

General Synod of the Church of England
8-10 February 2022

REPORT from the elected members of General Synod from the Diocese of Salisbury

This second meeting of the members of General Synod elected in the Autumn of 2021, was its first real business meeting. With about 60% of the clergy and lay people newly elected, there is a lot to learn and a lot to be gained from the fresh perspective that new members bring.

Unusually, this Group of Sessions has had a considerable amount of press coverage only partly because of the items on the agenda. One item not on the agenda but lurking in the background was a discussion paper *A consultation document: Bishops and their ministry fit for a new context* from the Archbishops and the Bishop of London. This wide-ranging paper attracted attention through *The Times* story on the front page of the 7 February edition and a Church Times front page with a coloured map of England showing five 'super dioceses'. Known as the *Ely Report* after the Rt Rev Stephen Conway, Bishop of Ely (and formerly the Bishop of Ramsbury 2006-2010) who led a Task Group of three, the exercise included 80-hour long interviews with 'key stakeholders' including all of the Diocesan bishops.

About this report

For the first time, our Report is being emailed to all lay and clergy electors in the Diocese and, as before, being published via Grapevine. We hope you will scan our Report for items of interest to you. If you want to access the supporting papers, search the Church of England website using the GS number. If you want to listen to the debates, they are available on YouTube. Go to YouTube and then search for General Synod February 2022 and a list of dates and afternoon or morning sessions should appear.

TUESDAY 8 FEBRUARY

STANDING ORDERS AND REMOTE MEETINGS GS 2177

Mixed mode Synod

The Standing Orders made in November 2020 permitting remote meetings via video conferencing were revived and will be in operation until August 2022. For the first time, a 'mixed-mode' Synod was held with most members present in the Chamber and several either in anti-rooms in Church House or at home in their parishes.

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS: THE ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY

Transformation, renewal and relationships

In the face of challenges such as global inequality, climate change, technological change and vaccine nationalism, Archbishop Justin Welby said that we seem to have lost 'the muscle memory of how to be together'.

He reflected that a key lesson of Covid has been that the illusion of individualism is just that: an illusion. The connection needed for the virus to spread has been a manifestation of the connections we share in so many ways. We cannot live without affecting others and it is our responsibility as Christians to look out for our global neighbours.

"God's answer to the question 'Am I my sister or brothers' keeper?' comes back unequivocally: "Yes. Yes you are, and your sisters and brothers are found in every

community on the planet. In their flourishing is also your own. In their decline is also your judgement.”

He warned that we are forgetting God and thus failing to see the divine in each individual and the call to love. In the face of differences and disagreements, he challenged Synod to come with an attitude of service and love, determined to see the innate value in each other and approach discussions with humility. He put forward three habits that will lead to transformation: having the courage to reimagine; allowing ourselves to be renewed by the Holy Spirit; and daring to work towards the world God wants for us where relationships are restored, justice flows down like a torrent and mercy like an ever-flowing stream. He concluded that it is in the practice of these habits that the grace of God will guide, hold and encourage us.

BUSINESS COMMITTEE REPORT GS 2241

What was on the Agenda – and what was not . . .

The Business Committee, which sets the Agenda for the Group of Sessions, tries to balance big picture concerns such as racial justice and safeguarding along with essential legislation which in this Synod was about the practicalities that would enable churches to reduce their carbon footprint and move towards our 'net-zero' target. Included were reports on key vision and strategy items like *Setting God's People Free* the Church of England language for its programme to nurture and release (lay) missional disciples that started in 2017.

There is always a Take Note debate on the Agenda. It is an opportunity to comment on what is on the agenda and what is missing. Salisbury Diocese representative Gill Verschoyle spoke in the debate articulating her concerns that the agenda did not adequately represent the real concerns of local parishes around falling congregations, parish finances, ever larger benefices and specifically asked why we couldn't have had a longer set of sessions to incorporate items such as these.

Another key issue for the Business Committee was the prioritisation they gave to including all those who could not travel to this group of sessions because of Covid and other reasons and including them through a video link as full participants. Alan Jeans and Ruth Abernathy (Channel Islands) both needed to use the remote facility from their homes and took part throughout. There had clearly been a huge amount of work done to include as many people as possible at a time when Church House was short-staffed due to illness.

