

Church of Ireland Council for Mission – Report 2007

THE CHURCH OF IRELAND COUNCIL FOR MISSION

Report to the General Synod 2007

Membership

Rt Rev Harold C Miller	House of Bishops
Very Rev Stephen Lowry	Synod
Mrs Bobbie Moore	Synod
Mrs Felix Blennerhassett	Synod
Rev Patrick Comerford	Synod
Rev Paul Hoey	Synod
Rev Canon David Moynan	Synod
Mrs Paddy Wallace	Mothers' Union
Mr David Brown	CIYD
Mr Martin O'Connor	Bishops' Appeal
Mr Thomas G Wilson	Methodist Church
Mr John Doherty	AMS
Mr Geoffrey Hamilton	AMS
Ms Linda Chambers	AMS
Capt Colin Taylor	AMS
Rev William Ritchie	Cashel
Vacant	Cashel alternate
Rev Ian Jonas	Cork
Vacant	Cork alternate
Vacant	Down
Vacant	Down alternate
Rev Peter Galbraith	Connor
Ms Diane Rhodes	Connor alternate
Rev Derek Kerr	Clogher
Rev Robin Wakely	Clogher alternate
Rev Geoff SA Wilson	Kilmore
Vacant	Kilmore alternate
Vacant	Meath
Ms Daphne Wright	Meath alternate
Very Rev Maurice Sirr	Limerick
Ven Wayne Carney	Limerick alternate
Vacant	Tuam
Vacant	Tuam alternate
Rev Derek Creighton	Derry
Rev Ken McCloughlin	Derry alternate
Rev Canon Michael Barton	Armagh
Mr Tom Stephenson	Armagh alternate

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Rev Ken Gibson	Dublin
Rev Cliff Jeffers	Dublin alternate
Ms Mavis Gibbons	Co-opted
Rev David Brown	Co-opted

Alternates will attend when the principal representative is unable to.

Membership

During the year Captain Stephen Baggs, Church Army, representing AMS, resigned to move to another post outside Ireland. The Rev Patrick Comerford resigned following his appointment to the staff of the Theological College and the Rev Michael Wooderson resigned following his retirement from parish ministry and his move to live in France.

Sincere thanks go to those who have given faithful service as members of the Council.

The following were appointed during the course of the year

Mrs Paddy Wallace	Mothers' Union
Captain Colin Taylor	Church Army
Rev Cliff Jeffers	Dublin alternative
Rev Canon Robert Kingston	Cork alternative

Mission Networks

The Council discussed the value of belonging to external mission bodies such as the Global Mission Network (CTBI) and Partnership in World Mission (PWM) and considered that continuing membership is worthwhile.

Mrs Bobbie Moore represents the Council as the Church of Ireland representative on the PWM and the Rev Paul Hoey on the Global Mission Network of CTBI.

The Global Mission Network is the official meeting point for the departments and agencies of the British and Irish Churches concerned with world mission and evangelisation. It has 34 member bodies and affiliates. GMN operates through networks and forums on world regions and mission issues. Its main function is co-ordination rather than programmatic work.

PWM brings together those in the Church of England involved in world mission - the Mission Agencies, World Mission Partners, Diocesan Companion Links and parts of the National Church Institutions.

Its web-site (www.pwm-web.org.uk) contains useful information with all its partners in world mission - who they are; where they are; and what they do. It offers regular short articles aimed to stimulate thinking about world mission. It seeks to bring together the whole network of people and organisations within the Church of England and its partner churches who have a heart for mission and a desire to see it prosper.

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The representatives attended the PWM conference in November 2006 and the Four Nations Forum for Evangelisation in Cardiff in December 2006. Reports of these conferences are available from the Secretary.

Both events opened up new ways of thinking in terms of the mission of the Church and were effective in sharing practical ideas some of which could be appropriate for the situation in Ireland. The Council is looking at effective ways to filter these ideas to the dioceses and on down to parish level.

Committee Review

In its response to the proposed reorganisation of committees, the Council pointed out that, having reorganised within the past few years, it is already the product of two previous committees. Moreover, the inclusion of diocesan alternates makes the Council look larger than it is in reality.

Joint Mission Conference

A request was received from the Covenant Council that the Council should co-operate with the Methodist Home Mission Department to organise a joint conference on mission. A small group, consisting of four members from each of the three bodies, recommended that a good focus for such a conference would be Fresh Expressions of Church (FXC).

Each body accepted the recommendation and a planning group, including practitioners of FXC, has been set up.

