

Congregational Pastoral Care Visiting Group members supporting ‘protected adults’ as defined in the Act have the opportunity to attend safeguarding training in their congregations and to ensure that ministers within the bounds co-operate fully with the Safeguarding Service and Ministries Council in complying with the Protecting Vulnerable Groups Scheme as introduced by the Act.

The Assembly also decided that all volunteers and paid staff should have a copy of the new pocket guide, *Safeguarding Children and Adults at Risk: key information for volunteers and staff*, and that congregations should be encouraged to make full use of the new safeguarding handbooks.

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Governing Body of the Church in Wales

April and September 2012

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Archdeacon of Margam

INTRODUCTION

As always, the 2012 meetings of the Governing Body addressed issues of relevance both to wider society in Wales and to the domestic life of the Church. The Archbishop’s Presidential Address to the April meeting focused on the likelihood of the extension of civil marriage to same-sex partners and the issues raised by *Equal Civil Marriage: a consultation*. If the legislation to allow same-sex civil marriage were passed, said the Archbishop, ‘I cannot see how we, as a Church, will be able to ignore the legality of the status of such partnerships and we ought not to want to do so’. In September, on the other hand, he concentrated on what he described as ‘musings on the underlying philosophy of *The Church in Wales Review Report*’ and, in particular, on what the Report had to say about the Gospel and the Church as an institution.

ANGLICAN COMMUNION COVENANT

In April 2011 the Governing Body had held an initial discussion on the final version of the Anglican Communion Covenant. In April 2012 it was asked to decide whether or not to subscribe to it. An amendment was proposed to the

motion for acceptance asking for a pause until the Anglican Consultative Council had decided how to proceed in the light of the rejection of the Covenant by the Church of England. The amendment was carried and the motion, as amended, was passed overwhelmingly – giving the Covenant what the Bishop of St Asaph described as an ‘amber light’.

EDUCATION

Education was a major focus of the September meeting, with presentations on chaplaincy in higher education and discussion of the Interim Report of the Church in Wales Advisory Council for Education that arose from *The Church in Wales Education Review* in September 2009. The Interim Report highlighted a number of recommendations that had not yet been implemented, such as the formation of Deanery Education Groups and the opening of new Church in Wales Welsh-medium primary and secondary schools. Dioceses were encouraged to be much more proactive at every level in recognising the opportunities that schools present to engage with children, young people and their families as part of the Church’s commitment to the wider community.

HARRIES REVIEW GROUP

In April 2011 the Archbishop had announced the establishment of a Review Group consisting of Bishop Richard Harries, Professor Charles Handy and Professor Patricia Peattie to consider the extent to which the Church in Wales was ‘fit for purpose as a channel of God’s grace for individuals, for our communities and for our nation’ – a decision driven by falling clergy numbers, financial pressures and parishes with ageing congregations and declining resources.

The Review Report⁵ was launched on 20 July 2012; dioceses and parishes were asked for initial reactions and comments by 9 November 2012. The Report makes 50 recommendations, perhaps the most radical of which is that parishes should be replaced by much larger ‘ministry areas’ served by a team of clergy and lay people, with full-time youth workers for each archdeaconry and more emphasis on ministry for young people. The Report envisages three administrative centres for the six dioceses, with Llandaff designated the permanent Archiepiscopal See and changes in the process of electing bishops. The overall emphasis is on collaborative ministry and outreach.

The Governing Body unanimously welcomed the Report and commended it for study and action.

5 *Church in Wales Review*, <<http://www.churchinwales.org.uk/structure/govbody/sep12/r.pdf>>, accessed 25 September 2012.

MEMBERSHIP AND FINANCE

There had been a continuing decline of between 2 and 4 per cent in attendance on Sundays and the major festivals, though Christmas 2011 had shown a significant increase because adverse weather conditions had had a major effect on attendance at Christmas services in 2010. Total income and expenditure had fallen but planned giving had increased by 5.1 per cent. Average giving by those attending on Sundays was £8.26. Total direct giving had increased from £6,928,000 in 1990 to £14,610,000 in 2011. However, the overall picture was one of continuing decline. Since 1990 Easter communicants and average Sunday attendance had fallen by almost half and there had also been a steep decline in the number of baptisms and confirmations.

REPRESENTATIVE BODY REPORT

The Charities Act 2011 ended the Representative Body's exemption from the requirement to register with the Charity Commission and it duly registered in August 2011. Lord Rowe-Beddoe retired after ten years as chair and was succeeded by James Turner, the deputy chair.

Continued volatility in the investment markets and the debt crisis in the Eurozone had made for a challenging investment environment in 2011. Total net income rose 8.5 per cent on 2010 levels but investment values fell from £447 million to £410 million. Detailed work would be carried out on the Clergy Pension Scheme and discussions were being held with dioceses on the level of the Block Grant from 2015. It would be necessary for the province to absorb any annual deficits for a number of years so that parishes could be shielded from the full effects of the recession.

The Representative Body had prepared the detailed Statement of Terms of Service for clergy and 69 per cent of clergy had already signed up to them.

WOMEN IN THE EPISCOPATE

The April meeting discussed a consultation paper prepared by the bishops on the ordination of women to the episcopate and completed a questionnaire. The results indicated that there was clear and sufficient support for the bishops to bring forward a bill to enable women to be ordained as bishops. There was also significant support for some form of pastoral provision for those with conscientious objections to that course, but little support for structural or parochial opt-outs.

The bishops therefore proposed that appropriate legislation be drawn up to enable women to be ordained to the episcopate but through two separate bills: the first on the issue of principle and the second to provide a scheme of pastoral

provision for conscientious objectors. If the first were passed and became a canon it would not come into force until the second bill was approved by the Governing Body and also became a canon. The second bill would include the scheme of pastoral provision as a schedule in order to give objectors as much reassurance as possible that the Church was being faithful to its declared intent in 1996. After debate, the Governing Body agreed the proposals by a majority.

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General Synod of the Church of Ireland

May 2012

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INTRODUCTION

Although six bills appeared on the agenda paper for Dublin this year there was only one of real substance. Two were to correct some cross-references in previous legislation, one was of a technical nature relating to voluntary pension contributions and a further bill imposed a requirement on dioceses to provide statistics to central Church bodies when demanded.

There was also a bill disbanding the existing provincial mediation panels, which have never been used since they were established some ten years ago – not so much because relationships between clergy, parishes and the ecclesiastical authorities in Ireland are so good that there are never any quarrels as because the perception on the part of clergy is that the procedures are inimical to them. At the time that these panels were established, a levy was imposed to provide the funding that it was felt might be necessary. No provision has as yet been made to deal with those funds. It will be interesting to see if they will be retained in central funds or distributed back to the dioceses.

THE COMMISSION ON EPISCOPAL MINISTRY AND STRUCTURES

The final bill, while simple and uncontroversial in itself, might well have significant and far-reaching consequences: it establishes a Commission on Episcopal Ministry and Structures.