

Church of Ireland Council for Mission – Report 2008

**THE CHURCH OF IRELAND COUNCIL FOR MISSION**

**Report to the General Synod 2008**

**Membership (January 2008)**

The Rt Rev Harold C Miller	House of Bishops
The Very Rev Stephen Lowry	Synod
Rev Bobbie Moore	Synod
Mrs Felix Blennerhassett	Synod
Vacant	Synod
Rev Paul Hoey	Synod
Canon David Moynan	Synod
Mrs Paddy Wallace	Mothers' Union
Mr Shane Tucker	CIYD
Mr Martin O'Connor	Bishops Appeal
Mr Thomas G Wilson	Methodist Church
Mr Colin Ferguson	AMS
Mr John Doherty	AMS
Mr Geoffrey Hamilton	AMS
Ms Linda Chambers	AMS
Captain Colin Taylor	AMS
Rev William Ritchie	Cashel
Vacant	Cashel alternate
The Rev Ian Jonas	Cork
Vacant	Cork alternate
Vacant	Down
Vacant	Down alternate
Rev Peter Galbraith	Connor
Miss Diane Rhodes	Connor alternate
Vacant	Clogher
Vacant	Clogher alternate
Rev Geoff Wilson	Kilmore
Vacant	Kilmore alternate
Vacant	Meath
Mrs Daphne Wright	Meath alternate
Very Rev Maurice Sirr	Limerick
Ven Wayne Carney	Limerick alternate
Vacant	Tuam
Vacant	Tuam alternate
Rev Derek Creighton	Derry
Rev Ken McLaughlin	Derry alternate
Canon Michael Barton	Armagh

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Mr Tom Stephenson	Armagh alternate
Rev Ken Gibson	Dublin
Rev Cliff Jeffers	Dublin alternate
Miss Mavis Gibbons	Co-opted
Mr David Brown	Co-opted

Alternates attend when the principal representative is unable to.

### **Membership**

During the course of the year Captain Colin Taylor (Church Army) and Colin Ferguson (Leprosy Mission) were appointed to represent the Association of Mission Societies (AMS).

Canon Cecil Wilson, for many years Director of Mission of CMSI, retired in September 2007. We record our deep gratitude not only for his contribution to the Council but even more for the many ways that he helped shape positively the mission scene in the Church of Ireland and beyond.

David Brown (CIYD) resigned in order to allow another member of the Youth Department take up membership. Sincere thanks go to him and to all those who have served the Council and the Church through their membership.

### **Committee Review**

In view of the ongoing review of the committee structure of the Church of Ireland the Council is undertaking an examination of its own workings with a view to more streamlined and effective communication.

The chairmen of the Council, the Parish Development Working Group and the Commission on Ministry met to look at areas of common concern and are considering possible ways to work more closely together.

### **Mission Networks**

Rev Bobbie Moore continued to act as the Council's representative at the Partnership for World Mission Conference. The title of the 2007 conference, held in Swanwick in November, was *Incomplete Without the Other*, taking up the theme of *Hospitality* within the context of the forthcoming Lambeth Conference.

Rev Paul Hoey attended the meetings of Global Mission Network both as the Church of Ireland Representative and on behalf of the Irish Council of Churches. The prime focus of these has been on a complete review of the working of the Network and its many forums and on planning a major conference to mark the centenary of the first ecumenical mission conference at Edinburgh in 2010.

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Reports of the meetings and conferences attended by the delegates are available from the Secretary.

The Council reviewed its membership of these two bodies and, while convinced of the value of continued participation, is conscious of the need for improved communication of the information and resources available through these networks to the local church level.

### **Joint Mission Conference**

The first stage of a process, originated by a request received from the Covenant Council that the two covenant churches organise a joint conference on mission, took place in November 2007 at Isaac's Hotel, Dublin. Over fifty people, from many parts of the island, and with a wide range of perspectives attended.

