

Standing Committee – Report 2007

APPENDIX E

THE HARD GOSPEL REPORT 2007

PRESIDENT

Most Revd RHA Eames

COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP *(letters in brackets indicate sub-committee membership)*

Most Revd Dr Richard Clarke (A)

Rt Revd Dr Michael Jackson

Very Revd Patrick Rooke (Chair) (A)

Ms Ruth Handy (Vice Chair) (C)

Mr Terry Forsyth (Honorary Treasurer) (B)

Revd Eileen Cremin (A)

Revd Canon Dr Ian M Ellis (Standing Committee)

Mr Bernie Frayne appointed (C)

Revd Kenny Hall (B)

Revd Canon Cecil Hyland (Parish Development Committee)

Revd Paul Hoey (Parish Development Committee [alternate])

Mrs Margaret McNulty

Revd Daniel Nuzum (D)

Ms Stella Obe (C)

Revd Michael Parker (C)

Ms Kate Turner

Revd Canon Trevor Williams (D)

Co-opted

Revd Doug Baker (Resource) (A,D)

In attendance

Mr David Brown (Youth Council)

Mrs Jenny Compston (Communications)

Mrs Janet Maxwell (Communications) (C)

Revd Earl Storey (HGP Director) (A,B,C,D)

Resignations

Revd Katharine Poulton

Ms Elaine Way

Sub Committees re Hard Gospel Project

(A) Strategy/Planning

(B) Finance/Grants

(C) Communications/Publicity

(D) Hard Gospel Sunday

HARD GOSPEL STRATEGY

The vision for the Hard Gospel Project is:

“A Church of Ireland which takes a positive leadership role in addressing the issues of sectarianism and dealing with difference that face the rapidly changing societies across the island of Ireland in the 21st century and a membership who contribute constructively to the development of transformed communities through reflecting and outworking Christ’s command to love God and their neighbour.”

The project has four strategic aims:

1. To enable the Church, at all levels, to model the relationships and values with regard to overcoming sectarianism, community conflict, and dealing with difference that it will promote in wider society.
2. To develop and promote policies, practices and statements of the Church of Ireland that will encourage honest and constructive relationships in dealing with sectarianism and issues of difference in the Church and wider society.
3. To enhance the capability of the Church of Ireland at all levels to take initiatives to build peace and to transform communities.
4. To implement initiatives, projects or programmes in collaboration with other Churches, agencies and groups in a manner that will create more open and inclusive local communities.

The project works to achieve strategic objectives under each aim:

1. To enable the Church, at all levels, to model the relationships and values with regard to overcoming sectarianism, community conflict, and dealing with difference that it will promote in wider society.
 - (a) Examine central structures and representative bodies to suggest ways to achieve more balanced participation within the Church of Ireland.
 - (b) Enhance existing and, where needed, provide new structures of internal dialogue to promote openness and understanding of difference in the Church of Ireland.
 - (c) Identify and change areas where sectarianism and destructive patterns of relating to difference affect the witness and ministry of the Church of Ireland. This will involve dialogue with, among others, representatives of Loyal Orders, ethnic minorities, women’s groups, disability organisations and gender and sexuality groups.
2. To develop and promote policies, practices and statements of the Church of Ireland that will encourage honest and constructive relationships in dealing with sectarianism and issues of difference in the Church and wider society.
 - (a) Proof all policies, practices and statements of the Church of Ireland in terms of sectarianism and dealing positively with difference, including those where the current attitude of the Church reflects historical identification with one political and cultural community.

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- (b) Identify areas of policy and practice where new guidelines on honest and constructive relationships in dealing with difference are needed and develop them.
 - (c) Widen the range of Churches, faith communities and other interest groups with which the Church of Ireland has regular and established relationships.
 - (d) Raise the profile and increase understanding of the Church of Ireland approach to sectarianism and dealing positively with difference through a focused and sustained programme of publicity and information.
3. To enhance the capability of the Church of Ireland at all levels to take initiatives to build peace and to transform communities.
- (a) Provide training, support and resourcing for central leadership.
 - (b) Provide training, support and resourcing for diocesan/parish leadership, both clerical and lay.
 - (c) Modify initial and continuing clerical and lay training processes to include significant emphasis on learning to overcome sectarianism, to deal positively with difference and to encourage/enable others to do the same.
 - (d) Develop the youth training programme to include a significant emphasis on learning to move beyond sectarianism and to deal positively with difference.
 - (e) Collate information about best practice in moving beyond sectarianism and dealing positively with difference and actively promote it within the church and beyond.
4. To implement initiatives, projects or programmes in collaboration with other Churches, agencies and groups in a manner that will create more open and inclusive local communities.
- (a) Develop projects in partnership with key agencies that address profound issues of social cohesion within our community.
 - (b) Work with as wide a range of key stakeholders as practical in a number of local areas to develop projects and programmes which address identified need, and will be owned by all involved.
 - (c) Develop a strong international dimension to the Hard Gospel Project. This will involve building relationships with key agencies in other spheres of conflict, with the purpose of meaningful exchange of learning.
 - (d) Seek appropriate short to medium term sponsorship and funding for the initiatives, with the aim of encouraging them to become self-sustaining in the long term.

