

General Synod Report: July 2019 ~ York

STANDING ITEMS

Report from the Business Committee: as usual the agenda covers four categories: standing items, legislation, ordering the life of the Church and the Church and the World.

Presidential Address - Archbishop of York: A challenge to overcoming disagreement which is causing a split in Synod and thus compromising the Church's mission to be welcoming and exemplifying a true life in Christ. He quoted Rowan Williams, who said (2010), about the ordination of women: "How can people who read the same Bible and share the same baptism still have such diverse opinions and conclusions?" This time it is the same with sex relationships...it's either a focus on Biblical authority or Tradition. The church often disagrees on God's word and God's work when the world is baffled by the inconsistency of the arguments resulting in disunity. How can the church act as an interpreter and guide rather than as an echo chamber for secular thinking? How can we show others faith in Christ when all they see is the disagreement? We must put ourselves in our opponents' shoes recognising that they too are seeking the mind of God. That faith, working through love, can in some way converge. He alluded to Rapoport's rules of debate: 1. Re-express our opponents' position ("Thanks, I wish I'd thought of putting it that way") 2. List points of agreement 3. Mention what you have learnt from your opponent, and, 4. Only then make constructive criticism! Build on and correct suppositions – do we read the Bible as testimony intertwined with history and interpretation. Look at the History and Law of the OT with the eyes of Prophecy? Live such a life vividly described by Paul. Our Christian character is still in the making and not yet fully formed. We must be reconciled to God before we can be reconciled with one another. We can be invigorated in our faith through many intellectual and worship means but these are means by which we come closer to God. We must humbly recognise others as better than ourselves in order to live a Christ-like life. Jesus calls us by name and leads us out to find pasture...sheep follow because they know the shepherds voice...a true disciple says to others 'follow me just as I follow Christ in order to grow in holiness and wisdom.' We must find a way to reach out to and empathise with those with differing views. Jesus calls us to welcome 'little ones' in his name...how can we help others to flourish as joint members of a body. Every sitting part should be a whole and none of us should be at the centre, Jesus Christ is he who willingly humbled himself and became incarnate in order to bring us back into relationship with God. We must be humble in mind, body and Spirit. We must look at the whole of Scripture rather than taking small bits and focusing on them alone, creating disagreement.

LEGISLATION

Enactment of Draft Amending Canon 39: clarification of when and where Sunday services of Morning and Evening Prayer and Holy Communion must be held in light of the fact there are now multi-benefices as well as single parish churches. Also reference to ordinations and the ministry of both ordained and lay leaders (including Churchwardens) exercising their Episcopal ministry.
Carried

Final drafting Amending Canon 41: clarification of wording in the register book of services and to those who exercise their ministry at such services. Also updating outdated language used in services, ecclesiastical courts, General Synod and Convocations, and making it gender neutral. Also concerned about building on consecrated ground of Cathedrals...can only be considered if relatives of those buried up to 50 years ago are in agreement. There is some controversy, previously raised, with an amendment about who 'Spouse' actually includes, is this the inclusion of a same sex spouse.

However, currently the term 'spouse' in Canon 31 specifically defines spouse as between one man and one woman. In 2014 the Pensions Measure included same sex couples as a 'spouse'.

Carried.

Final Approval of the Church of England (Miscellaneous Provisions) Measure: some of the miscellaneous clauses in the Measure: it enables members of religious communities to be ordained; A full list of both ordained and lay ministers will need to be on the formal PTO register; Any clergy and lay minister will be authorised to take funerals if they are asked by the family; Ecclesiastical Court fees will be available for those unable to pay; Advice about building on consecrated burial ground; Guidance on work of DAC inspectors; DAC members can be elected for 2 terms of 6years. Gender terms are removed in documents.

Bishops for 20 against 0 abstentions 0

Clergy for 91 against 0 abstentions 0

Laity for 110 against 0 abstentions 0

This was a specific part of amending Canon 41

Final Approval of Draft Amending Canon 41: which included the Miscellaneous Provisions Measure:

Bishops for 22 against 0 abstentions 0

Clergy for 94 against 0 abstentions 0

Laity for 114 against 2 abstentions 0

The petition will be presented to the Queen

First Consideration of Diocesan Board of Education Measure: a detailed measure concerning the updating of 1991 provisions regarding the continuation of DBE's in promoting Christian religious education and worship in church schools, and the appropriate steps each Diocesan DBE, DBF and Diocesan Synod needs to make in order to facilitate the implementation of the measure.

