



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

23rd July 2023

Dear Constance,

RE: BISHOPS IN THE HOUSE OF LORDS

Thank you for your recent correspondence in respect of your concerns about the Lords Spiritual. I have read your comments with interest.

The continuing place of Anglican Bishops in the House of Lords reflects our enduring constitutional arrangement, with an established Church of England and its Supreme Governor as Monarch and Head of State. This relationship between the Crown, Parliament and the Church has evolved over centuries and underpins the fabric of our nation.

The Lords Spiritual bring an important independent voice and spiritual insight to the work of the Upper House and, while they make no claims to direct representation, seek to be a voice for all people of faith, not just Christians. The presence of the Church of England in every community in England gives Bishops personal access to a very wide spread of civil society organisation and experience. Their personal contribution to the work of the House of Lords therefore draws not on partisan policy, but on that direct experience, as well as engagement generally with questions of ethics, morality, and faith.

Although there are 42 dioceses in the present-day Church of England, the number of places for Lords Spiritual is limited to 26 by statute. Of the 26, only five – the Archbishops of Canterbury and York and the Bishops of London, Durham and Winchester – are automatically granted a seat. As you may be aware, Bishops retire from the House of Lords when they leave office as a Bishop, which they are required to do at the age of 70.

Finally, thank you for your invitation to attend the Westminster Hall debate held on the 6th July 2023. Unfortunately, owing to a full diary I was unable to attend, although please rest assured that I will continue to follow the issues raised closely and I recognise your strength of feeling on this issue.

Once again, thank you for having taken the time to contact me and if I can ever be of any further assistance to you then please do not hesitate to contact me again.

With best wishes,

TOM PURSGLOVE MP
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT
CORBY & EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

LISTENING TO YOU - CAMPAIGNING FOR YOU
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