

**DIOCESAN MOTION FROM BRADFORD DIOCESE
'Senior posts reduction in the Church of England'**

Over recent years parishes across the country have been faced with considerable reductions in the number of stipendiary parochial clergy. When as a result of this Bradford Diocese moved towards clustering parishes, Calverley Deanery Synod passed a motion which, in amended form, has become that which General Synod is being invited to consider.

There have been some internal re-organizations within dioceses of duties among senior clergy: for example, in Bradford the two Archdeacons now carry additional responsibilities previously held by separate officers (reversing former trends to divest archdeacons of their parochial or other responsibilities). But this has not assuaged the feeling among many in the Diocese – a feeling shared by many in the Church of England, as the church press correspondence columns witness – that as the number of parochial stipendiary posts reduces, so the number of extra-parochial and 'senior' stipendiary posts should also reduce in proportion; and that this should be done in a carefully thought-out way across the country. This is a controversial point of view, but needs to be engaged with rather than brushed aside. This motion is brought by the Diocese of Bradford in order to enable the Synod to reflect on what the Spirit may be saying to the Church of England about its structures of responsibility and oversight.

The following points may be of assistance to the debate:

1. From 1990 to 2007 the number of full-time stipendiary clergy reduced from 11076 to 8304, and is projected to be 7920 by 2012. The overall projected reduction over only 22 years is around 3156 – around 28% of all stipendiary clergy.
2. During the period 1990–2006 almost the whole of this reduction was from those in parochial posts, resulting in widespread re-organization and further amalgamations of parishes – a process which had been taking place over a much longer period.
3. In 1959 there were 14,380 full time stipendiary clergymen of whom 377 were 'dignitaries', i.e. senior diocesan posts. In 2007 there were 8,304 full time stipendiary clergy of whom 347 were 'dignitaries'.
4. The number of non-stipendiary clergy, house for duty, Readers, Deaconesses and licensed lay ministers in 1960 was 6958 and has grown to 11201 in 2007. These ministers also need support and encouragement: some of this may be specifically episcopal, but a considerable degree of it could be done by stipendiary clergy having a more episcopal role.

5. Despite a large decline in church membership and in full-time stipendiary clergy over recent years, there has been no serious consideration given to the need to reduce the number of senior posts and the structures around them. The maintenance of episcopal apparatus, support services and expenses produces a Church that appears top heavy: e.g. in 2008 the Church Commissioners spent £7.3 million in maintaining diocesan bishops' houses, and £14.5 million in grants for bishops' support staff, office and working costs: an average of half a million pounds per diocese, or 10 clergy or lay worker stipends.

6. The key question is what work needs to be done, and how best to do it. Could we have more part stipendiary or self-supporting dignitaries? Could their work be shared between teams of parochial clergy, full and part time? As the patterns of parochial ministry are changing, how are we also changing the patterns of oversight and the deployment of episcopate, especially when we see many good and holy people in senior posts who are stuck in a hierarchical culture and who are increasingly overburdened by the demands placed upon them - which may well be unrealistic and unsustainable?

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