

# Full Synod: First Day

## Friday 9 July 2004

THE CHAIR *The Archbishop of York (Dr David Hope)* took the Chair at 8.00 p.m.

*The Chairman* led the Synod in prayer.

### **Welcome to Anglican and Ecumenical Guests**

*The Chairman*: There are two guests to be welcomed who are seated here on my left. It gives me great pleasure to introduce to members of General Synod Rt Revd Alan Harper, Bishop of Connor (Church of Ireland), and, beside him, Dr Alfred Rauhaus of the Evangelical Church in Germany. We greet them and welcome them. (*Applause*)

I would like now to invite Dr Rauhaus to give a message of greeting on behalf of the ecumenical guests.

*Dr Alfred Rauhaus (Evangelical Church in Germany)*: Your Graces, members of Synod, we, the ecumenical guests of General Synod, are very grateful for your invitation to join this assembly and we thank you for your friendly welcome.

A famous English composer, Sir Edward Elgar, created wonderful music which is known all over the world. No, I am not thinking about *Pomp and Circumstance* or *Land of Hope and Glory* because this is the first day of your Synod and not the last night of the Proms. However, there is another masterpiece among his music and that is *Variations on an Original Theme*, also known as the ‘*Enigma*’ *Variations*. There is also one theme that we are listening to in all our Churches, and this theme is not enigmatic but is well known. The theme which we share is Jesus Christ himself, together with the gospel, the Christian faith and the Church of God. That is the theme: the Church of God; and we are the variations.

The musical masterpiece consists not only of the theme but of the variations too, and there is a close relation: the theme is present in any variation, and the presence of the theme unites all the variations into one masterpiece. Sometimes its presence is obvious; sometimes it is more concealed in the musical structures; often the latter are the most artistic parts of the music. As music is a prelude of eternal life, so the Church of God is, correctly understood, the prefiguration of God’s kingdom.

I am representing the Evangelical Church in Germany, a communion of Churches of Lutheran, Reformed and United tradition. I myself belong to one of the Reformed *Landeskirchen* and I am a member of the Anglo-German Meissen Commission. Since 1991, when the Meissen Agreement was signed, our Churches have been on the road to

making more visible their existing unity in Christ. As in the Meissen Common Statement our Churches have committed themselves to strive for the full visible unity of the Body of Christ on earth and to work for the manifestation of unity at every level.

Several conferences on theological and ethical issues have been held in the past decade and one can say that now, more than in the past, we are able to hear the one theme and the variations that we are. However, we have not yet reached the aim originally set out in the Meissen Agreement; we are still striving for it and hoping to make the golden goal. Meanwhile times are changing and the different parts of Europe are coming closer together. What must we do, we in our Churches, to make heard, among the thousands of voices in the European society of the future, the one theme which binds us: the voice of Jesus Christ, of the gospel, of Christian faith? What can be done and what must be done through the ministry of our Churches? That is the challenge that we face and it needs our common response.

Perhaps this is a rather continental point of view, but emerging European society needs our common witness. As we read in Psalm 78, ‘. . . things we have heard and known, things our fathers have told us. We will not hide them from their children’. The children of our fathers are the men and women of our own generation. The psalm then continues, ‘We will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the Lord, his power, and the wonders he has done’. Our task also is the spreading of faith to the coming generations.

Someone has said that the future question will not be whether people in our part of the world become Lutheran or Reformed, Anglican or Roman Catholic, and so on, but whether they become Christians at all. That is perfectly right but, on the other hand, the Church of God exists in the variations that we are, and it makes no sense to deny our origins and the traditions which have formed our Churches. Together we must strive for the full and visible manifestation of our unity in Christ, as is written in the Meissen Common Statement or, as I said, strive to help people to recognize the one theme in the variations that we are. Indeed such kind of music will be the prelude of eternal life.

The Lord bless you all. The Lord bless this Synod. The Lord bless this Church.  
(*Applause*)

*The Chairman:* Thank you, Dr Rauhaus, for your message, and I hope that you will assure the members of your Church of our greetings, good wishes and prayers.

We come now to our regular – if I may call them that – ecumenical representatives. We have two changes this evening. One is the new representative of the Baptist Union, Revd Michael Bochenski, who unfortunately cannot be here this evening, but in his place Revd John Nicholson, a good friend of mine from Yorkshire ecumenical days, is very welcome among us. In place of Revd John McPake, the new representative of the Church of Scotland, we have Revd Sheilagh Kesting; unfortunately she is unable to arrive until tomorrow so we greet her *in absentia*. (*Applause*)

I am informed that the Bishop of Natal, Rt Revd Rubin Phillip, who is from the Church of the Province of Southern Africa and is currently visiting the Diocese of Southwell, is here with us in the public gallery. We greet and welcome him. (*Applause*)

## **Introduction of New Members**

*The Chairman:* I introduce and welcome the Bishop of Blackburn (Rt Revd Nicholas Reade); the Bishop of Gloucester (Rt Revd Michael Perham) (*laughter*) – who is he? – the Bishop of Hereford (Rt Revd Anthony Priddis); Revd Canon Adrian Botwright (Bradford); Revd Robert Cotton (Guildford); Revd Canon Cynthia Dowdle (Liverpool); Revd Giles Fraser (Southwark); Revd Brian Lewis (Chelmsford); Revd Ernest Pettengell (Sodor & Man); Revd Dr John Hartley (Bradford); the Archdeacon of the Army (Ven. Stephen Robbins); Revd Anthony Walker (Southwell); Revd Canon Robert White (Portsmouth); and Revd Ruth Worsley (Southwell). (*Applause*)

## **Welcome to Young Adult Observers**

*The Chairman:* Last but not least, on these occasions we have a substantial number of our young adult observers who are seated, as usual, up on the left of the chamber. It is very good to see you all and to see such a good representation of young members here this evening. I hope that you will enjoy the Synod. (*Applause*)

## **Progress of Measures and Statutory Instruments**

*The Chairman:* I report to the Synod that the Care of Cathedrals (Amendment) Measure and the Church of England (Miscellaneous Provisions) Measure have both been submitted to the Ecclesiastical Committee of Parliament.

THE CHAIR *Mr Anthony Archer (St Albans)* took the Chair at 8.20 p.m.

## **Report by the Business Committee (GS 1540)**

*The Archdeacon of Malmesbury (Ven. Alan Hawker):* I beg to move:

‘That the Synod do take note of this Report.’

It is my hope that members are going to join with me this evening in enabling me to set a General Synod record of being the shortest-serving Business Committee chair in living memory. The Constitution requires the chair of the Business Committee to be a member of the Archbishops’ Council, and with Michael Perham’s resignation as chair in March someone has had to hold the fort until now, and that happens to be me. Later this evening the Archbishop will recommend a new chair, Richard Turnbull, and of course it is Synod’s decision whether it wishes to accept that recommendation or not; but bear in mind that if you fail to do so the nightmare that you will face is me as your acting chair for the period until February and I assure you that it will be even more of a nightmare

for me than it will be for you. If you choose to approve the appointment, the Business Committee will of course welcome Richard to his new post and he will take it up tomorrow morning. He cannot take it up tonight because he has not been to the Business Committee meetings and could not possibly introduce what he does not yet know about.

I also welcome tonight Peter Crumpler, our new Director of Communications. (*Applause*) We had the pleasure of his company at our last Business Committee and we are encouraged by his interest and his desire to do what he can on the media side with General Synod.

Let us remember that tonight we reach an interesting stage in the quinquennium. We are four-fifths of the way through, and that means that inevitably there is a slight balance change in the business items. The bread-and-butter issues, if we can call them that – the things for which the General Synod would have to meet if it did nothing else, and some of them time-scheduled – have to be sorted as much as possible before the end of the York group of sessions next year. Consequently, at this stage in the quinquennium they take a certain priority. Members will notice that there is quite a lot of legislation. Some of it, I hope, will not take too long, but quite a lot needs to be determined. Some liturgy needs to be resolved. There is the financial budget which always comes up at this time of the year if we are going to have a national budget for 2005. Bearing in mind that we have had a self-imposed freeze for three years – 2002, 2003 and 2004 – it is an interesting and important moment to be considering that budget, not least as well with CHARM and Hind to consider alongside it. We have the Fees Orders which have to go through at this time of the year and we have the accountability of the Archbishops' Council and the Church Commissioners, which quite rightly and properly falls to this particular series of sessions.

That takes up a significant amount of our time. In addition, we are asking Synod to give various people a steer, not to make final decisions but to give a steer. This evening, after this particular debate, Synod is invited to give a steer about how business is done. Tomorrow we have a request that members give a steer to the marriage law reform group on which way they would like it to go, and the Clergy Discipline (Doctrine) Measure is also in many respects a steer about how you want it to develop.

