

General Synod Report on February 2019 Group of Sessions

As your elected representatives on General Synod, we have a responsibility to report to the members of Diocesan and Deanery Synods and the people of the Diocese. Not everyone will read the few specialist Church publications which report on most items. The national press report on a few items only and, when they do, the reporting is often wrong, or at least incomplete.

We have experimented in the past with putting items in the order in which they came up on the agenda but we suspect the readership Chamber probably cleared when we got to Legislation - and few returned. We also tried dividing the report into the same topics as the all-powerful Business Committee of General Synod uses but it wasn't really fit for the reporting purpose.

In this edition, our editor has tried to group similar items together so you can go straight to:

The State of the Nation - a last minute addition to the Agenda.

Part 1 **Standing Items**, including the Opening Address from the Archbishop of Canterbury

Part 2 **Evangelism**, the theme of this Group of Sessions with no fewer than 5 separate presentations and debates and called on all parishes to participate in *Thy Kingdom Come*

Part 3 **Social Issues** which deal with important questions such as the Homeless, the Environment and Gypsy, Roma and Travellers.

Part 4 **Church issues** which in this Group of Sessions raised some questions about church polity and relationships

Part 5 **Legislation**

Part 6 **Farewells and Welcomes** including some comments from the new member of the House of Laity, Sarah Beach.

While not part of our formal agenda, Synod heard a little about the national preparations for the Lambeth Conference 2020. We had an excellent bible study on the text which will shape the Conference, 1 Peter, led by the Archbishop of Canterbury's Chaplain, Revd Dr Isabelle Hamley.

In our reports, we try to mention those Synod members from the Diocese who were called to speak and something about what the speaker said. But it is not so easy. Not all those who want to speak at Synod can. If you wish to speak you stand and it is up to whoever is chairing the debate to call the next speaker from amongst those standing. It can be so frustrating not to be called since a lot of work always goes into preparing a speech. For the first time, the Business Committee produced statistics from the July 2018 Synod that recorded those who spoke in Synod and how often they spoke. Perhaps this will help better identify those who speak too often and those who seem not to get the chance to speak.

As the Chair of the Business Committee reflected, *speaking in debate is not the only way to speak into Synod. Voting is very important too.* As we start the run-up to General Synod elections in 2020, you may want to see how members voted. The information can be found on the Church of England website if there has been a counted vote and not merely a show of hands.

Finally, this Report is much longer than in the days when these Reports could not exceed 4 sides of A4 because they were printed and circulated or circulated on the premise they would be printed. We hope the length does not deter you from reading the sections that interest you and forwarding this report to a wider readership. We hope you will appreciate getting more detail and more (sometimes helpful, sometimes quirky) insights into the work of General Synod. What Synod debates or decides has an impact on the church around the country and in this Diocese.

I urge you to consider . . . giving up cynicism for Lent

Archbishop of Canterbury, Presidential Address to General Synod, Thursday 21st February, 2019

STATE OF THE NATION

The Archbishops of York and Canterbury requested a debate on the Church's role in the current political situation, entitled 'The State of the Nation'.

At the outset Archbishop Welby set the tone by saying that, "Any attempt to describe the state of the nation in 10 minutes is absurd" and "Brexit is not the subject of this debate". He also said, that in spite of the present uncertainty, we are a "nation of great stability envied around the world, (and) ... we in this country are amongst the most privileged people in the world". He continued by observing that for decades sufficient attention has not been paid to the common good and if not attended to, this will cause more division. He pointed out that it is funny how, Jesus' Sermon on the Plain – woe to you who are rich - is less popular than that on the Mount!

He admitted that the biggest challenge amongst us is recovering from the divisions we find around us, yet here we have the opportunity to build reconciliation into our country. Already the churches are doing much heavy lifting in this respect but also, now is the time for the church to be a peacemaker in every place, and to be ready for difficulties. As the Apostle Paul said, 'Pray without ceasing' for those who have enormous burdens on them. It is for us to lift the poor and vulnerable remembering that ahead is a time of promise.

