

APPENDIX A

MOTIONS TO BE BROUGHT TO GENERAL SYNOD

CO-OPTION CASUAL VACANCIES ON STANDING COMMITTEE

Proposer:

That Standing Order 6 (4) in the Constitution of the Standing Committee be amended to read:

Any casual vacancy by death, resignation, or otherwise occurring among the co-opted members shall be filled, as soon as conveniently may be, either by an electronic nomination and election process or at a meeting of the Standing Committee by election by the members present.

PRIVATE MEMBER'S MOTION

Proposer: Lucy Michael - Diocese: Dublin & Glendalough

Seconder: Gillian Purser

CALL FOR PEACE AND ACCOUNTABILITY IN GAZA AND THE WEST BANK

Noting the recent statement by Christian Aid as follows, the General Synod adds our support to the calls for peace and for accountability for genocide and apartheid in Gaza and the West Bank. The Christian Aid statement reads:

- Christian Aid's partners and the communities they serve have witnessed Israeli action in Gaza that we believe is genocidal.
- Christian Aid believes, on the basis of what we and our partners have observed over many years, that Israel is implementing a system in the West Bank that meets the definition of apartheid – in that it systematically discriminates against and impoverishes, marginalizes, and traumatises the Palestinian people in their own land.
- We are calling on international governments to uphold the role of the ICJ in reaching a final ruling on the question of genocidal intent in Gaza, and of apartheid in the West Bank, and to promote accountability for all violations of international law, by all parties, as the first step towards a just and lasting peace for all people who live between the river Jordan and the Mediterranean Sea.

COVENANT COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP MOTION

Proposer:

That the following be elected as Church of Ireland Representatives on the Covenant Council for the coming year:

The Rt Rev Michael Burrows, Bishop of Tuam, Limerick and Killaloe (Co-Chair)

Ms Elva Byrne

Rev Canon Dr Maurice Elliott

Ven Barry Forde

Rev Claire Kakuru

Rev Martin Steele”

MARRIAGE COUNCIL CHANGE TO TERMS OF REFERENCE

Proposer:

That the Terms of Reference for the Marriage Council be amended as follows:

“Elected by the General Synod every two years” to be changed to:

“Elected by the General Synod every three years”.

COMMISSION ON CHRISTIAN UNITY & DIALOGUE MEMBERSHIP MOTION

Proposer:

That the following be elected to CCUD for the coming year:

Rev Jane Burns

Very Rev Niall Sloane

Rev Canon Dr Daniel Nuzum

Rev Meurig Williams

Rev Suzanne Cousins

Ms Cate Turner

Very Rev Abi Sines

Rev Canon Kevin O’Brien

Mr Femi Atoyebi

Dr Bridget Nicholls

Rev Dr Ryan Hawk

APPENDIX B

THE CHURCH OF IRELAND CENTRE, DCU INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

ADVISORY COUNCIL

REPORT TO THE GENERAL SYNOD 2026

MEMBERS

Members are shown with attendance figures for the two meetings held during 2025.

1	Most Rev John McDowell, Archbishop of Armagh	School patron (Chair)
1	Most Rev Dr Michael Jackson, Archbishop of Dublin	School patron
2	Rev Canon Gillian Wharton	Honorary Secretary and member of the General Synod Board of Education (RI)
2	Very Rev Niall Sloane	Member of Board of Management of a Church of Ireland national school and of the General Synod Board of Education (RI)
2	Ms Rachel Fraser	National school principal
2	Ms Carolyn Good	National school principal from a small rural school
2	Ms Sarah Taylor	Member of the RCB with financial or auditing expertise
2	Rev Canon Prof Leslie Francis	External academic expert
2	Prof Noel Purdy	External academic expert from the island of Ireland

IN ATTENDANCE

Rev Canon Prof Anne Lodge	Director, Church of Ireland Centre
Mr David Ritchie	Chief Officer, RCB and Secretary General
Ms Elaine Whitehouse	Secretary to the Advisory Council

INTRODUCTION

The Church of Ireland Centre ('the Centre') was established in 2016 within the Institute of Education at Dublin City University (DCU) to ensure that the distinctive identity and values of teacher education in the Church of Ireland / Reformed Christian traditions were maintained on an ongoing basis following the incorporation of the Church of Ireland College of Education (CICE) into DCU.

The incorporation process provided that the Centre be supported by an Advisory Council, appointed by the relevant Church authorities. Accordingly in 2016 the Standing Committee of the General Synod nominated the first members to the Council.

The Standing Committee in November 2021 reappointed the outgoing members of the Council for a five-year period.

In collaboration with the governing structures of DCU, the Council is responsible for the relationship of the Church of Ireland with the Centre.

The principal activities set out in the Council's terms of reference are to support the work of the Centre and its Director and staff in the training of students as teachers in national schools under Church of Ireland / Reformed Christian faith patronage, and to make recommendations to the Representative Church Body (RCB) as trustee of the Church of Ireland College of Education Fund Trust in relation to the Centre's annual budget and related allocations.

The Council met in June and September 2025 by videoconference.

Rev Canon Prof Anne Lodge as Director of the Centre presented an update report to the Council on the academic year 2024/25, including the B.Ed. programme and the work of the Centre in areas including chaplaincy links; schools and community engagement; links with Anglican & Reformed churches; research; and heritage & legacy. The Council was pleased to note the roll-out of new Follow Me programme resources during the year.

Further information on the work of the Centre during the year is included in the report of the General Synod Board of Education on page 199.

At its September meeting the Council received figures from the Director on expenditure against budget for the academic year 2024/2025. The Council also considered a request for an allocation of €74,998 from the Church of Ireland College of Education Fund Trust in support of the work of the Centre in respect of the academic year 2025/2026 (2024/2025: €74,757). The Council agreed to recommend the budget request to the RB Executive Committee, acting on behalf of the Representative Body in its capacity as Trustee of the Fund Trust. The allocation from the Fund Trust is used to give bursaries and prizes to students, to support the provision of the teaching of religious education in the Centre and to support projects that further the Centre's ethos. The budget request was approved by the Trustee.

The Council welcomed Ms Rachel Fraser to her first meeting in June 2025 following her appointment as a member in September 2024.

APPENDIX C

BISHOPS' APPEAL REPORT 2026

Membership

Bishops' Appeal Committee

Rt Rev Ferran Glenfield (Chair) (4 meetings)

Mrs Iris Sutor (Hon Sec) (4 meetings)

Rev Canon John Ardis (4 meetings)

Rev Claire Henderson (3 meeting)

Mrs Claire Holmes (4 meetings)

Rev Canon Jono Pierce (3 meetings)

Rev Faith Sithole (3 meetings)

Very Rev Niall Sloane (5 meetings)

Education Advisor

Mrs Hilary McClay

Executive Summary

With support from Church of Ireland dioceses, parishes, and individuals, and in collaboration with key partner mission and development agencies, Bishops' Appeal funded crucial disaster relief responses, as well as longer term education, health, and agricultural community development programmes throughout the past year.

Key to our work in 2025 was our focus on providing grants to 32 projects around the world providing support for health, education, rural development and disaster relief, in addition to our continued response to the Middle East humanitarian crisis.

We established two new seasonal initiatives in 2025 – a Lent initiative **Pancakes & Prayer**, and **Gingerbread & Generosity** during Advent, which encouraged families and young people to engage with the challenges of overseas development as part of our Christian life and discipleship.

In total Bishops' Appeal distributed £158,993 and €272,002 during 2025.

Emergency Appeals

Bishops' Appeal would like to extend our heartfelt gratitude to all those who donated so generously to our General Funds, special appeals and supported the ongoing appeal for those impacted by the situation in the Middle East and relief work following the earthquake in Myanmar.

Pancakes & Prayer

Launched in 2025, Pancakes & Prayer is a new Advent initiative between Bishops' Appeal, CIYD and Fields of Life. Young people in the Church of Ireland rose to the challenge to pray for and engage with the stories of school children in two dioceses in South Sudan, the poorest country in the world. With the opportunity of giving something up for Lent, the project provides the opportunity to send donations through Fields of Life that will **feed a child for a year for £4.50/ 5 euro each**. This small sum provides the seeds, the tools and the training to set up school gardens capable of providing every child with a meal during the school day. Through the amazing response of young people in our churches, schools and youth clubs we raised enough money to feed almost 4,000 children for a year – a remarkable number. Thanks to everyone who took part.

In Lent 2026 the focus develops to also provide clean water for schools, so that every child is “Fed and Watered”.

Gingerbread & Generosity

In Advent 2025 Bishops' Appeal partnered with CFM and SAMS to provide an opportunity for children and families to think about those who don't have a safe place to live. Reflecting on the circumstances of Jesus' birth in a borrowed stable, and the family then fleeing to safety in Egypt, there are many layers in the Christmas story which echo the challenge of safety and homelessness that is experienced in our world today.

The project pack provided all sorts of resources for children and families, including worksheets, craft activities, stories and games and a competition to decorate the best gingerbread house, as well as a draft outline for a Sunday service usable during Advent and through to Epiphany.

Those who chose to donate to the "Houses of Hope" appeal as part of the Gingerbread and Generosity campaign, were able to contribute to a project supporting homeless people in Chile, or safe housing for vulnerable young women in Brazil.

General Synod 2025

At General Synod 2025 the Bishops' Appeal invited synod members to take home seeds to plant to remind us that whenever we donate to an appeal, or to general funds, we are effectively planting **Seeds of Hope**. Hundreds of sheets of seeded papers (to plant wildflowers) and pots of sunflower seeds were distributed to members of General Synod to all parts of Ireland.

It was a simple reminder that, rather than feeling overwhelmed by the needs of the world, we are able to do something, however small, that will make a difference and bring hope to people who are living in situations where there isn't much hope around.

Plans for General Synod 2026 remain a closely guarded secret – but please make sure you visit the Bishops' Appeal stand in the Exhibition Area to see what we are up to this year!

Project Grants – a sample of the vital projects around the world funded through donations and legacies

Mothers Cow – Zimbabwe – Christian Aid
Prison Ministry in the Diocese of Cairo – Egypt – CMSI
Support for survivors of abuse – Philippines – International Justice Mission
Church, Community, Children – Cambodia – Tearfund Ireland
WASH schools project – Mozambique – Self Help Africa
Resilient Communities, Hopeful Future – Pakistan – Tearfund
Sowing for the Future – Argentina – SAMS Ireland
Water for Life – Uganda – Fields of Life
Gitega Food Security – Burundi – CMSI
Afghanistan Relief – Afghanistan – Christian Aid

Parish Donations & Legacies

Over the past number of years, and conscious of the cost-of-living crisis of the past few years and the strain that has put on people's finances, we have been heartened by those digging deep and giving even when things are difficult. It has enabled us to support vital work in some of the most vulnerable communities worldwide. During 2025 the Bishops' Appeal received several significant legacy gifts. The receipt of legacies is humbly and gratefully received and used in a way that honours the life and memory of those who give.

CMSI Lent Project

Bishops' Appeal was glad to continue to partner with CMSI's Lent Project, providing resources for schools, youth groups and Sunday schools to use during Lent.

General Synod Mission Lunch

Bishops' Appeal is partnering with the Council for Mission to invite members of General Synod to a special Mission Lunch on Friday 8th May, in the Slieve Donard hotel, with the kind approval of the Honorary Secretaries, when we will have the opportunity to hear firsthand from Safa who is the Regional Director of Tearfund in the Middle East. Please come and be inspired and challenged by his stories – as well as enjoying a sandwich lunch together.

Thank You

Bishops' Appeal wishes to thank the RCB Finance Department for their continued support. In order to successfully facilitate these various large Appeals, we are dependent upon and so grateful to the RCB Finance department, who support us in the processing of cheques, the allocating and releasing of funds, and the issuing of receipts, along with all of the work of keeping our accounts and meeting the increasingly strict charity and audit requirements.

The Bishops' Appeal is extremely grateful to all the agencies who partner with the Church, who reach out to communities around the world. Listening to their needs and providing the necessary support and kinship to those in need. Our thanks to the hard-working committee and diocesan representatives of past and present. Finally, Bishops' Appeal expresses heartfelt gratitude to all those across the Church of Ireland, individuals, parishes, dioceses and central structures for their generosity and continuing support.

