

GENERAL SYNOD 2016

Report of the Standing Committee Seconder: Mrs Pauline High

**Embargoed Against Delivery
Check Against Delivery**

The Standing Committee like any well-oiled machine is not limited to its meetings six times a year. There are wheels within wheels, cogs within cogs, with each one being as important as the other. Throughout the report you will find the names of those people who serve on the various sub-committees and working groups. They are part of and support the work of the Standing Committee and by association carry out the wishes of General Synod.

That said, it is not only those members of Standing Committee or its sub committees who have a part to play in the development and moulding of our Church. As members of a synodical Church, each one of us has a duty to carry out the business of General Synod, prayerfully, effectively and most of all graciously.

Each one of us, whether we are clergy or laity, are the people who make the decisions that will shape the church that we know today, into what it will be in the future. Don't underestimate your worth in being here or the responsibility that it places upon you.

I wonder what your attitude was as you thought about coming to Synod?

- Did you see it as simply a chance to get away from parish life for a few days, or to get a few days respite from your busy schedule and home life?
- Did you think this is going to be three of the most boring days of your life that you must endure because you have been voted on to Synod by those who have entrusted you with the decisions that will form the future of our church?
- Or have you come with a genuine expectancy that you are here to make a difference and to use your influence to help build a church that looks to the future and looks at how it can best resource and equip God's people for the days ahead?

I hope that by the end of what you hear and see at Synod this year you will all be part of the latter group if you are not there already.

In seconding the Standing Committee report I would like to highlight the work of some of the working groups and committees. The first is the Bishops' Appeal Advisory Committee. On

page 189 they report a general increase in giving for 2015. However, with the ever increasing seriousness of the current refugee crisis and numerous disasters and emergency appeals requiring our attention there is always room for improvement. I know those who sit on this committee are grateful for the donations they do get. They will always be able to use more. The fact that the report covers five pages detailing the projects where support has been given is testimony to a very real and urgent need, throughout our own land and across the globe. Please do remember the Bishops' Appeal Fund.

The second group I would like to look at is the Northern Ireland Community Relations Working Group who on our behalf keep a watching brief on issues connected to community relations in Northern Ireland. As a church there are endless opportunities for us to enter the public arena and speak into difficult and often times inflammatory situations, to bring God's grace and love to a hurting world.

Much work has been done but again there is much to do and we need to consider what our response as a body of God's people should be and how we can best help those worst affected by cross community tensions.

The final group I would bring your attention to is the Parish Development Working Group. They seek to facilitate dioceses and individual parishes as they seek to grow and change to accommodate the needs of the communities in which they serve and to discover how to make best use of their resources.

The report makes mention of the groups desire to hold two follow-up conferences to the ones held last September in Abbeyleix and Dungannon subject to finance being available. Can I suggest that this is the sort of thing we need to encourage in our plans for *Long Term Church*?

Together Adrian and I have only scratched the surface of a few of the groups that support Standing Committee and I would like on your behalf to thank everyone who is part of this work for all the time and effort that they willingly and tirelessly put in.

To that end I would like to issue a challenge to each and every one of you. I spoke earlier of our attitude in coming to Synod and I would just like us to consider the thoughts of those who sit on the various committees and sub groups as they come to Synod.

- Do they feel they are supported in their work by the members of Synod?
- Are they encouraged by the thought that we appreciate all that they do over the year as they seek to serve us?

Can I ask that each person here has a look through the Standing Committee report and identify someone to say a personal thank you to before synod finishes on Saturday?

As I finish would you please turn with me to page 9 of the book of reports and in particular to the prayer in the box at the bottom of the page. It is my hope that we would exercise good stewardship of the resources of this church, that we would be granted a clear mind and judgement in all things and a willingness to seek God's will for the Church with an awareness of the trust and responsibility given to us. I hope that we will be guided with wisdom and lead in paths of truth as we now move to debate the report of the Standing Committee.