

GENERAL SYNOD

February 2007 Group of Sessions

Report by the Business Committee

Introduction and overview of the Agenda

1. The February 2007 Group of Sessions mark the return to use of Church House after a year's closure during the carrying out of major work. The Conference Centre will be reopening on the Monday after Synod and by 19 March the staff of the Archbishops' Council, the Church Commissioners and the Pensions Board will have moved to Church House from Elizabeth House and Millbank.
2. As part of the building project the Assembly Hall has been refurbished and its facilities upgraded. A flat floor has been installed and the fixed seating removed. This will make the Hall suitable for a much wider range of events and increase the potential for income generation by the Conference Centre. The old sound system has been removed. Temporary arrangements will be in place this February. Once the Synod has at this Group of Sessions resolved a number of issues about electronic voting the Corporation of Church House will be acquiring a system which will include both portable microphones and electronic voting handsets.
3. The Agenda for the February Group of Sessions includes a considerable amount of legislative business. There is a major debate on clergy pensions (following the recent extensive consultation exercise), and two Private Members' Motions, on lesbian and gay Christians and on civil partnerships, which are likely to attract a good deal of interest. The Agenda also reflects the Church's engagement with community affairs, as demonstrated by debates on Trident, criminal justice and prison policy, and the Lichfield Diocesan Synod Motion on media standards and their effect on individuals and society. There is a debate on a report from the Board of Education, which includes a progress report on the achievements of the expectations of the Dearing Report, five years on. There will also be a presentation on Fresh Expressions in the context of the Church's outreach and mission.
4. The Synod takes place shortly after the meeting in Tanzania of the Primates of the Anglican Communion, and the Archbishop of Canterbury will report to the Synod on the outcome of that in a Presidential Address.
5. There is one item of contingency business, a Private Member's Motion from Mr Gavin Oldham on the Ethical Investment Advisory Group: Restricted Investments, and this will be taken if a space opens up within the Agenda. No other Private Member's Motion has secured the 100 signatures, which, in the light of the Standing Orders, successive Business Committees have set as the acceptable threshold for a PMM to be debated.
6. A financial comment has been prepared by the Finance Division on items of Synod business which have significant financial implications, and this will be circulated in a Notice Paper.

7. The forecast of business (Annex 1) provides a forward look to future Groups of Sessions. The inclusion of items within the forecast provides no guarantee that an item will be scheduled for debate and the forecast is no more than an indication of the future programme of Synod business.

Venue and timing of the February Synod

8. The February Group of Sessions will take place **in Church House, Westminster from 2 pm on Monday, 26 February to 5 pm on Thursday, 1 March.**

Security

9. Members are asked to wear their Church House passes at all times and to study the security notice which will be circulated in a notice paper.

Worship

10. A service of Holy Communion will take place in the Assembly Hall at 9.15 am on Wednesday, 28 February. A time of prayer and worship will take place at the commencement of the morning sittings at 9.15 am on Tuesday and Thursday. Outline information about services in the Church House Chapel is given in the Agenda.

Order of Business

11. The business each day will follow the order set out in the daily list given in the Agenda, except where it is necessary to modify this. Every effort will be made to give the Synod the longest possible notice of any variations which it is proposed to make in the timetable, and to keep such changes to a minimum. Members are, however, reminded that if at any time within the Group of Sessions an unexpected gap opens in the Synod's Agenda, business earlier in the Agenda which has not been reached or completed within the period allotted, can be called by the Chairman, unless other provision has already been made for it.

12. If there is no such outstanding business and an unexpected gap opens in the Synod Agenda, then unless the adjournment is carried, the Business Committee has decided that the next item to be taken, as contingency business, will be the Private Member's Motion on the Ethical Investment Advisory Group: Restricted Investments. Members are reminded that the rubric 'not later than' in the Agenda does not prevent an item coming on significantly earlier than the time stated, depending on the progress of the preceding business.

