

Staff and Office News

The event at Lambeth Palace went well and boosted the local profile of NIFCON. Sadly as a fundraising event it was less successful. One major grant application has also been disappointing. Which is all the more galling as the exchange of news, suggestions and concerns is really taking off around the network. A specific request to part fund another consultation in 2006 has been fruitful. Thanks to all those who have contributed to this letter and if you can contribute financially to NIFCON or have further suggestions for funding sources do please let us know. Meanwhile, the chair of our Management Group, Bishop Michael Jackson of Clogher, Church of Ireland, accompanied the Archbishop of Canterbury on his very recent visit to Pakistan. There is a brief report on the Anglican Communion website at present and we hope to have something from Bishop Jackson for the NIFCON site in due course. Talking of which this is in need of a major redesign since we have so much material it is impossible to navigate. This will happen early in 2006.

Around the Communion

Aotearoa/New Zealand/Polynesia

Interfaith Search Fiji, the Ecumenical Centre for Research Education and Advocacy (ECEA) and the Citizens Constitutional Forum (CCF) held a meeting earlier in the year on the theme "Religion and Human Rights in Fiji." The aim was to engage representatives from a wide cross section of religious organisations and produce guidelines to promote religious tolerance which could be distributed in booklet form later. The response to the initial invitation (to every religious organisation registered with the government and others not on government lists) was very disappointing. In the end thirty four participants representing fourteen religious organisations, plus CCF and the Fiji Human Rights Commission attended. Sadly neither the Methodist Church or the Fiji Muslim League felt able to send official representatives and there were no participants from outside the Suva area. However there was a good gender balance and a friendly atmosphere developed which encouraged frank dialogue and good bridge building. The proposed booklet is now ready for compilation. If you think it would be of interest in your work please contact interfaithfiji@connect.com.fj Perhaps other readers have ideas on how to encourage participants from a wider area in future, though it may well be an issue of funds to pay for travel of course.

Bangladesh

News comes to us of worsening human rights and increased rates of crimes such as rape, kidnap, extortion, and dowry deaths. Land grabbing of the indigenous peoples and minorities has also increased. The real concern is that extremist militant Islamic groups target the judiciary, journalists, and NGO activists in a bid to establish Islamic laws in place of the existing civil system. There are at least 67 such groups existing and active. Whilst 40 thousand police were deployed to protect delegates at the South Asian Association for Regional Co-operation (SAARC) meeting in November, Government aid was not sent to alleviate the famine in the North of the country and few perpetrators of the terrorist attacks have been brought to book.

Canada

Work continues to keep an up to date list of Interfaith Officers in each Diocese who share news of interfaith events and concerns – NIFCON in microcosm! Christian Jewish relations feature this quarter. The Primate of the Anglican Church of Canada made a statement and joined other church leaders in signing a letter condemning the remarks by the President of Iran in October concerning the State of Israel

see www.ccc-cce.ca/english/home/whatsnew.htm.

Also, a major celebration took place in Toronto to mark the 40th Anniversary of Nostra Aetate.

The Interfaith Officer for the Diocese of Ontario, the Rev Dr Ian Ritchie has reported on the 10th Anniversary of Prayer Vigil that has grown over the years to become an interfaith movement that speaks out against poverty and social policies that exacerbate it. He also spent six weeks in Nigeria in the summer researching Christian-Muslim relations and filming for a DVD he hopes to make available for church presentations. He says of his visit "There are some valuable lessons to be learned – they have accomplished some things there (Nigeria) that people in Canada would say is impossible. Of course we don't hear anything about the good news stories in Canada because all the

mainstream news media will tell us about Africa is war, famine, plague and pestilence.” – much the same might be said of the media in the UK, see Church of South India below for news of a conference on this and other media issues.

The Revd Canon Linda Nicholls (the church’s official NIFCON contact) recommends the ‘Encounter World Religions’ residential programme she attended in Toronto, take a look at what they offer at www.worldreligions.ca.