Goes to the revision committee.

First Consideration Cathedrals Measure: following the 1999 measure, this is a detailed measure that clarifies the governance, management, property and financial affairs of 42 cathedrals (the seat of the bishop and centre of worship and mission of each diocese) functioning in 42 different ways as 'showmen to the state' with 10m+ visitors every year; The Measure extends the Chapter with non-executive lay members, focuses on safeguarding, recognises that some currently act as parishes in their own right and will have the option to change this, and it also clarifies the role of the Charities Commission - spelling out areas where the Cathedral acts independently and encouraging their coming into line with parish churches. It was felt there could be more clarity for the role and voice of the Bishop, who is not a member of Chapter. Ideally this should not only be in Chapter but as an invited visitor to Chapter, outside its management functions. Also, there should be greater guidance for the Bishop's role if an independent visitation were necessary.

Goes to the revision committee.

Approval of Faculty Jurisdiction: in order for the improved operation of DACs the Faculty Jurisdiction rules of 2015 have been amended to include the substitution of Part 4 concerning consultation and advice; the avoidance of unnecessary delays following submissions where necessary consultations have already been carried out. Faculties and consultations can now be lodged online. It also includes the revised and expanded lists of matters which may or may not be undertaken with/without the need for a faculty.

Debate continues at a later date...

Final Approval of Amending Canon 40: regarding the titles of those to be ordained priest or deacon in religious communities. In becoming explicit religious communities are better protected especially in the areas of safeguarding.

Bishops for 23 against 0 abstentions 0

Clergy. for 100 against 0 abstentions 0

Laity. for 111 against 0 abstentions 0

Goes to Parliament and then the petition will be presented to the Queen

55th Report of the Standing Committee - Proposed changes to Standing Orders relation to the Crown Nominations Commission: Amendments to Standing Orders 136 & 141: further amendments following the debate in February 2019, in relation to the submission of the name of one prospective Bishop to the PM subject to a 2/3 majority in a secret CNC ballot, with the agreement of a name in reserve if they so wish. The submission of one name will not be dependent on the agreement of a second name! Currently only one name is submitted in the case of a Suffragan Bishop.

Carried

Amendment to Standing Orders 132 & 135: clarifying the validation of each CNC or General Synod nomination, following confusion over a recent election process when a candidate inadvertently failed to disclose all their relevant interests, and the appeal fell.

Carried

Approval Legislative (Patronage of Benefices) Reform: this measure enables Archbishops' Council (with GS approval) to remove or reduce burdens resulting from ecclesiastical legislation. Burdens are both finance and unnecessary legal constrictions; these are delaying the start of the process required to fill the vacancy of a benefice. If, after 12 months, an appointment has not been made the rights of the Patron lapses. It is recommended that this is increased to 18 months as a lapse creates an unnecessary burden of uncertainty and administration on the parish.

Carried, now goes to Parliament

Approval Church Representation Rules (Amendment) Resolution 2019: this amendment is 'mission shaped' and allows for for the establishment, revision and renewal of roles for certain mission initiatives in addition to local churches in dioceses, and this will include the number of lay persons involved. This will be positively reflected in the number of seats allocated to each diocese in General Synod's House of Laity as their 'membership roles' are currently not included: so long as they are baptised and habitually attends worship in this 'initiative' or 'fresh expressions' of the CofE.

Carried

ORDERING THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH

Clergy Wellbeing: A presentation on how far this work is proceeding. The draft Covenant demonstrates some significant shifts in attitudes to the pastoral care of clergy: * Encouragement rather than demand. * Preventative rather than cure. * Towards mutual responsibility and partnership. * A coordinated response from discernment to retirement. * A cultural change towards a greater response from the whole church, and, * Practical and pragmatic achievability at every level where pastoral supervision and reflective practice is the norm. At the heart of the covenant is the concept that the wellbeing of clergy is crucial to the health of the Church at worship, in mission and in pastoral care. Clergy are a gift to the Church as they enable the ministry of the People of God. The Covenant, drawing on scripture and the ordinal, sets out the expectations of commitment of the clergy, the local church and the wider church through the Bishop.

