

GENERAL SYNOD 2013

Board for Social Theology in Action Motion 5

Proposed by the Revd Adrian Dorrian, Diocese of Connor

EMBARGOED UNTIL DELIVERY

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Board for Social Theology in Action Motion 5

Your Graces, members of Synod, the Board for Social Theology in Action exists as the result of a certain degree of experimentation at central committee level in the General Synod. Attempting to draw together three related but nonetheless distinct bodies (Board for Social Action NI, Board of Social Responsibility RI and the Church in Society Committee), while anticipating wider changes to central committees that didn't materialise and pioneering an interview selection process for the Board has proven to be a learning experience.

These processes brought into being a Board filled with expertise, but in almost every case with people who were already heavily committed across the Church of Ireland on other committees, both permanent and transitory. In seconding this motion, his Grace the Archbishop of Dublin will address how these revised terms of reference will better equip the Board to shape its membership according to its needs.

I wish to address two factors from the proposed terms of reference which I hope will demonstrate their being fit for purpose in order to move the Board forward positively in the years to come, that is the proposed new name and the renewed desire to be proactive as well as reactive in our work.

The Board's current name, Board for Social Theology in Action, grew out of the review process I mentioned earlier. In one sense the existing name is fit for purpose insofar as it addresses the crossover inherent to the work of a board such as ours – praxis alongside reflection, bringing together theology and action. However, experience has proven that the current name also has its problems. It is almost invariably shortened in print and Broadcast Media to Board for Social Theology. It is also fair to say that insofar as the name is fit for purpose within the Church, it takes some explaining to those beyond the Church. This is a Board that finds itself engaging with the media and I can speak of experience with at least half a dozen local radio producers whose response to the name of the board is 'and what does that mean'.

The board's proposed new title, and tagline, offers a simpler name and alongside the name an answer to the oft asked question 'what does that mean?'. We will be, it is hoped, the Church **and** Society Commission (of the Church of Ireland) and we are about putting faith into action. This also does away with the unfortunate positioning of the words 'in' and 'action'; as we have struggled over the past couple of years to be just as active as we might have liked, we have been all too aware as a Board of not saying 'in' and 'action' too quickly.

We hope, that in addition to giving the Board a name that is more properly fit for purpose we will be able to put together a membership more fit for purpose, in terms of breadth of expertise and in terms of geographic representation, which the Archbishop of Dublin will also address.

That being the case, the Board - or we hope, the Commission – should be better equipped to address the whole breadth of its remit. It is not the case that Board has been inactive

over the past two years, far from it, but the reality has been that much of the Board's engagement with society has been in a reactive capacity, in response to news items or consultations. I am delighted that later at this Synod we will be able to distribute a DVD resource called 'Go and do likewise' which showcases Ireland wide examples of parishes engaging with their communities but we want this to be one a string of resources the Board can produce for the Church. Discussion papers and other resource material are planned for the year to come but this will only be achievable if the Board's membership is broad, its function clearly defined and its operation is effective. By allowing some minor changes in governance, it is intended that the capacity of the Board be improved that it may become what was originally intended: a resource serving the Church both proactive and reactive terms.

Therefore, your Graces, I commend this motion to the House and ask that the General Synod approves the terms of reference for the Church and Society Commission.