

APPENDIX G

THE CHURCH IN SOCIETY REPORT 2003

MEMBERSHIP

The Bishop of Clogher, The Rt Rev MGStA Jackson (Chairman)
The Archbishop of Armagh, The Most Rev RHA Eames
The Archbishop of Dublin, The Most Rev JRW Neill
The Bishop of Cashel, The Rt Rev PF Barrett
Very Rev H Cassidy
Dr R Corbett
Mr SR Harper
Rev Canon WA Lewis
Mr LJW MacCann
Rev DA McClay
Ms S Mew
Dr K Milne

PREAMBLE

1. The Church in Society Committee of the General Synod of the Church of Ireland seeks to identify, contribute to, challenge and develop areas of living today where the mission of the church can be active and the love of God shared.
2. It does so by seeking an informed understanding of the societies in which we live and by presenting this to the Church. It also seeks to apply the radical expectations of the Kingdom of God to those same societies which constitute today's Ireland set in a European and global context.
3. It aims as much to listen as to speak and to be informative and practical in the fruit of its work. It aspires to promote understanding, debate and active response to the needs of the world by members of the Church of Ireland in the name of Jesus Christ as it has been authorised by the General Synod of the Church of Ireland (see Footnote 1).

Footnote 1: The sub-committees of the Church in Society Committee are further authorised to issue statements and reports in their own names.

WORKING METHODS

During the past year the Church in Society Committee established its working pattern for the future. Seven broad areas were identified to be covered by working groups with a chairperson elected by Standing Committee to guide and co-ordinate the work in each area.

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Each group consists of a panel of people with wide ranging expertise and the chairperson may call on selected members of that panel from time to time to deal with specific topics. Membership of the panels will be built up over a period of time.

The following are the areas identified and chairpersons appointed: -

- | | |
|---|-----------------------------------|
| 1. Ecological and Environmental | [Chairperson: Ms S Mew] |
| 2. European Affairs | [Chairperson: Dr K Milne] |
| 3. Legislation and Political (NI) | [Chairperson: Rev Canon WA Lewis] |
| 4. Legislation and Political (RI) | [Chairperson: Mr LJW MacCann] |
| 5. Medical Ethics, Science and Technology | [Chairperson: Dr R Corbett] |
| 6. Social Justice and Theological (NI) | [Chairperson: Rev DA McClay] |
| 7. Social Justice and Theological (RI) | [Chairperson: Rt Rev PF Barrett] |

Subjects are referred to the Committee for consideration from a variety of sources. These can be external (for example the Church is frequently asked for a response to proposals on legislation), and internally through, for example, the Standing Committee. The Church in Society Committee also has the potential to be proactive in identifying issues which it feels should be addressed.

PROJECTS

The sub-committees have dealt with a number of subjects during the year. These have been wide-ranging and in some cases constitute on-going projects that will continue to constitute part of the work of their relevant groups during 2003.

Where the work of a sub-committee reflects the particular concerns of one or other of the two political jurisdictions on the island, it is to be read in association with its counterpart within the totality of the Church of Ireland family.

In recognition that each sub-committee has its own very distinct area of operation, it was considered important to develop individual Mission Statements, which are listed below.

Issues dealt with by the working groups are appended to this report.

ECOLOGICAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL SUB-COMMITTEE

Mission Statement

- To respond, on behalf of the Church of Ireland, to the call to all Christians, to value the Universe, and to promote policies for the protection of the environment for future generations;
- To inform the members of the Church of Ireland, as effectively as possible, of the efforts being made to limit the negative impact on the Earth and its peoples by the unsustainable consumption of valuable resources, pollution, irresponsible disposal of waste, etc;

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- To encourage each parish and all parochial groups and organisations to adopt practices that reflect an awareness of the environment and a concern for its needs;
- To respond, when necessary, to enquiries regarding ecological and environmental matters, so that the Church of Ireland may express an informed viewpoint.

ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS IN THE CHURCH OF IRELAND

The Ecological and Environmental Group has embarked on a project to raise environmental awareness throughout the broader Church, so that Church members may explore for themselves the implications of ecological and environmental issues for their Christian lives in a dynamic and participative way and so that the Church of Ireland shows its commitment to its responsibilities in this area. The group's work to date is detailed in Appendix A, p 207.

EUROPEAN AFFAIRS

Mission Statement

“It is the purpose of the panel to study developments in the European Union with a view to:

- (a) identifying their significance for the Church of Ireland and the wider Irish community, north and south;
- (b) promoting awareness in the Church of such developments and of their implications;
- (c) contributing to public debate and (d) where appropriate, conveying local opinion to the governments of the U.K. and Ireland and to the institutions of the EU.”

The European Affairs group has been active in a number of areas during 2002/2003. The group Chairman, Dr K Milne is the Church of Ireland representative on the National Forum on Europe, with fellow group member Rev Canon CA Empey acting as alternative.

The group has been evaluating the situation with regard to CAP Reform and in December 2002 issued a statement on the implications for rural life that will be brought about by changes in EU financial support (Appendix B, p 209).

