

**FAITH AND ORDER COMMISSION OF THE GENERAL SYNOD
OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND**

1. This paper sets out a proposal that the current theological resources of the Church of England at the national level should be brought together to form a new Faith and Order Commission of the General Synod ('the Commission'). As well as consolidating the present arrangements, the proposal offers scope for a more focused and streamlined handling of work in this area in the future.
2. The proposal has been prepared in discussion with the chairs of the Council for Christian Unity, the Faith and Order Advisory Group ('FOAG') and the House of Bishops' Theological Group. The idea has also been considered by FOAG, the House of Bishops Theological Group, the Standing Committee of the House of Bishops and the House itself, and has been supported, with minor amendment, at each stage. The Archbishops' Council has been kept informed and we endorse the proposal.
3. Theological resourcing for the Church of England at the national level is currently provided by the Doctrine Commission, the House of Bishops' Theological Group, and FOAG.
4. The Doctrine Commission has provided extensive theological resources in the past, normally in the form of major set piece reports, published every five years or so, but has been in abeyance for several years.
5. The Theological Group advises the House of Bishops and its Standing Committee on theological issues that arise within the work of the House or the College, offering reflection on all theological aspects of the House's agenda. This provision would continue under the new arrangements.
6. FOAG provides theological resources and reflection for the House or College of Bishops and the Council for Christian Unity and through them for the Synod. Over the years, FOAG has produced a number of reports and other documents which have been adopted by the House of Bishops and made available to the wider Church. FOAG's main strength is in ecclesiology and ecumenical theology, though it currently also contains expertise in biblical studies, liturgy and ethics, and this sort of expertise will be needed in the new Commission. FOAG normally has several bishops among its membership. It scrutinises draft ecumenical agreements and other ecumenical and ecclesiological texts involving the Church of England. The members and the episcopal chair of FOAG are appointed by the Archbishops. It receives commissions of work from either the House of Bishops or the CCU.
7. The current proposal is for the establishment of the Commission, which will incorporate FOAG, the House of Bishops' Theological Group and the Doctrine Commission. The Commission will therefore have a special

relationship to the House of Bishops and to the Council for Christian Unity (as FOAG has now).

8. The Commission will receive requests or commissions of work from the Archbishops, the House of Bishops and the Council for Christian Unity. It will be able to initiate communication with the above and to indicate any concerns that it might have. It will be able to undertake medium term projects of a fundamental nature, as well as responding to immediate concerns.
9. The Commission's membership will be 16, including an episcopal chair. It will be made up of six bishops (including the chair), clergy and laity. It will need to be able to consult scholars outside its membership for particular pieces of work.
10. The chair and members of the Commission will be appointed by the Archbishops after consultation with the Appointments Committee (as is the position with the Doctrine and Liturgical Commissions). The Archbishops will also consult with the House of Bishops' Standing Committee in relation to the appointment of its episcopal members.
11. The chair and the other episcopal members of the Commission will constitute an Episcopal Reference Group within the larger body, which will perform a similar role to that of the current House of Bishops' Theological Group. The role of this group will reflect the special responsibility of the episcopate for matters of faith and order. It will act as the interface with the House of Bishops and will be at liberty to meet separately if required.
12. The Commission will meet four times a year, one meeting being residential, and will do much of its work by email correspondence in small working groups outside of the meetings (a similar pattern to FOAG).
13. The staffing of the Commission will be located administratively in the Central Secretariat and carried out through the House of Bishops' secretariat and the Council for Christian Unity, thus bringing together the current servicing of FOAG and the Theological Group.
14. The expenses of the Commission will be held within the Central Secretariat's budget. The expenses of the Commission are expected to be lower than the current costs of FOAG and the Theological Group (the Doctrine Commission does not currently figure in the budget of the Archbishops' Council).
15. The Chair of the Commission will have a seat on the House of Bishops' Standing Committee.
16. The proposed Constitution of the Commission is set out in Annex A.
17. In the light of the proposed formation of the Commission, the Standing Orders Committee proposes that the Standing Orders of the General Synod be amended so as to make express provision for the Commission and other Commissions of the Synod. The Standing Orders Committee's proposals are

contained in its 45th Report, set out in Annex B. Details of the amendments proposed can be found on the First Notice Paper.

