

Commission on Church Buildings. Page 399ff. Report 2004.

**Proposed by The Very Rev. Thomas R. Moore,
Diocese of Clogher.**

Embargo until Delivery

Your Grace and members of Synod the report on page 399 / 400 lies before us the terms of reference etc.

Established by statute of the general synod in 1986.

You will notice that there were no meetings held during the year and no grant applied for nor any grant paid.

The Church of Ireland may still exist in undiminished vigour throughout the land where visitors from far and near with easel, paint and brush in the midst of a vast solitude take his/ her stand on a point of scenic beauty or place themselves on a broken arch of some country bridge over a cool rural stream and sketch the ruins of St Peter's, Paul' or Mary or whatever, and feel exhilarated by the beauty of our buildings or saddened by the lack of care and inattention to the ruins, a shadow of past glory.

Our heritage whether it is in the form of old ruins or fine historical buildings are part of the fabric of our life. It is to the former that this report brings to our minds – the buildings long abandoned to the ravishes of time and the merciless elements of our Irish weather that the visitor either admires and seeks out as an object of beauty for their paint and crayon or complain about our disrespect and wilful abandonment of the heritage we all share. Trough the generous help many of the buildings now closed for worship can become again living monuments of the Church that spawned them and used them in the past as centres that commanded great love and care.

From the Report one might be led to believe that we don't have any such buildings and that all our church buildings are vibrant and alive and used regularly, but we know that this is not so. We have to ask the question, do Diocesan Councils and Select Vestries know about the help they can receive for those places that are extant and not sold on or used for other purposes? We would indeed ask Diocesan Councils to review their redundant places of worship and encourage any parishes which have such buildings, to either dispose of any dangerous building or turn them into something that would bring credit to the former sacred use and our church in general.

Some time ago we were reminded of the need to keep an eye on church graveyard walls and encouraged by the RCB to look seriously at their state of preservation or otherwise. In some areas these are almost part of the church structure and are listed as having historical significance. I wonder if the terms of reference could not be widened to include certain parameters to these and help and encourage parishes whether the churches are open and working or closed and now redundant that has such walled structures to access some funding from the 'fund'.

Knowing of the extent and length of some of these stone build retaining graveyard walls and especially those that impinge upon local property or have a common boundary with the county road can become

a mill stone around any vestry's financial capabilities to deal effectively with their deteriorating structure or even to give them any thought until that is they collapse.

I would commend this to the RCB and the Committee and ask them to widen their remit or to give some serious thought to the increasing problem that could in itself become a hazard and a danger just as serious as an old church building that has been left to decay and fall down of its own accord.

Your Grace this may be outside of my remit and that of the Report but I have aired it and in doing so propose the Report of the Commission on Church Buildings.