Can I point out to members and to the media – and I notice that some of the media have got it wrong already – that none of those items will be finally determined during this group of sessions. What will happen is that we will or we will not give to those who are working on them for us a steer as to how we want them to go. Take marriage reform: even if we give them a steer it is unlikely that it will be operational for probably another two years. So if we decided, for example, to have a free-for-all, go-where-you-like, do not expect people to come next week and be able to do it. It will not happen like that. We need to be quite clear that this is a steer. In each of these cases, if we give a steer, there will be a further debate at some stage before it is finally settled.

Over and above the bread-and-butter business and the steers that are being sought, we have a wide range of other subjects to cover, including two Private Members' Motions. We are giving a little precedence to Private Members' Motions this time because many will cease to be operational at the end of the quinquennium.

Members will notice that the Business Committee has already taken a couple of steps to modify slightly our business. You may have observed that there are no 'take note' motions in this group of sessions where there is a substantive motion following on; we go straight to the substantive motion and get on with debating the subject. I also give prior warning tonight that there will be a slight modification to the way in which Questions will be handled tomorrow evening. Those who have asked Questions will, as an experiment, receive their official answer before the Questions start. There will be an understanding that, save in exceptional circumstances, the Chairman will allow a maximum of two supplementaries on each Question – the ideal would be none, but two if you have to have them – on the first of which the person asking the Question has priority, with one more beyond that. There are 108 Questions down for answer; if we do them at a minute a toss we should get through most of them. We will see how far we get.

Turning to the forecast of business on pages 29–31, members will notice that the Business Committee has given Synod its best guess for what will come up in February and July next year. Having very carefully reviewed the business, the Committee has decided that there is no justification for advising the Presidents to call an additional meeting of the General Synod this November. The General Synod is currently bound by its decision to meet twice yearly save in exceptional circumstances. Such a circumstance will arise in November of next year with the commencement of a new General Synod, but we face only one time-critical item of business which will miss the end of York next year, i.e. the Ordinal, and that is because we must allow two revision stages, in February and July next year. However, I hope that it will be possible to take final approval on the Ordinal in November. If it becomes apparent in the course of next year that we are not even going to make it that far, it will be relatively straightforward (so long as General Synod is agreeable) to put forward a motion which will allow the present ASB Ordinal to continue for one more year until the new Ordinal is ready.

That is all I wish to say, and I look forward to hearing Members' comments.

*The Bishop of Durham (Rt Revd Tom Wright):* I am surprised to be making a maiden speech on a matter of business. I want to express concern and even alarm that no space is being given on the agenda to a consideration of theological training in the wake of the Hind Report. Let me explain quickly why I think we must add such a discussion to our agenda.

This last year, wherever two or three Church leaders have gathered together, there has Hind been in the midst of them as a topic of puzzlement and anxiety. I have been in multiple conversations about the implementation of the proposals, and I have heard

scarcely anyone speaking up in favour of them. Rumours abound of whole dioceses opting out and others wishing that they could. Endless meetings and consultations and talks about talks about talks have been going on. When I meet this kind of thing in other walks of life, I tend to conclude that if otherwise intelligent people are going round in circles and getting nowhere it must be because they are trying to answer the wrong question. That is why it is imperative that we get this whole matter on our agenda in this decision-making Synod.

I had hoped that the misgivings that I had last year in that very odd debate we had would disappear as the process got under way, but instead those misgivings have increased thirty-fold and sixty-fold and a hundred-fold. Many of us have not wanted to speak out on this because we like the Bishop of Chichester and we do not want to kick him on the shins, but there is now an increasing groundswell of discontent and frustration at what we are all being asked to do, and if we do not get a chance to talk about it at this meeting I fear both for the future of our theological training and for the sanity of those who feel that they are being asked to make silk purses out of what they perceive to be a sow's ear.

*Dr Susan Atkin (Chelmsford)*: Just a brief word in relation to paragraph 5 of the report where there is reference once again to a number of parked Diocesan Synod Motions. The ones that I am particularly concerned about relate to legislation to enable women to be consecrated bishop. We now have four such Diocesan Synod Motions parked – from Guildford, Ripon and Leeds, Worcester and Southwark – and I would urge the Business Committee to ensure that these are taken, certainly during the life of this Synod and preferably next February, when we will also be debating the Rochester Commission's report.

*Dr Peter Capon (Manchester)*: The efficient conduct of our business is totally dependent on the timely distribution of Synod papers. The Synod staff are to be congratulated on the efficiency and timeliness of the Synod mailings, but there is one exception: the report GS 1549 *Common Worship: Times and Seasons*, with a total of 556 pages and only included in the final mailing. I guess that no ordinary member of Synod has had this document in their hand more than a week; I only got mine on Monday morning, four days ago. Despite taking a day off work – (*laughter and applause*) – I have still only been able to skim through the report.

Yet we are not only asked to consider, when we debate this item, the report itself; we are asked, in the introduction by the chairman of the Liturgical Commission, also to consider the balance of the material: what has been put in and what has been left out. How can we possibly reflect on that in just seven days? I can understand why the Liturgical Commission considers the Article 7 procedures too cumbersome for this material, but at least that procedure gives the opportunity for considered reflection. Now we seem to be going to the opposite extreme of rushing material through on the nod, with no opportunity whatsoever for reflection. So I fear that if we debate this report on Tuesday our debate will be incomplete and ill-informed.

I put it to the Business Committee that the only reasonable course of action is to remove this item from the agenda and reschedule the debate for a later group of sessions.

*Mr Tim Royle (Gloucester):* I wish to draw the attention of the Business Committee to the fact that we have young adults here as observers and that two items have been placed on days when the young adults will not be here, items in which they would certainly have an interest, and, if they were able to speak, to which they could contribute. One is world poverty and the other drug misuse. It seems extraordinary to me that we place the two items about which we wish to hear the young tell us and on which we would like them to give us their opinions on the days when they are not here, and I hope that this will not happen again.

*The Archdeacon of Lincoln (Ven. Arthur Hawes):* Can I add to what has just this moment been said but first commend the acting chairman and his colleagues on the sheer variety of this agenda? I speak as a member of the Mission and Public Affairs Council which incorporates the Board of Mission, the Board for Social Responsibility and the Hospital Chaplaincies Council, and so naturally my concern is with the debates that relate to the external life of the Church, often referred to as ‘world-facing issues’. Given the theological truth central to our faith, that Jesus died for the world and not for the Church, my concern is with their place on the agenda.

In February 2003 mental health was the last item on the last day. In February 2004 the asylum debate was the last item on the last day. I stood and asked the Business Committee to time the business and it did so, but when we came to the debate the session needed to be extended and we discussed for 10 minutes whether we should extend it by 15 minutes. Restorative justice certainly has a prominent place on Sunday afternoon, but then we find, as we have just heard, that the drugs debate is the last item on the last day. Is that less important and indeed was the debate on asylum less important than the less than wholesome debate on the Church Commissioners’ future plans when we met in London?

I ask if you will please make sure that the debate on Tuesday morning on drugs, which is terribly important – such a major problem in our society – is timed, and please, please, in future will you give more prominence to these issues which the world wants to hear us talking about?

*Mr Gerry O’Brien (Rochester):* We have a lot of business before us in this group of sessions. We are partly hoist with our own petard because we have decided to meet just twice a year, but before this group of sessions members, like me, will have received two large white envelopes; the cost of postage amounted in aggregate to £13 to each of us, and there is an awful lot of paper to work through. In view of the short notice that we have had to read a lot of it, I suspect that a lot of us have brought reports to Synod that we have either not read or not read thoroughly. I believe that we owe it to the people who send us here to do our jobs properly and give careful consideration to the items before us.

It is not going to get any better. The last two and a half pages of the report on the agenda suggest that in February 2005 and July 2005 the agenda will again be heaving.

I would urge that we look again at this business of whether we meet twice or three times a year. We can meet for the same number of days; we can have the same amount of time in Synod; but I submit that three bites of the cherry would enable us to do our work far more thoroughly and not be overloaded, and I think that we would serve our constituencies far better if we were to do that.

*Mr John Higginbotham (Leicester):* I would just like to ask the Business Committee one question about contingency business: Items 703 (Christmas Stamps) and 810 (Canon B 44). It seems to me that Dr Baxter's eminently sensible proposal should be uncontroversial and could perhaps be more easily fitted in if we had a few minutes available, and I would ask the Committee to give this a strong priority. It is a small but important witness to the real meaning of Christmas. We should bear in mind that the lead-in period for new stamps from the Post Office is quite lengthy and that we need to make whatever recommendation we do make without delay.

*Revd Dr Richard Burridge (London University):* There is often a feeling that this Synod is something of a talking-shop, and yet at the same time it is very important that we understand that our talking happens because we are, at the end of the day, the place that has to make a lot of the decisions for the Church. A lot of the work takes place between the groups of sessions, and often it is in consequence of what we have discussed and what we have asked for. Therefore when reports come back to us we are in a bit of a dilemma: on the one hand, we do not want to spend all our time just talking about things but, on the other, we need to recognize that when things that we have requested have been done we should acknowledge it and say thank you.

