

Council for Mission in Ireland and Council for the Church Overseas

Seconded by Mrs Bobbie Moore, Connor Diocese

‘Embargoed until Delivery’

The bulk of report before you is contained under three headings:

Mission Resource Person Review – pg.371/372 - overseas addressing home

Presence and Prophecy – pg. 374 focussing on mission and ministry

Constitutional change pg. 373 – proposal for uniting two Councils

Firstly, Mission Resource Person Review.

This covers the three-year period during which Rev Charles Irwin ministered here in Ireland.

(Greetings from Charles)

The review asks if the Church of Ireland is ready and willing to learn from those outside. Are we perhaps resentful that someone from another part of the world should presume to offer advice? Such resentment could be justified if it did not come from someone who (at considerable personal cost) left his own country to live and work in our midst. It is within that context, with the knowledge and experience gained at first hand, that Charles has reflected insights, and presented challenges which are contained in the report and which are worthy of consideration.

Highlight just one – *We do not seem to have the sense of expectancy that is found in churches in other parts of the world.* (third bullet point on pg. 372).

There is much evidence that God is at work in the world by the power of his Holy Spirit. In Asia and Africa particularly, the church is growing steadily and even spectacularly. Charles poses the question – Where is our sense of expectancy?

Secondly – Presence and Prophecy

This book, prepared by Churches Together in Britain and Ireland – looks at how a changing church in a changing world needs to re-equip itself for effective ministry and mission in the 21 century. Excellent resource for thoughtful reading and discussion, in particular the points listed on page 374.

However in all its planning and discussion we must bear in mind the kind of society in which the Church is called to be salt and light. Leslie Newbigin reminds us that we no longer live in a **secular** society as we once imagined, but in a **pagan** society, and because its paganism is born out of the rejection of Christianity, it is far more resistant to the gospel. In his book, *Foolishness to the Greeks*, Newbigin goes on to describe this society as the most challenging missionary frontier of our time.

Do we accept the urgency of being God's people in this pagan society, does this urgency fire an expectancy to see God at work?

Thirdly constitution change

Over the past nine years, members of both Councils have grown in their belief that the division of the mission of the church into two departments – home and overseas – is a false division. As a result, you have before you their first joint report and a motion to formally unite the two councils.

Here is a wonderful opportunity for the Church of Ireland to actively endorse a motion which sends a clear message about its policy on the very *raison d'etre* of the church's existence.

The Scoping Report presented at last year's synod, contains what I believe to be a definitive mission statement for the Church of Ireland in this 21 Century.

In his introduction to the report, Gareth Higgins recounts the story of a company who made drill bits and found itself in a financial crisis. (pg.13). It called in consultants who finally presented their findings and told the company that it had lost its focus. It had become so bogged down in making drill bits, it had lost sight of the fact that its business was about making holes.

Gareth then made the application to the Church of Ireland:

It is easy to think you are here to maintain the ministry and structures of the Church of Ireland

But you know that you're not here to maintain the ministry and structures of the Church of Ireland

You are here to help incarnate the Kingdom of God and contribute to the transformation of this society.

I have pleasure in seconding the report etc.