

GENERAL SYNOD 2015

Bill No 1

Proposed by The Right Revd Ken Good, Bishop of Derry & Raphoe

EMBARGOED UNTIL DELIVERY

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Archbishop,

Bill No 1 is about improving our way of relating to one another in the Church of Ireland by establishing transparent and workable processes of good practice.

The Bill has two parts:

The first is the adoption by the Church of Ireland of a charter entitled, *'Dignity in Church Life'*.

This charter, which can be found in the Schedule, (on page 7 of the *Bills and Explanatory Memoranda*) is quite a brief and succinct statement about Christian discipleship. It is aspirational in nature, expressing the need for harmonious relationships and dignified behavior in church life.

But it also acknowledges that disagreements can occur and that conflict can arise. When such difficulties become apparent, it states that attempts at reconciliation must be actively pursued. The Charter commits all of us who

participate in church life to uphold these principles, not least those who hold office in the Church.

The second part of the Bill is essentially enabling legislation, in that it authorizes the RCB to come up with detailed policies, regulations and rules in the outworking of the Charter. Any such proposals must be approved by the Standing Committee before they can be acted upon.

The white A5 booklet, '*Dignity in Church Life – Draft Policies*' which members of General Synod will have received, is not, actually, part of this Bill, but is merely illustrative of the kind of follow-up which might flow from the passing of the Bill.

This *draft* booklet has been distributed so that members of General Synod may have a realistic idea of the likely policies and procedures relating to:
bullying or harassment
grievances of members of the clergy and
dealing with long-term illness of members of the clergy.

Rather than this Synod having to consider this material in detail at this Synod, it will first be the task of the RCB to continue with its preliminary work. I know that the Chief Officer would, in the coming weeks, welcome from Synod Members any suggestions and observations, in writing, as the booklet is still a work-in-progress.

It hardly needs to be added, Archbishop, that General Synod, at any future session, will continue to hold the power to amend or annul any of the

detailed policies, regulations or rules which the RCB may devise and which the Standing Committee may approve. This body will always have that authority and control.

I think it will be evident that much careful work has already been done by many people to get this work to this stage. I would want to express thanks to the Chief Officer, to the project team, to the HR consultant, to the reference group and to others who have given of their time and expertise in making all this possible. I can assure members of Synod that every effort has been made to be thorough, careful and professional in preparing for this Bill and for the positive Christian relationships which it seeks to foster and enable.

The seconder of the Bill, Mr Kevin Bowers, has considerable professional expertise and experience in the field of Human Resources and he will comment on the preparatory work that has been done.

Archbishop, I have pleasure in proposing that Bill No 1 be given a Second Reading.