18. If the Synod gives its approval to the principle of establishing the Commission, the motions for the amendment of the Synod's Standing Orders set out in the First Notice Paper will be moved. In the event that the motion proposing the insertion of the new SO 121 is carried, the Synod will then be invited to approve the Constitution of the Commission as set out in Annex A.

ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY
ARCHBISHOP OF YORK

CONSTITUTION
OF
THE FAITH AND ORDER COMMISSION OF THE GENERAL SYNOD OF
THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND

1 Title and status

- (a) The name of the Commission shall be “The Faith and Order Commission of the General Synod of the Church of England” (‘the Commission’).
- (b) The short title of the Commission shall be “The Faith and Order Commission”.
- (c) The Commission shall be a Commission of the General Synod.

2 Function

The function of the Commission shall be to act as a theological and ecclesiological resource for the Church of England.

In furtherance of this function the Commission may, in particular:

- (a) undertake work commissioned by the Archbishops, the House of Bishops or the Council for Christian Unity, including by:
 - (i) providing reports and other theological resources for the House of Bishops, the College of Bishops and the Council for Christian Unity, and through them for the General Synod;
 - (ii) advising the House of Bishops and the House of Bishops’ Standing Committee on theological issues that arise in the course of the work of the House of Bishops or the College of Bishops; and
 - (iii) reviewing draft ecumenical agreements and other ecumenical and ecclesiological texts of relevance to Church of England; and
- (b) draw to the attention of the Archbishops, the House of Bishops and the Council for Christian Unity matters which appear to it to raise theological or ecclesiological issues worthy of consideration by the Commission.

3 Membership

- (a) The Commission shall consist of a Chair and fifteen other members.
- (b) Six members of the Commission, including the Chair, shall be persons in episcopal orders of the Church of England, appointed by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York, after consultation with the Appointments Committee and the House of Bishops Standing Committee.
- (c) The remaining ten members of the Commission shall be appointed by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York, after consultation with the Appointments Committee.

4 Term of office

- (a) The Chair shall hold office for a term determined by the Archbishops, not exceeding five years, provided that the Archbishops may, on the expiry of such term determine that the Chair may hold office for a further term not exceeding five years.
- (b) Other members of the Commission shall hold office for a term of five years and may be appointed for a further term of five years. A member appointed to fill a casual vacancy shall hold office for the unexpired portion of the term of office of the member whom he or she has replaced.
- (c) No member shall serve for more than two full successive terms of office.

5 Episcopal Reference Group

- (a) The Chair and the other episcopal members of the Commission shall constitute the Episcopal Reference Group of the Commission ('the Reference Group').
- (b) The function of the Reference Group shall be to:
 - (i) promote communication between the Commission and the House of Bishops on matters relating to the work of the Commission; and
 - (ii) undertake such other tasks as the House of Bishops may from time to time request.
- (c) The Reference Group shall have the like power to regulate its own business and procedure as does the Commission, and may meet separately from the Commission if required.

6 Observers, consultants and assessors

The Commission and the Reference Group may invite such other observers, consultants or assessors as it considers appropriate to its meetings from time to time. Such persons shall have the right to speak but not to vote.

