

General Synod Report

Date : 25 February 2003 (Tuesday)

Source : EVNEWS Item

The first business of the second day of the General Synod was a debate on the report **Voices From Africa**. As was pointed out in the debate the vast continent of Africa is far from monochrome and likewise the churches are diverse. This report tried to bring together reflections on the life of various parts of the African churches, warts and all. The debate and resolution passed were pretty unremarkable but its view of the vibrancy and growth of the churches is no bad thing to reflect on what we can learn from them.

The Synod were then asked to consider a motion which would have changed a whole raft of legislation in order to take out the term 'chairman' and replace it with the word 'chair'. This would have been a monumental waste of time and money and most of the Synod recognised this. After the initial introduction the Synod voted to pass to next business.

The next motion would likewise have involved the church in considerable unnecessary expense. This was a call for legislation to prevent Cathedrals from **charging entrance fees** and to set up other means of financing them. In the event the motion was heavily amended so that rather than requiring legislation encouragement was given to Cathedrals to look at ways of raising funds without entrance charges.

At the beginning of the afternoon session a special emergency debate on the **Iraqi crisis** was inserted. This commended a joint statement by Rowan Williams and Cardinal O'Connor. The main point of contention in the resolution was that it calls on the UN to be the sole arbiter of whether military action should be taken against Iraq. It is no doubt good for the Church to be seen to be debating important issues of the day, whether the resolution necessarily adds anything of value to the issue is questionable. As was pointed out in the debate some of the parties to the UN security council have no less reason to block war than the perception is that the US or UK have reasons to propagate it.

The Synod then resumed debate on changes to its standing orders concerning the **Crown Appointments Commission**. The principal bone of contention here was that in November the Synod decided to increase the number of Diocesan reps on the CAC from 4 to 8. This was deemed by the establishment to be wrong and since then considerable pressure has been brought to get the Synod to change its mind. Although no decision was taken today it was decided to defer this part of the business

to July so that people can be worked on in order to manipulate the decision. This sort of thing, which has happened before, is Synod at its worse. The primary issue is whether when a Bishop is being appointed the Diocese should have about one third or one half of the places on the Appointments Committee.

There were a few other changes made to the Standing orders mostly fairly unremarkable.

There were two further items of business, both liturgical. The first was a set of **Additional Collects**. These collects in Common Worship are a sharp contrast to those in the ASB. Principally this is because they follow much more closely the Book of Common Prayer than ever the ASB did. This has not pleased many who wanted collects in contemporary idiom. As a result, at the request of the Synod, the Liturgical Commission has produced some new, shorter collects. These were remitted by Synod to a Revision Committee. It is open to anyone, where a member of Synod or not, to make submissions to the Committee about possible changes. My primary observation (which I was not called to make in the debate) is that almost without exception the rich vein of the grace of God which runs through the BCP, and hence Common Worship, collects has been eradicated in these briefer alternatives.

The second liturgical item was a sort of progress report on the Common Worship **Daily Prayer**. There were some issues of concern about this but it is largely unremarkable.

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