

The Standing Committee – Report 2009

APPENDIX G

THE HARD GOSPEL REPORT 2009

PRESIDENT

Most Rev Alan Harper

COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP (*letters in brackets indicate sub-committee membership*)

Most Rev Dr Richard Clarke

Rt Rev Dr Michael Jackson

Rt Rev Trevor Williams

Very Rev Patrick Rooke (Chair) (A)

Ms Ruth Handy (Vice Chair) (B)

Mr Terry Forsyth (Honorary Treasurer)

Rev Eileen Cremin (A)

Rev Canon Dr Ian M Ellis (Standing Committee)

Mr Bernie Frayne (B)

Rev Kenny Hall

Rev Paul Hoey (Parish Development Committee)

Mrs Margaret McNulty

Rev Daniel Nuzum

Ms Stella Obe (B)

Rev Michael Parker (B)

Ms Kate Turner

Co-opted

Rev Doug Baker (A)

In attendance

Mr David Brown (Church of Ireland Youth Department)

Mrs Jenny Compston (Minutes Secretary)

Mr Paul Harron (Press Officer)

Mrs Janet Maxwell (Communications) (B)

Rev Earl Storey (HGP Director) (A,B)

Mr Stephen Dallas (Project Officer)

Mr Philip McKinley (Project Officer)

Sub Committees

(A) Strategy/Planning

(B) Communications/Publicity

HARD GOSPEL PROCESS

To coincide with the end of the three year Hard Gospel Project, the Hard Gospel Committee met for the last time on 14th January 2009. This brought to an end the first phase of the Hard Gospel Process. Both the Project Team and the Committee had completed their work and in their place a smaller Hard Gospel Implementation Working Group was appointed by the Standing Committee to oversee the implementation of certain aspects of the continuing process. In this respect, January 2009 marked ‘the end of the beginning’ with success or otherwise now depending on the long term mainstreaming of Hard Gospel principles within every aspect of Church life.

At the final meeting, the Chair and Vice-Chair acknowledged the enormous contribution made by the full Committee. Special appreciation was paid to Mrs Jenny Compston (Minutes Secretary and Press Assistant), to Mr Terry Forsyth (Hon. Treasurer), to Rev Doug Baker (Consultant), to Mr Tony Macaulay (Evaluation) and not least to the Project Team of Rev Earl Storey, Mr Stephen Dallas and Mr Philip McKinley.

ACTION TAKEN 2008-2009

- Work with churches in the Craigavon area to engage with minority ethnic communities.
- Presentation and dissemination of 3,000 copies of *Whatever You Say, Say Nothing* – a report and DVD reflecting on the experiences of border Protestants in Clogher Diocese during the Troubles.
- Delivery of a number of *Beyond the Box* seminars, designed to encourage new thinking on difficult issues.
- Partnership with the Church of Ireland Youth Department to write, produce and distribute resources designed to provide innovative means of addressing issues of difference.
- Partnered with AICCMR (All-Ireland Churches Consultative Meeting on Racism) in producing and disseminating a directory of Migrant-led churches and chaplaincies in Ireland.
- Facilitated cross-community engagement in a range of church situations.
- Partnered with the Dioceses of Cork, Cloyne and Ross to deliver a diocesan conference on the theme of *Understanding our History: - Protestants, the War of Independence and the Civil War in County Cork*.
- Facilitated dialogue with a range of organizations including the Orange Order, the Royal Black Perceptory, the Gaelic Athletic Association, the Masonic Lodge of Ireland, the Travelling Community and Changing Attitude Ireland (a gay support group).

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- Produced research papers on issues such as Church of Ireland Engagement with Loyalism, Youth Work Training, as well as a range of articles for religious and secular media.
- Delivered training in diversity and cultural awareness in a range of dioceses, both north and south.
- Provided training in use of peace-building material to parish and cross community groups.
- Enabled training regarding cultural change for the House of Bishops.
- Provided leadership training for clergy and for Church of Ireland Theological Institute students.
- Helped to produce *Parish Guidelines on Immigrants for Armagh Diocese*.
- Developed a *Diversity Good Practice Guide* appropriate for use at either central or local level.

CONCLUDING ASSESSMENT

One of the first actions of the Project was to commission an independent evaluation of its work. Following the appointment of Macaulay Associates, an evaluation framework and methodology was established and this was undertaken in each of the three years of the Project. This annual evaluation ensured that the focus was maintained on the initial strategy and that new learning was highlighted and acted upon. In January, the end of project *Hard Gospel Project Evaluation Report* was presented to the Committee.

