

Item 1 – BUSINESS BOARD – Supplementary Report

Delegates to other Churches

The General Synod of the Church of Ireland (2008)

The Very Rev Dr David Clarke reports:

Along with Mr. Mervyn McKean,(Ballylennon Congregation), I was pleased to attend the Synod held in the Radisson SAS hotel, Galway. It was a unique occasion, not only because it was the first Synod to be addressed by a Head of State (President Mary McAleese), but also the first to be held in Connaught. The idyllic May weather, coupled with a less than efficient air-conditioning system, led one speaker to remark that he now knew what Cromwell meant when he said ‘To hell or Connaught!’

The choice of venue, along with the structure of the Synod, meant that northern voices were not so much in evidence as might have been expected. A number of delegates called for the Synod to be held more frequently in Dublin.

The focus of the opening session was the 50-minute address of Archbishop Alan Harper, which included a video clip highlighting innovative outreach at the ‘Jethro Centre’ attached to Shankhill parish, Lurgan. The Primate acknowledged the significant changes taking place in Irish society, north and south, and spoke of an Ireland, able to live with its past, but not in it. Reflecting on his recent visit to Israel, in the company of other church leaders, he described the situation there as ‘harrowing but not hopeless.’

Archbishop Harper also directed Synod to the mission statement formulated by the House of Bishops, as a challenge to all their members. The statement reads: ‘*The Church of Ireland, as an authentic part of the universal body of Christ, is called to develop growing communities of faith, in and through which the Kingdom of God is made known, and in which the whole people serve together as followers of Jesus Christ for the good of the world to the glory of God.*’

In her address, delivered with panache and punctuated with humour, President McAleese paid tribute to the role played by all churches in helping create an Ireland ancient enemies are side by side rather than toe to toe.

Synod business is modelled on the British House of Commons with 1st reading, 2nd reading and Committee stages, and approved resolutions leading to Bills in the ensuing year.

Once the procedures were grasped, it was clear that The Church of Ireland is grappling with issues that affect all denominations. Uncertainty about the performance of pension funds led the Synod to accept a resolution that the ministerial retirement age should rise to 67, but only for those joining the pension scheme after 31 December, 2008.

Likewise, issues of human sexuality were touched on, when one delegate expressed dissatisfaction about a display in the exhibition area. The 'changing attitudes' exhibit, selling a magazine of that name, which appeared to commend homosexual relationships, led the delegate to plead that at the forthcoming Lambeth Conference Irish Bishops would be unequivocal in their support of traditional values.

There were other areas of disquiet. The Church of Ireland is wholeheartedly committed to ecumenical involvement, but one speaker admitted that conversations with the Methodist church, with whom they share a covenantal relationship, have become 'bogged down.' A rector from Rathfarnham, commenting on the fact that there are 70 youth workers employed in various parishes, felt that more emphasis should be placed on children's ministry, stating that by teenage years the words 'horses', 'stable' 'door' and 'bolted' come to mind.

When given the opportunity to bring greetings to the Synod, I touched on the benefit which could result were our churches to work more closely together when speaking on moral and ethical issues affecting the island. It was gratifying that Bishop Harold Miller fastened on that point when addressing Synod. On two other matters, the Presbyterian Church was commended. Speaking about the Church's investments, Mr Sydney Gamble remarked that he was almost tempted to re-convert to Presbyterianism to take advantage of the excellent dividends from the Presbyterian Mutual Society. Watch out for a Church of Ireland Mutual Society! Canon John McKegney, while pressing for a more recognisable symbol of Church of Ireland identity, commented favourably on our logo, with the Burning Bush emerging from the 'i' of Presbyterian.

The opportunity to represent our Church at the Synod was a thoroughly memorable experience. The hospitality was lavish and the

welcome genuine; and it was interesting to see how another church is grappling with problems which affect us all.

The Church of Scotland General Assembly (2008)

The Rt Rev Dr John Finlay reports:

The 2008 Assembly of the Church of Scotland was held in Edinburgh from 15 to 21 May. PCI was represented by the Moderator, Rt Rev Dr. JM Finlay, his senior chaplain, Dr RB Savage, and Mr J Suitters, a representative elder. The members of the delegation and their wives were warmly received and given very generous hospitality.

The Rt Rev David Lunan, full-time Clerk of the Presbytery of Glasgow, was installed as Moderator for the ensuing year. He led worship with great spiritual sensitivity and insight, and the business sessions with an easy grace and good humour. The Irish Moderator was kindly invited to read the Scripture at a service on the opening night of Assembly.

While the Assembly's procedures are not dissimilar to those of PCI some differences are immediately discernable. One is in attendance. A mainly residential Assembly ensured that the hall was well filled whatever the topic or time of debate. Audio-visual equipment around the hall meant that proceedings were not delayed while speakers came to the rostrum.

Space does not permit a detailed report on all matters of business discussed. Many were of particular interest and relevance to our own situation. A panel on Review and Reform was concerned to bridge the gap between the central structures of the Church and the local Congregations. New vacancy procedures were also commended in order to minimize the delay which there often is in the process.

A working group has been formed to review the status of Articles Declaratory especially where the Church's work may possibly be done more effectively in co-operation with other ecumenical partners. The Special Commission on Structure and Change suggests that the time may have come to lay down the title of being the National Church. The Ministries Council suggested that a more flexible approach to the exercise of the ministry of Word and Sacrament might be desirable.

The Prime Minister's attendance at the Assembly on the Saturday morning was one of the highlights of the week. A son of the manse, he was most warmly received, and his speech acclaimed with prolonged applause. One of the emphases he made, that of a global desire for an end to poverty and injustice, was frequently reiterated throughout the whole Assembly. The Church's recognition of, and support for, all who serve as Chaplains in the armed forces was most striking and evidently appreciated by all involved in this challenging task.

One of the features of the Assembly is the number of fringe meetings that take place. Dr Finlay addressed one such group with Irish connections.

The Church of Scotland, like many other established Churches, faces the challenge of declining numbers in an increasingly secular and multi-faith society. It is interesting and enlightening to see how they are seeking to reshape the Church in order that it might be relevant in this 21st century.

