

Monthly Highlights

July 2012

International Interreligious Affairs

Anglican-Jewish dialogue, Oxford

At the end of July, the sixth Anglican–Jewish colloquium under the auspices of the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Chief Rabbinate of Israel, took place at Mansfield College in Oxford.

In the absence, due to ill health, of Chief Rabbi Shear Yashuv Cohen of Haifa, I was asked to be the Jewish chair of the proceedings. Below is the concluding communique describing the deliberations.



Participants of the Anglican-Jewish dialogue outside the main building of Mansfield College, from left to right:-

Professor Daniel Sperber, Revd. Rana Khan, Bishop John Pritchard of Oxford, Mrs. Claire Amos, Professor Avraham Steinberg, Rabbi Rasson Arousi, Rabbi David Rosen, Archbishop Michael Jackson, Dr. Jane Clements, Bishop Michael Ipgrave, Mr. Oded Wiener, Revd. Toby Howarth



LAMBETH PALACE

Communiqué of the Sixth Meeting of the Commission of the Chief Rabbinate of Israel and the Office of the Archbishop of Canterbury

The sixth meeting of the Anglican-Jewish Commission of the Chief Rabbinate of Israel and office of the Archbishop of Canterbury was hosted by the latter, at Mansfield College Oxford, on 31st July and 1st August 2012 / 12th and 13th Av 5772.

The Commission's mandate is taken from the provisions of the joint declaration of the Archbishop and the Chief Rabbis made at Lambeth Palace on 6th September 2006 and confirmed at their subsequent meeting in Jerusalem.

The meeting opened with the reading of a message from the Archbishop of Canterbury expressing his appreciation of the important ongoing relationship that the Commission represents and his own warm relationship with the Chief Rabbis of Israel with whom he had met earlier in the year in Jerusalem.

At the opening session the Rt Revd John Pritchard, Bishop of Oxford, welcomed the members of the Commission to Oxford in the context of positive local Jewish Christian relations. The members of the Commission sent their wishes for a full and speedy recovery to Rabbi Shear Yashuv Cohen, Chair of the Chief Rabbinate of Israel's Committee for Interreligious Dialogue. The Commission also congratulated the Rt Revd Michael Ippgrave on his appointment as Bishop of Woolwich and Canon Guy Wilkinson (a past Anglican coordinator of the Commission) on his investiture as CBE.

The theme of the Commission's meeting was 'Religion and Democracy' in both traditions. The paper presented by Dr Jane Clements on 'Anglicanism and the Secular State' explored the dynamic between the Kingdom of God and the earthly realm in accordance with the method of scripture interpreted in the light of tradition and reason.

Rabbi Dr Rasson Arousi's presentation explored 'Democracy in Judaism's Political Vision'. He compared contemporary democratic values and practices with Judaism's ideals of governance, participation and accountability of even the highest political authorities to religio-ethical values.

The programme included a visit to the Bodleian Library and a fascinating survey of Medieval Jewish Oxford. Rabbi Prof Avraham Steinberg then delivered a highly illuminating lecture on Jewish Medical Ethics at the Oxford Chabad Society attended by local multi faith audience.

The commission discussed various matters of concern, including the recent Private Member's Motion that related to Israel/Palestine at the Church of England's General Synod. There was acknowledgement that this had caused much distress within the Jewish community in Britain and also within the Christian community as well as in Israel and beyond. At the same time, appreciation was expressed for the efforts of all those who were engaged on the issue to introduce greater understanding and a wider perspective. The Commission discussed steps that could be taken to address the complexities of the challenges raised.

The participants looked forward to their next meeting in 2013.
