

STANDING COMMITTEE

REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS LAID BEFORE

THE GENERAL SYNOD AT ITS

ONE HUNDRED AND FIFTY-FIFTH ORDINARY SESSION 2025

**THE GENERAL SYNOD
OF THE
CHURCH OF IRELAND
HONORARY SECRETARIES OF THE GENERAL SYNOD**



Rev Canon Gillian Wharton, The Rectory, Cross Avenue, Booterstown, Blackrock, Co. Dublin

Mr Ken Gibson, 11 Magheralave Court, Lisburn, Co. Antrim, BT28 3BY

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SYNOD OFFICER - Dr Nicole Gallagher

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CONTENTS

1. SUMMARY	128
2. NAMES AND ATTENDANCE OF MEMBERS	128
3. APPOINTMENTS.....	131
4. APPENDED MOTIONS	132
5. ADVISORY COUNCIL TO THE CHURCH OF IRELAND CENTRE, DCU.....	132
6. AUDIT OF ACCOUNTS	132
7. CHURCH AND SOCIETY COMMISSION.....	132
8. CHURCH OF IRELAND CENSUS.....	132
9. CHURCH RESPONSE TO GAZA AND OTHER HUMANITARIAN CRISES	132
10. CLERGY PENSIONS FUND – SOLVENCY LEVY	133
11. COMPLAINTS AND DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURE.....	133
12. CONSTITUTIONAL REVISION	133
13. CONSULTATIVE GROUP ON DISABILITY	133
14. DIGNITY IN CHURCH LIFE POLICIES.....	133
15. ELECTRONIC VOTING FOR IN-PERSON MEETINGS	133
16. FINANCING OF SAFEGUARDING	134
17. FUTURE OF CURACIES: DEPLOYMENT, PROVISION AND FUNDING.....	134
18. GENERAL SYNOD 2026.....	134
19. GENERAL SYNOD/STANDING COMMITTEE FINANCES	134
20. GENERAL SYNOD ROYALTIES FUND	134
21. IN-PERSON STANDING COMMITTEE MEETINGS	134
22. JOURNAL OF THE GENERAL SYNOD –EDITOR	134
23. MINIMUM APPROVED STIPENDS	134
24. PENSIONABLE STIPENDS	135
25. PIONEER MINISTRY GOVERNING COUNCIL.....	136
26. PRIORITIES FUND.....	136
27. CHURCH OF IRELAND SAFEGUARDING BOARD	136
28. STANDING COMMITTEE AND GENERAL PURPOSE FUND ACCOUNTS	136
29. THIRD LEVEL CHAPLAINCIES.....	137
30. WORKING GROUP CONCERNING A CO-ORDINATED RESPONSE BY THE CHURCH TO HISTORIC INSTITUTIONAL ABUSE	137
31. WORKING GROUP TO REVIEW CLERGY TENURE.....	137

APPENDICES

A: Motions to be brought to General Synod	138
B: Report of the Advisory Council to the Church of Ireland Centre (CIC) in the DCU Institute of Education	140
C: Report of the Bishops’ Appeal Advisory Committee	142
D: Report of the Board for Ministry with Children and Families	154
E: Church of Ireland Census Figures 2024.....	157
F: Report of the Central Communications Board.....	158
G: Report of the Charities Registration Monitoring Working Group	164
H: Report of the Church and Society Commission.....	166
I: Report of the Consultative Group on Disability	169
J: Income and Expenditure Report for the Complaints Committee 2024.....	170
K: Report of the Future of Curacies Working Group	171
L: Report of the Moravian Interchangeability Working Group.....	172
M: Priorities Fund Grants and Accounts 2024	174
N: Report of the Third Level Chaplaincies Review Group.....	184
O: Report of the Safeguarding Board.....	186
P: Standing Committee Income and Expenditure and General Purposes Fund Accounts 2024....	190
Q: Report of the Working Group Concerning a Co-Ordinated Response by the Church to Historic Institutional Abuse	195
R: Report of the Working Group to Review Clergy Tenure.....	199

1. SUMMARY

Some significant matters dealt with by the Standing Committee in the past year were:

2. NAMES AND ATTENDANCE OF MEMBERS

During the period June 2024–March 2025 (inclusive), 5 meetings were held. The number of meetings attended by each member is placed before his/her name.

