

the Calendar of Saints, a motion of concern about current trade injustice and support for the 'Make Poverty History' campaign—and then the Synod reverted to housekeeping issues of budgets and quota. Africa might be dying of AIDS, but adequate housing for Scotland's aged citizens had a *more immediate impact.*

GENERAL SYNOD OF THE CHURCH OF IRELAND

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There was little legislation to burden Synod during 2005. Such as there was largely concerned housekeeping.

MARRIAGE RECORDS

The first Bill imposed a requirement that every church or chapel in which a beneficed or licensed member of the clergy officiates and in which a register of vestry members is kept maintains a marriage record book in which can be recorded details prescribed by regulations. Previously, marriage registers were provided by the state in both civil jurisdictions in Ireland and there was, consequently, no requirement upon select vestries to provide for the keeping of marriage record books. However, since 1 January 2004 in Northern Ireland (and, it is anticipated, shortly in the Republic of Ireland) the recording of marriages by clergy for state purposes has no longer been required. It was felt that, nonetheless, the Church required information for its own purposes: hence the legislation.

BUILDINGS

A second Bill was passed enabling diocesan councils to appoint chartered building surveyors in addition to their existing power to appoint architects. It also gave the Representative Body the right to appoint, at its own expense, architects, surveyors or suitably-qualified conservation specialists.

DOWN CATHEDRAL BOARD

The final Bill sought to reduce the size of the Down Cathedral Board, thereby reversing the process commenced in a previous statute of 1985 which enlarged it. In particular, the Bill relieved the Ordinary of the obligation of being a member of the Board. The Bill was introduced by the Bishop of Down, who made it abundantly clear that, while he might be relieved of the obligation to attend Board meetings, his right to know what was going on and, indeed, his right to interfere, were in no way affected.

RELATIONS WITH THE METHODIST CHURCH

A further matter of a legislative nature concerned relationships with the Methodist Church in Ireland. Guidelines in relation to local covenant partnerships were issued for consideration by the Church at large. They covered various categories of partnership, including single or multiple congregation partnerships, shared building partnerships, chaplaincy partnerships, mission partnerships and education partnerships. These were adopted without opposition.

MARRIAGE REGULATIONS

Finally, marriage regulations were also approved. As well as specifying the details which have to be recorded in the marriage registers, for which legislative provision had been made, the regulations imposed a number of other requirements. In particular, they provided that the ceremony must be in accordance with the rites and ceremonies of the Church of Ireland, that where any marriage is to be solemnised in a church or chapel other than by the incumbent, the incumbent's consent must be obtained and that clergy should expect a minimum period of three months' notice in order to give opportunity both for proper preparation and for the marriage ceremony. Finally, the regulations made clear that the ceremony should be carried out in a church or chapel of the Church of Ireland duly consecrated for public worship, and nowhere else, unless the circumstances are wholly exceptional and the prior approval of the relevant bishop has been obtained. In effect, a traditional church ceremony is to be regarded as the norm. Marriages in hotels, in football grounds, on hilltops, in ice-rinks or at or in swimming-pools are likely to be disapproved.