

GENERAL SYNOD FEBRUARY 2020

For what will this Synod be remembered? Certainly for two items which, because of the importance of these items to the Diocese, will be the subject of separate communications and so we are not going to attempt to cover them in this report.

The first is the transfer of Episcopal oversight of the Channel Islands to the Bishop of Salisbury. The process started with the presentation of the Report from the Archbishops' Commission by Lord Chartres (former Bishop of London) and First Consideration of the Measure on Monday, through the Revision Stage on Tuesday, and on to Final Approval on Thursday afternoon, a process that invariably takes at least two years. Any history buff or someone who wants to expand their vocabulary should definitely read the report at GS 1241.

The second item not being covered in this report was the lively debate on the Carbon Emergency and Carbon Reduction Target about which you will hear a great deal in the months and years to come. Each one of us and each church will be called upon to be part of the solution. Bishop Nick has the key role as the lead Bishop for Environmental Matters, or as he was called on that appointment 'Bishop for the Planet.' At this point, suffice it to say that because of an amendment, 2030 has replaced the proposed 2045 as the net zero emissions target.

Bishop of Salisbury introducing Item 10 – Climate Emergency and Carbon Reduction Target
Photo by Gill deBerry



The third item not covered in this Report is the new General Synod Elections Rules for the House of Laity, Clergy, Convocations and the Single Transferable Vote Rules. These new rules introduce online elections for each House and in revising the Rules, the opportunity was taken to consolidate and harmonise existing Rules. More information will be forthcoming on these new Rules soon but in the meantime, please do give thought and prayer to whether you or someone you know might be willing to serve the Church in this way.

But before we get to the General Synod elections in 2020, PCCs are currently looking for lay people willing to be appointed (or elected) at the APCM to serve as lay members of Deanery Synods. Might you help your church, parish and the churches in your area in this way? The time commitment is small and the contribution the Deanery makes to the life of the local church and the Diocese is large. And the lay members of the Deaneries matter nationally for they are the electorate for General Synod and will be voting in the General Synod election 2020. Do think about coming forward and making a difference!

But on to what is in this Report. There was a good balance to the Agenda during this, the penultimate Groups of Sessions, of the Quinquennium. There was an urgency to get the business completed so that it would not lapse at the end of the 5-year term and efforts to address the criticism that too few Private Members Motions were on the agenda. Some of the most important and timely questions are brought forward in this way and were sprinkled over the course of the four days, giving respite from the grind of legislation or on this occasion, election rules and amendments to Standing Orders.

Our Report covers the items in the same order as on the Agenda. Sometimes, it requires a rapid but often welcome change of gear and we hope that it will enable our readers to give you a bit of a sense of the pace and emphasis. Please just scan the headlines and read what interests you.

What is a SNEM, the new acronym? Answers on a postcard . . .

DAY 1 – SETTING THE TONE

Before work starts, we welcome Anglican guests from around the world and new Synod members. This time, we warmly welcomed the Revd Dr Helen Dawes to replace Canon Thomas Woodhouse for the Diocese of Salisbury. Helen is no stranger to the debating Chamber having previously sat on the other side of the dais.

Business as usual? Report by the Business Committee GS 2151

The Business Committee is charged with setting the agenda for each group of sessions and determining the order in which business is to be taken. The debate on the agenda offers members an opportunity to critique what each group of sessions will consider and often, what has been omitted - but not this time. It was a packed agenda and for the first time, we would go through all three stages of legislation for the Channel Islands Measure in one Group of Sessions.

During the Take Note debate, members commented on the short notice of the timing of the group of sessions which creates challenges for the lay members seeking time off from work to attend, why we were not debating the relations between the CofE and Jews to respond to the issues of antisemitism, and the continuing concerns about lots of presentations but no debate about LGBTI+ areas of our common life.

2020 - A significant year for the Church and the Anglican Communion

Archbishop of Canterbury's Presidential Address

A rather tired and weary archbishop started his address to Synod saying "2020, both for the Church of England and the global Anglican Communion, is a significant year": the publication of the 'Living in Love and Faith' papers; our part in COP 26 in Glasgow; the farewell to Archbishop Sentamu of York; setting the vision and goals for the next quinquennium of Synod; and especially the Lambeth Conference in the summer. So far over 660 bishops have indicated that they will be attending.

