

Standing Committee – Report 2010

APPENDIX F

CENTRAL COMMUNICATIONS BOARD

MEMBERSHIP

Rt Rev TR Williams	(House of Bishops) November 2008
Dr V Jones	(Standing Committee)
Ven REB White	(Honorary Secretary)
Most Rev RL Clarke	(Broadcasting Committee)
Rev EV Cremin	(Chair – Broadcasting Committee)
Dr K Milne	(Chair – Literature Committee)
Dr R Refaüssé	(Hon Secretary – Literature Committee)
Mr DC Reardon	(Church House Senior Management)
Ven RG Hoey	(Resigned as Chairman of the Internet Committee – January 2010)
<i>Vacant</i>	(Internet Committee)
Mrs Jane Leighton	(Representative Body)
<i>Vacant</i>	(Representative Body)
<i>Vacant</i>	(Co-option for gender & regional balance)
<i>Vacant</i>	(Co-option for gender & regional balance)
Head of Synod Services & Communications	(<i>ex officio</i>)
Press Officer	(<i>in attendance</i>)

OBJECTIVES 2010-11

- To review the role of, and need for, the Internet Committee.
- To draw up a proposal to provide for the editorial needs of the Church of Ireland website.
- To devise a proposal for a communications model to be developed during the period 2011-2015 with a focus on multi-platform use and providing a means of addressing younger members of the Church.
- To promote the need to re-instate media training.

Terms of Reference

Initiate policy in relation to the communications strategy of the Church.

Co-ordinate the work of the sub-committees.

Report annually to the General Synod.

Financial Situation

Owing to the difficult financial situation facing the Church, Communication budgets were drastically cut by the Board as a contribution towards cost saving, but with an inevitable reduction in certain services including media training, media monitoring, web development and promotional work. The press service has been prioritised to ensure that the Church's message continues to be articulated through external media channels.

Publishing

One of the objectives set in 2009 was to maintain and develop the Church of Ireland Publishing (CIP) imprint. A certain volume of publishing was maintained, and the

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Royalties Fund was asked to assist the Allocations Committee to support a variety of communications, liturgical, publishing and educational activities, for which the Standing Committee gave its approval to the Board's recommendation in 2009. Publishing, at least from the CIP perspective, was as vibrant as ever in 2009.

Website

Plans to review the Church's website were deferred until the financial situation would support fresh development but this remains a priority for the Committee and the CCB.

Broadcasting

In terms of Broadcasting, a considerable degree of energy has been directed to developing working relationships with RTE and BBC religious teams. Rev Dr Bert Tosh of BBC NI and Mr Roger Childs, Head of Religious Programming, have both engaged actively with the Board facilitating planning and programme development. Broadcasters, no less than the Church, are facing financial cutbacks and the Board commends the work of the Broadcasting Committee in maintaining active links with the industry at this time. UTV is experiencing considerable difficulty with a planned reduction in its locally sourced Public Service Broadcasting content, within the overall development plan for the ITV network. This will particularly limit the potential for religious programming which is only one of a number of categories included under this heading, which includes current affairs, drama and sport.

The Bishop of Limerick, as the new Chairman of the CCB, initiated a discussion about developing the Church's communication policy away from information provision and towards a storytelling approach. A further strand in this debate about the future communications needs of the Church explores how the Church should prepare for the next digital generation – that younger age group for whom the website and blog are only the beginning. The rapid pace of innovation in communications does not always make it easy to know which platforms and technologies make sense as a good investment for organisations such as the Church. Feedback from the commercial communications industry indicates that mistakes can be very expensive, and the Church needs to bear this in mind. On the other hand, the Church also needs to understand that much modern communication isn't 'organisational' at all but rather, is driven by individuals using various new platforms to explore for themselves. Although culturally the Church of Ireland tends to think of such things in a centralised way, whether provided by Church House Dublin, or by the diocese, in fact, the digital revolution may really be about developing a greater acceptance of 'unofficial' communication flow.

Meanwhile, the CCB is discussing whether the information function of the Church website is the most effective use of this application and is considering whether the site would make a more effective contribution to the witness and mission of the Church if it focused more on news and human interest and articulated more effectively the work of the Church under the three-fold focus of Growth, Unity and Service?

