



*Paper of*

# **Church of Ireland**

*delivered to*

# **The Citizens' Assembly**

*on*

**05 March 2017**

## **Statement for the Citizens' Assembly from the Church of Ireland**

The Church of Ireland welcomes the invitation to speak to the Citizens' Assembly. It acknowledges the timescale given to the Assembly by the Government, but would like to note that the nature of the Church's polity prevents it from responding fully within a short space of time on a matter of such exceptional human complexity and sensitivity. The Church of Ireland is a synodical Church which develops policy guided by the prayerful consideration and discussion of bishops, clergy and laity. Accordingly, this statement can be considered only a preliminary response.

While the Church of Ireland has consistently expressed the view that abortion should be confined to situations of strict and undeniable medical necessity, it has also since 1983 publicly questioned the wisdom of addressing such complex moral problems by means of amendments to the Constitution. Indeed unfolding events and a range of tragic human cases over the past three decades have demonstrated the deficiencies of the constitutional approach. However, we would wish to emphasise that to review or question the value of the Eighth Amendment at this time is not by implication to call for easy access to abortion. Rather, it is to suggest that those complex and hopefully rare situations in which medical necessity might require termination of pregnancy would be more suitably addressed through nuanced legislation. The Church of Ireland offers its good wishes and prayers to the Assembly in its weighty duty of striving to find a way forward in this sensitive matter, so that the rights of both mothers and the unborn may be duly balanced and careful reflection may take place regarding the place of the Constitution in addressing complex moral and social matters.