The Conference will be drawing on 1 Peter and the ancient image of the Good Shepard protecting his sheep. We are the good shepherds. It is essential that we recognise the lion which may have many faces - culture, cruelty, and a lack of Love. Modern technology and science may be shaping up to become the lion for if not scrutinised they have the potential to shape human beings. We must remain aware and watchful.

In speaking of the Clergy Wellbeing Covenant we would be adopting as an Act of Synod, the Archbishop said that the notion of profession is deeply rooted in religious values: "Professional standards, again whether they are for lay or clergy, call us to love and serve one another so as to liberate to each other the gifts that each has received."

We are not going to let the darkness overwhelm us "we are going to take His gospel and make His light known to the world.". Remember that God makes us instruments of His peace. We must pray for each other, especially those who disagree with us. This year, 2020, has the potential to achieve much change. *The full text of the address can be found at <https://www.archbishopofcanterbury.org/speaking-writing/speeches/archbishop-justin-welbys-presidential-address-general-synod>*

When is an Act not an Act?

The Clergy Covenant for Wellbeing – proclamation as an Act of Synod 2020 GS 2153

This was the formal affirmation and proclamation as an Act of Synod following the adoption by General Synod of the Clergy Covenant in July 2019. The Act does not create obligations or legal rights but expresses a moral, religious obligation on the part of the Church's members towards its clergy to improve our approach to clergy care and wellbeing so that ordained ministers flourish in their service of the mission of God within and beyond the Church. This acknowledges the pressure that clergy and their spouses are under to fulfil their multiple roles and responsibilities.

Realistic expectations are needed by all. It is planned that within three years the dioceses will report to a new Clergy Care and Wellbeing Facilitation Group on developments and learning since the Report was agreed. The motion was clearly carried.

The Covenant will now be proclaimed in Diocesan Synods as expressing the 'collective and formal expression by the Synod of its mind on a particular matter' and

- Diocesan Synods will be invited to debate it with a view to adopting the Covenant by the end of 2020;
- PCCs and Deanery Synods will be invited to consider and adopt the Covenant themselves within a year of their Diocesan Synod debate and to subsequently engage in the Big Conversation;
- each Diocesan Bishop will be asked to sponsor a Clergy Study Day on Care and Wellbeing within eighteen months of the Act of Synod being made;
- within three years of the Act of Synod being made each diocese, along with TEIs, the NCIs, etc., will report to a new Clergy Care and Wellbeing Facilitation Group on developments and learning since the Report was agreed.

If it's 5.30 p.m. on Day 1. It must be . . . Questions

Rather like PMQs in Parliament, the Synod Questions provide a space in the agenda for the members of Synod to hold the hierarchy to account. And this time, notwithstanding we had been able to submit written questions in November, there were over 120 questions requiring written answers. Various individuals or groups submit written answers to the questions and are ready to respond verbally to any supplementary questions.

The three biggest concerns of Synod were Safeguarding, the recently released Pastoral Statement from the House of Bishops concerning Civil Partnerships and, inevitably, the 'Living in Love and Faith' project. Our reporter for this item awards ***** to the Bishop of Newcastle who fielded difficult questions about the Pastoral Statement so graciously.

Many of the questions that asked for facts about policy, costs and dates remained unanswered – and we trust that such information might be released in the future.

DAY 2 It was a long day . . .

Meeting the needs of the 21st Century - Draft Cathedrals Measure GS 2136

Andrew Nunn, Dean of Southwark Cathedral, opened the debate of the Revision stage when points of drafting and detail are discussed. Eventually the Measure would be welcomed and passed by the Synod.

But to get there, the Dean reminded us that reform of cathedral governance was required to meet the needs of the 21st century. He set out the changes now proposed to governance, pastoral/liturgical duties, the day-to-day management, and the strategy and operation of a cathedral. It seems that where possible "the Measure offers permissions, rather than prescriptions understanding that all Cathedrals are not the same" (*editorial note- this is the new refrain*). In addition, the Charity Commission had also asked for a number of suggested revisions/amendments to the Measure to help improve Cathedral governance.