Item 3 – REPORT OF CORRESPONDING MEMBERS AND DELEGATES - Supplementary Report

Add

CCAP Synod of Livingstonia, Malawi – Rev Cogitator Mapala

Item 5 – PWA – Supplementary Report

Revised list of Committee Members

Mrs Margaret Stevenson (Ards)
Mrs Edna McIlwaine (Armagh)
Mrs Lynn Murray (Ballymena)
Mrs Dorothy Marshall (North Belfast)
Mrs Jean Clarke (South Belfast)
Mrs Winnie Moffett (East Belfast)
Mrs Janice Paul (Carrickfergus)
Miss Elizabeth Smyth (Coleraine)
Mrs Glynis Hutchinson (Derry/Strabane)
Mrs Georgina Hunter (Donegal)
Mrs Phyllis Spence (Dromore)

Mrs Violet Miller (Foyle)
Mrs Elizabeth Moffett (Iveagh)
Mrs Nan Bradford (Monaghan)
Mrs Ann Blue (Newry)
Mrs Jean Donald (Omagh)
Mrs Barbara Thompson (Route)
Mrs Maureen Weir (Templepatrick)
Mrs Sandra Fleck (Tyrone)
Mrs Valerie Tweedie (YWG)
Mrs Anthea Harrison (Ex Officio)
Mrs Christine Finlay (Ex Officio)
Mrs Charlotte Stevenson (Ex Officio)
Mrs Caroline Hawthorne

Item 7 – BOARD OF MISSION IN IRELAND - Supplementary Report

CONGREGATIONAL LIFE COMMITTEE

The Board of Mission in Ireland requested the Worship Panel to research the possibility of revising the late Professor J.M. Barkley's *Book of Public Worship of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland* (1965), and to ascertain how widely used this revised resource might be throughout the Church. Written and verbal feedback from ministers, licentiates, and worship leaders has been positive, and the Board now wishes to test the mind of the Assembly. A further request was received by the Panel from a Presbytery to investigate the updating of the language used in services of licensing, ordination, installation and induction. A resolution to this effect is appended.

Additional Resolutions

2a. That the BMI Worship Panel commission a revision of the Book of Public Worship of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland (1965), including in this revision alternative wording for services of licensing, ordination, installation and induction and report on progress to the 2009 General Assembly.

RA PATTON

2b. That the General Assembly calls the Church to a special focused period of prayer for an agreed period during 2009 and encourages the Board of Mission in Ireland to make suitable resource material available.

RA PATTON

5a. That the General Assembly notes the resignation of the BMI Property Committee convener, Mr Brian Knox and thanks him for his service both in this capacity and previously as convener of the General Assembly's Church Extension Committee.

RA PATTON

Amended Resolution

2. That the Congregational Life Committee be renamed the Research and Resources Committee; that the resignation of the convener the Rev Harold Boyce be accepted, that he be thanked for his services and the Rev Chris Kennedy appointed in his place.

RA PATTON

Resolution 8 is withdrawn

Item 9 – 2010 COMMITTEE - Supplementary Report

1. Special Assembly Theme

Work remains to be done on a title and a “strap line” but the basic theme has been agreed as “**Christ is Lord**”

2. Special Assembly Speaker

We continue to prayerfully seek out a speaker for the evening celebration meetings.

3. Timetable for the lead in to the Special Assembly

The main dates will be as follows:

Autumn 2008 – draft budget to be available

Early Spring 2009 – publicity event

June 2009 – General Assembly – full presentation supported by publicity material

Early September 2009 – public/press launch of the event including information available for Presbyteries.

End of September 2009 – distribute material to Congregations and invite registrations/reservation of delegate places

February/March 2010 – regional pre Assembly promotional events

15 May 2010 – closing date for Congregations to register delegates

23 May 2010 – final date for notifying the University of the number of bedrooms

(3 months notice required by the University.)

23 August 2010 – opening day of the Special Assembly

Post Conference: Resources available for all Congregations not just those which had delegates at the event.

Additional Resolution

1a That the 2010 Special Assembly Committee be appointed as follows:

TC MORRISON

Item 10 – EDUCATION BOARD

Additional Resolutions

2a. That the General Assembly recognise and affirm the contribution being made by many members of the Church, who, as a practical expression of their faith, are making a difference to the lives of young people through their work as teachers, lecturers, support staff, administrators, and governors in schools and colleges and other educational and training institutions.

R HERRON

2b. That the General Assembly welcome the indications of greater collaboration between schools, and between schools and colleges of Further Education, offering wider curriculum and life opportunities for young people within the 14-19 age range.

R HERRON

2c. That the General Assembly express disappointment that an agreed way forward has not been achieved between the political parties regarding the issue of ‘academic selection’, and encourage the Minister of Education and members of the Northern Ireland Executive and Legislative

Assembly to work together to find consensus and a resolution to this matter before the next academic year begins.

R HERRON

Item 11 – UNION COMMISSION – Supplementary Report

LIMITED ORDAINED MINISTRY RESOURCES

The report to the General Assembly p 98 refers to preliminary indications that while there are encouraging signs in the number of students for the Ministry attending Union College , that number seems to be more than matched by the number of projected retirements and the number of ministers leaving ministry for other reasons. Since the writing of that report, some more work has now been done on the figures available. Analysis of the number of assistants becoming eligible for call, of likely retirements, and of other likely changes in the number of ministers available shows that over the next few years there are likely to be the following number of vacancies:

2008	45
2009	39
2010	47
2011	55
2012	49
2013	57
2014	56

This means that while we can rejoice in the substantial number of applicants, students and licentiates, it is clear that this will only just keep pace with the number of losses through retirements and for other reasons and that therefore the problem of the large number of vacancies is not going to be resolved in the medium term. While we are not in “meltdown” in terms of the provision of ministry, it is vital that the Church faces up to the reality of this shortage. The Commission recognizes the deep feelings of frustration and disappointment that may be generated when Congregations are asked to share a minister, however it appeals for understanding as it tries to address this difficulty on behalf of the Church so that the limited ministerial resources we have may be used in the most effective way.

