

GENERAL SYNOD 2007

CHURCH OF IRELAND COUNCIL FOR MISSION REPORT

Proposed by Revd Derek Kerr

EMBARGOED UNTIL DELIVERY

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Like many of you, travel is a part of life I enjoy very much. New cultures, new food and, most special of all, new people. Aren't people a wonderful invention? No matter where I travel, be it on mission teams to Poland, Uganda or the Arctic, or on holiday trekking with the Bedouin tribe in the Sinai Desert or China I keep being blessed by them. What I notice about this invention of God is that, because He made us all, we are basically all the same. Most people respond to those who give them the respect they deserve without patronising. If you have a smile then generally there is one waiting to be returned. Give people time to talk and you will learn the most amazing things. Finally all people are searchers. All people, I believe, hold on to something outside of themselves even if that something is the belief that there is NOTHING OUTSIDE OF THEMSELVES and that all they need is belief in themselves and their own ability. It is this belief in something that, as Christians, we can give the answer to. To that end I draw your attention to two items in the report for the Council for Mission. Firstly the council has enjoyed hearing of Fresh Expressions of Church. While we must never lose the desire to make sure that when something is taught in the name of Christ it is true to the teaching of the Bible at the same time we must lose the desire to always control the format used. When someone dies will they go to heaven because the gospel is shared? While they are still on earth are they being helped to form the character of Jesus by the fruit of the Spirit. If the answer to both of these is yes then we must welcome their existence. Human beings in the church can go astray and certainly we want to help prevent that but to turn a particular ministry/mission into our image is never healthy.

Secondly the questionnaire we sent out to every parish got people thinking again about the mission field somewhere other than their own parish and community. Thanks again to all who responded. It gave us useful insight and, more importantly, provoked thought as to how we as a council might move forward usefully. Giving practical guidance on how to appoint a mission link person in the parish and how this person could function to the benefit of both parish and mission organisations. Then along with this the possible development of a mission website sharing resources and opportunities. These were just two things coming out of the exercise. Ultimately there is no substitute for meeting or going abroad to work with Christians serving the Lord in other lands. Like some others we in Devenish and Boho had the opportunity recently to meet and listen to some teenagers and two of their teachers from Uganda who were over for a thanksgiving tour celebrating 10 years of the work of Fields of Life, headed up by Canon Trevor Stevenson. It was the comment of many in the parish that this was one of the most useful events we had ever had. Being rector and listening to ten and half years of my sermons I couldn't agree more. These folk humbled us with their infectious Christian faith coming out of much adversity. I'm tempted to ask Synod to call on the governments of both countries on this island if they would invest money in order to send all teenagers abroad for 3 months to a country poorer than our own. It would be difficult to return unchanged for the better as many of us can testify to.

However I won't ask for this. Instead I am going to hand over to Paddy as she comes to second the report. Please keep the work of the Council for Mission along with the other committees in your prayers. We need to be faithful to Almighty God and useful to the Church of Ireland and your prayers will help in that need. Thank you.