All the amendments were debated if not always fully understood. Some amendments were not contentious and others were resisted. The consideration of the amendments was led by Robert Hammond, a member of the Steering Committee. Strangely, an amendment inserting the word 'unity' was lost.

The biggest laugh of General Synod came as result of an amendment from the Charity Commission that was so complicated that probably only members of the Holy Trinity understood it! This was passed. Finally, the Long Title to stand part of the Measure was then passed, but not without more laughter as we considered who was a member of the Church of England. (The answer was given in a later debate. There is no definition.)

O dear, what can the matter be? Deanery Synod Term Limits in the House of Laity GS 2154

A keystone of the Simplification agenda was to streamline the Church Representation Rules. At the interim stage in the consideration of what are now the Church Representation Rules 2020, a member of General Synod and Diocesan Lay Chair wrote to the Revision Committee suggesting that the number of consecutive terms that a Deanery Synod representative would be eligible to serve should be limited to 6 years. The Revision Committee accepted the proposal and this limitation was included in the draft Church Representation Rules before Synod for approval in July 2019.

Long story short, in July 2019 Synod *had* to accept this provision limiting the number of consecutive terms a person could serve in the House of Laity of a Deanery Synod *or* all of the new Rules would be kicked into touch and could not be brought back during this Quinquennium. Some quick work by the Chair of the Elections Review Group and especially the Chair of the Business Committee to save the Simplification day resulted: time would be made available in February 2020 to reconsider the question and sort it out before the end of the Quinquennium so that the new rule will not 'bite' in 2026.

A very large survey was undertaken offering seven options. Over 925 responses had been received. The favoured option from the respondents was *option two: reversing the default position so that there would be no term limit unless the APCM resolved to impose it*, closely followed by *option seven: no term limit*. The analysis was based on all respondents.

Debbie McIsaac spoke in the debate and said that it would be a fundamental change to church polity and undermine the electoral franchise of lay people were there to be any term limits on laity, pointing out that there are no limits on the clergy at any level of the synodical hierarchy.

It will come back to Synod in July 2020 for a decision as to whether to revert to the previous position, that is, that there is no limit on the number of years lay people can serve on Deanery Synod. To reverse the position will require a vote in favour by 2/3rds of those present to pass. In an indicative counted vote by Houses the results were

Bishops	14 For	6 Against	1 Abstention
Clergy	66 For	31 Against	3 Abstentions
Laity	128 For	14 Against	2 Abstentions

Close? Had the three clergy who abstained voted against, it would have been defeated.

Listening in to the experience of others:

Living in Love and Faith and the Pastoral Advisory Group Presentation

Different attitudes to questions of human sexuality have always been with us. How do we live with one another in love and faith given our differences?

The Pastoral Statement from the House of Bishops on Civil Partnerships on Opposite-Sex Couples was the immediate background to this Presentation which began with a video, one of the resources that are being produced by the Pastoral Advisory Group to encourage churches and deaneries to discuss the issues considered by the Living in Love and Faith project. (The video and other resources are available at www.churchofengland.org/LLF)

The Bishop of Coventry set out an over view of how this work had been done, who had been involved and when the work had taken place. Eeva John, the Enabling Officer for this work, talked about the 'cloud of witnesses' who had contributed to a challenging and sometimes painful set of conversations. The LLF project will produce a set of teaching and conversational resources estimated to be 16,000 pages, not a set of recommendations or a report. These will be available by the time of the July 2020 meeting of General Synod. The Bishop of Coventry described these resources as a 'call to action' to the church: each parish will be asked to engage with the resources over the course of at least a year. This will be a call to churches to engage with those who understand things differently.

Members of the LLF task group, including the Bishop of Salisbury, discussed some of the challenges they had faced in working together. Bishop Nick and others spoke of a major falling out within the group during one meeting, when some members had felt that they weren't being heard. Despite this, the members spoke about the power of grace-filled conversation and attention to one another.

So Soon?

Church Representation Rules (Amendment) Resolution 2020 GS 2155

New Rules having only just been brought into force, there were some small corrections which needed to be made. But we turned the page of the Order Paper for the day to be met with several pages and 16 different proposed amendments brought by one eagle-eyed member of General Synod from another place relating to enrolment and appeals on elections. All were grateful for the Business Committee accepting these amendments obviating the need for a debate. We moved fairly swiftly and methodically through the business.