The purpose of this initial event was

- to identify and support existing *Fresh Expressions of Churches (FXC)* in Ireland;
- to create a network of such churches;
- to enable those interested to find out more about how a *FXC* works;
- and to share the wisdom of those who have some experience in the field. .

A *Fresh Expression of Church (FXC)* has been defined as “a form of church for our changing culture established for the benefit for those not yet members.”

Rev Steve Croft (*Fresh Expressions* – the official organ of the Church of England and the Methodist Church in England for the fostering of *FXCs*), is the facilitator for the various stages of the process.

The Steering Group is planning the next event, due on 26 April, which will look at some examples of churches in Ireland that are doing things differently and will also explore some resources for training for leadership for new forms of church.

A sub-group has been set-up with a view to planning the first part of the Mission Shaped Ministry Course to start, it is hoped, in September 2008.

A further stage will seek to draw in more people from across the dioceses, willing to explore this area with a view to affirming a wide diversity of churches in their journey to becoming more mission-shaped.

The Council is aware that while some churches are beginning to think in terms of *Fresh Expressions* not all will necessarily use the language of *Fresh Expressions*. There are areas where there is no sense of the need to do anything different. Moreover, we cannot expect the experience of *Fresh Expressions* in England to transfer automatically to Ireland.

Ultimately, the aim is to help our churches work out what it means to engage in mission in the Ireland of today. This will likely involve the recognition that we cannot be an “either/or” church but a “both/and” church in a mixed economy.

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The Council also recognises that exposure to this way of thinking about church should form part of theological training for ordained ministry and that this should become part of our ongoing focus and discussion with other groups.

The Council expresses gratitude to the Priorities Fund for its sponsorship of this event.

### **Mission Breakfast**

The Mission Breakfast held in the Lyrath Estate Hotel, Kilkenny, had a large attendance. The input was from Mr Shane Tucker, a field worker with the Church of Ireland Youth Department. He shared his vision for different and complementary forms of church in Ireland and his own experience of one particular expression of church in Dublin. An invited guest, a pastor in an American church, told stories of how various people, who had not previously been involved in any meaningful way in the life of the church, had encountered God through the worship and ministry of his church.

### **Parish Mission Links**

The Council compiled the findings of its recent Mission Questionnaire to every parish in the Church of Ireland. The aim of the exercise was to get an overview of how many parishes support a mission link, how those links operate and to assess the value of such links. The Council is grateful to all who took time to fill in the questionnaire.

- The response rate was approximately 30%, 181 parishes replied. Of these 99 had mission links using the mission agencies. 54 parishes had more than one link.
- Overall the response rate compares with the sizes of the dioceses. The most prevalent links, by far, were African with Asian next in number.
- In the past few years 46 parishes have made visits to their links. 61 parishes have received visits from their links.
- Most links were based on a development principle. The main types of ministry supported were in the fields of education and children's work.
- Of those parishes which responded 75 approximately named a person, other than the rector, responsible for developing links with the mission agencies or with support mission partners.

Some examples of questions raised by the findings include:

- Are there parishes with eastern European links?
- Are parishes which responded as having no link open to one?
- Is there division between urban and rural support?

A summary of the findings was made available through *The Church of Ireland Gazette* whose help, as always, is appreciated.

Some individuals and parishes expressed interest in developing their own mission links.

### **Mission Strategy and the Church of Ireland**

The Anglican Communion Office Questionnaire requested information, for the Lambeth Conference, about the Church of Ireland and its approach to mission. The difficulty in giving a clear answer to such questions as “What is the strategy of the Church of Ireland for mission over the next five years?” or “What different approaches do dioceses have?” highlighted the importance of the Council trying to help parishes work out what good mission support and involvement might look like in their own context.

Work is ongoing on a series of guides to stimulating mission within the parish.

The Council was disappointed that it is not currently possible to produce a new edition of the *Irish Christian Handbook*, since one major church in Ireland has made a decision not to make available to the compilers its census figures. In the meantime we are exploring how best to analyse the figures we already have to hand for the Church of Ireland.