Dr Stuart Brown has reported on a four day international conference on responsible investment “A Non-violent Response to the Israeli Occupation?” organised by the Canadian Friends of Sabeel.

The first speaker (Jeff Helper) suggested most Israelis want peace but the program of Prime Minister Sharon would make it impossible for a Palestinian state to exist save as five cantons (Nablus, Ramallah, Hebron, East Jerusalem and Gaza) separated by Israeli territory. He saw this as a type of apartheid. To avoid the imposition of this the speaker wanted sanctions against the occupations of Palestinian lands targeting companies who produce goods in the occupied territories, universities which conduct research there, sports teams which play there etc.

On the second day three films were shown by B H Yael who would like to encourage solidarity between Israelis and Palestinian peace activists. A fourth film, “Protest and Prayer” shown by Frances Combs (Toronto Conference of the United Church of Canada) described efforts to persuade the Conference to join a boycott and campaign of divestment from companies profiting from the illegal occupation of Palestinian lands.

The Conference of UCC adopted the resolution. (All the churches support the existence of the State of Israel but insist that this State should end the occupation and negotiate a peace agreement with the Palestinians.)

Next day Naim Ateek (director of the Sabeel Centre in Jerusalem), spoke about the wall in Palestine.

Stave Adivi, a member of the group “Courage to Refuse” and the Committee against the Destruction of Houses insisted that the only way for Israel to have security would be through recognition of the Palestinians’ rights and negotiation of a lasting peace. He repeated more than once that he was against the occupation only, while the existence of the State of Israel was not in question. However, justice delayed is justice denied. In discussion with other delegates Stuart heard how even though UCC had passed the resolution there had been some foot-dragging. Is interfaith dialogue sometimes falsely used to prevent action?: action must be based on justice. Some churches (in Canada) have prepared a list of agencies in Israel and Palestine which deserve positive investments. See www.iccr.org for lists of boycotts and campaigns.

Jad Isaac, executive director for the Jerusalem Institute for Applied Research, was due to speak but was prevented from leaving Bethlehem so his recorded speech was heard. He explained the pattern of withdrawals in some areas and seizure of lands elsewhere. There is an increasing pattern of repression that can only increase frustration which is the breeding ground for violence. It was possible to have a telephone question and answer session with Jad and his presentation is available at www.arjij.org.

Michael Mandel, a professor at Osgoode Law School gave a lecture about the judicial aspects of the occupation . He is a Jew opposed to the occupation and says it is not good for the Palestinians; it is equally bad for Israel and all Jews.

Unable to attend due to ill health Archbishop Desmond Tutu sent a video message.

Comparisons were made between the South African situation under apartheid and the Palestinian situation. Salpy Eskidjian, a former employee of the WCC’s Commission for International affairs, underlined the essential role of the WCC in programs of social action due to its historic involvement in supporting human rights and its basic networks in all parts of the world. Responsibility lies with every church to act according to its own conscience, and with the churches together, to join their efforts in support of justice in Palestine.

In the concluding paragraph of his report Stuart notes ‘This conference was an exercise in practical dialogue. There were Christians, Jews and Muslims from several parts of Canada, the USA, Europe, Israel and Palestine. United in the face of the evil of the occupation of Palestinian lands and the systematic oppression of their inhabitants the participants committed themselves to combat this evil with all available means, and especially with campaigns and actions to affect the agencies and companies which are profiting from this illegal occupation and inhuman oppression.’

