

General Synod of the Scottish Episcopal Church

June 2022

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Secretary General of the Church

INTRODUCTION

The General Synod of the Scottish Episcopal Church (SEC) met from 9 to 11 June 2022. The previous two meetings of the Synod had taken place in virtual form only. The 2022 meeting was in hybrid format, with most members attending in person and a small number joining online.

In his charge to Synod, the Most Rev'd Mark Strange, Primus, noted how the world had changed significantly since the previous meeting of Synod in 2021. Following lockdown, the Church needed to help with the rebuilding of community and to be able to give hope by offering good news to those struggling to find a safe place to live, to feed their families or to heat their homes.

Early on in the session, Synod members met in small groups to 'debrief' following the experience of the pandemic and shared challenges and encouragements encountered.

ALTERATIONS TO CANONS – ELECTION OF BISHOPS

A first reading of alterations to Canon 4 (to be renamed *Of the Calling and Election of Bishops to Vacant Sees*) was approved after significant debate. The presentation of a first reading in 2022 followed the Synod's decision in 2021 to favour a limited revision of the Canon rather than a more radical reinvention of the electoral process. At present, the process under Canon 4 provides for an initial process in which a Preparatory Committee (which includes both provincial and diocesan members) produces a shortlist of a minimum of three, and maximum of five, names. The shortlist is made public, and the candidates are presented for election by the Electoral Synod (the membership of which largely mirrors that of the Diocesan Synod). In the event of the process failing (for example, if the minimum shortlist cannot be attained) the process is re-run and, in the event of the process failing again, the right of election defaults to the Episcopal Synod, consisting of the seven diocesan bishops.

The new Canon retains the respective roles of the Preparatory Committee, Electoral Synod and Episcopal Synod but more intentionally brings all elements into a single process. It also envisages that the bishops would be present at the preliminary meeting of the Electoral Synod, the intention being that, if the election

ultimately passes to the Episcopal Synod, they will have had first-hand experience of hearing the needs and aspirations of the diocese as it seeks to discern its new Bishop. The proposed new process also dispenses with the publication of the shortlist of candidates and envisages that candidates' names will remain confidential such that only the name of the elected candidate would be made public. The new Canon provides that if the first process is 'unsuccessful' (for example, a shortlist of at least three names cannot be achieved, or the Electoral Synod declines to elect any of the candidates), then it is run for a second time, with the minimum number of names on the shortlist being reduced from three to two. If that second process is unsuccessful, the election passes to the Episcopal Synod.

Considerable emphasis during the debate was placed on training in discernment for those involved in the electoral process, the practical care of candidates during the process and the need for prayer and attentiveness to the Holy Spirit throughout. Having received a first reading, the text of the new Canon passes to Diocesan Synods for comment and will return to General Synod 2023 for a second reading. By then, a commentary and set of guidelines to accompany the Canon will have been prepared and will address some of the practical aspects of running an episcopal electoral process.

ALTERATIONS TO LITURGY

In 2021, a first reading of proposed changes to the Scottish Liturgy 1982 had been approved. The revisions comprise modifications to language, both in reference to humans and to God, in order to reflect changes in English usage since the 1982 Liturgy had first been adopted. At second reading in 2022, a number of suggestions made by Diocesan Synods were incorporated and the liturgy received its second and final reading.

The Synod gave a first reading to three Pastoral Offices for Priests, Deacons, and Readers and other Authorised Lay Ministers, respectively, the offices having previously been authorised for experimental use in 2017. All three offices now pass to Diocesan Synods for comment before returning for a second reading at General Synod 2023.

An alteration was made to the Scottish Calendar to include the commemoration on 19 January each year of Scottish Saints and Martyrs of the Reformation Period. The Synod also agreed to amend the Calendar to include a commemoration on 15 June of members of the church who had suffered under the Penal Laws applicable to Scottish Episcopalians and that were introduced following the Jacobite uprisings.

CLIMATE CHANGE

The new Provincial Environment Group gave a presentation about the challenges faced by the Church in working towards its target of net zero

carbon emissions by 2030. The extrapolation of data from the results of a survey undertaken earlier in 2022 suggested that the SEC as a whole had an overall baseline of 4300–5700 tonnes of CO₂, equating to 13.9 tonnes per church. A consultation on the definition of net zero is to be issued later in 2022.

UKRAINE

The Synod heard first-hand from a member of clergy who had helped transport Ukrainian refugees from the Ukrainian border to Berlin earlier in the year. It also received a presentation from Scottish Faiths Action for Refugees on what churches could do in Scotland to support refugees locally. The Synod endorsed a statement from the Primus deploring Russian aggression in Ukraine.

ETHICAL INVESTMENT

The Synod agreed a revised ethical investment policy statement for the SEC Unit Trust Pool. The policy, building on previous restriction, now places restrictions on direct investment in companies that derive more than 10% of their turnover from armaments, fossil fuel extraction, gambling, pornography and tobacco. (A policy previously adopted also states that where investments in such restricted categories are held in pooled funds, they should not exceed 1% of the value of the Unit Trust Pool.) The new policy also recognises that ethical investment goes beyond simply avoiding areas that are incompatible with the SEC's values. It envisages that the SEC should have regard, where possible, to the desirability of investing in funds with a focus on making a positive contribution in areas such as: developments in human health, well-being, education and communications; the sustainable development of just and peaceful societies; businesses that minimise the harmful effects of industry.

SAFEGUARDING

In order to introduce a greater degree of external scrutiny into the SEC's safeguarding processes, a proposal was approved to expand the membership of the provincial Safeguarding Committee by requiring two members having professional safeguarding management experience at a senior level to be drawn from outwith the SEC.

RULES OF ORDER

In a somewhat lengthy and procedurally complicated debate, the Synod considered possible changes to the Rules of Order for Synod meetings. Not all

of the proposals were accepted, but it was agreed to introduce a formal process to enable counter motions to be proposed and debated.

OTHER MATTERS

The Synod approved the annual report and accounts for the General Synod for the year ended 31 December 2021. Recognising that a new stipend policy adopted by Synod in 2021 would produce a significant increase in the level of stipend for 2023 and beyond, and also that current economic circumstances were likely to prove challenging for many congregations, the Standing Committee indicated its intention to make provision for Transitional Stipend Assistance Grants for congregations for 2023 and 2024. In addition, whilst provincial quota had been substantially reduced as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic, with the intention that there would be a phased increase to £750,000 by 2024, the Committee proposed to further smooth the increase by deferring until 2025 the rise to £750,000. In consequence, the increase in provincial quota for 2023 was limited to £25,000, giving a total figure for provincial quota of £685,000 for that year.

The Synod also received reports on the development of lay learning opportunities, largely arising from experience during the pandemic of significant engagement of lay people in online lectures and discussion; on ongoing work by the Personnel Committee; on the development of training and resources for congregations on matters of health and safety and risk assessment; and a presentation by the Provincial Youth Committee.

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Governing Body of the Church in Wales

April and September 2022

MATTHEW CHINERY
Head of Legal Services

THE NEW ARCHBISHOP

The Governing Body of the Church in Wales met at the International Conference Centre, Newport on 27–28 April 2022 and 6–7 September 2022. The April session began with the formal notification to the Governing Body of the election of the Most Reverend Andrew John, Bishop of Bangor, as Archbishop