The group examined the issues surrounding the Nice Referendum and released a statement on the Referendum, which is also listed in Appendix B, p 210.

Additionally, the European Affairs working group is monitoring proposals from the European Convention with regard to a future constitution for the EU.

LEGISLATION AND POLITICAL (NI)

Mission Statement

The task of the Committee is to:

- a) monitor and assess Northern Ireland legislative and political matters as they affect the people of Northern Ireland and the rest of the island within a European context;
- b) propose and pursue imaginative ways forward as the community struggles to emerge from its troubled heritage of division and violent conflict;
- c) examine the possible impact of existing and proposed legislation on the Church, and seek to be pro-active where and when appropriate.

Areas of Work (as of February 17 2003)

The immediate task before the Committee is to respond to the Northern Ireland political situation following the suspension of the Stormont Assembly and Executive. In this regard, we are actively pursuing dialogue through meetings with the Northern Ireland political parties – Ulster Unionist, SDLP, Sinn Fein, Democratic Unionist, Alliance, Women’s Coalition, Progressive Unionist, UKUP, etc., also with the Northern Ireland Office and the Government of the Republic of Ireland.

We are in discussion with certain statutory and other bodies – the Northern Ireland Policing Board, the Parades Commission, the Human Rights Commission, the Equality Commission, the Commission on Decommissioning, the Community Relations Council, and the Loyalist Commission.

We are fully committed to making a positive contribution to finding a way forward for the establishment of inclusive democratic and accountable government in Northern Ireland: and to promoting peace and harmony between all sections of our community. From our understanding of Jesus’ proclamation of the reign of God, we seek a fair, just, inclusive and peaceful society for everyone.

LEGISLATION AND POLITICAL (RI)

Mission Statement

The purpose of the Legislation and Political Panel (RI) is to facilitate the Church of Ireland in having a positive role in the legislative and political life of the Republic of Ireland. This includes: -

- a) examining the impact of existing and proposed legislation on the Church;
- b) the promotion and support of legislative changes which reflect and which are consistent with the ethos and principles of the Christian faith;

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- c) the provision of informed comment on political developments and issues.

The introduction of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (RI) and the resulting implications for Protected Structures has been identified by the committee as an immediate priority in relation to its impact on Church life. They are currently working on this project.

MEDICAL ETHICS, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Mission Statement

- To identify all significant developments in medicine, research, therapy and management.
- To analyse the provision of health care by health departments in both jurisdictions.
- To study advances in science and technology to protect human integrity under God.
- To report all relevant items, as they pertain to the church at large and the community as a whole, to the Church in Society.
- To discuss widely ethical issues as they arise, including with other faiths.
- To become a source of expertise to the Church in Society and other committees and sub-committees.

The original Chairperson of the Medical Ethics, Science and Technology Group regretfully had to resign from this post during the year due to personal commitments. We are fortunate that Dr R Corbett has recently agreed to act as Chairperson. He is a Consultant Dermatologist and has spent over 20 years as a Senior Lecturer in the Medical School in Queen's University, Belfast.

Professor P Morrison, consultant in clinical genetics in Belfast City Hospital and a member of the working group, has prepared a paper on Stem Cells, which is appended to this report as Appendix C, p 211.

SOCIAL JUSTICE AND THEOLOGICAL (NI)

Mission Statement

The group's mission statement is a response to the prophet Micah's exhortation: "this is what the Lord requires of you: to act justly, to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God."

It aims to do this by: -

- a) initiating programmes and campaigns that will address issues of social justice in practical ways in our society and our Churches;

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- b) encouraging those inside the Church of Ireland to think theologically and practically about those issues of justice and mercy that surround us;
- c) providing a focus or forum for Christians to reflect on contemporary issues in a way that elicits a practical response;
- d) speaking out whenever necessary and possible on behalf of those who are marginalised or disadvantaged in any way in our society;
- e) providing resources for the parishes to enable them to progress these issues at a local level.

Rather than simply responding with words to the many issues that could be considered under this heading the committee would prefer to provide resources and impetus to help local congregations and individuals set a positive mission agenda that has a cutting edge where issues of social justice are concerned.

They are presently working on a booklet which they hope will resource parishes, groups and individuals in connecting more effectively with their local communities. They would like this resource to stimulate social action and mission that will start to bridge the gulf that is often evident between committed church members and the local communities that surround our worship centres. There is the need to recognise that the church doesn't always understand or positively impact society in an incarnational way with the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

This booklet will provide ideas on how churches can make their communities aware of their presence and of their commitment to their communities. Ideas put forward in the resource will include: -

- Making initial contacts by offering hospitality;
- Building links with local homeless centres, e.g. Christmas meals for homeless families;
- Support schemes for single parents families;
- Running a fund-raising evening on behalf of the local primary school;
- Working with the local community to provide community facilities;
- Setting up a not-for-profit drop-in/community café/No-Name Club;
- Providing imaginative free social events for families e.g. Jubilee Celebrations;
- Getting involved in community events, e.g. supporting charity events;
- Working in areas of social deprivation – how does the church make a start?