I am thinking particularly of the report from the Ethical Investment Advisory Group. There has been a lot of debate on the floor of the Synod over the past few years asking that theological reflection be taken very seriously, and I was delighted to see that in the reports which arrived in the second of the two white envelopes to which Mr O'Brien referred there is a very good report *Adding Values* (GS Misc 743), which I hope people will have read. However, because it is not on the agenda and because, as we have heard, we have rather a lot to read, many people will probably have read only the things that we have to look at. I did read it and appreciated it very much. I particularly appreciated the way in which there are regular theological reflections throughout the report in exactly the way that I and others have asked for.

I then remembered that in the first envelope that I had received there was at least an invitation to a fringe meeting at which we could discuss it, so I thought 'Great, at least we can discuss it there'. I rang them up to say that I would like to go to the fringe meeting but, because very few had responded to the flyer in the first envelope to discuss the report which did not come until the second envelope, the fringe meeting had in fact been cancelled. That is a great shame and it means that this is about the only place where

we can actually thank the EIAG for its report. We might like to think about the sequence in which things come in the envelopes so that, although I appreciate that not everything can be discussed every time on the floor of Synod, some of those important fringe meetings where miscellaneous reports can be discussed can be thought about.

I am also glad that we are going to be discussing the Archbishops' Council's report; I was sorry that the Business Committee had put it down for deemed approval. The Archbishops' Council, through their report, bring to the Synod all the reports of the various boards and councils and divisions and committees, a huge amount of work, and it is very important that that is recognized and not just deemed. So I am glad that is being done, even if it does mess up the Business Committee's agenda.

*Mr Barry Barnes (Southwark):* Archdeacon Hawker stole some of my thunder. Synod will not be surprised to note that what I am talking on is a point of order, but Archdeacon Hawker mentioned that on the reports the 'take note' motions had been discontinued. I had noticed that and I was intending to raise the point, because the Standing Orders seem to be mandatory on it. SO 95(b) says that 'when a report has been called by a chairman of that sitting the chairman or another member of the body concerned shall move "*That the Synod do take note of this Report*". So it is mandatory – I see the Clerk shaking his head, but it does appear to be mandatory – and therefore presumably Standing Orders will have to be suspended.

*Mr Tom Sutcliffe (Southwark):* The structure and funding of ordination training reflects the length of working life that people are going to have, and one of the things that the Church seems to have given no thought to at all is how long we expect people to go on working. We have been operating for some years – 30 or a little bit longer than that; I cannot remember exactly how long – on the assumption that there should be a compulsory retirement age for people working for the Church. I know that this is a very complicated issue that relates to the nature of the parson's freehold and so on, but it would be desirable, it seems to me, for the Church to be ahead of the game for once. The Government are likely to come to the conclusion that perhaps a compulsory retirement age is something that, in a civilized society, we should not have, and I am not sure that the present system whereby bishops are expected to work for six years, or work themselves to desperation in committees and so on over a period of six years and then have lost all their enthusiasm for pastoral work, is necessarily the best kind of thing that we should be aiming for. I would like to flag up now the fact that we should be thinking about this issue: the length of working life of people working for the Church.

*The Archdeacon of Malmesbury, in reply:* I thank members for their comments, and I would like to deal with the 'take note' comment first. The Standing Orders were changed in February 2004, and 95(f) says, 'Where the Business Committee is of the opinion that it would be for the better conduct of the Synod's business, the Committee may determine that a report need not be the subject of a debate under paragraph (b) above' (which is about 'take note' debates). I trust that that will be taken note of!

Material for Synod debates, wherever it is possible to do so, is sent out in the first mailing. That is not always possible, and GS 1549 is classic because it required the consent of the House of Bishops before it could come to the Synod to be taken note of and then go back to the House, if you do take note of it, for the House to commend it. It is commending material; it is not going through the full procedure. Unfortunately the House of Bishops did not meet until well into June, so by the time it had met and things could be sorted out the first mailing had gone. We would have loved to send it out with the first mailing, and when it came with the second mailing I immediately assumed that the principal item of complaint tonight would be the cost of the postage because this alone makes a significant difference. I am amazed that anyone thought that they were supposed to read every single page of it before they came to General Synod. I would have thought that most people would have drifted through and picked out particular interests and seen how it felt, because this is resource material. However, thank you for the comments about that anyway.

Three sessions of Synod a year? I read of an episcopal suffragan just recently suggesting that we should go down to one session every three years. So it depends where you come from as to what you feel, but it is an issue which people are free to bring up.

Because we have two Private Members' Motions on the agenda and only one Diocesan Synod Motion, that is why the Ely motion is the first item of contingency business, to be fair to Diocesan Synod Motions at that point.

To Richard Burrigge I would say that my information here is that the ethical investment report, which does not come up every year and will be coming up at York next year, was actually sent out in the first mailing, not in the second.<sup>1</sup> So I am told.

Young members: I hope that the young members have come to find out what the General Synod is all about and that they are interested in the entire agenda. (*Laughter*) If they are interested in the entire agenda, they are probably interested in more than you and I are. However, which items of business they would find of particular interest is something we have to ask them, not something that we have to assume on their behalf; and I would not dream of doing otherwise.

Last day of business: this is a hoary old one, that everyone goes home on a Tuesday morning. Can I tell you that statistics show that a very large number of members of Synod have booked themselves in for lunch on Tuesday, and that we reckon that only about 40 people will not be here on Tuesday, which is probably more than are here on Saturday and Sunday. It is how it comes. The truth is that there is always more business to do than we can possibly fit in. Decisions and choices have to be made. I am very thankful that the Archdeacon of Lincoln expressed his appreciation that we had got some of what he would feel is the interesting business on at an earlier stage, but we

<sup>1</sup>This document was, in fact, sent out in the second mailing

cannot get it all on at an earlier stage, and some of the bread-and-butter business of Synod does need to be taken.

Four Diocesan Synod Motions on women and the episcopate: the Synod made a clear decision that it would ask for a report from the Bishop of Rochester's group. That report has gone to the House of Bishops, and I understand that it is to be published in October and will be debated here next February. Until that has happened it is not reasonable to push things, when the Synod has given a clear indication of the speed at which it wishes to go.

On the Hind Report, I have every sympathy with the Bishop of Durham. I suspect that we ought to be discussing that but I am told that the Ministry Division feels that it wants to let the working groups handle it. If you feel that that is not good enough, let us have it loud and clear and we will make sure that it is on an agenda. There is a Question tomorrow on the subject, and it will come up again there.

Thank you all for your contributions, which are greatly valued.

*The motion was put and carried.*

*The Archdeacon of Malmesbury:* I beg to move:

‘That this Synod approve the dates for future groups of sessions set out in paragraph 12 of the report.’

These are the dates suggested for 2006, 2007 and 2008.

*The Chairman:* Is there any debate? (*No response*)

*The motion was put and carried.*

## ***Making the Synod's Procedures More Effective: Report by the Business Committee (GS 1542)***

*The Archdeacon of Malmesbury:* I beg to move:

‘That this Synod invite the Standing Orders Committee, in consultation with the Business Committee, to

- (a) introduce amendments to the Standing Orders and the Constitution to permit votes to be recorded electronically;

- (b) consider reducing the time normally allowed for speeches under SO 21; and
- (c) consider ways in which downward pressure can be applied in relation to the number of amendments tabled for debate.'

It may come as a surprise to some people that at every meeting of the Business Committee all comments that have been sent in, however wonderful and profound or bizarre and stupid, are without exception considered by the Business Committee. That is a standard part of our agenda and we value the input. So we are reviewing all the time, meeting by meeting. We also had a lunch-time meeting here at York in 2002 to consider ways in which we could improve the effectiveness of Synod. We have had discussions with the Communicating of General Synod Group and the Making Synod User Friendly Group, both of whom are private enterprise exercises, and we have had a joint meeting with the Standing Orders Committee. I think that this is the right time to do some testing of the water. This Synod has been in place for four years, which means that most members, whether they were new at the beginning of the quinquennium or had come in before, have a good idea of how the Synod operates; so now is a useful time to test the water as to what members think might be meaningful ways to improve Synod in time for a new quinquennium next autumn.

There is a range of issues that people have raised, but I have only three to bring before you in the motion this evening: electronic voting, the time allowed for speeches and the number of amendments. They are the three that have come up most regularly and on which we would value a steer. Can I just stress that it is a steer that we are looking for because, if it means changing the Standing Orders, the Standing Orders Committee must be given the freedom to look at it, to consider it thoroughly and to come back with its recommendations, and there would be a debate before such a Standing Order came into operation. So there will in each situation be an opportunity for members to discuss it if you so wish. Equally, if a Measure is necessary it will require debate at a later stage.

If the item on electronic voting that could require a Measure was found to be controversial, it cannot possibly be part of the Miscellaneous Provisions Measure that is being proposed at the moment because that can deal only with uncontentious business; but if it is the will of Synod that we really do move fairly quickly on that, it could be considered by that revision committee for inclusion in the Measure.

