

General Synod **11 to 14 February 2008 at Westminster**

Amongst the major issues discussed were:

A draft *Pensions (Amendment) Measure* to allow the Church Commissioners to continue to spend capital, as necessary, to augment their income to pay clergy pensions.

The Code of Practice under *Part V of the Dioceses, Pastoral & Mission Measure* relating to *Mission Initiatives* under Bishops Mission Orders was approved.

The draft *Ecclesiastical Offices (Terms of Service) Measure* was substantially modified. Synod voted to retain the freehold of the “parsonage” house with clergy when “Common Tenure” conditions of office are implemented.

The debate on a draft *Ecclesiastical Fees (Amendment) Measure* was adjourned as Synod did not think some of the proposals regarding the payment of fees in relation to weddings and funerals had been properly thought through.

The draft *Amending Canon No 28* authorising non Anglican ministers to preside at Communion services in LEPs at Christmas, Easter & Pentecost, subject to the bishop’s approval, was agreed.

Two Private Members Motions were discussed, the first entitled “*Casinos*” but more properly addressing gambling issues in general and the second on “*Bible Availability*” where it was agreed that “anyone entering a church or attending a service should have easy and unfettered access to a bible”.

Synod revisited the question of appropriate *Eucharistic prayers for children* where “a significant number of children” are present and asked the Liturgical Commission to have another attempt as the previous draft, when Common Worship was being written, was rejected at that time by Synod.

The Mission and Public Affairs Council’s report on *Mental Health Issues* updated Synod as to developments since the Mental Health Act 2007 was passed. A recurrent theme in all of the Synod’s debates over the years on both Prisons and Mental Health is its grave concern over the number of prisoners with mental health problems where there are insufficient resources for their treatment.

The Archbishop of York introduced a “take note “ debate on the *Anglican Communion Covenant*. The Covenant Design Group had submitted their first draft to all 38 Provinces requesting responses by the end of 2007. This report was on the response given by the House of Bishops to the first draft. Immediately before Synod the second draft known as the St Andrew’s Text was published and the debate tended to blur the House of Bishops response to the first draft with the second draft which few have had time to study carefully. This second draft is intended for discussion at the Lambeth Conference in the summer.

HM Government announced last summer proposals affecting *Crown Appointments*. Synod reviewed the many responses to the proposals the main one being that the church valued the impartial input to senior appointments given by the current Prime Minister’s Crown Appointments Secretary and would like the present arrangement broadly to remain.

The International Anglican – Roman Catholic Commission on Unity & Mission’s *Agreed Statement* was generally welcomed but Synod endorsed the concerns of the Faith & Order Advisory Group that justification by faith, included in earlier drafts, had been omitted in contrast to the recent RC Lutheran Statement.

Detention without Charge is the Mission & Public Affairs Council’s report on the issue of extending the present 28 day limit whereby terrorist suspects may be held before being charged or released. Whilst not voting against an extension in very specific cases, Synod did express grave concern over the infringement of civil liberties and concern that ethnic minorities feel they were being singled out for special treatment.