

National Conference of Priests of England & Wales Conference 2003

Motions Passed By Conference

A key part of the NCP structure is discussion of “Areas For Exploration” sent in by priests from around the country or raised by individual representatives. On the basis of this exploratory phase, motions are then drawn up for debate in plenary session. The following motions were adopted as conference policy (having attained the requisite backing of two-thirds of representatives present):

1. Conference resolves that in considering diocesan and parish re-organisation, in the light of falling clergy numbers, and to prevent priests labouring under intolerable burdens, the time for kindly reassurance has passed, and the time has come for grasping nettles. This task belongs to the whole people of God, but the leadership must come from our bishops.
For: 73% Against: 0% Abstained: 27%
2. In order that there be opportunities for lay people to fulfil their vocation in the service of the Church, structures should be more widely developed for which there would be appropriate training and funding.
For: 93% Against: 0% Abstained: 7%
3. Conference recommends to the Bishops’ Conference that they set up a working-party with a view to establishing a residential therapeutic centre specifically for the care of priests who are undergoing emotional breakdown.
For: 78% Against: 7% Abstained: 16%
4. This conference wishes to express its gratitude and enthusiasm for the work of the National Office for Vocation. We pledge our continued support at every level for this work. We particularly wish to encourage the link with the Catholic Agency for Evangelisation, as we see the priority of evangelisation as providing an underlying context for a culture of vocation.
For: 100% Against: 0% Abstained: 0%
5. This conference urges the Episcopal conference of England & Wales to submit their child protection protocols for the ‘*recognitio*’ of the Holy See, in order that the procedures may be canonically binding upon every bishop and diocese in England & Wales.
For: 100% Against: 0% Abstained: 0%
6. This conference asks that due canonical process be observed before any priest is placed on administrative leave.
For: 96% Against: 0% Abstained: 3%

7. We the National Conference of Priests, deplore the way many asylum seekers are currently being treated. Under Section 55 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act, 2002, the Government refuses support to applicants who do not claim asylum at the port of entry if it believes their applications have been delayed unreasonably. It is clear, however, that the Government is refusing support to many people who applied even hours after entry. Consequently they are refused food and shelter. We believe that Section 55 of the Act is being interpreted so strictly and therefore request the Home Secretary to suspend its operation as a matter of the greatest urgency.

For: 90% Against: 0% Abstained: 10%

8. This Conference asks the Department of Catholic Education and Formation to consider urgently the appointment of an adequately resourced national coordinator for the ongoing formation of priests.

For: 88% Against: 2% Abstained: 10%

9. This Conference for a second time brings to the urgent attention of Bishops' Conference the question of pensions and the resolution of Conference 2002:

Conference welcomes and accepts the presentation-report of the joint NCP/Financial Secretaries' Committee (established by the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England & Wales) and:

- *urges that the hierarchy as a whole view the presentation so as to inform themselves of the overall picture;*
- *notes that most disbursements to help retired priests are ex caritate and not ex justitiae;*
- *notes that individual priests also must take responsibility for some of the financial provision for their old age, and in their will should be urged to remember those still labouring in the vineyard;*
- *notes that constraints of critical mass mean excessive fees are paid to Fund Managers;*
- *resolves that, to assist the retirement years of younger clergy, a National Stakeholder Pension Fund (or similar) be set up using tax benefits from the Government, together with contributions from the diocese, the parish and the individual priest, and that this should be a "stand-alone" provision for the individual;*
- *resolves that the Bishops' Conference should further mandate the same joint committee to do a survey of salaries of clergy and to report to conference next year.*

For: 96% Against: 0% Abstained: 4%