

Synod Summary for Diocesan Secretaries

Introduction

This summary is prepared for Diocesan Secretaries and their offices. Please do share with others as you wish. If you have any thoughts on how to improve this, please let us know.

The General Synod met from 23rd to 27th February at Church House. This was the first time that Synod had met in London over a weekend. Members will be encouraged to feedback on how useful they found this.

Synod Business

The business done can be found on our [website](#). The report of proceedings will be made available in due course.

Item 1: Welcomes and Introductions: The usual start of the group of sessions. All members were welcomed by the Archbishop of Canterbury. In addition, there was the formal introduction of newly elected members. There had been six new members since the November 2023 group of sessions, and there were five Bishops attending the Synod during a vacancy in See.

Item 2: Presidential Address: The Archbishop of Canterbury gave a Presidential Address. At the end of the Presidential Address, the Archbishop of Canterbury gave Tom Joy, Chief Investment Officer, the Lambeth Award for his contribution to the Church.

Item 3: GS 2333 Report of the Business Committee: The Chair of the Business Committee, Canon 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.

Item 504 and 505: GS 2334 Vacancy in See Committees Regulations Consolidation: This consolidation instrument which brings together the changes in the Vacancy in See Committees Regulations into one document was passed by Synod and was then proclaimed as an Act of Synod.

Item 502: GS 2273C Amending Canon No 43: This Amending Canon received Final Approval at the July 2023 group of sessions and was finally enacted.

Item 4 GS 2331A and GS 2331B Parochial Fees: This was a Diocesan Synod Motion from London and focused on fees payable at crematoria and cemeteries. It was carried by Synod on a show of hands, and meant that Item 503, the Parochial Fees Order 2024, was amended to reflect this motion.

Item 5: Questions: There were 225 submitted to this group of sessions. In this session, questions 1 to 121 to the Remuneration & Conditions of Service Committee, Mission & Public Affairs Council, Committee for Minority Ethnic Anglican Concerns, Appointments Committee, Business Committee, House Of Bishops (Living in Love and Faith (LLF)), Crown Nominations Commission, Dioceses Commission, Faith and Order Commission, Fees

Advisory Commission, Liturgical Commission, Church Commissioners, Pensions Board, Ethical Investment Advisory Group and Archbishops' Council were answered.

Item 6: [GS 2335A](#) and [GS 2335B Code of Conduct for PCCs](#): This was a Diocesan Synod Motion from Chelmsford which requested the Archbishops' Council undertake a review to consider whether there should be a Code of Conduct for PCC members. There were two amendments which were rejected by Synod, so the final motion as voted on was as follows:

'That this Synod request that the Archbishops' Council carry out a review to consider:

- a) the possibility of drawing up a Code of Conduct for PCC members and lay volunteers,*
- b) the issues required to put in place a disciplinary process for their removal from the PCC in cases where this is not followed,*
- c) the resources required at national, diocesan and parish level to bring this about.'*

It was carried in all three Houses and the results were as follows:

	In favour	Against
House of Bishops	30	1
House of Clergy	128	23
House of Laity	105	53

There was 1 abstention in the House of Bishops, 4 in the House of Clergy and 8 in the House of Laity.

Staff will be in touch with dioceses regarding how this will be taken forward.

Item 7: [Questions](#): This was a continuation of question time and questions 122 to 167 to the Archbishops' Council and House of Bishops were answered.

Items 8 and 9 [GS 2336 Safeguarding](#): There was a video presentation by Professor Alexis Jay introducing her report which had been published just before Synod met. Synod was then invited to debate a motion. There were seven amendments, two of which were carried by Synod. The final motion was as follows:

'That this Synod thank Sarah Wilkinson and Alexis Jay for their work and request that the process set out in paragraph 12 of GS 2336 for forming a response to, and considering any necessary implementation of, their recommendations be pursued as a matter of priority;

That this Synod adopt and endorse the apologies expressed by the Archbishops to the Survivors impacted by the matters described within the Wilkinson Report, and specifically acknowledge and apologise for its own collegiate shortcomings within the scrutiny process;

That this Synod apologise to all members of the former Independent Safeguarding Board for the stress harm and professional embarrassment they have endured which have arisen as a result of the ISB formation, structuring, resourcing, implementation and management for which they were not responsible.'

It was carried on a counted vote of the whole Synod and there were 337 in favour, 21 against and 20 abstentions were recorded.