Briefly, the Business Committee does not have a set view on any of these three subjects. It has a preference in favour of electronic voting but we want to hear what you say. The arguments for and against are on pages 4 and 5 of the relevant report. The Synod should be assured that the Committee has actually tested the system in London: how it works, and that it is secure. It could be available, if you wish to have it, for November 2005. Also it could be brought in gradually, rather than for the whole of Synod business, and we could have time to consider which bits of Synod business it would be relevant for. It would enable us to have accurate voting figures, and I can assure members that counting

hands, especially here, is a fairly dire process. It could save time and it could give us accuracy, if that is what we want. Because it is electronic, it comes under the Data Protection provisions, and if we were to pass a motion to change Standing Orders to allow for the recording of the votes (because the system would allow us to record who had voted for and who against), that can be done and would be acceptable to the Information Commissioner. However, we would have to state very clearly, as a Synod, in what circumstances that information would be made available and to whom; it would be very clearly controlled. So there is little problem there; it is a question of whether you would like it or whether you would not.

As regards speech limits, the recommendation of some people is that opening speeches should be reduced from 15 to 10 minutes, and the maximum contribution from the floor should be five minutes. I would point out to members that five minutes, in reality, is the most that any of you get anyway because it has become an increasingly regular habit to reduce to five minutes from square one, in order to fit everyone in. However, does that mean that we cannot have a more detailed perception where that is relevant? It is a question that members must consider. It is my personal view, and not that of the Business Committee – and I have been on Synod since 1990 – that my principal function here is to listen hard, to assess and then to vote; those are the things that I have been brought here to do. Over and above that, I may have the privilege of speaking, and you may think that my speaking is worth listening to – or not; that is another matter – but there seems to be a feeling that everyone must have a chance to speak. In one sense that would be lovely but, even with what I hope will be the reduced size of Synod from next year, you will not get everyone speaking and if, in the average debate, you started at five minutes and did not allow any ten-minute speeches you would allow possibly two more people to speak. So it is an issue that you need to advise us on, whether we should really start to bring it down to five minutes or whether we should leave as it is at the moment, in the knowledge that, in reality, it is often five minutes anyway.

Coming to the amendments, the issue here is that we have an increasing number of amendments being put down. The net result is that they can seriously disrupt what is otherwise a meaningful and useful debate. There is what is called the ‘bus ticket’ amendment: you put an amendment down not because you have something really useful to offer but to guarantee yourself five minutes on your feet, talking about whatever aspects of the situation you want. There has been, quite understandably, a measure of abuse due to frustration, but how do we cope with this? Do we continue as we are and hope that things will settle down, or do we bring in a way of reducing the number of amendments? In the report one or two suggestions are made. If you gave a steer that yes, we ought to reduce the number of amendments, we will go back and the Standing Orders Committee will go back, and we will look at the options, then bring them to you for your decision. So again this is not a decision that has to be made tonight; it is a principle that we are looking for.

We look forward to hearing Members’ responses. If you, Mr Chairman, were minded, or the Synod were minded, at the end of this debate to split the motion into three and

have three straw polls effectively, one on each part, I would be quite happy to see that.

*The Chairman:* I draw Synod's attention to the environmentally friendly green fifth notice paper: there is a financial comment under SO 98, which nobody will speak to tonight, but you need to look at paragraph 4.

*Revd Canon David Lickess (York):* I would support all three of these proposals of the Business Committee. I think that electronic voting would save a lot of time and it would be more accurate, though I am a bit sobered up by the cost of it and obviously that must be borne in mind.

The main thing I want to say relates to part (b). One of the biggest moans among ordinary members of Synod, parish clergy and laity is that we often come with things to say and do not get a chance to speak, because only a few people are called in most debates, and many of them are the same voices that we shall hear three or four times in this group of sessions. [*Members:* Hear, hear.] I know that things have recently improved, with chairmen introducing a five-minute speech limit, and I think that this should become the norm except for probably a few well-informed and able speakers, whoever they may be. Now that Bishop Buchanan is retiring, he is always very amusing and well worth listening to, but, you know, there will be fewer of those people.

I also support the idea of a maximum of ten minutes for opening speeches, especially as we should have read the report and know what it is about. For two years in the early 1990s I went as the Synod's rep to the Methodist Conference. They limit speeches to three minutes and it enables more people – ordinary members – to speak and to make a contribution or two during the week. Sometimes, I know, three minutes is not very long, but it focuses what one wants to say, and sometimes speeches are rather padded out. So I am not happy with the Standing Orders Committee's idea of keeping the present time limits and just allowing flexibility by chairmen; I think that we should make a move, which some of us in this Synod have tried to do before and failed, to have five minutes as the norm, as Peter Spiers says in his amendment, in every debate, and soon moving to three minutes if there are many wishing to speak.

I also want to say a few words about amendments. I think that they should demonstrate some support. When many amendments are voted on, we find only a very few hands raised in favour and yet they have taken up five or ten minutes of our time. I think that again the Standing Orders Committee is out of tune with members of the Synod, and I would support the Business Committee in moving along the right lines to make Synod more effective.

When I timed this at home, it was about two and a half minutes.

*Dr Edmund Marshall (Wakefield):* I wish to speak very strongly in favour of part (a), that amendments to Standing Orders be introduced to permit electronic voting. We are

sometimes told that the voting procedures in this Synod follow those of the Houses of Parliament, and to some extent that is true: divisions in both places are preceded by stentorian shouts of 'Division' echoing down the corridors and throughout the chamber, which does not really speak very well for our idea of Christian unity; in both places members indicate their preference on an issue by passing through appropriate doorways; and they are in both places counted as they pass through those doorways. There, however, the parallel ends because in the two Houses of Parliament there are large division lobbies, spacious chambers, in which up to three hundred people can stand about or sit during the time of the division. We have no such spacious chamber either at Westminster or here. When you go through the door at Westminster you are all jammed up in the circumferential corridor outside the Assembly Hall; when you go through the door here you are on the balcony, and in bad weather that is no good thing. What is more, in the Houses of Parliament a record is taken of Members as they pass through the doorways, and that is how they have a permanent record of how people have voted. We have no such facility here but electronic voting would provide the answer. I feel that we have to give a lead to parliamentary procedures by looking at this modern method of voting.

With regard to part (c), asking for measures to reduce the number of amendments tabled for debate in the Synod, I want to bring forward one particular suggestion. This applies where an item of business has been delayed for one reason or another and has run out of time during a particular group of sessions of the Synod. This has happened on at least two occasions in recent years. What happens then is that the business is deferred until the next group of sessions, and during that time more and more amendments appear to that business. That is wrong because you never get any nearer the end of that item of business if you allow that. I suggest that the Committee should look at ways in which, as soon as an item of business is deferred from one group of sessions to the next, there should be a stop to prevent any further amendments being tabled in normal circumstances. Obviously, I agree, emergencies could arise which would necessitate an amendment, but that should be very much the exception; the rule should be that no more amendments are allowed once the item has been deferred.

With regard to part (b), the time allotted to speeches, I suggest very strongly that, in considering how best to make savings of time on this particular item, the Committee should look more at the time taken by speeches from the platform when motions are moved and reports brought to us. Most of these things have already been given to us in voluminous material which has been there for us to read, and in many cases it is no longer necessary to have long speeches in order to introduce those items.

Please let us retain as much time as possible for speakers from the floor and concentrate our attention, in trying to make time savings, on the speeches which introduce debates.

*Revd Canon Peter Burrows (Leicester):* I would like to thank the Business Committee for bringing this report to Synod. It would, in the midst of weighty Synod business, be

easy to overlook the underlying importance of what Synod is being asked to do. While I have mixed feelings about different aspects of the report before us, it is a valuable contribution to what I hope will be the evolutionary process of making Synod's business more accessible and user-friendly. I remember as a child standing in the playground with other children, waiting to be called by a team leader to be part of a team. You stood in a large group and, one by one, names would be called out and you went forward to be a part of a chosen team, but as more names were called and the group got smaller or, worse still, if you were the last one to be called the sense of vulnerability and rejection could be difficult to cope with. When this happened on more than one occasion, there was a real temptation to give up and not try at all.

That is how it can feel as you are trying to work your way into Synod, as you stand to be called but never quite make it. The perception can be that the better and more able players get chosen first by the team captains – in our case, the chairmen. I therefore welcome the report's strong steer to the chairmen to ensure that as many people as possible are called to make their maiden speech. I know that we are not being asked to make a recommendation regarding this, but it is important to avoid the possibility of the less spirited Synod players simply giving up. If that happens we might miss some valuable contributions.

It is because of the need to hear important contributions that I would discourage Synod from voting in favour of reducing the time normally allowed for speeches. The chairmen already have ample discretion, which they should and do use, to vary the time allowed for speeches and in this way ensuring that Synod is as well informed as possible through well structured and carefully prepared contributions.

