

85th Annual Report
of the
Irish Council of Churches
For the year ending 2007



SUBMITTED TO THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE COUNCIL
April 2008

CONSTITUENT COMMUNIONS

at 31 January 2008

Church	[Dates of Joining ICC]	Website
Antiochian Orthodox Church	2005	www.belfast.antiochian.org.uk
Church of Ireland	1923	www.ireland.anglican.org
Coptic Orthodox Church	1999	No website at present
Greek Orthodox Church in Britain & Ireland	1997	<i>No website at present</i>
LifeLink Network of Churches	1998	http://www.cfc-net.rg/lifelink.htm
Lutheran Church in Ireland	1972	www.lutheran-ireland.org
Methodist Church in Ireland	1923	www.irishmethodist.org
Moravian Church, Irish District	1923	www.moravian.org.uk
Presbyterian Church in Ireland	1923	www.presbyterianireland.org
Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church	1923	www.nspresbyterian.org
Religious Society of Friends	1923	www.quakers-in-ireland.org
Rock of Ages Cherubim & Seraphim	2001	<i>No website at present</i>
Romanian Orthodox Church	2004	<i>No website at present</i>
Russian Orthodox Church in Ireland	2003	www.stpeterstpaul.net
Salvation Army (Ireland Division)	1965	www.salvationarmy.org

Officers of the Council at 31 January 2008

President	Ms Gillian Kingston (Methodist Church)
Vice President	Rev Anthony Davidson (Presbyterian Church)
Honorary Treasurer	Mr Hilton Henry, JP, FCA
Immediate Past President	-
General Secretary	Mr Michael Earle

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ANNUAL REPORT OF THE IRISH COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

Submitted to the Annual Meeting of the Council, April 2008

THE HISTORICAL MANDATE The Irish Council of Churches is constituted by “Christian Communion in Ireland willing to join in united efforts to promote the spiritual, physical, moral and social welfare of the people and the extension of the rule of Christ among all nations and over every region of human life” (1966 constitution as amended in 1995).

This mandate was extracted word for word from the original constitution that established the United Council of Christian Churches and Religious Communities in Ireland in 1922 (John Barkley, 1983: *The Irish Council of Churches 1923-1983*). There were seven founding member churches at the Council’s first meeting in January 1923 (Church of Ireland, Presbyterian Church, Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church, Methodist Church, Moravian Church, Congregational Union, and the Religious Society of Friends/Quakers).

SIGNIFICANCE This historical background is significant as it indicates that the Council’s ecumenical beginnings were shaped by the aftermath of World War 1 and the period when partition and the border had just been created on this island.

Few will appreciate that this Council was also one of the earliest pioneers of National Councils of Churches throughout the world and that six of its seven founding churches continue in its membership today. Membership of the Council has now more than doubled to fifteen churches.

The original Council started in the context of momentous changes in Ireland. It served at the cutting edge for those churches wanting to express their Christian witness in working together for the benefit of all peoples, both locally and overseas. Its mandate covered the whole island and continues to reflect the All-Ireland focus of most of its member churches.

The question facing us today is how relevant is this mandate to our member churches in 2008? Is our work still at the cutting edge?

PRESIDENT'S REPORT 2007

Writing this report, I am conscious that my term of office as President is coming to an end – where have the two years gone, I ask myself? It is appropriate, therefore, to place on record my deepest and most sincere thanks to those who have been so supportive throughout and without whom things would have been much more testing. You have been at the end of assorted 'phone lines and email systems and you have not been found wanting. It is invidious to name names, but you know who you are and I want to say 'thank you so much'. And the thanks of us all should go to Michael Earle, Rob Fairmichael and Karen Kelly – you have worked long and hard and have always been found smiling!

We were all saddened to learn of the passing of Mgr Patrick Devine in April 2007. A good friend of the Council, his genial nature and ready appreciation of traditions other than his own endeared him to all with whom he came in contact. As a representative of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Ireland, he took part in the Church Representatives Meeting of Churches Together in Britain and Ireland for a number of years. He was a significant holder of memory within the Irish ecumenical scene and we miss him greatly.

On a happier note, we shared in the joy of the Church of Ireland when *the Bishop of Connor, Alan Harper, was appointed Archbishop of Armagh*. As a Council, we were particularly honoured when, within a week of his installation, Archbishop Harper attended the entire AGM in Armagh, taking part in the lively discussion after lunch.

More good things were to come – we were further delighted by *the elevation of Archbishop Seán Brady to the College of Cardinals*. It has been a privilege and pleasure to serve as co-Chair of the Irish Inter-Church Committee and Meeting alongside His Eminence.

It has been good to welcome on to *the Executive of the Council* Bishop Richard Clarke (Church of Ireland), the Revd Donald Ker (Methodist Church), Ms Elizabeth Onasanwo (Rock of Ages Cherubim and Seraphim) and the Revd Allen Sleith (Presbyterian Church). Women's Link is represented by Marian Woods and Roberta McKelvey has also been coopted for a further three years. We look forward to working together.

Thought has been given to the rotation of the *Presidency of the Council* and, after due consultation, it has been agreed that the Presidency should be held by the Church of Ireland (2010-2012), followed by the Lutheran Church (2012-

2014). The Lutheran Church has been a member of the Council since 1972, but this is the first time they have felt able to take up the Presidency and we are delighted that this is the case.

A highlight of the year was *the visit to Ireland of the General Secretary of the World Council of Churches* at the end of April. Accompanied by Graham McGeoch and Lydia Nduna, the Revd Dr Sam Kobia was here for two days as part of a longer visit to all the nations of these islands. The visit included a viewing of the Book of Kells and a very different, but equally significant, viewing of the murals in north Belfast; there were public meetings and more private dinner engagements. Dr Kobia met with both church leaders and theological students. I am most grateful to the Irish School of Ecumenics and to Edgehill Theological College for their hospitality for the public meetings and to Archbishops Martin and Neill for hosting private functions. In a personal letter after the visit, Dr Kobia commented that “*the visit provided me with a unique opportunity to debate and exchange ideas on issues and concerns of the churches in your country.*” Speaking of the Belfast experience, he wrote, “*it brought to life a history of Christianity that we can not afford to forget, but from which we must learn important lessons.*”

There are times when even the most ardent ecumenists feel discouraged, when we feel that things aren't progressing at any appreciable rate, that the going is tough and the debate turgid. But there are *signs of hope and encouragement....*

- A seminar on international bilateral dialogues, sponsored by the Irish Inter-Church Meeting, was held at the Emmaus Centre, Dublin, in October 2007. Addressed by Dame Mary Tanner, it was attended by a capacity audience of young theological students from eight theological colleges. Clever seating arrangements for lunch enabled everyone to meet and converse with a wide range of others and to broaden horizons.
- At the opening service of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity in Dublin in January 2008, an Anglican Archbishop preached powerfully in a Roman Catholic Pro-Cathedral and, during the service, a priest of the Romanian Orthodox Church, President of the Dublin Council of Churches, rose to welcome the Catholic Church into full membership of that Council. This major coming together of Christians in the Dublin area is the result of several years' discussion and it is most welcome. The leaders of the Dublin churches are to be congratulated for this courageous and prophetic move.

Much has been achieved, much remains to be done, to paraphrase the election strap-line of a certain political party. The ecumenical endeavour might be likened to a milking stool: it needs all three legs – theology, structure, grassroots relationship - in order to stand! There are theological issues with which we, as thinking and practising Christians, must grapple. Yes, there are certainly times when prophetic action is called for, but, for the most part, it is the painstaking, step-by-step, dismantling of the things which have historically divided us which will get us there in the end. There are structural issues for our churches and our ecumenical bodies to tackle if we are to be seen to witness as one Body of Christ. Can we learn to accept each other and present a united face to the forces which militate against faith in today's world? And by no means least important are those *relationships among Christians of different persuasions at parish and circuit level*, the level at which we see Christ in the other, the level at which we are, in a real sense, Christ to the other. It is a challenge, but we are called to be one that the world may believe.

It has been an immense privilege to have been President of the Irish Council of Churches – thank you all for your trust and for being there with me. I know that you will extend the same welcome and support to the Revd Tony Davidson and I wish him every blessing as he takes on the Presidency of the Council.

Every blessing to you all,

Gillian Kingston

ICC President (2006-08)

GENERAL SECRETARY'S REPORT

‘...becoming one flock with one shepherd.’ (John 10.16)

This is the 85th annual report submitted to the AGM of the fifteen member churches of the Irish Council of Churches, which was formally reconstituted in 1966. This is my fourth report since being appointed to this position in July 2004.

(1) Introduction

It's a privilege to serve the Council's fifteen member churches, to walk with them on their own and to create spaces for them to work together. With a Gospel mandate to become one flock on this island, they are full of rich differences in size, traditions and ecclesiology, all of which are gifts to be treasured. The flock looks like a multi-coloured patchwork quilt that embraces diversity and challenges sameness, uniformity and minimalism. Yet the flock shares the same Shepherd and is challenged to remain faithful to the one voice. Ecumenism is a task given to us by Jesus Christ who prayed that 'all might be one' (John 17.21), so we must expect blessings to flow from making this commitment together and discover 'how good it is when brothers (and sisters) live together in unity' (Psalm 133.1)

In a world of division, inequality, fears of global recession, addiction, greed, violence and exclusion, the ways of the Gospel call the churches to walk together and be signs of God's Kingdom; to be counter-cultural in building the common good based on peace with justice; to care for creation; to be the Salt in our communities; to stand with our brothers and sisters in need; to work together in our community's margins and darkest places; to welcome the gifts of the 'other'/the stranger; and to be known for our love for each other. ***'If you have love one for another, then all will know that you are my disciples'*** (John 13.35).

We all express our unity in the Body of Christ by praying to 'Our Father'; many share in a common baptism and communion around an open table; and many are involved in shared projects at local or national levels. Yet we repeatedly fail to live up to Jesus' challenge '*to become one flock with one shepherd*'. God's grace keeps forgiving and loving us in our disobedience and brokenness; the Spirit continues to give us glimpses of what can be when we come together as God's people; and we only need to open our eyes to find signs of Christ's hope all around us.

2007 has been an amazing year and there has been so much for which to thank God on the ecumenical front, let alone the many welcome political, social, cultural and economic developments around this island.

Highlights of 2007 included

- a new three year Parish-based Integration Project (PIP) was established in the Republic by a committee of the Irish Inter-Church Meeting. PIP is already drawing attention to new models of intercultural integration which are developing at local parish level and being driven by the increasing diversification of immigrant groups
- a study day on theological ecumenism was held with staff and students from eight different theological colleges from Belfast and Dublin
- a brief 2-day visit from Rev Dr Sam Kobia (General Secretary, World Council of Churches) to Dublin and Belfast
- over 30 delegates from ICC and the Catholic Church attended the third European Ecumenical Assembly in Sibiu (Romania)
- an Irish candle was used at 30 church/ inter-church events (involving more than 3,000 people) around the island before being gifted to the Romanian churches hosting the European Ecumenical Assembly in Sibiu
- Executive members spent time meeting with local church and community groups either side of the peace wall in the Ardoyne (North Belfast) – and also in Clontarf (North Dublin) - to ground themselves in local ecumenical realities
- Council representatives were involved in a wide range of consultations including the Bill of Rights Forum (NI); Charities Bill for N. Ireland; Churches Together in Britain and Ireland; ecumenical meetings in Armenia, Hungary and Romania
- Links were made with new churches and new ecumenical groups around the island
- ICC registered as an employer in the Republic for the first time in its 85 year long history to facilitate the employment of Adrian Cristea for the Parish-based Integration Project

The Council welcomes many other ecumenical initiatives taken during 2007 including the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Dublin joining the membership of the Dublin Council of Churches; the decision by four churches to share one local place of worship in the new west Dublin

Adamstown town centre; and the Global Christian Forum held in Nairobi in November which brought together the widest range of global churches ever gathered for worship, discussion and discernment: www.globalchristianforum.org

Progress made on priorities outlined in last annual Report

Seven priorities were outlined at the end of the last annual report. These related to developing an Irish Ecumenical Directory; an ecumenical staff appointment in the Republic; open ecumenical events in both jurisdictions; creation of a joint Management group to prioritise the work of the national ecumenical bodies; a communications strategy; church membership criteria; ICC representation on other organisations. These have all been addressed by the Executive during the year and referred to in this report, but most remain on the agenda for further work during 2008.

