

## **GENERAL SYNOD 2011**

### **BILL No 2**

**Proposed by the Venerable Philip Patterson, Diocese of Down**

**EMBARGOED UNTIL DELIVERY**

**CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY**

Your grace, this bill has been drafted in the light of our covenant relationship with the Methodist Church in Ireland. The Covenant Council has sought to draft protocols to regulate Covenant Partnerships. These Partnerships may take many forms such as shared buildings, shared congregations, joint chaplaincies in higher and further education or in prisons or hospitals. The difficulty from the point of view of the Church of Ireland is that our Canons do not make provision for any such arrangements. This bill will allow after due process regulations to be put in place for the governing of Covenant partnerships.

The standing Committee has on a number of occasions noted the need for 'Ecumenical Canons' to address this situation. Eventually they requested the Legislation Committee to draft an enabling Canon to which regulations could be attached to provide for such situations. The legislation committee drafted such a Canon that it reported to Standing Committee and the Standing Committee made a number of useful suggestions. This led to a joint meeting of the Legislation Committee and the Bills Committee that produced this final draft that was in turn reported to Standing Committee and is now before you for your consideration.

There are a number of things you should note about this Bill:

Although the context was our covenant relationship with the Methodists, the bill has been drafted in a wider context of Ecumenical partnerships. This so that if we end up with a similar covenant relationship with another Church we do not have to introduce a new canon, but can deal with the situation by making regulations.

This canon is an enabling canon. It does not regulate the various permutations of ecumenical partnerships that are possible, but rather provides that the Standing Committee may make such regulations as are necessary for the governing of these partnerships. Obviously they will be different depending on the nature of the relationship and interdependence in each specific class of partnership. Any such regulations will of course be reported to General synod.

This canon and regulations made under its authority are for ecumenical partnerships alone and they never have the ability to alter the doctrine, rites, formularies or rubrics of the Church of Ireland. This is an important safeguard.

Your Grace this is a simple straightforward Bill that enables us to honour our covenant obligations to our covenant partners and will allow progress to be made in building up that relationship in all sorts of areas. I commend this Bill for the consideration of the Synod