Item 15 – GENERAL BOARD – Supplementary Report

PRIORITIES COMMITTEE

1. The General Assembly in 2007 encouraged Presbyteries to review their work and priorities in the light of the Priorities Committee Report, 2006 and report to the Convener of the Priorities Committee. Many Presbyteries responded using the five headings of the report.
2. ***Prophetic Community Involvement:*** This was seen mainly as a responsibility for Congregations in their local areas who must be “living witness to the transforming grace of God”. The Church must “speak to challenge society in ways which will be heard and understood”. It was noted that many church members can effectively witness through their places of employment or education. The media is also seen as an area for developing skills in communications. A number of Presbyteries made the point that the Church “needs to set the agenda rather than merely respond to it”. Presbyteries can give a platform for organisations working in specific fields. One Presbytery noted that “we have often kept quiet when we could have added our voice to offering congratulations when positive action has taken place”.
3. ***Centres of Pastoral Care and Fellowship:*** Again it was noted that pastoral care is most often exercised at congregational level but the effectiveness of the care being offered should be examined during a Presbytery consultation. The importance of “training and retraining elders” was noted. Several Presbyteries noted that “manse families are vulnerable to living with false expectations to perform” and many recognised the need for greater attention to the care of manse families. In some Presbyteries the encouragement of smaller Congregations to “do many aspects of their work and witness together” was seen as positive. A lack of flexibility in our Church structures was seen as a problem. Good communication was identified as a help towards greater pastoral care and support.
4. ***Discipling and training for all-member ministry:*** While few Presbyteries mentioned discipleship and training in great depth there was a recognition of the challenge to “move members from being passive spectators to active participants”. A co-ordinated approach was seen as essential. Some Presbyteries look for the “decentralisation” of Christian Training and there is a desire for a variety of courses that will better facilitate “all-member ministry”. One Presbytery supported compulsory in-service training for Ministers and elders. It was recognised that Presbyteries

could be more pro-active in overseeing in-service training and sabbaticals for Ministers.

5. ***Global Engagement:*** A growing local global involvement was recognised with Congregations, and to a lesser extent Presbyteries, sending teams connected either to BMO or independent agencies. In some Presbyteries there is encouragement for Congregations to “adopt” a missionary or begin a twining relationship with an overseas Congregation. Communication and reporting is seen as important. Challenges include: immigration and cross-cultural training for mission at home; global economy, the environment and fair-trade; learning from overseas partners; facilitating congregational teams and initiatives; making mission integral to congregational life; the irrelevance of home and overseas distinction in mission.

6. ***Servant Courts:*** Several Presbyteries see their role as enabling and encouraging Congregations through the consultation process, although there was a recognition that this needs to be reviewed. It was suggested that each Congregation should more regularly report to Presbytery on its progress in mission. While one Presbytery comments that “collective accountability, supervision and support characteristic of our denomination is one of our strong points” there was also dissatisfaction at the working of some Boards. The experience of some Presbytery representatives is in “rubber stamping Committee reports or giving permission to office bearers to make decisions”. Paperwork and administration are essential but “much of the work appears irrelevant to congregational life”. The encouragement of Presbytery links was seen as positive and some Presbyteries are developing mission trusts etc.

7. The responses of Presbyteries were sufficient to give a general overview of the issues identified. Some of these relate closely to concerns already noted by the Priorities Committee. They include:

- The effectiveness of the pastoral care and supportive fellowship offered in Congregations.
- A particular concern for stress in full-time ministry and the care of manse families.
- Training to enable genuine “all-member” ministry.
- The need for cross-cultural training as society becomes more diverse.
- The enabling of members to develop skills in communication through the media, including the ability to set agendas rather than respond to them.

- An encouragement of environmental awareness and concern for the global economy.
- The development of genuine partnership and learning in overseas mission.
- A recognition of the increasing irrelevance of the home/overseas distinction in mission.
- The need for an urgent review of the consultation process.
- A review of the Board and Committee structures to ensure genuine participation by all.
- A greater understanding of the role of the Presbytery in the life of the Church.

Some of this work is already in progress or will be best undertaken by individual Boards. The Priorities Committee will ask them to do so. Other work will need to be initiated by the Committee. This includes:

- (a) Discussion of a more holistic approach to mission.
- (b) A review of the consultation process to strengthen the relationship of Presbytery and Congregation.
- (c) Further clarity on the role of Presbytery and what is expected at that level of Church governance.
- (d) Development of the Board and Committee structures to increase members' participation.

CHURCH AND SOCIETY COMMITTEE – Supplementary Report

Sunday Football

1. A number of Presbyteries wrote to the Committee expressing their concern about the decision of the IFA to play competitive sport on Sundays. The Committee wrote, on behalf of the whole church, to the IFA and offered to meet with them regarding this matter.

2. The Committee is concerned about the extension of competitive sport to Sundays, together with other large events, as the arrangements surrounding those events can hinder or diminish the freedom to attend worship freely. In this way what has always been the established pattern of our society's life is interrupted in a way which we believe is not healthy for society.

Human Fertilisation and Embryology Bill

3. At the time of writing the bill is on its second reading on the House of Commons. All the four main parties at the Northern Ireland Assembly have joined to express their concern that the Bill may be used as an opportunity to extend the 1967 Abortion Act to Northern Ireland through an amendment. The churches have joined them in their expressions of concern by writing to all members of the House of Commons explaining that the 1967 was never extended to Northern Ireland and asking that this decision not be taken at Westminster on behalf of local people. The Four Church Leaders signed the letter setting out the situation, informing MP's of the difference in law here and stating their belief that a decision such as this, if taken at Westminster, could be detrimental to devolved government in Northern Ireland.

4. The HFE Bill is a complex piece of legislation raising ethical challenges for both church and nation. It is not the remit of the Church & Society Committee to explore those ethical issues but the progress of the Bill, its content and the surrounding discussion does point to a need for a discussion to be facilitated from an ethical perspective.

Criminal Justice & Policing

5. At the time of writing there is still no agreement on the devolution of criminal justice and policing. The report of the Standing Committee has been made recommending that, because there is agreement, some powers can be devolved but setting out others around which there is yet no agreement.