APPENDIX Ci

BISHOPS' APPEAL ACCOUNTS 2025

INCOME & EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT	Year ended 31 December	
	2025	2024
	€	€
INCOME		
Contributions	354,074	347,368
Legacy Funds	721,579	-
Deposit Interest	12,326	13,617
Sterling translation loss/gain	(1,862)	4,952
Tax refunds	10,936	13,359
	<u>1,097,053</u>	<u>379,296</u>
EXPENSES		
Administration Expenses & Salaries	<u>51,057</u>	<u>42,497</u>
	51,057	42,497
OPERATING SURPLUS FOR YEAR	<u>1,045,996</u>	<u>336,799</u>
Grants Paid	454,396	430,137
Surplus/(Deficit) for the year	<u>591,600</u>	<u>(93,338)</u>

BISHOPS' APPEAL ACCOUNT 2025

BALANCE SHEET

Year ended 31 December

2025

2024

€

€

CURRENT ASSETS

Cash at Bank	1,125,073	533,062
Cash held by the RCB	11,948	24,586
Debtors	18,215	5,988
	<u>1,155,236</u>	<u>563,636</u>

Total Net Assets	<u>1,155,236</u>	<u>563,686</u>
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FUNDS EMPLOYED

Balance at 1 January		
	563,636	656,97
Surplus/(Deficit) for the year		4
	591,600	
		(93,338)
Balance at 31 December	<u>1,155,236</u>	<u>563,636</u>

BISHOPS' APPEAL CONTRIBUTIONS

		2025		2024	
	Stg£	€			€
ARMAGH	9,873	1,023	16,465	2,544	
CLOGHER	19,939	905	9,630	250	
CONNOR	7,451	-	15,083	-	
DERRY & RAPHOE	16,628	10,056	16,844	4,381	
DOWN & DROMORE	63,991	100	25,950	100	
KILMORE, ELPHIN & ARDAGH	-	3,557	-	4,656	
CASHEL, FERNS & OSSORY	509	27,519	-	34,916	
CORK, CLOYNE & ROSS	-	17,406	-	19,414	
DUBLIN & GLENDALOUGH	-	66,128	-	60,116	
TUAM, LIMERICK & KILLALOE	-	15,773	-	22,504	
MEATH & KILDARE	-	11,866	-	13,129	
OTHER	11,472	50,765	20,635	58,945	
TOTALS	129,863	205,098	104,607	220,955	

TOTALS IN EURO	354 074	347 368
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BISHOPS' APPEAL GRANTS PAID

TYPE OF DEVELOPMENT	2025 €	2024 €
Disaster Relief	207,970	173,828
Health & Medical	71,979	77,889
Education/Communications	68,189	74,059
Rural Development	<u>106,258</u>	<u>104,361</u>
Totals	454,396	430,137

DEVELOPMENT AGENCY

Christian Aid	60,429	106,147
Tearfund	115,225	70,000
Fields of Life	54,900	32,248
Gorta – Self Help Africa	30,683	19,388
CMSI	71,372	43,827
Motivation	10,000	12,085
Habitat for humanity Northern Ireland	2,361	18,127
International Justice Mission UK	22,944	12,085
South American Mission Society	11,472	-
Mothers' Union	305	-
Others	<u>74,705</u>	<u>116,230</u>
Totals	454,396	430,137

BISHOPS' APPEAL GRANTS PAID

GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION

AFRICA - €168,352; Stg £21,493;

Project	Location	Agency
Gitega Food Security Project	Burundi	CMSI
Mothers' Union Literacy Project	Burundi	Mothers' Union
Emergency Response	DRC	CMSI
Education of Church Leaders	Ethiopia	CMSI
Livelihoods and Peace-building	Ethiopia	Tearfund Ireland
Diocese of Cairo Prison Ministry	Egypt	CMSI
Bee Resilient	Kenya	Christian Aid
Focus Malawi	Malawi	Self Help Africa
Survive and Thrive	Malawi	Motivation
WASH in schools	Mozambique	Self Help Africa
Pig Rearing (Poverty Uplift) Project	Rwanda	CMSI
Liloma Project year 1 (CCR Diocese)	Sierra Leone	Christian Aid
Pancakes & Prayer	South Sudan	Fields of Life
Water for Life	Uganda	Fields of Life
Mothers' Cow	Zimbabwe	Christian Aid
Growing Resilience and Eco Enterprise	Uganda	Self Help Africa
I Am Girl	Uganda	Fields of Life
<u>ASIA - €30,115 ; Stg £40,940 ;</u>		
Afghanistan Emergency Appeal	Afghanistan	Christian Aid
Church – Community-Children	Cambodia	Tearfund Ireland
Myanmar Emergency Appeal	Myanmar	Christian Aid
Children's Disability Ministry	Nepal	CMSI
Health Resilience Strengthening Project	Nepal	CMSI
Resilient Communities, Hopeful Future	Pakistan	Tearfund NI
Support for survivors of abuse/exploitation	Philippines	IJM
<u>MIDDLE EAST - €71,020 Stg75,720;</u>		
Middle East Appeal	Gaza & Middle East	Diocese of Jerusalem
Middle East Appeal	Gaza & Middle East	Tearfund
<u>SOUTH AMERICA - Stg£ 20,000;</u>		
Sowing for the Future	Argentina	SAMS

Domestic Abuse Education	Peru	International Justice Mission UK
<i>EUROPE -- €2,515 Stg £840;</i>		
Development Education Lent Resources	Ireland	CMSI
Ukraine Appeal	Ukraine	Habitat For Humanity – Ukraine Appeal

Independent auditors’ report to the Advisory Committee of Church of Ireland Bishops’ Appeal

Report on the audit of the financial statements

Opinion

In our opinion, the Church of Ireland Bishops’ Appeal’s financial statements:

- for the year ended 31 December 2025 have been properly prepared in all material respects, in accordance with the basis of preparation on page 8 and accounting policies on pages 8 and 9 of the financial statements.

We have audited the financial statements, which comprise:

- the balance sheet as at 31 December 2025;
- the income and expenditure account for the year then ended;
- the accounting policies; and
- the notes to the financial statements.

Basis for opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (Ireland) (“ISAs (Ireland)”) including ISA (Ireland) 800. Our responsibilities under ISAs (Ireland) are further described in the Auditors’ responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements section of our report. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

Independence

We remained independent of the entity in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of the financial statements in Ireland, which includes IAASA’s Ethical Standard, and we have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements.

Emphasis of matter - Basis of preparation

In forming our opinion on the financial statements, which is not modified, we draw attention to the fact that the accounting policies used and disclosures made are not intended to, and do not, comply with the requirements of Generally Accepted Accounting Practice in Ireland.

Conclusions relating to going concern

Based on the work we have performed, we have not identified any material uncertainties relating to events or conditions that, individually or collectively, may cast significant doubt on the entity’s ability to continue as a going concern for a period of at least twelve months from the date on which the financial statements are authorised for issue.

In auditing the financial statements, we have concluded that the Advisory Committee’s use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements is appropriate.

However, because not all future events or conditions can be predicted, this conclusion is not a guarantee as to the entity’s ability to continue as a going concern.

Our responsibilities and the responsibilities of the Advisory Committee with respect to going concern are described in the relevant sections of this report.

Reporting on other information

The other information comprises all of the information in the Financial Statements other than the financial statements and our auditors' report thereon. The Advisory Committee are responsible for the other information. Our opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and, accordingly, we do not express an audit opinion or, except to the extent otherwise explicitly stated in this report, any form of assurance thereon.

In connection with our audit of the financial statements, our responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements or our knowledge obtained in the audit, or otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If we identify an apparent material inconsistency or material misstatement, we are required to perform procedures to conclude whether there is a material misstatement of the financial statements or a material misstatement of the other information. If, based on the work we have performed, we conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, we are required to report that fact. We have nothing to report based on these responsibilities.

Responsibilities for the financial statements and the audit

Responsibilities of the Advisory Committee for the financial statements

As explained more fully in the Statement of Advisory Committee responsibilities set out on page 4 the Advisory Committee are responsible for the preparation of the financial statements in accordance with the applicable framework and for being satisfied that they give a true and fair view. The Advisory Committee are also responsible for such internal control as they determine is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, the Advisory Committee are responsible for assessing the entity's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the Advisory Committee either intend to liquidate the entity or to cease operations, or have no realistic alternative but to do so.

Auditors' responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditors' report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISAs (Ireland) will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

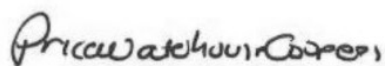
Our audit testing might include testing complete populations of certain transactions and balances, possibly using data auditing techniques. However, it typically involves selecting a limited number of items for testing, rather than testing complete populations. We will often seek to target particular items for testing based on their size or risk characteristics. In other cases, we will use audit sampling to enable us to draw a conclusion about the population from which the sample is selected.

A further description of our responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements is located on the IAASA website at: http://www.iaasa.ie/getmedia/b2389013-1cf6-458b-9b8f-a98202dc9c3a/Description_of_auditors_responsibilities_for_audit.pdf.

This description forms part of our auditors' report.

Use of this report

This report, including the opinion, has been prepared for and only for the Advisory Committee and for no other purpose. We do not, in giving this opinion, accept or assume responsibility for any other purpose or to any other person to whom this report is shown or into whose hands it may come, including without limitation under any contractual obligations of the entity save where expressly agreed by our prior consent in writing.

The logo for PricewaterhouseCoopers, featuring the company name in a stylized, handwritten-style font.

PricewaterhouseCoopers
Chartered Accountants
Ireland
20 March 2026

Appendix D

Church of Ireland Board for Ministry with Children and Families General Synod Report 2026

www.cfm.ireland.anglican.org

Membership

Rt Rev George Davison, Bishop of Connor (Chair)

Children's Ministry Network representatives:

Rev Rebecca Guildea (RI)

Ms Lynn Storey (RI)

Mr David Brown (NI)

Dr Millie Bellew (NI)

Sunday School Society for Ireland representative:

Very Rev Niall Sloane

Board of Education representatives:

Rev Catherine Simpson (NI)

Ms Carolyn Good (RI)

Standing Committee representative:

Rev Canon John Ardis

Liturgical Committee representative:

Rev Julie Bell

Staff:

Dr Peter Hamill (Secretary)

Ms Rachael Murphy (Development Officer)

Vision Statement

The Board for Ministry with Children and Families (CFM) seeks to equip, resource and advocate for the increased welcome, enhanced inclusion and full participation of children and their families in the whole life of the Church. Its vision is that every Church of Ireland parish, no matter how big or small, is equipped to provide vibrant and engaging ministry with children and families.

Communications

Over the past year, we have once again increased the number of people engaging with our resources and training. Our social media presence remains strong, with a healthy number of followers across multiple platforms. Additionally, our website (www.cfm.ireland.anglican.org) continues to experience high engagement, particularly on our resources page and with our online training videos.

Each season, we release a Newsletter that features resource ideas, inspiration, and interesting articles focused on ministry with children and families. You can find the sign-up page for the Newsletter on the homepage of our website.

In September, the Diocesan CFM representatives and DYOs gathered for an overnight stay at Dromantine Centre. There, we were joined by Dr Mark Griffiths, who facilitated discussions based on his latest research on Generation Alpha and his book, "One Generation from Extinction."

The following day, we came together in Newry with representatives from various other churches and organisations, including three bishops! The service celebrated 250 years of ministry with children, young people, and families in the Church of Ireland. It was a lovely, gentle, and joyful gathering where we expressed our gratitude for the legacy of ministry left by the church's pioneers and those who have continued to carry the flame through the generations. Each diocese received a commemorative plaque, which was lit during the National Day of Prayer for young people in November. Both BCFM and CIYD are committed to building on this legacy, ensuring that our ministry remains relevant and impactful in a rapidly changing society.

Resources

Our collection of resources continues to expand, with most items available for free download from our website. A selection of these resources will also be showcased at our stand during General Synod.

In the coming months, we plan to launch an online shop where you can purchase hard copies of resources, such as our Baptism Books, posters, and Bible Buddy Packs. In the meantime, if any parish needs these resources, they can either reach out to their Diocesan CFM Representative or email Rachael at cfm@ireland.anglican.org.

This year, we are excited to launch the Accessible Book of Common Prayer (BCP). This resource is specifically designed for children to help them engage with the most commonly used services, Morning Prayer 2 and Holy Communion 2. However, we also recognise that it will be beneficial for individuals of all ages with additional needs, as well as adults who may find it challenging to navigate these services. In our design, we have ensured that the resource does not have an overtly childish appearance, allowing users of all ages to feel comfortable using it. At the same time, we have incorporated bright and clear design elements to make it visually appealing to children. The printed book includes a pocket on the inside cover for storing a notepad and pencil. Additionally, we have created PowerPoint slides that complement the book's design and icons. These slides will be available for churches to download and customise according to their specific service outlines. At the time of writing this report, we are about to commence printing. Each parish will receive an initial copy for review, followed by additional copies available for purchase from the Church of Ireland online shop. We will also distribute copies at General Synod.

We extend our gratitude to the working group members who supported Rachael during the development of this resource: Rev Andrew Neil, Ms Kirsty McCartney, Ms Joanna Griffin, Ms Lynn Storey, and Rev Rebecca Guildea.

During Advent, we were thrilled to partner with the Church of Ireland's Bishops Appeal and SAMS Ireland to launch "Gingerbread and Generosity," which we hope to establish as an annual fundraising event. This year's theme was "Houses of Hope," raising funds for two projects supported by SAMS Ireland: one is a safe house for young girls at risk of exploitation in Brazil, and the other is a food hub and shelter for homeless families in Chile. Families and churches were encouraged to engage with free downloadable packs that included crafts, games, intergenerational service outlines, and a trail to learn more about the projects while having fun decorating gingerbread houses. Thanks to the generosity of parishes and families across the island of Ireland, we raised just under €5,000.

Training

Throughout the year, we have hosted numerous training events, both in person and online. Rachael offers workshops for clergy and volunteers focused on engaging with children and families in your community, volunteer recruitment and retention, and she is also available for CFM strategy-building support. In the coming year, she plans to provide informal support sessions for rural deaneries that wish to explore ministry with children and families in a local context. If your rural deanery is interested in meeting with Rachael in this way, please email: cfm@ireland.anglican.org.

