

GENERAL SYNOD 2007

CHURCH OF IRELAND COUNCIL FOR MISSION

Seconded by Mrs Paddy Wallace (Connor)

EMBARGOED UNTIL DELIVERY

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

In seconding this report I am conscious that I am a very new member of the Council.

What strikes me since joining the Council is the spirit of enquiry and of reflection which permeates the work and which is recorded in our report.

You have already heard reference to the questionnaire that explored what is actually happening in parishes in the area of overseas mission links. Many questions asked and responded to with positive news. In short there is a lot happening and it is exciting – but further questions are raised such as where are the parishes with Eastern European links? How open are other parishes to developing a link? How can we best encourage living links - what you have just been hearing about from our proposer and what our secretary, Paul Hoey, has referred to as the ‘human face of mission’.

These are the experiences which deepen our spiritual life and which enrich our parishes and our church

Likewise the exploration of the Mission Shaped Church Report has raised challenging questions which we would urge members of Synod to read and reflect on. You will see them in the report on page 349.

Perhaps the most timely and urgent questions came from the Hard Gospel Project.

Considerable time was given early in the year to exploring the Hard Gospel and the issues there which relate to the Council for Mission. Where is our confidence in our mission to those who come to our shore? How are we equipping our members to engage with people of other religions even on neutral issues? How can we accommodate newcomers in our worship structures? How much do our internal structures hinder mission? What of our relationship with other churches in being a missionary church in the context of our changing society in Ireland, both north and south?

These last questions and many more found in the report are not unique to the Council for Mission. Perhaps that highlights the relevance of and sense of urgency around the Hard Gospel. Our report poses an important question – How do the Hard Gospel, Parish Development and the Mission Council relate?

As someone who believes deeply in the concept of connecting with one another and working across agencies I would encourage you as members of Synod to reflect on that last question. You will find one possible answer in the report! We are fortunate as a church to have our various councils and committees which can focus on specific areas of our mission and ministry – but let us not read their reports in isolation, rather as unique but interconnecting pieces of the jig saw, the picture of our church seeking to further Christ's Kingdom here on earth.

I have pleasure in seconding this report of the Council for Mission.