

APPENDIX E**CENTRAL COMMUNICATIONS BOARD****REPORT 2001**

The Annual Report of this Board incorporates those of the Broadcasting, Internet and Literature Committees.

MEMBERSHIP**Central Communications Board**

Most Rev RL Clarke, Bishop of Meath and Kildare (Chairman)

Rev AF Abernethy (resigned April 2000)	Ven RG Hoey
Rev Canon Professor J Bartlett	Rev Dr AW McCormack
Mr G Bradley	Rev Canon JW McKegney
Rev P Comerford	Dr R Refaüssé
Mr AD Fleck	Mr RH Sherwood
Rev M Graham	

Broadcasting Committee

Dr K Milne (Chairman)

Ms R Buchanan	Rev TW Gordon
Rt Rev WP Colton, Bishop of Cork	Dr V Jones
Mr AD Fleck	Rev Dr AW McCormack (Honorary Secretary)
Rev AJ Forster	Rev FJ McDowell (Honorary Treasurer)

Literature Committee

Rt Rev MHG Mayes, Bishop of Limerick (Chairman)

Very Rev Dr MGStA Jackson	Mr S O'Boyle
Rev Canon MC Kennedy	Dr R Refaüssé (Honorary Secretary)
Rev Canon JAB Mayne	Rev B Treacy, OP
Dr K Milne	Very Rev Dr SR White

Internet Committee

Ven RG Hoey (Chairman)

Mr M Larmour	Rev M Graham (Co-ordinator)
Mr RH Sherwood	

DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS/MEDIA OFFICER

A review group appointed by the Central Communications Board recommended the creation of a new communications unit. The group had consulted widely before reporting back to the Representative Body and the Standing Committee which agreed that a Director of Communications (based in Dublin) and a Media Officer (based in Belfast) should be appointed to form the unit with a brief to cover media relations, media training, internal and external communications, co-ordination of publishing, public relations, the fuller development of the Diocesan Information Officer network and the Internet.

No appointments have yet been made under these new arrangements. Brian Parker was subsequently appointed on a contract for services basis to the role of Press Officer.

PRESS OFFICE

Staffing

Brian Parker was appointed as acting Press Officer on a contract basis following the retirement of Liz Gibson-Harries. He is based in Belfast but maintains close working relations with Church House in Dublin. Jenny Compston continues as assistant to the Press Officer.

New Technology

The Press Office continues to develop the use of the Internet in association with the Rev Michael Graham, not least in achieving effective distribution of news releases.

Events 2000

The Millennium Service in the Waterfront Hall involved a wide cross section of interests in the churches and in the community.

The General Synod in Belfast attracted sustained media interest over the three days with a variety of photo opportunities supplementing news coverage. On site press facilities and press services were well used by journalists. The structure of the Synod Reports publication was confusing in relation to the business agenda. A measure of synchronisation would be welcome.

Diocesan Synods received rather piecemeal coverage with some achieving substantial recognition in local newspapers. However the scheduling of synods remains “cluttered” with Bishops’ speeches cascading on to the news desks, one on top of the other. Consideration needs to be given to this schedule and some attempt made to space the events.

Other media events included:

- the enthronement of Bishop Michael Mayes as Bishop of Limerick;
- the “Profiles of Faith” video launch in Dublin and Belfast;
- the new Hymnal launch in Dublin with Pam Rhodes, BBC;
- the Mothers’ Union General Meeting, held in the Waterfront Hall Belfast, which attracted positive media coverage with Lady Eames, World President, featuring in broadcast and print media.

Dominus Iesus

The Church of Ireland response drew sustained interest from the national and local media. There was also press interest in the Inter-Church Meeting held in Dundalk to discuss the issue.

Drumcree

Intense media demands around this issue with Archbishop Eames fielding requests for interviews. Press releases, briefings and by-line articles are also used where appropriate.

Support for Dioceses

The Press Officer continues to support Diocesan and Cathedral initiatives. A quarterly meeting of Diocesan Communications Officers, “News Breaks”, is now in place. The meetings include the opportunity to discuss issues with media professionals.

