

THE COVENANT COUNCIL

The Church of Ireland and the Methodist Church in Ireland

REPORT 2022

MEMBERSHIP

Church of Ireland

The Rt Rev Michael Burrows, Bishop of Cashel, Ferns and Ossory (Co-Chair)
Ms Elva Byrne
Very Rev Nigel Dunne
Rev Canon Dr Maurice Elliott
Ven Barry Forde
Rev Claire Kakuru

Methodist

Rev Dr Heather Morris (Co-Chair)
Rev Andrew Dougherty
Ms Gillian Kingston
Rev Dr Tom McKnight
Rev Dr Janet Unsworth (Secretary)

Presbyterian Observer

To be confirmed

In attendance

Dr Catherine Smith (Synod Officer, Church of Ireland)

The Role of the Covenant – Moving Forward

The Covenant Council continues to act as a vehicle and advocate for the furtherance of the Covenant agreed between the Church of Ireland and the Methodist Church in Ireland. The Council has, like other committees, met on Zoom during the months since its last report.

The Council is continuing to examine the opportunities, as well as the challenges, presented by the journey that the two denominations are making. While the introduction of Interchangeability of Ministry in 2014 has allowed for a deepening of the mutual recognition of ministries, the Council needs to continue its detailed discussion of practicalities and protocols in regard to the implementation of Interchangeability, and hopes that 2022 will see progression of this work. The main areas of discussion are:

- Understandings of Ministry and *Episcope* within each denomination;
- Regulations regarding Covenant Partnerships;

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- The nature of co-operation and collaboration at local and Diocesan/District level, as well as national level;
- An explorations of rites of the Methodist Church in Ireland and the Church of Ireland – rites of ordination, Eucharist, marriage, and confirmation.

It is necessary that this work is accompanied by further implementation of the Covenant at every level. Thus, we continue to urge local churches to look again at the clauses of the Covenant and to engage with each other to consider how co-operation in mission can be enabled.

Local Covenant Partnerships and Projects

The Covenant Council continues to monitor those partnerships and projects that have been enabled by the Covenant. The Council is continuing to review the protocols and guidelines for partnership in use within the various projects. In due course, and following consultation with those working in local settings, revised guidance will be issued to facilitate the working out of the covenant in local situations. The implications of charity registration for covenant partnerships are being discussed by the Covenant Council as a matter of some urgency, and a residential day is planned to develop a governance document or framework that may be adapted to the required context and which addresses the respective regulatory frameworks.

Church of Ireland – Moravian Church

The Bishop of Cashel has kept the Covenant Council informed on bilateral conversations between the Church of Ireland and the Moravian Church, to provide the Council with an opportunity to consider any implications that this further relationship of interchangeability involving the Church of Ireland might have for Methodist Covenant partners. The wish of the Church of Ireland to proceed to interchangeability has been previously reported to the General Synod. However, the single province of Britain and Ireland of the Moravian Church has required some conference with the Church of England, which has now written to the COI to commend the work of interchangeability.

Motions to propose at General Synod

The Covenant Council proposes the following motions for the consideration of the General Synod:

“That the following be elected as Church of Ireland representatives on the Covenant Council for the coming year:

The Rt Rev Michael Burrows, Bishop of Tuam and Limerick (Co-Chair)
Ms Elva Byrne
Very Rev Nigel Dunne
Rev Canon Dr Maurice Elliott
Ven Barry Forde
Rev Claire Kakuru”