Our long-awaited national conference, Neartù, which had been postponed, took place over two days in May. On the first day, around 25 people, including Diocesan CFM representatives and nominated volunteers/staff, gathered at the Mount St. Anne's Conference Centre for a time of learning, discussion, and sharing with Rachel Turner, the founder of Parenting for Faith. This was a precious time of growth and honesty, which many of those present found truly beneficial. The following morning, we welcomed around 60 additional participants from across the island—a mix of clergy, volunteers, and staff members. The morning began with worship led by Mr Lawrence Bellew, followed by a keynote address from Ms Rachel Turner. In the afternoon, we held a marketplace featuring organisations such as Love4Life, Legacy, Roots, and CMSIreland, each of which led workshops.

October marked an exciting time of training and encouragement as we spent 24 hours with the talented Mr Bob Hartman, author of many books, including *The Storyteller Bible* and *The Rhyming Bible*, among hundreds of others! This was a writer's retreat designed for a small group of creative individuals who applied for their spots. We gathered at Murlough House, a location where C.S. Lewis is reputed to have written much of the *Chronicles of Narnia*. From our time together, we hope to create a variety of resources over the coming year. Throughout the winter months, we once again held a range of online training workshops. Many of these sessions were recorded and have been added to the training workshop catalogue on our website. This year's topics included: Messy Church with Ms Aike Kennet-Brown, the director of Messy Church UK, and Ms Laura Steerman, CFM officer for Taney parish; Festive Family Ministry with Ms Julie Currie; Christmas reflections with Ms Lydia Monds from The Ministry of Healing; and PACE—a toolkit for Children's Ministry with Ms Lisa Campbell, founder of Wonderful Me.

Finally, we are excited to announce that this year, in partnership with the Children's Ministry Network Britain & Ireland, we will be launching Ministry Essentials. This training programme is designed to provide a comprehensive introduction to mission and ministry with children, regardless of your working context. Each module introduces key concepts for the theme and explores how they can be applied to both your practice and your role as a practitioner. The course consists of ten modules and has been produced in partnership with Cliff College and TheologyX. Participants can take the Children's Ministry Essentials programme in its entirety or as standalone modules.

The 10 modules include:

1. The world of the child
2. The developing child
3. Biblical perspectives on children
4. The role of play in faith formation
5. Creating space for children in our church communities
6. Inclusion
7. Participation
8. Contexts of mission and ministry with children
9. Pastoral care
10. Leadership and teamwork

Thanks to the generous support from The Church of Ireland Priorities Fund we will offer 20 free spaces per diocese. More details will be shared via our social media platforms in the coming months.

Children's Ministry Network (Britain and Ireland)

The Church of Ireland is actively involved in the Children's Ministry Network (CMN), which is part of Churches Together in Britain and Ireland. Dr Peter Hamill currently serves as the Moderator for this group, while Ms Rachael Murphy is an Executive Group member responsible for supporting the logistics of the two annual conferences.

In 2025 we met together at Shallowford Conference centre to focus on the way Churches support families who foster and adopt. It is hoped that discussions held during this event will lead to the development of a

resource and/or additional training module for Ministry Essentials looking at trauma-informed response in church-based ministry with Children and Families.

Appendix 1

Children and Families Ministry Network Members

Development Officer (Chair)	Ms Rachael Murphy
Armagh	Mr David Brown
Clogher	Rev Rebecca Guilda
Derry & Raphoe	Ms Kirsty McCartney
Down & Dromore	Dr Millie Bellew
Connor	Ms Victoria Jackson
Kilmore, Elphin and Ardagh	Vacant
Dublin & Glendalough	Rev Cathy Hallissey and Ms Lynn Storey
Meath & Kildare	Rev Yvonne Hutchinson
Cashel, Ferns and Ossory	Ms Carolyn Good
Cork, Cloyne & Ross	Rev Elise Hanley
Tuam, Limerick & Killaloe	Rev Canon Jane Galbraith and Rev Vicki Lynch

Members can be contacted through their respective diocesan offices.

Church of Ireland Census 2025 (and comparison with 2024 & 2023)

	2025	2024	2023
Total number of Parish Groups:	442	449	449
Number of census responses:	440	446	443
Percentage response rate:	99.55%	99.33%	98.66%
Number of churches/worship centres:	1064	1068	1043

Diocese	Attendance Feb date			Attendance June date			Attendance Sep date			Attendance Nov date		
	2025	2024	2023	2025	2024	2023	2025	2024	2023	2025	2024	2023
Armagh	4,656	4,525	4,606	4,722	4,865	4,933	5,071	4,686	4,950	5,006	5,244	5,314
Cashel, Ferns & Ossory	2,219	2,349	2,380	2,451	2,261	2,481	2,703	2,688	2,270	1,965	2,426	2,293
Clogher	3,187	3,003	2,855	2,941	2,983	3,205	3,482	2,946	3,136	2,818	3,038	2,842
Connor	6,436	6,390	6,464	6,561	6,768	6,452	6,747	6,465	6,464	7,136	7,845	7,787
Cork, Cloyne & Ross	1,676	1,661	1,554	1,877	1,597	1,565	1,878	2,025	1,524	1,652	1,510	1,609
Derry & Raphoe	4,464	4,451	4,122	4,826	4,917	4,516	4,791	4,905	4,554	4,475	4,408	4,565
Down & Dromore	9,681	9,668	9,122	10,134	9,625	9,592	10,474	10,042	9,308	10,800	10,153	10,076
Dublin & Glendalough	5,373	5,002	4,844	5,716	5,192	4,773	5,770	5,824	5,619	6,444	5,544	5,489
Kilmore, Elphin & Ardagh	1,860	1,955	1,857	2,074	2,011	1,961	2,363	2,009	2,136	2,194	1,993	2,016
Meath & Kildare	1,018	1,091	948	1,067	1,243	1,015	1,367	1,179	1,098	1,113	1,189	1,163
Tuam, Limerick & Killaloe	1,373	1,554	1,365	1,625	1,649	1,716	1,838	1,562	1,511	1,280	1,483	1,403
Totals	41,943	41,649	40,117	43,994	43,111	42,209	46,484	44,331	42,570	44,883	44,833	44,557

Diocese	Baptisms			Weddings			Funerals			Confirmed		
	2025	2024	2023	2025	2024	2023	2025	2024	2023	2025	2024	2023
Armagh	219	203	230	75	76	81	381	410	404	135	180	173
Cashel, Ferns & Ossory	96	100	121	24	29	51	142	120	139	124	134	197
Clogher	156	139	153	52	46	52	277	213	235	111	173	145
Connor	228	240	295	89	78	92	642	705	662	124	115	161
Cork, Cloyne & Ross	67	67	83	18	22	22	88	103	101	89	107	82
Derry & Raphoe	284	264	325	81	84	100	417	421	441	223	232	297
Down & Dromore	273	235	239	96	101	108	798	838	857	187	143	150
Dublin & Glendalough	302	329	327	54	53	51	291	287	278	434	396	473
Kilmore, Elphin & Ardagh	86	101	83	40	39	55	96	138	160	85	89	69
Meath & Kildare	43	59	49	18	17	31	73	65	53	57	77	74
Tuam, Limerick & Killaloe	71	44	49	26	18	26	78	89	84	71	76	50
Totals	1,825	1,781	1,954	573	563	669	3,283	3,389	3,414	1,640	1,722	1,871

APPENDIX F

CENTRAL COMMUNICATIONS BOARD

MEMBERSHIP*

Most Rev Pat Storey (<i>Chair</i>) 6/6	House of Bishops
Rev Canon Gillian Wharton 5/6	Honorary Secretary, General Synod
<i>Vacant</i>	Standing Committee
Rev Carlton Baxter (from September 2024) 4/6	Standing Committee
Canon Dr Kenneth Milne 4/6	Chair, Literature Committee
Dr Raymond Refaussé 6/6	Honorary Secretary, Literature Committee
Ms Ruth Gyves (from March 2026)	Representative Body
Very Rev Nigel Dunne 5/6	Representative Body
Rev Alan Ruffli 6/6	Liturgical Advisory Committee
Mr David Ritchie 6/6	Chief Officer, RCB
Mrs Janet Maxwell 6/6	Head of Synod Services & Communications
<i>In attendance</i>	
Mr Peter Cheney 6/6	Press Officer
Mrs Lynn Glanville 6/6	Dublin & Glendalough Communications Officer
Mr Stuart Wilson 5/6	Website & Information Administrator

*Standing Committee may co-opt up to three additional members for gender, regional and other balance.

TERMS OF REFERENCE

- Initiate policy in relation to the communications strategy of the Church;
- Establish and co-ordinate the work of the sub-committees;
- Advise and support staff dealing with communications;
- Recommend and seek funding for communications projects for the benefit of the Church;
- Examine recommendations from the Literature Committee for support from the General Synod Royalties Fund and forward these for approval to the Standing Committee;
- Identify training needs among church communications staff and volunteers, providing training where possible;
- Report annually to the General Synod.

SUMMARY – MAJOR OUTCOMES FOR 2025/26

- The Allocations Committee of the RB continued to relieve financial strain on the Royalties Fund, which has become depleted in recent years, allowing income in the fund to reaccumulate.
- Work to effect a redesign of the Church of Ireland website is ongoing.
- A new approach to broadcast worship has been launched by RTÉ. The CCB welcomes Scratch Films' appointment and also the return of recording in a parish setting. A schedule of services for the period 2026, 2027, and 2028 is under development. A call-out to parishes received a generous response representing many aspects of worship in the Church of Ireland.

GENERAL SYNOD ROYALTIES FUND & PUBLICATIONS

At the year end, the balances in the General Synod Royalties Fund stood at €165,948 and £12,051 at representing improvements of 17% and 48% respectively on the previous year-end position. The Allocations Committee kindly continues to support various ad hoc printing needs that arise during the course of the year and steps have been taken to provide planned projects within the relevant committee budgets.

CHURCH OF IRELAND GAZETTE

Working Group on Support for *Church of Ireland Gazette*

Very Rev Nigel Dunne

Rev Carlton Baxter

Mrs Janet Maxwell

Mr Peter Cheney

The Church of Ireland Gazette will celebrate its 170th year of publication in 2026. This makes *The Gazette* one of the oldest continuous publications in the UK or Ireland. The CCB congratulates the Board of Church of Ireland Press on this significant achievement. *The Gazette* offers a friendly critique of the life and activities of the Church of Ireland. In recent years, like many printed publications, it has begun to struggle with printing and distribution costs and has received considerable support from the CCB, the Allocations Committee and the Priorities Fund as the Board tries to find a way forward that balances the ongoing desire by some to have a physical magazine, while others are moving to an electronic format.

The CCB would encourage people to try out the on-line version of *The Gazette*. There is considerable advantage in accessing the magazine on your computer or phone in terms of convenience with the added advantage that *The Gazette's* new editor, Mr Clark Brydon posts additional updates to *The Gazette* website, when stories of particular interest emerge. Subscriptions may be obtained at <https://coigazette.ie/subscribe>

SEARCH

The CCB also commends the journal *SEARCH*, which offers readers a valuable series of researched articles in each of the three annual volumes, generally addressing a particular theme within the life of the Church of Ireland in each edition. *SEARCH* offers an in-depth consideration of key areas of church life and is an important contributor to discourse within the Church and beyond.

PRESS OFFICE

In January of 2026, Mr Peter Cheney announced his resignation from the role of Press Officer in order to take up an opportunity with the Anglican Centre in Rome. The Board thanks Mr Cheney for the significant contribution he has made during his tenure as Press Officer, in particular to the development of the website and social media and wishes Mr Cheney all success in this new venture. Mr Stuart Wilson continues to provide support as Website and Information Administrator. The Board also acknowledges the work of the Diocesan Communications Officers (DCOs). During the year, Rev Earl Storey retired as DCO of Meath and Kildare and was replaced by Mrs Jenny Horner. Mrs Horner's previous role in Kilmore Diocese was taken up by Mr David Roe. The Board congratulates all of these on their departures and new positions respectively. Anglewise Communications continues to provide video production support, primarily through the *Inspiring Angles* series on websites and social media.

Inspiring Angles' productions during the year included Rev Stephen McWhirter's charity walk from his parish of Rossory in Clogher to Dublin, and university chaplaincy in Dublin (Rev Canon Paul Arbuthnot and Mr Eric Hughes), also Ms Emma Fawcett speaking about youth work in Dublin and Glendalough, and a selection of interviews from General Synod (e.g. Rev Canon Craig McCauley on growing a local church and Dr Susan Hood on archives), local churches supporting Harmony Hill Primary School in Lisburn and the Cregagh Crafters from East Belfast, an enterprising group that was previously funded by the Mind Matters Project and is going from strength to strength.

Key activities with an external focus included marking VE and VJ Days, the Royal Foundation Service in Armagh Cathedral with the time of 'Together at Christmas', and the 50th anniversary of the episcopal consecration of former Archbishop Robin Eames, which took place in St Columb's Cathedral, Derry, in June 2025. The Archbishop of Armagh made various statements on matters in Northern Ireland during the summer months to call for calm amid tensions, including addressing anti-migrant riots and other incidents such as the effigies in a boat placed on a bonfire in Moygashel. Mrs Lynn Glanville and Mr Peter Cheney

received acknowledgement from the Primate's Reference Group on Ethnic Diversity, Inclusion and Racial Justice for work undertaken to create a migration and ethnic diversity hub on the Church of Ireland website.