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- Helping people with removals, decorating a new home, provision of smoke alarms, etc;
- Other practical ideas.

The booklet will also include some examples of projects in Ireland and elsewhere that parishes may visit in order to stimulate them into similar action.

Unless our awareness of areas of social injustice leads individual Christians and congregations into positive social action, the work of this committee will remain only a 'talking shop' and this is something to be avoided at all costs. It aims to be a prophetic voice that will enable, empower and equip the Church into prophetic action that is practical and also offers theological reflection that sends His church out into the world in the power of the Holy Spirit to live and work to His praise and glory.

SOCIAL JUSTICE AND THEOLOGICAL (RI)

Mission Statement

“To provide where possible pro-active, as well as reflective theological comment, on contemporary issues of social justice within the Republic of Ireland, and where relevant to make suggestions on possible courses of action”.

Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Ireland

The group has been examining the issue of refugees and asylum seekers in Ireland and has issued a paper which appears in this report as Appendix D, p 214.

STATEMENT ON THE POSSIBILITY OF WAR IN IRAQ

The statement issued on January 23 2003 by the Chairman of the Church in Society Committee, The Rt Rev MGStA Jackson, is also attached to this report as Appendix E, p 222.

FUTURE PROJECTS

A number of additional issues have been identified as areas of future involvement for the Committee's sub-groups. In the coming year these will include, Poverty and Violence, Cloning, Child Labour, Children and Advertising and The Charter of Fundamental Rights.

THANKS

We would take this opportunity to thank all of those who have agreed to give their time and dedication to serving the Committee through the panels of its various sub-committees. Their help, advice and expertise in the service of the Church is acknowledged, recognised and deeply appreciated.

Appendix A

ECOLOGICAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL GROUP

The Committee considered the way in which the Church of Ireland could best respond to the challenges faced globally, nationally, and locally, with regard to Ecological and Environmental matters, and bearing in mind the particular example called for from those who acknowledge God as the Creator, and who consequently value the created world.

Being aware of the growing concern among all about the frailty of the universe, and the wanton way in which man has ravaged the world, with insufficient regard for the sharing of resources and the need to ensure their supply in the future, the committee felt that a start should be made to define its purpose, and to undertake a project that would be within its scope, and which could be completed within a limited time-span, and which would lay the foundation for future development.

It was therefore agreed that the committee would undertake to produce, in the course of 2003, a compact folder of information to be distributed to the Bishops of each Diocese, and to the Rectors of each parish. Funding has been sought for this purpose from the Church of Ireland Priorities Committee. The purpose of the folder is to contain the basic information required to enable each parish to undertake its own audit regarding what it is doing at its own local level to ensure the best use of resources, and to raise the level of awareness of the need for every individual to contribute to proper care for the environment.

It was felt that, where possible, due regard should be taken of the work that already exists, and that the experience of those who have already pioneered projects in this area should be acknowledged and used. The Rev W D Humphries of St. Molua's Parish, Stormont, shared with the committee, the experience he and his parish has had of introducing an Eco-Congregation Scheme, and it was decided that this organisation should be approached, and, possibly after a little adaptation for the Church of Ireland parishes (particularly those in the Republic of Ireland), the programme could be warmly recommended for widespread adoption.

The current tasks of the Committee are as follows: -

- To explore the way forward towards the introduction of the Eco-Congregation Scheme in Church of Ireland parishes;
- To enquire if it is possible to mount a stand at the General Synod to advertise the Eco-Congregation Scheme, and to raise members' awareness of the support being given to environmental awareness by the Church of Ireland, and to make them aware of the existence of this Committee, and of its remit;
- To provide a report to the Church of Ireland General Synod, to be included in the book of reports, regarding this Committee, and its on-going work;

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- To continue to gather information from all relevant sources, for inclusion in the folder for the parishes;
- To draw up a list of experienced speakers who might be approached to speak in parishes, and possibly to launch a parochial awareness of how they should approach care for the environment in their area;
- To explore the possibility of an article, or series of articles, in the Church of Ireland Gazette, which might be repeated, in full or in part, in Diocesan magazines;
- To consider the possibility of producing a pack of information for Primary schools, and promoting awareness of environmental issues, bearing in mind the work already being undertaken in this area;
- To explore the possibility of sponsorship to fund a competition for primary schools who may undertake ecological and environmental projects;
- To seek to have ecological and environmental emphasis included in Harvest Thanksgiving Services and to draw up a resource list and possible service outline;
- To approach the Representative Church Body Property Committee for assistance in producing guidelines for rectors and glebe wardens, in relation to care and management of church property (including grave yards), with due regard to matters such as insulation, economic use of resources, etc.

The Committee hopes to meet, as it has done, both in the North and South, and to maintain progress in the encouragement of ecological and environmental awareness among Church members, and of the responsibilities we share, collectively and individually, for ensuring that our beautiful world is cared for in our generation, and maintained for the future.

