. S. Hutchinson and Dr. K. Milne attended the Annual Meeting of the Commission in Brussels in September.

THE CHURCHES' HUMAN RIGHTS PROGRAMME

The Programme is sponsored by the Conference of European Churches, the Canadian Council of Churches and the National Council of the Churches of Christ, USA, and relates to the CSCE (Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe) Process begun in 1973. John Lampen represented the Council at a conference organised by the Programme in Budapest in September dealing with minorities in Europe.

WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

A group of four people from 1st Lisburn Presbyterian Church and St. Patrick's (Roman Catholic) Parish attended a pan-European ecumenical gathering in Potsdam, Germany, in July. The gathering was part of a long-term European ecumenical process towards a renewal of congregational life and mission.

THE CHURCHES' PEACE EDUCATION PROGRAMME

The Churches' Peace Education Programme is the legal entity which runs the joint peace education programme of the Council and the Irish Commission for Justice and Peace. Trustees are appointed by the two bodies who, in turn, appoint a Management Group to manage the programme.

The Department of Education (NI) have been carrying out a review of all the voluntary education for mutual understanding/peace education organisations funded by it and a submission was made to the Department in September. The Department seems willing to continue funding, at least until the end of March 1996.

The Management Group has been looking at an appropriate staffing structure for the Programme and hope to have this in place by the end of August 1994. In the meantime the two peace education officers posts have been extended to that time. Miss Rosslyn McAuley's post has been made permanent.

The future of the Resources Centre has remained uncertain because of proposals for a new organisation that might service the EMU sector in education. These proposals are awaiting approval (and funding) by the Department of Education (NI). However, the Resources Centre catalogue was revised during the year and distributed to schools.

During the year 'The Churches and Worship' material for primary schools and 'Peacemaker', a post-primary module, was revised and reprinted. The 'Churches and Worship' materials were launched at a meeting of the Trustees in May. An adult study guide 'What the Bible Says about Sectarianism' was produced. Post-primary modules on 'Human Rights' and 'Non-Violence' are in the course of preparation and a revision of the 'Free To Be' materials for primary schools is being carried out.

Mr. Norman Richardson has continued his involvement in a wide range of contacts with schools and teachers, including participation in a part-time EMU/CH in-service course at Queens University, Belfast. Mrs. Brigid Lenane has been involved in the preparation and piloting of the 'Non-Violence' module.

During the year Mrs. Carrie Barkley and Mr. Gerry Jeffers resigned from the Management Group. Mrs. Barkley was replaced by Mr. Michael Arlow. Sister Lucina Montague has become chair of the Management Group.

IRISH INTER-CHURCH MEETING

The Irish Inter-Church Meeting is composed of representatives of the Irish Episcopal Conference of the Roman Catholic Church and the Member Churches of the Irish Council of Churches.

The thirteenth Meeting took place on October 8 and 9, 1993, with the theme of 'Sectarianism'. John Lampen and Mrs. Mary McAleese introduced the publication *Sectarianism: A Discussion Document*. Responses to issues raised in the document were given by His Eminence, Cardinal Cahal Daly, His Grace, Archbishop Robin Eames, the Very Rev. Dr. John Dunlop, the Rev. Dr. Eric Gallagher and Sir Kenneth Bloomfield. The Meeting was the first one which was residential and it was felt to have been an open, honest and moving occasion dealing with a difficult subject.

Irish Inter-Church Committee

The Committee met six times during the year. Much time was given to considering the draft of the Sectarianism document, preparing for the Meeting and discussing follow-up to it.

A meeting of representatives from the British and Irish Churches took place in February with a primary focus on the Northern Ireland situation. A further meeting may take place in 1995.

Consideration has been given to the promotion of local ecumenism. Soundings have taken place in a number of places where there are existing local groups with a view to holding one-day events which might stimulate interest and involvement in local inter-church activity. The first of these events will take place in Enniskillen in March. The initiative stimulated Mr. William Rutherford of the Clonard-Fitzroy Fellowship to arrange a couple of meetings for other similar groups in the North of Ireland.

For the first time the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity Irish Order of Service was produced under the auspices of the Irish Inter-Church Meeting using material prepared in Ireland. The new committee consists of the following:

Rev. D. Baker, Rt. Rev. Mgr. P. Devine, Mrs. G. Kingston,
Rev. Canon B. Mayne, Rev. P. Murphy, Rev. P. McGoldrick,
Sister R. Hannaway.

Department of Social Issues

The working party on Sectarianism produced its deliberations in February. The draft was considered by the Department at a residential in February and then by the Irish Inter-Church Committee. The document was eventually published in October with the title *Sectarianism: A Discussion Document* along with two accompanying background papers: *Roots of Sectarianism in Ireland: Chronology and Reflections* by Dr. Joseph Liechty and *How Should We Evangelical Christians Handle Our Differences with Those in the Roman Catholic Church* by the Rev. Gary Mason. The document has been referred to the Member Churches for their comments.

The Department has spent some time considering future work and is currently looking at 'Church and Society: Entering the 21st Century'. A resources sheet on Church documents on social issues is also being prepared.

The Irish Inter-Church Committee has set up a sub-committee to look at the working, role and composition of the Department.