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS

THE ARCHBISHOPS AND BISHOPS

THE HONORARY SECRETARIES OF THE GENERAL SYNOD

5/5	Rev Canon Gillian Wharton
5/5	Mr Kenneth Gibson
5/5	Ms Hazel Corrigan
5/5	Rev Canon Malcolm Kingston

ELECTED MEMBERS

Armagh	4/5	Rev Gary McMurray
	5/5	Rev Carlton Baxter
	5/5	Ms Caroline Nesbitt
	2/5	Ms Mary Caldwell
Clogher	5/5	Rev Mark Gallagher
	5/5	Ven Paul Thompson
	2/5	Mr Glenn Moore
	2/5	Mr Neville Armstrong
Derry & Raphoe	1/5	Rev Graham Hare
	5/5	Rev Canon Harry Gilmore
	3/5	Mr Robert Ellis
	4/5	Ms Kaye Nesbitt
Down & Dromore	5/5	Rev Mark Lennox
	5/5	Ven Jim Cheshire
	3/5	Mr William Fyffe
	5/5	Mr Andrew Brannigan
Connor	2/5	Rev Peter Jones
	5/5	Rev James Boyd
	0/2	Ms Caitlin Davison (Resigned November 2024)
	3/5	Mr Roy Totten

Standing Committee – Report 2025

Kilmore,	4/5	Rev Canon Ruth West
Elphin &	4/5	Ven Ian Horner
Ardagh	4/5	Ms Hannah O'Neill
	5/5	Mr Edward Lindsay
Tuam,	5/5	Very Rev Niall Sloane
Limerick &	2/5	Very Rev Lynda Peilow
Killaloe	4/5	Dr Catherine Smith
	3/5	Mr Edward Hardy
Dublin &	4/5	Rev Sean Hanily
Glendalough	5/5	Rev Rob Jones
	4/5	Dr Julie McKinley
	4/5	Mr Lyndon MacCann SC
Meath &	4/5	Rev Philip McKinley
Kildare	5/5	Ven Leslie Stevenson
	1/5	Dr Harriet Wilkinson
	2/5	Ms Phyllis Roe
Cashel,	3/5	Very Rev Stephen Farrell
Ferns &	1/2	Rev Dr Christine O'Dowd-Smyth (Resigned November 2024)
Ossory	1/2	Ven Mark Hayden (Elected December 2024)
	3/5	Mr Eric Driver
	5/5	Mr Richard Codd
Cork,	5/5	Rev John Ardis
Cloyne &	2/5	Ven Andrew Orr
Ross	2/5	Ms Hilda Connolly
	5/5	Ms Helen Arnopp

CO-OPTED MEMBERS

4/5	Very Rev Kenny Hall	4/5	Rev Canon Aonghus Mayes
4/5	Very Rev Nigel Dunne	5/5	Mr Alan Williamson
5/5	Ven Peter Thompson	3/5	Ms Jane Leighton
3/5	Rev Canon Dr Maurice Elliott		

The Secretary General, and the Assistant Secretary of the General Synod are entitled to attend and speak at meetings of the Standing Committee.

COMMITTEES OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE

FINANCE AND ARRANGEMENTS SUB-COMMITTEE

Mr Richard Codd
The Honorary Secretaries

LEGAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

His Honour Judge Tom Burgess
His Honour Judge Alastair Devlin
Mr Lyndon MacCann, SC
Mr Oswyn Paulin

Mr William Prentice
Sir Ben Stephens
Mr Andrew Walker
The Honorary Secretaries

PRIORITIES FUND COMMITTEE

Mr Glenn Moore
Rev Peter Ferguson
Ms Hazel Corrigan
Rt Rev George Davison

Ven Andrew Orr
Rev Peter Ferguson
Mr Roy Totten

BUDGET SUB-COMMITTEE

Mr Richard Codd
Ms Helen Arnopp
Ms Hazel Corrigan
Rev Canon Malcolm Kingston

WORLD DEVELOPMENT- BISHOPS' APPEAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Rt Rev Dr Ferran Glenfield (Chair)
Ms Iris Sutor (Hon. Secretary)
Rev Canon John Ardis
Rev Claire Henderson
Mrs Claire Holmes
Rev Canon Jonathan Pierce
Ms Gillian Purser
Rev Faith Sithole
Very Rev Niall Sloane

