

# GENERAL SYNOD 2021

## FEEDBACK FROM BREAKOUT GROUPS

### SESSION 5 – FAITH AND ORDER BOARD REVIEW OF CANON 4 COLLATED RESPONSES

**NB: Question 4 should be answered by every group (because it's central to the indicative vote) but groups can choose which other questions to tackle (at least one other)**

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1. *Discernment of vocation is at the heart of the election of a Bishop. What training or preparation for this would help you, if called on to serve on a Preparatory Committee or as an Elector?*

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#### **Feedback**

- Review from the retiring bishop of what they had found were the key areas they needed to cover in that Diocese:
- Once a bishop says they're leaving, the process should start then – not waiting til the role is vacant.
- What is going on with the lack of appointments of Scottish candidates?
- We MUST offer better training and development for Scottish trained candidates in order to have a pool of talent for episcopal appointments
  
- More training for electors and members of Prep Cttee required
- Understanding more clearly what the role of the bishop is today, historically, theologically, spiritually, ... "Here is what a bishop does" – but what if what is needed is different from what is done in the past?
- Often what the clergy want is different from what the lay members want. What is needed is something that brings together expectations, hopes, and fears.
- What is discernment training? More training about that!

We should have a conversation about what a bishop is!

A council may not allow the diocese its own voice to elect a bishop.

People on synod should be able and willing to do their job.

Each charge should be involved. Balance between Province and Diocese.

Briefing not a complicated process of training.

Give a description to everyone voting the sort of qualities one would look for in a bishop.

May vary?

Do the laity understand what it means to be a priest / bishop. Not as simple as a job description.

A talk from a bishop telling the electors what it means – theology, instructions ....

Recognise the responsibility that is being held.

Training may not be necessary for clergy but is for lay members. No more than a day.

Discernment is difficult to understand. Making it more important in process emphasises expertise – not in accordance with modern democratic processes.

It is discernment – you're electing a bishop, not a CEO. A prayerful discernment of God's will for your diocese.

Variety needed in the CoB. Should lie in the hand of the diocese not in a group displaced.

Prep Committee – should undergo specific training. Need to know what it is they've been asked to do. It is a responsibility to be the best prepared you can be to take part in the process.

Process experience in diocese not good. Candidates not looked after properly. Council might make a better job but not sure.

Electors spend more time with candidates to get to know them. Easier to discern when you've met someone. Not by reading information on paper. Get a sense of the person. Not enough time spent with electors and candidates together. Worth the time to do this.

Yes. Hands tied by what can say and what not to say; risk of comments being seen as personal. Use of NONE vote. Discuss what sort of bishops we want; separate discussions within clergy and laity. Training required. Huge time invested in discernment for clergy but not for bishops. Involved processes elsewhere eg in Europe and USA. Training for laity re choosing for bishops vis a vis clergy

The discernment process is one that is required to assess 'whether' you are called to be a Bishop. Perhaps, an acknowledgement of a discernment of 'where' you are called to be as a Bishop should also be a priority. To be made aware of wider factors.

Another request was made for more information about the actual realities of the job of being a Bishop – what this involves in detail. People need training and information on what the job and role of the position truly and realistically entails.

**THIS QUESTION UNDERPINS THE OTHER THREE!!**

Preparation

As electors what do we want in a Bishop and how do we know?

We must not use secular models and people need to fully understand that the 'rules' of recruitment for secular employment DO NOT APPLY and can be very destructive.

What is the mind of Christ, the will of God? This is what it is all about. Training in this applies to all members of Diocesan Synods for their work as members of synods, let alone the election of Bishops.

Confidentiality is crucial and must be watertight.

Discernment of what a Bishop is.

Unconscious bias

Good concise training of is expected of them as individuals before the process starts – Prep. Comm/Electoral Synod or Electoral Council

Training on what the job/vocation of the Bishop is.

Training in reading CV's and in interviewing techniques

Policy to identify people at SEI who could become Bishops alongside casting the net wider than ourselves.

