

SYNOD NEWS

THE GENERAL SYNOD OF THE CHURCH OF IRELAND

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A good deal of the time of General Synod 2000 for the Church of Ireland was spent in the ongoing process of liturgical revision and reform. As regards actual legislation, three liturgical bills were presented all of which achieved the necessary two-thirds majority.

The first bill was to amend parts of the Book of Common Prayer, specifically the Order for Morning Prayer, the Order for Evening Prayer, the Litany and the Appendix containing the alternatives forms of Evening Prayer. This bill continued the policy of the Liturgical Advisory Committee, approved by the General Synod, of interfering as little as possible with the original forms.

The second bill sought to amend the Book of Common Prayer by including a number of forms of service, namely forms entitled Morning and Evening Prayer, the Litany in Contemporary Language, a Late Evening Office and Weekday Intercessions and Thanksgivings.

The third bill sought to amend the Book of Common Prayer further by including the basic structure for a Service of the Word. This set out the structure of a proposed service for use on occasions when the prescribed services of Morning and Evening Prayer or Holy Communion might not meet the needs of a particular congregation. Also included were notes for guidance. It was made clear that examples of working out this structure had already been published and that resource material authorised by the House of Bishops such as *Patterns for Worship* (Church House Publishing 1995) or a *Book of Times and Seasons* (Church of England 2000) might be used to work out other forms based on the structure.

As well as the liturgical bills, a number of liturgical resolutions were also presented to the Synod. These resolutions referred to bills to be presented in the year 2001 as part of the revision and reform programme. The resolutions covered a revision of the Order for the Administration of the Lord's Supper; the incorporation into the Book of Common Prayer of a revised form of the Celebration of the Holy Communion; and a further, new version of the current 1926 Book of Common Prayer Order for the Administration of the Lord's Supper in contemporary language. The first two of these resolutions were passed with the necessary majorities, but the third failed on votes of both Orders, there being an actual majority against among the laity.

A further two liturgical resolutions dealing with the Calendar, Collects and post-Communion prayers and with the Canticles were both passed.

In addition to the liturgical bills a further bill, amending a prior statute setting up the Commission on Church buildings by extending the powers of the Commissioners to make recommendations about grants, was also presented. The purpose of the bill was to enable the Commissioners to recommend to the Representative Body, which controls the finances of the Church of Ireland, to make grants from the funds not only for the development of churches which remain open following determinations by the Commissioners but, in addition, towards making safe ruined or redundant church buildings which are of either historic or visual significance in a local landscape.

In addition to the legislative programme the Synod dealt with its normal routine, one might almost say mundane, programme of house-keeping and finance, with reports from the Standing Committee, the Representative Body, the Pensions Board,

the Board of Education and the like. In addition there were significant debates on the topics of abortion and the withdrawal of artificial feeding and hydration, with the Synod displaying a marked disagreement with the views expressed in an Appendix to the Role of the Church Committee report. The Synod also debated, as part of its Standing Committee report, a proposal for a reduction in its own size and a re-arrangement of the system of representation. A motion which included provisional guidelines of the legislation was passed after a lively debate. It remains to be seen whether the spirit of self-sacrifice which was evident in this vote will be carried over to the debate and voting on the legislation.

THE GOVERNING BODY OF THE CHURCH IN WALES

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Although as Senior Diocesan Bishop the Right Reverend (as he then was) Dr Rowan Williams had presided over the meeting of the Governing Body in September 1999, the meeting on 26th and 27th April 2000 was the first over which the now Most Reverend Dr Rowan Williams had presided since his election and enthronement as Archbishop of Wales. The formal, constitutionally obligatory, notification of these events was read by the Senior Diocesan Bishop, the Right Reverend Dr Barry Morgan, Bishop of Llandaff, and was acknowledged warmly by the assembled company.

The meeting marked the launch of the Provincial Jubilee Fund, established to mark the year 2000 and to promote the principles of jubilee, namely release from all forms of slavery, the fair distribution of wealth, and care for creation, following the call of the 1998 Lambeth Conference. The Fund is intended to assist projects across the world which fulfil these principles, particularly in countries where there is suffering as a result of poverty, injustice and oppression. The Provincial Jubilee Fund in the first instance will support projects in Palestine, and in particular a mobile dental clinic in Gaza, in partnership with the Near East Council of Churches and Christian Aid, the Rawdat El Zuhur School in East Jerusalem and the Tamar Institute for Community Development in Ramallah on the West Bank.

Other presentations, not unrelated in concept but with application nearer to home, focused on the work of Wales Christian Aid and on the development of the Province's own Credit Union project, under which a contribution is being made for the five year period starting in April 1999 to support the work of the Credit Union Development Officer with the Wales Cooperative Centre in fostering the establishment and development of credit unions throughout the Province. This presentation was made by Lesley Bird, the Development Officer herself, in conjunction with the Reverend Brian Pippen, Rector of Pontypool and closely involved with credit union work personally, and also Mrs Valerie Martin, the Board of Mission's Provincial Social Responsibility Officer.

The April meeting is the time when the annual reports of the Board of Mission and of St Michael's College, Llandaff are presented. The Board of Mission report was introduced by the Reverend Enid Morgan, presenting her sixth and final report as Provincial Director of Mission before taking up her new appointment as Chaplain at Trinity College Carmarthen in the autumn. This presented an opportunity which was warmly welcomed by the Governing Body to acknowledge her work during her tenure of office and to wish her well for the future.