

## GENERAL SYNOD

### The Dioceses Commission Annual Report 2014

1. The Dioceses Commission is required to report annually to the General Synod. This is its seventh report.
2. It consists of a Chair and Vice-Chair appointed by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York from among the members of the General Synod; four members elected by the Synod; and four members appointed by the Appointments Committee.

#### Membership and Staff

3. The membership and staff of the Commission are as follows:

Chair: Canon Prof. Michael Clarke (Worcester)

Vice-Chair: The Ven Peter Hill (to July 2014)  
The Revd P Benfield (from November 2014)

Elected Members: The Revd Canon Jonathan Alderton-Ford (St Eds & Ips)  
The Revd Paul Benfield (Blackburn) (to November 2014)  
Mr Robert Hammond (Chelmsford)  
Mr Keith Malcouronne (Guildford)  
*Vacancy from November 2014*

Appointed Members: The Rt Revd Christopher Foster, Bishop of Portsmouth  
(from March 2014)  
Mrs Lucinda Herklots  
The Revd Canon Dame Sarah Mullally, DBE  
Canon Prof. Hilary Russell

Secretary: Mr Jonathan Neil-Smith

Assistant Secretary: Mr Paul Clarkson (to March 2014)  
Mrs Diane Griffiths (from April 2014)

4. The Ven Peter Hill stepped down as Vice-Chair of the Commission upon his appointment as Bishop of Barking in July 2014. The Commission wishes to place on record their gratitude to Bishop Peter for his contribution as Vice-Chair to the Commission over the last three years. The Revd Paul Benfield was appointed by the Archbishops as the new Vice-Chair of the Commission in November 2014.
5. Mrs Diane Griffiths succeeded Paul Clarkson as Assistant Secretary to the Commission. The Commission is grateful to Paul for his assistance.

#### Duties and Powers of the Commission

6. The Commission's duties and powers, laid down by the Dioceses, Pastoral and Mission Measure 2007, are summarized in paras 7-13 of its 2008 Annual Report (GS Misc 920), which is available, with other information about the Commission and its work, in the Commission's area

of the Church of England web site: <https://www.churchofengland.org/about-us/structure/dioceses-commission.aspx>

### **The Diocese of West Yorkshire and the Dales**

7. 2014 saw the historic creation of the new Diocese of Leeds (West Yorkshire and the Dales). The appointed day for the dissolution of the former Dioceses of Bradford, Ripon & Leeds and Wakefield and the creation of the new diocese was Easter Day (20 April). The new diocese was formally inaugurated in a special service in York Minster on the Feast of Pentecost (8 June) at which Bishop Nick Baines' Election as the Bishop of Leeds was confirmed. The Archbishop of York presided and preached and a special congratulatory message from Her Majesty the Queen was read out.
8. Most of the work of implementing the provisions of the Commission's Reorganisation Scheme fell on those in the diocese, and the Commission wishes to pay tribute to all those who have worked tirelessly to make the vision a reality. This work is, however, on-going and much inevitably remains to be done. The Commission itself had specific responsibilities concerning the designation of interim diocesan structures (such as the DBF of the new diocese) and determining compensation for some office holders who would lose their posts under the terms of the Scheme, and appointed sub-committees to handle these tasks.
9. The Commission was very conscious that its Scheme was the first of its kind and, with this in mind, it commissioned one of its number, Professor Hilary Russell, to conduct an evaluation of the process. She conducted about 50 interviews with a range of interested parties in the course of the summer and her Report was published in December – see <https://www.churchofengland.org/media/2127972/yorkshire%20evaluation%20report.pdf>
10. While it needed to be recognised that the Scheme itself was a considerable achievement - being at the maximal end of anything envisaged under the Dioceses, Pastoral and Mission Measure 2007 – the Report made a number of key recommendations for the future, including the following:
  - The need for clearer articulation of the case for change; and better communication particularly to diocesan staff directly affected by the Scheme;
  - The appointment of an adequately resourced facilitator early in the process, supported by a programme management board with representation from the Archbishop's office, the dioceses, Church Commissioners and Archbishops' Council;
  - Better HR and pastoral support for individual post holders directly affected by the Scheme.

### **Peterborough and Ely**

11. A sub-Committee of the Commission met with representatives of the Dioceses of Ely and Peterborough in the autumn to review the anomalous situation whereby six parishes in the City of Peterborough were located in the Ely diocese. The two dioceses had set up a Letter of Intent aimed at enabling any potential obstacles to mission deriving from this situation to be overcome. The Commission will be considering what, if any, role it should play in resolving any outstanding issues, and whether there are wider regional issues that warrant its attention.

### **Visits to dioceses and bishops' regional groups**

12. As part of its ongoing dialogue with bishops and dioceses, representatives of the Commission also made the following visits during the year:
  - The Diocese of Sodor & Man (January);

- The Dioceses of Durham and Newcastle (March);
- The South West Regional Bishops' Meeting (April);
- The Dioceses of Guildford, Portsmouth and Winchester (September);
- The South Central Regional Bishops' Meeting (October);
- The West Midlands Regional Bishops' Meeting (December).

