

APPENDIX P**SYNODICAL STRUCTURES WORKING GROUP****REPORT 2001****MEMBERSHIP**

Rt Rev WP Colton, Bishop of Cork, Cloyne and Ross (Chairman)
Mr DJ Auchmuty
Ms V Beatty
Ms C Burrows
Rev Canon BJ Courtney
Mr JD Getgood
Very Rev TR Moore
Rt Rev JRW Neill, Bishop of Cashel and Ossory
Mr RF Palmer
Rev Canon PF Patterson
Lady Sheil
Ms CS Turner

INTRODUCTION

In 1999 and 2000 previous reports have detailed our reasoning for seeking to introduce changes to General Synod's structures, size and means of representation. After debate both reports have been accepted by Synod and our Working Group has sought to respond sensitively to the reservations raised on various aspects of our recommendations. We believe it is now time to bring before Synod positive proposals which we trust offer all members of the Church of Ireland a just and meaningful representation in the business of General Synod.

In receiving the report of the Working Group last year, the General Synod adopted the following resolution:

General Synod:

1. Welcomes and receives the report of the Working Group on Synodical Structures of the Standing Committee
2. welcomes the presentation of the legislative proposals contained in the report
3. encourages the Standing Committee to present the legislative proposals as a Bill to General Synod in 2001 and
4. requests the Working Group to continue its work on related areas in order to present the necessary resolutions and legislation to fulfil the other recommendations listed in its report to General Synod in 1999.

The Working Group is submitting a Bill to the General Synod this year to amend Chapter I of the Constitution. The Bill contains proposals for a reduction in the number of Synod members, a change in the distribution of members across the dioceses and election of members by proportional representation.

OUR AIMS FOR GENERAL SYNOD

The reports to the General Synod in 1999 and 2000 identified the aims of the Working Group.

- To be representative of the whole church, i.e. of small, sparsely populated dioceses and of large and more densely populated dioceses.
- To optimise the potential of the General Synod by reducing the size of the House of Representatives.
- To attain a level of membership in keeping with the principles on representation followed at Disestablishment in 1870.
- To build into its basis of representation a mechanism to allow adjustments should church population patterns or diocesan boundaries change in the future.
- To establish meaningful links, and encourage the work of Diocesan Synods.
- To retain the essential characteristics and functions of the General Synod as:

A representative body.

A unifying body.

A legislative body.

A debating forum.

An administrative body.

(see the report to the General Synod 1999).

WHY MAKE SYNOD SMALLER?

1. Since the establishment of the General Synod in 1870, only very minor changes in representation have been made. Consequently, we feel that a major adjustment in representation is now required to account for the substantial reduction in the church population since that time. In 1999 Synod gave the Working Group a mandate for a 50% reduction in the size of Synod and in 2000 the Synod voted in favour of proceeding on that basis. The actual reduction being recommended in the Bill is less than 40%.
2. It should make the Synod a more intimate and less intimidating body thus encouraging more members to take an active part in debates.
3. It allows more flexibility with the size and location of venues.
4. It allows flexibility with the timing of the meeting, possibly outside the normal working week.
5. It would open up the possibility of a residential Synod, if appropriate funding were to be available.
6. Where size is reduced, membership should be more highly regarded.

WHY ARE SOME DIOCESES LOSING MORE REPRESENTATIVES THAN OTHERS?

Every Diocese is experiencing a reduction.

We are seeking to make Synod representative of every geographical area and to ensure that sparsely populated dioceses and highly populated dioceses are both treated fairly.

Even with the proposed reduction the proportion of those eligible to attend is greater than in 1870. Then there were 2,230 ordained clergy in contrast to approximately 550 today and the figures for representation were based on ten percent of that number. Changes in diocesan boundaries since 1870 have resulted in a minor increase from 624 to the present figure of 648.

HOW CAN A SMALLER SYNOD REMAIN REPRESENTATIVE?

Proportional Representation by Single Transferable Vote is widely acknowledged to be fairer than the present simple majority system. It should result in a broader and fairer representation, particularly in the dioceses that have a small number of representatives. An agreed and tested method of PR will be provided to each diocese.

CAN SYNOD PROCEDURES BE MADE MORE ACCESSIBLE?

In our discussions on this issue, the following recommendations could be considered for implementation:

1. Executive staff of the RCB should be permitted to speak at General Synod and Standing Committee meetings.
2. Links between General Synod and each Diocesan Synod should be strengthened.
 Diocesan synods might be held around the same time, thus allowing matters from General Synod to be referred to them.
 Reports and other matters could be referred rotationally to diocesan synods to broaden the focus of their meetings to matters of general interest to the Church.
 Some matters referred to diocesan synods may require comment to be fed back to General Synod.
3. Wherever possible, the present parliamentary procedures of Synod, including the bills procedure, should be revised and made more accessible.
4. Diocesan representation on the Standing Committee should remain the same (2 clerical and 2 lay for each diocese).

THE BILL

The Bill to amend Chapter I of the Constitution proposes that representation be calculated on the basis of 20% of the number of serving clergy in each diocese (excluding those who are retired) and that no diocese shall have fewer than four clerical representatives.

Based on the formula in the Bill, the House of Representatives will reduce from 648 members to 393 given the number of clergy at November 2000. A table showing the resultant distribution of members throughout the dioceses is included as an Appendix.

The Bill also proposes that elections should be by proportional representation.

Records of General Synod's considerations in the area of reform of Synodical structures can be found in Administration 1967; the paper presented by Canon JLB Deane and included in the Journal of the General Synod 1994; the previous reports of this Working Group, printed in the Journals of the General Synod for 1999 and 2000.

**APPENDIX TO
SYNODICAL STRUCTURES WORKING GROUP REPORT**

NUMBERS AND REPRESENTATION

Representation based on 20% of total clergy with a minimum of 4

Diocese	Clergy	Laity	Total
Armagh	11	22	33
Clogher	7	14	21
Derry	11	22	33
Down	25	50	75
Connor	22	44	66
Kilmore	6	12	18
Tuam	4	8	12
Dublin	18	36	54
Meath	5	10	15
Cashel	9	18	27
Cork	7	14	21
Limerick	6	12	18
Totals	131	262	393