

Commission on Ministry –

Centre of Community Prayer, Retreat, Hospitality and Study.

The decade of centenaries is being marked by various events in church and state. In 2020, the Church of Ireland marks more than a centenary when the 150th anniversary of the Disestablishment of the Church of Ireland will take place. Doubtless there will be special events to mark this occasion but perhaps something more than an event is needed to ensure that the church has not simply ticked off the date on a calendar and moved to the next item to be remembered whether 100, 150 or 200 years ago.

The Commission on Ministry has been talking to people who have an interest in and a feel for the rhythms of daily prayer and community life both through tradition monastic and new monastic communities. Members of the commission have spent very short periods of time with the communities of Benedictines in Rostrevor and in Glenstal Abbey, where meetings were fitted in around the schedule of daily prayer.

The Church of Ireland has no centre for community prayer or retreat, such places as once existed are long gone. For those who wish to spend time on retreat, we are fortunate to have ecumenically minded communities who will welcome in the stranger as a matter of course, but some yearn to have a facility which the Church of Ireland can call its own.

Such centres however cost money, not just initially, but for upkeep, maintenance and staffing and so as a starting point the Commission on Ministry would like the synod's help in allowing a scoping study to take place which might help to focus minds on the feasibility of such a facility.

I have pleasure in proposing the motion that the General synod considers the establishment of a centre of community prayer, retreat, hospitality and study might be one suitable means by which the Church of Ireland could mark the forthcoming 150th anniversary of Disestablishment, and commends efforts by the Commission on Ministry and others to undertake a scoping study to examine the feasibility of such a project and to present it as a priority for the Church.