



Diocesan Secretaries  
Archdeacons

Nicholas Hills  
Administrative Secretary  
Central Secretariat

19 February 2015

Dear Diocesan Secretary  
Dear Archdeacon

### **General Synod: February 2015 group of sessions**

I wrote to you at the end of last month to give an outline of the business for the February group of sessions of the General Synod. I said then that I would get back to you with an update on what happened.

### **Task Groups**

Synod members spent all of Wednesday engaging, first in smaller groups and then in plenary debates, with the reports produced by the Task Groups on Resourcing the Future (dealing principally with the method of distributing the funds made available by the Church Commissioners); Resourcing Ministerial Education (the future shape and funding of training for ordained and lay ministry and discipleship); and Simplification (a range of proposed changes to streamline legislative processes and simplifying legislation and regulation designed to make life easier for parishes and dioceses). Time was also scheduled for the Synod to offer a view on the proposal that the Church Commissioners might break their longstanding principle of inter-generational equity and make more money available to support the programme of reform and renewal and, in a smaller group, the report by Lord Green's group on developing senior leadership. Underpinning all of this was group work and then a plenary debate on Discipleship.

The motions before the Synod in the afternoon were all carried and work will now proceed to develop and consult on more detailed proposals.

The Secretary General wrote to all Diocesan Bishops and Diocesan Secretaries on 6 February offering an opportunity in dioceses for engagement with the opportunities and challenges presented by the emerging reform and renewal programme as a whole. Some of you have already been in touch to offer dates on which this might happen. I would encourage those who haven't yet done so to contact me by email at the address below.

Church House, Great Smith Street, London SW1P 3AZ

Direct Line +44(0)20 7898 1363 Switchboard: +44(0)20 7898 1000 Fax: +44(0)20 7898 1369

Email: [nicholas.hills@churchofengland.org.uk](mailto:nicholas.hills@churchofengland.org.uk) Website: <http://www.cofe.anglican.org> DX: 148403 Westminster 5

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All of the Task Group reports, video interviews and online discussion forums can be accessed here:

<http://cofecomms.tumblr.com/archive>

## **Legislation**

### ***Revision***

The **draft Naming of Dioceses Measure** returned to the Synod to complete its Revision Stage (which it had not been possible to take in November). The draft Measure was intended to enable dioceses to be named either after the see of the bishop of the diocese or after a geographical area. However, following concerns expressed that the draft Measure did not propose anything that could not already be achieved by other means (cf. the Scheme that established that the Diocese of Leeds could also be known as the Diocese of West Yorkshire and the Dales), the Synod voted against the principal provision of the draft Measure with the result that the legislative process came to an end and the draft Measure will not now proceed any further.

The **draft Safeguarding and Clergy Discipline Measure** and **draft Amending Canon No.34** were also before the Synod for revision. The draft Measure and draft Amending Canon seek to take further the process of making the Church a safe place for children and vulnerable adults – both by making the disciplinary processes under the Clergy Discipline Measure 2003 more effective in cases where safeguarding issues arise and by strengthening the wider legal framework in various ways.

The draft Measure and draft Amending Canon fared rather better than the draft Naming of Dioceses Measure. Three amendments (one to the draft Measure, two to the draft Amending Canon) were carried, all with the support of the Steering Committee, and both pieces of legislation will return to the Synod in July for Final Drafting and Final Approval.

### ***Final Approval***

**Draft Amending Canon No. 35**, which is the first step in giving effect to the Southwell & Nottingham Diocesan Synod Motion passed by the General Synod in 2012 calling for any authorised regular communicant (including children admitted to the Holy Communion under the Admission of Baptised Children to Holy Communion Regulations 2006) to be allowed to distribute the Holy Communion, received Final Approval. The Amending Canon is a paving provision: the detailed provision required to put new arrangements in place will be made by Regulations to be laid before Synod at a later date – possibly in July, once the Amending Canon has been enacted.

### ***Enactment***

**Draft Amending Canon No. 32**, which deals with the representation of the clergy in the Lower House of the Convocations and the Constitution of the Upper Houses of the Convocations, was enacted. The Canon was finally approved in July last year and forms part of the overall package of changes in the representation of bishops, clergy and laity at the General Synod.

### ***Approval***

The petition to change the names of the suffragan sees of Knaresborough and Pontefract to Ripon and Wakefield respectively was approved.

### **Other non-legislative business**

Other key business before the Synod included:

- following on from the presentation on **violence against religious minorities in Iraq and Syria** at the November group of sessions, Archbishop Bashar M Warda, Archbishop of the Chaldean Diocese of Erbil in Iraq, gave an address to the Synod at the invitation of the Archbishops;
- the Synod agreed the **allocation of seats** to the dioceses in the elections to the General Synod in the autumn of this year (GS 1975);
- a **Private Member's Motion** on the burial of those who have taken their own life (GS 1972A and GS 1972B) was carried, calling for the introduction of legislation to allow those who have taken their life to be buried in accordance with the rites of the Church of England. It was made clear during the debate that, contrary to some reports in the media, it is already the case that clergy can bury those who have taken their own life while of sound mind. It is the case, however, that in such circumstances the Canons require the use of a form of service approved by General Synod or by the diocesan bishop. The Synod has not, in fact, approved any such service. The object, therefore, of revising Canon B 38 will be to remove that requirement, so as to allow the use of the funeral service in such cases;
- a report from the Mission and Public Affairs Council and the Rural Affairs Group on **Mission and Growth in Rural Multi-Parish Benefices** (GS 1985) was well received; and
- the **Additional Baptism Texts** (for use when children or young people are present) returned to the Synod. There were two motions for re-committal of parts of the text, neither of which received sufficient support to proceed. The texts now return to the House of Bishops and, subject to the satisfactory completion of the Article 7 procedure, should come back to the Synod in July for Final Approval.

I attach the formal record of Business Done for your information.

## **Other matters not on the Agenda**

### *July 2015 group of sessions*

The Business Committee will meet on 20 May to determine the agenda for the July 2015 group of sessions at the University of York. This will be the final group of sessions of this quinquennium, following which the Synod will be dissolved. Synod will meet in the period between 10-14 July; exact timings will be published as soon as possible after the Business Committee meeting in May.

### *And finally ... Elections 2015*

In the lead up to this year's elections to the new Synod, I am working with colleagues in the Legal and Communications Offices to make information about the electoral process more readily accessible and intelligible. I will let you know when the material is available so that Diocesan Communications Officers can draw attention to it locally. (See also GS 1975 for the elections timetable and the allocation of seats to your diocese.)

I hope this briefing has been of some assistance to you. Please let me know if you need any further information.

With all good wishes

Nicholas Hills