(2) Thanks

Office bearers and Committees: It's been a great privilege to work with Gillian Kingston as the ICC President over these past two years. She has been generous in sharing her time, ecumenical wisdom, charm and wit, plus her many talents, skills and networks both locally and overseas. She has worked with enormous commitment and integrity in dealing with the many facets of Council business, in representing the Council to the churches and wider public, and in co-chairing the Inter Church Meeting.

My thanks also go to Rev Tony Davidson who will be taking over as President at the AGM, and to Hilton Henry as Treasurer. The development of an ICC Officers' group this year has been most helpful in clarifying priorities and processing the business between Executive meetings. The Council is blessed with the gifts of many committed individuals, who freely volunteer their time and expertise to serve on its numerous committees and represent it on external organisations. Thanks to you all.

During the year, new members of the Executive Committee were welcomed and warm appreciation was extended to the contributions made by Rev Winston Graham (Methodist), who retired in June and to Bishop Michael Jackson (C of I), who resigned in February.

Staffing: The small staff team continues to get through a huge variety of jobs and I am enormously indebted to Karen Kelly (full-time Office Administrator since 2005) and Rob Fairmichael (part-time Associate Secretary since 1993) for creating a positive office environment and putting in the extra hours as needed. Working at Number 48 is a pleasure. In January 2007, we welcomed

Adrian Cristea (Project Worker, Parish-based Integration Project) who started his work based in the ISE office in Dublin; project management is contracted out to Robert Cochran.

(3) Changing contexts

2007 has been a significant, almost unimaginable, year after nearly 40 years of community conflict on this island. President Mary McAleese described it as *“a year of new directions, offering a new sense of purpose, new relationships and friendships between us all – north, south, east and west, we have the opportunity to make this new dispensation shine, to give our children and grandchildren a blessed life, to give those still in conflict all over the world, hope and help.”* (Irish Times 30/11/07) It was a culmination of the tireless efforts of countless individuals, church, community and ecumenical groups working quietly on the ground over many earlier years to develop trust, bridge differences and build community relationships. This peace process continues.

In the North, the political agreement at St Andrew’s and subsequent elections provided an overwhelming electoral mandate for power-sharing. The Democratic Unionist Party and Sinn Fein took the key leadership positions when devolution returned to the NI. Assembly on May 8th with an Executive which involves all but one of the larger parties. Normalisation was strengthened by the British army’s decision to formally end its 38 year old campaign, ‘Operation Banner,’ in Northern Ireland.

With the need to shape a new common space between former antagonists, the leadership given by the First Minister and Deputy First Minister has been widely recognised. After an initial honeymoon of cross party consensus, *realpolitik* is now addressing more contentious local bread and butter issues and priorities affecting local people. Amongst these issues are finding processes of growing the private sector economy; agreeing the content of a Bill of Rights; addressing the legacy of the past; agreeing the future shape of education; dealing with sectarianism, areas of deprivation, inequality and political alienation; testing the level of cross-party commitment to develop the *Shared Future* policy; addressing the costs of continuing division, estimated at over £1.5 billion per year; preparing for the devolution of criminal justice and policing from Westminster during 2008. The churches continue to have important contributions to make in all of these areas and their public witness will be strengthened by making a commitment to do this together.

In spite of the prevailing spirit of optimism and hope, there remains a dark side within Northern Ireland with daily media accounts of fear, sectarian intimidation and paramilitary-related activity. 57 peace lines in the form of

walls and gates still mark critical interfaces – none have been removed in the last ten years and sadly more have been built this year. An ecumenical group of clergy in North Belfast recently drew public attention to the Assembly's apparent '*burial of the concept of a shared future*' and failure in their draft programmes for Government to address community divisions and '*the scourge of sectarianism and separation across our Province*'. This grass root initiative may inspire other church and ecumenical groups to speak out together on local issues affecting the common good in their communities.

In the Republic, the elections returned a Fianna Fail government with the Green Party amongst the coalition partners. They are now addressing the impact of a faltering economy and the realities of two-tier health and education systems. Rising prosperity is linked to higher costs of housing, continuing inward migration, new challenges from religious pluralism and cultural diversity, from drug related crime, suicide, child poverty and other issues of health and welfare. Commentators are asking whether the vision of the Easter Proclamation '*to cherish all the children of the nation equally*' can be fulfilled and realised. The State has initiated a welcome process of engaging with churches and faith communities and the gifts each has to contribute in developing community cohesion and integration. Funding of the Parish-based Integration Project is a practical expression of the Government's commitment to make public resources available to this area.

Cross-border cooperation continues to develop in many different forms as economies of scale open up new opportunities and possibilities for business, public utilities, tourism, and indeed for the churches to help build the common good. And as we approach important anniversary commemorations relating to the past (eg. 1912, 1916, the Troubles) in both jurisdictions, there are opportunities for the churches to draw on their traditions of remembering to offer creative leadership to embrace all sections of the community they serve in ethical and inclusive ways.

(4) Church membership

Member churches: Council membership remains with fifteen churches, which are named at the front of this report. Attempts were made during 2007 to deepen the fellowship by giving time for two different churches to share their work at each Executive meeting – but sadly the business agenda overtook the time available. Efforts continue to be made to increase participation in the Council's work among some of the smaller churches. A sub-group started work in 2007 to clarify the Council's membership criteria and ways of engaging with new members to increase their participation. The Executive is reflecting on

whether it should adopt a credal basis or retain its current cooperative basis. This debate will continue into 2008.

Each year, I attempt to meet with individual church leaders and administrators, attend the annual meetings of the larger churches (Church of Ireland, Methodist, Presbyterian) and the Quakers, keep in touch with church issues through their newsletters/websites, attend services of worship, and offer the smaller churches whatever practical assistance we can through the office (e.g. letters supporting visa applications, finding unused worship locations, passing on office equipment). Inevitably this intention turns out to be patchy, but my commitment is to keep this work on a relational basis, rather than allowing it to become distant, formal or institutionalised.

Non-Member churches: There are more than 20 different churches and many independent fellowships on this island that are not part of the Council's membership. While it is encouraging to hear that individual Council members involved with groups like AICCMR, Embrace and PIP are in contact with some of the ethnic churches, the Council has not to date engaged in formal talks with any non-member churches or any coalitions of them – though we continue to have good informal relationships with Evangelical Alliance in both N. Ireland and the Republic. The challenge remains to listen to new voices and keep the table open. During the year, the Executive received membership enquiries from four different churches. Two have expressed interest in applying once the membership criteria have been clarified. An informal meeting took place before Christmas with the Metropolitan responsible for Europe and North America in the Indian Orthodox Church (also known as the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church). We hope to progress these applications further during 2008.

(5) Governance

AGM 2007: This was hosted on March 22 by the member churches in Armagh with 87 Council members and guests attending. Derek Poole (Programme Director, Centre for Contemporary Christianity in Ireland) gave a stimulating address on the day's theme '*Future directions for the churches in Ireland: Post-Nationalism, Post-Christendom, Post-Modernity*' to which Professor Linda Hogan (Head of School, Irish School of Ecumenics, Dublin) responded. After a pilgrimage to another church for lunch, delegates had an open plenary with the leaders of the four largest churches. The AGM acknowledged the closure of the Inter-Church Reconciliation Fund for Ireland on 31/12/2006. This had been set up in 1974 with funds received largely from European churches and church agencies. Their continuing solidarity during the Troubles helped to support over one thousand cross-community youth work,

reconciliation and community development projects. A short record of this important piece of work is available from the Inter-Church Centre in Belfast. Rev Tony Davidson, Hilton Henry and Dr David Stevens were formally appointed as Property Trustees (48 Elmwood Avenue). Finally, the President publicly thanked Rev Dr Gordon Gray (Presbyterian), Dr David Poole (Religious Society of Friends) and Rev Dr Norman Taggart (Methodist) for their longstanding commitment and contribution to ICC over many years.

AGM 2008: This will be hosted on April 2nd by the Methodist church in Bray, Co Wicklow with keynote speakers addressing the theme '*Witnessing together in a changing Ireland.*' Afternoon workshops will apply the theme to issues of family life, suicide, and what it means to be church. Member churches will be invited to approve a key motion from ICC Executive to sell the Inter-Church Centre at 48, Elmwood Avenue, Belfast.

ICC Executive Committee: Five meetings were held during the year. These included morning sessions organised by individual Executive members in the Ardoyne (North Belfast) and in Clontarf (Dublin) to meet with local church and community groups; a planning meeting at Emmaus (Swords) and a pre-AGM meeting in Armagh. Amongst the many agenda items, the Executive Committee:

- accepted a proposal to sell 48 Elmwood Avenue, Belfast
- supported a proposal to create a part-time ecumenical staff position in the Republic and forwarded this to the Irish Inter-Church Committee/IICC
- supported a proposal from the Board of Overseas Affairs to broaden its work under the auspices of IICC and forwarded this to IICC
- postponed the Irish Ecumenical Directory project until more information could be obtained from the local level and then be made more widely available through the website
- discussed a paper on the criteria for ICC membership
- listened to presentations from member churches, Christian Aid Ireland, PIP project
- reviewed internal matters (Joint Management Group, terms of reference for sub-groups, the roles of the officeholders, the rota for nominating for Vice President, Council's insurance cover, staff pension schemes)
- appointed ICC representatives to external bodies with clarity about tenure and accountability
- hosted a group of employers from the Church of Norway
- welcomed a new tenant at 48 (the Administrator of Embrace NI) and expanded space available to the TIDES staff (existing tenants)

- reviewed progress on its core priorities

ICC's core objectives 2006-2009

Progress made after 12 months was reviewed by ICC Executive at their August planning meeting

- (1) To be an ecumenical instrument facilitating its member churches to pray, witness and act together on this island by
 - deepening the fellowship and common life in Christ among member churches at local, regional, national and international levels;
 - encouraging bilateral and multilateral ecumenical actions among member churches;
 - seeking to stimulate ways of more effective witness
 - relating to other Christian communities throughout Ireland
- (2) To be a resource for all member churches, and particularly for the smaller ones, to facilitate dialogue with
 - non-member churches throughout the island of Ireland
 - Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (CTBI)
 - Conference of European Churches (CEC), World Council of Churches and other international ecumenical structures
 - civil society in general, including with other faiths
- (3) To identify and encourage local ecumenical, inter-church and other Christian networks
- (4) To provide safe spaces for dialogue and encounter on difficult and/or contentious issues within and between member churches
- (5) To address those matters that cannot be accommodated in the structures of the Irish Inter-Church Meeting:
 - ICC is a registered charity with its own AGM, is a legal employer, an associate member of CTBI & CEC, has oversight of a Board of Overseas Affairs, manages the Inter-Church Centre and appoints ICC representatives to various bodies.
 - IICM is an informal ecumenical forum which meets every 12-18 months, has a committee that meets quarterly to oversee its responsibility for ICCSI (social issues including racism), the Department for Theological Questions, and whatever issues its members wish to raise.

- (6) To focus the common Christian witness of member churches in promoting the common good on this island based on the Christian values of peace, justice, reconciliation, resource sharing and the vision of an inclusive society for all.

(6) Board of Overseas Affairs – Rev Dr Jim Campbell (Moderator 2003-2010, Presbyterian)

The Board of Overseas Affairs, the one Board still existing within the domain of the Irish Council of Churches, has a broad remit including overseas aid and development, world mission, and international affairs and relations. As members feel strongly that Christian witness in this area would be more effective if the committee was more inclusive, discussions have been started with the Irish Inter-Church Committee (IICC) about coming under the aegis of the Irish Inter-Church Meeting, i.e. including Catholic Church involvement. As the IICC wished to review its mandate and work first before taking any decisions, discussions have only been touched upon, and it is recognised that broadening the Board would require changes of various kinds.