TRAINING

An annual training event is provided for Diocesan Communications Officers, hosted in the Church of Ireland Theological Institute. The topics covered this year were Artificial Intelligence and introductions to Mr Brydon as the new editor of *The Church of Ireland Gazette*. In addition, two media training events for church spokespersons took place.

Guidance on copyright and photography is provided to parishes. Parishes are reminded that the Canva Pro graphic design platform is available free of charge to registered charities in the UK and Ireland and can help to avoid the unintentional infringement of copyright when sourcing photos for online content. See: www.canva.com/help/canva-for-nonprofits.

CHURCH OF IRELAND WEBSITE

Working Group on Website Redevelopment

Rev Alan Ruffli
Mr David Ritchie
Mrs Janet Maxwell
Mr Peter Cheney
Mr Stuart Wilson

The current version of the Church of Ireland website has been in place in 2017, and the Board has decided to proceed with its redevelopment, to ensure compatibility with current requirements and to provide the best possible customer service to the Church's membership and other audiences who make use of the website. At the time of writing, the Board was working on proposals that would allow for current website content to be retained and improved and also incorporate content from the Safeguarding and Children and Families Ministry websites. Work on the redevelopment website is progressing, through a working group of the Central Communications Board, with the aim of launching a new website by 2027.

BROADCASTING – RTE

The CCB was pleased to find that restructuring at RTE resulted in a positive change to the delivery of broadcast worship, with the appointment of Scratch Films to return to a model of parish-based services. As outside broadcasts tend to be rather more costly to produce, a plan has been agreed to produce two services on each Sunday when recording will take place.

This means that a live morning service at 11 will be hosted in a parish, which will then act as the host for a second parish in the afternoon, allowing the possibility for a time of meeting and sharing between the two parishes. A call-out for volunteers was sent out in January 2026, and the response from parishes has been more than generous, allowing for a rich and varied programme of broadcast services representing the varied interpretations of worship and liturgy across the island.

The Church of Ireland has 12 televised services every year. The provision for radio worship was unchanged by the new arrangements for televised worship. Streamed daily weekday Masses also continue and www.ChurchServices.tv web streams are still attracting around 20,000 viewers a day after nearly five years and providing much valued spiritual support for the elderly, housebound or hospitalised. Church of Ireland parishes are regularly represented in Sunday morning radio services.

In December 2025, Mr Roger Childs, the head of religious broadcasting at RTE, took voluntary redundancy from his post and was replaced by Mr John McMahon. The Board thanks Mr Childs for the significant contribution that he made during his tenure at RTE, during which time he refreshed the religious broadcasting format and created a series of new programmes that gave voice and insight to the developing religious make-up of the island. Mr Childs was variously a member of and invited guest at the Central

Communications Board. The Board wishes him well in the future and thanks him sincerely for the contribution he has made.

BROADCASTING – BBC

The Church of Ireland benefits from regular opportunities for broadcast worship services provided on BBC Radio Ulster, BBC Radio 4 and BBC Radio 3 throughout the year. Over the course of 2025 and early 2026, these have included Radio 3 Choral Evensong from St Patrick's Cathedral, Armagh, during the Charles Wood Festival, and Radio Ulster Morning Services including contributions by Bishop Harold and Mrs Liz Miller; Mrs Esther Simpson (lay reader in Down and Dromore on the 1,700th anniversary of the Nicene Creed); Canon Simon Doogan; St Columba's Church, Knock (for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity); St George's, High Street, Belfast; and Knockbreda Parish Church (at Christmas). The services with the Nicene Creed and for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity reached national audiences through Radio 4.

Morning Service is a Blackthorn production for BBC Northern Ireland and contact details for the producers are available at www.blackthornproductions.co.uk. The production team for Choral Evensong can be contacted at choral.evensong@bbc.co.uk.

LITERATURE COMMITTEE

MEMBERSHIP

Canon Dr Kenneth Milne (Chairman)
Rev Canon PK McDowell
Ven RB Rountree
Rev KG Rue
Rev Bernard Treacy OP
Dr Raymond Refaüssé (Honorary Secretary)
Ms Cecelia West
Mr George Woodman
Mrs Janet Maxwell (ex officio)

In attendance: Mr Peter Cheney (Press Officer)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2026 the Committee will set out to:

- Promote church-related publication within and beyond the Church of Ireland
- Manage Church of Ireland Publishing
- Evaluate applications for support from the General Synod Royalties Fund

MAJOR OUTCOMES FOR 2025

Arising out of the Action Plan for 2025:

- The fifteenth & sixteenth booklets in the Braemor Studies series, which seeks to publish the best of the final year dissertations in CITI, were published.
- Supporting the Liturgical Advisory Committee's publication on the canticles

CHURCH OF IRELAND PUBLISHING

The Literature Committee has continued to further the work of Church of Ireland Publishing (CIP), the publishing imprint for the Church of Ireland.

The following titles were published in 2025:

Gregory Dunstan (ed.), *Journal of the General Synod, 2025*

Patrick Little, *The Church of Ireland under the Stuarts* (published by Four Courts Press with support from the General Synod Royalties Fund)

Andrew Neill, *Exploration and Meaning. Considering Faith Formation in Children Aged 6-11*

Cameron Mack, *The Collision of Words. Counter-Formation Through Interactivity with Scripture in Deuteronomy and the Daily Office*

Martin Steele (ed.), *Church of Ireland Sunday and Weekday Readings Advent Sunday 2025 to Eve of Advent Sunday 2026*

Peter A. Thompson, *A Treasure in Clay Jars. Rediscovering the Spirituality of the Canticles*

ONLINE PURCHASING

The Literature Committee expresses its gratitude to the Central Communications Board and to the staff of the finance and IT departments of Church of Ireland House for supporting the facility to purchase Church-related materials online via the Church of Ireland website.

This facility has proved extremely popular and is being widely used. Ms Heather Jestin continues to assist with the distribution of materials to parishes. Orders can now be placed online, or by e-mail or by phone using the following addresses:

Online ordering: <https://store.ireland.anglican.org/store>

E-mail: heather.jestin@rcbcoi.org

Tel: +3531 4125 665

GENERAL SYNOD ROYALTIES FUND

The Committee recommended the following grants, which have been made since the last report:

- €4,500 to support the publication of *Search*.

ACTION PLAN 2026

- Prepare the seventeenth and eighteenth books in the Braemor Studies for publication.
- Support the publication programme of the Liturgical Advisory Committee.
- Support the publication of the Church of Ireland/Moravian Reference Group's 'Armagh Agreement'.
- Support Bishop Richard Clarke's proposed book on the disestablishment revision of the Book of Common Prayer.
- Support the revised on-line edition of Rev Canon Michael Kennedy's BCP Commentaries.
- Support Dr Kevin Moroney's proposed book of essays on Anglican liturgies.

APPENDIX G

CHARITIES REGISTRATION MONITORING WORKING GROUP

MEMBERS

Membership

The Archbishop of Armagh (Chair)

Ms Ashley Brown

Mr Ken Gibson/ Ms Hazel Corrigan

Mr Roy Lawther

Mr Lyndon MacCann SC

Ven Leslie Stevenson

The Working Group has no new issues requiring a report in 2026.

APPENDIX H

THE CHURCH AND SOCIETY COMMISSION OF THE CHURCH OF IRELAND

REPORT 2026

MEMBERSHIP (16)

Most Rev Dr Michael Jackson (Chair)	(5/5)	Mr Keith Gardiner	(3/5)
Most Rev John McDowell		Mrs Zephryn Patton	(3/5)
Mr Neville Armstrong	(5/5)	Mrs June Butler	(2/5)
Rev Jane Burns	(4/5)	Rev Dr Andrew Campbell	(2/5)
Mr Ken Gibson	(4/5)	Mr Steven McQuitty	(2/5)
Dr Michael Trimble	(4/5)	Ms Hannah O'Neill**	(1/1)
Rev Andrew Irwin	(4/5)	Dr Claire Jones	(0/5)
Mr Garrett Casey*	(4/4)	Dr Harriet Wilkinson	(0/5)

Secretary: Mr Craig Copley Brown (RCB staff in attendance)

*From March 2025

**To March 2025

The Church and Society Commission (CASC) is an advisory group, serving the Standing Committee of the General Synod, and engages with legislatures and governments on a variety of issues, including legislation. The mission of CASC is to provide oversight and direction for the Church of Ireland's work, in respect to social theology in action. CASC's views only become representative of the Church of Ireland after being approved by its General Synod.

The Commission submits the following report with appendices referencing its work since the General Synod of May 2025.

Executive Summary

Over the past year the Church and Society Commission continued its work to provide oversight and direction for the Church of Ireland's work in respect to social theology in action. In the time since the last General Synod, the Commission has worked proactively to prepare reports and other resource material for the Church and reactively to respond to government reports, public consultations, and events in society. The Commission had the opportunity for a one-day residential meeting in the Church of Ireland Theological Institute, the first in-person since the Pandemic, which provided a valuable opportunity for members to meet, discuss and plan the future work of CASC.

Membership

The Commission would like to thank all of those who have contributed their time and expertise over the last year towards helping the Commission achieve the work it has, with particular thanks to Ms Hannah O'Neill who stepped down from the Commission this year. We are most grateful for her contribution during her time with the Commission. We welcomed Mr Garrett Casey as a new member of CASC and are grateful for his time and expertise.

Report

Troubles Legacy

At General Synod 2025 the Church and Society Commission presented its work regarding the ‘Legacy of the Troubles’. This included an information leaflet, liturgical resources (compiled by the LAC), and training for curates as part of the CME initiative at the Church of Ireland Theological Institute. The Commission acknowledges that for many individuals and communities, the trauma caused by the Troubles is still very raw, and it is hoped that this small initiative might help in bringing comfort, solace and understanding to all those affected, and those who minister to them.

The Commission recognises that there are a number of key groups working in this area and expertise on the matter already exists within and outside the Church. Rather than recreate existing work our goal has been to bring these people and organisations together, including inviting representatives to Synod, to assist us in addressing the challenge faced by the Church.

Assisted Suicide

The Commission continued to monitor the progress of legislation put forward in both the Republic of Ireland and the United Kingdom to legalise assisted suicide.

The Church of Ireland’s stance in opposition to any such legislation has been consistent and the Commission has previously engaged with legislators on the matter to voice this opposition. The Commission continues to engage with ongoing consultations and would remind members of its information leaflet on the subject that provides a brief, up-to-date point of reference for those within or outside the Church of Ireland community, highlighting the scriptural beliefs that underpin the Church’s stance alongside, a brief outline of some of the medical, legal, and social arguments that reinforce the stance. The flyer works to convey these arguments concisely while also paying heed to the deep emotional resonance this issue has for so many people.

Homelessness

The compound effects of the ongoing Housing Crisis and increases over recent years in the cost of living has driven a surge in the number of people experiencing homelessness. While a true solution will require a significant commitment to action and investment throughout the Island of Ireland, the Commission chose this past Christmas season to highlight the struggles of those experiencing homelessness in the hope of focusing the spirit of Christian charity into practical action, with guidance for parishes and individuals on steps they can take at a local level to assist those in their community experiencing homelessness.

Responses to Programmes for Government

Since the last report to General Synod, the Commission has released a submission in response to the publication of a Programme for Government for the Republic of Ireland. In responding to the Programme for Government the Commission emphasised the ways in which the Church hopes to assist in creating a better future for all people on the island of Ireland. Similarly, in the case of the Programme for Government in Northern Ireland, the Commission offered its insight, urging action where the programme does not adequately address the actions which will need to be taken, particularly around the area of housing, public investment, and climate stewardship.

Statements and Documents

[Submission on the Republic of Ireland's Programme for Government 2025-30](#)

[Statement on the Northern Ireland Programme for Government](#)

[Healing and Hope – resources on addressing the trauma of the Troubles](#)

[Homelessness - Sharing hope with people without a home this Christmas](#)

[Statement on the death of Sr Stanislaus Kennedy](#)

[CASC responds to RoI Budget 2026](#)

APPENDIX I

CONSULTATIVE GROUP ON DISABILITY

Membership

Rev Natasha Quinn-Thomas (Chair) 5/5
Rev Aaron McAlister 3/5
Ms Rachel Kenny 5/5
Ms Naomi Swatridge 4/5
Ms Hannah Daly (resigned November 2025) 3/3
Mr Simon Malley 4/5

New Members

Following the resignation of two members over the past 18 months, the Group is now seeking expressions of interest in order to appoint some new members. The Group functions in a consultative way, working with other committees and Church organisations to promote awareness of and action on disability and inclusivity needs.

Planning for the Future

The Consultative Group has certain priorities in its planning for the future:

- a. To make people think beyond disability and towards access for all;
- b. To make people aware of the legislation in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland and outline the implications of the same;
- c. To make people aware of key issues involved in making sure properties are accessible.

2025 Achievements

- 1) Circulation of recent survey of provision for deaf congregation members to all clergy;
- 2) Preparation of a more comprehensive survey across as many aspects of accessibility as possible, to include physical, sensory and hidden disabilities;
- 3) Preparation of a new leaflet outlining the supports the Group can offer;
- 4) Website update – the Group’s information on www.ireland.anglican.org has not been updated for some time, and it is now being updated as part of a general reworking of the Church of Ireland website. One of the ways the Group is looking at to improve the website is to explore the possibility of using ‘Easy Read’, an accessible format for people with intellectual disabilities.