Appendix B

EUROPEAN AFFAIRS GROUP

STATEMENT ON CAP REFORM

The Common Agricultural Policy: The Threat to Rural Life

Changes in EU support for farmers are likely to have serious implications for life in rural Ireland, north and south. In a statement issued today the Church of Ireland says there is an urgent need for more public awareness of the considerable changes likely to take place. The following statement was issued by the European Affairs panel on the Common Agricultural Policy: -

We believe that, as a matter of urgency, public opinion should be made aware of the very considerable changes that are likely to take place in the manner in which financial support for farmers is provided by the EU, and of the serious implications these changes may have for life in rural Ireland, north and south.

The process known as ‘decoupling’, whereby the subsidisation of agriculture will no longer be linked to the production of crops and the rearing of animals will, we believe, inevitably cause a further migration from the countryside unless adequate steps are taken to counterbalance such forces. In addition, if ‘modulation’ is implemented there is a risk that, in time, up to one fifth of EU funding currently received by Irish farmers by direct payment could be diverted to a central pool in Europe, with no guarantee that it would return to Ireland for rural development.

The inducement to farmers, especially younger farmers, to stay on the land is already gravely affected by the sharp reduction in farm incomes that has been occurring for several years. Furthermore, the forthcoming enlargement of the European Union, which we strongly support, cannot but have an adverse effect on the share of EU funding directed at farmers in Ireland.

Unless effective measures are taken, both at national and European levels, to promote rural development, we foresee a further deterioration in the sustainability, not to speak of the quality, of rural life in many parts of Ireland, with consequent impoverishment of many communities. The implications of what may well result from the current mid-term review of the workings of the Common Agricultural Policy are very considerable, and we have been made particularly aware of how they may impinge on the life of our parishes. But our concern is a wider one, and related to the danger that family farms of all sizes may disappear, and to our belief that the farming community should be enabled to continue to play the vibrant part in Irish society that is so vital for the wellbeing of the country.

STATEMENT ON THE NICE REFERENDUM

The Church of Ireland Working Group on Europe has a vision of a European continent finally achieving an enduring peace within the framework of the European Union. For too long our continent has been devastated by total war, resulting in incalculable destruction, suffering and loss of life.

In view of the critical nature of the Irish decision, we consider that the electorate has a serious duty to consider the potential consequences of a 'No' vote.

We believe that Europe now finds itself at a crossroads in history, and that the Nice Agreement, however imperfect, provides a unique and possibly unrepeatable opportunity to achieve enduring peace.

The benefits of membership of the Union, particularly for those countries so long deprived under totalitarian regimes extend well beyond economic stability: they include, common spiritual and intellectual values, the dignity of the individual and the rule of law.

Through its close relationship with the Lutheran churches in the Baltic States, the Church of Ireland has been made keenly aware of their deep disappointment over Ireland's rejection of the Nice Treaty. Their concern is that a second rejection may prove fatal to those forces in their respective states which favour the enlargement process.

The Group endorses the statement made by the Irish Roman Catholic Bishops on the Treaty of Nice published on 8th October. We further commend for serious consideration the statements regarding the advantages of endorsing the Treaty issued by organisations representing trade unions, employers and farmers.

Appendix C

STEM CELLS

WHAT ARE STEM CELLS?

Stem cells are primitive cells that are responsible for creating various tissues and organs in the body. At an early stage in their development, stem cells are unspecialised. After birth, they only reactivate when new cells are needed e.g. after injury. Under certain conditions, they may become cells that can develop into almost all types of cells or tissue. They can also undergo self-renewal - that is they can divide to form further unspecialised stem cells.

WHERE DO THE CELLS COME FROM?

There are different sources of stem cells (see box 1). Much is made in the media of embryonic stem cells - cells that occur in the early (5 day) embryo when it is a tiny ball of around 100 cells called a blastocyst, before it implants into the wall of the mother's womb. Because stem cells can develop into most types of tissue, they hold out an exciting prospect of development of new cell treatments to replace damaged cells in the body that won't be rejected.

Box 1:

SOURCES OF STEM CELLS	NAME
Early human embryos	Embryonic stem (ES) cells
Aborted human fetuses	Fetal stem cells
Umbilical cord blood	Placental stem cells
Adult humans	Adult stem cells – bone marrow (or haematopoietic); skin; blood

Stem cells from the sources above differ in a number of ways - one way is the **Plasticity** of the cell - plasticity refers to the range of cell types that the cell can turn into. All embryonic stem cells have high plasticity as they develop into all the different organs and tissues of the early fetus - such as arms, legs, blood vessels, kidneys etc. It was thought that older cells and tissues such as adult stem cells had very limited plasticity but recent research has shown that adult cells also have plasticity and can even turn into cells of another type (e.g. adult nerve cells may be able to turn into blood cells) - a process called transdifferentiation. Proponents of transdifferentiation who claim cells can change, and opponents of transdifferentiation who claim that cells do not change and challenge its existence, hotly contest research in this area.