Private Members' Motions

13. Private Members' Motions are contained in Special Agenda III. Notice of any new Private Members' Motions will be published in a notice paper, and they will be available at the February Group of Sessions for signature by members (to indicate their support for a debate on them) but only if they are received no later than 5.30 pm on Monday 26 February.

Detailed Agenda

Introductions and welcomes (Monday, 26 February)

14. There will be the usual introductions of new members and other formal announcements.

Presidential Address on the Anglican Communion

15. The Archbishop of Canterbury will give a Presidential Address on the Anglican Communion in the light of the Primates' Meeting on 15-19 February 2007.

Report by the Business Committee

16. This will provide the customary opportunity for members to raise points about content and shape of the Agenda for this Group of Sessions, or about the Synod's business generally.

Dates of Synod in 2009 and 2010

17. The Synod is invited to agree the following dates for 2009 and 2010:

2009

9-13 February

10-14 July

16-18 November (if required)

2010

8-12 February

9-13 July

15-17 November (inauguration of the new Synod)

Trident

18. In December 2006 the Government published *The Future of Trident* – a White Paper containing the proposals to renew Britain's nuclear deterrent. This initiated a three-month public debate in preparation for a debate in the House of Commons some time in March. Although the Government has decided to renew Trident this is the first time that a Government has permitted discussion in the Commons on its plans to develop the nuclear deterrent. A Synod debate towards the end of the three months will provide an opportunity for a considered view to be offered from the Church of England before the consultation period ends.

19. The Mission and Public Affairs Council made a submission to the House of Commons Defence Select Committee putting forward probing questions for clarification of the Government's decision. It drew on the statement made by the Archbishop of Canterbury when *The Future of Trident* was published. Both documents are included in the background paper to Synod. The debate is intended to focus on the Government's current plans and so the Resolution to be proposed by the Bishop of Southwark welcomes the serious questions put in the MPA Council' submission, calls on Christian people to engage in the debate in the light of

Christian Just War thinking, and asks the Government to clarify how its plans meet the spirit of its obligations in international law and the ethical principles underpinning them.

Questions

20. Under SO 105, members may address Questions to the Chairmen of the three Houses of Synod, the Secretary General, the Clerk to the Synod, the Chairman of the Archbishops' Council, the Chairman of any body answerable to the Synod through the Archbishops' Council (including Boards and Councils), the Church Commissioners, and the Chairman of any Church of England body on which the Synod is represented. Anyone wishing to ask a question must give notice of it to reach the Clerk to the Synod by 5.30 pm on Wednesday, 14 February 2007. The Questions notice paper will be distributed at the beginning of the Group of Sessions.

21. Members are entitled to ask up to two questions. 'Omnibus' questions are not in order. If a member wishes to query several points, each should be the subject of a separate question. Detailed information, tables of figures, etc are better dealt with in a written answer, and members are urged to be selective in matters which they raise orally at Question Time, including any supplementaries which must be framed as a question and should be kept brief. Members should indicate clearly when submitting a question whether it is for oral or written answer.

Clergy Pensions (Tuesday, 27 February)

22. The Synod received a presentation under Standing Order 97 at the July sessions on the second report of the Archbishops' Task Group, *Clergy Pensions - The Way Forward*. That report was widely distributed within the Church, and comments were invited with a deadline of no later than 10 November.

23. The results of the consultation are set out in GS 1645 along with the recommendations that the Archbishops' Council, in the light of views from the Deployment, Remuneration and Conditions of Service Committee (DRACSC), has decided to make to the Synod. The Synod is being asked to endorse the recommendations at paragraph 69 of GS 1645, subject to the statutory and other consultations that the Archbishops' Council now needs to conduct; and in the light of those consultations, to invite the Archbishops' Council to submit to the Synod in July final proposals, including such changes as are necessary to the funded scheme rules.