The Bishop of London reminded members, don't pretend we are all alike because we are not. We need to listen to our community, for division is not new. Several speakers spoke of the anger and fears in their own locality arising from economic uncertainty, job losses (including Honda in Swindon), local government at breaking point, and so on. Across the country inequality by region has become more and more recognisable. Synod was cautioned on how the Rules for Radicals book stalled Martin Luther King's cause where hope broke through, but cynicism broke it apart.

Other sound bites from the debate included:

- 'There is danger of Christianity being hijacked and turned into an example of national xenophobia;'
- 'a new humility is called for;'
- 'The Church has a myriad of resources to help;'
- 'As the population grows we need to go deeper into the meaning of inclusion;'
- 'There are young people today that are passionate about what is right;'
- 'For the sake of the soul of Europe, and the soul of Britain, let us be a blessing to others'.

Finally, the Archbishop led Synod in prayer before Synod voted in strength,

- (a) for all sections of the Church to uphold the various politicians and civil servants for the responsibilities they bear;
- (b) to reaffirm the Christian commitment to putting the voices of the poor and marginalised at the heart of the nation's concerns; and
- (c) to call upon national leaders, drawing on Christian hope and reconciliation, to work together for that common good at this time of division.

1. STANDING ITEMS

Business Committee Report

In the 100th anniversary year of the formation of the Church Assembly, this Synod's set out an agenda for our future focused on evangelism – '*a springboard across all traditions*'. Speaker after speaker made tribute to the work of the Business Committee for laying before Synod an agenda that focused on important issues like our interaction with children and young people, the need to address issues of poverty and our mission to gypsy, Roma and traveller communities. The final debate on Saturday, *The State of the Nation*, was a timely debate, but its late inclusion necessarily squeezed other business into a tighter time frame. The new Synod App was celebrated!

Presidential Address from the Archbishop of Canterbury

The Archbishop gave thanks for the agenda's focus on the Great Commission. In a shorter than usual address the Archbishop talked about our current situation as a Church and as a Nation through the lens of the First Letter of Peter, the scripture that will be at the heart of the 2020 Lambeth Conference. We were reminded that we are not just any group of Christians but General Synod and we must seek to be walking together. This is a reason for hope that we might love one another and 'look like what we speak about'. The Archbishop talked about the complexity of communication and our need to listen, to be heard and to reflect because our enthusiasm can be easily misrepresented (as it later was in the press about services on Sunday)

Archbishop Justin celebrated signs of growth in the church, praised the work of church schools and reminded Synod that we might disagree over issues but we must not leave the Holy Spirit out of the equation! "God loves us all equally and we are all part of the Body of Christ." We carry the good news and we should allow the Holy Spirit to work in our hearts - listen to one another, that is our hope, he concluded

Questions

There were over 120 written questions, an unusually high number, more than 30 of which related to transgender and *Pastoral Guidance for use in conjunction with the Affirmation of Baptismal Faith* issued by the House of Bishops.

Questions covered the following topics, amongst many others:

- Financing residential ordination training
- The percentage of disabled ordinands and other clergy training statistics
- Clergy wellbeing (the subject of a House of Laity meeting)
- Strategic Development Funding and whether this is monitored and evaluated.

Individual questions included

- Should the church celebrate the 50th anniversary of the first moon landing (Answer: no)
- How can the Church Commissioners sponsor more affordable housing
- The CofE response to knife crime
- The rescheduling of BBC TV's Songs of Praise to early afternoon.
- The cost of the Lambeth Conference and whose costs will be paid

Members from Salisbury Diocese questions

- Jane Charman was concerned about the money lost through the Apprenticeship Levy and also asked if the church was intending to mark the UK leaving the EU with a special liturgy
- Gill de Berry asked if the House of Bishops had considered the families and friends, who had been affected by a loved one with gender dysphoria, when preparing their pastoral guidance.

