



*Monastic Interreligious Dialogue
Commission for Britain & Ireland*

www.mid-gbi.com

24 February 2010

**REPORT ON THE MID-GBI COMMISSION MEETING
FEBRUARY 4, 2010
St Mary at the Cross Abbey, Edgware, Middlesex**

PRESENT

Sr Lucy, Coordinator, Turvey; Sr M Catherine, Minutes Secretary, Chester; Abbess M Thérèse and Sr M Catherine Campbell, Edgware; Abbot Francis Baird and Aldhelm Cameron-Brown, Prinknash; Fr Paul Fleetwood, Worth; Br Philip Dulson, Mucknell Abbey (former Burford).

APOLOGIES

Sr Agnes Wilkins, Stanbrook; Sr Mary Mark Brooksbank, West Malling.

Since our last Commission meeting, Fr Dunstan, Ramsgate and Sr Rosemary, Fairacres have resigned from the Commission. At present we do not have a non-UMS Anglican member of the MID Commission.

The meeting followed the Agenda which was sent out beforehand to members, with copies to Fr Andrew and D Dominic of Ealing, as the forthcoming annual European conference (Venue Ealing) formed the main business of the discussions

1. QUESTIONS FROM THE 2009 ANNUAL CONFERENCE?

A full report was given in the last issue of **Monastic Encounter**. The only question arising regarded the inclusion of oblates as full members of the Commission.

- ◆ We decided unanimously to accept the view of the European coordinators that any oblates wishing to be full members would be recommended by their monastery.
- ◆ We also agreed that the Commission could include one or two oblate-members as permanent members. Present members are to consult with their communities, oblates and oblates directors.
- ◆ Their membership, like ours would last for the term of 6 years, and be renewable.

2. MEMBERS OF THE COMMISSION: DEPUTY COORDINATOR

NB. Thinking of renewal or resignation for oblates, we need to note that *we have not yet discussed the manner of accepting or announcing renewals for monks, nuns or oblates.*

The term for the coordinator is 6 years: do other members

(a) want to renew our commitment like that of the coordinators and at the same time? Or

(b) just leave it informal, as it is now, and make it clear when we have to withdraw?

At present we have 13 members of the commission though not all are able to attend all meetings. For example we have an Irish member, but he has never been able to make it to a meeting. We still think it important that Ireland be included. We hope to have another two members very soon: Sr Mary John of West Malling; and Fr Rocco Viviano, SX, as member and adviser. About the latter, see below.

Deputy Coordinator. For the October conference someone is needed to be deputy coordinator in case Sr Lucy cannot make it. There is also a wider need to have a deputy named for the general running of the commission's meetings. So far we have no name. Several people offered to help with the Conference in terms of welcoming, introducing guests and speakers etc.

The discussion about oblates, and about the inclusion of Fr Rocco Viviano SX as a full member and adviser marks a widening of the scope of the MID Commission. This is happening in other European countries, too, where it is not simply a strictly "monastic" commission any longer.

3. MONASTIC ENCOUNTER BULLETIN

At this point of the meeting a new subject arose. The difficulties of producing the MEB as it now stands. It was suggested and agreed that we should reconsider and re-define MEB. Instead of expecting “news” about dialogue events from our contact members, we plan to re-style MEB and have articles of interest, book reviews and such-like. Br Philip Dulson (Mucknell Abbey, former Burford) has offered to take over the editorship of MEB. We will still welcome and include any news coming to us about dialogue events in different monasteries, but it will no longer be (one of) the main purposes of the MEB.

A suggestion was made and accepted that we should organise an Open day with a speaker, whose talk could then go in the MEB. This might be part of our annual meeting for dialogue ...

It was also agreed that it should be produced annually rather than bi-annually.

Rather than following the example of IBI (which will be internet-only very soon) we decided to keep it as it is (hard copies posted to the monasteries, and one copy on our web site) because it was pointed out that copies in the guest-houses have animated the interest of guests and oblates. When we enquired recently, almost all the monasteries also preferred to have a hard copy.

4. ONGOING FORMATION FOR THE COMMISSION

As we realise that we ARE the monastic interreligious commission for Britain & Ireland, and not just a “committee” for a larger group, we agreed that it would be good to have some input ourselves when we meet. Fr Rocco Viviano, SX, has studied the subject and had experience of dialogue . He is being seconded by his congregation for full-time work in IFD. Most of his work so far has been done in the Philippines, but he is now studying for a further degree in Heythrop. During these years of his time in UK he is very happy to be an adviser-member of our Commission and to share his experiences and learning with us, and likewise to learn from our monastic approach to dialogue.

Fr Rocco came for the afternoon session of the present meeting, met everyone and gave some interesting insights into his work of IFD and the meaning of it (one memorable phrase that struck all of us was **“Dialogue is part of the DNA of a Christian”**, which he explained. An interesting discussion with questions accompanied his input. It was agreed that he would be a full member of the Commission for the duration of his time in UK. We welcome him and look forward to meeting him again.

Another person whom we hope will give us some input is Sr Agnes Wilkins of Stanbrook Abbey, Wass, who is also hoping to do a degree in interreligious dialogue at Heythrop. It would be good to share her progress in her studies and learn from her, and she has agreed to this, if all goes well.

And thirdly, Professor David Ford, Regius Professor of Divinity at Cambridge, who will be giving us an evening session at the October conference on “Scriptural Reasoning”, is very willing to be attached to our Commission as adviser. His work as Director of the Cambridge Interfaith Programme means that we can learn a great deal from him, and perhaps make it available in our annual meeting for dialogue.

5. CONTACT MEMBERS

We hope still to keep in touch with the contact members of our British/Irish monasteries, and will welcome any news of dialogue events (or book reviews or articles) for MEB. The MEB will be sent around as usual to the monasteries, and accounts of our meetings, such as the present one, so that interested monks/nuns, oblates and guests may benefit from our experiences and ideas.

6. EUROPEAN CONFERENCE: 4-8 OCTOBER, EALING ABBEY

Sr Lucy handed round a copy of the conference booklet which is in preparation, and the “welcome” sheet for coordinators and gave an account of the progress made so far. Then discussion revealed that so far we can accommodate other participants, (not coordinators) for the Wednesday & Thursday nights at Edgware or Burnham Abbey. Several said they would come in for the day only.

We are waiting to hear if Michael Barnes, SJ will be one of the Christian speakers. If not, Fr Rocco Viviano will be a speaker.

The final part of the day will be a panel of speakers and invited guests—if the latter wish it. TBA

7. PREPARATIONS FOR OCTOBER CONFERENCE

The next stage must be a meeting with D Andrew and D Dominic of Ealing Abbey who are our 'hosts' organising the conference with us.

8 FUTURE OF THE MID-GBI COMMISSION

Sr Lucy's term as coordinator ends in the summer of 2011. We are now back in the same position as in 2005 when Fr Peter left for Douai, France. At that time Sr Lucy's Prioress gave her permission to take on the job for one term of office only. We now need a new coordinator if the GBI Commission is to continue. Of those taking part in the present meeting in Edgware, none felt they could take on the position.

This leaves a big question mark over the future of the Commission.