While I want to encourage Synod to support the principle of an electronic voting system and the changes required to Standing Orders, I do not think that this is the right moment to introduce it. If the Corporation of the Church House is minded to instal a new system as part of a modern conference facility, I would happily back that. However, my concern revolves round the cost of the new system and the message that its purchase would give to our parishes. At a time when parishes are being asked to share a greater financial responsibility, as we shall hear in the debate on the financial support of ordinands in training, and at a time when dioceses are asking parishes to increase their giving and make significant decisions about the availability and affordability of clergy, I cannot help but wonder if many of the parishes would consider in the present climate that £250,000 spent on an electronic voting system was a wise use of our financial resources. I also have questions about the cost of £5,000 to £8,000 being charged not just to Synod but to other users and wonder whether this is a sum of money which other users would be prepared to pay.

I want fully to support, therefore, the process of making Synod's business more accessible but also urge wise timing so that the process is truly evolutionary and seen to be an important part of the Church's mission in making information more accessible to a greater number of people, rather than a self-indulgent Synod luxury.

*Canon Sarah James (Gloucester)*: I assume, Mr Chairman, that you are aware from the piece of paper that I put in that I am not actually speaking on the three items which have been drawn to our attention but rather to paragraph 29 on page 13 of the report.

I want to approve the recognition there that access for disabled people is being taken seriously. We need to remember that it is society, i.e. us, which disables people by putting obstacles, stumbling blocks, such as steps and pillars, in their way. I rejoice that future planning in Church House will take appropriate measures but regret that this is a year or more down the line. However, I would like to press us all: we need to set an example and follow it ourselves in dioceses and parishes. When we book premises for a conference – a CME day, perhaps, or a committee – we should ask whether there is wheelchair access for those who cannot walk, suitable toilets, a working loop system for those who are hard of hearing, and clear sight-lines for deaf people who need sign language interpreters, and we should refuse to use those premises which are not up to standard. We must ensure that all our events, including those held in churches and cathedrals – and dare I mention the Synod inaugural service in Westminster Abbey next year? – are signed in British sign language for profoundly deaf people because they too want to attend and be part of what the Church is doing.

*Mrs Anne Foreman (Guildford)*: I would just like to make two points that I hope the Business Committee will take on board, one about electronic voting and the other about amendments.

The first refers to the third bullet point of paragraph 10 on page 5, where the fact that electronic voting might cause an increase in voting by Houses is put forward as a point against it; I would like to suggest that it is a point in favour. Voting by Houses does make very clear, in a helpful and important way, the divisions that can exist between laity and clergy, and it is useful to have those made clear.

The second point is about amendments. When I first read the report I looked at past copies of the *Report of Proceedings* and tried to see if there was a pattern in which amendments were carried and which lost. It was a fairly thankless task, but it seemed to me that there were certain amendments – there were lots of them and they always get carried – which are the sort where a group or a piece of work or something like that is left out, and people put an amendment down to make sure that they are included. People feel a bit miffed and they want recognition, and the amendment is put; it is always courteously heard and usually passed. The other one is where the language is involved: there may be a slight nuance that is not quite right, and people want it amended. I would like to suggest that you apply this downward pressure, whatever that might be, to limit that number of amendments. Can we have fewer of the amendments of omission, please?

*The Bishop of Woolwich (Rt Revd Colin Buchanan)*: In 1975 in this chamber Series One and Two Communion, known as 'One and a half', the ancestor of Rite B and of Second Order now, passed in the House of Clergy by 105 votes to 52. I spoke to Geoffrey

Cuming, that famous liturgist, and asked him how he had voted. 'Oh,' he said, 'I'm lame. I didn't go up the stairs. I would have voted against it' – and that would have settled it for history. That is the only argument that I can think of in favour of electronic voting, of which I am really highly distrustful. It would have been interesting, though, for liturgical history.

I have used electronic voting in one or two places and I remain distrustful. I think that the report is quite slight in its discussion and explanation of it. It does admit that it makes voting secret though in fact the advocacy that we had from the platform was that it can make it explicit. We need to know which is really in view. If we are making voting secret – and 'secret ballot' is the phrase used in the report on the agenda – we are crossing quite a serious watershed in the life of the Synod and, although I do not want to resist it necessarily, I do want to put it under very strict conditions, which is what my amendment, which I hope the Synod will support, is about.

In the Commons, of course, the Whips would very much like to know which way their Members are voting, and I have no doubt that the Members would sometimes be interested in being able to vote without the Whips knowing which way they have voted, but we are not in that position: there are no Whips here. What there is here is a real open pattern of Synod life in which we are accountable, those of us who are elected, to our electors; they need to know how we have voted and other members of Synod need to know how we are voting, so that they can call us to account over lunch. That is a very important feature of our voting procedures, and I really cannot believe that all that much time is being wasted. On most of the occasions when we go through the doors to vote by Houses, it is something quite serious, where the sense of expectation and build-up and discussion is part of the dynamics of the Synod, which I should be sorry to see lost in a five-second voting pattern.

I am not entirely clear how we are going to vote by Houses. Is it that everybody is going to put in their number first and then the electronics can sort out which numbers have voted, or will all the Houses have to sit separately so that certain blocks can have their votes counted? I would like to know that. We are not told it and it is the sort of thing that needs fuller explanation under the conditions that I am suggesting before the Synod accepts this as a Standing Order. Suppose there are mistakes in people putting in their numbers? Or suppose people say, 'Oh well, Brother So-and-So's been called away by an emergency, but there's an empty seat beside me and I know which way he would have voted?' That is what they do in Northern Ireland. How can you trace corrupt or mistaken voting in a system of this sort? It really is quite important. The House of Bishops, for instance, holds only 53 votes. If ever 54 votes come up, we shall know that something has gone wrong. They say that when the clock strikes 13, it does not only misinform you then; it tells you that you cannot trust it at any other time either. So watch out for 54 votes in the House of Bishops.

I think that very little time will be saved. My amendment is designed to enable the Synod to have very clear information when it votes for it and to have it reviewed while the

present patterns still remain in living memory, so that there is a real comparison being made when that review happens. I cannot believe that Alan Hawker can do other than accept this.

*Mr David Webster (Rochester):* The report from the Business Committee makes clear in its discussion on electronic voting that it has had wide discussions with the Corporation of the Church House, and, to obviate any illusion about where the money might come from, it is coming from the Corporation, which is entirely separate from the finances of the Archbishops' Council and the Synod. It would have the responsibility for purchasing that, at a cost of about a quarter of a million pounds. I hope, therefore, that it will be helpful to make a few points from the perspective of the Corporation, with which I am closely involved.

Some of the older members, including the acting chairman of the Business Committee (because I think that it was the year in which he joined Synod), will remember that it was in 1990 that the present microphone system was introduced into the Assembly Hall, with an anticipated life of 15 years; so it needs to be replaced soon, and, some may feel, not before time because it has already given more problems than is acceptable. As members probably know, the present system is fully wired with an extensive network of under-floor wiring connecting individual microphones to the main controls of the gallery and the Assembly Hall. Such systems are now largely obsolete. Hand-held microphones issued to each person, be they Synod member or commercial conference delegate, as they enter the building now present a convenient and much cheaper alternative. As the report makes clear, the IML system which is being proposed can also at a limited additional cost include the ability to conduct votes electronically.

These days, the conference centre at Church House, administered by the Corporation, is increasingly being asked for electronic voting for commercial meetings held in the Assembly Hall, such as annual general meetings of companies and institutions, and there may well be a case for such a voting system to be purchased by the Corporation, irrespective of whether the Synod decides to make use of it; but let me stress that the Corporation has made it clear to the Business Committee, with which discussions are being held on a regular basis, that it will instal electronic voting in the Assembly Hall if asked to do so, even if it had separately concluded that the commercial case for doing so was not proven.

There are also references in the report to the forthcoming proposed refurbishment of the Assembly Hall and in a way it could be said that the two go together, though, if asked to do so, the Corporation will instal an electronic voting system before the refurbishment. The present layout of the hall dates from 1949, when the hall was reopened after wartime damage. The original 1936 layout had a flat floor whereas the present has what I think is called in the trade a 'saucer-shaped profile'. The seating layout was slightly different. The present seating dates from the late 1940s and it too has reached the end of its life and, as I think we would all agree, must soon be replaced.

Moreover, as we know, the seating is fixed, which does not suit quite a few of our commercial clients, for it means that the hall cannot be used for such events as banquets, for which there is a considerable demand.

I can assure members that the proposed alterations are not really significant; we intend at the February group of sessions to have an exhibition of final plans and we are hoping to arrange a lunch-time meeting in the Assembly Hall where questions can be put to the Secretary, the general manager of the conference centre and indeed members of the Council, many of whom are Synod members. At the Corporation's annual meeting last month a distinguished lay Synod member (and we must remember that all Synod members are members of the Corporation) made clear her real concerns about certain aspects of the proposed refurbishment.

I end by assuring the Synod that the use of electronic voting is entirely in its hands. In this as in other matters the Corporation will respond to the decision and needs of the Synod, as expressed to it by the Business Committee, and there is no question of the Corporation making the running in this matter.

*The Chairman:* I am going to impose a speech limit of five minutes. Can we please stay on electronic voting, because I think that will help the business?

