

Commission for Christian Unity and Dialogue

Seconder: Revd Suzanne Cousins

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Your Grace, friends and members of General Synod: The work of the Commission for Christian Unity and Dialogue, its working groups and members, is largely unseen but it is significant, often seminal, and warrants our attention and prayers; for example, I believe it is appropriate to acknowledge with gratitude those on CCUD who help us as a church understand and navigate matters political and religious in Europe and our place within and beyond the European community.

Anselm's adage, "faith seeking understanding", describes the theological plumline employed, but to me the joy is to see and experience the positive and joyful relationships – ecumenical, inter-church and inter-faith – which transpire and are encouraged and sustained through the patient and prayerful work of the groups and those interests described and summarised in the report. It is important that continue to attend to these relationships.

Such communions as Porvoo may, in light of their fairly long history, seem established and secure, as may our various ecumenical partnerships, but we do well not to take these for granted and rather to nourish and cherish them, in light of contemporary influential forces and voices in society and our communities which are contrary to Christ's call and command to love, and which are confusing and misleading for citizens, including church people.

Canon Fielding has kindly mentioned the Inter Faith Working Group (IFWG), and I will take the liberty of drawing attention to the growing importance of inter faith matters and of emphasising that inter faith matters do matter. They are pertinent to us all. It is not so long ago that inter faith dialogue was perceived largely as an academic and theological niche area, encroaching little on our daily life or pastoral concerns, but it is not so now.

Today it is quite apparent that our ability to engage comfortably and graciously with people of faiths other than the Christian faith is essential to our witness, work and citizenship, and for many of us, in our increasingly multicultural settings, interaction and engagement is an everyday affair. And so the Church's evolving work in the area of inter faith dialogue and relations is of increasing relevance and requires our careful attention.

Included in the IFWG's remit is the task of assisting the Commission in providing a voice within the Church of Ireland for refugees and asylum seekers, a voice – of mercy, grace and the compassion of our Lord Jesus himself, towards displaced people and peoples, refugees,

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migrants, and the marginalised – and this in these difficult times and in the public square where, as I have intimated already, mercy, grace and compassion are too often lacking.

In light of all this the IFWG is partnering again this year in its annual conference, for the third successive year, with Sanctuary of Faith – the faith stream of Places of Sanctuary Ireland, which our friend and colleague Revd Abigail Sines, also a member of the Working Group, chairs. I commend to you this ‘Dialogue of Friendship’ conference taking place on Saturday 17th May in Dundrum Methodist Church, Dublin, under the title, Listening Well to Build Communities. We are delighted that Dr Ebun Joseph is the keynote speaker and that Dr Lucy Michael, a member of the Primate’s Ethnic Diversity, Inclusion and Racial Justice Reference Group, is to contribute to the day.

Your Grace, friends and members of General Synod: You have before you the report of the Commission for Christian Unity and Dialogue and you have heard Canon Stephen Fielding's thorough endorsement of the same. And so, it gives me great pleasure to second the proposal that this report be taken into consideration. Thank you.