The Board of Overseas Affairs currently meets three times a year. Rev Dr Jim Campbell is the Moderator, Rev Colin McClure is Deputy Moderator, and members represent a variety of churches on an ‘opt in’ basis (any member of the Council can be a member of the Board). Colin McClure represents the Board on the International Affairs Liaison Group of CTBI, and Rev Prof Cecil McCullough has replaced Rev Dr Gordon Gray as a representative on the Middle East Forum of CTBI and our Middle East specialist. Tribute was paid during the year to Dr Gray for long years of committed service to the Board, including as Moderator. Rev Paul Hoey has taken up the position of ICC representative on the Global Mission Network (formerly Churches’ Commission on Mission); his predecessor, Maureen Irwin, was thanked for her significant contribution to the work and the Board over many years. The reports written by those representing ICC on CTBI Forums this past year can be found on pages 29-33.

The Board hears regularly about the work of Christian Aid and appreciation has been expressed for what Christian Aid does in supporting work and education for world development in the churches (see report on pages 24-25). In addition, during 2007 we began to hear reports on the work being done by denominational world development bodies. The situation in Zimbabwe has also been on the agenda.

The Board is fortunate to have regular contributors on particular areas of the world including Sudan (Rev Terry McMullan) and Sri Lanka (Rev Dr Norman Taggart) who keep us up to date with a level of knowledge and detail, difficult to come by elsewhere. We have continued to take an interest in, and try to support, the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI). During the year we had Sonia Hume of SAT-7, a Christian television broadcasting agency in the Middle East, speak at a Board meeting and also at an evening meeting organised by the Board. SAT-7 provides important support to Christians and enquirers and helps counteract the image of Christianity as simply being anything 'Western'. It has the support and involvement of a broad range of churches in the Middle East. (The website of the SAT-7 Trust for Britain and Ireland is at www.sat7trust.org)

While the World Mission Committee, a sub-committee of the Board, did not meet during 2007, there was a lunch-time meeting organised at the Inter-Church Centre in Belfast for churches to meet and learn more about Irish Aid. This included the changes happening with this world development funding arm of the Irish government and the opportunities for churches to access funding for work abroad and in relation to development.

During 2008, the Board will continue its focus on its key areas, pick up other topics as warranted, and organise occasional speaker meetings as the opportunity arises. If there is a change of aegis in the offing, mentioned in the first paragraph of this report, then more major changes will be planned.

(7) Europe

As ICC is an associate member of the Conference of European Churches (CEC), there are opportunities for representatives from the Irish churches to participate in ecumenical discussions at the European level. During 2007, Robert Cochran (Methodist) attended a Church and Society meeting in Armenia (report on page 33); Michael Earle attended a meeting of European General Secretaries in Budapest (Hungary); Rev Colin Campbell (Non-Subscribing Presbyterian), Karen Kelly (ICC Administrator) and Fr Godfrey O'Donnell (Romanian Orthodox) represented ICC at the third European Ecumenical Assembly held in Sibiu (Romania). All fully reported on their experiences to the Executive. The Irish churches gifted a candle to the Romanian churches and that story is included on page 44. Plans are in hand to create space for the larger churches to share common concerns on European Union matters before the next CEC Church and Society Meeting.

(8) Annual reports from ecumenical and community organisation on which there is ICC representation.

These are printed at the end of this Annual report with the name of the writer at the top of each

- All-Ireland Churches' Consultative Meeting on Racism (AICCMR)
- Bill of Rights Forum (NI)
- Christian Aid Ireland
- Churches Peace Education Programme (CPEP)
- Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (CTBI)
- CTBI Churches' Commission for Racial Justice (CCRJ)
- CTBI Global Mission Network (GMN)
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- CTBI Middle East Forum (MEF)
- Conference of European Churches: Church & Society Commission (CSC)
- Embrace (NI)
- Inter Church involvement in funding
- Irish Inter-Church Committee (IICC)
- Inter-Church Committee on Social Issues (ICCSI)
- Racial Equality Forum (NI)
- Regional Equality Liaison Panel (RELP)
- Women's Link

(9) Statistics

Staff serviced 53 ecumenical committee meetings around the island (administration and minutes) and provided an ecumenical presence at 60 conferences/seminars /events. Six open ecumenical events were held during the year (two organised by the Board of Overseas Affairs, two involving Dr Sam Kobia and the Irish School of Ecumenics; the 'Taste and See' event organised by AICCMR on the worship styles new to this island; and the study day with students from eight theological colleges)

(10) Communication

Communications strategy: In August, the Executive approved the following policy:

- (i) ICC will endeavour through its member churches, representatives, structures and staff to achieve:

* the communication of the Council, its message and beliefs to member churches, church leaders and administrators, individuals, organisations, statutory bodies, governments and political representatives in both jurisdictions, other Christian bodies, other religions and their representatives

- * effective communication within the Council between Executive, officeholders, committees and task groups, staff
- (ii) ICC will seek to develop and enhance:
- * the identity and image/logo/strapline of ICC conveyed in its publications
 - * the interaction of ICC with print and broadcast media (church and secular in both jurisdictions) using expertise within member churches
 - * Internet/website
 - * communication of the activities and decisions of Executive and the AGM
 - * *Irish Ecumenical News*
 - * brochures
- (iii) ICC will appoint a Communication Committee comprised of five representatives appointed by member churches, served by the General Secretary, to fulfil these objectives and report regularly to the ICC Executive Committee and the AGM.

Strapline: During the year, the Executive approved the following brief description of ICC's core work on our new conference banner:

'Cross-ing boundaries – creating places where Irish churches from all traditions may pray, dialogue and act together.'

This acknowledges ICC's Christian foundations and the realities of many divisions in our churches and local communities. It clarifies ICC's central role in creating focussed spaces for its members and other churches to meet around the island. It challenges the member churches to meet with each other and the wider community, to be purposeful and active at the boundaries/margins in building Christ's Kingdom together.

Irish Ecumenical News: This occasional resource of ecumenical information serves as a useful all-island communications medium between the 3,250 faith communities of the 16 member churches of the Inter-Church Meeting. Four editions (January, Lent, Pentecost and Autumn) were completed in 2007, ranging in length from 2 to 14 pages. News stories are gathered from many different printed church and community sources that arrive each week in the office. Guest editorials have so far been invited from church leaders and ICC officeholders. It takes nearly two weeks to collate the material, edit, print and distribute each edition with some casual help of young people. The email database continues to expand and now exceeds over 1,000 with a printed edition being sent to another 350 readers, though this is becoming increasingly uneconomic. Three editions are planned in 2008. It is hoped that much of the

material, including the Ecumenical Diary, can be transferred onto the new website.

Press releases: Seven press releases were distributed during the year to member churches and the secular press. Apart from the *Church of Ireland Gazette* and the *Methodist Newsletter*, Council delegates need to be aware that few/none of our ecumenical good news stories during the year have been picked by the editors of the member church newsletters to inform their readership.

ICC website: The new website www.irishchurches.org will be in operation by the AGM, thanks to the patience, skill and perseverance of the office Administrator (Karen Kelly), Robert Cochran and the website designer (Mark Robinson). We have at last reached agreement in clarifying the identities of ICC and IICC and hope this communications medium will now help us to reach a wider public audience than previously reached. The ICC website will have many inter-church resources available to download and print free of charge. The website will be a source of information on inter-church activity around the island. We hope we can continue to keep it user-friendly, up-to-date and relevant, but realise this will have to be undertaken within existing staff hours. We welcome the offer of technical support from the new CTBI Web Manager when this appointment is made in 2008.

Future: Executive will establish an ICC Communications Committee in 2008 to implement the agreed communications strategy and bring additional expertise to this important and strategic area of our work on this island.

(11) ICC priorities for 2008

The Executive will continue to develop its core priorities under the leadership of its new President. If the AGM agrees to sell 48 Elmwood Avenue, the agenda for 2008 will include:

- finding suitable premises for a new ecumenical office in Belfast
- further work with IICC in deciding about an ecumenical appointment in the Republic and the future direction of the Board of Overseas Affairs
- developing the website to incorporate the *Irish Ecumenical News* (3 editions) and the Irish Ecumenical Directory
- developing a network of ethical specialists to resource the Council as needed
- clarifying the Council's membership criteria and processing outstanding membership applications

- resourcing parish and ecumenical groups with web-based CTBI materials relating to the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity (January), Lent (February/March), Racial Justice Sunday (September), and Creation month (September) – the latter is an outcome of the European Ecumenical Assembly in Sibiu
- listening to the Irish Government’s referendum proposals on EU Treaty Reform
- complying with the requirements of the proposed NI Charities Commission
- setting up a Communications Committee
- implementing any funding outcome for the Churches Peace Education Programme
- contributing to the four nations work of CTBI, including preparations for a 4-nations church leaders’ summit in 2009 and the Edinburgh 1910 anniversary in 2010
- developing agendas focussing more on in-depth outward-looking debate rather than internal housekeeping issues; responding to issues that the member churches want to work on together

(12) Conclusion

Implicit in all this planning is the prayer:

- (i) to be the ecumenical instrument that serves and adds value to the member churches of ICC in their shared witness to pray, witness and act together on this loved island;
- (ii) to be signs of Light, Hope and Unity in all that we do together in our Irish context;
- (iii) and most importantly, to ‘become one flock with one shepherd.’

May our actions be faithful and obedient in deepening this common life together during 2008.

*Lord of the church, we pray for our renewing; Christ over all, our undivided aim;
Fire of the Spirit, burn for our enduring; wind of the Spirit, fan the living flame;
We turn to Christ amid our fear and failing; the will that lacks the courage to be free;
The weary labours, all but unavailing, to bring us nearer to what a church should be.’*

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Michael Earle
General Secretary, ICC
Executive secretary, IICM
31 January 2008

HONORARY TREASURER'S REPORT to AGM 2008

1 GENERAL

I express my utmost thanks and appreciation for the encouragement and help of Michael Earle and Karen Kelly in connection with my role as Honorary Treasurer. I really enjoy and benefit from involvement in the Irish Council of Churches.

2 FINANCE

The audited Accounts for 2007 will be presented at AGM in Bray on 2 April 2008. This presentation should allow for pertinent questions and encourage vision to guide future direction.

I highlight some areas considered during the year 2007:

Property

The Executive Committee received a report on remedial maintenance requirement to office premises 48 Elmwood Ave, Belfast costing around £400,000. Detailed consideration of options followed and the committee brings a recommendation to Council to sell this property. This motion to sell will be brought to the AGM on 2 April 2008.

Staff salaries

From 1 April 2007 salaries were increased by 3% together with enhancement of the salary of the Office Administrator to recognise her growing work responsibilities. Examination of staff pension policies was commenced during 2007 to ensure compliance with legislation and best return for pension contributions.

Member church subscriptions

A decision was made to increase member subscriptions by 3% from 1 January 2007 and effect a minimum subscription per denomination of £100/€148. It was decided also to increase such subscriptions by a further 3% from 1 January 2008.

Accounts 2007

a) The accounts for the year ending 31 December 2007 will be prepared by me for audit by mid January 2008. I plan to present these in the same format as last year. Charity legislation may require more detailed annual accounts in future years.

b) See below table of member church contributions to the ICC General Fund for year end 31 December 2007 and comparison with 2006. There is one outstanding membership subscription.

c) Travel reserve balance at year end 2006 was £6,818. This reserve was created in order to finance individuals (especially youth) to travel to ecumenical events abroad thus nurturing fresh ecumenical vision. The Executive Committee decided to merge this reserve into a general reserve but not lose vision for this ecumenical initiative. It was decided to finance the cost of such travel from the revenue whichever year the expense is incurred.

Hilton Henry 18 January 2008

AUDITED ACCOUNTS for the year ending 31 December 2007 will be presented to the Annual Meeting and be available on request from the ICC office.

