

THE CHURCH IN SOCIETY COMMITTEE

MEMBERSHIP

The Bishop of Clogher, The Rt Rev Dr MGStA Jackson (Chairman)
The Archbishop of Armagh, The Most Rev AET Harper
The Archbishop of Dublin, The Most Rev Dr JRW Neill
Dr R Corbett (Medical Ethics Working Group)
Rev Canon Dr IM Ellis (Honorary Secretaries' nominee –resigned January 2009)
Rev KRJ Hall (Social Justice and Theology (NI) Working Group)
Mr SR Harper (Legislation and Politics (RI) Working Group) (Honorary Secretaries' nominee)
Rev WD Humphries (Environmental and Ecological Working Group)
Rev Canon WA Lewis (Legislation and Politics NI Working Group)
Dr K Milne (European Affairs Working Group)
Very Rev FJG Wynne (Social Justice and Theology (RI) Working Group)

FUTURE OBJECTIVES

The Committee identified four main objectives for 2009/10:

1. The Committee entered discussions with the Board of Social Action (NI) and the Board of Social Responsibility (RI) to develop an agreed single structure to address social action needs in the Church of Ireland. A joint meeting was held in October 2008, which agreed a framework, and a Joint Working Group was set up to refine the proposal. The Joint Working Group held its first meeting in November 2008. The meeting agreed that the objective of work in this area is embraced in the following mission statement: To reflect on our social responsibilities and facilitate appropriate action.
2. The Committee undertook to explore how it might maintain possible channels of communication with external organisations, such as the Loyal Orders, the Masonic Order, organisations representing the gay and lesbian community, the Travelling Community, the GAA, which had begun under the auspices of the Hard Gospel Project. The Committee pays tribute to the work done by the members of the Hard Gospel Committee and its staff in this regard and will liaise with the Hard Gospel Implementation Group.
3. The Committee agreed to re-examine the relationship between itself and its counterpart in the Methodist Church in Ireland and to seek to deepen the engagement between the two. One joint statement was issued on the subject of Lisbon during the year, which also embraced the sister committee in the Presbyterian Church in Ireland.
4. Given the speed and ferocity of the economic downturn, the Committee will address this as a matter of urgency, by producing a booklet entitled, *Pastoral Care in the Recession: 2009*, which it hopes will be available by the time the General Synod meets in May. When published, an electronic version of the booklet will be available at www.ireland.anglican.org/synodnews

Church in Society – Report 2009

PURPOSE OF COMMITTEE

The Church in Society Committee of the General Synod of the Church of Ireland seeks to identify, contribute to, challenge and develop areas of living today where the mission of the Church can be active and the love of God shared. It does this through the development of reports, resource materials and by developing projects that apply theological perspectives to public issues in a challenge to Christian living.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

During 2008-2009, the Church in Society Committee completed the following work:

Statements

- The Chairman made a statement on the Convention to ban cluster munitions in May 2008 (APPENDIX A)
- The European Affairs Working Group with the Church and Society Panel of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland and the Council on Social Responsibility of the Methodist Church in Ireland made a joint statement on the Lisbon Treaty in May 2008. (APPENDIX B)
- The Chairman made a statement on the Consultative Group on the Past in May 2008. (APPENDIX C)
- The Ecological and Environmental Working Group, through Eco-congregation Ireland, encouraged churches to ring their bells for climate change, in advance of the UN Climate Change Conference in Poland, December 2008 (APPENDIX D)

Consultations and meetings

- A submission was made by the Social Justice and Theology (NI) Working Group in May 2008, to the consultation on Proposals for Health and Social Care Reform conducted by the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, recommending a reduction in bureaucratic structures and increased funding of services. (Submission available at http://www.ireland.anglican.org/cmsfiles/pdf/Information/Submissions/Ch_Soc/hscr0508.pdf)
- A submission was made by the Social Justice and Theology (NI) Working Group in response to the NI Civic Forum Review in August 2008. (Submission available at http://www.ireland.anglican.org/cmsfiles/pdf/Information/Submissions/Ch_Soc/cfr0808.pdf)
- The Chairperson of the Medical Ethics Working Group was asked to prepare a response to a debate organised by the NI Ethics Forum, on Monday 3 January 2009 in All-Souls Non-subscribing Presbyterian Church, Elmwood Avenue, Belfast

Church in Society – Report 2009

entitled, ‘This House believes that the right to medical assistance to die should be recognised’.

