

GENERAL SYNOD

The Dioceses Commission

Annual Report 2011

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

Membership and Staff

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

Chair: Canon Prof. Michael Clarke (Worcester)
(from Feb. 2011, NB. *vacancy* from Nov. 2010)

Vice-Chair: Canon Prof. Michael Clarke (Worcester)
(Nov. 2010 to Feb. 2011)
Vacancy (Feb. 2011 to May 2011)
Ven Peter Hill (Southwell & Nottingham) (from May 2011)

Elected members: The Revd Canon Jonathan Alderton-Ford
(St Edmundsbury & Ipswich)
The Revd Paul Benfield (Blackburn)
Mr Robert Hammond (Chelmsford) (from March 2011)
Mr Keith Malcouronne (Guildford) (from March 2011)

Appointed members: Mrs Lucinda Herklots
The Revd Sarah Mullally, DBE
Canon Prof. Hilary Russell
The Rt Revd Nigel Stock,
Bishop of St Edmundsbury & Ipswich

Secretary: Mr Jonathan Neil-Smith (from September 2011)
Dr Colin Podmore (to September 2011)

Assistant Secretary: Mrs Jo Winn-Smith
(from Sept. 2011)
Mr Sion Hughes Carew
(to Sept. 2011 – maternity leave cover)

4. Two positions on the Commission became vacant in October 2010: the Archdeacon of York did not stand for re-election to the General Synod and Mr Michael Streeter was not re-elected. Prof. Clarke was appointed by the Archbishops to succeed the

Archdeacon as Vice-Chair, and the two places for elected members of the Synod were filled by election in March 2011.

5. In November 2010, the former Chair, Dr Priscilla Chadwick, who had been a co-opted member of the General Synod, ceased to be a member of the Synod (and hence eligible to chair the Commission) when the new Synod was inaugurated. She was not co-opted to the new House of Laity and in February 2011, therefore, the Archbishops appointed Prof. Clarke to succeed her as Chair of the Commission. The position of Vice-Chair was temporarily vacant and the Venerable Peter Hill was appointed by the Archbishops in May 2011.
6. Dr Colin Podmore, Secretary to the Commission was appointed the Clerk to the Synod in March 2011. He held the two posts concurrently until the appointment of Mr Jonathan Neil-Smith as the new Secretary in September 2011. The Commission take this opportunity to offer its sincere thanks to Dr Podmore for his work on the Commission.
7. Mrs Jo Winn-Smith returned from maternity leave in September 2011, Mr Sion Hughes Carew having been seconded part-time from the Church Commissioners to act as Assistant Secretary of the Commission for her year's absence. The Commission are grateful for his assistance and welcome Mrs Winn-Smith on her return.

Duties and Powers of the Commission

8. 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: www.diocom.org

Boundary Review no. 2: Yorkshire

9. Having undertaken preparatory work, including over 80 meetings and hearing oral evidence from over 100 individuals, including senior diocesan staff, clergy, laity and secular representatives, the Commission issued its draft report in November 2010, focusing on the Dioceses of Bradford, Ripon & Leeds, Sheffield and Wakefield, and on the western boundary of the Diocese of York. The consultation received over 140 responses. The Commission issued a progress report in July.
10. As a result of the initial consultation exercise the Commission met with representatives of the three dioceses to discuss its proposals further in July. The three Bishop's Councils of the dioceses also set up a Preparation Group to take the proposals forward. The Commission considered all the evidence it received and amended its recommendations which were published in the draft scheme for formal consultation on 1 November 2011. The consultation closes on 30 April 2012. The key elements of the scheme are:
 - Replacing the current Dioceses of Bradford, Ripon & Leeds and Wakefield with a new Diocese of Leeds (which may also be known informally as 'the Diocese of West Yorkshire and the Dales');

- Configuring the Diocese of Leeds with five episcopal sees (one diocesan see and four suffragan sees) – Leeds itself, Bradford, Huddersfield, Ripon and Wakefield (on the basis that these would each have episcopal areas conterminous with the Archdeaconries of Leeds, Bradford, Halifax, Richmond & Craven and Pontefract respectively);
- Retaining the existing cathedrals of Bradford, Ripon and Wakefield on an equal basis as centres of mission;
- Providing for Leeds Parish Church to be a pro-cathedral at some point in the future, should the Bishop of Leeds so decide;
- Transferring a number of parishes to neighbouring dioceses, thus bringing diocesan and county boundaries into closer alignment

