

PROCESS FOR APPROVING NEW LITURGY OR AMENDING EXISTING LITURGY

Canon 22 of the Code of Canons sets out the process for formal adoption of new authorised liturgies within the Scottish Episcopal Church. (The process also applies to alterations to any existing liturgy.)

The process is a similar one to that for the adoption of new canons, or the alteration of existing canons. It involves a "first reading" at a meeting of General Synod, followed by consultation with Diocesan Synods and then a "second reading" by General Synod the following year.

At first reading stage, voting is in the separate houses of General Synod (bishops, clergy and laity) and the proposal must achieve a simple majority of those present and voting. If the first reading is approved, the material is passed to Diocesan Synods. The role of the Diocesan Synods is to consider the proposed alteration and, if the Diocesan Synod so wishes, to express an "opinion" on the proposed alteration to the General Synod. A second reading then takes place at a subsequent meeting of General Synod which must consider any opinions received from Diocesan Synods. At second reading stage, voting is again in houses but a majority of at least two thirds must be achieved in each house.

At second reading stage at General Synod, further amendments can be put forward but only if they substantially reflect an opinion communicated by a Diocesan Synod (Canons 22.2 and 52.17). That means that if a Diocesan Synod wishes to express an opinion, it would be important to ensure that it is clearly expressed as such. For example, a comment made at a Diocesan Synod by just one individual would not constitute the opinion of that Synod unless the Synod as a whole had voted to approve such a comment. Consequently, if a Diocesan Synod wishes to suggest changes to the liturgical material, it should make it clear what the specific change is which it wishes to propose and should vote on the matter within the Diocesan Synod meeting, so that it is clear that the proposal has the backing of the Synod. In order to allow informed debate of any proposed amendment at Diocesan Synod, Dioceses might wish to encourage their Synod members, within the scope of any applicable rules of order, to provide advance notice of any such proposal. Any motion being proposed for Diocesan Synod would need to comply with Resolution 3 under Canon 50.

Any opinions expressed by Diocesan Synods will also be considered by the provincial Faith and Order Board in advance of second reading stage at General Synod.

John F Stuart
Secretary General
November 2021