We considered this so essential that we suggest basic discernment training for Synod members on a regular basis with further work when Dioceses knew a Bishop was retiring. This Basic training would also support further training if a Bishop retired without warning due to illness etc.

Continuing to keep people generally trained would help to keep knowledge and memory of last 4 elections in mind.

- Understanding of the system for all involved- perhaps need some accountability that people sign to say that accept the role involved and will undertake all the work involved.
- What is the role of a Bishop- full understanding required before being able to vote. There are books etc. SEI Journal articles etc.
- What the Diocese have chosen as their particular issues
- Choose the right people for the council and as lay reps
- Does the vacancy time allow for a full discernment process for the Diocese to determine what their new bishop should be?
- Interview skills
- Prep Skills
- Accountability

Involve our Provincial Director of Ordinands and their team in the process. For example in taking a training session for the people doing the selection – preparatory committee and electoral synod. Some teaching about what spiritual discernment is, what it involves, from people who are experienced and trained in this. Also underlined by primus as how this is different from a job interview or appointing a CEO!

Training in the importance of confidentiality. Maybe get people to sign a confidentiality agreement.

Teaching on the ways the Holy Spirit speaks to us!! Maybe then we can recognise this when it happens!

Have a secular expert take a session on kind interviews for the prep committee – how to put the candidate at ease and get the best from them. Similarly for the electoral synod.

Training in what the role of bishop could be. The fact that laity and clergy in Glasgow could not agree suggests that laity and clergy have very different ideas of what is desirable in a bishop. E.g. clergy will also be thinking of what qualities and experience the candidates offer in terms of being their ‘line manager’

- Guidance / training / direct information / reading matter made available at provincial level
- Discussion strayed into an emphasis on the imperative of a system that shows compassion, kindness and a nurturing approach to subjecting candidates to the selection / discernment process.
- Prayerful preparation is essential

Definitely need training.

Need to know exactly what Bishops do, what is the scope of their work, what sort of person is needed.

Clear procedures needed.

Current Bishop to help before he/she leaves?

Is an interregnum required - is this a grieving process?

A shorter interregnum may result in a very similar person being elected (or very different!)

This is a tortuous process.

Training for discernment for priesthood very useful - 2 days, what qualities are required; not a tick box exercise. Need time for the Holy Spirit to work in the process, to speak for all, an ongoing awareness. Training helps the process.

#### Training

Discernment process for inclusion in either of these roles

Support to work through the paperwork

Recruitment experience preferred or advice from an HR professional.

Clarity as to what a Bishop's role is! Specific to the Diocese.

Former Bishop to share experience with the Preparatory Committee/ Episcopal Synod.

This could allow clarity of role.

We thought that training would not only be helpful, but it should be mandatory. It was generally felt that at congregational level there was no knowledge of what a Bishop does and no knowledge of vocational discernment, and that should form part of the training. Also, there is evidence people do not understand our ecclesiology and that should be included.

It was also felt there should be mandatory training for those conducting the process.

There was a lot of discussion about the process itself, descriptions such as toxic, horrid, and abusive were used. It was the hope of this Group that other aspects would be considered and changed: confidentiality was mentioned, how we affirm leadership in the SEC and build competence and skills, how we support people in their roles, would a simple succession planning model work.

Those who put themselves forward as candidates and those elected by the Church should be properly protected by the Church.

We discussed the CofE scheme of identifying potential at an early stage, however rejected the idea, we were much more in favour of identifying call and vocation to a particular diocese and felt this should be explored much more at preparatory committee and electoral synod. We felt quite strongly that the writing of a diocesan profile should be much more a part of the process and then trying to marry up the candidates to the profile. We also felt that the other end of the system the electoral synod needed reform and much more training for those on synod as to what it was the synod was trying to discern.

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2. *As a member of the College of Bishops, a Bishop in the SEC has both a Provincial and a Diocesan role. What do you think the balance should be between Province and Diocese in the selection of candidates and the election itself?*

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#### **Feedback**

- There should be relatively little Provincial role.

