

Church of Ireland Council for Mission – Report 2011  
**THE CHURCH OF IRELAND COUNCIL FOR MISSION**  
**Report to the General Synod 2011**

**Membership (January 2011)**

The Rt Rev Harold Miller	House of Bishops
Very Rev Stephen Lowry	Synod
Rev Bobbie Moore	Synod (resigned 2010)
Mrs Felix Blennerhassett	Synod
Vacant	Synod
Rev Paul Hoey	Synod
Vacant	Synod
Mrs Margaret Crawford	Mothers' Union
Vacant	CIYD
Vacant	Bishops Appeal
Mr Thomas Wilson	Methodist Church
Vacant	AMS
Mr John Doherty	AMS
Mr Geoffrey Hamilton	AMS
Ms Linda Chambers	AMS
Captain Colin Taylor	AMS
Vacant	Cashel
Vacant	Cashel alternate
Mr Mark Dunwoody	Cork
Rev Eileen Cremin	Cork alternate
Mr Colin Ferguson	Down
Dr Trevor Buchanan	Down alternate
Rev Peter Galbraith	Connor
Miss Diane Rhodes	Connor alternate
Vacant	Clogher
Rev Robert Kingston	Clogher alternate
Vacant	Kilmore
Vacant	Kilmore alternate
Vacant	Meath
Mrs Daphne Wright	Meath alternate
Very Rev Maurice Sirr	Limerick
Ven Wayne Carney	Limerick alternate
Vacant	Tuam
Vacant	Tuam alternate
Rev Canon Derek Creighton	Derry
Rev Ken McLaughlin	Derry alternate

## Church of Ireland Council for Mission – Report 2011

Rev Paul McAdam	Armagh
Mr Tom Stephenson	Armagh alternate
Rev Ken Gibson	Dublin
Rev Cliff Jeffers	Dublin alternate
Miss Mavis Gibbons	Co-opted
Rev Canon David Brown	Co-opted

Alternates attend when the principal representative is unable to.

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

#### **OBJECTIVES for 2011:**

1. To seek the permission of the Synod to re-shape the committee in such a way as to enable it to fulfil its aims in a more efficient way.
2. To build on the initially encouraging response to *Back to Church Sunday* and to enable more parishes to make this most of this venture as a missional opportunity.

#### **Membership**

The Council, mindful of the potential reorganization of committee structures within the Church of Ireland, chose not to seek reappointments where membership places fall vacant.

It was also generally felt that a smaller, more streamlined body could serve the purposes of the Church more effectively and a motion to this end is being presented to the Synod.

#### **Joint Mission Group**

A new Joint Mission Group with the Methodist Church in Ireland has been established to promote shared missional education and communication.

The Council is represented by Rev Paul Hoey, Capt Colin Taylor and Mr Geoffrey Hamilton.

In its first two meetings the group has focused on:

1. shared promotion of the *Back to Church Sunday* initiative;
2. anticipating the interchangeability of ministry as a reality. How might this be seen as a creative missional experiment?
3. shared missional leadership training (ordained and lay). The group is looking at what resources are available and could be recommended and how this information could best be made available.

#### **Synod Mission Event**

The 2010 Mission Event was held on Saturday 8 May at CORE Church. The Fields of Life Director, Rev Trevor Stevenson, gave a presentation on the work of this agency and an interview about its vision and strategy. The integral approach taken to mission and the well-thought through strategy impressed many who attended.

## Church of Ireland Council for Mission – Report 2011

The Mission Event in 2011 is a seminar on *Making the Most of Back to Church Sunday*. It will be held in the Armagh City Hotel. Mr Michael Harvey, co-ordinator of *Back to Church Sunday* in UK and Ireland, will be the main speaker.

### **Mission Strategy and the Church of Ireland**

The Council recognizes the work of the mission agencies to provide vital, ongoing resources and support to parishes in the outworking of their involvement in the mission of God. It is concerned that parishes should make the most of the resources they allocate by supporting the official mission agencies of the Church. It encourages each parish in the Church of Ireland to be strategic, prayerful and generous in support for the agencies even in these times of financial stringency.

The Council wishes to commend the *Discover* course produced by CMSI as a tool to help parishes develop a missional mindset. For more information see [www.discovermission.org](http://www.discovermission.org)

### **Mission Statistics**

The Council's plans to pilot the gathering and analysis of already available statistics for the purposes of mission were strengthened by a proposal being put forward by Mr Andrew McNeile concerning statistics prepared by Tear Fund after market research about church attendance and involvement in the Republic and Northern Ireland.

These highlighted that in 2002 both jurisdictions in Ireland had the highest levels of church attendance anywhere in Europe. But they also showed a serious decline in weekly attendance. For instance, in the Republic of Ireland, attendance had declined in the two years from 2002 to 2004 from 55% to 45% and there is general expectation that subsequent years could contain information of an even more drastic decline following publication of the Ryan Report.