Internet Committee

The Internet Committee of the Church was originally set up to develop the technical infrastructure for a central website for the Church. In recent years, the Committee has achieved its original brief, and has handed over the technical support to the IT staff of Church House. The CCB thanks all of those who served on the Internet Committee

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throughout its years of activity and who contributed to this project. The Church website currently contains more than 4000 pages and is a major source of information. At its meeting in February, the CCB received the resignation of the Chairman of the Internet Committee, Ven RG Hoey. Archdeacon Hoey had acted as Chairman of this Committee since its inception in May 1970 and the Board extended its sincere thanks to him for the dedication that he showed to this particular project which has been such a significant landmark in the story of Church communications. The Board then held a significant debate on the future needs of the website. A decision was taken to ask the Standing Committee to disband the Internet Committee, with a view to putting in place a new proposal in respect of the editorial management and development of the website. The Board hopes to deliver this proposal in 2010/11, in the hope that resources will then be available to support this function, which the Board identifies as a priority for the Church. As a result of this review, there is no report from the Internet Committee for 2010.

LITERATURE COMMITTEE

MEMBERSHIP

Dr K Milne (Chairman)
Professor R Gillespie
Rev PK McDowell
Ven RB Rountree
Rev B Treacy OP
Ms C 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 2010 the Committee will seek to

- Promote church-related publication within and beyond the Church of Ireland.
- Manage Church of Ireland Publishing in the new economic climate.
- Evaluate applications for support from the General Synod Royalties Fund.

ACTION PLAN 2010

Implement a formal promotion and marketing, sales and distribution, management structure.

Promote the use of electronic publishing as well as traditionally printed material to maximise the use of resources.

Work towards the publication of a Church of Ireland parish handbook, and work with the Liturgical Advisory Committee on the publication of a booklet on liturgical space and guidelines for re-ordering of churches, subject to a motion for the approval of the General Synod, is in progress.

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 CIP website (cip.ireland.anglican.org) was maintained.

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The following titles were published in 2009:-

Mrs Gillian Kingston, *Working out the covenant. A shared spiritual heritage.*

Mr George Leckey, *Reader ministry in the Church of Ireland.*

Rev Brian Mayne (ed.), *Sunday and weekday readings 2010.*

Dr Kenneth Milne (ed.) *Journal of the General Synod 2008.*

Very Rev Gordon Wynne & Mr Lachlan Cameron, *Pastoral care in the digITal world.*

PUBLICATIONS OFFICER

The Publications Officer continued to work with the designer, Mr Bill Bolger.

In addition to preparing the CIP titles for publication she prepared the document *Recession* for the General Synod website, and worked with the Press Officer on the launch and promotion of *Reader ministry in the Church of Ireland.*

GENERAL SYNOD ROYALTIES FUND

The Committee recommended the following grants:-

€2,000 to the Liturgical Advisory Committee to maintain and update the worship section of the Church of Ireland website.

€2,500 to meet the production costs of *Reader ministry in the Church of Ireland.*

€2,790 to print *Working out the Covenant.*

€3,000 to subvent the publication, by Four Courts Press, of a critical edition of the letters of Primate Boulter, edited by Dr Patrick McNally & Dr Kenneth Milne.

In addition the Standing Committee requested the payment of a grant of £2000 to print the final report of the Hard Gospel project, and, in light of the particular financial difficulties facing the Church of Ireland, the Allocations Committee requested a grant of €75,000 to assist in maintaining funding for communications, liturgy, and book purchases for the RCB Library.

£2,700 to the Liturgical Advisory Committee for the production costs of the final Year A of *Singing Psalms* to enable the completion of the project.

€4,000 to the APCK to produce two Church of Ireland information pamphlets.

€2,000 to the Church of Ireland College of Education towards the total publication costs of €10,000 for a bi-centenary history of the Kildare Place Society in which the College has its historic roots.

BROADCASTING COMMITTEE

Membership

Ms R Buchanan

Most Rev RL Clarke

Rev EV Cremin (*Chairperson*)

Rev TW Gordon

Mr R Childs

Rev Dr R Tosh

Head of Communications (*ex officio*)

Press Officer (*ex officio*)

Objectives 2010

Maintain Church of Ireland contribution to consultations and policy review by broadcasters and governments.