**Member Churches Contributions to ICC at 31 December 2006
and at 31 December 2007**

	General Fund 2007	General Fund 2006	Travel Fund 2006
	£	£	£
The Church of Ireland	16,892	16,236	164
The Presbyterian Church in Ireland	16,892	16,236	164
The Methodist Church in Ireland	5,150	4,950	50
The Religious Society of Friends	665	640	6
The Non Subscribing Presbyterian Church of Ireland	665	640	6
The LifeLink Network of Churches	309	297	3
The Salvation Army	237	228	2
The Lutheran Church in Ireland	197	183	2
The Moravian Church Irish District	191	183	2
The Greek Orthodox Church in Britain & Ireland	191	183	2
The Romanian Orthodox Church in Ireland	191	183	2
The Coptic Orthodox Church in Ireland	0	45	1
The Russian Orthodox Church in Ireland	100	45	1
The Rock of Ages Cherubim and Seraphim Church	100	45	1
The Antiochian Orthodox Church in Ireland	100	49	1
	41, 880	40,143	407

All-Ireland Churches' Consultative Meeting on Racism (AICCMR)

– Dr Scott Boldt (chair)

The AICCMR has continued to meet under the auspices of ICCSI to fulfil its role within the inter-church structures of providing a voice and a challenge to churches to respond to racism, to positively 'welcome the stranger' and to embrace the emerging demographic and inter-cultural realities of newcomers in Ireland.

After the success of the inter-church worship event in Dublin in November 2006, the group has been involved in a variety of activities in the last year. Members have been serving on the advisory group for the Parish-based Integration Project (PIP) of ICCSI. We had a meeting with Andy Bruce and Claudette Douglas of CCRJ (Churches Commission for Racial Justice, CTBI) to provide them with an overview of and insight into the Irish situation. A regional meeting was organised and held in Dungannon to learn about and support local churches engaged in addressing racism.

A second *Taste and See* inter-church worship event was organised in May, this time in Belfast at St Colmcille's Catholic Church, Ballyhackamore. A distinctive feature of this event was the five workshops which took place in the morning focused on creative tools for reconciliation and worship (Psalm Drummers, Gospel music, visual arts, puppetry and drama). The worship event itself had contributions from the Psalm Drummers, the Polish Mission Church, the Vineyard Church, the Methodist Church and individual offerings of poetry, painting, prayers in different languages and a reflective PowerPoint presentation.

During the year, the group has been revisiting its aims and objectives. One of the themes which has been emerging is building relationships between the newer churches in Ireland and the more established churches. The group has also been attempting to come up with a new name and this process has proved helpful in articulating its aims and purpose. *'Inter-cultural Insights: Christian reflections on racism, hospitality and identity from the island of Ireland'* has been edited and extended into a comprehensive training resource and will be published in 2008. We are also looking at publishing an updated version of *'What the Bible says about the Stranger'* by Rev Kieran O'Mahony, OSA.

Bill of Rights Forum (NI)

– Very Rev Dr Samuel Hutchinson (Presbyterian)

A Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland was promised in the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement (1998). That Bill is to provide rights which are supplementary to the European Convention on Human Rights and which relate to “the particular circumstances of Northern Ireland,” which is emerging from 30 years of conflict.

Following the political discussions at St Andrews, a Forum was set up to advise on the contents of the Bill. That Forum is a multi-party, multi-sectoral body broadly representative of the people of Northern Ireland. Since I was appointed as the ICC representative last February, I have regularly attended its meetings, which initially took place about once a month, but then became more frequent. Some meetings are half-day events; some are whole-day events, while one residential meeting lasted two days. However, plenary meetings of the Forum meetings are only the tip of the iceberg. Most of the detailed work – and there is a lot of it - is being done in Working Groups, the membership of which has been strengthened by the addition of persons who are not Forum members, but who have some relevant expertise to offer, those nominated by the ICC being Rev Patricia McBride (Presbyterian Church), Rev Dr Fred Munce, MBE (Methodist Church) and Mr Lindsay Conway OBE (Presbyterian Church). ICC has arranged three additional meetings in Armagh for these representatives to meet with key people in the churches’ Church and Society sector to monitor developments and share common concerns.

I convene the Working Party on Criminal Justice and Victims, which is meeting once a week. That convenorship has also involved me in:

- (i) A conveners’ meeting which acts as an Executive Committee;
- (ii) A further sub-group managing our four outreach workers, who contact sections of our community not much involved hitherto, such as the Loyal Orders, and vulnerable groups, such as those who suffer from disability or who live in remote rural districts or in “TSN” areas of social need;
- (iii) An extensive programme of deputation, addressing Human Rights meetings arranged by various organisations, of which the Orange Order and the WAVE victims group are probably the best known;
- (iv) Other conferences with a Human Rights dimension organised by bodies like the Human Rights Commission, Age Concern, Disability Action, etc. Those conferences provide an opportunity to confer with leading lawyers and academics and others such as Kadar Asmal from South Africa.

While a Bill of Rights usually deals with basic principles rather than detail, the issues raised for inclusion in the Bill are numerous, including a wide range of women's rights; children's rights; economic and social rights; culture, identity and language; civil and political rights; sexual orientation; disability, ethnic minority concerns and the needs of the travelling community, as well as the key issues of the criminal justice system and victims. Unfortunately the Forum membership does not include any representative of a victims' organisation so we have contacted many of them (over 40 to date) and taken written and oral submissions. The legal definition of "victim" is likely to prove difficult if not impossible and needs are not always the same as rights. Issues arising in criminal justice include the right to silence, length of time awaiting charge or trial, detention without charge, juvenile justice and the age of criminal responsibility, an issue which can give rise to much misunderstanding.

Our timetable is extremely tight as our proposals must be submitted on 31st March 2008, when the Forum and its Working Parties will cease to exist.

Christian Aid Ireland – *Margaret Boden (Director)*

On the 1st April 2007, the two Companies created in 2006 commenced operating. As Christian Aid's financial year runs from April to March, the first annual report and audited accounts should be in the public domain by September 2008. The two Boards approved at the AGM in October 2006 by the member church bodies including the Irish Council of Churches, met regularly and undertook Governance training at the beginning of 2007. At a residential of the Boards in October they also undertook Gender based Violence and HIV awareness training and learned more about Christian Aid's rapid response to emergencies. Christian Aid's global strategy of "*Turning Hope into Action*" is embraced by the Irish Boards and work in Ireland is therefore allied to this.

Of significance during 2007 was the agreement by Irish Aid to fund Christian Aid's work again in their multi annual programme funding scheme known as MAPS. Having received three years funding for conflict and post conflict countries from MAPS 1, it was agreed that MAPS 2 would be a five year contract with a significant increase in funding and an expansion from four countries to seven. €17 million over five years will therefore contribute significantly to country programmes in Afghanistan, Sierra Leone, Israel/occupied Palestinian Territories, Colombia, Rwanda, Burundi and Angola. Christian Aid is one of five international agencies currently in the MAPS programme. It cannot be stressed enough that it is because of the generous support of our member churches and the wider community that we are in a position to apply for and receive Irish Government funding. We are

therefore conscious that voluntary income through Christian Aid Week, Denominational Appeals, Committed Giving, Legacies, Present Aid and other generous donations are increased in value because MAPS 2 funding is proportionate to the size of Christian Aid in Ireland.

During 2007, one of our Board Members, Rev. Dr. Sahr Yambasu (Methodist minister in Galway) returned to his home country of Sierra Leone to facilitate a media visit by the *Irish Times* journalist Mary Fitzgerald. Timed to coincide with the lead up to elections in August, it helped to underline that the building of civil society in post conflict situations is an important part of Christian Aid's support of partner organisations. In 2008 it is hoped that two of Christian Aid's Board members will visit Angola on a similar fact finding visit.

In this "transition" year for Christian Aid in Ireland, we will continue to assess the capacity of the Ireland operation to carry out new and devolved ways of working in an open, transparent and efficient way. In 2006/07 £5.7 million was received through the Belfast and Dublin offices and around another £250,000 received in London from Irish sources. We are seeking to align financial systems so that all income raised in Ireland can be audited in Ireland and therefore benefit our relationship with Irish government sources. The appointment of a qualified accountant as Head of Finance, Mrs Gillian Laney, will contribute significantly to this.

Churches Peace Education Programme (CPEP)

– *Michael Earle (Secretary)*

ICC reps: *Canon Trevor Williams (C of I), Rev Tony Davidson (Presbyterian), Gillian Kingston (Methodist), Hilton Henry (ICC Treasurer)*

Catholic reps appointed by Irish Commission for Justice and Social Affairs (ICJSA): *Bishop Donal McKeown, Fr Tim Bartlett, Harry Casey*

The Trustees continue to search a new direction for this programme since funding for the last one ended in 2005. They formally met once during 2007, but continue in email communication through the Chair (Bishop Donal McKeown, ICJSA) and Vice-Chair (Canon Trevor Williams, ICC).

A major application for a fully staffed project for 2008-2010 which offered a new direction with major involvement by Stranmillis and St Mary's University Colleges was unsuccessfully made to the Department of Education (NI). At the same time, approval was given to grant the Council for the Curriculum Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) non-exclusive permission to adapt and reproduce materials from CPEP's Little Pathways Resource, free of charge to

all Primary schools in Northern Ireland, as part of its Year 2 publication called *'Living. Learning. Together.'*

During the summer, another more modest three-year project offering a new direction was prepared by Dr Gerry McCann, based on the research that he had undertaken for the Trustees in 2006. The Trustees subsequently submitted a project application to the Reconciliation Fund of the Department of Foreign Affairs (Republic of Ireland) and expect to hear the outcome of this by March 2008. If successful, the Irish Bishops Conference has agreed to make an annual grant of £5,000 for the term of the project. A similar amount has been approved by the Executive of the Irish Council of Churches.

Copies of CPEP's history and the Research report 2006 are still available from the Inter-Church Centre.

Churches Together in Britain and Ireland

- Canon Bob Fyffe, General Secretary CTBI, December 2007

Churches Together in Britain and Ireland is an expression of our shared commitment as churches, and an important instrument towards the unity we seek. Our principal function is to deliver constructive space for the Churches to meet one another. We are committed to working the Churches agenda, using the Trustee Body and Senior Representatives Forum as a platform to carry this forward. We are also aware of the need to engage with the churches more regularly in order to listen and respond to changes of priority and emphasis.

It was agreed by the CTBI Trustees that the existing Churches Commissions should be reconfigured and redefined as Networks. This is not merely a change of name but reflects a radically different way of working. Part of our renewed emphasis on accountability to the new Trustee body has involved partnership with the four National Ecumenical Instruments in appointing representatives to the new Networks. With new governance we have taken the opportunity to redefine the role of each Network and to ensure that priorities are understood and shared across the organisation. Part of these plans involves a Networking Conference, when we will bring all the Networks together for an annual gathering. We hope that this will allow sharing and planning with the Churches in a more dynamic way.

One aspect of our new ways of working has been to work across the various portfolios, allowing greater sharing, understanding and coherence across the organisation. This has allowed us to agree common themes with the Churches and these are being developed and taken forward as a priority.

The three themes being worked across CTBI are:

Migration and the Movements of People.
Environment and Climate Change
Culture, Identity and the Public Space

Faith and Order

The Faith and Order agenda has been given far greater prominence in our new arrangements. There will be a four nations consultation on the Nature and Mission of the Church, taking place next June and invitations will be sent out in the very near future.

The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2008 materials have already been produced and advertised. It should be noted that this year's material is available as a free download and is available in English, Welsh and Irish.

Racial Justice

The excellent document "*Migration Principles*" has been in circulation for some months now, and has been extremely well received. It follows on from "*Asylum Principles*" published last year. Now the Racial Justice team are organising events around the four nations in partnership with local Churches Together groups to work through the principles and to discuss how this crucial topic is taken forward at local level.

Global Mission Network

Trustees will shortly be receiving the final outcomes of a review of Global Mission Network Regional Forums. This review has been undertaken to ensure that the views of the churches are central to future priorities and resources. At the same time the work of the Mission Theology Advisory Group has continued along with the Centre for Mission Accompaniment. Both groups have recently produced excellent publications. Within GMN, the China desk continues to overflow with ideas, initiatives and publications. GMN also continues to play a crucial role within the four nations as we prepare for the Edinburgh 2010 Conference.

