

CONVOCATIONS OF CANTERBURY AND YORK

“Guidelines for the Professional Conduct of the Clergy” Background Note

1. On 28th February 2000, the Lower Houses of the Convocations of Canterbury and York, meeting separately, carried the following motion – “That this House approves the proposal of the Standing Committee of the House of Clergy that a Joint Committee of the two Lower Houses be set up to prepare a Code of Professional Conduct”.
2. The Joint Committee consisted of the following Proctors: the Prolocutor of Canterbury (Canon Hugh Wilcox, St Albans); the Prolocutor of York (Canon John Stanley, Liverpool); Canon Frank Dexter (Newcastle); Prebendary Kay Garlick (Hereford); Canon Peter Hill (Southwell); the Revd David Houlding (London). The Synodical Secretary (Canon Michael Hodge) and the Synodal Secretary (the Venerable David Jenkins) acted as Secretaries to the Joint Committee.
3. The Committee appointed Canon Wilcox as its Chairman and, at a later stage, invited Canon Stanley to continue as a member following his retirement from the Convocation of York.
4. By direct mailing and by the use of the Church Press, invitations were issued to organisations and individuals to make submissions to the Committee to help in the preparation of the draft document.
5. The Committee are grateful to all those who responded and whose submissions greatly helped the Committee in its work.
6. We received legal advice, which we accepted, that it would be preferable if we used the word “Guidelines” rather than “Code”.
7. Canon Francis Bridger (Principal of Trinity College, Bristol) wrote a “Theological Reflection” that greatly assisted us in our task and has been warmly appreciated by those who read it in the draft document. Mrs Diana Webster (Europe) cast an eagle eye over our work, searching for textual infelicities. We are most grateful to both of them.

8. The draft document was published in February 2002 and copies sent to Bishops, to diocesan secretaries, to all members of the General Synod and its legal officers. Other copies were sent to various organisations and individuals. We are particularly grateful to the *Church Times* for reproducing the draft Guidelines in their entirety in its edition of 22nd February 2002. The document contained a request that comments be received by 31st July 2002.
9. During the period from February to July, many meetings were held throughout the country. As a result, over 100 responses were received from both groups and individuals, many reflecting very careful thought on the part of those who wished to contribute to the on-going debate.
10. The Lower House of the Convocation of Canterbury and the Upper and Lower Houses of the Convocation of York took note of the draft Guidelines at separate meetings on 6th July 2002. The following motions were carried-
 - (a) “That the House do take note of the Draft Document.”
 - (b) “That the Working Party be invited to consider the comments that will have been received by not later than 31st July 2002 and to bring amended Guidelines to the Convocation at the earliest possible date.”
11. As a result of the debates in the Convocations, the Joint Committee was strengthened, for the revision process, by the addition of the Rt Revd John Packer (Bishop of Ripon & Leeds) and of Mrs Mary Johnston (London).
12. Altogether, the Joint Committee met twenty-one times, two of them residentially. Without some outstanding submissions from the many contributors – even if sometimes contradictory! – their work would have been made much harder.
13. The Joint Committee recognises that what they offer is not, and cannot be, the last word on the subject. It will be for the Standing Committee of the Convocation of Canterbury and the Assessors of the Convocation of York to decide on how to keep the subject under review and to bring forward amendments as necessary from time to time.

4th April 2003

Hugh Wilcox
Chairman