6. Areas around which there is, as yet, no agreement include - Classification of drugs; Legislation and regulatory structure governing acquisition of intelligence; Regulation of private security industry; Offenders accommodation; Release of life prisoners on license; Transfer of prisoners to other parts of UK; Part of police and army powers; Matters under Public Processions (NI) Act 1998; National security matters (remain with Secretary of State); Matters relating to 50:50 recruitment; Licensing of prohibited weapons; Appeals against Chief Constable's decision not to issue firearms certificates; Removal of prohibitions on purchase of firearms; Security aspects of explosives regulations; Lord Chancellor functions relating to Data Protection Act 1998

7. While the Committee is agreed that a healthy society is one in which full responsibility is taken we are concerned about the budgetary impacts of the devolution of these powers, not least in terms of the liabilities

from the years of the 'Troubles' that would devolve, thus Ulsterising the conflict and relieving Britain of financial responsibility.

8. It is our view that the parties need to consider very carefully the implications of devolving justice and policing for the structures of devolution themselves and for the health of our society in the future. Any concerns must be measured against the moral responsibility to govern ourselves and take responsibility for our own society. Clearly this is a challenging and difficult balance to achieve and can only be effectively addressed when the political parties work together, listening to one another's concerns and hopes, and agreeing a way forward. Some things may have to wait if the good of all is to be considered and some things may have to go ahead if the concerns of some are to be addressed. To move where we can agree and to leave what cannot be agreed for further negotiation may be the most courageous step of all. Whatever way forward is chosen it is not acceptable to continue to use every issue to continue to play politics with one another and thus extend the conflict and its detrimental effects on this society.

9. Policing is still in the process of being devolved and shaped locally. The Committee recognises the strain of a reducing budget on the demands of the PSNI, together with the strain of changing practice and changing needs across society. In this crucial time it is important that members of the church not only acquaint themselves with the changes but also that they engage in the ongoing debate with the aim of continuing to develop an effective policing service across the whole community in Northern Ireland.

Bill of Rights Forum

10. In 2002 the Church and Government Committee (reports pp59-64) agreed with the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission's position that a Bill of Rights, 'should therefore be drafted in general terms, setting out basic principles for how the Government should operate but allowing a good deal of flexibility ...' This remains the position of the Church and Society Committee.

11. The Committee continues to welcome the affirmation of human rights from our belief that, as scripture teaches, everyone is made in the image of God. There is a consequent respect for human rights required.

12. The Committee remains concerned, however, firstly, that too detailed a Bill of Rights will undermine responsibility and pit people against

one another in an unhealthy competition and, secondly, that the notion of responsibility, inherent in the notion of human rights, is evacuated from the Bill by a tendency to overemphasise a preoccupation with the individual out of the constituent context of relationship.

13. After 15 months of intensive research and discussion the lengthy Report on recommendations for the proposed Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland was published on 31 March, when Prof Chris Sidoti, the Chairman of the Forum, formally presented a copy to Prof Monica McWilliams, head of the Human Rights Commission.

14. In accordance with the decisions reached in the Belfast Agreement in 1998, and later at St Andrew's in December 2006, the Forum had been asked to bring agreed recommendations for rights supplementary to the European Convention on Human Rights "reflecting the particular circumstances of Northern Ireland."

15. However, there was no consensus on the meaning of that key phrase. Some Forum members favoured a very narrow interpretation (restricted e.g. to matters like "parity of esteem" for the two main communities, non-discrimination, flags and parades) and others a very wide interpretation (including e.g. health care, affordable housing, protection of the environment, education and a vast array of other matters). Consequently the participants could not achieve unanimity on any of the main issues or even on what should be in a short preamble to the Bill.

16. In the end the Forum simply decided to transmit all suggestions made with note on the level of support for each one so that nothing would be lost. Its Report includes recommendations on such matters as equality; security; privacy; freedom of thought, conscience and religion; culture, language and identity; nationality; criminal justice; victims and the right to liberty.

17. Faced with a wide variety of conflicting views the Human Rights Commission will obviously have a difficult task drafting a Bill of Rights that will be generally acceptable throughout Northern Ireland. It is expected to report by 10 December, after which there will be a public consultation which will provide an opportunity for all interested parties, including the Churches, to comment on its proposals. The Forum Report can be read at www.billofrightsforum.org

Republic of Ireland

18. After increasing pressure to disclose his financial arrangements to the Mahon Tribunal, Mr Bertie Ahern stood down and handed over the office of Taoiseach to Mr Brian Cowen. Given that Mr Ahern held the office for nearly eleven years it will take some time to adjust to a new personality and a different style of leadership. It remains to be seen just how far Mr Cowen will follow his predecessor in granting recognition of the Church's role in civic society, but it is hoped to maintain good working relationships with the Irish government on matters of concern.

19. Momentum is building towards the Irish referendum on the Lisbon Treaty. As the only country constitutionally obliged to hold such a referendum; and given the consequences of a 'No' vote, there is considerable pressure from Europe for a favourable outcome. The Treaty enjoys broad political support within the country (Sinn Fein being a rare exception), but there remains general confusion and doubt within the electorate given the Treaty's complexity. The Government will need to work hard to convince the 'Don't Knows'. Nonetheless, Irish people remain very pro-Europe and have a sense of obligation to the newer states.

Europe

20. The Church and Society Committee continues to be kept informed of developments in Europe and the Churches response to European initiatives by the Rev. Matthew Ross. Matthew is a Church of Scotland minister working at the Church and Society Commission of the Conference of European Churches, partly supported by PCI.

21. The Church and Society Commission has been involved in many European projects, including helping to facilitate the Council of Europe's 2008 Exchange on religious education. It also initiated a discussion on "Churches in Europe and Intercultural dialogue" to mark the European Union's Year of Intercultural Dialogue. This focussed on the role of religion as an important part of the identity and culture in today's Europe. Other topics on the agenda of the Commission are – Legal Aspects of the Role of Religion in the Public Sphere; Family Policies; Climate Change; Human Rights and Socially Responsible Investment. The CSC works closely with the Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe to lobby on issues such as Refugee resettlement; movement of migrant workers and discrimination against e.g. the Roma people.

22. The Clerk of the General Assembly continues to chair the CSC Working Group on Peace, Security and Reconciliation. As well as reviewing CEC involvement in areas such as Kosovo and Serbia it has welcomed the recent EU initiative of a Peace-building Partnership, but expressed concern at the disparity of resources devoted to that initiative compared especially to the European Security Strategy. Human rights in the Armed Forces has also been a concern as has post-conflict peace-building and the healing of memories.