2. EVANGELISM

Guests from the Anglican Communion

The evangelism theme which pervaded this meeting of Synod started with presentations by invited guests from the Anglican Communion. The Bishops from Jabulpur and Kenya related to us the transforming power of the evangelistic message within their communities. They spoke of the need to befriend and serve if we are going to fulfil the commandment to 'love our neighbours as ourselves'. The Most Revd Prem Chand Singh said that we needed to accept others who are different from ourselves, join together in communion with each other and celebrate the unity we find in the love of Jesus Christ. Rt Revd Paul Korir reminded us that we would be accountable to God for the disciples we bring to Him and that our churches must be for all people while remaining relevant to the societies in which we live.

Evangelism and Discipleship or 'Mobilising the Million'

The long-awaited debate on Evangelism and Discipleship (GS2118), delayed from July 2018's Synod, was presented by the Revd Barry Hill. Like hearing a compelling story or watching a great film, the Gospel should be something we find irresistible to share with others. As 'Trip Advisors' for the Gospel we should be pointing people towards Jesus based on the overflow of the abundance of God's love in our hearts. This enthusiasm was taken up by Alison Coulter who is part of the group 'Setting God's People Free' set up to 'mobilise the million' lay people in churches of the Church of England with between 20 and 60 in the congregation.

This call can't be outsourced to Church House. It is not an initiative; it is the way we live. Many speakers continued with this theme but acknowledged it wasn't simple, obvious or easy- we speak different dialects. After voting to make evangelism a priority, the Archbishop of Canterbury said that Synod had committed itself to a "radically differently-shaped Church". Applause followed the carrying of a motion that calls on the Church to "equip and enable lay and ordained people to be more confident in sharing the good news of Jesus Christ".

Ministry among Children and Young People – *When would sit?*

The Bishop of Ely opened this debate in a novel way. All members of Synod were asked to stand; and then to sit down when the age they had come to Christian faith was called out. In this very visual way, it was easy to determine that the majority of Synod had become Christians in their childhood or teenage years. Thus, the importance of evangelism amongst children and teenagers became immediately apparent.

The importance of the home/school/church axis was seen to be crucial and examples were shared of how faith can be shared down the generations within the family at home. The Bishop himself had been brought to faith by the witness of his grandmother. He also asked whether if evangelism amongst younger people is so productive and vital, should all our church services be relevant to that age group?

In the debate that followed all the following initiatives were commended – Messy Church, Open the Book, Falcon and Scripture Union camps. Our Archdeacon Alan Jeans spoke about Army and other cadet corps.

It was noted that social action was key to young people and that churches who ran these projects reported engaging many youngsters. Other speakers were concerned about the increase in mental health issues and felt that those who had a faith were less likely to suffer from these problems. Prayer spaces in schools are very important and there is, for

example an excellent one at Queen Elizabeth Secondary School in Wimborne (further information is available from the M4M team and Rural Field Officers in the Diocese).

Before ending, the Bishop introduced the Prayer Map to be given to the children in CofE primary schools as part of the 'Thy Kingdom Come' this coming May. Watch out for this coming your way!



Estates Evangelism

The Bishop of Burnley Philip North presented the case for Estates Evangelism in a compelling and passionate way. As a result of the deployment of people, priests and the financial commitment, the church will be transformed. We were told that the one in five parishes that have social housing estates of 500+ units comprise 50 % of the population of England! Over the decades there has been a systematic withdrawal of nearly all Christian churches from these deprived, under-represented and forgotten estates. The motion was intended to reinforce and accelerate the Church's return to Christ's mandate to start with the poor and make followers of all.

There was an acknowledgement that the Church's culture is largely middle class. The succession of speakers who wholeheartedly supported the motion made some telling points.

- The greatest deprivation and most widely spread lack of opportunities for people are on estates;
- Leaving the EU is likely to have the biggest impact on those living on estates;
- The withdrawal of 'church' has been across all denominations;
- Stress on the clergy and their families can be overwhelming and they need continuous and strong support;
- The best people to minister to those living on the estates are those who grew up there and understand the circumstances and lives of those raising families there. There is a heart-breaking lack of local, indigenous leadership at all levels;
- This is not a short term 'project': it must be consistent and continuous over many, many years;

The Archbishop of Canterbury said: "Don't vote for this if you are not ready for the consequences" a sentiment echoed in Bishop North's concluding remarks.