24. The debate will be prefaced by a presentation by Shaun Farrell, the Secretary to the Pensions Board, who will be introduced by the Bishop of Ripon and Leeds, Chair of DRACSC. The Bishop of Ripon and Leeds will then speak and move the motion asking the Synod to endorse the recommendations in paragraph 69 of the report.

Legislative Business

25. The draft Dioceses, Pastoral and Mission Measure and related draft legislation return to the Synod for Final Drafting and Final Approval. The draft Church of England Marriage Measure also returns, for the Revision Stage. The Revision Committee has made a number of amendments to the draft Measure, one effect of which is to limit the extent of the relaxation the Measure will make to the current rules on the place of marriage.

26. As regards new legislation, the principal items to be introduced are the draft Ecclesiastical Offices (Terms of Service) Measure, the draft Ecclesiastical Offices (Terms of Service) Regulations and draft Amending Canon No 29, which give effect to the recommendations of the Review of Clergy Terms of Service. The draft legislation will introduce, in the form of 'common tenure', a new framework of rights and responsibilities under which both freehold and licensed clergy will hold office within the Church, as well as making significant changes in relation to clergy housing.

27. The Synod will also be asked to give First Consideration to draft Amending Canon No 28, which implements the Synod's decision in February 2005 on the Ely Diocesan Synod Motion about Canon B44.

28. Of the other items of legislative business before the Synod for approval, two relate to the process of winding up the Central Board of Finance: the Synod will be asked to confirm the appointment of a new body corporate (CBF Funds Trustee Limited) as the trustee of the Church of England Investment Funds in place of the CBF and to approve the National Institutions of the Church of England (Transfer of Functions) Order 2007, which will transfer responsibility for a number of miscellaneous functions from the CBF to the Archbishops' Council. Additionally, approval will also be sought (under the deemed procedure) for the Parsonage Measure (Amendment) Rules, which make technical changes to the Parsonages Measure Rules 2000.

Fresh Expressions

29. This presentation will provide the opportunity of informing Synod members about recent and forthcoming developments with Fresh Expressions. We are now three years on from the debate on Mission Shaped Church and at the mid-point of the Archbishops' initiative. The presentation will be introduced by the Archbishop of Canterbury and given by the Revd Dr Steven Croft (Archbishops' Missioner and Team Leader), together with the Revd Lynda Barley (Head of Research and Statistics, Archbishops' Council) and the Revd Paul Bayes (National Mission and Evangelism Adviser, Mission and Public Affairs Division). The presentation will include new DVD material on rural fresh expressions of church and an analysis of new statistical information. It will be followed by about 30 minutes for questions and comments. Illustrated background information about Fresh Expressions will be circulated to brief Synod members in advance of the presentation. Members of the Fresh Expressions team will be present throughout the Synod and staffing a display; they will be glad to engage in further discussion and debate with members.

Holy Communion (Wednesday 28 February)

30. Holy Communion will be celebrated at 9.15 am in the Assembly Hall. The Archbishop of Canterbury will preside.

Lesbian and Gay Christians: Private Member's Motion: The Revd Mary Gilbert

31. Two Private Members' Motions - from the Revd Mary Gilbert on Lesbian and Gay Christians and from the Revd Paul Perkin on Civil Partnerships - are due to be debated. They have collected the most signatories and, in view of the fact that both concern human sexuality, though from differing perspectives, the Committee judged that both should be debated at the

same Group of Sessions, and on the same day. The Business Committee has agreed that in order to maximise preparation time, **the deadline for receipt of any amendments to either motion** should be advanced to **10 am on Tuesday 27 February**.

32. The outcome of the debates is bound to be watched closely not only in the Church of England but across the Anglican Communion. The House of Bishops has produced two factual notes as a background resource for the debates (GS Misc 842B and GS Misc 843B), in addition to the notes from the movers of both motions (GS Misc 842A and GS Misc 843A). Further background material is contained in *Some Issues in Human Sexuality: A Guide to the Debate* (GS 1519), published in November 2003.

