**“Engage compassionately with the world and society in all its rich variety of need and opportunity”. The mission statement of the House of Bishops of the Church of Ireland highlights the need for the Church of Ireland to engage with all in our society. In light of the degree of need and deprivation in Irish society, is the Church of Ireland successful in achieving this goal?**

by Ross Styles

**Abstract**

The mission statement of the House of Bishops of the Church of Ireland states that the Church of Ireland must: “Engage compassionately with the world and society in all its rich variety of need and opportunity”.1 In light of the increasing rates of homelessness and drug addiction and the continued hardships endured by many people in Irish society, it is the aim of this dissertation to assess how effective the Church of Ireland has been in engaging with all in society, particularly those at the margins.

1 *Growth, Unity, Service*, Mission Statement of the House of Bishops of the Church of Ireland, 2008.

The dissertation looks at the historical background to mission and outreach in the Church of Ireland, from the foundation of the church in 1536 through to the 20th century. The dissertation will highlight how this historical legacy had a greatly limiting effect on the Church of Ireland’s prospects for mission. The dissertation then looks at the contemporary issues facing many in Irish society, followed by the theological and biblical basis for framing an informed and caring Christian response to these problems. The dissertation then includes interviews with a broad range of people across the Church of Ireland, from the hierarchy through to local parish volunteers, to give a snapshot of how the Church of Ireland is engaging with all in society. The interviews then continue, with people from faith-based groups, such as Tiglin, that help the marginalised in our society.

The dissertation concludes with an assessment of where the Church of Ireland is, and where we can improve, in our engagement with the wider community, particularly with those vulnerable sections of society who need our support.