

**APPENDIX Q**

**THE PORVOO MEETINGS IN DUBLIN – OCTOBER 2007**

**A report by the Very Revd Desmond Harman**

The Archbishops and Presiding Bishops of the Porvoo Churches met at Church of Ireland House in Dublin Oct. 8 – 9 to discuss issues of common concern to the churches of the Porvoo Communion. These included living in communion, cooperation with people of other faiths and migration and integration in Europe.

The Porvoo Contact Group, comprising one representative from each church, continued working through the week on issues suggested by the presiding bishops, and issues from a previous Church Leaders' Meeting in Cardiff 2006.

The group agreed on **five areas of work** to be carried forward:

1. The first is a theological conference on **“Ethics and Communion”** to be held in London in January 2008. The Standing Committee has already agreed to send Dr Andrew Pierce to this conference.
2. The second is an **interfaith consultation** to be held in Scotland in November 2008.
3. Denmark has been asked to host a consultation in early 2009 on **“Migration and Integration”**.
4. Work will continue on **the role of the deacon within the Porvoo Communion**.
5. A study will be conducted on **a process for the possible enlargement of the Communion**. During the meetings each member of the Contact Group presents a Country Report describing developments within their churches and society for discussion.

*For Ireland report see below.*

The Archbishop of Dublin, as host of the meeting, entertained the Primates to dinner on Monday October 7. On Tuesday the Archbishop of Armagh led the prayers at the opening of the meeting and that evening there was a Choral Eucharist in Christ Church Cathedral followed by a dinner in the cathedral crypt attended by the Primates, the Contact Group and ambassadors of the Porvoo-related countries. On Wednesday afternoon the Contact Group went to Glendalough for spiritual reflection led by Fr Michael Rogers during a mostly silent walk among the lakes in glorious autumnal sunshine. Holy Trinity Church, Rathmines, was the setting for the Eucharist according to the Evangelical Lutheran tradition on Wednesday and Thursday morning.

I would like to thank the staff of Church House, of Christ Church cathedral and of the Archbishop of Dublin for their help in organising the meetings of this week.

## Standing Committee – Report 2008

**The Porvoo Communion** is a communion of churches, mostly in Northern Europe, that have signed an agreement to “share a common life in mission and service”. The churches that signed the agreement are The Evangelical-Lutheran Churches of Estonia, Lithuania, Sweden, Norway, Iceland and Finland and the Anglican churches of Wales, Ireland, Scotland and England. Two churches from South Europe also belong to the Porvoo Communion. They are the Lusitanian Church in Portugal and the Reformed Episcopal Church of Spain. The Evangelical Lutheran Churches of Denmark and Latvia have observer status. See also [www.porvoochurches.org](http://www.porvoochurches.org)

Church of Ireland  
Country Report. October 2007

### **Political change**

The political parties in Northern Ireland have agreed to work together in the new Northern Ireland Executive and The Revd Ian Paisley has become First Minister and Mr Martin McGuinness the Deputy First Minister.

This new situation demonstrates a public calm but underneath there remains a lasting suspicion among the communities. There have been suggestions that reconciliation programmes such as those used in South Africa should be activated but people from that country have warned that the circumstances in Ireland are different and that these attempts at reconciliation might make matters worse. How to come through conflict to healing is a challenge for the churches and it will not happen instantly. The hurts run too deep.

### **Social change**

We are very aware of many growing social problems. Although the so called ‘Celtic Tiger’ has brought great prosperity for many people there seem to be others who are not benefiting. There is a growth in the use of drugs. There have been many gang-related killings. We have had very many road deaths caused by young drivers and immigrant drivers. Many questions remain related to immigrants but not all are negative. In Dublin one church has developed an ‘international’ ministry with a priest from Nigeria. Another church which was shared by Anglican and Methodist congregations is now shared with the Romanian Orthodox and Methodists with only a small weekday service for Anglicans. A Roman Catholic Church which had a small Tridentine Mass now has an overflowing Polish congregation. There is a growing Latvian community which needs a place to worship.

In the wider community the farmers are finding it hard to work their land economically and are abandoning farming in favour of other more profitable work.

### **Church change**

The Church of Ireland Hard Gospel programme continues to challenge the church to recognise sectarianism and racism and to encourage people to learn to live with difference. The programme has recently moved to examine our Church’s structures. It has criticised the make-up of committees, the lack of gender and age balance, the time of meetings which

Standing Committee – Report 2008

exclude many people and the time of General Synod in particular which meets mid-week in May and therefore excludes many who are loyal members of the Church, such as teachers.

**Mission 21**

This is a programme to encourage parishes to examine their life and to plan development programmes. A number of pilot schemes have been organised.

**Theological College**

The House of Bishops has initiated a new programme of training for Ministry to begin in September 2008. This is designed to be more inclusive, to have greater elements of distance-learning and to accommodate those with families in a more caring way. Explorations are taking place to move the Theological College to a new site but no plans have been published. The cost will be very great.

**Marriage regulations**

The state in both parts of the island is introducing new regulations. These regulations demand that the couple obtain a Marriage Registration Form from a civil Registrar and then present this to a registered solemniser. This solemniser may be a church minister or some other recognised person. The Church of Ireland has issued its own rules for recording marriages and recommends that the normal place for a marriage is in a church but that in exceptional circumstances, with the approval of the bishop, it may take place elsewhere.

**Porvoo**

We are particularly glad to have the honour of hosting the meeting of the Primates and Presiding Bishops of the Porvoo Communion in October 2007.

*The Very Revd Desmond Harman  
Porvoo Contact Person*