Finally from Canada, Mike Westwood has sent an update on the progress of the Interspiritual Centre of Vancouver - a plan to build one interfaith spiritual centre, ... ‘being the use of premises for religious worship, spiritual learning,

and community involvement by way of a single facility designed to serve a diversity of faith groups, spiritual communities and individuals...'. The building will part of a ground breaking neighbourhood at the south east end of False Creek, currently a bleak, abandoned industrial zone. The site will first be used to house more than 2,000 athletes for 2010 Vancouver Winter Olympics before being transformed into a permanent community. The project also has impeccable environmental credentials. A website to keep up with the project is being developed at www.interspiritual.org

Cuba

Iglesia Epsicopla de Cuba reports on damage to homes and church buildings from recent hurricanes. They also ask our prayers for Bishop Miguel Tamayo as he ministers to both Uruguay and Cuba. The Episcopal Church of Cuba is an Extra-provincial Diocese. In February 2006 they will have an extraordinary Synod to approve a new Constitution and Canons for Cuba. *WE were delighted to see Bishop Miguel in the office recently.*

England

As NIFCON's last letter went to print The Mission and Public Affairs Council published 'Presence and Engagement' for debate by General Synod. Focusing on the situation of churches in multi Faith neighbourhoods, the report aims at re-affirming the commitment of the Church of England's ministry in these areas, encouraging dioceses to review their strategies for supporting clergy, and encouraging theological reflection. The document includes research carried out in the *Presence and Engagement* project, which investigated the Church of England's role in parishes with significant multi Faith communities. See <http://www.cofe.anglican.org/info/interfaith/presence.pdf>

The Christian Muslim Forum is due to be launched in January 2006. This is a bilateral forum for England bringing together in one body the range of Christian Churches and Muslim traditions. The Forum, in total, is made of up 10 Christians and 10 Muslims, 7 of whom are women. The Aims and Objectives of the forum were set out in a joint statement by Bishop David Gillet and Dr Ataulah Siddiqui (Chair and Vice Chair of the Forum respectively):-

'To weave a web of open, honest and committed personal relationships between Christians and Muslims; To encourage shared reflection on the spiritual, theological, scholarly, ethical and practical values of the two traditions in order to offer resources for citizenship in our society; To build a shared public platform to strengthen Christians and Muslims working together for the common good in partnership with others; To develop channels of communication to help Christians and Muslims together to respond to events which test our relationship. In all of this work we seek to remain faithful to our own commitment as Christians and Muslims while growing in our relationship with each other, our understanding of each other's tradition, and our ability to work together for the good of our communities and society as a whole.'

Continuing Porvoo links; The Revd Fergus Capie an Anglican priest who directs the work at London Inter Faith Centre, (an ecumenically hosted place for meeting, study and dialogue among the world's religions) was invited by the Swedish church, to give a paper at their recent (October 2005) three day diocesan clergy conference in Stockholm, held every five years.

Entitled 'Identity and Openness' it comments on the bewilderment caused to colleagues from other faith traditions by Christian reticence to be defined. Rather than a 'recovery' of confidence in our identity as Christians – which would just be bringing back what we had before – we need a fresh understanding of the nature of our Christian identity, not just in a post Christian and mainly secular society, but also in relation to the other faiths. With other faiths seeking identity in a diaspora setting, is Christianity one among a number (the 'level playing field model') or does it still have a 'host' role (a 'hospitality' model)?

Our search for identity will in turn be influenced by the level of openness we show and experience. We experience openness in the self giving love of God in Christ, but as Christianity has become institutionalised boundaries have developed. However, openness need not mean compromise.

Fergus makes a plea for those who dialogue in pursuit of common ground to be joined by the more conservative who seek a base line of peaceful coexistence within which each can fully live. He also picks up on the cross cultural differences which need to be remembered in dialogue - between for example an understanding of the completeness of the individual and a more corporate understanding of identity.

Whilst there is a greater freedom again to speak and live my faith than say a decade ago we need to remember that others may be sharing their 'my' differently. If Muslims understand their faith as something corporate whilst Christians speak from an individual view point we need not be surprised when Muslims ask what is the difference between the term 'western' and 'Christian'.

The paper also touches on the temptation within the inter faith “industry” to become more comfortable with dialogue partners than with ones home constituency.

Fergus also suggests that whereas in ecumenical relations we start with what we agree on and work out, in inter faith perhaps we have to start by acknowledging our differences and not try and gloss over problems. Openness can lead to change, on both sides.

