

Report on the February 2017 General Synod from the Members from Salisbury Diocese

It was a strenuous group of sessions. The start of Synod was beset with technical sound problems which made listening difficult. Some thought that this was symbolic of the character and tone of the Group of Sessions while others thought that the tone was unexpectedly constructive and measured.

*Due to the weight of business, the number of important items and our desire to give you a sense of the thing, this Report is longer than usual. We hope it bears reading and that you especially enjoy **Bishop Nick's report and tribute to the Bishop of London on the last page.***

Business Committee Report This Synod 's agenda had to compensate for time spent in July 2016 on Shared Conversations, address the report from The House of Bishops on marriage and human sexuality, debate and approve several pieces of legislation and make room for Private Members Motions which had achieved 100+ supporting signatures. We were encouraged not to let the human sexuality issue overshadow the important debate 'Setting God's People Free' on leadership and laity. That the agenda left little time for more topical issues was robustly but unsuccessfully challenged.

Presidential Address Archbishop Justin began by reminding members that there were many similarities between Synod and political assemblies such as the House of Lords, with opportunities to pass, block or delay business. However, the Church's Synod should be different and be a 'cross shaped' people, which means sometimes enduring hardship and challenges in the character of Christ.

The world was becoming a more unpredictable and challenging place. Through Brexit the UK is being reimagined and it could be a time of liberation and opportunity for the Church of England using its unique position in society. If we are to offer Christ in this turbulent world, it should be in the nature of service, not self-importance or selfish interest. As we look towards Lent, Jesus tells the story of his temptation in Luke 4. In his commentary on this passage, Karl Barth summarises the three temptations as self-indulgence, seeking to rule, and seeking impact through drama or crisis.

There is a huge Christ in Glory tapestry at Coventry Cathedral. A tiny human figure stands between the feet of Christ looking out on to the world and can only see Christ's wounded feet. In the words of the Archbishop:

"We are called to be the people of the cross, to live as those whose only hope is God, closely nestling in the presence of Christ, seeing and loving the world around as Christ does, so that in this time of a choice between national hope and opportunity or threat and fear we may play the part to which we are called in reimagining our country and seizing the best future that lies before us."

Questions During the Questions session there were, perhaps unsurprisingly, a significant number of questions concerning sexuality. Other questions concerned clergy wellbeing, with several querying the absence of any statistics for clergy marital breakdown. Salisbury's Jane Charman asked a question concerning the apprenticeship levy, highlighting that not all dioceses will benefit from this levy so the costs should be borne by the national church rather than dioceses.

Anniversary of the Reformation The Bishop of Coventry opened the debate, reminding Synod that the Papal Preacher, Raniero Cantalamessa, had spoken of the importance of this anniversary at the Inauguration of the Synod in November 2015. Members spoke on ecumenical themes and celebrated the ties that bind and the continuing relevance of the Reformation. Our own Peter Breckwoldt made a maiden speech, highlighting the depth of Christian teaching in the Bible, Luther's treatise on Justification by Faith (salvation is not for sale) and that the Bible came to be translated into the language of the people for the first time.

Address by the Secretary General of the Anglican Communion (AC) The AC consists of 500 dioceses around the world. It developed largely from colonization since the 17th century and missionary work after the 19th century. The present Secretary General, The Most Reverend Josiah Idowu-Fearon, emphasized the Communion's common roots in the Church of England. He rejoiced over the wider Anglican Communion being robust, "filled with God's love, to walk in mission together". In spite of some differences, the AC came to a common mind on many issues. Together we face persecution, political turmoil, instability and violence, but our churches are working together to defeat these. He alluded to the vocation of the C of E with its pastoral and educational care that are gratefully shared around the AC world, all being ingredients that help to win over the whole human family into the family of God.

MARRIAGE AND SAME SEX RELATIONSHIPS

Following comments made during the Business Committee debate about the short time allocated to debate on the Report from the House of Bishops entitled *Marriage and Same Sex Relationships after the Shared Conversations* GS 2055, the original timetable was altered. But there was much to be done before that debate took place.

The first aspect was some preliminary remarks by the Bishop of Norwich, Graham James, as background to the small groups work. Taking his starting point as 1957, the Wolfenden Report and attempts to have homosexuality decriminalized, he charted the history of Church of England reports on issues of sexuality. It was however notable that he referred to some reports omitting any reference to others. (text of address <http://bit.ly/2liIOYY>)

The Bishop of Willesden, Pete Broadbent, spoke next on what he said were 'questions of process'. He started with an apology "to those members of Synod who found our report difficult, who didn't recognise themselves in it, who had expected more from us than we actually delivered, for the tone of the report."

The bishop referred to GS 2055 as a situation report, "an expression of where the House of Bishops thinking has got to". Using case studies had been formative in the bishops' deliberations. He was disappointed that some members of Synod had said they would not be attending the small groups. He also spoke about what he thought it actually meant to 'Take Note' and concluded by speaking about final 'process' questions:

We need to recognise that behind this debate lie several major fault-lines. There is no shared understanding of theological positions between those who see themselves as upholding, from the point of view of scripture, an orthodox position and those who see themselves advocating, from the point of view of scripture, a position of change (text of address <http://bit.ly/2l7phsd>).

Following a shortened lunch break, Synod moved into the second part, the small group work which, under the St Michael's House protocols are not reported. (Some LGBTI and other supportive clergy and lay members of Synod did not attend their Group sessions and met separately with the Archbishop of Canterbury.)

The third aspect was the debate on GS 2055. It began with prayer for Synod members to be led into all truth and grace by the Holy Spirit. The debate was skilfully chaired and a good balance and range of speakers were invited to contribute, a difficult task

given that over 100 members had requested to speak. The atmosphere did allow a sense of being in a safe place and many gave their personal stories. There were many passionate and emotional speeches which were received attentively, respectfully and courteously. The Vote by Houses followed and the announcement that the Motion had been lost was, as is Synod custom, greeted with silence. The numbers were

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| House of Bishops | 43 for 1 against (in error) |
| House of Clergy | 93 for 100 against 2 abs |
| House of Laity | 106 for 83 against 4 abs |
| Total | 242 for 184 against 6 abs |

Speaking immediately afterwards, Archbishop Justin said the vote was "not the end of the story, nor was it intended to be." That same evening, the Archbishops issued a follow-up letter, the text of which can be read at <http://www.anglicannews.org/news/2017/02/archbishops-of-canterbury-and-york-issue-letter-after-synod-vote.aspx>.

SETTING GOD'S PEOPLE FREE

Mark Russell, a lay member of the Archbishop's Council, introduced this report which focuses on lay discipleship and leadership in the Church. There now needs to be a seismic shift in culture to empower the laity in God's mission in every sphere of life. Lay people and clergy are partners in mission. The report is not about 'clergy bashing' but about resourcing clergy to encourage the laity to flourish in their calling and whole life discipleship and allow more influential lay leadership. As a fully functioning body, we cannot afford to fail the 98% who are not ordained. We are so much more than the gathered church and cannot afford to overlook the Christian presence in the workplace and where people are living out their retirement. Being called where they are to use their unique gifts is an equal vocation to any other, often unencumbered by church structures.

The best action plan will change nothing. The laity themselves should start asking 'What can I do to change the culture?' rather than depending on others to come up with the answers. Lay people need to play their part in changing the culture. We should nurture and affirm our current lay leaders within the structures of the Church in order to gain confidence and build up the laity.

All who spoke in the debate fully supported the report although there were murmurings at one point when most people being called to speak (by the lay chair) were clergy! Perhaps the culture is harder to

change than we first thought! Some bishops also spoke and showed a genuine commitment to supporting the proposals made about changing the culture. The Archbishop of York made the point that in Yorkshire people are passionate about talking about the weather. If they could be persuaded to talk about Jesus in the same way then the whole of Yorkshire would be converted! There was a moving speech from a member of Deaf Anglicans who, using sign language, reminded the Archbishop's Council not to overlook providing resources for those lay people with disabilities.

The motion to welcome the report and develop an implementation plan, appoint champions for culture change, set up a national portal for whole life discipleship, set up a learning community of pilot dioceses and look again at clergy training in line with the priority for lay formation, was carried unanimously by Synod. Watch this space!

Banns Preliminaries to Marriage Revd Stephen Trott's Private Member's Motion (which had gathered the requisite 100 signatures) concerned legal preliminaries to a church wedding. It was labelled 'the end of banns as we know it' (sic). He reminded us of the mountain of bureaucracy and that the focus of the ministry should be on marriage and not banns. A lively debate followed with a number of helpful contributions and suggestions such as seeing it as a "Life Event Ministry". There was considerable discussion about the relationship between church and state. A significant amendment to the Motion was resisted and narrowly defeated. The Motion was voted on by houses and defeated in all three.

Fixed Odds Betting Terminals: Reduction of the Minimum Stake This London Diocesan Synod motion calls upon the Government to better control betting terminals. These B2 terminals are 'touch-screen' machines on which you can bet £100 each 2 seconds or, in theory, £18000 an hour. It is estimated that 125,000 problem gamblers use these machines while Ladbrokes gain half their profits from the terminals in their betting shops. They are a real problem in the poorer parts of London: on Newham High St alone there are 16 betting shops, feeding on the poorer members of the community. Harrowing stories were forthcoming from other cities such as Newcastle and Blackburn. The Bishop of St Alban's moved three amendments which made the bill more specific including fixing the upper limit as £2 (down from £100) and these were adopted. The motion, as amended, passed unanimously.

Retirement at 70? The Ecclesiastical Offices (Terms of Service) (Amendment) Regulations 2017 (GS2048)

This legislation concerned those ministers who are required to retire from office at the age of 70. Whilst recognizing that with a fall in minister numbers it will be prudent to make it easier for those who are willing to continue beyond this age, it should not compel those who do not wish to do so. In a full debate contributions touched on: helping clergy and parish to understand the exact position; avoiding burdensome precedents; guidance that will be needed; and requiring a sabbatical before extending ministry. The motion was amended to include consideration of parish or diocesan needs and also to include the consent of the PCC. The motion, as amended, was carried.

Draft Church Representation, Ecumenical Relations and Ministers Measure GS 2046

is designed to give effect to further proposals from the Simplification Task Group. The first Clause and Schedule replace the Church Representation Rules, important stuff for electoral roll officers, churchwardens, PCCs and incumbents. For example, a PCC may amend or replace the Measure's 'model' rules and if a joint council is created in a multi-parish benefice, the individual PCCs will go into abeyance, a less formal and cumbersome way of uniting parishes and without adding an additional layer of governance. But the draft appeared to make the electorate for General Synod diocesan synod members instead of deanery synods members, a matter that had been specifically debated and which Synod voted against in 2013. An *errata* was published after Debbie Mclsaac, a member for Salisbury, pointed out to Synod support that something had gone wrong.

The Draft will now go to a Revision Committee. If you have any comments, contact one of your General Synod representatives who will be able to make submissions. If what is proposed will be a problem for you or could be improved, it may be a problem for many others.

Draft Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction and Care of Churches Measure

This was a Take Note debate about ecclesiastical courts and officers. Specifically it allows Dioceses to continue to manage their own Quinquennial inspections of churches schemes and to amend them as necessary to account for any anomalies. The motion was carried. Final approval of the Measure was given on a Vote by Houses.

The Safeguarding (Clergy Risk Assessment)

Regulations 2016 In summary, these regulations provide that a bishop can require a member of the

clergy to undergo a risk assessment if there is any risk regarding children or vulnerable adults. While the draft was supported in principal, there were concerns that some aspects were unclear or unbalanced. Care needs to be taken throughout the process, careful selection and professionalism of the assessors must be assured and assessor impartiality is essential. A motion to adjourn the debate (which would have meant that a draft could return to Synod) did not succeed. The Archbishop of York and others said that the regulations were needed as soon as possible to remove the current inconsistencies across the dioceses in how assessments are conducted but accepted that a review was needed.

COMPLETED

To robe or not to robe? Vesture Having started life as a PMM in the last Quinquennium, draft Canon No. 36 came to Synod as a final revision. It is a permissive Canon and is not compulsory. PCCs will need to be consulted about dispensing with robes for particular or all services but the PCC will not have a veto. Any lack of agreement will be referred to the bishop. In the case of services such as baptisms and weddings then families would be consulted except where baptisms take place in the usual Sunday parish worship and it had already been locally agreed to dispense with robes for those services. No definition is given in the Canon as to what 'seemly' attire might mean! The point that robes still remain appropriate in most cases was made in the debate. The draft legislation was overwhelmingly passed by Synod.

Burial of the dead Canon 37 now provides that the usual orders of service can be used for the burial of those who have taken their own life or who are known not to have been baptised. There will, however, be no requirement for those clergy who through conscience are unable to conduct those services and they may consult the bishop for an alternative form of words. Synod voted overwhelmingly in favour of this Canon.

Mission and Pastoral (Amendment) Measure

Synod voted in favour final approval of this Measure which had undergone revision since the last debate in February 2015. Office holders displaced by reorganisation will now receive six months warning and twelve months housing and stipend. Overall, the measure seeks to simplify the process of parochial reorganisation by making changes to consultation processes, introducing deanery plans as a step to pastoral reorganisation, and ensuring that Bishops' Pastoral Orders allow for swift changes to parish boundaries and titles.

