

THE GOVERNING BODY OF THE CHURCH IN WALES : RECENT LEGISLATION

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At the September 1991 meeting of the Governing Body, two items of legislation were passed, both having a direct bearing upon relations with other Churches within the province. Firstly, amendments were made to the qualifications relating to the status of qualified elector, as well as to the method of application for enrolment on the electoral roll of a parish. Secondly, the Bill to Permit the Establishment of Ecumenical Projects received its Committee Stage and Third Reading, and was promulgated as a Canon of the Church in Wales.

Status of Qualified Elector

Section 2 of chapter VI of the Constitution of the Church in Wales provided that to have one's name placed on the electoral roll of a parish one must not be a member of any religious body which was not in communion with the Church in Wales, and if a qualified elector became a member of such a body, his name should be removed from the roll. The Bench of Bishops proposed amendments to both of these rules so as to permit members of other religious bodies to be qualified electors provided they were in receipt of a written dispensation from the diocesan bishop, and in future a person's name would only be removed from the roll if he joined another religious body without the aforesaid written dispensation from his bishop. Enrolment would allow such persons to attend, speak and vote at Vestry meetings, as well as qualify them to serve on the PCC and as churchwardens. They are not however eligible for membership of bodies or tenure of office at any level higher than that of the parish, for it is still necessary in such cases to declare that one is not a member of any religious body not in communion with the Church in Wales regardless of episcopal dispensation.

The Bench also instigated an amendment to the form for application for enrolment to be found in section 3 of chapter VI. The form previously contained in that section had given rise to much confusion among applicants. It was decided therefore to remove the form from the Constitution, replacing it with a simple declaration that the applicant was qualified and was willing to be bound by the Constitution.

Canon to Permit the Establishment of Local Ecumenical Projects

The Canon, as promulgated, consists of twelve sections and two schedules. Basically, it permits three types of ecumenical endeavour. Firstly, it allows the Church in Wales to enter into LEPs with other Churches in a particular locality, in which the Church in Wales members, clergy and laity, will extend their ministry to the members of the other Churches and in return will allow the ministers and people of the other Churches to minister to them. The second and third types of arrangement are limited versions of the first type, in which either the ministry of the Church in Wales in a locality is extended to other Churches without any reciprocal extension, or else the ministry of another Church or

Churches is extended to a Church in Wales congregation without any reciprocal extension. These latter types are intended to operate in situations in which either there is no Free Church minister in the locality or else there is no Church in Wales incumbent.

Section 1 of the Canon allows a diocesan bishop to authorise the establishment of an LEP in a parish or parishes by written declaration, having reached agreement with the other Churches involved. Consent for such an arrangement must have been obtained from the Bench of Bishops, the Diocesan Conference, the PCC or PCCs concerned, and the Incumbents affected. That having been done the Bishop may then, under section 2 of the Canon, licence members of the clergy and laity of the Church in Wales to minister within the project, and grant his written authority to ministers and members of other Churches to minister to the Anglicans within it. As the project will be a shared venture, the normal rules of parochial administration may not be appropriate, and the Bench of Bishops may, under section 3, make regulations for the administration of the project. Section 4 provides that the Bishop may, in case of difficulty, end the project by communicating his decision to do so to all the parties involved, after having consulted the other partners.

Section 5 allows clerics and lay members of the Church in Wales to officiate at such services as are specified, in such places of worship belonging to other Churches as are named, in the bishop's licence. They must however have such a licence; the forms of service to be used must have been approved by the bishop, and the authorities of the other Church must consent, while the Church in Wales participant may only perform those functions which he or she may lawfully perform within the Church in Wales. Section 6 allows persons so licensed to attend, speak and vote at meetings of another Church involved provided they are so invited and have the bishop's permission. These sections can operate both in the LEP situation and that in which Church in Wales ministry is being extended to other Churches.

Sections 7 and 8 can operate either in LEPs or where the ministry of another church is being received by a Church in Wales congregation. Section 7 allows ministers and members of other Churches to officiate at such services as are specified, and in such parishes as are named, in the written authorisation of the diocesan bishop. They must however have such an authorisation and they must use only forms of service which are contained in the Book of Common Prayer for use in the Church in Wales or forms approved by the bishop. Celebrations of the Holy Communion must be presided over in such circumstances only by duly accredited ministers of the other Churches, and only the rite approved by the Commission of the Covenanted Churches, and commended for use by the Governing Body of the Church in Wales, may be employed for such celebrations. The Prayer Book rite is not permitted. Moreover, the bishop must ensure that celebrations of the Eucharist according to the rites of the Church in Wales take place on the four major festivals if communicants within the project request it. In addition, such persons may only officiate in this context if the authorities of their own Church and the PCC consent, they may only perform those functions which they are permitted to perform in their own Churches, and they must have agreed in writing to be bound by the directions of the diocesan

bishop and such other Church in Wales authorities as the Bench of Bishops may specify. The Bench, under Section 8, are permitted to make regulations relating to matters of parochial administration and certain other issues in parishes where a Free Church minister is officiating instead of a Church in Wales incumbent, but, for the regulations to be valid, the Governing Body of the Church in Wales must have approved them.

Section 9 provides that the licences and written authorisations mentioned in sections 5 and 7 may be revoked in writing by the diocesan bishop at any time.

Section 10 provides for the involvement of sector ministries within an LEP, while section 11 makes it clear that the Canon permits exceptions to the normal order and discipline of the province by providing that nothing therein shall affect or be deemed to affect the clerics' declaration of canonical obedience nor their declaration to be bound by the Constitution, and that the faith, discipline, articles, doctrinal statements, rites, ceremonies and formularies of the Church in Wales are similarly unaffected by the Canon's provisions. Section 12 provides the short title – Local Ecumenical Projects Canon, 1991. The First Schedule lists those services at which Church in Wales clergy and laity may officiate under Section 5, while the Second Schedule lists those services at which the ministers and members of other Churches may officiate under Section 7.

The Canon took effect immediately upon promulgation.

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