Carried:

Mission and Ministry in Covenant: the completed report, 'On the Way to Unity', outlines the work of the Faith and Order bodies of the Methodist Conference and General Synod following debates of both denominations undertaken in 2018. The recommendations are set out and a clause included that will initiate the process of preparing legislation needed to implement the Covenant. Recommendations include:

ON THE WAY TO UNITY. * Churches in Communion. * Reconciliation and the exchange of their distinctive gifts regarding mission and ministry

ORDERS OF MINISTRY AND SHARING IN MISSION * President-Bishop in the Methodist Church: Episcopal ordination and Eucharistic presidency * Interchangeability of deacons * Welcoming one another's presbyters/priests * Beginning a new chapter - marking the Covenant journey in the context of joint mission and service to the world

RECOMMENDATIONS * Formal declaration...the first steps towards a new relationship * Planning an inaugural joint service or services of Holy Communion * Reciprocal acceptance of ordained ministers * A Council event... in the context of a joint mission and service to the world * Further exploration of diaconal ministry.

To fail to support the proposals would mar any hope for progress towards unity, not just with the Methodist Church but towards a fuller visible unity in relationship with other churches currently not ordered in the historic episcopate.

Issues: **1.** The Methodist Conference has just accepted the acceptance of the marriage of same sex couples. This would be in contradiction to current Anglican Doctrine. The CofE is already in covenant with churches in the Porvoo agreement who have already made this same decision, therefore, this should not be a reason to withdraw from the process of coming into Covenant. **2.** The Methodist Church accepts the non-episcopal ordination or commissioning of ministers who can also preside at Holy Communion...their ordination would not currently be recognised by the CofE. Many argued that the motive behind the Covenant is the call to do Mission Together...in the Diocese of Carlisle working together for mission has been more effective than doing it apart.

...In an amendment to the motion we were challenged to be prepared to put our reservations to one side for the sake of Mission to show the love of Christ to all (carried). Other amendments expressed concern about bringing legislation at this stage. The Bishop of Coventry urged us to oppose the amendments. It is felt that clarity does need to be a focus as the proposed legislation stage starts, in tandem with the Methodist Church. We have already been on the Covenant road for a long time, and even though more thought is needed, this moment of grace is the next step as we seek to enable change by drafting legislation. Being the CofE legislation will not happen quickly!

1st amendment lost: for 118, against 224, abstentions 13

The second amendment carried: for 221, against 127, abstentions 8

The House of Bishop's is to report back in the next quinquennium.

Vote by Houses: Carried

Bishops 35 for, 1 against, abstentions 1

Clergy 130 for, 20 against, abstentions 9

Laity 123 for, 29 against, abstentions 10

Archbishops' Council Report: this can be found on www.churchofengland.org The nine objectives covered are: evangelism (come to faith - including digital evangelism), discipleship (grow in faith), ministry (exploring God's calling - both ordained and lay - becoming younger and more diverse), common good (co-ordinating major initiatives and supporting local programmes in some of the 16,000 churches in England), education (1m attending church schools who will help shape future society), resources (eg. cashless collection plates), safeguarding (vigilant monitoring), governance (attempting to simplify), and, a Church for all people (welcoming communities for everyone, especially for those living with disability and in areas of social deprivation).

Appointment of a Member of the Archbishops' Council: four candidates were been shortlisted (2 men and 2 women) and interviews were in late June to fulfil a vacancy. Maureen Cole (who grew up in Chislehurst, attending Christ Church) has been appointed. A point was raised that GS only heard who had been appointed that morning and it felt as though we were just rubber stamping the appointment. Apologies were made for this oversight.

Presentation of the Triennium Funding Working Group: grateful that changes in the inflation base, used to calculate non-pension commitments, the Commissioners' Asset Committee has significantly increased money available for distribution, and subject to Church Commissioners' AGM held in June the following will continue to be supported by national Church funds:

1. Supporting lowest income communities.
2. Recruiting and training more ordained ministers.
3. Strategic developments and supporting investment in growth programmes in dioceses.
4. Also... * Archbishops' and bishops' ministry costs (including senior leadership development). * Cathedral clergy stipends.

