

Plans to elect clergy of UK Minority Ethnic or Global Majority Heritage backgrounds to serve on the House of Bishops have been agreed in what is hoped will be a “catalyst for change” towards making the leadership of the Church of England more representative.

Under the scheme, which has just been approved by a Committee of the House, there would be at least 10 UKME/GMH people taking part in meetings of the House – either as existing members or new “participant observers” – later this spring.

The House of Bishops – which is both part of the General Synod and a body in its own right – is made up of the most senior bishops in the Church, including all of the diocesan bishops and some elected suffragans.

At present there are just four UKME/GMH bishops in the House, out of 53 places. Under the plans, the House will ensure that at least 10 can be present, either as members as of right; as suffragan bishops appointed as participant observers, or as priests elected as participant observers.

In addition to the four existing UKME/GMH members of the House, the plan will involve three further suffragans (two of whom were recently nominated as bishops) being invited to join the House as participant observers.

There would also be three priests elected by serving UKME/GMH clergy.

Further details on the nomination process will be announced shortly. It is expected that the process will be complete by May.

The idea of participant observers in the House of Bishops was recommended in [From Lament to Action](#), the report of the Archbishops’ Anti-Racism Taskforce, which was published in April last year. It was based on temporary provision introduced in 2013 under which women first took part in meetings of the House ahead of legislation opening the way for female bishops.

The Archbishop of York, Stephen Cottrell, said: “This may seem like a small step to some, but it ensures that a diversity of voices and experiences enriches the discussions of the House of Bishops as we seek to be a church that truly embraces people of global majority heritage at every level of its life.

“I am grateful for the work that has gone into making this possible. This is a step on the journey. I look forward to the blessings this change enables and the way forward it opens up.”

Canon Dr Sanjee Perera, the Archbishops’ Adviser on Minority Ethnic Anglican Concerns, said: “We are pleased to report progress from the House on this From Lament To Action recommendation and be able to celebrate having 10 people of UK Minority Ethnic/Global Majority Heritage in the House of Bishops with the arrival of the ‘Participant observers’ in a few months.

“We hope this will create a catalyst for change that will enrich the Church according to the calling of the gospel.”

Notes to editors

- The plans have been agreed by the Standing Committee of the House of Bishops.
- Any member of the clergy from a UKME/GMH background who wishes to vote can email clerk@churchofengland.org by February 1 to be added to the electorate.
- [Read more](#) about the elections for Participant Observers to the House.
- From Lament To Action recommended: One UKME/GMH clergy elected from each region to attend meetings of the House of Bishops as participant observers for three year periods until such time as there are six UKME/GMH bishops able to sit as members of the House.
- The plans as agreed would involve electing three UKME/GMH members of the clergy and inviting three UKME/GMH bishops to serve as participant observers. Taken together with the four UKME/GMH bishops who are currently members of the House, this will ensure a total of 10.

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