

GENERAL SYNOD 2018

Standing Committee Report Proposer: Mrs Judith Cairns

**Embargoed Against Delivery
Check Against Delivery**

Archbishop,

This report of the Standing Committee is the final report of the Standing Committee which was elected three years ago and has faithfully conducted the business of the General Synod since the last triennium. As such, I would like to begin by thanking the members of the Standing Committee for their commitment over the last triennium and to acknowledge the broad range of work that has been undertaken over the three-year period of their term of office. I would also like to welcome the newly elected Standing Committee and to wish them well as they take up the reins in June coming.

Membership of the Standing Committee of the General Synod is a privilege and a responsibility. It is a privilege to be elected by our peers on diocesan synods to serve in this capacity, but also a responsibility to carry forward business in the interest of the wider Church. We are helped by a group of co-opted members, who are selected because of their special skills and the contribution they will be able to make. We also have the support of the staff of the Synod Department, the Press Office, Children's Ministry, Bishops' Appeal, Safeguarding and Education, and Priorities Fund. Not all of these are full-time positions, and only a few of these staff are specifically retained to support a single activity. So, while we rely heavily on staff support, there is lots of opportunity for volunteers to make a real and active contribution to the work in progress.

And so for the next few moments we have an opportunity and I trust it will be an encouragement to hear of some of the issues dealt with. We can be so consumed in our own wee corner at times and this report gives us space to lift our eyes and see what God is doing both across this island and perhaps in areas of ministry that we aren't usually involved in. Among the most important matters dealt with in the last year are:

- conclusion of the work of the Parish Development Working Group;

- formation of the Advisory Council to the Church of Ireland Centre for Education at Dublin City University;
- progression of the work of the Children's Ministry Network – in partnership with the Sunday School Society;
- establishment of the Safeguarding Trust Board; and
- charities.

While it may seem odd to begin with an ending, the conclusion of the work of the Parish Development Working Group is something that we acknowledge and celebrate. This initiative of the Church has been successfully developed to the point where the central initiative has taken root in our dioceses and has borne much fruit and will, we pray, continue to do so as it continues to flourish under the nurture of bishops and diocesan synods. In particular, the Standing Committee pays tribute to the work of the Revd Canon Paul Hoey, who led the work of the Parish Development Working Group tirelessly since its inception and also Nicola Brown and Tessa Marsden, providing administrative support. They have shown untiring enthusiasm for this project and there are countless parishes around the country that have benefitted from their energy and commitment. They were well supported by an enthusiastic committee and also with support from the Allocations Committee. I would invite you to show our appreciation to Paul and all those who served on the Parish Development Working Group for a job well done.

In a different sphere of work, the reorganisation of third level teacher training for national schools had resulted in the training for Church of Ireland teachers being moved to Dublin City University. The move not only involved the physical transition of teaching and students to the 'other side of town', but also involved changes to the management of the trust, which was taken into the care of the RCB, and the establishment of a new committee, the Advisory Council to the Church of Ireland Centre for Education at Dublin City University. This body was set up under the Standing Committee and its terms of reference were approved by the Standing Committee in its final year of the triennium. The Council's first report is included in the appendices to the Standing Committee. We wish the members of the Council well in this new role and we also wish Professor Anne Lodge, and her staff well as they begin this new phase of work. The Church of Ireland has a long and distinguished history in the provision of education. The current Church of Ireland Historiographer, Dr Kenneth Milne, was a former Principal of the Church of Ireland College of Education, and the College traced

its roots to the Kildare Place Society which was so important in the development of the educational model in Ireland.