23. European Integration continues as a major item on the European agenda, especially the present process of ratification of the Lisbon Treaty. In an evaluation of the Treaty the Church and Society Commission has commented:

When comparing the Treaty of Lisbon with the objectives the Church and Society Commission (CSC) advocated all along the process, the following could be stated:

CSC called the EU to be more than an economic cooperation and to have a strong valuebasis. Although there are reasons to be content about the way the EU's values and objectives are now defined, CSC will continue to monitor their implementation in the EU policies. CSC welcomes the reference to Europe's religious inheritance in the preamble.

CSC wanted the Charter of Fundamental Rights to be made legally-binding and the EU to accede to the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR). This is happening. The Charter will become legally-binding, except for the UK, and the EU shall accede to the ECHR.

CSC hoped the treaty reform to serve as a way to balance the now dominating economical interests with social considerations. The new social clause stipulates that "in defining and implementing its policies and actions" the Union shall take into account 3 requirements linked to the promotion of a high level of employment, adequate social protection, fight against social exclusion, high level of education, training and protection of human health. The social dimension is also strengthened by the Charter of Fundamental Rights. Yet again, the real test will lie in the practical implementation of these legal innovations.

Furthermore, CSC promoted participatory democracy. In this regard, the treaty reform brings along a couple of innovations. The first one is the "citizen's initiative". In the future, one million signatures of EU citizens of several EU countries will compel the European Commission to make a legislative proposal on the matter in question. The proposal will then, of course, go through the normal procedure in the European Parliament and the Council. Citizens' initiatives might become a useful mechanism for churches. Moreover, CSC welcomes the commitment on the part of the EU

institutions to conduct an open, transparent and regular dialogue with civil society.

CSC also feels that participatory democracy will be empowered by the increased clarity concerning the competences of the different EU institutions. Moreover, the EU processes will become more transparent with the introduction of the co-decision procedure (the European Parliament is involved) as the ordinary legislative procedure.

Finally, the Treaty of Lisbon will also include an article on open, transparent and regular dialogue with churches and religious associations (Article 16c TFEU; cf. Article 52 of the CT). This same article also confirms that the Union respects the status granted to churches and religious associations or communities by the national legislations of Member States.

There are, nevertheless, areas where CSC did not succeed in achieving its objectives. The biggest disappointment concerns the lack of progress in the enhancement of non-military means of conflict prevention and crisis management.

All in all, even if the methods used for treaty negotiations since its relaunch at the beginning of 2007 did not comply with the requests of openness and participatory processes, there are reasons to believe that the Treaty of Lisbon will be one step towards the kind of Europe CSC has promoted.

In the Republic of Ireland a referendum on the Treaty will be held on 12 June, 2008, and the Church and Society Committee encourages citizens to vote. The United Kingdom is not, of course, planning to hold a referendum. The Treaty will be ratified by Parliament.

European decisions are increasingly affecting the political landscape of Ireland. The Committee will continue to monitor and where appropriate express concerns in this area.

Dealing with the Past

On 29 May, 2008 the Eames/Bradley Consultative Group on Dealing with the Past set out what they understood to be the critical issues facing Northern Ireland society on this issue with a commitment to publish recommendations in a report later this year. As the Rev Dr Lesley Carroll is a member of the Eames/Bradley Consultative Group, the Church and Society Committee appointed a sub group to prepare an initial response.

Centres' Review Panel

1. Since the report was written the Centres' Review Panel has met to further consider the future of the Lucan site. In 2007, the General Assembly confirmed that "Guysmere should continue as the one Residential Centre to be managed by the Board of Youth and Children's Ministry". The Panel therefore considers that its first responsibility is to ensure that Guysmere may continue as an effective and attractive Centre.

2. A discussion began in 2006 with the Board of Social Witness to develop the Lucan site for sheltered accommodation. This was acceptable to planners under the County Development Plan and at least one Housing Association is interested in developing a proposal. The Panel is concerned that the possibility for development should not be lost. It fulfils one of the strong desires of the Panel to maintain a Presbyterian presence on the site and indeed it may be possible to include some accommodation for Church use as a base in the Republic.

3. The Panel has also considered the proposal submitted by the Dublin and Munster Presbytery last year and amended to include the leasing of the present Centre to Taylor University for approximately seven months each year. The Panel obtained an assessment of the financial aspects of the plan from auditors, Ernst and Young, although this was before the Taylor proposal. The Panel recognises that in the Dublin and Munster Presbytery detailed work has been carried out by a dedicated group of people. However, it is also aware that any development on the site alongside the Board of Social Witness proposal, needs to be secure for at least twenty-five years. The Panel is not convinced that the Presbytery's proposal would give that stability. There is also concern about the mixed development of the site.

4. At the General Board it was suggested that the Panel should talk to planning consultants and it has done so. It now wishes to ensure that the steps recommended by the consultant are followed through. The most effective way of doing so is to identify a preferred partner for the development and allow the partner to take the project through the planning process.

5. Having carefully considered all the issues, the Panel is now recommending to the General Assembly that the board of Social Witness is instructed to enter discussions with Housing Associations in order to develop the whole site for sheltered housing. This will maintain a Presbyterian presence on the site and release resources for the development

of Guysmere. Only if the partner indicates that it does not need the whole site would the panel consider additional proposals.

Presbytery Bounds Panel

1. Following further discussion and consultation with the Presbyteries concerned, the Panel has agreed to recommend two Presbyteries for the Dublin and Munster/Monaghan area.

1. The present Monaghan Presbytery with the addition of Dundalk, Castlebellingham, Carlingford, Kells, Ervey, Sligo, Boyle, Ballina, Killala, Ballymote.

2. The remaining Congregations of the Dublin and Munster Presbytery.

2. As the report already suggests, the Panel does not believe that the work of rationalising Presbyteries is finished, but that a period is needed to reflect on the purpose and function of a Presbytery before returning to the shape and scope of Presbytery bounds. This work is being referred to the Priorities Committee.

