

GENERAL SYNOD 2015

Motion 15 - Commission on Diocesan Ministry and Structures: Motion 15 on Episcopal Elections

Proposed by Revd Stephen Farrell

EMBARGOED UNTIL DELIVERY

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

“That General Synod welcomes the principles, analysis and approach to the election of Bishops outlined in Apendix III to the report of the Commission on Episcopal Ministry and Structures, acknowledges that there is a need for change and requests the Commission to bring a Bill to the next General Synod to reform the procedure for electing Bishops along the lines proposed.”

**Speech of The Rev'd. Stephen Farrell, Diocese of Dublin
Embargoed until Delivery**

Your Grace,

This motion concerns the election of our bishops. To say our bishops are elected is only part of the story, we believe they are sent through the process of election. What is contained in these proposals is simply designed to make this easier, to be open to the guidance of the Spirit, and to facilitate Episcopal Electoral Colleges in their work.

The procedure for episcopal elections set out in our report is fundamentally recognisable to anyone familiar with the current process. There are changes, and I will come on to those in a moment, but much of what is set out is an attempt at codifying or structuring that which we know quite often happens informally at present.

How will the process work? Once a bishop signals their intention to resign the Archbishop will appoint a Facilitator to meet with the Episcopal Electors from that diocese. The Facilitator's role will be to help the diocese draw up a draft diocesan profile and statement of needs. This will allow a diocese to take stock, to consider as clergy and people together the needs of the diocese going forward and their priorities for the diocese in the next number of years.

The Electoral College will be very similar to the current College, elected by Diocesan Synods and charged by them with this important work. The proposed changes are designed to help the Electoral College discharge their duty. The most obvious change is that the Electoral College does not simply meet one, but meets twice, and may meet a third time.

At its first meeting the EEC elects from its number a smaller sub-committee called a Discernment Committee. This body is charged with seeking nominations and itself coming up with names for nomination. It will meet with those being considered and will have a discretion as to how best to become apprised of those who are nominated. The Discernment Committee will be responsible for compiling a shortlist of between three and five names to be considered by the full Electoral College at its second meeting, and will be responsible for introducing those shortlisted to that second meeting of the College.

At its second meeting, the Episcopal Electoral College would be given information on those on the shortlist by the Discernment Committee. The Discernment Committee shortlists, but it is the Electoral College that elects. The existing requirement for a two thirds majority in both Orders would be retained, but to remove undue barriers to an election, if a candidate receives a simple majority in both Orders their name alone is put to the College to see if they can obtain a two-thirds majority in both Orders.

Where an election is made the consent of the person elected is obtained before their name is passed to the House of Bishops. The role of the House of bishops is unchanged, save that the Discernment Committee liaises with the House of Bishops and gets their input just before it prepares its shortlist.

If no candidate is elected, the College may choose, by simple majority, to ask the President of the College to summon a third meeting of the College within one month and ask the Discernment Committee to bring forward additional names for consideration at that date. Alternatively, if the College does not elect it can opt to pass the election to the House of Bishops.

Where the selection is passed to the House of Bishops, they must consider the names originally submitted by the Discernment Committee but are not restricted to those persons. Where the Discernment Committee is asked to bring forward additional names to a third meeting of the College, the names originally shortlisted remain eligible for election.

There is a lot of detail in these proposals, but much remains familiar. We have stuck close to our vision and principles document, seeking to maintain a balance between diocese and wider church and between clerical electors and lay electors. We have sought to safeguard the dignity of all those considered for episcopal appointments. In terms of the election to the Primacy we want to consult further and have not finalised proposals, save that the Diocese of Armagh will prepare a statement of needs and diocesan profile in the same way as every diocese.

This Motion is not legislation. The Commission is here to listen and is willing to listen on points of detail. What we are asking for in this Motion is support for this direction of travel and a mandate to turn this vision and these principles into working legislation to be brought to the synod floor and debated next year.