Topical Issues

The Press Office was drawn into various topical stories throughout the year, for example the EC debate on religious ethos in schools, political developments, visit of the Dalai Lama, lobby group issues, “Black Santa” and support for schools projects with a religious slant.

Press Office Resources

The Press Office staff are grateful to all those in the Church of Ireland who respond to the many demands for information and interviews that come from the media. In its work the Press Office depends on ready access to key sources of information and in the past year it has been encouraged by the helpful response from members of the Church of Ireland, clerical and lay, in building up effective press relations.

BROADCASTING COMMITTEE

The year has proved a rather busy one for the Committee and, through its course, the Committee has met in discharge of its obligations in Dublin and Limerick as well as in Belfast.

Regulatory matters regarding the new audiovisual landscape - ‘Digitalisation’

The phenomenon of digitalisation, outlined by the Committee at the General Synod of 1998 in its document Digital Broadcasting, is now well and truly under way in the United Kingdom and in the Republic of Ireland. Many of the areas highlighted for discussion by the Committee document are now live in public discourse - issues primarily of regulation and qualitative value in programming.

Last year’s report to the General Synod highlighted the Committee’s response to the Broadcasting Bill (1999) produced in the Republic of Ireland by the Minister for Arts, Culture, the Gaeltacht and the Islands. The thinking displayed in this response has been continued and amplified in the current cycle in the Committee’s response to the Communications White Paper produced in late 2000 by the United Kingdom Government and presented by the Secretaries of State for Trade and Industry and for Culture, Media and Sport. The response is appended to this report.

Much work and reflection has gone into the Committee’s responses – the Honorary Secretary attended a conference sponsored by the Voice of the Viewer and Listener on ‘Public Service Broadcasting’ in May 2000, while both the Honorary Secretary and the Chairman attended a Symposium on the germane issues in Westminster in January 2001

at the invitation of the Archbishops' Council of the Church of England. The Committee expects the issues of the continuing understanding of broadcasting on the model of public service (and the related issues of technological convergence) to occupy it in any conceivable future in both jurisdictions.

Broadcast Training

The preparation of clergy and laity to participate in the many opportunities still presented by the contemporary broadcast culture has continued to exercise the Committee. The Rev Tom Gordon is administering a scheme of graded training which is open to both clergy and laity and designed to enable their fuller participation in the current broadcast climate. The Committee encourages everyone interested to avail themselves of this training.

Local Broadcasting

The Committee continues to appreciate the work of members of the Church of Ireland involved in local broadcasting. The Committee continues to contribute to the 3R syndication service which provides religious interest material for use by local stations. The Committee has also monitored developments in the Dublin area regarding the possible launch of a new religious station and is active in exploring creative religious programme options with existing local broadcasters. At a national level in the United Kingdom context, Dr Valerie Jones attended the summer meeting of the Churches Advisory Council on Local Broadcasting (CACLB) as an aid to monitoring developments in the United Kingdom.

BBC

The Committee received the news of the departure of the Rev Ernest Rea from his central role in Religion and Ethics in the BBC. A letter was sent to him thanking him for his indefatigable work in British religious broadcasting over the past few decades and wishing him well in the future.

RTE

The Committee continues to appreciate the standard and regularity of broadcast Church services on RTE and records its thanks to the parishes of the Church of Ireland for their continued willingness to broadcast radio and television liturgies.

Visit to RTE Lyric fm

During the course of the year the Committee visited RTE Lyric fm in Limerick. This was in response to the invitation of Seamus Crimmins, Head, Lyric fm. The Committee was delighted to meet with a large group of, typically young, producers who were deeply interested in developing synergies between classical music and arts programming and the cultural phrasing of the religious. The Honorary Secretary has explored these synergies in practical programme making for Lyric in the past year.

Guided Thinking with Dr Colum Kenny of DCU and Breda O'Brien (Irish Times)

Dr Colum Kenny and Breda O'Brien attended a Committee meeting in the course of the year to help guide the thinking of the Committee on the more theoretical aspects of broadcasting policy formation. It is hoped that the Committee may work with Dr Kenny

in particular to develop a day long symposium in conjunction perhaps with DCU School of Media to profile important issues in religious broadcasting.