The Scandal of our Generation

Windrush Commitment and Legacy GS 2156A and 2156B

This was a timely but long-overdue debate and took place on the day that 90+ people of the Windrush generation were deported to Jamaica. It was introduced by the Rev Andrew Moughton-Mumby, a vicar in Walworth, South London who brought his Private Members Motion only a short time ago. He had the most horrendous stories of forced deportations of individuals who had lived in this country for many years. However, particularly relevant to the Synod were the very embarrassing stories of those who had been discriminated against by the Anglican church to whom they had been given letters of invitation by their church back in the West Indies. Archbishop Justin was so moved that he abandoned his prepared speech and gave one of abject apology in response to what we had heard.

The focus of the debate was rather altered by two amendments which highlighted the lack of BAME Anglicans in leadership in the church. This was reflected in many of the following speeches although the Bishop of Leicester recounted how a positive programme of identifying and recruitment of potential BAME leaders in his diocese had proved very successful.

This debate could easily be dismissed in Salisbury Diocese as irrelevant but even in this Diocese, if we look carefully at population statistics, we are likely to find that people from BAME backgrounds are underrepresented in our churches and even more so in the leadership of our churches. We must take note of what was said here. We can and must *all* do better.

Not one left standing - 56th Report of the Standing Orders Committee GS2157

This was supposed to be deemed business which doesn't need to be debated but no, the same member from another diocese brought forward amendments so that the Standing Orders relating to appeals would be absolutely fit for purpose. His amendments were accepted bringing his total to 34 amendments carried in one afternoon. These people are important. The main role of Synod is to legislate and to do it well. Timely and appropriate amendments are much better than returning later to do a tidy-up. But it has to be said that very few members of Synod were left in in the Chamber mark this achievement. Our intrepid reporter for the Salisbury Diocese went above and beyond the call of duty by remaining in the Chamber at short notice when others were in the tea room.

DAY 3

Big issues and big commitments

One of the pleasures of attending Synod is to participate in the daily worship which on the morning of the 3rd day for the last few years has included a bible study led by the Revd Dr Isabelle Hamley who sometimes presents the Thought for the Day on Radio 4. We did the final chapter of 1 Peter, the text that will be used to frame the Lambeth Conference.

Safeguarding: response to recommendations in Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA) May 2019 investigation report in respect of the Diocese of Chichester and Peter Ball Case Studies GS 2158

The Synod was reminded of the sensitivity of this debate and the need to be respectful of victims and survivors of abuse both in the chamber and beyond. We kept silence before the Bishop of Bath and Wells (who later was to receive a prolonged standing ovation at the invitation of the Archbishop of Canterbury who thanked him for the work he had done) outlined the progress made in Safeguarding and the recommendations contained in the Report. The Archbishop of Canterbury reaffirmed his apology and his insistence of the need to hear and heed the voices of survivors and victims. The journey is nowhere near complete for us to be 100% safeguarding-compliant.

The motion before us was to accept all the initial IICSA recommendations. The Bishop of Huddersfield, who will take over the lead on National Church Safeguarding from the Bishop of Bath and Wells, proposed an amendment which added:

- a commitment to taking concrete actions following our apologies;
- taking a survivor-centred approach to safeguarding and including arrangements for redress for survivors; and
- asking Synod to regularly receive progress reports.

The Bishop of London underlined the need for a culture change and our behaviours, priorities and decisions, and said that the change must begin with the Bishops. There were many speeches, all moving, tear-filled, challenging, apologetic and unanimously supporting the motion. John Spence, Chair of the Finance Committee, made a commitment that funds would be available to make redress possible.

Every church person in the Diocese needs to reflect on what more you can do to protect children and vulnerable adults, and what can you do to ensure the necessary checks and training are undertaken without hesitation or complaint.

After keeping silence and prayer, an electronic vote of the whole Synod was ordered. It was carried unanimously, none against, no abstentions. The further recommendations of IICSA will almost certainly be before Synod in July.

A Grave Matter - End to Pauper's Funerals GS 2169

Sam Margrave, a General Synod lay member from the Diocese of Coventry, introduced an important Private Member's motion on the topic of Pauper's funerals to the General Synod. He explained that significant number of bereaved families were unable to afford funeral costs or went into 'funeral poverty'. They were experiencing a 'postcode lottery' of different practices around the country.

