

Northern Ireland who had chaired the working group that had produced it. As well as chapters covering all aspects of the life of the Church of Ireland, it includes a history, a glossary and photographs. It is an attractive publication, making the Constitution more accessible to members of the Church.

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## General Synod of the Scottish Episcopal Church

June 2018

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### INTRODUCTION

The General Synod met at St Paul's and St George's Church in Edinburgh from 7 to 9 June. It was the first General Synod at which the new Primus, the Most Revd Mark Strange, presided. In his charge to Synod, he preached on the love of God and the meaning of 'loving your neighbour as yourself'. The mission of the Church was about revealing God's love and making life better for all, not just for church members.

### CHILD POVERTY

A particular focus of the meeting was a session from the Church in Society Committee on child poverty. The Synod was addressed by the Roman Catholic Bishop of Galloway, the Rt Revd William Nolan, on the *Give Me Five* campaign: an initiative calling upon the Scottish Government to pay a top-up on child benefit of £5 per week. Synod heard at first hand of specific local initiatives undertaken by St Andrew's Cathedral, Inverness, to alleviate child poverty, including a holiday lunch club for school-age children, a breakfast club and banks to provide school uniforms, toiletries and winter jackets. After debate, the Synod supported a motion endorsing the *Give Me Five* campaign.

### ALTERATIONS TO CANONS AND RESOLUTIONS

Changes to the Church's Code of Canons require a two-year process: a first reading at General Synod, followed by consideration of the proposed change

by diocesan synods, then a second reading by the General Synod the following year. At first reading stage, the change requires a simple majority in the separate houses of bishops, clergy and laity; at second reading stage, a two-thirds majority in each house is needed. In 2018, there were no Canons for second reading but amendments to two Canons received a first reading.

Canon 35 ('Of the structure, furniture and monuments of churches, and the due care thereof') sets out a process for obtaining consent to alterations to church buildings.<sup>5</sup> Approval at first-reading stage was given to a change to include church curtilages within the scope of the Canon, since their status had previously been a matter of some doubt. The inclusion of curtilages would be subject to a number of 'minor works' exceptions to the requirement to obtain consent.

In relation to Canon 52 ('Of the General Synod'), a first reading was given to a proposal to dissolve the Information and Communication Board (one of the General Synod boards). The underlying rationale, set within a broader communications strategy, was to address the perception that communication was limited to a single board when, in fact, it was a role for all boards.

Resolutions under Canons are a form of subsidiary legislation and require only a single reading for adoption. Resolution 1 under Canon 41 ('Of communicants' and other rolls'), which previously required public display of the local communicants' roll prior to church annual meetings, was amended to ensure that this would be done only provided that there was appropriate compliance with data protection legislation.

Canon 4 ('Of the election of bishops to vacant sees') sets out a detailed process for the election of bishops. In essence, following the preparation of a shortlist of candidates, the diocese in question elects its new bishop. The Canon provides a default position so that, in circumstances where a diocese has been unable to elect a bishop within the requisite timescale, the Episcopal Synod (which comprises all diocesan bishops) itself elects the new bishop. The Diocesan Synod of Aberdeen and Orkney had passed a resolution earlier in 2018, which was subsequently adopted by the provincial Faith and Order Board for presentation to General Synod, calling for a review of the Canon. The motion was accepted, and the Faith and Order Board will now establish a review group.

## PERSONNEL POLICIES

The Personnel Committee presented policies on various matters relevant to the clergy, including policies on clergy leave, maternity, paternity, adoption, parental and shared parental leave, clergy housing, clergy retirement and clergy expenses. However, the first policy to be presented, on clergy leave, received

5 'Faculties' do not feature in the legal system of the Scottish Episcopal Church.

considerable opposition in relation to matters of both content and general approach. In the light of that opposition, the motions presenting the policies for Synod's approval were all withdrawn. As a result, the Personnel Committee will give further consideration to these policy areas, including improved means of consultation prior to proposals being presented to Synod.

## STRATEGIC AND FINANCIAL MATTERS

Future budgets were given consideration in the general context of various strategic initiatives. In particular, the Synod heard a report from the Scottish Episcopal Institute's recently appointed Director of Mixed Mode Training, the Revd Richard Tiplady. Mixed mode training for ordinands will commence in the autumn of 2018. A presentation was also made by the Mission Board on some of the implications for the Scottish Episcopal Church of the Scottish Churches Census completed in 2017.

The Standing Committee brought forward a proposal to increase provincial quota (payable by dioceses to the province) by 3 per cent for 2019. Extended debate took place, with a number of Synod members voicing concern at the financial burdens faced by congregations. In the event, the motion was amended to freeze provincial quota for 2019 at the 2018 level.

A report on the triennial valuation of the Scottish Episcopal Church Pension Fund, carried out as at 31 December 2017, explained that the Fund was in surplus by approximately £3.7 million. While the cost of future service had increased from 30.2 per cent of stipend in 2014 to 35.9 per cent in 2017, the Synod agreed, in the light of the surplus, to maintain the current contribution rate of 32.2 per cent of stipend, with effect from 1 January 2019.

## OTHER MATTERS

Synod received reports from those who had represented the Scottish Episcopal Church at the Conference of European Churches Assembly in Novi Sad and the UN Commission on the Status of Women session in New York in 2018. The Church and Society Committee reported on a range of current work, including discussion of Brexit, and pilgrimage in the current age. Various internal matters were also considered, including a paper on the future role of the provincial Mission Board and alterations to the process for appointment of members to the provincial Administration Board. The Synod also welcomed a number of younger church members who spoke of the work of the Youth Committee.

*The report for the General Synod of the Church of England will appear in volume 20, issue 2.*