USES OF STEM CELLS

Already stem cells are used in trials to treat adult neurological diseases such as Parkinson's disease and Huntington's disease (so-called fetal stem cell therapy where donated cells from an aborted or miscarried fetus are inserted into the brain and grow to replace the deficient chemicals produced in these diseases). Some cancers can also be treated by bone marrow stem cells, which are infused or transplanted into patients who have leukaemia or lymphomas. The stem cells replace the abnormal leukaemia cells with normal blood cells - these are called haematopoietic stem cells and have been in hospital use for over 3 decades.

ADULT VS. EMBRYONIC STEM CELLS

Adult cells grow much more slowly than embryonic cells - imagine watching a 2 year old boy who falls and grazes his knee and comparing the speed to which his graze heals to that of a 65 year old man. The younger cells have much more vitality and plasticity and will quickly heal whereas the older cells take a little longer. The same happens with fetal cells transplanted into the human brain in Parkinson's disease - they quickly grow to replace the older adult cells which are malfunctioning. Embryonic stem cells grow faster still, so researchers prefer to use embryonic cells for faster results.

IS RESEARCH ON STEM CELLS NECESSARY?

Despite all the research carried out on stem cells to date, little is known as to how and why embryonic cells grow much faster than adult cells. The House of Lords Select Committee on stem cells published a report in February 2002. The Committee anticipates that many advances in therapy will come in the future from research on embryonic stem cells. They concluded, however, that advances would not come from research on embryonic stem cells alone, and recommended that all routes to therapy should be kept open to ensure maximum medical benefit to include research on adult stem cells. This differs from the USA where adult stem cell research is seen as the main way forward, and embryonic stem cell research is prohibited.

THE ETHICAL FRAMEWORK

The main difference in approach between the UK and the USA lies in the ethical problems arising from embryonic stem cell creation. Embryonic stem cells are formed by growing a dividing fertilised egg in a test tube and then taking out the stem cells just before the stage when the early embryo would be implanting naturally into the womb (around 4 -5 days). Taking the cells from the early embryo allows a stem cell bank to be built up to store cell lines that can keep in storage for several years. This has the disadvantage that the early embryo dies in the process. Adult stem cell research avoids having to destroy embryos as cells are removed from adult tissues and is ethically acceptable. A cell nucleus taken from the early embryo can be inserted into another growing cell nucleus - so called **cell nuclear replacement or cloning**. Such cells can be used to replace cells not working in the body for therapy - so called **therapeutic cloning**. If these cells were ever to be transplanted in to a mother's womb, this would lead to

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reproductive cloning. Although embryonic stem cell research is now legal in the UK, allowing creation of embryos up to the 14-day stage to produce stem cells, it is felt that sufficient safeguards are in place to prevent such reproductive cloning taking place. The UK however is still at the end of the moral spectrum being one of the few countries in the world to authorise the deliberate creation of embryos for research - a practice that runs against the European convention of human rights and biomedicine. The paradox in the USA however is that although they take a moral stance on creation of embryos, the legislation in several states allows execution of people on death row at the other end of life.

A consensus is growing that suggests research on adult and fetal cells is permissible as the ethics is analogous to transplantation work e.g. kidney donation - for example human kidney may be donated from one person to another if the donor is dead, but not if a human had been specifically conceived purely to donate both kidneys and die in the process. Embryonic stem cells may be used if they are currently in a stem cell bank but the deliberate production of fresh cells while sufficient banked cells are available would not be recommended (Nuffield report). Thanks to our understanding of human stem cells, thousands of transplant recipients survive. An open debate on the ethics of stem cells combined with very careful regulation of embryo research will ensure that knowledge continues to improve without infringement of the ethical and moral principles by which we live.

Useful References:

Stem cell research. House of Lords: Report from the select committee. February 2002. HMSO, London

Stem Cell research: medical progress with responsibility. Department of Health, London, June 2000. [Http://www.doh.gov.uk/cegc/](http://www.doh.gov.uk/cegc/)

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Appendix D

SOCIAL JUSTICE AND THEOLOGICAL GROUP (RI)

REFUGEES AND ASYLUM SEEKERS IN IRELAND

A Report of the Social Justice & Theology Committee of the Church in Society Committee

INTRODUCTION

With the advent of totalitarianism in the 1930s, the abuse of human rights became common place in much of mainland Europe. Active Trade Unionists, Socialists and Communists were arrested, jailed, tortured and murdered and in Germany those of Jewish origin were particularly singled out for inhuman treatment. In Stalinist Russia, millions of people disappeared into labour camps and died from barbarous ill-treatment. Despite pleas for help and shelter from those being persecuted, many countries - Ireland included - simply refused to act or to believe that it could possibly be as bad as was being claimed.

When the extermination camps were liberated and the full horror of what had happened was at last revealed, the nations that had stood idly by felt a sense of shame and guilt at their earlier complacency. In 1951 a conference was held in Geneva at which the nations of post war Europe agreed to promote and uphold basic standards of human rights.

At this conference a ‘refugee’ was defined as: ‘A person with a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion.’