*Dr David Bowen (Canterbury):* I am sorry that the motion before us has mixed together three aspects which should really be quite separate. One is whether or not we wish to consider moving towards electronic voting and to make changes in our Standing Orders to that effect; another is whether we wish to pay for electronic voting and particularly how much this will cost and over what period of time; and the third is how we propose to accomplish electronic voting. This report reads like a technical solution-driven project, and anyone who has done technical projects knows that if you want a disaster that is a good place to start.

So I hope that Synod can express an approval for using electronic voting and for changing Standing Orders to create some experiments but I will vote against that part of the motion and the amendment because of the expense. I have been contacted by my diocesan secretary and by others, and they are, frankly, appalled by the idea that the Church will have headlines saying 'A quarter of a million pounds spent on electronic voting for a group that meets twice a year and that numerous people in the Church do not know or care about'. I hope that we can overcome that last statement, but we must not spend this money in this way at this time.

Apart from that financial driver, the technical solution proposed does not sound to me as though it has been carefully thought through; as previous speakers have mentioned, it certainly has not been carefully explained to us. A much more appropriate solution to this would be for us to amend Standing Orders to allow experiments and then to try one or two technical solutions which, for that sort of money, the manufacturers will bring in and allow us to try at a group of sessions.

So I hope that Synod will vote against the amendment and against part (a) of the motion.

*The Bishop of Birmingham (Rt Revd John Sentamu):* Anything that will make our Synod meetings and procedures more effective must surely be supported. We are living in an age of technology where a lot of complicated things can easily be resolved. This Thursday I was at the launch of the first laboratory to deal with sickle cell and thalassaemia screening for the nation; years ago this would have been an impossibility but they can now do it on every firstborn, just like that, because technology has improved. So I for one believe that anything that makes Synod more effective needs to be supported. We are, after all, being asked to give a steer, and we should give the Business Committee a steer to look at the Standing Orders in terms of electronic voting, allowing time for speeches and the number of amendments. That should be looked at and then brought back.

However, I would have thought that the Business Committee needed to be slightly more brave. What I crave is Standing Orders that allow us to dialogue with one another. Too often we try to emulate Parliament. This is a Christian body and, as a Christian body, we need styles of discussion in which we can hear one another. Often you hear the same speech as if the person standing up has not been listening, and they give it to you again and again. By the time we come to vote we are all punch-drunk with the same idea.

Do you remember – I think I would prefer to call you ‘Moderator’: it is a better word than ‘Chair’ because it is a better thing – when you were in the Chair and we were talking about the spending plans of the Church Commissioners? There was a real desire that we should actually try to adjourn the thing, but, oh, we had Standing Orders in the way and we had to go through this nonsense of stopping this and stopping that before we eventually came to the same thing. I said to myself, ‘Is this a Christian body?’

So I want to say to the Business Committee that, yes, we must be efficient but ask if we could move towards a more Christian dialogue with each other. At any meeting where rules reign, lawyers like me make a lot of money! I would rather that, in our gathering, in our discussions, we are dialoguing and listening to one another. So if the point has been made, there is no need for you to make it again. We need to listen. I am worried that the Standing Orders were made at a time when we pretended that we were like Parliament across the road, but we are not, and as times have become more difficult we need to be able to listen and to dialogue with each other, to look each other in the face and walk out of this place renewed in Christ. I know that lawyers like me say, ‘Oh, but rules are going to help us’. Please, I do not think that this is what Jesus actually died for and rose again for and calls us to be. So may I encourage anything that will not only help us to be more efficient but will make this body look more and more like pilgrims together on the way?

*The Bishop of Woolwich (Rt Revd Colin Buchanan):* I beg to move as an amendment:

‘At the end of paragraph (a) *insert* the words “provided that the use of electronic voting for each of the categories of voting at present to be found in SO 36(b), (c) and (d) be authorized by a separate decision of Synod in each case, and that such authorizations are limited to a period of not more than three years in the first instance and are in terms that ensure they will lapse at the end of that period unless they are reviewed and expressly renewed by the Synod”.’

I move it Christianly and without passion!

*The Archdeacon of Malmesbury*: I do not wish to disappoint Bishop Buchanan’s faith in my ability to decline his amendment. It is interesting that he has given us an amendment but that most of his speech had very little to do with the detail of the amendment but indicated, quite understandably, his own particular concerns about electronic voting.

Can it be specific or not? The answer is that it can be. We now know for sure from 1 July after dealing with the Information Commissioner that it can be specific if we wish it to be so. If we do not wish it to be so, it will not be. That is a decision that the General Synod would have to make when the Standing Orders came up.

Each person would have a personal handset. I just do not believe that members of Synod would wish to appropriate handsets from other people and use them in the available time; I think that that is pushing the boat out a bit far.

The amendment talks about SO 36(b), (c) and (d) which members of course all know by heart. It is on page 27 of Standing Orders: 36(a) is a show of hands, 36(b) is a count of the whole Synod and 36(c) is a division of the whole Synod. I really question whether there is any usefulness in breaking it up in this sort of way. Also, if you have actually read the report, you will have noted that even if you say ‘Yes, let’s go for this’ it will come in part by part; it will not all come in at one time. So there will be an opportunity to come back and comment and therefore the sort of testing that is required here is actually written into the way we will have to operate anyway. I would encourage Synod to decline the amendment.

*The Chairman*: We are now discussing the amendment and I impose a three-minute speech limit.

*Revd Simon Stokes (Norwich)*: I stand here this evening as someone who is disabled, as you could quite clearly see: the set-up that we have here does not suit me terribly well. I want to speak against the amendment because I think that it takes our eye off the ball. The proposals of the Business Committee actually encourage us and enable us to look to the future, to make us more inclusive. I have spent my whole life trying not to be disabled, trying to make people see me as an individual; Synod makes me disabled. I get very fed up when I stand; I cannot see when people are pointing to me to call me to speak; and it is difficult to find the mikes here or indeed in London. The advantage of the

electronic voting system which has not been brought out is that it can also indicate those who are wishing to speak so it would save having to stand up. It would save a lot of problems for someone such as me who is disabled.

I do not like talking about the fact that I am disabled, but I find Synod very difficult over these practical issues. Please could Synod do something about taking note of the fact that those who are disabled want to play an active part within Synod?

*Revd Jonathan Alderton-Ford (St Edmundsbury and Ipswich):* I hate to have to disagree with my former theological college principal, but his speech about technology was scaremongering: there are lots of ways of making sure that it is fair and accurate. Surely the most important thing is the truth, that we get accurate figures on our votes. I will give you an example: last July Archdeacon Hawker's attempt to reform faculty was won on a show of hands and lost when we went through the doors. The most important thing about this assembly is that we get it right.

The second thing is time. We have had lots of talk about what we are going to do with the time. I sat in a London session and I measured the amount of time we spent voting that day, which was an average day, and by my calculations we could have saved an hour on a single day's work. How many debates have we had about what Synod is here for, how it uses its time, and about debates that cannot be taken? One of my friends said to me, 'I really do like the whole process of going through the doors. In fact, I like to see how everybody else is voting and then join the longest queue'. That is poor leadership. We are here to do many things but, above all, we are here to take decisions. I would suggest that if we are going to be effective and representative we should read the material and pray. We should listen to each other and pray. We do not have to speak every time. It is just as important to listen as it is to speak. If we are called, we should certainly pray before and after; but above all we should vote and we should pray that we have done God's will in this place.

I believe that electronic voting will help us because, above all else, surely we are servants of God and surely servants also of the truth.

*Revd Richard Thomas (Oxford):* I hope that Synod will support this amendment. As a communications director of a diocese, I might be expected to be in favour of electronics. In some cases I am but in this case I most certainly am not. I think that we need a mixed economy. I do not think that we want either all-electronic or all-hand; there are occasions when it is really important that we get a sense of how each one of us is voting, so that there is a kind of collegiality about the place. Voting is not just about counting numbers. It is first of all about owning our own decisions, second about doing something together and third about demonstration. If you take away that business of time and space, almost certainly one of the results will be that we will try and get more and more votes into the available space and that will have the tendency to turn us into button-pushers so that the whole process escalates and robs the one space that we need.

So I want to see a mixed economy. In some cases and in some areas of debate it will save us time. In other areas it will rob the Synod of that sense of collegiality and ownership and spoil something very special about being a body of Christians together who are responding to each other rather than simply taking electronic signals from the brain through the button to a scoring desk. For that reason I hope that Synod will support the amendment and that we will begin to leave space for a mixed economy in which we can have some hand voting, some physical movement, and some electronic voting.

*Revd Richard Seabrook (Chelmsford):* I want to support Bishop Buchanan's dislike of electronic voting. When towards the end of the war Winston Churchill oversaw the rebuilding of the House of Commons he talked about there not being enough seats for all the Members. I am not suggesting that we take seats away so that we have to share seats, but I am saying that it brings about a sense of immediacy, a sense of drama, in democracy which I think is very important. The pressing of electronic buttons takes away any sense of drama from our voting. I know that people have said that it takes a long time, and certainly electronic voting would be much more accurate, but to give ourselves a sense of drama about the General Synod is very important. If we pressed electronic buttons we would not be able to see how people had voted. Going through the Ayes and Noes lobbies is very important.

