

GENERAL SYNOD 2014

Resolution re the 200th Anniversary of CMSI

Seconded by Bishop Patrick Rooke, Bishop of Tuam

EMBARGOED UNTIL DELIVERY

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Your Grace, Members of Synod.

As Chairman of the Bishops' Appeal Committee, I am delighted to second this resolution. CMSIreland is one of the main, if not the major missionary/aid agency Bishops' Appeal works with in distributing your gifts for the wider work of the Church in other lands, and not least in terms of education, health and rural development. As stated on the website: '*CMSI works in relationship with our Global Partners and the Church in Ireland to see lives transformed.*' This organisation has been transforming lives since 1814.

But which lives are being transformed?

Is it those who benefit from the aid or missionary endeavors of CMSI? The answer is certainly yes - lives in those nine countries where CMSIreland is currently active have undoubtedly been transformed.

But so too have the lives of ordinary Church of Ireland people through their involvement here at home, in the work of CMSIreland. Fundamentally, CMSI is a Christian Mission organisation that exists to help God's people engage in God's mission. Along with its partner agencies, CMSI enables the local church here to see and be involved in the big picture. Like its sister organisations, (one of which celebrates its 300th Anniversary later this year), CMSI helps us to be church as it is meant to be – an outward looking body, embracing all people everywhere.

This is how CMSI itself defines this side of its role:

To help God's people rediscover mission at the heart of Church life - To provide opportunities for mission-focused discipleship -
To release people into God's mission – globally and locally -
To encourage and resource local Christians in living out the Good News of Jesus -
To support our partners as they make practical responses to the needs of the communities in which they live and -

To Pioneer new opportunities for mission.

In my own diocese we have partnered with CMSI through Bishops' Appeal in supporting the Diocese of Kajiado in Kenya in its work of creating educational facilities and opportunities for massai girls at the Oloosyian School. We have raised a small amount of money from our diocese but far more importantly we have, in the process, discovered a sense of cohesiveness in looking beyond ourselves and our own needs – and that for me is mission.

What an important player CMSI has been and is and we are wrong if we simply see it as those people who go overseas to do good works in our name. As CMSI needs the Church of Ireland to provide funds and personnel and prayer, so too we need CMSI to keep our eyes focused on the real mission of the Church at home and in those far off places that most of us will never see for ourselves.

And for 200 years it has been doing just that. The original threefold focus in 1814 was to abolish the slave trade, social reform at home and world evangelization. These have now become: Supporting the Global Church, Resourcing the Church in Ireland and Mobilising Individuals.

Sometimes in Church life we are not as good as we should be at celebrating what we've got. Many of the new Churches in Ireland look enviously at the buildings and structures we have and yet for many of us we see them as burdens of a past age that we slavishly maintain without really appreciating the rich heritage and potential that is ours. CMSI is part of that heritage, which developed from humble beginnings 200 years ago to become an agency with well-established links and 19 global partners across Africa and Asia.

I look forward to being present in Armagh in a week's time to join in in the formal bicentenary celebrations. An opportunity indeed to give thanks for those who have served with CMSI, many of whom dedicated their lives to its work. An opportunity too to pray God's continued blessing on the present leadership and those who will take its work forward.

It gives me great pleasure to second the resolution.

“That, the Synod recognises the work of mission to be a call to the whole people of God at all levels of His Church and recognises the contribution that the Church Mission Society Ireland has made to that mission since its formation in 1814 as the Hibernian Church Missionary Society, through the sending of mission personnel, the resourcing of the Church in Ireland and through prayer and solidarity with Christians across the world.

We rejoice with the Church Mission Society Ireland in its bicentenary and welcome the special celebration events, those which have taken place and those being planned, including the Changing Times Conference and Celebration in Armagh from 15th – 16th May.

We recognise the ongoing influence that relationships forged through the Church Mission Society Ireland continue to have on the Church of Ireland, and commend the society’s work to the wider Church.”