

The Society for Ecumenical Studies

MINUTES

of the Annual General Meeting on Tuesday 23 May 2006 at Christ Church & Upton Chapel, London SE1

Members Present: Paul Avis, John Bradley, Tom Bruch, Teresa Burke, James Cassidy, Martin Conway, Sophia Fletcher, Margaret Jacques, Keith John, Maximos Lavriotes, Hilary Martin, Barney Milligan, Alan Rainer, Mark Woodruff

Guests Present: Stephen Copson, Paul Fiddes, Sarah Parry, Ian Tutton

Members' Apologies:

1. Opening Prayer

Martin Conway, Chairman and Presiding Officer, opened with prayer.

2. Apologies for Absence

The apologies of Hubert Allen, John Briggs, David Carter, Frank Davis, Elizabeth Fisher, Nicholas Latham, Murdoch Mackenzie, Tim Macquiban, Ian McIntosh, Paul McPartlan, Richard Mortimer, Paul Murray, Donald Norwood, Mary Parkinson, Ruth Reardon and Mary Tanner were noted.

3. Minutes of the AGM held on 21 June 2005

These were signed as a correct record.

4. Executive Committee's Annual Report for 2005

Approved.

5. Financial Statement and Annual Accounts to 31 December 2005

Expenditure: £2452-75

Income: £ 959-44

Excess of Income over Expenditure: £1493-31

Opening balance at 1 January 2005: £2522-13

Balance carried forward at 31 December 2005: £1028-82

Hilary Martin, Treasurer, explained that the expenditure had been especially high because of costs incurred because of a conference that had to be cancelled at the last moment. Income was lower than in previous years because of poor responses to requests for subscriptions from members. The bank balance at the date of the Annual General Meeting stood at £1005.

The Financial Statement and Annual Accounts were approved.

6. Membership and Subscriptions

Various members present judged the subscription rates now to be too low for what the Society and its officers were expected and expecting to do on the basis of them. Dr Paul Avis seconded the Committee's proposal they be doubled. Accordingly they will be set at the following levels from 2007:

- £20 Individual Members (£10 for retired, students, religious & unwaged)
- £24 Married couples (£12 retired, students and unwaged)

7. Election of Executive Committee for 2006-2007

The Chairman invited the Guest Speaker, Professor Paul Fiddes, to preside at the following elections.

- a) **Chairman & Presiding Officer:** Martin Conway was proposed by Paul Avis and seconded by Sophia Fletcher. There being no other nominations, Martin Conway was declared elected.
- b) **Secretary:** Mark Woodruff was proposed by Martin Conway and Alan Rainer. There being no other nominations, Mark Woodruff was declared elected.
- c) **Treasurer:** Hilary Martin was proposed by Maximos Lavriotes and seconded by John Bradley. There being no other nominations, Hilary Martin was declared elected.
- d) **Members of the Committee:** The members of the outgoing committee - John Bradley, David Carter, Maximos Lavriotes and Alan Rainer – were proposed by James Cassidy and seconded by Paul Avis. There being no other nominations, they were declared elected.
- e) **Honorary Members of the Committee:** Paul Murray, in view of the Society's links with the ecumenical study and composition of the curriculum of the department of Theology at the University of Durham, was proposed as an honorary corresponding member of the Committee by Mark Woodruff, seconded by Maximos Lavriotes. This was approved. Paul Murray, past Chairman and currently a member of the theology faculty at the Catholic University of America in Washington was proposed by Mark Woodruff as an honorary corresponding member of the committee, seconded by Maximos Lavriotes. This was approved.

Paul Avis asked that the thanks of the members of the Society to the Officers and Committee, for putting a new lease of life in to the Society, be recorded

Martin Conway thanked Professor Fiddes for his assistance and resumed the chair.

8. Future Plans

In view of funds available a cautious approach is being pursued as the Society 'regroups'. The three main plans are:

- a collaboration with the Rural Theology Association, possibly in May or June 2007. This necessarily awaits an opportunity for a convergence of interest in a given topic or range of interests, but both RTA and the Society are aware that the countryside and the environment offer a distinctive context for ecumenical study and action.

- an event to explore the controversial question (especially in view of current Anglican and Roman Catholic relations) of what is a 'proper Church'. This has been proving logistically and diplomatically challenging to arrange. But the interest of members and of speakers indicate that at the right point this will be a helpful exercise.
- a repeat of the very successful Iona week for younger future church and ecumenical leaders in the autumn of 2007. This is being arranged by the Iona Community, under the leadership of Murdoch Mackenzie and with the Society as a strong supporter. As in 2005, it is proving difficult to get denominations to commit to sending delegates and to paying their costs. But 8 have responded positively so far.

Committee members are also linked with other societies engaged in ecumenical study and practice, especially the Ecumenical Society of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and the work of some religious houses on 'East-West' meetings, to promote Christian unity among the churches of the east and between the various Western and Eastern traditions. There will also be work towards the 2008 centenary of the foundations of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity.

The website is to be developed as a portal and more of a forum for ecumenical study.

John Bradley suggested that, in view of the Society's sustained concern in the matter of Eucharistic sharing and the nature of Communion (not least as it affects inter-Church families), the Society could usefully support a study event on the report by the General Secretary of Churches Together in England, the Revd Bill Snelson, on the work and thinking of the CTE's Theology and Unity Group. This is entitled *Enriching Communion* and is available from CTE at the cost of £4-95.

Alan Rainer referred to plans for a major event for sixth form students on Theology and Philosophy, to be held at St Alban's Abbey possibly in spring 2008. He explained the formation of theological literacy among young people, with the stimulation of great concepts, beliefs and values, addressed and challenged by the tools of philosophy was a critical opportunity for ecumenical action. It would also be an important focus for encounter between people and belief systems in different faiths, surely in the spirit of foundational ecumenical work in the past.

The Committee will work on all these ideas.

9. The Ninth General Assembly of the World Council of Churches

The report by Dr Martin Conway is attached.

10. Recent Developments in the Anglican-Baptist Dialogue

A study seminar was addressed by Prebendary Paul Avis, Church of England Council of Christian Unity, and Professor Paul Fiddes, Regents Park College, Oxford. Mark Woodruff's report is attached.