

THE CHURCH OF IRELAND COUNCIL FOR MISSION – REPORT 2025

MEMBERSHIP (AS OF JANUARY 2025)

ATTENDANCE FIGURE FOR JUNE 2024 – JANUARY 2025

Rt Rev Ferran Glenfield (2)	House of Bishops / Kilmore
Rev Tim Wright (Hon Chair) (3)	Synod
Rev Colin McConaghie (Hon Secretary) (3)	Synod
Sarah Taylor (Hon. Treasurer) (3)	Kilmore and Elphin
Ms Emma Lynch (3)	AMS
Ms Jenny Smyth (2)	AMS
Rev Stephen McElhinney (0)	AMS (stepped down May 2024)
Rev Dr Paddy McGlinchey (2)	CITI
Rev Dr Laurence Graham (2)	Methodist Church
Mr Thomas Stevenson (2)	Armagh (stepped down September 2024)
Ven Paul Mooney (1)	Cashel
Rev Kingsley Sutton (3)	Cork
Rev Jonathan McFarland (3)	Derry and Raphoe
Ven Andrew Orr (2)	Synod
Rev Isaac Hannah. (2)	Synod
Mrs Jill Lester (2)	Connor
Mrs Hazel Speares (3)	Mothers' Union
Mr David Frizelle (3)	Tuam, Limerick and Killaloe
Rev William Jeffrey (3)	Clogher
Rev Henry Blair (1)	AMS
Mrs Hilary McClay (1)	Bishops' Appeal
Ms Kelley Bermingham (0)	Meath and Kildare
Mr Luke Hawkins (2)	CIYD (joined June 2024)
Rev Adam Pullen (2)	Synod (joined June 2024)
Rev Richard Balmer (1)	AMS (joined January 2025)

According to the constitution of the Council, each diocese is entitled to nominate a representative and an alternate. Alternates attend when the principal representative is unable to. Some members represent more than one possible constituency.

The Council for Mission met three times from June 2023 to January 2024, unfortunately a fourth meeting had to be cancelled due to a bereavement.

These meetings were a combination of in person in the Church of Ireland Theological Institute and online via Zoom.

CHANGES IN MEMBERSHIP SINCE GENERAL SYNOD 2023

Rev Stephen McElhinney who was an AMS rep on Synod stepped down in May 2024 following his departure from the South American Missionary Society to return to parish ministry. We wish Stephen every blessing.

Mr Thomas Stevenson stepped down from the Council in September 2024 after many years of faithful service. We thank Thomas for his contribution to CfM and wish him God's blessing.

Mr Luke Hawkins joined the CfM as CIYD representative in June 2024. Luke will provide an important link between the Council and the youth of our church.

Rev Adam Pullen returned to the CfM as Synod representative in June 2024. Adam is a former chair of the Council, and we are delighted to have him back on board.

Rev Robert Balmer joins the CfM as AMS representative. Robert will represent the work of Crosslinks, and we look forward to his contribution to the Council.

We are grateful to all the members who have contributed to the work of the Council for Mission over the years.

We continue to use the Anglican 5 marks of mission to focus our activities, which are:

1. To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom (Tell).
2. To teach, baptise and nurture new believers (Teach).
3. To respond to human need by loving service (Tend).
4. To transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and pursue peace and reconciliation (Transform).
5. To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation, and sustain and renew the life of the earth (Treasure)

(*Bonds of Affection-1984 ACC-6 p49, Mission in a Broken World-1990 ACC-8 p101*).

ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION:

COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP

The aim of the CFM has always been to represent the wide breadth of the Church of Ireland with representation from each Diocese alongside members elected by General Synod and representatives of the Association of Missionary Societies.

There has been a large turn over in membership over the last couple of years with a number of people having served the maximum terms while others have left the Diocese or organisation they represented.

We would encourage those Dioceses that aren't currently represented to prayerfully consider nominating someone to represent them on the Council.

2024 - A YEAR OF NEW OPPORTUNITIES

In the report to General Synod 2024 we spoke of the CfM undergoing a year of transition as new members had joined and we had spent time seeking God's guidance for the coming years. We reported that the CfM would be focussing on two major projects in the year to come, the launch of a new Podcast Series and a Global Mission Partner. Both of these projects launched during 2024.

