

COUNCIL FOR MISSION IN IRELAND

REPORT 2003

MEMBERSHIP

Chairman Rt Rev Harold Miller, Bishop of Down and Dromore

General Synod Rev Canon David Moynan
Rev Clive Atkinson (resigned October 2002)
Rev Stephen Lowry
Mr William Frizell

Co-opted Miss Mavis Gibbons (CPAS)
Mrs Rosslyn Faulk (Mothers' Union)
Captain Charles Harris (Church Army)
Mr David Brown (CIYD)

Diocesan representatives

Armagh	Rev Canon Dr William Neely
Clogher	Rev Derek Kerr
Derry and Raphoe	Rev Canon Brian Johnston (to June 2002) Rev David Morrow (from October 2002)
Down and Dromore	Rev David Brown
Connor	Rev Chris Pollock
Kilmore	Mrs Janet Catterall
Tuam	Mrs Jane Stark
Dublin and Glendalough	Mrs Felix Blennerhassett
Meath and Kildare	Rev Michael Wooderson
Cashel and Ossory	Rev Canon Gary Dowd
Cork	Captain Keith Dyde CA
Limerick and Killaloe	Ven Wayne Carney
In attendance:	Rev Charles Irwin, Mission Resource Person

Honorary Secretary Rev Stephen Lowry, Dromore Cathedral Rectory,
28 Church Street, Dromore Co Down BT25 1AA

Honorary Treasurer Mrs Felix Blennerhassett, Overseas House, 3 Belgrave Road,
Dublin 6

SUMMARY

In 2002 the Council entered into a new trial relationship with the Council for the Church Overseas. This represents a step of faith on the part of both councils and we have sought God's strength and wisdom as we have tentatively developed our "engagement".

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We looked at ways of helping Small Churches Grow. The cell group model proved a helpful starting place. A visit from Rev George Lings of the Sheffield Centre proved a fruitful and thought provoking overnight conference.

RELATIONSHIP WITH THE GENERAL SYNOD COUNCIL FOR THE CHURCH OVERSEAS

The Two Mission Councils of the Church of Ireland have agreed to enter a period of time when they share in all meetings together. The two mission councils recognise they share many interests and common goals. God's Mission to humankind is one, and our response, though defined sometimes by the location of our activity, is best understood as one Mission. For a trial period, joint meetings will be held, with an opportunity for any item of business to be conducted separately if required by one council or the other. Due to the current requirements of Synod we will continue to produce two written reports, but intend that both be considered together in one debate following the presentation of one or other report at Synod each year. This Report contains content from both Councils' discussions. A meeting of the Joint Mission Working Group following General Synod 2002 had produced this suggested trial pattern of shared meetings. This was agreed by both councils separately and then initiated at an Overnight Meeting in October 2002, held in Bellinter, Navan.

To date two joint meetings have been held with some reduction in duplication of debates and hence a speeding up of decisions in common areas. Three further meetings are planned in 2003. The trial period is likely to proceed until General Synod 2004.

MEMBERSHIP

The Council was sorry to receive the resignation of one of our longest serving members, Rev Canon Brian Johnston, in May and assured him of our hopes to keep Mission in Ireland at the heart of the agenda of the Mission Councils of the Church of Ireland, and wished him well. In congratulating Bishop Ken Good on his appointment to Derry and Raphoe, we were pleased to see his place on Council taken briefly by the Rev Clive Atkinson (Connor) who shortly afterwards announced his intention to serve with Intercontinental Church Society, in two English speaking congregations at Vevey and Chateau d'Oex, in Switzerland. We welcomed the Rev David Morrow as the new representative from the Diocese of Derry and Raphoe. Mrs Felix Blennerhassett was elected Honorary Treasurer.