Sam highlighted some less than compassionate approaches taking place around the country and these included no one being allowed to be present at a service; service times that make attending impossible; ashes often not given back; and no headstone allowed, enforcing a policy of unmarked graves. Such "funerals" are called public health funerals and there has been a steady rise and this is expected to continue. Our right action as the national church could make a difference if we choose to.

The General Synod backed a motion put by Mr Margrave after some amendments calling for the Government to develop, with council leaders, a national plan and basic standards for 'pauper' funerals. In addition Synod also supported plans for the Church to work with others to tackle the issues raised in the debate. The debate had reminded us that everyone is made in the image of God and is unique and precious.

Resourcing Churches and Growing new Church Communities: Children and Youth Ministry GS 2161

This was a motion brought by the Chair of the Mission and Public Affairs Committee, Mark Sheard. The detailed paper supporting the motion was supported by many statistics on attendance, age, gender and number of churches which framed many of the comments in the debate. The message is clear: the whole church must respond to the issue of a dramatic and continuing fall in attendance by under-16s. One telling statistic is that there less than 1000 churches from over 16,000 with more than 25 under-16s. Indeed, there is a existential threat to the continuance of the Church of England in 10 years' time.

The number of people wishing to speak was huge. Keith Leslie was called to speak. There were several comments on who and what should be measured, what the statistics were actually telling us and the applicability of urban data to other contexts. The main motion sought to concentrate on success and allocate funding accordingly was weakened by amendments in that the motion. Synod supported amendments which will result in funding being spread more widely including to those who cannot emulate larger churches' success.

Fit for purpose? Draft Diocesan Boards of Education Measure for Revision GS 2131A

This is the first real update of Church education legislation since 1991 and it was long overdue. The name of the Measure doesn't set the blood racing but the governance and legal framework of DBEs across the country, responsible for the education of some 1 million children who attend Church of England schools, should. Yet at the end of the previous lively debate on Children and Youth Ministry in our churches, the debating hall gained quite a lot of empty seats.

The Steering Committee had aimed at guidance rather than statutory prescription thus allowing dioceses to draw up their own plans according to local needs. Most of the work had been done in advance by a Revision Committee (this one included Salisbury lay rep, Debbie McIsaac). Because it was a very sparsely attended debate and 40 members need to stand to signify their wish for an amendment to be debated, it restricted the possibility of this happening. Even so, many amendments were proposed which largely called for more accountability to be included in the Measure.

The most controversial item was a change which the highly respected Charles George QC, Dean of the Arches and Auditor, had proposed to the Revision Committee. It would have required all DBEs to be incorporated charities (CIOs or companies). The Steering and Revision Committees decided that, given the level of consultation that had taken place with the DBEs across the country, some of which wanted to retain their unincorporated form, they would leave it to Synod members to propose the relevant amendments. One lay member of Synod tried, but his amendment only did half the job.

So the Draft Measure was approved and will come into effect on 1 January 2022. It was not Synod at its best in doing its key role of scrutinising legislation.

What is fair representation? General Synod Elections 2020 and Allocation of Seats GS 2162

The Synod was invited to approve the allocation of places for the directly elected diocesan representatives to the Lower Houses of the Convocations (clergy) and to the House of Laity for the quinquennium 2020-2025. The allocation of seats is decided by the number of electors in numbers of licensed clergy; and the number of lay members recorded in the electoral rolls. The Business Committee recommended the number of lay seats are divided on a 70 Canterbury: 30 York proportion although a numerical reckoning would put the representation at 75:25. An amendment to this effect was proposed by one member and supported by a few others but was defeated.

The speeches included concerns that falling number of clergy, especially in northern Dioceses, through failing to recruit and redundancy, unfairly reduces their representation at General Synod. The 70:30 bias helped increase representation from the northern Dioceses. The Bishop of Leeds preferred allocation on a population basis rather than membership. After all, we serve the nation, not just our congregations. Justice and equity won the day, and the proposals as presented were passed.

Because of the fall in clergy numbers in the Diocese of Salisbury, the number of clergy proctors has been reduced from 5 to 4. The number of Laity members for Salisbury remains at 6 people.