- Civil Partnership Bill (RI): the Legislation and Politics (RI) Working Group monitored the progress of this legislation and restated the view expressed in a previous submission that civil partnership cannot be equated with marriage.
- The Chairman and members of the Social Justice and Theology (NI) Working Group met with the NI Victims Commissioners in June 2008. Subsequently, the Rev KRJ Hall announced an initiative to equip clergy to facilitate meetings between victims and the Commission, starting in dioceses that are located wholly or partly in (NI) (Appendix E).
- The Human Rights Consortium met with the Chairman and members of the Social Justice and Theology (NI) Working Group in Armagh Diocesan Offices in January 2009.
- Members of the Social Justice and Theology (NI) Working Group met with the NI Law Commission on the subject of bail regulations, November 2008.
- The Legislation and Politics (RI) Working Group is continuing its ongoing research, policy development and discussion at sub-committee level on the care of the elderly.
- The Social Justice and Theology (NI) Working Group met with the Ulster Unionist Party (UUP) and the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) representatives regarding the Church of Ireland’s attitude to the Irish language, in December 2008 and January 2009.
- A submission was made by the European Affairs Working Group to an RI Oireachtas sub-committee, set up in the aftermath of the Lisbon referendum, highlighting means of informing the public (Appendix F).
- The Social Justice and Theology (RI) Working Group Chairperson attended the Churches Together in Britain and Ireland’s Racism Network in London, at which he has distributed the Rev Canon Patrick Comerford’s book *Embracing Difference*, which was warmly received and received copies of a youth DVD aimed at disadvantaged young people.
- Legislation and Politics (NI) Working Group, through its Chairperson, has been seeking to co-operate with other Churches, political parties and community organisations in acquiring a stronger voice within Stormont.
- The Chairpersons of the European Affairs Working Group and Social Justice and Theology (NI) Working Group prepared a document on the Church of Ireland and the Irish language (Appendix G).
- The Church in Society Ecological and Environmental Panel produced a response to the Church’s policy on the reduction of waste and global warming in a) schools, b) churches and c) other church property (Appendix H).

Church in Society – Report 2009

- The Social Justice and Theology (NI) Working Group responded to a consultation on an amendment to the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 concerning the 'Removal of the exemption for operators of transport services from Part III of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995'. (Submission available at http://www.ireland.anglican.org/cmsfiles/pdf/Information/Submissions/Ch_Soc/sjt0209.pdf)
- Social Justice and Theology (NI) responded to a consultation by the Department of Finance and Personnel on the draft presumption of Death Bill (Northern Ireland) 2008 (Submission available at http://www.ireland.anglican.org/cmsfiles/pdf/Information/Submissions/Ch_Soc/mpc.pdf)

Publications

- *Pastoral Care in the Digital World*, Social Justice and Theology RI Working Group.
- *Greening the Church: October 2008*, the Ecological and Environmental Working Group's magazine (Available at <http://www.ireland.anglican.org/index.php?do=news&newsid=2356>)
- A report is being prepared on the theological and pastoral impact of the recession.

APPENDIX A

BISHOP OF CLOGHER URGES BAN ON CLUSTER MUNITIONS

The Chairman of the Church in Society Committee of the Church of Ireland, the Rt Rev Dr Michael Jackson, Bishop of Clogher, has issued a statement supporting calls for a complete ban on the production, transfer, use of and association with cluster munitions.

The statement has the support of a number of Provinces in the Anglican Communion. Expressions of support have been received from the Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia, the Episcopal Church of Brazil, the Anglican Church in Hong Kong, the Church of Melanesia, the Church of Mexico, the Scottish Episcopal Church and the Church in Wales.

Representatives from 109 countries as well as the United Nations, the International Committee of the Red Cross and the Cluster Munitions Coalition are currently gathered in Dublin to finalise an anti-cluster munitions treaty.

The full text of the statement of the Chairman of the Church in Society Committee, the Rt Revd Dr Michael Jackson, Bishop of Clogher, follows:

From 19-30 May 2008, representatives from 109 countries as well as the United Nations, the International Committee of the Red Cross and the Cluster Munitions Coalition are gathered in Dublin to finalise an anti-cluster munitions treaty.

