

Regulations for Local Covenant Partnership – Primacy

Executive Summary

1. The Regulations seek to provide for a single body of people to manage the finances and property at Primacy Bangor, and to ensure compliance with all requirements of both the Diocese of Down & Dromore and the Methodist Church.
2. This body of people will be known as the ‘Christ Church Primacy Covenant Council’
3. For charitable purposes this body will sit within the single charitable registration of the Methodist Church in Ireland (MCI) as a ‘Society in Covenant Partnership’. This is the simplest solution, mitigating against the need to insert regulations in the Church of Ireland Constitution or to create an entirely new ‘Governing Document’ that would essentially sit between the Constitution and the Manual of Laws.
4. Notwithstanding the MCI registration and the roles for church officials and various representatives as set out in the in the MCI Manual of laws, the Local Covenant Partnership will ensure the following in line with Church of Ireland and Diocesan requirements:
 - a) Officers will be appointed who will undertake the roles and responsibilities of church and glebe wardens, and these will be notified to the diocese within the timeframe for returns as required by the diocese. In so far as is practicable, appointments will be made so as individuals, irrespective of the descriptor agreed on, can fulfil the respective roles as required by both denominations.
 - b) Diocesan synodspersons and parochial nominators will be nominated at each triennial as required by the diocese. (nb. The latter will be a body of people who, together with representatives from the Methodist Circuit, will engage with the bishop and district superintendent with regard to appointments, as Primacy will not be a ‘Board of Nomination’ appointment
 - c) All financial and statistical returns as required by the diocese and to the MCI Connexion will be made
 - d) All assessments as applied by the diocese and the MCI Connexion will be paid
 - e) All property permissions will be applied for in compliance with the directions as stipulated by the Church of Ireland and/or MCI.
 - f) An annual general meeting will be held within the timeframe for parish Easter General Vestries and arranged so as to comply with MCI requirements
5. One permission required from the diocese is for the Register of Covenant Members (equivalent to the Register of VestryPersons) to be revised at the last meeting of the Covenant Council in each calendar year. This will allow this return to be made to the Methodist Church in the same timeframe as all other Methodist societies and circuits. This register will form the register for appointment to the Christ Church Primacy Covenant Council at the annual general meeting. (Nb. The church of Ireland does not require the revised registers to be returned, and so nothing is ‘lost’ in this. The key principle is that a register is maintained, is revised annually for communication to MCI, and forms the basis of the AGM in line with the timeframe required by Col)

Barry Forde
February 2025

For approval by Diocese and the Circuit Executive

Denominational Approval and Charitable Status

1. This Covenant Partnership is between the society of Christ Church Primacy, in the Circuit of Bangor and Holywood in the Methodist Church in Ireland, and the parish of Christ Church Primacy in the diocese of Down and Dromore in the Church of Ireland
2. This agreement is approved by the Bangor and Holywood Circuit Executive and the Down and Dromore Diocesan Council.
3. It is agreed that, for the purposes of compliance with Charity Legislation and the Charities Commission, the Christ Church Primacy Covenant Partnership will be a 'Society in Covenant Partnership' as per the Manual of Laws in the Methodist Church in Ireland.
4. Hereafter the church in covenant partnership will be referred to as Christ Church Primacy Bangor

Provisions for the good governance of Primacy Bangor

5. A single Register of Members of the Covenant Church will be maintained of persons aged 18 and over. Only persons on this register will be eligible for appointment or election to the local Covenant Council, and are entitled to elect and appoint to the same. All persons on this register shall be deemed members of both the Methodist Church in Ireland and the Church of Ireland.
6. This register will be reviewed annually and the revised register agreed at the last meeting of the Covenant Council in any Calendar Year.
7. Other registers may be maintained by the local Covenant Council, including but not limited to congregational rolls, junior registers, registers of subscribers. No eligibility arises for appointment or election to the local Covenant Council by virtue of being named on any such registers.
8. A General Meeting shall be held annually. This meeting will be chaired by whomever is appointed to officiate in the Covenant Partnership by agreement between the district superintendent and the bishop of the diocese, or in the absence of such person, a person agreed by the same parties to chair the same.
9. Public notice of the place and hour of the General Meeting shall be authorised by the Covenant Council and widely communicated for at least the two Sundays preceding the day appointed for the meeting.
10. This meeting shall be held each year not earlier than twenty seven days before, and not later than twenty days after, Easter Day, and may be adjourned to any day or days not later than the sixth Monday after Easter Day, provided that the General Meeting may not be held on, or adjourned to, a day within the period from Palm Sunday to Easter Sunday (inclusive).
11. At the General Meeting each year there shall be appointed from among the registered covenant members:
 - (a) The officiating minister (or person with pastoral charge) shall nominate a person to fulfil the role of both Society Steward and Incumbent's churchwarden, provided that if there is no such nomination such person shall be elected by the registered local covenant members at the same meeting or some adjournment thereof