MEMORIAL RECORD

The Rev Thomas Hoyte Lyle, BA, MA, BD, DD, died on 17 March, 2008 in the 87th year of his age and the 59th of his ministry. The son of missionary parents, he was born in India in 1921 and, when in Ireland, his home Congregation was Greystones. He was educated at Campbell College Belfast, Trinity College Dublin where he gained a 1st class honours in Mental and Moral Science, New College Edinburgh, Westminster College Cambridge, Dublin University College and, what was then, Assembly's College Belfast. He was Licensed by the Dublin Presbytery in June 1949 and Ordained as a Missionary to India in September of that year. After a period of language study he became superintendent of the Boys' Hostel in Ahmedabad and remained there until the mid 1950s. In 1956 he became a member of staff of the Gujarat United School of Theology and in 1963 he was appointed by the Bible Society of India to be Convener of the Gujarati Bible Revision Committee. His flair for the Biblical languages and for Gujarati together with his sound grasp of theology made him ideally suited for this position in which he excelled. He returned from India to Ireland in

1973 and was installed as Minister of Kells and Ervey in that same year. In 1975 he accepted a Call from the Congregation of Limerick where he remained until 1980. In that year he received a Call from the Congregation of Second Islandmagee where he remained until retirement in 1986. Tom, as he was affectionately known by his friends, was every inch a Christian gentleman possessing so many of the graces so admired by others and which endeared him to all who had the privilege of knowing him. To be in his presence was a benediction and greatly privileged were those who had the privilege of calling him – their minister or friend. His sharp brain, his flair for languages, his sound grasp of reformed theology, his love for people of every race colour class or creed coupled with his warm devotion to Christ and his Church all contributed towards making him the man, the missionary, the minister and the humble servant of Christ he undoubtedly was. To his wife – the former Margaret Sheila Stevenson – the sympathy of the General Assembly is extended at this time of sorrow and loss.

Additional Resolutions

Church and Society Committee

14a. That in light of the decision of the IFA to allow competitive football on Sundays, the General Assembly express concern about professional sporting events which hinder or diminish attendance of Sunday worship, thus interfering with Christian practice as an established aspect of societal life.

AJ BOAL & LE CARROLL

14b. That the General Assembly commend the four largest political parties for together taking a stand on the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Bill, against the extension of the 1967 Abortion Act to Northern Ireland.

AJ BOAL & LE CARROLL

14c. That the General Assembly thank the Four Church Leaders for the representations they have made on behalf of the churches to MP's expressing concern about the potential extension of the 1967 Abortion Act to Northern Ireland without the consent of the Northern Ireland Assembly.

AJ BOAL & LE CARROLL

14d. That the General Assembly urge the political parties to continue to work together on the areas not yet agreed in the devolution of justice and policing; further urge them to be attentive to the liabilities which may also

devolve and to consider the well-being of this society as a whole from both a financial and moral perspective.

AJ BOAL & LE CARROLL

14e. That the General Assembly affirm the need for active citizenship from church members in the area of policing, specifically with regard to membership of District Policing Partnerships.

AJ BOAL & LE CARROLL

14f. That the General Assembly reaffirm the importance of human rights as a means of expressing the belief that everyone is made in the image of God and, therefore, equal in dignity, but warns against the dangers of competing rights and of diminishing the importance of relationship.

AJ BOAL & LE CARROLL

14g. That the General Assembly congratulate Mr Cowen on his promotion to Taoiseach and wish him well in this challenging role.

AJ BOAL & LE CARROLL

14h. That the General Assembly encourage all citizens of the Republic of Ireland to vote in the referendum on the Lisbon Treaty, June 12th 2008.

AJ BOAL & LE CARROLL

14i. That the General Assembly commend the ongoing work of the Eames/Bradley Consultative Group on Dealing with the Past, as set out in their speech of May 29, 2008, and recognise their wide ranging analysis of the huge challenges facing everyone concerned for the well being of Northern Ireland Society.

TN HAMILTON

14j. That the General Assembly affirm the key role of our Church, working alongside others, in building a healthy civil society and in particular welcome both the invitation and the challenge made by Eames/Bradley for the Churches to be part of the healing and reconciling work needing to be done to achieve a shared and better future.

TN HAMILTON

Church House Panel

23a. That the General Assembly instruct the Church House Panel to proceed with the drawing up of a Business Plan as outlined in its report, paragraph 8.

RA McLERNON

Centres' Review Panel

23b. That the General Assembly instruct the Board of Social Witness to enter discussions with housing associations in order to develop the Lucan site for sheltered accommodation.

DONALD J WATTS

Presbytery Bounds Panel

24a. That the General Assembly adopt the new Presbytery arrangements in the Dublin and Munster/Monaghan area, as outlined in the supplementary report, with effect from 4 March, 2009.

DONALD J WATTS

Additional Resolution

27a. That the General Board be requested to bring information regarding the Inter-Religious Council, and its umbrella group, 'Religions for Peace', to next year's General Assembly and that no involvement be had with these groups until the Assembly chooses to enter into membership.

BRIAN BOYD AND STEPHEN NEILLY

**Item 22 – BOARD OF FINANCE AND PERSONNEL –
Supplementary Report****Report on Review of Pensions**

Included in the Board's report on the Review of Pensions in Schedule 1 are two tables showing the estimated effect of the Proposed Pension Scheme Changes for the Staff and PWA Schemes and the Ministers Pension Scheme (1978) (MPS). These tables are the same as those included in the Board's Report to the General Assembly in 2007. Our actuarial advisers prepared these based on similar assumptions to those used in the preparation of the triennial actuarial valuations of the schemes. One of those

assumptions was that, total pensionable remuneration increases annually by 1.5% above inflation. This is an entirely reasonable assumption for valuation purposes and is justified based on historical experience. Overall, pensionable remuneration increases above inflation for a number of reasons e.g. increase in salary point placement, promotion, change in job position or in the case of the MPS where a minister moves to a Congregation with a higher call figure or receives service increments.

However, in preparing individual statements for scheme members showing the impact of the proposed changes it is not appropriate to assume that every single member will enjoy an increase in their remuneration of 1.5% above inflation. Indeed, for the majority, this is unlikely to be the case. The individual statements of benefits issued to members are therefore based on current pensionable remuneration and assume an annual increase in line with an estimated annual increase in the Retail Prices Index. No provision has been made for any other increases. Therefore, if a members pensionable remuneration at retirement is higher than an annual inflationary increase on their present remuneration their final pension would be higher than the amount shown on their individual statement. The basis of calculation of benefits as shown on the individual statements is therefore largely the same as that used in preparing annual scheme benefit statements.