REPRESENTATION

Members represented the Councils and the Church at the following meetings and events during the year 2002:

- Mission Ireland Committee of the Methodist Church in Ireland, Belfast
- Building Bridges of Hope Steering Group for Ireland Meeting (CTBI)
- Churches Commission on Mission (CTBI)

STATISTICS ON IRISH RELIGIOUS LIFE

The Mission Councils welcome the opportunity that the recent Census figures from the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland give to analyse nominal church membership. Figures indicate that in 2001 some 20,000 fewer people in Northern Ireland regard themselves as affiliated to Churches in comparison to 1991. The third largest religious grouping in the Republic of Ireland is the Muslim community. However, specific evidence regarding the increase and or decrease of religious affiliation, attendance and belief in Ireland is patchy and anecdotal for the most part.

The Councils are concerned that no national statistical survey on this particular matter has been organised. While various denominational surveys and diocesan reports have been compiled, the overall picture is vague. We believe that a properly prepared, analysed and distributed set of statistics reflecting the current state of faith in Ireland would be an invaluable tool in the development of mission in our land. We need a base line against which future growth or otherwise can be analysed.

The Councils have made tentative enquiries regarding the possibility of employing an organisation to do this survey, and believe that it would be in the interests of all the churches to join together in this. This would be best achieved with some initial agreement between different denominations and we invite the General Synod to support and encourage the appropriate body to initiate such an approach.

OVERNIGHT CONFERENCE

In our Overnight Conference with the Rev George Lings of the Sheffield Centre, we studied a number of principles which underpin the local church. Using several examples from the booklet series “Encounters on the Edge”, we were encouraged to think with fresh insights into ways of allowing “church” to be relevant in its own communities. Using the imagery of society being dislocated from the church, like a ship on an ocean, he said “Western Society is sailing away from the church faster than the church can build bridges”. See *“Encounters on the Edge: The Sheffield Centre/Church Army”* by George Lings.

Small churches, if they are to function as God intends, must seek to express the life of Christ in their communities. They should **enable** all sorts of people to belong, **expect** a life of personal discipleship from members, **express** their identity with each other and the people among whom they gather as community, **expand** their influence by sharing their faith in relevant ways, and **encounter** God in their shared life of worship and prayer. See: *“Cell Church Values: CPAS”* by Tony Hardy.

Every church, whether large or small, needs to have these various expressions in its life together, yet the one facet deemed essential by church politics is that it can maintain a sacred building! In fact the special places of worship, and the prime locations they occupy, are visible evidence of the centrality to our land of the Christian faith.

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They represent both an invaluable asset and yet also a dangerous preoccupation for those who serve Christ in the Church. Buildings are a gift to be prized and passed on, but they are not the essence of the church and their non-viability must not be allowed to determine the end of an otherwise viable church community in a specific location.

The biblical evidence and the expressed opinions of people today both concur in this: that people **need to belong**. This suggests that churches should be **cells resulting in the development of attractive and transforming community**.

We recommend instead that steps be taken to encourage and allow “Church of Ireland People” in a geographic area or in an economic activity to be a “parish” without the need for a building to describe their identity. We recommend that ways be found to enable them to explore new ways of witnessing to Christ’s power and presence in their missionary situation. If we do not own such “building-less communities” in the life of our tradition, then no new such community will be established to be the nucleus of parishes in the future. Instead the Christian witness in an area will be left to denominations without our rich and valuable heritage and authentic Christian teaching to share, or to none. Ireland will be weaker as a result.

GROWING SMALL CHURCHES

For two years members of CMI have studied different types of churches experiencing growth in some area of their life. We have become aware that most of these were town- or city-based larger churches. However, many parishes in Ireland consist of quite small numbers of people. Most of these have a desire either to survive, at least for a little longer, or perhaps to grow a little more. We believe they are well placed to do much more than this, provided they focus their efforts appropriately.