The motion was passed with an overwhelming majority.

Encouraging Youth Evangelism or Are They at Your Table?

The debate on this Private Member's Motion, deferred from July 2018, was launched with a passionate address from Mark Russell (Chief Executive of Church Army and a member of the House of Laity) about the dire situation in the wider church regarding our work with youth nationally. Training needs to be changed in a variety of ways but the priority is to pray for reaching young people. The numbers are bad so even a little improvement will make a great difference. We were reminded that young people will change the heart of the church. We must not drop the ball.

'Our engagement with young people within our Sunday worshiping communities is currently very limited. The majority of churches have no, or very few people under 16' (GS 2124B). Where does your church come in these statistics Sunday church and fresh expressions attendance by under 16s?

- 36.1% (3810) of our churches have no-one under the age of 16
- 65.6% (6910) of our churches have less than 5 children or young people under the age of 16*
- Only 680 (6.45%) of our churches have more than 25 under 16s
- Only 170 (1.61%) of our churches had more than 50 under 16s
- Only 30 (0.28%) of our churches had more than 100 under 16s

Many excellent schemes of engaging young people with Christian faith were mentioned. Boys Brigade, other uniformed organisations, church choirs, creative schemes in Cathedrals and 'Soul Survivor' were all mentioned as effective ways of attracting the youth into faith. The vice chair of the House of Laity shared how her church had removed its pews to accommodate a youth club. Many speakers, however, reflected on the importance of the young

people themselves in witnessing to others and bringing them along to youth events at church, they were the very best evangelists.

One highlight was the maiden speech by Revd Canon Chris Tebbutt who told Synod of the importance of each deanery having a plan for reaching young people and shared experiences of the Wimbourne deanery bus and other work in the Deanery including in one of its school. The challenge is indeed great but we should not be daunted by the situation.

Synod voted without dissent to support the motion.

3. SOCIAL ISSUES

Homeless Task Force

This important debate came to Synod from a Private Members' Motion and was almost talked out by the previous motions during the day taking longer than anticipated. The proposal to postpone the debate till July was roundly and volubly rejected. The debate took place albeit with the time period reduced by 15 minutes. This led to an intensity of purpose (and a short time limit on speeches) as Synod recognised the overwhelming importance of this growing problem.

The first issue is to understand what 'Homeless' and 'Rough Sleeping' are. Rough sleeping, as its name suggests, was not having a bed at all and existing on the streets. Rough sleepers, with a growing percentage of women among their number, are officially 5000 each night, but Crisis estimates it could be as high as 200,000. Violence and abuse against them are endemic and a shortened life is common. The 'homeless' are those with no permanent bed, "sofa surfing", living in bedsits and on short tenancies.

The motion was that the Church should join the excellent charities working in this sector using its reputation for impartiality, its access to organisations and its nationwide reach to form a Task Force to act as a bridge or 'glue' to bring them together and multiply their output. We must by faith help out our neighbours.

There was a long queue of speakers from all three houses wishing to address the Synod all in strong support of the motion. Their essential points were:

- helping the homeless is best done at the local level with parliamentary funding and 'top cover';
- a light touch is essential as volunteers react to the immediate not necessarily to national situations;
- the location of some parishes mean that they must step forward and lead in this area;
- the church has wealth, land and leadership to bring to bear;
- the task force must remain small, agile, 'energy rich' and above all responsive to the charities' needs.

It was asked whether the Church can provide land for social housing.

The immediate lesson is to look about you. Homelessness exists where you are, now. It is everybody's business. The parishes and the dioceses must be ready to assist.

The motion was passed 395 for and one against (fat finger on the electronic button?) with no abstentions.