ARCHBISHOPS' RACIAL JUSTICE COMMISSION AND UPDATE TO SYNOD ON RACIAL JUSTICE WORK GS 2243

Taking Action

An update on the work on Racial Justice began with an address from Lord Boateng, the Chair of the Archbishop's Racial Justice Commission. In an extraordinary and sometimes emotional speech Lord Boateng spoke of the personal faith that drives his and should drive all our efforts in combatting the sin of racism in the church and in society. “Race is a gaping wound in the body of Christ” he said, whilst pointing out that the racial diversity of the government front bench is greater than that on display of the platform of Synod.

The Racial Justice Commission was set up following a recommendation from the *Lament to Action Report*. The focus on action proved a theme not just in Lord Boateng's speech but in

many of the speeches that followed. There have been many noble and well-intentioned reports but little action. Can people of colour trust the church that things will be different this time? As one speaker put it “Money will be required to ensure action takes place.” John Spence, Chair of the Finance Committee followed and he reiterated the Archbishops’ Council’s intention to find money to support this work.

Progress has been made on 35 of the 40 recommendations of *Lament to Action*, but much more needs to be done. The Racial Justice Commission’s work continues with visits to dioceses around the country. Lord Boateng said

“We will wash your feet but we will also hold your feet to the fire”.

QUESTIONS PART 1

Synod asks the questions and sometimes gets the answers

Questions is one of the most important and interesting sessions at Synod. Readers can find all questions and written answers at <https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2022-02/QUESTIONS%20Notice%20Paper%20February%202022.pdf> including of course those submitted by the members from the Diocese.

The Session itself concentrates on ‘Supplementary Questions’ which are asked when the member does not think a full answer has been given or wants more information. There are always more questions than Synod can go through in a session so there is a rotations system to ensure that, over time, all areas are covered. So for the first time, the Business Committee scheduled two Questions sessions.

The first question was what had led to the Rural Affairs Group being disbanded. The answer given led to a supplementary question which our Diocesan Synod representative Debbie Mclsaac asked. Her question prompted a lengthy response from Mark Sheard as Chair of the Mission and Public Affairs Council which corrected some of the information given in the written answer to the original question. Other areas for questioning included *Living in Love and Faith*, the numbers of single parish benefices and sizes of multi-parish benefices, the largest of which contains 29 parishes. There is also one parish that contains 12 ‘worshipping centres.’

WEDNESDAY 9 FEBRUARY

SAFEGUARDING REPORT GS 2244

The journey so far but still so far to go

The business on Wednesday began with the important topic of Safeguarding which has become almost a standing agenda item with presentations from the Lead Bishop for Safeguarding Dr Jonathan Gibbs Bishop of Huddersfield and Maggie Atkinson Chair of the Independent Safeguarding Board. It was especially helpful for this newly-elected Synod to be given a clear understanding of the Church of England journey and its commitment to ensuring the safety of all.

During the Take Note debate, there was an acknowledgement that there is much more to be done. Although money is often discussed in connection with Safeguarding this is clearly an important task of our Church and one which cannot be underestimated. It was a sobering debate.

An amending motion expressing disapproval of the Report was moved but not put the vote when a motion to Move to Next Business easily passed on a counted vote of the whole Synod. This is a procedural device which means which that the subject matter of the amendment cannot come back to this Synod during its lifetime. If you wish to understand key parts of our Safeguarding commitment and journey so far including IICSA, Safe Spaces, National Safeguarding Team and Survivor Support then an easy document to read would be GS 2244 found on the General Synod website.

THE FACULTY JURISDICTION (AMENDMENT) RULES 2022 GS 2245

Towards 2030 Carbon Net Zero: Changes to List A and List B

In November 2020, the Environment Working Group put before Synod a background paper called *Rising to the Challenge: reaching Net Zero by 2030* (GS Misc 1262). The paper provided members with an update on progress made by the Church in reducing energy use and associated carbon emissions, following the Synod's resolution on climate change in February 2020. The paper also included recommendations for giving further effect to the Church's ongoing commitment to working towards net zero emissions.

In this debate, the Synod was asked to approve the proposals which affect List A (no permissions required) and List B (Archdeacons' permissions) provisions, taking church buildings a step nearer to achieving Carbon Net Zero by 2030. Fiona Norris spoke in favour of the changes, citing a colleague working in Central America and the recent survey of young people which concluded that only 1 in 10 thought that the church was doing enough.