Key Areas of Work

Building bridges is a core value for the Hard Gospel Project. This is expressed through a range of action:

- Enabling a healthy process of self-reflection within the Church of Ireland with regard to its values, practices and structures.

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- Facilitating relationship building across theological, religious, political and other boundaries.
- Facilitating new thinking and energetic public debate on key issues regarding reconciliation and community cohesion.
- Working with parishes and other groupings to increase levels of confidence and capacity to build bridges in local communities.
- Building capacity within leadership at all levels of Church life.
- Facilitating relationships with new religious and social groupings in a changing Ireland, both north and south.

Audit of Central Structures

Work is in process to audit the level of diversity and examine approaches to diversity within the structures of the Church of Ireland and to produce an action plan for change.

The objectives are:

- (a) To prepare an audit instrument, appropriate to the Church of Ireland, which can assess the balance of composition of representative bodies according to gender, age, location etc.
- (b) To audit the current and recent past (3 years) composition of key structures and representative bodies.
- (c) To explore the experiences and views of a range of internal stakeholders regarding diversity and approaches to diversity.
- (d) To audit current structures of communication at central, diocesan and local levels with particular reference to how they support and promote internal dialogue on issues of sectarianism, racism and dealing positively with those who are different, both within levels and between levels.
- (e) To audit current central level of interaction with diverse organisations including Loyal Orders, ethnic minorities, women's groups, disability organisations, and gender and sexuality groups. The audit should pay particular attention to how others experience the witness and ministry of the Church.
- (f) To prepare a report of the findings and recommendations of the audit in the summer of 2007. This will include:
 - An analysis of the composition of each body with recommendations for action that will redress imbalances, where necessary
 - An analysis of the current approaches to diversity and recommendations for change
 - An outline of how current structures function in relation to their stated purpose, and recommendations on changes to current structures or possible new structures to improve internal dialogue
 - An analysis of the level of interaction with diverse groups and their experience of the Church and recommendations for change

The Church of Ireland and Loyalist Communities

This relationship emerged as a key issue as a result of research, the Reflect & Act course and a wide range of individual meetings. The priorities for this work are:

1. To increase the confidence and effectiveness of Church of Ireland members to love their neighbours within loyalist communities.
2. To assist parishes to build partnerships that reflect and act on identified neighbourhood need within marginalised loyalist communities.
3. To promote the importance of understanding neighbourhood needs within the geographic and demographic area that parishes are located.
4. To enable Church of Ireland parishes to help develop stable vibrant and confident loyalist communities that view church as a relevant institution with a role to play.
5. To facilitate identified parishes to assess their ability to take action and employ the skills required.

Practical initiatives have included:

- (a) An Education Exhibition to encourage educational attainment and aspiration (north Belfast);
- (b) Clergy Forums in Connor as well as Down and Dromore Diocese. These were addressed by prominent author and academic Professor Steve Bruce;
- (c) Beyond the Box seminars to address issues of civic leadership within the protestant community.

Immigration

The Republic of Ireland has experienced an unprecedented wave of immigration in recent years. This has also become an increasing feature of life in Northern Ireland. As a response to this issue the Hard Gospel Project has initiated a programme that has included:

- (a) Presentations at a number of 2006 Diocesan Synods to announce and invite all present to a 'Diocesan Immigration Consultation Evening'.
- (b) Diocesan Consultation Evenings: Each bishop has been requested to chair an evening where interested people in the diocese are invited to come and talk through experiences, interests or ignorance on issues of immigration. A significant number of dioceses have completed this.
- (c) A national conference is planned in early 2008 to build on the work of the Diocesan Consultation Evenings. This event will focus on appropriate pastoral responses to immigration.
- (d) Each diocese will be encouraged to build upon the work of the process so far, by focussing on set projects, either at a local level or diocesan level.
- (e) A report will be completed on the journey of exploration undertaken by the Church of Ireland to respond adequately to the challenge of immigration.