Another new initiative is the focus on children's ministry. Beginning with the Children's Ministry Network, which aimed to encourage the development of and focus on children's ministry in the Church of Ireland, in the last year, there has been a new impetus to bring together this work with that of the Sunday School Society. At its last meeting before the General Synod, the Standing Committee received a proposal to merge the work of the Children's Ministry Network with that of the Sunday School Society, with a proposal that the Sunday School Society would be vested in the Representative Church Body as its trustee in the coming year. There is a degree of complexity involved in all work involving charities' governance as we get used to the new legislative framework of the Charities Acts, but we are confident that this work will bear fruit going forward. Parishes are meanwhile encouraged to maintain their efforts to expand their work with children, which remains central to the nurture of spiritual growth in our young people and to their enjoyment of parish life.

The Children's Ministry Network continues to develop and produce resources. I would really encourage you to take time to read and acknowledge the volume and quality of the work that has taken place at a diocesan level and across Ireland. The energy, vision and commitment demonstrated by those involved will, I trust, encourage you and inspire you...while we all ask ourselves the question – How can we engage more children and with them in worship? Please take a look at the excellent resources and opportunities available. Some members of the network are here at Synod and you will find Ms Lydia Monds on the Bishops' Appeal stand if you want to find out some more.

Anyone who knows me, knows that I like to celebrate. Having mentioned charities, we have reason to celebrate! I would like to congratulate our parishes in Northern Ireland on having completed registration and successfully started to make their first reports to the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland. This has been no mean feat. So well done to all involved! In the Republic of Ireland, the Charities Regulatory Authority has indicated that it will commence registration after May and during the second half of the year. Registration will proceed diocese-by-diocese as it did in Northern Ireland and parishes will be contacted by their diocesan secretaries. Mrs Kate Williams has recently provided seminars around the country addressing the financial accounting requirements that parishes will have to meet. Most of the remaining material needed for registration has been drawn up centrally and will be provided to parishes at the point where they complete registration. More details of how to

prepare for registration are included in the Standing Committee report under the heading *Charities Legislation*.

Finally, and following the biblical imperative that the first shall be last, can I draw your attention to the establishment of the new Safeguarding Board in 2016, which oversees the development of policies and other work necessary to implement effective safeguarding of children and adults in need of safeguarding. The Church of Ireland was one of the early adopters of safeguarding values, and *Safeguarding Trust* has become an important pillar of ministry with children and young people. The Republic of Ireland introduced new legislation in 2017 – *Children First*, which has led to a number of significant changes to the *Safeguarding Trust* policy in this jurisdiction. In both jurisdictions, there will now be added a policy for *Adult Safeguarding*. In Northern Ireland this is the result of legislation, and in the Republic the Church is introducing the policy as guidelines on best practice. Training in this new policy will begin immediately after General Synod and you will find details on the website and also from your diocesan secretary. Dr Peter Hamill, Secretary to the Board of Education, is attending General Synod and you will find him on the Safeguarding stand if you want to find out more.

As a result of expanding work in this area, the Standing Committee, with the Representative Body, is sponsoring a Bill to extend the responsibility for implementation and adherence to the safeguarding policies by bishops and parishes, to include adult safeguarding.

Unfortunately, additional safeguarding obligations entail additional work centrally as well as at the parish level. As a result, we have also had to bring forward a further Bill to increase the funding levy to cover the additional work. The cost of this, per parish, will still represent good value. The central service provides support not only to ensure that our policies are constantly kept up to date, and to provide guidance on policies to the parishes and dioceses, but also provides parishes with a vetting service and support in managing issues that arise. These include advice to panels that receive and must make mandatory reports of disclosures, but also, more recently, advice on the management of former offenders who seek to attend worship. Copies of the policies are available online, and can also be requested by parish panels (at no further cost) from our Safeguarding Officers or from the Synod Department. I have very much enjoyed my triennium on the Standing Committee. When I looked back, just at the work undertaken in this last year, I was struck, again, by the breadth and range of the matters dealt with and the detail and professionalism that is apparent in the output of the Standing Committee. The Standing Committee's remit is to carry on the work of the General

Synod between sessions – and I can report to you that the members take that responsibility seriously, scrutinising these items carefully on your behalf.

Archbishop, may I propose that the report of the Standing Committee is received and adopted?