

# REPORT OF THE REPRESENTATIVE CHURCH BODY

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Since 1870, the RCB, as a trustee body, has always played a crucial stewardship and management role, in which it seeks to serve and support the Church's ministry. We are fortunate that the Executive Committee which meets six times a year, the six main committees which meet up to eight times a year, and the 60 members of the full Representative Body, which meets four times a year, all work together to carry out faithfully that management responsibility with integrity and accountability – ably assisted by a first class professional staff team in Church House.

## MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP

One of the big themes which exercises and even excites my mind in ministry is that of the creative relationship between *leadership* and *management*. It is a subject about which a vast amount has been written in recent years, not just in relation to the world of business and commerce, but right across the board in virtually every enterprise and discipline imaginable – not least as it applies to church life. I know that some church people are a bit uneasy about talking in such 'worldly' terms, and shirk from using this kind of less-than-spiritual vocabulary, but I must say that I become increasingly convinced of the value and even the importance of applying these categories to church life.

Those who speak knowledgably about these things would argue that whereas good *management* is always needed - to keep systems on an even keel, to administer efficiently, to see that things are done well, good *leadership* is

crucial, particularly in times of change and uncertainty - to discern direction, to clarify vision and to identify priorities. The task of leadership, for example in a parish or diocese, is to identify the key challenges to be tackled, to persuade and motivate parishioners or parishes of the key work to be done, and to give direction as to the key steps that must be taken towards achieving the church's goals. That is the prioritizing task of leadership. It is then up to the managers in the parish or diocese to find the necessary resources to enable the work to be done. So each of these two elements, leadership and management, have a vital role to play in the successful accomplishment of the church's task.

I am aware that the RCB, too, has to offer a mixture of both management and leadership, but its primary function, it would appear from its Mission and Responsibility as outlined on page 10 of the Report, is more one of management than of leadership in the strict sense. The direction, the vision, the priorities, the specific goals are identified primarily by the General Synod, or by the Standing Committee on its behalf, - and in an episcopal church like ours by the bishops who undoubtedly have a significant role to play in that process; whereas the resourcing of the priorities and goals is then made possible by the RCB, insofar as the terms of its trusteeship will allow.

The genius of the system within which we operate is the creative outworking of this delicate balance, as a common purpose is shared. The pressure comes when, as in the current economic climate, the financial resources are in less plentiful supply and tough decisions have to be taken as to how the available cloth can be cut to best cover the identified needs and priorities.

#### **ASSET MANAGEMENT**

We are well aware, from the media as well as from the financial pages of this report, of the difficult economic climate in which the RCB's stewardship and

management has had to function in recent months. However, in an atmosphere where financial losses and market pressures are all about us, it is right to acknowledge some good news when we see it. And there is indeed some good news close to home for our own staff team.

In acknowledging the impressive and efficient role of the RCB staff in Church House, and not least of the Heads of Departments, which I, like the proposer of this report, certainly wish to do, I am particularly happy to highlight to members of the Synod the impressive record of our own internal Investment Team. The heading *Asset Management* on page 17 of the Report outlines the various fund managers which handle our investments for us, but humility has prevented the authors of the report from drawing attention to the fact that the in-house investment team has achieved considerably better returns on the funds they have invested than their external counterparts have done in the past year. In recognition of their competence in coping more effectively with the turbulence of the stock market, I suggest that we acknowledge with our applause the commendable achievement of the 'home team'.

From the many issues raised in the 95 pages on the report, I will just highlight two or three more to commend to members' attention and possible response in debate.

## **DISABILITY AND ACCESS**

Seventeen months from now some important legislation will take effect that will have major implications for churches, parochial halls and other buildings used for parish activities. On page 79, Appendix G we are reminded that under the Disability Discrimination Act, 1995, the deadline for getting our house in order, literally, is October 2004. We have known for some years that

this target date is approaching, and happily many parishes have been taking action to ensure that they will comply with the requirements of the Act.

Parishes, and therefore Select Vestries, are urged to carry out Access Audits of their property, paying particular attention to features such as parking, entrances, emergency exits, steps, kerbs, stairways, lifts, toilet facilities, lighting and signage. Where any of these physical features make it impossible or reasonably difficult for disabled persons to take part in church life, then appropriate action will have to be taken to alter or remove the offending feature so that full participation is made possible.

#### **HISTORIC CHURCHES.**

It can happen that committees established by the central church to tackle a specific task or other, can take some time to get their work done before reporting back. But an impressive exception that is worth noting has its findings referred to on pages 22 and 84 of this Report.

We are indebted to the three members of the *Historical Churches Advisory Committee*, the Bishop of Connor, Mr Neill and Mr Prins, on the speed of their work, on the succinct nature of their report and particularly on the amount of distilled wisdom summarised in the seven pages of Appendix H.

I suspect that we will all welcome the committee's summary of legislative requirements in both jurisdictions, the provision of practical information, and the suggestion of potential sources of funding and grant aid. It will be interesting, however, to see if the Synod has anything to say about their proposal that a Church Conservation Advisor be appointed by the RCB, and whether the financial cloth can be cut in such a way that funding can be found for such an appointment. An advisor of this sort should help parishes avoid

pitfalls and mistakes that can easily be made in the care of such buildings, could ease financial burdens by pointing parishes in the right direction for funding, and might well relieve many clergy of an administrative burden that they could well do without and for which they feel neither called nor trained to handle.

## **CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, I note with pleasure that on page 23 the Library and Archives Committee report that the number of reader visits to the RCB library rose significantly in 2002. The Library is an excellent resource, and I pay personal tribute to the staff for their helpfulness and professional expertise, made freely available to me in Derry regarding advice on our very fine and historic diocesan library. May I in finishing turn members' attention to page 95 of the report, and suggest to them that a visit to the RCB Library is now worth a visit more than ever before, since unlimited entertainment is freely available to us all in the form of a recent acquisition: the speeches, correspondence and papers of Canon JLB Deane!

I have much pleasure in seconding the proposal that the Report of the Representative Church Body be taken into Consideration.