

GENERAL SYNOD 2017

Standing Committee Report Seconder: Mr Richard Codd

**Embargoed Against Delivery
Check Against Delivery**

Archbishop,

In seconding the Standing Committee report for 2017 I, like the proposer Bishop Storey, would like to acknowledge the workings of the several committees, boards and working groups, making up the contents of this report. One cannot say enough in thanking the members of each group, many of whom travel long distances to meetings, for all that they do for the Church.

One of these committees is that of the Priorities Fund. This year almost €508,000 was allocated for ministry, education, community, areas of need and outreach initiatives. Of the 66 applications received 55 received grants. The generous financial support from each diocese annually for this fund cannot be underestimated.

The Citizens' Assembly was addressed by Bishop Michael Burrows in March. Canon Gillian Wharton also attended when the topic was the Eighth Amendment of the Constitution. Bishop Michael's contribution at the question and answer session was particularly well received. A few years ago, I was privileged to be one of the 66 citizens, together with 33 members of the Dáil and Seanad, on the Constitutional Convention and the recommendations of that Convention were then submitted to the Houses of the Oireachtas. The Government of the Republic of Ireland is to be commended for the setting up of the Convention and Assembly. The report of the Historical Centenaries Working Group makes interesting reading. The working group is to be commended for its input in marking the Easter Rising and the Battle of the Somme. For the past four or five years I have travelled with Canon Ian Poulton and his group to the battlefields of the Somme visiting, among other places, Thiepval and the Irish Peace Park at Messines and laying wreaths at the Ulster Tower, Guillemont and at the Menin Gate at Ypres. We travel again in a few weeks' time.

The centenary commemorations in 2016 have helped to give an understanding of the Rising and the Somme that before might not have been there.

The launch of the book *Rebel Prods*, written by the late Dr Valerie Jones, is a valuable contribution to that understanding. Valerie, as many will remember, was a frequent contributor to debates at General Synod and sadly passed away before she could see the fruits of her labour in print.

The Northern Ireland Community Relations Working Group was set up to keep a watching brief on issues relating to reconciliation. In the light of recent Assembly elections and Brexit, extra challenges are posed. This group will be incorporated into the Church and Society Commission later this year. The Working Group on Disability presents a positive report and draws our attention to the increase in legislation.

Among the other reports are those on Children's Ministry and the Pioneer Ministry Working Group and the Charities Registration Monitoring Working Group.

The latter report draws my attention to the work of treasurers in our parishes. Recently, while auditing the accounts of my parish, I wondered just how many of the parishioners realised how much work is involved. No longer can the Sunday morning collection be lodged in its entirety on Monday. Some of the proceeds of church fundraising events may have to be held for some time if, as they usually do, they consist of coins which do not make up the required amount for lodging. The local supermarket or shop may help to convert some coins into notes but it's all a lot of work, not to mention the responsibility involved. Added to this is all the paperwork. Value the parish treasurer because some parishes are not finding it easy to fill this most important position.

I commend the contents of the report of the Standing Committee and I have great pleasure in seconding its adoption.