Legislative Business

33. Please see paragraphs 25-28 above.

Electronic Voting

34. A separate paper from the Business Committee has been circulated (GS 1636).

Civil Partnerships: Private Member's Motion: the Revd Paul Perkin

35. See paragraphs 31-32 above.

Achieving the First Two Hundred Years: Report by the Board of Education (Wednesday, 28 February)

36. Lord Dearing's report, *The Way ahead: Church of England schools in the new millennium*, was approved by General Synod in November 2001. In the past five years it has effectively driven the Church of England's strategy and policy for secondary schools. A debate now will allow the Church to amend or endorse a set of further strategies for the development and improvement of its work with schools and other educational institutions in the years up to the celebration of the bicentenary of the National Society in 2011.

37. These include important proposed aspirations in the fields of post-16 and further education, and the encouragement of new developments in the links between schools, their parishes and their wider communities.

38. This is the more timely because the Education and Inspections Act, which became law in November 2006 and comes into force during the first half of 2007, opens substantial new opportunities for the Church in education. However, the passage of the Bill has also created fresh public debate about foundation schools and faith schools, and in particular about their admissions policies. The debate will be resourced by a report from the Board of Education (GS 1646), entitled *Achieving the First Two Hundred Years: The Dearing Report Leads to the First 200 Years of the National Society: Education Division School Strategy Team and National Society Strategy for 2007-11*.

Criminal Justice and Prison Policy Issues (Thursday, 1 March)

39. The criminal justice system is undergoing major challenges as a result of the critical level of prison overcrowding and changes in the system of supervising offenders through the

creation of a National Offender Management Service, amalgamating the prison and probation services. At the same time, there is considerable public anxiety about dangerous offenders and anti-social behaviour.

40. The debate gives Synod members the opportunity to comment on these matters from their personal experience and to consider once again the priorities that Christian faith might suggest for overall policy in responding to crime - particularly the needs of victims and vulnerable offender groups. It also highlights the opportunities and problems for Christian service and witness in the criminal justice system, including new possibilities for involvement of faith and voluntary groups in working with offenders in the community. The debate is resourced by a report from the Mission and Public Affairs Council (GS 1647).

41. The debate will be preceded by an address from Mr Phil Wheatley, Director General of the Prison Service, followed by a short time for questions, after which the Bishop of Worcester (the Bishop to HM Prisons) will speak to and move the motion to be debated by the Synod.

Legislative Business

42. See paragraphs 25-28 above.

Media Standards: Their Effect on Individuals and Society: Lichfield Diocesan Synod Motion

43. This motion began in the parish of Armitage and was adopted in turn by the Rugeley Deanery Synod and Lichfield Diocesan Synod. The motion arose out of concern that current standards relating to harm and offence in the media tended to allow the exploitation of individuals on screen in a variety of ways, with unhelpful consequences for society. In the view of the Lichfield Diocesan Synod, this approach could be challenged if there was well-founded evidence in research findings of a link between exploitation in the media and standards of human behaviour. For example, in a number of high profile murder and rape cases it has become apparent that the perpetrators claim to have been influenced by watching violent pornography or playing violent computer games. Moreover, the Lichfield Diocesan Synod noted that the increase of 'reality television' programmes brought in to sharper focus questions about the effects of on-screen behaviour being copied by viewers, and the effects of this on society.

44. This motion seeks to address these concerns, by calling for research to examine whether it is true that such portrayals within the media are having an effect on standards of human behaviour. Once that research is available, the motion argues that the debate can then be taken forward.

45. The debate is resourced by a background paper from the Lichfield Diocese (GS Misc 844A) and a background paper from the Communications Office (GS Misc 844B).