Among the aims of the conference are

- to help identify and support any existing Fresh Expressions of Churches in Ireland
- to create a network of such churches
- to enable those interested to find out more about how a FXC works, and
- to share the wisdom of those, such as Mr Steve Croft (Fresh Expressions – the official organ of the Church of England and the Methodist Church in England for the fostering of FXCs), who have some experience in the field.

The conference will aim to use the best skills available in this area, model a wide variety of FXCs and offer good resources.

Primarily it is intended for key leaders from local churches keen to find out more along with people already involved in FXCs.

A two-stage event is being planned, a day meeting in late 2007 which will gather practitioners for a listening exercise, and a second larger event to share the thinking with the wider Church and to provide an opportunity to explore what FXCs are about.

Mission Breakfast

The Breakfast, held in St Mark's Hall, Armagh, thanks to the permission of the Rector and the Select Vestry, had a large attendance. The input from the speakers from Wells Church, Moneyrea and the Discovery Project Dublin, was greatly appreciated although pressure of time did not allow for questions. Consequently, the same theme is to be adopted for the Breakfast in 2007.

The Hard Gospel Project

The Council held an overnight meeting to unpack some of the issues highlighted in the Hard Gospel report that relate to the work of the Council. It was noted how the incident of refugee asylum seekers taking refuge in St Patrick's Cathedral had brought a sharp focus to some of these issues: welcome; dealing with difference; interfaith dialogue etc.

During this exercise the following points were made, relating to specific sections of the report:

Chapter 15 - Welcoming new members

1. Churches need training in appropriate ways of doing evangelism that respects the integrity of those outside but does not compromise the integrity of the Gospel.
2. Finding ways to involve newcomers can lead parishes into a deeper exploration of faith.

Chapter 20 - Training and resourcing of clergy

1. The exclusivism of the Church in some areas conflicts with the New Testament theology of inclusion.
2. How can clergy, who often feel a personal sense of inadequacy in facing these issues, be trained and resourced to deal with them?
3. How can the Council offer support for the transitioning in training now taking place?

Chapter 6 - Dealing with ethnic difference

1. In terms of mission the Church has been prepared in the past to spend time and money to "send the Gospel" to those overseas but are we ready to go to those who come to our shore, to listen, to show respect and understanding?
2. Is the Church willing to be flexible in its worship structures to accommodate outsiders? Are congregations being informed about the issues?

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Chapter 9 - Relations with other Churches

1. We need to challenge the “ourselves alone” attitude with regard to doing mission.
How much do our internal structures hinder mission?

Chapter 10 - World Religions

1. Globalisation is leading to an interconnectedness and interdependence in the world. But how many Church members have even one friend from another world religion?
2. This raises issues of confidence. There is a hesitancy about co-operation with other religions even on neutral issues. Is part of the problem simply poor interpersonal skills for many Church members?
3. Could the Council be a conduit for providing simple and accurate information about other religions?

Chapter 5 - Responding to Society

1. Our picture of Jesus determines our response to society. He challenges public issues and personal concerns. What image of Jesus does the Hard Gospel require us to present to society?
2. What does it mean to straddle two cultures – the modern and post-modern? Which culture does the Church most naturally fit in with?

The Rev Earl Storey, Director of the Hard Gospel Project, attended and offered his reflections on areas of overlap between the two bodies. He identified some of the challenges facing the Church including:

- Leadership - the Church of Ireland has had a model of training clergy that has been pastoral but has not equipped men and women to lead.
- Confidence: are we a timid Church? How do we recover a boldness in addressing these issues? Is there a loss of confidence in our message to the extent that mission stops meaning anything?
- Accommodation: is there a danger of accommodating a second-rate theology and vision out of a desire to relate in a new multi-cultural Ireland?

How do the Hard Gospel, Parish Development and the Mission Council relate? Perhaps the role of the Hard Gospel project is to facilitate the asking of these questions, the Mission Council to encourage thinking towards answers and Parish Development to provide assistance in partnering parishes through change?

Parish Mission Links

During the year the Council sent out a Mission Questionnaire to every parish in the Church of Ireland. The aim of the exercise was to get an overview of how many parishes support a mission link, how those links operate and to assess the value of such links.

The Council is grateful to all who took time to fill in the questionnaire.

- The response rate was approximately 30%. 181 parishes replied. Of these 99 had mission links using the mission agencies. 54 parishes had more than one link.
- Overall the response rate compares with the sizes of the dioceses. The most prevalent links, by far, were African, with Asian next in number.
- In the past few years, 46 parishes have made visits to their links. 61 parishes have received visits from their links.
- Most links were based on a development principle. The main types of ministry supported were in the fields of education and children's work.
- Of those parishes which responded, 75 approximately named a person, other than the rector, responsible for developing links with the mission agencies or with support mission partners.