To enable members to make a more appropriate comparison between their individual statements and the tables produced last year, an additional set of tables has been produced by our actuarial advisers excluding the 1.5% increase above inflation and these additional tables are shown below. If the additional tables are compared to, the tables produced last year,

- (i) in the case of the Staff and PWA/Overseas Board Irish Mission Scheme they show less of a percentage reduction between the pensions from the existing scheme and proposed scheme. This is because the table last year assumed that the pension provided under the existing scheme would reflect a general increase in pensionable salary of 1.5% above inflation each year.
- (ii) in the case of the Ministers Pension Scheme (1978) there is less of an impact in terms of the percentage changes as pensions under the existing scheme are revalued in line with national average earnings which are still assumed to increase at 1.5% above inflation each year.

ESTIMATED EFFECT OF PROPOSED PENSION SCHEME CHANGES**ADDITIONAL TABLES****STAFF and PWA SCHEMES**

Age at 1 JANUARY 2008	Accrued Pensionable Service to 1 January, 2008 (Years)	Pension from age 65 – Existing Scheme in today's terms £pa (Note1)	Proposed Annual Pension in today's terms - £pa			
			From age 65	% Reduction in Pension	From Age 67	% Reduction (Increase) in Pension
35	0	12,500	11,000	12.0	13,300	(6.7)
35	10	16,700	15,200	9.0	17,500	(5.0)
45	10	12,500	11,500	8.0	13,300	(6.7)
45	20	16,700	15,700	6.0	17,500	(5.0)
55	20	12,500	12,000	4.0	13,300	(6.7)
55	30	16,700	16,200	3.0	17,500	(5.0)
60	20	10,400	10,200	2.4	11,300	(8.0)
60	30	14,600	14,300	1.7	15,400	(5.7)
60	40	18,800	18,500	1.3	19,600	(4.4)

(Note1 – assumes no change to existing scheme)

MINISTERS' PENSION SCHEME (1978)

Age at 1 JANUARY 2008	Accrued Pensionable Service to 1 st January, 2008 (Years)	Benefits from age 65 – Existing Scheme in today's terms £pa (Note 1)		Proposed Annual Benefits in today's terms - £pa					
		Pension	Tax-free lump sum	From Age 65			From Age 67		
				Pension (after tax- free lump sum)	Tax-free lump sum – Assuming max. taken	% overall reduction (increase) in Pension*	Pension (after tax- free lump sum)	Tax-free lump sum – Assuming max. taken	% overall reduction (increase) in Pension*
35	0	11,910	35,720	7,780	51,870	22	9,250	61,700	7
35	10	16,790	50,380	10,400	69,350	26	11,850	79,020	15
45	10	11,550	34,640	7,810	52,060	19	8,960	59,750	7
45	20	15,750	47,260	10,430	69,540	21	11,560	77,070	12
55	20	10,650	31,950	7,840	52,250	12	8,670	57,800	2
55	30	14,280	42,830	10,460	69,730	13	11,270	75,120	5
60	20	8,370	25,100	6,540	43,610	7	7,220	48,160	(4)
60	30	11,740	35,210	9,160	61,090	7	9,820	65,480	(1)
60	40	15,100	45,310	11,780	78,570	7	12,420	82,810	1

(Note1 – assumes no change to existing scheme)

* this is the reduction (increase) in pension after converting tax-free cash to pension

(Please note these figures are for illustrative purposes only and are not guaranteed)

The Board appreciates that many may find these illustrations complicated. Further explanations will be available during the consultation period prior to changes taking effect.

Widows of Ministers Fund

With reference to Par 21(a) in Annual Reports 5.75p should be 5.5p.

Review of Tyrone Memorial

In the Board's report, it is noted that a review of the operation of the Tyrone Memorial is scheduled for 2009 and that there have been some discussions with the Union Commission which suggested that the review should be more wide ranging. Following further discussion with Union Commission, it was agreed that the Board of Finance and Personnel would propose to the General Assembly that it would carry out a full review of the Tyrone Memorial. The Board of Finance and Personnel, while being prepared to take a lead role in the review, recognises the need to have input from interested parties and would therefore wish to include on any Review Panel representation from the Union Commission and Board of Mission in Ireland and other interested parties as considered appropriate.

PROPERTY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

While an invitation to tender for the stonework contract has been issued to six firms, it has not been possible to complete the tendering process in time to report to the General Assembly. An additional resolution will ask that authority be given to the Board of Finance and Personnel to accept a tender and proceed with the contract.

The Property Management Committee based on the proposals of and following discussion with the Church House Panel, has advised the Architect and Quantity Surveyors not to include the repairs to Fisherwick Buildings in the tender documentation. This is to allow the Church House Panel time to fully consider proposals for the future use of the Fisherwick premises. The Annual Reports 2006 page 266 state that the estimated cost of the repairs to Church House before professional fees, VAT and grants is £3,702,670. The Architect and Quantity Surveyors have advised, subject to receipt of tenders, that if the estimated costs of the repairs to Fisherwick Buildings are taken out of this estimate, an allowance is made for cost increases and a contingency sum is included to provide additional space on the third floor to accommodate an extension of conference facilities on the first floor, that the revised estimate will be around the sum that was previously estimated for the entire premises including Fisherwick Buildings.

Additional Resolution

11a. That the General Assembly authorise the Board of Finance and Personnel to accept a tender on the stonework of Church House and to proceed with the contract.

JH MARTIN

11b. That the Board of Finance and Personnel establishes a Panel to carry out a review of the Tyrone Memorial with representation from the Union Commission, Board of Mission in Ireland and other interested parties as considered appropriate and present an interim report to the General Assembly in 2009.

J MILLAR

Item 25 – BOARD OF CHRISTIAN TRAINING – Supplementary Report

MINISTERIAL DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Last year the General Assembly created, as an Assembly Committee, the Ministerial Development Committee. This replaced the Ministerial Development Fund Committee of the then Board of Studies and Christian Training. By raising the status of the Committee and deleting of the word ‘Fund’ from its title the Assembly indicated a widening and deepening of its role and responsibility. The Committee continues to be responsible for the promotion, development and administration of the Ministerial Development Fund, but its remit is now much wider than simply that Fund and its membership has been strengthened to reflect that fact.

