

Synod summary for Diocesan Secretaries

Introduction

This summary provides an overview of the business at the February group of sessions. General Synod met from 6th to 9th February. As with other meetings in this quinquennium, the meeting was hybrid. On average there were about 15 – 20 who attended by Zoom. This is much lower than previous groups of sessions.

Synod Business

A brief summary of the items discussed at the February group of sessions are below. More detailed information can be found in the Business Done summary on the website [here](#).

Temporary Standing Orders: the temporary Standing Orders made under Section 1 of the [General Synod \(Remote Meetings\) \(Temporary Standing Orders\) Measure 2020](#) had to be revived as they lapsed in August 2022. Synod agreed to revive these for three years which enabled those attending by Zoom to speak and vote during the debates. It is expected that this will be the last time that the temporary Standing Orders need to be revived, as remote attendance of Synod meetings will be provided for in the Miscellaneous Provisions Measure which is currently going through the synodical stages.

Welcomes and introductions: the usual item for any group of sessions. All members were welcomed by the Archbishop of Canterbury. In addition, there was the formal introduction of newly elected members.

The Lower House of the Convocation of York met before Synod met to co-opt a member of the House. The Convocation agreed to co-opt The Revd Sarah Siddique Gill (Blackburn). As co-opted members, they have the same rights as an elected member, so they are ex officio members of the diocesan synod and deanery synod where they are resident.

Item 3 Presidential Address: the Archbishop of Canterbury gave a Presidential Address.

Item 4 [GS 2284 Report of the Business Committee](#): the Chair of the Business Committee, Robert Hammond, spoke to the Business Committee Report and answered questions from members about the shape of the Agenda. The Synod voted to take note of this on a show of hands.

Presentation of Petitions: one petition was presented to Synod under Standing Order 43. It stands referred to the Business Committee.

Item 500: [GS 2269A Amending Canon No 42](#): This was the Revision Stage for this Amending Canon which will implement a recommendation from the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse that the role of diocesan safeguarding adviser be changed to one of diocesan safeguarding officer. Diocesan safeguarding officers would have responsibility in the diocese, independent of the bishop, for the professional leadership on and management of matters relating to the safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults. The Synod voted to take note of this on a show of hands.

Item 504: [GS 2255A Diocesan Stipends Funds \(Amendment\) Measure](#): This was the Revision Stage for this legislation which will allow dioceses more freedom to be generous with their historic wealth to other dioceses in the Church of England, and enable a more equitable sharing of this wealth. The Synod voted to take note of this on a show of hands.

[GS 2264 Church of England Pensions \(Application of Capital Funds\) Measure](#): This was the Revision Stage for this legislation which will further extend the period during which the Church Commissioners are permitted to resort to capital to meet their obligations under the pre-1998 clergy pension scheme. The Synod voted to take note of this on a show of hands.

Item 5 [GS Misc 1329 Living in Love and Faith](#): The Bishop of London gave a presentation on the items related to Living in Love and Faith which would be discussed at the group of sessions.

Item 6: [Questions](#) there were 206 questions submitted by members which is the largest number ever received. The Business Committee allocated two sessions for questions to be answered, the first session were non-LLF questions and the second session were for LLF questions. 142 of them were covered during this session, and they were questions to the Secretary General, Clerk to the Synod, National Society Council, Church Buildings Council, Ministry Council, Remuneration and Conditions of Service Committee, Mission and Public Affairs Council, Business Committee, Standing Orders Committee, Clergy Discipline Commission, Dioceses Commission, Faith and Order Commission, Legal Advisory Commission, Liturgical Commission, Archbishops' Council, House of Bishops, Church Commissioners and Pensions Board.

Item 510 [GS 2285 Diocesan Boards of Education Measure 2021 \(consequential amendments to regulations under Canon B12\) Regulations](#): This legislation makes amendments which are consequential on the Diocesan Boards of Education Measure. It was approved on a show of hands.

Item 509 [GS 2272A Church of England \(Miscellaneous Provisions\) Measure](#): This was the Revision Stage for this legislation which covers a wide range of provisions which would not merit free-standing legislation. Many of the provisions are of a technical nature. Clause 8 related to Bishop's Mission Order: Termination of Licence was withdrawn, and the issues related to this work will be considered as part of the review of the Mission and Pastoral Measure. Clause 10 relating to Judges: Appointment and Retirement was amended and a number of amendments were made to Clause 15 which relate to Church Property: Disposal of Land.

Item 7 [Loyal Address](#): A loyal address was presented to His Majesty The King

Item 8: [Questions](#) the LLF related questions were answered and questions 143 to 206 were covered in this session.

Item 9 [GS 2286 Resourcing Ministerial Formation](#): This item updated Synod on a proposed new method of funding theological education institutions to give them greater stability with an innovation fund to encourage entrepreneurship and partnership working. It was approved by Synod on a show of hands.

Item 10 [GS 2287 Cost of Living](#): This item reflects the impact of the highest level of inflation for over 40 years (in the UK), and the very significant increases in energy prices adversely affecting individuals and organisations. This was passed following a vote of the whole Synod.

