

The Governance and Organisation of the Church of Ireland

WHO ARE WE?

The **Church of Ireland** belongs to the world-wide church known as the Anglican Communion. The Anglican church across the world has over 80 million members in over 160 countries.



The Church of Ireland is an **Episcopal** church, which means that it is governed by a body of bishops. In the USA the Anglican church is known as the Episcopal Church.



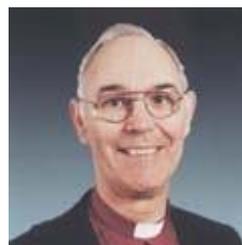
WHERE DID WE COME FROM?

The Church of Ireland is so named as it covers the whole island of Ireland and until 1870 was the **established** church in Ireland - established by an act of parliament. As such it had a privileged position and was supported and financed by every citizen in the land irrespective of their religious affiliation. In 1870 the Church was **DISESTABLISHED** and since then has been fully independent of status and state support.

The Most Rev. A.E.T. Harper, OBE, BA
Archbishop of Armagh and Primate of All Ireland

WHO'S THE BOSS?

The **Archbishop of Armagh** - currently The Most Reverend A.E.T. Harper, O.B.E., B.A. - is the head of the Church of Ireland and is known as the **Primate of All Ireland**.



Armagh is the ecclesiastical (or church) capital of Ireland ever since St Patrick set up his headquarters there in the fifth century. Thus the Cathedral there is dedicated to St Patrick.

St. Patrick's Cathedral, Armagh



How is the Church organised?

The island of Ireland is divided by the Church into **TWO Provinces** - The Northern Province of **ARMAGH**, and the Southern Province of **DUBLIN**.

The Primate (the Archbishop of Armagh), whilst being head of the whole Church of Ireland, has particular oversight of the northern province of **ARMAGH**.

The Archbishop of **DUBLIN** has general oversight in the southern province of Dublin.

Each province is further divided into **DIOCESES** with a Bishop for each diocese. The Bishop is the head of each diocese. For example, the Bishop of the Diocese of **CLOGHER** is the **Right Reverend John McDowell**.

There are 12 dioceses in total, 7 in the northern province and 5 in the southern province. Each diocese is sub-divided into **PARISHES**, with a Rector as overseer.

The **RECTOR** is the minister in charge of a parish (or sometimes several parishes). In a large parish he/she may have the assistance of a **CURATE**.

So, the organisational structure of the Church of Ireland looks like this:



The Primate - The Archbishop of Armagh

The Northern Province of ARMAGH

The Southern Province of DUBLIN

Diocese of:

Diocese of:

ARMAGH
CLOGHER
DERRY and RAPHOE
DOWN and DROMORE
CONNOR
KILMORE, ELPHIN and ARDAGH
TUAM, KILLALA and ACHONRY

DUBLIN and GLENDALOUGH
MEATH and KILDARE
CASHEL, OSSORRY and FERNS
LIMERICK, KILLALOE and ARDFERT
CORK, CLOYNE and ROSS

How is the Church governed?

The Church of Ireland is governed by the **GENERAL SYNOD** (like a parliament). The General Synod is made up of two Houses:

The **House of Bishops**, consisting of all 12 Bishops, and
The **House of Representatives**, consisting of:
216 Clergy
432 Lay people

These Bishops, clergy and people represent all the dioceses and parishes in Ireland. The Synod meets annually and has overall responsibility for the church.

The General Synod enacts legislation for the whole of the Church of Ireland, as well as discussing the work of the **STANDING COMMITTEE** which is responsible for oversight of the legal, financial and pastoral work of the church. There are several other Committees which are responsible for various aspects of church life.

The **REPRESENTATIVE CHURCH BODY** (RCB) is the Administrative office of the Church of Ireland. It's function is to support the work of the Standing Committee, the House of Bishops and General Synod. The RCB has the legal responsibility as Trustees of the Church of Ireland, and for all it's financial affairs.

So what about the Diocese?

Throughout the island of Ireland, there are 12 diocesan groups made of up 26 dioceses. A diocese (e.g. Clogher) is divided into **RURAL DEANERIES** which are further divided into **PARISHES**.

The **DIOCESAN SYNOD** has responsibility for the oversight of parish life, finances and structures of the diocese, and sends Diocesan Representatives to General Synod. The Diocesan Synod is made up of The Bishop and One Clergyperson and Two Lay People representing each parish in the diocese. Like General Synod, Diocesan Synods meet annually.

Diocesan Synod in turn elects a **DIOCESAN COUNCIL**, which deals with all the business of the diocese. Other Diocesan Committees will usually include: Finance, Glebes (buildings), Education, Youth Work, Missions, Ministry of Healing and Social Welfare.



So who's who?

