

been amended by the Westminster Parliament. It was noted that the Church's current position is that marriage is between one man and one woman and that in consequence the Church cannot support the legislation. Comment was made on the need to protect those with genuine religious convictions which do not embrace same-sex relationships.

#### CHURCH AND SOCIETY COUNCIL

The council presented a number of topical issues, chiefly addressing the economy and welfare reform. A new issue this year was funeral poverty: the Assembly urged the Scottish Government to address the matter in its upcoming review of legislation relating to burials and cremations and to urge local authorities and others to ensure that funeral charges are fair. Furthermore, the Assembly urged that national insurance contributions and benefits should cover basic funeral costs.

#### SAFEGUARDING COMMITTEE

The Assembly again issued an instruction that all staff and volunteers in congregations should be enrolled in the Protection of Vulnerable Groups scheme by October 2015 and that guidance and procedures produced by the Church should be rigorously observed.

doi:10.1017/S0956618X14000957

## Governing Body of the Church in Wales

**April and September 2014**

PHILIP MORRIS

Archdeacon of Margam

#### INTRODUCTION: EPISCOPAL MINISTRY

In his April Presidential Address the Archbishop noted a number of important current issues – gender, same-sex relationships, assisted dying and ecumenism – and said that he could not recall a Governing Body where so many important topics were all under discussion at the same time. Perhaps the most critical,

however, was the Bishops' Code of Practice, published in advance of the Bill that was to come into effect in September to make it possible for women to be ordained as bishops. What followed would be a listening exercise, since no decision on the matter was required of the Governing Body. What all the issues highlighted, however, was that there was genuine principled disagreement among Christians about moral, doctrinal and ecumenical issues. Moreover, no-one approached those matters neutrally; all had been shaped one way or another by upbringing, education and life experiences to see things in certain ways.

The Presidential Address in September was very different: unusually, it was from all seven bishops collegially. The Archbishop said that on the issue of the consecration of women to the episcopate he was aware that there was a danger that what he was about to say would not please either side – but that was the risk the Governing Body had taken in entrusting the bishops with the task of drawing up the Code of Practice. The Bill explicitly said that the Code should be drawn up in such a way that every member of the Church might feel secure and the bishops had also drawn extensively on work done elsewhere in the Anglican Communion.

#### THE CODE OF PRACTICE ON EPISCOPAL MINISTRY

The Code of Practice is in two parts: five underlying principles and five provisions setting out the detail. The five principles are as follows:

1. The Church in Wales is fully and unequivocally committed to all orders of ministry being open equally to all, without reference to gender. It holds that all those whom it duly elects, canonically ordains and appoints to office are the true and lawful holders of the office which they occupy and thus deserve due respect and canonical obedience.
2. Anyone who ministers within the Church in Wales must be prepared to accept that the Church in Wales has reached a clear decision on the matter.
3. Since the Church in Wales continues to share the historic episcopate with other Churches, including other Churches of the Anglican Communion, the Roman Catholic and the Orthodox Churches, which continue to ordain only men as priests or bishops, the Bench of Bishops acknowledges that this decision on ministry and gender is set within a broader process of discernment and reception within the Anglican Communion and the whole Church of God.
4. Within the Church in Wales, those who on grounds of theological conviction and conscience are unable to receive the sacramental ministry of women bishops or priests continue to be within the spectrum of teaching and tradition of the Anglican Communion. The Church in Wales therefore remains committed to enabling all its members to flourish within its life and

structures as accepted and valued. Appropriate provision for them will be made in a way intended to maintain the highest possible degree of communion and contributes to mutual flourishing across the whole Church in Wales.

5. Since the Code of Practice needs to be both strong and flexible enough to respond to a changing situation in the future, and since the Governing Body has entrusted the Bench of Bishops with the task of agreeing a Code which commits the Bench to making provisions for all the members of the Church in Wales, the Bench reserves the right to amend the provisions of this Code as may be necessary in the future.

The Bench did not accept the view of those who say that the Church should not ordain from that moment onwards those who do not accept the ordination of women. A process of discernment meant waiting to see what emerged in the Communion. The five provisions are as follows:

1. Should a woman become a diocesan Bishop in the Church in Wales, her jurisdiction as a diocesan bishop is recognised unreservedly and without qualification as set out in the Canons and Constitution of the Church in Wales for a diocesan bishop.
2. Individual members of the Church in Wales who, on grounds of conscience, are unable to receive the sacramental ministry of a woman diocesan bishop, shall not be required to do so against their conscience, and alternative provision shall be made.
3. A diocesan bishop shall make for such members within their dioceses all reasonable provision for appropriate sacramental episcopal ministry on such occasions as necessary upon submission of a request in writing from those individuals supported by their parish priest.
4. The bishops of the Church in Wales commit themselves to making themselves available to their colleagues to assist one another in facilitating any such provision.
5. No bishop shall be obliged to bring proceedings against any member of the Church in Wales on the grounds that such a member dissents in conscience from the provisions of the Canons enabling Women to be Ordained as Bishops or Priests.

In the September Presidential Address delivered on their behalf by the Archbishop, the bishops went on to say that Provision 1 made it clear that the jurisdiction of a woman bishop has to be ‘recognised unreservedly’, but Provisions 2 and 3 made it obligatory for alternative provision to be made for individuals – *not* for parishes – who on the grounds of conscience were unable to receive the sacramental – *not* jurisdictional – ministry of a woman bishop in confirmation and ordination.

