

GENERAL SYNOD
CANTERBURY DIOCESAN SYNOD MOTION
REVIEW OF QUALIFICATIONS FOR PCC MEMBERSHIP
AND ENTRY ON THE CHURCH ELECTORAL ROLL

Background Note from the Secretary General

Introduction

1. The motion brought by the Canterbury Diocesan Synod seeks a review by the Archbishops' Council of the qualifications for membership of parochial church councils ('PCCs') and for entry on church electoral rolls. It also raises issues, beyond those specifically concerned with qualifications for entry, about the application form for entry on the roll.
2. The motion is particularly concerned, in the light of the growth of mission initiatives, with the requirement that a person be an 'actual communicant' to be eligible for election to a PCC.

Summary

3. So far as PCC membership is concerned, there might well be places where the 'actual communicant' requirement is not a suitable qualification for all PCC members. But that can easily be addressed by the parish concerned by using the power in the new Church Representation Rules ('CRRs') to adopt its own rules for parish governance.
4. The qualifications for enrolment on church electoral rolls and the application form are something that might usefully be considered by the Elections Review Group, who can bring any proposals for change to the Synod.

Church Electoral Rolls

5. A lay person is entitled to have his or her name on the roll of a parish if he or she—
 - (a) is baptised,
 - (b) is aged 16 or over,
 - (c) has made one of the following three declarations, and
 - (d) has duly applied for enrolment on Form 1.

The first declaration is a declaration that the person—

- (a) is a member of the Church of England or of a Church in communion with it, and
- (b) is resident in the parish.

The second declaration is a declaration that the person—

- (a) is a member of the Church of England or of a Church in communion with it,
- (b) is not resident in the parish, but

(c) has habitually attended public worship in the parish during the preceding six months.

The third declaration is a declaration that the person—

(a) is a member in good standing of a Church which is not in communion with the Church of England but subscribes to the doctrine of the Holy Trinity,

(b) is also a member of the Church of England, and

(c) has habitually attended public worship in the parish during the preceding six months.

6. These and other provisions governing church electoral rolls are contained in Part 1 of the CRRs. The Church Representation and Ministers Measure 2019 ('the Representation Measure') entirely replaced the then existing CRRs with a new CRRs. Part 1 of the new CRRS was based on the equivalent provisions of the old CRRs. The Revision Committee for the Measure reviewed the provisions concerning church electoral rolls and considered a number of submissions from members of the Synod for their amendment: see [GS 2046YY](#) at paragraphs 82 to 136. That involved the Revision Committee considering, among other things, what was meant by being 'a member of the Church of England' and by 'habitual worship'. The Revision Committee received only one submission directly concerned with the qualifications for entry on the roll. That submission, which would have excluded resident parishioners who did not habitually attend public worship in the parish, was not accepted by the Revision Committee. No member of the Synod tabled amendments to the provisions concerned with electoral rolls at the Revision Stage in full Synod.
7. As matters stand, a person who worships in a mission initiative rather than at the usual parish services is eligible to be a member of the church electoral roll for the parish where the worship of the mission initiative takes place if that person meets the other eligibility criteria.
8. Applications for enrolment on the church electoral roll are necessarily quite complex owing to the existence of three different categories of persons who qualify for enrolment, i.e. Anglican resident parishioners, Anglican non-residents who habitually worship in the parish, and members of non-Anglican Trinitarian churches who are habitual worshippers in the parish and who are also prepared to declare themselves to be members of the Church of England.
9. The background paper from the Diocese of Canterbury refers to the absence on the application form for enrolment of any statement about the benefits of being a member of the church or the expectations the church has of its members. However, the church electoral roll is not, and is not intended to be, a list of 'members' of the church in the relevant parish. It is a roll of electors, i.e. those persons who are entitled to vote in elections of representatives of the laity on the PCC and the deanery Synod and who, in addition to all those on the local government register of electors, are entitled to vote in elections of churchwardens of the parish. The total membership of the Church of England is greater than the number of those whose names are entered on church electoral rolls. The concept of membership of the Church of England is nowhere defined and there is no single, overarching concept of membership of the Church of England. In principle, anybody in England may regard him- or her-self as

a member of the Church of England and is entitled to receive the ministry of the Church of England by virtue of being a parishioner.

10. There might be some ways in which the application for enrolment could be simplified, but the form needs to reflect the statutory eligibility criteria and unless they were radically changed, the scope for changing the form would be quite limited. This is something that might usefully be considered by the Elections Review Group.

Membership of Parochial Church Councils

11. As the background paper from the Diocese of Canterbury says, **under the model rules for parish governance** (CRRs Part 9), to be qualified for election as a representative of the laity on a PCC (or on any other body of synodical government) a person must be an 'actual communicant'. An actual communicant is a person who is confirmed (or otherwise entitled to receive Communion in the Church of England) and who has received Communion according to the use of the Church of England or of a Church in communion with it at least three times during the preceding 12 months (CRR rule 83(2)). In addition to being an actual communicant, to be qualified for election as a representative of the laity, a person must also be aged 16 or over and his or her name must have been on the church electoral roll for at least the preceding six months.
12. The Canterbury background paper notes that some mission initiatives (often referred to as 'fresh expressions [of church]') do not involve eucharistic worship. A person who worships exclusively in a mission initiative where the worship does not involve any eucharistic worship will not, therefore, be an actual communicant and, under the model rules, will not be qualified for election to the PCC of the parish where the mission initiative is based.
13. **However, parishes are not obliged to use the model rules for parish governance: they are simply the default if a parish puts nothing else in their place.** Part 2 of the new CRRs enables a parish which wishes to do so to amend, supplement or replace the model rules. It is already possible for a parish to make a scheme amending the model rules so that, for example, a certain number of non-communicants could be elected to its PCC.
14. Whether being an 'actual communicant' should generally cease to be a qualification for election as a representative of the laity is a weighty question. It would, in principle, have implications not only for the membership of PCCs but also of deanery and diocesan synods and of the House of Laity of the General Synod.
15. Against that background, it may be noted that there is nothing inherently non-eucharistic about the worship of mission initiatives. The [House of Bishops' Code of Practice for Mission Initiatives \(July 2018\)](#) provides guidance about worship and the administration of the sacraments in mission initiatives. The Code states (at paragraph 5.4.2) that the bishop, in drawing up the order authorising a mission initiative, will pay 'careful attention ... to how [the] sacraments of Holy Communion and Christian initiation will be administered'.

16. A more proportionate response to the issue identified in Canterbury's would be to publicise the fact that parishes do not have to use the model rules for parish governance and to encourage them to consider using the new power for parishes to amend, supplement or replace them.

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