Questions raised by the findings include:

- Where are the parishes with eastern European links?
- Are parishes who responded as having no link open to developing one?
- Is there division between urban and rural support?

Many Mothers' Union branches have links with parishes overseas which have not been included as parish links. However, these are not always owned by parishioners.

It is hoped that a fuller breakdown of the findings will be made available through the Church of Ireland Gazette and on a website linked to the Church of Ireland site.

Mission Strategy

A sub-group was established to explore the possibility of encouraging parishes to approach and support mission strategically.

Possibilities being considered include:

- The publication of a regular series of leaflets under the title of 'Look out –mission alive!' The purpose of these would be to inform, invest, and interact.

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- Encouragement and guidance on how to appoint a Mission Link Person to co-ordinate the parish's approach to mission, eg. acting as a link between the mission agencies and the parish.
- Training at diocesan level.
- Development of a mission website for sharing resources, news and opportunities.

Mission Shaped Church

The Council continued its exploration of the Mission Shaped Church Report and its implications for the Church of Ireland.

Copies of a study guide *Moving on in a Mission shaped Church* and the *Expressions* newspaper giving examples of FXCs were sent to all ordained leaders with encouragement to raise the issues at grass roots level.

A Fresh Expression of Church (FXC) has been defined as, “a form of church for our changing culture established for the benefit for those not yet members.” Fresh Expressions is about learning to live at the edge, building community, making a response to a transient society, learning how to begin again, not about getting people back into church but find new ways of being church. There is still life in traditional church but we need both forms to grow together in a mixed economy.

Our discussion raised the following questions and observations:

- What is the spine of church? What is its essence?
- Might a model of umbrella be better than of spine? It speaks of something that is sheltered, covered, yet open and with space to include.
- What makes Fresh Expressions Anglican?
- Is it a church if it doesn't have sacraments, the Word or discipleship?
- Is the Lambeth quadrilateral relevant to the discussion about FXC?
- Is it even right to think in these terms? Anglicanism isn't a church. We are not definitive.
- Anglicanism itself began and still is, at root, a fresh expression.
- The Church of Ireland can sometimes demonstrate an obsession with identity, which can verge on spiritual idolatry.

One key component that seems to “legitimise” or validate a FXC is the relationship or otherwise with the diocesan bishop. In general relationships, with God, people and traditional church, seem to be key factors in the development of a FXC. The Council would encourage further research in this area of what factors influence the development of FXCs.

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The Council recognised that exposure to this way of thinking about church would need to form part of theological training for ordained ministry and this should become part of our ongoing focus and discussion with other groups.

Mission Agency Updates

Two weeks before each meeting every mission agency within the Association of Mission Societies is circularised for prayer requests and news items of importance to the wider Church.

An important part of each meeting is the time spent in prayer for such issues.

Diocesan Reports

The exercise was initiated during the year of receiving a report on a rotation basis from diocesan representatives on the Council, two at each meeting, to give a brief overview of mission thinking and activity in their own area.

Mission issues

As the Council has been meeting for several years, members were invited to review the range of issues on the agenda. Are key areas being missed? As a result of this exercise the Council hopes in future to add to its list of activities a focus on links between the Church of Ireland and the different ethnic groupings in Ireland and the importance of listening to and engaging with people in these groupings.

Mission Course

The Council welcomed and commended news of the production of a major new course intended to help the parish develop in mission in the widest sense. Although facilitated by CMSI it will not be a “branded” course.

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APPENDIX A

**MISSIONARY SOCIETY CONTRIBUTIONS FROM THE CHURCH OF IRELAND
2006**

Where there are blanks no figure was returned

Society	Donations £ Stg	Donations Euro
Bible Society (NI)	14,563	
Church Army (CA)	17,305	
CMSI Church Mission Society Ireland		1,226,290
Church's Ministry among the Jewish People (CMJ)	23,508	
Church Pastoral Aid Society (CPAS)	34,911	
Crosslinks	263,487	121,524
Dublin University Far Eastern Mission (DUFEM)		2,393
Dublin University Mission to Chota Nagpur (DUMCN)		
Feed the Minds, Ireland		
Irish Church Missions (ICM)	34,000	
Intercontinental Church Society (ICS)	10,283	
Interserve		
Jerusalem and Middle East Church (JMES)		
Leprosy Mission	70,598	
Mission to Seafarers		13,450
Mothers' Union	154,116	
National Bible Society		16,505
Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge (SPCK)	60,532	
South American Missionary Society (SAMS)	243,992	11,312
United Society for the Propagation of the Gospel	125,017	
Total	<u>1,052,312</u>	<u>1,391,474</u>

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