Throughout the 1960s, 1970s and into the 1980s this definition served us well. However, as time passed, in addition to the many refugees fleeing persecution, a new kind of immigrant appeared in Europe; the ‘economic migrant’ who was fleeing poverty and hopelessness usually somewhere in the Third World. When, in 1990, the communist regimes of Eastern Europe imploded numbers seeking entry to the EU states began to soar and Europe started to review its earlier commitment to providing a safe haven to refugees.

June 1991 - EU states adopt a common refugee policy

The total number of applicants for asylum in EU member states in 1986 was 200,000. By 1989 the number had reached 316,900 and in 1992 there were 696,500. In response to the increasing numbers seeking asylum **a common policy throughout the EU was adopted.**

It had three basic plans:

- Border control policies common to all EU member states;

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- A common foreign policy in dealing with asylum seekers;
- A common asylum law for all EU member states. This meant changing asylum laws throughout the EU and, effectively, introducing a zero admittance policy.

EU Proposals in Action

- Access to EU member states was to be curtailed;
- First country applications - asylum seekers could not travel beyond the first country in which they arrived and could not apply for asylum elsewhere;
- Welfare payments to asylum seekers were to be reduced to a minimum (or less in some cases);
- Those refused refugee status that were unlikely to leave willingly were to be detained;
- Claimants who alleged they were persecuted by ‘non-state agents’ e.g. terrorised by rebels or religious fanatics could not claim asylum.

The background to the situation in Ireland

Ireland has had occasional groups of refugees arrive in the past. The Huguenots in the seventeenth century settled here and made an enormous contribution to the economy of the country by developing the linen industry. Refugees from Central Europe came later and revived the glass industry in Waterford and in the 1930s small numbers of Jewish refugee children were allowed to come into Ireland.

However, it is important to remember that for many of the last 150 years Irish people have left these shores where they were impoverished and regularly unemployed and have sought a better future for themselves in other countries e.g. Britain, Canada, Australia and the USA. Many of those arriving in Ireland today from Eastern Europe and Africa are doing the same thing as the Irish of old. They’re trying to find a better life for themselves and their families.

Before 1993 there were never more than fifty applications in any one year from asylum seekers wishing to come to Ireland. But there were what were called ‘**Programme Refugees**’ from Vietnam and Bosnia. These were refugees who were identified in crisis situations and who were invited to come here by the Irish Government. Special arrangements were put in place to welcome them, though few remained where they originally settled and many moved to Dublin or elsewhere in the EU when they got a chance. Some have claimed that they were not made welcome and were discriminated against.

Definitions of different kinds of refugee

An asylum seeker is a person who seeks **to be recognised as a refugee** in accordance with the terms of the 1951 (Geneva) Convention relating to the status of refugees. Asylum seekers are given temporary permission to reside in Ireland while their cases are being processed and they will be issued with a Temporary Residence Certificate. They are not allowed to work or study unless they are under 18 years of age when they will be provided with a place in an appropriate school. They must live in government provided hostels where they are provided with free food, accommodation and €19 a week on which to subsist.

A Convention Refugee is a person who fulfils the requirements of the definition of a refugee under the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees. When this status has been granted refugees are allowed to work, study and eventually apply for Irish Citizenship.

A Programme Refugee (as stated above) is a person who has been invited to Ireland on foot of a Government decision in response to humanitarian requests from such bodies as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

Non-national parents of Irish-born children have been granted residency rights to care for their Irish-born children. However, following a recent court ruling there is no longer any guarantee that parents of such children will be allowed to remain in Ireland.

‘Leave to remain’ may be granted on the initiative of the Minister for Justice on humanitarian grounds. Very few such requests – less than 1% - are granted.

The situation in Ireland

Latest available statistical information:

Inward migration to Ireland, 1995-2000

<i>Origin</i>	<i>Percentage</i>	<i>Number</i>
Returned Irish	50%	123,100
UK	18%	45,600
Rest of EU	13%	33,400
USA	7%	16,600
Rest of World	12%	29,400

(Central Statistics Office, Dublin)*

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‘The number of asylum seekers to Ireland has increased in recent years and has levelled out at approximately 11,000 per year. This is slightly higher than the EU average per head of population, but it is also the case that the total number of asylum seekers and refugees in Ireland is much less than many other EU countries per head of population as there were virtually no asylum seekers coming to Ireland before 1996.’

The main countries of origin for asylum seekers in Ireland in 2000 were:

- Nigeria 3,404 asylum seekers
- Romania 2,384 asylum seekers
- Czech Republic 403 asylum seekers
- Moldova 388 asylum seekers
- Congo DR 358 asylum seekers

***“Towards a National Action Plan against Racism in Ireland” Dept. of Justice and Law Reform, March 2002**

Total cases finalised by Office of the Refugee Applications Commissioner, 20.11.2000 – 31.12.2001*

Recommendations to grant asylum	467
Recommendations to refuse asylum	
• Substantive, after interview	4,056
• Manifestly unfounded, after interview	600
• Failure to appear at interview	1,975
Withdrawals processed	4,873
Determinations for transfers to other countries	234
Unprocessable	372
Total	<u>12,577</u>

***Office of the Refugee Applications Commissioner, Annual Report 2001**

Applications for asylum from unaccompanied minors

During 2001, over 600 applications for refugee status were received from unaccompanied minors, which marked a very considerable increase in the number of applications from this group. Concern was also expressed at some applicants who claimed to be minors but whose ages could not be verified. Indications are that the concerns are justified. The majority of those tested were found to be over 18 years old.