Environmental Programmes

The original debate on this Diocesan Synod motion from London and Truro Dioceses was adjourned at the July 2018 group of sessions, through lack of time. The motion called on every Diocese to have an environment programme with a Bishop's staff team lead member; for a national Church framework for the reduction of the CofE's energy and CO2 emissions; and for the church to share good practice including through peer review and promotion of Eco Church initiatives. During the 6 months of the adjournment, a plan of action had drawn up and there was cooperation with Historic England to give advice to parishes on eco-changes to parishes.

The debate had some inspirational speeches. T

- The Bishop of Truro advised us that Cornwall is aspiring to have 100% renewable energy by 2030;
- Representatives from the CofE Youth Council pleaded with us to set more actions and sharper deadlines for change in all Dioceses.
- Bishop Nicholas, the Lead Bishop on the Environment, reminded Synod that the call for change is coming from the bottom up, from local Dioceses, and that the environment is not an extra to the Marks of Mission, but integral to all mission, and 'resource lite' at present.

An electronic vote of the whole Synod was requested and the result was for 279, against 3, abstentions 4.

Advertising and Gambling

Initiated by the Ministry and Public Affairs Council, the Bishop of St Albans, the Rt Revd. Dr Alan Smith, called on her Majesty's Government to reduce the quantity and pervasiveness of gambling advertising and to introduce a mandatory levy on gambling firms to fund independently commissioned research, education and treatment programmes. He encouraged churches to be an open place for people with gambling problems and ask that churches support initiatives to educate children and young people about the risks related to gambling.

Synod was presented with statistics and anecdotal evidence about the pervasive nature of advertising. Several members made their maiden speeches supporting this motion including Richard Jones from Salisbury Diocese. Synod passed this motion overwhelmingly but did not support an amending motion to ban all gambling advertising.

Ministry and Mission among Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Communities

On Saturday morning Synod received a presentation and took part in a debate on 'Ministry Amongst Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Communities'. Around 30 members of the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller community were in the public gallery including some from the diocese of Salisbury with Rev Jonathan Herbert, our Chaplain to Gypsies and Travellers, and former Chaplain Roger Redding.

Janie Codona, a member of the English Gypsy community, recalled her own experiences of discrimination. Thomas Acton, Emeritus Professor of Romany Studies at the University of Greenwich, described the diversity of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller identities. Rev Martin Burrell, Chair of the Churches Network for Gypsies, Travellers and Roma, spoke about his experience as a Chaplain in the diocese of St Albans, now the only other diocese (in addition to Salisbury) to have such a Chaplain.

The Bishop of Chelmsford then proposed a wide-ranging motion calling on the Church to resist prejudiced stereotypes of Gypsies, Roma and Travellers and condemn hate crimes against them, to appoint a Chaplain or chaplaincy presence in every diocese and, through the Mission and Public Affairs Council, to press for the provision of land, including Church land, for suitable sites.

The following debate was warmly supportive. It was revealing that media reports on the debate all quoted extensively from the single, apparently negative, speech but failed to report the punch line. What happened is that a lay member from the Diocese of Chelmsford's speech was cut short because the 'red light' (indicating the speaker is out of time) had gone on. Every speaker, even the Archbishop, must sit down immediately. The Bishop of Chelmsford in his summing up finished the story: the speaker was in his Diocese and had been the one to (literally) turn on the church water tap for those in need.

Canon Jane Charman's speech was greeted with extended applause. The full text merits reading and can be found at <https://www.salisbury.anglican.org/resources-library/whos-who/news-and-events/2019-02-jane-charman-speech-for-general-synod>

4. CHURCH ISSUES

Living in Love and Faith and the Pastoral Advisory Group

The Pastoral Advisory Group reminded us that their key task was to offer pastoral resources. In turn, members of the Steering Group read sections of their open letter outlining the perceived evils that are a bar to good practice.

Silence	the policy of silence is unacceptable and unhelpful. Silence can shelter abuses of power.
Fear	no one should live in fear within our churches. Fear can corrupt common life.
Ignorance	Ignorance about the experiences and perspectives of other should be addressed
Hypocrisy	we need to be open about sex, gender, relationships and not be ashamed of who we are.
Power	we need to pay attention to the power held by those in authority and the misuse of power.
Prejudice	we were reminded that the journey from prejudice to hatred, is short.

The learning objectives of the Living in Love and Faith resources are: to inspire; to discover a deeper desire to know God; to have a deeper understanding of Christ's teaching; to learn different ways to read scripture; to help in Christian discipleship; and to be alert to the life of the church. At present the academic papers (of which there are over 80) and stories that the group have gathered are being made into resources in the form of podcasts, films and books. It is understood that these resources will strive for 'appreciative disagreement'.

Standing Orders and Crown Nominations Committee (CNC)

This you might think would be a dull bit of business for General Synod, but nothing could be further from the truth. It seemed that the Business Committee did not give this enough time as there were several amendments tabled to Standing Orders and the work of CNC. The managers of Synod thought wrongly that this would go through with ease.

The debate was Synod at it best. The working and composition of CNC was explored. What became clear was that the outcome (the appointment of Bishops) isn't always driven by discernment, rather by the pressures on getting the 'right' people to be appointed as bishops. The debate showed that when it comes to the crunch most people behave as though they don't believe discernment is the Archbishops' highest priority. The key speech was that given by Aiden Hargreaves-Smith, who set the tone with good arguments to overturn what the CNC had recommended which was to dispense with the secret ballot. For this crucial vote the figures were:

Bishops:	19 for	14 against	1 abstention
Clergy:	76 for	66 against	4 abstentions
Laity:	63 for	99 against	5 abstentions

Totals 158 for 179 against 10 abstentions.

so the motion was lost and secret ballots in the process of appointment of new bishop remains.

5. LEGISLATION

Church Representation and Ministers Measure and Amending Canons 38 and 39.

The Measure is part of the Simplification agenda. The Bishop of Willesden congratulated the Steering Committee on their work, saying the new rules are more easily understood and now written in English. It was claimed that the Measure is a good model of Simplification and will be particularly helpful to rural parishes. We shall see. An important change is that elections, including to General Synod, will be conducted by electronic voting.

This was the Final Approval Stage so the Measure could not be amended and either went through or failed in its entirety. There was a lot of interest from Synod members (and Deanery Lay Chairs in the Salisbury and other dioceses) prior to the debate on one aspect and that is introducing a limit on a lay person serving on a Deanery Synod to two consecutive terms of three years. The chair of the Steering Committee was at pains to make Synod aware that an APCM can *disapply* the measure and this reassurance, coupled with the promise that the Elections Review Group would look at this particular provision before it starts to 'bite' in 2032, resulted in the votes on the Measure and Canon vote being overwhelmingly carried. There are some other new provisions that may 'bite' in another way . . .

Draft amending Canon 40

Draft Amending Canon 40 defines religious communities and is the first time that General Synod has made provision for the religious life. Speakers questioned whether the community should be subject to two regimes, their own, and that of Synod. Also, does there need to be a viable size for them, and should Synod be overseeing them when they are peculiarly unusual, and individual communities? The consensus was that they need to be recognised as well as acknowledged and Synod was the right body to do this. Besides, it was a way for Synod to commend to all, their qualities and obedient way of life. In essence the Canon does not seek too much definition because more is to be found in their handbook. However, there are conditions, such as safeguarding, that the community needs to be seen to satisfy. Synod approved the draft on a show of hands.

Draft Church of England (Miscellaneous Provisions) (No. 2) Measure, Draft Amending Canon No. 41

The clue to this item lies in the term 'miscellaneous'. The measure updates or otherwise tidies up existing pieces of legislation relating to matters as various as religious communities, a register of ministers (there will be a national register of priests but it won't include LLMs), funerals conducted by lay people, disused burial grounds, parochial registers and records, and the constitution of General Synod. This was the revision stage for this item, meaning that it had already been referred to a revision committee who had considered various proposed amendments to it, some of which had been accepted and some rejected. The chair of the Revision Committee talked Synod through the report, four people asked questions of clarification to which he responded, and the motion was clearly carried. Altogether an uneventful, but necessary item.