The paper is a good treatise against the awful English tendency to be apologetic and try to avoid offence when by so doing one may not show the real self that the other may be longing to see and understand. *For more on the London Inter Faith Centre contact info@londoninterfaith.org.uk for a copy of the paper contact the NIFCON office.*

Kenya

CONSTITUTION MAKING – KENYA

A Constitutional Court in Nairobi, Kenya this week underscored the importance role played by the Church in the Constitution of Kenya making process.

The Anglican Church of Kenya with a membership of 5 million in a population of 31 million Kenyans is one of the few mainstream Church organizations which the court said “gave content and substance” to the Constitution.

Anglican Church of Kenya (ACK) is the second largest Christian Church in Kenya after the Roman Catholic and has been involved in the clamour for Multi-party-ism and good governance for decades.

The main political issue in Kenya today is the country's Constitution Review process. Different political parties have been involved in intense campaigns to either allow or reject a Referendum on the draft Constitution. The voting for the Referendum is scheduled for Monday 21st, November 2005.

A group calling itself Yellow Movement took the issue of the Referendum to the Constitutional court seeking to have it stopped.

In recognition of the Church role in Constitution making efforts, the Anglican Church of Kenya was two months ago appointed by the Government as a national provider of Civic Education on the Constitution.

The Church House of Bishops in August this year took a neutral stand on the Referendum by advising the flock to first read and understand the draft Constitution before voting “YES” or “NO”. The Church felt that the flock should be left alone to make their own informed decision or “**vote according to their conscience**” as the Head of the Church Archbishop Benjamin Nzimbi said. However the Church was emphatic that Kenyans must go and vote en-masse.

The debate on the new draft Constitution has polarized the country so much that the Church did not wish to be directly party to it. His Grace the Archbishop said “**Each person has a right to make informed decisions after reading and understanding the draft constitution. As for voting “YES” or “NO” that is an individual decision. But go and vote for your right**”
(We now know that the result of the referendum was ‘No’)

The National Council of Churches in India

Sent news of their HIV/AIDS Task Force which met on November 24 which gave priority to children suffering from and due to HIV/AIDS. Chaired by Dr Samuel Kishan the Task Force took a strong pro-life stance. The Revd Enos Das Pradhan , Chair of the Commission on Polity and National Governance speaking on World Aids Day said “the challenge is to sharpen our faith perspective , our theological foundation for responding to the epidemic. Therefore, the challenge before the Indian Church is to develop an integrated policy to combat HIV/AIDS.”

See www.nccindia.in for the Council of World Mission's HIV and AIDS Policy and Strategy

Papua New Guinea

we received the following prayer request and reflection

On the 10th. October, 2005, the Anglican Church of Papua New Guinea elected Father Joe Kopapa to be the next Bishop of Popondota Diocese.

He will need our prayers as he takes up his new responsibilities. His will be no easy task.

A bishop is both a leader and a servant to his people. He leads primarily by example and teaches most effectively by the kind of person he is and the kind things he does. He receives obedience from his clergy but must also be obedient --- to the Church he serves. He is not alone in his decisions: the people of God surround him; his brother bishops are beside him to share his burden. He can call on the inherited wisdom of the Church through two thousand years. He has his prayer life to keep him close to Jesus. He has his Bible giving clear guidance to one who reads it carefully and prayerfully.

What are the gifts a bishop needs to do his work? Different people bring different gifts. No two of us are alike. Since God has called Father Joe to be Bishop of Popondota we may be sure he will have the gifts his diocese needs from him, but three gifts are important for every bishop;

Firstly, a bishop needs ears to hear what people are saying with understanding. He will listen for the meaning behind the words, to the need, to the heart. He will hear the difference between truth and deceit.

Secondly, a bishop needs eyes to see what the Holy Spirit wants him to see. He will see the real situation in the present, learn the necessary lessons from the past, and see the way forward into the future.

Thirdly, a bishop needs courage to speak not just his own mind but the mind of Christ. He will speak not for himself but for the Church.