PODCASTS

'Mission Matters - A Church of Ireland Council for Mission Podcast' launched in June 2024 under the production of Mr Stephen Fletcher, Communications officer of the United Dioceses of Tuam, Limerick and Killaloe. The aim of the Podcasts is to promote mission within the Church of Ireland both here and overseas and to encourage others to engage in mission.

The first podcast featured Ms Joanne Miller, a Church Army diocesan evangelist in Glendermott Parish, in the Diocese of Derry and Raphoe.

The initial podcast was followed up with episodes featuring:

- Rev Daniel Lescano, Vicar General of the Anglican Diocese of North Argentina
- Mulugeta Dejen-Haile, Regional Programmes Coordinator for Tearfund Ireland in Ethiopia
- Rev Arsène Mafurebe, Gitega Diocese, Burundi and CfM mission guest
- Mr John Quinn, Strategic Director of Alpha Ireland

All of these podcasts can be found on the Church of Ireland Website and the CfM social media. Thanks to Mr Peter Cheney, Church of Ireland Press Officer, for his assistance in promoting the podcasts.

The Council would like to thank Stephen for all his hard work in helping us get this project up and running.

If you have any inspirational missional stories that would make for inspiring listening, please let us know as we seek to develop the podcasts in the coming year.

GLOBAL MISSION PARTNER

In 2024 CfM started a further new initiative with our first Global Mission Partner as we welcomed Rev Arsène Mafurebe Pastor of St Marc's Parish, Nyabutusti, Gitega Diocese, Burundi.

Rev Arsène was sponsored by Church of Ireland parishes through his theological degree course at Bujumbura Christian University, Burundi. He was ordained in 2021 and has since been serving as priest in charge of St Marc's parish. Rev Arsène's visit was funded by CfM and facilitated through CMS Ireland one of our AMS members. We are grateful to Mr Roger Thompson for all of his work in co-ordinating such a varied program for the visit and for all our church communities who welcomed Arsène across the island of Ireland.

During his five weeks visit across April, May and June 2024 we believe the Church of Ireland benefitted greatly from the presence of Rev Arsène. Arsène brought insight, energy and a different perspective on how we do things here. He helped us to see with fresh eyes our part of the global church.

We believe the best way to understand the impact of Arsène's visit is through his own words.

"I am very happy with how my visit to Ireland/N Ireland and England from 23/4 to 5/6/2024 was planned. I was well briefed beforehand. Meanwhile I understand that the delay in obtaining my Irish and UK visa might have disturbed plans at some point. This placement visit was hosted by the Council for Mission, coordinated and supported by CMS Ireland, two entities that collaborate well and whose mission are complementary.

During my visit, the weather was favourable; it allowed me to easily adapt to everything. I value a lot the care and consideration I received from all placement hosts. They were very welcoming, they did a lot of driving, walking and were very patient with me. I never had to complain about food, beds/coverings, hot water for bathing, and having my clothes washed. They are very friendly. I pray to not have been a very demanding guest!

For 6 weeks, I visited all sorts of contexts for mission from Dublin to Sligo to Belfast: children's ministry, youth and urban mission, elderly ministry, rural ministry, peace and reconciliation initiatives, pioneer ministry and the Church Army Training Centre, hospitals and school chaplaincies. I attended confirmation services in both Castleknock parish, Dublin with Archbishop Michael Jackson, and Calry parish Sligo with Bishop Ferran Glenfield, as well as a Burundi Focus Event in Glendermott and New Buildings parish, Derry/Londonderry.

Coming from Burundi where Christianity is less than 150 years old, my understanding is that Ireland has a very old Christian tradition. However, the fact that at a certain point in history religion at some extent interfered with politics, that made religion and the Church accountable for certain political failures hence bringing people far from God and the Church. That being said, it is encouraging to note that the Church is working hard to pass on the good news of the Gospel to the next generation in a highly complex socio-political context.

Please find below a few reflections:

a) Visits to Discovery Gospel Choir & St Brigid's Cathedral, Kildare

I visited KIVA School in Kildare which has children from 33 different countries. This shows, in my understanding, how complicated it is to minister in such a multicultural context!

