

**The Network for Inter Faith Concerns (NIFCON) of the Anglican Communion
REPORT TO THE ANGLICAN CONSULTATIVE COUNCIL**

NIFCON exists to encourage:

- Progress towards genuinely open and loving relationships between Christians and people of other faiths.
- Exchange of news, information, ideas and resources relating to inter faith concerns between provinces of the Anglican Communion.
- Local contextual and wider theological reflection.
- Witness and evangelism where appropriate.
- Prayerful and urgent action with all involved in tension and conflict.
- Support for people of faith, especially Christians, who live as religious minorities in situations of discrimination or danger.

NIFCON does this by:

- Networking and meeting;
- Communication using various media
- Gathering information through its international presidents, management group, correspondents, and contacts support groups.
- It has also been charged by the Lambeth Conference to study and evaluate Muslim-Christian relations and report regularly to the Anglican Consultative Council

PERSONNEL

Presidents of NIFCON

The Rt Revd Mouneer Anis, Bishop of Egypt, Province of Jerusalem & the Middle East

The Most Revd Paul Keun-Sang Kim, Presiding Bishop, Anglican Church of Korea & Bishop of Seoul)

The Rt Revd Timothy Stevens, Bishop of Leicester, Church of England

Management Group

This group is chaired by the Archbishop of Dublin, the Most Revd Michael Jackson. The group meets two or three times each year in order to take forward the work of the NIFCON.

Staff Changes

Mrs Clare Amos

The Network has been provided with huge and invaluable leadership and inspiration, theological insight, support and fundraising ability by Clare Amos over these last years. We continue to be amazed at what could be achieved in one day each week. In September 2010 Clare took up the post of Programme Executive for Interreligious Dialogue and Cooperation with the World Council of Churches, based in Geneva. We were sorry to lose her hands-on, day-to-day leadership, but looking forward to the leadership she will be able to provide from her new post.

The Revd Rana Yaoub Khan

Rana has been working with the Anglican Communion Office as the Dialogues Assistant for the international, interfaith dialogues associated with NIFCON. He has also been involved with other

NIFCON work. His time has been divided between this work and a post at Lambeth Palace where he has been working in support of the interfaith work of the Archbishop of Canterbury. Rana has come to us on an internship for three years, funded by the Lambeth Partners, from the Church of Pakistan. He completes his term at the end of November 2012. Rana has made a great contribution to the Communion's interfaith work during the time he has been with NIFCON. He has contributed to enlarging our horizons and deepening our understandings, especially through his lived experience in Pakistan.

Future

Financial support for the work of NIFCON continues to be a constant challenge. It is not clear at the time of writing where the funding for staff support from NIFCON will be derived. We live in hope. Funding is being sought, but not yet found!

ACTIVITIES OF THE TRIENNIUM 2010-2012

International, interfaith dialogues

al-Azhar

For a number of years NIFCON has administered the dialogue between the Anglican Church and the Permanent Committee of **al-Azhar** al-Sharif for Dialogue with Monotheistic Religions in accordance with the agreement to maintain ongoing dialogue signed in 2002. The mosque of al-Azhar in Cairo, Egypt, dates back to 969 BCE (358 AH) and has grown over the centuries not only to include a university but to become the premier Sunni world centre for Islamic studies.

2010 Dialogue in Cairo focused on the important role religious leaders have in using their influence to promote religious harmony, particularly in countries where there is religious diversity. The meeting also discussed the need to ensure the welfare of all religious minorities wherever located and to safeguard their right to freedom of religion and freedom of worship. (http://nifcon.anglicancommunion.org/work/dialogues/al_azhar/cairo2010.cfm)

2011 Dialogue in London Unfortunately it was not possible for this meeting to proceed in the planned form. The Egyptian delegation was unable to leave Cairo due to the political instability of the time. The Anglican delegates, however, met and were able to take stock of the dialogue. Thanks were expressed to Bishop Alexander Malik, Church of Pakistan, for his leadership of the Anglican delegation and best wishes for his retirement in 2012. Bishop Mouneer Anis accepted the Archbishop of Canterbury's invitation to take over the co-chairmanship from Bishop Malik.