When Dr Marshall earlier made the point about the House of Commons, he touched on one point that is very important: I think that we should record how we vote when we go through the lobbies so that people outside the Synod see how we voted in each House and can put a name to how we voted as well.

Electronic voting would be a radical departure from our democratic legislation process in England. It is important that we echo what happens in Westminster, because surely there is a direct connection between this Synod and the Houses of Parliament.

Something else is very important: we act as tellers and doorkeepers and we are ourselves involved in the democratic process in Synod. It would be a shame if that were taken away. Simply by being doorkeepers and tellers we can own that process ourselves rather than giving it over to some electronic device. So what I would say is that we should resist any electronic voting whatsoever.

*The Chairman:* I see no one standing.

*The Bishop of Woolwich (Rt Revd Colin Buchanan):* On a point of order, Mr Chairman. Would it be possible for me to withdraw the amendment? Archdeacon Hawker has already said more to us in responding to me, things that I needed to know and I thought Synod needed to know. We do not need to have a vote on this if he is really assuring me that some of the points that I made will be met.

*The Chairman:* Let me take advice. For that to happen requires the leave of the Synod, in essence, unanimous consent. If Synod is content for the Bishop's amendment to be

withdrawn – and that includes of course the Archdeacon – then he may withdraw it. Are you content? (*Some dissent*) No, we need to vote on the amendment.

*The amendment was put and lost.*

*Revd Peter Spiers (Liverpool):* I beg to move as an amendment:

‘*Leave out* paragraph (b) and *insert* “(b) introduce amendments to the Standing Orders to reduce the time normally allowed for opening speeches to 10 minutes and for other speeches to five minutes;”.’

I would like to thank the Business Committee for all the work it has done, for producing this report about streamlining our procedures, for its receptiveness to some radical, out-of-the-box thinking and for the At Home that it had last July.

If culture is defined as ‘the way we do things round here’, my amendment is designed to change the culture or the way we do things, and I hope members will not just see it as a mealy-mouthed attempt to gag certain individuals; it is not. I want Synod to support my amendment for three reasons.

First, I believe that lower speech limits would increase the chances of getting through the business that the Business Committee put before us. Hey, we might even have some time for silence and prayer. The Business Committee often get stuck, so let us support it on this particular issue.

Second, chairs generally impose a speech limit of five minutes at the outset anyway, so all my amendment would be doing is enshrining common practice in Standing Orders.

Third, it would allow more people to participate in the debates. We have already heard a few speeches about the frustration that people feel in not being able to speak. It is terrible that people get elected to Synod and come along here, wanting the opportunity to contribute, and are not given that opportunity. Lower speech limits would allow more people to speak. I do not think that the quality of a speech depends on how long it is. I would remind Synod that Proverbs 21.23 says, ‘He who guards his mouth and his tongue keeps himself from calamity’. Proverbs 10.19 says, ‘When words are many, sin is not absent, but he who holds his tongue is wise’. James 3 reminds us of the importance of taming the tongue. When Jesus was asked by his disciples how they should pray, he gave them a prayer that you can say in 30–40 seconds.

So I reject the notion that longer speeches allow more weighty and theological reflection.

Coming to the other part of my amendment, about speeches opening debates, we have already heard people ask what is the point of someone having 15 minutes to tell us what is already in the report. Either they say something completely different, or the reports

are shorter; but let us not have both. Ten minutes means succinctness and is a good discipline for all those who open debates.

If members do not support my amendment you will be left with part (b) of the original motion which I think is too vague because it just asks the Standing Orders Committee to 'consider reducing'. Why not cut out a bit more time and just decide tonight that this is what we want to do and stop faffing about? Please support my amendment.

*The Archdeacon of Malmesbury:* Just to add to Pete's collection, James 1.19: 'Let everyone be quick to listen, slow to speak', and, from a Chinese proverb, 'Even a fool appears wise if he keeps silent, and discerning if he holds his tongue'. I totally agree.

Thank you for your support for (b), because you did support it in what you said. So what is your amendment seeking to do? Instead of inviting the Business Committee and the Standing Orders Committee, with a steer, to go away and look at this and to allow people, after reflection, to bring in comments, you are mandating and thus taking away any possibility of their doing otherwise. However, having done that, they will then bring a Standing Order back to Synod which the Synod may turn down, but the Synod has already mandated that there shall be a Standing Order. I think it is wiser to consider reducing, as in the main motion, rather than demanding, as in the amendment. I recommend that we do not accept the amendment.

*The Chairman* imposed a speech limit of three minutes.

*The Archdeacon of Middlesex (Ven. Malcolm Colmer):* I welcome the general thrust of the report because I welcome procedures to make Synod more effective. In particular, I welcome the reduction in time allowed for speeches that is in Pete Spiers's amendment, but not in order to allow Synod to deal with more business or even perhaps to allow more people to speak, although I am grateful for his concern and here I am, after four years, speaking. No, I think that Synod should deal with less business, but business which is related more directly to the Synod's engagement in God's mission and its own call to follow Jesus Christ in the Spirit. What is needed is more time to listen together to God, not necessarily to listen to each other more. The Bishop of Birmingham said that we should behave as a Christian body and that meant dialogue with one another, but as a Christian body surely we should be in dialogue with God the Holy Trinity?

Abraham, Moses, Jesus, the Early Church, were called by God to go where he is leading, so we need time and space to hear God together. Yes, I have enough faith to believe that the Lord will speak through speeches in Synod, but I want to encourage us to take paragraphs 31 and 32 of the report very seriously. Paragraph 31 proposes groups for discussion, mutual support and prayer, but prayer seems to have got lost by paragraph 32. I think that these groups should not meet, as the report says, biennially but at every group of sessions, as in Alan Hargrave's following motion, which I hope we shall reach. In paragraph 32 it has become simply group discussion, but the parliamentary style of

Synod is not, as the report suggests, best suited for much of the Church's agenda, and groups, as it suggests, of 15–20 would allow Synod members to 'listen to each other'.

What is really needed is three more words at the end of this sentence: to 'listen to each other and to God'. So I urge Synod, through the Business Committee, to find ways to enable space for listening to God as followers of Jesus Christ, and to find time to discern God's call to the Church, so that we will be more a community of disciples and pilgrims and more effective in our service.

*Mr Barry Barnes (Southwark)*: On a point of order, Mr Chairman. After the next speaker, I beg to move:

'That the question be now put.'

*This motion was put and carried.*

*Miss Sue Booth (Lichfield)*: At Methodist Conference last week, our ecumenical observer Dudley Coates had opportunity and reason to remind them that their Standing Orders do not allow applause after speeches, and that cuts down quite a bit of time.

It is now pretty usual for members to write and to read what they want to say, so surely they can make certain that what they want to say is not lengthy. When writing what they want to say they can divide it into different points, and if someone makes that point then surely they can cut that paragraph. It has been said before that we keep hearing the same things over and over again. (*Laughter*)

During my 45 years in broadcasting I have edited talks (and sermons) and in fact two of the current bishops I have edited down, so that they say exactly what they want to say and they fit into the time allocated. It is really not that difficult. I may add that I have discovered that if, on the request to speak form, I say I am going to take under three minutes I get called.

*The amendment was put and lost.*

*Mrs Gill Ambrose (Ely)*: I beg to move as an amendment:

'*Leave out* paragraph (c) and *insert* "(c) introduce amendments to the Standing Orders requiring that amendments to motions be accompanied by a brief explanation of the purpose of the amendment and that at least 25 members must be standing in order for an amendment to be debated."'.

I want to thank the Business Committee for its attention to the suggestions from the User Friendly Synod Group. The Archdeacon suggested that the User Friendly Synod Group was a private enterprise business; if you are a private enterprise business you do

not necessarily expect to be heard, but we feel that we have been heard and we are very grateful for that. We are grateful for the Committee's desire to look again at the large number of amendments being tabled because some of them do detract from the main focus of the debate. We have heard already about the device of the 'bus ticket' amendment.

We are hoping therefore that with this amendment we can sharpen up the Business Committee's proposal at (c). We have consulted quite widely and believe that we have come up with a workable system. What we propose is that for an amendment to be debated 25 people need to stand. If not, the amendment would simply fall. The problem with that of course is that you may not know why somebody is tabling the amendment, so we suggest that each amendment be accompanied by a very brief description of its purpose so that people can consider carefully beforehand whether or not this is a worthwhile amendment and whether it will add anything to the substantive motion. We believe that that is a fair, simple and straightforward way of ensuring that only important amendments which add to the substance of the debate are taken so that we can keep focused on the major issues under discussion and not obfuscate what we are trying to think about. I hope that Synod will support this amendment.

