

**GENERAL SYNOD 2007**

**THE CHURCH IN SOCIETY COMMITTEE REPORT – pages 249-281**

**Proposed by the Bishop of Clogher, Right Revd Dr Michael Jackson  
Chairperson of the Church in Society Committee**

**EMBARGOED UNTIL DELIVERY**

**CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY**

The Report of the Church in Society Committee comes at a time when political changes, such as many people never expected to come to pass in Ireland, have happened. These changes have also brought about structures of devolved government along with responsibilities which have to be owned and carried through by public representatives for all the people irrespective of party. And this will lead to a new type of political life in Northern Ireland. What the people right across Ireland now need to see is a climate of sustained political maturity. And the General Synod of the Church of Ireland is a good place in which to give voice to this sentiment and to this expectation because the all-Ireland aspect of Irish life is amply represented in the General Synod. Ireland, as we all know, has already changed. The forward march of history is such that those who have brought us to the implementation of this change are those who hitherto have stood at the extremes of politics in Northern Ireland itself and indeed for long have been entrenched political enemies. And this too is something which people never predicted.

The overarching political reality is that co-operation across borders which until now have excluded and divided must issue in a sustained, objective, inclusive, long-term commitment on the part of public representatives. And this must be for the well-being of people right across Ireland. The Prayer Book of the Church of Ireland asks no less of us in the Prayer for Christian Citizenship which it contains: ‘Grant unto us all that, laying aside our divisions, we may be united in heart and mind to bear the burdens which are laid upon us. Help us to respond to the call of our country according to our several powers...’ This requires a willingness to go forward in faith into areas and relationships where we have not been before. Can we do with those who are very different from us

what we have often been reluctant to do with one another in the past - build bridges? And can we envision and inform a future where a political life of cross-party co-operation enables those very bridges to bear the load of more and more people who wish to travel together on the road of normal, progressive political life?

Throughout the year past, as well as keeping abreast of the developments outlined above, the Committee has offered its work both to the members of the Church of Ireland and also to the wider society. As you are all aware, the Church in Society Committee works through Sub-Committees composed of Panels whose members are gathered together from time to time to look at particular issues from a Church of Ireland perspective. This gives a wide scope to the Committee and a freedom to those who chair the Panels to be proactive as well as reactive in their way of working. The Medical Ethics, Science and Technology Sub-Committee has, among other things, worked and reported on Ethical Issues and Care of the Elderly, offering particular areas where the church is challenged to think ahead and make greater provision with those who are entering older age. The Committee on Europe challenges trenchantly any suggestion that the Constitutional Treaty has gone away as a live issue. In fact, grappling with it has become all the more urgent in light of the potential for structural injustice to become embedded in the concept of Europe itself by the introduction of a two-tier membership as witnessed in the accession of Romania and Bulgaria. Constitutional issues closer to home are also dealt with in other parts of this year's Report as well as matters of international interest and concern.

I have had great pleasure in working with Members of the Church in Society Committee over the year past. I also wish to thank the staff in Church House and in particular Miss Lucy Connolly for all they have done to facilitate the work of the Committee. I have great pleasure in proposing the Report of the Church in Society Committee to the General Synod 2007. In seconding the Report, Dean Wynne will address a number of other areas and issues which form part of the work of the Committee.