

General Synod Report

Date : 13 July 2003 (Sunday)

Source : EVNEWS Item

Business today began in the afternoon with the **Anglican-Methodist Covenant**. The Covenant has been widely discussed in Dioceses and Deaneries. It was always likely to be approved by a large majority of Synod not least because the Covenant doesn't say very much. In the end over 90% of the Synod voted in favour following on from the adoption by the Methodist Conference. An Implementation Commission will now be set up. There were two following motions from Dioceses. The first, intended to ensure that some fruit came out of the Covenant by July 2005 was rejected. The second, calling for recommendations for the full interchangeability of presbyteral ministries was passed by 137 votes to 119. This ought to mean that within a relatively short space of time Anglicans will recognise Methodist presbyters fully. Given that the sticking point 30 years ago was the validity of Methodist ministry in the eyes of some Anglicans this development is not insignificant.

There then followed the revision stage on a set of **additional collects**. These had been produced because many people do not like the stilted language of the Common Worship Collects. There were no amendments and therefore although some points were raised in the debate the revised form of these new collects were sent to the House of Bishops and are likely to be brought for Final Approval in February.

The third item of business was a **Diocesan Synod Motion on Pastoral Care**. In view of the pressures on clergy, not least because of the tendency in many places for clergy to be taking more and more services, there was concern that pastoral care was being neglected as an aspect of ordained ministry.

In the evening the Synod gave attention to a report on **embryo research**. This was a very well balanced report that covered the ethical ground and allowed room for scientific exploration. However, balance is not always right. As was pointed out in the debates the Church of England is unusual among Christian groups in the UK in not taking a clear position, which is no surprise. An amendment which would have focussed on the therapeutic value of embryo research was not passed because it was seen as ignoring the views of those who hold an absolutist position

which another which did recognise that there needs to be consideration of the therapeutic potential was passed.

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