

GENERAL SYNOD

Discerning in Obedience: A theological review of the Crown Nominations Commission: A report from the Monitoring Group Established by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York

Summary

This paper sets out reflections of the oversight group monitoring the implementations of “*Discerning in Obedience*”. It updates members on progress since their last report GS1209.

1. Members will recall that the arrangements for progressing the recommendations of the report “*Discerning in Obedience: a theological review of the Crown Nominations Commission*” (GS1171) included the establishment “*of a small oversight group to monitor the progress on the discussion and implementation of arrangements*” (GS2080 paragraph 11 and as set out in Annex 1 of the paper which also included CNC related issues raised in the “*Review of the nomination to the See of Sheffield and related concern: Report by the Independent Reviewer*”). This group was asked to report back to General Synod and this is its second report following a meeting on 3rd May 2019.
2. Membership of the group is as follows

The Rt Revd Dr Michael Ipgrave (Chair)
 The Very Revd Peter Bradley
 The Ven. Nikki Groarke
 Canon Dr Addy Lazz-Onyeobi
 Dr Lindsay Newcombe

Caroline Boddington, Archbishops’ Secretary for Appointments was in attendance at the meeting.

Crown Nominations Commission

3. The Archbishops and Central Members were charged to i) review the proposals relating to the culture and operation of the Crown Nominations Commission (CNC) and Vacancy in See process not requiring Standing Order Changes ii) consider those recommendations requiring Standing Order changes for the Standing Orders committee.
4. We reported on a number of culture issues in our last paper. Clearly cultural change is a long-term issue and we hope that members of the CNC continue to be alert reviewing how they work. We specifically look forward to further updates from them on their deliberations in relation to the teaching ministry of the bishop and Mutual Flourishing. Members will recall that a number of Standing Order Changes were tabled for consideration by the February General Synod GS 2120 relating to
 - a) The disqualification of central members from meetings of the Commission for their own diocese (SO 137);
 - b) The appointment of the lay chair for the York CNC (SO 138);

- c) The election of bishops to meetings of the CNC for Canterbury and York (SO 139);
- d) The nomination of replacements for central members of the CNC (SO 140):
- e) Arrangements in relation to 2/3 voting majority (SO 141): and
- f) A proposal to remove the requirement that voting in the CNC should be secret (SO 141)

5. Members will recall that General Synod

- a) carried a package of Standing Order amendments (SO 137 3A - 3D) to disqualify central members from meetings of the Commission for their own diocese;
- b) carried an amendment such that the person presiding at meetings of the Crown Nominations Commission for York should be resident in the Province of York and be appointed by the Prime Minister after consultation with such persons or bodies as the Prime Minister thinks fit (SO 138 (7));
- c) carried an amendment such that the bishops elected by the House of Bishops under SO 139 (a) would be a bishop whose see is in the Province of Canterbury or who is retired and resident in that Province for a vacancy in the See of Canterbury with a similar provision for York (SO 139 (1A));
- d) carried an amendment to ensure that the Chair of the House of Clergy or the House of Laity (whichever is relevant) nominates a replacement for any member disqualified under S)137 3A – 3D);
- e) did not approve a proposed amendment such that the 2/3 majority required in voting would be from those “present and voting” rather than from the “total number of voting members of the Commission” (SO 141 6); and
- f) did not approve the proposed amendments in SO 141 (6), (7), (8) and (9) such that the requirement for a secret ballot be removed.

6. We have been advised that the Central Members are currently exploring an idea mooted by Mr Aiden Hargreaves-Smith that the Commission be relieved of the absolute requirement to identify a second name. This work has not yet been completed and we look forward to considering at General Synod in due course. We feel that adopting a process whereby the identification of one name is not contingent on the identification on second name would be a positive step.

7. General Synod declined to accept the recommendation of the report that the requirement for a secret ballot be removed. In a counted vote by Houses the motion was lost. The House of Bishops voted 19 -14 in favour of the motion, the House of Clergy 76- 66 in favour and the House of Laity 63- 99 against. We do hope that as a result the Commission will not reduce its exploration of ways in which a culture of trust and openness is engendered whilst retaining the facility for a secret ballot.

8. In our previous paper we noted that one of the more complex recommendations of the report is that the Archbishops should make a statement jointly that on the evidence presented to the CNC, all candidates under consideration are eligible for consecration

in accordance with the teaching of the Church and any guidance given by the House of Bishops, and so eligible for the House of Bishops (5.5). This has some similarity with the requirement that the Archbishop of the Province must “concur” with a Suffragan nomination. We understand that this has been remitted to *the Faith and Order Commission (FAOC)* as we proposed in our last paper and we await the outcome of their deliberations.

Election Processes and Operation of Vacancy in See Committees

9. Members will recall that issues relating to the process of Vacancy in See Committees have been remitted to a group which is charged with reviewing the election processes for membership of the CNC. The Terms of Reference of the Group are as follows
 - a) to review the process for the election of Central Members to the Crown Nominations Commission;
 - b) to review the process for the election of diocesan representatives from the Vacancy in See Committee;
 - c) to review the matter of disclosing declarations of interest in synodical elections; and
 - d) to take a broader, theologically informed view of representation in and of the church so as to stimulate a wider discussion in the church on electoral process and related matters.
10. A number of specific issues emerging from the report relating to the Vacancy in See Regulations rather than Standing Orders have been referred to this group, namely
 - a) That a provision be introduced such that there should be equal balance of clergy and laity amongst elected members;
 - b) That the regulation be amended such that neither Suffragan nor Assistant Bishops can serve on the Crown Nominations Commission for their diocese;
 - c) That only one member - clerical or lay - of the Bishop's Staff team may serve on the CNC;
 - d) The extension of the regulation to ensure a minuted discussion on representation; and
 - e) The reservation of designated places on the CNC to ensure balanced representation (raised in General Synod 2018)
11. Ostensibly process points, these issues require deep reflection on the theological exploration of “Representation” in the report “Discerning in Obedience” and we look forward to hearing more about their thinking.
12. As noted in our last paper, the Election Process group aims to report to General Synod in February 2020. It will have met four times by General Synod and has a residential in September to draw together its thoughts. A consultation exercise is currently underway and a fringe event is planned for the July Synod in which members will be able to share their views.

House of Bishops/Development and Appointments Group

13. Again we noted in our previous paper that the Development and Appointments Group (DAG) were charged to review the management of Episcopal Lists on behalf of the House of Bishops and we stressed the need to make these clearer and less mysterious. The pilot process whereby existing Suffragan bishops and those in the pool for ministry as a Suffragan Bishop might have the opportunity to express interest in vacant Suffragan sees is currently underway. We welcome the increased openness through the provision of briefing material to support candidates' in their own discernment and feedback after shortlisting. We will be interested in the feedback on this as the process progresses.

Conclusion

14. This paper has set out our reflections on the progress that has been made in relation to the report "*Discerning in Obedience: a theological review of the Crown Nominations Commission*". Once again, we would like to express our thanks to those who have are involved in developing its recommendations. We will prepare another report for General Synod

+Michael Lich, Chair of the Oversight Group

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