

The Society for Ecumenical Studies

Annual Report 2007

The Society's Statues & Objects

The Society was founded in 1995 and became a Registered Charity, Number 1096515, on 14 March 2003. Its objects as a registered charity 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.

Executive Committee (elected on 30 May 2007)

Dr Martin Conway	President (Chairman)
The Revd Mark Woodruff	Secretary
Mrs Hilary Martin	Treasurer
The Revd John Bradley, Mr David Carter, The Revd Maximos Lavriotes, Mr Alan Rainer	

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Membership

The Society's membership at the end of 2007, including subscribers, honorary members and certain associate bodies, now stands at 120.

Committee and Activities

Although during the year the Executive Committee met once to conduct the Society's business, it was a very busy year for arranging or being involved in events and collaborations:

- Ecumenical Marian Pilgrimage Trust's biennial conference in March – papers now published
- Assembly of European Ecumenical Movements & Communities in Stuttgart in May
- Our Annual Study Seminar – Anglican-Roman Catholic Relations: A Kick Start? – a discussion about IARCCUM, with Dr Mary Tanner, European President of the WCC and Mgr Andrew Faley, Assistant Secretary of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England & Wales
- The Third European Ecumenical Assembly at Sibiu, Romania, in September
- A second training experience for young ecumenical leaders of the future on Iona
- The sixth Leuven Explorations in Systematic Theology, Believing in Community – Ecumenical Reflections on the Church – at which six members gave papers in either the main or junior scholars' conferences in November

Our principal event was a conference in St Mary's Church, Chelsea in November to take forward the interest and inspiration arising from the University of Durham's initiative on Receptive Ecumenism, or ecumenical learning. Our member, Dr Paul Murray is leading this initiative through the new Centre for Catholic Studies at Durham, which is now in an 'action research' phase, involving Anglican, Catholic, Methodist and URC partners in the North East. The conference brought together over 80 people to hear Metropolitan Kallistos of Diokleia (Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of Great Britain), Bishop Christopher Hill (of Guildford), David Carter (British Methodist-RC Committee), Professor Paul Fiddes (Regents Park College, Oxford), Dr John McDade SJ (Principal of Heythrop College) and Dr Paul Murray (University of Durham).

Website – www.ecumenicalstudies.org.uk

Papers and reports from most of these events are either on our website or accessible at a linked site.

The website continues to be a means to disseminate our discussions and papers and reports by our members to a much wider readership. It now constitutes as full as possible an archive of the Society's activities and studies since preliminary meetings in 1994.

In collaboration with our friends in other ecumenical societies we set up a dedicated web site for the commemoration of the different martyr traditions in English history, responding in the run up to the Centenary of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity to the call by Pope John Paul II for a 'new memory'. Thus the former causes of pain and enmity are embraced as part of one another's story, so that they become a focus of unity. Honouring the Protestant, Anglican and Catholic martyrs thus ceases to be partisan but is an expression of hope for visible reconciliation. The site can be found at www.seedofthechurch.org.uk

Again in partnership, we set up a second dedicated web site for the Centenary of the Week of Prayer, setting out its history and the development of prayer for unity in the progress of the ecumenical movement through the last 200 years. We were closely involved through the year in discussions with Westminster Abbey, the Ecumenical Society of the Blessed Virgin Mary and Churches Together in England, which resulted in a fine national celebration on 18 January 2008 at the Abbey, led by the Archbishop of Canterbury, Cardinal Cormac Murphy O'Connor, Commissioner Elizabeth Mearns of the Salvation Army and Archbishop Nathan Hovhannisian of the Armenian Orthodox Church. It was a most encouraging Service of Thanksgiving and Recommitment, recalling that, despite our persisting separations, so many of our prayers for unity have indeed been granted and renewing our dedication and confidence that unity will surely come to us. www.weekofprayer.faithweb.com

Work for the Future

For the future, the Committee has kept a number of ideas for study, locally and nationally under review:

- Further close collaboration with other ecumenical societies and Churches Together
- Continued involvement with and support for the Receptive Ecumenism project
- An event exploring the connection between sacrifice, atonement, reconciliation and Eucharist
- Contribution to East-West study encounter and exchange
- Ecumenism and the limits of diversity – how much can we accommodate different cultures and other faiths (a collaboration with the Cambridge Federation on November 15 2008)

Martin Conway, President & Chairman

15 April 2008