### **Joint Diocesan Working**

13. The visits to Durham and Newcastle; and to Guildford, Portsmouth and Winchester were specifically concerned with exploring the scope for joint administrative working. It was clear in both instances that a great deal had been achieved through local cooperation across borders. In the former case joint working was of a more strategic nature, with the archdeacons and diocesan secretaries from Durham and Newcastle meeting on a regular basis; in the latter, cooperation was more task-focused. In both cases joining forces in particular areas such as Education or IT had primarily led to more administrative resilience, rather than cost savings.
14. The Commission is keen to encourage dioceses to continue to look for opportunities to share resources and expertise (and had also raised this at its regional encounters). It proposes to publish occasional case studies on its web pages.

### **Episcopal Oversight Symposium**

15. An invited gathering of 33 bishops, archdeacons, and other senior staff attended a Commission-sponsored symposium at Lambeth Palace on 27 October 2014 in order to explore issues of episcopal oversight in more depth. The day had been prompted by long term strategic proposals for mission from the Diocese of Chelmsford which potentially merged the roles of area bishops and archdeacons. The Bishop of Chelmsford delivered a key note address and there were also contributions from Professor Loveday Alexander (a member of the Faith & Order Commission) with Biblical reflections on senior church leadership); Bishop Christopher Hill with an ecclesiological perspective on episcopal oversight; Caroline Boddington (Archbishops' Appointments Secretary); and the Archdeacon of Bromley and Bexley.

Copies of some of the papers can be accessed on the Commission's web pages:

<https://www.churchofengland.org/about-us/structure/dioceses-commission/suffragan-sees/episcopal-oversight-symposium.aspx>

16. The following were among key points from the day:
- Both scripture and tradition suggested that there was no single blueprint for episcopal oversight.
  - Chelmsford was exploring new ways of bringing leadership closer to the ground. This was work in progress – with no fixed timetable - and the diocese would remain in dialogue with the Commission about its plans.
  - Structures needed to serve mission priorities.
  - There were concerns about the increasing administrative load on bishops and archdeacons.
  - There was a need for maximum clarity of roles, particularly why intended roles for a suffragan bishop needed to be undertaken by a bishop.
17. In terms of follow up the Commission would be liaising with Development and Appointments Group and the Faith and Order Commission; and would be reviewing its official guidance on the process for filling suffragan sees in order to clarify what was expected from the diocesan bishop especially in respect of a role description.

## **Suffragan Sees**

18. The Dioceses Commission has a statutory obligation under section 17 of the Dioceses and Pastoral Mission Measure 2007 which requires diocesan bishops to submit a proposal to the Commission for approval each time it requires a Suffragan See to be filled.
19. The Commission carefully considered, and agreed to, submissions for the filling of the following sees:
- Aston (in the Diocese of Birmingham)
  - Basingstoke (in the Diocese of Winchester)
  - Burnley (in the Diocese of Blackburn)
  - Crediton (in the Diocese of Exeter)
  - Edmonton (in the Diocese of London)
  - Grantham (in the Diocese of Lincoln)
  - Hertford (in the Diocese of St Albans)
  - Hull (in the Diocese of York)
  - Plymouth (in the Diocese of Exeter)
  - Selby (in the Diocese of York)
  - Stockport (in the Diocese of Chester)
  - Taunton (in the Diocese of Bath & Wells)
  - Whitby (in the Diocese of York)
20. Although the Commission did not reject the filling of any suffragan sees, it took care to ensure that in each case there was a clear mission rationale for the post together with greater clarity of role.
21. In December the Commission also approved a proposal from the Archbishop of Canterbury to fill the suffragan see of Maidstone. The see, which had been vacant since 2009, had been identified by the Archbishop as one that should be filled by a bishop who took a conservative evangelical view on headship, in recognition of the House of Bishops' Declaration made in the run up to the final approval by the General Synod to allow women to be admitted to the episcopate in July 2014. For further details see:  
<https://www.churchofengland.org/media-centre/news/2014/12/suffragan-see-of-maidstone.aspx>

## **Provincial boundaries**

22. The Dioceses Commission is responsible for keeping both the provincial and the diocesan structure of the Church of England under review. Following the inauguration of the Diocese of West Yorkshire & the Dales this year, the imbalance of the Provinces is now even more apparent with 12 dioceses in the Province of York and 30 in the Province of Canterbury.
23. The Commission has been encouraged by both Archbishops to review the boundary between the two provinces so as to create a more balanced archiepiscopal workload. The Commission intends to canvas the views of the House of Bishops at a future meeting.

[On behalf of the Commission]

MICHAEL CLARKE

Chair

18 December 2014