All this must be under-girded by personal humility and an obedient heart.

Programme for Christian-Muslim Relations in Africa – PROCMURA

At the invitation of PROCMURA, The Coptic Evangelical Organization for Social Services (CEOSS), Cultural Development Division in Egypt, 23 Muslim and Christian women and men from Kenya, Egypt, Ghana, Tanzania (mainland and Zanzibar), Nigeria, Uganda, Togo, and Senegal as well as partners of the two organisations from Denmark to Nairobi gathered to deliberate on issues on Christian-Muslim relations in Africa.

Five days of discussion and reflection on issues of mutual concern to both Christians and Muslims in sub-Saharan Africa and in Egypt covered multiple areas all of which were aimed at peace and peaceful co-existence between Christians and Muslims in particular, and society in general for the holistic development of African peoples. The deliberations exposed participants to a wider variety of experiences from the two organisations in the area of building peace and bridges of understanding in their diverse societies. Accordingly, a memorandum of understanding is to be agreed upon and signed by the two organisations.

After intensive open discussions, the participants resolved to:

1. Strengthen relations between Muslims and Christians in sub-Saharan Africa and in Egypt through mutual respect.
2. Continue deliberations on new ways of promoting peace and understanding between the two communities and the wider society.
3. Encourage Christians and Muslims to collaborate to address general issues that affect society, as for example, the HIV/AIDS pandemic.
4. Ensure that any misunderstanding between people of different faiths is resolved in a non-violent manner through dialogue.
5. Promote the spirit of dialogue and positive tolerance as the norm among people of different faiths and not just as a means of resolving conflicts.
6. Deglobalise conflicts by consciously working together to ensure that conflicts in any part of the world do not adversely influence relations between people of different faiths in a given country.
7. Call on the media to be partners in promoting peace, tolerance and understanding among diverse communities.

The meeting also expressed solidarity with Kenyans preparing to vote in a referendum on a new constitution.

The Church of the Province of South Africa

Back at the end of July The Revd Natalie Simons-Arendse wrote to tell us about a group she works with in Cape Town. Part of a wider organisation based in the USA, Seeking Common Ground, their particular project is called Face to Face, Faith to Faith. Every year a group of young people (Jewish, Muslim and Christian) between the ages of 16 and 18 meet for 2 weeks in Holmes, New York where they meet their counter parts from the Middle East, Northern Ireland, South Africa and the USA. They learn leadership skills, conflict resolution and most importantly how to listen to each other. On return to their home countries, the participants are compelled to be part of interfaith community projects/charities for the rest of the year until the new group gets chosen to attend the 2 week camp in the USA. The follow up programme includes meeting with the home group every month, contacting friends in the other countries to encourage and support them to always think peacefully! This programme has been running for 5 years now and we can only pray that it will continue to grow from strength to strength.

Natalie works part time as an intern to Archbishop Undungane.

The Church of the Province of South East Asia

picking up the theme of 'identity' Dr Albert Sundararaj Walters writes from the theological Seminary in Malaysia

An Identity Crisis

Christianity has been in the land of Malaysia for nearly 500 years. However, with the emergence of race-based politics after Independence (Merdeka) in 1957, the Church and Christians in general, find a pressing need to critically and creatively respond to local dynamics of politics, cultures, traditions and religions.¹

Christians have continually raised concerns over various national issues, e.g. on building of churches, on provision of burial ground, on banning of Bibles and Christian literature in the Malay language, etc. Perhaps the most pressing and perennial issue facing the church is to do with possible religious antagonism arising out of the Islamisation process in the country.