Fellowship

Through the course of the year, the Committee has developed some rudimentary proposals for the provision, in partnership with a national broadcaster, of a Programme-makers Fellowship. This might be a three month bursary which would enable a proven talent to develop a programme ready script on a religious/human interest topic. Discussions are still very much at an elementary stage, three broadcasters have been simultaneously approached to test possible interest, BBC, UTV and RTE.

INTERNET COMMITTEE

The Internet Committee advises the Central Communications Board on the use of the Internet in the Church of Ireland. Its membership comprises the Ven Raymond Hoey (Chairman), Robert Sherwood (Chief Officer), Mark Larmour, Ken Cinnamond and Michelle Carter (IT department, RCB) and the Rev Michael Graham (Internet Co-ordinator).

The Internet Committee works in three main areas:

- maintaining and developing the Church of Ireland websites
- encouraging the use of the Internet among Church members
- supporting Internet users in the Church of Ireland

Church of Ireland Websites

The Church of Ireland website (<http://ireland.anglican.org>) continues to attract thousands of visitors each year. In 2000 over 50,000 sessions were served by the web site – each session representing one visit to the site by a web user (for 1999 the site handled 21,500 visitors). This represents an increase of over 130% in visitors and indicates the spread of use of the Internet throughout the world. Our visitors came from places as far afield as Egypt, the United States, Canada, Argentina, Trinidad, Panama, the Czech Republic, Croatia, Turkey, Jordan, the United Arab Emirates, Kazakhstan and Vietnam.

The Internet Committee also established a General Synod website (<http://synod.ireland.anglican.org>) for Synod 2000 held in the Waterfront Hall, Belfast. As well as providing general information to Synod members, the site carried copies of Synod Reports, some copies of speeches made by delegates as well as press releases and reports of the debates and decisions of Synod.

A novel addition this year was the live audio broadcast of Synod business via the Internet, allowing church members who were not present to hear fully what was being reported and discussed. The President's Address and the Report of the Standing Committee were recorded and remain available on the web site.

During Synod the site had over 2000 visitors who followed proceedings both during and after the event. The website is still active and is an excellent resource for those looking for information on the debates and reports presented at Synod 2000.

Use of the Internet by church members

One of the most exciting developments of last year was the establishment of the Church of Ireland's Internet service through the setting up of the church's own web servers. This has allowed the Internet Committee to increase greatly the services which can be offered to church members, while at the same time curtailing costs paid to an outside Internet Service Provider (ISP).

The Church of Ireland can now offer full Internet Services to all members who are already on-line including official email addresses and web site hosting. Currently the Internet Committee host 77 domains on its servers ranging from dioceses and parishes to APCK (<http://apck.ireland.anglican.org>), the Mothers' Union (<http://motherunion.ie>) and the Church of Ireland Gazette (<http://gazette.ireland.anglican.org>).

These services are currently available free of charge to Church of Ireland organisations. Contact the Internet Co-ordinator (hostmaster@ireland.anglican.org) if you have any queries.

The Internet Co-ordinator also maintains the Church of Ireland Email and Resource Directories. The Email directory alone contains over 500 entries (an increase of 20% over last year) and has become too large to distribute individually. Consequently on-line directories are maintained (<http://churchofireland.net/directories>) and are generally accessible to Directory members.

To date 72 parishes have web sites (an increase of 80% over last year); other parishes and dioceses have web sites in preparation.

Presentations on the Internet continued to be made to various bodies in the Church of Ireland. An Internet Café was provided at General Synod and an Internet Stall was included in the Connor Diocese "Building for Generations" launch in Coleraine.

In addition, other bodies in the Church continue to explore the potential of the Internet. The Internet Committee is happy to provide support and advice to all who may be considering using this exciting new communications medium to spread their message.

