

## RECENT LEGISLATIVE DEVELOPMENTS

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At the February 1992 Sessions of the General Synod final approval was given to the Incumbents (Vacation of Benefices) (Amendment) Measure (see 1992 Ecc. L.J. 315). The Measure now awaits consideration by Parliament.

The final drafting stage of the Women Priests legislation was also dealt with in February and the main Measure and the two Canons now stand referred to the House of Bishops in accordance with the Synod's Constitution.

General approval was given to the Team and Group Ministries Measure and this is now committed to a Revision Committee for amendment. The main provisions of the legislation are to give additional rights to team vicars especially where they have been given a special cure of souls in respect of a parish in the team. For example, they would act as chairman of the parochial church council of their parish rather than the team rector and, where they occupy a parsonage house or team house, they would be consulted regarding proposals for altering or disposing of the house.

The Measure would also abolish the freehold office of a team rector and make this an office to be held for a "specified term of years". This phrase is defined in the Measure as a term specified in the pastoral scheme or, where not specified, a term for seven years. A deacon who is licensed to serve as a member of the team with authority (so far as consistent with the office of deacon) to perform the offices and services that an incumbent may perform, would also in future serve for a specified term of years. The Measure would also make it possible for a member of a team other than the team rector or a team vicar to be given special responsibility for pastoral care of part of the benefice so far as consistent with that member's office.

The Measure also gives power to the General Synod to make provision by Canon for the bishop's licence granted to a deaconess, licensed lay worker or reader to be for a fixed term subject to a right of summary revocation. Draft Amending Canon No 16 which was also given general approval at the February Sessions contains the necessary provisions in respect of this. The draft Canon will be considered for amendment by the same Revision Committee as the draft Measure.