

**APPENDIX T**

**SYNODICAL REFORM WORKING GROUP**

**REPORT 2003**

The Annual Report of this Board incorporates reports from its three main committees, the Broadcasting Committee, Internet Committee and Literature Committee.

**MEMBERSHIP**

Rt Rev AET Harper (Chairman)  
Mrs JM Bruton  
Rev Canon BJ Courtney  
Mr GA Forbes  
Mr S Gamble  
Rev Canon RD Harman

The Most Rev JRW Neill was appointed as a member of the working group, but decided not to take up membership.

**THE BRIEF OF THE WORKING GROUP**

In view of the failure of the Bill to review Synod membership at the General Synod last year, and the remaining desire for Synodical reform, the Standing Committee addressed the resolution adopted by the General Synod in 2001. It was generally agreed that there was frustration among members of the General Synod that there had been no opportunity at the Synod to debate Synodical reform, the Bill having been lost on the First Reading.

The resolution passed by the General Synod in 2001 was as follows:

In view of the request of the General Synod in 2000 to consider Synodical Structures and of the failure of Bill No 5, the Standing Committee be requested to give urgent consideration to the means by which enquiries into the structures and workings of the General Synod may be continued, with a view to further proposals being laid before the Synod during the triennium beginning in 2003.

The Standing Committee, in June 2002, appointed the working group, which was requested to consult widely, as appropriate, and report to the Standing Committee in March 2003 on the reform of the General Synod.

**ISSUES TO BE CONSIDERED**

The working group decided to identify the most pressing issues, consider these in detail and submit various options to the Standing Committee, without necessarily making a particular recommendation in each case. The following issues were identified, and are addressed below under separate headings:

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1. Representation from each diocese and overall membership.
2. Timing and frequency of meetings.
3. Weighted membership to include different age categories etc.
4. Organisation of Synod business to provide for in-depth debate on particular issues.
5. Election by proportional representation.
6. Provision for legislation at the Synod to be more user-friendly.
7. Mechanism to encourage input from diocesan synods to the General Synod.

### **Representation from each diocese and overall membership**

The question of diocesan representation and overall membership of the General Synod is a most critical element of any review of Synodical structures. It is also among the most divisive. There has been general agreement on the need to revise the basis for membership to take into account the current distribution of Church of Ireland clergy and population. The existing division of representation among the dioceses was based on the number of clergy serving in 1870 following disestablishment. The working group submits three different models for consideration.

There having been insufficient support for a major reduction in the overall membership of the House of Representatives, each model has been designed to produce a total membership roughly comparable with the present total of 648. This figure, and the models below, exclude the archbishops and bishops, who are *ex officio*, being members of the House of Bishops. Thus the total membership of the General Synod numbers some 660.

#### ***Model One***

The first model is based on the present distribution of the Church of Ireland population throughout the dioceses and takes into account the demographic changes since 1870. It requires the collection of accurate and comparable statistics from parishes. As there are various ways of measuring Church population, which produce vastly differing results, an acceptable and practical method of collecting the statistics will have to be agreed.

If it is possible to collect accurate information for this purpose, the statistics would be likely to prove useful for many other purposes. However, difficulties would arise if there were to be any doubt about the accuracy of the figures. It is suggested that the actual numbers on which to base representation be revised every third triennium (nine years).

The model is designed to achieve a total membership of 600 with diocesan representation calculated using a banded scale of Church population, with two lay members for each clerical member. Details are attached as Appendix A, p 274.

#### ***Model Two***

Recent proposals for revising Synod membership have been based on the number of cures in each diocese. This has the advantage of taking into account the clerical strength of each diocese, but at the same time, allows for a proportionally higher representation

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from the less populated dioceses, given that these dioceses have fewer members in each parish.

This basis for membership does not, however, take into account recent or anticipated trends in ministry in which the area covered by a cure may be expanded into a team ministry under one incumbent, assisted by curates and auxiliary ministers. This collaborative style of ministry represents a growing trend in rural areas so that the clerical strength of the diocese may not be accurately reflected by counting cures only.

The computation in Appendix B, p 275 assumes one clerical member of Synod per 2.5 cures, and two lay members for each clerical member, giving an overall membership of 579.

#### ***Model Three***

The model set out in Appendix C, p 276 is designed to reflect the full clerical strength of each diocese. The model is similar to Model Two, except that clerical membership is based on the number of cures in the diocese, together with the number of other licensed clergy. Licensed clergy may include curates assistants, auxiliary ministers and others such as youth officers. Based on one clerical member of Synod for every three cures/licensed clergy, the total membership is 651. If the basis for calculating is one clerical member for every 3.5 cures and licensed clergy, total membership is 549. Details are attached as Appendix C, p 276.