Department of Theological Questions

Documents on *Salvation and Grace* and *Ecumenical Principles* were published in September. The Department is currently embarking on a major study on 'Freedom, Justice and Responsibility in Ireland'.

APPENDIX I

LOYALIST PARAMILITARISM AND THE CHURCHES

Produced by a Working Party of the Board of Community Affairs

Our Protestant Churches have rightly condemned loyalist paramilitarism, and its escalation of violence in recent years. But our working party felt there is also need to understand the causes and circumstances of this violence, which claims to defend the community to which we minister. We need to know what influence our Churches can have on those involved. so we spoke to people in the paramilitaries 'home area', including some who would be close to their thinking, as well as a minister, a community worker and a senior police officer.

The account we were given was as follows: We were told that paramilitarism arose in those parts of the loyalist community which felt that Churches, government and the unionist politicians had failed them. Government had failed to protect its loyal subjects not only against the violence of the IRA, but also against encroachments on their 'Britishness'. Their own politicians had failed to stop this; it was paramilitary action, not politicians, who had brought down both the powersharing executive and the British-IRA ceasefire. Yet these same politicians had always manipulated the threat of loyalist violence and urged young people to actions which they as leaders repudiated; the paramilitaries had refused to respond violently to the Anglo-Irish Agreement out of annoyance with these political subterfuges.

The 1991 loyalist ceasefire during the Brooke talks had not been easily achieved, but it was a strong agreement once made. It was primarily addressed to the Unionist politicians, to put pressure on them not to wreck the talks. It was also meant to 'slow up' the IRA. Loyalist paramilitary politics was in favour of some accommodation with the 'nationalist' community, including a share of power, but firmly within a British or independent Northern Ireland.

Our informants said that the fears of betrayal in the loyalist community were real, though often irrational. The violence was the response of people who had never been encouraged to be articulate. It gave a feeling of significance. Not feeling properly defended themselves, it enabled them to 'prove' that the IRA could not defend the Catholic community either. This was one reason for the random nature of some loyalist killings; others might be due to cases of mistaken identity, or to correct identification of victims which was later denied on the other side. In general it was a response to perceived violence against their own community; loyalist paramilitary groups were still 'defence' associations, and their violence was not a stratagem designed to achieve some future ambition.

Other Reasons for Paramilitarism

Though there is some force in this account, it made loyalist paramilitarism seem too reasonable; it underplays its lack of clear focus, glosses over the irrational hatreds within it and omits the corrupting and spreading effects of violence. It also overlooks the burden which the organisations put on the community when they claim to defend. Paramilitary groups need money, and they need a large measure of secrecy and protection in their own areas, which must be ensured by fear if not by loyalty. They may attract the committed, but by the nature of their activities they also attract those who would have taken up crime in any case. Paramilitarism gives power and importance (and wealth) to those who would not otherwise have it – and they will fight to maintain these privileges.

One former paramilitary has written, “I was tired of hearing of money like forty odd thousand pounds disappearing overnight, people building new bungalows, having new cars”. Former loyalists who had met republicans for the first time in prison said, “We all realised we had been used”.

In many nationalist areas even those who do not support paramilitaries may have an allegiance to the cause of a united Ireland, and a deep distrust of the Crown forces. They therefore may give some measure of assent (or at least a willing silence) to IRA activity. In unionist areas many more people (though not everyone in hardline areas) support the police, so the paramilitaries depend on creating an atmosphere of fear. When they move outside these areas to make money they are at risk of their victims informing the police; within the area they can demand money on a regular basis in comparative safety. This has become so divorced from any sense of idealism that it is common knowledge that they will sometimes agree with republican groups to share out areas of interest. Some loyalist paramilitaries have been ‘set up’ and killed because their profiteering was too blatant; but other deaths have shown that it is just as dangerous to oppose racketeering from within the organisation.

Recently community ventures have developed in loyalist areas, of a type which has existed much longer in nationalist areas. They were born out of disillusion with church, politics, and violence as means of change. Where they had been energetic and effective they had given former paramilitaries a way to get involved in something positive. Without resorting to violence, ordinary people felt that they were not impotent. They were disillusioned with their own unionist politicians, with their ‘politics of the border’. Now they sensed the possibility of themselves making improvements in the quality of their lives.

The Protestant Churches

Where do the Churches fit in? Most of our informants did not see the Churches as agents of healing in a wronged and violent community. In general they are perceived as absent in the sense that ministers, and often many of the congregation, did not seem to identify with the area where

the Church stood — they were seen as middle-class people who often did not even live there. Our informants saw all too little willingness to get involved in the problems of the area or the new efforts to resolve them.

It might be thought that people in the inner cities who come to Christ would reverse this tendency. But we were told that few such people stay and struggle to work out their new faith in their old situation. Conversion often brings a change of lifestyle which enables them to move on and out. And mission is seen as something one does overseas, not in the Shankill or Upper Malone.

Where there are Church social ventures, we were told, they are often quite isolated, not linked to other community work, and not even joining any umbrella organisations in the district. No doubt Church members are often involved in general community work; but they didn't present themselves as representatives of their Churches, and it was felt unlikely that they fed back their community experience into the life of the Church. For most people 'the Church' was simply the minister, as a symbolic figure, present at the opening of a new project — and several local ministers didn't even manage this. Part of the resentment at Church ecumenical activities and exhortations was a feeling "They care about the other side more than about us".