In a presentation to the Council Andrew drew out some implications:

- the pastoral model of congregational chaplain has all but gone;
- rapid disintegration in participation is a challenge to all churches;
- rapid disintegration in the urban priestly structures of the dominant denomination that is highly sacramentally dependant creates further missiological pressures;
- connection between national and religious identity continues to be strong;
- new initiatives are likely to be welcomed;
- further work needs to be done to gather statistics to fill out the picture.

But already it is clear that there is a massive mission opportunity and challenge in all parts of Ireland.

The Council concurs with a number of recommendations being made concerning:

- the need for further research with cultural analysis of the missiological and sociological context for mission in Ireland;

## Church of Ireland Council for Mission – Report 2011

the establishing of a balanced cross-denominational group operating under a Church of Ireland banner;

the production of something akin to the English *Mission Shaped Church* Report with analysis and pointers towards missional communities in a mixed or blended economy of church.

The Council's own pilot project to collect statistics has commenced with three dioceses, Derry, Kilmore and Meath. A sample of the form to be filled in is attached as an appendix to this report. We are grateful to the Bishops and Diocesan Secretaries concerned for their willingness to be involved.

As soon as the figures are available the process of analysis will be carried out using an electronic tool. The process will also be reviewed with the Diocesan Secretaries.

### **Mission Council Agenda**

In order to ensure a balanced agenda the Council has embarked on a process of study and engagement on the following issues over the next two years:

1. rediscovering the mission of God: theological reflection on Biblical principles in world mission;
2. relief, development evangelism and church growth: presenting God's call to holistic mission.

### **AMS**

The Association of Mission Societies (AMS) is an informal forum for representatives of those mission agencies which have an ongoing relationship with the Church of Ireland. It meets regularly to discuss issues of mutual concern and to inform and be informed by the wider Church on important mission concerns and initiatives. A key part of this is AMS's representation on the Council.

It is currently pursuing a number of areas of activity:

- a. it is producing a series of articles on the work of agencies within AMS for publication in the *Church of Ireland Gazette*;
- b. it is engaging in an ongoing discussion with the Archbishop of Armagh on the nature of mission in Ireland today and the needs of the Church of Ireland;
- c. it is building an involvement in the life of the Church of Ireland Theological Institute by regular participation in worship, leading information events and helping in appropriate ways to resource the curriculum. The Institute has also appointed a staff and a student representative to attend annual AMS meetings with the intention of promoting a two-way listening process.

## Church of Ireland Council for Mission – Report 2011

### **Mission Networks**

The Council is represented on the Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (CTBI) mission forum, the Churches' Network for Mission. This is a valuable forum for the sharing of missional experience and resources. Information is available on the website [www.globalmissionsnetwork.info/](http://www.globalmissionsnetwork.info/).

Much of the focus over 2010 was on the Edinburgh World Mission Conference, celebrating the centenary of the first ecumenical world mission conference. It was a much smaller event than the original nevertheless the conference was significant in its impact particularly through the provision of some excellent study materials and new resources.

For these see [www.edinburgh2010.org/en/resources.html](http://www.edinburgh2010.org/en/resources.html)

### **Back to Church Sunday**

Back to Church Sunday is an initiative that has been making an impact in Great Britain since 2004 in just one English diocese. Although a few Church of Ireland churches tapped into this in an informal way it was only in 2010 that Back to Church Sunday was officially promoted in Ireland, north and south. The initial response was encouraging with over 40 parishes signed up for participation. Approximately 50/60 Methodist churches took part.

Research shows that, overall, there has been a positive impact. One medium sized parish recorded a 25/30% increase in attendance. Another small church's Sunday congregation hit 100 for the first time in very many years, using as its slogan "Come as you are". Another parish invited back parents of children baptized in recent years and has seen a healthy response. Several months on one parish records that 15 – 20 of those who 'came back' have stayed.

The Council is recommending that the Church should build on this encouraging beginning. It has established a small group, jointly with the Methodist Home Mission Department, to develop some resources particularly appropriate for churches in Ireland and to run a number of promotional events in different parts of the country.

### **Mission News and Prayer**

An important part of each meeting is the time spent finding out what mission agencies, dioceses and individuals are doing in terms of mission and in praying for these initiatives.

In particular, the Council welcomed the appointments of Mr Ronnie Briggs as CMSI Director of Mission and Rev Trevor Johnston as Crosslinks Ireland Team Leader.

**APPENDIX A**

**RESOLUTION TO BE PROPOSED TO THE GENERAL SYNOD**

1. That the constitution of the Church of Ireland Council for Mission be amended to read as follows:

**Remit**

- to stimulate within the Church of Ireland a sense of the priority and urgency of mission;
- to advocate the complementary nature of mission globally and locally;
- To maintain close relationships with other bodies concerned with mission in particular with Diocesan Boards of Mission, the Association of Mission Societies and mission and overseas development agencies;
- to promote effective models of mission and evangelism;
- to encourage reflection on the theology of mission;
- to allocate funds from St Patrick's Memorial Fund and other funds at its disposal.

