



**February 2020**  
**Report to Peterborough**  
**Diocesan Synod**

The business of General Synod falls into four categories:

Standing items

Legislative business

Ordering the life of the church

The church and the world

*In this report these four categories will be used to summarise the work of the February sittings, but the emphasis will be on those items which have a direct or particular effect on our churches or communities, and which might require actions on the part of parishes, chaplaincies and schools. If you are interested in an area which seems to be thinly covered in this report, please do follow it up with one of the General Synod members, or look at the General Synod pages of the Church of England website, which include a full report of the proceedings, and a chance to watch back the live feed of the synod.*

Revd Canon Beverley Hollins

February 2020

## Standing items

These are the parts of synod business which always come up, such as the report of the business committee and Synod Question Time, as well as opportunities to listen to the presidential address and addresses by visiting dignitaries from other part of the communion and sister churches.

In his presidential address, Archbishop Justin referred to the theme of this year's Lambeth Conference, drawn from 1 Peter, 'God's church for God's world', and especially to 1 Pete 5.8: 'Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.' As shepherds, he suggested, we need to be alert to the threats to our flock, and to be clear that the enemy is the devil, not each other. Archbishop Justin also emphasised the importance of our having 'professional standards' (a phrase he admitted great fondness for) and that these standards might be defined as 'love in action'.



## Legislative business

As an established church, there are laws governing the church which have to pass through the houses of parliament, and which originate in General Synod, where most of the work is done. At any Synod, these 'Measures' will appear for First reading, Revision Stage, or Second Reading, before being passed on to parliament for final approval. The February synod included revision stage work on the **Cathedrals Measure** and the **Diocesan Boards of Education Measure**. Unusually, all three stages for a measure happened during this synod, allowing the **Channel Islands Measure** to move rapidly towards enabling changes to bring the Channel Islands into the Diocese of Salisbury, and to update some aspects of legislation applying to the islands.

A number of existing measures were also amended to bring them up to date. The one that will be of most interest to Diocesan and deanery synod members is **The Church Representation Rules (Amendment) Resolution 2020**. The title sounds dry, but the effect is more interesting: elections to be held for General Synod later this year can now be held electronically.

*Those who are elected to Deanery Synods at this year's APCM's will be invited to vote for new General Synod members via an electronic voting system, and will receive information about how to vote by email. Members who do not have email accounts will still be able to vote by post in the old way.*

Synod also passed a motion reversing the decision in rule M8 (5) of the Church Representation Rules 2020, which means that now **there is no term limit on serving as a Deanery Synod representatives, unless the APCM chooses to introduce one.**

## Ordering the life of the church

### The Clergy Covenant for Wellbeing Act of Synod 2020

The Act of Synod will be proclaimed at diocesan synod. It shows the importance that Synod attaches to the Covenant, and the expectation that across the country care will be taken to support the clergy. Study materials are available in a document attractively called *GS Misc 1246*, using a set of questions designed to help synods and PCC's to consider how we ensure the ongoing wellbeing of those who dedicate their lives to serving the church.

### Living in Love and Faith

Resources to help with thinking on issues around human sexuality will be released in the summer. The Pastoral Advisory Group has now made available a set of 'Pastoral Principles for Living Well Together', and are publishing a set of cards outlining them and offering resources for study and prayer. A short film on the principles can be seen at [churchofengland.org/PAG](https://www.churchofengland.org/PAG).

The principles are:

- acknowledge prejudice
- speak into silence
- address ignorance
- ease our fear
- admit hypocrisy
- pay attention to power



## **Safeguarding**

The Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA) has made some recommendations for the church, to help us improve our safeguarding and to support survivors of past abuse. More recommendations from IICSA will follow, but it was important to act on what has already been said, and to state clearly that the church feels the shame of what has been done to vulnerable people by clergy and lay people in official roles in the past, and that we are sorry – and will act on our apology to make reparations to survivors.

## **Children and Youth Ministry**

A report was laid before synod reminding us of the urgency of reaching out to children and young people, and the rapid decline in numbers of children in our churches. The motion before synod affirmed the importance of working with children and youth and proposed that investment should be focused on successful churches, expecting those churches to then cascade training and support to smaller churches. Growing Faith, the strategy of the children and youth department of the Church of England, wasn't mentioned in the motion. The emphasis, and lack of connection to Growing Faith, concerned a number of diocesan children's work departments and General Synod Members. Peterborough Diocese is a Trailblazer diocese for the Growing Faith approach, which underlies our SDF scheme, and so it was Peterborough members who worked on behalf of a much bigger group to amend the motion and ensure that smaller churches are viewed as equally important as the large ones. Other members also offered amendments, and so the eventual motion that was carried was much more inclusive and representative of the church than the original.

