

Standing Committee – Report 2009

APPENDIX D

CENTRAL COMMUNICATIONS BOARD

The Annual Report of this Board incorporates reports from the Broadcasting, Internet and Literature Sub-Committees from March 2008-February 2009.

MEMBERSHIP

Most Rev AET Harper (Chair)	(House of Bishops) To November 2008
Rt Rev TR Williams	(House of Bishops) November 2008
Very Rev JFA Bond	(Standing Committee)
Most Rev RL Clarke	(Broadcasting Committee)
Rev EV Cremin	(Chair – Broadcasting Committee)
Rev Canon Dr IM Ellis	(Honorary Secretary) resigned November 2008
Ven RG Hoey	(Chair – Internet Committee)
Mrs J Leighton	(Representative Body)
Dr K Milne	(Chair – Literature Committee)
Dr R Refaüssé	(Hon Secretary – Literature Committee)
Mr DC Reardon	(Church House Senior Management)
Head of Synod Services & Communications	(<i>ex officio</i>)
Press Officer	(<i>in attendance</i>)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Board welcomed the appointment of Mr Paul Harron, based in the Press Office in Belfast. The Church of Ireland website ‘Worship Section’ was launched in November 2008 by the Liturgical Advisory Committee. The Internet Committee plans to review the design and operation of the website. In Broadcasting, the Committee regretted cuts in its own training budget, and also cuts in the RTE budget for religious services on radio. The Committee hopes to work with RTE to develop a magazine format as part of the Sunday morning religious television service enhancing the existing broadcast of religious services with more elements of witness, discussion and reflection. The Committee was also concerned about the threat to public service content in the UK and encouraged OFCOM, the regulator, to ensure that religious content and other public service content is maintained. The Literature Committee undertook a major project, producing Malcolm Macourt’s book *Counting the People of God*, an analysis of the Church of Ireland population reflected through the last Irish census. The CCB’s Diocesan Communications Officer training focused on developing writing skills for web applications and also on the importance of continuing to develop the work of the Hard Gospel Project in communications activities.

OBJECTIVES 2009-10

- Review the diocesan communications infrastructure and work with dioceses to ensure an effective service that meets modern communications requirements;
- Maintain Church of Ireland publishing capacity within current financial climate;

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- Focus on maintaining strong religious broadcast output through engagement with RTE and BBC;
- Review Church of Ireland website;
- Provide media training to Church personnel.

Media training

From 2008, the CCB and the Broadcasting Committee has engaged in a programme of media training. The importance of mass media is growing and the development of digital and internet platforms increases the opportunity to use these communication skills effectively. As 2008 was a Lambeth Conference year, the Board provided specific training for Bishops and the feedback from this was very positive. The Board regretted that the training budget was cut from the 2009 budget, apart from a small contingency amount. Given the importance of widening the pool of trained individuals so that the Church is equipped to deliver high quality broadcast liturgies, spokespersons and also local broadcasters, the Board urges the General Synod to reinstate this aspect of our work in the near future.

Accessible Communications

Each year, the CCB encourages the Church to remember the needs of disabled worshippers. *The Church Hymnal* and the *Book of Common Prayer* are both available in large print and Braille formats from the Braille Unit at Maghaberry Prison. The Board thanks Mr David Johnstone, Head of the Braille Unit for his ongoing work in providing these materials in Braille. This is a free service. Advice on the creation of alternative formats for minutes, reports, service sheets or other materials such as Sunday School materials is available from the Synod Services and Communications staff in Church House, Dublin. Parishes and dioceses are encouraged to develop their use of alternative formats to increase participation in Church life and worship. The CCB places a high priority on this area of work and would like to see greater uptake of the materials already available. The Braille Unit at Maghaberry may be contacted at maghaberrybraille@hotmail.com

Communications Support for the Hard Gospel Values

With the end of the Hard Gospel Project, the CCB identified the continued promotion of the key values of the project as a central component of the Church's communications strategy. The Diocesan Communications Officers met in January 2009 for a special training day and appreciated a session with Bishop Trevor Williams, a former member of the Hard Gospel Committee and now Chairman of the Hard Gospel Implementation Working Group. The session focused on ways to keep these themes alive and to encourage people to reflect on what they mean.