**Membership, elected triennially, should consist of:**

- one member nominated by the House of Bishops, elected triennially;
- six members nominated by General Synod, elected triennially;
- four members nominated (on a rotation basis) from within the Association of Mission Societies;
- One member nominated by the Covenant partners in the Methodist Church in Ireland
- one member nominated from among the students of the Church of Ireland Theological Institute;
- up to four members co-opted.

To address the issue of communication with dioceses the Council will host an annual network conference, with the purpose of listening and sharing and stimulating debate:

1. That each parish in the Church of Ireland should be encouraged to make the most of the missional opportunity afforded by Back to Church Sunday;
2. That the Council should continue with the important work of compiling the statistics that are already available in the dioceses of the Church of Ireland and, at an appropriate stage, widen out the pilot presently being conducted to include all the dioceses;
3. That endorsement be given to CMSI in its promotion of the Discover course and that parishes be encouraged to use it with as many different groups as possible.

Church of Ireland Council for Mission – Report 2011

APPENDIX B



Diocese:

Parish:

Church:

**Occasions**

<b>Baptisms</b>	<i>Up to 1 year old</i>	<i>1 to 12 years</i>	<i>13 and over</i>
<i>Insert number...</i>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
<b>Confirmations</b>	<i>Up to 12 years</i>	<i>13-18 years</i>	<i>18 and over</i>
<i>Insert numbers</i>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
<b>Marriages:</b>	<input type="text"/>		
<b>Funerals:</b>	<input type="text"/>		
<b>Festivals</b>	<i>Communicants</i>	<i>Total attending worship</i>	
<b>Easter:</b>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	
<b>Christmas:</b>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	

**Attendances in 1<sup>st</sup> Four Sundays of October**

Sunday	All	Adults	Under 16	
<i>1<sup>st</sup> 4 Sundays:</i>	<i>All at worship on Sunday</i>	<i>Adults attending weekday services &amp; worship events</i>	<i>Number at worship services and/or Sunday activities</i>	<i>Additional no. at weekday services &amp; worship activities</i>
<input type="text"/> Oct 20 <input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
<input type="text"/> Oct 20 <input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
<input type="text"/> Oct 20 <input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
<input type="text"/> Oct 20 <input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

**Type of Parish:**

I would describe this individual church as... (circle/underline all that apply)

Rural      Village-based      Town-based      Urban      Other

**This year's Mission Question:**

Which small group programme or materials (if any) have you used in your parish in the last two years? e.g. Alpha, Church 21, etc..

<b>Avg Sunday Attendance</b>	adults	Young (under 16)
<i>Insert numbers</i>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

**General Vestry List:**

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Name in Block Capitals: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Please return to your local diocesan office by Jan 31st 2011 PLEASE SEE NOTES OVERLEAF

Church of Ireland Council for Mission – Report 2011



NOTES:

A separate form should be completed for each church in a group or union of parishes. This enables analysis of the strengths of different sized worshipping communities

- 1 Baptisms are to be categorised into three age groups.
- 2 Confirmations may only happen once every few years. Please include here people from this church who were confirmed here, or took part in a confirmation service elsewhere. Do not include people from other parishes who were confirmed in this church. Please record those confirmed into the three age groups.
- 3 Number of couples married in this church. This does not include Blessings following Civil Ceremonies.
- 4 Total number of Funeral Services associated with this church community, including Cremations, burials, whether or not the church building was used.
- 5 Easter Services include any Saturday Vigil and all services on Easter Day. Add also total number of Communicants present
- 6 Christmas Services for this survey include services from 4 pm on Christmas Eve and all Christmas Day
- 7 You were asked to identify numbers of children and adults attending all services during the first four weeks of October. If you have a regular midweek service, or a daily service please count the total number of attendances (the same person may be counted more than once) and include the figure here.  
Please indicate with an asterisk and make a note if any of these attendance figures were unusual for any reason (Harvest etc.)
- 8 Each year the survey asks a once-only question, the answer to which is unlikely to change in your parish from year to year. Annual returns will build up a picture of the qualities of life in local churches which aid or hinder mission and growth. This year's question is to do with your locality. Please indicate which term(s) best describe your church's setting.
- 9 Eliminating Harvest Sunday and Easter Sunday, and Christmas Day if it falls on a Sunday, please estimate the numbers of young people (aged under 16) and adults on an average Sunday, by adding the attendances over the year and dividing by 50. This figure may change e.g. if you have two services a month the figure will be 24; or if Christmas Day is on a Sunday and there are otherwise 52 Sundays the figure will be 49.
- 10 Please return the numbers of people on your General Vestry List following its most recent revision.



Church of Ireland Council for Mission – Report 2011

**APPENDIX C**

MISSIONARY SOCIETY CONTRIBUTIONS FROM THE CHURCH OF IRELAND 2010

Where there are blanks no figure was returned

Society	Donations £ Stg	Donations Euro
Bible Society (NI)	12029	0