International Affairs

The work of International Affairs continues to focus on Zimbabwe and the Middle East. By its nature this work requires quiet diplomacy and an understanding of complex issues. We continue to explore ways in which we can resource joint initiatives with the churches in these areas of concern. Issues around language are being discussed and work with partners on this important area developed.

Inter Faith Relations

Inter Faith Relations is regarded as one of the crucial issues of the present time. In the political arena we need to be fully aware of all the developments flowing from Government and in this respect it is important to develop close contacts with those who work in the public square on these issues. Equally, many of the churches are making a priority of inter faith relations and CTBI seeks to work in a complementary way with the Churches and the Ecumenical Instruments in this arena.

Church and Society

Following the Third European Ecumenical Assembly it has been suggested that the period from 1st September to 4th October be set aside by Churches to focus on God's creation. CTBI has therefore taken the opportunity to invite a small group to pull together the already vast array of worship and study resources available, so that they might be more easily used by those who wish to focus on the environment and creation during this period. These web based resources might take the same form as the Week of prayer materials.

Future

With so many pressures on church leaders I hope that a programme called "Growing Global Leadership" may be of interest. We are exploring how we might identify emerging church leadership, who might then be resourced to visit and reflect upon various situations around the world. I am working to establish a pilot project to establish how this might best be developed.

Emerging from the "Ecumenical Architecture" was the desire for a Church Leaders Summit. This plan is now being taken forward across the four nations and I hope an event will take place sometime in 2009.

As well as the various initiatives identified above we continue to support and resource work across the four nations such as the Edinburgh 2010 programme. All of this is being resourced within the confines of restricted budgets. I hope that you can appreciate that we are now emerging with fresh energy and enthusiasm. All of the projects and work can now be seen on our new web site (www.ctbi.org.uk)

Governance as an Associate member: The Irish Council of Churches applied for Associate membership status of CTBI in May 2005. It has been represented by the following elected representatives on the CTBI Trust since it was reconstituted in May 2007: Gillian Kingston, Hilton Henry and Bishop Richard Clarke (replacing Bishop Michael Jackson). They fully participate and



Some members of the ICC Executive Committee visiting North Belfast, April 2007



Irish Inter-Church Committee, November 2007

Rev Dr Donald Watts (PCI), Rev Fr Godfrey O'Donnell (Romanian Orthodox), Rev Tony Davidson (PCI), Mr Robert Cochran (ICCSI), Rev Gabriel Farquhar (PCI), Most Rev Dr John McAreavey (RC), Mr Michael Earle (Executive Secretary), Ms Gillian Kingston (MCI), Most Rev Dr Diarmuid Martin (RC), Rev Dr Tom Norris (RC), Most Rev Richard Clarke (C of I), Prof Brendan Leahy (RC), Most Rev Dr Gerry Clifford (RC), Mr Eamonn Fleming KCSG (Hon Treasurer), Most Rev Dr Tony Farquhar (RC)



Panel of Church Leaders at the ICC AGM in Armagh, March 2007

(L-R) Rt Rev David Clarke (PCI), Rev Ivan McElhinney (MCI), Ms Gillian Kingston (chair), Most Rev Dr Alan Harper (C of I), Most Rev Dr Gerry Clifford (RC)



ICC delegates to the European Ecumenical Assembly (EEA3) in Sibiu, Romania Sept '07
Rev Fr Godfrey O'Donnell, Karen Kelly and Rev Colin Campbell with Sr Joan Roddy (RC)



ICC meeting on the Bill of Rights (L-R standing)
Rev Dr Wesley Blair (MCI), Rev Dr Sam Hutchinson (PCI), Rev Patricia McBride (PCI), Canon Walter Lewis (CofI), Sr Brighde Valelly (RC), Rob Fairmichael (ICC), Rev Tony Davidson (PCI) (L-R sitting) Most Rev Dr Alan Harper (C of I), Ms Janet Maxwell (C of I), Mr Lindsay Conway OBE (PCI)



Rev Dr Sam Kobia (General Secretary, World Council of Churches) with (L-R) Prof Linda Hogan (ISE), Most Rev Dr John Neill (C of I), Most Rev Dr Diarmuid Martin (RC) and Dr Andrew Pierce (ISE) at the Irish School of Ecumenics, April '07



Some members of the committee of Women's Link (L-R) Mrs Joyce Bond (Secretary, C of I), Olive Hobson (Society of Friends), Miss Winnie Moffitt (Women's Link Chairperson-elect, MCI), Mrs Marian Woods (Moravian), Mrs Roberta Thompson (Chairperson Women's Link, Moravian), Ms Violet O'Mullan (NSPCI) Mrs Phyllis Watters (MCI), Ms Margie Savage (Women's World Day of Prayer N.I.)

Greenhills Ecumenical Conference Jan 08 (L-R) Panel: Canon Patrick Comerford (C of I), Rev Dr Ruth Patterson (PCI), Ms Gillian Kingston (ICC)



Ms Gillian Kingston and Mr Hilton Henry attending the CTBI Trustee meeting in Dublin, January '08



Speakers and Co-Chairs at the Irish Inter-Church Committee study day, *October 2007*
(L-R) Cardinal Sean Brady (RC), Dame Mary Tanner (keynote speaker/ European President of WCC), Ms Gillian Kingston (ICC), Prof J Cecil McCullough (PCI), Most Rev Dr Tony Farquhar (RC)



Some council members and guests at the ICC AGM in Armagh, March 2007



Most Rev Joseph Duffy (RC), Most Rev Michael Jackson (C of I) and Mgr Richard Mohan (Prior) with the Irish Ecumenical candle at an Ash Wednesday ecumenical service at Lough Derg.



A symbol of unity in diversity

Michael Earle and Karen Kelly at the ICC AGM, March 07





General Secretaries of CTBI and the four nations: *Canon Bob Fyffe (CTBI), Rev Aled Edwards (Cytûn-Wales), Br Stephen Smyth (ACTS-Scotland), Rev Bill Snelson (CTE-England) and Michael Earle (ICC).*



Rev Tony Davidson (PCI), Pastor Paul Reid (LifeLink) and Peter Jordan (LifeLink) at the ICC AGM, March 2007



Adrian Cristea – Project Worker, Parish-based Intergration Project



Most Rev Dr Tony Farquhar (RC) and Rev Tony Davidson (PCI) hosting an ICC seminar with a delegation of employers from the Church of Norway, Oct '07



Very Rev Dr Samuel Hutchinson – ICC representative on the NI Bill of Rights Forum 2007-08



Delegates at the Irish Inter-Church Committee study day at Emmaus, October 2007



Derek Poole, keynote speaker addressing the ICC AGM in Armagh, March 2007

contribute to the Trust's business, but act as non-voting trustee observers. Mr Henry's term will expire in April 2008. Trustee meetings have rotated around the four nations, the last was held in Dublin for the first time in January 2008. The General Secretary (ICC) attends these CTBI Trust meetings and also participates in the 4- nations' General Secretaries meetings.

CTBI membership: The Church of Ireland and Methodist Church in Ireland are full-members of CTBI, while the Catholic Church in Ireland is an associate member. Eight other ICC member churches have indirect membership through their churches in Britain (Antiochian Orthodox, Cherubim and Seraphim, Coptic Orthodox, Greek Orthodox, Lutheran, Moravian, Russian Orthodox, Salvation Army).

CTBI Churches' Commission for Racial Justice (CCRJ) **- *Denise Wright (LifeLink)***

CCRJ has historically been a Commission of Churches Together in Britain and Ireland. It includes representatives from the Churches and related organisations. It monitors trends and developments in the field of racial justice in Britain, Ireland and Europe and seeks to co-ordinate the Churches' response on key issues.

A document '*Asylum Principles*' has been designed to help Churches and other organisations individually and collectively to formulate responses to public policy and its impact upon refugees, and people who seek asylum. A paper on Migration has been developed to provide a similar resource on that subject.

This year's meeting of the Commissioners was held in October 2007 in Ireland at the Emmaus Centre, Dublin. It provided a forum for Commissioners and staff to come together to share the work being undertaken in the four nations and to speak into the future structure and work of the Commission.

The Commission is to become a Network, as will the other Commissions of CTBI. The past year has seen significant changes and a comprehensive review of the work of the Commission has resulted in a new strategic plan that sees the Racial Justice Fund and Racial Justice Sunday as the centre of the network's activity, from which its further work of campaigning, education and empowerment will flow.

In a strategic move to maximize the impact of the Fund, grant distribution will be suspended during 2008. All available resources will now be invested in networking and capacity building through the regional centres of the Racial Justice Network.

Staff from CCRJ have traveled to Ireland - North and South - to visit projects on the ground and it is envisaged that this relationship will continue to grow.

CTBI Global Mission Network (GMN)

– Rev Paul Hoey (Church of Ireland)

I attended my first meeting as a representative of ICC on CTBI's Global Mission Network organizing group in September, but really can't say very much about it as the substantive business was the reception of a confidential review of the workings of the various forums. Apparently, the efficient working of the various Forums in a way that bears some relationship to the work and values of CTBI has been an item on the agenda for some years, but this independent review has been helpful and the process will be complete by March 2008.

At this meeting, Steven Lyon announced that he would step down as Moderator of GMN after the next meeting. Tribute was paid to the important strategic and organizational work he had enabled. There was also some discussion on what "membership" of GMN, as opposed to "affiliation", meant but in general, it was agreed that as wide an involvement of churches and groups should be encouraged to participate in the meetings and activities of the Network.

I attended a meeting of GMN itself in November. There were about twenty people present of whom two, Rev Derek Poole representing the Methodist Church, and myself, were from Ireland. Again, a key agenda item was the Forum Review and members were able to express their views on the recommendations to Janice Price, the Commission Secretary, and to key CTBI staff before decisions are made about the Forums.

The other substantive item was a report on plans for the Edinburgh 2010 Conference, to mark the Centenary of the original ecumenical Mission Conference. An ambitious study programme on nine areas around the theme "*Witnessing to Christ Today*" is in preparation. The approach will combine a balance between the academic and the telling of the worldwide story of mission. There had been considerable debate on the venue, with a reluctance on the part of British delegates to keep the focus on Western Europe but a strong desire, which won through, by others around the world to return to the original venue.

The primary purpose of the event is to celebrate what God has done in the growth of the Church worldwide in the past century and to affirm the relevance

of Christian witness today. It will take place 2-6 June 2010 at the Assembly Hall in Edinburgh.

As a newcomer to the Network, it is quite a challenge to comprehend the workings of GMN and CTBI and their various sub-groups and Forums. There seems to be quite a turnover of members so that quite a few others, like myself, were attending for the first time. This could make the task of creating a genuine sense of network and sharing the experience of mission an interesting exercise.

CTBI International Affairs Liaison Group (IALG)

– *Rev Colin McClure (Presbyterian)*

The International Affairs Liaison Group, serviced by Canon Flora Winfield (Secretary for International Relations – CTBI), met twice in 2007. In a newly adopted forum style, each session was devoted to a particular issue. The plan is that at each meeting expertise can be gathered and then appropriately disseminated to the various constituent bodies and denominations. There is a clear intention to cascade such resources and information, facilitate cooperative ventures and thereby optimise the impact the churches of these islands can make. 2007 has therefore been something of an exploratory one for IALG.

The first meeting in June at Wesley's Chapel, London had some informed input from CTBI staff and former Foreign Office officials. The focus was "*China in Africa*". Enhancing our understanding of Chinese foreign policy towards this continent has obvious applications for our relationships with African partner churches. Perhaps less obvious was the insights afforded to the cultural assumptions of Chinese inhabitants of these islands – not least the significant Chinese Christian community.

The second meeting in November took place in the CTBI offices, Paris Gardens, London. A member of the IALG group, Dr. Charles Reed (a leading officer of the Church of England) shared his substantial research into climate change – facts and impacts. Whilst academically rigorous, Dr. Reed's presentation left members in no doubt that this issue demanded coordinated Church action – with no delay!

In both instances there were clear benefits in developing our understanding of how we best do mission, relate to our partners at home and overseas, and understand our place in this world. This style of IALG meeting will only prove valuable in so far as member churches do ultimately and effectively receive the information and resources appropriate to them. The practice of posting most papers and other inputs on the CTBI website is anticipated in the very near

future. I am certain that this will be a great boon to achieving maximum coverage throughout the churches. However, given the sensitive and often confidential nature of some of the material there can be no guarantee that every input to IALG will appear on the website.