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Contribute to communications training in Theological Institute in respect of broadcast training and make similar inputs where possible.

Maintain links with religious broadcasters in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland and support the broadcast of religious services.

Participate in church media networks and develop the Church's understanding of the role of digital technologies and new media.

Broadcast Training

In response to the financial crisis the Budget Sub-Committee asked the Broadcasting Committee to cancel plans for Broadcast Training and only a small contingency amount has been retained in the budget for 2010. The committee regrets this, but understands the reasons behind the request. The committee places high importance on the need for good quality and effective communication, and looks forward to reinstating this important aspect of its work for the benefit of parochial and wider ministry in future years.

RTE Religious Programming

Despite financial cutbacks at RTE, Mr Roger Childs, the Head of Religious Programming, produced a new series in the autumn of 2009 entitled '*Does God hate...?*' The '*Would You Believe?*' series returned with eight strong and thought provoking programmes in the autumn and veteran presenter Mr Gay Byrne hosted a series of conversations with well-known people entitled '*The Meaning of Life*'. *Joe Duffy's Spirit Level* returned as the magazine format religious programme on the fourth Sunday of each month, moving to a 5.15pm slot on Sunday afternoon from January 2010 when more listeners may be able to enjoy the programme. Among the Church of Ireland broadcast highlights this year was the 150th anniversary of Powerscourt, which was shared ecumenically and the special broadcast from St Canice's Cathedral, Kilkenny which marked the 400th anniversary of the city. The financial cutbacks present particular challenges to the scheduling of regular Sunday religious services in both television and in radio. However, the Rev Tom Gordon, together with the other denominational representatives working with the RTE staff, continue to maintain this important aspect of programming Sunday by Sunday. The additional broadcasts on religious festivals which were introduced in recent years have also been maintained. This has been achieved by working within curtailed geographical areas and the use of a mix of live and pre-recorded services which maximises the use of studios and production time. In most cases, parishes which have been invited to broadcast now undertake two broadcasts from the same venue. The Rev Tom Gordon and the RTE staff recognise the additional commitment which this involves and wish to record their deep appreciation of the support given by parishes in the present circumstances.

BBC Radio Ulster

The Broadcasting Committee welcomed the Rev Dr Bert Tosh from BBC NI as a new member this year. The BBC hosted a meeting of the Broadcast Committee in November, which was attended by Mr Mark Adair, Head of Corporate Affairs, the Rev Dr Bert Tosh and Mr Martin O'Brien, the producer of *Sunday Sequence*. Dr Tosh was able to explain to the Committee how contributors to *Thought for the Day* are allocated and noted that this was not done on the basis of proportionality to the numerical strength of the various denominations in NI. He noted that letters of complaint printed in the *Church of Ireland*

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Gazette and the *Belfast Telegraph* had underestimated the number of Church of Ireland participants. A very positive development has been the decision of the BBC to relocate its production centre for its Sunday morning religion and ethics programmes to Belfast. The Committee wishes BBC NI well in developing this new area of work on a UK-wide basis.

UTV

UTV suffered a significant setback to its public service programming in 2009, when cutbacks to the PSB services were announced. This severely limits the potential for developing religious programming at UTV and also reduces the likely volume of locally produced current affairs material. The Committee has identified pressure on the public service component of broadcasting in the UK in recent reports. This trend is not necessarily in the public interest and the Committee again draws this fact to the attention of the General Synod as a matter of concern.

Churches Media Council

The Rev Eileen Cremin attended the conference *Impact – Media shaping culture shaping faith* run by the Churches' Media Council in June 2009. The key focus of the conference was on faith and values and explored the question of whether the media shape public life, and the effect that the media has on religion. The conference looked at public service broadcasting; at the impact of gaming on society (one in three UK households bought a new games console in 2008); and the role of social networking sites. These things compete with traditional religious broadcasting. There was considerable debate around the question of whether religious organisations should get involved in the new forms of communication.

