

APPENDIX O
SECTARIANISM STEERING GROUP
REPORT

MEMBERSHIP

Very Rev DR Chillingworth	Rev Canon T Keightley
Rev OMR Donohoe	Ms L Keyes
Rev Canon RD Harman	Dr K Milne
Ven AET Harper (Chairman)	Mr D Morrow
Rt Rev RCA Henderson, Bishop of Tuam	Lady Sheil
Mrs E Hilliard	Mr DB Thorpe
Ms A Kee	Mr D Wilson

The proposal that there should be an Education Programme was part of the work of the Committee on Sectarianism from the beginning. Following the completion of that Committee's work and the presentation of its Report to General Synod 1999, Standing Committee, in Resolutions of September 1999 and March 2000, authorised continued work on the development of the Programme.

The Report of the Committee on Sectarianism and the Resolutions which accompanied that Report enabled the Church of Ireland to declare its mind on the issue of Sectarianism and the ways in which it either impacts upon or is found within the life of the Church of Ireland.

This Education Programme is a complementary exercise. Members of the Church of Ireland both clergy and lay, in parishes and dioceses and within the institutional and decision-making structures of the Church will be invited to explore issues of faith, identity and culture as they experience them in their daily life and membership of the Church.

THE CONTEXT

This Programme is intended to challenge members of the Church of Ireland to undertake a spiritual journey. We are all rooted in particular social, political and historical contexts. We do not regard ourselves as being sectarian people. The "Moving Beyond Sectarianism Programme" of the Irish School of Ecumenics describes Sectarianism as arising **'as a distorted expression of positive human needs, especially for belonging, identity and the free expression of difference'**.

But we believe that God calls us to seek him in such a way that we transcend those contexts and those distortions. Having recognised that challenge, we can be set free to respond to him and to one another in a new way.

We believe therefore that this Programme will offer a path to spiritual renewal for our Church and its people. We also believe that it will encourage the growth of new relationships which will strengthen the unity of the Church.

THE VISION

The mission of this programme is to help the people of the Church of Ireland community to draw on the values and insights of their faith so as to affirm legitimate identity while developing relationships of trust and understanding within and beyond the Church.

Our vision is that we would give to the Church of Ireland community the tools required to understand and explore the various expressions of faith and identity present in the Church and to develop creative opportunities for bridge-building.

METHODOLOGY

The programme will be focused on two aspects of the life of the church. Of major importance will be the attempt, through a pilot project in a number of dioceses, to involve a significant number of parishes, clergy and people. This project will model a process which explores faith and identity and points the way to creative relationships with others.

It is equally important that the Church of Ireland should establish a programme through which the same core principles and values can be applied to the institutional and decision-making life of the central bodies of the Church and the groups and bodies associated with it. This aspect of the programme would involve members of Central Committees and staff, members of other Boards and Committees which define aspects of church policy and other agencies which are associated with the Church of Ireland.

CONSULTATION PROCESS

The Programme has been the subject of widespread consultation. During the year, presentations were made to the House of Bishops and to the Standing Committee. Standing Committee then authorised an application for financial assistance to the Community Bridges Programme of the International Fund for Ireland.

THE INITIAL PHASE OF THE PROGRAMME

The initial phase of the programme will be exploratory. A survey or scoping study will be conducted throughout the Church of Ireland. This will explore attitudes of clergy and lay people to the issues raised by the programme and will also explore appropriate methodologies for the development of a pilot programme. It is envisaged that the pilot programme would be established in three dioceses, northern, southern and cross-border.

This programme is a journey for the Church of Ireland. We believe that the commitment which has been made to the initial steps is very important. Further consultation and consideration will be needed as each stage of the journey unfolds.