* Digital evangelism...from reaching people to engaging with every form of voice. * Additional support to dioceses:

... £27m to meet costs of ordinands and clergy training.

... £18m support towards increased number of curates (because of increased number of ordinands). Secure for 12 years.

... A one-off sum of £10m to help develop cathedral sustainability.

... £45m to help dioceses in financial difficulties.

... Up to £20m for a social impact investment programme, secure for six years.

The overall aim is to equip the church of today in order to enable the church of tomorrow, bearing in mind that the current increase of income from investments can decline in the future: Pensions 20%, Core Distribution 56% , Additional Distributions £24. *Carried*

Financial Business: Archbishops' Council budget and proposal for Apportionment for 2020, made in light of financial restraints in dioceses. However, new funding streams are beginning to have a transformative effect, as has the growth in congregations, especially the more informal expressions of church. Individual givers has increased by 34%. Stewardship is being more imaginatively managed in parishes, as is the way giving is being undertaken...card readers is one example. The following 5 areas cover the Council 2920 budget:

Vote 1. Training for Ministry. £17,589,013

Vote 2. National Church Responsibilities. £22,088,169

Vote 3. Grants. £1,241,579

Vote 4. Mission agency pension contributions. £697,742

Vote 5. Clergy retirement housing grant. £5,298,598

The table of proportion and the pooling of adjustment for 2020 between the Dioceses was approved. Rochester's apportionment for 2020 is: £183,301. *Carried*

Safeguarding: this was an opportunity to have a question and answer session specifically focusing on safeguarding. There was a particular focus in the area of action to support survivors. Lessons Learnt Reviews are helpful in addressing and preventing future mistakes. We all have a role in safeguarding, integral to the very life of the Church. Areas of work being undertaken:

1. Leadership and management of safeguarding.
2. IICSA: independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (currently in the middle of the 3rd hearing).
3. Key developments. A project manager is in place. 3 independent Lesson Learnings reviews have been confirmed. A Clergy Discipline Measure working group will meet in September

4. Engagement with victims and survivors. Inadequate in the past. Now there is a survivors reference group. Safe Spaces project will soon begin to offer advice and services. National Victim and Survivors Charter. National Safeguarding Summit will take place in September. 'Restorative Justice practices' is about to start.

Chair of Safeguarding Panel spoke: they have looked at two areas so far this year: Training and development then the Clergy Disciplinary Measure (a survivor challenged that this Measure is only seeking sanction by consent). Looking at Prevention in September. The Church is late coming into the debate and has a hard task to catch up but there are good people undertaking this task.

A Survivor in the Chichester Diocese spoke: big issues around trust, especially towards the Church. Survivors need to be represented and also valued, in the past they have been sidelined. Safeguarding is about Pastoral care: vigilance, protection and compassion. Mandatory reporting is likely to be recommended and there are also calls for safeguarding procedures entirely independent of the bishops with an independent ombudsman.

Southwark Diocesan Synod Motion - Refugee Professionals: the background to the motion is the welcome of refugees with professional qualifications and experience that will help to reduce current shortages in UK as it is quicker and cheaper than training new professionals. However, there is concern that, in light of the austerity agenda, refugee professionals are being pressed to accept lower paid jobs rather than being steered towards training programmes to help them apply skills in the UK. Dioceses are being encouraged to help in enabling refugee professionals to become better integrated members of UK society. An amendment was passed to widen the scope to all refugees who are seeking employment to match their skills.

Carried

Presentation - Mission-Shaped Church and Fresh Expressions, 15 years on: a review on what is happening across the Church since 2004...a new missionary movement, a Christ Centred Ecclesiology:

a) Phenomenal growth of 'Fresh Expressions' and 'Pioneer Ministry' where the church is being renewed from the edge, the margins. Benefitting from the experience and joint collaboration of 6 denominations. 1. Christ must be the pattern 2. We are nurturing a movement 3. The biggest benefit is when the church as a whole blesses this movement.

b) How can the local church join in? Use the digital apps! Explore the Fresh Expressions training and resources through 'GreenHouse' project. This is now entering a new phase in two key areas. 1. Money...the financing of a strategic five-year project to enable 10 Dioceses to create more and stronger 'fresh-expressions', and, 2. Increasing the numbers of lay and ordained pioneers with a view to developing and sustaining more fresh expressions and church plants. This can be part of every diocese and parish mission. Start a conversation about 'how can we create a new church' for those beyond the reach of current parish ministry