In larger churches, in more densely populated areas, there is a good potential for growth, not least on account of the following: many people are displaced from home communities and open to new relationships; there is an anonymity in the populous places which allows people to enter a new church community without attracting attention; there is a more flexible approach to leadership with a lesser impact of over-influential families/individuals in a larger complex; there is a greater financial resource available for innovative ideas for the use of plant creatively; there are fewer ties to traditional models of working because of a shorter community memory.

In smaller churches a different range of potentials exists. Helping smaller communities grow into more effective and fruitful living bodies of believers is clearly a somewhat different task. Every fruitful work of God by the church needs to be under-girded by prayer; it depends on some faithful proclamation of God’s truth, it entails a willingness to serve and a capturing of a vision for God’s purpose, each small church needs further to undertake a spiritual search which will enable it to grow. These principles of cell church life are the keys to growth.

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The Church of Ireland has had such strong links with the buildings in which people have worshipped that often the viability of maintaining and using the building has determined the viability of the church. This is an incorrect understanding of the nature of church. Churches can exist without sacred buildings, but often the Church of Ireland has acted as if this were not the case. We need to rediscover new ways of being and doing church in our age and in our differing communities.

The Mission Councils seek comment and direction from the General Synod as to whether and how best we can present working ideas and suggestions to Synod, using written materials, a presentation at General Synod, or some other means.

NEWS FROM THE DIOCESES

ARMAGH

We brought the Decade of Evangelism to an exciting conclusion with a celebration in the Cathedral on 27 September 2002. Each parish had prepared a Banner as a symbol of its dedication to the Evangelical work of the Diocese. These were to be presented at an open air rally which had to be cancelled due to Foot and Mouth and the thanksgiving was instead on the 27th. Paul Clarke, of Ulster Television, consented to interview a selection of representative members of the Church of Ireland in the Cathedral in a framework of praise and rejoicing as the Diocese renewed its pledge to witness in the coming years. The Banners were processed through the Cathedral and made a colourful and inspirational display.

Despite the end of the Decade some parishes have pledged themselves to a five year guaranteed income to Bishop Alison College at Arua, a legacy of our continuing support of this scheme undertaken in the Decade.

DOWN & DROMORE

Our five year diocesan strategy under the banner of ‘Think again’ continues with its specific emphases on ROY! - Reconciliation, Outreach and Young people - all undergirded by spiritual renewal.

There was a great sense of a united witness as our Methodist friends joined us in leading the celebrations at St Patrick’s-tide at Saul Church and Down Cathedral where people from many denominations gathered to worship.

The Diocesan clergy and a good number of their spouses were challenged and encouraged for their ministry by Philip Yancey and Christine Eames at a weekend conference held in Donegal town.

The focus for the year was our ‘Hearts on Fire’ Diocesan mission held in St Anne’s Cathedral, Belfast in early October. It was an opportunity to respond to God’s call to us; as individuals to have hearts set on fire with love for him, and as a church, to mission! Our Bishop was the main speaker. People from our parishes were encouraged to attend

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by the Bishop, who visited every parish personally to extend that invitation! The first night was specified as a youth night and over 500 young people came.

Each of the four nights following saw congregations of over 1000 people present. We continue to be challenged to 'Think Again'.

DUBLIN & GLENDALOUGH

The work of the Diocesan Council for Mission over the last year has centred on two events: "Celebrating our Oneness in Christ" and "Excitement in Mission". In each case the purpose was to encourage awareness of what the Mission of the Church can be in a multi-cultural and changing Ireland. More urgently, the purpose was to encourage involvement and engagement in such mission.

"EXCITEMENT in MISSION"

On Tuesday 26 February 2002, in Lucan Parish Centre, representatives of the major Missionary Societies got together under the auspices of the Diocesan Council for Mission to present their work. The Rev Charles Irwin, Mission Resource Officer of the Church of Ireland, was the main speaker. This event provided an opportunity for a number of mission agencies to promote their areas of operation, and permitted people interested in knowing more to discuss matters in detail.