#### **Timing and Frequency of Meetings**

The working group considered that a greater percentage of members might attend the Synod if the usual three day, mid-week format were to be changed. Such a change may suit members working Monday to Friday, particularly younger members. The following options may be considered:

- A weekend meeting to facilitate members who work a normal five day week.
- A residential meeting which could include evening sessions.
- Shorter meetings, perhaps two-day sessions twice yearly.
- Separate meetings for legislative and non legislative business (consideration of reports etc).
- A meeting in a month other than May (possibly March) which may suit farmers or those involved in education.

#### **Weighted membership to include different age categories etc.**

The objective in legislating for weighted membership on age grounds would be to reduce the average age of Synod members. Some dioceses already elect members in under-45 and 45-or-over age categories to facilitate elections to the Standing Committee.

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Rules in this area might, however, make it difficult for some dioceses to identify sufficient members in the lower age category. Nevertheless, younger members should be encouraged at every opportunity. Changes, such as weekend meetings, may help to attract younger members, but unless other changes are made, it is unlikely that legislation for weighted membership alone would be effective or operable.

It was felt that it could be helpful to ensure that organisations, such as the Church of Ireland Youth Department, the Church of Ireland Theological College, the Mothers' Union or CIMS are represented on the General Synod. It is suggested that consideration be given to reserving a certain number of places for such organisations.

Furthermore, in order to afford opportunity for the renewal of representation, it is suggested that consideration be given to setting a maximum term of three consecutive triennia for membership of the House of Representatives. This would not preclude election after a break.

Attached, as Appendix D, p 277, is a table showing the average age of the General Synod members elected for the period 2003-2005, which indicates that younger people are not being elected to the Synod.

#### **Organisation of Synod business to provide for in-depth debate on particular issues**

Liturgical revision will be completed in 2003, which will enable more time to be made available for other matters. It has been suggested that each committee should be encouraged to identify one major issue for focused debate each year from the business before it. As not every committee will have a major issue each year, business could be organised to concentrate on, say, two or three issues in a particular year. These issues could be made more interesting if facilities were made available for visual presentations where appropriate. If these issues are notified in advance, members will have opportunity for thought and research prior to the meeting of the Synod.

Provision for in-depth debate on particular issues could be made in conjunction with the ordering of the timetable and would not require any amendment to the Standing Orders. However, there is a difficulty if a presentation is to be made by a non-Synod member as this requires the suspension of Standing Orders, a procedure not normally favoured by the President, or the Honorary Secretaries. Standing Orders could, however, be amended to permit non-members to address the Synod without the necessity of suspending of Standing Orders.

#### **Election by proportional representation**

The former Synodical Reform Working Group recommended that General Synod members be elected by Proportional Representation. It was felt that this was a more equitable method of election, which would result in a broader range of membership from minority groups.

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There is software available known as eSTV that might be adapted for use by dioceses to assist with the election of General Synod members by PR. However, this software, as it stands, only allows for a maximum of 50 candidates. This would not suit elections where there may be 70 or more candidates, which would be the case in the larger dioceses. Without the assistance of suitable software, dioceses would be faced with a complicated procedure in counting votes, which may lead to disputed results. Consideration of such a change should, however, be postponed until such time as appropriate software is available.

#### **Provision for legislation at the Synod to be more user-friendly**

Under the present Standing Orders, Bills presented to the Synod are dealt with along the lines of parliamentary procedure. This is considered by many members of the Synod to be very cumbersome and complicated resulting in much time being wasted on procedural niceties. Despite efforts to explain the Bills procedure in leaflets etc, many members of the Synod do not fully understand the rules.

However, it is clear that the parliamentary procedure does help to ensure that legislation does not obtain approval without detailed consideration. As the vote on the Third Reading of Bills is taken at least a day later than the Committee stage, any unusual circumstances affecting attendance on a particular day would not allow a Bill to be approved without a second vote on a different day. It is suggested that the present procedure should be retained, but in a simplified and more understandable form.

The procedure for amending Bills is also complicated and not always understood. Some members may be reluctant to submit amendments due to the complexity of the rules governing amendments to Bills. It is felt that the procedure should be simplified.