Some members met with Archdeacon Bob Jackson, a specialist in the area of statistics for mission, to seek advice for the task.

Initially, the Council has asked each diocese to give an indication of how it uses its own figures for attendance at worship, pastoral offices etc.

### **Mission Course**

Mr Colin Corbridge, Church Mission Society Ireland (CMSI) Mission Resource Co-ordinator introduced a new resource, *Discover*, that is aimed at grass roots change in the way parishes see mission, helping them to raise awareness of and grapple with issues.

*Discover* arose out of the Mpower consultation, organized by CMS, which brought over 100 mission partners from around the world. One of the things this consultation revealed is that there is little grasp in many parishes of what mission looks like. People find it hard to differentiate between mission and charity. Holistic mission is not a familiar concept to them. This has led, in some cases, to apathy about mission.

The new resource will be a non-branded, Alpha-style resource for small groups or whatever works locally. It will make good use of DVD with creative ideas for discussion and exploration. It is based on good research of what is already available in colleges, courses etc. The course is targeted primarily towards those in the post-student to early 50s age group.

The course will have 18 sections divided into three parts: mission, connection and identity. Six modules are on thinking about mission and its theological and scriptural base; six on how this relates to the world today and another six on how this works out in the lives of ordinary church members. What’s distinctive is the way this ties all these things together.

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It is in production by an established group of core contributors. After prototype trials, the course is scheduled for sale in 2009. Local trainers will be available for any church or group wishing to use all or part of the course. A series of regional launch events will be announced soon.

The Council warmly commends the *Discover* course.

### **Mission Agency Updates**

- Crosslinks has appointed two new staff members Mr Tim Silk and Mr Sam McGeown.
- The internationally recognised *Arrow Ireland Leadership Programme* began in Ireland in autumn 2007. 20 full time church leaders from all parts of Ireland are taking part in a series of residentials, projects, peer group and mentor meetings, with a focus on leadership development and appropriate strategies for evangelism, over a period of two years.
- CMSI welcomed a new Director of Mission, Mr Ian Smith.

### **The Future - Mission Issues**

As the Council has been meeting for several years, members were invited to review the areas of mission that we had been focusing on thus far. It was felt that we should give some consideration to the area of links between the Church of Ireland and the different ethnic groupings in Ireland. How are we as a church listening to them? Conscious that the Hard Gospel project has been facilitating much good work in this area the Council nevertheless felt that it would be worth while to make it the focus of the 2008 Synod Mission Breakfast.

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**APPENDIX A**

That the General Synod recognises the importance of the efforts of the Church of Ireland Council for Mission;

That the General Synod authorises the Church of Ireland Council for Mission to gather, compile in standardised form and analyse the already existing information in each parish and diocese concerning trends in worship and pastoral offices and endorses the planned trial in three contrasting dioceses.

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**APPENDIX B**

**MISSIONARY SOCIETY CONTRIBUTIONS FROM THE CHURCH OF IRELAND 2008**

Where there are blanks no figure was returned

<b>Society</b>	<b>Donations £ Stg</b>	<b>Donations Euro</b>
Bible Society (NI)	15,262	
Church Army	24,423	
CMSI		1,737,440
Church's Ministry among the Jewish People	28,195	
Church Pastoral Aid Society	28,997	
Crosslinks	188,220	
Dublin University Far Eastern Mission		6,624
Dublin University Mission to Chota Nagpur	2,454	
Feed the Minds, Ireland		
Intercontinental Church Society	3,583	
Interserve		
Jerusalem and Middle East Church	2,264	
Leprosy Mission		
Mission to Seafarers	13,537	
Mothers' Union		
National Bible Society		16,539
Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge	13,365	5,568
Tearfund		
SOMA	2,859	
South American Missionary Society	80,867	13,360
United Society for the Propagation of the Gospel	64,685	
<b>Total</b>	<b>468,711</b>	<b>1,779,527</b>