

# Church of Ireland

# Justice Strategy

## We are Part of Something BIGGER

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**Background:** We are part of something bigger than ourselves.

It is called the Kingdom of God.

In the Kingdom, people on the margins are brought into the centre, the poor have food and security, the slaves have their chains broken, the migrant has welcome and those being stepped on and stepped over are lifted up.

Have you ever been angered by an injustice in your locality or around the world and wanted to do something about it? But the more you try, the more you realise it is a complex, complicated issue and you become exhausted and overwhelmed? Walking Justly with God suddenly becomes impossible!

### **Questions:**

- How can we work together to make a difference?
- How do we become part of a movement - the Kingdom - responding at every level to complex injustices?
- How do we bring Christ's reconciling work to the processes of 'doing justice'?

### **Step 1: Acknowledge Where We are Now**

In 2018, a scoping study researched who was doing what 'at home' and 'overseas'. It gleaned an overview of Parish and Diocesan activity, Committee and Central activity, Anglican Communion Activity, and

Community, Mission and Development Agency activity in relation to issues of poverty, inequality and other injustices such as climate, gender and tax.

The scoping study highlighted that we are doing huge amounts of work to tackle injustice.<sup>1</sup> See a sample below

Parishes collecting dry food goods and toiletries for local refugees & food banks.	Central/Diocesan: Conferences on Justice Issues such as Migrant Rights/Gender Violence	Inter-Church initiatives to create Churches of Sanctuary for Refugees
Diocesan/Centrally: Gender quotas on committees	Eco-Congregation and parishes using church grounds for conservation and reducing single use plastics	Central/Global: Bishops' Appeal funding land rights campaigns where multinationals have displaced indigenous people
Church Partners: Vox church survey on people's experience of church, youth, gender discrimination etc.	Partnering with mission agencies and churches overseas to reduce hunger and generate income among world's poorest people	Church Partners: Mission Agencies and Development Agencies working with communities living in conflict zones
Development Agencies engaging the church in global tax and trade justice issues and campaigning for fairer policies and laws	Anglican Alliance sharing justice campaign and church resources	Mothers' Union raises awareness on GBV, running 16 days of Activism, as well as promoting literacy as a human right

Inspirational work is being done across many strands of a complex issue that addresses everything from our own inherited structural norms, to our compassionate and biblical response in our own communities and across the world. **We are already making a difference.**

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<sup>1</sup>This compliments work done by Council for Mission mapping the 5 Marks of Mission in Ireland & Bishops' Appeal work mapping advocacy and development work done Overseas.

However, there is more scope for increased awareness of what each group is doing and for greater collaboration. Also, there is currently more being done to address the symptoms of injustice rather than the root causes. Therefore, when we join together, we will have a bigger impact.

## **Step Two: Envisage Where We Want to Be**

In five years time we want to see a more collaborative, holistic response from the Church to a variety of injustice issues, for people to feel part of a bigger justice movement and to be equipped to respond in a variety of ways.

Building upon the Justice Framework we want to:

- ✓ Look Up: Continuously return to Christ's reconciling work on the cross that ushered in the Kingdom. In the Kingdom there is no disconnection from God, from others and from creation, therefore greed, corruption and selfishness, all of which are the root causes of systemic injustice, cannot thrive.
- ✓ Look In: Have taken simple, yet purpose filled steps to reduce silos and work more as a connected movement towards shared goals.
- ✓ Look Out: Have empowered people to respond to injustices at every level, from influencing policy makers to joining local campaigns.

## **Step Three: Take Strategic Action**

### **(a) Listening**

The first step is for the Church to engage in deep listening to what matters to people locally, nationally and globally in relation to the injustices they see and are moved by. We will engage with Vox Magazine Editor, Ruth Garvey-Williams, to do a survey across the

churches to get a snapshot of what concerns people in relation to justice issues. Vox has already carried out two excellent surveys and evaluated the findings. Here, the findings will help shape the strategic response.

**(b) Joined Up Thinking:**

Using the information gleaned from the survey, the key issues will be identified and ways to break down silos and work more collaboratively on these issues will be explored. Therefore the primary role of the Justice Strategy is to create opportunities for more Collaborative Action.

**(c) Create an Online Forum** where:

- justice initiatives are shared and ideas are promoted and celebrated,
- campaigns are highlighted,
- diocesan trainings are offered,
- service outlines and prayers on an issue are accessible,
- international days (world refugee day, world water day) are flagged,
- mission agencies partnering in issues are visible and contactable,
- facts and statistics on different issues are regularly updated.

**(d) Host a Justice Conference** as an event to celebrate action taken and strategize for better collaboration. Invite all key people engaged in justice issues to attend and to network. Firm up plans of action and collaboration.

**(e) Appoint Justice Champions** in each diocese – arising from the conference, identify people who are passionate about social justice and about effective communication to be points of contact for highlighting work being done and sharing training and resources being offered. These champions should also have a key contact in each

parish to liaise with, as well as a key contact in central church to support them.

- (f) **Engage Key People** from each committee, agency and community group that respond to injustice to update their resources, events, trainings and campaigns to the online forum.
  
- (g) **Provide Simple, Effective Case-Studies** of instances where the work groups and parishes are doing has been multiplied by accessing resources and tapping in to a wider justice movement.

#### **Step 4: Implementation of the Strategic Action**

- Decide who and appoint an individual/committee to oversee the Strategic Action over a one year period. Potential for Bishops' Appeal to assign Education Advisor Ms. Lydia Monds the task of coordinating efforts for one year, and then review.
  
- Ask Standing Committee/Budget Committee to set aside a small budget – €5,000, with plans to match this funding through Priorities and other Funds in order to conduct a survey, design information and host a conference.
  
- Make the working documents such as the Justice Strategy available online alongside the Scoping Study, the Strategy Framework and other complimentary publications such as the Council for Mission's 'Radiant Faith: Living out the Five Marks of Mission to encourage transparency in the process.
  
- Undertake the listening survey research by partnering with Ruth Garvey-Williams of Vox Magazine - contact parishes to invite their parishioners to take part in the survey.
  - What injustices do you see in your locality?

- What injustices do you see around the world?
- What matters to you?

Base the focus of the strategic plan on what matters to people at the grassroots.

- Identify key ways to break down silos by inviting key people from different groups to collate the resources on two to three justice issues initially so people feel updated, resourced and inspired. This will involve including committees, Mission Agencies, Youth and Children's Groups, Advocacy Groups and government commitments such as the Sustainable Development Goals.
- Approach Church House about having a Mission tab on the Home Page banner of the Church of Ireland website. In the Mission section, there should be a Justice Issues section which will be our Online Forum.
- Send a poster to all parishes with a leaflet thanking them for helping shape the strategy and inviting them to join the movement and be part of something bigger. Direct them to the website.
- When the strategy is launched and the connections are deepening, then a justice conference will be arranged to iron out the direction, making sure joined up thinking and the responses from the survey are at the heart of the discussions.
- Arising from the Justice conference, key people in dioceses will be approached to take up roles advocating for justice issues and keeping the flow of information moving between different groups.
- Regular updates to Standing Committee on progress and direction.

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*Join the Movement*

[www.watchthisspace.com/justice](http://www.watchthisspace.com/justice)