Supporting Internet users in the Church of Ireland

Throughout 2000 the Internet Co-ordinator continued to provide ongoing telephone and on-site support for Internet users throughout the Church of Ireland. This included written recommendations for equipment upgrades in several central and diocesan offices, installation and reconfiguration of systems for users, and the handling of general queries on email and web sites.

An increasing area of concern as more people go on-line is the spread of computer viruses. In 2000 the Internet Co-ordinator provided advance warning of potential virus threats, advised on anti-virus measures which users should be adopting to protect themselves and others, and helped clear many systems which had become infected by viruses.

The wider Anglican Communion

During its September 1999 meeting in Scotland, the Joint Standing Committee of the Primates of the Anglican Communion and the Anglican Consultative Council passed a resolution endorsing the establishment of an **International Advisory Council on Telecommunications for the Anglican Communion (IACTAC)**. Its role was to review an assessment of the electronic communication capacity and needs of the Provinces and their Dioceses and to examine and recommend ways that emerging technologies in electronic communication can best serve the Anglican Church on all levels.

The Internet Co-ordinator represented the Church of Ireland at the initial meeting of the Council in April 2000.

A report was presented by the Council and the following three areas identified for follow-up work:

- 1) Supporting the functions of the Council as the proposal for establishing a **TELECOMMUNICATIONS STANDING COMMITTEE** of the Anglican Communion is considered.
- 2) Examining the best way to establish an **ANGLICAN COMMUNION “PORTAL”** and undertaking to negotiate the way information is collected and fed to this “portal”.
- 3) As a first step in developing an **ANGLICAN COMMUNION TELECOMMUNICATIONS NETWORK**, selecting one Province in Africa as a model to establish a full telecommunications capacity both internally and with outside partners.

The Church of Ireland continues to be actively involved in these areas.

The Internet continues to develop at a pace which astonishes observers. Easier access through the use of, for example, interactive Web TV has brought the world wide web into the homes of many families who would never have considered purchasing or using a personal computer. On-line shopping, banking, arranging travel and holidays have all become familiar activities to millions of people throughout the world. We are truly witnessing an ‘e-revolution’, but we must be aware of the dangers of causing an ‘e-divide’ between those who are able to grasp the opportunities presented by this new communications medium and those who are excluded.

The Archbishop of Canterbury at the IACTAC Conference in April 2000 said:

“It is not necessary for me to remind you that the church owes its very existence - humanly speaking - to it being able to embrace new developments in communication and commerce in its infancy and over the centuries. At the heart of our faith is the idea of Jesus, the word of God, and that is compelling us to be faithful to Christ and to communicate his message effectively to the world. Thus, when we look at the infant church we see the way that it was able to take advantage of the Roman roads that criss-crossed the Empire and the ‘lingua franca’ that was ‘*koine* Greek’. These were the two ‘super highways’ in those days that God used to promote the faith of Christ And Christ lies at the heart of any thinking about the use of communication media within the

Church. We turn our minds to the example of Christ himself as a wonderful communicator, always innovative, challenging and sometimes indeed defamiliarising. But always drawing people together into communities, local, national and international.”

The Internet Committee wishes to acknowledge the very significant input and vision of the Rev Michael Graham as Co-ordinator, technical supervisor and all round enthusiast without whom much of the advances in the use of the Internet in the Church of Ireland would not have taken place at this stage.

LITERATURE COMMITTEE

Membership

The membership of the Committee was brought up to full strength by the election of three new members: the Very Rev Dr Michael Jackson, the Very Rev Dr Stephen White, and Dr Kenneth Milne.

Meetings

The Committee met in Dublin on four occasions.

In the continued absence of a Director of Communications, who might direct publishing policy, the Committee has been considering some of the printed resources which the Church of Ireland ought to have constantly available. Among these might be up to date editions of the Church of Ireland Handbook and the Irish Churchwardens’ Handbook, a guide to ordination and a guide to lay reading. In addition, the Committee has been considering whether some of the materials which have been printed in the Journal of the General Synod might be made more generally available in a more attractive format.

The Committee is conscious that, whilst it is desirable to continue to have such resources available in printed form, some of them might also be appropriately issued on the Church of Ireland website.

