

GENERAL SYNOD 2007

STANDING COMMITTEE REPORT

Proposed by the Very Revd Norman Lynas (Diocese of Ossory)

EMBARGOED UNTIL DELIVERY

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Your Grace,

[There is an adage that says “Better to be thought a fool than to speak one’s mouth and remove all doubt”, I suspect all doubt is about to be removed!]

The report of the Standing Committee comprising 33 separate headings and 14 appendices (pp171-245) provides this house with a breath-taking array of energy, engagement, endeavour and development. All this from a series of groups whose commitment to listening, reflecting, praying and to activity, indicates the broad pattern of ministry/service within the life of the Church. This ministry is marked by a clear partnership of clergy and laity in working through their respective disciplines, the significance of the revelation that “God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself”.

This honesty of engagement is reflected throughout the entire report and as the proposer, I can only highlight a number of aspects in the time allotted. On pp174/5 I refer to the intense heart-searching for the maintenance of “the bonds of peace in the unity of the Spirit” within the life of the Anglican Communion. Having been deceived by the obvious, there has been a deeper discernment within the Communion concerning the nature of authority, its role and use in the decision making that seeks

not to impose but commend. At a time that many perceive as of “great difficulty”, means are being sought to hold together the Communion through the possible use of an Anglican Covenants first outlined in the Windsor Report in 2004. Even though it will not be part of the constitution of the Anglican Consultative Council, nonetheless if adopted for use, and however well intentioned, it may have the effect of changing what is “Communion” to a Confederation! [Trust is instinctively and freely given – it is not and cannot be contrived – our deepest union is in the Risen Lord, in whose promise to his faltering disciples “Lo I am with you always to the end of the age”, is the bedrock of our continuing hope and desire]

Trust finds its fullest expression in practical actions that seek to educate, alleviate, illuminate and elevate. The Bishops’ Appeal (p189+193) has for many years been the focal channel through which our giving as members of the church, has been used to good effect at the point of need. Our giving as a Church in 2006 reflects a serious down trend that could be interpreted as our “weariness in well doing”, and that our role, in upholding human dignity, created in the image of God, re-created in Christ has diminished to the point of beleaguered pharisaism. We aid if only we can be seen to aid, and truly says Jesus “They have their reward”. With the exception of Connor Diocese, we must understand that need is continuous, and should be matched by a joyful graciousness and generosity in giving - “For to whom much is given, much is required”.

Equally as challenging as our giving is our attitude towards and underlying beliefs about those whom scripture calls “neighbour”, but I suspect is translated as “them”. In the 1950’s ‘B’ movie cult classics

“Them” was a film concerning Giant Ants, destined to take over the world, aided by the folly of men in not understanding the significance of splitting the atom! The Hard Gospel Project (p180+210ff individual) is a most welcome and challenging programme facilitating the “crie de couer” of our individual and collective brokenness at all levels of church, North and South. It is the challenge to see “them” in an entirely different way. As our faith journey unfolds and in the “listening to the other”, there emerges the Spirit prompted engagement of moving with each other to a deeper and joyful unity of common purpose; hope and shared hurt that cannot be transformed. The breadth of the task is enormous, and given the welcome sea change in the

political endeavour of Northern Ireland and awaiting with interest the outcome of a general election in the Republic, the milieu in which this work is set will provide an exciting, provocative and much needed freshness to our pilgrimage.

If the Bishops' Appeal reflects our outward gaze on the international scene, then the Priorities Fund (pp181-85) reflects the multi-faceted local Church scene including the ecumenical interface. It is most encouraging to see under the various headings the number of projects that involve the whole community or serve the whole community, Newtownbreda United Churches (Down) and the Cosy Cats projects (Elphin) to name but a few. As the funds name suggests, these are the priorities in that year, and the encouragement of more projects is to be welcomed – The Fund ought to be strained beyond breaking point with the quality and calibre of the engagement requiring finances.

Notwithstanding the perception that this is a male dominated agenda I draw attention to the report on p235 on the UN commission on the Status of Women, that our excellent representative Mrs Joan Bruton should draw attention to the esteem in which the Mother's Union is held at such an international gathering (see pages 236/7), for it's work on the African Continent is indeed both remarkable and uplifting.

For 20 years (1986-2006) this Synod was presided over by [your immediate predecessor] the Most Revd Dr RHA Eames, "Robin" to many of us. His contribution to the life of this Church, Communion, and Country has been immense. For many, his legacy will be a defining chapter in their lives - of constancy, hope, care and goodness in a societal era dominated by much cruelty and suspicion. Needless to say much of what he has achieved has been through the love and support of Lady Eames and the family. We wish them well in their well-earned new adventure that is called "retirement".

Finally Your Grace, it remains for me to wish you every blessing and happiness as the mantle of Elijah falls to Elisha in your work as president of this Synod, as Archbishop of Armagh and as a pastor pastorum to the flock of Christ.

It is with pleasure that I propose the adoption of the report of the Standing Committee.