



General Synod report to Diocesan Synod

November 2021

GENERAL SYNOD – JULY 2021

General Synod met remotely between the 9th and 12th July 2021.

All supporting papers can be found here:

<https://www.churchofengland.org/about/leadership-and-governance/general-synod/agendas-papers/general-synod-july-2021>

Presidential address – Archbishop of York

On living through the pandemic...

- "...there have also been many wonderful stories of Christian resourcefulness, creativity and tenacity as in our parishes, chaplaincies, church schools and just about every other expression of church life we have found ways of sustaining the life of worship, built new online communities of faith, and served our local communities." "As we emerge into the next phase of our learning how to live with Covid, we don't know how many people will return to worship; we don't know quite what will happen with the new communities we have nurtured online; we don't know the full extent of the financial challenge. I know how difficult this has been in parishes and dioceses where at every level of church life we have had to make difficult decisions. But I want to encourage you. I think what the Church of England has done in the past 18 months, especially in the local church, is magnificent."
- "Apparently, in some quarters it has been suggested that clergy are a limiting factor on church growth. I agree. A shortage of clergy would really limit us. We need more vocations. That is my prayer: priests to serve a priestly people. It is the vision set for us in the Ordinal. It is also at the heart of the vision and strategy...that, centred on Christ, the parish system of the Church of England will be revitalised in such a way that we will all discover the part we have to play in God's mission and find new ways of serving our nation with the gospel."

Racial Justice Commission

- The Rt. Hon the Lord Boateng has been appointed Chair of the Archbishops' Racial Justice Commission, a three-year Commission of independent advisers to scrutinise the Church of England's policies, practices and culture in relation to racial justice. The Commission is being established following preparatory work by the Archbishops' Anti-Racism Taskforce which produced the *From Lament to Action* report last April. The first meeting of the Commission is expected in the autumn, reporting to the Archbishops every six months.
- Lord Boateng said: "Racism is a gaping wound in the body of Christ's church. Our mandate as a Commission is not only to bind but to heal. This is a grave responsibility

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and one which can only be taken up and guided by prayer. I assume this new role with that in the forefront of my mind and ask for your prayers at this critical time in the history of the Church”.

- The Archbishop’s Council has accepted 34 out of 39 of the recommendations contained in *Lament to Action*. The call for funding for full-time racial justice officers in all dioceses although initially rejected is still under consideration.

Responsible representation

- The recommendations of the *Responsible Representation* review were approved, establishing a new election process for the Crown Nominations Commission (the body responsible for discerning those to be nominated for appointment as diocesan bishops). In future, CNC central members will be elected as six pairs: three pairs from the House of Clergy, and three from the House of Laity. For a given vacancy, only one member of each pair will serve at any one time. This approach aims to ensure greater diversity of views, ages, and traditions on the CNC.

Vacancy in See committee

- The Vacancy in See Committee (Amendment) Regulation 2021 was approved, dealing with how diocesan members of the CNC are elected. Key provisions include: making the members of the houses of clergy and laity of the diocesan synod a single electorate when electing people to the diocesan ViS committee; making chairs, and the episcopal members, of ViS committees ineligible for election as diocesan members of the CNC; and allowing ViS committees to meet remotely.

National Investing Bodies approach to climate change

- The First Church Estates Commissioner, Loretta Minghella, updated Synod on the national investing bodies’ approach to the climate crisis. The NIBs are committed to working in partnership with the wider Church to achieve Net Zero by 2030 for the Church’s operational emissions while working to a 2050 target for their investment portfolios. They expect companies in which they are invested to have taken significant steps towards a lower carbon future by “2023 at the latest” otherwise the NIBs will sell their holdings. Key here is the Transition Pathway Initiative (TPI) which is used to track the transition of carbon intensive companies.

Covenant with the Methodists

- Synod voted to create a new body, Life in Covenant, to oversee the next stage of the Anglican-Methodist Covenant.

Archbishop’s Council Budget 2022 and proposals for apportionment 2022

- Synod approved the apportionment amongst dioceses to enable the Archbishop’s Council to meet the expected expenditure shown in its budget for 2022. Synod also approved the pooling adjustment for 2022 in respect of additional maintenance grants for ordinands. The Archbishop’s Council will bring an updated estimate of expected income and expenditure for 2022 to the November Group of Sessions.
- The Council’s current gross expenditure budget is £52.0m for those areas of expenditure part funded by the apportionment. This is £1.5m (2.9%) above the 2021 restated budget. The main increases are in safeguarding, the creation of a Racial Justice Unit, externally funded projects on freedom of religion and modern slavery, and on the new People System. The 2022 budget currently holds apportionment flat at the 2021 level of £32.5m (1.6% below the level in 2019 and 2020).

Safeguarding

- The Bishop of Huddersfield, who is the Lead Bishop for Safeguarding, provided an update on safeguarding covering: safeguarding Sunday on October 10; safeguarding policy development (specifically the Safer Recruitment and Management Guidance); the establishment of the Independent Safeguarding Board; the new Safeguarding Programme (in response to IICSA); and the national safeguarding management system. The search for suitable people to sit on the Independent Safeguarding Board is underway.

