

General Synod Report Wednesday at Church House Westminster

Date : 8 February 2006

The Synod approved this morning new regulations concerning the **admission of Children to Holy Communion**. The most controversial part of these regulations is that they require that once a child has been admitted in one church they should be admitted in all churches. Thus without ever really approving and addressing the theological issues involved the Synod has in effect imposed a new policy on all parishes.

At final approval only about 30 people voted against.

A following motion was put which would have strengthened the regulations by requiring that children show evidence of genuine faith before they be admitted to Communion. The Synod voted to move to next business, by 143 votes to 96, without debate.

Immediately afterwards the Third Estates Commissioner spoke about the controversial sale of the **Octavia Hill estate** in London. Issues around this property have been rumbling on for years and have frequently made the national press. Many are pushing for the Commissioners to allow the properties to be rented as affordable housing which means below market rents and therefore at a loss. The Commissioner pointed out that they have a legal duty to do the best out of their investments and can only sell at less than market value with specific permission.

Final business of the morning was a private member's motion from Nigel Holmes of Carlisle regarding **Reader Ministry**. His resolution arises from the confusing picture that now exists about different forms of authorised ministry in the Church of England. The resolution was amended and the final form was:

'That this Synod, aware that the work of the ten thousand Readers is crucial to the mission of the Church, requests the Archbishops' Council to consider how this nationally accredited office should be developed and readers more fully and effectively deployed in the light of the welcome introduction of a great variety of patterns of voluntary local ministry, both lay and ordained.'

In the afternoon a motion was debated and passed on **the human genome** and moves within the European Union to allow genetic material to be patented.

The original motion was:

That this Synod

- (a) believe that the human genome is gifted by God to each individual and, as such, should not be patentable;
- (b) call for strict control on the availability of human genetic data; and
- (c) whilst recognising the need for appropriate intellectual property protection regret that EU Directive 1998/44 makes legal provision for the patenting of genetic material of human origin.'

An amendment called for a report by Feb 2007 looking into the theological, ethical and legal implications of patenting human genome.

A debate then took place on Slavery. Next year marks the 200th anniversary of the abolition of the slave trade. The resolution called attention to the involvement of the Church in slavery in the past and sought to apologise for this. The motion also called for more to be done to abolish the widespread practice of slavery in the UK and around the world today.

The report "Into the New Quinquennium" was not taken earlier in the day due to lack of time but was debated late in the afternoon.

Final business was a report on hospital and health cared chaplaincy with a resolution supporting those involved in this and calling upon Government and health care bodies to ensure that provision continues to be made.

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