#### **Mechanism to encourage input from the diocesan synods to the General Synod**

The report to the General Synod in 2001 from the former Synodical Reform Working Group recommended that links between the General Synod and each Diocesan Synod be strengthened in the following ways: -

- Diocesan synods could meet around the same time, thus allowing matters from the 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 the General Synod.

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These recommendations are endorsed by this working group. It is also suggested that provision could be made for diocesan synods to refer issues, which are of general interest to the Church, to the General Synod. Standing Orders could be amended to allow for consideration of reports from diocesan synods at the General Synod.

#### **The Way Forward**

The working group considers that recommendations for Synodical reform, should be brought forward on an issue by issue basis over a period. This approach will allow each issue to be considered and resolved separately, rather than all reforms being lost because one issue in the process does not receive the necessary support.

The Standing Committee has agreed to appoint a committee at its June 2003 meeting to consider recommending legislation to address specific issues following discussion of the report at the General Synod. However, the question of diocesan representation and overall membership remains the most urgent issue.

March 2003

**Appendix A**

**GENERAL SYNOD REPRESENTATION**

**Based on Diocesan Population**

<b>Diocese</b>	<b>Synod Members</b>	<b>Clerical Members</b>	<b>Lay Members</b>
Armagh	66	22	44
Clogher	48	16	32
Derry	66	22	44
Down	90	30	60
Connor	90	30	60
Kilmore	39	13	26
Tuam	12	4	8
Dublin	66	22	44
Meath	27	9	18
Cashel	39	13	26
Cork	39	13	26
Limerick	27	9	18
<b>Total</b>	<b>600</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>400</b>

*Scale of Church of Ireland population*

Indicating clerical membership of the General Synod for each range

Under 3,000	12
3,000 – 5,999	27
6,000 – 9,999	39
10,000 – 19,999	48
20,000 – 29,999	57
30,000 – 39,999	66
Over 40,000	90

**Appendix B**

**GENERAL SYNOD REPRESENTATION**

**Based on one clerical member for every 2.5 cures**

<b>Diocese</b>	<b>Cures</b>	<b>Synod Members Based on 1:2.5</b>	<b>Clerical Members</b>	<b>Lay Members</b>
Armagh	46	57	19	38
Clogher	33	42	14	28
Derry	50	60	20	40
Down	81	99	33	66
Connor	78	96	32	64
Kilmore	25	30	10	20
Tuam	9	12	4	8
Dublin	55	66	22	44
Meath	18	24	8	16
Cashel	34	42	14	28
Cork	22	27	9	18
Limerick	20	24	8	16
<b>Total</b>	<b>471</b>	<b>579</b>	<b>193</b>	<b>386</b>



**Appendix C - GENERAL SYNOD REPRESENTATION**

**Based on (A) one clerical member for every three cures and other licensed clergy and (B) one clerical member for every 3.5 cures and other licensed clergy**

<b>Diocese</b>	<b>Cures and Others</b>	<b>A Synod Members Based on 1:3</b>	<b>Clerical Members</b>	<b>Lay Members</b>	<b>B Synod Members Based on 1:3.5</b>	<b>Clerical Members</b>	<b>Lay Members</b>
Armagh	54	54	18	36	45	15	30
Clogher	35	36	12	24	30	10	20
Derry	56	57	19	38	48	16	32
Down	123	123	41	82	105	35	70
Connor	111	111	37	74	96	32	64
Kilmore	31	33	11	22	27	9	18
Tuam	13	15	5	10	12	4	8
Dublin	90	90	30	60	78	26	52
Meath	25	27	9	18	21	7	14
Cashel	45	45	15	30	39	13	26
Cork	31	33	11	22	27	9	18
Limerick	26	27	9	18	21	7	14
<b>Total</b>	<b>640</b>	<b>651</b>	<b>217</b>	<b>434</b>	<b>549</b>	<b>183</b>	<b>366</b>

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**Appendix D**

**GENERAL SYNOD 2003 – 2005**

**AVERAGE AGE OF MEMBERS BY DIOCESES AND ORDERS**

<b>Diocese</b>	<b>Average age Clerical Member</b>	<b>Average age Lay Member</b>
Armagh	57	64
Clogher	52	65
Derry	56	64
Down & Dromore	53	61
Connor	50	57
Kilmore	57	58
Elphin	51	66
Tuam, Killala & Achonry	55	54
Dublin & Glendalough	57	60
Meath & Kildare	51	60
Ferns	46	62
Cashel & Ossory	56	60
Cork, Cloyne & Ross	49	57
Limerick & Killaloe	52	55