

Standing Committee Report

Secunder: Mr Alan Williamson

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Archbishop, members of Synod,

In formally seconding the Standing Committee's Report, I want to highlight the extension request for the **Board for Ministry With Children and Families** – a major initiative in the past three years. This has been one of the biggest and most significant projects undertaken by the Standing Committee in the last triennium. Initially funded by the Sunday School Society for Ireland and the Church of Ireland Allocations Committee, this project has been pivotal. We extend our heartfelt thanks to both organisations, as well as to the Board for Ministry with Children and Families. The dedication of the Board members, along with Rachael Murphy and Dr Peter Hamill, despite initial pandemic-related delays, has been remarkable. We've granted permission for the board's reappointment and authorized the submission of funding applications for 2025-2027, demonstrating our ongoing commitment to this important work.

Throughout the past year, we've embarked on another considerable endeavour: the completion of the **Review of the Episcopal Electoral College Process**. This involved gathering insights from participants and crafting proposals to refine certain aspects of the process. These proposals required the drafting of additional regulations and some amendments to the Constitution, which will necessitate a bill for General Synod. The selection of bishops is a sacred process deeply rooted in spiritual discernment, and it's vital that we continuously assess and enhance it. The Working Group approached this task with meticulous care, attentively listening to the experiences of those engaged in the new electoral college process. We extend our sincere gratitude to Bishop George Davison and the dedicated members of the Working Group for their tireless efforts, as well as to those Synod members who contributed to the lively debate on the bill yesterday.

The incredible generosity of dioceses has opened doors for nearly €600,000 to support **Priorities Fund projects** over the next two years.

A heartwarming total of 55 grants have been recommended, igniting progress in outreach, Christian education, clergy and lay leader training, and innovative ministry.

I invite you to delve into the inspiring plans detailed from page 178 onwards. From vibrant cross-community singing events for schools to the provision of much-needed counselling facilities, and an uplifting all-island children's and families conference, these projects promise to breathe new life into our parishes.

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The impact of the Priorities Fund is truly heartening, empowering countless young hearts to embrace faith and unlock their boundless potential. Moreover, the wisdom and triumphs gleaned from these initiatives are destined to enrich the wider Church community.

I warmly encourage you to seize the chance to connect and do what we do best, talk with the passionate project leaders gathered here at the General Synod. Their warmth, expertise, and invaluable insights are sure to kindle a spirit of collaboration as we journey together in ministry and mission as the Church of Ireland.

The work of the Church requires people who serve in many ways.

We've had a fantastic response to our call for expressions of interest, welcoming nine new members to the **Church and Society Commission** alongside our existing team for continuity. The Commission's scope is broad, covering political, social, and community well-being issues. We wish them success as they tackle challenging and complex issues with empathy and understanding. Their goal is to contribute a Christian voice to often sharp and painful debates, particularly amidst the challenges of limited public funding. We ask for your support through prayer and engagement with their work.

While the day-to-day **budgeting** may seem less exciting compared to the work of individual committees, it's the foundation of the General Synod's extensive activities. Mr. Wilfred Baker has chaired the **Budget Sub-Committee** for quite some time, guiding us through financial challenges, from the 2008 crash to recent recovery efforts. His leadership has been essential in sustaining Synodical activities during difficult times. Today, as he has indicated that he wishes to step down we express our gratitude to Mr Baker for his invaluable contributions to this crucial aspect of our work in some very difficult and uncertain days for the Church of Ireland.

In similar vein, the Editor of the Journal, **Dr Kenneth Milne**, has recently been joined by a Deputy Editor, Dean Gregory Dunstan. Dr Milne has been Editor of the Journal since 1994, making this his 30th year in the role. However, the task does not grow lighter as the years pass, and we hope that our new Deputy Editor, enjoys the task and is able to share the burden of work.

Finally, I would like to **express thanks** to those who were asked to represent the Church of Ireland at the annual gatherings of other Churches. Thanks to those who served in various representational roles. Thanks to those who volunteered on our committees and thanks to the staff of the Synod area, and particular congratulations to Nicole Gallagher on the safe arrival of her daughter, Grace.

Your Grace, I am delighted to second the Standing Committee Report.

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