

GENERAL SYNOD REPORT ON JULY 2019 GROUP OF SESSIONS

The general consensus from your representatives is that this was a good Synod. We did the necessary legislative reviews at several different points rather than in one go and did it rather better than we sometimes do. Remember the red tape review? We made synodical and legislative history through a new simplified procedure that can be used to remove administrative burdens. We also have some simplified faculty procedures. At this Synod and the two Groups of Sessions in 2020 (February and July) it will be race to get all the legislation through. Those that don't finish the process will lapse and the new General Synod will start with a clean slate in 2020.

If you have an idea of how the practices and procedures of the Church of England can be improved, an area for reform or if you think there is an issue that needs to be debated or on which the Church should speak, then now is the time to start thinking about it so that it gets on an early agenda. The best way to get something started is to take it to your Deanery Synod meeting and if they support it, to the Diocesan Synod.

It was also a very full Synod and there is lots to report. To help you make your way through it, you can use the links below to go straight through to various sections. And for the first time, we are reporting on the now entitled *Living in Love and Faith* (LLF) seminars and workshops looking at different aspect of human sexuality, amongst other questions.

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A Wider Perspective

Ecumenical Guests

General Synod starts, we warmly welcome representatives from other churches, both those in the Anglican Communion and ecumenical guests, to help us look at what we are doing in the context of the bigger picture. This first part of General Synod always has the feeling of warm-up acts at a big concert.

First off was **Rt Rev Elof Westergaard, Bishop of Ribe, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Denmark.**

We were told by the Bishop of Ribe that in Denmark, 75% of the population are members of the Danish National Church. The 2,200 parishes enjoy much freedom including the appointment of their own vicars. To finance the church, a tax is levied on members and collected and disbursed by local government.

There are growing numbers of members from the migrant communities and while numbers are declining, the church is playing an increasingly active role in the community including through partnerships with local government and schools. It is frequently consulted by Government in matters relating to social care. As the national church, it must be incarnational through the frequent celebration of the sacraments and cultural engagement in everyday life. Since 2014, most ministers in the church have chosen to celebrate same-sex marriages in the church.

The Bishop mentioned two initiatives:

- hymn singing with infants with the parents bringing their babies mid-week to sing and dance which gives both parent and child familiarity with the church and leads to conversations about faith and baptism;
- 'drop-in baptism' - it is advertised that on a certain day at a certain time you could come by the church and, after a chat with the vicar, have your child baptised. People had been constrained by not knowing who to contact and how to make the arrangements.

Bishop Eloff commented on the close relationship his country felt with the UK and concluded by saying "You may leave the EU but you don't leave your neighbours."

Mothers' Union

This year we also welcomed **Mrs Sheran Harper the Worldwide President of the Mothers' Union** from Guyana and the first President from outside the UK. It was fantastic to hear her speak about the MU which is the oldest and largest women's movement in the world. She told us incredible stories of brave women leaders such as those serving in South Sudan. Now 142 years old, there are 4 million members and it is the largest women's organisation in the world.

Sheran reminded us that MUs are at heart of many communities who are working in partnership with local churches driven by a love for God and all humanity. She then gave examples of women's empowerment and how the MU had led on child protection in Guyana. There were wonderful stories of women from warring tribes in South Sudan who had been brought together in northern Uganda and began a work of reconciliation together. Recently they had listened to 200,000 members throughout the world and brought findings to the worldwide meeting in Rwanda last month. MU members are making a practical difference. It was a great way to begin!

Learning with others

On Monday instead of starting the day with a short time of worship, we continued our study of 1 Peter which we started in February. This book will be used at the bible study as part of the Lambeth Conference next summer. We had 45 minutes on 1 Peter 2 ably led by Rev Dr Isabelle Hamley (whom you can hear on Radio 4's *Thought for the Day*) who had our rapt attention on the difference between *petra* (rock or chunky boulder) and *lithos* (dressed stone) and how we are called to be both. The **Archbishop of Inglesia Anglicana de la Región Central de America (IARCA), the Most Revd Julio Murray** gave us some fascinating insights into the reading. She followed it with a welcome period of silence in the Chamber to reflect on the passage before all the words that would follow during the day.