Last year in the Committee’s Report to the Assembly it was noted that *“some Committees and Panels of other Boards are examining issues related to ministerial development and spiritual renewal.”* The Committee went on to state that *“we look forward to a profitable inter-action and cross-fertilisation of ideas and proposals”*. (Reports to the General Assembly 2007 page 213). Since then informal contact has been maintained with, among others, the Board of Mission Overseas, the Board of Mission in Ireland, and the Panel on Ministries and the Panel on the Pastoral Care of Manse Families, both panels of the General Board. While the discussions have ranged widely they have tended to focus on two issues:

1. The relationship between the two main elements of the Fund, namely in-service training (sometimes called Professional Development) and the renewal of the spirit.
2. The introduction of an obligatory element into ongoing in-service training for some categories of ministers.

The Panel on the Pastoral Care of Manse Families (General Assembly Reports 2008, p77) is concerned with the physical, emotional and spiritual wellbeing of ministers and their families. In discussions with the Committee it has pointed to the number suffering from stress and burn-out which highlights, in its view, the inadequacies of a laissez-faire attitude to sabbatical rest and renewal. The Committee looks forward to ongoing discussions with this Panel.

Others point to the difficulties experienced by ministers in the first few years of their ministry. An earlier generation of ministers benefitted from a series of sessions given by Rev David Searle of Rutherford House to those in the first few years of their ministry. In June 07 the Committee sponsored a series of sessions for ministers in their first charge. The response both in numbers participating and appreciation was encouraging. However, as sometimes happens, those in most need are most reluctant to attend. Reflection on such needs and representations from groups and individuals from a wide cross section of the PCI has led the Committee to the view that an obligatory element in Ministerial Development/ In Service Training merits serious and careful consideration by the wider church. Ordained ministers after all, stand out as the exception among the caring and healing professionals by not being *required to undertake* ongoing in-service training.

One model which has commended itself to the Committee is as follows:

- (a) First 5 years after ordination: annual attendance at specific “courses” to be required.
- (b) After 5 years: regular in-service training as chosen by minister in conjunction with Presbytery
- (c) Each minister must take a sabbatical of at least 4 weeks before the end of 10 years.

Many questions remain to be considered but a course could be designed reflecting the individual minister’s place and kind of ministry, his or her personal needs and preferences, and the recommendations of the Presbytery in each case.

Accordingly, the Committee is requesting the General Assembly to direct Presbyteries to consider these issues and forward their views to the Committee. To facilitate discussion and consideration documentation is being prepared and, subject to the Assembly's decision, this will be forwarded to Presbyteries to focus their discussion and feed-back. Some members of the Committee will also be available during next winter for consultation and clarification, if that is required.

Candidates for the Ministry

Amended Resolution

7. Delete

Jeremy Gardiner

Fisherwick

South Belfast

In Private

Item 28 – JUDICIAL COMMISSION – Supplementary Report

1. The Judicial Commission met once since the Annual Report was written. In considering a reference from a Presbytery asking for advice and determination by the Commission on a letter which the Presbytery had received from three ministers. The Commission was joined in its deliberations by the Rev Dr SN Williams, Professor of Systematic Theology. The letter reported that during the course of an interview on Radio Ulster's Talkback programme, a minister under the care of the Presbytery, in response to a question, had stated: "I don't consider homosexuality to be a sin". In the view of the three ministers, this is a serious departure from Scripture and therefore questions the sincerity of the individual's ordination vows. They respectfully asked the Presbytery to "look into these things, which we believe are matters involving church discipline".

The Commission did not examine the accuracy of the alleged statement or the circumstances in which it was made, but rather considered whether if the statement was made, the Presbytery should exercise discipline over the minister.

The last major report received by the General Assembly on “The Church and the Homosexual” was in 1979 (Reports 1979, pp 181-195). It was sent down to Presbyteries for study and comment with this proviso – “they (i.e. the General Assembly) consider it desirable to draw attention of all our people to the fact that the Holy Scriptures clearly condemn homosexual practices, as they also condemn heterosexual immorality, but as clearly declare to those so involved the saving grace of our Lord Jesus Christ with the promise of forgiveness and strength in response to repentance and faith”. The Report clearly distinguishes between “homosexuals” and “practising homosexuals” (par 8). In the Biblical section it is stated that “sexual relationship, like other relationships was adversely affected by the advent of human sin” (par 17). “God, the Bible testifies, deals with the effects of sin, not by accepting lower standards, but by redeeming men from sin through Jesus Christ, and restoring in them by the inworking of His Spirit the image which sin had destroyed.” (I Cor 6 : 11). (Par 18)

The Report throughout makes a clear distinction between “homosexual orientation”, otherwise “homosexuality”, and “homosexual practices”. Homosexual practices are clearly condemned – “It is evident that, in the New Testament, the Old Testament view that homosexual acts are sinful in the sight of God is fully endorsed and reinforced. In the light of these passages it would be difficult to argue that a practising homosexual may engage in and claim God’s blessing on a homosexual relationship” (Par 23). However, the biblical attitude to homosexual orientation is recognised in the Report as a consequence of fallen human nature. In its conclusion the Report states – “It is vital to draw the distinction between a homosexual orientation and homosexual practice. Temptation is not sin, whether for the homosexual or the heterosexual” (Par 73).

In the light of the clear and repeated distinction drawn in the Report between homosexual orientation and homosexual relationships, the Judicial Commission determined that the statement “homosexuality is not a sin”, without further qualification, is not inconsistent with the Church’s position as stated in the 1979 Report. The Commission therefore instructed that the Presbytery should not consider Church discipline as a consequence of the reported comment. It further recommends that the Doctrine Committee may wish to re-visit the 1979 Report in the light of more recent theological thinking. A resolution to this effect is appended.

The Judicial Commission also advised the Union Commission on an issue of the union between two Congregations which had been part of a previous judicial discussion.

Additional Resolution

1a. That the General Assembly ask the Doctrine Committee to re-examine the issues of “The Church and the Homosexual Report” (1979) in the light of recent theological research.

DONALD J WATTS