Diocesan Communications Network

Communication is central to modern Church life, whether it is through traditional mass media (including local radio and newspapers) or through internal church communications (websites, web-based transmission, teleconferencing, magazines, tapes, information sheets and notice boards, CDs and videos).

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The CCB would like to draw particular attention to communication at the diocesan level. Many dioceses have now appointed a Diocesan Communications Officer, and in some cases, also special radio officers dealing with local radio stations. This network has proved invaluable where it is put in place and properly resourced. The Board offers its thanks to dioceses which have taken this step and encourages others to do likewise. During 2009/2010, the CCB will be engaging with the dioceses to explore the implications of new technology for the mission of the Church, with a view to deepening the Church's communications resource at the diocesan level.

The CCB welcomes the publication by the Church in Society Committee of *Pastoral care in a digital world*, which is a thought-provoking analysis of the changes that technology is bringing.

Personnel

The Board thanks the Rev Canon Dr Ian Ellis for the contribution he made during his membership of the Board.

The Board welcomes Mr Paul Harron to the communications staff. Mr Harron is based in the Belfast Press Office. The Board also thanks Mrs Jenny Compston for her work in the Press Office, providing support to the Press Officer. The Board also thanks Ms Michelle Carter, Ms Charlotte Howard and Mr Alastair Graham for their work on the website and internet services.

Sub-committee Reports

LITERATURE COMMITTEE

MEMBERSHIP

Dr K Milne (Chairman)

Prof R Gillespie

Rev PK McDowell

Ven RB Rountree

Rev B Treacy OP

Ms Cecilia West

Very Rev SR White

Dr R Refaussé (Honorary Secretary) Mrs J Maxwell (*ex officio*)

In attendance: Dr S Hood, Publications Officer

Mr P Harron, Press Officer

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2009 the Committee will seek to:

- Promote Church-related publications within and beyond the Church of Ireland
- Manage Church of Ireland Publishing in the new economic climate

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- Evaluate applications for support from the General Synod Royalties Fund

OBJECTIVES 2009

- Promote the use of electronic publishing as well as traditionally printed material to maximise the use of resources.
- Implement a formal promotion and marketing, sales and distribution, management structure.
- Work towards the publication of a Church of Ireland parish handbook, a study of lay readers, and a booklet on pastoral care and the digital world.

CHURCH OF IRELAND PUBLISHING

The Literature Committee has continued to devote much of its time to furthering the work of Church of Ireland Publishing (CIP), the publishing imprint for the Church of Ireland. The Literature Committee will produce the new Church of Ireland Handbook in 2009. The Royalties Fund remains healthy, despite the economic downturn. The Committee successfully produced Malcolm Macourt's *Counting the People of God*, which was launched by the former Primate, the Rt Rev Robin Eames, in Belfast and by the Archbishop of Dublin, the Most Rev Dr John Neill, in Dublin and Dr Garret FitzGerald.

The CIP website (cip.ireland.anglican.org) was updated.

The following titles were published in 2008:-

Gillian Kingston, *Working out the covenant. Guidelines for the journey.*

Malcolm Macourt, *Counting the people of God? The census of population and the Church of Ireland.*

Brian Mayne (ed.), *Sunday and weekday readings 2009.*

Kenneth Milne (ed.) *Journal of the General Synod 2007.*

In addition CIP facilitated the publication of a *Confirmation Handbook* by Mr Andrew Brannigan.

PUBLICATIONS OFFICER

The Publications Officer attended a CLÉ course on editorial project management and continued to work with the designer, Mr Bill Bolger.

In addition to preparing the CIP titles for publication she undertook additional design work on the the bishops' mission statement, *Growth, Unity, Service*, provided advice for *Singing Psalms* and facilitated the digitization of the proceedings of the General Convention, 1870.