Given that ICC's input into the IALG group presently comes via the Board of Overseas Affairs, I believe the Irish perspective is valued and valuable. Straddling two political jurisdictions and numerous denominational traditions gives us a rather unique frame of reference. In the future I could envisage an IALG which is less London-centric and attempts to be even more responsive to contemporary issues impacting upon our world church partners and our relationships with them. I certainly hope that our various mission, development and global concerns groupings – at denominational and congregational levels - will become increasingly familiar with the work and resources of IALG. I have been personally enriched in my work for IALG and am convinced that it is an invaluable resource for being Church on these islands into the 21st century!

CTBI Middle East Forum (MEF)

– Professor J. Cecil McCullough (Presbyterian)

I have attended two meetings of the Middle East Forum. At both meetings a major item on the agenda has been the future of all CTBI Forums in the light of a complete reorganisation which the CTBI is undergoing. The aims of the reorganisation are good governance and making space to bring the churches themselves back into the ecumenical centre.

Final decisions will be taken by the CTBI Trustees at a meeting in Dublin on 22/23 January and the recommendation going to the Trustees will be that the regional Forums would cease to exist. One of the recommendations of the reviewing committee was that the MEF could reconstitute itself as an independent body outside of CTBI, but in association with it if certain conditions were met. It then would have more freedom to speak and the expertise on Middle Eastern Affairs would not be lost to the churches. A small subcommittee has been set up to consider the future of the MEF and report to the next meeting on 12th March.

The role of the Forum has been to understand the issues in the whole region and to enable those engaged in mission in the region to coordinate and work together. It also plays a very important role in providing space where ME church leaders can share their concerns and can be a conduit for passing those concerns on to the churches. Thus, for example, in my first meeting we had an excellent address from the Metropolitan Archbishop of Aleppo on the position

of Christians in Syria and in the second meeting, Dr Suha Rassam spoke very movingly of the plight of Iraqi Christian refugees in the aftermath of the American led invasion of Iraq and the need for Western Christians to show solidarity with them. Her paper is very informative and will be distributed widely among the churches.

It has been a privilege representing the ICC at the two meetings I have attended. I felt the Forum was doing a very worthwhile job and hope that whatever structures come into place in the future, the churches will not shirk their historic responsibility of support for their Christian brothers and sisters in the Middle Eastern churches.

Conference of European Churches: Church and Society Commission (CSC) – Robert Cochran (Methodist)

The Church and Society Commission (CSC) is one of the specialist commissions of CEC, the Conference of European Churches. It brings together representatives from all the churches across Europe who are members of CEC with responsibility for ‘church and society’ matters. It is primarily focussed on interacting on behalf of the European churches with the EU institutions and the Council of Europe in relation to such issues. Membership can be from specific churches, or observer membership from Councils of Churches. None of the Irish Churches are individual members of CSC, but ICC is an associate member and has a representative on behalf of all the Irish member churches. During 2007, I was appointed by ICC to be their representative for the next five years.

CSC operates through a small secretariat based in Brussels (for EU matters) and Strasbourg (for Council of Europe Affairs), liaising with members through email - and with a plenary meeting every year bringing together the representatives. In June 2007 this plenary meeting took place in Armenia, hosted by the Armenian Apostolic Church, which is a very ancient church (tracing its origins back to one of the twelve apostles), in the Orthodox tradition. It was clear that our visit there was seen by the church in Armenia as a very important gesture in their desire to become more actively a part of the family of European churches. This was very vividly demonstrated by the special arrangements which were made (liturgical and other) for the group to fully participate in the Divine Liturgy on the Sunday morning, including the extending of Eucharistic hospitality to everyone. This was, I understand, the first time the Eucharist was shared with people of other Christian traditions, or even with members of other branches of the Orthodox tradition. It was a clear

demonstration of what can be achieved when ecumenism takes on sufficient urgency in the life of our churches.

Our CSC meeting discussed a wide range of issues arising from developments in the EU and the Council of Europe. One key strand was the growing emphasis in both institutions on intercultural dialogue, particularly as it relates to dialogue with the churches. This clearly gives rise to opportunities, but also dangers. For example, are churches comfortable with being regarded as just another cultural strand within society? And if not, how do we articulate our position in terms that can be understood and accepted by the European institutions? What is the role of religion in the public sphere?

Other matters examined included the progress towards what has since become known as the Lisbon Treaty (or the Reform Treaty), European enlargement and integration, human rights and religious freedom, corporate social responsibility, climate change and other environmental issues.

One of the issues for us in Ireland is the need for the Irish churches to better coordinate our input to the discussion at European level on issues arising from the EU and the Council of Europe Affairs (CoE). To this end I hope to convene a meeting of appropriate representatives from all the Irish churches prior to the next plenary CSC meeting (in the Czech Republic in April 2008), so that I can have a better sense of the Irish perspectives when I attend that.

Embrace (NI) – *Denise Wright (LifeLink)*

EMBRACE is an inter-church organisation, which began as a support group for refugees and people seeking asylum, but now sees its main role as one of encouraging church communities to make this a more welcoming place for all people from minority ethnic backgrounds.

EMBRACE seeks to equip the church to fulfil its call to welcome our new neighbours, by providing information, training, materials and channels for practical help. It is now based at the Inter Church-Centre where the office is staffed part time by Jill Marrs. It provides information through a regularly updated website, quarterly Newsletters, an Annual Information Update, materials such as fact sheets (see www.embraceni.org) and speaking engagements.

Links between the churches, NICEM (NI Council for Ethnic Minorities) and MCRC (The Multi Cultural Resource Centre) are facilitated to provide practical help and channel volunteers. The Emergency Fund is used to provide vital emergency assistance to destitute migrant workers and people seeking

asylum where no other means of support, either statutory or charitable, is available. Assistance may be given to provide hostel accommodation and food as a short-term stop gap whilst a longer term solution is established. It may be provided to allow someone to return to their home country when there is no reason to stay and no other means of returning. All support given is subject to meeting a set of criteria and delivered through agencies such as NICRAS (NI Council for Refugees and Asylum Seekers), NASS (National Asylum Support Service), The Welcome Centre and NICEM.

EMBRACE on the Streets is a Belfast project where churches provide basic packs of essential items for distribution by existing voluntary agencies working with destitute migrant workers on the streets and in hostels. The keynote speaker at the EMBRACE AGM 2007 was Arlington Trotman, the Moderator of the Churches Commission for Migrants in Europe, who spoke on the history and legacy of the Slave Trade. A party for NICRAS was held in December.

Funding is at present from membership fees and financial support from churches, for which we are very grateful. Due to the expanding nature of our work we do require increased financial resources and this area is a priority for 2008 if we are to continue to encourage the Church to reflect gospel values of compassion, hospitality and justice.

Inter-Church involvement in funding

- Rob Fairmichael (Associate Secretary, ICC)

Following the cessation of the Inter-Church Reconciliation Fund for Ireland at the end of 2006, the Inter-Church Centre and inter-church bodies retain a couple of funding functions. One is acting as a local agent for Stichting Het Solidariteitsfonds (SSF), a Dutch fund which grant aids work with children in conflict situations; we liaise with local organisations and money passes through our accounts. SSF make the funding decisions and in 2007, just over £35,000 was given to four different organisations working with children around Northern Ireland. We fulfil a useful role in acting as a local agent and overseer.

A '*Short Record*' of the work of the Inter-Church Reconciliation Fund for Ireland, 1974 – 2006, was issued in spring 2007. Among other things this explored the role of the Fund in acting as a channel for primarily European churches and church organisations wanting to assist peace, reconciliation and community development in Northern Ireland. Its early days were particularly significant as the community funding sector was very underdeveloped at this stage. At current values somewhere around a couple of million pounds sterling passed through its hands and we believe it was quite significant, especially for

some smaller groups. The report is available under the resources section of the inter-church website (www.irishchurches.org)

The second ongoing funding function is ECLOF, the Ecumenical Church Loan Fund for Ireland which exists on an all-Ireland basis and makes loans (at a relatively soft rate of interest) to church and community groups, mainly for community service projects. The maximum loan it can make is just over £30,000 and it is sometimes used as a ‘top up’ for capital projects so they can proceed without delay when fundraising has not quite hit the desired target. With interest rates relatively low, the demand for ECLOF’s services is much less than it once was. The committee is attempting to discern whether it should continue. One new loan, to Coleraine Quakers, was issued in 2007 and there are a total of five current loans. Enquiries are very welcome.

Irish Inter-Church Committee (IICC)

- *Michael Earle, Executive Secretary*

‘A forum for ecumenical debate and action by churches in Ireland’

Background

The Irish Inter-Church Meeting (IICM) was established in 1973 as a forum comprising the Roman Catholic Church and the member churches of the Irish Council of Churches (ICC). Its purpose continues to be:

- (i) to survey the whole field of ecumenism
- (ii) to initiate a general review of relations between the Christian Churches in Ireland
- (iii) to explore the possibilities of further dialogue on both practical and doctrinal issues.

The Irish Inter-Church Meeting originated in the Ballymascanlon talks in 1973. Representation, funding and organisation at all levels are undertaken on a 50-50 basis between the Catholic Church and the ICC member churches. Twenty one plenary meetings have been held since 1973. It has published a number of reports and papers to which reference is made under the “*Resources*” section on the website.

Irish Inter-Church Committee (IICC)

Set up in 1984, this group seeks to develop and forward the vision of IICM between plenary meetings. The committee meets approximately four times a year. The focus tends to be on dialogue rather than bringing recommendations to the member churches or to the Irish Inter-Church Meeting. This Committee is composed primarily of senior church leaders (lay and ordained) and is co-chaired by the ICC President and the Catholic Primate of All-Ireland (currently Ms Gillian Kingston and Cardinal Seán Brady). The Committee receives

reports from the Inter-Church Committee on Social Issues and the Department of Theological Questions and it keeps in touch with Churches Together in Britain and Ireland. The IICC also considers other matters referred to it. The agenda is determined by the Joint Secretaries from ICC and the Catholic Church (currently Rev Tony Davidson and Rev Dr Tom Norris).

2007

The IICC met four times in Dundalk during 2007. The three-hour meetings were held in the Ballymascanlon Hotel until the refurbished Armagh Diocesan Pastoral Centre was opened at the end of the year. Much of what follows was reported back to member churches and the wider community through the *Irish Ecumenical News* during the year.

Changes in committee membership involved the retirement of Rev Winston Graham, the resignation of Bishop Michael Jackson, while Rev Gabrielle Farquhar (Presbyterian), Bishop Richard Clarke (Church of Ireland), Rev Donald Ker (Methodist) and Eamonn Fleming KCSG (Treasurer, IICC) were warmly welcomed. The tradition of inviting representatives from all 15 member churches of ICC to the first Committee meeting of the year continued. At the final meeting of the year, Bishop Tony Farquhar thanked Ms Gillian Kingston for her contributions and many gifts in co-chairing these meetings over the past two years in her role as President of the Irish Council of Churches. Rev Tony Davidson will take over in this role at the ICC AGM on 2nd April 2008.

Tribute: The committee noted with sadness the death of Mgr Patrick ‘Paddy’ Devine, who died suddenly in Dublin on April 5th, one year after his retirement as Parish Priest of St Anthony’s, Clontarf. A long time member of the IICC, his ecumenical contribution included service as Secretary of Ecumenism in the Dublin diocese, Secretary of the Irish Episcopal Conference Advisory Committee and Council member of the Irish School of Ecumenics Trust Council. He represented the Catholic Church for 20 years at the General Synod of the Church of Ireland, the Conference of the Methodist Church, and at meetings of the Churches Together in Britain and Ireland.

“Always courteous and gracious, he bore witness to the virtues of perseverance and commitment in ecumenism – in and out of season”- (Rev Professor Brendan Leahy).

