

THE GOVERNING BODY OF THE CHURCH IN WALES

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*This report covers the meetings of the Governing Body
in April and September 2003*

April 2003

Two Bills fell to be considered by the Governing Body on this occasion. The first—to incorporate into the Book of Common Prayer an additional calendar, lectionary and set of collects—was one of a number of Bills authorising new liturgical matters which will fall to be considered over the next few years. The subject matter of the Bill being liturgical, it had been through a detailed consultation process, in accordance with the agreed procedure for such matters, and therefore came to the Governing Body simply for a final debate and vote. The outcome was that the Bill was passed unanimously by all three Orders and was promulgated as a Canon of the Church in Wales.

Also due to be considered at this meeting was a Bill to amend the Local Ecumenical Projects Canon 1991. It had proved more difficult than expected to find a formula for the revision which took proper account of all relevant ecumenical developments since the original Canon was adopted and on this occasion it was agreed that the Bill which had previously been circulated to members should be withdrawn to allow further consideration to take place and a revised proposal to be brought forward in the future.

Detailed consideration was given to the report of a consultation organised by the Council for Mission and Ministry on sustainable development and climate change. A full day's discussion on these issues had taken place in August 2002, and the Governing Body was asked to make recommendations for the future practice of the Province, individual dioceses and parishes for the proper stewardship of environmental resources in the future. The discussion attracted a great deal of interest to the extent that the debate, which was the final item to be considered on the first day of the meeting, was carried through into the following morning and the recommendations suggested by the consultation were adopted by the meeting.

The Governing Body then went on to hear two further reports, one relating to the needs of rural communities for the future and another noting the imbalance of power in world trade and calling attention to the need for both Church and State to support the Trade Justice Movement, which seeks to redress this imbalance. In conclusion, the Governing Body heard

a presentation on behalf of the Association for the Promotion of Retreats and a report on progress with the programme to assist the development of Credit Unions in Wales, now beginning the fifth year of the five-year programme which had begun in 1999.

September 2003

This meeting was the first since the election of Dr Barry Morgan as Archbishop of Wales following the departure of Archbishop Rowan Williams to Canterbury. The meeting therefore began as required by the Constitution with the formal announcement of the election. The Senior Diocesan Bishop—the Bishop of Swansea and Brecon—took the chair and called upon the Provincial Secretary to read the formal notification of the election, which was greeted with a standing ovation. The Archbishop then resumed the chair and, as required by the Constitution, said prayers ‘including the Lord’s Prayer and the Apostles’ Creed’, inviting all those present to join him in doing so.

These requirements having been fulfilled, the Archbishop delivered his first Presidential Address, dealing in particular with issues of human sexuality which are currently the subject of much discussion both in the media and in many churches. It was then time to hear the Annual Report of the Representative Body. This was the first occasion when it fell to the new Chairman of the Representative Body, Sir David Rowe-Beddoe, to present the report. The format of the presentation was changed from previous years. Sir David explained that a report on investment performance would be given first by the Chairman of the Investment Sub-committee, Mr John Roberts, and that he would follow that with an explanation of the steps which were being taken to deal with the financial issues facing the Province by a very wide and far-reaching review of how all the Representative Body’s work was accomplished and looking at ways in which this could be done more effectively.

The second day of the meeting started with a discussion of proposals for an additional order for the Holy Eucharist, details of which were before members for consideration. This was an opportunity in accordance with the accepted procedures for dealing with changes to liturgy which allow the proposals to be consulted on widely before being brought to the Governing Body for a general discussion. The Bill to authorise the new order comes before the Governing Body on the next following occasion, by which time it is envisaged that everyone who wishes to contribute to the debate will have done so, thus enabling the Bill itself to be treated more straightforwardly.

Next came a private member’s motion concerned with various aspects of human sexuality. Many members contributed to the debate, which took place against the background of and accordingly with the benefit of the Archbishop’s presidential address the previous day. An amendment was proposed, which affected aspects of how the resolutions should be worked out rather than the substance, and the resolution was passed.

During the meeting the Governing Body heard the Annual Reports of the Council for Mission and Ministry and of Trinity College, Carmarthen, together with the report on the meeting in Trondheim in June of this year of the Conference of European Churches. The Governing Body also heard short presentations on behalf of the Prince's Trust in Wales and 'Building Bridges of Hope', which is a project of the Churches Commission on Mission of Churches Together in Britain and Ireland. This was presented by the Revd Terry Tennens, a minister of the Baptist Union of Great Britain. He spoke about the work of the project, which has made considerable progress in some areas, facilitating the co-operation of Christian Churches of different denominations in various ways which has been a great encouragement to all those concerned.

Members were reminded of the need to remember that the Governing Body's meeting in April 2004 is to take place in Aberystwyth. The new arrangements for the April meeting are to take account of the fact that changes in accommodation arrangements at the university in Lampeter mean that it is no longer possible for the authorities there to accommodate the April meeting. No change is currently anticipated for the September meeting.

THE GENERAL SYNOD OF THE SCOTTISH EPISCOPAL CHURCH

IVOR GUILD

Writer to the Signet

At the time of the Synod human sexuality was attracting the headlines, but apart from a reference to the need for right relations by the Primus in his opening address, the subject was not discussed.

Women Bishops

The Canonical change providing for the Ordination of Women to the Episcopate came before the Synod for confirmation of the Resolution passed last year; it required a two-thirds majority of those present and voting in each House. The Resolution had been considered by dioceses, where it had been supported unanimously in some and with limited opposition in others. The College of Bishops had issued a Statement of Intent promising that, if the Resolution were passed, they would recognise the Synod's jurisdiction and authority, and committing themselves to assist in issues of pastoral provision and sacramental care. They also pledged that those opposed to the ordination of women would continue to have a valued and respected place within the Church. Those speaking against the Resolution pleaded for more time before a profound and irrevocable