

## General Synod Report

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The two early items of business were the Draft Care of Cathedrals Measure and the Miscellaneous Provisions Measure. These went through quickly and without controversy.

The next item of the day was a following motion to the Anglican Methodist Covenant. Rod Thomas had submitted this in July but for some reason no time had been allowed for it. Now that the Covenant has been passed to Dioceses etc. for discussion the following motion had lost some of its immediacy but there was a good discussion. The concern with the Covenant is that doctrinal issues, whilst given some coverage, are not recognised sufficiently strongly. The reason for this is that the Covenant is not intended at this stage as a programme for institutional unity, but clearly that is where most people hope it will go and many just do not seem to worry about what other people believe.

Some of the doctrinal issues identified by evangelicals were Wesleyan perfectionism, predestination, the Methodist prayers to 'God our Father and Mother', the role of women in oversight and the Methodist's willingness to promote homosexual practice. In addition the Anglo Catholics are concerned about the same issues that stalled unity thirty years ago, namely the nature of episcopacy, 'the eucharist', the doctrine of the Church and ministry.

In the end, after a reasonable debate the Synod opted to move to next business recognising the importance of the issues without wishing to go against the Covenant so soon after it was adopted.

The morning business having then been completed there were two additional motions slipped in and passed.

The first was to ensure that at some point the rules for Church AGMs are changed so that when there is an election and ballot papers are used people do not sign on the back but rather numbered papers are handed out. Apparently some unscrupulous people had been finding out who voted against them.

The second was a call to the government to give more financial help to churches coping with the repair of listed buildings.

The first business of the afternoon was a long discussion on the report "Choosing Diocesan Bishops". This included a large range of proposals to ensure that the process was more open and fair. What the report was not able to do was suggest any change to the end of the system where two names are submitted to the Prime Minister.

The chief complaints about the Crown Appointments Commission have been that its obsessive secrecy is unseemly and unhelpful and that the information supplied to the Commission about candidates is so filtered by the appointments advisors that no-one can have confidence that people are not being purposely misrepresented. The new proposals will go a long way to removing these concerns by opening up the process, allowing people's names to be put forward as possible bishops and for the candidates themselves to produce and agree the information about them which will be put to the commission.

In the event there were two amendments which involved some (significant) tinkering with the system. For each of these the vote on a show of hands was too close to call so that there had first to be a count and then because this was also too close, a division of the Synod (people go out through Aye and Noe doors). One of the amendments, from Stephen Trott, allowed that instead of there being 4 members of the Diocese on the Commission there should be 8. This was passed by a fairly narrow margin. However, the motion which it amended was adjourned - and the adjournment motion itself went to a division of the Synod). The concern was that when the motion comes back somehow Stephen Trott's proposals will have been muted.

Final business of the day was Questions. There were surprisingly few of these although there were some significant exchanges.

At one point the Bishop of Gloucester was commenting on the national conferences used to select candidates for ministry. However, with a slip of the tongue he described them as 'Natural Selection Conferences'. No doubt this has something to do with how we come to have Anglican Primates.

Tomorrow's Business Extension of the authorisation for Series 1 Marriage and Burial (these are the 1928 services with such things as intercession for the dead - the proposal is to authorise them indefinitely!). Diocesan Synod Motion on Vesture of Ministers Appointment of Auditors to the Archbishops' Council Presence and Prophecy Abortion Act Parliamentary Democracy

Further Note: One of the Private Members motions that has been put forward is a call for a commission to be set up in order look into the issue of homosexuality.

What is reprehensible about the proposed motion is that it should be a commission 'whose membership includes openly lesbian and gay lay and ordained members of the Synod.' Sadly some 79 members of the Synod have so far signed this motion.

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