

THE DIOCESES COMMISSION

ANNUAL REPORT 2017

The Dioceses Commission is required to report annually to the General Synod. This is its tenth report.

1. The Commission consists of a Chair and Vice-Chair appointed by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York, the latter from among the members of the Houses of Clergy and Laity of the General Synod; four members elected by the Synod; and four members appointed by the Appointments Committee.

Membership and Staff

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

Chair: Canon Prof. Michael Clarke

Vice-Chair: The Revd Paul Benfield (Blackburn)

Elected Members: Mr Anthony Archer (St Albans)
Mr Malcolm Halliday (Leeds)
The Revd Canon Geoffrey Harbord (Sheffield)
The Revd Dr Robert Munro (Chester)

Appointed Members: Mrs Maureen Cole [until January 2017]
The Rt Revd Christopher Foster, Bishop of Portsmouth
Ms Ruth Martin [from July 2017]
The Rt Revd Dame Sarah Mullally, Bishop of Crediton
Prof. Hilary Russell

Secretary: Mr Jonathan Neil-Smith

3. The Commission was pleased to welcome Ruth Martin, the Southwark Diocesan Secretary, who filled the place left vacant by the resignation of Maureen Cole. The Secretary continued to be seconded part-time to assist the work of the National Safeguarding Team; and also assisted the Independent Reviewer with his review of the Sheffield Episcopal Nomination. Both these significant assignments impacted on the administrative resource available to the Commission during the year.

Duties and Powers of the Commission

4. 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/leadership-and-governance/dioceses-commission>
5. 2017 has been a quiet year for the Commission with no consideration of major proposals for Reorganisation Schemes. The Commission nevertheless continued to exercise its statutory role in respect of the filling of suffragan sees; and it engaged in a range of discussions touching on its overall responsibilities for episcopal oversight.

Suffragan Sees

6. February saw the General Synod's approval to the creation of the new Suffragan See of Loughborough in **the Diocese of Leicester**. This followed discussions in which the Commission took a leading role (as reported in GS Misc 1173 last year), and formed part of a mission strategy to reach out to the BAME community in this multi-cultural diocese. The Revd Dr Guli Francis-Dehqani was appointed to the newly created post and she was duly consecrated on 30 November.
7. The Commission continues to take a close interest in episcopal oversight in the recently created **Diocese of Leeds**. Representatives of the Commission met with the Bishops of Leeds and Richmond in June to consider a proposal to name the revived See of Richmond after Kirkstall – within the episcopal area which was the focus of the bishop's ministry, and the site of a medieval abbey. The Commission was supportive of the mission case for a change. The proposal was strongly supported at the Leeds Diocesan Synod on 14 October and is due to go forward to the General Synod in February 2018 for approval. The Chair and Secretary also participated in a round table discussion on 22 November with the Archbishop of York, and representatives of the new diocese, the Archbishops' Council, the Church Commissioners and others to consider lessons to be learned from the amalgamation exercise.
8. The Commission continues to take care that any proposal to fill suffragan sees should be rooted in the diocese's mission strategy, cohere with the roles of others in the diocesan senior leadership team, and include roles that are inherently episcopal. In exercising its responsibilities under section 17 of the Dioceses and Pastoral Mission Measure 2007, the Commission considered, and agreed to, submissions for the filling of the following sees during the year:
 - Bradwell (in the Diocese of Chelmsford)
 - Lancaster (in the Diocese of Blackburn)
 - Penrith (in the Diocese of Carlisle)
 - Ripon (in the Diocese of Leeds)
 - Warrington (in the Diocese of Liverpool)

Visits to dioceses

9. As part of its ongoing work representatives of the Commission made the following visits during the year:
 - The senior staff of the Diocese of Blackburn (March);
 - The Bishops of Leeds and Richmond (June);
 - The CEO of Peterborough City Council (September);
 - The Dioceses of Ely and Peterborough (October).

[On behalf of the Commission]

MICHAEL CLARKE
Chair

30 December 2017