

28/94 Funding for Growth - 2001

(A report from the Standing Committee.)

Synod Resolution 28/94

1. Resolution 28/94 is as follows -

This Synod, noting the point the President made in his address "Funding for Growth - 2001", asks Standing Committee to -

- (a) investigate what changes to ordinances, if any, are necessary to require an Architectural Panel to consider the availability of suitable alternative buildings within a reasonable distance of a proposed building site prior to giving approval for new construction or extension of existing church buildings;
- (b) develop a coherent policy regarding the extension of parish facilities in areas which could reasonably be considered as "developed" from a diocesan point of view;
- (c) determine how much funding could reasonably be released to Vision 2001 as a result of a modest rationalisation of resources in areas of the Diocese where, as a result of historical factors we now find an oversupply of under-utilised church trust property;
- (d) report these findings to the next ordinary session of this Synod.

Architectural Panels

2. At no time in the past, have Architectural Panels been required to take into account the availability of suitable alternative buildings within a reasonable distance of a proposed building site prior to approving plans for a new church, hall or rectory, or plans for extensions to buildings of those types. Their role has been simply to approve unconditionally or subject to conditions, or reject applications made to them.

3. There are at least two matters to be considered by the resolution. First, whether the present buildings within a parish are considered suitable. Secondly, if they are not, whether there are suitable buildings within a reasonable distance in an adjoining parish.

4. The first is primarily a matter for the parish concerned. If in the exercise of their ministry, the parish authorities come to the view that the existing church plant needs extending or rebuilding, then they are expected to follow the procedures outlined in the relevant sections of the *7th Handbook* (see pp 69-88).

5. Secondly, joining with other parishes having suitable buildings to allow the use of common facilities within a reasonable distance is a matter of consultation and co-operation between the parish authorities. Items to be considered here will include the suitability of using another church's premises for particular activities, the identity of each church, the financial arrangements, the availability of suitable premises, the compatibility of ministers and congregations, and the ongoing nature of any arrangement after the departure of a particular minister. The minister has control over the use of the church and the minister and churchwardens acting together have control over the hall.

6. At present, the Area Archdeacon is the person who has a knowledge of the region's strategic plans for church development, chairs the regional Architectural Panel and acts as a diocesan focal point for the practical side of ministry, including buildings.

7. An application to an architectural panel for the approval of plans could be used as an opportunity for a proposal for the amalgamation of parishes, but the Synod would need to recognise that possible expanded role by amending, for example, the Church Grounds and Buildings Ordinance 1990 and/or the Parishes Ordinance 1979.

Extension of Parish Facilities in Developed Areas

9. The term "developed" could be taken to imply that ministry in such an area has become a matter of maintaining what presently exists. Current diocesan thinking from the Archbishop and other quarters is emphasising the need to move from a "maintenance" mode to a "mission" mode. This means that all existing parishes should be going for growth in all areas of evangelism and nurture, and additional plant to facilitate this growth may well be required.

10. The Synod already has a coherent policy for the "extension of parish facilities" in "developed areas". That basic policy is in clause 5 of the Church Grounds and Buildings Ordinance 1990 and involves -

- (a) the parish council;
- (b) the minister;
- (c) the preparation of plans to a certain standard;

- (d) the approval of those plans by the Archbishop or an Assistant Bishop on the recommendation of an architectural panel; and
- (e) evidence that arrangements will be made for the proper and adequate supervision of the proposed works.

11. Criteria for buildings are found in the Parishes Ordinance 1979, the Presentation and Exchange Ordinance 1988 and in guidelines prepared by the Architectural Panels jointly.

Funding for Vision 2001

12. In the early years of Vision for Growth, the income from sale of churches was significant. In recent times, however, little has gone to Vision 2001 from this particular source.

13. There may be areas of the Diocese where there are under-utilised Anglican churches. But the rationalisation of this situation through the amalgamation of parishes and the wider sharing of resources is difficult to achieve. There are 3 major factors involved.

- (a) Sometimes parishioners oppose change, especially when it involves the closure of their church. The notion of "parish rights" is no myth.
- (b) Minister's freehold can be a barrier if the rector, himself, is opposed to the particular change envisaged.
- (c) Often there is local need for significant funds from any sale of surplus property after an amalgamation and the wider distribution of funds is reduced or non-existent.

14. Often it is not possible to estimate what a property is worth until the alternative uses are investigated, and there is little point in investigating alternative uses if a property is in a reasonable position and is a going concern.

15. Most church land is shown in church financial statements at the latest Valuer General's valuation, and buildings are shown at insurance value. This is not a good indication of what a property might bring on sale. An investigation of each property, its zoning and its possible alternative uses, would be required and the consultants' costs for this would be prohibitive unless they could be charged against the sale of the property.

For and on behalf of the Standing Committee

GEOFFREY HUARD
Archdeacon of Georges River

16 May 1995