- (b) A 'People's Steward' who shall fulfil the traditional roles of People's churchwarden, Methodist Pew Steward and Communion Steward, elected by the registered covenant members
 - (c) A person nominated by the officiating minister who shall be both Property Steward and Incumbents glebeward, provided that if there is no such nomination such person shall be elected by the registered covenant members at the same meeting or some adjournment thereof
 - (d) A further glebeward may be elected by the registered covenant members
 - (e) A person nominated and elected to the role of Treasurer
 - (f) A person nominated and elected to the role of Secretary
 - (g) Up to 12 further persons
12. The General Meeting shall receive the annual accounts as presented by the Covenant Council, and those attending shall be entitled to require of the outgoing Covenant Council an explanation of any matter appearing in the accounts.
13. In any triennial year as required by the Church of Ireland there shall be elected from among the registered covenant members such persons as directed by the diocesan council as are required to hold the roles of diocesan synod members and supplementalists, and parochial nominators and supplementalists.
14. The local Covenant Council shall, in so far as it is appropriate to the good ordering of life in covenant partnership, undertake the roles and responsibilities as required of a Methodist Church Council and a Church of Ireland Select Vestry. In addition to oversight of the work of God in the local church the roles of the local Covenant Council will include, but are not limited to:
- (a) The ordering of the church for worship
 - (b) Maintaining church records
 - (c) Maintaining church fittings and fabric
 - (d) Developing and implementing policies for good governance (i.e. GDPR, Conflict of Interest)
 - (e) Health & Safety, Fire Risk Assessments
 - (f) Insurances
 - (g) Paying of bills

Safeguarding

15. It is agreed that the Safeguarding Policy of the Methodist Church in Ireland will be deployed.
16. A full record of all matters pertaining to safeguarding, registers, appointment of volunteers, panels, referrals, will be maintained and provided to the Safeguarding officers within each denomination annually.

Reporting to, and oversight by, Denominational Bodies

17. The local Covenant Council shall report to the Circuit Executive with regard to all management and preparation of accounts, such that the Circuit Executive might provide oversight and make annual budget submissions to the Governing Body. Further, the Covenant Council shall make all statistical returns as may be required by the Circuit Executive.
18. The local Covenant Council shall make all financial and statistical returns as required by the diocese.
19. The local Covenant Council shall be responsible to ensure that all financial assessments as are agreed and required of the Circuit Executive and by the Diocese are paid in a timely manner.

20. The local Covenant Council shall ensure that all inspections of properties as may be required are undertaken, seeking to minimise, through good management and by agreement, the costs of assessment, maintenance and reporting.
21. The local Covenant Council shall ensure that all works to be undertaken to properties will adhere to the appropriate regulations of the denomination that is the legal owner of said properties, and where title deeds are held jointly, shall ensure that all necessary approvals are attained and the proper parties enter into agreements to undertake said works.

Appointments

22. The responsibility for ensuring good processes are in place for appointing officiating clergy will be shared between the district superintendent and diocesan bishop. In all such appointments they will seek to consult with representatives of the Covenant Partnership and will put into place appropriate processes to expedite such appointments.
23. A person appointed to officiate in Christ Church Primacy will be licenced by the diocesan bishop and listed by the Methodist Conference in the manner that is appropriate to their role and appointment.

Worship

24. Worship shall be conducted in a manner that is in accordance with the rites, liturgies, and formularies of both the Methodist Church in Ireland and the Church of Ireland.
25. Sacraments may be conducted according to the authorised services in either tradition.
26. Confirmation and Reception into Membership may be conducted as a single, shared service by agreement between the diocesan bishop and district superintendent.
27. Marriage may be conducted according to either rite, provided that no marriage rite of the Church of Ireland may be used in any place other than a building consecrated by the Church of Ireland for worship unless by permission of the bishop.

Use of premises

28. The church premises and ancillary rooms shall only be used for the purposes consonant with the regulations of the General Synod of the Church of Ireland and the Conference of the Methodist Church in Ireland.

Dissolution

29. This Partnership may be dissolved by agreement between the parties named in Section 1, or by either party on giving reasonable notice to allow for dissolution in as timely and seemly a manner as safeguards the reputation of both denominations, the persons involved in governance, the assets and finances of all parties, and the wider witness of the church.