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Usual Business

Presidential Address by The Archbishop of York

The Archbishop started his address by quoting the former Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams:

"How can people who read the same Bible and share the same baptism come to strongly diverse conclusions about human sexuality?"

Nine years later, there has been little, if any, progress in our approach. The disagreement we have is that arising from loss of the habit of reading the Bible consistently and thoroughly as part of public and private devotion. We must read consistently to think consistently and understand others' faith in Christ before we can question them on conclusions that strike us as false. Rationality of faith allows us to give weight to past experience and reasonable presuppositions.

General Synod should find ways of thinking, reflecting and acting by attending to the whole Scripture and Scripture as a whole. What scripture has to teach about the human body is particular cannot be overlooked but neither can it be taken apart from the whole counsel of God. When we disagree, we must disagree Christianly in a Jesus-shaped life.

Business Committee

The Take Note debate on the Business Committee Report was a subdued debate and unusually there were very few gripes about the agenda. Safeguarding dominated. It also arose frequently in the debates to follow and had its own Question slot, scheduled appropriately as the first session after the Celebration of the Eucharist in York Minster.

There was strong desire to hear 'the House of Bishop's speaking from their heart', prompting survivors to ask the question 'do you care?' Victims yearn to hear 'that this body (General Synod) is undergoing a cultural change'. Archbishop Welby outlined the position, stating that 'the IICSA (Independent Inquiry into Child Sex Abuse) reports make sobering reading'. He had broken down at the hearing when evidence was being given adding "that is general amongst the House of Bishops".

Synod has had several presentations on the subject but Safeguarding has not yet been debated. The Archbishop concluded by giving three reasons why an open debate on this was not appropriate at present

- many would feel we are trying to distract attention;
- at present dioceses are working very hard and it is the victims and survivors who need to be heard from;
- we need to wait for the IICSA Report and then engage with it.

Synod were told that a way forward would be given in 2020. Meanwhile, the letter from senior clergy in the Diocese of Blackburn, reflecting on IICSA reports, is to be commended for reading. See

https://www.blackburn.anglican.org/storage/general-files/shares/News%20and%20events/News%20-%20June%202019/iicsa_letter_2.pdf

Questions

There were 91 Questions on the list not including the Questions on Safeguarding. Synod received a 58 page booklet of Questions and Answers a few days before Synod and there is a chance to ask follow-up questions which, under the Standing Orders, may be asked by the original questioner or some other member.

It is often in Questions that an issue is first brought to the attention of Synod and then later, it shows up in some piece of work. Will that be the fate of a Question which asked what legislation would be required to remove all references to 'rector' and style all as incumbents 'vicars'?

The first set of questions asked of the Secretary General was a sort of bits and pieces about Synod itself. The first Question asked for the age profile for House of Clergy and House of Laity broken down by years of birth. Supplementary question asked: should there be an introduction of an upper age limit in the House of Laity. Response from Secretary General: "There was no plan for this". What do you think?

There was also a question regarding the diversity of General Synod. The Secretary General referred to new marketing campaign to engage with next generation and said that work was ongoing with dioceses to engage with Synod in broadening the appeal to members.

Archbishop's Council Annual Report (GS 2138) and Archbishop's Council 2020 Budget (GS2141)

John Spence gave his usual brilliant presentation on the work and funding requirements for the forthcoming year.

It centred around five areas which each required a separate vote; Training for ministry (£17.6m), National Church Responsibilities (effectively, the operating budget and Safeguarding), (£22.1m) Grants (£1.2m), Mission Agency Pensions (£0.7m) and Clergy Retirement Housing (£5.3m).

Very encouraging news was received about the increase in the number of people coming forward for training for ordained and lay ministry, hence the large charge. Also, for Vote 2, much has been invested in digital activities leading to many parishes taking advantage of the Church of England much improved website and assistance with their own digital activity. Vote 3 was mainly concerned with contributions to the Anglican Communion Office and grants to Church Urban Fund and Fresh Expressions. Votes 4 and 5 are self-explanatory yet important. After some debate, all five votes were unanimously passed.