General Synod Royalties Fund

The Committee noted that the guidelines for grants from the General Synod Royalties Fund had been amended by the Standing Committee by the addition of liturgy to education and communication as the areas of the Church’s life which the fund should specifically support.

Grants to the Liturgical Advisory Committee were recommended for the following purposes:

- (i) To purchase a notebook computer for the Honorary Secretary of the Liturgical Advisory Committee.
- (ii) To provide funds for the purchase of works of reference for the Liturgical Advisory Committee. The Committee appended a proviso that the Liturgical Advisory Committee should also supply the Representative Church Body Library with a copy of each of the books which it purchases.

APPENDIX TO CENTRAL COMMUNICATIONS BOARD REPORT

SUBMISSION IN RESPONSE TO A *NEW FUTURE FOR COMMUNICATIONS* – UK GOVERNMENT WHITE PAPER ON COMMUNICATIONS

BACKGROUND TO SUBMISSION

The Church of Ireland is an Anglican-episcopal Church which exercises a ministry both in Northern Ireland and in the Republic of Ireland. The Broadcasting Committee of its General Synod is therefore obliged to speak on relevant matters in both jurisdictions. The following submission is made on behalf of this Committee.

PART A – GENERAL DYNAMICS OF RESPONSE

We welcome the white paper *A New Future for Communications* as a serious and timely intervention in an increasingly complex audiovisual environment. We agree that “the communications revolution is creating a new economic and democratic landscape” (1.1.1) and that this necessitates a rethinking of both policy objectives and the supportive regulatory frameworks which might enable their achievement.

We believe that a “dynamic and competitive market” is a worthy aspiration and that it cannot be allowed to develop in an unguarded or unregulated way. We therefore welcome the notion of a coherent framework of regulation monitored or enforced by a single regulatory body, OFCOM (1.3ff., 8.1ff.). The tiered approach to regulation which recognises a difference in type of broadcaster (5.6–5.8) is something which we would generally welcome.

We welcome also the white paper’s continuing commitment to the notion of Public Service Broadcasting as a vital component in the democratic project (1.2.2; 4.0; 5.3.10; 11 et passim). We regard PSB as something worth defending. We also welcome the proposed development of a regionalism in the broadcasting environment (4.4ff.). The proposals for ‘Access Radio’ are also welcomed by us (4.5ff). We refrain from comment in the intricate area of cross media ownership rules, but note that it would not be our position to support any amendment of channel ownership disqualifications of the sort mentioned at 4.9.2.

The role of the regulatory body in developing media literacy is an exciting and valuable proposal (6.7ff.) and we applaud the retention of current controls on the content of religious advertising and programmes (6.9).

PART B – PARTICULARITIES OF RESPONSE

Dynamism and Competition

We believe that the aspiration towards a dynamic and competitive market is a necessary response to the communications revolution. We sense a certain tension in the white paper between 4.2.6, “a competitive market is likely to be one with many voices...” and 4.2.4, “Left to itself the market may tend to focus investment only on more popular types of content...”. We therefore agree that regulation is entirely necessary.

We see sense in the mirroring of technological convergence in the proposed convergence of many regulatory bodies in a single regulatory authority, OFCOM, but we wonder why ‘lighter touch’ regulation is felt to be an adequate aim in the new configuration. The centring of the structures of regulation around the Competition Act may need to be compensated for precisely by a heavier, and not a lighter, hand. We do not suppose that the liberalisation of the market is of greater importance than the preservation of value within it.

The three tiered structure of OFCOM monitored regulation which is proposed valuably recognises a distinction in type of broadcaster, and it seems fair that PSB expectations should be graded and type-specific. We would be cautious, however, of expecting too much to result from self-regulation. The history of the form in related industries has proved patchy and has not always secured the confidence of the public. The simplification of the regulatory framework should not become a practical reason for poor or inadequate regulation of services. We also suggest that further thought might be given to the issue of quantifiability which forms the basis of the distinction between tiers two and three.

