

Two further bills fell by the wayside. A Bill to alter the representation provisions of the Constitution so as to reflect more closely demographic changes in the Church of Ireland population since 1870 was defeated in both Houses. A Bill intended to provide for the better observance of the legal requirements relating to copyright was withdrawn.

As there were no liturgical resolutions, it would appear that, for the first time in many years, there will be no liturgical legislation before the Synod when it meets in Galway in 2008. No doubt some other central committee will fill the unaccustomed gap, lest the membership should have nothing to do.

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In his opening address, the Primus called for a developing faith rather than a static one, inviting people into relationship rather than repelling them. This required a greater optimism, with the obligation to consider the needs of the wider Church. The Primate's address opened the way to consideration of the Anglican Communion Covenant.

THE COVENANT

The terms of the Covenant led to a lively debate within a fixed-time limit. The Faith and Order Board of the Province will give its final response for the Anglican Communion. Only after it had been presented to the Anglican Consultative Council would the text be passed to the Province for ratification by the Synod.

It was doubted whether a Covenant vague enough for the Scottish Province would be specific enough for some others; but the Church had to seek a common mind or else look at ways in which to stay together if such a common mind was to be reached. An agreed orthodoxy was not something to which the Scottish Church was accustomed.

In the end, the Synod invited the Faith and Order Board to finalise a response to the Anglican Communion; and a suggestion by the Bishops of holding a

conference in late 2007 or early 2008 in order to ascertain what were the key issues in the Covenant led to little discussion and no questions.

ELECTION OF BISHOPS

After such heady stuff, the canonical changes and the standard domestic house-keeping resolutions were quietly passed. The first canonical change to be considered for a second time was concerned with the Canon 'of the Election of Bishops' and, in particular, with the information to be given to the Electors about the various candidates. It also made it possible for the Assessor to be changed and prohibited the introduction of new Electors after the preliminary meeting. In respect of a vacant see, it gave the College of Bishops power to appoint one of their number (and not necessarily the Primus) to take charge of the vacant diocese. None of these changes proved controversial.

CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

This turned out to be a more difficult matter. A paper had been prepared and issued, which proposed the creation of two membership rolls: a Congregational Roll (roughly equivalent to the present Roll of Adherents) and an Electoral Roll (of those who wished to become more fully involved in the life of the congregation as voting members – in effect, replacing the current Communicants' Roll); but the importance and complexity of formulating a way of determining membership of a congregation led to considerable discussion. It was not a mere administrative change but a fundamental shift in the idea of what membership comprised. The outcome was a Resolution to receive the Discussion Paper and to ask the Faith and Order Board to bring forward the appropriate canonical alterations for a first reading at the General Synod 2008.

CHILD PROTECTION

The developing area of child protection legislation required changes; and vulnerable adults were now incorporated into the system of protection by the Adult Support and Protection (Scotland) Act 2007. New guidelines had been prepared and the necessary changes to Canons and Resolutions were passed.

LITURGY

A Resolution was then passed authorising the Marriage Liturgy 2007, with celebration of the Eucharist an optional inclusion. Doubts were expressed as to whether sufficient time had been allowed to elapse since its introduction in 2002 for full experimental use; but a motion to defer its introduction to the

list was lost. Marriage was not defined in the service, but it was understood to be ‘the ceremony by which two persons are made husband and wife’, as defined in the *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*.

RETIREMENT

The needs of retired clergy led to several motions. The Retirement Welfare Committee suggested a levy on all legacies for the benefit of the Retirement Fund; but no proposal was formulated as a Resolution, as it was feared that a levy would deter potential benefactors. There was, however, a proposal that every congregation in a diocese should pay an annual equivalent of 5 per cent of the capital of any pecuniary legacies received, for the benefit of the Retirement Housing Fund. Because so many abstained, this proposed Resolution was not carried. The Church Pension Fund – a final salary scheme – was happily shown to be in surplus.

STIPEND

A Resolution regarding the payment of stipend by regular monthly remittances was passed *nem con*. Deductions from such instalments were not permitted, unless authorised by the Code of Canons or statutory provisions.

RELATIONS WITH PEOPLE OF OTHER FAITHS

The Synod urged clergy to draw ministers of other faiths routinely into local ministers’ meetings on appropriate occasions, despite fears expressed that it might dilute the Church’s faith. It was left to each congregation to decide how best it might support interfaith weeks.

SLAVERY

The Synod assented to the Common Statement of the Churches regarding the Bicentenary of the Act abolishing the North Atlantic Slave Trade.

MINISTRY DEVELOPMENT

The Ministry Development Committee submitted a detailed report. A Lay Learning Office supported the work, and a conference for laity was planned for November. The Committee was working closely with the Methodist Church. It was hoped to involve younger members by establishing a Youth Synod.

CONGREGATIONAL STATUS

Proposals to remove the distinction between incumbencies and independent congregations were warmly welcomed, and an amendment to the relevant Canons was passed for the first time. Provision was made for Joint Incumbencies with five-yearly reviews and for the formation of linked charges.

CONCLUSION

At a time when a new and controversial code of beliefs was threatening the Anglican Church with schism, the Synod was a calm and peaceful gathering, more concerned with Scotland's domestic needs than with the wider issues of belief. The Primus in his opening address had spoken of the obligation to consider the needs of the wider Church as more important than our own; the proceedings of the Synod scarcely reflected this call.

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