Standing Orders and the CNC

Yes, Standing Orders do matter for they order all sorts of things in General Synod. The Crown Nomination Commission is the body that meets to recommend the appointments of Bishops to the Prime Minister. This is seen as a rather influential body and it is therefore important that the appointment of members to the Commission is transparent and that their decisions are carried through, in this case as to how and how many names are put to the Sovereign. The changes to the Standing Orders were drafted to tie up a few 'loose ends' in this process. The proposals, amended twice, were passed by the Synod.

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Safeguarding

Safeguarding Presentation

The Bishop of Bath & Wells, Peter Hancock, outlined some of the actions that are being proposed to ensure our provision for safeguarding is the best it can possibly be. This is all of our responsibility at every level in our Church. Leadership and management of our safeguarding procedures; the recommendations from IICSA inquiry; key developments including a National Case Management System; independent learning lesson reviews into three significant case; a Clergy Discipline Measure (CDM) working group; and engagement with victims and survivors, which has previously been inadequate. A Victims and Survivors Charter is proposed, and Restorative Justice practice in beginning.

The Independent Chair of the National Safeguarding Panel, a Methodist former Director of Children's Services, outlined the progress of the work of the Panel, looking at training and development, and the CDM review. The next area for review will be the prevention of abuse within our Church.

The Survivors Representative, a survivor himself, then spoke about the loss of trust in the Church. As a member of the National Safeguarding Panel, he is the voice of those whose lives have been destroyed by the effects of abuse within the Church. He spoke about the significant positive changes that have been introduced, but also the difficulties in placing CDM cases involving Safeguarding.

Questions to the presenting team followed from the floor of Synod. The item ended with a vote of thanks to the Panel, especially the Survivors Representative, who received prolonged applause with a standing ovation.

Questions: Safeguarding Presentation and Questions

Safeguarding Questions (92-111) which had been submitted in writing by Synod members followed the Safeguarding Presentation. We had questions about the late Bishop George Bell and his case. The questions focused on details of the claims made about Bell and how they were handled. The Bishop deftly handled this and other questions when he promised continued support for victims. It seems that some victims experience led them

to distrust the care offered by their own diocese. The Bishop said he would find a way so that victims might be looked after by a different diocese.

A number of aspects to IICSA's work also came up. The Bishop made it clear that the church would follow any IICSA recommendations about mandatory reporting. To the surprise of the chair and the synod we had raced through the questions in under half hour. Unusually, there were few supplementary questions. If you wish to read the questions go to <https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2019-07/General%20Synod%20July%202019%20questions.pdf>
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Mission and Ministry in Covenant: Anglican-Methodist Relationship

A week or so before the Synod meeting, what is known as the Anglican-Methodist Covenant would likely have had a smoother passage. Although the issue of apostolic succession severely vexes many of the bishops and some clergy (and is little understood by most of the laity), the Covenant proposal to bring forward legislation might have gone through unamended. This would have started the formal process to allow priests/ministers to preside at the Eucharist in both churches and permit a priest/minister to be part of the permanent team working at a church/Chapel as a normal practice.

However, at the very recent Methodist Conference (equivalent to our General Synod), they moved much closer in their 'relationship' thinking and are consulting about same sex marriage and a more accommodating position on sex before marriage. Synod is still very much in its discovering and debating stage for these matters. (The work is known as Living in Love and Faith.)

There were some who thought it would be best not to continue the process but the clear majority thought that deliberative discussions should continue. A timely amendment was proposed and passed which enables the process to go forward, albeit without the commitment which some would have wanted. The Motion as approved asks the Faith and Order Commission to work with the Methodist equivalent on drafting texts for the formal declaration, inaugural service and the service of welcome, and the House of Bishops to report in the next quinquennium on progress made, together with proposals for implementation. A disappointing result for many but progress on closer communion with the Methodist church is still moving forward. Amongst the many that spoke in the debate was Mrs Susan Howdell, the Methodist Church's representative on General Synod.

