

Covenant Council Report
Proposer: Dean Nigel Dunne
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Archbishop,

Since the historic agreement on the interchangeability of ministry between our two traditions in 2013 the Covenant Council has had significant work to do in working out both the ecclesiological and practical outworking of it on the ground. As is usually the case with such ecumenical agreements there will always be unforeseen matters that weren't obvious at the time. Now that we have had some movement of clergy from one polity to another various issues have arisen, not least matters of oversight. One such matter the Council has had to resolve is the question of Full Connexion for Methodist ministers who move into ministry in a Church of Ireland context. I don't think we Anglicans realised the depth of feeling, tradition and identity that Full Connexion brings for Methodist ministers and the wider Methodist Church. I am glad to say that recent discussions have been an education for the Church of Ireland members of the Council and it looks like this matter is almost fully resolved. Recommendations are being brought to the Methodist Conference in June.

Among the more practical issues which have arisen is that of the charity registration of Local Covenant Partnerships and we are seeking to address the issues which have arisen with a view to the regulatory frameworks both sides of the border. I will leave the second of this report to explain further as it was beyond my expertise!

As ever, the Council continues to encourage collaboration between our traditions on the ground and in the last year particular focus has been given to the interchange of Methodist Local Preachers and Diocesan Lay Readers. The pilot scheme run by the Dioceses of Dublin and Glendalough and the Southern District of the Methodist Church has been very useful and a small sub-group are working on how their experience might shape similar schemes in other parts of the island.

This is the last time Synod members will have to listen to me proposing this report as I am standing down from the Council after about 20 years! It's quite long enough and I feel the time is right for 'younger blood' to be brought onto the Council to continue its work, which hopefully from now on will be much more about growing shared opportunities for our common mission at grassroots level now that it would seem all the remaining major ecclesiological issues have been resolved. That said, we thought we had cracked everything in 2014 ... so fingers crossed and perhaps the odd prayers said!

Archbishop, I have pleasure in proposing that the report of the Covenant Council be received.