

Motion 6 (Allocations) Seconders Speech.

The Right Reverend Trevor Williams, Bishop of Limerick and Killaloe

The RCB exists to serve and support the Church, primarily by looking after the Church's central finance and its property.

Property

The Constitution of the Church of Ireland states that Church property should be vested in the Representative Body to ensure that it is safeguarded for the future use and benefit of the parish and the Church in general. Select Vestries are required under the Constitution, to keep churches and other parochial buildings in a proper state of repair and maintenance. I know of one parish where a fine Rectory now lies derelict, because simple repairs were not attended to in a timely fashion.

This duty of care is imperative in an increasingly regulated world. We are responsible for listed and architecturally and historically significant buildings and artefacts. We are also accountable for the health and safety of all people who use Church premises, and have to comply with planning and other relevant legislation in each political jurisdiction. It is critical that Churches and other parochial buildings are maintained within these regulatory standards, and that significant works are carried out effectively and in compliance with the regulations. That is why all works of significance must be authorised by the Diocese and the RCB. I emphasise this because there have been instances recently where attempts to by-pass civic and Church regulation in an effort supposedly to save time and money, have resulted in parishes incurring what may turn out to be crippling additional cost. Select Vestry members, as trustees, do not need this sort of concern or anxiety.

New Property Database

On p14 you will see that a very significant project has just commenced. This is to establish a comprehensive computerised database for all Church property. Its a mammoth task, but the resulting Property database will be an invaluable resource making available at the touch of a button all information relating to Church property throughout the Church of Ireland. Up to now records have been kept up to date manually. We have decided to stop feeding the dinosaur, and allow a computer take the grunt out of the graft.

RCB available for advice

To exercise our responsibilities relating to Church property parishes need good information. So I draw your attention to the Property Report on pages 37 to 49 of the Book of Reports. This is a useful resource for all members of General Synod, but particularly if you are a member of Diocesan Council, Select Vestry and have anything to do with Church property. There is accurate

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and reliable information on the Local Property Tax and Water Charges in the Republic and how they relate to Church property. There is full information on the Grants and Funds available for our care of buildings in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland and how to apply for them, to name just a few of the topics covered. But also to remind you the RCB provides general guidance on the web site and through regular circulars on important and current issues and is available to give advice where needed on specific issues before project plans are drawn up. The RCB is happy also to give advice even where properties currently are not vested in the central Church of Ireland trust body.

Trusts and Bequests

Church of Ireland members of former years have blessed us with a great legacy of trusts and bequests to be used for the benefit of parishes and the Church in general. On page 188 of the Book of Reports we see that such concern for the future of the Church is carried on into this generation – in the past year **740 thousand euro** and **685,thousand pounds** was entrusted to the RCB for the benefit of parishes. The total value of parochial and diocesan financial trusts at the 2103 year end was just under **250 million euro**.

The RCB is our Church's trustee body, ensuring the resources from the past are used today for the Church's essential purpose. Make your parishes aware of the continuing tradition of endowing and supporting future Church generations.

Purpose

What is the purpose of the Church in 2014? What is God calling us to be, as the Church of Ireland, now and in the future?

We face unique opportunities as a Church today. We have Good News to proclaim, a loving community to which we belong, a commitment to serve others in the name of Jesus Christ, working for a world of justice, peace and reconciliation. God invites us to be signpost and first fruits of his coming Kingdom, the world as God wants it to be. In our life and witness we are called to demonstrate how the profound transformation which this world desperately needs, is possible through the power of God in Jesus Christ, working through the Holy Spirit. This is the purpose of the Church.

The Church of Ireland has much to offer. We have a valuable legacy from the past. In our membership we have a diversity of traditions, gifts, and expressions of Christian faith, which working together in love, can function effectively as the body of Christ. We don't just exist for ourselves, we are ecumenically committed, we engage with and serve our local communities, we make the Christian faith real in people's lives, through the treasures of our liturgy that enable relevant and engaging worship with real depth. And we share our life as members of the 85 million

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brothers and sisters in the Anglican Communion in 165 countries around the globe. What amazing resources we have been entrusted with.

Together with the Anglican Communion we have described five marks of Mission

1. To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom
2. To teach, baptise and nurture new believers
3. To respond to human need by loving service
4. To seek to transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and to pursue peace and reconciliation
5. To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth -

Why mention all this in the context of the report of the Representative Church body? Because its the job of the RCB to ensure that the resources of the Church are used for the Church's purpose. The Church does not exist for itself. Success is not Survival of the Church. The Representative Church Body exists to enable the Church be the Church, the instrument of God's loving purposes in the world. All the work of the RB is carried out in the context of the Ministry and Mission of the Church.

The Future

We are at an exciting time in the Church of Ireland. In the central committees I get a sense that people are discovering that the Survival of the Church of Ireland is not enough. We need to think, plan and mould the structures of our Church in a shape that will be fit for purpose, empowering our Church in Mission. As General Synod we need to articulate an inspiring and motivating vision for the future of our Church.

Members of RCB

In common with so many Church members, the central Church finances have faced very difficult times. I want to pay tribute to members of the RCB who in some cases devote huge amounts of their time and skills in service of the Church. Thanks to them we have done remarkably well facing enormous challenges.

Church House Staff

I have been hugely impressed by the staff in Church House. They are not only loyal and committed, they are hard working, and with the cut backs of recent years in order to save costs, they have risen to the challenge at considerable personal cost. I want to acknowledge that. In Church House we have great staff serving Jesus Christ in their work for his Church. Thank you.

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At the top of page 22 of the RCB report and on the yellow Motions paper, you will see the allocations of expenditure for 2014. These allocations from General funds are for the maintenance of the ministry, Pension costs, Training of Ordinands, and the ongoing work of this General Synod. I have pleasure in seconding Motion 6 to approve these allocations.

(1,169 words)