

## THE GOVERNING BODY OF THE CHURCH IN WALES

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*This report covers the meetings of the Governing Body held in  
April and September 2004*

*April 2004*

This meeting was held at the University of Wales Aberystwyth for the first time for a number of years. The principal items on the agenda were the interim report of the Representative Body Review Steering Group, the Standing Committee report of the Review of the size and structure of the Governing Body itself, and a Bill to incorporate a new Order for the Holy Eucharist into the Book of Common Prayer.

In his opening address, the Archbishop of Wales spoke of the challenges presented to the Church by the apparently inexorable downward slide in church attendance by whatever criteria that were measured. Accepting that the figures are bad, Dr Morgan pointed out that 'so often God uses the crises and challenges of the moment to lead us into new paths and new ideas' and offered the example of the teaching of Jeremiah to the Israelites in exile in Babylon. Reminding the Governing Body that there were still encouraging numbers of people offering themselves for confirmation and also for ordination, the Archbishop stressed the importance of recognising the need to do things differently and to ask the question 'how do we support God's mission to the world and how can we begin to change matters?' Examples which he gave included the development of the teaching ministry of the Church, the need to concentrate on mission—bringing the Gospel to as many people in Wales as possible—the turning of a vision into reality by making proper recognition of the gifts and talents available at a local level and a proper stewardship of our own money, setting our giving at a realistic level. Commenting that the present challenges were probably as fundamental as anything which had arisen since disestablishment, the Archbishop reminded the Governing Body that disestablishment itself which was neither sought nor welcomed had actually led to the strengthening of the Church—therefore not a discouraging precedent.

The need to look forward and to do so realistically was the underlying purpose of the Representative Body Review Steering Group, which was established by the Finance and Resources Committee of the Representative Body. Its purpose is in the light of the Representative Body's continuing deficit to review all aspects of provincial structures, including expenditure, and to make recommendations for a sustainable way forward. The intention was both to address the Representative Body's continuing deficit and to overhaul its own structures and procedures which, based on a system put

in place some eighty-five years ago, are now in need of updating. The report therefore focused on general financial affairs, on administrative issues, examining too the inter-relationship of the provincial and diocesan offices, on the ownership and management of property, on existing provincial structures and on clergy remuneration, including pensions. The presentation drew a largely favourable response and provided further material for the Group to consider with a view to bringing forward specific proposals to the Governing Body in September.

The report on the review of the Governing Body itself reflected the work undertaken since the failure of an earlier report in 2001 to secure any significant support. The Group had come to the conclusion that there was a case for a significant reduction in the number of members of the Governing Body and invited members to consider the suggestion that the total membership should be reduced from the present figure of 350 to either 207 or 144. The exact figures are reached by a fairly complex process which takes into account the need for equal representation of dioceses, the principle of two lay members to one clerical member and a three-year election cycle.

There was general agreement that a significant reduction was appropriate. A straw poll revealed an almost equal division of support for the two alternative figures suggested and the Standing Committee was requested to bring forward specific proposals based on the discussion to the September meeting.

The Bill to incorporate an additional Order for the Holy Eucharist into the Book of Common Prayer was part of an ongoing process of liturgical revision. There has for a number of years now been in operation a long consultation process where amendments or additions to liturgy are under consideration. This is intended to ensure that when the Bill to authorise the changes is brought forward, it is as far as possible non-contentious. The benefit of this procedure was again apparent here in that although there were a number of contributions on issues of minor detail, there was no challenge to the principle of the new service and the Bill was accordingly passed and promulgated as a canon, thus authorising the new Order of Service.

#### *September 2004*

The principal non-routine items of business on the agenda on this occasion were the report of the Representative Body Review Group, whose interim report had been presented in April, a report from the Standing Committee on the size of the Governing Body itself, and the approval of a new form of Ordinal for bishops, priests and deacons brought forward by the Bench of Bishops.

In his presidential address, the Archbishop of Wales included reference to the first of these two reports as he had done in April. He stressed that although the report was completely honest in presenting starkly the need

to face the fact that the central subsidy of the Church in Wales could not continue, the need to take full responsibility for our own affairs could be a catalyst for change for the better when it was remembered that although disestablishment was viewed with horror at the time, it has come to be seen as one of the best things that could have happened because with it came independence of the state and responsibility for our own affairs.

The report itself, refined in the light of discussion at the April meeting, was again introduced by the Chairman of the Representative Body, Sir David Rowe-Beddoe, and the Archdeacon of Brecon, the Venerable Randolph Thomas. The recommendations in the report will now be the subject of consultation with the dioceses and will then be finalised by a special meeting of the Representative Body before coming to the Governing Body in April 2005 with specific recommendations for approval. These are likely to include changes to the way in which available funding resources are provided, changes to pension arrangements and a radical restructuring of the Representative Body itself, reducing its numbers substantially and leading to a much greater level of involvement than is presently the case for the members of the smaller body.

The Standing Committee report on the size of the Governing Body brought forward specific recommendations in the light of the discussions in April, providing for a reduction in the elected membership from 270 to 108, a reduction in the number of Archdeacons from all those in office (15) to one per diocese, a reduction in representation of the Deans from all six to three, and a provision that the only ex-officio members should be the Diocesan Bishops (a number which includes the Archbishop), Assistant Bishops with province-wide responsibilities (as opposed to an Assistant Diocesan Bishop) and the Chairman and Deputy Chairman of the Representative Body. The result of this will be a radical reduction of ex-officio members from a current total which can be as much as 44 to 18. The report was introduced by His Honour Michael Evans QC as Chairman of the Standing Committee and by the Venerable Robert Williams, the Archdeacon of Gower, and the recommended changes were supported after discussion. Constitutional revisions to implement the changes will now be brought forward at the meeting in April 2005.

The new Ordinal had been prepared by the Bench of Bishops but required Governing Body approval before it could be introduced for experimental use. That approval was given and allows the Bench to use the new service for experimental purposes for not more than ten years. Within not more than that period the Bench has to decide whether to propose the incorporation of the service into the permanently authorised rites of the Church in Wales (which requires Bill procedure) or whether to let the service lapse.