

Scottish Episcopal Church

General Synod of the Scottish Episcopal Church
Scottish Charity No SC015962

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The Rev'd Canon John Walker
The Rectory
St Mary's Place
Inverurie
AB51 3NW

8 January 2018

Dear John

Your Open Letter to the College of Bishops and the Bishop Elect of Aberdeen and Orkney

The members of the College of Bishops and the Bishop elect of Aberdeen and Orkney are in receipt of your letter of 5 January 2018.

We have been greatly concerned to receive your letter. We regard it as particularly regrettable that you have chosen to communicate with us by publicly releasing your letter and press release without any prior indication to us of your intentions and we are dismayed at the invidious position in which it places Canon Dyer as the Bishop elect of the diocese. We deplore that you have sought to subvert the outcome of the canonical process which led to Canon Dyer's election. Members of the College are unanimous in supporting Canon Dyer in her acceptance of election and will continue to support her throughout her consecration and future episcopal ministry in the diocese.

The process which has been followed is entirely in accordance with the procedure set out by Canon 4. As you know, the Diocese of Aberdeen and Orkney went through two complete processes under which it had full opportunity to elect a bishop (two mandates were issued for successive processes). The Preparatory Committee met and interviewed a number of candidates but ultimately was unable to produce a shortlist of the required minimum of three candidates. In such circumstances, the process properly, and canonically, lapsed to the Episcopal Synod. There is no provision in Canon 4 for election by the Episcopal Synod to be subject to any subsequent vote on the part of the Diocese. To introduce such a vote would be at odds with the canonical procedure.

Whilst it is true that the general tradition of the Scottish Episcopal Church is for a diocese to elect its own bishop, there are occasions where, for whatever reason, that may not be possible and, in such circumstances, the bishops of the church are canonically charged with the responsibility of electing. That principle was accepted by the General Synod of the Scottish Episcopal Church when the existing Canon 4 was

adopted, following the usual consultation with dioceses at the time. It is not open to the bishops unilaterally to alter such a process by introducing new elements, nor would they seek to act contrary to the Canon. If at some point in the future, the Church decides to alter Canon 4, that would be a matter for the General Synod and the usual procedures for altering the Code of Canons would apply.

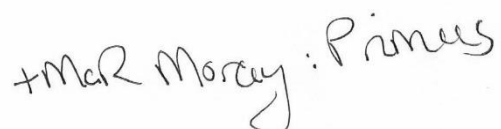
The election of Canon Dyer followed a period of deep prayer and reflection on the part of the bishops. Whilst, it would not be appropriate to disclose the internal discussions which took place among the bishops, suffice it to say, that the bishops fully believe and trust that they have been led by the Holy Spirit in their election of Canon Dyer. She too shares that conviction and looks forward to becoming the new Diocesan Bishop in response to God's call. The bishops know her to be a person who will seek, under God, to enable the diocese to move forward in its mission and ministry and in service to the people of Aberdeen and Orkney.

You state in your letter, and your accompanying press release, that your "protest" is not personally directed at Canon Dyer, and also that it does not concern arguments about women bishops or same-sex marriage. We are glad to note that and simply observe that to invite her to withdraw her acceptance of election seems entirely inconsistent with those assertions. Your letter does not purport to speak for the Diocese as a whole and we would wish to point out that there are many in the Diocese who have expressed their delight at the prospect of Canon Dyer becoming their bishop.

You have chosen the mechanism of an open letter to endeavour to undermine Canon Dyer's election. You give us no option but to respond similarly. However, by that same mechanism, we would appeal to the Diocese of Aberdeen and Orkney as a whole to come together now to welcome Canon Dyer as your new Bishop. We invite you to join with us in supporting her and to commit yourselves, as we do ourselves, to pray for the Diocese as a whole, and for Canon Dyer in particular, as she prepares for her consecration and future life with you.

This letter is being copied to those listed as signatories to your letter.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "+Mark Moray: Primus". The signature is written in a cursive style.

The Most Rev'd Mark Strange
Bishop of Moray, Ross and Caithness and Primus
On behalf of the College of Bishops

cc Rev'd Captain Gerry Bowyer, Rev'd David Dawson, Rev'd Ian Ferguson, Rev'd Alastair MacDonald, Rev'd Canon Dr Alexander E Nimmo, Rev'd Richard O'Sullivan, Rev'd John Duthie, Rev'd Dr Duncan Heddle, Rev'd Anne James, Rev'd David Wright, Dr Hugh Dawson, Anne Harper, Avril Hern, Professor Alan MacInnes