

**THE COVENANT COUNCIL**

The Church of Ireland and the Methodist Church in Ireland

**REPORT 2023**

**MEMBERSHIP**

**Church of Ireland**

The Rt Rev Michael Burrows, Bishop of Tuam, Limerick & Killaloe (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 Janet Unsworth (Secretary)

**Presbyterian Observer**

To be confirmed

**In attendance**

Dr Nicole Gallagher (Synod Officer, Church of Ireland)

**Membership**

Since the last report of the Covenant Council to General Synod, the Rev Dr Tom McKnight has resigned from the Covenant Council leaving a vacancy for a Methodist member on the Council which will hopefully be filled in the near future. The members of the Council would like to thank Rev Dr McKnight for his time on the Council. Discussions are also underway with the Presbyterian Church in Ireland for the nomination of a Presbyterian Observer to sit on the Covenant Council.

**The Role of the Covenant Moving Forward**

Over the past year, the Covenant Council has continued its work in advocating for the furtherance of the Covenant agreed between the Church of Ireland and the Methodist Church in Ireland. Since its last report, the Council has been fortunate to have finally met ‘in person’ again after the necessity of various meetings held on Zoom during the Covid-19 pandemic.

## The Covenant Council – Report 2023

The current work of the Council is mainly centred around the various practicalities, opportunities and obstacles faced by both the Church of Ireland and the Methodist Church in Ireland in the realisation of interchangeability of ministry between the two denominations. The main areas of discussion are:

- Understandings of Ministry and *Episcope* within each denomination;
- Regulations regarding Covenant Partnerships;
- The nature of co-operation and collaboration at local and Diocesan/District level as well as at a national level (Chaplaincy in further and higher education, prisons and healthcare, formation in ministry, and lay readers/local preachers);
- An exploration of the rites of the Church of Ireland and the Methodist Church in Ireland (ordination, Eucharist, marriage, confirmation, and baptism).

As well as these discussions, it is the intention of the Covenant Council to undertake the provision of training sessions with the aim of incentivising clergy of both denominations to partake in covenant partnerships and the interchangeability of Ministry through the familiarisation of the clerics of both denominations with each other's liturgy and worship styles.

The Council also welcomes the intention of the House of Bishops to bring a bill to the General Synod to clarify the situation concerning occasional, as opposed to long-term, interchangeability of ministry.

### **Local Covenant Partnerships and Projects**

The Covenant Council continues to monitor those partnerships and projects that have been enabled by the Covenant while continuing to review the guidelines and protocols required for such arrangements. The necessity for the charity registration of covenant partnerships is of particular concern to the Council and this has been put on the agenda for the residential meeting due to take place at the end of March 2023 so that a governance document can be developed to address the regulatory frameworks both sides of the border. It is intended that an update on this will be presented in the Report of the Covenant Council to General Synod 2024.