The latest issue may be termed an 'identity crisis'. As an upgrading exercise, all Malaysians have been advised to change their old identity cards to the electronic chip-based MyKad by the end of 2005. However, recently there have been a number of complaints by some non-Malays/Muslims that the National Registration Department (NRD) has incorrectly recorded their religion in the database. Some who are Christians were listed as Buddhists or Sikhs, while others who are non-Muslims were listed as Muslims. The NRD's claim of extracting information on religion from the applicant's birth certificate is presumptuous. A person may have converted from the religion that is stated in the birth certificate. Non-Muslims are free to choose their religion and to change it at will – except Islam.²

On the surface, this seems to be a trivial matter, but the minority Christian community³ has plenty of reasons to be concerned. This possible misrepresentation of the size of the Christian population could have serious implications and repercussions. Firstly, it could affect the political clout of the group. Secondly, it may also be associated to town planning and the approval of churches in housing estates by local authorities.⁴ And these and other related issues could further affect Christians' meaningful participation in nation-building.

It is rather unfortunate that aggressive Islamisation and polarised politics have led to the sidelining of the reality of multi-religious Malaysia. Despite constitutional assurance of religious freedom, there are still biased groups and individuals attempting to assert their religious beliefs and impose restrictions on the religious freedom of others.

In such a socio-political and religious climate, interfaith dialogue should be a practical means for the different faith communities in the country to reach a common and open understanding of one another.

Submitted by: Albert Sundararaj Walters Seminari Theoloji Malaysia Seremban, Malaysia

¹ "Citizens of Heaven, Citizens of Malaysia" in *Berita CCM* April-June 2005. *Berita CCM* is a publication of the Council of Churches of Malaysia.

² Cf. "MyKad Matters: Wrong Record May Reduce Size of Christian Population" in *CA News* November 2005.

³ 9.1% according to 2000 census. Statistics based on *Population Distribution and Basic Demographic Characteristics Report: Population and Housing Census 2000*. Putrajaya: Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2001. Available: <http://www.statistics.gov.my/English/PageDemo.htm>

⁴ Cf. Wong Chun Wai, "An 'identity crisis' we can do without" in *The Star Online*, Sunday October 16, 2005. Available: <http://thestar.com.my/services/focus>.

The Church of South India

are concerned with cyclones and floods in many parts of the CSI, ongoing Tsunami relief work, and growing unrest due to militant activities to disturb peace in the sub continent. They also ask our prayers for the ensuing Synod in January 2006.

Also on the Tsunami, The Revd Joshva Raja was in Taipei, Taiwan in late July presenting a paper on Early Warning System and Village communication Networks.

The United Theological College (UTC Bangalore) has continued with outreach and service to the community organising a one day seminar in August on Mass Media and Adult Education; a two day seminar on Training Disabled personnel for the IT industries and a week long training for NGOs and church workers on how to engage critically with the media and the use of alternative media.

They have also been behind the creation of media awareness programmes in some local schools and published a textbook 'Media Education – A guide Book for School Teachers' in conjunction with ISPCK.

Two other titles from UTC 'Communication and Theological Education' by Fr Dr Michael Traber and 'Religion, Media and Representation' by Joshva himself.

The college's street theatre has also proved popular with Bangalore churches and for promoting awareness on health issues.

UTC has also conducted training for the women of the Church of South India Karnataka Central Diocese in promoting awareness about HIV/AIDS.

The college encourages students to do visual hermeneutics and use songs and dances to communicate in addition to straightforward preaching.

The beginning of December UTC hosted an international conference 'Democracy and the Citizen's Media.

We hope to receive news of that for the next newsletter especially the session on Journalism, Advocacy & Peace-Building.

Scotland

Scottish churches have appointed a part-time worker to promote dialogue between Christians and people of different faiths. Former teacher Andrew Sarle, who is completing his theology studies at Edinburgh University, will work with churches to encourage members to engage in dialogue with members of other faith communities. Mr Sarle, a Kirk elder who was brought up in a mixed faith home, is employed by the Churches' Agency for Inter Faith Relations in Scotland.

USA

Interfaith Developments in the Episcopal Church

The Standing Commission on Ecumenical and Interreligious Relations of the Episcopal Church (SCEIR) monitored the successful completion of the Interfaith Education Initiative jointly sponsored by a grant from Episcopal Relief and Development and the Office of Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations.

