

## **Motion No.8**

**Proposer: The Revd Canon Malcolm Kingston**

**Embargo Until Delivery • Check Against Delivery**

Archbishop / Bishop,

As had already been said, this is the third meeting of the current membership of General Synod, therefore a new membership for the next General Synod will be formed by Diocesan Synods in the months ahead.

In the approach to next year's General Synod the newly elected Synod members will elect from their membership Diocesan representatives for the Standing Committee.

Provision already exists in the Constitution of the Standing Committee for nominations to Standing Committee membership to take place either by post or by email.

The only change that Motion No. 8, if passed, will make to the nomination process is that the Honorary Secretaries may issue a deadline for receipt of nominations earlier than the currently prescribed three weeks before the opening of General Synod.

The experience of the Synod staff has been that receiving nominations three weeks before Synod means that the processing of elections can be quite tight, especially during what is a very busy time in the approach to General Synod.

The Honorary Secretaries would there very much appreciate General Synod's support in granting the freedom to facilitate the nomination and election process earlier to reduce the added stress upon staff that elections cause in the advance of Synod.

If passed Motion No. 8, would also offer the opportunity to vote electronically during the election of nominees to membership of the Standing Committee.

Historically the election of Standing Committee members was undertaken by postal ballot as specified in the Standing Committee's Constitution.

However, in an age of better electronic communications, the postal ballot has become less favourable and many comments to such effect were received last time around. The postal ballot is particularly less favourable when it comes to posting ballot papers from Northern Ireland to Dublin.

In a fact finding mission, on Wednesday, I went to a post office in Armagh to purchase a stamp to send a letter to the Republic of Ireland. The cost of the stamp was £2.20, the price having

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increased just last month. There is always the question of how long a postal ballot will take to arrive when crossing the border. Unless a voting paper is sent well in advance of the deadline there is realistic possibility of a cross border voting paper not making the ballot deadline.

It has to be stressed that Motion 8 does not exclude the possibility of using the postal process for the election Standing Committee representatives. Motion 8 just removes the necessity for it to happen by postal vote. If we are not ready to run this electronically in time for next year, we will utilise the existing postal process until we are confident that we have got it right.

However, I think we will be ready.

Just to be clear, a ballot only takes a place where there is more than one nominee for each Diocese and in each category; the categories being clergy or lay, over 45 or 55, or under 45 or 55. The age threshold depends on the dioceses concerned. For instance, if I was to stand for a place on Standing Committee, I would be nominated for the clerical over 45 category. I have crossed the threshold this time around! If a clergyperson, or more than one clergy persons, over the age of 45 years and from Armagh Diocese, also stands then there is an election. If, in this example, I am the only nominated clergyperson who is over 45 years from my diocese, there is no election for the place that I am standing for and I am automatically elected.

So, what happens if this Motion is passed, and we are voting for electronically next Spring.

The first step will be that voters will be assigned a random five- or six-digit identity number. This number shall be allocated by the Synod Officer and only the Synod Officer shall have access to whom is allocated which random number. Each voter will receive their number and if they need to be reminded of their number, the Synod Officer is the only person who can offer help.

An invitation to vote online shall be received by the relevant voters. When the deadline for voting online expires, the scrutineers will analyse the results. The scrutineers are the Honorary Secretaries who will have a list of the authentic voter identity numbers. As the Synod Officer will not be a scrutineer, the anonymity of the voters is preserved. The person with the technical expertise to host the electronic platform for the election will assist the Honorary Secretaries in the analysis of the electronic elections.

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The scrutineers will have a list of legitimate identity numbers and they will check that legitimate votes were cast, in the correct category, and that there is no repetition.

So here is a little demonstration with the help of Mr Jonathan Hull.

[Demonstration]

We very much hope that this seems like a helpful and simple methodology for voting in Standing Committee elections. It will save on postage, it will be verifiable and it will involve less time for processing.

Before I conclude, I would like to offer an amendment to clauses 5, 7, and 14 of Motion 8 where there is indication of electronic voting being linked to an email address. This is a mistake for which we apologise.

In each instance where there are the words

“ ... either electronically (via the Synod Officer to [synodofficer@rcbdub.org](mailto:synodofficer@rcbdub.org)) or by post .....

these should be amended to

“ ... either electronically (via the electronic means specified by the Honorary Secretaries) or by post ...”

Archbishop / Bishop, I propose that Motion No. 8, as amended, be passed.