Highlights: The main highlights of the year included:

- (i) A **study day** organised by the Department of Theological Questions (led by Rev Dr Tom Norris) on the theme ‘*The world on our doorstep – exploring developments in theological ecumenism from global and local perspectives.*’ This was held on 24th October at the Emmaus Retreat centre, Swords (Dublin) and attended by 60 people from IICM member churches, as well as staff and students from eight Irish Theological Colleges (All Hallows, Church of Ireland Theological College, Edgehill, Irish School of Ecumenics, Maynooth, Mater Dei, Milltown Institute, Union College). Dame Mary Tanner, the European President of the World Council of Churches, gave the keynote address on ‘*A general overview of bilateral dialogues – doors and obstacles from a global perspective.*’

Irish theologians then summarised their involvements in the following international/national dialogues:

- Methodist/Roman Catholic International Commission (Ms. Gillian Kingston)
- World Alliance of Reformed Churches / Roman Catholic Dialogue and the Anglican Roman Catholic Commission for Unity and Mission (Bishop Tony Farquhar)
- Community of Protestant Churches in Europe – previously known as the Leuenberg Church Fellowship (Professor Cecil McCullough)
- Covenant Council of the Methodist Church and the Church of Ireland (Rev Peter Thompson)

Copies of all these talks are available on the website: www.irishchurches.org

Rev Professor Brendan Leahy (Maynooth) and Dr Andrew Pierce (Irish School of Ecumenics) facilitated/chaired the sessions, while Rev Dr Tom Norris and Canon Ian Ellis led the day’s worship. There was only sufficient time to present this study day as an introductory ‘taster’, but it highlighted part of the Irish contribution to these international bilateral dialogues; stimulated interactions between church leaders, theological staff and students from a younger generation of ecumenists than usually participate in IICC meetings; and has generated interest to explore how this model might be followed up and planned in different ways.

- (ii) A new three-year **Parish-based Integration Project** (PIP) was initiated in January by the IICC’s Inter-Church Committee on Social Issues (ICCSI) with 100% funding from the Republic’s Department of Justice. Based in premises generously made available within the Irish School of Ecumenics

in Dublin, the project worker (Adrian Cristea) is developing models of good practice of local communities at parish level integrating new immigrants attracted by the Irish economy. He is making many new connections both with member and many non-member churches. Further details on the website www.iccsi.org and on page 40 of this report.

- (iii) Ecumenical visits from **overseas guests** included a visit from Rev Dr Sam Kobia (General Secretary, World Council of Churches) to Dublin (April 30) and Belfast (May 1) – referred to earlier in this report. In early October, a group of Lutheran employers from the Church of Norway spent a morning hosted by members of IICC to exchange experiences of church and ecumenical realities in each other's homelands.
- (iv) **Presentations** were given by the following speakers: Dr Jehangir Sarosh (European President of World Conference of Religions for Peace) proposing to establish an All-Ireland Inter-Religious Council; Norman Richardson (Secretary, NI Inter Faith Forum) on the Forum's work in Northern Ireland; Rev Professor Brendan Leahy on the work of the Dublin-based Three Faiths Forum; Rev Dr Jim Campbell (Moderator, ICC's Board of Overseas Affairs).
- (v) **Irish candle** gifted to the Third European Ecumenical Assembly (EEA3). This candle became a symbol of Irish church unity as it was transported around both jurisdictions on this island, was lit at 30 different church/inter-church events and witnessed by over 3,000 participants. The candle was presented to the Romanian churches hosting the EEA3 in Sibiu in September with a letter from the Executive Secretary (see page 44 of this report)

Other matters:

The Irish Inter-Church Committee:

- sent its congratulations to the new Church of Ireland Primate, Archbishop Alan Harper and to Cardinal Seán Brady
- shared concerns raised by member churches
- agreed to postpone the Directory of Irish Ecumenism
- set up a sub-group to give further consideration to IICC's vision and remit
- considered a paper proposing a Dublin-based ecumenical staff position in the Republic
- listened to the experiences of members who had attended the third European Ecumenical Assembly in Sibiu and set up a sub-group to bring a joint statement to the member churches about the final message from this Assembly

- shared the issues raised in bilateral meetings with the Taoiseach as part of the ongoing Church-State dialogue in the Republic
- gave its support to advocate locally for the UN International Day of Non Violence (October 2nd); underwrote the anti-racism work of AICCMR (see separate report)
- promoted the resources of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, Racial Justice and Lent programmes (Churches Together in Britain and Ireland) and June 21 as a Private Day of Reflection (Healing through Remembering)
- requested the leaders of the four main churches to speak out over their safety concerns in the aftermath of shootings at the police
- supported ICC in its decision to sell the Inter-Church Centre in Belfast
- the Treasurer raised concerns about the escalating deficit of maintaining IICM and the need to draw on reserves for the past two years. This was due to increased staffing costs to run the office, the increased cost of holding meetings (IICM and IICC) and supporting external projects (ISE, Eco-Congregation Ireland) without addressing the need to raise membership subscriptions.

Priorities in 2008

It's been agreed to reduce the meetings in 2008 to three. Members will welcome Bishop Wolfgang Huber (Chairman, Evangelical Churches in Germany) when he visits the Lutheran Church in Ireland for the first time between May 17-19. A full programme of meetings has been arranged with preaching and lecturing in Dublin and Belfast. Further consideration will be given to ongoing business (IICC's vision and remit for 2008-2010; financing the proposal to appoint an ecumenical staff position in the Republic; agreeing a new direction for the Department of Theological Questions with new terms of reference; the sale of the Inter-Church Centre in Belfast; agreeing a statement from the Sibiu Assembly to the member churches on this island). The committee will continue to discuss issues raised by its member churches, its sub-committees and its Executive Secretary.

Inter-Church Committee on Social Issues (ICCSI)

– *Robert Cochran (convenor, Methodist)*

A significant part of ICCSI's role is to foster the setting up, and then to act as the oversight committee for, a number of ecumenical projects which address specific social issues.

The first of these, which has been operating since 2005, is the **Eco-Congregation Ireland** (ECI) initiative. ECI has its own website at www.ecocongregationireland.org It is managed by a committee of key

promoters of environmental issues within the participating churches - at present these are:

Joe Furphy (Presbyterian Church in Ireland – current ECI Chair)
Rev David Humphries (Church of Ireland)
Helen Shiel (Methodist Church in Ireland)
Sr Catherine Brennan (Catholic Church)
Natasha Harty (Religious Society of Friends)

ECI is working with the participating churches to deepen the awareness of a theology of creation as well as practical attention to environmental issues with church life. If suitable funding can be sourced, it is planned to recruit in 2008 a part-time person to provide an extra level of momentum to these activities.

A second major project under the auspices of ICCSI is the three-year **Parish-based Integration Project**, financially supported by the Reception and Integration Agency in the Republic. This project, which commenced at the start of 2007 with Adrian Cristea in post in Dublin, has set up a web site with a large amount of relevant resource material (see www.iccsi.ie) and has developed a set of ten key guidelines to underpin effective integration activities. These in turn are being further expanded into a more detailed handbook, containing more detailed information, case studies etc. Contact is being made with a wide range of local congregations and local ecumenical groups engaged in integration of the new immigrant communities into church life, or seeking to do so.

Other matters looked at by ICCSI during the year include socially responsible investment and finance with a small project underway on this, and the question of the increased prevalence of violence as entertainment in the media. It is planned to put a particular focus on this latter issue during 2008. In addition, ICCSI acts as a useful ‘clearing house’ of information on ongoing activities and publications on social issues within the churches.

Racial Equality Forum (NI) - Denise Wright (LifeLink)

The Racial Equality Forum was established to develop and monitor the Racial Equality Strategy for NI. The Forum has representation from all government departments, minority ethnic communities, the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission, the Equality Commission for NI, the voluntary sector, faith groups and the trade unions. Many members now feel that the Forum is simply too large to work effectively and meetings tend to focus on information being imparted by the Forum secretariat with little opportunity for members to have input.

Work is currently being undertaken on the second year's Implementation Action Plan. It is felt by many that while much progress has been made and having departmental action plans is beneficial, there needs to be a much greater focus on placing statutory obligations on the different statutory agencies which fall within those departments remit.

The Office of First Minister and Deputy First Minister (OFMDFM) has allowed additional time before publication of the Action Plan for discussions to take place between minority ethnic representatives and departments about departmental contributions to the plan. The Shadow Forum is meeting to facilitate this. While this is happening, the full Forum is currently being reviewed by the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister (OFMDFM). The race strategy is linked to the '*Shared Future*' document and that has been parked by the NI Assembly whilst they await answers from different Departments.

Regional Equality Liaison Panel (RELP)

– Rev Dr Wesley Blair (Methodist)

Section 75 of the Northern Ireland 1998 Act has spawned a veritable equality sub industry in N. Ireland. DHSSPS Regional Equality Liaison Panel is one group of many and is charged with addressing issues of inequality where they exist within the wider health sector.

2007 has been a fairly busy year and during the course of this year considerable thought has been given to the impact of devolution, as well as working out the implications of the Review of Public Administration for the health sector. Disability Action Plans, having been given due consideration, have now been published for consultation; also guidance has been issued on S75 Equality Monitoring (published July) and Promoting Good Relations (published October). An Action Plan for Equality, Good Relations and Human Rights Strategy has now been cleared at Departmental level and will be published early 2008. A Gender Equality Strategy and a Revised Complaints Procedure have also occupied considerable time and energy.

Looking to 2008 there is a full agenda and among other issues the Panel plan to address the following: OFMDFM has signalled its intention to move forward with the development of a Single Equality Bill (SEB). The SEB will endeavour to harmonise existing equality and anti-discrimination legislation, extending and amending it where appropriate. The Department has also been approached for updated action plans to feed into the OFMDFM led Sexual Orientation Strategy and the Gender Equality Strategy. All in all this has been a busy period indeed.

Women's Link - Roberta Thompson (President, Moravian)

ICC Women's Link aims to provide a forum for discussion and exchange of ideas; to work together on matters concerning the teaching of Christ, relative to life in the home, the Church, the community and the world; to make contact with Christian Women's groups and to invite them to participate in events when and where possible.

The committee met in Dublin and Belfast during the year. Mrs. Anthea Harrison (formerly of Belfast Bible College), the speaker at our Annual Fellowship Day held at Edgehill College in March, gave two very inspiring meditations on the theme "*He ascended into Heaven*". Mrs. Ada Mo, a young Chinese Christian, spoke of her experiences and Mrs. Phyllis Watters, President of the Methodist Women's Institute, presented a very moving role play on gender justice.

The Chairperson and Secretary attended the Presbyterian Women's Association (PWA) Annual Meeting and the Mothers Union Annual Festival Service in Belfast. Roberta also attended the Methodist Women in Ireland (MWI) Central Committee Meeting as an observing guest. Mrs. Winnie Moffett represented Women's Link at the installation of the new MWI President. Mrs. Marian Woods represented Women's Link at I.C.C. meetings in Swords and Clontarf (Dublin).

Wales hosted the 4 Nations Women's Concerns Meeting in 2007; it was held in October at St. Michael's College, Cardiff. Reports were given by Cytûn (Wales), NEWS (Scotland), CTE (England), and Women's Link (Ireland). Issues highlighted included immigration, trafficking, gender equality and green issues. Questions as to our identity and purpose led to a very useful discussion. Next year's meeting will be hosted by Churches Together in England.

The current **Women's Link Committee** consists of:

President/Chairperson: Roberta Thompson (Moravian)

Hon. Secretary: Joyce Bond (Church of Ireland, NI)

Hon Treasurer: Phyllis Watters (Methodist)

Rep on ICC Executive: Marian Woods (Moravian)

Committee members: Violet O'Mullan (Non Subscribing Presbyterian), Miriam Irwin (Salvation Army), Olive Hobson (Society of Friends, NI), Brigid Jacob (Society of Friends, RoI), Brigitte Riedel McGarry (Lutheran), Margie Savage (Women's World Day of Prayer, NI), Eilis O'Malley (Women's World Day of Prayer, RoI). Lifelink representative to be appointed.

