

General Synod Report

Date : 10 February 2004 (Tuesday)

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The morning of the second day of the General Synod (Tuesday 10 February) was taken up with changes to the **composition of the General Synod**. The initial work had been done several years ago by the Bridge Commission and although some recommendations had already been implemented most of them had to wait until now.

There were over 70 items on the agenda paper although many of them were interlocking.

It was agreed to reduce the number of Suffragan Bishops on Synod by 2. A radical suggestion by the Bishop of Ripon and Leeds to allow the Bishops in each Diocese to decide who would represent them was rejected, but not without significant support, on the grounds that Diocesan Bishops needed to be part of the Synod in order that they hear what everyone else has to say.

It was agreed to reduce the number of Deans on the Synod who have a special electoral constituency.

The proposal to create a special electoral constituency for Archdeacons was not agreed. Presently there is at least one Archdeacon on Synod for every Diocese, one is ex-officio. An amendment from the floor was passed that Archdeacons should stand as part of the ordinary clergy but that at most one Archdeacon can be elected from each Diocese.

It was agreed that the number of Laity be reduced by having a lower upper limit for those elected from each Diocese.

A further proposal to cut the special representation from clergy in Universities was defeated.

In all the Synod will fall by about 90.

In the afternoon the Synod discussed the report **Mission-shaped Church**. There was a good crowd in the chamber and gallery for this debate. The Bishop of Liverpool stressed that this report was largely about recognising creative ways of being church that have grown out of the grass roots of the Church. The report aims to set out an integrated strategy for both neighbourhood (parish churches etc) and network church as a response to the mobile and diverse environment of today.

The report was well received and many of the suggestions within it are already shaping other business before the Synod this week.

There were several amendments passed most of which are worthy although they make the final motion cumbersome and complicated.

There followed a report entitled **A Measure for Measures** that in many ways builds on Mission-shaped Church. This document contains a large number of recommendations that will have a significant impact on the shape of the Church.

The proposals do make a self-conscious shift to the Diocesan level away from the national.

Following on from this they will make it far easier to restructure Dioceses and to look at the numbers of Bishops.

A single new measure for Mission and Ministry is proposed dealing with Diocese, Neighbourhood and Network and Church Buildings.

The Measure will recognise and facilitate the variety of fresh expressions of being Church. It will also cover issues to do with church buildings and particularly streamlining the procedures when buildings are no longer needed for worship.

The **Pastoral (Amendment) Measure** prompted some technical discussion. It allows for parts of church buildings to be leased whereas at present they have to be used under licence.

The final debate of the day was the twice re-convened debate on **Gender Neutral** titles. This would have required that several pieces of legislation should be revised to remove words such as chairman and replace it with chair. An amendment that was accepted by the proposers from Birmingham Diocese was passed to provide that no past legislation would need to be revised but rather in all future legislation of the synod gender neutral titles would be used.