Living in Love and Faith

- Some 5500 people have been involved in an LLF event, 69 LLF advocates have been appointed, and around 9000 people have registered on the LLF learning hub.
- The engagement period, due to end in January 2022, has been extended until April 2022 to give dioceses more time. However, the plan is still to offer a “clear way forward” when Synod meets in November 2022.

Church Commissioner governance

- Reforms aimed at increasing the diversity of Church Commissioners were approved (although they were very nearly sent back for further scrutiny!). The so-called Legislative Reform (Church Commissioners) Order, which is the mechanism by which the reforms will be implemented, is a simplified process which avoids going through the time-consuming Measure process. Commissioners won't in future have to be Church of England members but their terms will be limited to ten years.

Housing

- Synod approved the recommendations from the ‘Coming Home’ report produced by the Archbishops’ Commission on Housing last February. This report sees responding to housing need as an integral part of the mission and ministry of the Church of England, calls on all actors in the housing sector to play their part in ensuring that all have access to a decent and affordable home, and clarifies the legal position governing the disposal of church land and non-operational property.

Church representation rules

- Individual APCMs can vote to impose a term limit on those who serve on Deanery Synods. This was instead of imposing universally required term limits. The former was favoured as a compromise giving the difficulty many parishes have in finding people willing to serve on Deanery Synod.

Clergy conduct

- Synod took note of the report ‘Proposals for Legislation to replace the Clergy Discipline Measure 2003’ (with a new clergy conduct measure). The Bishop at Lambeth, who chaired the working group that produced the report, drew attention to five key principles of the new proposals: separate tracks for complaints and misconduct; a statutory duty to support those involved in the process (complainant and respondent); early investigation of complaints; and the proper resourcing of diocesan and national structures.
- Much of the debate was around how one distinguishes between complaints and misconduct. The Bishop at Lambeth said this would be a key part of the implementation group’s work. However, a motion was approved calling on the implementation group to develop a system which distinguishes between ‘complaints not involving misconduct’, ‘misconduct that is less than serious’ and ‘serious misconduct’ so this will inform the group’s work too.
- In a separate presentation, the Bishop at Lambeth called for “much greater clarity” about what was demanded of ordained ministers, arguing that introducing a new disciplinary structure would make “no difference unless we go back to basics”. He said there needed to be proper support for clergy but also accountability and an understanding of responsibility.

Review of pastoral reorganisation

- Synod commended for discussion the consultation paper Mission in Revision: A Review of the Mission and Pastoral Measure 2011, and invited the relevant bodies to bring forward draft legislation for consideration by Synod no later than July 2022. The current Measure, which enables dioceses to carry out pastoral reorganisation, has long been criticised as unwieldy and in need of reform. There will now be a consultation process prior to legislation being drafted.

Vision and strategy

- Synod took note of a presentation by the Archbishop of York on vision and strategy. “As the Church emerged out of Covid, it must become younger and more diverse, a safe place of welcome for everyone, and ‘a mixed ecology Church where we reach and serve our nation in many ways,” he said.
- The Archbishop said that the parish system was at the centre of thinking and expressed dismay that anyone could think the vision and strategy would abandon the parish.

Transforming Effectiveness

- The Bishop of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich updated Synod on the transforming effectiveness agenda. He said the work had proceeded by interrogating everything against two questions: Does this enable the flourishing of the local church and/or does it make the Church of England more coherent and effective in its national role? He said the key findings were around trust, hierarchy and deference, expertise, and service. A lack of trust is the single biggest cause of duplication across the Church, the Bishop argued. Hierarchy and deference lead to ineffectiveness and error. He urged creating a climate in which we learn from expertise, and in which the Church’s national bodies model listening and servant-heartedness.

Five guiding principles

- Synod took note of a report by the Implementation and Dialogue Group (set up in 2018) on whether the Five Guiding Principles were fit for purpose. The FGPs were established in 2014 to enable those unable to receive the ministry of female bishops or priests to flourish in the Church of England. There are different views on how well the FGPs are working and indeed on the recommendations in the IDGs report. However, the Bishop of Rochester argued that the FGPs still offer a framework and a new Standing Commission is being established to oversee their working.

Farewells

- Synod said farewell to the First Church Estate Commissioner [to be replaced by Mr Alan Smith from October 1], the Bishops of Beverley, Rochester, Willesden and the Bishop at Lambeth, who is also the Bishop to the Forces.

Canon Martin Gainsborough
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GENERAL SYNOD ELECTION RESULTS 2021

On the 18th October 2021, the election results were announced for the six successful candidates who will represent the Diocese of Bristol at General Synod for the new five year term.

The **clergy** members are The Revd Kat Campion-Spall, The Revd Canon Dr Martin Gainsborough, and The Revd Paul Langham. The **laity** members are Dr Brendan Biggs, Miss Abby Scott, and Mr Ed Shaw.

General Synod will be meeting next from 16th to 17th November 2021 and this will be the first meeting of the new quinquennium.