The motion as carried was as follows:

'That this Synod, mindful of the impact of the deepening cost of living crisis on ordinary people, including many members of our congregations and communities, and recalling our Lord's commitment to those who were hungry or lacked the essentials of life:

- (a) continue to pray for those whose efforts help mitigate the human suffering of the crisis: including His Majesty's Government, public servants and professionals in key sectors, the many volunteers in church and secular projects and everyone who puts their neighbour

- before themselves;
- (b) commit ourselves, as individuals as well as members of dioceses, parishes and other worshipping communities, schools and chaplaincies, to do all we can to support the most vulnerable, even as many of our own members are falling into hardship themselves;
 - (c) call upon His Majesty's Government, notwithstanding the external factors deepening the crisis, to recognise that the resilience of the nation, its communities and its people, is limited, and call for policies that offer generous support to those who are falling into poverty and the organisations dedicated to supporting them;
 - (d) commend the steps taken to date by dioceses and charities to relieve some of the pressure on clergy, church staff, and their families;
 - (e) call upon dioceses and NCIs to do all they can further to relieve pressure on parishes, clergy, church staff, and their families, recognising the leadership they offer to their communities.'

Item 511 [GS 2288 Draft Parochial Fees Order 2023](#): This Order proposed that parochial fees should be reduced to 5% above the 2022 level (rounded up to the nearest pound) from the 9.9% (in line with CPI inflation, rounded up to the nearest pound) which will apply from 1 January 2023 for the remainder of 2023. It was approved by Synod on a show of hands.

Item 544 [GS 2273 Amending Canon No 43](#): This was the Revision Stage for this Amending Canon which covers a wide range of provisions which would not merit free-standing legislation. Many of the provisions are of a technical nature.

Item 11 [GS 2289 Living in Love and Faith](#): This item invited Synod to engage with the proposals being brought forward by the House of Bishops as a result of the Living in Love and Faith process. Synod allocated eight hours of debate to this and there were 27 amendments to the original motion. One amendment was approved by Synod and the final motion was as follows:

'That this Synod, recognising the commitment to learning and deep listening to God and to each other of the Living in Love and Faith process, and desiring with God's help to journey together while acknowledging the different deeply held convictions within the Church:

- (a) lament and repent of the failure of the Church to be welcoming to LGBTQI+ people and the harm that LGBTQI+ people have experienced and continue to experience in the life of the Church;
- (b) recommit to our shared witness to God's love for and acceptance of every person by continuing to embed the Pastoral Principles in our life together locally and nationally;
- (c) commend the continued learning together enabled by the Living in Love and Faith process and resources in relation to identity, sexuality, relationships and marriage;
- (d) welcome the decision of the House of Bishops to replace Issues in Human Sexuality with new pastoral guidance;
- (e) welcome the response from the College of Bishops and look forward to the House of Bishops further refining, commending and issuing the Prayers of Love and Faith described in GS 2289 and its Annexes;
- (f) invite the House of Bishops to monitor the Church's use of and response to the Prayers of Love and Faith, once they have been commended and published, and to report back to Synod in five years' time.'

Item 506: [GS 2255A Diocesan Stipends Funds \(Amendment\) Measure](#): This was the Final Approval Stage for this legislation and was approved following a vote by Houses.

Item 502: [GS 2269A Amending Canon No 42](#): This was the Final Approval Stage for this Amending

Canon and was approved following a vote by Houses.

Item 12 [GS 2290 Governance Review](#): This item provided the General Synod with an update on the work of the National Church Governance Project Board.

Item 13 and 14 [GS 2293 Safeguarding](#): There was a presentation by the new Director of Safeguarding, Alexander Kubeyinje followed by a take note debate. Synod agreed to take note on a show of hands.

[GS 2265A](#) and [GS 2265B Insurance Premium Tax](#): This Diocesan Synod Motion from Lincoln seeks to address the impact of insurance premium tax on churches and other charities. This was carried on a show of hands.

The following items were not able to be debated at the February group of sessions and will be debated at the next group of sessions:

[GS 2264 Church of England Pensions \(Application of Capital Funds\) Measure](#): Final Approval stage for the Measure which further extends the period during which the Church Commissioners are permitted to resort to capital to meet their obligations under the pre-1998 clergy pension scheme.

[GS 2291 Electronic Register Book of Services Form and Conditions 2023](#): This item allows a register of services to be kept in an electronic form approved by the General Synod as provided for in Canon F 12, as amended by Amending Canon No. 41

[GS 2292 61st Report of the Standing Orders Committee](#): This sets out a number of proposals to amend the Standing Orders.

Changes in Synod membership

We would like to remind you to update the Synod team of any resignations that you receive. Resignations from the House of Clergy should be sent to the Registrar and House of Laity to the Clerk of the Synod. If you could send any updates to gsresignations@churchofengland.org, that would be extremely helpful. This is particularly important for those resigning from the House of Clergy, as the Provincial Registrar needs to send a formal citation for the vacancy to be filled.

As we are still within the first two years following the elections to General Synod, any casual vacancies should be filled using the voting records of that election. Civica can help you with this and you should not be charged for this. Once the recount of the election has taken place, or new election if there were no candidates from the previous election, please send the confirmation of the new members to clerk@churchofengland.org.