2012 Dialogue in Cairo (proposed) This meeting is planned for late November. We hope to explore together understandings of citizenship and community. Anglican members of the 2012 Delegation are The Rt Revd Mouneer Anis, Bishop of Egypt (Anglican Co-Chair); The Most Revd Datuk Bolly Lampok (Primate of SE Asia, Bishop of Kuching); Professor Yvonne Haddad, Professor of the History of Islam and Christian-Muslim Relationships, Georgetown University Washington) and the Rt Revd Jonathan Frost, Bishop of Southampton (England).

Anglican-Jewish Commission meeting Oxford 2012

The Commission's mandate is taken from the provisions of the joint declaration of the Archbishop and the Chief Rabbis made at Lambeth Palace on 6th September 2006 and confirmed at their subsequent meeting in Jerusalem. The 2012 theme of the Commission's meeting was '*Religion and Democracy*' in each tradition.

The Anglican participants were: The Most Revd Dr Michael Jackson, The Rt Revd Dr Michael Ipgrave OBE, Mrs Clare Amos, Dr Jane Clements, staffed by The Revd Dr Toby Howarth Secretary for Inter Religious Affairs to the Archbishop of Canterbury ,The Revd Rana Youab Khan, Archbishop of Canterbury's international Inter-religious Dialogues Assistant & NIFCON

PUBLICATIONS

Christian Muslim Digest <http://nifcon.anglicancommunion.org/digest/index.cfm>

Published electronically four times per year this offers a digest of information from English-language newspapers and broadcast services in the main countries or areas where Anglicans and Muslims regularly encounter one another. It seeks to provide factual coverage of stories involving Anglicans and Muslims in a way that shows a) what is happening in relations, and b) how the stories are handled in the media. In addition to this, there are occasional detailed reports about a particular area, adding to factual coverage some analysis and opinions from as wide and authoritative a selection of commentators as possible.

Land of Promise: an Anglican Exploration of Christian Attitudes to the Holy Land, with special reference to Christian Zionism

This piece of work was undertaken at the request of ACC-14. It explores the doctrine of Christian Zionism as it impacts the life of our churches, in particular attitudes to Israel Palestine and the Christian communities there. (*a separate agenda item at ACC-15*) This document is included in the papers for the ACC-15 meeting.

Generous Love: the truth of the Gospel and the call to dialogue - an Anglican theology of interfaith relations

Demand for this publication continues, as does use of the online study guide <http://www.aco.org.books>. The study guide is designed to be updated and developed so that the stories and articles, prayers and weblinks can be added to reflect insights from different parts of the Communion. A translation of *Generous Love* is available in Urdu.

CONFERENCES AND VISITORS

Presence of Faith Symposium

A symposium for a group of theologians, in December 2011, to review and discuss Anglican involvement in Christian dialogue and encounter with other faiths, and also to remember and celebrate the immense contribution of Bishop Kenneth Cragg to this field of Christian endeavour.

The main themes covered in the papers were:

The history of Anglican involvement in other faiths over the last 100 years;

Theological reflection on the motivation for this involvement and assessment of it;

The lived experience and involvement of Anglicans present and past in various parts of the world in relation to other faiths.

Abstracts of the papers can be seen at

http://nifcon.anglicancommunion.org/resources/documents/abstracts_of_papers.pdf

The papers from the symposium will be published. Publication date 2013.

Visitors from Ghana

In September 2012, at the request of the British High Commissioner in Ghana, NIFCON and the Archbishop of Canterbury's Interfaith Adviser hosted a two-day programme for four Imams from

Ghana. The visitors were particularly keen to observe and hear about maintaining healthy and productive relationships between Christian and Muslim communities

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Strengthening the network aspect of NIFCON'S life

by making best use of the developments in electronic communication methods to facilitate this
Identifying and encouraging active participation from each Province
Securing funding for staff and programme

Other Possible areas of engagement:

Arab Spring - responding to issues developing out of this and the situation face by Christians in the region;

Persecuted Christians - to be able to provide reliable information to enable effective prayer and other responses around the Communion

Eastern faiths - a greater engagement with the non-Abrahamic faiths, perhaps initiate a Christian Buddhist conversation based in Asia

Anglican theology - further exploration of the Anglican theology of inter faith engagement, possibly through research into existing NIFCON material;

Theological Education - trying to raise the profile of Interfaith work on ministry formation curricula

A study guide/Bible Study to the document *Land of Promise?*

Regional Consultations an opportunity to bring together participants from a particular region to focus on a specific interfaith concern.