

Briefing Note



Diocese of Toronto
Anglican Church of Canada

The Incorporated Synod
of the Diocese of Toronto

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To: Members of Synod
From: The Ven. Elizabeth J. Hardy
CAO & Secretary of Synod
Date: March 4, 2015
Re: **Proposed Changes to Synod Composition**

In 2012 the Diocesan Council set up a Working Group with membership drawn from all the Episcopal Areas. The group's mandate was to review and recommend any required changes regarding the composition and structure of Synod. The review was in response to comments made by many Synod members in recent years and to the challenges encountered by the Agenda Committee and others in planning for Synod meetings.

In Acts 15 we hear about the apostles and elders meeting together in the Council of Jerusalem to discern the Spirit's leading for the future shape of the Church. Our synodical gatherings follow in this tradition as we gather together as the people of God seeking God's will for our diocese. Since the nineteenth century, Anglican synods have included representatives of both the laity and clergy meeting with the diocesan bishop. They are opportunities to seek the *sensus fidei*, that is the mind of Christ as expressed in the community of the faithful. With that in mind, it is critical that synods be organized in such a way that there is plenty of opportunity for the members to listen for the Spirit's leading through prayer, worship, the reading of Scripture, study, and discussion so that decisions that are taken for the life of the diocese truly reflect the will of God. Due to the present size of Synod (in excess of 1,100 people) this has become a challenge. As the Working Group reviewed the present situation and thought about possible changes, their great desire was to ensure Synod was both representative of the community of the Church in the diocese while making sure that it was of such a size that members could truly participate in the decision making process.

In consultation with Diocesan Council the Working Group developed certain guiding principles. The group believed that it was important that each parish be represented with a lay and clerical voice in the councils of the Diocese. It further understood that Synod needs to be structured in such a way as to perform effectively, economically, and efficiently. It also came to understand that Synod has four different purposes (complying with legal and statutory requirements, electing bishops, making policy, communicating and implementing the ministry of the Diocese) and that Synod could perform these tasks more effectively by being tailored to meet these specific purposes.

After many months of work, recommendations were made by the group to Diocesan Council which after much discussion accepted the recommendations and referred them to the wider diocese for discussion at Town Hall meetings to be held in the various Episcopal Areas.

The suggested reforms are as follows:

- The number of Lay Members of Synod from each parish will be determined by the Average Sunday Attendance: one member for attendance of 1-249, a further member for attendance of 250-499, a further member for attendance of 500 and above.
- At regular meetings of Synod each parish will be entitled to send one cleric.
- Sixteen youth members will be chosen, four from each of the Episcopal Areas.
- The Community of Deacons in the diocese will be represented by four members (one per Area), Chaplains by four members (one per Area), and Religious Communities by one member.
- As in all other Canadian dioceses, retired clergy would not have a vote.

As a result of these reforms, it is estimated that the total number of voting and non-voting members at a regular session of Synod will decrease from 1,131 to 495. (Please note that of the 1,131 voting and non-voting members eligible to attend Synod, between 450 and 700 actually exercise their prerogative to attend now.)

Regular Sessions of Synod will be held every other year, as is our current practice, and will begin mid-day on a Friday with the Eucharist and Bishop's Charge continuing with the business of Synod until later Saturday afternoon. With this change, the Synod will be able to conduct all its business with the cost of only one over-night stay and will decrease the need for lay members to take time off work.

For electoral Synods, where voting is done by houses (the house of laity, and the house of clergy), lay representation will be according to the formula for regular sessions of Synod. However, all active clergy, canonically resident in the Diocese and holding the Bishop's Licence for a regular parochial or missionary charge, will be able to attend and vote.

It is further recommended that Synod Forum Days be held, if needed, to allow for wider and more in depth discussion of significant issues coming before Synod. These Forum Days while not legislative would be part of the synodical process, being held in each Episcopal Area, and chaired by the Bishop or his or her designate. Results of these Forums including any memorials, petitions and intentions would be fed into the next Regular Session of Synod. These Forum Days would be open to both regular lay and clerical members of Synod and other interested members of the diocese.

As a result of these proposed reforms, synod members would be able to engage more directly in the work of Synod. The reduced size and shortened length of a regular session of Synod allow for major cost savings for the parishes and the diocese and allow for a broader choice of venues across the diocese. The new schedule will also allow for greater lay attendance from a wider variety of people. The tailoring of Synod to meet its various purposes allows for flexibility so that major issues and decisions can be considered in depth and a wide variety of people be involved in the decision making process.

Prepared by:
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Chair of the Working Group on Synod