If the Churches have this lack of impact on the community as a whole, it is not surprising that they have no influence on paramilitaries. (This was demonstrated by the contact of one church mission which we visited which was deeply involved in the problems of the immediate area, and where their minister was able to bring some influence to bear on paramilitaries in the area).

There is no question that the Protestant churches have condemned loyalist paramilitarism. Some feel that condemnation is rather muted compared to their comments on republicans; but we feel it is wrong to generalise about this. There are occasional stories of Church people approaching the paramilitaries to recover stolen Church property; this is wrong in itself, but if it is the only form of contact it will be taken as condoning them. It is important that when church spokespeople appeal to people to pass information on to the security forces they make it clear that this applies to loyalist activity as much as any other type.

We were told of a minister who had issued a statement against IRA, UFF and UVF. The local community newspaper inadvertently omitted the IRA. The next Sunday he approached his Church in a 'hardline' area with some nervousness; but he found his hand warmly shaken by parishioners who told him, "We've been waiting twenty years for someone to say that"!

What the Protestant Churches can do

We were advised that the Protestant Churches did not need to get involved with loyalist politics or paramilitarism. They should demonstrate their concern for deprived "Protestant" areas by the quality of their interest, support and involvement in what is constructive in the area, and then they

would gain influence which could be used. The same theme appears in the Inter-Church Meeting's Report *The Challenge of the City* (1990).

A seminar on *Community Development in Protestant Areas* in 1991 made several points which reinforce our conclusion, among them:

- (Paramilitaries) are real, are part of the community, and they cannot be ignored. Many participants expressed the view "There, but for the grace of God..." It was also felt that paramilitaries could and should have a different role — that of negotiation rather than violence. They could be using the energy they have in a positive direction. Can and should community development workers encourage this process?
- If we want justice for everyone we are faced with the need to condemn violence unequivocally.
- In whatever way we can, this society needs to allow and encourage people to change particularly people who have been or are paramilitaries.
- The Churches have lost ground especially in the inner city, and there has been a general breakdown in the moral fibre of the the community. Churches are out of touch with local people. Increasingly they have the congregation bussed in, particularly to working class areas. Similarly the clergy are usually 'in-comers' who do not live locally. Overall many Churches do not reflect the local community in which they are based.
- Many community groups could never have a dialogue with those evangelical Churches which focus on 'the other world' and preach hell, fire and damnation, doing little or nothing to improve social conditions in 'this world'. Other Churches which get involved in community work nevertheless retain the hidden agenda of saving souls rather than stimulating self-help and community development.

This report is intended to inform and stimulate discussion. But four specific areas were pointed out in our enquiries where the Churches could do more to counter the worst effects of paramilitarism. One was a much higher commitment to work with prisoners and their families, giving emotional, spiritual and perhaps practical support; if the paramilitary groups do all the work, no wonder young men get involved. The second was to give solid encouragement to those Christians, for instance in the Cornerstone Community on the Springfield Road, who were actively committed to reconciliation and who seemed to the paramilitaries to be very isolated from the mainstream of Church life. The third was for Church members, lay people as much as clergy, to find out the problems in the area where they worship and try to address them. The fourth was that such efforts should be linked with those of local community groups.

We are brought back to Christ's words, "I am among you as one who serves". Wherever our Churches are seen as part of the power structure of society, aloof, controlling and unsympathetic, they will lack the power to convince and convert. This leaves a vacuum in which evil can operate. This is the cost of our failure to be a 'servant community'.

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APPENDIX II

EVANGELISM IN IRELAND: IMPRESSIONS FROM A VISIT TO IRELAND

by the Rev. Donald Elliott,
Secretary of the Churches' Commission on Mission

Dear Colleagues

- 1 To an Englishman, Ireland seems familiar, yet it is delightfully different. Seen carefully finger-scrawled on the side of a greasy locomotive standing in Dundalk station between Belfast and Dublin, JUSTIFICATION BY GRACE THROUGH FAITH! Where else but in Ireland, close to the border? And where else but in Ireland would a sizeable group called Evangelical Catholics arise with official recognition. Of which, more anon.
- 2 In March, the 4-Nations Evangelisation Forum in CCOM, made up of one of each from the English, Irish, Scottish and Welsh ecumenical bodies (Rev. Roger Whitehead, Rev. David Godfrey, Rev. Chris Dormer, Sr. Vincent O'Regan) together with myself, held its first meeting in Belfast and Dublin. Through the Rev. David Godfrey, who is Moderator of the Inter-Church Affairs Board of the Irish Council of Churches, the Group was introduced to a significant range of persons engaged in evangelism in Ireland.
- 3 In that highly-commendable collection called *The Scandal of the Cross: Evangelism and Mission Today* (USPG, £4.95), Albert Nolan OP of South Africa writes of three traditions and their expressions of engagement. So, he says, Evangelicals have tended to stress personal "evangelism"; Catholics church-based "evangelisation"; and Ecumenicals world-transforming "mission". Though none exclusively of course. In Ireland we met with interesting examples of all three types.