I also visited Trudy's Bible house group. Trudy is a 94-year-old lady, a lay reader who incredibly loves the Lord and who still runs a Bible Study in her home. I was amazed to learn that the youngest member of the house group is 79. Burundi having a very young population, this visit introduced me to a ministry to the elderly that I looked at very closely.

Being a fervent music lover, joining Discovery Gospel Choir for rehearsal was an enjoyable moment. Discovery Gospel Choir is an incredible outreach initiative in the midst of Dublin, a very multicultural city, that creates a feeling of belonging in the hearts of these many young people (some Christians and others not) presenting to them the Gospel in a musical envelope.

My visit to St Brigid's Cathedral was inspiring. St Brigid is an amazing and old Cathedral, full of history and Heritage. The church is using this site as a centre of mission! With an estimated attendance of above 20,000 visitors every year, the Cathedral uses tourist visits as an opportunity for Gospel proclamation. It also attracts

many young girls as St Brigid is perceived as a patron of Women's Leadership since the early church. I believe this to be an asset the COI can capitalize on to further strengthen local mission.

I also visited St Brigid's Light Peace Centre - a Roman Catholic nun's peace centre that provides a safe space for pilgrimages and reconciliation in a post-conflict country and context. The centre reminded me that Peace is not only the absence of gunshots! It is a state of the heart. There is still a lot to be done for people of all Ireland to completely heal them from the wounds of the past, just like Burundi.

b) Church Army College, Sheffield

Church army plays an important role in training future commissioned evangelists within the Church of England and the Church of Ireland. I attended mission and evangelism first year module and I was asked to speak on mission in context.

From my experience, mission done outside its cultural, environmental, economic, demographical and ethical context does more harm than good.

I noted that candidates come from Churches from different theological traditions (conservatives, Catholics, evangelicals, charismatics, etc.). However, despite their diversities, tutors do their best to be as objective and practical as possible, taking into account that mission will be applied differently depending on the theological influence of the student and her/his Church.

I genuinely believe that the mission of the Church should not rely only on ordained ministry. There should be room for flexibility in form, however not in substance, which would allow lay and young people to actively participate in mission, always thinking about new ways of presenting the Gospel to unreached categories of each community.

c) Glendermott Parish, Derry/ Londonderry

Conflictual history of the city:

Derry/Londonderry is a walled city. I had a walk on the wall around the city and realized the history of Ireland somehow mirrors the history of Burundi. The two countries have suffered periods of troubles, political and religious divisions that have caused so much psychological, physical and spiritual harm and wounds yet to be totally healed in both countries. The Peace Bridge and all the initiatives for reconciliation are perfect examples of what reconciliation ministry looks like!

d) Another Chance Charity Shop

This is the Glendermott and Newbuildings Parish's Charity Shop, located in a former interface area between Catholics and Protestants during the troubles. This shop gives opportunity for people to donate clothes and other possessions which are sold to generate income to support mission.

It serves the communities as prices are lower compared to other shops and gives to the Church the opportunity to show compassion and the love of Christ to people in need (e.g. homeless people). Furthermore, the Charity brings people together. From Monday to Sunday, there are people who volunteer to work in the Charity Shop; some of them do not even attend Church. The charity has become a powerful ministry.

e) The House Group

From Africa, we have these stereotypes that the West is progressively becoming secular. It was therefore very encouraging to see that there are people who still meet in small house groups to share the word of God. For me, this proves that the old way of relational and invitational approach to evangelism within neighbourhoods is still relevant.

All that being said, attending the General synod of the Church of Ireland was an opportunity for me to learn, to understand the context of ministry in Ireland and to embrace the Anglican communion as I felt linked to what was happening miles away from my home country. The Synod was also an opportunity for me to connect with new people, as I first met Archbishop John McDowell there.

The possibility to invite partners in mission from other denominations in the general synod was totally new to me. I loved that as it strengthens ecumenism by creating strong bonds of partnerships in mission. The baptism of children of unmarried parents (single parents or parents that are not religiously married) was a heated debate at the General Synod. This further highlighted the challenge within the Church (in Burundi as well) of having

a common theological, doctrinal and pastoral understanding of what it means to be a welcoming, caring and loving Church for both lay people and clergy.