LAY JUDGES OF THE COURT OF THE GENERAL SYNOD

Sir Ben Stephens
His Honour Judge Alastair Devlin
Mr Lyndon MacCann SC
His Honour Judge Tom Burgess
Mr Patrick Good KC
Mr Charles Galloway
Ms Jenny Ebbage
Mr Alex Hoffman
Mr Philip Gilliland
District Judge Rosalie Prytherch

3. APPOINTMENTS/NOMINATIONS

During the period covered by this report, the Standing Committee made the following appointments/nominations:

- The following were appointed by the Standing Committee to the Working Group to Review Clergy Tenure: Very Rev Stephen Farrell, Ms Helen Arnopp, Mr Glenn Moore, Ven Barry Forde, Ms Irene Knox, Rev Canon Nicola Halford, Ms Joan Bruton, Rev Ruth Elmes. This is in addition to Rev James Boyd, The Rt Rev George Davison, Rev Canon Malcolm Kingston, Mr Lyndon MacCann SC and Mr Willie Oliver who had been appointed to the Group previously.
- The following were appointed to the Consultative Group on Disability: Rev Natasha Quinn-Thomas, Rev Aaron McAlister, Rev Canon Jono Pierce, Mr Simon Malley, Ms Naomi Swattridge, Ms Hannah Daly and Ms Rachel Kenny.
- The following were appointed to the Literature Committee: Canon Dr Kenneth Milne, Rev Canon Peter McDowell, Rev Richard Rountree, Rev Ken Rue, Rev Bernard Treacy, Mrs Cecilia West, Mr George Woodman, Dr Raymond Refaussy.
- Rev Catherine Simpson was appointed to the Board for Ministry with Children and Families as the Board of Education NI Representative.
- The following were appointed to the Humanitarian Crises Working Group: Ms June Butler, Mr Stephen Trew, Dr Simon Woodworth, Rev Canon Gillian Wharton.
- Ms Rachel Fraser was appointed to the Advisory Council to the Church of Ireland Centre, DCU, following the resignation of Ms Joyce Perdue.
- Rev Rob Jones was appointed to the Commission on Ministry as the Standing Committee representative.
- The following were appointed to the Central Communications Board: The Most Rev Pat Storey, Rev Carlton Baxter, Rev Canon Gillian Wharton, Canon Dr Kenneth Milne, Dr Raymond Refaussy, Mr David Ritchie, Mrs Janet Maxwell, Very Rev Nigel Dunne and Rev Alan Ruffli.
- Mr Richard Codd and Rev Canon Ruth West were nominated as the Standing committee representatives on the CITI Governing Council.
- Rev Suzanne Cousins was nominated as the Church of Ireland Representative on the Churches' Forum on Inter-Religious Relations.
- Ms Linda Rainsberry and Mr Garrett Casey JC were appointed to the Disciplinary Panel.
- Rev Billy Burke and Rev Dr Leonard Madden were appointed to the Marriage Council.
- The following were appointed to attend an online meeting on behalf of the Church of Ireland with the Conference of European Churches President and new General Secretary: Very Rev Niall Sloane, Rev Canon Kevin O'Brien, Rev David White.
- Ms Gina Coptý was appointed as the church of Ireland representative to attend the Annual General Meeting of Churches Together in Britain and Ireland.
- Mr Roy Totten was appointed to attend the Moravian Church Provincial Synod in Darbyshire.
- Mr Mike Johnston was appointed to attend the Church of England General Synod in York.
- Ven Andrew Orr and Rev Meghan Farr were appointed to attend the 2024 Ireland Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends in Cork.
- The Ven Paul Thompson and Ms Judith Cairns kindly were nominated to attend the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland in Belfast.
- The following were appointed to attend the Irish Inter-Church Meeting in Dromantine: Rev Kevin Ronné, Very Rev Shane Forster, Ms Gina Coptý, Ms Cate Turner, Rev Shona Bell and Rev Dr Ryan Hawk (in addition to Ms June Butler and the Dean of Limerick who attended as the Church of Ireland Representatives on the Irish Council of Churches and the Bishop of Derry and Raphoe who attended as the immediate past president of the ICC).
- Mr Edward Hardy and Dr Harriet Wilkinson were appointed as the Standing Committee representatives on the CIYD Central Board.

