

GENERAL SYNOD 2016

Motions received from the Diocese of Aberdeen and Orkney

Canon 52.2 requires that any resolution which has been submitted to the Standing Committee but not included in the agenda must be notified to Synod members when the agenda is sent out.

Motions have been received from the Diocese of Aberdeen and Orkney in the following terms:-

"We, the Synod of the Diocese of Aberdeen and Orkney, request that the following motions are put to General Synod:

In the light of the recent Anglican Primates meeting we, the General Synod of the Scottish Episcopal Church, wish to:

- a) *Support the Primates' reaffirmation of the traditional doctrine of the church in upholding marriage as between a man and a woman in faithful, lifelong union.*
- b) *And commit to making no decisions that could put the SEC's relationship with the Anglican Communion at risk."*

The Standing Committee has given the motions very careful consideration and has also had the benefit of advice from the Synod Assessor. In considering the motions, Standing Committee was aware that General Synod 2015 had specifically instructed that a first reading of an alteration to Canon 31 be brought forward in 2016 by the Faith and Order Board which would include the removal of the doctrinal statement in Canon 31 concerning marriage. In view of the fact that motion a) referred to above would deal with the same subject matter as a motion to give a first reading to an alteration of Canon 31, Standing Committee considered that motion a) above could be included on the Synod agenda only after a motion from the Faith and Order Board for a first reading of Canon 31 had been voted upon and only if the motion to approve a first reading of Canon 31 were not passed. Motion a) above is, therefore, included on the agenda for Synod but subject to those provisos.

Standing Committee is, obviously, aware that the meeting of the Anglican Primates had taken place in January this year and thought it would be appropriate to allow some opportunity at Synod for note to be taken of this. The Synod agenda therefore includes, in Session Two, reports of both the Primates' Meeting and of the meeting of the Anglican Consultative Council held last month. The Standing Committee has specifically included in that session a "take note" motion regarding the Primates' Meeting and its Communiqué in order to provide an opportunity for Synod members to make any comment on the matters addressed by the Primates.

Motion b) from the Diocese of Aberdeen and Orkney has not been included on the agenda. That is partly because the wording of the motion is too vague and ambiguous to be legally competent to put to the Synod. The motion seeks to commit the Synod to taking no action that would put the Scottish Episcopal Church's relationship with the Anglican Communion at risk. However, at the time of making a decision to take any action, General Synod would not necessarily be in a position to know whether any such prospective action would put the SEC's relationship with the Anglican

Communion at risk. Nor is the meaning of “at risk” clear. Also, short of the usual canonical process, one General Synod cannot bind a future General Synod as to how it should or should not act. In practice, it is for each Synod to decide for itself what decisions it wishes to make, in the light of whatever information is available to it at the time.

John F Stuart
Secretary General
May 2016