*The Archdeacon of Malmesbury:* Once again we have an amendment the mover of which supports the main motion but then wishes to be much more prescriptive than the main motion. The main motion asks that we 'consider ways'. The Business Committee and Standing Orders Committee will understand clearly that they have to come up with a way forward, but 25 people is not the only way of doing it; there are other ways and we need to look at them all carefully. However widely the group has consulted – and I am glad that its members have – there will be quite a lot of people in the Synod who know that they have not been consulted and who would value putting in their penn'orth as well before the decision is made. I would therefore prefer, if we are going to pass it, to stay with the (c) of the motion rather than the prescription in the amendment.

*Mr Barry Barnes (Southwark):* On a point of order, Mr Chairman. I beg to move:

‘That the question be now put.’

*This motion was put and carried.*

*The amendment was put and lost.*

*The Chairman* imposed a speech limit of two minutes.

*The Dean of Gloucester (Very Revd Nick Bury):* I just want the Archdeacon to make it clear exactly what would be the consequence of electronic voting because if it means that Ingrid Slaughter will not shout 'Divide!' I shall vote against this. (*Laughter*) If, however, through some cunning electronic device, we can record her voice for evermore,

so that before we press our little buttons we can have that wonderful sound, I shall vote for it.

*Revd Canon Paul Nener (Liverpool):* On a point of order, Mr Chairman. We have not responded to the Archdeacon's request that we might divide the motion, and I get the feeling that some people would be in favour of doing that.

*The Chairman:* We have not quite got that far yet, but as we will move to the vote immediately after the Archdeacon has replied, I could perhaps say that it certainly has my consent that the text be divided and I shall explain how that will work, provided that Synod is content. Is Synod content? (*Agreed*)

*The Archdeacon of Malmesbury,* in reply: I would like to thank all who have contributed to the debate. I would just say in passing that dialogue with each other – Bishop of Birmingham – space for listening to God – my brother archdeacon – and the issues of disability will be noted. The disability issue is under way with the refurbishment of Church House at Westminster: a large number of the concerns will be met in that, and we are in detailed discussion with the University of York over improving the situation here. So thank you for those comments. They have not been lost.

Under amendments, I did not hear anyone actually arguing strongly against what is being proposed, and relatively little was said about the amendments except for some dissatisfaction with the present practice.

In terms of speech limits, there is a very popular perception that a few people speak a lot. In fact, the statistics show otherwise. Statistics are being kept, and have been kept for a length of time, so that chairmen may know who has spoken and who has not. The statistics show a wide number of people and surprisingly few speaking on many occasions. So the reality as recorded does not match with the popular perception, although we want to do something about that. As for the better or more able being called first, my experience of Synod is that sometimes it has been the other way round.

Speech limits: again, on the whole, a much more varied situation but we shall look forward to seeing what the straw poll gives us.

On electronic voting I was surprised and gratified that there was such a strong emphasis in favour. I appreciate that the technical solutions are in the report, but if we had not put them there members would have spent the whole evening asking questions about them, and we wanted to assure members that that had been dealt with. Someone said that the sense of drama would be lost. When the Business Committee actually practised with this, there was no loss of sense of drama; in fact it was quite amazing as some of the results came out and we were turning to ask each other why we had voted that way. (It came up on the screen in our case so we all knew exactly who had voted how.) There was a real sense of drama. So it will not be lost.

A mixed economy is perfectly feasible if that is what we decide as a General Synod to do. It would be feasible in certain cases just to have a show of hands and if, like this evening, with many votes, it is quite evident what the vote is, then fine; if it is close we immediately go to an electronic vote and we get a clear result. So a mixed economy is still a possibility, if you want it. Remember it is what you as a General Synod feel to be right, but you need to have the detail brought back to do.

I want to stress paragraph 17 of the report: the cost will be met by the Corporation of the Church House and not by the General Synod. The Corporation believes that if it were put in, it would add to the commercial viability and attractiveness of the premises; the system that is under consideration is used in major AGMs of large plcs and has been heavily road-tested in a whole range of situations where people are much more likely to want to fiddle the books than any member of General Synod would ever wish to do. We would rent it from the Church House Corporation when we wished to use it. So can we just be clear about that? Any suggestion that the Church of England is going to spend a quarter of a million pounds putting the system in is just not true. The system, by the way, will be adaptable, so it can be brought to York and used here as well when we are here.

You have expressed views. I hope that most of you have taken the opportunity to listen carefully. The Business Committee and the Standing Orders Committee value hearing what you have said. It has been recorded and it has been noted. However, we need to know what steer you wish to give us. It is your decision and we look forward to knowing what it is.

*Part A of the motion was put and carried in the following form:*

‘That this Synod invite the Standing Orders Committee, in consultation with the Business Committee, to

- (a) introduce amendments to the Standing Orders and the Constitution to permit votes to be recorded electronically.’

*Part B of the motion was put and carried in the following form:*

‘That this Synod invite the Standing Orders Committee, in consultation with the Business Committee, to

- (b) consider reducing the time normally allowed for speeches under SO 21.’

*Part C of the motion was put and carried in the following form:*

‘That this Synod invite the Standing Orders Committee, in consultation with the Business Committee, to

- (c) consider ways in which downward pressure can be applied in relation to the number of amendments tabled for debate.’

*The Chairman:* That completes the business of that item. I regret that time has not been found for the following motion.

### **Appointment of Chairs of the Appointments, Business and Audit Committees (GS 1551)**

*The Archbishop of York (Dr David Hope):* I beg to move:

‘That Prebendary David Houlding be appointed as chair of the Appointments Committee for a period expiring on 31 December 2005.’

With your permission, Chairman, I will speak to this item and the following two together.

It will not be immediately obvious from the slate of appointments before Synod but we have recently suffered an outbreak of what might be termed ‘Perhamitis’. The appointment of Michael Perham to the see of Gloucester has caused a rash of other appointments. I draw the attention of members of Synod to GS 1551.

There will be an air of familiarity about the first of these appointments. Synod confirmed the appointment of Prebendary David Houlding as chair of the Appointments Committee at the February group of sessions this year. However, as a result of the appointment of the new Bishop of Gloucester, a vacancy occurred among the elected clergy membership of the Archbishops’ Council and Prebendary Houlding was elected to fill that vacancy in March. One of the most frequently explored byways in the National Institutions Measure 1998, section 11, subsection (1), provides that, when a person is a member of one of a list of bodies, he or she ceases to be so if elected to another body on that list. The Archbishops’ Council and the Appointments Committee are both on that list. So just 15 days after Synod had made David Houlding chair of the Appointments Committee, he ceased to be a member of that Committee, having been elected to Archbishops’ Council.

However, brothers and sisters, there is a happy ending to this sorry tale! For salvation is to be found – I did not know all this, but I am told – in SO 116(a)(i), which enables the Archbishops, after consulting the Council, to reappoint Prebendary Houlding as chair of the Appointments Committee. That we wish to do. The Council have given their support. I shall not repeat all the things said about David Houlding in February but simply hope and pray that Synod will give its agreement also.

In addition to being a member of Archbishops’ Council, Michael Perham was also chair of the Business Committee. His appointment as bishop means that we have a vacancy for the chair of that Committee, and this appointment has to be filled from the six

elected members of Archbishops' Council. Following consultation with the Council and the Appointments Committee, the Archbishop of Canterbury and I wish to request the Synod to confirm the appointment of Revd Dr Richard Turnbull as chair of the Business Committee. He has already served the Church in a number of different roles, including as diocesan chair of clergy, chair of the clergy stipends review, a member of DRACS and chair of the synodical steering committee on the Pensions Measure. He has been a member of the General Synod since 1995 and we believe that he is the right person to take on this challenging and important role.

The Bishop of Gloucester will be relieved to hear that I have no intention of blaming him for the third vacancy that the Synod is being asked to confirm an appointment to fill this evening. The vacancy as chair of the Audit Committee of the Archbishops' Council arises through no fault of his but following the retirement of the previous chair, Mr Ian McNeil. Mr Tony Hesselwood will be known to some members of the Synod from his previous membership of Synod from 1995; I understand that he is in the public gallery this evening. Mr Hesselwood has been chair of Bradford DBF since 1982, has been treasurer of his PCC since before he was old enough to be a member of it, has had a lifelong involvement with the Scouting movement and has been accountant for Scargill House for many years. He was, as I say, a member of Synod from 1995 to 2000; he has served as vice-chair of the Audit Committee since 1999; and his appointment as chair for an initial period of five years would provide some valuable continuity on the Committee. Again following consultation with the Archbishops' Council and the Appointments Committee, the Archbishop of Canterbury and I are very happy to commend his appointment to the Synod.

*The motion was put and carried.*

*The Archbishop of York:* I beg to move:

‘That Revd Dr Richard Turnbull be appointed as chair of the Business Committee for a period expiring on 11 December 2005.’

*The motion was put and carried.*

*The Archbishop of York:* I beg to move:

‘That Mr Tony Hesselwood be appointed as chair of the Audit Committee of the Archbishops' Council for a period expiring on 31 July 2009.’

*The motion was put and carried.*

*The Session was adjourned at 10.14 p.m.*