

Bill No 1**Explanatory Memorandum**

In 2002 a Covenant between the Church of Ireland and the Methodist Church in Ireland was signed acknowledging that the ordained ministries of both Churches are equally given by God, and looking "forward to the time when our ministries can be fully interchangeable and our churches visibly united". In addition the Covenant acknowledged that "personal, collegial and communal oversight is embodied and practised in both churches, as each seeks to express continuity of apostolic life, mission and ministry".

As part of the journey of learning more about the practice of oversight in both churches an 'Interchangeability of Ministry Working Group' was set up by the Church of Ireland to consider the issues that arise for the Church of Ireland, and to work alongside a counterpart group within the Methodist Church. The two working groups, meeting together, produced a Statement of Agreed Principles on the Interchangeability of Ministry which was presented to General Synod in 2010. This was followed by a Second Statement entitled "Interchangeability of Ministry and Episcopate", produced for both General Synod and the Methodist Conference in 2011 as part of the Covenant Council Report. The Bill gives legislative effect to the Statements received and accepted by Synod.

This Bill provides that the polities of the Church of Ireland and Methodist Church in Ireland remain distinct for each church, whilst giving effect to both the aspirations of the 2002 Covenant, and the Agreed Principles put before, and accepted by, General Synod on Interchangeability of Ministry. The Ordinal, Preamble and Declaration of the Church of Ireland maintain inviolate the threefold order of bishop, priest or presbyter, and deacon. What has been discerned is sufficient consonance between the understanding of the threefold ministry in each tradition. There is the recognition of collegial episcopate, communal episcopate, and personal episcopate (in the person of the Methodist President, his or her predecessors and successors), in the polity of the Methodist Church in Ireland, such that interchangeability of ministries between the two polities may now be permitted to take effect.

In this context the title 'Episcopal Minister' is used within the polity of the Methodist Church in Ireland to give expression to the personal episcopate that has always been present in the role of the Methodist President. The role, office, and function of Episcopal Minister commences upon the installation of, and prayer of consecration for, the President of the Conference and of the Methodist Church in Ireland, and remains on the person when the term as President comes to its end. It is an articulation of the role of President, and applies not just to the current President and her successors, but indeed to all past Presidents. It is therefore not a new concept created by the Methodist Church in Ireland to give effect to the Covenant, nor an attempt to impose language from within the polity of the Church of Ireland on the Methodist Church in Ireland. Rather, it is an articulation within the Methodist Church in Ireland as to how it understands itself, helpfully providing the Church of Ireland with the language of 'Episcopal', over and above the real substance of recognising personal episcopate in the role, office, and function of the Methodist President, successors and predecessors. Given this understanding the Bill considers as equal all Presidents of the Methodist Church in Ireland as Episcopal Ministers, whether installed before or after the time at which it is hoped the Bill comes into effect. Having therefore discerned sufficient consonance in the threefold ministry of each church, and in the understanding of episcopate within the Methodist Church in Ireland, the logic of interchangeability is not to seek to 're-ordain' or 'further consecrate' those who have already been considered to be ordained or consecrated within this understanding of the threefold order.

The effect of the Bill is to permit interchangeability of ministry to happen in practice, but also to make clear that the impact of the Bill does not mean, for example, that a Methodist presbyter is *de facto* a Church of Ireland priest, or a Church of Ireland bishop is *de facto* a president of the Methodist Church. Rather, what is provided for is that, having recognised the validity of the other, an ordained minister in either denomination may come under the discipline and oversight of the other for the exercise of ministry. This will allow participation, subject to the appropriate permissions required by the existing polities of either church, in the liturgies and rites of the other church. For example, a Church of Ireland priest might administer sacraments in a Methodist Church according to the Methodist rite through invitation and with permission, but without becoming a circuit minister in connexion with Conference or for the purpose of District Synod. Furthermore, and as expressly stated in and described by the Bill, a number of Church of Ireland bishops will participate in the Installation and prayer of consecration of a Methodist President. In both instances the corollary will apply.

The Bill would also permit Methodist ministers to be considered for and appointed to a cure or similar role within the Church of Ireland including election to a vacant see, and Episcopal Ministers to be considered for such election without further consecration. In such circumstances those appointed to an office within the Church of Ireland will become a part of the polity of the Church of Ireland, its Dioceses, Synods, Ecclesial offices and functions.

It is appreciated, and in the Agreed Principles was expressly stated, that there will be a period of anomaly during which time there will exist priests and presbyters, bishops and episcopal ministers of both churches from before and after the commencement of interchangeability. Such periods of anomaly have ample precedence in other ecumenical processes and, given that from the outset there has always been the greater acknowledgement of the continuity of apostolic life, mission and ministry embodied and practised in the oversight and ministry of both churches, this period is one that each church can, and should accept, in the full knowledge that with the passing of time those ordained and consecrated during the era of interchangeability will become the norm.