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Clergy Care and Wellbeing: Mission and Ministry in Covenant

In essence, the Covenant is about the quality of relationships. In Ministry there will always be more to be done, but maintaining healthy boundaries in all areas of life are crucial. Clergy, laity and wider church colleagues must work together. No one should feel they are working alone. Laity should be challenged to accept - accept the vicar for whom they are, but not let them hide behind the collar. The challenge to the clergy is to be human and priestly.

Bishops should be encouraged to talk about boundary setting and personal care and the Diocesan culture must reflect intent. Delegation is crucial. Leaders should be encouraged to differentiate between 'self-care' and 'self-interest'. In the Covenant praying, listening, respecting and acknowledging are central. But the covenant is irrelevant if we don't accept responsibility for ourselves. Pastoral supervision should be seen as the norm and should be regular and non-managerial. The need for compliance and accountability were raised. The question

was asked: what are we afraid of being accountable for? On its own the covenant will make no difference, but hopefully it will start conversations and provoke honesty and encourage speaking about vulnerabilities.

An amendment was put forward, asking how the Diocese fit into the Covenant but there was no appetite to debate it and the amendment lapsed. Resources and cost are important. Can the dioceses be used to share good practice? After debate, the motion was approved. It will return to Synod as a draft Act, which confusingly is not legislation but a statement of intent.

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Mission-Shaped Church and Fresh Expressions, 15 Years On

The Bishop of Oxford, Stephen Croft, energetically presented this item, filling in the history of the Fresh Expressions (FX) movement back to and before 2004 when the Report '*Mission Shaped Church*' was presented to General Synod. Since then thousands of FX's have grown up around the country, some have flourished and still exist while some have fallen by the wayside but valuable lessons were learned and new disciples made. He introduced the new Head of Development of FX at Church House, Revd Heather Cracknell, who, with Archbishop's Council funding, is aiming to work with ten dioceses to stimulate growth in Fresh Expressions through the FX Greenhouse project.

Mark Sheard, a member of Archbishop's Council, then proposed the motion, which, to summarise, was to celebrate and encourage parishes and dioceses to form new FX and grow disciples, and to call on the Archbishop's Council to bring to General Synod an update on FX in two years' time (July 2021). The motion was unanimously passed.

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Setting God's People Free

Canon Dr Jamie Harrison, Chair of the House of Laity, opened the debate on Tuesday morning, the fifth day, after what was a wonderful time of worship and praise at General Synod. This time of praise lead helpfully into a debate that called for a deeper and intentional discipleship under the banner of Setting God's People Free (SGPF),

'a programme of change to enable the whole people of God to live out the Good News of Jesus confidently in all of life, Sunday to Saturday',

seeking to implement proposals from the Report presented to General Synod in 2017.

The focus is to facilitate a shift in culture, not a narrow, centrally driven strategy. We were encouraged to use our gifts to build up the body of the church. It was also stressed that everything should be done with a covering of prayer. We were also helpfully reminded that discipleship was a 24/7 experience but we were warned not to end up being 'churchy'.

There were several amendments proposed by various members of Synod, all of which were welcomed. There followed a lively debate. In the debate it was stressed repeatedly how important that all ministry involved the whole people of God. There was criticism that the debate itself was scheduled on Tuesday when many members of the House of Laity had already returned to work. The word "every" was also highlighted to remind us how important that discipleship is for all. In the debate it was made clear that the hardest thing about the report is to put this into practice. Several speakers commended the Synod that it saw this as a strategic priority for Archbishop's Council and the wider church. The motion was overwhelming approved by Synod.

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Living in Love and Faith and the Pastoral Advisory Group

Bishop Christopher Cocksworth introduced the presentation. He said they had been very busy, compiling amongst other things, the first three of five sections of the Teaching Document. A draft would be available for review by the College of Bishops in the Autumn. There had been much engagement and consultation with the Anglican Consultative Conference (ACC), Primates and new bishops.