2026 Plans

- 1) Launch & distribution of an all-island accessibility online survey, followed by analysis of resulting data and a report of recommendations;
- 2) Printing and launch of new leaflets;
- 3) Recommendation that parishes nominate a disability representative who can liaise with the Consultative Group on Disability;
- 4) Continued updating of website.

Conclusion

The Consultative Group continues to seek consultation with and support from church members with either a professional or personal knowledge in the area of disability. After the disruption caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, we are starting to make progress on our ideas and plans. We also seek prayerful support in the year ahead as we continue with our first projects.

To get in touch with the group, please contact Ms Aisling Sheridan, Synod Administrator at aisling.sheridan@rcbcoi.org.

GS Complaints procedure

	2025Total€	2024Total€	2023Total€	2022Total€	2021Total€	2020Total€	2019Total€	2018Total€	2017Total€	2016Total€
Income										
DepositsLess - deposit refund	0	(725)	(692)	0	(1,000)	0	(1,000)	0	(814)	0
Support from General Purpose Fund	692	0	0	0	1,000	0	0	0	0	0
	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Net deposits	692	(725)	(692)	0	0	0	(1,000)	0	(814)	0
Costs										
Legal - External Legal -	17,476	19,863	0	0	6,027	0	0	0	0	0
In-House Legal	12,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Technical	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mediation	0	0	0	0	6,013					
Expert witness costs	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Administrative and secretarial	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Travel & subsistence	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Catering	0	0	0	0	536					
Sundry	0	0	0	0	316	0	0	0	0	0
Facilities hire	0	0	0	0	758					
	29,476	19,863	0	0	13,650	0	0	0	0	0
	30,168	19,138	(692)	0	13,650	0	(1,000)	0	(814)	0

Costs will be charged to the RCB income and expenditure account in the year the complaint hearing takes place.
There were no bonds (deposits) being held at the 31st December 2025.

APPENDIX K

Report on Behalf of the Armagh Agreement Reference Group **To the General Synod of the Church of Ireland 2026** **And the Provincial Board of the British Province of the Moravian Church**

As a brief introduction to the Armagh Agreement, this document was agreed in 2021, and in 2022, it was accepted by both the General Synod of the Church of Ireland and the Synod of the British Province of the Moravian Church. Among other possibilities for our two churches working even more closely together in the future, the agreement enables the inter-changeability of ordained ministry between our two churches, while recognising the different ways in which deacons and bishops function in each of our churches.

This year (2025), the reference group has met twice.

The present members of the group are:-

Church of Ireland – Rt Rev Michael Burrows (Joint Chair) 2/2

Rev Canon Dr Helene Steed 2/2

Mr Roy Totten 1/2

Rev Dr Robert Cotter 2/2

Moravian Church – Rt Rev Sarah Groves (Joint Chair) 1/2

Rev Michael Newman 0/2 (substituted by Rev Livingstone Thompson) 1/2

Mr Mark Kernohan 1/2

Rev Philip Cooper (Secretary) 2/2

Rev Livingstone Thompson (Moravian Church) attended our meet in October, to represent the Provincial Board of the Moravian Church, due to the fact that Br Michael Newman was not able to attend.

Bishop Sarah Groves gave a presentation about the Moravian Church and Moravian spirituality, at the Church of Ireland Theological Institution, in Dublin, on 27th January, 2025. Bishop Michael Burrows was also present.

There has been a meeting between Moravian ministers, and Church of Ireland members of the clergy situated in the Diocese of Connor. The meeting was held on 21st February, 2025, at the House of Vic-Ryn, in Lisburn. During the meeting, Bishop Sarah Groves and Bishop George Davison discussed with the group the significance of the Armagh Agreement.

Rev Dr Robert Cotter, on behalf of the group, has continued to work on a planned publication that gives an account of the historical background, and the events and discussions, that led to the creation of the Armagh Agreement. This work is nearing completion, and the group is extremely grateful to Robert for the commitment and hard work involved in creating this important and valuable piece of work.

It is hoped that in 2026 a small celebration can be organised in Dublin, with a service in Whitechurch parish church, including the planting of a tree in the nearby Moravian burial ground. The group was planning to hold this celebration in October, 2025, to coincide with its meeting on that day. However, the event was postponed, due to the fact that a number of the members of the group could not attend.

We need to reflect further on the practice and discipline surrounding occasional ‘interchangeability of ministry, e.g. in the area of safeguarding. The group recommend that the Moravian Church’s National Safeguarding Lead and the appropriate safeguarding officers from the Church of Ireland communicate with one another on this matter.

In its future work, the group will look at the following subjects:-

- Mutual participation in ordinations of bishops
- The possibility of sharing theological training in Ireland
- The Moravian Church's relationships with the Methodist Church in Ireland
- Production of a leaflet that explains the agreement and what the two churches can do together
- The possibility of sharing in each other's festivals, patronal celebrations, harvest festivals, anniversary services, Christingle services, etc.

The Armagh Agreement presents our two churches with exciting opportunities for mission and joint work, the Reference Group continues to hope and pray that the agreement will grow and flourish in the years ahead, bearing much fruit for the kingdom of God.

Rev Philip Cooper
January 2026

Priorities Fund Report to the Standing Committee March 2026

[illegible]

Application Number		Diocese	Conversion rate Sterling to Euro		€1.20846 / £1		Amount Requested		Recommended Grant Year 1		Recommended Grant Year 2		Total Recommended Grant
			Applicant & Description of Project		£	€	£	€	£	€	£	€	
<u>Outreach Initiatives cont'd</u>													
OI- 18		Connor	St Brigid's Church (Pairsh of Mallusk) Creation of a Youth Club for high school students		£17,970				£5,000	€6,042	£5,000	€6,042	€12,085
OI- 19		Connor	St Paul & St Barnabas, York Street A Mission & Discipleship Hub for North Belfast		£40,000								€0
OI- 20			South Lisburn Community Church Outreach Trip to Romania via Exodus		£6,060								€0
OI- 21		Connor	Lisburn Cathedral Youth Providing better youth facilities in Lisburn Cathedral		£10,000				£6,000	€7,251			€7,251
OI- 22			<i>Duplicate to OI- 23</i>										€0
OI- 23		Down	Seapatrik- Banbridge Parish Outreach initiative using music to connect with the community		£5,500				£3,000	€3,625			€3,625
OI- 24			Shankill Parish Church Lurgan To further develop existin outreach events		£10,000				£7,500	€9,063			€9,063
OI- 25			Glencraig Parish Church Holy Week Art Exhibition		£4,750				£2,500	€3,021			€3,021
OI- 26			Sligo Centre for Mission To start an Outreach for secondary school students			€20,000				€10,000		€5,000	€15,000
OI- 27		Connor	South Lisburn Community Church Duplicate of OI- 20										€0
OI- 28			Lisburn Cathedral Youth Duplicate of OI21										€0
OI- 29		Down	Braniel Community Church Expansion of community garden		£2,600				£2,600	€3,142			€3,142
OI- 30		Down	St Molua's Parish Church To establish and operate a Men's Shed and Community Garden		£32,085				£17,000	€20,544			€20,544
OI- 31		Connor	St Nicholas & All Saints Renovate All Saints' Centre to continue outreach projects		£121,049				£40,000	€48,338			€48,338
OI- 32			Kill o the Grange Parish Outreach to the in poor communities of Uganda			€20,000							€0
OI- 33		Down	St. John's Parish, Lurgan To enhance Messy Church Ministry via new AV system		£2,560				£2,560	€3,094			€3,094
OI-34		Down	Tullycamet Church Develop outreach programme in impoverished area		£10,000				£5,000	€6,042	£3,000	€3,625	€9,668
													continued overleaf -->

		Conversion rate Sterling to Euro				€1.20846 / £1																	
Application Number	Diocese	Applicant & Description of Project														Recommended Grant Year 1		Recommended Grant Year 2		Total Recommended Grant			
<u>Outreach Initiatives cont'd</u>																£		€					
																£		€					
OI- 35	Down	Castlewellan - The Well															£9,000		€10,876		£6,000	€7,251	€18,127
		To set up a community outreach hub in Mainstreet Castlewellan																					
OI- 36	Down	West Winds Community Church															£10,000		€12,085		£5,000	€6,042	€18,127
		Develop a Youth Engagement project in West Winds social housing estate																					
OI- 37		Towerprogramme																	€1,200				€0
		No connection with C of I																					
OI- 38	CFO	Lismore Union of Parishes - Pioneer Ministry - Cook Serve Pray																	€15,000				€15,000
		Outreach to youth, wider community and those marginalised through addictions																					
OI- 39	Cork	Kinsale Union of Parishes																	€750				€750
		Updating Multose Church entrance and community hall																					
OI- 40	Raphoe	Killymard Parish - The Mustard seed																	€5,000				€5,000
		Further development of the Mustard Seed Outreach Facility																					
OI- 41	na	Kilkenny Christian Centre - Multidenominational																	€10,000				€10,000
		Renovation of Community Resource Centre - The Light House																					
OI- 42		St Pats Greystones																	€50,000				€0
		Renovation of Church Community Centre to facilitate outreach to local area																					
																							continued overleaf -->

		Conversion rate Sterling to Euro	€1.20846 / £1															
Application Number		Diocese	Applicant & Description of Project										Recommended Grant Year 1		Recommended Grant Year 2		Total Recommended Grant	
			Amount Requested						£		€		£		€			
Christian Education																		
CE-1			Board for Ministry with Children and Families														€0	
			Production of a Child-friendly version of the Book of Common Prayer															
CE-1b			€10,000								€7,000						€7,000	
			Production of video about the work of CCUD															
CE-2		Kilmore	€3,200								€3,000						€3,000	
			Audio visual equipment for Sunday School and Mother and Todler Group															
CE-3		Derry	€800														€0	
			Bible Studies for Children															
CE-4		Down	£24,000								£20,000		€24,169				€24,169	
			Provision of a timber building for Sunday School															
CE-5			€10,000								€4,000						€4,000	
			To create three new Irish case studies on pioneering mission															
CE-6		Down	£2,420								£420		€508				€508	
			Bible study groups for people who have recently come to faith.															
CE- 7		Down	£4,340														€0	
			Upgrading of Sound System in Parish church for clearer communication															
CE-8		n/A	£20,000								£5,000		€6,042		£5,000		€12,085	
			Designed Merchandise for national youth events															
CE- 9					€8,000						€6,400						€6,400	
			'Life on Purpose' video and discussion series for youthwork & Alpha Textbook															
CE-10																	€0	
			Duplicate of CE-9															
CE-11		Meath	€25,000								€7,500						€7,500	
			Saints and Scholars -Christian faith education including heritage and arts															
CE-12		KEA	€25,000														€0	
			To provide sound equipment in Schools Sports Hall															
CE-13		Ferns	€8,500														€0	
			Development of choir															
																	continued overleaf ---->	

		Conversion rate Sterling to Euro									
Application Number	Diocese	Applicant & Description of Project	€1.20846 / £1		Amount Requested		Recommended Grant Year 1		Recommended Grant Year 2		Total Recommended Grant
			£	€	£	€	£	€	£	€	
Innovative Ministry in a Rural Context											
IM-1	Limerick	Abington Church									
		Outdoor eco space for parish and local Syriac Orthodox community									
IM-2		Liberty Prayer Ministry									
		No connection with C of I									
IM-3	Kilmore	Shercock Tidy Towns									
		Painting of Shercock Church									
IM-4	Down	Killyleagh Parish									
		Youth and Toddler groups, community events and music scholarships									
IM-5		GFS Ireland									
		Display of the History of the GFS									
IM-6	Armagh	Kildress Parish Church									
		Rectory Garden resortation as a Spiritual resouce									
IM-7	Down	Killyleagh Parish									
		Outreach to the community by increased Heritage Awareness									
IM-8	Kilmore	KEA Diocesan Council									
		Two year of Agricultural Chaplaincy within KEA Diocese									
IM-9		Gathered - A Partnership Ministry									
		Outreach Centreand and associated hubs for people with no church connection									
IM-10	Kilmore	Kinawley and Holy Trinity									
		Provision of an AV system for the Parish group									
IM-11	Armagh	Altedesert Parish									
		Conversion of Parish Hall into Outreach Community Centre									
IM-12	Down	Moneyreagh Community Church									
		Outreach work to the village of Ballygowan									
IM-13	Down	Bryansford - Kilcoo Parish Curch									
		Develop various initiatives to connect with the local community									
IM-14	Down	Moneyreagh Community Church									
		Expand "HOST" community outreach Coffee Shop									
IM-15	Armagh	St Matthew's Church, Richhill									
		Development of grounds at Church and Hall for Parish events									
IM-16	Down	Lower Kilwarlin									
		Furnish parish hall to enable outreach projects including Café Church									
IM-17	Down	Upper Kilwarlin									
		Outdoor Prayer Labyrinth									

		Conversion rate Sterling to Euro											
Application Number	Diocese	Applicant & Description of Project	€1.20846 / £1		Amount Requested	Recommended Grant Year 1				Recommended Grant Year 2		Total Recommended Grant	
			£	€		£	€	£	€	£	€		
Training - Lay & Ordained													
T-1	na	New wine ireland Training and events for church leaders	£50,000									€0	
T-2	Limerick	Adare - Croom - Kilpeacon - Kilmallock Training courses for rector in Counselling and Psychotherapy		€2,280								€0	
T-3		COI Deans Conference To support the annual 2 day meeting of the Deans		€2,000				€500				€500	
T-4	na	HOB Providing training and education for each diocesan bishop		€40,000				€40,000				€40,000	
T-5	Down	Dundonald - St. Elizabeth's Creation of a ministry training scheme in Dundonald Parish	£45,217				£7,000	€8,459				€8,459	
			£865,629	€450,562			£263,080	€474,071	£52,000	€82,840		€556,911	
			£	€			£	€	£	€		Total Expressed in Euros	
							Total recommended grants, 1st and 2nd year						