"CELEBRATING our ONENESS in CHRIST"

On St Andrew's Day, 30 November 2001 a service "Celebrating our Oneness in Christ" was held in Christ Church Cathedral - the Mother Church of the Dioceses. Its aim was to extend a welcome, in Christ's Name, to all who have come to Ireland for whatever reason:

- some, as tourists and students;
- others, to take up job opportunities;
- still others, as refugees and asylum seekers who, fleeing injustice and persecution in their own countries, are desperately seeking a new start and fresh life in Ireland.

TUAM

The Diocese of Tuam, Killala and Achonry Board of Mission meets about four times a year, allowing time for prayer and reflection on a passage of scripture prior to any business. A noticeable feature of our Board of Mission is the high degree of lay involvement, whilst valuable contributions are made by the clergy through their participation in and support for the events arranged by the Board of Mission.

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2002 has seen small but important developments in the area of mission. The scattered nature of our congregations continues to pose logistical problems when planning events, but there is an increasing awareness that this need not pose insurmountable barriers. The Bishop has stressed our need to pray for the ability to discern one another's gifts, as well as our own. During the past year, we have seen such prayers beginning to bear fruit, but it is a message that bears repeating as we continue to explore the concept that small can, indeed, be beautiful.

Two '**Diocesan Exploration Days**' were held on the subjects of Christian healing and prayer. These well-attended events highlighted the diverse and considerable gifts that are to be found among the clergy in our diocese. The success of these occasions suggests that the Board of Mission can and should function as a creative body that can hopefully bring together the impressive, but sometimes neglected resources to be found within the diocese. Further Exploration Days are planned for 2003.

There has grown a conviction that youth and adult education are areas which require further development within the diocese. With regard to the young people of the diocese, the availability of substantial central funding for a Diocesan Youth Officer and for youth-focussed activities is seen as a most welcome development that provides our scattered and financially-challenged diocese with an opportunity to develop this much-needed ministry.

During the past year, the Board of Mission has started to look at a number of adult study programmes already being used in other parts of the country. Some of these have been used, with varying degrees of success, within individual parishes within the diocese. Although our diocese is small in terms of numbers, there is a remarkable diversity of backgrounds amongst our congregations. Any education programme must be flexible enough to incorporate this diversity, as well as being suitable for small groups with limited financial resources.

Some congregations within the diocese have been blessed by the presence of asylum seekers, many of whom prove to be enthusiastic participants in parish life, eager to integrate and adapt, yet at the same time bringing challenges and new ideas as they share their own experiences and gifts with the community.

OTHER REPORTS

CHURCH ARMY - AN UPDATE

The work of Church Army has been maintained over the last year with few staff changes. Captain Isaac Hanna has come to work in Killowen Parish, Coleraine with young people and families. He is also responsible for promoting and facilitating the Church Army "Learning to Share" Evangelism Training Programme throughout Northern Ireland. The syllabus draws on resources that have been developed in training Church Army Evangelists. The course is also available within the Republic of Ireland.

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“Learning to Share” is already being used by a number of dioceses in the Church of England and the Church in Wales, as well as other denominational groupings. A growing number of dioceses are using “Learning to Share” as the basis for developing teams of lay evangelists operating with the Bishops approval at diocesan and parish level. Individuals or parish study groups can also undertake course Modules. The University of Leeds validates the course.

Isaac Hanna can be contacted at isaac@hannai.freeseve.co.uk or via the office in Lisburn.

We continue to receive a number of applications for selection to join Church Army. We are pleased with the increased interest. We currently have a number of people from the Church of Ireland in training at our college in Sheffield. A Church Army Vocations event will take place from 27-29 June at Stricklands, Bangor.

A number of Parish Missions and Mission weekends have been conducted across Ireland during the course of the year and these appear to have been of value to the local churches involved. We have staff specifically available to conduct such events.

Captain John O’Neill has been appointed as an Itinerant Evangelist and he can be contacted via our office in Lisburn.

