

**Bill No. 1**

**Proposer – Mr Ken Gibson**

**Embargo Until Delivery • Check Against Delivery**

Many years ago an old and very gifted speaker told me that in any speech, address, sermon or whatever, it was important to tell the audience what you were going to tell them, tell them and then tell them what you have told them.

Me speaking about Representation may well seem a bit like that – I spoke at Synod in Londonderry in 2019, I spoke to many of you at the recent diocesan sessions and here I am again.

Today I want to just briefly remind Synod of what it said, what it did and what it requested leading up to this Bill.

Firstly, three-and-a-half years ago Synod gave a private member's Representation Bill a first reading thereby agreeing to a Bill being introduced. In other words it, Synod, saw merit in discussing change. It then gave that Bill a second reading. That indicated that Synod wanted to take the issue of possible change in representation seriously.

However given the significance of any change in representation and its long-term impact coupled with the large number of amendments that were to be considered all of which proposed different models of change, Synod decided that this was too important an issue to decide on then and there.

Instead it referred both the private member's Bill and the amendments to its Standing Committee – four persons from each diocese, the bishops and archbishops, and seven co-opted – to work on, and bring back to General Synod, and I quote “a report and legislative proposals for decision by Synod”.

Standing Committee gave the issue considerable time at each of its five meetings that year and held a special one day meeting. It also asked a sub-group – one of its members from each diocese plus Canon Wharton and I as Honorary Secretaries to do the “number crunching”. As I and others have said in different fora, that process was of great importance in sharing and understanding the different contexts that the Church is working in throughout this island.

In Londonderry in 2019 Standing Committee brought its report and Synod accepted a number of key principles:

- The importance of ensuring that the voice of the marginalised, the weak, the remote, the minority and so on can be heard at General Synod. If Synod were based solely on numbers, the voice of the rural or indeed the inner city church could be permanently under represented and never heard;
- We must maintain our system of nomination and election – no special cases; we must have a General Synod that is of a size that is manageable, encourages participation and so on but is not so small as to mitigate against a regular turnover of members;
- A membership formula that is easily understood;
- The system must be easily reviewed on a regular basis – every three triennia and not every 150 years!
- There is a need to support and be generous towards the Dioceses of Tuam, Killala and Achonry and Limerick and Killaloe as they embark on an amalgamation that will require a lot of time, effort, determination and so on without imposing further radical change; and
- A recognition that previous mergers of dioceses etc. had, through no fault of their own left certain diocese with over-representation. Any change would therefore have to be managed carefully and cautiously that's why the Bill proposes phasing the change in two steps.

Furthermore General Synod 2019 accepted the principles now contained in this Bill before you today:

- The calculation of the numbers per diocese would be based on the existing recognition of the number of cures per diocese by central church for levy purposes recognising that at the next review other factors may or may not have developed to a stage of having to be taken into account;
- And this is a key important point, rather than the cure model proposed in the original Bill in 2018 which was deemed unfair to the marginal voices, additional places would be awarded on a scale of one to 12 with one additional place given to the numerically strongest diocese in terms of cures, right down to 12 additional places to the numerically smallest diocese;

- In the case of any amalgamation of diocese, there would be no change until the next three-triennia review;
- No diocese should have more than twice the average number of places and no diocese should have less than half the average number of places; and
- Neither province should have 2/3 or more of total representation.

After debate General Synod 2019 welcomed and adopted that report, endorsed the principles therein and “looks forward to the presentation of the Bill at General Synod 2020”. Of course, Covid-19 had other ideas about timing. So missing 2020 means the Bill sticks to the time frame as discussed in 2019 but moves us there a little bit quicker.