The Teaching Document would include video about gender and sexuality although the main product would be a book. There were lots of different people on the team, <https://www.churchofengland.org/about/leadership-and-governance/general-synod/bishops/living-love-and-faith/group-membership#na> sharing their experiences, people of all views. They continue to disagree but understand each other's position better. The Bishop hoped that their work of pursuing truth would be honoured by God.

Since it is essentially a writing project they are faced with the challenge 'how can we write collaboratively? How can we pass the pen around? How can the voices be faithfully articulated? Who holds the power? How do we divest ourselves of power to talk to one another rather than about one another?' The groups aim was to try to find better ways of relating to one another honestly. Engaged with over 100 people with diverse lived experience wasn't easy and how does one resist the temptation of politicking?

How do we stay open to a manageable process? How do we resist trying to find THE answer? All requires patience. God seems slow to revealing himself to those with whom we disagree. Patience and pain go together. Deep personal pain is at the source of a lot of conflict. The process invites us to enter into the pain though. As we go deeper the pain can increase. But as we persevere we feel that there is a promise. New creation comes through the death, resurrection and the power of the Holy Spirit.

Perhaps ... we are seeing something new. Can this speak powerfully to a nation that is gorging on difference and division? Next year, churches will be encouraged to engage with the document, to enter into conversation.

On Saturday afternoon there were a number of LLF seminars known as 'encounters on the way'. They would be centred around the Biblical reflection of the Emmaus story and would ask the following questions: 1) Where are we? 2) Who are we? 3) What are human beings? 4) How do we hear God? 5) Where does wisdom come from? Synod members were invited to come and share their own reflections. Another seminar was led by the Pastoral Advisory Group (PAG) which would challenge each ourselves about our prejudice, and how to treat ourselves with the loving dignity we all deserve.

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Legislative Business and Standing Orders

Legislative Reform (Patronage of Benefices) Order 2019 – Synodical and Legal history?

It is not a title that is likely to set the heart racing— but there was a ripple of excitement when the Chair reminded members that we would be making synodical and legal history as the first Order to come before the Synod under the simplified procedure which can be used to remove or reduce administrative burdens. It made its passage with remarkable swiftness and will become law later this year. The consultation paper was issued in November and over 90 responses were received, went through the relevant Committees including the Scrutiny Committee and will likely come into force later this year. Under the full procedure, it would be lucky to have come into force by 2021.

The substance of the Order simplifies the rules relating to the filling of vacancies in a benefice. It removes undue delay in starting the process, gives the PCC up to six months to prepare the profile, convene the meetings, etc. and provides for a register of patrons to be kept up-to-date.

Church of England (Miscellaneous Provisions) Measure Amending Canon 41 for Enactment: Who is a 'spouse'?

A special amendment was needed at the final stage to clarify and include all those relatives who have a right to object before permission is granted for disused burial grounds to be approved for building. In this case, an amendment was needed so as to include in the definition of 'relative' a civil law spouse or same sex spouse.

After much debate it was decided that 'marriage' in the eyes of the state and the eyes of the church are different and this is a distinction needed to be accepted. Some felt that the amendment challenged the church's definition and understanding of marriage but it was pointed out that the pensions law has already been amended to include same sex spouses. The amendment was carried.

Also, the question was raised about churches only being required to keep registers in electronic format. Will successive generations be able to read them? The response was given that Archdeacons must check 'written records'. It is up to individual churches to decide how to keep accurate records.

Church Representation Rules (Amendment) Resolution 2019 for Approval

This resolution provides an amendment to the Church Representation Rules for those congregations established under a Bishop's Mission Order (and therefore extra-parochial). The Mission Initiative Roll, where baptised members over 16 years of age, can be entered on a roll, similar to the Parochial Electoral Roll. This allows representation of the Mission Initiative on the Deanery Synod, and the Synodical governance of the Church of England. The Resolution was passed in all three houses, and was committed for approval in Parliament.

