

Archbishop,

The mission and ministry of the Church of Ireland, and indeed of every Christian disciple, is to hold out the light of Jesus Christ in the darkness, to share the reassurance and hope that Christ offers to all who will trust him. In times of challenge and difficulty we offer Jesus, who says to his disciples "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid." (*John 14:27 NIV*)

As I speak to second the report of the Representative Church Body, I do so acknowledging that this report covers what has been a very challenging period for the church in all its parts. In the midst of the huge disruption to our life together as a Christian community, Mr Saville has outlined what could justifiably be described as a 'successful' year for the Representative Church Body. It is reassuring to hear that investment funds have performed well and we are grateful to the RCB for the financial supports that have been extended to dioceses, parishes and cathedrals in particular.

But the response of the RCB and its staff to the challenges of the Covid pandemic have not only been limited to financial matters.

During Covid we have had to learn new skills and adapt how we communicate with one another - in parishes, diocesan committees and central church meetings. Electronic meeting platforms may have their limitations, but they have enabled us to continue to meet when we may not otherwise have been able to and have had the additional benefit of reducing travel time and costs. I'm sure that we look forward to being able to enjoy the human contact of meeting in person again, but the lessons we have learned will enable us to have the flexibility of meeting in-person, or remotely, or perhaps even in a blend of the two.

Another benefit that we have seen in the past year, is the accelerated ability of the RCB to deliver remote training. We have seen this particularly in the important area of safeguarding training, but this method has also been used to provide training in the field of charities governance. As an all-island church remote training, and indeed recorded training, will be a feature of the post-Covid service provided to parishes and dioceses by the RCB and its staff.

Much work has already been done in the field of making useful information and guidance for the support of parishes available online through the 'Parish Resources' section of the Church of Ireland website. The increasing burden of compliance matters that parishes are facing, with health and safety, safeguarding and charities regulations, to name but a few, can at times seem overwhelming! It is useful to have a body of resources that can be easily accessed at any time to make life a little

easier for us all. I'm grateful for the material that is currently available to us in Parish Resources, but am reassured to know that the RB recognises the increased need for timely, relevant, consistent and up-to-date guidance as regulation and documented governance becomes an essential part of parish life.

Aside from the pandemic, another feature of the last year, has been that once again our minds have been focused on the realities of climate change. As we have again had our attention drawn to the effects of severe flooding, drought and devastating wild fires many of us have been challenged about our individual and corporate stewardship of God's creation.

In the main, the RCB's focus has in the past been on our investments, but that focus is expanding to consider how the church as a whole can realign its activities to minimise our impact on the environment. Most of us, as individuals, are becoming used to considering what we can do to reduce waste, our carbon footprint and the destruction of our natural resources, and increasingly we are recognising that we need to consider the implications of those priorities for our life together as church communities too. I am pleased to hear that the Church Fabric & Development Fund has approved funding for a climate change conference next year and I hope this will initiate a church wide discussion on this important topic.

Change has been the dominant theme of this speech, and on that subject, many of us will be aware that Henry Saville will be stepping down from his role as chair of the RB Executive Committee after this General Synod. It is one of the most demanding and time-consuming roles within our church and I'm sure that you would want to join me in acknowledging that Mr Saville has given unstintingly of himself to this important work over the last five years. ("Henry, on behalf of us all, thank you!")

And of course, as we express our thanks to Mr Saville, I'd also like to take this opportunity to welcome Mr Henry Algeo as the incoming Executive chairman and wish him well as he takes on this important work.

The RCB's mission statement is "to inform, to support and to manage resources for the advancement of the mission and ministry of the Church of Ireland." Society has changed rapidly in the last year and will continue to change, and the church has not been immune from that. I trust that we will recognise the ways that the RCB and our staff have worked to be faithful to their mission statement during this time and encourage them to remain focussed on that task in the year that lies ahead.

Archbishop, It is my pleasure to second the report of the Representative Church Body to the General Synod.