Thus, I believe this placement visit has brought closer our two Churches of Burundi and Ireland. I have ministered in the Church of Ireland by sharing the word of God, testimonies and addressing people and groups of people. Through this, I was able to talk about Burundi and its Church to members of the C o I both clergy and laity. This bridges cultural differences and serves as a solid foundation to build a positive bilateral mission partnership between our two Churches. Also, I have learnt new ways of doing ministry in addition to making new friendships. I have grown as a person and as a pastor in the Church of Burundi, Gitega Diocese.

I believe that after my visit there are more people from Ireland who pray for what God is doing in Burundi and vice versa. The newly signed partnership between Gitega Diocese, Armagh Diocese and CMS Ireland was built on the foundation laid by this visit.

In short, the fact of changing placements a number of times and constantly adapting to new people has been the biggest challenge and the biggest opportunity at the same time. It has allowed me to meet many people and to explore mission in the C o I to the maximum. Language has been negligibly challenging as well as English accents change a lot from place to place in Ireland.

However, I would highly recommend this experience for other global partners. My humble opinion is that local effective mission must include experience sharing visits and mutual support between global partners.”

We believe these words to be a testimony to the impact of the global partner visit across the church of Ireland. The feedback from all who engaged with Rev Arsène during his time with us was extremely positive. The opportunity for two-way learning with global partners will believe is invaluable as we continue to encourage and engage in mission in the Church of Ireland.

CfM plan to continue this project in 2025 and we are currently working with AMS to develop a identify the right partnership and program for 2025.

It is the vision of the council, depending on funding approval, to send someone from within the Church of Ireland on a reciprocal project overseas in 2025.

BURSARIES

In 2024, CfM found itself with a surplus of funds which had accumulated over the Covid years and had to be spent within the financial year under RCB guidelines.

In order to ensure those monies were used for mission purposes we were able to support a number of projects throughout the CoI. It is to be noted that these grants were only possible due to an underspend of previous years, and this was a one-off opportunity for CfM to support mission projects financially as we are not a funding body.

The following grants were awarded:

€2897 CMS Ireland

€1135 International Church Society

€2000 Sligo Council for Mission

€800 Cork Centre for Mission

€3500 Kildare Centre for Mission

€2500 TLK Future Farming Conference

The CfM continues to offer a bursary grant to support ordinands from the Theological Institute who chose to go overseas as part of their placements. CfM has committed €250 per year to this bursary.

ASSOCIATION OF MISSIONARY SOCIETIES

AMS elected new officers in November. Jenny Smyth (CMSI) continues as chair of AMS. Ms Julia McKinley (NBSI) replaces Ms Emma Lynch as Secretary and Rev Richard Balmer (Crosslinks) replaces Ms Catherine Hillcox as treasurer. AMS members thanked Catherine and Emma for their kind service.

In 2024 Sat-7 ([SAT-7 | Making God's Love Visible](#)) was admitted to membership. There are currently 15 member organisations. AMS met 3 times during the year, kindly hosted by CITI in November and March, when an AMS member was invited to preach in chapel with a mission theme. The final meeting took place during General Synod. 4 AMS representatives serve on the Council for Mission. Sessions on the practicalities of engaging in global mission are facilitated by AMS as part of the Continuing Ministerial Education programme. This has been a valuable opportunity to think through how parishes can become involved.

AMS was responsible for arranging the programme for Rev Arsène Mafurebe from Burundi during his visit sponsored by the Council for Mission. Rev Arsène connected with many church leaders and ministries across the Church of Ireland during his visit, contributing and learning in equal measure. It is very much hoped that visits to and from the global church can become an annual opportunity.

A resolution was passed to offer a grant each year towards a global church placement for students in training in CITI to strengthen links across the Anglican Communion. This matches the grant agreed by the Council for Mission.

The AMS mission stand in General Synod, Armagh, was as usual a collaborative enterprise and attracted considerable interest affording the opportunity to engage with clergy and delegates from across the island to discuss the missional support offered by the societies represented.

Bishops' Appeal continues to be a very useful channel for funds to support programmes across the global church, implemented through some of the AMS member societies.

The friendship, solidarity, and fellowship among AMS members strengthens our missional activities as does our engagement with Council for Mission. Thank you for your unwavering commitment and support. Together, we will continue to work to see God's kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven.