

16 June 1997

Dear Prime Minister

See of Liverpool

Following the resignation of the Right Reverend David Sheppard, this vacancy in See was considered by the Crown Appointments Commission at a meeting on 5/6 June. The Commission elected for your consideration the two names of the Venerable George Cassidy, Archdeacon of London and Canon Residentiary of St Paul's Cathedral London and the Right Reverend Gavin Reid, Bishop of Maidstone in the Diocese of Canterbury.

George Cassidy is 54. Having read for his first degree at Queen's University, Belfast he took an M.Phil. at University College, London. He was initially employed as a civil servant in Northern Ireland then spent two years in Kenya as a town planner. He trained for the Ministry at Oak Hill and began his ministry in Bristol Diocese with a curacy in Clifton, followed by an incumbency in Bristol. In 1982 he became Vicar of St Paul's, Portman Square and was appointed to his present post ten years ago.

George Cassidy was well regarded as a parish priest and people liked his warmth and encouragement. He proved a good administrator and was not afraid to take initiatives. With his qualification and experience as a town planner and in his interest in financial matters, he brought unusually broad and relevant experience to the Archdeaconry of London. He has the considerable mastery of detail that the City Churches continuously demand and a good style and sense managerially. He is known and liked by distinguished figures in the City. He also makes an important and well regarded contribution to the Chapter at St Paul's.

George stands in a traditional evangelical context, with a concern for orthodoxy but an openness to other Anglican traditions. He has a keen and critical mind and his interests are by no means confined to the Church and its immediate concerns. He reads widely and keeps up his theological and biblical study. He accepts the ordination of women, albeit without great enthusiasm, yet has always been affirming and encouraging of women's ministry in general.

The Bishop of London warmly commends George Cassidy for his very real achievements and loyal contribution and confirms that he is able to work with all churchmanship traditions in the Church of England. He envisages that his gifts could be very useful indeed at the present juncture in the life of one or other of our great cities.

George Cassidy is married and has two grown up daughters. His wife is a trained school nurse. They are a most hospitable and kind couple, very welcoming in their home to a wide range of people.

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Gavin Reid is 63. He was educated at London University and trained for the ministry at Oak Hill. After curacies in East Ham and Rainham, Essex, he was appointed Publications Secretary for the Church Pastoral Aid Society in 1966. After some years there and then a period working for the United Society for Christian Literature, he returned to CPAS as Director of Evangelism, a post he held until 1990. As part of that task he played a key role in the Billy Graham Missions of the 1980s. From 1990 he was seconded to advise the Board of Mission on the Decade of Evangelism, until his present appointment as Bishop of Maidstone in 1992. His most recent contribution to the wider Church is his chairmanship of The Archbishops' Advisory Group on the Millennium.

Gavin Reid's great strength is as an inspirer and he is something of a visionary. In his publications he shows himself to be a man of ideas and a first class thinker. He has considerable gifts as a communicator, whether that be as a speaker at public conventions, as a debater in General Synod or in the media. His evangelical work has taken him all over the country, giving him a feel for parish life which has stood him in good stead as a Bishop even though his direct parochial experience is limited.

Before becoming a Bishop he was known and respected as an uncompromising, open evangelical. He has nevertheless been able to minister to all without in any way denying his roots; though not all those from other traditions have found it easy to relate to his views. But all would acknowledge that he is an enthusiast for the Gospel, a godly priest, and an outstanding national figure in evangelism. He relates well to leaders of the community in Kent and is valued, for example, by the King's School in Canterbury.

Bishop Reid is married and has three grown up children. His wife, Mary, is a teacher and has taught in primary schools with children with special needs. She also has experience as a magazine editor. She is a strong supporter of her husband's ministry.

The Crown Appointments Commission did not express a clear preference for either candidate, the voting being seven votes to Gavin Reid and five to George Cassidy.

I believe the fact that the Commission did not in the end express a clear preference for either candidate is an indication that whilst the name of Gavin Reid gained considerable support at an early stage, by the end of the meeting this support was manifestly not as clear as it had been.

It was quite clear that the diocesan representatives were very definitely pressing for his name, and it would be only right for me to add also that the Archbishop of Canterbury was similarly supportive.

However, the Commission as a whole was less persuaded, both on the grounds of age as well as and perhaps more importantly on the grounds of compatibility, for there seemed to be a number of discrepancies between on the one hand what was written in the Diocesan Statement of Needs together with the Secretaries' Memorandum, in comparison with the information to hand about Bishop Reid.

It would be true to say also that whilst the name of George Cassidy gained the necessary majority as a second name to be placed before you for consideration, and whilst he undoubtedly has the many qualities, recited above, yet quite in spite of these there were as well **misgivings** shared in the Commission about whether his proper archdeaconal qualities really have the capacity to develop more fully into the qualities needed for this particular episcopal ministry.

In differing ways therefore each of the two persons concerned have their comparative strengths and weaknesses, given the profile of the Diocese of Liverpool at this important juncture and in succession to Bishop David Sheppard.

With greetings and all good wishes.

Yours sincerely

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