

working group set up by Standing Committee to consider the issue. The varying reservations about the Covenant probably mirrored those expressed elsewhere in these islands and elsewhere in the Anglican Communion. To some the regulatory provisions were regarded as harsh – to the point, perhaps, of almost being designed to encourage division and exclusion. To others the provisions were too weak – perhaps to the point of ineffectuality.

The motion before Synod was ‘Seeing that the Anglican Covenant is consonant with the doctrines and formularies of the Church of Ireland, the General Synod hereby subscribes the Covenant’. The effect of this, as it was explained, would not be to install the Covenant as part of the Church’s formularies or of its own internal self-understanding. Rather, it would be received as a means of regulating the Church of Ireland’s relationship with other Churches and an acknowledgement that, in making major or innovative decisions, no Anglican province can simply walk alone but must recognise the relationship consequences of such decisions.

Although, in the event, the motion was carried by a significant margin of over four to one there was no impression of a tidal wave of enthusiasm. Rather, it seemed that Synod concluded after consideration that adopting the Covenant, even allowing for the possibility of its eventual failure, was the better thing to do at the present time.

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General Synod of the Scottish Episcopal Church

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INTRODUCTION

The agenda seemed slight and uncontroversial. The General Assembly of the Church of Scotland had been stimulated by the debate on homosexual ministers but nothing in the programme of discussion for Synod seemed likely to spark such feeling and argument. The Anglican Covenant could excite members to threaten schism or lead to a divided Church but it did not look likely.

The Primus in his review of the year had invited all those attending to consider their mission and how work in mission and ministry was to be resourced, and also to look at their relationship with the rest of the Anglican world – topics that had been debated at many past synods and were regularly on the menu. Nor could much excitement be expected from debating small technical alterations to Canons on the Retiral of Clergy or the appointment of lay representatives by religious communities with a private chapel.

MEMBERSHIP

Both membership and giving had fallen in some dioceses in the preceding year and budgets had had to be reviewed; but with higher levels of donations and legacies the accounts showed a healthy financial position. There was, however, a continuing need to ensure that resources were efficiently and effectively used. The Annual Report and Accounts were passed without opposition. The Budget for the coming year was approved, with a 3 per cent increase in provincial quota; and a resolution was passed deleting the provision that membership of the Standing Committee should cease if a person were not re-elected to membership of the General Synod, thus ensuring that the Standing Committee got the full benefit of a member's experience for four years.

THE ANGLICAN COVENANT

To enable all members to have an opportunity to express their views on the Covenant an *indaba* process was approved for both the General and Diocesan Synods. No decision was sought in the current Synod; the Faith and Order Board wished neither to defer consideration of the Covenant nor to rush too quickly into considering the question of adoption since the matter had significant implications for the future of Anglicanism. Eventually a decision on the Covenant would be reached by canonical legislation, involving two readings at successive Synods, with voting by Houses. Accordingly, the question of adoption 'in principle' was debated in small *indaba* groups without immediately commencing the canonical process. The comments of each group were noted so that a record could be kept; the Synod in 2012 would have the benefit of knowing the reaction of church members throughout the dioceses when a motion approving the Covenant 'in principle' was put to the Synod.

CANONS

The canonical changes before the Synod were more a matter of tidying up than of substantial change. The retirement policies concerning stipendiary and non-stipendiary clergy were brought into alignment and an anomaly removed, with

an amendment to Canon 62 being passed for a second time. A first reading was given to an amendment to Canon 63 enabling religious communities with regular lay worshippers to elect a lay representative to the Synod. A first reading was also given to Canon 66, enabling bishops to authorise for ministry Church Army officers who have completed an appropriately validated course of pastoral or theological study. A small amendment to Canon 13 enabled bishops to have more flexibility and time in dealing with situations where stipends could no longer be afforded.

SAFEGUARDING

The Protection of Vulnerable Groups (Scotland) Act 2007 came into force at the end of February 2011 and the definition of 'regulated work' has been narrowed. The new Scheme is intended to remove the need for multiple disclosures. This has led to the need to amend Canon 65 to reflect the changes made; and the opportunity was taken to simplify the wording of the Canon. The amendment was duly passed. The amendment also enabled the Provincial Office to provide advice in relation to appointments to position of trust and responsibility not covered by the scope of 'regulated work'. An amendment to Canon 65 was also passed that provided for an accusation being lodged against a member of the clergy for conduct that might render the cleric unsuitable for working with children or vulnerable adults.

PENSION FUND

Good investment returns had put the Fund in a much better financial position. The next actuarial valuation was due at the end of 2011. The Trustees were continuing their appeal against the Pension Protection Fund levy on account of the levy being calculated from out-of-date accounts.

MISSION AND MINISTRY

The document entitled *Whole Church Mission and Ministry Policy* was presented by the Primus. The policy sought to engender a new and dynamic relationship between Province and dioceses and between dioceses themselves. The policy described ways in which the Province could act as a supporter and resourcer of the dioceses in the way they allocated money targeted at missionary endeavours. To discuss the document the Synod divided into *indaba* groups and on resumption passed the motion without opposition. The convener of the Ministry Development Committee presented a report outlining the main items that the Committee was addressing or needed to address, including ministerial

education and the validation process. All aspects of education and learning were considered important.

CHURCH IN SOCIETY COMMITTEE

Issues considered important by the Church in Society Committee were euthanasia, drug trafficking and domestic violence, and it was preparing to turn its attention to ethical banking. On these topics it engaged with people of other faiths. A motion was passed encouraging each diocese and charge to conduct its own environmental sustainability audit and to identify opportunities to reduce energy consumption. Interfaith relations were also encouraged.

PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

The Personnel Committee has chosen to consider questions of gender; but this subject did not stimulate any discussion in the Synod. It appeared that for congregations, in their working and in their appointments, there was no gender impact to be corrected.

CONCLUSION

With a decision on the Covenant still a long way off, the Synod was not called on to reach any difficult decisions. It passed the necessary tidying-up measures and welcomed the concluding remarks of the Primus that the quality of discussion and evident background knowledge had been very encouraging.

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