

# GENERAL SYNOD 2016

## Report of the Church of Ireland/Methodist Church Covenant Council Seconder: The Revd Canon Dr Maurice Elliott

Embargoed Against Delivery  
Check Against Delivery

Archbishop

In seconding this report I simply wish to add one further and, I hope, significant emphasis, and that concerns highlighting the remarkably high profile which the Covenant between our two churches has achieved across the wider ecclesial and ecumenical scene. For example, at the recent meeting of the ACC in Lusaka this was apparent in two ways: First, there was a unanimous welcome at ACC for the report of AMICUM (being the Anglican Methodist International Commission on Unity in Mission) in 2015 and co-chaired to our great delight by the Bishop of Down and Dromore. The report is entitled *Into all the World –Being and Becoming Apostolic (IAW)* and is mentioned in the Book of Reports, p.304. Within the text of *IAW* the COI-MCI arrangement receives exceedingly warm and favourable coverage, and further to this, the ACC has now passed a resolution agreeing to the establishment of an International Coordinating Committee to monitor developments, to act as a catalyst, to encourage joint mission. Going forward, the Covenant Council will no doubt be reporting to, learning from, and, depending on how things progress, arguably even influencing this oversight body.

And secondly, there has been much positive awareness and appreciation of the realisation of interchangeability within the Irish context. Members will recall how this was accomplished through the discovery of ‘sufficient consonance’ in terms of personal *episcopate* between the roles of bishops and presidents, and this interchangeability was explicitly referenced within the report to ACC of the ACO Department for Unity, Faith and Order. In fact it should also be reported to this Synod as a particular joy for the CoI that the Primate was invited to address the ACC on precisely this matter, and again the reception of the meeting was entirely positive.

The proposer has rightly highlighted the issues of strategic leadership and canonical provision as a means of seeking to further the substantiation of the Covenant arrangement between our two churches. However, in doing so, he also draws attention to significantly under-realised potential – the dichotomy between the shop-window and the counter. In seconding the Report I would echo those sentiments, and would add a call for a note of necessary celebration. In other words, we need to learn to see the Covenant as others see it, and we need to continue to embrace and to cherish what it represents and what it offers with a sense of confidence and joy. The danger for any such agreement is that it all too easily become an ecumenical museum-piece. Members of Synod, our plea this afternoon is that we avoid allowing that to happen and instead re-commit ourselves to seeing the Covenant as a living endeavour which remains rich in its potential to take us further along the road of partnership and mission, and as a major milestone project which is viewed with genuine admiration and approbation by our brothers and sisters across the wider Anglican and Methodist worlds.

Archbishop, I have pleasure in seconding the Report.