

THE COVENANT COUNCIL

The Church of Ireland and the Methodist Church in Ireland

REPORT OF THE COVENANT COUNCIL TO THE CHURCHES 2013

MEMBERSHIP

Church of Ireland

The Most Rev Dr Richard Clarke, Archbishop of Armagh (Co-Chair)

Ms Elva Byrne

Very Rev Nigel Dunne

Rev Dr Maurice Elliott

Rev Barry Forde (Secretary)

Rev Canon Virginia Kennerley

Rev Dr Peter Thompson

My Cyril McElhinney (resigned)

Methodist

Rev Winston Graham (Co-Chair)

Rev Donald Ker

Rev Andrew Dougherty

Rev Janet Unsworth

Rev Louise Donald

Ms Gillian Kingston

Dr Fergus O'Ferrall

Mr Nigel Beattie

Membership

The Covenant Council is delighted that the Most Rev Dr Richard Clarke, co-Chair, was translated to the role of Archbishop of Armagh and Primate of All Ireland. The Archbishop has been a wise steer of the Council, particularly as our Churches move towards interchangeability, and there are high hopes that this will come to pass under his Primacy. The Council is also grateful to Rev Andrew Dougherty for his tenure as Secretary, and to Rev Barry Forde for taking up the role. It is with regret that Council accepted the resignation of Mr Cyril McElhinney and wishes to place on record its thanks and appreciation for all his efforts and insights during his membership. Mr Philip Benson (CITI), and Mr Rowan Zeelie (Edgehill) have acted as Student Observers on Council as we further links between the Institute and Edgehill.

10th Anniversary of the Signing of the Covenant

In 2012 celebrations of the 10th anniversary of the signing of the Covenant took place at the Methodist Conference in Enniskillen, and in Dublin and Cork. The role of the Covenant has also been promoted at Diocesan Synods in Meath and Kildare and also in Connor. Council would encourage all Diocesan Synods to place the work and opportunities under the Covenant on their agenda. A short video clip highlighting the work of the Covenant can be accessed online at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a3F7z7xRz4g>.

Local Covenant Partnerships and Projects

There are a number of partnerships and projects that continue to grow. At Queen's University, Belfast a Local Covenant Partnership was signed by the Bishop of Connor and the District Superintendent, the Church of the Resurrection was recognised by both denominations as a 'Covenant Church', and a new Covenant Management Group was put into place to work on behalf of both churches in further unity on campus.

The Church of the Good Shepherd and Primacy in Bangor continue to further the work of the Covenant, whilst in Maghaberry work is underway to agree a Local Covenant Partnership. The Council would like to encourage all churches to think creatively about how the Covenant might be put into effect locally.

Interchangeability of Ministry

Further to the Agreed Principles, presented to and received by General Synod in 2010, from the Methodist and Church of Ireland Working Groups on the Interchangeability of Ministry, and the Second Interim Statement in 2011, in particular Appendix B, the Covenant Council submits the following:

1. That the Methodist Conference in 2012 has acted in accordance with these statements, in agreeing on an Order of Service for the Installation of the President that recognizes the role of the President as 'Episcopal Minister'. This is an articulation, in language, of the role of the President within the Methodist Church and while the language is new, the concept is not. The intentionality of the service, its language, tone and purpose, is at one and the same time, unique to the Methodist Church, and of huge assistance in furthering the work of the Covenant.
2. The Church of Ireland, in working towards the agreed latest date of 2014, now proposes an Ecumenical Canon to Synod in order that we might achieve the agreed will of Synod on interchangeability. It is our hope that through the Bill proposed and the adoption of such an Ecumenical Canon we will recognize the personal, communal and collegial episcopate in the polity of the Methodist Church in Ireland and in particular the office and function of President, his or her predecessors and successors, within the Methodist Church as being that of 'Episcopal Minister'. In addition we work to provide for the presence of Bishops and Presidents at the respective consecration and installation of Bishops and Presidents, and to allow for those ordained and in full connexion with the Methodist Church in Ireland to carry out ministry within the Church of Ireland on such occasions as this is required. This may include sharing in liturgical life and practice, or holding an office within the Church of Ireland.
3. The Canon proposed is submitted on the basis of the agreed and received will at Synod at each stage of presenting Principles and Statements on Interchangeability. It is the hope of Council that the principles it seeks to elucidate are fully endorsed and will come into effect by 2014.

Motions to propose at General Synod

The Covenant Council also propose the following motions for the consideration of the General Synod this year.

‘That the following be elected as Church of Ireland representatives on the Covenant Council for the coming year:

The Most Rev Dr Richard Clarke

Ms Elva Byrne

Very Rev Nigel Dunne

Rev Dr Maurice Elliott

Rev Barry Forde

Rev Canon Ginnie Kennerley

Rev Dr Peter Thompson’

‘That General Synod continues to encourage congregations to celebrate the Covenant relationship with neighbouring Methodist congregations on or around September 26 each year.’