Progress in relation to the Covenant and the Working Groups on Interchangeability has been communicated both through representation on, and communication to, wider ecumenical groups including the Anglican-Methodist International Commission for Unity in Mission (AMICUM), whilst due regard has been given to those within the Anglican Communion through memorandum and presentation to the Inter Anglican Standing Commission on Unity Faith and Order (IASCUFO).

In summary therefore the Bill represents a significant step in bringing the aspirations of the Covenant into being, through a fulfilment in the deepening of communion, and in sharing a common life and mission.

THE VERY REV NIGEL DUNNE
THE BISHOP OF CASHEL AND OSSORY

BILL

To provide for interchangeability of ministry between the Church of Ireland and the Methodist Church in Ireland

WHEREAS it is the will of the Church of Ireland to work towards the unity of all God's people;

AND WHEREAS for this purpose it is desirable to enable interchangeability of ministry between the Church of Ireland and the Methodist Church in Ireland;

AND WHEREAS for this purpose it is necessary to amend Chapter IX of the Constitution of the Church of Ireland;

BE IT ENACTED by the Archbishops and Bishops and clergy and laity of the Church of Ireland in General Synod assembled in Dublin in the year 2014 and the authority of the same as follows:-

1. In this Statute, 'Chapter IX' means Chapter IX of the Constitution of the Church of Ireland.
2. In Chapter IX, immediately after Canon 10, there shall be inserted the following Canon:

10A Interchangeability of Ministry with the Methodist Church in Ireland

- (1) For the purposes of this Canon, 'in full Connexion with the Conference of the Methodist Church in Ireland' shall mean a presbyter who has completed his or her period of training and probation and has been admitted as a member of the Conference of the Methodist Church in Ireland or admitted into connection therewith.
- (2) Pursuant to the will of the Church of Ireland to work towards the unity of all God's people, and that its mission may be further strengthened, the Church of Ireland,
 - (a) recognizes all three expressions of personal, communal, and collegial episcopate in the polity of the Methodist Church in Ireland, in the person of the Methodist President and his or her predecessors and successors, in the Methodist congregations and in the Methodist Conference respectively;
 - (b) discerns consonance between the office and function of a bishop within the Church, (as expressed in the Ordinal and the Preamble and Declaration) and in the office and function of a President and a past President within the Methodist Church in Ireland and understands that 'Episcopal Minister' gives expression to the office and function of Presidents and Past Presidents of the Methodist Church in Ireland;
 - (c) requires that at least two bishops of the Church participate in all future Installations and Consecrations of the President of the Methodist Church in Ireland;
 - (d) recognizes those who have been, at any time, installed and consecrated as a President in the Methodist Church in Ireland and who are in full Connexion with the

Conference of the Methodist Church in Ireland, as being entitled to participate in the laying on of hands in the ordination of bishops and priests in the Church.

- (3) When both events referred to in 10A(2)(c) and 10A(2)(d) have first occurred the Church of Ireland shall;
- (a) consider any presbyter of the Methodist Church who is in full Connexion with the Conference of the Methodist Church in Ireland, as being equivalent to those ordained priest within the Church solely for the purposes of being considered for or appointed to any role which necessitates being in priest's orders within the Church;
 - (b) consider any President or former President of the Methodist Church in Ireland, who is in full Connexion with the Conference of the Methodist Church in Ireland, as being equivalent to those ordained bishop within the Church solely for the purposes of being considered for election and translation into a vacant see within the Church, or any other role which necessitates being in priest's orders within the Church;
 - (c) require that ministers and Episcopal Ministers of the Methodist Church in Ireland exercising ministry within the Church be made subject to the ecclesiastical polity, laws and tribunals and authority of the Church including its Canons, Constitution, and discipline for the duration of the exercise of that ministry, and shall have no part in nor be subject to, the same polity, authority, Canons, Constitution, and discipline except during such time as that ministry is exercised within the Church of Ireland;
- (4) When both events referred to in 10A(2)(c) and 10A(2)(d) have first occurred the Church shall acknowledge a period of anomaly during which there shall be those who were installed as President by, and presbyters received in full Connexion with, the Conference of the Methodist Church in Ireland, before the coming into force of both 10A(2)(c) and 10A(2)(d), and those installed as President by, and presbyters received in full Connexion with, the Conference of the Methodist Church in Ireland after both 10A(2)(c) and 10A (2)(d) have come into force, and shall not distinguish between the same provided they are in full Connexion with the Conference of the Methodist Church in Ireland.