7 Business and procedure

- (a) The Commission shall elect a Vice-Chair from among its own members.
- (b) The quorum at meetings of the Commission shall be not less than five of the members of the Commission for the time being and no business shall be transacted in the absence of a quorum. Subject thereto the Commission may transact business notwithstanding vacancies.
- (c) The Commission may appoint such committees (on such terms as to membership, appointment, functions and reporting back or otherwise) as it shall from time to time determine. Any such committee may include persons who are not members of the Commission.
- (d) No meetings of the Commission shall be held during any group of sessions of the General Synod except with the agreement of the Clerk to the Synod.
- (e) Subject as aforesaid, the Commission shall have power to regulate its own business and procedure. In the absence of such regulation, paragraphs (f) and (g) below shall apply.
- (f) The Chair (or in his or her absence the Vice-Chair) shall determine all questions of order and procedure. He or she may move motions or amendments and, in the case of an equality of votes, shall have a second or casting vote.
- (g) All decisions shall be made by a majority of members present and voting without discrimination in respect of Houses; and voting shall be by show of hands.

STANDING ORDERS COMMITTEE

FORTY-FIFTH REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE

We present to the Synod our forty-fifth report. Our membership for the current quinquennium is as follows:

Appointed members:

Mr Geoffrey Tattersall QC (Manchester) (Chair)
Mrs Gill Ambrose (Ely)
The Revd Canon Sue Booy (Oxford)
The Ven Adrian Harbidge (Winchester)
The Revd Canon Simon Killwick (Manchester)
Mr Clive Scowen (London)

Ex-officio members:

Canon Dr Christina Baxter (Chair of the House of Laity)
Dr Philip Giddings (Vice-chair of the House of Laity)
The Revd Canon Glyn Webster (Prolocutor of the Lower House of the Convocation of York)
The Ven Norman Russell (Prolocutor of the Lower House of the Convocation of Canterbury)

Item 26

SO 121 – Commissions of the Synod

1. At present, there is a lack of clarity as to the constitutional position of most of the Commissions of the Synod. Although Article 10(2) of the Synod's Constitution provides that the Synod "*may appoint or provide by their Standing Orders for the appointment of such Committees, Commissions and other bodies ... and such officers as they think fit*", no provision is in fact made in the Synod's Standing Orders for Commissions, save in the case of the Crown Nominations Commission (which is regulated in detail by SO 122). Thus the constitutional basis of the Synod's other Commissions (i.e. the Doctrine Commission, the Liturgical Commission and the Legal Advisory Commission) is unclear – albeit that the Liturgical Commission's constitution has been approved by the Synod.
2. The Committee considers that the proposed establishment of the Faith and Order Commission (which will replace the Doctrine Commission, the Faith and Order Advisory Group and the House of Bishops' Theological Group) provides an opportunity to put the legal basis of the Faith and Order Commission, the Liturgical Commission and the Legal Advisory Commission on a clearer and more secure footing.

3. Accordingly, the Committee proposes that the Standing Orders should be amended by the insertion of a new SO 121 which makes provision for the establishment of the Commissions and requires each Commission to have its own constitution, the terms of which are to be approved by the Synod and must include the minimal provisions set out in SO 121(c) concerning procedure and membership. **Item 26** in the First Notice Paper makes provision to that end.

Item 25

SO 105 – Questions

4. SO 105 specifies the bodies whose Chairs may be asked questions in Synod in accordance with the provisions of SOs 105 to 109A. Should the Synod accept the Committee's proposal to insert the new SO 121, the Committee considers that SO 105 should be amended consequentially to include a reference to the Chairs of any of the Commissions established under the new SO 121 so that questions may be asked of them. (Whilst provision to that effect is likely to be unnecessary in practice since, given their membership, any Commission is almost certainly going to be a "*Church of England body on which the Synod is represented*" so as to enable a question to be asked of its chair under SO 105(a)(vi), it would be desirable for there to be certainty in this respect; and in any event an amendment of the kind proposed could be thought to be desirable in principle to reflect the status of the Commissions as significant bodies which are closely linked to the Synod.)
5. **Item 25** in the First Notice Paper makes provision to that end.

On behalf of the Committee:

Geoffrey Tattersall QC

Chair

May 2010