Those labouring to ban the production, storage, transfer and use of cluster munitions are to be commended and prayerfully supported. One might ask why, in the context of the arms industry where products are designed with the specific intent to kill, maim and destroy, are cluster munitions particularly sinister and deserving of special attention? The answer is this: they fail to observe the principle of distinction and so run contrary to the entire spirit of humanitarian law, that code which reaches for a moral centre based upon the sanctity of human life and the dignity of the person and through which nations are supposed to strive for a fair and just peace. In failing to distinguish between the civilian and the military, cluster munitions prevent us from containing the violence of war. Their use brings warfare to the civilian man, woman and child and drags warfare beyond the formal ending of hostilities, embedding it in the soil that communities must reclaim after war, slowing reconstruction efforts and distorting the rebuilding of normal life, making it a life-threatening affair.

Efforts to reduce or dilute the force of the convention being finalised must be resisted. Several countries participating in the negotiations have come to the table with proposed amendments that, if included in the final convention, would perpetuate the suffering caused by cluster munitions. Participation in the conference is to be welcomed, by contrast countries such as China, India, Israel, Pakistan, Russia and the United States of America are not attending. However, any attempt to dilute the terms of the Treaty by those attending cannot be condoned. Such action, if successful, would serve to define the unacceptable and wrong as formally acceptable and legal. Humanitarian law must be fused with justice and fairness. No document that acknowledges certain cluster munitions as legitimate utensils for the exercise

Church in Society – Report 2009

of force, either by mention or omission, can be regarded as a proper contribution to that fusion. To excuse the use of cluster munitions within the body of humanitarian law directs that body away from the principles it is supposed to make normative.

Much has been made of the technological improvements in, and the modern safeguards of, certain cluster munitions by those countries that wish to limit the scope of the convention. It is worth noting that 142,000 unexploded sub-munitions have been removed by the United Nations' Mine Action Coordination Centre in southern Lebanon since 14th August 2006 after the region was cluster-bombed by the Israeli Defence Forces in the summer of that year. In the same period, 179 civilians have been injured and 20 civilians killed by such cluster munitions. It is unknown how many sub-munitions remain, but thus far only 15 per cent of the 40 million square meters affected has been returned to communities for their use.

The cluster munitions used in that conflict and which left unexploded ordnance in their wake included the most up-to-date models for which some countries are seeking exemptions. In a letter to the editor of *The Times*, nine generals and former generals wrote that "to choose a course that seeks to exempt the UK's remaining stocks from a ban risks creating loopholes that others will inevitably exploit. Most importantly it will not achieve the stigmatisation of cluster munitions, which must be our objective if we are to prevent the proliferation of these weapons. An important lesson of the anti-personnel mine ban treaty is that, even if some main stockpilers will not sign, clear, unequivocal statements of intent will strongly shape their practice." The momentum for an authoritative and definite convention is there and it must be seized, while those seeking to insert chinks and loopholes must be resisted.

To seek praise for destroying one's own stockpiles of cluster munitions while simultaneously negotiating for permission to use the cluster munitions of non-signatories in joint military operations is hypocrisy. The definitions of this convention must be as comprehensive as possible, the transition period from ratification to operation as short as possible, and the moral objectionability of being associated with these weapons as clear as possible. If the convention fails to ban the use of cluster munitions in joint operations, we would still call on the governments of the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland to unilaterally refuse the participation of the Armed Forces of the Crown and the Irish Defence Forces in any operation where another participant is using cluster munitions, and to legislate accordingly as Belgium has done. Anything less is to condone these weapons.

Hopefully at the conclusion of the conference in Dublin a convention to ban the use of all cluster munitions and association with them will be in place with the maximum number of signatories to provide the convention with the moral gravity and voice that it deserves. Once again, prayerful support is due to all those working to agree and strengthen this convention, particularly to the Norwegian government that has been a leader on this issue from early on with the Oslo process, to the Irish government that convened the current conference, and to Pax Christi who, through their Make Cluster Bombs History campaign, have been agitating upon the issue for several years.

(Statement available from <http://www.ireland.anglican.org/index.php?do=news&newsid=2208>)

APPENDIX B

JOINT CHURCH STATEMENT ON THE LISBON TREATY REFERENDUM

A Statement on the Lisbon Treaty Referendum issued by the Church of Ireland European Affairs Working Group, the Church and Society Committee of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland and the Council on Social Responsibility of the Methodist Church in Ireland.

