

Appendix J

**Hard Gospel Implementation Group
Report to General Synod 2011**

Members

Mr Geoffrey Perrin
Rev Andrew Forster
Mrs Ethne Harkness
The Rt Rev Trevor Williams (Chair)

Executive Summary

The Working Group prioritised three areas of work: gender-based participation in church life; youth participation in church life; consideration of a request for a guide to pastoral ministry for gay and lesbian members of the Church. The Working Group made proposals to the Standing Committee of the General Synod.

Report

Gender-based participation in church life

The Hard Gospel Implementation Group expresses its thanks to Canon Doris Clements for the research she presented on gender-based participation in the Church of Ireland. Canon Clements made a detailed presentation to the 2010 General Synod but time pressures had significantly curtailed the debate on such an important topic. The Group has reflected on Canon Clement's research during the year and made a presentation to the Standing Committee in November 2010, highlighting the main points of concern.

1. The representation of women decreases significantly from parish bodies to diocesan bodies to central committee bodies.
2. The representation of women is lowest on committees addressing finance and employment issues and Boards of Nomination.

The Group returned with proposals to the Standing Committee in March 2011 and these are presented as a resolution at the end of the Standing Committee Report.

Youth

Similar concern was raised about the sense of disconnect between the youth ministry of the Church, which has seen a dynamic resurgence in recent years, and the follow-through into participation in the wider structures of the Church. It was felt that more under-45 representatives could be drawn from this section of church membership at General Synod and diocesan structures of the Church would also benefit from encouraging younger people to join in. Consideration is being given to how young people might attend General Synod and how a view from the youth within the Church might be brought to the notice of General Synod for

Standing Committee – Report 2011

discussion. Above all, part of handing down our tradition of faith requires being open to and engaged with our young people and extending a welcome to join with us.

The Group returned with proposals to the Standing Committee in March 2011 and these are presented as a resolution at the end of the Standing Committee Report.

Pastoral ministry for gay and lesbian members of the Church

In addition, the Group responded to a request from the Honorary Secretaries to give consideration to a suggestion from the Rev Mervyn Kingston from Changing Attitude Ireland to publish a guide to pastoral provision for gay and lesbian people in the Church of Ireland and certain other materials to assist parishes and families in understanding the issues facing gay and lesbian Christians. The Group met with Mr Kingston and other representatives of Changing Attitude Ireland in February 2011 and will have a further meeting to consider the materials presented following the General Synod. The Group will return suggestions to the Standing Committee in due course.