**Ethical Investment Advisory Group: Restricted Investments:
Private Member's Motion by Mr Gavin Oldham**

46. This motion invites the Synod to express the view that the list of restricted investments maintained by the Ethical Investment Advisory Group should be published, and also made available under license. A background paper from Mr Oldham (GS Misc 845A) has been circulated. A paper from the investment bodies represented on the Ethical Investment Advisory Committee (the Archbishops' Council/Central Board of Finance, the Church Commissioners and the Pensions Board) is also being circulated (GS Misc 845B).

Prorogation

47. The Synod will be prorogued by the Archbishop of Canterbury no later than 5 pm.

The work of the Business Committee

48. The Committee has considered a range of correspondence received from Synod members. A lack of spontaneity in the handling of Questions was noted by a number of correspondents following the July Synod, and Southwark members expressed concern about the division of the motion on the sale of the Octavia Hill Estates. Some of the correspondence received following the July Group of Sessions focused on the handling of Monday's debate on Women in the Episcopate, and on the choice of speakers called in the debate.

49. In relation to Questions, the Business Committee feels that the time is right to consult Synod members on some suggestions which the Committee would like to make about making optimum use of the opportunity provided by Question Time, and a note of these suggestions is included as Annex 2 to this report.

50. The Committee has worked closely with the Corporation of the Church House in arrangements for the refurbishment of the Assembly Hall in Church House, Westminster. It has also continued to monitor improvements in access for disabled people at York.

51. It has also looked at the existing mechanisms for allowing time for the Synod to debate urgent matters that may arise between the issue of the Synod's Agenda and the Synod meeting, but considers that the existing provisions - whereby the Presidents have the power to agree the addition of urgent business once the Synod's Agenda has been settled - are satisfactory. As will be seen, the Committee is suggesting developing Question Time so that it might provide an opportunity for reflecting more effectively on matters of current concern.

52. The Committee has also looked at invitations to ecumenical guests to attend the July Synod, and noted that a representative of the Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland will be attending the Synod in 2008 (following the customary biennial pattern) and may be invited to address the Synod. There is also the possibility of a senior representative of the Orthodox Churches attending and addressing the Synod, perhaps in the context of a possible debate on the international Anglican-Orthodox dialogue in 2008. The Committee also welcomed proposals from the Mission and Public Affairs Council that representatives of other faiths should be invited to attend a future Group of Sessions, which would include a reception and a presentation in the margins of the Synod. The representatives would be introduced to the

Synod when observing a debate from the gallery, and the welcome would be extended to any future debates which they felt to be of common concern.

On behalf of the Business Committee

Kay Garlick

February 2007

Membership of the Business Committee

The Revd Prebendary Kay Garlick (Hereford) - *Chair*

Elected by the House of Bishops

The Rt Revd Trevor Willmott, Bishop of Basingstoke

Elected by the House of Clergy

The Ven Alan Hawker, Archdeacon of Malmesbury (Bristol) - *Vice-Chair*

The Revd Sue Booy (Oxford)

The Ven Alistair Magowan, Archdeacon of Dorset (Salisbury)

Elected by the House of Laity

Mrs Sue Johns (Norwich)

Mr Gerry O'Brien (Rochester)

Mrs Rosalind O'Dowd (London)

Two members of the Archbishops' Council

Professor John Craven (Appointed)

The Revd Canon Glyn Webster (Appointed)

The Secretary to the Committee is David Williams
and the Assistant Secretary is Malcolm Taylor

Forecast of future General Synod business

This forecast provides a forward look to future Groups of Sessions. The inclusion of items within the forecast provides no guarantee that an item will, in due course, be scheduled by the Business Committee for debate.

One or more Private Members' Motions and Diocesan Synod Motions are customarily included in each Group of Sessions.

A place will be found for considering the report from the Legislative Drafting Group on Women in the Episcopate as soon as the House of Bishops requests it.

