

## **Standing Committee Report**

**Secunder: Ms Hazel Corrigan**

### **Embargo until Delivery · Check against Delivery**

In seconding the Standing Committee report, I wish to draw members' attention to three legislative pieces.

Firstly, the General Synod Representation Bill. As General Synod could not be held last May the Working Group spent considerable time discussing the best way to proceed and recommendations went to Standing Committee last month where they agreed to defer presenting the Bill to General Synod in 2021. As the diocesan triennial elections have already, or will shortly, take place in the various dioceses, the impact of the Bill will not take effect until the triennial elections of 2023. In light of that, and because this Bill affects every diocese, it was felt that bringing this to our first General Synod by Zoom might not give members a good opportunity to discuss it and give the Bill due consideration.

We are conscious that there will be new members joining General Synod next year and in order for all representatives to be fully informed about the Bill and the process, it was agreed that each diocese should be asked to hold a forum at which their General Synod representatives would be briefed as to the history and journey of this legislation. It was felt that as members of the Working Group are made up of representatives from every Diocese they would be the most appropriate people to brief the General Synod members in their respective dioceses as they are fully cognisant of the work undertaken, discussions held, and conclusions reached, since its formation in 2018.

Standing Committee agreed that the Bill going to General Synod next year would have the following alterations:

- The first phase of the changes to representation at General Synod to take effect for the triennium 2024-2026 inclusive; in other words, we were going to start the new model in 2021 and now we will be starting in 2024. The end date will remain the same – this being 2032 – which will reduce the bedding in period to one triennium rather than two.

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- The second phase of the changes to representation at General Synod to take effect for the triennia 2027-2032 inclusive;
- The review to take commence in 2030, as originally intended;
- The out-workings of the review to take effect for the three triennia beginning 2033.

Secondly, the bills procedure report is Appendix C on page 191. The bills procedure has served the General Synod well during the last 150 years, and its use of the parliamentary model and terminology emphasizes the democratic nature of synodical governance. In recent years the Chairs of the Bills Committee and those chairing the bills stage at General Synod have strived to explain clearly each step of the process. We do not wish to suggest extensive changes – it is proposed to make some minor amendments of the phraseology to allow greater ease of understanding the process. It is hoped that this will reduce the perception of verbal complexity and encourage members to participate actively in the legislative process.

Finally, the Charities Bill. The Standing Committee and RB have jointly approved a Bill which has been presented to you at this General Synod, to create a new Chapter in the Constitution to contain all of the new provisions that pertain to Church of Ireland bodies registering under the new Charities Act.

This body of work has been some years in development as both the Church and the relevant Regulatory Authorities have refined their approach. While a number of Church of Ireland bodies have already registered, there is a significant outstanding group of parishes in the Republic of Ireland, and dioceses and cross-border bodies in Northern Ireland that still need to register.

Both Regulatory Authorities had sought some alterations in the wording and content of the

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Church of Ireland Constitution to meet the criteria for charitable registration and governance as expressed in the new Charities Acts in the two jurisdictions.

All of this work, to date, has now been brought together in the proposal for a new Chapter, where the various charitable statements can be easily found, not only by those who need them, but also by any member of the public. We would like to thank the members of the Charities Registration Monitoring Working Group for their ongoing commitment to this piece of work, which has been both detailed and long drawn out. We also thank the Ven Barry Forde for his proposed amendment in respect of Local Ecumenical Partnerships. While there is only one such, registered at present, we hope that more will come forward in time under the Covenant with the Methodist Church, and it will be important that there is a clear pathway to registration.

Finally presenting its concluding report to the General Synod, the Facilitation Committee (found on page 245) lists out its recommendations which will be referred to Standing Committee or other bodies to explore more fully.

We would like to thank each one of the members – Mr Ken Gibson, Mr Robert Neill, Rev Katharine Poulton, Rev Bantry White and Dr Catherine Smith who acted as secretary – for the huge amount of commitment and research that they provided to this committee over the last four years.