

Agreement made between representatives of the Church of Ireland and the Moravian Province of Great Britain and Ireland and endorsed by the House of Bishops

The following representatives of the Church of Ireland and the Moravian Province of Great Britain and Ireland met in Armagh on November 8, 2021:

<i>Bishop Sarah Groves</i> <i>The Rev Michael Newman</i> <i>The Rev Philip Cooper</i> <i>Dr David Johnston</i>	<i>Archbishop John McDowell</i> <i>Bishop Michael Burrows</i> <i>The Rev Canon Helene T Steed</i> <i>The Revd Dr Ian Ellis</i>
<i>Moravian Church</i>	<i>Church of Ireland</i>

The purpose of the meeting was to consider and clarify any outstanding issues prior to putting in place an agreement to enable interchangeability of ministry between us. It has been the express desire of the synods of both our churches to achieve this since an earlier phase of conversations in the years leading up to 2015.

It is now our hope and expectation that this vision can come to pass in 2022, and we seek the support of the authorities of both our churches to bring this about.

In order to make this agreement possible, we have agreed to advise our churches of the following keypoints, with a view to strengthening our common life and mission.

- In our shared commitment to the threefold ministry including the historic episcopate as locally adapted, we are agreed that bishops should be consecrated to that office and function by at least three other bishops.
- We are agreed that, while the practical and liturgical functions of deacons vary within our polities, any Moravian deacon entering the ministry of the Church of Ireland will exercise diaconal ministry in the manner traditionally understood by the Church of Ireland, and vice versa. Further, any Church of Ireland priest wishing to serve a Moravian congregation would be received as a Presbyterian, and again vice versa.
- We wish to express our delight that the Church of England is content that Church of Ireland bishops take a full part in the consecration of Moravian bishops, even when this takes place in England, provided the local Church of England bishop is informed as a courtesy. We will of course be making the Church of England aware of the progress and outworking of our conversations here.
- As this agreement will touch on existing agreements between our churches and the Methodist Church in Ireland, we undertake to inform them of its substance and with them to consider its implications.
- This agreement will come into full effect, not by some formal Declaration, but – following due process – by participation in each other's episcopal ordinations/consecrations. At some appropriate point we hope to mark what has been fruitfully achieved by a symbolic ceremony such as tree plantings in Grace Hill and in Dublin.

- We recognise that in the longer term there will need to be a reference group with members from both our churches to oversee the implementation and pastoral / missional outworking of this agreement.
- This group will also deal with matters where there is further work to be done, for example concerning a possible common Eucharistic Prayer, and the most respectful manner of dealing with remaining consecrated elements when the service is over. There are other issues too touching worship and liturgy where we can learn much from one another.
- The reference group will also need to consider necessary differences of practice between occasional and more permanent examples of movement in ministry between our churches, and consequent issues of pastoral discipline. In framing this agreement, we have been considering issues relating to long term or permanent movement in ministry between our churches, but different questions arise when such movement is on an occasional basis; for example, for a Church of Ireland deacon to preside at the Eucharist in a Moravian church in such a situation would not be acceptable.
- The reference group, furthermore, will need to consider the situation in relation to those received into ministry in the Moravian or Anglican contexts but who were not originally ordained in those contexts.
- We hope that this agreement will bring strength and enrichment to us both in our task of furthering the Kingdom together, and we see special possibilities not only in places where we both have parishes and congregations, but also in the area of theological training. Even more importantly, we trust that our work will result in all God's people from both our churches feeling not just welcome but truly at home in the other.
- As we stated at the conclusion of our discussions in 2015, and following now in particular the discussions we have had more recently with the Church of England, we believe the time has come to move this matter towards a definite and joyful outcome.