11. The main changes following consideration of the initial consultation responses were:

- that the see of the bishop of the new diocese was changed to Leeds (not Wakefield), and hence the name of the diocese would also be Leeds, but with the option that it might also be known as ‘the diocese of West Yorkshire and the Dales’;
- leaving the three cathedrals on an equal footing so that none of them is designated as ‘the principal cathedral’ (rather than a focus on Wakefield);
- the inclusion of provision for Leeds Parish Church to become a pro-cathedral if and when the bishop of Leeds decides it should.

12. The consultation also included a detailed financial memorandum on the likely impact of the proposals and a mission statement (as required by the Dioceses, Pastoral and Mission Measure).

13. Following the decision to deal with the Diocese of York separately a short review was undertaken in November 2011 of its northern boundary with the Diocese of Durham. It was clear from the consultations that there was little appetite or necessity for wholesale change to the diocesan boundaries involving the Commission. There was, however, agreement in principle that some minor changes be pursued in the Stockton / Thornaby area on the basis that these could be dealt with via the Pastoral Measure.

Plans for 2012

14. Further discussions on the Diocese of York itself are planned, as well as some other informal investigatory discussions concerning other dioceses. The consideration of the City of Peterborough and its relationship to and impact on the boundaries of the dioceses of Peterborough and Ely will also recommence now that the two new diocesan bishops have settled into their posts.

Suffragan Sees

15. Section 17 of the Dioceses, Pastoral and Mission Measure 2007 (concerning the filling of vacant suffragan sees) and the related section 12 (which requires diocesan bishops to keep the provision of episcopal oversight within their dioceses under review) came into effect on 1 January 2011. In anticipation of this, the Commission issued guidance for diocesan bishops (about which it had consulted the House of Bishops) on the operation of these sections of the Measure. This guidance was

published on the Commission's website. The Commission proposes to issue further advice to diocesan bishops in 2012.

16. The Commission carefully considered, and agreed to, submissions for the filling of the following sees:
- Doncaster (in the Diocese of Sheffield)
 - Stepney (in the Diocese of London)
 - Bradwell (in the Diocese of Chelmsford)
 - Woolwich and Croydon (in the Diocese of Southwark)
 - Bedford (in the Diocese of St Albans)
 - Crediton (in the Diocese of Exeter)
 - Lewes (in the Diocese of Chichester)
 - Ramsbury (in the Diocese of Salisbury)
17. Although the Commission is rigorous in its responsibilities in this area, no requests for the filling of suffragan sees were rejected. It did, however, request additional information in some instances before a decision could be made. The Commission is pleased to note from the diocesan submissions that more systematic and careful thought is being applied to the case for filling these sees.

Survey of Episcopacy

18. In order to assist the Commission's understanding of suffragan episcopacy, a survey was undertaken of the number and varieties of legal arrangements for suffragan episcopacy across the Church. Further research is planned for 2012.

Conclusion

19. 2011 has further underlined the considerable amount of time and care that is needed in diocesan reorganisation. The proposals included significant changes as well as many minor ones and much detailed investigation and deliberation has taken place. In particular, the Yorkshire Review has shown the vital importance of working in partnership with the dioceses concerned, as it is they who inevitably play a pivotal role in taking forward the Commission's proposals. The Commission take this opportunity to thank the many people who have contributed their time and energy to responding to the initial consultation exercise and the ongoing work that is being undertaken to develop workable proposals and arrangements.
20. The Commission is conscious that many in the wider Church will be watching progress on the Yorkshire Review with great interest. Much will depend in 2012 on how that scheme progresses in terms of the momentum for change that was evident in the General Synod when it enthusiastically supported the Toyne Review and passed the Dioceses, Pastoral and Mission Measure.

[On behalf of the Commission]

MICHAEL CLARKE
Chair

16 May 2012