The denominations take it in turn to provide a chairperson for two years. Mrs. Winnie Moffett (Presbyterian) will take up office at the Annual Fellowship Day to be held at Moyallon on April 12th 2008, when the theme will be “*Who is my neighbour?*”

Story of the gift of an Irish ecumenical candle - a letter from the Irish churches to the Romanian churches as they host the Third European Ecumenical Assembly in Sibiu (Romania) from 4-8 September 2007 – Michael Earle (Executive Secretary, IICC)

Wick. Wax. Water. Wonder. The basic ingredients for a craftsman to create something new and beautiful that will glorify God.

In this prayerful spirit last autumn, Brother Pascal from the small Benedictine community in Rostrevor, County Down created a one metre long Paschal candle and presented this to the Irish ecumenical bodies to honour the theme of this European Ecumenical Assembly: *The Light of Christ shines on all – Hope for renewal and unity in Europe*’ (John 8.12). It comes with a wooden base, which was beautifully crafted out of a cherry tree by community members from the local Camphill Community in nearby Kilkeel.

The candle was lit for the first time on 10th November 2006 during the opening worship at the Irish Inter-Church Meeting held at the Emmaus centre near Dublin. It is a symbol of the light we share in Christ, who threads together the Christian churches located all over the island of Ireland with those located all over the continent of Europe.

Over the past ten months, it has been on a pilgrimage where it has been lit at 30 inter-church and special occasions all over the island of Ireland. It has journeyed from Belfast to Cork, from Dublin to Limerick, from Drogheda to Donegal, from Armagh to Dundalk; from the interfaces in North Belfast to those in West Belfast; from Dublin’s north side to its south side; from inner city, to suburbs, to rural and cross-border communities.

It has brought together over 3,000 people in groups ranging from 5 to 300 from a rich variety of church tradition and from both political jurisdictions. It has been the focus for Christians from Orthodox, Catholic, Protestant, Reformed, Evangelical and Pentecostal backgrounds on this island. Its light has shone on Archbishops, clergy and lay people of all ages, on civic leaders, as well as on those not engaged with church life.

It has been a focus of worship at large ecumenical gatherings at Ballymascanlon, Clonard-Fitzroy, Corrymeela, Glenstal and Greenhills, Lough Derg and Week of Prayer for Christian Unity services; annual church conference of member churches; local inter-church prayer services, community carol services, schools and theological colleges; inter-faith events; community interfaces; public lectures and community meetings with politicians.

This candle has already travelled several thousand kilometres around Ireland as the Irish churches have prepared for this third European Ecumenical Assembly. It has shone into the darkness of our divisions, our brokenness and fragmentation, our suffering and pain. It has shone into our walls of injustice, separation and exclusion.

It has been present - yet unlit - on at least one occasion as it is still associated for some with a particular tradition of using candles that they cannot identify with. Such controversies invite us to work more closely together in responding to Jesus' prayer to be one, to strengthen our fellowship and our witness in the wider community wherever we live.

It has challenged us to go beyond the labels of 'Us' and 'Them' that we give to each other. Its flickering flame has inspired and challenged our relationships with each other and our existing ways of being church together.

The candle continues to call us to follow the way of the Gospel, the hope found in Jesus, and the Spirit's guidance in transforming our relationships with each other and with the increasing number of new neighbours in our local communities.

The 33 delegates from these Irish churches with other Irish colleagues are bringing this much loved ecumenical symbol to our brothers and sisters in the Romanian churches in the spirit of love and unity in which it was created and shaped on this island.

May this gift from the churches from the western edge of Europe contribute to the light of this European Assembly and the churches gathered on the eastern edge of Europe. May the candle be used to bring together the churches in Romania, to inspire you in your worship, to break down any barriers between you, and remind you of our love and interconnectedness in the Body of Christ in Europe. Alleluia.

MEMBERSHIP AND REPRESENTATION

(As at January 2008)

COUNCIL MEMBERS APPOINTED BY THE MEMBER CHURCHES

Ex-Officio Members of Council (Church Leaders)

Church of Ireland	Most Rev Dr Alan Harper
Presbyterian Church in Ireland	Rt Rev Dr John Finlay
Methodist Church in Ireland	Rev Robert Cooper
Moravian Church (Irish District)	Mr Derick Woods
Non-Subscribing Church in Ireland	Rt Rev David Banham
Religious Society of Friends	Mr Alan Pim
Salvation Army (Ireland Division)	Major David Jackson

Antiochian Orthodox Church

Rev Fr Irenaeus du Plessis	Fr David Lonergan
Sub Deacon Maximos Murray	

Church of Ireland

Mr Len Bryan	Mr Garrett Casey
Most Rev Richard Clarke	Rev Canon Dr Ian Ellis
Rev Raymond Fox	Rev Sonia Gyles
Ms Ruth Handy	Mr Sam Harper
Ms Sheelagh Harte	Rev Canon John Mayes
Dr Kenneth Milne	Ms Mary Maconachy
Mr Jim McGaffin	Mrs Roberta McKelvey
Mr W Trevor Morrow	Most Rev Dr John Neill
Rev Daniel Nuzum	Rev Baden Stanley
Rev Obinna Ulogwara	Rev Canon Trevor Williams

Coptic Orthodox Church in Ireland

Rev Fr Athanasius Gawargayous	Mrs Mary Gawargayous
Deacon Sherif Gayed	

Greek Orthodox Church in Britain and Ireland

Fr Thomas Carroll

LifeLink Network of Churches

Mr Garath Baxter	Mr Peter Jordan
Mrs Denise Wright	

Lutheran Church in Ireland

Ms Anne Marie Connolly
Ms Eva Maria Molloy

Pastor Corinna Diestelkamp

Methodist Church in Ireland

Mr Robert Cochran
Mr David English
Mrs Laura Griffith
Rev Donald Ker
Rev Janet Unsworth

Rev Andrew Dougherty
Rev Geraldine Gracie
Rev Elizabeth Hewitt
Ms Gillian Kingston
Mr Tom Wilson

Moravian Church Irish District

Rev Paul Holdsworth
Mrs Marian Woods

Rev Jan Mullin

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Rev Bridget Spain

Rev Chris Hudson, MBE

Presbyterian Church in Ireland

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Dr David Poole

Rock of Ages Cherubim & Seraphim Church

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Ms Hannah Yemisi Dare

Mr Oluwole Isaac Adeleye

Romanian Orthodox Church in Ireland

Rev Fr Godfrey O'Donnell

Russian Orthodox Church in Ireland

Deacon Nikolay Evseev

Rev Fr George Zavershinsky

Mr Stanislav Naspanyy

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Captain Marcus Mylechreest

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Methodist Church in Ireland

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(Appointed August 2007)

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Moravian Church Irish District

Mr Derick Woods

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Rev John Brackenridge
Rev Lorraine Kennedy-Ritchie

Rev Dr Donald Watts

Religious Society of Friends

Dr David Poole

**Rock of Ages Cherubim and Seraphim
Church**

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Romanian Orthodox Church in Ireland

Rev Fr Godfrey O'Donnell

Russian Orthodox Church in Ireland

Rev Fr George Zavershinsky

Salvation Army (Ireland Division)

Major David Jackson

Co-opted

Mrs Roberta McKelvey
(Co-opted to AGM 2010)

Mrs Marian Woods
(Co-opted to AGM 2010)

Ex Officio

(Moderator of Board of Overseas Affairs BOA)
Rev Dr S Jim Campbell (PCI)

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Mr Eamonn Fleming KCSG (*IICM Hon Treasurer*)

Very Rev Colm McGrady

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Irish Council of Churches

Ms Gillian Kingston

Mr Hilton Henry (*ICC Hon Treasurer*)

Rev Anthony Davidson

Mr Michael Earle

Co-opted

Rev Dr Donald Watts

Rev Donald Ker

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Lutheran Church

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Presbyterian Church

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Rev Dr Donald Watts

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Prof Brendan Leahy

Church of Ireland

Rev Canon Ian Ellis

Most Rev Richard Clarke

Methodist Church

Rev Donald Ker *(appointed August 2007)*

Rev Elizabeth Hewitt

Presbyterian Church

Rev Dr Donald Watts

Rev Gabrielle Farquhar

Moravian Church Irish District

(Representing smaller churches since Jan 2006)

Mr Derick Woods

Romanian Orthodox Church

(Representing 4 Orthodox churches since Jan 2006)

Rev Fr Godfrey O'Donnell

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Mr Robert Cochran *(Chair)*

Executive Secretary

Mr Michael Earle

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Chairperson

Mr Robert Cochran (Methodist) since 2002

Roman Catholic

Rev Tim Bartlett

Very Rev James Carroll

Mr Patrick Durkan

Sr. Carina Muldoon

Sr. Joan Roddy

Ms Margaret Burns

Rev Eamon McDevitt

Mrs M Harold

Mr Phelim O'Reilly

Church of Ireland

Mr W Trevor Morrow

Mr Ian Slaine

Lutheran Church

Pastor Corinna Diestelkamp

Methodist Church

Rev David Clements

Presbyterian Church

Mr Lindsay Conway, OBE

Rev Alan Russell

Mrs E Pat Crossley

Religious Society of Friends

Terry Gillespie

Salvation Army (Irish District)

Major David Jackson

ICC Staff

Mr Adrian Cristea

(Parish-based Integration Project)

Mr Rob Fairmichael

**ADVISORY GROUP – PARISH-BASED INTEGRATION
PROJECT (PIP)**

Robert Cochran (MCI)

Philip McKinley (C of I)

Rev Alan Martin (PCI)

Sr Joan Roddy (RC)

**ALL IRELAND CHURCHES' CONSULTATIVE MEETING ON
RACISM (AICCMR)**

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Fr Donal Bennett
Rev Richard Kerr
Mr Philip McKinley
Sr. Joan Roddy

Mr Robert Cochran
Rev Alan Martin
Rev Katherine Meyer
Sr. Brighde Vallely

ICC Staff

Mr Rob Fairmichael

IRISH ECUMENICAL CHURCH LOAN FUND (ECLOF)

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Mr Al Connolly
Mr Rob Fairmichael
Miss Hazel McMillan (Treasurer)

Mr Michael Earle
Mr Eamonn Fleming KCSG
Mr Irwin Pearson

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Bill of Rights Forum (NI)

Very Rev Dr Samuel
Hutchinson (*Presbyterian*)

Conference of European Churches
Church & Society Commission
Churches Community Work Alliance
(CCWA) Management Committee
Churches Together in Britain & Ireland
(CTBI) Trustee Observers

Mr Robert Cochran (*Methodist*)
(2006-2010)

Rev Colin Campbell (*NSPCI*)
(2007-2010)

Mr Hilton Henry (*to April '08*)
Most Rev Richard Clarke (*to*
April '09)

CTBI International Affairs' Liaison
Committee

Ms Gillian Kingston (*to April '10*)
Rev Colin McClure (2007-2010)

CTBI Churches' Commission on Inter-Faith Relations	Rev Canon Desmond Sinnamon <i>(CofI) (1997-2007)</i>
CTBI Churches' Commission on Racial Justice	Mrs Denise Wright <i>(LifeLink)</i>
CTBI Global Mission Network	Rev Paul Hoey <i>(C of I)</i> <i>(2007-2008)</i>
CTBI Middle East Forum	Prof J Cecil McCullough <i>(PCI)</i> <i>(2007-2008)</i>
NI Dept of Health Regional Equality Liaison Panel (RELP)	Rev Dr Wesley Blair <i>(MCI)</i> <i>(2005-2009)</i>
EMBRACE (NI) (Christians Working with Asylum Seekers, Refugees)	Mrs Denise Wright <i>(LifeLink)</i> <i>(since 2004)</i>
OFMDFM Race Equality Forum	Mrs D Wright <i>(LifeLink)</i> <i>(since 2006)</i>
Week of Prayer for Christian Unity (CTBI Four Nations Editorial Group)	Fr Adrian Eastwood CM <i>(RC)</i> <i>(2007)</i>

ICC SECRETARIAT

General Secretary

Associate Secretary (part-time)

Administrator

Mr Michael Earle

Mr Rob Fairmichael

Mrs Karen Kelly

Notes:

Notes:



One of the remaining fifty-seven peace lines still dividing neighbours and communities in Northern Ireland