Day 4 Justice and Jesus

Communicating the Gospel Diocesan Synod Motion: Through His Poverty

The Diocese of Leeds called on the Archbishops' Council to commission a study that explores:

- (a) the reasons why, in contrast to Jesus, the Church of England is generally less effective in communicating with, and attracting people from more disadvantage communities; and
- (b) ways of addressing and reversing this situation.

A well-attended Synod put forward many supportive amendments on this subject. Speakers spoke of current projects already being pursued with disadvantaged communities and what had already been achieved in this area since Faith in the City published in 1985. Several speakers explained if they were Jesus, they would be able to do and attract more people, but being only mortal, they had their limitations. Speakers also claimed that there was a problem with communication and understanding with people from disadvantaged communities and with the church in general.

Two speakers were called from this Diocese. Rev. Chris Tebbitt spoke of loneliness and social isolation on estates and the importance of clergy housing in terms of mission and evangelism, saying that "inappropriate housing sends out totally the wrong message and tone to the community. It affects the wellbeing of the clergy and their family". Keith Leslie talked about the importance of communication and the language we use and his experience as a Street Pastor. Other speakers spoke about poverty and the sheer effort of daily living which left very little energy for anything not essential for survival. Some reminded Synod that poverty also existed in rural areas where it was less visible.

Synod supported this motion and called on the Archbishops' Council to commission a study notwithstanding that the Secretary General's report referred to the several reports that had already been done.

Farewell to the Archbishop of York

Archbishop Justin Welby praised the Archbishop of York who is currently travelling in the Pacific. He said: "He (John Sentamu) has gone to visit parts of the world which are suffering the effects of climate change right now. He has gone typically to respond to an invitation for him to go and preach and be alongside those who are suffering: a pattern of his life throughout his ministry."

The Archbishop continued: “Speaking about Sentamu when he’s not here is both dangerous but also deeply liberating for it means we can show our gratitude, thanks and love for him without him being able to stop us.”

Recalling the Archbishop of York’s work on the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry, Archbishop Justin added that “he has said that he himself was stopped at least eight times by the police”. The Archbishop of Canterbury continued: “To honour his memory, his lifelong, bitter cruel and wicked experience of institutional racism which has existed and does exist within the Church of England we must be dedicated to actions not just words.”

Reflecting on the Archbishop of York’s impact nationally, the Archbishop of Canterbury said: “The Church of England will miss you Sentamu and the wider country will miss you. There aren’t a lot of bishops who are so well known outside the church.”

Summing up the Archbishop of Canterbury concluded: “Thank you for being obedient to your call and to the voice of the Lord calling you to speak out and to speak up. Thank you for being you. Thank you to you and to Margaret for your example of love and service, dedication and sacrifice in so very many ways.” He closed by saying: “Let us try to show not only in our appreciation but also in our actions, that we will let his prophetic ministry bear its full fruit in our church.”

The Fringe Meetings

There are many fringe meetings organised during Synod – breakfast, lunch and after the sitting concludes at 7.00 p.m. which Synod members can chose to attend. In addition to the two topical examples below, there are meetings of those with a shared theological or ecclesial tradition.

Thy Kingdom Come. This meeting celebrated the worldwide phenomenon that this idea had become, working with all Christian groups across the country and now countries. Archbishop Justin spoke briefly about it and we were shown facts and figures which revealed the vast numbers of people who had been engaged with the programme last year. We were then broken into small groups to discuss and suggest ideas for the future and given the new resources for this year. Roll on our next celebration in Salisbury Cathedral.

Synod's Environmental Group This meeting was held on the evening of the climate change debate and attracted more people than anticipated. Bishop Nick talked through a PowerPoint showing the work that had been achieved and now the immediate targets that still had to be met. The main speaker was Ruth Valerio who has written the Archbishop's Lent book this year – an important read for us all. The whole #livelent programme is linked to the book for the first time and resources can be found on-line.

Any Questions?

The list of members of General Synod who contribute to this report can be found at <https://www.salisbury.anglican.org/whos-who/synods/general-synod> and can be contacted via Church House or by email.

P. S. **SNEM Senior non-executive member of the Cathedral chapter**