

for motions to be brought to Governing Body for debate by a Diocesan Conference. The Governing Body also continued its revision of the Constitution to insert gender-neutral language – ‘chairmen’ have now become ‘chairs’.

Away from legal matters, in both April and September considerable time was given to discussion and debate about the Church in Wales in a post-pandemic world. Additionally, in April the Governing Body declared its wish that 2022 be declared ‘a Year of Biblical Literacy’ across the Province. The September meeting heard an update from the Bishop of Bangor on the preparation of resources to assist churches in marking the year.

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# General Synod of the Church of Ireland

## September/October 2021

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### INTRODUCTION

The Church of Ireland Synod took place from Thursday 30 September to Saturday 1 October, meeting again by electronic communication technology. Being the first meeting of the triennium, it was for many their first experience of General Synod; yet the online format was a more familiar medium than it had been at the last meeting held in December 2020.

### BUSINESS

Unlike the pared-down business of last year, the proceedings were more in keeping with the usual Synod format, albeit debate was still somewhat impaired by the remote format. There were five Bills before Synod, one dealt with General Synod representation, three Bills related to Boards of Nomination for appointment to vacant parishes and one addressed the proposed merger of the Dioceses of Tuam and Limerick.

### GENERAL SYNOD MEMBERSHIP

The bill for a phased reduction in members of General Synod – which had been deferred last year – was brought forward this year. It amended the allocation of

Diocesan representatives at Synod from set figures, largely unchanged from those set out after disestablishment in 1870, to a formula based on the number of cures plus a sliding scale of 1–12 additional places from the largest to smallest diocese. The existing ratio of two lay representatives for each clerical representative was retained. A transitional period means a small reduction in overall numbers for the next triennium (2024–2026) before full implementation leading to another small reduction for the period 2027–2032. A review process for the size and distribution of the House of Representatives will be carried out every nine years. The aim is to achieve a more proportional spread of membership based on diocesan cures, while maintaining a plurality and breadth of voice across the diverse Church of Ireland.

### BOARDS OF NOMINATION

Three Bills related to amendments to Chapter IV of the Constitution ‘Appointment to and Tenure of Cures’.

Two related to membership of Board of Nomination: one to ensure that parochial nominators should include both female and male members and the other to avoid conflict of interests by ensuring that no-one serve as a diocesan nominator for a parish of which he or she is a registered vestry member or parochial nominator.

The third required a successful nominated cleric to a parish to respond to the Bishop within a stated time otherwise the nomination would be null and void. It also required that unsuccessful candidates be informed before any public announcement.

### PROCEDURES FOR UNITING DIOCESES OF TUAM AND LIMERICK

A Bill was passed to provide procedures for the election of a Bishop for the United Dioceses of Tuam, Limerick and Killaloe in the event of the Sees of Limerick and Killaloe and of Tuam, Killaloe and Achonry falling vacant simultaneously. In previous years, Synod had passed legislation for procedures should either See fall vacant, but as both the Bishop of Tuam and the Bishop of Limerick and Killaloe were retiring on 31 October 2021, this additional legislation was urgently required.

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