

GENERAL SYNOD 2014

CHURCH OF IRELAND YOUTH DEPARTMENT

Seconded by Mr Damian Shorten – Diocese of Limerick

EMBARGOED UNTIL DELIVERY

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

The youth ministry which is offered in our Parishes and Dioceses is an essential component of the whole ministry of the Church of God. Through it, the future leaders of our Church are nurtured and formed as they are supported in their Christian discipleship, and are also encouraged to play their part in the life of the Church NOW, sharing their insights and experiences as full members of Christ's Body. I feel, as I'm sure many of us do, it to be a privilege to have the opportunity to be involved in ensuring this ministry to young people, though this privilege comes with huge responsibilities.

I will attempt to articulate two of these responsibilities to members of Synod here today:

The first responsibility we have is that we ensure that in all our youth ministry, our priority is the presentation and passing on of the Person and Gospel of Jesus Christ and that this is at the fore of all that we do. While ensuring our young people have fun and friendship, if this is not in the context of or is allowed to come before or take the place of the Christian dimension of our activities, then we have are guilty of not being faithful to our calling as Christians leaders. This takes on a pragmatic importance in our modern society. The Church, including our youth ministries, is competing for time and attention with so much in our young people's lives. If we just try to be about providing 'entertainment' and a social experience, while good and important, we will fail; we just cannot compete. But we can offer so much more! We can offer the treasure, the pearl, of presenting to our young people the person of Jesus and what it means to know, love, and serve Him.

However, this leads to our second responsibility, one which each of us personally and individually has, and something that came out strongly at the recent Mission Conference in Dromantine, which I hope and pray bodes well for the future of our Church. In ministry, "we can't share what we don't have", so we can only authentically present Jesus if we ourselves are committed to following and encountering him. This is why if we are to be faithful to our mission of reaching young people with the Faith and nurturing them in it, we need to commit ourselves to abiding in Christ, the true Vine, without whom we can do *nothing!*

To conclude, the main responsibilities will be to ensure that we who are involved in this ministry are ourselves fully committed and equipped to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ and secondly that we continue to provide opportunities to ensure that this is an essential component of the youth ministry taking place in our Parishes & Diocese throughout our Church. CIYD and its staff are a support and resource for the whole church as it fulfils these responsibilities.

As I conclude here today, it is my prayer that every member of the Church, laity and clergy, in our parishes and dioceses, may rise to the responsibilities and challenge and play their part in our Church's ministry, not just to young people, but all people.

It gives me great pleasure to formally second the Report of the Church of Ireland Youth Department as presented in the book of reports.