- The Rev Aaron McAlister and the Rev Lynne Gibson were nominated to represent the Church of Ireland at the 2025 Religious Society of Friends Yearly Meeting.
- The Archbishop of Dublin, the Bishop of Tuam, Limerick and Killaloe, the Dean of Limerick, Ms Gina Coptly, and Dr Bridget Nicholls were nominated as the Church of Ireland delegates to attend the Anglican Four Nations meeting.
- Mr Garrett Casey was appointed as a co-opted member of the church and Society Commission.

4. APPENDED MOTIONS

Motions amending the terminology used in the Bills Procedure and a motion to allow for electronic voting at in-person meetings of the General Synod can be found in Appendix A on page 138.

5. ADVISORY COUNCIL TO THE CHURCH OF IRELAND CENTRE, DCU

The report of the Advisory Council appears as Appendix B on page 140. A report from the Church of Ireland Centre, DCU is also contained in the Board of Education Report.

6. AUDIT OF ACCOUNTS

In June 2024, PricewaterhouseCoopers were appointed as auditors of the accounts of the Representative Church Body for the financial year 2024.

7. CHURCH AND SOCIETY COMMISSION

The report of the Church and Society Commission can be found in Appendix H on page 166.

8. CHURCH OF IRELAND CENSUS

The results of the 2023 Church of Ireland Census were presented to the Standing Committee at the June meeting. At this meeting it was also decided that the census would take place annually. The thanks of the General Synod must be paid to Mr Jonathan Hull for his assistance in facilitating the census in the online format which has worked so well and for his expertise in compiling the resulting data. Figures from the 2023 and 2024 censuses can be found in Appendix E on page 157.

9. CHURCH RESPONSE TO GAZA AND OTHER HUMANITARIAN CRISES

At the General Synod of 2024, a motion was passed requesting the Standing Committee to ‘identify an enhanced mechanism by which we as a church community may publicly speak to such gross humanitarian situations in a timely and Christian manner, especially when sacred scripture and the Word of God is being used ... to justify acts of war.’ A Working Group was formed by the Standing Committee and the report of this Group was presented to the Standing Committee at the November 2024 meeting. The group concluded that the only body that can speak on behalf of the Church of Ireland is the General Synod and that, while bishops, archbishops, and various committees (such as CASC) may issue statements to the Church, they do not speak on behalf of the Church (although this nuance is often lost on the media and the general public). The group noted that bishops should be encouraged to have robust and timely responses to crises as they arise, and that theologians should be encouraged to make written responses where it is felt that Scripture is being abused. Finally, the working group acknowledged times where Christian Churches spoke together and noted the power of this, encouraging Christian Churches (the Church of Ireland included) to work together with the Irish Council of Churches and the Irish Inter Church Meeting in issuing statements.

10. CLERGY PENSIONS FUND – SOLVENCY LEVY

In September 2024, Ms Hilary Prentice, Chair of the RB Executive Committee presented a report on proposed changes to the Clergy Pensions Fund Solvency Levy.

Standing Committee approved the following resolution:

That, as recommended by the Representative Body and the Trustee, in accordance with Section 36 of Chapter XIV of the Constitution of the Church of Ireland, the rate of levy to be paid by each diocese towards the cost of securing the solvency of the Clergy Pensions Fund from 1 January 2025 be set at an unchanged percentage level of 3% of the Minimum Approved Stipend in force at 1 January 2025.

11. COMPLAINTS AND DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURE

In January 2025, the Standing Committee considered the 2024 Income and Expenditure report for the Complaints Committee as required under Chapter VIII 23 (e). This report is appended as Appendix J on page 170. The appointment of the Complaint Administrator for the purposes of the relevant part of Chapter VIII was approved for another year.

12. CONSTITUTIONAL REVISION

At the January meeting, the Standing Committee passed a resolution that a bill to make editorial changes to the Constitution of the Church of Ireland be brought to the General Synod next year and that Mr Lyndon MacCann would act as editor.

13. CONSULTATIVE GROUP ON DISABILITY

The Standing Committee agreed to seek new expressions of interest for the Consultative Group on Disability and a new group was appointed. The report of the Consultative Group on Disability can be found as Appendix I on page 169.

