

SYNOD NEWS

THE GENERAL SYNOD OF THE SCOTTISH EPISCOPAL CHURCH

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The menu of the 1999 Synod consisted, as usual, of four courses: the passing of canons, concern about various social issues, inter-church relations, and the raising of finance. These will be taken in reverse order:

The Finances of the Church

The minimum stipend of clergy in the coming year was fixed at £15,570, an increase of just over four per cent. The aim of the Administration Board is to equate it as far as possible with the minimum stipend in the Church of England. For those clergy who are retiring it is hoped to provide retirement houses, but the rotating stock requires to be increased as the retired clergy live longer and age catches up with an increasing number. Tidying was also necessary with regard to the pensions of those serving part-time who are not at present properly provided for. Pensions generally are to be increased by three per cent.

Fund-raising is a perennial problem. This year it was felt that stress should be placed on a legacy strategy, though whether it is healthy to finance any organisation from the contributions of the dead rather than the living is doubtful. It may be more a matter of repackaging—wrapping up the appeal in a slightly different form from the last time it was sold. The issue was highlighted by one diocese reducing its payment to Provincial Quota in protest at its assessment being increased. This led to an appeal to that diocese to reconsider its decision, and in the meantime the shortfall was met from Boards with surplus funds.

Inter-Church Co-operation

Work with other Churches was the subject of a report. Matters ranged from responding to the WCC Report *Towards a Common Date for Easter* to consideration of the Joint Declaration in chapter 8 of the Reuilly Common Statement. On the home front the Church was encouraged to look at how best to reach out to new populations by planting new churches and to stimulate small healthy congregations.

Social Concerns

Matters of social concern could be divided between domestic and international. Domestically, child protection was debated, though little new could be added to what has already been said frequently in Parliament and the press. The suicide rate of prisoners on remand was so worrying that pressure should be exerted on the Prison Service to look into better procedures. Racial harassment and domestic violence were also discussed, though little fresh light was thrown on such much-cavassed subjects, but discussions are scheduled to take place with other Churches in the Scottish Churches Community Development Fund. A speaker from Aberlour Child Care Trust outlined concerns about 'underparented' children who suffer from lack of adequate fathering.

On the international scene, Archbishop Khotso Makhulu spoke about poverty and the effect of servicing world debt, an issue which he regarded as a matter of justice. Motions were passed to remit unpayable debt owed by the world's poorest coun-

tries, with the Chancellor of the Exchequer being encouraged to support the Jubilee 2000 Campaign objectives—if necessary by acting unilaterally to cancel bilateral debt.

A motion was put down protesting against the Bank of Scotland entering into a joint venture with Robertson Financial Services in view of the opinions published by the Revd Pat Robertson. This was not proceeded with as by the time of the Synod the Bank had withdrawn from the venture.

The Working Party on Human Sexuality which had been set up in 1998 had quickly run into difficulties, and its convener had resigned. The Bishop of Glasgow was appointed to take his place. The undoubted difficulties in this field were left for him to try to resolve.

Canons

Much time was taken up in discussing canons, both those coming up for the first time and those subject to a second reading. Of those coming forward for a second time there was ready acceptance of the amendments to Canon 50, which altered the required majority for matters not on the agenda to be discussed. It was now left to the Rules of Order to lay down the majority instead of the previous mandatory three-quarters. Canon 55 (to be renumbered 53) was also quickly passed: it provides for 'Resolution of Situations of Pastoral Breakdown and Other Differences and Disputes'. It is very relevant to the situation of St Paul's Cathedral in Dundee.

In 1988 a Green Paper was presented to Synod dealing with the election of bishops. A new Canon 4 was presented this year which puts into effect its recommendations after taking into account comments received from the dioceses. In the course of the debate a promise was given that further comments would be weighed up before the canon was submitted for ratification next year, and on this assurance the canon was passed *nem con*. Under the new canon the office of lay elector falls to be abolished, and the consequential amendments to other canons resulting from this amendment were also passed (these being to Canons 37, 39, 40 and 63).

Other canonical changes proposed for the first time were (1) to section 6 of Canon 15, an amendment to remove the presupposition that a cleric from another Church or Province could be appointed only to a temporary charge – an amendment which follows the Porvoo Agreement; and (2) to section 4 of Canon 25, an amendment to remove the need for the bishop's consent for admission of members of other Churches to Holy Communion. Canon 44 was also altered to allow for the possibility of simultaneous membership of the Episcopal Church and another Christian Church. Canon 61, which deals with accounts and auditors, was updated, and an alteration proposed by the Edinburgh Diocese was likewise passed. Its purpose is to adopt a more rigorous system of self-regulation with regard to alterations to buildings lest existing planning exemptions be removed by legislation on the ground that regulation is too lax. The proposal is to set up in each diocese a Building Advisory Committee.

General

In his opening address the Primus spoke of the theological breadth of the Scottish Episcopal Church as evidenced in his visits to various churches. The deliberations of the Synod showed the breadth of its interests and its willingness to consider world issues and not merely domestic housekeeping.