

Bill No 1**Explanatory Memorandum**

The General Synod 2015 will be asked to consider a number of proposals relating to the project, initiated at the request of the archbishops and bishops, to develop policies and procedures supporting the maintenance of relationships based on Christian principles throughout the Church of Ireland.

This Bill seeks to have a Dignity in Church Life Charter formally adopted by the Church of Ireland. The Dignity Charter, which is set out in the Schedule to the Bill, seeks to articulate the Church's commitment to harmonious relationships in Church life with reference to the Christian principles underpinning those relationships.

It is intended that the Charter be adopted and published throughout the Church.

The Bill also seeks to empower the Representative Body to develop policies, regulations and rules to give effect to the Charter and to submit same to the Standing Committee for approval. The General Synod would have the authority to annul or amend any such policy, regulation or rule at its next session following.

Policies and procedures under the Charter are currently being developed in an initial three areas: dignity in Church life and the prevention of bullying and harassment; grievances of members of the clergy; and the management of long-term illness of members of the clergy.

Drafts of these policies and procedures have been circulated to all Synod members for information and, subject to the Bill being passed, are intended to be finalised following General Synod. In addition, Bills Nos 2 and 3 following relate to the area of long-term clergy illness and may be considered as complementary to the policy being developed in that area.

It is anticipated that this project will result in a variety of professional and financial resource requirements into the future and these will be considered as appropriate alongside the development of the relevant policies and procedures.

The intention is that the first of these policies and procedures would start to come into effect from January 2016, depending on resource requirements and other practicalities.

THE BISHOP OF DERRY AND RAPHOE
MR KEVIN BOWERS

(At the Request of the Standing Committee and the Representative Church Body)

BILL

To Adopt the Dignity in Church Life Charter

WHEREAS it is desirable to adopt a Charter that promotes harmonious relationships across all the structures of the Church of Ireland;

BE IT ENACTED by the Archbishops and Bishops and the Clergy and Laity of the Church of Ireland, in General Synod assembled in Armagh in the year 2015, and by the authority of the same, as follows:-

1. In this Statute, the “Dignity in Church Life Charter” means the Charter contained in the Schedule to this Bill and the “Standing Committee” means the Standing Committee of the General Synod.
2. The Church of Ireland hereby adopts the Dignity in Church Life Charter.
3. The Representative Church Body may develop policies, regulations and rules to give effect to the Charter and may, from time to time, propose amendments to the same. Such policies regulations and rules, together with any amendments to the same, shall be submitted to the Standing Committee for approval.
4. Any policies, regulations, rules or amendments to the same approved by Standing Committee shall be presented to the General Synod on the first day of its session next after the approval of such policy, regulation, rule or amendment, and it shall be lawful for the General Synod by resolution to annul or amend the same without prejudice to the validity of anything done in the meantime in pursuance thereof.

Schedule

Church of Ireland

Dignity in Church Life Charter

Church membership implies a commitment to relationship. The gospel invites people into relationship with God and relationship with all who are part of the life of the Church. The pattern of Christian discipleship points to how Christian people are expected to behave in their relationships with one another – church life should be underpinned by respect, valuing everyone’s human dignity before God and the pursuit of reconciliation when conflict arises.

In this context and in the knowledge that relationships in church life, as in all life, can be imperfect, the Church of Ireland is committed to:

- Building and supporting harmonious relationships in church life across all its structures
- Upholding the right of all equally to be treated with dignity and respect
- Seeking reconciliation where there is disagreement or conflict.

The Church of Ireland is committed to upholding this Charter. All individuals participating in the life of the Church have a duty under the Constitution of the Church of Ireland to uphold this Charter together with such policies, regulations and rules as may be adopted to uphold its principles. All who hold office in the Church have a specific responsibility to promote its provisions.