

GENERAL SYNOD

Appointment of the Chair of the Dioceses Commission

1. In February 2016 the General Synod approved the re-appointment of Professor Michael Clarke¹ as Chair of the Dioceses Commission for a further term of five years beginning on 1 May 2016. Professor Clarke was sadly unable to serve a full term and resigned on health grounds in June 2018. Since then, the Commission has relied on the services of the Deputy Chair, the Revd Paul Benfield, and the post of Chair has been left unfilled. Given the likelihood that the Commission will be entering a new phase of work, the Archbishops have now decided to nominate a new Chair.
2. Although this is an appointment made jointly by the two archbishops, the Church of England (Miscellaneous Provisions) Measure 2014 provided that the General Synod should also approve the appointment, given that the person appointed serves as an ex-officio member of the relevant House of the Synod. (Previously the Chair could only have been drawn from members of the House of Clergy or the House of Laity.).
3. The Archbishops propose that **Dame Caroline Spelman** be appointed to this role. Members of Synod may recall that she served as Second Church Estates Commission from May 2015 until January 2020 (during which time she was an ex-officio member of the House of Laity), having decided to stand down as an MP at the end of 2019. Dame Caroline had a distinguished parliamentary career for over 20 years, and served as Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs in the Cameron administration from 2010-12. Her wide political experience, and knowledge and understanding of the Church of England, make her well suited to the role of Commission chair as it potentially embarks on fresh strategic role. She has indicated that she is willing to serve.
4. All the terms of Commission members are set by statute and run until 30 April 2022². The General Synod will therefore have the opportunity to consider a further proposal for the chairing of the Commission in February 2022.

Synod Motion

5. The Archbishop of York will move a motion inviting the Synod to approve its appointment of Dame Caroline Spelman as Chair of the Dioceses Commission for a term expiring on 30 April 2022.

William Nye
Secretary General

April 2021

¹ Canon Professor Michael Clarke had been a member of the reconstituted Dioceses Commission since 2008. He served as Vice Chair from November 2010, and as Chair since February 2011 (in succession to Dr Priscilla Chadwick). His initial appointment by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York ran until 30 April 2016.

² Under the Dioceses, Pastoral & Mission Measure 2007, the Deputy Chair – drawn from the House of Clergy is appointed by the Archbishops /Laity - is appointed by the Archbishops; 4 members are elected by the General Synod; and 4 are appointed by the Appointments Committee.