

GENERAL SYNOD
DRAFT NAMING OF DIOCESES MEASURE
REPORT OF THE REVISION COMMITTEE

Membership

Chair: Dr Edmund Marshall (St Albans)

***Ex officio* members**

(Steering Committee): The Reverend Paul Benfield (Blackburn)
The Reverend Canon James Alison (Leeds)
The Reverend Prebendary Maureen Hobbs (Lichfield)
Mrs Sue Slater (Lincoln)
Mr Adrian Vincent (Guildford)

Appointed members: Dr John Beal (Leeds)
The Right Reverend Stephen Cottrell, Bishop of Chelmsford
The Reverend Dr Hannah Cleugh (Universities: Durham & Newcastle)
Miss Emma Forward (Exeter)
The Reverend Ruth Yeoman (Leeds)

Consultants: Mr Jonathan Neil-Smith (Secretary, Dioceses Commission)

Staff: The Revd Alexander McGregor (Deputy Legal Adviser)
Mr Christopher Packer (Legislative Counsel)
Mr Sion Hughes Carew (Secretary)

1. The draft Church of England (Naming of Dioceses) Measure received First Consideration at the February 2014 group of sessions of the General Synod. The period for the submission of proposals for amendment under Standing Order 53(a) expired on 17th March 2014.
2. Two submissions, one from the Reverend Jonathan Frai (Chichester) and one from Dr John Beal (Leeds), were received by the Revision Committee (“the Committee”) within that period and were published on the Church of England website in accordance with Standing Order 53(aa). Legislative Counsel had also identified a number of drafting issues which led the Steering Committee to propose amendments to the draft Measure. A list of proposals for amendment (other than drafting amendments), and the Committee’s decision in respect of each, is set out in the Appendix.
3. The Committee met on 23rd September 2014 and the proposals which it accepted form the basis for the draft of the Measure (GS 1935A) now before the Synod (in which amendments accepted by the Committee are shown in bold).
4. Except where indicated, decisions of the Committee were unanimous.

Consideration of the draft Measure clause by clause including proposals for amendment

Clause 1 (Naming of dioceses)

5. The proposals received from the Reverend Jonathan Fraiss and from Dr John Beal specifically related to subsection (2) of clause 1. That subsection provided that where the name of the diocese was taken from a geographical area, the style and title of the bishop were to be taken from that name.
6. Mr Fraiss proposed that subsection (2) be omitted. He submitted that while it might be desirable for a diocese to be named after a geographical area, it might also be helpful if the bishop of the diocese were to continue to be named after the see city so that a large city would still have a bishop closely identified with it. He pointed out that this reflected the position which had, in practice, arisen following the reorganisation of dioceses in West Yorkshire. The working name of the diocese was “West Yorkshire and the Dales” while the diocesan bishop was known as “the Bishop of Leeds”.
7. Dr Beal (a member of the Committee) made a related proposal in relation to subsection (2). He proposed that where the diocesan bishop retained the entire responsibility for an area of a diocese (and did not delegate functions in respect of that area to a suffragan bishop), it should be possible for the title of the diocesan to be taken from the name of that area. He cited the example of the Diocese of West Yorkshire and the Dales which, he argued, illustrated a general point. It operated an area-based system for the delegation of episcopal functions with each of five areas overseen by an area bishop. The ‘Leeds episcopal area’ was overseen directly by the diocesan bishop. If the diocesan were given the title ‘Bishop of West Yorkshire and the Dales’, the largest episcopal area in the diocese would not have a bishop with its name in his title. In his view it would be a mistake to require that the title of the diocesan and the name of the diocese should always be the same (as subsection (2) did).
8. The Reverend Paul Benfield reported that the Steering Committee was generally of the view that it should not be a requirement that the title of the diocesan and the name of the diocese should always be the same, and that there ought to be a degree of flexibility so that the title of the diocesan could either be the same as the name of the diocese or could be taken from the diocesan bishop’s see city.
9. In discussion the Committee considered a submission dated 19th September 2014 from the Bishop of Coventry, the chair of the Faith and Order Commission but writing in a personal capacity. The Bishop of Coventry’s submission set out a theological basis for retaining the status quo – namely that the title of a bishop was taken from the place where the bishop had his see or cathedra and that the diocese was named after the bishop. He argued that the changes which the Measure would bring about would break the relationship of identity of a diocese with the person of the bishop and the bishop’s teaching authority.
10. A number of members questioned whether it was wise to proceed with the Measure at this time and whether it would be better to defer consideration of the issues it raised until an assessment could be made of how the new Diocese of Leeds/West Yorkshire and the Dales had evolved in practice.
11. It was pointed out that names taken from geographical areas were not necessarily any more inclusive than names taken from a particular city. The name ‘West Yorkshire and the Dales’ excluded Barnsley, for example. A diocese could always use a geographical name informally – in

communications, on websites and on letterheads – if it was helpful to do so but legislating for a change in nomenclature might result in tying the hands of bishops and dioceses in the future.