July 2007

Legislation

Church of England Marriage Measure – Final Drafting and Final Approval
Amending Canon No 28 re Canon B 44 – Revision Stage
Miscellaneous Provisions Measure – First Consideration
Usual Fees Orders

Reports

Anglican/Methodist Covenant: second interim report from the Joint Implementation Commission
Faith and Order Advisory Group (FOAG) follow-up report to *For Such a Time as This*
Church Commissioners Annual Report, and report on Investment issues (requested by July 2006 Synod)
Standing Orders Committee report
Lambeth Conference: preparatory presentation
Liturgical Formation and Church Music
Senior Church Appointments
Disability issues for ministry in the Church of England
Present and Participating: A Place at the Table – The Role of Minority Ethnic Anglicans in the Church
Clergy Pensions
Presentation on the Church Army

February 2008

Legislation

Amending Canon No 28 – Final Drafting and Final Approval
Clergy Terms of Service legislation - Revision Stage
Miscellaneous Provisions Measure – Revision Stage
Church of England (Pensions) Measure [Commissioners' power to spend capital] – First Consideration
Ecclesiastical Fees (Amendment) Measure [parochial fees] – First Consideration

Reports Reader Ministry
International Anglican/Roman Catholic Commission for Unity and
Mission Report: *Growing Together in Unity and Mission: Building on
Forty Years of Anglican-Roman Catholic Dialogue: A Study Paper*
ARCIC report on *Mary: Grace and Hope in Christ*
Poverty in England: Report by Mission and Public Affairs Council
Mental Health Issues: Report by Mission and Public Affairs Council

July 2008

Legislation Clergy Terms of Service legislation – Final Drafting and Final
Approval
Miscellaneous Provisions Measure – Final Drafting and Final
Approval
Church of England (Pensions) Measure – Revision Stage
Ecclesiastical Fees (Amendment) Measure – Revision Stage

Reports Human Genome
Report of international Anglican-Orthodox dialogue

February 2009

Legislation Church of England (Pensions) Measure - Final Drafting and Final
Approval
Ecclesiastical Fees (Amendment) Measure – Final Drafting and Final
Approval

Reports Good Childhood Project: Report by the Children's Society
Mission-Shaped Church: follow-up
Lambeth Conference Report

29 January 2007

QUESTION TIME

1. Following the February and July 2006 Groups of Sessions, the Business Committee received a number of comments from members of the Synod about Question Time. These indicate that some members at least do not believe that Question Time is at present fulfilling its purpose satisfactorily. The Committee has considered these comments and wishes both to offer the Synod some reflections on them and also to invite members to comment on some possible changes that might improve the situation.
2. Question Time is not intended to be a means of enabling individual members of the Synod to inform themselves about the work done on the Synod's behalf. Rather, it is a means of asking questions in such a way that the answers are drawn to the attention of other members and are given 'on the record' and therefore available for future reference. It is a means of publicizing facts and of holding to account those responsible for the Synod's work. The fact that supplementary questions can be asked is an important element in the process; a noncommittal answer is less likely to be given if it will be subject to a supplementary question.
3. Some members of the Synod are concerned that in Question Time there is currently insufficient time for members to pursue matters that are clearly of interest and importance, and that the length of time spent on less significant matters means that some important Questions do not receive oral Answers at all. There is also a feeling that Question Time has come to lack spontaneity and therefore to be a less stimulating part of the Synod's agenda than it once was.
4. The Committee has identified a number of ways in which these related concerns might be addressed.

(1) *Ask the staff*

5. Where members are simply asking the question in order to obtain the information requested, and not in order to place that information on the record, give it publicity or ask a supplementary question about it, it is suggested that they should refrain from putting down a question for oral answer, and instead simply contact the member of staff concerned and ask the question direct, without taking up synodical time (and the staff time involved in processing Questions and Answers for Question Time) unnecessarily. The relevant member of staff can usually be identified by consulting the Church of England Year Book, but in case of difficulty the Secretary General, the Clerk to the Synod and other staff of the Secretariat stand ready to assist members in identifying the best staff member to contact.