Several amendments which would have reduced the impact of the proposed changes were put forward. One that was hotly debated sought to ensure proposals to replace a like-for-like fossil fuel boiler could be considered by an Archdeacon rather than be the subject of a faculty process. This amendment was narrowly lost by 3 votes (142 to 145 with 12 recorded abstentions).

One amendment was accepted: List B proposals will now include installation of equipment for receiving (and, if desired, sharing) wireless broadband services on the exterior of a church building, church hall or similar building a matter of interest and important to rural churches who could not get online during the pandemic.

The items now included within the Faculty Jurisdiction Rules 2022 are:

- draught proofing, insulating heating pipes, and low energy lighting;
- the replacement of a boiler in the same location and using the existing fuel supply if it is a non-fossil fuel supply.
- roof insulation. Where roof replacement work is carried out on a church or on a church hall or other building, consideration must be given to installing roof insulation. Where roof insulation is proposed for a listed building, a faculty must be obtained.
- soft furnishings etc. List A will provide that changes to kneelers, hassocks, pew runners or cushions are permitted so long as they do not result in a major change to the overall appearance of the church. List A will permit carpet runners between pews.
- replacement of gas and oil tanks must be by Faculty.
- Lists A and B to permit the installation of electric vehicle charging points.
- List B to include provision for the installation of photovoltaic panels on a church, or on a church hall or similar building, which is not listed or in a conservation area.

- List B to include provision for the installation of electric pew heaters.

Please check the detail with your Archdeacon to ensure that your proposals are managed within the new Rules.

CHALLENGING SLAVERY AND HUMAN TRAFFICKING GS 2243

A Timely Debate

A motion from the Diocese of Durham asked Synod to hold the Government to account on protecting victims of child-trafficking including those who were now vulnerable adults seeking asylum in the UK. The motion was carried unanimously.

The mover of the motion shared the story of 'Stephen', a victim of child trafficking from Vietnam at the age of 12 who endured 4 years of slavery on cannabis farm. He was viewed by the state as an illegal immigrant and due to be deported. But with the support of his fosterer Rev David Tomlinson, a petition garnered over 100k signatures along with the support of his local MP. The decision was successfully overturned and he was given leave to remain.

The debate at Synod coincided with the debate in the House of Lords on the Nationality and Borders Bill including outcomes for trafficked children on reaching adulthood, the limited time period in which a victim must provide evidence and the disregard for the impact that trauma has on children being able to recall and share details. Bishop Sarah Mullally highlighted the current conflict of interest in the Nationality and Borders Bill between upholding immigration rules whilst also offering safeguarding to vulnerable victims and her opinion that the Bill was failing the most vulnerable in society.

We were reminded of the key role of churches in being the eyes and ears of our community and that we need to 'step up what we do if we are truly going to care' for these people. It was humbling to hear of the work of the Lords Spiritual on the Bill into the small hours of the previous day - there was laughter when Alistair Bianchi, who introduced the motion, cheekily commented that he didn't realise the bishops did any work! He was also pleased to hear that Challenging Slavery and Human Trafficking would be on the agenda for the Lambeth Conference.

REPORT OF THE REVIEW OF CLERGY REMUNERATION GS 2247

Clergy remuneration, stress and wellbeing and the cost of living

The Bishop of Hereford Richard Jackson presented this Take Note motion on clergy remuneration, stress and wellbeing, following the results of a survey of more than 3,700 clergy completed in mid-2021.

The report stimulated considerable debate, especially given the rising cost of living relating to increased energy costs following the pandemic. It also lamented the fact that clergy stipends had fallen behind the rate of inflation for nearly a decade and that the clergy pensions scheme had also received considerable reductions in the last ten years.

Despite the acknowledged struggles, the report found that 62% of clergy reported that they were 'comfortable' or 'doing all right'. The Bishop said however that it was regrettable and that attention needed to be paid to the 25% who said they were only 'just getting by' and a further 13% who said they were 'really struggling'. Getting them extra assistance and finding a

mechanism to effectively reach out to those and others in a similar position is most important. The great work of the Clergy Support Trust for those in greatest need was highlighted.

Our diocesan member, Rev Jane Palmer expressed her disappointment in the report and felt extra support from bodies like the CST, whilst welcome, was not dealing with the real issue and just 'kicking the can down the road'. She pointed out that the 38.5% in the two worst categories should be understood as more than 1,400 individual clergy in significant need and who felt the current support package was not sufficient to meet their needs and which could put off younger people pursuing a vocation to ministry in the church.

