

The Society for Ecumenical Studies

MINUTES

of the Annual General Meeting held at 5pm on 12 February 2003 at Church House, Great Smith Street, Westminster SW1

Present: Martin Conway, President
Paul Avis
John Bradley
David Carter, Secretary
Sister Fidelis Daly, Treasurer
Maximos Lavriotes
Barney Milligan
Paul McPartlan
Ruth Reardon
Martin Reardon
Mary Tanner
Mark Woodruff

Apologies: James Cassidy
Martin Cressey

1. The Chairman opened in prayer. He thanked the Revd Dr Paul Avis for his kind permission to host the meeting at Church House, and for the help of his secretary, Angela Doe.

2. **Financial Statement**

The Chairman and Treasurer tabled and spoke to the following financial statement, which was approved:

	£
Balance at 1 Jan 2002	1248-01
Income for year to 31 December 2002	1101-10
Expenditure for year to 31 December 2002	1016-71
Balance at 31 December 2002	1332-40

3. **Charitable Status**

The Chairman reported on progress. The Society has to agree the Constitution, the Executive (i.e. the Committee) has to sign the relevant documents. The Society's aims and objectives have to be defined including certain standard formulae. The following statement was proposed:

'The Society's objects are the advancement of religion and the education of the public by fostering as widely as possible the Christian Ecumenical Movement, in a way that combines practical experience in social, international and interfaith fields with theological reflection and exploration in regard to divisions between Christian denominations, in particular by providing occasions and a regular forum within which persons and groups of different backgrounds, races and theological convictions can meet for exchange of information, for discussion and to work together on study projects, where appropriate in collaboration with other groups or agencies'.

At a formal vote, the statement was unanimously ratified. It was also agreed that the new Committee members should sign the Constitution and the

Declaration as trustees for the Charity Commission, in the hope that the Commission could approve it without further re-drafting, with the expectation that the 2004 AGM would be the first under the new Constitution.

4. **Elections**

Martin Conway was re-elected Chairman of the Society, and Sister Fidelis Daly as Treasurer. David Carter tendered his resignation as Secretary and Mark Woodruff was elected in his place to take office after the St Albans conference in May 2003, until which time David Carter would continue to serve as Acting Secretary. The other members of the Committee elected were Maximos Lavriotes, Gareth Powell, Paul McPartlan and David Carter.

5. **Website**

The website is now up to date, including Mary Tanner's paper on Orthodox participation in the WCC from the November 2002 conference in Birmingham. The internet address is <http://www.sfes.org>.

6. **Activities 2002**

The Chairman described the conference of Societas Oecumenica at Salisbury. The aim had been to look at multi-culturalism, which he felt was still not really understood in many continental countries. There had been two excellent British contributions, from Michael Ipgrave and Kenneth Leech. The Society had been admitted to membership of the Societas. Barney Milligan said he had found the meeting useful for contacts. Mary Tanner asked that the two British papers mentioned be placed on the Society's website.

The joint meeting of the Society with the new Birmingham ecumenical centre at the College of the Ascension had been attended by about forty people. There had been two major papers, by Mary Tanner and by Peter Sulston, the latter on current ecumenical strivings in British Methodism. Shorter addresses had been given on the Local Ecumenical Partnership at Bar Hill (near Cambridge), on ecumenical work in Kenya and on the witness of the Church of South India. The day had concluded with the service of inauguration for the new Centre. A summary of the meeting by Martin Conway would go out in the next mailing.

7. **Paul Couturier Fiftieth Anniversary 2003**

Mark Woodruff mentioned the study day, commemorating the work of Fr Paul Couturier on 22 March at Westminster Cathedral Hall, the celebratory mass at Westminster Cathedral on 24 March and the weekend conference at the English Convent in Brugge at the end of June. The Society, with the Ecumenical Society of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Catholic League, Westminster Cathedral and the Jerusalem Trust are among the bodies sponsoring the events.

8. **St Albans, May 2003**

The Chairman reported that 450 had already registered and the organisers hoped that up to a thousand might come.

David Carter mentioned the arrangements for the contextual weekend meeting at London Colney. He would be writing to those registered later about exact arrangements.

On July 5 the Chairman will be taking part in a meeting, led by the Revd Dr Colin Marsh, to reflect on the St Albans day, and how best to take forwards its

insights. It was provisionally agreed that a meeting of the Society on November 8 2003 should be planned by the Committee as the Society's own contribution to this process.

9. **Other Business**

The importance of keeping links with the Ecumenical Centre at Westcott House, Cambridge and the forthcoming Berlin ecumenical Kirchentag were noted.

John Bradley said that, from his experience with the Rural Theology Association, joint conferences with other societies could be very valuable. He suggested we organise a joint conference with the RTA on *The Way Forward for Ecumenism in the Countryside*. He felt that the recent co-operation of churches in the foot and mouth crisis might offer something to build on. Big issues the Society could usefully address were noted as areas where the Church faces meltdown, and the way in which the proposed Declarations of Ecumenical Welcome were likely to be little used. Such a conference would need to be planned a couple of years ahead.

Martin Reardon mentioned the John Coventry Memorial Lecture, sponsored by the Association of Inter-Church Families, to be held at Heythrop College on March 1. It will be addressed by Bishop Crispian Hollis on the Mississauga initiative on Anglican-Roman Catholic relations.

David Carter mentioned the short conference of the Ecumenical Society of the Blessed Virgin Mary to be held at Woldingham School, Surrey, 22-29 August. It would also commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the Abbé Paul Couturier.

10. **Address**

Mark Woodruff addressed the Society on the subject of the influence of the Abbé Paul Couturier and the need for his enduring influence to be encouraged by renewed, creative ecumenical action in his spirit. A copy of the paper would be circulated to members in the mailing.