

R.B. Report - Seconding Speech: Very Rev Niall Sloane

Your Grace, Niall Sloane, Diocese of Limerick and a clerical member of the RB Executive Committee.

I would like to thank Ms Prentice for her presentation of the business of the Representative Church Body. Given that you have already received a detailed presentation on the business of the RCB, I would like to take this opportunity to consider some of the services provided by the RCB.

RCB Library

I have heard it said that the RCB Library is one of the Church of Ireland's best kept secrets and so I would like to take the opportunity to advertise some of the services that it provides. Students at the Church of Ireland Theological Institute will be aware of the library and its support of the theological education at the Institute. During the year the RCB Library held public exhibitions of its collection, including the well-attended installation of the Bartlett Collection at the former Chapel of the Church of Ireland College of Education Campus.

The library provides access to the public to its own rich collection and to church records, and acts as a repository for parish records. This is a precious and valuable collection to have in our custody and we thank the Librarian, Dr Hood, and her team for their careful stewardship of these documents. For any parish with registers lying in a safe or drawer, I would encourage you to send your archives to the RCB Library for safekeeping knowing that you can access this information through the library staff. Furthermore, every church across the island has precious objects in its care, such as church plate and the care and record keeping of these cannot be underestimated. I know Dr Hood, would be happy to provide support to any parish in this area.

Church Fabric & Development Fund

Your Grace, it may not be of interest to you or members of Synod to know that I come from County Cavan, married to Scots woman and with strong Ballymena connections. However, if you join the dots, there is a common theme and therefore, it should not surprise you when I talk of money ... and more to the point free money. As you will have seen there are several funds administered by the RCB which support parishes. There are property grants, including the Marshal Beresford and the Church Fabric Fund which support on-going works on our church buildings. This year an additional energy grant has been added to the portfolio. In addition to the Priorities fund, mentioned elsewhere, as well as local authority and state grants – there are numerous funding opportunities to help parishes across the island – so please do seek them out. Grant aid can significantly help a parish and enthuse our parish treasurers!

You will note from the report, that there has been several applications to the Church Fabric & Development Fund for diocesan missional projects, which support strategic initiatives and which this year provided grants to display the Red Book of Ossory at Saint Canice's Cathedral, Kilkenny, Mind Matters Training, a grant to support the service marking the covenant with the Moravian church, and funding for the visit of His Majesty, King Charles to Armagh Cathedral. There is funding out there, so seek it out.

Representative Role

But the RCB is not just a service provider or the custodian of funds, it is a Representative Body, The Representative Body of the Church of Ireland. With membership of the Representative Body includes the bishop, clerical and lay membership of each diocese. The RB Executive Committee comprise members of this Representative Body plus co-opted members who provide specific skills and expertise, with a mandate to support the mission and ministry of the Church of Ireland.

For the Representative Body to work effectively it needs to **communicate and listen**. At each ordinary meeting of the Representative Body, the Chair of the RB Executive Committee presents the business of the Executive Committee, and members of the RB have the opportunity to ask questions. And today we are reporting to you, General Synod, on the work of the RCB, and we invite your questions and welcome the opportunity not just to provide a response but to take away your feedback, comments and questions so that these may influence the future of the Representative Church Body.

Strategy and governance are high on the Executive Committee's agenda, and the RCB continues to report full compliance with the Charities Governance Code. The Executive Committee has a sub-committee actively considering **strategy** to ensure that we effectively and efficiently address our role of supporting the church.

Finally, I want to pay special tribute to the Chair of the RB Executive, Ms Hilary Prentice for her wise, gracious and diligent conduct of our activities and her unwavering service to our church.

Your Grace, I second the Representative Body Report.