

## **THE COVENANT COUNCIL REPORT 2024**

The Church of Ireland and the Methodist Church in Ireland

### **MEMBERSHIP**

#### **Church of Ireland**

The Rt Rev Michael Burrows, Bishop of Tuam, Limerick and Killaloe (Co-Chair)

Ms Elva Byrne

Very Rev Nigel Dunne

Rev Canon Dr Maurice Elliott

Ven Barry Forde

Rev Clare Kakuru

#### **Methodist Church in Ireland**

Rev Canon Dr Heather Morris, General Secretary of the Methodist Church in Ireland (Co-Chair)

Rev Andrew Dougherty

Ms Gillian Kingston

Rev Dr Janet Unsworth (Secretary)

Rev Canon Dr Sahr Yambasu

#### **Presbyterian Observer**

To be confirmed

#### **In Attendance**

Mr Stuart Wilson (Committee Support, Church of Ireland)

#### **Introduction**

The Covenant Council continues its work in advocating for the furtherance of the Covenant agreed between the Church of Ireland and the Methodist Church in Ireland. We have welcomed the opportunity to gather in a residential format yearly as well as to hold other one-day meetings as helpful to the business before us.

#### **Areas of Current Work**

As reported last year, the current work of the Council is focused on 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 principal areas of discussion continue to be:

**1. *Understandings of Ministry and Episcopate within each denomination and the implications of these for those who move to serve in the other denomination***

There is mutual recognition that under the gift of interchangeability any minister that moves with the blessing and permission, and in good standing of the sending church will minister faithfully and fully under the sole authority of the receiving church. During the past year, we have considered the importance of putting in place some protocols to enable the movement of clergy from one polity to another. Work is continuing on the nature of these, and we will bring recommendations in due course.

## **2. *Covenant Partnerships***

The Covenant Council continues to provide support and guidance to those partnerships and projects that have been enabled by the Covenant while continuing to review the guidelines and protocols required for such arrangements. The charity registration of covenant partnerships is a complex matter, remains a concern to the Council and work continues to address the issues given the regulatory frameworks both sides of the border. During the past year, we have also considered the need to ensure that when changes in clergy take place in local contexts, that this is facilitated well.

## **3. *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)***

We continue to look for a wide variety of opportunities for co-operation and collaboration. A long-held aspiration has been the possibility of interchange of Methodist Local Preachers and Diocesan Lay Readers. Given this, we are glad to report that a pilot is being undertaken in the Dublin area by the Dioceses of Dublin and Glendalough and the Southern District of the Methodist Church. We hope that this exchange will provide a template that can be taken up in other settings.

As well as these discussions, a revision of the ‘Guidelines to the Journey’ booklet is taking place. It is planned that the updated version will be made available in PDF format in the near future. While the booklet provides information on key areas to be borne in mind when working together and when visiting or planning worship in the other polity, it is still hoped that the Council might be in a position to undertake the provision of training sessions. Such training would be of benefit to those engaged in local Covenant partnerships, as well as those who wish to facilitate the more ‘occasional’ expressions of interchangeability of ministry enabled by the decision of last year’s General Synod. The sessions would provide the opportunity for clerics of both denominations to become more familiar with each other’s liturgy and worship styles.

## **Membership**

Since the last report of the Covenant Council to General Synod, the Rev Dr Sahr Yambasu has joined the Methodist members on the Council.

Discussions continue with the Presbyterian Church in Ireland regarding the nomination of a Presbyterian Observer.

Over recent years, the Council has reduced its membership on several occasions. To enable fuller participation and representation from those involved in local partnerships, it is the intention of the Council to grow its membership again in the near future. Measures will be brought to Synod and Conference in due course to facilitate this.

## **Motion to Propose at General Synod**

The Covenant Council proposes the following motion 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, Limerick and Killaloe (Co-Chair)  
Ms Elva Byrne

Very Rev Nigel Dunne  
Rev Canon Dr Maurice Elliott  
Ven Barry Forde  
Rev Claire Kakuru”