Setting God's People Free: a report on the progress of what is not a programme but a change in culture. 1. Encouraging and equipping the laity for mission Sunday to Saturday, and, 2. Affirming the complementary gifting, vocation and accountability of ordained and lay leaders. The implementation of this hinges on four crucial elements: * Encouraging a wide variety of people to use their roles and influence to embed change across the life of the church, and coordinating that work. * Putting into practice small shifts in equipping lay people to live out the 'Good News 24/7. * Being attentive to what we learn as changes are made. * Rooting the changes in prayer and discernment of God's voice in the process. 25 Dioceses have taken up the challenge to participate in the initiative (including Rochester - 'Called Together'). There is the determination to call and empower 98% of the CofE who are not ordained, setting them free for fruitful, faithful mission and ministry, influence and leadership within a vibrant relationship with Jesus Christ in the whole of life's experience, not just in church based ministry. This could be done through:

1. National championing of the cultural shifts.
2. Digital resources to inspire and support everyone's vocational journey.
3. Learning from the experiences of the 25 'pilot Dioceses'.
4. Remodelling selection, training and ministerial development of clergy with the priority of lay formation and development.

Carried

THE CHURCH IN THE WORLD

Presentation from the Mothers, Union Worldwide President: Mrs Sheran Harper: the Anglican MU President from Guiana, the first from outside the British Isles. Wishes MU to be visible among the whole of the Anglican Communion because it is one of its gifts and must not be a best kept secret...the oldest, 142 years old, and largest women's movement in the world. Working among people of all faiths and none, driven by a love for God and all humanity. Her particular area of expertise is the MU parenting programme. Another area of effective ministry is the empowerment of women in parts of the world where they are 'under dogs'.

Ecumenical Guest's address: Rt Rev Westergaard, Bishop of Ribe, Denmark. About 75% of Danish nationals identify with and belong to the national Lutheran Church...there is an increase of members from smaller ethnic minorities as well and various kinds of partnerships are being forged, including schools as well as church. The church is a church of the people and is also closely associated to the state. Local taxes help support the churches in each areas. Deacons have power to employ their own minister. The Danish church comes across as being fairly liberal: over half of ministers are women and the church also marries/supports same sex couples. Hymn singing with parents and children is high on the agenda, there are many drop in centres and baptisms have increased.

Additional Agenda Item added by Archbishops: Message from South Sudan. Revd Canon Joseph Bilal (Episcopal Church of Sudan & South Sudan University) addressed the synod. "I was born in war, grew up in war and married in war". During the violence of civil war 400,000 were killed and 4 million people displaced. Now South Sudan is independent after the long civil conflict and persecution. That independence was due, in a large part to the efforts of friends including solidarity from the UK and particularly the Church of England. Archbishop Justin Welby visited Sudan in 2013 (travelling there against Foreign Office advice) and went to a place of massacre and prayed there, then he joined with Pope Francis in retreat in Vatican for 3 days when the Pope knelt and kissed the feet of the leaders of each faction, touching the heart of the perpetrators of violence. Most of things discussed here at General Synod are relevant to Church of South Sudan. We need to work together to live according to the spirit of christ's kingdom

Living in Love and Faith: the Pastoral Advisory Group gave a presentation followed by a time for questions in preparation for the seminars to be held on the Saturday afternoon. The three seminars cover the whole area of sexuality and the church:

1. *Bible Study* - a reflective journey relating to matters of sexuality, exploring a series of encounters with individuals and with Christ.
2. *Workshop*- exploring Pastoral Principles in the context of General Synod: how might the 'pervading evils' diminish the quality of relationships among members?
3. *Where are we?* Some damage was done after an inaccurate blog following GS in 2018. In February a final presentation of what will be a theological thesis on where the Church is discerning God's voice in relation to sexuality and marriage. Malcolm Brown (Christian Ethics): if we're starting with science are we introducing a secular narrative? If so does Theology becomes incidental? As a group they are looking at how to communicate between disciplines in dialogue together. Facts include an authoritative infra-graphic source of what people are doing in their lives,

15,000 between 15 & 74. Some of the unmediated data is not telling us what is out! How does the Church make the changes in attitudes to sex in society? Human fallibility over time changes in nature. Social trends may not always be on a known trajectory, however, Society at large is also demonstrating a healthy attitude towards sexual issues.