Catholic Evangelisation

- 4 The Conference of Major Religious Superiors in Ireland (CMSRI) has a Vision Statement. It concluded with these words: "We live in a world of shifting cultures and collapsing boundaries. For this reason we search constantly, and creatively, for new ways to proclaim the 'Good News' of Jesus in a European and Global context".
- 5 Not a bad Vision Statement for all of us in a Decade of Evangelism.
- 6 In the Republic, the Catholic Church increasingly sees itself in the midst of the "shifting cultures" of a "new Ireland". Recent moves in relation to divorce and contraception, it was said, represented lost battles for the Church. The scandal about Bishop Casey had underlined its new position. Attendance at Mass has been declining steadily in the urban areas, where it can now be as low as 8%, compared with 80-90% in the countryside.

- 7 Dr **Thomas Norris** of St Patrick's College, Maynooth, Co Kildare, speaks of a culture split between church and society. Irish students now have to take a course in Christianity in order to be able to understand western literature! Images of one cultural group are not evocative to another, he says. The process of tradition has weakened, leaving people without established patterns. "Independence" and "originality" are the order of the day. Paradoxically, there is at the same time fast developing a well-endowed technical and informational unity. It lacks soul and compassion. He suggests that Christians need to become the new "Bible of the Poor".
- 8 More than once we heard about the 1991 "Ryan Report" of the National Council of (Catholic) Priests in Ireland. The NCPI Executive consists of 8 diocesan and 8 Religious priests plus Rev. **Joe Whelan**. It can make representations to the Bishops' Conference on behalf of parish priests. Joe Whelan, a Mill Hill Missionary, worked in Uganda, was involved in the early days of CaFOD, and served as chaplain to social workers in Liverpool. In 1991 he was appointed to the NCPI to introduce "the missionary dimension".
- 9 Diocesan priests in Ireland are mainly drawn from rather conservative farming and business families. As a result of falling numbers, parishes in deprived and inner city areas are being led by Religious and missionaries with overseas experience. They bring new and missionary impulses in evangelism to such work.
- 10 In 1991, as a result of resolutions passed at the NCPI annual general meeting in 1990, a Report was prepared at the request of the Episcopal Pastoral Commission under the chairmanship of Bishop Laurence Ryan, expressing a desire for change and setting out a plan for renewal at every level of church structure, including implications for the seminaries. There were also proposals for Renewal Courses fully to involve laity and Religious (including a good proportion of women).
- 11 As a result the Bishops, the CMRSI and the Irish Missionary Union (IMU) are to explore the way forward for Church in the "new Ireland".
- 12 Rev. **Joe Dargan SJ**, Director of CMRSI, suggests that all this implies a fresh vision of the Church as a "community of disciples", and he believes that the Religious bring that kind of understanding to parish leadership. In all there are 15,600 Religious living and working in Ireland, of whom 3,000 are priests and 11,415 sisters, though over half are aged 60 or more.
- 13 In Northern Ireland, the scene is different, since here the Troubles are be said to be veiling an underlying secularisation. The urban parish priest (and Protestant minister) still wields considerable community clout. Indeed there are said to be quite different perspectives as between priests

in the North and in the South. For example, with the former, any proposal for integrated education should be thrown out; with the latter, why not look at it? **Tony Farquhar**, Auxiliary Bishop of Down and Connor, says that Catholics in Northern Ireland are wary of ecumenical commitments that exclude Presbyterians.

- 14 In the context of the Pope's call for a "new evangelisation" Archbishop Cahal Daly had in 1990 inaugurated the Irish response. Rev. **John Murray** of St Malachy's College, was appointed to co-ordinate activity in the North of Ireland and set up a school for evangelism in Belfast running a Catholic Evangelisation Training Programme. This is addressed to lay-people and Sisters in parish work, and the aim is for the trained then to train others locally. It consists of a mixture of talks, discussion and actual house-to-house practice in evangelism. The format here is that of questionnaire, sharing faith and praying for householders.
- 15 We heard that **Sean Connolly** and **John O'Rourke**, at St Paul's Falls Road, are doing pioneering work developing a "parish cell" system, small groups of worship and study which multiply themselves. This is based on the experience in Milan of Michael Hurley of Ballinteer, Dublin.
- 16 Catholic Evangelisation is of course led and nurtured by Vatican pronouncements. *Evangelii Nuntiandi* under Pope Paul VI in 1974 ('Evangelism in the Modern World') has been basic, spelling out the intentions of the 2nd Vatican Council. Likewise, the present Pope's *Redemptoris Mission* in 1990 ('The Mission of the Redeemer'), reinforces the essentially missionary nature of the Church as indicated in the 1965 Vatican II document *Ad Gentes*.

Evangelical Evangelism

- 17 By the same token, **Robert Dunlop**, a leading Baptist, reckons that the Lausanne Covenant statement of 1974 provides a locus where a wide spectrum of evangelical and charismatic Christians can "shelter and share". He heads the Irish Lausanne Council for Evangelisation. The membership includes both historic and "new" churches. Eugene Boyle, an evangelical Catholic is on the Council.
- 18 The objectives of the Irish Lausanne Council are i) to create a resource bank of ideas and advice, ii) to encourage local co-operative evangelism, iii) to establish a register of evangelistic expertise, and iv) to identify effective training.
- 19 In 1987 there was held the Galway Congress of Evangelism. A second Congress was held in September 1992 at Drumcondra. Present were a group of "Evangelical Catholics", but also a representative group of Presbyterians encouraged by their special 1990 General Assembly at Coleraine. One of the liveliest seminars focused on Evangelical/Roman Catholic dialogue, highlighting the value of the

international Evangelical Roman Catholic Dialogue On Mission (ERCDOM, 1979-84) report for Ireland. It sought to identify areas of agreement and disagreement, suggesting where theological work needed to be done. There is fear both of separation and of ecumenism.

