

Inter-Church Relations Committee

1. The analysis begun last year in examining and assessing the role and place of the Inter-Church Committee within the life of the Church has continued to be in the forefront of the minds of the committee members. The work of the committee has been changing slowly over the last few years as it has been deemed more effective to move some of the functions to other committees. The Covenant Council is now responsible for the relationship between the Methodist Church and the Church of Ireland. Matters affecting joint schemes are dealt with by the Inter-Church Consultative Committee. The appointment of representatives to international conferences and committees is dealt with by the General Committee because of budget implications.

It has thus become increasingly difficult to identify our particular role. This has had a discouraging effect on the members of the committee as we have sought to understand what a new role may be in the future. We are also aware that the Connexions process is considering the structures and roles of all committees within the Connexion. Therefore we find ourselves in a state of limbo.

2. An encouraging feature of relationships with other churches within Ireland has been the increasing number of local initiatives. Some of these, inspired by lay people faithfully working out their commitment in their own localities, has led to joint prayer services and vigils, community church fora, united Bible studies for Advent and Lent. The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity and, in particular, the Women's World Day of Prayer continue to have many committed participants.

3. The European Methodist Council organised a 'Festival of Faith' in Berlin in the summer 2003. Around 25 Irish Methodists joined the gathering of 900 Methodists from across Europe. This was an inspiring Festival, particularly for those from small, isolated Methodist communities in Eastern Europe.

4. The Irish Inter-Church Meeting took place in November 2003 in the Emmaus Retreat Centre on the outskirts of Dublin. The theme of the Meeting developed from the research which had been sponsored by the Irish Council of Churches on the ways in which immigration and the increasing numbers of asylum seekers and refugees was affecting the various churches in Ireland.

The Inter-Church Committee awaits with interest to see how its role will develop under the Connexions Programme.

AGENDA

1. The Conference receives the report.
2. The Conference receives the report of the Inter-Church Consultative Committee.
3. The Conference appoints the following as representatives to The Irish Council of Churches: Revs W Winston Graham, Thomas M Kingston, Alan G Wardlow, Ivor N Owens, Daphne M Twinem, Ms Eunice Crawford, Ms Gillian M Kingston, Ms Frances Moffett, _____, _____.

4. The Conference appoints the following as representatives to Churches Together in Britain and Ireland: Revs W Winston Graham, M Elizabeth Hewitt, Ms Heather O'Neill
5. The Conference appoints the following as members of the Irish Inter-Church Meeting: Revs Dr Johnston McMaster, M Elizabeth Hewitt, Mr T Osmond Mulligan, Mr Robert Cochran
6. The Conference appoints the following as members of the Inter-Church Consultative Committee: Revs W Winston Graham, Desmond C Bain, Thomas M. Kingston,

7. The Conference appoints the following as representatives to the European Methodist Council: Rev W Winston Graham, Mr James Lamont, Ms Lucy Bateman
8. The Conference reappoints the Convener: Rev M Elizabeth Hewitt