GENERAL SYNOD ROYALTIES FUND

The Committee recommended the following grants:-

€5,000 to produce *Counting the People of God* by Dr M Macourt

€500 to assist with the editorial and design work of a *Directory of migrant-led churches & chaplaincies*

€850 to the Very Revd RB MacCarthy towards the publication of a study of J.H. Bernard.

€1,000 to Canon David Crooks towards the publication of *Clergy of Tuam, Killala & Achonry.*

€2,000 to *Search* to assist with short term cash flow problem

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€3,500 to APCK for printing a leaflet on marriage
£1,000 to produce a book on Church of Ireland Churches dedicated to St Anne by Dr M Scarlett

In addition the Standing Committee approved a grant of €2,000 from the General Synod Royalties Fund to enable the Hard Gospel final report to be printed and requested the payments of grants totalling €19,000 to the Hard Gospel project as previously agreed.

The Standing Committee also agreed that the sum of €4,375 be made available for the printing of 3,500 copies of the large print pew edition and 1,500 copies of the presentation edition of the Church Hymnal (2000).

BROADCASTING COMMITTEE

Membership

Ms R Buchanan

Most Rev Dr RL Clarke

Rev EV Cremin (Chair)

Mr R Childs

Rev TW Gordon

Rev Dr R Tosh

Appointed: January 2009

Head of Communications (*ex officio*)

Press Officer (*ex officio*)

PURPOSE OF THE COMMITTEE

The Committee reviewed its objectives in 2008 and identified four objectives for the current three year period.

- Broadcast training
- Monitoring
- Preparing for the digital future
- Media sector engagement – lobbying, maintaining links, responding to consultations.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The report outlines changes in religious programming by RTE regarding the introduction of a magazine format as part of the televised religious service output, and a cost reduction measure in respect of radio services. A section of the report focuses on the implications of the change to digital transmission in terms of religious programming. There is a review of the broadcast training programme, which focused on preparation for Lambeth 2008. The regulation of public service content in the UK, which embraces most religious programming is the subject of an ongoing OFCOM consultation, the progress of which is also reviewed.

OBJECTIVES

To maintain the quality and quantity of religious programming output featuring content relating to the Church of Ireland.

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To undertake work directed to supporting religious programming generally and to maintaining the quality of that programming within the public service remit.

Training

The broadcast training programme for 2008/09 focused on providing training for bishops in the lead up to Lambeth 2008. The training focused on two dimensions of broadcast skill: handling information content and presentation. The information content of the training focused on issues that were dominating news media during the months leading up to Lambeth and prepared individuals to deal with interrogative interviews, and also to build practice in communicating what is often complex information in the limited time available on broadcast media. The training in broadcast presentation skills focused on developing physical aspects of presentation, and building confidence in dealing with a medium that can often be intimidating.

Monitoring

The new Press Officer, Mr Paul Harron, has been helpful to the Committee in developing a profile of religious programming and in drawing the key items to the attention of the Committee for further consideration. This has facilitated better liaison with producers to get more out of religious content. A good example is the revised format of the joint Christmas message from the two Archbishops of Armagh broadcast by RTE, which allowed them to speak in an active context from the Lisanally Special School in Armagh, rather than simply a ‘straight to camera’ piece. Viewing figures for this were correspondingly increased by 20% to 113 000.

Preparing for the digital future

Despite the swift change in the economy and its dramatic impact on advertising revenues, and consequent pressure on public service content, the move to digital broadcast transmission is set to go ahead in both the UK and Ireland. The process of digital switchover is too far advanced not to proceed.

Digital transmission technology can carry more content and therefore to enable more competitors to enter the market. It had been assumed that a robust economy would generate increasing advertising revenues, which would offset the increased competition that would be generated by the use of digital technology.

Instead, it is likely that some broadcast companies will fall victim to commercial pressures as the industry competes to chase declining revenues and static audiences. This is particularly true in the UK, where a competitive market vision has driven development of the media sector. It is less true of Ireland, where RTE remains the primary broadcast player.