In summing up, +Richard said that the Church Commissioners were committed to trying to keep up with the rate of inflation in the coming years and not fall further behind in real terms but they also did not anticipate a significant, above inflation increase in stipends would be affordable.

GOD'S PEOPLE SET FREE: LIVING AS MISSIONARY DISCIPLES GS 2248

Be prepared to give an answer for the hope that you have

The Bishop of Gloucester began by asking 'what does it mean for us to be the church?'. Everyone is called to be the body of Christ. Discipleship is not just 'doing worship' – we are sent out from worship to be the church in the world in our daily lives. A short video was shown of a number of Christians who were being 'chaplains' in their lives. These included a midwife, a magistrate who prayed for guidance in making the right decisions in court and a family with primary aged children who prayed together.

We should be a church of missionary disciples and enable the whole people of God to live out their faith in the everyday world. Each of us should give an account of what we believe and why and as God's people should evangelise the nation, using the five marks of mission which are to: proclaim the good news of the Kingdom; teach, baptise and nurture believers; respond to human need by loving service; transform unjust structures of society; challenge violence of every kind and pursue peace and reconciliation; and to strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth.

Lay people, rather than being 'rota fodder', should be trained and resourced to witness. Church and worship should be changed so that everyone can find their way to the Christian life. All the baptised need to shine as a light in the world.

QUESTIONS– PART 2

Open issues and a final answer (?) on individual cups for the Eucharist

A question was asked as to what information the Church had on the impact of long interregna. Mark Sheard, Chair of the Mission and Public Affairs Group said that so far as he was aware, no research had been done but thought that the-length of time was an issue that should be examined.

Concerns were expressed that the Church of England's Youth Council had disbanded since it was not attracting viable numbers. The Bishop of Durham hoped that a different way of providing representation by young people at General Synod could be found though this has not

proved possible during the pandemic. If Synod wants greater youth representation, suggestions and proposals for consideration by Synod would be welcomed.

Questions about the administration of the sacrament in one kind or both kinds, ways to administer Communion and the use of individual cups have been asked in every Groups of Sessions since July 2020. In response to a question in November 2021, the Bishop of Lichfield on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishop said that while the House of Bishops was interested in knowing what was happening and recognised that local practices had developed ‘we clearly as a House of Bishops and as bishops individually are not interested in policing this in an inquisitorial or a punitive way.’

The answer this time was as clear as it is going to be for the foreseeable future. The written answer from the Bishop of Lichfield on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishop was:

As I mentioned in November [2021], the House of Bishops has agreed that it does not wish to propose the necessary legislative business to the General Synod which would make the use of individual cups indisputably lawful.

This very unusual season in the life of the Church has meant that different churches and ministers have adopted various forms of administering Holy Communion. In the oral response to a supplementary question, the Bishop made it abundantly clear that they did not want the question about the use of individual cups (or other local practices) asked again:

‘The House of Bishops and the bishops individually have no interest in policing this and our behaviour demonstrates that.’

It was the final question answered at the session - the Bishops are hoping that they have given a final answer.

THURSDAY 10 FEBRUARY

GROUP WORK

The morning opened with members of Synod doing some group work on *Diversity, difference and disagreement: resources for effecting culture change* GS Misc 1308. The session was well-attended and well-conducted ensuring everyone was challenged to consider how well they listened and how each one could make a positive difference.

REPORT BY THE GOVERNANCE REVIEW GROUP GS 2249 and GS 2239

A BIG piece of work . . .

As part of the Transforming Effectiveness stream, taking forward the Governance Review of the Church of England and the NCIs will be one of the most significant pieces of work for this Quinquennium. The background is that the House of Bishops originally commissioned a review of the national governance structures of the Church of England in December 2019. The resulting Report (GS 2239) recommends that ‘most of the existing national governance bodies of the Church of England and their underlying functions should be brought into a single charitable body established by legislation and called Church of England National Services (CENS). The governance for CENS would be carried out by a Board of Trustees. The report then goes on to make some suggestions regarding the composition of the CENS Board and the number and nature of its sub-committees.

The Bishop of Leeds said the underlying principles were rationalisation, simplification and clarification but not centralisation. The goal is to make clearer who makes decisions and how. He acknowledged that even the most experienced members of Synod found it difficult to work out how the Church 'works' and that it was complex and bewildering. He said that this was a request to enter into the next stage of the listening process and affirm the principles outlined, with the Review Group coming back with legislative proposals. Clearly, there was concern that Synod might 'butcher' the proposals when it returned as it did to similar wide-ranging reforms proposed 25 years ago.

