

## General Synod Report Monday at Church House, Westminster

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During the afternoon there were separate meetings of the Convocations of Canterbury and York, the House of Clergy and the House of Laity.

The clergy meetings included discussion about the new Ordination services and the report on clergy terms of service. On the latter item there were clear differences of opinion about the rightness of abandoning clergy freehold. However, of greatest concern was the proposal to transfer ownership of benefice property (church, churchyard and parson's house) from the Incumbent to the Diocesan Board of Finance. The members of the working party present were clearly prepared to consider alternatives to this such as vesting the properties in another body, the PCC or a local trust. These items will be debated later in the week.

In the House of Laity meeting one of the main items was a resolution from Mrs Margaret Brown. The resolution was an attempt to bring back consideration of the Clergy Discipline Measure in relation to Doctrine. The Synod had previously rejected (in the House of Clergy only) the proposals for a Clergy Discipline Measure in relation to doctrine, ritual and ceremony. Although there was some opposition to this new resolution it was approved with the intent that new legislation should be brought before the Synod by July 2006.

The meeting of the whole Synod began at 5pm with the normal welcomes and announcements. The first significant item was the debate on the report of the Business Committee. This is often a fairly uneventful debate but two speakers raised the fact that the Synod was not being allowed to debate royal remarriage. Previously it had been pointed out that a 'small number' of Synod members had asked for this and that it would disturb an already full agenda (though quite how vital Weekday Lectionary is was not explained.)

At the end of this debate there was a call from Canon David Houlding to show support for the Prince of Wales and Camilla Partker Bowles. The applause that followed was half-hearted at best (one member near me described it as third-hearted) and many Synod members clearly did not join in.

Final business was a motion to rescind Canon B44(5) which is no doubt well known to all readers.

This Canon concerns the provision of Holy Communion in Local Ecumenical Projects. The Canon requires that Communion be administered according to the rites of the Church of England at major festivals. Ely Diocese had asked for this to be changed because it is seen as a problem in such Ecumenical Projects. There was quite a lot of opposition expressed to this because of the general expectation that Anglican Churches have Anglican Worship on a regular basis. The motion was amended to provide a bit more flexibility. However, there was then an attempt to sink it by calling for a Division by Houses. The resulting vote was:

	For	Against
Bishops	14	13

Clergy            90    72  
Laity             109   80  
Thus the motion was carried.

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General Secretary, Church Society

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