GENERAL SYNOD 2013

Bill No 7

Proposed by the Venerable Robin Bantry-White, Archdeacon of Cork,

EMBARGOED UNTIL DELIVERY

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

This Bill is in some ways the opposite of Bill no.3, where we celebrate and utilise the benefits of electronic media to improve communication with Synod members. This Bill, on the other hand, seeks to restrict a too-great dependence on electronic media in the keeping of parochial records.

Electronic methods have been simply wonderful for all sorts of parochial work and many parishes are run far more efficiently because of them. However, the Library and Archives Committee of the Representative Body, of which I am a member, has drawn the attention of Standing Committee to the fact that some parishes and some Diocesan bodies, are keeping records of their proceedings only in Electronic format. If I may give an example from our Diocese: A Rural Dean could not access the list of Registered Vestrypersons, since it was only kept in electronic form, on the laptop of an elderly parishioner, who was at the time ill. But it goes further than this. It is a rule in health and hospitals that if it is not written down, it did not happen. We are advised that the same applies in many aspect of, say, the work of a Select Vestry. In the case for instance, of the letting of contracts, or of employment or where some person might consider themselves disadvantaged by the actions of the Select Vestry, and a matter came to a court of law, then minutes kept only in electronic form might not be accepted. It is very easy to print out sheets which are bound in a folder and are signed or initialled, as we do for Synod and Standing Committee. This bill, if passed , will require Diocesan Synods and the Chapter of St Patrick's to make regulations requiring this to be done, not only in relation to the work of select vestries, but also in respect of diocesan bodies and committees, including boards of nomination. This is a prudent and wise course of action, which the Bill, if passed, will require to be done.