A clear welcome to the proposals was sought by the Review Group. The first proposed amendment was to replace 'welcome the Report' with 'thank the Review Group for its report' and update on the basis that 'welcome was taken to indicate that Synod agreed with the proposals when in fact there had been no debate or discussion about the proposals themselves'.

As the vote was about to be taken, there were technical glitches. Order papers were not available and the App was not current which means that members might not be clear what they were voting for or against. When the vote on the amendment came, the result was 162 in favour, 153 against, recorded abstentions 10. (Synod was later reminded that it is was the practice to greet the results of every vote with silence.)

The second amendment sought to remove the proposal for a Nominations Committee where there would be eligibility pre-selection. The Bishop of Leeds resisted on the basis that the issue should be on the table going forward. The amendment was lost by 124 votes to 199 with 24 recorded abstentions.

The third proposed amendment was to have a further Report and specific proposals to be brought to Synod rather than going straight to introducing legislation. The amendment was lost by the vote in favour 150, against 185, recorded abstentions 16.

The main motion (as amended) was clearly carried on a vote by Houses. Time and determination will tell whether Synod will have the stamina and resilience to see through a process of fundamental reform which balances the various interests to a satisfactory outcome. (Any reader interested in these matters is welcome to contact Debbie McIsaac, who is a member of the Governance Review Reference Group.)

PERSECUTED CHURCH GS2246A and GS 2246B

An Ecumenical and world-wide issue

Synod were asked to support a motion from the Diocese of Lichfield encouraging the Church to pray for persecuted Christians and to offer support to them through link Dioceses. The motion also asked for the issue to be addressed at this year's Lambeth Conference. The motion was considerably strengthened by an amendment, supported by the Diocese of Lichfield, which offered practical resources and suggestions for action on the subject.

There followed a moving series of contributions from members of Synod. The Bishop of Truro, who led an Independent Review into this issue on behalf of the Foreign Office, spoke of his shock at the scale and severity of the issue. Archbishop Angaelos, the Coptic Archbishop of London said 'we all bear the cross of persecution but we must never accept it for others.

In a counted vote Synod supported the amended motion unanimously. Here in Salisbury Diocese, with a link to South Sudan where people are regularly persecuted and killed for their faith, we are therefore urged to keep praying, supporting and advocating for our brothers and sisters in Christ. Do look at the Order Paper for this debate which gives suggestions for practical action and links to resources.

CROWN NOMINATIONS COMMISSION FOR THE SEE OF CANTERBURY GS 2253

The who and how of choosing the next Archbishop of Canterbury

The final piece of business was a Take Note debate as part of a wider consultation on proposed changes to the Membership of the Crown Nominations Commission for the See of Canterbury.

Approximately 25% of the Archbishop's time is taken with matters regarding the wider Anglican Communion. GS 2253 proposes a revised membership of the CNC with 9 representatives of the national interests of the Church of England, 3 from the Diocese of Canterbury and 5 from the wider Anglican Communion, as part of a recognition that the Archbishop is seen as first among equals and a focus for unity and therefore the wider Anglican Communion should be involved in his or her future appointment.

Interestingly, it was mostly those on Synod from the wider Anglican Communion who spoke against a wider representation on the basis that most Bishops in the wider Anglican Communion are elected and would not welcome 'interference' from outside their province and so why should the Church of England welcome it? This proposal could indeed have the opposite effect to its intention and appear more colonial, rather than less.

Others spoke about the Archbishop needing, at present, to remain neutral or cautious on some issues that were significant in England because of the sensitivity of the subject in the wider Communion and therefore, a rotating presidency of the wider Anglican Communion would give the Archbishop of Canterbury more freedom to speak out about national matters.

Synod took note of the Report in all three Houses. It could be expected, however, that somewhat different proposals will be put forward.

FAREWELLS

Bishop of Winchester and Bishop of Liverpool

Synod said Farewell to the Bishop of Winchester, Tm Dakin and in a somewhat lengthier and more detailed address, to the Bishop of Liverpool, Paul Bayes. Both retired Bishops were present in the gallery.

25 February 2022

***Members of the House of Clergy and the House of Laity of the
Diocese of Salisbury and the Channel Islands***