Why do people seek asylum?

Among the 11,634 people applying for asylum in Ireland in 2002 no doubt there were those who, like the Irish before them, were seeking to improve their lot and used

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‘asylum’ as the means by which to gain legal entry to this country. However, there were others who were genuinely fleeing persecution or fear of being killed.

Increasing political repression, murder and torture in countries such as Zimbabwe or Congo have added to the numbers applying for asylum. Some people live in areas of intense religious tension between Muslims and Christians e.g. northern Nigeria. Current problems of global terrorism and the response of western powers can heighten communal conflict. People speak of fears of being killed if they return home.

Many people seek refuge for personal and family reasons that are not readily understood in secular western societies. Women who flee their homes may do so to avoid genital mutilation for themselves or their daughters. There may also be aspects of ritual murder or human sacrifice that appear unbelievable to western minds but are a real threat to people who have come here to escape. The complexities of ongoing conflicts in countries far away may not always be appreciated by those whose job it is to make decisions on asylum requests. And there is also the difficulty of people trying to tell their experiences through translators. Language can be problematic in presenting a credible case.

What are the feelings of refugees coming to Ireland?

Lack of understanding of why refugees come here generates a lot of heated debate, much of which is ill-informed. There is almost no Irish research on the needs and patterns of settlement of immigrants. A detailed survey, limited to Vietnamese and Bosnian programme refugees, was however, conducted by five Irish Government departments in 1997.

Bosnian refugees, when asked, stated: -

- They had suffered considerable personal loss;
- Many had experienced the trauma of war, injury, death of loved ones;
- They were seeking security and peace in Ireland;
- They were very fearful.

Vietnamese refugees stated, in addition to the above

- They were seeking to reunite their families.

Most refugees were negative about having to flee their homes and all

- experienced sadness, depression, grief;
- were fearful and suffered panic attacks;

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- Felt lost, confused and insecure. Also felt they had no control over their lives;
- 43% of Bosnians said they were worse off by coming to Ireland.

“The experience in Ireland has shown that policies aimed at assimilating refugees into Irish society do not work.” From: ‘Cultivating Pluralism’ Ed. By Malcolm Mac Lachlan and Michael O’Connell.

What challenges face newly arrived immigrants in Ireland?

Asylum seekers confront numerous challenges when they arrive in Ireland and need support in dealing with them.

- **English language teaching** is not available in any systematised manner and this prevents many asylum seekers from integrating into Irish society;
- **Dealing with Irish bureaucracy** can be extremely frustrating and slow. Many asylum seekers do not have adequate assistance in establishing their entitlements;
- **Many asylum seekers suffer severe depression and / or psychological trauma** which are not properly treated or helped by being incarcerated in overcrowded and often very noisy hostel accommodation. Privacy and security of belongings are also concerns for many refugees;
- **Asylum seekers may not officially work or study** in Ireland until they have had their status as refugees confirmed and that can take a *very* long time. There is an inevitable temptation to take up offers of poorly paid illegal work;
- ***“The policy of putting asylum seekers into a limbo of several years’ duration, where they are prohibited from working, and they and their families discouraged from learning English, is souring the whole induction process for immigrants,”*** says Fr. Bill Toner, director of the Jesuit Centre for Faith and Justice in Dublin;
- **Employment** for those who are eventually granted refugee status is usually non-skilled and for many refugees who are highly educated, this adds to their loss of self-worth.

Ireland needs skilled immigrants

Irish government policy is increasingly based on the premise that increased numbers of migrants into Ireland are necessary for the continued expansion of the economy. Ms Mary Harney, the Tanaiste, stated: -

“It is in our own economic self-interest that we adopt a more open attitude to immigration.”

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Most of those invited to take up the vacant jobs are, however, from within the EU or the Eastern European states awaiting membership of the EU. None of them may stay in Ireland when their work permits expire unless invited to do so.

Positive efforts needed to help refugees integrate

- English language classes are especially helpful as a way to reach refugees;
- Help with understanding the language of official documentation is usually needed;
- Discussion after church services with refugees makes them feel welcome;
- Listening to those who express racist comments and trying to respond with the facts is an important way to defuse it;
- There is a considerable body of information on refugee law and social service assistance available from refugee organisations. Those who wish to can obtain this information and pass it on to those who need it.

Theological reflections

The birth narratives of Jesus portray the Holy Family fleeing to Egypt to escape the tyrannical cruelty of King Herod. Matt. 2: 21-23. In the Christian story there is an appreciation of the plight of the refugee.