Interfaith courses were offered in seminaries and dioceses, a web site (www.interfaitheducationinitiative.org) established, and successful conference held at the Washington National Cathedral in September 2004. Dr. Lucinda Mosher and Ms. Sonia Omulepu provided leadership for this three year program.

The 2003 General Convention formally charged the SCEIR with oversight of this Church's interreligious relations in addition to ecumenical relations. The SCEIR sought appointment of members with particular gifts and skills in interreligious relations. In addition, the Commission devoted a significant portion of its April 2005 meeting to formulating a strategy for interreligious relations. Ecumenical partners, including the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and representatives from the National Council of Churches and the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, were invited to share their own work in interreligious relations.

The Commission wishes to engage in as much of this work as ecumenically as possible, but also believes the Episcopal Church has particular perspectives to offer in interreligious relations.

The Commission also heard from prominent scholars and theologians on the theology of interreligious relations, and there was considerable discussion on the convergences and divergences in approaching interreligious relations as opposed to ecumenical relations. While the Episcopal Church has been guided for more than 100 years by the Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral, no similar rationale or grounding exists for interreligious dialogue. The SCEIR commissioned a task force to formulate a statement upon which this Church would conduct interreligious relations.

In November 2005 Bishop Christopher Epting, Deputy for Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations for the Episcopal Church, appointed Dr. Gwynne Guibord to serve as a consultant to the Office of Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations in interreligious matters. Dr. Guibord is a trustee of A Council for a Parliament of the World's Religions and convened a workshop at the Parliament in Barcelona 2004 on "Pathways to Peace: the Wisdom of Listening, the Power of Commitment." She recently delivered an address at Cornell University entitled "When Faith Becomes Hate: Religion Gone Awry."

We also received an article by Adem Carrol who describes himself as a "responsible" Muslim commenting on the French riots. Please contact the NIFCON office if you would like a copy.

The West Indies

Canon Knolly Clarke sent a paper 'The Faith Based Organisations & Their Social Responsibilities'. Which makes interesting reading alongside Revd Capie's paper *see page 4*. He begins by quoting Roman Catholic theologian Paul Knitter to remind us that religion rightly understood has a public responsibility to transform situations that are negative and evil. Religious communities must endeavour to remove those forces that inhibit and stand in the way of change for a better world. He suggests that whilst individual religious communities may have the theological and spiritual resources to enable them to transform the status quo the time has come for them to do so together not alone.

The International Parliamentary Union has identified issues that the religious communities must consider in collaboration with each other and act on collectively; respect for life; a responsibility towards future generations; protection of the environment. Christians cannot love God if they do not love their neighbour, Submission to God means that for Islamic communities the brotherhood of man must be a pillar of faith, Buddhists cannot achieve enlightenment without compassion and Hindus cannot realise the yoga of knowledge without the yoga of action for the good of all.

Canon Clarke believes 'Our woes flow from a pool of disunity and disease fed by a false notion of self, we do not understand ourselves and our relationship with one another and so we separate from the other.' He suggests we need to move 'from centripetal living and attitudes to one of centrifugal movement and adds 'Strange as it may seem we can only find our true selves when we respond to our neighbour, when we recognise that we are our brothers and sisters keepers.

Reading from Knitter again, Canon Clarke observes 'although our religious symbols and religious stories may be different and our religious language may be different and diverse, the commonality would be found on the common quest for justice integrity and peace.'

'The Challenge for our Faith Based Organisations', he concludes 'must be their concern with the issues which threaten life on earth. Hence they must come together to invest time, intellect and energies in developing a universal ethic for saving our world from tragedy.'

Suggestions for prayer

For all involved in communication especially where travel and communication is difficult or expensive.

For the work and ministry of PROCMURA

For all those rebuilding after natural disasters and the opportunities for co-operation across boundaries that this may afford.

For all those embarking on new patterns of ministry, for new Bishops and Archbishops and especially Andrew Sarle in Scotland, Dr Gwynne Guibord in USA and all involved in the Christian Muslim Forum in England.