

UNITY

*Newsletter of the Portsmouth Catholic Diocesan Christian Unity
Committee*

Summer 2011

Churches Together in Berkshire Initiative on Proposed English Baccalaureate

Many will know that the government's proposal for the English Baccalaureate (E.Bacc) does not include religious education as one of the core subjects which has the potential of marginalising the teaching of RE in schools. Support for a petition to include RE in the E.Bacc was circulated by Churches Together in Berkshire to all churches in Berkshire. This has resulted in a letter signed by nine Church leaders in Berkshire (including Bishop Crispian of Portsmouth and Bishop Peter Doyle of Northampton) being sent all seven Berkshire Members of Parliament requesting their support the reinstatement of RE in this course. To date all but one have replied, most showing sympathy to the request of the petition.

Francis Connolly, Catholic Denominational County Ecumenical Officer, feels that there may be many more opportunities for the churches to work together like this to be a combined Christian voice in the market place.

ARCIC III

A new phase of bilateral dialogue between the Anglican Communion and the Roman Catholic Church (ARCIC III) has commenced. The first meeting of ARCIC (Anglican Roman Catholic International Commission) took place in May this year at the monastery at Bose, Italy. Discussions have focussed on the interrelated issues: *the Church as Communion, local and universal*, and *how in communion the local and universal Church come to discern right ethical teaching*. The Programme also required the Commission to re-examine how the "commitment to the common goal of the restoration of complete communion in faith and sacramental life" is to be understood and pursued today, and to present the work of ARCIC II in its entirety with appropriate commentaries to assist its reception.

In considering the method that ARCIC III will use, the Commission was particularly helped by the approach of 'receptive ecumenism', which seeks to make ecumenical progress by learning from our partner, rather than simply asking our partner to learn from us. Receptive ecumenism is more about self-examination and inner conversion than convincing the other; Anglicans and Roman Catholics can help each other grow in faith, life and witness to Christ if they are open to being transformed by God's grace mediated through each other. ARCIC is committed to modelling the receptive ecumenism it advocates. It intends to find ways to consult with the members of its churches at many levels as its work matures.

New Ecumenical Canon

In April Canon Paul Townsend was installed as an Ecumenical Canon of Winchester Cathedral at a special ceremony during Sunday Choral Evensong. This is a special honour as Fr. Paul is one of only three such canons. As an ecumenical canon he is entitled to attend meetings of the Cathedral Chapter as well as being invited to process on particular occasions, preach, lead the intercessions and proclaim sacred scripture.



Canon Paul Townsend pictured after his installation as Ecumenical Canon in Winchester Cathedral.

Events

A full report and pictures of the *Unity in Action – Christians Reaching Out to Society* forum can be found at <http://www.christianunity.org.uk/Unity-in-Action-Report.html> .

The next forum being planned will take place on Saturday 17th March 2012 at St. Bede's Church, Popley Way, Basingstoke. The theme is *The Big Society – The Christian Response*. Full details and arrangements will be communicated in due course.

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