The Parochial Fees and Scheduled Matters Amending Order 2019

This Order provides for the fees payable to the DBF and PCCs from 1st January 2020 to 31st December 2024 in connection with marriages, funerals and burials and the erection of monuments in churchyards. The fees for 2019 have been used as the base figures and increases have been calculated by reference to CPI rather than RPI. Burial fees will no longer be payable in respect of persons aged 16 or 17 and the PCC will no longer receive a fee where a funeral service takes place at a crematorium or cemetery because it was said that the small sum carried too great an administrative burden for dioceses.

Code of Practice on Cooperation by the Church of England with Other Churches

This guidance paper sets out the expected good practice within the framework of the Ecumenical Relations Measure 2018, and the new Canon B43. Whilst seemingly advisory, it is a mandatory guide and Bishops and others must have regard to the Code. It offers advice regarding worship and buildings including: the local designation of a local church building used by a minority congregation; the invitation to ministers of other denominations; and the change of name from Local Ecumenical Partnerships to Local Ecumenical Cooperative Schemes. There was a short but wholly

affirming debate including speeches from the Moravian and Baptist Church Representatives on Synod and Synod members who have valued cooperation within their local LEPs/LECSs. The draft Code of Practice was overwhelmingly approved.

6. FAREWELLS, WELCOMES and FUTURE ITEMS

Farewells

Synod said 'farewell' to the Bishop of Dover, whom we learnt was a very good cook, hardworking and profoundly hospitable! Bishop Trevor has also been responsible for the Channel Islands as well as Dover, demonstrating his capacity for service. His missionary work to the refugee camps at Calais, was also commended.

Bishop Graham of Norfolk Diocese leaves East Anglia after twenty years in post. His care, wisdom and love over these years have reflected God's care for all. We all thoroughly enjoyed the video clip of his jumping on custard!

We also said good-bye to Stephen Slack, Chief Legal Advisor to General Synod, Archbishops' Council and the Church Commissioners' Official Solicitor. He brought all legal personnel into one department and has adeptly and professionally steered all three bodies since 2001. He has been the 'source of counsel and good judgement that has gone beyond professional legal advice, and has encompassed real wisdom about the Church.'

Jonathan Spencer has been Chair of the Church of England Pensions Board for more than 10 years. Previously a very senior civil servant, Jonathan has led the Pensions board which currently manages funds totalling more than £2 billion. It administers pensions to some 40,000 people, houses about 2,500 retired clergy and their dependents, and supports and maintains some Christian retirement communities.

Both Stephen and Jonathan received prolonged applause from a standing and almost full chamber on the final afternoon of the Group of sessions

Welcomes

New members in all three houses were welcomed to Synod including the Sarah Beach, a new member of the House of Laity from the Diocese of Salisbury. About her experience at her first Synod, Sarah writes:

On a personal note I would say that I have thoroughly enjoyed my first General Synod. I have been stimulated, challenged and frustrated, probably in equal measure, if I am honest. I have been surprised by the depth and breadth of business that can be covered within four days and look forward to further meetings. I have been welcomed and met with friendliness by all whom I have encountered this week. But my introduction to Synod has been made more pleasurable by the welcome from my fellow representatives from Salisbury; their help, willingness to support and befriend me, has made my Synod experience more enjoyable than I was perhaps anticipating. Thank you to you all.

Future Pattern of Meetings of General Synod

There will be a change in the pattern of Synod's February meetings from 2021. At the London sessions there will be weekend sittings, something that has been experimented with during this triennium but going further to include whole weekends.

Behind the plan is a desire to see new members recruited from under-represented groups and while speakers from the floor were not convinced by the plans, Synod voted to accept the new pattern, after a number of counted votes on amendments, one of which was accepted. This amendment gives the Business Committee a bigger window of dates for the February 2023 Synod with the possibility for the new Synod to make decisions based on working with the new framework of dates and times.