

## **2008 Chair's Report**

I find it astonishing that we have arrived at another AGM of NASACRE. The past year has been one of much activity in the world of RE and I hope that you have been kept up to date by our communications via Newsletters and the Website.

Throughout the year the members of the NASACRE Executive have continued to meet together at least once per term and have kept in contact via email, telephone and small project meetings and post between meetings. Meetings have all been well attended and very busy. In addition to regular items, business has included consideration of and responses to the new reporting format for SACREs from QCA; the Ofsted long report: *Making Sense of Religion*; the proposed revision of Circular 1/94 and the Department for Communities and Local Government's paper *Face to Face and Side by Side*. The executive also met with a senior official from the then DfES to discuss the future of RE and SACREs.

At the end of the last AGM held in the Birmingham Council House, the Executive met to co-opt Tristram Jenkins who has an invaluable role in keeping the first 3 years of Faith Forum project monitoring on track. This enabled Tristram to take an active role in the first Executive meeting of the year.

Our Treasurer Michael Metcalf worked closely with the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority to organise the London conference held earlier this year at which Jim Knight MP was our keynote speaker.

Members of the Executive have attended the Launch of Islam Awareness Week and contributed to Conferences organised by Teachers' TV and the National Union of Teachers – all of which have enabled us to promote the role of SACREs more widely. NASACRE was represented at Glasgow University's Expert Seminar on its research project *Does RE work?* in February 2008. Several members have been involved in interfaith activities; two people attended the AGM of the Inter Faith Network UK in June 2007 and meetings have been held with the Inter Faith Network to identify common areas of interest and collaboration.

### **Regional Groups**

We continue to consider whether it is possible for the Executive to effectively support regional groups, particularly as we do not have a paid Officer and most of us have 'the day job'. However during this year three regions set up meetings that were either organised in partnership with the Executive or members of the Executive attended; these have proved popular. We have also established a pilot regional area on the NASACRE website that the London Chairs of SACREs were invited to join. A limit of 3 SACRE members for each SACRE was proposed to maintain a manageable site and under the watchful eye of our webmaster, Paul

Hopkins, the use of the site has been at times quite good. A roll-out of an improved 'chat and sharing' area is proposed for the next year.

### **Keeping in touch**

#### **a) Website**

As mentioned above, the NASACRE Exec is very grateful to Paul Hopkins for the work he does in developing and maintaining our website. We continue to use it to provide documents and suggestions for agenda items for member SACREs. The area 'For your next SACRE Agenda' is intended to help SACREs to plan their meetings and to keep up to date with current debates and several Clerks and Advisers have expressed their enthusiasm for this section. Another popular area is the Frequently Asked Questions section. These are based on real enquiries from SACREs (which seem regularly to come into the secretary's email in-box late at night!).

#### **b) Newsletter**

This year the Newsletters have been designed for print but have been posted on the website. As you are aware the provision of printed copies has been a casualty of our move from Westhill to London. During the next year we will be taking stock of the Office situation and will review the situation of the newsletters. In the meantime it is good to see a developing range of contributors and we hope these provide a good discussion point for your members.

#### **c) Other publications**

Work has been completed on rewriting the NASACRE Information Booklet and a review of the document *So You're Joining Your Local SACRE* is underway. An article about the work of SACREs, commissioned by *ACT Now*, the magazine of the Association of Christian Teachers, appeared in the spring 2008 edition.

#### **d) Office**

Our NASACRE Administration is being supported at the South London Multifaith and Multicultural resources centre by Yvonne Cameron, the Centre Administrator. We are grateful to the Business Manager at the Lewisham PDC, Joyce Greene and to Yvonne, the RE Centre's Administrator, for holding the fort so swiftly after our short notice from Westhill. The future of our Admin will be discussed during this year.

#### **e) Database**

During the year, a small project was set up with funding from the RE Council. This enabled us to commission the design and development of a database for SACRE information including contact details and vacancy information. Over several months Vivienne Brown contacted all SACREs in as many ways as she was able to obtain the relevant information and we are already using the responses to keep our website information current and to inform discussions about a roll-out of the SACRE Recruitment and Training Programme. However what continues to be amazing is how difficult it is to get in touch with a SACRE if

our records become outdated, so please urge all SACRE Clerks / Administrators to let us know as soon as the situation changes in your SACRE so we can be sure to invite you to any events and to include you in the Recruitment and Training Programme if we are in your area.

### **Young People's Faith Forums**

As we come to the AGM we also come to the latest round of Awards for Young People's Faith Forum Projects. Our gratitude to the Westhill Trustees for the funds for these projects can not be over-expressed. These exciting and innovative projects are really making a difference at a local level and we were happy to promote them to the Community Cohesion Unit as examples of good Inter-Faith work undertaken by SACREs around the country. The Executive's YPFF 'team' has met during the year to co-ordinate the initiative and to visit individual projects, often attending keynote events. We are hoping to put reports from all the awards on the website to celebrate their successes – if yours is not yet there please let us have a report as soon as you can. Good luck to this year's successful projects!

### **Working with Partners**

#### a) Religious Education Council of England and Wales (REC)

Members of the Executive attend RE Council meetings, representing the interests of NASACRE and its member SACREs. These have been held in London and Wales this year. I have also served as a Trustee and Board Member of the RE Council's Board of Directors. This has been an interesting experience and has given us the opportunity to consider the developing role of SACREs in the national scene and to make useful contacts and links with other member bodies. A start has been made on the roll out of the recruitment and training programme and we look forward to taking more responsibility for this work in the coming two years.

#### b) Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA)

During the year members of the Executive have participated in several initiatives by the QCA, ensuring that advice is clear and related to local interests.

#### c) DCSF and the Community Cohesion Unit

Papers developed and meetings held by Executive members with the DCSF and the Community Cohesion Unit contributed to the inclusion of the further development of the SACRE Recruitment and Training Programme in the funding from the Minister announced at the London Conference.

We have also worked with faith communities and HMI to the benefit of SACREs and their work.

During the year we have supported a number of individual SACREs experiencing specific, and often sensitive, challenges and asking for advice. A few SACREs have also requested and received visits from executive members.

I think with this brief report you can see that we have remained busy representing SACRE interests this year – perhaps that is why the last AGM does not seem a year away. I commend the work of our Executive members and those who have worked with us and we look forward to another busy and challenging year ahead.

Denise Chaplin  
Spring 2008