Of particular importance to the Churches, is the impact of competition, economic factors and the digital switchover on public service broadcast content.

Public service broadcast content was the concept that underpinned the creation of the BBC and of RTE. The term embraces broadcast content to inform, educate, entertain and provide mass communication inputs that influence or help society for the better. The fees raised by the TV license scheme, were used to sustain the BBC’s and RTE’s public service remit. In the UK, the BBC was not permitted to compete for commercial

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revenues (advertising), but commercial providers were excluded from sharing in the license fee. Over time in the UK, the public service concept has also been embraced by other broadcasters, and there is currently a big debate in the UK as to which media organizations ought to produce public service content, and how this should be funded.

Even before the economic downturn, commercial channels in the UK, in particular the ITV network, were putting forward the argument that despite commercial revenue, they could not break even and sustain public service programming. They have made a strong case for either sharing the license fee income, or for a competition based approach to a general fund for public service content.

The broadcasting regulator, OFCOM, has been conducting an ongoing consultation over the last few years, to ascertain the way forward in terms of future regulation of public service broadcasting content, which is an important and currently vulnerable aspect of broadcasting. Public service broadcasting is particularly important to the Church, because it includes religious programming. Public service programming also includes the areas of sport, news and current affairs, documentary and drama. Religious programming has tended to get a very small portion of the resources addressed to public service programming. Any threat to public service content represents a magnified threat to maintaining religious programming.

Having considered the various factors involved, the Committee agreed that the importance of maintaining public service broadcast capacity had to be the first consideration. The Committee observed that proposals to increase the number of public service providers to include more commercial operators appeared to be impractical, as even the largest of these, ITV, has found it impossible to achieve a cost-benefit balance in respect of public service programming during what has been described as the ‘boom years’ of the past decade. ITV has indicated that it would require extensive public money to be injected in order to achieve any measure of breakeven, in terms of public service programming. The Committee felt public service programming would be put at great risk if the money currently directed to the BBC was diluted among a number of commercial competitors. In particular, the Committee felt that a competitive PSB Fund, would almost certainly see available PSB funding directed to the biggest genres of public service content (sport, news and current affairs, drama) with those areas, including religious programming, which are already treated as the Cinderellas of public service content, being squeezed even further out of the mainstream.

The Committee was therefore extremely pleased when OFCOM’s report favoured the model that maintains as much PSB content as possible within the BBC, currently the main provider of public service programming, and refused to consider those models that dilute PSB content. The Committee noted that the proposed model is the one that works best in terms of provision of religious programming for Northern Ireland. The model proposed, Model 1, would continue to make provision for PSB within the ITV network, and this was also welcomed by the Committee subject to certain points raised at General Synod 2008. The Committee noted the critical comments made at last year’s General Synod, which complained of the lack of religious programmes on the ITV network, which includes Ulster Television (UTV), although the Committee noted the contribution that UTV has made in terms of news and current affairs programming, which does

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contribute to an understanding of developments at the societal level in Northern Ireland. The Committee encourages UTV to review its policy on religious programming within its public service output and has set out the aim of initiating a dialogue with UTV management as one of its objectives for the coming year.

RTE

In Ireland, RTE continues to be the main provider of public service content by regulation, and, thus is facing somewhat less difficulty in terms of the digital switchover than the UK broadcast sector. However, the economic downturn will also have implications for religious programming in Ireland.

With a view to revitalising the content of the broadcast religious services on Sunday morning, RTE has been exploring with the Committee and the relevant bodies in the other Churches, the possibility of introducing new elements to the televised religious service on one of the monthly services. These would take the form of inserts that cut away from the service to enable, for example, a short interview with a parishioner offering a moment of personal witness, or perhaps, to reflect a special focus such as vocation, a short debate on challenges for the Churches in relation to this.

At the beginning of 2009, RTE took a decision that no additional budget would be available to revise the format of religious service programming in the coming year, although there is general agreement that the proposal is a good one.