Diocesan Boards of Education Measure – For First Consideration

This draft Measure is a vital piece of legislation drafted after consultation with the Diocesan Boards of Education including Salisbury DBE. The measure is needed to update the existing legislation in order to accommodate and regularise different structures for DBEs and to respond to the changed and changing regulative landscape taking into account the demise of the Local Education Authority and the rise of MATS (Multi Academy Trusts). A standard approach is particularly needed when MATS are across different dioceses. Joy Tubbs, the Director of Education for our Diocese, supported the new measure which secures the future of our own church schools. Gill de Barry spoke in favour of the motion which was passed.

Cathedrals Measure – For First Consideration

This measure seeks to offer detailed statutory structures for governance within our Cathedral churches, including roles and responsibilities, property, finance, and safeguarding. The new measure will supersede the original Cathedrals Measure of 1999, and follows some issues in the Cathedrals in Exeter and Peterborough. Whilst it was acknowledged more work need to be done in Revision Committee, the Measure was approved for revision in committee. The Synod chamber then emptied for a much needed coffee break, leaving a smaller, but quorate Synod to debate the following item.

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Issues for our time

Responding to serious youth violence (GS 2132)

This motion was presented by Rev Canon Dr Rosemarie Mallet a vicar in Southwark Diocese. She started by sharing some alarming statistics.

- 16% of young people do not feel safe at home
- Gang members are twice as likely to suffer from mental health issues as non-members
- Gangs recruit from school referral units among children excluded from school – so it's very important to avoid excluding students and to keep them in full-time education.

In the debate that followed, we were reminded that this is now a rural problem as County Lines were selling drugs in market towns and villages. It was felt that churches are in a unique position to help in the following ways

- Work alongside Street Pastors and School Pastors
- Open our churches to offer young people a safe sanctuary
- Diocese must train clergy to be aware of issues around County Lines
- The churches could fund youth workers as none are being funded by the local authority
- Encouraging schools not to exclude students too readily.
- In some areas church families looked after children after school, who otherwise might be roaming the streets.

Some time was spent on proposed amendments and speeches relating to Exclusions and its effects.

Refugee Professionals Southwark

This Southwark Diocesan Motion was introduced by Nicholas Lebey from Battersea Deanery. The proposal was that each parish should support one refugee family and help them through this integration process. We need to recognize that refugee professionals have many skills that could be usefully used in society. Too often the processes of legal integration into our society took many months and years. Church congregations include many professionals who could actually help the refugees by mentoring, teaching them English and finding employment in their field of expertise. Thus, for example, instead of delivering pizzas, a qualified doctor could be helped to fast track into the NHS. An amendment was accepted which widened the scope of the motion and the motion was passed.

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On the Fringes: Going Digital

Synod consists of more than the formal sittings and worship. Many of us spend our early mornings, part of the lunch break and after supper in Fringe meetings organised by all sorts of special interest groups, organisations and departments in Church House.

Just to give you a flavour of the thing, here are some of the amazing statistics shared at a Fringe meeting hosted by the CoE Digital team whose work includes digital evangelism and digital discipleship.

<https://www.churchofengland.org/digital-labs>

Alexa - Alexa has answered 75,000 questions in 1 year: 40% of the requests asked for a prayer and 31% asked about the Christian faith.

Lent Pilgrim and Easter Pilgrim - The content had been seen on 6.9 million occasions on social media. In a survey 93% had found it helpful.

Thy Kingdom Come - The App had been downloaded 6000 times and the content seen over 933,500 times with 530,000 individuals reached.

A Church Near You (ACNY) - There were 12 million visits to the site with 81% first time visitors. All churches can build a website linked into ACNY and it will save them the money paid to the website provider.

There's now provision for benefices with a team of churches and the facility for diocesan administrators to check each parish page for usage.

Digital charter - This had been launched in the last fortnight and contains guidelines for on-line behaviour. It has been reported on all over the world and made the headlines in the paper in the UK. One can sign up on-line or on hard copy.

Do make sure your children and grandchildren know of all these fantastic digital facilities.

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