APPENDIX Li
STANDING COMMITTEE
PRIORITIES FUND

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT		Year ended 31 December 2025	
		2025	2024
		€	€
INCOME			
Contributions	1	575,280	304,798
Investment Income		47,095	19,822
Individual Contributions		186	121
Bequest Income		-	-
Bank Interest		25	
		<u>622,586</u>	<u>324,741</u>
EXPENDITURE			
Administration Expenses	2	(20,833)	(24,981)
Operating Surplus for the Year		<u>601,753</u>	<u>299,850</u>
ALLOCATIONS & GRANTS			
Allocations & Grants Distributed	3	(383,531)	(467,000)
Surplus/(Deficit) after Allocations & Grants		<u>218,222</u>	<u>(167,150)</u>
Valuation Movement		72,255	52,259
Currency translation adjustment		(5,309)	3,837
Net Surplus/(Deficit) for the year		<u><u>285,168</u></u>	<u><u>(111,054)</u></u>

STANDING COMMITTEE

PRIORITIES FUND

BALANCE SHEET

Year ended 31 December 2025

		2025 €	2024 €
INVESTMENTS			
Investments held by the RCB	5	1,260,114	1,187,859
CURRENT ASSETS			
Cash held with the RCB	6	425,276	212,363
Debtors	7	-	-
		425,276	212,363
Net Assets		<u>1,685,390</u>	<u>1,400,222</u>
FUNDS EMPLOYED			
Balance at 1 January		1,400,222	1,511,276
Surplus/(Deficit) for the year		285,168	(111,054)
Balance as at 31 December		<u>1,685,390</u>	<u>1,400,222</u>

Standing Committee Report 2026

Notes to the Financial Statements

	2025	2024
	€	€
1. Contributions		
Contributions from the dioceses	575,280	304,798
	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
2. Administration Expenses	2025	2024
	€	€
Salaries & PRSI	20,007	20,044
Stationary, Printing	578	4,150
Miscellaneous & Transfers	248	697
	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
	20,833	24,891
	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
3. Grants & Loans	2025	2024
	€	€
Ministry	55,129	49,358
Retirement Benefits	-	-
Education	26,521	102,544
Outreach Initiatives	278,035	263,098
Innovative Ministry	23,846	52,000
	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
	383,531	467,000
	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
4. Capital Commitments		

As at 31st December 2025 the Priorities Fund had committed grants of €466,016 for Jan 2026 – March 2027. These grants have not been provided for in the Financial Statements-

5. Invested assets are shown at market value at both 31 December 2024 and 31 December 2025.

	2025	2024
	€	€
6. Cash on deposit held by the RCB		
Cash on deposit held by the RCB	425,276	212,363
	<u> </u>	<u> </u>

This represents cash held on behalf of The Church of Ireland Priorities Fund by the RCB in pooled bank accounts.

Standing Committee Report 2026

	2025	2024
	€	€
7. Debtors		
Contributions Accrued	-	-
	<u> </u>	<u> </u>

8. Foreign Currency transactions have been translated to Euro at the rate of exchange ruling at 31 December 2025, €1 = £0.8717 (2024: €1 = £0. 8275).
9. An accountants' report has not been provided for these Financial Statements as the cash balance of €425,276 and Investment balance of €1,260,114 is included within the scope of the Representative Church Body's audit.
10. The Priorities Fund is not the beneficial owner of any tangible fixed assets, and thus no depreciation charge arises in the current or previous financial year.

Appendix M

Church of Ireland Safeguarding Board

General Synod Report 2026

“All adults and children have a fundamental right to be respected, nurtured, cared for and protected from harm or the risk of harm.”

(Church of Ireland Safeguarding Policies)



Mrs Gillian Taylor
Safeguarding Manager for
Casework



Dr Niall Moore
Safeguarding Manager for
Policy and Training

Members of the Safeguarding Board

- The Archbishop of Armagh, Most Rev John McDowell (Chairperson) (4/5 meetings attended)
- The Archbishop of Dublin, Most Rev Dr Michael Jackson (0/5 meetings attended)
- Clerical Honorary Secretary of General Synod, Rev Canon Gillian Wharton (4/5 meetings attended)
- Representative of clergy from Northern Ireland, Bishop Ian Ellis (5/5 meetings attended)
- Representative of clergy from Northern Ireland, Rev Dr Christopher St John (3/5 meetings attended)
- Representatives of clergy from the Republic of Ireland, Rev Ruth Elmes (3/5 meetings attended)
- Representatives of clergy from the Republic of Ireland, Rev Eugene Griffin (4/5 meetings attended)
- Representative of the Representative Church Body, Rev Canon Paul Thompson (4/5 meetings attended)
- Chief Officer and Secretary General, Mr David Ritchie (5/5 meetings attended)
- Independent member, Senior Consultant Child Protection in Sport Unit at NSPCC Mr Paul Stephenson (3/5 meetings attended)
- Independent member, Policy Manager with the Rape Crisis Centre Ms Shirley Scott (5/5 meetings attended)

The Safeguarding Board membership includes representatives of the northern and southern provinces appointed by their Archbishops and independent experts in safeguarding from outside of the Church of Ireland.

Summary of activities

Policy development

The Safeguarding Managers worked with internal and external advisors to prepare policies and procedures which were presented to the Safeguarding Board for consideration, these included:

Amalgamated Child Safeguarding policy

The new draft policy has been approved by Standing Committee and has involved consultation with the statutory authorities in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland including Tusla, the Department of Health (NI) and the Data Protection Commissioner. A process to induct people in the new policy is underway alongside redevelopment of existing guidance to support the implementation of policy at parish and diocesan level.

Procedure for Visiting Members of the Clergy Seeking to Minister in the Church of Ireland for Longer Term Ministry

A new procedure to provide consistency on safeguarding processes for visiting members of the clergy has been drafted and approved by the Safeguarding Board and the House of Bishops. This procedure forms part of the guidance to accompany the new safeguarding policy.

Procedure for External Groups Who Use Church Property

A new process to replace the existing common protocol document has been completed, which will form part of the new guidance to accompany the safeguarding policy. This procedure provides greater clarity around the interaction between external groups using church property and parachurch organisations who use church property to deliver ministry with children.

New Structure of the Safeguarding Team

Following a governance review, the Safeguarding Team has been restructured to operate across both jurisdictions of Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. Existing staff now have a focus on specialisms with one team focusing on policy, training and proactive safeguarding and another team focusing on casework.

The Policy and Training Team is managed by Dr Niall Moore who is the Safeguarding Manager for Policy and Training. Mr Alex Kinch and Ms Sarah Mac Bruithin are the Vetting and AccessNI Administrators, and Ms Chiara DeRaffaele is the Safeguarding Administrator. The Policy and Training Team are responsible for issues relating to policy, training, Garda Vetting, AccessNI or any safeguarding issue that is not related to an allegation whether in Northern Ireland or the Republic of Ireland.

The Casework Team is managed by Mrs Gillian Taylor who is the Safeguarding Manager for Casework. Mr Anthony Russell and Ms Katie Harrigan are the Safeguarding Casework Officers. The Casework Team are responsible for offering advice on any allegations or concerns related to the safety of a child or adult whether in Northern Ireland or the Republic of Ireland, or issues relating to persons of concern who wish to take part in church services or other church related activities.

Database Development

In April 2024, the RCB Safeguarding Office began a project to develop a centralised secure database. The purpose of this new database is to provide a centralised system for storing safeguarding information relating to contacts, roles, training records, vetting contact information and advice. The system is now fully operational and is now able to produce reports and statistical information relating to advice offered, training delivered, parish returns and the current people involved in safeguarding at parish and diocesan level. The process to log relevant existing data to the central database is well underway with dedicated staff now in place to support this important project. Further development of this system will continue in the coming year to support the work of the team.

Safeguarding Training

In 2025 the Safeguarding Managers provided training to 865 people including child safeguarding Parish Panels members, those involved in adult safeguarding, those involved in vetting, students in CITI and those involved in pastoral ministry. This is in addition to the training that is organised in each Diocese by Safeguarding Compliance Officers/Safeguarding Leads and delivered by trainers trained by the RCB.

Advice Offered

During 2025 the Safeguarding Team offered 516 individual pieces of advice to dioceses, parishes and relevant individuals relating to all aspects of safeguarding. 55% of advice related to casework and responding to allegations or persons of concern. The remainder of advice focused on the category of protecting (28%) which included advice on proactive safeguarding, including vetting and AccessNI queries. The remaining 17% related to general policy advice and issues related to compliance, training and supporting people with additional needs.

Establishment of a Case Management Committee

A key part of the new safeguarding policy is the development of a Case Management Committee to offer multidisciplinary advice on complex cases. The terms of reference for this committee were agreed by Standing Committee in November, and an independent chairperson will be appointed alongside members of the Committee.

Vetting Services

Vetting and AccessNI staff provide a vetting service for parishes, dioceses, Church of Ireland schools and relevant organisations. This service is provided pursuant to a Service Level Agreement with parishes, diocese, schools and other relevant organisations. During 2025 the RCB processed over 3826 vetting applications and 1533 AccessNI applications.

In 2025 major changes occurred in both AccessNI and Garda Vetting processes. Both AccessNI and the National Garda Vetting Bureau introduced improved secure systems, new processes for signatories and applicants and training requirements. The Vetting and AccessNI staff worked throughout the year to implement and communicate these changes, through email, newsletters, individual support and the delivery of mandatory vetting training. The team members appreciate the support and patience of those within parishes, dioceses and schools as we work together to implement these changes.

Further information regarding safeguarding can be found on <https://safeguarding.ireland.anglican.org/>

**STANDING COMMITTEE
INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT**

	Notes	2025 €	2024 €
INCOME			
Representative Church Body	1	839,958	728,968
Royalties Fund Income		36,637	45,314
Grants/Contributions		-	5,511
Deposit Interest	2	1,690	1,422
		<u>878,285</u>	<u>781,215</u>
EXPENSES			
Services provided by RCB	3	397,263	358,518
General Synod Expenses	4	50,149	53,257
Miscellaneous Expenses	5	43,611	58,703
		<u>491,023</u>	<u>470,478</u>
OPERATING SURPLUS FOR THE YEAR		<u>387,262</u>	<u>310,737</u>
ALLOCATIONS AND GRANTS			
Allocations to Ecumenical and Anglican Organisations	6	139,077	125,522
Allocations to Church related Organisations	7	227,352	174,744
		<u>366,429</u>	<u>300,266</u>
Surplus for year		<u>20,833</u>	<u>10,471</u>

STANDING COMMITTEE

FUND ACCOUNT

Year ended 31 December

		2025 €	2024 €
CURRENT ASSETS			
Cash on deposit held by RCB	8	177,861	157,789
Net Assets		<u>177,861</u>	<u>157,789</u>

FUNDS EMPLOYED

Balance at 1 January		157,789	149,454
Surplus/(Deficit) for the year		20,833	10,471
Currency translation adjustment		(761)	864
Adjustment to opening balance		-	(3,000)
Balance as at 31 December		<u><u>177,861</u></u>	<u><u>157,789</u></u>

Notes to the Accounts

1. Income from Representative Church Body

	2025 €	2024 €
Representative Church Body allocation	941,059	856,816
Refund unexpended allocation	(101,101)	(127,848)
Total income from RCB	<u>839,958</u>	<u>728,968</u>

This represents amounts which were allocated by the Allocations Committee of the Representative Church Body to fund the activities of the Standing Committee.

2. Deposit Interest

	2025 €	2024 €
Royalties Fund	1,690	1,422
	<u>1,690</u>	<u>1,422</u>

3. Services provided by RCB

Services provided by the RCB relates to the time apportionment of certain RCB staff who provide Standing Committee support.

4. General Synod Expenses

	€	€
Venue and Facilities	50,149	53,257
	<u>50,149</u>	<u>53,257</u>

5. Miscellaneous Expenses

	2025 €	2024 €
Publications & Printing	7,155	8,916
Honorary Secretaries' expenses	10,048	6,850
Porvoo Expenses	2,525	2,816
COI Church & Society CO	938	1,065
Council for Mission	3,028	24,415
Commission on Ministry	14,665	9,839
Subscriptions	3,264	3,353
Historiographer	1,300	1,300
Sundry	688	149
	<u>43,611</u>	<u>58,703</u>

6. Ecumenical and Anglican Organisations	2025 €	2024 €
Anglican Consultative Council	56,077	59,072
Irish Council of Churches	28,374	28,127
Churches Together in Britain and Ireland	11,471	12,085
Irish Inter-Church Meeting	13,611	13,853
World Council of Churches	4,798	4,955
Conference of European Churches	12,000	-
Irish School of Ecumenics	2,000	2,000
Delegates' expenses (travel/conferences)	10,746	5,430
	<u>139,077</u>	<u>125,522</u>
	=====	=====
7. Allocations to Church related Organisations	2025 €	2024 €
Central Communications Board	192,482	144,424
Grants paid to General Church Organisations	5,000	5,000
Grants paid to Support Allocations	13,000	12,000
Church of Ireland Marriage Council	3,350	11,774
Royalties Fund Expenditure	13,520	1,546
	<u>227,352</u>	<u>174,744</u>
	=====	=====
8. Cash on Short Term Deposit	2025 €	2024 €
Royalties Fund	179,772	155,652
Other Account Balances	(1,911)	2,137
	<u>177,861</u>	<u>157,789</u>
	=====	=====

This represents cash held on behalf of Standing Committee by the RCB in pooled bank accounts.

