

GENERAL SYNOD 2009

**BILL NO 4
TO DISBAND THE COMMISSION ON CHURCH BUILDINGS**

Proposed by the Very Reverend L D A Forrest, Diocese of Ferns

EMBARGOED UNTIL DELIVERY

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

This Bill to disband the Commission of Church Buildings is at the request of the Representative Church Body and follows a motion passed at last year's General Synod.

The historical background to the Commission is probably well known to older members of the Synod. The Commission was established in 1986 by statute of the General Synod. The following year the churches in the United Dioceses of Meath and Kildare were visited by the Commission and their report, which was very controversial at the time, led to major changes in the number of church buildings remaining in use. In 1988 the United Dioceses of Cork, Cloyne and Ross were reviewed with further controversial consequences.

The Commissioners made grants available over the subsequent years to assist with meeting the cost of either demolishing or making safe redundant church buildings.

Some might argue that the radical nature of those two reviews discouraged other dioceses from inviting in the commissioners. Whether or not that would be the case, the whole situation with regard to the future of church buildings has now altered very considerably with the new legislation relating to all listed buildings.

Under new government legislation relating to heritage and the maintenance and upkeep of listed buildings what happened in those early days of the Commission on Church Buildings cannot now happen. The days of removing roofs and capping the walls of redundant churches are gone. We face new challenges in disposing of redundant churches and those regulations which led to the setting up of the Commission on Church Buildings

are now out of date. The Representative Body and the Property Committee now largely deal with these issues.

Furthermore the reason for the disbanding of the Commission is clearly indicated by the fact that it has not been asked to exercise its powers to review the number of churches required for public worship in any diocese since 1988. Furthermore it seems quite clear even were it to remain in existence that it would not be asked to act again under the terms in which it was set up.

The present small grant-making process of the Commission, it is proposed, will be carried out by the RCB through the Property Committee and the unexpended allocation will be transferred back to the RCB to meet any such future grant applications.

To this effect I now formally propose Bill No.4.