



# General Synod of the Church of Ireland

## May 2023 (Wexford and online)

Cate Turner

Member of Synod

### Introduction

The Church of Ireland General Synod had been held online in 2021 and in person in 2022. This year – the third meeting of the triennium – the first two days were held in Clayton White’s Hotel, Wexford (Friday 12 May and Saturday 13 May) with day 3 taking place remotely on the evening of Tuesday 16 May. (Another evening, Thursday 18 May, had also been set aside for meeting but this was not required.)

There were nine bills before Synod: eight passed and one was defeated. Of those which passed one dealt with interchangeability of ministry; two with pensions, one with charity legislation and four dealt with largely administrative details.

The bill which fell had aimed to amend the Constitution so that those elected to represent a certain diocese should be invested in that diocese through registered general vestry membership of a parish within the diocese, or that clerics should be licensed in the diocese which they are elected to represent. Objections to the bill included the lack of flexibility, concern over additional restrictions and the technicality that beneficed clergy do not hold a licence.

### Interchangeability of ministry

In 2014, General Synod passed Canon 10A, which represented a major breakthrough in ecumenical relationships, particularly with our Covenant partner, the Methodist Church in Ireland, in terms of a converging common understanding of the ministry of *episkopé*. The main intention at the time was to facilitate long-term transfer of members of the clergy between one polity and the other and to enable ministers of the Methodist Church in Ireland to be considered eligible to become office holders in the Church of Ireland. The canon has proven unclear about more occasional exercise of ministerial interchangeability: for example during shared missional activities or periods of holiday and sick leave. The Bill amends Chapter IX of the Constitution and provides opportunity for occasional exercise of interchangeability with the express consent of the Ordinary. (No parallel difficulty concerning occasional interchangeability exists in the Methodist context.)

### Pensions

One bill amended Chapter XIV to allow for future changes in the Church of Ireland contribution to the Church of Ireland Clergy Defined Contribution Pension Schemes (one for clergy in Northern Ireland and one for clergy in the Republic of Ireland), provided that the contribution rate not be reduced below the previously set 8% of the relevant minimum approved stipend or episcopal stipend.

A second bill also amended Chapter XIV, removing the ceiling on the amount by which pensions payable to members and to the spouses of deceased members of the Church of Ireland Clergy Pensions Fund can be increased from one year to the next. In addition, any such increase was no longer restricted to taking effect on 1 January in the following year.

### **Charity legislation**

The Charities Regulatory Authority in the Republic had requested a rearrangement of the contents of Chapter XVII of the Constitution (relating to charitable objects in the Republic of Ireland) following the review of the group of pilot parish applications made in 2022. There is no alteration in any aspect of regulation of parishes; the bill enacting these rearrangements simply places the required clauses in a separate section. Passing the bill enables the process of wider parish registration to recommence.

### **Various administrative amendments**

As the Board of St Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin, had changed its name to 'Saint Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin' the constitution was amended to reflect this change in name.

The General Synod declaration form was amended to provide a space for an email address for correspondence.

The General Vestry declaration form was amended to remove the requirement for members to repeat their postal address within the form.

Being mindful of modern communications, the requirement to attach a notice regarding revision of vestry members and the notice of the Easter Vestry on the door of the church was removed from the Constitution. Once the bill was passed, one member of Synod noted ruefully how it was a shame to lose the historic echoes of nailing documents to church doors!

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## **General Synod of the Scottish Episcopal Church**

June 2023 (St Paul's and St George's Church, Edinburgh)

John F Stuart

Secretary General, Scottish Episcopal Church

### **Introduction**

The General Synod of the Scottish Episcopal Church (SEC) met from 7 to 9 June 2023. The meeting was held in hybrid format, with most members attending in person and a small number online.