

Report on Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith relations

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I began the report to Area Meeting by asking who knew anything about QCCIR, who reads Circular and other QCCIR publications and who had ever been to a conference or meeting organised by QCCIR. Only a very few hands went up.

QCCIR is the standing committee charged with assisting Quakers to work with other faiths and churches, identifying the spiritual and human values we share in pursuit of common goals. It also reflects on Quaker insights, theology and values to help Quakers enter imaginatively into the life and witness of other faiths.

The committee has representatives from around the country, including Scotland, Wales and Ireland Yearly meeting and from Young Friends. It meets three times a year for a weekend, and has regular dialogue with Britain Yearly Meeting and Meeting for Sufferings. As well as publishing its annual magazine Circular, it runs an annual conference and helps BYM with identifying interfaith speakers at the annual gathering. The most recent committee meeting took place in Limerick in the Republic of Ireland and good contacts were made with a range of faiths in Ireland, including Jewish groups, as well as Ireland Yearly Meeting Friends. There was also a very good meeting with Ecumenical Accompaniers who have been instrumental in promoting the bill going through the Irish parliament to boycott goods from Israeli settlements in the Occupied Territories. Irish Friends spoke about their concerns about the future of inter-church work there given the differences in outlook and values north and south of the border.

They produce publications on aspects of the religious life of the society and interfaith issues in Britain today. The latest of these is a series which includes *The Changing Face of Faith in Britain*, *The Spirituality of New Quakers*, and *Charting Quaker Ecumenical and Interfaith Involvement*. Another relatively recent publication was *A Spirit-led Church* (2013).

The committee appoints Friends to inter-church and inter-faith bodies nationally, such as Churches Together in Britain and Ireland. It drafts responses on behalf of BYM to consultation papers on faith issues, such as the recent World Council of Churches paper on Religion and Violence.

The last conference organised by the Committee in March this year entitled *Inspiration and Practice*, the spiritual grounding of our ecumenical and interfaith work, was attended by 78 people, including our own Area representative Alice Collins, whose report we heard at the last Area Meeting in May.

Recently the Committee has led on liaising with the Board of Deputies of British Jews, who have reacted adversely to a number of positions Quakers have taken on Israel and to the choice of speakers on occasions at BYM gathering. Many representatives are engaged in local inter-faith work in general and on specific issues, such as a low carbon future. Much of this work can be read about in Circular and on the Quaker website www.quaker.org.uk/qccir.

At present the committee is most keen to hear from Area and Local meetings about their inter-faith work. They want to get a good overview of what is being done, with which groups, and how the faith landscape of Britain is changing in the modern world. A questionnaire is available to assist Friends in responding to this and I will circulate this to local and area clerks as soon as I am able to get a copy.

I asked Friends at the meeting to reflect on what interfaith work looks like from where they are, any examples of good practice that has led to positive change and improved relationships and whether

there is more we could be doing. It would be good if Friends would all spend some time on this and prepare feedback for the Committee.