

EXPLANATORY NOTE

This motion seeks to do two main things:

- a) Formally pause the process of seeking a new permanent Bishop of Bangor, following the decision of the Electoral College in October not to proceed with the shortlisting of candidates, whilst ensuring that when the process of seeking a new permanent Bishop of Bangor restarts it is the Electoral College empowered to appoint the new Bishop, not the Bench of Bishops (Clause 1 a-b);
- b) Ensure that an interim leader for the Diocese holds the necessary appointments and offices to lead the Diocese and represent the Diocese's interests in provincial governance (Clauses 1 c-d and 2)

Clause 1 a-b

Ordinarily a Bishop's Electoral College is required to meet within either two or three months of a See becoming vacant (depending on what, if any, notice of resignation was given by the departing Bishop). Under Regulation 16.3 of Chapter V (Regulations) of the Constitution, Standing Committee may extend this deadline, but not beyond six months of the See becoming vacant due to Regulation 24. At that point, the right to appoint the next Bishop of Bangor lapses to the Bench of Bishops. There is nothing in the Constitution setting out the speed at which the Bishops must act to make such an appointment.

The previous Bishop of Bangor retired on 31 August 2025. As things currently stand, (assuming that the current Electoral College does not elect a new Bishop before 28 February) the Bench of Bishops will assume the right to appoint the next Bishop of Bangor as of 1 March 2026. The Bench could hold the appointment vacant for an indefinite period if they so choose.

Clauses 1 (a) and (b) have the effect of automatically restarting the election process on or before 1 January 2028 (preventing the vacancy being continued indefinitely) and convening a new Electoral College to elect the new permanent Bishop at that point. There have recently been new elections to the Electoral College; the drafting at clause 1 (b) confirms that it is the newly-elected Electoral College that will convene.

Clause 1 c-d

Where there is a vacancy in a Diocesan See, the Archbishop is empowered as Guardian of the Spiritualities to make provision for the administration of the vacant Diocese and the exercise of the cure of souls within it. Traditionally this is primarily exercised through the appointment of one or more commissaries of the Archbishop, who administer the Diocese in the name and on behalf of the Bishop until the new Diocesan Bishop takes up their role. In most recent vacancies the task has been performed by the Archdeacons of the Diocese, in addition to their ordinary duties.

The Archbishop has indicated her view that the needs of the Diocese of Bangor are best served by the appointment of an experienced Bishop as a Commissary. The Archbishop is entitled to do this without involving the Governing Body. However, clause 1 d would give permission for that person to be styled 'Interim Bishop of Bangor'. To receive this title, the person would need to previously have been consecrated to the Episcopate.

The role of an Archbishop's Commissary automatically lapses when a new (permanent) Diocesan Bishop takes office, which is legally at the Sacred Synod to confirm the election/appointment. Clause 1 d explains that the title of Interim Bishop and the Archbishop's power to bestow the title lapses on the same day.

Clause 2

If the Archbishop were to bestow the title Interim Bishop of Bangor on a commissary, clause 2 sets out some further provisions.

Clause 2 a would entitle the Interim Bishop to be, for example, an ex-officio trustee of the Bangor Diocesan Board of Finance, and other diocesan charities.

Clause 2 b makes them a member of the Order of Clergy of the Governing Body (as is the case with full-time Assistant Bishops, such as the last two Assistant Bishops in the Diocese of Bangor).¹

Clause 2 b also reserves to the Archbishop certain rights relating to the Courts and Tribunals of the Church in Wales. Rights of appointment of the Diocesan Chancellor and Registrar would remain with the Archbishop, as would the power to refer individuals to the Disciplinary Tribunal (although this could be exercised by the Archbishop at the request of the Interim Bishop).

Clause 2 c enables the Representative Body to pay a stipend to the Interim Bishop (which would be an Assistant Bishop's stipend rather than a Diocesan Bishop's stipend).

Clauses 2 d and e place some further limits on the Interim Bishop's powers, distinguishing them from a permanent Diocesan Bishop. They would not be an ex officio member of the Electoral College and would not be a member of the Provincial Synod of Bishops or Bench of Bishops [2].

[1] This clause also means that the Interim Bishop would not be an ex-officio member of the Standing Committee. However, Standing Committee currently has a vacancy for a co-opted member, and the Standing Committee could therefore if it wished co-opt the Interim Bishop to the Committee.

[2] The recent practice of the Bench of Bishops has been to invite full-time Assistant Bishops to attend their meetings in a non-voting capacity. It is anticipated that the same would apply to the Interim Bishop.