

# **THE GENERAL SYNOD OF THE CHURCH OF IRELAND 2015**

## **BILL NO 3**

### **PROPOSER'S SPEECH**

**The Bishop of Derry and Raphoe  
The Right Rev Ken Good**

**Thursday 7 May**

Bill Number 3 refers to the provisions laid down by General Synod in respect of the Severance Fund.

The Severance Fund was established by General Synod in 2003 with the objective of accumulating funds that could be applied, under rules to be formulated by the RCB, when a member of the clergy resigned from ministry on a permanent basis. Gaining access to the Fund was to follow a process of mediation through Provincial Mediation Panels.

The Provincial Mediation Panels, however, were disbanded in 2012, as they were not being utilised.

Under the current provisions, the Fund may be accessed when a bishop or archbishop makes a recommendation and a member of the clergy resigns from ministry permanently and irretrievably. The Fund has been very useful in a small number of occasions in facilitating its original purpose.

The resources of the Fund were derived from a diocesan levy initiated in 2004, and collected at a level of 1% of Minimum Approved Stipend for four years. No levy for the Severance Fund has been collected since 2007, and none is proposed for this year or for 2016. The balance on the Fund stands at in excess of the equivalent of £350,000 or €500,000.

What is being proposed in Bill Number 3 that the Severance Fund should also be capable of being accessed where a member of the clergy has to vacate their office as a result of ill health, without the

need to resign from ministry. This would link to the provisions of Bill Number 2, and to Bill Number 1, which was put before Synod to enable, amongst other provisions, that a Church-wide policy on long-term clergy illness be formulated and implemented.

This Bill would allow that the Fund could be accessed, as is already the case, under rules to be set by the RCB. The suggestion is that these might include using the Fund to initiate disability insurance for clergy, to provide a safety net in a situation when a member of the clergy could not continue exercising their ministry because of medical incapacity. Any access to the Fund in these circumstances would be constructed and regulated to complement other provision available through clergy pension arrangements and from the state in each jurisdiction.

Where a diocese might already have such provision, any such provision would be taken into account and suitable and appropriate arrangements made to incorporate and account for it .

I believe that utilising the Fund for this purpose is a caring, practical and Christian application of the resource. It will help to enable the support of clergy in illness. And it will enable, more easily and more compassionately, ministry in a parish be continued in a way that has the capacity to be less uncertain and less disruptive.

It is proposed that, in its wider application, the Fund be re-named the Clergy and Ministry Protection Fund.

Archbishop, I have pleasure in proposing that Bill No 2 be given a Second Reading.