

## **GENERAL SYNOD 2013**

### **Motion relating to the Terms of Reference for the Church in Society Commission**

**Seconded by The Rt Revd Michael Jackson, Archbishop of Dublin & Glendalough**

**EMBARGOED UNTIL DELIVERY**

**CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY**

The Church in Society Commission will succeed The Board for Social Theology in Action. In so doing it will continue both the work of that Board and the work which needs to be revitalized from The Church in Society Committee. Members of Synod will remember that some years back the Christian Unity Committee restyled itself The Commission for Unity and Dialogue. In so doing it gave the Church of Ireland a freedom to be creative and to think and act in ways which hitherto had not been possible in regard to areas of Ecumenical Encounter, Anglican Communion Affairs and Inter Faith Dialogue. Our hope would now be that this spirit will be brought into the response which the Church of Ireland makes in areas of church and society right across the island of Ireland.

The Board for Social Theology in Action fell between two stools of the Church's making. The first was the root and branch review of all our Committees; the second was the advertisement and competition, so to speak, for Committee membership. What we have learned is that it is essential to have a realistic geographical spread of people with commitment, expertise and capacity to equip others to enjoy and to share their discipleship of Jesus Christ with others in a spirit of mission. For this reason we wish both to honour the proven commitment of those who were selected for membership and

also to widen our range of membership through co-option. As things stand, this is particularly important in regard to people from within the Republic of Ireland. For this reason as much as for any other the facility of co-option will be greatly welcomed.

We are at a difficult place and in difficult times. In Northern Ireland power sharing has slid into the default position of being power splitting; in the Republic of Ireland the impact of compacted austerity is relentless and irresponsibilities in the past are being visited on the current generation and will carry forward well into the next. As always, it is the poor who suffer first and suffer most. Too often it is our wont in the Church of Ireland to seek to preserve and to keep to ourselves what should be shared with others. The mission of God in the Ireland of today calls on all people of faith and of goodwill to do the very opposite. Our discipleship gives us the chance through this newly-configured Church in Society Commission to open up and to go out and say: Yes, rather than to close down and say: No.

Connecting the church and the society is no easy work. We need to be pro-active enough to be effective and humble enough to learn what are the real needs. As so often, we ought indeed to find that we are given more by those whom we begin by thinking need anything from us. This truly is theology in action.