The bishops explained that many of those who were against the ordination of women wanted the Bench to allow ordinations or confirmations by a male bishop specifically ordained for that purpose who was himself against the ordination of women. However, that was a model of episcopacy that the Bench could not accept: it was

an uncatholic view of the episcopate for people to accept only bishops who happen to agree with their own views. Others could refuse the ministry of bishops simply because they are not in accord with their views on a whole range of other issues.

Moreover, a specific alternative episcopal ministry for members unable in conscience to accept the ministry of a woman bishop could not be in full communion with a future Bench of Bishops which included women and, as such, would not serve the unity of the Church.

The bishops wanted to be as inclusive as possible, which is why they wanted to affirm wholeheartedly the ordination of women to the episcopate; but they could also accept that provision should be made for those unable to accept their sacramental ministry. Their hope was that, by making such a provision, no-one would feel the need to leave the Church.

## COMMISSION OF COVENANTED CHURCHES

In 2012 the Gathering of the Covenanted Churches had made recommendations for a pattern of ordained ministry in a Uniting Church, and its Commission produced three discussion papers for consideration by the denominations, asking for a response by July 2014. The Church's Standing Doctrinal Commission had subsequently produced a paper for the Bench of Bishops. The Governing Body discussed the papers in response to a motion to commend the recommendations and to encourage the Covenanted Churches Commission to develop them further, taking into account the advice of the Standing Doctrinal Commission.

Under the proposals, the Uniting Church would have nine jurisdictions: the six existing dioceses plus a Methodist jurisdiction, a Presbyterian jurisdiction and a URC/Covenanting Baptist jurisdiction, each of which would be invited to elect its own bishop. A description of the bishop's role would be drawn up and agreed by all five Covenanted Churches.

## CHURCH IN WALES REVIEW: PROGRESS

At the April meeting the Chair of the Implementation Group on the recommendations of the Church in Wales Review in 2020 *Vision* said that, in the

fifteen months since the group had started its work advising on how the recommendations might be taken forward, change had been happening across the Church. 2014 was likely to be a particularly exciting year, as diocesan strategies were taken forward in partnership with Church members and a number of important provincial events to support that work took place. A major concern, however, was that many people within the Church still knew little, if anything, about 2020 *Vision*; and it was the group's responsibility to address that.

Of particular interest to readers of this *Journal* is the news that a Legal Issues Group has been set up to advise on issues arising from the implementation of the review's recommendations. Initial findings were that there were no significant constitutional obstacles to the creation of ministry areas.

## FINANCES AND MEMBERSHIP

The Annual Report and Accounts of the Representative Body revealed that investment income was recovering from the losses incurred during the recession; however, income levels were still below those in 2007. The block grant to each diocese, used mainly for ministry costs, would again be increased by 3 per cent in 2014, though the Representative Body was running an annual deficit. Easter communicants had dropped by 10 per cent from 2012 and average Sunday attendance by over-eighteens by 4 per cent.

## DIOCESAN CONFERENCES

In September, on a motion from the diocesan conference of St Asaph, the Governing Body agreed to reduce the minimum age for membership of diocesan conferences from eighteen to sixteen.

## SAME-SEX MARRIAGE

In April, the Governing Body had met in small groups to discuss a paper on options for same-sex marriage. In September, the Archbishop announced a twelve-month consultation with the dioceses on whether or not the Church should solemnise same-sex marriages. They would be asked to give their views on three options: maintaining the status quo, conducting same-sex weddings or blessing same-sex relationships. The Church's Church and Society Officer would produce a specific consultation paper in co-operation with the Bench of Bishops which would be sent to the dioceses along with the Doctrinal Commission's report. At the end of the consultation the bishops would bring proposals to the Governing Body.

## MEDIATION SERVICE

At the April meeting, the Governing Body authorised and commended the establishment of a mediation service for the Church, consisting of trained mediators from all dioceses who will support clergy and laity as a voluntary and confidential form of addressing disputes. It might be used to try to resolve conflict arising between clergy or laity; to rebuild relationships after a formal dispute has been resolved; and to address a range of issues, including relationship breakdown, personality clashes, communication problems, bullying and harassment. The mediator would work through a process of one-to-one and joint meetings with the parties to explore and address their differences, as well as seeking areas of agreement and a basis to go forward.

## ST MICHAEL'S COLLEGE LLANDAFF AND MINISTERIAL TRAINING

At the September meeting, the Archbishop of Wales explained the decision of the Bench of Bishops to reform theological training in the province. The bishops had rejected the proposals of a review group to close St Michael's College, Llandaff. However, both St Michael's and the St Seiriol's Centre in Bangor would eventually cease to exist in their present form and form part of one training institute for the whole of the Church, with a single training institution on two or three sites. Llandaff, Bangor, Carmarthen and Wrexham were currently under consideration. The Bishop of Monmouth noted that the number of clergy in the Province had fallen to 471 from almost 700 in 1998; and the Church needed to make it clear that ordained and lay ministry would be equally valued.

Canon Dr Peter Sedgwick would be retiring as Principal of St Michael's at the end of the 2013/14 academic year after ten years at the college. He was to be succeeded as Acting Principal by the Dean of Residential Training, the Revd Dr Mark Clavier.

## THE ORDINAL

The bishops had already been using the Alternative Ordinal on appropriate occasions; and in September 2013 the Governing Body had expressed the wish to bring forward a Bill to authorise it on a permanent basis. The Bill to incorporate the Alternative Ordinal into the Church's *Book of Common Prayer* was duly passed.

doi:10.1017/S0956618X14000969