- 20 There are small "new" churches in most towns of the Republic, we were told. They are largely made up of formerly nominal Catholics who find access in them to Scripture and fellowship. It was suggested that they are thereby cutting themselves off from their historic and cultural roots. "Catholics know how to dance: Protestants don't!" Some of the leadership is coming in from outside Ireland. International links are mainly through the World Evangelical Fellowship.
- 21 One of the new churches is the Kingdom of Life Fellowship in Dublin led by **Niall Barry**. It seeks to evangelise by establishing friendly contact through music and public events. It is inspired by the Ichthus movement in London, evangelising by "words, works and wonders" in areas of deprivation. Relationship-building is fundamental. Church planting is seen as the way of renewing Ireland for Christ. Accusations of proselytism have to be seen against a background of 40 years of nominal Catholic involvement, says Mr Barry. The new churches are sometimes unfairly lumped together in publications with cults, sects and new religious movements.
- 22 In Northern Ireland, evangelicalism is multifarious and everywhere. The province attracts evangelistic groups from all over the world, drawn both by the crisis indicated by "the Troubles" and by the atmosphere of ardent Protestantism. By no means all of them are soundly based or tactful. **Howard Lewis**, a Presbyterian minister, heads the Evangelical Alliance Northern Ireland (EANI), and is probably best informed about it all. EANI was formed in 1988 with a basis of personal faith in Jesus Christ, Trinitarian theology and Biblical authority. With a staff of just two, it helps its member bodies evangelise and to do so co-operatively, lets evangelistic organisations know about each other, and generally draws together Christians together in the context of fragmentation in church and society.
- 23 Traditional "big event" evangelism, says Howard Lewis, is tailing off as the sense grows that evangelisation is the role of all church-people. This, by the way, is of course the theme throughout Britain and Ireland. Luis Palau-type missions are no longer seen as the main way forward.
- 24 The main Protestant churches in Ireland are mainly "low-church" evangelical in ethos to a greater or lesser extent. So the Presbyterian Church in Ireland (PCI) has its "Irish Mission" begun in 1710, just 10 years after the founding of the denomination itself. Vatican II has had an impact, and since the 1970s the work has broadened to include

programmes in Catholic schools. Under Rev. David Temple, there are 9 full-time workers with new developments in ministry in Carlow and Kilkenny. Less formal worship has been noted as a factor in growing churches. The PCI Board of Evangelism is appointing an Evangelism Promoter to encourage church people to share their faith. There is strangely little conscious impact from the many overseas partners on Presbyterian evangelism in Ireland.

- 25 **Bishop Brian Hannon** is President of the Church of Ireland's Council for Mission in Ireland which serves to further the Decade of Evangelism as part of its on-going agenda. It has a rather low profile in view of traditional diocesan independence. For 1994 a consultation is planned comprising four representatives from each diocese. Philip King's book *Making Christ Known* is recommended reading.
- 26 **Brian Hannon's** diocese is Clogher on the Ulster borders. He reports progress with the Bishop's Task Force for Evangelism. The diocese is largely rural and tends to be conservative and clergy-run. However, a lively link has been established with the Church in Uganda involving young people in work camps. This has provided fresh impetus and vision, enabling a move from "Clogher survives" to "Clogher shares". For evangelism in 1993 it has exploited the 1550th anniversary of St. Patrick in Clogher village. Since 1990-91 within the Diocese of Connor there have been The Call to Prayer (1990-91), to Train (1991-92), to Reach Out (1992-93) in successive years, culminating in the Call to Proclaim during the week of 21-28 November, 1993.
- 27 In the Dublin Diocese **Ricky Rountree** is the Decade Officer. There has been some uneasiness about a decade of "Evangelism" because of its Bible-thumping associations. The Diocese accordingly coined the phrase "Faith Alive" instead. The Decade Officer assists parishes, and a DIY pack for Parish Consultations is being widely used. The results have been helpfully specific, indicating needs for indigenous Irish material for first-time enquirers into Christian faith, post-confirmation education and Christian "parenting". Developments include the appointment of a (part-time) research assistant to help review and adapt existing materials, making worship accessible within acceptable parameters, encouraging lay ministries, and pressing for inter-church co-operation.
- 28 **Paul Kingston** works for the Methodist Church in Ireland's Home Mission Department. his job is "to encourage the Church in mission and evangelism" by providing resource material and disbursing central funds for poorer circuits. They are launching a "Mission Ireland" fund to assist new outreach efforts.
- 29 For example, **Kay and Tony Kennedy**, moved into the Killinardan estate in Tallaght, Dublin, in 1985 to provide a caring Christian presence. They ran a house fellowship and children's programme. Kay Kennedy

died suddenly in 1990. Then a house on the estate was bought by the Methodist Church as an "experiment" and **Isobel Jackson** moved in. There are 1,800 homes at Killinardan with a population of about 10,000. 98% are Catholic of whom 8% go to Mass. 70% are unemployed. Isobel has close contact with several families. There are two Bible fellowship meetings and a children's club each week. There is help with good second-hand clothing and with coping with rent arrears. There is good contact with the RC priests who are Religious. They participated in the Billy Graham "live link". 14 persons have made a Christian commitment and stayed.