Legislative Reform Measure The aim of this Measure is to remove or reduce burdens resulting from ecclesiastical legislation, and in the words of Charles George, *ex officio* Dean of the Arches who proposed the motion, 'to render us more fleet of foot'. It provides for certain types of changes to be made in future by Order rather than Measure thus reducing the time and effort involved.

When the Measure had its first reading last July there was justifiable concern that it might remove decision making power from General Synod and concentrate it instead in the hands of the Archbishops' Council. During the revision stage a number of improvements were suggested to safeguard against this possibility. Several of those who had suggested improvements spoke in the debate to say that they were now satisfied and the Measure passed its final reading with the full support of Synod.

FAREWELLS

The First Estates Commissioner Andreas Whittam

Smith CBE Synod gave a hugely warm good-bye to Andreas Whittam Smith who had been Commissioner since 2002. From Keble College Oxford he pursued a career in financial journalism becoming Editor of the *Guardian*, *Daily Telegraph*, and the *Investors' Chronicle*. He was the founder of *The Independent* and President of the British Board of Film Classification, collecting awards for journalism and his philanthropic activities along the way. Our Church has been greatly blessed by his outstanding leadership. He greatly improved the Board of Governors and assets of the Church of England seeing the latter rise from two and a half to nearly eight billion pounds.

After a prolonged standing ovation Sir Andreas offered Synod advice of five tests for successful institutions.

1. Innovation - the C of E is widely dispersed and is perfectly placed to innovate.
2. Funding is needed,
3. Research is essential - *Anecdote to Evidence* moved the C of E forward.
4. More people must be trained and all must be better trained.
5. We need to face up to reality across the Church - and that is what the Reform & Renewal program is all about.

An affectionate farewell to + London, The Rt Revd & Rt Hon Richard Chartres KCVO DD FSA

The first Confirmation taken by +Richard Chartres as Bishop of Stepney in 1992 was on the Isle of Dogs when I was the Vicar. As the senior Suffragan during the last vacancy in London Diocese he put me in as Vicar of St Martin-in-the-Fields in September 1995, two days after it had been announced he would be the next Bishop of London. With very many others I am grateful for our partnership in the Gospel.

This farewell at General Synod was chaired by Aiden Hargreaves-Smith, a layman from London Diocese, who began the proceedings by declaring in a deep resonant voice, "Beloved". Chartres is a big and imitable figure. The Archbishop of Canterbury said that +Richard has been a source of tradition and strength in the Church of England. He has helped all parts of the Church flourish, built cooperation between the different parts of the Church and confidence in the Christian Gospel in a diocese that has experienced Church growth.

+Richard has spoken with authority in the public square, been Chair of the Church Commissioners, is Dean of the Chapels Royal, has significant links with the Orthodox Church and led for the House of Bishops on the environment. Archbishop Justin spoke very personally about +Richard's being a wise advisor particularly to him as a new Archbishop and thanked him for "speaking with friendship and also corrections".

Archbishop Justin acknowledged that +Richard has presence and quoted from The Guardian:

The Bishop in his dressing gown going to the vegetable rack could give the impression of a major ecclesiastical procession.

At the annual HTB focus weeks his exceptionally loud non-episcopal shirts caused much comment. For those unfamiliar, Synod was shown a series of photos to illustrate the range. The Archbishop said on one of these occasions he was standing next to the Bishop of London in the front row. The Archbishop looked up and said, "The music is very loud, especially the drums." The Bishop of London leant down and said, "Carruthers, it's when the drums stop we should be worried."

Caroline Chartres was also warmly thanked for her extraordinary contribution to the Church of England and the Diocese of London. The Archbishop commented on their last Christmas card which showed the family when +Richard was about to become Bishop and now as he is leaving. In addition to everything else they have brought up four marvellous young people.

There was a long standing ovation. Eventually the Bishop of London re-established silence from where he and Caroline sat in the Gallery declaring, "This is not a Soviet-style Party Congress". The Chair asked that there be no more interruptions from the Gallery. There was more to be said but we could not bear it now. With enormous affection, this was the end of a twenty-five year episcopal ministry.

We look forward to +Richard and Caroline's arriving to retirement in Wilton and to +Richard becoming an Assistant Bishop in the Diocese of Salisbury where we hope they will have a long and very happy retirement.

+Nicholas Sarum

Quote of the week

Sir Tony Baldy, former MP and Chair of the Church Buildings Council, now member of the House of Laity, Diocese of Oxford, as part of a Question on Festival Churches

"Candlemas – a sort of Christingle for grown-ups"