The altered economic climate also resulted in RTE taking a decision that the cost of radio services must be cut, by asking participants to record two services on each occasion. The Committee notified this decision to the Bishops' meeting, and to staff in the communications network of the Church. The Bishops were asked to identify clergy and parishes with liturgical and broadcasting skills to ensure that the quality of broadcasts is enhanced rather than diminished by this new arrangement.

RNN

Religious News Network, the syndicated religious news service which produced bi-monthly material for local broadcasting stations continues to be an important contributor to religious programming in the Republic of Ireland. The Committee thanks those members of the Church of Ireland, who serve on the Board of RNN and assist in developing the programming on behalf of the Church.

Media sector engagement

The Committee continues to maintain its links with the BBC, UTV, RTE, Ofcom, ICCTRA, the Churches Media Council, the Westminster Media Forum, the Voice of the Listener and Viewer and Religious News Network (RNN). The Committee hosted representatives of the northern and southern broadcast media at two events during the year, facilitating discussion of issues facing the Churches and the industry at this time. In December, the Committee agreed to support a call for emergency funding from RNN, which provides a bi-monthly recording of Church news to local radio stations in the Republic of Ireland. This is a valuable service, which carries Church of Ireland content to local audiences and to which the Church of Ireland has been a contributing funder for more than a decade.

INTERNET COMMITTEE

MEMBERSHIP

Ven R G Hoey (Chair)
Ms M Carter (IT department - RCB)
Mr A Clements (Head of Finance - RCB)
Ms S Wynn
Mr P Neill
Rev PG Heak
Mr N Hutchinson
Rev AJ Ruffli
Head of Communications (*ex officio*)
Press Officer (*ex officio*)

ROLE OF THE INTERNET COMMITTEE

The Internet Committee advises the Central Communications Board on the use of the Internet in the Church of Ireland.

The Internet Committee works in two main areas:

- maintaining and developing the content and presentation of the Church of Ireland website and the General Synod website
- encouraging and developing the use of the internet among Church members.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Internet Committee's objectives were revised in June 2008 as it was agreed that much of the technical infrastructure is now established as a function of the IT department with specific elements of work outsourced. The focus of the Committee will now shift to dealing with issues of content and presentation of content. A second objective is to identify and promote new uses of internet to the benefit of the Church of Ireland. The Liturgical Advisory Committee (LAC) took over responsibility for the Worship section of the Church of Ireland website.

FUTURE OBJECTIVES

Work with committees to encourage greater creative use of the website to communicate with the Church

WEBSITES & HOSTING SERVICES

The anglican.org support was taken under the management of Church House, with the maintenance of folders and mailboxes being provided by the IT department. This addressing system, which operates throughout the Anglican Communion, is now established for more than a decade and is well understood. There are about 600 addresses in Ireland of which more than 400 replied to a recent survey of use. The Online Directory for clergy use became active during the first six months of 2008. The password protected e-mail service became active in mid-July.

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BLOGS

Blogs are an increasing fact of life and there are several Church of Ireland ‘blogs’. The Committee considered whether blogs can be regarded as part of an official site as the main purpose of a blog is to present personal opinion and views.

The Committee agreed that the main website could not host blogs for these reasons. The Committee agreed that a disclaimer, at least, is required on any related Church sites that contain blogs, such as the Hard Gospel website. A communication on this subject was circulated to all webmasters.

DISTANCE LEARNING

The Committee is pleased to note increasing interest in using the internet for distance learning. The practical outworking of this is likely to be the responsibility of the Library and the Theological Institute and other possible users rather than of the Internet Committee.

REVIEW OF WEBSITE

In line with its objective of focusing on content and presentation, the committee is conducting a review of the website to maintain a fresh appearance and content. Wider use is being made of photographs to add interest.

MEETING OF WEBMASTERS

The Committee agreed to host a meeting of webmasters in the Church of Ireland in 2009, to find out the issues that are of importance or concern to this group.

PRESS

It was noted that members of the secular press are making wide use of the Church website commenting especially on the immediacy of the Press Release section and the overall usefulness of the General Synod website for information and reference.