9. Foreign currency transactions have been translated to Euro at the rate of exchange ruling on 31 December 2025, €1 = £0.8717 (2024: €1 = £0.8275).

10. An accountant's report has not been provided for these financial statements, as the balance of €177,861 is included within the scope of the Representative Church Body's audit.

GENERAL PURPOSES FUND

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT

Year Ending 31 December 2025

GENERAL PURPOSES FUND**INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT**

	2025	2024
	€	€
INCOME		
Interest and dividends	1,316	1,249
	<u>1,316</u>	<u>1,249</u>
EXPENSES		
Registrar's fees	-	-
	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>
OPERATING SURPLUS FOR YEAR	1,316	1,249
Balance 1 January	55,496	52,306
Currency translation adjustment	(7)	3
Unrealised Gains on Revaluation	<u>2,735</u>	<u>1,938</u>
Balance 31 December	<u>59,540</u>	<u>55,496</u>
FUNDS EMPLOYED		
Investments	47,318	44,586
Cash held by RCB	<u>12,222</u>	<u>10,910</u>
	<u>59,540</u>	<u>55,496</u>

Sterling balances and transactions have been translated to Euro at the rate of exchange ruling at 31 December 2025, €1 = £0.8717 (2024: €1 = £0.8275).

APPENDIX R

Interim Report of the Wedding Venues Working Group to the General Synod

Members:

Rev Canon Gillian Wharton (Co-Chair) 3/3
Mr Ken Gibson (Co-Chair) 3/3
Most Rev Patricia Storey 3/3
Rt Rev Ferran Glenfield 1/3
Rev Carlton Baxter 3/3
Mr Andrew Brannigan 3/3
Dr Ruth Gardiner 3/3
Rev Canon Jennifer McWhirter 3/3
Ms Judy Peters 1/3
Rev Lesley Robinson 3/3
Very Rev Niall Sloane 3/3
Mr Timothy Smyth 2/3

In attendance (RCB Staff)

Mr Linto John
Ms Aisling Sheridan

In response to a resolution passed at the General Synod of 2025, the Standing Committee of the Church of Ireland, at its meeting on 16 September 2025, established the Wedding Venues Working Group, to investigate the possibility of allowing Church of Ireland clergy to solemnise marriages in secular venues as part of the Church's outreach mission, and to bring a final report with recommendations to the General Synod of 2027. The members of the Working Group hold a variety of views and opinions on this topic, bringing breadth and balance to the discussions.

The Working Group has met on two occasions (3 November 2025 and 4 February 2026) with the next meeting scheduled for 24 March 2026.

The Working Group agreed that the term "secular venue" was not wholly suitable, given that its work encompasses any building that is not a consecrated Church of Ireland worship space. Accordingly, the group adopted the working title Wedding Venues Working Group to reflect this wider scope.

Previous Discussions

The Working Group noted that discussions originally began when the General Synod 2018 requested the Marriage Council to consider whether marriage ceremonies might be conducted in buildings other than consecrated church buildings. The Marriage Council and the Liturgical Advisory Committee expressed concern that existing regulations required clarity and that any change would necessitate new liturgical provision. Subsequently, the issue was considered by the Standing Committee and referred back to the Marriage Council, the Liturgical Advisory Council and the Church and Society Commission.

On 15 June 2021, the House of Bishops presented Standing Committee with revised marriage regulation wording that affirmed that marriages are ordinarily to be celebrated in consecrated church buildings, and that any marriage outside such buildings should only proceed in exceptional circumstances with the relevant bishop's prior approval. This was agreed by Standing Committee.

Current State Marriage Regulations in RoI and NI

The Group examined the current marriage regulations for both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland, which reflect the legislative frameworks under the Civil Registration Act 2004 and the Marriage (Northern

Ireland) Order 2003 respectively. Members noted that these regulations were drafted over two decades ago and were shaped by the pastoral and cultural context of that time. Several members of the Group expressed the view that while the existing provisions allow for exceptional flexibility, their language now seems outdated and insufficient as a response to current pastoral realities. Discussion highlighted that civil marriage trends and couples' preferences have shifted significantly, with many now valuing the convenience and comfort of secular venues such as hotels and event spaces for their weddings.

Pastoral and Missional Considerations

At the request of the Working Group, papers with differing viewpoints were presented to the Working Group by Very Rev Niall Sloane and the Rev Lesley Robinson.

Very Rev Niall Sloane's paper highlighted a number of reservations and concerns, should marriage ceremonies be permitted to take place in buildings other than those consecrated for worship in the Church of Ireland. It also included examples of connection and outreach that had occurred when marriage ceremonies took place in churches.

Rev Lesley Robinson, who was the proposer of the motion at General Synod 2025, tabled a paper outlining the opportunities for pastoral engagement, mission and outreach with individuals and families who might not otherwise attend church. She reported that she had been asked on occasions to officiate at a marriage ceremony in buildings other than those consecrated for worship in the Church of Ireland, and other clerical members of the Group also stated that they had had similar requests.

Consultation with other Denominations

The Group consulted with other Christian denominations regarding their practice on marriages in secular venues. Responses indicated a diversity of approaches:

- the Moravian Church permits such marriages and generally supports the practice, though with a preference for weddings in worship spaces;
- the Presbyterian Church in Ireland reports long-standing ministerial discretion for such weddings;
- the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) allows weddings outside meeting houses;
- the Methodist Church in Ireland permits secular venue weddings in certain circumstances;
- the Roman Catholic Church does not permit marriages outside consecrated churches.

Discussions to Date

1. There is a pastoral concern amongst clergy and laity that the current regulations may be restrictive.
2. Would there be a missional value in offering couples the option of a Church of Ireland wedding liturgy in venues other than consecrated church buildings?
3. Any change to existing practice must safeguard the centrality and significance of consecrated worship spaces in the Church of Ireland.
4. Discussion also reflected the need for protocols which would respect the conscience, integrity and office of local clergy, should there be any change to existing regulations.
5. The Working Group acknowledged that the existing "exceptional" provision already allows for some pastoral flexibility. However, concern was expressed that the definition of "exceptional" was open to interpretation and such divergence could present a difficulty for a bishop.

The Working Group will bring its final report to the General Synod of 2027 as per the terms of reference.

APPENDIX P

WORKING GROUP CONCERNING A CO-ORDINATED RESPONSE BY THE CHURCH TO HISTORIC INSTITUTIONAL ABUSE (HISTORIC INQUIRIES WORKING GROUP)

Members:

Archbishop of Armagh (1)
Archbishop of Dublin (1)
Ms Hilary Prentice, Chair RB Executive (1)
Rev Canon Gillian Wharton, Honorary Secretary (1)
Mr Ken Gibson, Honorary Secretary (1)
Mr Lyndon MacCann SC (1)
Mr David Ritchie, The Secretary General (1)
Mrs Janet Maxwell, Head of Synod Services (1)

The Institutional Inquiries Working Group met on one occasion since the last meeting of General Synod. The ongoing work dealt with during this period:

- Further research into records of the Church of Ireland Adoption Society records in Northern Ireland (all files from 1950s).
- Monitoring progress - Inquiry into Mother & Baby Homes in Northern Ireland.
- Monitoring progress - Inquiry into Historic Clerical Child Sexual Abuse in Northern Ireland (relevant committee - Church of Ireland Safeguarding Board).
- Monitoring developments - Mother & Baby Home redress scheme (RI).
- Monitoring legislative requirement –relevant records.

Northern Ireland

On 28 January 2026, Ven Shane Forster and Mrs Janet Maxwell attended a meeting with the Executive Office team making preparations for the Public Inquiry into Mother and Baby Homes and related issues. The team is led by Mr Martin Carey, Director of Truth Recovery Programme. The Church connection with two of the homes included in the study (Kennedy House and Hopedene Hostel) arose through connections with the work of the Church of Ireland Moral Welfare Association.

The Moral Welfare Association was a body formed in the 1930s, at which point it was independent of the Church. By the late 1940s, Northern Dioceses of the Church of Ireland had agreed to nominate representatives to the Association. The Association's central board at this time also included independent members, representative of C of I umbrella bodies, and representatives of independent non-church, charitable, civic and state sector welfare agencies.

The Association in turn set up Kennedy House (1947-56) and sent representative to sit on the managing committee of Hopedene Hostel (1943-91), which was itself established as a multi-agency initiative led by Belfast City Council (Corporation) in 1943 as part of the war-effort led by the Ministry of Health in Whitehall. The Association founded the Church of Ireland Adoption Society in 1950.

While the Church did not manage the Moral Welfare Association for most of the period under scrutiny, by the 1960s, there was a close relationship with the Church, and particularly with the Dioceses of Connor and Down and Dromore. In the late 1980s, the General Synod agreed to reorganise the efforts of various groups working in the area of social welfare and created the General Synod Board of Social Responsibility, which absorbed the remaining activities of the earlier bodies. No homes remained open at this time, but the Adoption Society was taken into the scope of the ongoing activity and remained so until it became full independent in 2018.

In January 2026, the Working Group was given a further opportunity to comment on the Chapters on Hopedene Hostel and Kennedy House to be included in the Report of the Independent Panel. The comments submitted focuses on the results of further research, which had thrown fresh light on the actions taken by the Ministry of Health following the outbreak of war in 1940, resulting in a national effort to co-ordinate and improve the provision of services by state and charitable agencies to unmarried women and their children. Circular 8266 of 1943 summarises this initiative and demonstrates the policy behind Belfast Corporation's efforts to co-ordinate the work of agencies working in the Belfast Area, and which resulted in the establishment of Hopedene Hostel in that year.

The significance of governmental intervention in the direction of policy and provision in respect of unmarried mothers and their children has not been sufficiently recognised in much of the narrative around this issue.

Indeed, the multi-agency approach that was encouraged by the government is reflected in the structures of the Moral Welfare Association, itself. The Association's central board as set out in the new Constitution of 1947, reflected the same multi-agency co-operation. Representation included independent individuals, Church diocesan representatives and representatives of civic and Council welfare agencies.

- Kennedy House - operated by the Church of Ireland Moral Welfare Association (Northern Dioceses) with partnership finance from two (possibly three) County Welfare Authorities, 1947-56; the report also identifies a home of the same name run by the C of I Rescue Society 1912-1946. The Church of Ireland Rescue Society, was a women's lay committee which had no direct links to either the central church, nor dioceses.) Between 1922-1956, some 168 women were admitted to the two institutions known as Kennedy House.
- Hopedene Hostel 1943-84) (established as a multi-agency home as an initiative led by Belfast City Council responding to the Ministry of Health's nation-wide initiative to co-ordinate the work of charity and state agencies working with unmarried mothers and their children.) The Board of Hopedene comprised representatives nominated by a wide range of organisation including the C of I Moral Welfare Association (Northern Dioceses) and the Church of Ireland Rescue League, alongside representatives of various other denominational, civic and medical institutions). Hopedene was closed in 1984 following a review conducted by the three main Churches liaising with the Dept of Health & Social Services, which was providing funding to sustain the home. The decision to wind up in 1984 led to sale of the building. Funds were directed in part to the Church of Ireland Board of Social Responsibility, now an independent charitable organisation called Family Routes, which also took in the records and used these to set up an adoption tracing service. Between 1922 and 1984, the Interim Report identified 670 women using the facility.

Link to the original Report: [Publication of Research Report on Mother and Baby Homes and Magdalene Laundries in Northern Ireland | Department of Health \(health-ni.gov.uk\).](#)

The Public Inquiry is due to be set up during 2026, and will look at various aspects of the provision for unmarried mothers and their children, largely focusing on looking for systemic institutions operating as mother and baby homes. A redress scheme has already been announced that will provide a set sum of £10,000 to those who were resident in named homes, with individuals being able to bring claims for specific harms at a later point. Mr Martin Carey, Director of the Truth Recovery Programme has indicated that contributions may be sought where specific harms or systemic failings are identified.