The European Union, as a multinational body of 27 member states founded on principles of democracy and subsidiarity, has been a remarkable experiment in peaceful cooperation in the aftermath of the untold suffering of the Second World War, throughout the divisive period of the Cold War and through to the present day. This has been accompanied by significant economic growth, not least here in Ireland. We would however stress that prosperity has a purpose, and therefore regard it as important that the Union, as it develops, should be seen to promote social development as well as economic progress. We rejoice in the fact that the Union is expanding and bringing new opportunities to countries formerly cut off from the European mainstream by the political realities of the Cold War.

We recognise that the enlargement of the Union has brought new challenges to its structures, originally designed for just six member states, and that some reform is necessary to enable the Union to act effectively in responding to major challenges facing the world, including issues such as climate change, the increasing cost of food internationally and the security of energy supplies: external challenges that can best be faced on a multinational basis. We acknowledge that the Treaty of Lisbon is a considered effort to respond to these challenges.

It falls to the Irish people to evaluate this effort and to form their own judgement as to whether or not the Treaty effectively addresses the issues facing Europe, its citizens and the world. In making this judgement we would urge all Christians to take the time and to make the effort to study and reflect prayerfully on the contents of the Treaty. We would particularly commend the Referendum Commission's explanatory leaflet on the Treaty and the National Forum on Europe's Summary Guide to the Treaty of Lisbon in this regard. This Treaty relates to the future of the Union and Ireland's role in it, and we would urge members of our churches to judge it on its merits and not for reasons unconnected with it.

Finally, we would urge the members of our churches to vote, which is their right and privilege. An aspect of this Treaty we would particularly commend to your attention is Article 2, section 30, which recognises the role that churches and religious associations can play under the new structures, and we welcome the fact that the Irish government has already provided for structured dialogue between government officials and the churches on issues of shared importance.

(Statement available from <http://www.ireland.anglican.org/index.php?do=news&newsid=2209>)

APPENDIX C

BISHOP OF CLOGHER RESPONDS TO CONSULTATIVE GROUP ON THE PAST

A response to the statement released by the Consultative Group on the Past issued by the Bishop of Clogher, the Rt Rev Dr Michael Jackson, Chairman of the Church of Ireland's Church in Society Committee and of the group appointed by the Standing Committee of the General Synod to make submissions to the Consultative Group on the Past.

The Church of Ireland, through a group appointed by the Standing Committee of the General Synod, had the privilege of making a presentation to the Consultative Group on the Past in November 2007. At the meeting where we made our presentation, a number of significant issues relating both to the work of the Consultative Group and the life of the Church of Ireland in contemporary Ireland were discussed and the Hard Gospel Project of the Church of Ireland was showcased.

Yesterday's keynote speech delivered by the co-chairperson of the Commission, Lord Eames, makes a number of significant points which seek to draw together the findings of the Commission and to draw out implications for a future society in Northern Ireland. Have no doubt that the content of the speech was carefully weighed by all members of the Commission ahead of its delivery.

It expresses a number of things which we have not heard before from a publicly appointed body of this sort. First, it asks serious and important questions of the IRA, loyalist paramilitaries and elements of the State in relation to responsibility for the deaths of innocent people in our community. Secondly, it asserts that the State sometimes acted illegally and calls upon the State to acknowledge both the totality and the complexity of its role over the past forty years. Thirdly, it draws attention to the failure, thus far to properly address the many health and welfare issues still endured by victims and survivors of The Troubles. Fourthly, it invites all citizens of Northern Ireland to address an issue which will definitely not go away, however painful and unpalatable, namely that as each day passes securing justice becomes less and less likely.

Undoubtedly the content of this speech will arouse strong and conflicting emotions among members of the Church of Ireland as well as among other members of the population. To some it will speak of outrage and betrayal, to others of something too little and too incomplete. Deep within it there lies the courage to ask questions which have not been asked before. Its full import will become clear only when the final report of the Commission is published. Its honesty of expression, based on the all-important process of careful listening, is to be welcomed.

(Statement available from <http://www.ireland.anglican.org/index.php?do=news&newsid=2210>)

APPENDIX D

RING THE CHANGES ON CLIMATE CHANGE - COUNTDOWN TO COPENHAGEN

Christian Aid, Eco-congregation, Friends of the Earth, Tearfund, Trócaire and Stop Climate Chaos invite you to take part in the Global Day of Action on Climate Change

From 1 – 12 December 2009 the UN Climate Change Conference will take place in Poznan, Poland. World leaders will meet to discuss action on climate change for the last time before the Copenhagen Climate Conference, which will seek to replace the Kyoto Protocol when it runs out in 2012. Over the next twelve months, governments around the world must receive a loud and clear message that bold decisions will have to be made in Denmark, in December 2009, if we are to avoid catastrophic climate change.

To coincide with this year's conference, there will be an international day of action on 6 December. Marches and demonstrations will be taking place across the world, including in the UK and Ireland, which will illustrate the demand for strong action to be taken by governments on climate change.

In Northern Ireland Christian Aid, Eco-congregation Ireland, Friends of the Earth, Tearfund and Trócaire have teamed up to organise "Ring the Changes on Climate Change – the Countdown to Copenhagen."

In the Republic the same event is being organised by the Stop Climate Chaos coalition. On 8 December last year, while world leaders met in Bali, dozens of Churches in Northern Ireland and the Republic rang their bells at 2pm as part of an event called "Sound the Alarm on Climate Change." At the same time, activists gathered in Belfast and Dublin. We want to build on the success of that event this year by including many more Churches and activists.

We have renamed our event "Ring the Changes" because we want to convey a positive message, one concerned with solutions to climate change – both scientific and political. This is a message of hope and possibility, not one of panic.

There are a couple of ways in which you can take part in this event:

1. Arrange for the bells to be rung in your local Churches and Cathedrals and organise events in your town or village around the bell-ringing
2. Incorporate the message of action on climate change into your Church services over that weekend

It only takes one or two Churches in each town or village to ring their bells in order to make an impact **and we would like your Church to join in**. All you have to do is arrange for the bells to be rung at 12 noon precisely. If your Church doesn't have bells, then why not get in contact with other Churches in your town that do?

Invite members of other Churches in your town to come to whatever event you're organising or organise an event in conjunction with them.

Church in Society – Report 2009

While the bells are ringing you can take a number of actions to let your local community know why this is happening. You could:

- Hold a carol service outside the Church and hand out flyers to passers-by;
- Host a prayer service to be held inside the Church;
- Organise a climate change prayer service in your Church hall for all the Churches in your area;
- Host a “Night of non-power” by turning off the lights and heating and have a candlelit service with your coats on. The service can focus on care for the environment and you could have a talk about the effects of climate change and how we can all make a difference;
- Get your youth workers to lead a session on climate change with the young people – we can provide free resources to help you do this.

Instead of, or in addition, to this, we would like the message of this year’s event to be included in Church services over the weekend of 6 and 7 December. We can provide you with the information they need to bring the message of action on climate change to your congregation.

We are encouraging every Church or group of Churches which takes part to contact their local press, using a template press release which we can provide to participating Churches.

In Belfast, we hope to have members of the clergy of all denominations, as well as a diverse range of activists and members of different congregations from across Northern Ireland. If nothing is happening in your town, then please come along to St Anne’s from 11:00am onwards.

In Dublin, Stop Climate Chaos are in the middle of organising events and will make announcements about these soon.

For a full range of resources to help you run your events please log onto www.foe.co.uk/ni after 31 October 2008.

If you are interested in joining in any aspect of the event then please contact Niall Bakewell at Friends of the Earth on 028 9089 7592 or email niall.bakewell@foe.co.uk.

(Statement available from <http://www.ireland.anglican.org/index.php?do=news&newsid=2358>)

APPENDIX E

**SOCIAL JUSTICE AND THEOLOGY (NI) WORKING GROUP MEETING WITH
NORTHERN IRELAND'S COMMISSION FOR VICTIMS AND SURVIVORS**

Members of the Church of Ireland's Social Justice and Theology Group, a sub-group of its Church in Society Committee, met with the four Commissioners for Victims and Survivors in Northern Ireland in Armagh. At the invitation of the Church in Society Committee's Chairperson, the Rt Rev Dr Michael Jackson, Bishop of Clogher, and instigated by the group's Chairman, the Rev Kenneth Hall, the meeting was hosted in June at Church House, Armagh by the Archbishop of Armagh and Primate of All Ireland, the Most Rev Alan Harper.

In an initial open and exploratory discussion, the four Commissioners – Patricia MacBride, Brendan McAllister, Bertha McDougall and Mike Nesbitt – outlined the nature of the Commission's work, its definition of victims and survivors and the potential for the engagement of Church groups in the process of enabling people to speak about their conflict-related experiences. For its part, members of the Church's Social Justice and Theology Group expressed the possibility for the Church to engage in a facilitative way between the Commission and victims and survivors within Church of Ireland congregations.

The Rt Rev Dr Michael Jackson welcomed the meeting and the Commissioners' willingness to engage with the Church of Ireland directly. He said, 'This was a fruitful and helpful encounter. The Church of Ireland hopes that the process being embarked upon by the Commission is a successful one especially in terms of ensuring that the voices of victims and survivors – not least those who have to date been 'silent' ones – are effectively heard'.

- The Meeting of the Social Justice & Theology Group with the four Commissioners for Victims and Survivors took place on 4 June 2008. In addition to those mentioned above, the following also attended: The Very Rev Patrick Rooke, Dean of Armagh and Chairman of the Church of Ireland's Hard Gospel Committee; Mrs Ethne Harkness, former Director of Law Reform (NI) and a member of the Church of Ireland's Standing Committee; and Mr Philip McKinley, Field Worker with the Hard Gospel Project.
- The Commission for Victims and Survivors published its Initial Work Programme in June 2008, which is downloadable from www.cvsni.org.

(Statement available from <http://www.ireland.anglican.org/index.php?do=news&newsid=2302>)

APPENDIX F

**SUBMISSION MADE BY THE EUROPEAN AFFAIRS WORKING GROUP TO AN
RI OIREACHTAS SUB-COMMITTEE, SET UP IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE
LISBON REFERENDUM**

Having representation on the National Forum on Europe and having made several submissions to the Forum in which we have expressed our commitment to the European project, we welcome the establishment of the Sub-committee on Ireland's Future in the European Union (EU).

We note with particular interest that the sub-committee's remit includes the consideration of measures to improve public understanding of the EU and its fundamental significance for Ireland's future, the importance of which we have always stressed within the Church of Ireland and in wider society.

While acknowledging that among members of the Irish electorate, who voted for rejection of the Lisbon Treaty, there were those whose criticisms were based on an accurate understanding of the text, there were others who clearly voted on the basis of misconceptions as to what the treaty actually proposed.

We therefore noted with interest a declaration by the communications commissioner, Ms Margot Wallstrom, as reported in the *Irish Times* of 23 October 2008, emphasising the need not only to provide citizens with accurate information, but also to address the matter of the manner in which their decisions are arrived at, and how misinformation should be countered.

We consider this initiative to be particularly important at a time when the future for the Irish economy holds many uncertainties. The fate of Iceland in recent weeks provides a clear demonstration of the hazards of being outside the Euro zone and EU membership. It would also appear that the Danes are reflecting on the cost of their EU opt-outs. The key importance of access to stable energy sources, combined with new uncertainty about Russian policies in the wake of the invasion of Georgia, mean that Ireland's continued active participation in EU policy-making is essential for the protection and security of our vulnerable economy. To cut ourselves off from full participation in the Union at this time seems, to say the least, very unwise.

For these reasons, at this particular time, and having in mind those many other considerations that lead us strongly to value what the European Union has achieved for the continent, we believe that any future discussion of the developments set out in the Lisbon Treaty must be based *on the facts of the case*, on a carefully articulated overview of the implications of rejecting the Treaty for Ireland's future in the Union and on what the possible cost of a policy of opt-outs might be.

(Statement available from <http://www.ireland.anglican.org/index.php?do=news&newsid=2495>)

APPENDIX G

THE CHURCH OF IRELAND AND THE IRISH LANGUAGE

1. Recent discussion in Northern Ireland concerning the place of the Irish language there has shown that there are those who hold the view that the nationalist community alone places a value on the language and wishes to promote its use.
2. While it is certainly the case that attachment to the language is more prevalent in that community and that it has, to some extent, been appropriated by elements within it, we would be failing in our duty if we were not to draw attention to the long tradition of support for the Irish language in the Church of Ireland.
3. We wish further to point out that the membership of the Church of Ireland spans both parts of the island of Ireland and indeed draws the majority of its membership from Northern Ireland. This membership reflects all shades of political opinion, with probably a majority being unionist in political sympathy. The Church of course takes no position on constitutional matters but upholds the existing constitutional order and rule of law in both parts of the island and in her services in Northern Ireland, offers prayers for Her Majesty and the Royal Family. We affirm our belief that an interest in the Irish language is entirely compatible with a unionist political outlook, and believe that links with Scottish Gaelic and Manx, and remoter connections with Welsh and Cornish, can be a means of fostering strong cultural and linguistic links with other parts of the United Kingdom. In this regard we note that languages form a part of the areas for cooperation under the remit of the British Irish Council.
4. The strong revival of interest in Irish that occurred in the late nineteenth century owed a great deal to Church of Ireland scholars, some working in Trinity College, Dublin, and others in the Royal Irish Academy. Furthermore, much of the credit for the founding of the non-political Gaelic League in 1893 is accorded to Dr Douglas Hyde, whose hopes for Irish were not only academic, but included a wish to see the language come into everyday use in Ireland. Indeed it was Hyde's ambition that the people of the entire island, whatever their religious or political traditions, would find a common bond in the language. In very recent years, Gaelic psalm-singers in the Scottish Free Church Presbyterian tradition have contributed to acts of worship in Dublin and on the Aran Islands, thus enabling local communities to appreciate the riches of that form of worship in a sister language of Irish.
5. In pursuit of Hyde's ideals, in 1914 a society was formed in the Church of Ireland to promote the use of the Irish language in the Church's worship. 'The Irish Guild of the Church' (Cumann Gaelach na hEaglaise) continues to hold regular services in Irish (with financial support from central Church funds). There is an Irish language edition of the *Book of Common Prayer* (2004) and a number of hymns in the Irish language (with translations) appear in the *Church Hymnal* (2000). A regular column in Irish appears in the *Church of Ireland Gazette*. We also recognise the fact that the Irish language has a

Church in Society – Report 2009

place in the public worship of other churches. Modern interest in ‘Celtic spirituality’ is widespread, far beyond Ireland, and it should be remembered that it was in the Irish language that such spirituality first found expression.

(Statement available from
http://www.ireland.anglican.org/cmsfiles/pdf/Information/Submissions/Ch_Soc/coirish.pdf)

APPENDIX H

**ECOLOGICAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL WORKING GROUP'S RESPONSE TO
THE CHURCH'S POLICY ON THE REDUCTION OF WASTE AND GLOBAL
WARMING IN A) SCHOOLS, B) CHURCHES AND C) OTHER CHURCH
PROPERTY**

The advisory work of the Church of Ireland in respect of the above is centralised in the Ecological and Environmental Working Group of the Church in Society Committee, which encourages parishes to adopt an active role in the stewardship of God's creation.

The promotion, therefore, of good ecological practice would include a parish carrying out all functions and activities in a way which minimises negative impact on the environment. The many and varied ways of implementation might include the monitoring and reduction of energy use, the use of energy from renewable sources (where possible), the setting of targets for reduced waste generation, the promotion of recycling, the minimization of land, water and air pollution, employing environmental considerations in the management of office administration, the general application of sustainability objectives in all aspects and activities, as well as the regular monitoring of these activities and an attempt to make ongoing improvements as opportunities arise.

An email bulletin entitled "Greening the Church" is received by a growing number of parishes and individuals. It contains articles on the many activities of good environmental practice adopted by churches throughout the island, and is thus an encouragement to many.

Environmental workshops are held at various locations, at which teaching sessions are complemented by the promotional work of bodies such as Friends of the Earth.

The Church of Ireland is a founder member of Eco-Congregation Ireland, and is actively involved in the promotion of environmental stewardship through this ecumenical body. Within the same, the Church of Ireland co-operates with the Roman Catholic, Methodist and Presbyterian churches, as well as the Society of Friends, and organisational and administrative membership is open to all Christian denominations.

Eco-Congregation Ireland is an internet initiative and therefore all resources are free and can be downloaded from the website: www.ecocongregationireland.org. The modules are designed to enable congregations to become self-sufficient and monitor their own progress. They cover many aspects of parish life, including worship.

The above general description of this aspect of the Church's work can clearly be seen to include the major topics of reduction of waste and global warming, and while much of the Environmental Panel's work is with the parishes, as well as with the individual households which make up the parish families, one would expect the implementation of parish policy to cover a parish's schools, churches, and indeed all its buildings.

(Statement available from <http://www.ireland.anglican.org/index.php?do=news&newsid=2496>)

Church in Society – Report 2009