

## **Motion No.5**

**Proposer: The Ven Barry Forde**

**Embargo Until Delivery • Check Against Delivery**

Archbishop, members of Synod.

As the schedule to this motion indicates, a Facilitations Committee was established after the Commission on Episcopal Ministry and Structures to pick up on strands of thought, discussion, potential reforms from that body of work, and then to allocate these to an appropriate body within the church for further deliberation. The role and tenure of archdeacons was passed to the Commission on Ministry.

In reviewing the current position on tenure, the Commission was very clear on three things.

One, that the appointment of an archdeacon is the prerogative of a bishop alone, and that the duty and office of an archdeacon is to aid and assist the bishop.

Two, that once appointed an archdeacon may retain that office until she or he moves out of the diocese, retires, or reaches the age of 70. (A Bill to bring the retirement age in alignment with the retirement age for clergy generally has been postponed until Synod 2024 simply due to the sheer weight of business before Synod this year).

Three, that it is really not up to the Commission alone to decide a change is necessary and what that change might look like.

As such, the Commission canvassed opinion from all serving bishops and archdeacons on a range of options, and now seeks to canvass the views and opinion of Synod. In the dim and distant past of last autumn it seemed that there would be a whole load of time at Synod to debate the pressing issue of the age – the tenure of archdeacons. Yet even if time is pressing, that is what we seek to do. Without the pressure on a single proposal coming in the form of a Bill that might pass or fail, what we seek is the mind of Synod as to whether (a) we should continue our work and come back with a proposal in the form of a Bill, or (b) if we should cease and desist.

That is what we now open up for debate, and the schedule to the motion sets out the options for Synod to consider. We have sought to fairly represent and summarise the pros and cons of each, that largely captures the considerations and views presented to and canvassed from serving bishops and archdeacons.

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The greater weight of response from bishops and archdeacons suggested to us that, given that an archdeacon is appointed by a bishop, and the duty is to aid and assist the bishop, that there is some merit in allowing for a new bishop to appoint his or her archdeacon or archdeacons either upon taking up office or at some point whilst in office – at all times being sensitive to relationships and optics with the diocese. This was the greater weight of opinion, but there were also those who were very clear that there should be no change.

Option A before Synod would link tenure to that of the appointing bishop, so that a new bishop might have the possibility of appointing her or his archdeacon or archdeacons. This might take place upon a bishop taking up office, or after a prescribed settling in period.

Option B would link tenure to a fixed term that be renewed, with the likelihood being that at some point a new bishop or even a current bishop, might be able to take a view as to whether to appoint a new archdeacon.

Option C would effectively mean that tenure may be retained according to whatever is agreed at the time of appointment between a bishop and his or her archdeacon. If at the time of appointment an archdeacon knows she or he will be in office for five, six, seven, 10 years or until such times as there is a new bishop, then everyone knows where they stand from the outset.

Proposals and proponents for change recognise the inextricable direct link between a bishop and an archdeacon – both on appointment and in duties. They advocate permitting a new bishop to make changes best serves that direct link, allows for things to be freshened up, for others to have the office, and for serving archdeacons to have the possibility of stepping down without being compelled to remain in situ until retirement.

Proposals and proponents for no change point to the need for continuity in a diocese, the need for time to allow serving archdeacons to grow into the role, the pressure on smaller dioceses to refresh appointments, and the need for any new bishop to have to work with those in the diocese.

The Commission has been tasked with the work of discerning if change is desired and we now seek to canvas your views to see if we need to come back with a Bill to vote on, or not as the case may be.