Public Service Broadcasting

We hold to the Reithian trinity of the informing, educating and entertaining roles of broadcast communication. We regard PSB to be a vital part of the democracy in which we live and furthermore feel that every broadcast channel sustains to some extent public service obligations - notwithstanding the distinction in type previously mentioned. We believe that the regulatory authority would be better to err on the side of strong regulation in defence of PSB. Competition is, as the white paper itself realises, not a blessing entirely removed from the possibility of curse.

In a multi-channel environment such as already exists in the UK (and is daily becoming more commonplace) we warmly welcome the notion that EPGs would be strictly regulated to enforce the profile and presence of important 'must carry' broadcasters, cf 2.6.3. The fragmentation of audience which is a necessary corollary of a multi-channel environment (see p.50, Davies Report summary) should be compensated for in every possible way. In the past the relative scarcity of TV channels has made possible significant communal experiences in viewing, and the loss of this sense of virtual community will, we consider, be a source of some regret.

We agree that continuing access to free-to-air PSB services is "essential to full social and economic inclusion", 3.1, and applaud the resolve of the white paper to ensure this. Relatedly we applaud the aspiration with regard to universal internet access by 2005.

Regional issues

The encouragement of a regionalism in PSB (4.4.11) is also welcomed by us. We would support the development of programming in Northern Ireland which would reflect the linguistic diversity of the locale. This would of course include Irish language programming, Ulster-Scots programming and ethnic minority language programming.

In line with the Belfast Agreement we would also support the availability of TG4 in Northern Ireland. However, we reckon that there is a danger of limiting the perception of cultural identity by developing programming in languages spoken only by appreciable minorities in Northern Ireland. We suggest that there is a considerably greater advantage to be gained by the sharing of English language programming throughout the island – programming from the Republic of Ireland should be easily available in Northern Ireland and it is most important that reciprocal arrangements are developed in this regard. The fostering of mutual understanding we consider will be more effectively served by this than by any ideological attempt to produce minority language programming which, by the medium of its construction, is not accessible to a majority of the population in either Northern Ireland or the Republic of Ireland.

Access issues

The development of ‘Access radio’ through a start-up fund (4.5.3) is warmly welcomed by us. We believe that the initiative is entirely consistent with the white paper’s connection of communications with democratic access issues and with the development of media literacy in the general population.

Ownership issues

We approve of the proposed correction of the current anomaly regarding the ownership of radio licences by religious bodies (4.9.1). However, we resist in the strongest possible terms any relaxation in the ownership prohibition of the sort proposed in 4.9.2. It is our opinion that the interests of religious broadcasting are best served by a strengthening of PSB requirements and that an authority such as OFCOM should act to encourage and ensure the presence of religious stranding on all PSB channels- a “mixed ecology” (5.2.12) of programming is a surer defence for the witness of the religions than a niche which is in reality a ghetto. Furthermore we believe that religious stranding in PSB channels should be fairly placed in schedules and not relegated to slack periods.

We consider that TV channels owned by religious organisations may pose a potential danger to the balance between the celebration of one religious tradition’s identity and the discommoding or discomforting of another. We suggest that there is a difference in kind between the predictable aspirations of religious organisations involved in broadcast production and supply and their commercial correlates which would require much further study and reflection. There are sufficient examples in the transatlantic context of the unseemly scramble of religious identities into channel ownership to mandate further reflection before any change in policy is effected.

If the outcome of the white paper response process is in fact to permit a relaxation in the conventional ownership prohibitions, then we suggest strongly that this must have no bearing whatsoever on the continuing provision of religious programmes in the ecology of PSB services.

Media literacy

This is an entirely positive initiative which should be pursued with all possible vigour and urgency. We hold it to be particularly important in an era of convergent media technologies.

CONCLUSION

We welcome the white paper as a serious and considered contribution to the challenges of the contemporary communications environment. We have outlined certain areas about which we harbour certain reservations though this in no way detracts from our appreciation of the effort itself.

We are available for further consultation where this is necessary.

Revd Dr Alan McCormack
Honorary Secretary, for and on behalf of the Broadcasting Committee.