The following is the Independent Evaluator's Concluding Assessment:-

1. *The Hard Gospel Project initiated, developed, supported and coordinated a wide range of activities involving more than 7,500 people across every diocese in Ireland between November 2005 and December 2008. This is the most substantial denominational church initiative of its kind to have taken place in Ireland.*
2. *The Church of Ireland demonstrated its commitment to the development and implementation of the Hard Gospel Project through the level of time and resources invested in ensuring it made a difference. The project was managed effectively through the Hard Gospel Committee and a high level of activity was stimulated and delivered by the small project staff team.*
3. *A major achievement was to raise awareness of the project and the issues it was spotlighting at all levels of the Church of Ireland. The project provided a range of opportunities at all levels to address issues of difference, community conflict and sectarianism. Discussion of Hard Gospel issues has become normative within the Church of Ireland. The issues and approaches of the Hard Gospel are becoming mainstreamed into the Church and there has been a degree of culture change towards*

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more open discussion of diversity issues. This enabled the Church to take a series of new initiatives and some of these had an impact in the wider community.

4. *The project enhanced the overall capability of the Church of Ireland to take initiatives to build peace and transform communities by providing training and support at parish and diocesan levels and by supporting the development of a series of diocesan and parish level initiatives. The outcome is new initiatives by churches actively contributing to community development and peace-building, including youth initiatives, in a breadth of locations and levels.*
5. *The project developed a series of high quality resources and disseminated these throughout the Church and beyond.*
6. *The project developed demonstration projects that addressed key strategic issues in relation to the legacy of conflict and an increasingly multi cultural Ireland. The projects on immigration and Loyalist communities were at the cutting edge of contemporary diversity and inclusion issues in Ireland during the past three years. They engaged the Church of Ireland in these issues at a level and depth that had previously not been possible. The projects were well designed and delivered by the project staff team and they attracted the attention of wider society. They have been written up and disseminated as models of good practice for the wider church and society.*
7. *The pace of organisational change as a result of the project has been slow. It has taken three years for the beginnings of change in structures, policies and practices to become apparent. In spite of substantial time and resources being invested in research, discussion, committees and publications, this has produced limited change to date. Success can only be measured in terms of any change that actually takes place in the future.*
8. *The project faced challenges including the scale of the task, different expectations and barriers to change within the ‘culture’ of the Church and the danger of being reduced to the status of a marginal short-term project.*
9. *A major challenge was to both stimulate and support activities to demonstrate new approaches and build capacity while at the same time influence organisational culture, policies, practices and structures so that the Hard Gospel would become a mainstream and embedded long-term process within the Church.*
10. *The project achieved a wider community profile through good media coverage of its activities, as a result of a well-implemented communications strategy. This was most successful when the project highlighted issues that were then taken up and developed into wider public discussions through the media.*
11. *The project was successful in developing a series of new collaborations and partnerships with other churches, organisations and agencies on relevant issues and initiatives. The project staff successfully implemented a series of initiatives with other churches, agencies and groups with a clear focus on creating more open and inclusive local communities.*

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12. *The plans developed for the post project phase of the Hard Gospel process have a strong focus on mainstreaming the process at a central level, while at the same time identifying ways of supporting sustained interventions at diocesan and parish levels.*
13. *The evaluation has one major recommendation; that the Church of Ireland should put in place the necessary structures, strategies and resources to continue its Hard Gospel process as a long-term mainstream initiative within the Church that will create both internal change and practical action in local communities on diversity issues.*

WAY AHEAD

The Hard Gospel Committee shared the Independent Evaluator's view that the necessary structures, strategies and resources to continue the Hard Gospel process as a long term, mainstream initiative within the Church of Ireland must be put in place. In this connection it welcomed the setting up of the Hard Gospel Implementation Working Group. In stepping down, members of the Committee were conscious that the Church of Ireland needs to do the following:-

Put together, in a concise form, its commitment to the ongoing Hard Gospel process and its principles. This should be distributed widely.

Enact the necessary legislation to ensure that the Hard Gospel remains part of the DNA of the Church of Ireland.

Task different groups/committees within the Church, as necessary, with responsibility to follow up particular aspects of the process.

Ensure that the Hard Gospel is incorporated in all theological formation learning.

WEBSITE

All Hard Gospel publications, resources and information can be found at www.hardgospel.net

FUNDING

Funding for the Hard Gospel Project came from a range of sources:

- The International Fund for Ireland Community Bridges Programme
- The Department of Foreign Affairs (ROI)
- The Church of Ireland
- The Church of Ireland Priorities Fund
- The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council.