12. Some members were concerned not to lose sight of the model of the Church as constituted by the people being gathered around the person of the bishop and the place of the bishop's seat. The bishop was not a managing director for an area but a father in God. The members who expressed this view were concerned that the changes which the Measure would bring about would amount to a departure from catholic order and the nature of episcopal ministry as received by the Church of England. They also considered that the Church's mission would not be assisted by finding attractive titles and that any apparent gains in intelligibility would be offset by a weakening of the theology of episcopacy.
13. Other members were of the view that the mission of the Church would be impeded if the names of dioceses were not able to reflect the areas and communities they served.
14. A number of members raised the possibility that the Committee might advise the Synod that the Measure should be withdrawn.
15. Other members did not share these concerns. They pointed out that the Synod had asked for legislation that would make it possible for a diocese to be formally named after a geographical area as an alternative to being named after the see of the Bishop when it passed the motion brought to it by the Bradford Diocesan Synod. The Ripon and Leeds Diocesan Synod had brought a motion in identical terms.
16. Members who were in favour of the changes which would be brought about by the Measure pointed out that no diocese would be required to change its name to that of a geographical area: the Measure was permissive. They considered that the advantages that would accrue for the mission of the church from a diocese being named after a geographical area were significant. They did not consider that such a change would involve a substantial departure from the way in which episcopacy was understood.
17. Subject to a number of members reserving their position on the merits of the Measure as a whole, the Committee was content with subsection (1) as drafted. No proposals for its amendment had been received and none were made by members of the Committee.
18. Dr Beal moved that subsection (2) be amended so that it would not be a requirement in all cases for the title of the bishop to be the same as the name of the diocese; but that in cases where the diocese was named after a geographical area, the title of the bishop should either be taken from the name of the bishop's see or from the name of the diocese.
19. Some of the members who were concerned generally about the changes that would result from the Measure raised the particular concern that if a diocese and a bishop had different names, the identity of the two would be damaged. Others were of the view that a degree of flexibility was desirable and considered that there was merit in Dr Beal's proposal.
20. The Committee vote on Dr Beal's amendment with **6 in favour and 4 against**.
21. Mr Fraiss's proposed amendment to omit subsection (2) accordingly fell.
22. The Committee gave effect to Dr Beal's amendment by substituting a new subsection (2). It also made consequential amendments to subsections (3) and (4).

23. The Committee accepted proposals from the Steering Committee that it should make drafting amendments to subsections (4) and (5) which had been identified by Legislative Counsel.
24. On the motion that clause 1 (as amended) stand part of the Measure, **7 voted in favour and 3 against.**

Clause 2 (Citation, commencement and extent)

25. The Committee accepted a proposal from the Steering Committee that it should make a drafting amendment to subsection (1) of clause 2 which had been identified by Legislative Counsel. The effect of that amendment was to change the short title of the Measure to “the Naming of Dioceses Measure”. The Committee was advised that the inclusion of the words “Church of England” were superfluous in this context as all Measures had to relate to matters concerning the Church of England and there was, therefore, no need to identify that fact in the short title.
26. The Committee agreed that clause 2 as amended should stand part of the Measure.

Long Title

27. The Committee agreed that the Long Title should stand part of the Measure.

Motion under SO 54(a)

28. The Bishop of Chelmsford moved that the Committee’s report include a recommendation to the General Synod advising that the Measure should be withdrawn. He relied on matters already raised in discussion (and set out above) in support of the motion.
29. Supporting the Bishop of Chelmsford’s motion, some members expressed concern that the Measure, as amended to permit the title of the bishop to be different from the name of the diocese, could have the effect of separating the bishop, the bishop’s see, and the diocese and that this represented a significantly worse position than that which currently obtained.
30. Others considered that to advise the withdrawal of the Measure would be a discourtesy to those who had brought the diocesan synod motions to the General Synod, calling for the legislation. In passing those motions, the General Synod had expressed its broad agreement with what the Measure sought to achieve.
31. Members were generally agreed that if a recommendation were to be made by the Committee advising the withdrawal of the Measure, it should be accompanied by a further recommendation that consideration of that advice should be deferred until after the Synod had debated the motion which had been brought to it by the Wakefield Diocesan Synod, “That this Synod ask the House of Bishops to facilitate a theologically informed debate about the organisational shape of the Church we are called to be in order to best equip the parishes to serve the people of our land”.
32. On the Bishop of Chelmsford’s motion, **4 voted in favour and 6 against.**

Edmund Marshall (Chair)
On behalf of the Committee

October 2014

Appendix

Summary of proposed amendments and the Committee's decisions

Draft Naming of Dioceses Measure

Clause or schedule of original draft Measure (GS 1935)	Summary of submission	Committee's decision
Clause 1	Omit subsection (2) (the Reverend Jonathan Fraiss)	Rejected
	Amend subsection (2) so that where the diocese is named after a geographical area, the title of the diocesan may be taken either from the name of the see or from the name of that area (Dr John Beal)	Accepted
Clause 2	No submissions received	
Long Title	No submissions received	