

Ecclesiastical Offices (Terms of Service) Measure

Submission to the Revision Committee

from Church Society Trust

Church Society Trust is a patronage body which holds patronage rights in relation to 113 parishes and are also proprietors of four chapels.

1. Common Tenure vs Freehold

- 1.1 We believe the proposal to introduce Common Tenure in place of Freehold is unwarranted. The original motivation for this legislation was to provide greater security for clergy without Freehold.
- 1.2 The removal of clergy freehold will be detrimental to the nature of ordained ministry in the Church of England and consequently to the nature of the Church itself. One of the customary arguments is the freedom it gives clergy to speak freely. It seems clear to us that many clergy without freehold do have a great reluctance to speak out when they should and therefore this is a well-founded fear.
- 1.3 Freehold has served the Church as one of the safeguards against centralisation which is a constant problem for an Episcopal Church. We do not believe that Common Tenure can provide the same safeguards and the proposed Measure as a whole contains far too much that is potentially open to abuse.
- 1.4 The freehold of office is part of the gift made by the Patron on presentation. Therefore the Measure is removing from the Patron part of their property rights. This fact has not been properly addressed and the claims that the proposals do not affect Patronage are untrue.

2. Clergy house

- 2.1 Since it is no longer being proposed to dissolve the benefice there is no longer any justification for transferring any of the benefice property. The General Synod appears already to have voted not to include the proposal in relation to clergy houses.
- 2.2 If nevertheless it is decided that clergy houses should be transferred from the benefice then they should be transferred either to the Patron or to a local trust. In many instances the Patron has owned parsonages in the past and in most other cases the local parish purchased the property.
- 2.3 If there is concern about the maintenance of the property then those acting as trustees should be required to meet certain minimum standards and be allowed to contract out some of their responsibilities to a Diocesan Board.

3. Regulations

- 3.1 The Regulations appear to be treating clergy as employees rather than as a calling. We would wish to see a greater stress put on the need in selection ministry that the Biblical requirements are met. Of relevance is the fact that those selected should be men who are able to manage their own house well (1 Tim 3.4). If they cannot do this they are likely to struggle to balance the responsibilities and stresses of ministry.
- 3.2 Part IV - Section 18. This section needs to respect the conscience of those unable to accept the spiritual oversight of women. This should be so both where a parish is under alternative oversight and where a clergyman would wish to have his review conducted by a man rather than a woman.
- 3.3 Section 19. This is unnecessarily dictatorial. Clergy should be free to ensure that they receive proper training. There are many people who are already concerned about the entirely inappropriate training given on CME to curates and would not wish to see this being forced on all clergy. The reviews process envisaged in Section 18 should be sufficient to ensure that Clergy are finding suitable continuing training.
- 3.4 Part V. Clarification is required as to what is being permitted and forbidden here. For example, would a minister be free to be a member of a patronage trust if that trust is not a charity? Or, would a minister be free to attend or speak at a conference of a body which was not a charity? The regulation is far too restrictive.
- 3.5 The earlier points illustrate a problem with the regulations as a whole. They are being introduced to deal with a few instances of abuse, but we are in danger of gross over-regulation. Either some regulations will be ignored, or there is the danger of even greater abuse as some use the regulations to prevent clergy from engaging in work in which they currently engage.

Revd David Phillips, Secretary

on behalf of the Directors of Church Society Trust

2 April 2007