- There's a good reason we have a Primus not an Archbishop: sometimes we need a voice-piece and this is the Primus
- There should be mostly Diocesan input. If this results in a College that doesn't have everything it needs, then it needs to draw in the expertise and resource from elsewhere, not try and pick a bishop to fill a hole.
- Appointment from outside Scotland has to stop.

70 / 30

Issue around number of people in diocesan synod.

Weighting towards diocese preferred. Need to ask difficult questions. Need for visionary and strategic thought. Challenge system; does it produce more of the same. See above re what do we want from our bishops (visionary, strategic, pastoral, personable, prayerful). Bishop will need to step up to Provincial tasks. College of bishops to reflect full theological spectrum.

The Group as one believed that the Diocese role is primary in selection of candidates as well as a regard to the context, place and time of that Diocese.

Support from Province is appropriate but not exclusive. Provincial people should be involved in the process but should not be there to derail the process and undermine the decision of the Diocese.

It was raised that there are major concerns with having a minimum shortlist of 3.

The call of a Bishop involves every congregation within the Diocese and it was felt to be disempowering of this process with the Preparatory Committee having too much power.

At the preparatory committee stage only.

We need to be surprised by who God calls and so the Bishops should be very chary of getting too involved.

60/40 Diocese/Province seems like the best arrangement.

Need a well-trained group – less stressful for all concerned in the process.

Something like a BAP might be used although the residential element would present great danger to confidentiality.

Again, need an understanding of what the Bishop's job is, and the skills required.

Far more important for the Diocese, but good to have Bishops able to work together.

- 50:50
- 60:40 Diocese: Province
- Province might be seen as the expert and therefore the risk is the Diocesan voice may be silenced
- Bishop's on prep committee have a strong voice which isn't always helpful to the process

There is a historical precedent for dioceses choosing their own bishop but those selecting are often untrained and inexperienced.

If candidate choice is made by college of bishops, how do we bring that choice back to the diocese pastorally?

Do we look at the provincial really? Do we look at the skill set of the current college of bishops and use this to help discern the provincial need?

Does each charge having their say reflect a lack of trust? Is this really necessary? After all the person who happens to be lay rep at a particular time (and very good at it) may not have the best skills for choosing the bishop and may not reflect the views of the individual church

The council option tries to reduce the disjoint between prep. Committee and electoral synod but the weighting of diocesan members to provincial experts must be in favour of the diocese.

- Diocese should have a major say in selection. Local preferences and traditions should be respected

Diocese more important than Province, should be the majority.

How is a Bishop's time split between the two?...more in the Province as there's collective responsibility for everything as there is no archbishop over all. The college works together.

One person's experience of the election of a bishop was not good, much lobbying being done, a difficult experience.

Others - much better experiences where the Holy Spirit was felt to be there, all the candidates felt valued and respected.

- Group didn't like this question, felt it was setting Province against Diocese, encouraging mistrust
- We need a process to help trust, what do we need to do to encourage this

70% Diocese

30% Province

Comments about not being clear as to the role of a Bishop!

Suggestions that serious consideration be given to 'hiving off' some of the tasks to other clergy/ competent lay people. Concern at the work load of Bishops.

?need for a Bishop on every committee or Board.

Comment on how we train/ support potential applications for Bishop.

We thought that the current balance in the Preparatory Committee was fine. However, the choice of people serving should ensure they know the process, know the needs of the diocese, and have a level of competence. This has not always been the case.

We felt there was obviously a need to balance the responsibilities of a Bishop however did not feel that the balance meant that the provincial role should be overemphasised in the selection or election of candidates. We felt that there was too much duplication of Bishop's roles within the province and 1 bishop at the most

2 on any board or committee should suffice. It is for the college to appoint the most appropriate Bishop to the most appropriate committee.

