

GENERAL SYNOD

Representative of Pentecostal Churches on the General Synod

1. The custom of inviting guests from other churches to sessions of the General Synod began soon after the inauguration of the first General Synod in 1972. Since 1995 other churches have been invited to nominate representatives to serve for a period of three years in this capacity under Standing Order 113(a) which came into force in time for the July 1995 sessions.
2. There are nine representatives of other Churches on General Synod, representing:
 - the Church of Scotland,
 - the Churches of the Baptist Union of Great Britain,
 - the Eastern Orthodox Churches,
 - the Council of Oriental Orthodox Churches,
 - the Moravian Church of Great Britain and Ireland,
 - the Methodist Church of Great Britain,
 - the Roman Catholic Church,
 - the United Reformed Church and
 - the black majority churches
3. The representatives of other Churches do not have voting rights, but they are allowed, under Standing Orders, to speak in certain debates. A number of these Churches reciprocate by inviting the Church of England to nominate a representative to attend their own synods and councils.
4. There has been a Black Majority Churches representative in the General Synod since 1995, when the Revd Nezlin Sterling was appointed. In 2010, she was succeeded by Bishop Dr Joe Aldred, who at the time was the Secretary for Minority Ethnic Christian Affairs at Churches Together in England (CTE). After a period of restructuring at CTE, Dr Aldred is now the member of staff with responsibility for Pentecostal and Multicultural Relations, reflecting the changing profile of the membership of CTE, which now includes an increasing number of Pentecostal Churches, some, but not all of which may also be described as Black Majority.
5. In 2013, after much consultation with the Black Majority and Pentecostal Churches of CTE, the Enabling Group of CTE decided to establish a sixth CTE President from the Pentecostal stream, rather than to represent any particular ethnicity. Dr Aldred subsequently raised with me whether his appointment as an ecumenical representative should now, therefore, be as a representative of Pentecostal Churches rather than of the Black Majority Churches, to mirror the developments in CTE. I have consulted the Council for Christian Unity.
6. The Council noted that of the nine churches represented on the General Synod, all but the Black Majority Churches are referred to in terms of their ecclesiology and Christian tradition, whereas the Black Majority Churches have been defined by ethnicity. The language used here singles out one representative in this way, and although not intended, it may reinforce a narrative of inequality and discrimination. To invite a Pentecostal rather than a Black Majority Churches

representative, would, therefore, not only create consistency, but would be a sign of accepting all representatives on an equal footing.

7. In the light of these observations, and after further consultation with Dr Aldred, the Council for Christian Unity recommended this change to Business Committee. At its meeting on 23rd September 2014 the Business Committee approved this proposal and agreed that it should take effect in February 2015, before the current term of office of ecumenical representatives comes to an end in February 2016.
8. The new arrangement will be in place for the inauguration of the newly elected General Synod in November 2015. The Committee agreed that Dr Aldred will continue as the representative at least until the end of the current term of office. This will give time for the Pentecostal Churches to be fully aware of the change and to receive reports from their representative before the invitation to nominate a representative for the next three year period in 2016.

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