Clerical Management and Operating Structure of a Diocese

The Bishop
The Archdeacon
The Rural Deans
Parochial Clergy
Non-stipendiary Clergy
Lay Readers
Parish Readers



**The Rt. Rev. John
McDowell
Bishop of Clogher**



**Newly appointed Parish Readers in
Clogher Diocese**



**Newly commissioned Diocesan Lay
Readers in Clogher Diocese**

The Diocesan Cathedral

The Diocesan Cathedral is the Mother Church of a diocese.

A Cathedral is governed by: - **The Dean and Chapter**

The Chapter consists of clergy appointed by the Bishop:-

The Dean
The Precentor
The Chancellor
The Treasurer
The Archdeacon
The Prebendaries (Canon)
and the Bishop (ex-officio)



And what about the Parish?

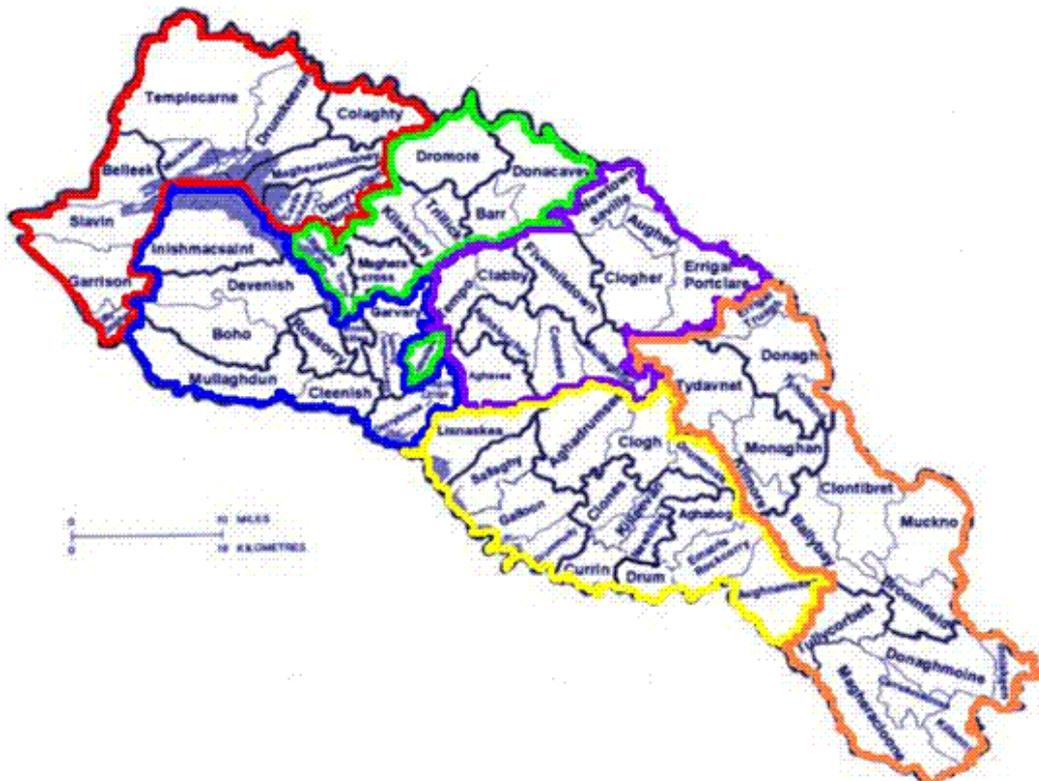
Each Rural Deanery is made up of a number of **PARISHES**. Each parish has an ordained **RECTOR** as the Incumbent (the clergy-person in charge), and a number of families and individuals who are usually living within the defined geographical parish boundary.

Every parish, or Union of parishes, elects a **SELECT VESTRY** from among it's members. The Select Vestry is responsible for the 3 'F's of parish life - Fabric, Furnishings and Finance, though usually they oversee many other aspects of parish life as well. The Select Vestry is elected by the people of the parish at the annual General Vestry Meeting which takes place at Easter-time.

Membership of the Select Vestry consist of the Rector, 2 Churchwardens, 2 Glebe Wardens and 12 Vestry members.

A parish may then have many other organisation which are run for parishioners and the wider community, such as:

Mothers' Union
Scouts and Guides
Girls Brigade and Boys Brigade
Choir
Youth Club
Bible Study
Prayer Groups
etc.



Map of Clogher Diocese showing Parishes and Rural Deaneries
Key: **Kesh Rural Deanery** **Clogher Rural Deanery**
Enniskillen Rural Deanery **Clones Rural Deanery**
Kilskeery Rural Deanery **Monaghan Rural Deanery**

**The Church of Ireland - A Member Church of the Anglican Communion
Organisation and Administration**