Attitudes to the stranger in the Old Testament encourage acceptance and fairness towards the stranger. The Chosen People are to remember that they were slaves and strangers in Egypt and to treat others with the respect they would want for themselves. *Deut. 10:19 'You shall also love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.'*

Lev. 19:34 'The alien who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; you shall love the alien as yourself.'

The inclusive family of the Church in the NT is increasingly aware that there are no boundaries to God's care. For Paul this was a passionate conviction. *Galatians 3:28 'For there is neither Jew nor Greek; there is neither slave nor free; there is neither male nor female; for you are all One in Jesus Christ.'*

For Peter it was a truth that dawned slowly through personal encounter and divine revelation. *Acts: 10:34 'Truly, I perceive that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears Him and does what is right is acceptable to Him.'*

Compassion is the touchstone of right belief and in the story of the sheep and the goats, the response to our neighbour is our response to Christ Himself. *Matt. 25:35 '... For I was hungry and you gave me food. I was thirsty and you gave me drink. I was a stranger and you welcomed me.'*

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The tradition of Christian hospitality encourages Christians today to respond openly to the challenge of the asylum seeker. We do well to remember that while numbers of asylum seekers have grown significantly in Ireland since 1996, the majority of refugees are to be found in third world countries which have fewer resources to respond to the challenge.

A system of assessment of asylum cases is being developed but it is disquieting to reflect that Ireland has one of the lowest rates of acceptance of refugees in Europe. While recognition rates in Germany and the UK are 24% and Denmark recognises 45%, the rate in Ireland is only 4%.

- **New asylum applications**
September 2002 - **1,199**
October 2002 - **1,149**
These were the highest monthly figures so far for 2002.
- **Countries of origin**
Nigeria, Romania, Moldova, Zimbabwe and Ukraine.
- **Cases dealt with in September and October 2002**
Cases completed: **2,459**
1,020 withdrawn applications and
209 refused asylum on grounds of failure to turn up for interview.
- **Appeals**
Number heard in September and October: **1,040**
Number recognised as refugees: **204**
- **Backlog of unprocessed cases**
By October 31 the backlog was **7,671** of which **2,500** were at appeals stage.
- **Deportation orders**
From 13th September 2002 to 28th November 2002:
signed – 237; *effected* – 82
Top nationalities deported: Czech – 21; Nigerian – 14; Bulgarian – 5;
Polish – 4.
- **Accommodation for asylum seekers**
There were **3,846** asylum seekers in 53 accommodation centres in 23 counties in the country in mid-November 2002. This represents an occupancy rate of 76% of current accommodation at the disposal of the Reception & Integration Agency.

Appendix E

**STATEMENT FROM THE CHURCH IN SOCIETY COMMITTEE ON THE
POSSIBILITY OF WAR IN IRAQ**

The Church in Society Committee of the General Synod of the Church of Ireland is acutely aware of the deep concern felt by members of the Irish public North and South and at all levels of the Church as fears of armed conflict in Iraq escalate. We share the concerns expressed by Anglican Church leaders around the world, particularly those in the Middle East, and are aware of the growing concerns of church leaders and people from all traditions.

Already a consistency can be discerned in statements made by members of the Church of Ireland in highlighting concern in the areas of what today constitutes a just war and what practicalities are in place to respond coherently, constructively and compassionately to the humanitarian imperative in the event of war.

The Committee holds that it is necessary to revisit the criteria by which we have historically judged wars to be just or otherwise as a matter of human and theological urgency not least as the theory itself is now questioned from within the churches. It also accepts that in the short term it will not be possible to deliver a theologically rounded statement of criteria applicable to the situation of modern warfare with which children, women and men are now faced.

Among issues which need to be revisited are:

- The embroilment of civilians in modern warfare and the specific problems of targeting unprotected civilian areas from the comparative safety of centres of military operations;
- The sophistication of military technology and the devastation which it inflicts not only in immediate accuracy of targeting but in long-term genetic damage to individuals and communities through the chemical, biological and nuclear warfare;
- The affront made by war itself to responsible care for the environment in human and ecological terms;

At the same time the Church in its ministering role acknowledges the need to provide appropriate pastoral care to members of the armed forces who seek to serve peaceful concerns and to protect not only national but international interests appropriately defined. Ministering in war is as vital as speaking out for or against war.

The Committee notes the imbalance, too often insufficiently examined or challenged, in relation to the holding of weapons of mass destruction by Western powers in comparison with emerging nations. We ask: Who will set an example and what form will that lead take?

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The Committee further requests that every effort be made to proceed diligently and efficiently with the UN Weapons Inspection initiative in Iraq and that this be done without prejudice. It also requests that the appropriate UN Resolutions and Conventions be adhered to throughout this process.

Finally the Committee urges that every diplomatic step be taken to avert armed conflict and that all Christians pray for peace.

The Rt Rev Michael Jackson, Bishop of Clogher
Chairperson, The Church in society Committee
January 23 2003