Sustaining Rural Community

A new project has been designed in partnership with Clogher diocese. Its purpose is to contribute to a more peaceful and sustainable rural community by encouraging the development of a progressive, confident and inclusive protestant border community in cross-border areas covered by the Church of Ireland diocese of Clogher.

1. To encourage members of the Church of Ireland community to share their personal experiences of the Troubles and their aspirations for the future.
2. To encourage members of the Church of Ireland community to share their experience of the church during the Troubles and to articulate how they see its role in sustaining community in the future.
3. To encourage members of the Church of Ireland community to share their experience of being a minority community in a range of border areas and to do so in such a way that is both heard and understood by the wider community.
4. To record and present the experiences and views of members of the Church of Ireland community to:
 - The wider community in Northern Ireland
 - The wider community within the Republic of Ireland
5. To contribute to the building of peaceful rural community by enabling members of the Church of Ireland to engage with other communities to address issues key to peace building.

Beyond the Box seminars

These events are held in a range of locations. They are designed to facilitate new thinking and energetic public debate on key issues regarding community cohesion and reconciliation.

Subjects have included:

- Political leadership within the unionist community
- Dealing with the past in Northern Ireland
- Racism
- Reflections by former members on the challenges facing the Church of Ireland

Resources

Reflect & Act

The Hard Gospel team has developed this course in order to enhance the culture of loving our neighbour within the Church of Ireland context. The course is based around the parable of the Good Samaritan and is a mix of activity, discussion and teaching. It has been piloted and run by staff members in up to ten locations to date. The aim is to:

- Facilitate self reflection of the individual's role as a Christian within the community
- Prompt the church to define its neighbours
- To assist churches to take small scale initiatives

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Loving our Neighbour

This resource was developed by the Revd Doug Baker and has been distributed (January 2007) to each parish in the Church of Ireland. The purpose is to help church members to consider issues of identity and belonging.

Hard Gospel Sunday

A Hard Gospel Sunday has been designated for 9th September 2007. It is appropriate that issues of living constructively with difference are addressed as this is also Racial Justice Sunday. The purpose is to inform, inspire, challenge, and invite commitment from a significant per cent of Church of Ireland membership. This is a way both of making sure that some activity associated with the Hard Gospel reaches every parish and of supporting those parishes that are now taking new initiatives by placing what they are doing within the context of a Church of Ireland wide commitment.

A range of resources will be supplied including:

- (a) Brief commentary on scripture passages and sermon notes/outline.
- (b) Prayers and other liturgical material.
- (c) Children's address – suggested material.
- (d) A bulletin suitable for photocopying.
- (e) Posters/artwork/logo.
- (f) Suggestions of ways to build complimentary activities into the day.

Staffing

Project Director: Revd Earl Storey

Project Officer (based in Belfast) – Mr Stephen Dallas

Project Officer (based in Dublin) – Mr Philip McKinley

Evaluation

In early 2006, the Hard Gospel Project appointed independent consultants, Macaulay Associates, to design, develop and implement a monitoring and evaluation framework. This would involve the collation of relevant data and preparation of an annual evaluation report, to assess progress against the intended objectives of the project.

Funding

Funding for the Project has been secured from a range of sources:

- The International Fund for Ireland Community Bridges Programme
- The Department of Foreign Affairs (ROI)
- The Church of Ireland
- The Church of Ireland Priorities Fund
- The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council

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THE HARD GOSPEL

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT	Period to 31 December
	2006 £
INCOME	
International Fund for Ireland	107,000
General Synod Allocations	67,263
Church of Ireland Priorities Fund	55,500
Govt. of Ireland – Department of Foreign Affairs	26,948
NI Community Relations Council	5,027
Sundry donations and interest	8,283
	<hr/> 270,021
EXPENDITURE	
Project expenditure	
Salaries and associated costs	99,532
Administration and finance	25,157
Travel and subsistence	15,079
Publicity, publishing and communications	6,184
Programme costs	8,234
Professional fees	7,171
Sundry	3,691
Total expenditure	<hr/> 165,048
Surplus of income over expenditure period	<hr/> <hr/> 104,973

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THE HARD GOSPEL

FUND ACCOUNT	As at 31 December 2006
	2006 £
CURRENT ASSETS	
Cash with Representative Church Body	104,973
	<hr/>
	104,973
CURRENT LIABILITIES	
	<hr/>
	Nil
	<hr/>
	Nil
	<hr/>
Balance as at 31 December 2006	104,973
FUNDS EMPLOYED	
Balance at start of period	Nil
Surplus for the year	104,973
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Balance as at 31 December 2006	104,973
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ACCOUNTANTS' REPORT	

PricewaterhouseCoopers
Chartered Accountants
Dublin
13 March 2007