14. DIGNITY IN CHURCH LIFE POLICIES

In June, the Standing Committee received a presentation from Ms Judy Peters from the Anti-Bullying and Harassment Policy Review Group, discussing the Review Group's proposed changes to the Anti-Bullying and Harassment Policy. This item was brought back to the September meeting for further discussion and it was agreed that this item go back to the House of Bishops for further consideration before any changes to the policy were formally approved.

In September 2024, in accordance with Statute Ch. I of 2015, the Standing Committee approved the amended Clergy Permanent Health Insurance Policy and Guidelines for inclusion in the Dignity in Church Life Charter.

15. ELECTRONIC VOTING FOR IN-PERSON MEETINGS OF THE GENERAL SYNOD

In September, the Honorary Secretaries, with the assistance of Mr Jonathan Hull, presented the Standing Committee with a proposal for the introduction of a system of electronic voting for use at in-person meetings of the General Synod. This proposed system would entail the scanning of a QR code using a smart phone or tablet and would replace the current teller/voting card system (although the teller/voting card system could still be called upon where required at the discretion of the president). Electronic voting should be quicker and more reliable than the current system and every vote could be quickly verified.

In order for the option of electronic voting at in-person meetings of the General Synod to be available, a change in standing orders is required. This motion can be found in Appendix A on page 138.

16. FINANCING OF SAFEGUARDING

Statute III of 2018 makes provision for the financing of the work of the Safeguarding Board including the work of the Officers and parish vetting. This statute includes a requirement for the Standing Committee to report on a triennial basis on the implementation of this statute, specifying any amendment which may appear to be necessary or expedient. At the March meeting of the Standing Committee, it was reported that this statute had been implemented as required over the past three years.

17. FUTURE OF CURACIES: DEPLOYMENT, PROVISION AND FUNDING

At the November 2024 meeting, the Standing Committee approved the funding and training proposals put forward by the Future of Curacies Working Group. The report of this group can be found as Appendix K on page 171.

18. GENERAL SYNOD 2026

At the June meeting of the Standing Committee, it was agreed that remote sessions were not conducive to the effective carrying out of the business of the General Synod. Therefore, it was agreed that from 2026 onwards the General Synod would revert to the model of taking place over three days in-person.

The Standing Committee also passed by resolution that the General Synod of 2026 will take place in the Slieve Donard Hotel in Newcastle, Co. Down.

19. GENERAL SYNOD/STANDING COMMITTEE FINANCES

At the September 2024 meeting of the Standing Committee, the Budget Sub-Committee presented its report which was accepted by the Standing Committee and forwarded to the Allocations Committee for consideration.

20. GENERAL SYNOD ROYALTIES FUND

While the General Synod Royalties Fund has been closed to further grant applications until it has been restored to a healthier position, in June a resolution was passed requesting that the Allocations Committee directed the sum of €4,500 to support the publication of the Journal *SEARCH*.

21. IN-PERSON STANDING COMMITTEE MEETINGS

With the return of in-person meetings after the Covid-19 Pandemic, the Standing Committee began meeting in the larger venue of the former Chapel of the Church of Ireland College of Education. However, with the elimination of social distancing restrictions, the Standing Committee voted to return to the venue of Boardroom 1 of Church House for its meetings.

22. JOURNAL OF THE GENERAL SYNOD –EDITOR

Dr Kenneth Milne stepped down as the editor of the Journal of the General Synod and was replaced by the deputy editor, the Very Rev Gregory Dunstan. The General Synod is indebted to Dr Milne for his almost thirty years of service as editor.

23. MINIMUM APPROVED STIPENDS

Under section 51 (1) of the Constitution of the Church of Ireland as revised by Chapter VI of 2011, the Standing Committee is required to consider recommendations from the Representative Church Body as to the rates of Minimum Approved Stipends to take effect from 1 January 2025.

At its meeting of 17th September 2024, the Standing Committee heard a submission by Mr Michael Johnston, Chairman of the Stipends Committee, which detailed the RCB's recommendations.