Captain Keith Dyde and his wife Pauline leave Ireland at the beginning of 2003. He will be involved in Area Evangelism in a number of Dioceses in the Southeast of England. The “Wheels Trailer” will accompany him.

A full list of Church Army Evangelists working in Ireland can be found in the *Church of Ireland Directory* listed under “Association of Missionary Societies”.

We have an increasing need for additional finance to develop the work as income does not keep pace with our bills. We are eager, however, not to retract and are seeking to find alternative sources of funding, although this is not easily found for Evangelistic work.

As a step of faith some “safe” money in our reserves has been allocated to five adventurous new projects across the UK & Ireland – One in the Church of Ireland. (Details will be available shortly). The project relates to youth ministry, in partnership with Summer Madness.

From January 2003 Capt. Charles Harris is re-titled: Area Operations Manager. He also assumes responsibility for Church Army work in Scotland as well as Ireland. This is the outcome of an internal review that has reduced the number of current Area Co-ordinators from nine to six.

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From: Charles Harris, Area Operations Manager.
Other information about Church Army is available on the Internet.
<http://www.churcharmy.org.uk>
Church Army Office, 4 Thornleigh Place, Lisburn, Co. Antrim, BT28 2FD
(028 9266 3295)

CPAS IN IRELAND

During this year there have been opportunities to work with a significant number of parishes throughout Ireland in areas of leadership and evangelism. With Roger Murphy, CPAS evangelist we have led outreach events in St Paul's, Lisburn; Magheraculmoney Parish, Kesh; St Saviour's, Craigavon and Willowfield Parish, Belfast. This last year has seen the re-launch of the six weeks training course 'Lost for Words', now an all-age resource for children, youth and adults. A number of parishes have been using this. The new Baptism video with discussion material 'First Steps' is being used by many churches.

There continues to be openings to work with Sunday School leaders, both in individual parishes and with others. In October, together with Crosslinks, we led a training day for the Diocese of Cashel and Ossory, and in November, with the Sunday School Society of Ireland, one in Dublin; together we also had a lunch for the clergy of the Diocese, other such days are planned with different Dioceses.

The main thrust of CPAS is to encourage the local Church and throughout the year both Keith and Mavis have had the privilege of working with many different churches, seeking to help and encourage them. We were sad to have to lose Keith in December, due to the financial situation, and unfortunately he will not be replaced at the moment.

MOTHERS' UNION

Mothers' Union continues its 'Christian Care for Families Worldwide' by:

- Supporting the Jubilee Debt Campaign;
- Resourcing members to initiate and run numerous local projects many of which are HIV/AIDS related;
- Extending the Literacy and Development Programme following the successful pilot in Burundi, Malawi and Sudan. "Help us with literacy and then we can deal with other things ourselves";
- Supporting the Relief Fund which brings immediate help to emergency situations, drought stricken areas of Central Africa being recent recipients.

In Ireland the MU Parenting Programme, which trains facilitators to lead Parenting Groups, is meeting a real need.

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Individual dioceses here run a variety of projects giving practical help both in parishes and in local communities.

All-Ireland conferences have given members, particularly younger members, an opportunity to engage in relevant issues, whilst encouraging fellowship and commitment.

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ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR 2002

CURRENT ACCOUNT	2002
INCOME	€
Balance brought forward	341.01
Simmonds Bequest & Black Trust	153.04
Lunch money	96.70
From Deposit account	250.00
From GSCCOS	200.00
Bellinter conference	226.31
Bank interest	1.79
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	1,268.85
EXPENDITURE	
Lunches	96.00
Draft GSCCOS	86.96
CPAS	163.99
Bellinter Conference	183.72
Church Army	486.07
Bank charges	5.82
Office expenses	77.04
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	1,099.60
Balance in hand at 31.12.02	169.25
Balance in Deposit account	1,210.62