## **The church and the world**

### **Climate Emergency and Carbon Reduction Targets**

This is a huge priority for the world, and it is vital that the Church both engages and sets an example. The original motion suggested a target of 2045 for the Church of England to become a carbon-neutral church, through reducing and adapting energy use in every building across the whole church. This was considered to be too slow by many members, and so the challenge placed by General Synod is for 'all parts of the Church of England, including parishes, BMOs, education institutions, dioceses, cathedrals and the NCIs, to work to achieve year-on-year reductions in emissions and urgently examine what would be required to reach net zero emissions by 2030 in order that a plan of action can be drawn up to achieve that target'. Diocesan Synods are asked to review and address the progress of this every three years.

### **Disadvantaged Communities**

Leeds diocese brought a motion addressing the lack of success of churches at reaching disadvantaged people. The motion that was passed read:

That this Synod call on the Archbishops' Council to commission a study that

- a) explores the reasons why the Church of England is generally less effective in communicating with, and attracting people from, more disadvantaged communities despite the gospel being good news for the poor;
- b) explores ways of addressing and reversing this situation, such as:

- i. actively seeking to select and train more people from disadvantaged communities
  - ii. deploying more resources into reaching people from disadvantaged communities
  - iii. gathering and disseminating stories of good practice from churches working in disadvantaged communities; and
- c) builds upon the work of the GRA:CE project in exploring the links between social action, discipleship, and church growth.

### **Public Health Funerals**

Sometimes referred to as 'Pauper's funerals', the service offered when people can't afford a funeral can be bleak and hurtful. Synod asked the Life Events Group to lead work into changing the Church of England's approach to this, and helping us to develop resources to support those who can't afford a funeral. It also called upon HM Government to create a national plan for a basic funeral which offers greater dignity and support for those left behind.

### **Windrush Commitment and Legacy**

Discrimination against minority communities is a matter of shame for our community and for our churches. BAME members still experience racism, whether blatant or unconscious, and are still under-represented within the leadership of the church. The motion that was passed expressed shame at the past, and asked the Archbishops' Council to commission research towards affecting real change, and called on the whole church to stamp out racism in all forms.

## Legal Aid Reform

The Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012 has made access to legal aid harder for some disadvantaged and vulnerable people, and has led to considerable hardship in a number of cases. Synod asked HM Government to take notice of reports on the effects of the act, and to consider how to alleviate its impact on disadvantaged people.



*Bishop Donald speaking during the debate on Children and Youth, image captured from the General Synod live stream feed.*

## How does all this affect us?

### *Elections 2020*

- at your 2020 APCM's you'll be asked to elect Deanery Synod representatives. These people will not only represent you in the shared thinking of the deanery, but will also elect the new General Synod, so think carefully about whether you want to stand, or who you vote for. Don't leave yourselves unrepresented or badly represented!
- Because the Church Representative Rules are new, decisions like how many members are on your PCC (especially a very large PCC) and how many terms a deanery synod rep might serve, need to be made by the APCM before the elections happen.
- PCC's can make recommendations to the APCM to save time at the meeting.
- New deanery synod reps should look out for emails in the summer inviting them to vote electronically.

### *Clergy Wellbeing*

- Study questions on how we care for our clergy and their households, and how clergy care for themselves, have been made available. Ask the Chair of the House of Clergy for a copy, and consider using the study questions yourself or with your PCC.

## ***A Carbon-neutral Church***

- Every church, chaplaincy and school is asked to put this on your agenda. As and when you update your building or change your heating system, ensure that you work towards becoming carbon-neutral. When you review your energy bills, think hard about choosing a supplier who offers sustainable, carbon-neutral power.
- DAC members will need to review advice given to churches. Suggesting gas as the cheapest or easiest option is no longer an acceptable go-to recommendation, and it will be important to explore options like ground-sourced heating (for example) instead
- Diocesan synod will need to include this on the agenda every third year. Deanery synods might like to do the same.

## ***And the rest?***

Many of the issues raised affect our communities in different ways. Why not look at the items discussed and considered reflecting on them at your PCC, study group, cell group or deanery synod? Consider how this issue is reflected in your ministry and outreach locally. What are you doing in your church or chaplaincy about outreach to children, for example, or to disadvantaged people? How can you learn together about unconscious bias and being more appreciative of everyone in your community?

Or perhaps there is an important community issue that you believe synod has missed. Check the Church of England website and see whether synod has addressed it, or speak to a General Synod member or the Diocesan Secretary. If it really has been missed, then your PCC can ask your deanery synod to discuss it, and they in turn can send it to Diocesan Synod. That's how debates like the one on Disadvantaged Communities began.

### ***And finally...***

Your General Synod members will be attending the last synod of the quinquennium in July. Some of us will be standing for election again, and some of us will be standing down. We haven't necessarily all decided yet what our intentions are.

The elections will be held before Diocesan Synod meets again. So let me pose this question:

What about you? Think about it. Will you stand for election for General Synod? If you think you might, do talk to a current member to find out what's involved.

You have a vote. Use it! And use it well, and thoughtfully, as you choose the people who will represent this diocese on the national scene for the next five years

*Please pray for those who currently represent you, and for those who will be standing next time.*