Elaine Storkey (Sociology): We bring assumptions about what our culture brings. We have focused on individualism for the last 4 decades, therefore sex is nobody else's business! This means it is hard to develop a concept of a public cultural sexual ethic. The issue for the church is articulating its view. More vulnerable groups are now speaking out so it's hard for society to maintain that sex is simply a private issue, if it is conceptual. Safeguarding and sexual violation is an area where the church is taking a lead. There is a conflict of expectations because of the stigma of being out! With a discussion with young people there is a conflict of views, the desire for a deep meaningful lifelong relationship to the desire for sexual gratification and experience. Asked what the meaning of sexual experience was for your personal fulfilment, not (a 50 years ago) gratifying your partner. The impact of societal change is a world view shift, the perceived end of Christianity. I am what I do, what I have, what I buy, what other people think of me, I am my sexuality/gender, Newhart I make of myself, the image I choose, I' of no real significance....who are we as persons in a context of a culture that doesn't help to tell you. Rev. Dr Chris Cook (Ordained, Dr, Theologian, Clinical Psychologist & psychiatrist): The language about sex and gender can sometimes be misunderstood...are we talking about the same thing? Sex, the act, is basically about the biology which is identified by gender, male and female. However, identity is often understood to be an inner psychological identity that is recognised by other people. The heart is emotionally about attraction and not sex! Biological Sex can be ambiguous: Anatomy, physiology, chromosomes, psychology. A complicated interdisciplinary subject. Intersex is a lot of people if it is YOU. We are talking about identity. The nature of gender embraces social role, identity, non-binary, cultural variation, it can depend on which part of the world you come from. Transgender, the most difficult word to explain. They are assigned he wrong gender at birth, makes self-identification difficult. Some can live with gender dysphoria, others need to transition. However, some people are confused with identification of either gender, consider they are neither male or female. How do we describe this confusion with Genesis 1:27.

4. How do we hear God: Different ways of understanding Scripture. Locations about us as a church and society in sexuality and marriage, and who we are as human beings and as a church...how we live in love and faith embracing these issues. God speaks to us through Christ (made flesh). We discern what God is saying though the Holy Spirit, and prayer, the heartbeat of our relationship with God. There are five interlinked and overlapping pointers to help as we map the different issues surrounding sexuality and marriage.

Scripture: agreement that we should read scripture together in the light of Christ, learning about God's love for us and how we live in love and faith together. How do we hear one, united voice of God through the differing human voices in Scripture? Scripture is written in different contexts, and the context of today is also different.

Tradition - Church: differing views on how the church hears and practices its faith. Differing attitudes toward liturgy and practice.

Creation: the world around us and the effect of our place in creation, the individual flourishing of humanity. We disagree in some of these observations and conclusions, yet science can inform the church, which needs to remain critical in the investigation of our faith in relation to our world.

Culture: there is a society culture and also a church culture - a mix and complex intermingling. We need to discern where we (the church) needs to change. Conscience, conviction and experience: how do these shape our individual understanding of scripture?

Scripture: the agreement is that there are two major ways that scripture can be read in the light of the witness of Christ, and that scripture calls us into holiness; a school of instruction which is shaped by love. One of the major disagreements is how we read and respond to scripture, two distinct approaches. 1. Divinely, God breathed and inspired, and we can grasp difficult books through the Spirit. In seeking to learn about God we need this view. 2. To read faithfully we need to understand that there are areas in Scripture where there are tensions. What they meant to the original authors and cultures has changed within the light of our culture. We must acknowledge the original meaning and then re-read in light of our own culture.

5. *Who are we?* Chapter 1. Image: created, fallen and redeemed. How do we talk about 'the fall' what language do we use, what does sin mean? How we listen patiently and generously to other people's stories and the different ways in which they understand/discern God. We can use the same words yet they can mean such different things. Humans are living icons of the divine image: Genesis 1:26-28, Christ as the eternal perfect image - God with us, the image of God as a responsibility - in love for the world, between each other.

