

WASACRE: ORIGINS AND FORMATION

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The journey started during the 1990-91 academic year with a Curriculum Council of Wales initiative which involved Rheinallt Thomas who was Director of The Welsh National Centre for Religious Education (WNCRE) at Bangor University. A Consultation was held in March 1991 and subsequently the *Curriculum Bulletin No 5: Religious Education 5-16 in Wales* was published. That initiative provided a new focus which resulted in WNCRE convening, chairing and minuting a Consultation of all SACREs in Wales at Cardiff in January 1992.

The Consultation made several recommendations, one of which was to establish a small working group, serviced by WNCRE, to look at the agreed syllabuses which had been published. This was done and the report was written by John Summerwill and published by WNCRE in June 1992 under the title *New Agreed Syllabuses in Wales – Report of a working Party to the Consultation on Agreed Syllabuses of the Welsh SACREs*. The bilingual report was presented to another Consultation held in Dyfed in September 1992. WNCRE continued to co-ordinate the Consultation of Welsh SACREs and during 1993-94 the focus was in relation to a new Circular for Religious Education and Collective Worship (published by the Welsh Office as Circular 10/94).

The value of what was achieved by collaboration led to the suggestion that a Welsh Association of SACREs be formed. This was deemed necessary as a result of the reorganisation of local government which resulted in eight SACREs becoming 22 in number from 1996. Representatives of all of the eight SACREs in Wales met in Cardiff in November 1994 to consider setting up an association. Representatives of all of the eight LEAs in Wales were unanimous in their support for the new Wales Association of SACREs when it was formally constituted at its first meeting on 27 February 1995. A Constitution was approved and it was agreed that the Association would meet three times a year to discuss common concerns, share expertise and facilitate co-operation between LEAs in developing RE and Collective Worship. The first Officers of the Association included: Chairperson, Archdeacon A. John Lewis (Mid Glam); Vice-Chairperson, County Cllr Wyndham Davies (West Glam); Secretary, Mr Gavin Craigen (Clwyd); and Treasurer, Mr John Mitson (Powys).

The second meeting of the Association was held in Clwyd on 8 June 1995. By 1996 the reorganisation had taken place and the WASACRE AGM was held in Llangefni on 11 July. There was great delight on that occasion that 18 of the 22 new authorities were able to send representatives – including several Directors and Assistant Directors of Education. It was noted at the time that so soon after local government reorganisation, and without many SACREs having met, that this was an indication of the value seen in the work of WASACRE and of the commitment of the LEAs to SACREs and RE.

And from those beginnings, WASACRE has now grown to be the established forum for RE and Collective Worship in Wales and the one representative body consulted on all such matters whenever the need arises.