

**APPENDIX Q**

**SYNODICAL REFORM WORKING GROUP**

**REPORT 2005**

**MEMBERSHIP**

Very Rev RD Harman (Chairman)  
Mrs JM Bruton  
Rev Canon BJ Courtney  
Mr MC Davey  
Mr DN Finlay  
Mr LV Johnston  
Rev Canon SM Neill

**THE BRIEF OF THE WORKING GROUP**

The Standing Committee in June 2003 appointed the working group to recommend a programme of legislation to the General Synod to address specific issues relating to synodical reform. Four members were elected, together with an Honorary Secretary, with power to co-opt not more than three further members. The Honorary Secretaries appointed the Very Rev RD Harman. The Rev Canon BJ Courtney and Mr DN Finlay were subsequently co-opted as members of the working group. Mr MC Davey resigned from the working group in January 2005.

**ISSUES TO BE CONSIDERED**

The working group decided that the first issue to be addressed should be the question of representation from each diocese and the overall membership of the General Synod. Other issues that have been considered are as follows:

- Timing and frequency of meetings;
- Weighted membership to include different age categories;
- Organisation of Synod business to provide for in-depth debate on particular issues;
- Election by proportional representation;
- Provision for legislation to be more user friendly;
- Mechanism to encourage input from diocesan synods to the General Synod.

The working group in its Report to the General Synod in 2003 made various suggestions on these other issues, most of which could be implemented by the Standing Committee without the necessity for legislation by the General Synod.

In relation to the timing and frequency of meetings, suggestions included weekend meetings, residential meetings, two-day meetings twice yearly, separate meetings for legislative and non legislative business and a meeting in March, rather than May.

## Standing Committee – Report 2005

Weighted membership relating to age may be difficult due to the general age profile in some dioceses. The possibility of *ex officio* members was addressed in the model proposed to the Standing Committee in January 2005.

Depending on the amount of business before the Synod in a particular session, in-depth debate on specific issues is always possible to include in the timetable where time permits.

Election by proportional representation will not be practical until there is the necessary software available to deal with the numbers to be elected in the larger dioceses. While some dioceses may be reluctant to undertake the election of Synod members by PR, it may be worth considering again at a later stage.

It is felt that the procedure for dealing with legislation should be simplified. However, the present parliamentary procedure does help to ensure that legislation does not obtain approval without detailed consideration.

Various ways of encouraging input from diocesan synods to the General Synod were suggested. Reports could be referred to diocesan synods from the General Synod, some of which may require comment to be fed back to the General Synod. Provision could also be made for diocesan synods to refer issues, which are of general interest to the Church, to the General Synod.

### **REPRESENTATION FROM EACH DIOCESE AND OVERALL MEMBERSHIP**

The working group in its earlier reports to the Standing Committee submitted three possible models for General Synod representation. Each model aimed at attaining a similar or slightly smaller number of members than at present. The first model was based on the Church of Ireland population in each diocese, the second was based on the number of cures in each diocese and the third was based on the number of cures and other licensed clergy in each diocese.

Following a meeting with the Diocesan Secretaries in March 2004, the model based on Church of Ireland population was ruled out because it became clear that it would be impossible to procure comparable statistics.

### **THE MODEL BASED ON CURES ONLY**

At the General Synod in 2004, the majority of members who commented, expressed a preference for a model based on cures only, as opposed to the model based on cures and other licensed clergy. The working group subsequently took the views of the Synod members into account and developed a model based on cures only which was recommended to the Standing Committee.

In addition, the inclusion of a small number of *ex officio* members, with full voting rights, was felt to be a way of ensuring that key personnel in the Church of Ireland would be members of the Synod.

### Standing Committee – Report 2005

The possibility of including co-opted members was considered to be impractical as the nomination and election of co-opted members would have to be carried out by post prior to the meeting of the General Synod.

The working group agreed to propose a model with the following characteristics:

1. Two lay members for each clerical member in each diocese;
2. A total membership of approximately 590 (a small reduction from the present total of 660);
3. Membership based on one clerical member for every 2.5 cures in each diocese;
4. A minimum of four clerical and eight lay members for each diocese;
5. Membership to include a small number of *ex officio* members.

The following is a model of General Synod membership based on one clerical member for every 2.5 cures, with calculations rounded upwards.

Diocese	Cures	Synod Members	Clerical Members	Lay Members
Armagh	46	57	19	38
Clogher	33	42	14	28
Derry and Raphoe	49	60	20	40
Down and Dromore	79	96	32	64
Connor	77	93	31	62
Kilmore and Elphin	24	30	10	20
Tuam, Killala and Achonry	9	12	4	8
Dublin and Glendalough	55	66	22	44
Meath and Kildare	18	24	8	16
Cashel and Ossory	34	42	14	28
Cork, Cloyne and Ross	22	27	9	18
Limerick and Killaloe	16	21	7	14
<b>Total</b>	<b>462</b>	<b>570</b>	<b>190</b>	<b>380</b>

Standing Committee – Report 2005

**Summary of General Synod membership:**

House of Bishops		12
House of Representatives		570
Clerical	190	
Lay	380	
Ex Officio Members		7
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Total		<b>589</b>

**EX OFFICIO MEMBERS**

It was proposed that the following be *ex officio* members of the General Synod, with the Standing Committee being authorised to revise the list of *ex officio* members before the commencement of each triennium:-

- Assistant Secretary of the General Synod
- Chief Officer and Secretary of the RCB
- Chairman of the RCB Executive Committee
- Principal of the Theological College
- Education Officer
- Education Officer (NI)
- Youth Co-ordinator

No change was proposed in respect of members of the Representative Church Body, who are entitled to attend meetings of the General Synod. Only those who are members of the Synod are entitled to vote.

Consideration was given to including *ex officio* representation from the various committees and boards of the General Synod. However, it was found that in almost all cases these bodies are already represented on the Synod as their terms of reference includes a member of the House of Bishops or an elected member of the Synod. Consequently, it was decided not to add these to list of *ex officio* members.

It was suggested that *ex officio* membership should take precedence over elected membership. This would mean that a person who is an *ex officio* member, is not eligible for election as a Synod member. If an elected member becomes an *ex officio* member, they would be no longer eligible to remain as an elected member. This rule would ensure that places for elected members are not held by *ex officio* members.

**PROPOSALS TO THE STANDING COMMITTEE**

The Synodical Reform Working Group submitted these proposals to the Standing Committee at its meeting in January 2005, with a view to submitting a Bill to the General Synod to amend Chapter I of the Constitution. However, members of the Standing Committee were divided on whether the proposed model should be recommended to the

#### Standing Committee – Report 2005

General Synod. Consequently, it was decided that there would be insufficient support for the proposals by the General Synod and no recommendations were made.

The working group subsequently decided that it was not in a position to make any further proposals on Synodical reform to the Standing Committee and requested that Synodical Reform Working Group be disbanded.