

## GENERAL SYNOD

## THE DIOCESES COMMISSION

## ANNUAL REPORT 2018

**Summary**


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

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**Membership and Staff**

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

Chair:	Canon Prof. Michael Clarke [until July 2018]
Vice-Chair:	The Revd Paul Benfield (Blackburn) [Acting Chair from July 2018]
Elected Members:	Mr Anthony Archer (St Albans) [until October 2018] Mr Malcolm Halliday (Leeds) The Revd Canon Geoffrey Harbord (Sheffield) The Revd Dr Robert Munro (Chester)
Appointed Members:	The Rt Revd Christopher Foster, Bishop of Portsmouth Ms Ruth Martin The Rt Revd Dame Sarah Mullally, Bishop of London Prof. Hilary Russell [until June 2018]
Secretary:	Mr Jonathan Neil-Smith
3. 2018 was a year of transition in terms of the membership of the Commission. Professor Michael Clarke stood down from the Chair in the summer, after serving as a member since 2008, and as Chair since 2011. At the General Synod in July the Archbishop of York paid tribute to his role in leading the Commission, particularly through its part in the creation of the Diocese of Leeds. The Commission benefited significantly from his experience and wise counsel. At the time of writing the Archbishops are considering who might fill his place.
4. In addition, Professor Hilary Russell stood down as one its appointed members. She had played a key part in the Commission's work in respect of the West Yorkshire dioceses and assisted with its early evaluation of the exercise. Anthony Archer also resigned as an elected member. His knowledge of personnel matters will be particularly

missed. Both places will be filled in due course. A by-election for the Synod-elected vacancy will be held in the New Year, following which the Appointments Committee will be considering a suitable candidate to fill the vacant appointed place.

### **Duties and Powers of the Commission**

5. 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>
6. 2018 has been a relatively 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**

7. February saw the General Synod's formal approval to the renaming of the See of Richmond as Kirkstall (in the Diocese of Leeds). The change had been strongly backed by the new diocese to better reflect the extent to which the Rt Revd Paul Slater ministered within the Leeds episcopal area. The title was drawn from that of a famous medieval abbey, thus drawing together contemporary mission needs of today's church with the Christian heritage of the area.
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:
  - Crediton (in the Diocese of Exeter)
  - Huntingdon (in the Diocese of Ely)
  - Jarrow (in the Diocese of Durham)
  - Ramsbury (in the Diocese of Salisbury)
  - Reading (in the Diocese of Oxford)
  - Shrewsbury (in the Diocese of Lichfield)
  - Southampton (in the Diocese of Winchester)
  - Stepney (in the Diocese of London)

### **Review of the Sees of Beverley, Ebbsfleet, Maidstone and Richborough**

9. In the autumn the Commission embarked on a review of the Sees of Beverley, Ebbsfleet, Maidstone and Richborough. The exercise took place within the framework of the House of Bishops' Declaration on the Ministry of Bishops and Priests. Its focus was on workload. Unlike most suffragans, all these bishops work across a range of dioceses, and it seemed sensible to look at their Sees together to find out if common issues arose. The Commission hopes to issue its Report early in 2019.

## **Joint diocesan working**

10. Following a stimulating discussion with the Director of Renewal and Reform, Debbie Clinton, at its June meeting, the Commission commissioned a survey of diocesan practice in respect of joint working across boundaries. It intends to publish its findings in 2019.

[On behalf of the Commission]  
PAUL BENFIELD  
Acting Chair  
31 December 2018

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