The issues that the Public Inquiry will focus on were previously indicated as follows:

“

- *what led women and girls to be admitted to such institutions;*
- *their treatment while there;*

- *their departure from the institutions;*
- *the placement of children, now adults, (other than with a birth mother), born while their mothers were in an institution, for the purposes of adoption, fostering or other care arrangements; and*
- *the registration, regulation or inspection of the institutions. (p.15)”*

The Inquiry will also look at individuals and organisations attached to these homes in Northern Ireland:

“The policy intention is to focus not only on the institutions themselves but also on any organisations or individuals linked to their activities. This reflects the recommendation of the Report “to investigate individual, institutional, organisational and state departmental / agent responsibility concerning human rights violations experienced in Mother and Baby Institutions, Magdalene Laundries, Workhouses and their pathways and practices (including the adoption system, related institutions such as ‘baby homes’ and private nursing homes, and cross border and international transfers of children and women)”. (p.18)”

Ongoing research into Records of the Church of Ireland Adoption Society

The Working Group has received a third report from Family Routes regarding a review of adoption records of The Church of Ireland Adoption Society by independent researchers. The research has looked at standards of care exercised in the adoption work carried on by the Society. The third Report looked at the totality of files from the 1950s, which is the decade in which the greatest number of adoptions took place. Some 156 records were considered. This is the only study of its kind undertaken on adoption records relating to the work of the Inquiry and hopes that it will be of use to the Inquiry as it conducts its business. In this study, there was no evidence of cross border adoption. Evidence of counselling or advice on alternatives was less than in records from later decades, but researchers commented that in most cases during the 1950s, the decision on adoption had been taken prior to the involvement of the Adoption Society and its social workers. In balancing this apparent lack of counselling, during the 1950s, the records from Kennedy House show that a significant number of women returned to their families and a higher number of these brought their children with them than is found in samples from other institutions. This would indicate that the Moral Welfare Association was engaging with women with advice, counselling and active support to achieve an outcome that would involve the family of the birth mother during the time the mother was resident in the home. It also demonstrates a level of success for their advocacy and counselling work and that they were sincere in their appeals to the Church to work with the Association to try and keep mother and baby together.

Inquiry into Historical Clerical Child Sexual Abuse in Northern Ireland

The Working Group noted that the Church of Ireland Safeguarding Board is engaging with Prof Tim Chapman and his team in Northern Ireland regarding the research being undertaken into historical clerical child sexual abuse in Northern Ireland.

Republic of Ireland

A - Engagement with Independent Negotiator on behalf of the State (Redress Scheme)

A further letter was sent to Minister Foley in July 2025 to reiterate that the Church of Ireland was not the founder owner or manager of any homes mentioned in the Redress Scheme for Mothers and Baby Homes.

B - Preservation of Certain Records

Statements on relevant records from the Archbishops and Bishops were prepared and submitted ahead of the deadline for reply on 20th March 2025 under The Maternity Protection, Employment Equality and Protection of Certain Records Act (2024) in the Republic of Ireland. During 2025, there was some informal indication from the National Archives that the scope of records might be extended, but nothing further has been added to the existing criteria at the point of writing. For the information of anyone managing historic records, the criteria defined in the legislation is as follows:

The institutions defined are broader than mother and baby homes and include orphanages and industrial schools, personal records and any images. The relevant period is 1922-1998.

Relevant 'institutions':

1. A Mother & Baby Home
2. A County Home
3. A Magdalen Laundry
4. An industrial school, reformatory or related institution
5. An orphanage
6. An institution designated by the Minister

In Northern Ireland, PRONI has led a similar project to preserve relevant records ahead of the work of the Public Inquiry into Mother and Baby homes and related issues commencing. This is expected to begin in 2026/2027.

APPENDIX Q

WORKING GROUP TO REVIEW CLERGY TENURE REPORT 2026

Members and Attendance (as of February 2026)

Rev Canon Malcolm Kingston (Chair) (9/9)

The Bishop of Connor (7/9)

Ms Helen Arnopp (7/9)

Rev Canon James Boyd (8/9)

Mrs J Bruton (7/9)

Rev Ruth Elmes (7/9)

Very Rev Stephen Farrell (2/9)

Ven Barry Forde (9/9)

Rev Canon Nicola Halford (7/9)

Miss Irene Knox (6/9)

Mr Lyndon MacCann SC (6/9)

Mr Glenn Moore *resigned October 2025*

Mr Willie Oliver (6/9)

Dr Nicole Gallagher (staff in attendance)

Background

This Working Group was originally formed as a Select Committee at the General Synod of 2023 but has since become a Working Group of the Standing Committee.

Objectives

The objectives for this group as laid out in the Terms of Reference document as approved by Standing Committee were as follows:

- To review the concept of clergy tenure as understood within the governance of the Church of Ireland;
- To consider the tenure of other clerical/ministerial titles (Priest-In-Charge, Bishop's Curate, Pioneer Minister, Chaplain etc.) (While other ministerial titles were discussed, it was decided by the group to focus mainly on incumbents as they are the ones who have security of tenure by virtue of their being an office holder).
- To undertake a review of the provisions currently in place within the Constitution in respect of breakdown of pastoral relationships and to consider additions or amendments to these provisions, if appropriate, as well as possible measures to prevent the occurrence of pastoral breakdown in some cases before an issue occurs (This objective was the main focus of the group and is the basis for the majority of the groups final recommendations);
- To review the concept of tied housing and whether they are still fit for purpose in the parish context (The concept of tied housing was discussed by the group and the conclusion was reached that tied housing is still fit for purpose as it enables a greater flexibility for clergy to move to where they feel called to serve without having to worry about accommodation for themselves or their families).

Recommended Changes to Existing Policy and Legislation

The legislative recommendations of the Working Group are appended to this report and briefly outlined below.

Amendments to the Disciplinary Process in Chapter VIII

Following numerous consultations with interested parties, it was decided by the Working Group that, on the whole, our current disciplinary process as laid out in Chapter VIII is still, by and large, suited to its purpose. However, it was clear that some amendments would be required in order to make the process clearer, quicker,

and more robust. Therefore, in the attached document, members will see that changes being recommended to this process include:

- The inclusion in legislation of a six-week timeframe between the time that a bishop receives a formal complaint which they may try to resolve pastorally on a local level, if appropriate, and onward referral to the next step in the complaints process. This means that a complaint cannot sit with a bishop indefinitely and will speed up the complaints process which is beneficial for all parties concerned.
- The introduction of the concept of mediation after this six-week timeframe has lapsed which should be concluded within six weeks over a maximum of three days unless an extension is granted by the bishop with the consent of both parties. The introduction of mediation at this earlier stage in the process should mean that complaints are given a chance to be dealt with sooner, without allowing the problem to fester for longer than necessary.
- The introduction of legislation that would allow for the Complaints Committee to require a member of the clergy to undergo an independent medical assessment should that member of the clergy claim that they are unable to cooperate with the disciplinary process on medical grounds. This change would see that clergy who are deemed medically fit to engage with the disciplinary process will be obliged to do so, without holding up the process indefinitely, while also protecting clergy who are deemed by the independent assessment as being unfit to engage.
- A restructuring of the list of clerical offences liable to disciplinary action in section 25 of Chapter VIII. This list is now divided into four sections (Doctrinal, Ecclesiastical Law, Civil Law, and Safeguarding). The inclusion of safeguarding offences within the section is also a new recommendation being made by this Working Group.
- An amendment to section 26 stating that written submissions to the Complaints Administrator need not be accompanied by the sum of £600 or €1000 if the complaint is being made by a bishop concerning any member of the clergy convicted of a criminal offence carrying a custodial sentence or any complaint relating to safeguarding offences which has been approved by the Case Management Committee. The payment of a bond in instances where a cleric has been convicted of a criminal offence was deemed to be wholly unnecessary and the payment of a bond in the case of safeguarding complaints was deemed inappropriate as nobody should feel that they cannot make a safeguarding complaint due to lack of funds.
- An addition to section 27 (b) stating that if a safeguarding complaint has been made by a bishop on the advice of the Case Management Committee, the complaint will be directed straight from the Complaints Administrator to the Complaints Committee without the requirement for attempted pastoral resolution as outlined in section 19. This would also be the case for safeguarding complaints being made by an archbishop concerning a diocesan bishop or the archbishop of the other province.
- The introduction of legislation changing the number of days between the Disciplinary Tribunal notifying the Respondent of the time and venue of a hearing of the formal complaint and the actual hearing of that complaint from 42 to 21 days, and the inclusion of a clause whereby the Disciplinary Tribunal must act without undue delay in cases where the Respondent has been convicted of a criminal offence in either jurisdiction, removing the need to wait the 21 days. This reduction in the number of days would speed up the process while also giving the Respondent enough time to organise attendance at a hearing, while the provision for the Disciplinary Panel to act without undue delay in cases where the Respondent is incarcerated means that cases such as these could be concluded as swiftly as possible.

Introduction of Interlocutory Orders

Following consultations with the respective chairs of the Complaints Committee and the Disciplinary Panel, it was agreed by the Working Group that there should exist within the constitution the power for the Disciplinary Panel and Appeals Tribunal (either by their own motion or on application by the Complaints Committee or the Respondent) to make such interlocutory orders as deemed appropriate to the circumstances of any particular case. Interlocutory orders are temporary, interim orders that can be issued while a case is ongoing before a final decision is reached. The Working Group wishes to make clear that these measures would only be used where deemed absolutely necessary at the discretion of the Disciplinary Panel or Appeals Tribunal (bodies whose membership include highly experienced legal professionals) and would, by no means, be used for every

case. The list of interlocutory orders which may be used are included in the bill to amend Chapter VIII of the Constitution appended to this report.

Termination of Tenure

Termination of Tenure may be seen as the most significant item of this review and the Working Group has come up with a proposal to legislate for the termination of tenure in two specific circumstances: ill-health and pastoral/parochial breakdown. The Working Group believes that the attached proposal is one that is fair to both clergy and parishes and, while it will not be the answer to every tenure-related issue within the Church of Ireland, it is certainly the first step.

- Ill Health

Currently, once a cleric has been on certified sick leave for a twelve-month period they are eligible to apply for the Clergy Permanent Health Insurance Scheme. The Working Group is suggesting a change to this process whereby if a cleric is on certified sick leave for a continuous twelve-month period or for twelve months within an eighteen-month period, it would be mandatory for that cleric to apply to the Clergy PHI scheme (unless the cleric in question had already reached Normal Retirement Age). The Working Group also suggests the introduction of a new mechanism whereby the cleric's diocesan bishop can, in circumstances where the cleric has not yet reached Normal Retirement Age, trigger the PHI application on their behalf or, in circumstances where a cleric has reached Normal Retirement Age, serve that cleric with notice of termination of tenure. This would be at the complete discretion of the diocesan bishop taking all factors of the individual circumstances into account and no stipend would be ceased and there would be no requirement to vacate their residence until any PHI application has been determined. The Working Group is also recommending the migration of the Clergy PHI Policy from policy (or 'soft law') into legislation (or 'hard law'). The effect of this would be to protect the clergy so that the terms of the policy could not easily be changed from what the cleric originally signed up for.

- Parochial/Pastoral Breakdown

In instances where there would appear that there has been a complete parochial/pastoral breakdown between a cleric and their parish to the extent that the viability of the parish and/or the ministry and well-being of the cleric is in jeopardy, the Working Group is suggesting the introduction of a no-fault termination process. This process would begin at a local level through the diocesan bishop and, if suitable, mediation (parallel to section 19 of Chapter VIII). Should this issue be unable to be resolved at a local level, this would then lead to the diocesan council tasking a Diocesan Committee of Inquiry to review tenure. The Committee of Inquiry would then bring its recommendations to the diocesan council and it may then be determined that the cleric concerned would cease to hold office and vacate the glebe house within a three-month period while receiving their full stipend and a reasonable accommodation allowance from the RCB for a period of one year or until he/she has obtained another ecclesiastical office, whichever is sooner. Following the decision that tenure of a cleric be terminated, it is also a recommendation of the Working Group that there should exist a mechanism whereby any lay person who, through the investigation process, has been seen to have played a considerable role in the breakdown of the clerical/parochial relationship, could be required to cease to hold any office within the parish for a prescribed period of time. The Working Group is also recommending that legislation be introduced to cover instances of intractable breakdown between a bishop and his/her diocese which would be a parallel of the proposed legislation outlined above.

Other Recommendations

Through the course of the discussions of this Working Group, it has been noted on several occasions that while 'neglect of duty' is listed as one of the clerical offences liable to disciplinary action under Chapter VIII, the duties of a cleric are not clearly outlined anywhere in one place. Instead, they are scattered between the Constitution (including the Canons), the Ordinal, and the institution/licencing service. The Working Group is, therefore, recommending the production of a 'Clergy Support and Guidelines' booklet to be given to ordinands and to all incumbents on the occasion of their institution or licencing. This document would not only outline the duties expected of a cleric but also the benefits and supports that are available to them as well as a step to step guide to the disciplinary process and the protections that are in place at a central level to protect clergy from complaints with no foundation.

Thanks

The members of the Working Group wish to thank all those who engaged with and assisted them in their deliberations, especially those from other congregations who joined the group, either in person or online, to share their experiences of the disciplinary processes of their own denominations, and Mr Patrick Good KC, Chair of the Complaints Committee, and Ms Claire Callanan, Chair of the Disciplinary Tribunal, for sharing their feedback and experiences of the existing Chapter VIII disciplinary process. Thanks must also be paid to Mr Lyndon MacCann SC and the Ven Barry Forde for the provision of their considerable legal knowledge in the drafting process.

It is the sincere hope of the Working Group that the attached recommendations are palatable and fair to both clergy and laity, as well as to the House of Bishops, and that if the recommendations are passed by the General Synod, the result will be:

- A Church that can deal with complaints in a more prompt manner while remaining fair to its clergy.
- A Church where clergy are held accountable for major underperformance issues.
- A Church where the laity are held accountable for their role in the complete breakdown between an incumbent and his/her parish.
- A Church that can resolve breakdowns in relationships more efficiently and effectively.
- A Church where clerics who are on sick leave are generously supported, but where parishes do not have to face the uncertainty of having a rector who is on leave for an open-ended period of time.