- 30 Mainstream church evangelism in Ireland is wary of accusations of proselytisation, and so is addressed mainly to nominal Church-people and the unchurched. There is no central clearing-house for the Decade in Ireland. The need for primary evangelism is widely acknowledged, but required Christian unity for its credibility. The Luis Palau mission had a mixed reception among the churches. There is now the possibility of a Taizé gathering in Dublin in 1994 which would make visible churches working together, ie Anglicans, Roman Catholics, Methodists, and (perhaps) some Presbyterians.

Evangelical Catholic – Fusion?

- 31 The group of Evangelical Catholics remains within the Church and indeed has some official recognition. **Mr Paddy Monaghan**, their leader, says that they cross the cultural and religious divides. The focus is on charisms. In 1973 he came to personal faith and saw Ireland "as a mockery to Christ". In 1990 a statement setting out the affirmations and beliefs of Evangelical Catholics was issued "with Ecclesiastical Permission" and "welcomed by a wide range of Catholic and Protestant clergy and lay-readers". It avers that "many members of the Roman Catholic Church" have been "perhaps over-sacramentalised" and "under-evangelised".
- 32 Paddy Monaghan introduced us to:
Tom Nichols of Youth With A Mission (YWAM), which had been in Ireland 10 years, working mainly with young Catholics through schools and parish missions. There are full-time 25 staff members in the Republic, living as a "faith mission" in a Convent in east Dublin. YWAM has earned the trust of many priests over the years. It holds monthly 'Celebrate' evenings for young people "excited about God".
Ronan Johnston of the Emmaus Community, which is a covenanted group of 24 professional persons, aged 18-30, dedicated to introducing Christian music, art, and theatre into the evangelistic market. They serve to feed other people's evangelistic endeavours. The community has been in existence for about 8 years. It has six elements: prayer group, music studio, 3 bands (nurturing other Christian bands), Montessori school, the 'Celebrate' team, and drama outreach.

Joe O'Callaghan of the Nazareth Community, inspired by the 60's Sword of the Spirit Community of Detroit. The community is family based, meeting every two weeks on Sunday mornings for two hours. On the other Sundays, they meet in smaller groups of four families when there is more personal sharing. Children are specially provided for, linked to YWAM. There are outreach projects, eg to local hospitals. The basis is "Spirit baptism".

Sean Fleming of the Alexian Brothers, a charismatic ministry with the mentally ill.

Ecumenical Mission

- 33 There are of course magnificent ecumenical mission projects in Ireland, of which the most famous is the Corrymeela Community. Directly evangelistic ecumenical endeavours are harder to come by. There are only a few "local schemes of cooperation" in Ireland. We were, however, introduced to one fine example of "quiet ecumenism" in Belfast. It is the Cavehill Clergy Fellowship.
- 34 This is a group of ministers and Religious of five different denominations (Protestant and Catholic) working and living within the Cavehill district of Belfast, which abuts the Lower Antrim Road. They meet monthly in one another's homes. This has been going on for more than fifteen years despite changes in personnel. They include the Columbanus Community of Reconciliation.
- 35 The group shares in services for Advent, the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity and Christian Aid Week. They have responded together to special needs, such as terrorist murders. As Rev. Margaret Johnston (PCI) said: "Churches are there to help people make statements from a Christian perspective".
- 36 Their aims are: a) the development of bonds of trust and friendship through the study of Biblical and other ecumenical texts and through social inter-action; b) inter-denominational worship and witness; and c) fostering of understanding as to agreements and disagreements. It would have been good to find out whether one of the "ecumenical texts" studied had been the 1982 World Council of Churches' "Mission and Evangelism – an Ecumenical Affirmation".
- 37 Their 'Aspirations and Future' include: doing everything possible together that conscience permits; growing in friendship, prayer and worship; reducing polarisation within our own communities; creating joint initiatives to improve quality of life in the wider community, eg care of the elderly, youth projects. A joint mission among the Protestant members of the Fellowship is planned for the week of 21 November 1993.
- 38 At the Irish Council of Churches (ICC) meeting at the end of our week in Ireland, **Dr David Stevens** (General Secretary) pointed out that it is a

long road from Belfast to Dublin. The peace process is just such a road. Evangelisation takes place in that context. Evangelicals, such as **Peter Quigley** and **David Porter**, are creatively involved.

- 39 At the ICC meeting, there was a paper by Rev. Paul Fritz, pastor of the Lutheran Church, Dublin, on the Role of the Protestant Churches in the New Europe. He suggested that there were three possibilities, the Ghetto strategy, the Offensive strategy and the strategy of Dialogue. The first, he said, would mean a retreat into sectarianism. The second would aim at defending freedom and unity in plurality from, for example, the dream of re-establishing a "Europe of the cathedrals". On the third, **the question was whether the churches could sufficiently overcome their "introvertedness" to expound genuine Gospel dialogue with the people.** There in that last point, it seems to me, lies the challenge for us all in evangelisation.

