

In 2001 the General Secretary of ACC, Canon John L. Peterson, secured a grant which enabled the Network of Inter Faith Concerns (NIFCON) to employ staff for the first time. Mrs Clare Amos was seconded from her role of Theological Resource Officer with the United Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (USPG) to act as Coordinator for NIFCON for two days per week (most recently this has become one and a half). From Easter 2002 Ms Susanne Mitchell has worked for two and half days per week as Administrator. Dr Lucinda Mosher has volunteered to act as NIFCON Support Associate for North America. Staff are based in the new ACO premises at St Andrew's House, Westbourne Park, London.

The recent Standing Committee of the ACC approved a change to the network's **structures**. A Management Group chaired by The Right Reverend Michael Jackson, Bishop of Clogher, will oversee the work of the Coordinator (on behalf of the Secretary General). A larger group of Associates will be invited to meet on an annual basis to share news and expertise. Some of the Associates will also offer financial support. The network continues to have three Presidents but is currently awaiting the appointment of a replacement for the Right Reverend Kenneth Fernando who has retired from this role. We rely on **contacts** from each province to send regular reports (preferably in May and November) to keep the network informed.

The **website**, established in 2002 by the generous support of Anglican Internet Services, is currently the main source of publicising the activities of the network Dennis Johnson of AIS continues to receive and post material from the office on a regular basis. The address is www.anglicannifcon.org. There are also regular NIFCON pages in Anglican Episcopal World.

The Coordinator and Administrator have made a number of **external contacts** via letter, email, phone or in person with people seeking help with their inter faith work They also maintain links with other inter faith bodies and attend conferences.

Several months of 2003 were taken up with planning for and holding a **consultation in Bangalore** at the kind invitation of the United Theological College from 30 August to 4 September. The meeting looked at the interface between Mission and Dialogue. Attendees were mainly from India and the South Asia region with some delegates from Africa, USA and Europe. The gathering also underlined the 'Concerns' aspect of the networks role, underlining our task of advocacy. It is hoped to hold a similar meeting in 2005 possibly in Africa and or perhaps jointly with the Inter Anglican Standing Committee for Evangelism (IASCOME).

The **monitoring of Christian-Muslim relations** around the communion, as mandated by Lambeth 1998, has taken the form of a digest, which appears on the website, tackling a specific issue at a time. Issues covered so far include comments made by Shaykh Tantawy in relation to the Iraq war, the situations of Christians in the future Iraq and an overview of the situation in Sudan. A future issue will look at Christian Muslim relations in Kenya. NIFCON looks to its contacts around the communion to inform this work. Currently we hope to secure funding for more staff or staff time to further this.

NIFCON has been asked to undertake the administration of the **Al Azhar dialogue** on behalf of the Archbishop's office. Although a planned meeting in New York in September 2003 was called off at the last minute, Shaykh Fawzy spent a week at Ridley Hall Cambridge, England in October 2003. The next formal round of the dialogue will take place in Cairo in September 2004 when Archbishop Rowan has been invited to lecture at Al Azhar.

One year ago a volume celebrating the work of **Bishop Kenneth Cragg** entitled 'A Faithful Presence' was published to mark his 90th Birthday. NIFCON encouraged and helped with the production of this book.

Fourthly, in the area of Christian-Muslim relations NIFCON has pressed for the topic to appear formally on the agenda for **ACC13** in 2005. That said, it is conscious that its role is broader and encompasses issues between Anglicans and many different faiths as some of the news from around the communion illustrates.

News from contacts:

we hope there will be more of this in future please!

We have had reports from Fiji on Hindu Christian relations, detailing the work of Interfaith Search Fiji. It is to be hoped that initiatives with young people will change the climate from one of intolerance on the part of Christians to mutual respect.

By contrast we heard whilst in India of the rise of Hindu fundamentalism, the particular difficulties in Gujarat and the issue of anti conversion legislation. This has also caused difficulty in Sri Lanka in recent months where the Buddhist majority see Christian mission as threatening. This is unfortunate in the light of the great strides made towards peace over the civil conflict in the country, a peace which faith groups and leaders have played an important part in bringing about.

England continues to be influenced by September 11 and events since. There has been a burgeoning of initiatives to foster Christian-Muslim dialogue partly to avert future catastrophes and partly to counter the suspicion and Islamophobia. It is difficult to prevent this dominating the inter faith scene.

The Church of Ireland reported on the need for education to further more positive attitudes in the area of inter faith relations. It would perhaps be fair to suggest that inter faith relations are relatively new in this area of the communion but increased immigration has moved the topic up the agenda.

Nipon Sei Ko Kai reported on the Religious Summit Meeting in Mt. Hiei. The Most Rev James Toru Uno, has become one of the directors of the Japanese Committee of the World Conference on Religion and Peace.

We continue to hear mixed news from Nigeria in that some regions are able to enjoy positive relations between Muslims and Christians but in some the Christian minority suffers. As in Fiji there is a need for more funds to further dialogue and education.

The Bangalore consultation welcomed the opportunity to hear about inter faith issues in Malaysia, New Zealand, USA, Korea, and Tanzania in person from delegates. These reports are available on the website or on request from the NIFCON office.