

Introduction to the *Church of Ireland Parish Handbook*

by the Most Reverend Dr. Richard Clarke, Archbishop of Armagh and Primate of All Ireland:

It is a real pleasure to welcome the new *Church of Ireland Parish Handbook*, which has been conceived as an integral part of our Long-Term Church programme.

Although designed primarily for select vestry members, in defining the precise duties of vestry members and parish officers, and explaining also how the different components of the Church of Ireland interconnect, this *Handbook* should prove of far broader interest and relevance. 'Good Practice' must cover every aspect of the church's functioning, and this short and readable manual will therefore be of value in the more general context of parish life, covering - as it does - such wider issues as how an organisation's finances should be handled and meetings should be organised. In addition, it is undoubtedly of crucial importance that all members of the Church of Ireland understand properly the structures of the Church to which they belong, and can therefore appreciate fully how each element exists to serve the totality of the Church, and thus our shared Christian witness to the world. The central structures of the Church of Ireland exist primarily to enable local Christian communities - the length and breadth of this island - to fulfil their mission more effectively and efficiently. Our hope is that this contribution to the work of the whole Church may enhance the life of every parish, as together we move with confidence into that future to which God is calling us.

We are all grateful to the many people who have contributed to the production of this *Parish Handbook*, but it is hoped that many others will also contribute to its future, as the *Handbook* is designed to be a continuing and interactive project. As time goes on, it will change and grow, as circumstances and requirements change, and with digitalisation this is of course completely feasible.

The hope and prayer of those who have brought this manual into being is that it will be applied in such a way that the work and witness of the Church will be truly enriched. May it be so.

+Richard Armagh:
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