Chapter 2. Difference, Identity, Nature and Dignity: ways of thinking about what it means to be human in connection with the scientific view of the nature of humanity. There is a deep level of pain with people expressing their experiences in very different ways. eg nature...what does it mean to be 'natural'? Part of Gods loving intention and design...is everything that happens (regularly) 'natural'? Is it innate and instinctive or a 'fallen nature'. How do we evaluate each experience eg on sexual orientation and human/identity. How do we interpret Scripture , nature or nurture Rom 1:26-27 and 1 Cor 1.13-16. Chapter 3. Church, Community and Calling: the Church is humanity redeemed and sanctified by God...raises issues of belonging, exclusion, power. We need to address welcome inclusion and how we hold disagreement which brings us closer together rather than tear us apart. Where is agreement and positive concept? We walk the road together and ask questions together which helps to bring us closer together.

1. Patterns of relationship: compatible with participation...poverty, chastity and obedience (evangelical religious life)

2. Patterns of relationships:? expressive of truth about the church

3. Rich resources within tradition for reflection on marriage and on celibacy

4. Only two patterns? Questions about freedom, diversity, fulfilment and change.

The Church is more than an institution it is the people of God.

This is very much a writing project the question of 'who holds the pen' and where is the power? As a group of 40 very diverse people overseeing the project they are trying to really listen and learn from each other without allowing the politics of differing views to interfere. Patience is need to hear from each other and even more from God. There is much pain in the process as the conflict and divisions make the pain more acute. They are persevering because of the promises brought through Jesus Christ.

Serious Youth Violence: More than just knife crime, but the violent and visible outcome of a complex of social issues that is often distorted by the media and its negative stereotyping of particular groups of young people; school exclusions and loss of youth services stand out as key phenomena. SYV can also involve intimidation, threat or coercion intended to escalate violence between young people.. The CofE needs to be equipped to respond to this phenomenon and do everything possible to prevent its occurrence in communities, offering pastoral support and reconciling responses in affected communities. The report recommends that:

. CofE schools monitor, measure and report on exclusions.

. Train and educate the whole school community

. Diocese resource, educate, train and support clergy and church communities.

. Support and equip chaplains and those working in church-based youth work.

. Churches to use their space for community meetings and events.

. Ensure churches are 'safe-spaces for young people.

. Churches to work with secular organisations such as Word 4 Weapons and to install knife amnesty bins.

How can the Church be a visible sign of hope? Especially as successive governments have failed to understand the main causes, vulnerability through dysfunctional families, poverty, drug trafficking and the result of exclusions, and tried to control the problem through the penal system rather than looking at the initial factors and seeking to prevent rather than punish! Churches are good at reacting to the consequences of violence. The Church should also be reactive, and there are various organisations and churches already opening their doors in this way. We must be the Samaritan rather than the Pharisee! There is a church in every community, how can they be encouraged to be places of pastoral care as well as for repentance and reconciliation. A place of resources for every community that meets the needs of the culture of that particular place, encouraged and enabled by the Diocese working in partnership with civic services, often through Chaplaincies, pioneer and youth ministry.

Carried: 315 for, 0 against, 0 abstentions

Southwark Diocesan Synod Motion - Refugee Professionals: the background to the motion is the welcome of refugees with professional qualifications and experience that will help to reduce current shortages in UK as it is quicker and cheaper than training new professionals. However, there is concern that, in light of the austerity agenda, refugee professionals are being pressed to accept lower paid jobs rather than being steered towards training programmes to help them apply skills in the UK. Dioceses are being encouraged to help in enabling refugee professionals to become better integrated members of UK society.

Carried

Rochester Diocesan Synod Motion - Anna Chaplaincy: needs no introduction as the motion came through Bromley Deanery to our Diocesan Synod. The motion embraced the commendation of, and call to, every Diocese to engage in Ministry to older people, especially those living with dementia, through Anna Chaplaincy and the Gift of Years. It also calls on Her Majesty's Government to report on the progress of the PM's 'Challenge on Dementia 2020' asking what steps are being taken to join up health and social care to ensure the seamless transition from one to other for people living with dementia.

Carried unanimously

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**Last but not least:** for the first time ever random large boxes of different sweets were passed through the Synod chamber during debates each day! Was this to sweeten us up or to give us energy bursts, especially in post lunch debates? Thank you to the anonymous donor(s)!

**Angela Scott**