

THE COVENANT COUNCIL

The Church of Ireland and the Methodist Church in Ireland

REPORT 2021

MEMBERSHIP

Church of Ireland

The Rt Rev Michael Burrows, Bishop of Cashel, Ferns and Ossory (Co-Chair)

Ms Elva Byrne

Very Rev Nigel Dunne

Rev Canon Dr Maurice Elliott

Ven Barry Forde

Rev Claire Kakuru

Methodist

Rev Dr Heather Morris (Co-Chair)

Rev Andrew Dougherty

Ms Gillian Kingston

Rev Dr Tom McKnight

Rev Dr Janet Unsworth (Secretary)

Presbyterian Observer

To be confirmed

The Role of the Covenant – Moving Forward

The Covenant Council continues to act as a vehicle and advocate for the furtherance of the Covenant agreed between the Church of Ireland and the Methodist Church in Ireland. While the Council has only met once formally in the midst of the current circumstances, the Co-Chairs have liaised in regard to pressing issues which have faced both denominations and on consultation was appropriate.

The Council is continuing to examine the opportunities, as well as the challenges presented by the journey that the two denominations are making. While the introduction of Interchangeability of Ministry in 2014 has allowed for a deepening of the mutual recognition of ministries, the Council needs to continue its detailed discussion of practicalities and protocols in regard to the implementation of Interchangeability. The main areas of discussion are:

- Understandings of Ministry and *Episcope* within each denomination
- Regulations regarding Covenant Partnerships
- The nature of co-operation and collaboration at local and Diocesan / District level, as well as national level

The Covenant Council – Report 2021

The Council is looking at these issues alongside relevant bodies within each denomination and hopes to be in a position to report further to both the General Synod of the Church of Ireland and the Conference of the Methodist Church in May / June 2022.

However, it is necessary that this work is accompanied by further implementation of the Covenant at every level. Thus, we continue to urge local churches to look again at the clauses of the Covenant and to engage with each other to consider how co-operation in mission can be enabled.

Local Covenant Partnerships and Projects

The Covenant Council continues to monitor those partnerships and projects that have been enabled by the Covenant. The Council is continuing to review the protocols and guidelines for partnership in use within the various projects. In due course, and following consultation with those working in local settings, revised guidance will be issued to facilitate the working out of the covenant in local situations.

Communications

The Council had planned to send out a questionnaire following the publication of articles regarding some of the local Covenant partnerships. However, on further reflection, the Council decided that strategic conversation in local settings would be of more benefit. These have not been possible in the current circumstances. However, it is hoped that they will be able to be progressed in due course. It is intended that the standalone website will be replaced by a Covenant Council page on the Church of Ireland and the Methodist Church in Ireland websites. These pages will provide a platform for general information, as well as access to key Covenant Council documents and resources.

The Covenant Council continues to encourage all dioceses and parishes to look for opportunities in which the Covenant might be of assistance for ministry and mission.

Motions to propose at General Synod

The Covenant Council proposes the following motions for the consideration of the General Synod:

“That the following be elected as Church of Ireland representatives on the Covenant Council for the coming year:

The Rt Rev Michael Burrows, Bishop of Cashel, Ferns and Ossory (Co-Chair)
Ms Elva Byrne
Very Rev Nigel Dunne
Rev Canon Dr Maurice Elliott
Ven Barry Forde
Rev Claire Kakuru