

Council for Mission Report

Proposer: Revd Jonathan McFarland

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Thank you for the opportunity to address General Synod.

Can I begin by thanking the Revd William Jeffrey for last year's report?

The Revd Tim Wright (Honorary Chair of the Council of Mission) and Revd Colin McConaghie (Secretary) send their apologies for being unable to Synod this year but I would like, on behalf of the Council of Mission to thank them for their leadership and valuable work in making this past year a productive year in the Council of Mission.

Our appreciation also goes to Sarah Taylor for being our Treasurer.

The Council for Mission is a Council of General Synod made up of diocesan representatives from across the Church of Ireland who sit alongside other groups and representatives with an interest in mission.

The Council is a partnership with other mission agencies, such as the House of Bishops, Synod members, diocesan representatives, AMS (the Association of Mission Societies), CMS (Church Missionary Society), Bishops' Appeal, Church of Ireland Theological Institute (CITI), the Methodist Church, and the Mothers' Union.

The aim of the Council is to facilitate and encourage mission alongside these dedicated agencies, within and throughout the Church, at home and abroad – building on the Anglican Communion's Five Marks of Mission - to Tell, Teach, Tend, Transform and Treasure.

What do these Five Marks of Mission mean?

To **tell** means to proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom

To **teach** means to teach baptise and nurture new believers

To **tend** means to respond to human need by loving service.

To **transform** means to transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind, and to pursue peace and reconciliation.

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To **treasure** means to strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth.

I am the Revd Jonathan McFarland, from the parish of Urney in the Diocese of Derry and Raphoe.

I am also the Diocese of Derry and Raphoe representative on the Council for Mission.

I also sit on Derry and Raphoe's Board of Mission and Unity and recently I became the Derry and Raphoe representative linking our own diocese with Bishop Given Guala in the Diocese of Kondoia in Tanzania through the work of CMS in that region.

I have been on the Council of Mission for six years. I must say that the scale of the work seemed daunting at first. It was impressive how many of our mission partners and their projects were given a voice on the Council for Mission.

I remember, as a newcomer, wondering how I would fit in, but as time moved on I grew to enjoy and value our worship and fellowship together, and gradually the mission projects became more understandable thanks to the excellent input from the various mission agencies.

Mission has certainly been a priority in my own Diocese of Derry and Raphoe. I am proud to say that my own parish of Urney played a key role in supporting Bishop Hall in Madagascar up until his recent retirement. Bishop Hall grew up in Urney Parish and had his faith nurtured there. We were always thrilled to have him visit us when he came home and he maintained regular correspondence with us and the work in Madagascar.

Sadly when one work ends, it can leave a vacuum with the danger that the work of mission becomes relegated to a secondary role in a parish.

How do we prevent that from happening in our parishes?

I was aware of the close link that Bishop Andrew had with CMS and Bishop Given Guala in Tanzania. That relationship was granted a formal status at our Diocesan Synod last autumn and positive developments are currently being worked on.

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Recently, at our clergy conference in Sligo, I was appointed the link representative between Derry and Raphoe and the Diocese of Kondoa in Tanzania. There is a degree of excitement in our diocese with this mission partnership.

Bishop Given from Kondoa needs help because of the huge growth in new converts in his diocese. Over the past twenty years, his diocese has grown from 5,000 believers to over 25,000 believers. Could you imagine that happening in Ireland?

We need to be praying that it does.. The first time I met Bishop Given he taught me a simple song: “We need revival now, we need revival, Lord!”

Despite the distance between us, we need to make revival our prayer too. But how do we connect to that same vision that is held by our mission partners?

Let me give you two examples that have made an impact on me, both national and local.

Firstly our relationship with Bishop Given and CMS has identified a deep need for facilities that will serve as an administrative hub but also as a training facility for new and existing clergy who want to advance their theological studies in the Diocese of Kondoa in Tanzania.

This work is wonderful in itself and it follows the energy generated by the Revd Arsène Mafurebe from Gitega, Burundi, from his visit to Ireland last year. His enthusiasm and vision has certainly boosted and revived again our love of mission in Derry and Raphoe and throughout the Church of Ireland.

Let me give you a brief example of how that excitement is beginning to gain traction.

Bishop Andrew received a prayer request recently from Bishop Given about an urgent need in Kondoa.

Bishop Given had requested that the people in Derry and Raphoe could pray for rain in that part of Tanzania. He specified that it needed to be the ‘right rain’ Too little or too much would be no good, it needed to be ‘the right rain’

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I prayed for ‘the right rain’ that Sunday in the parish of Urney. After the service, my Church Warden, Mr Archie Baird, thanked me for the prayers. Archie is a farmer. He said that he understood how Bishop Given felt, the ‘right rain’ is important.

At that precise moment I knew that our mission vacuum was behind us. Archie Baird’s comments and the rest of our prayers that Sunday, was our first real connection with Bishop Given and the people of the Diocese of Kondoa in Tanzania. They were no longer thousands of miles away in Africa, they were now in the hearts and prayers of our people in the parish of Urney in the Diocese of Derry and Raphoe.

I believe that if this kind of prayer connection is replicated throughout our various global mission partners and the Church of Ireland in general, by the power of the Holy Spirit, people will re-engage what God is doing through all of our mission agencies.

Prayer has always preceded revival. We think about the upper room on the Day of Pentecost when the Church was born. This need for more prayer applies at both home and abroad with our brothers and sisters in mission.

How will we know that we are making progress in mission in the Church of Ireland?

One significant and exciting development that has been fruitful in the Council of Mission this past few years, has been the development of the ‘Mission Matters’ podcasts which are available on the Church of Ireland website. These podcasts prove that parishioners are testifying and engaging in the work of mission at home and abroad. More podcasts are planned for this incoming year.

Finally, it gives me great pleasure to propose the Church of Ireland Council for Mission report to the General Synod 2025 as contained in the pages of the 2025 Book of Reports.

Thank you.