

GENERAL SYNOD 2009

BILL No 1 – TO AMEND THE BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER BY INCLUDING THEREIN THE DECLARATION

Proposed by the Very Reverend Patrick Rooke

EMBARGOED UNTIL DELIVERY

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Your Grace, Members of Synod.

Bill No 1 is about placing a Declaration passed as a Resolution of the Synod of this Church in 1999 into a full bill in order to ensure its inclusion in the Book of Common Prayer. This Declaration, placed before the 39 Articles of Religion would then provide context for the Articles, which were written in another century, using language of another century, for the Church of another century.

I would draw Synod's attention to this paragraph from the Declaration:-

These historic formularies are a definition of the faith as proclaimed by the Church of Ireland, and thus form an important part of the inheritance through which this Church has been formed in its faith and witness to this day. The formularies that have been passed on are part of a living tradition that today must face new challenges and grasp fresh opportunities.

If that is not a statement for the Church of Ireland in the twenty-first century, then I don't know what is!

Indeed the more I read through this Declaration, the more convinced I am that it provides the ideal introduction to the 39 Articles in the Prayer Book – as it already does for the Articles on the Church of Ireland Website. The compilers of it had certainly taken great care to get it right.

For instance:-

It states that significant differences with other denominations remain yet indicates that progress has been made.

It emphasises tradition yet points to significant changes in the language we now use to express our beliefs and concerns.

It acknowledges hurt caused yet affirms a new determination to reach out towards other churches.

The words '*temporal gradient*' come to mind - for it is true, with time things do change, and there have been many changes since the Articles were first included in the Prayer Book. But this is not to say that we should no longer be proud of our historic formularies – on the contrary, as the Declaration reminds us, they have made us what we are. The real challenge for the Church today, is 'in a spirit of humility and love' to help people understand from where we have come and for what we stand.

Members of Synod, this Declaration of 1999 enables all who read it to understand the 39 Articles of Religion as more than a legacy of