

General Synod – Canon Concerning Confirmation 1992 Adopting Ordinance 1998

Explanatory Statement

1. The Canon Concerning Confirmation 1992 (the "Canon") repeals old canon law concerning confirmation and substitutes new rules in its place. The text of the Canon is set out in the schedule to the bill. Under section 30 of the Constitution of the Anglican Church of Australia (published on pages 122 to 151 inclusive of *The Seventh Handbook*) the Canon will not have effect in Sydney until the Synod adopts it by ordinance.
2. The Canon was originally passed by the General Synod as a provisional canon and was referred to dioceses for their consideration. In 1997 our Standing Committee appointed a committee (the "Committee") to recommend a response to the provisional canon. The report of the Committee, which was adopted by the Synod, is published on pages 364 to 385 inclusive of the 1998 Yearbook. The Committee did not recommend any changes to the provisional canon and, earlier this year, the General Synod passed the provisional canon with only minor amendments.
3. By section 2 of the Canon, the bishop of a diocese must personally, or by a bishop authorised by him, confirm throughout his diocese as often and in as many places as convenient, laying his hands upon those who have been baptised and instructed in the Christian faith and life as set forth in the Scriptures and in the Catechism and praying over them.
4. By section 3 of the Canon, every minister who has a cure of souls shall encourage those baptised as infants to affirm the Christian faith for themselves and to present for confirmation.
5. By section 4 of the Canon, every minister who has a cure of souls must instruct or cause to be instructed all who wish to be confirmed in the Christian faith as set forth in the scriptures and in the Catechism.
6. By section 5 of the Canon, a minister normally must present to the bishop only those who have come to years of discretion and who are ready to make public affirmation of their commitment to our Lord Jesus Christ and who can render an appropriate account to the faith and life expected of a Christian.
7. By section 6 of the Canon, the canons numbered 60 and 61 of the Canons of 1603, in so far as they may have any force, will have no operation in Sydney if the Canon is adopted. The text of those canons is as follows -

60. Confirmation to be performed once in three Years

Forasmuch as it hath been a solemn, ancient, and laudable custom in the Church of God, continued from the apostles' times, that all bishops should lay their hands upon children baptized and instructed in the Catechism of Christian Religion, praying over them, and blessing them, which we commonly call Confirmation; and that this holy action hath been accustomed in the Church in former ages, to be performed in the bishop's visitation every third year; we will and appoint, That every bishop or his suffragan, in his accustomed visitation, do in his own person carefully observe the said custom. And if in that year, by reason of some infirmity, he be not able personally to visit, then he shall not omit the execution of that duty of confirmation the next year after, as he may conveniently.

61. Ministers to prepare Children for Confirmation

Every minister, that hath cure and charge of souls, for the better accomplishing of the orders prescribed in the Book of Common Prayer concerning confirmation, shall take especial care that none shall be presented to the bishop for him to lay his hands upon, but such as can render an account of their faith according to the Catechism in the said book contained. And when the bishop shall assign any time for the performance of that part of this duty, every such minister shall use his best endeavour to prepare and make able, and likewise to procure as many as he can to be then brought, and by the bishop to be confirmed.

Recommendation

8. The Standing Committee recommends that the Synod pass the bill as an ordinance.

For and on behalf of the Standing Committee

MARK PAYNE
Diocesan Secretary

14 August 1998