The Churches Media Council AGM considered proposals to adopt a new set of restructuring objectives culminating in the launch of a new web based initiative called 'The MediaNet' which offers a support and information network for people working in and involved in broadcasting. The annual conferences will continue to take place. The Council also asked the member bodies to consider raising the level of contributions. The Church of Ireland's financial position precluded raising the contribution at this time so the committee will continue to contribute at its existing level.

Westminster Media Forum

The Westminster Media Forum hosted a seminar that considered children's use of media and provided a fascinating insight into the very different way that children and young people use the various communications technologies for entertainment, play, exploring the knowledge world and to talk with each other. The seminar highlighted many of the moral challenges thrown up by new media and many of the speakers encouraged active engagement in these issues. The Westminster Media Forum Parliamentary Reception in 2009 focused on issues of public accountability and media responsibility again putting the need for a moral and ethical approach to public affairs to the fore of the agenda.

Technological innovation is reaching a stage where even quite young children are comfortable in the non-linear, multi-platform electronic world. The multi-platform concept means that children often use more than one communications technology at a time. The research presented at the WMF seminar indicated that most children by age 12 will have access to television, radio, print, mobile telephony, land-line telephony,

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websites, broadband-based services including e-mail, social networking sites, commercial sites and online gaming. Gaming consoles are also extensively used. Much of this content is commercially oriented rather than public service in nature, although there is a strong resistance among the user-consumer to pay for content unless absolutely unavoidable.

One of the themes emerging strongly in the seminar was that of accessibility on the basis of income with a concern that lower income families will be excluded from many products. This happens in respect of other aspects of life also, but the seminar drew attention to conflicts between the concept of an open democratic society that espouses ideals of equality and accessibility and the reality of a universal communications medium that is increasingly driven by commercial factors. Perhaps these concerns are overplayed in a year when the banking crisis has raised concerns over the capacity of a free market to deliver outcomes that favour the common good, but it is certainly an issue that should concern Christian social thinkers.

The need to teach children to analyse and evaluate on-line content was also raised and this theme of developing media literacy also featured in a consultation by Ofcom on its Revised Disability Action Plan.

A more extensive report of this seminar is contained in the Broadcasting Committee's report of Committee News in January 2010 on the Church's main website. Go to www.ireland.anglican.org then follow links for News – Committee News.

Ofcom – Revised Disability Action Plan Consultation

The Committee responded to the Ofcom consultation on its Revised Disability Action Plan. The consultation process was particularly useful, with specific opportunities provided to discuss the plan and to give face to face feedback with other stakeholders. The Rev Canon William Murphy from the Disability Working Group, who also runs the Church's Mission to the Deaf in Northern Ireland, assisted the Committee on this occasion.

In addition to encouraging Ofcom to promote education about new technologies among disabled and older people, the Committee also highlighted issues to do with representation of disabled and older people in media content and in media employment – both of which feature significant under-representation of these groups. This is important because representation of people and issues in media content tends to influence public perceptions of reality, and contribute to the marginalisation of these groups in real life.

A practical point made by the Committee related to the design of infrastructure, service connections and products related to the new technologies. These are often miniaturised, fiddly, lacking an obvious or simple means of analysing faults, and service backup is often perceived to be inadequate to producing a fast, simple solution. Broadband services are prone to failure or 'dropping away'. They do not provide the consistent reliable platform that land-line telephony currently provides for older and disabled people, who increasingly use the 'emergency button' linked to the telephone (and other services developed around the same concept) to enable them to continue living in their own homes. The Committee encouraged Ofcom to consider the importance of these services and the need for a robust, consistent platform to underpin their reliability when taking regulatory decisions about the discontinuation of older technologies. Members of Synod

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are asked to maintain their vigilance in respect of these issues and to add their voices to public debate when possible.

A further issue for both disabled and older people relates to the cost of new technologies. As more services migrate to on-line platforms, so it is necessary to know how to use them (media literacy) and to be able to afford to maintain an up-to-date communications infrastructure in the home – or for there to be public provision of such. In a period when income gaps are widening and recent economic crisis has had a negative impact on future pensions, we need to be particularly aware that disabled and elderly people need an active voice to lobby for their rights to access communications and to participate and contribute to society despite the fact that they are likely to be among the lower income groups in that society.