(2) *Questions for Written Answer*

6. Where members wish the Answer to be placed on the record, but do not expect that they will wish to ask a supplementary question about it, they are invited to consider specifying that the Question is for Written Answer. Such Questions still appear in the

Questions Notice Paper, and the Answers are placed on the notice board as well as appearing in the *Report of Proceedings*.

(3) *Timing of Question Time*

7. Some of the dissatisfaction with Question Time at recent Groups of Sessions has been caused by Question Time taking place not on the first evening but later on during the Group of Sessions. The consequence of this is that Questions asked in order to elicit and publicize facts in advance of a debate are overtaken by events, and time is taken up with the reading out of Answers that have already in substance been given in debate or have lost their immediate relevance once the debate is over. The Business Committee has accordingly decided that in future Question Time should normally be on the first evening, and when that is not possible, on the second evening.

(4) *Answers given in advance*

8. Other problems have been caused by a change in the Synod's Standing Orders in 2002, whereby a copy of each Answer is now required to be given to the questioner at least one hour before Question Time. This has resulted in the members reading supplementary questions from prepared scripts, removing much of the spontaneity that Question Time previously had. It also seems likely to have resulted in an increase in the number of supplementary questions, and in supplementary questions being lengthier and more involved (and thus requiring longer answers) than was previously the case. Each of those factors reduces the pace of Question Time, with the consequence that fewer original questions are asked and/or that those chairing Question Time feel less able to deviate from the norm of two supplementary questions for each original Question. The Business Committee is accordingly minded to ask the Standing Orders Committee to prepare an amendment to the Standing Order to remove the requirement to give questioners the Answer to their Question in advance of Question Time.

(5) *Discretion of the Chair*

9. As indicated in the previous paragraph, it is possible for the person in the chair at Question Time to allow more than two supplementary questions where he or she detects that the Synod wishes to pursue a matter in more depth. The Business Committee encourages members of the Panel of Chairs to make more use of this power. However, it must be recognized that where the pace is already slow due to the other factors mentioned, Chairs are likely to feel inhibited from making much use of this power, since the consequence of permitting more supplementary questions will be that even fewer original Questions are reached.

(6) *Selecting Oral Questions*

10. The Business Committee has also considered one further possible solution to the problems that have been identified. At present, the decision as to whether a Question should be for oral or written answer is taken by the questioner. In practice members who put questions down for oral answer cannot be sure that they will be reached because the number of questions routinely exceeds the number that can be answered in the available time. Unanswered oral questions are already answered in writing.

11. It would be possible to amend Standing Orders to enable a small panel of Synod members to make a selection from the questions submitted for oral answer of those which it judged of greatest current interest and most likely to produce an interesting and informative Question Time. Other questions would be answered in writing. The composition of the panel would be for future discussion.
12. The Business Committee thought that an idea of this kind merited consideration given the present level of dissatisfaction with Questions. The potential advantage is that it would enable a series of supplementaries on, say, the twenty most significant questions or groups of questions. This might also go some way towards allowing matters of current and urgent concern to be given proper consideration in Synod, as many members have requested. In order to work it would, of course, require a measure of trust in the small panel that, within quite a short time of the deadline for questions to be submitted, would have to make the selection. This is, at this stage, not a proposal but an idea about which the Committee would welcome comments.

Invitation to comment

13. The Business Committee would welcome comments in writing from members of the Synod about Question Time in general and how it might be improved. It would also welcome comments on
 - the proposal that the requirement for members to be given copies of the Answers to their Questions in advance should be removed, and
 - the idea of a small group of members selecting for oral answer only a proportion of the Questions submitted.

The Committee will be considering comments received from Synod members at its next meeting on 7 June, and would therefore be grateful if they could be sent to the Clerk to the Synod (david.williams@c-of-e.org.uk) by 14 May.