The Standing Committee approved the recommendations of the Representative Church Body and approved the following resolution:

That, as recommended by the Representative Body in accordance with Section 51 (1) of Chapter IV of the Constitution of the Church of Ireland, the rates of Minimum Approved Stipends shall be as follows with effect from 1 January 2025:

- (a) no stipend shall be less than £37,310 per annum in Northern Ireland or €45,640 per annum in the Republic of Ireland in the case of an Incumbent or a member of the clergy appointed as Bishop's Curate under the provisions of Section 42 of Chapter IV or of a Diocesan Curate over the age of 30 years appointed under the provisions of Section 43 of Chapter IV.
- (b) the stipend for a Curate-Assistant shall be in accordance with the following scale:

First Year	75.0%	of minimum stipend for incumbent
Second Year	77.5%	"
Third Year	80.0%	"
Fourth Year	82.5%	"
Fifth	and 85.0%	"
succeeding Years		

24. PENSIONABLE STIPENDS

Under Section 2 of Chapter XIV of the Constitution of the Church of Ireland as revised by Chapter V of 2011, the Standing Committee is required to consider a recommendation from the Representative Church Body and the Church of Ireland Clergy Pensions Trustee Limited as to the rates of Pensionable Stipend to take effect from 1 January 2025.

At its meeting of 17th September 2023, the Standing Committee heard a presentation by Ms Hilary Prentice, Chair of the Executive Committee of the Representative Church Body, which detailed the financial background to the recommendations of the RCB and the Church of Ireland Clergy Pensions Trustee Limited.

The Standing Committee approved the recommendations of the Representative Church Body by adopting the following resolution:

That, as recommended by the Executive Committee and the Trustee, in accordance with Section 1 of Chapter XIV of the Constitution of the Church of Ireland, Pensionable Stipend shall be as follows with effect from 1 January 2025:

- (a) Pensionable Stipend shall be £33,390 per annum in Northern Ireland and €42,247 per annum in the Republic of Ireland in the case of an Incumbent or a member of the clergy appointed as Bishop's Curate under the provisions of Section 42 of Chapter IV or of a Diocesan Curate over the age of 30 years appointed under the provisions of Section 43 of Chapter IV.
- (b) Pensionable Stipend for a Curate-Assistant shall be in accordance with the following scale:

First Year	75.0% of Pensionable Stipend for incumbent
Second Year	77.5% "
Third Year	80.0% "
Fourth Year	82.5% "
Fifth and succeeding Years	85.0% ""

25. PIONEER MINISTRY GOVERNING COUNCIL

In January, the Pioneer Ministry Governing Council presented an interim report on Pioneer Ministry to the Standing Committee, as is required in the PMGC Terms of Reference.

26. PRIORITIES FUND

The accounts of the Priorities Fund and the grants, approved by Standing Committee in March 2025, are contained as Appendix M on page 174.

27. CHURCH OF IRELAND SAFEGUARDING BOARD

That Standing Committee previously requested that the Safeguarding Board give due consideration to the issue of gender identity in the revised Child Safeguarding Policy. The Safeguarding Board compiled a response which was provided to the June meeting of the Standing Committee. However, the Standing Committee felt this response to be inadequate. Therefore, the Safeguarding Board prepared a new response which was presented to the Standing Committee in September and deemed sufficient. At this meeting, the Standing Committee was also provided with a copy of the Safeguarding Strategy for 2024-2026. A presentation was then given to the Standing Committee on this Strategy at the November meeting by Dr Niall Moore, Safeguarding Officer.

The full report of the Safeguarding Board appears as Appendix O on page 186.

28. STANDING COMMITTEE INCOME AND EXPENDITURE AND GENERAL PURPOSES FUND ACCOUNTS 2024

The accounts are contained as Appendix P on page 190.

29. THIRD LEVEL CHAPLAINCIES

The final report of the Third Level Chaplaincies Review Group can be found in Appendix N on page 184.

30. WORKING GROUP CONCERNING A CO-ORDINATED RESPONSE BY THE CHURCH TO HISTORIC INSTITUTIONAL ABUSE

The report of the Working Group can be found in Appendix Q on page 195.

31. WORKING GROUP TO REVIEW CLERGY TENURE

Since the General Synod of 2024, the Select Committee to Review Clergy Tenure has ceased to exist as a Select Committee of the General Synod and is now a Working Group of the Standing Committee. The full report of this Working Group can be found as Appendix R on page 199.