Pentecost 1993.

APPENDIX III

LOCAL ECUMENISM IN IRELAND

by Dr. David Stevens, General Secretary, Irish Council of Churches

Introduction

Ireland has some of the most developed top-level ecumenism in the world: the Irish Inter-Church Meeting, regular meetings of Church Leaders, etc. The local level presents a somewhat different picture. This paper attempts to look at this from the available research material, from a recent piece of work commissioned by the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council and from personal exploration.

Background: The Research Evidence

(i) Ecumenism in Northern Ireland

Morrow's research (1) found that 5% of Methodist clergy, 18% of Church of Ireland clergy and 44% Presbyterian clergy would not participate in joint worship with Roman Catholics. Boal, Livingstone and Campbell (2) in their survey of Church-going Protestants in Belfast found that there were three main groups:

'liberals'	over 50%
'liberal-conservative'	ca 20%
'fundamentalists'	ca 25%

Of the 'fundamentalists' up to a third would have no dealings with the Roman Catholic Church whatsoever and the rest were only prepared to have dealings on social issues. 'Liberals' would have dealings with the Roman Catholic Church on both religious and social matters. But only one third of **all** Church-going Protestants were prepared to worship with Roman Catholics.

There is a persistent theme in recent research of Protestant young people being less open to ecumenism and good relations with Roman Catholics. The Boal, Livingstone and Campbell material is cited above. Greer and Long's research (3) among rural Ulster school children found that Catholic pupils were more open to Protestants than Protestant pupils were to Catholics; and less inclined to favour the use of violence. Morrow found that there was a tendency for Protestant younger clergy to refuse to worship with Roman Catholics more often than their older colleagues. In contrast, McElroy's survey (4) of Northern Ireland priests in 1986 found that younger priests tended to be more liberal than their elders in a number of issues, e.g. on mixed marriage, on attitudes to integrated education and on peace and reconciliation activity.

Morrow found that a much greater number of Roman Catholic clergy had no contact with clergy of other denominations. He observed that for

many Catholic clergy in Belfast and Londonderry inter-community relationships and ecumenism were considered to be unimportant relative to issues such as unemployment and social conditions. Morrow suggests that in a situation of residential segregation people develop lives which take no cognisance of the other community. He also suggests a concern for the maintenance of institutional 'purity' may also be a factor. Morrow further suggests some evidence among Roman Catholics of a 'one-true Church' mentality, particularly among clergy. In this mind-set the Protestants and their Churches are ignored, or they are not taken seriously.

Morrow's research shows clearly that in Northern Ireland congregational and other parish activities on the one hand and the political and cultural divide on the other tend to mirror and institutionalise each other. There is little participation in each other's activities and there is only occasional commitment to programmes of meeting and encounter across congregational or parish boundaries. Unpublished research in the Greater Belfast area gave some quantification of this. Seventy per cent of Churches had no links outside their denomination. Around 20-25% had a link across the Protestant-Catholic divide (mostly through clergy, e.g. through membership of a clergy fraternal, and mostly in middle class areas). Recent research into Church women's organisations confirms the picture (5). Inter-church cooperation is limited to the few. Cross-community cooperation is very much the exception.

(ii) Ecumenism in the Republic of Ireland

McGreil found (6) that between the early 1970s and the late 1980s people's enthusiasm for ecumenism had cooled somewhat, particularly among the young. Eighty-three per cent of those interviewed in Dublin in the 1972-73 survey had said unity between Catholic and Protestant Churches was desirable in principle and 62% possible in practice. In the 1988-89 national survey these proportions had slumped to 45% (63% in Dublin) and 30%. Only 37% of 18-20 year olds thought Church unity was desirable in practice; 28% thought it undesirable.

A survey of Church of Ireland members (7) in 50 different parishes scattered throughout the Republic in 1989-90 found the following perceptions of the ecumenical movement:

- 36% considered it a good thing
- 12% saw it as a threat
- 50% considered it could be both good and bad

It was hypothesised that the opposition and ambivalence were due to fears that ecumenical initiatives might essentially benefit the Roman Catholic majority and endanger the cohesion of the minority community.

Sixty-five per cent of the parishioners believed that the position and influence of the Roman Catholic Church in the Republic was "far too important", 27% believed it "a little too important"; and 6% believed it

to be "just right". The perception of the role of the Catholic Church seemed to depend on the local attitude towards Roman Catholic clergy. Local relationships with ordinary Roman Catholics were regarded as very good, particularly in local areas.