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3. *Canon 4 has to be put into practice for each election. Do you think it would be helpful to have a Commentary on the text of the Canon, and practical Guidelines based on the experience of previous elections? What would help you as a member of a Preparatory Committee, a Candidate, or an Elector?*

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### **Feedback**

Canon 4 was written to enable a filtering for candidates not really suitable. Ending with a list of electable candidates.

Talking through canon would be helpful. Canon is a hard read and clunky; timings are restrictive. Executive summary would help. Not convinced commentary is necessary.

The Canon 4 should be redrafted to be simplified but remain rigid.

The Group felt it important to and imperative have guidelines that explain the Canon. However, it was expressed that guidelines are helpful but must not be seen to be an attempt to influence decision making processes. Concern was raised the any guidelines drafted in light of previous experience can be seen as a form of control. Therefore a minimal approach to explaining the rubric would be welcomed.

One member noted from previous experience that having a Dean alongside representatives from the College of Bishops who know the process thoroughly and can explain it clearly, greatly helped the whole process go smoothly.

Yes yes yes

Yes. Good commentary and guidance would help to keep Canon simple

Allow flexibility in time scales.

Maybe allow for longer and better interviews.

Do not publish candidates either in press or online.

Commentary would be essential

Leadership throughout the whole process really important.

Some Commentary would be useful.

But Canon 4 is convoluted, so extraordinary care is required in drafting the Canon.

Use flowcharts instead of commentary and case studies from past Elections

- Imperative that the content and full understanding of Canon 4 is there, in order to comply with the Canon! Guidelines would be appreciated. One Diocese had a Canon's expert attend area councils to explain fully the canon.

- A clear remit for the candidates and what they might expect. Canon 4 doesn't state this and so a supporting document for clear and transparent process that looks after the wellbeing of the candidates. It would also help the process and those whose role it is to oversee the process.
- Prayer, prayer, and prayer
- Confidential process all the way- with only the elected bishop being announced. No public shortlist, which isn't good for the candidates, their families and their congregations.
- A good balance of laity and clergy in the process
- Vote by houses
- Care over gender discrimination
- Outcomes of the canon must always and nearly always be possible

Already plenty of information, maybe too much!

Election for Argyle and the Isles was on Zoom and worked well.

Needs careful thought as to who is going to be able to vote, they need to be selected, not just because they've always held the role.

Some of the Group thought a commentary on Canon 4 would be useful. Others thought that this would not help some of the fundamental questions raised earlier in this feedback. It should not be prepared as a substitute for good training.

The confidentiality aspects of the process should be clearly set out and enforced. This does not seem to be happening at the present time.

We felt the Canon should be no more than a sentence and refer to the fact we elect Bishops in the SEC and that the process be signposted. The canons are not the place to detail the process or procedures in detail. The timeframes and practicalities if 2 dioceses are operating the same process at the same time produces unnecessary difficulties. There are issues around confidentiality, timescales and requisite numbers of candidates. We don't think that any candidate should be excluded before preparatory committee. Every application should be examined by the preparatory committee and the preparatory committee trusted by all parties to put forward those candidates that in their mind could be elected to the office of Bishop, to the electoral synod.

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**4. *Having read the Report on the Consultation, which do you believe should be the best way forward for the revision of Canon 4: the Electoral Council, or the Electoral Synod?***

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**Feedback**

Council approach breaks tradition of hundreds of years. Bishops should primarily be elected by those they care for – primarily those in their locale. This principle of subsidiarity was kept in Presbyterian traditions to (preaching as sole nominee)

- Confidentiality and a range of candidates also mitigates against the Council
- Reform to the Synod approach is needed, regarding confidentiality: the larger the Synod the harder it is to keep things confidential.
- Our Dioceses are geographically spread – the people of the area in the diocese

- Historical influence is important – local choosing matters. But Diocesan Synod needs more training. Experience of prep committee does make it seem some people have not prepared in advance.
- What about a Presbyterian system with sole nominees after prep cttee vetting?
- What about deciding final stage by lot after prep cttee vetting?
- We shouldn't be starting with revising Canon 4, but with training people for leadership positions such as vestry, synods, cttees...
- Majority stay with Electoral Synod, but many questions...
- Privacy and confidentiality has be better managed...