The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council Research

The NI Community Relations Council commissioned some research (8) into local ecumenical activity in Northern Ireland using a list of groups produced by the Irish Council of Churches. The General Secretary of the Council was on the steering group for the research and a substantive effort was made to unearth as many groups as possible. Forty-eight groups were finally located. Around ten of the forty-eight were social action projects, e.g. in the Waterside in Londonderry, Downpatrick, Newcastle, North Belfast, Ballyclare, Portadown and New Mossley. There were prayer groups and bible studies and clergy fraternals. There were a few examples of contact groups at local parish/congregation level. Some were for clergy only, some were both for clergy and laity. However, there appear to be large sections of the country, particularly West of the Bann, where no similar groups exist at all, as far as can be discovered. We cannot claim that we have unearthed all the groups. There may be some more, in particular ecumenical prayer groups. However, the Leader of the Christian Renewal Centre, the Rev. Cecil Kerr, estimates that there are not more than twenty-four inter-denominational prayer groups in Northern Ireland. In addition to the groups mentioned above, we need to add the local Protestant and Catholic Encounter (PACE) local groups (ten in number) and ecumenical communities like the Corrymeela Community, the Cornerstone Community, the Columbanus Community, the Lamb of God Community and the Currach Community, all of whom are involved in local ecumenical activity, to get a rounder picture.

The Council's research concentrated on the list of groups produced by the Irish Council of Churches, plus a local PACE group. It consisted of an in-depth examination of a selected number of groups plus a postal survey of all the ICC identified groups.

What the Research Revealed:

- the clergy only groups fulfilled a somewhat different function than the mixed clergy-laity groups. The clergy only groups were almost professional associations providing mutual support, fellowship and understanding. For mixed groups the most important thing was "understanding and promoting interest in and respect for other traditions".
- little evidence that the mixed clergy-laity groups were inserted into the life of parishes and congregations.
- the groups thought they were having some effect on the local community.

— in a significant number of groups there was evidence of one key figure who had been important in the setting up and sustaining of the group.

— preference for such activities as prayer, bible study, and discussion, than for public events.

— inter-church activity which involved “understanding and promoting interest in and respect for the other traditions” received overwhelming support. There was also significant support for cooperating together on social and community projects and some support for specifically theological dialogue. Public worship at any level other than Christmas carol concerts was the most problematical area for cooperation.

— the difficulties in developing better local ecumenical relations were seen to be as follows:

- * most clergy saw their primary role as being a pastoral one in relationship to their own flock, not in giving leadership in relationship to community relations or ecumenism.

- * for some clergy there was a fear of difficulty within their parish or congregation: for many Protestant clergy the Orange Order was often a significant restraining factor.

- * for clergy, lack of time and pressure of other commitments; lack of expertise was also a concern.

- * fear and suspicion engendered by local violence.

- * differences in cultural and moral attitudes to such things as Sunday Observance, alcohol, etc.

- * for both clergy and laity political divisions — the fact that most Protestants are Unionists and most Catholics are Nationalists — significantly hinders ecumenical and community relations activity.

- * for Protestants aspects of the Roman Catholic Church (including its theology). This was particularly true for Presbyterians, but Presbyterians were also the Protestant denomination most involved in inter-church groups.

- * for Catholic lay people problems associated with some senior parish clergy.

— little evidence that organisations which might be regarded as having a resource and supporting function to local ecumenical groups did in fact do so, e.g. the Irish Council of Churches, the Churches’ Central Committee for Community Work, the Irish School of Ecumenics. In fact there was little contact between these bodies and local groups.

From this research, and from other pieces of information, it can be estimated that the number of people involved in local inter-church groups (including PACE groups and the ecumenical communities) is around 1,500 and maybe as high as 2,000.

Republic of Ireland

The Irish Council of Churches was only able to unearth just under twenty local ecumenical groups. The impression is that there are few structured local groups. From this it cannot necessarily be assumed that little is going on. Often significant ecumenical activity is in fact going on at parish level and there are often good relationships (particularly between clergy) in local areas. Andy Pollak in an article in the *Irish Times* says "In places as far apart as Dun Laoghaire, Wexford, Cavan and Mayo small groups of enthusiasts have built up inter-church relationships through such activities as joint drug counselling work, mixed marriage guidelines, local radio work, prayer and Bible study groups and ecumenical lectures and meetings" (9).

There has been a significant change in relationships between Protestants and Roman Catholics over the last 25 years, but there are few ecumenical groups.

Some factors that have been suggested in relationship to ecumenism in the Republic are the following:

- the demographic realities - there are few Protestants, particularly in the south and west
- a lack of urgency - after all we have good personal relationships
- pressures on clergy, particularly with the decline in manpower in some areas
- a self sufficiency factor among the largest Church - after all we don't really need the other Churches.

Some Conclusions

There are only relatively small numbers of people involved in local ecumenical activity. The reality and priorities of Church life in the main confine ecumenical (and community relations) work to the margins. In Northern Ireland groups like Protestant and Catholic Encounter and ecumenical communities like Cornerstone, Corrymeela and Columbanus also make a contribution at local level, but usually outside the local Church structures. The charismatic movement seems to have lost momentum as a way of bringing Protestants And Catholics together.

There is a hostility factor to local ecumenism among some (particularly Protestants); there are factors which relate to pressures on clergy and how they see their role; there are factors which relate to the political situation in Northern Ireland (including the amount of violence at local level); there are factors which relate to local religious demography and the degree of segregation between the communities; there are factors which relate to the Churches (theology, ways of organisation); and there are factors which relate to cultural and moral differences. And at the same time there is a core of committed people involved. There are particular possibilities of promoting

local ecumenical activities that seek to promote understanding and respect for other traditions and for those involving cooperation on social and community issues. It may also be that in Northern Ireland the need to improve community relations is something that is slowly coming on to the Church agenda.

March 1993.

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