Electoral Council - 1

Electoral Synod – 4

Neither - 2

Synod 1, Council 6

Both sides were debated and the pro/cons of each discussed.

From various experiences of the group members, having a process that was open and based firmly within the Diocese was the best way forward.

It was also noted that if the small committee concept is taken forward that the position of Bishops should therefore be seen as an 'appointment' rather than an 'election'. The language should be adjusted to reflect this.

Diocesan synod should be allowed to elect a smaller electoral synod if it thinks fit.  
Diocese should be able to elect their Bishop.

Electoral synod ensuring that the Diocese can choose their Bishop.

Should we go back to the Lay Elector specially chosen form the charge or the Lay rep chosen to relate to Diocesan and General Synod

Need for strong voices form the Diocese.

Electoral Council because of the discrepancies in the size of the Diocese

Need for anonymity.

Where does the Holy Spirit come into this process?

Confidentiality of candidates an absolute necessity

One suggested option an electoral council but with 75-80% diocesan membership

Note that there is very little experience to comment from...

This feedback group overwhelmingly 7 to 1 favoured Electoral Synod.

- Council II
- Synod III

5 in favour of a council and one in favour of the synod system.

**General comments:**

This should be a kind process. So many former candidates never offer themselves again. So many suitable candidates are not prepared to put themselves through such a destructive process.

How do we care for these people pastorally?

There is a shocking lack of confidentiality and data protection law is not taken seriously

We need to guard those who are “unsuccessful” (particularly their identities)

The present system has evolved to select bishops like our present bishops. How can we make room for real diversity; bishops who see church differently, who live out their episcopal calling differently, who challenge the status quo and lead us forward courageously?

We need a balance of Holy Spirit discernment and skills and training. Prayer is not just an add-on. It should be the base rock upon which everything else is based.

If the application form sets a word limit then surely some penalty is people don't stick to it – otherwise it disadvantages those candidates who do stick to it.

- Balance should be achieved between ‘touchy-feely’ care for candidates and a pragmatic assessment of talents and suitability
- A reformed electoral synod would be preferable as more sensitive to distinctive Scottish tradition
- The SEC is numerically relatively small (compare entire SEC with one English diocese) and so selection of bishops at provincial level would better equip successful candidates to be bishops of the whole SEC (and the Anglican Communion)

Council because it is smaller.

The College of Bishops only...

Focus on the necessities, geographical challenges with rural or island dioceses.

Zoom might be better.

- 4 of us preferred option 2, Electoral Council, 1 person favoured Electoral Synod
- Current system is not working, it is broken, and the people involved are broken
- This is such a responsible process to be involved in, that proper discernment of the preparatory committee and electors needs to be undertaken
- Examples of people (laity) attending electoral synod and openly stating that they haven't read the papers and knew already who they were voting for because it was someone they liked!
- Bishop election is not a democratic process, it is a discernment process\small
- College of Bishops electing should be a last resort
- Confidentiality is a huge issue
- Small group is easier to hold confidentiality
- Work on the process long before the election stage is crucial, people need to understand the process and what they are charged to do
- In the Philippines, they use the process of a “Basket of Names”, candidates' names are put in a basket and the youngest member (most innocent) of the electoral body picks a name out of the basket and so a Bishop is chosen!

**All members agreed that the Episcopal synod should be the way forward. This on the basis of the decision should be made at a grassroots level.**

The Group was firmly of the view that the Dioceses should be involved in the choice of a Bishop. We thought that for a small diocese the electoral synod worked well, but in the larger dioceses it was too cumbersome. If we had taken a vote, it would probably have been 50/50.

Unanimously electoral synod although with reform, particularly at both ends of the process.