Item 10 [GS 2319 Land and Nature](#): This item related to the developing net zero work that had already been agreed by Synod and which dioceses are beginning to implement. There were two amendments, and one was carried by Synod. The final motion was carried on a show of hands and was as follows:

‘That this Synod, recognising the need to respond urgently to the ecological crisis, in line with the global scientific consensus that the climate change and biodiversity loss crises are intricately linked

- (a) welcome the work being done by the Church Commissioners, the NCIs, and many dioceses, parishes, cathedrals, and schools to manage all or part of their land for climate and nature, in urban and rural communities alike;*
- (b) request Diocesan Secretaries to take a named person/committee in their dioceses to create an action plan to achieve the ‘Land’ section of Eco Diocese at Silver level by 2026 at the latest.*
- (c) request Chairs and Secretaries of all diocesan property/finance committees to incorporate nature-positive objectives into their asset management policies within the next 6 months.*
- (d) call on parishes, cathedrals, TEIs, NCIs offices with land they manage or influence to:
 - i. create a simple land management plan, with reference to the guidance and examples from Caring for Gods Acre,*
 - ii. work towards an increasing level of Eco Church, including the actions in the ‘Land’ section, and*
 - iii. record the biodiversity of their green spaces, through taking part in Churches Count on Nature each year.**
- (e) call on Diocesan Boards of Education to work in accordance with the Department for Education Sustainability Strategy.’*
- (f) request the Church Commissioners to report back to General Synod within three years about their progress with:
 - i. enhancing and supporting biodiversity across their agricultural and forestry land;*
 - ii. engagement and collaboration with tenants about sustainable farming, and*
 - iii. their leadership amongst landowners in a way that recognises the importance of shared learning, support and respect in achieving these objectives.**

This motion sets out a number of tasks for dioceses which have been highlighted above in green. Staff will follow up in due course.

Item 11 [GS 2337 Synod Code of Conduct](#): This item requested that the Business Committee revise the current Code of Conduct for Synod members and present proposals to a future group of sessions. It was carried on a show of hands.

Item 12 [GS 2320A](#) and [GS 2320B Future of Work](#): This Diocesan Synod Motion from Oxford addressed the issue of fair work. There were 10 amendments to the motion and five were carried by Synod. The final motion was approved on a show of hands and was as follows:

‘That this Synod:

mindful of the deep economic effects of the pandemic, the impacts of new technology, and the global rise of new forms of working

- a) affirm the dignity and value of purposeful work, whether paid or unpaid, as a significant component of human flourishing;*
- b) endorse the Rome Call for promoting an ethical approach to Artificial Intelligence (AI);*
- c) endorse and commend the five principles used for evaluating fair and dignified platform work in the gig economy by fair work;*
- d) encourage all parishes, benefices, dioceses, cathedrals, Theological Educational Institutions and other Church of England organisations to implement, at a minimum, the living wage for employees and to have a regard for work/life balance and dignity at work; and*
- e) call for the Faith and Order Commission (FAOC) together with Mission and Public Affairs Committee to advise on what is essential to purposeful, dignified, and fair work in the context of the fourth industrial revolution now in progress including specific advice on how these changes impact the work of women and to look at Biblical wisdom on work, employment and economy in its widest sense; and to consider a range of practical solutions from recent economic thinking in harmony with the Christian tradition's emphasis on grace, justice and mercy, such as questions around pay ratios within organisations, Basic Citizens' Income, poverty and wealth lines, to strengthen our Christian voice in the public square as a Church.’*

This motion has one item which is directed at dioceses which is highlighted above.

Item 13 [GS 2338 Racial Justice](#): This item summarised the work that has taken place since the publication of ‘From Lament to Action’ to embed racial justice, noting that the Archbishops’ Racial Justice Commission ceases its work in November 2024 and proposed further action for dioceses and the Church. It was carried after a vote of the whole Synod, with 364 in favour, none against and two abstentions. The full motion was as follows:

‘That this Synod:

- a) commend the practical and positive outcomes in From Lament To Action but recognising the need to further embed racial justice in the life and practice of our Church, request that the national Church ensures crucial resources remain available including appropriate governance arrangement and funding, **recommend that***

Dioceses give priority to the collection, monitoring and measuring of relevant data, and encourage parishes and deaneries to develop local action plans to address issues of racial injustice.

- b) note that the Archbishops' Commission for Racial Justice shall complete its mandated three-year term in November 2024 and request the Archbishops' Council ensure effective structures exist for monitoring actions and outcomes on racial justice, including a possible review and strengthening of the role of the Committee for Minority Ethnic Anglican Concerns, and that the Synod Group Sessions in February 2025 review the progress made by Dioceses, the NCIs and other related institutions in implementing the recommendations in From Lament To Action.'

There is a specific action for dioceses which is highlighted above.

Item 14 [GS 2339A](#) and [GS 2339B Bullying by Lay Officers](#): This item was a Private Members Motion from the Ven Mark Ireland (Blackburn) seeking to bring forward legislative proposals to disqualify lay members from office if their behaviour merits this. This was carried after a vote of the whole Synod with 273 in favour, 15 against and 22 abstentions.

[GS 2340 63rd Report of the Standing Orders Committee](#): There was one proposal from the Standing Orders Committee to amend the Standing Orders which was carried by Synod. This provides that there should be at least one speech against a motion before the debate can be closed. There were two amendments put forward by Clive Billenness (Europe) which were also carried by Synod. This provides for the bell to be rung before a counted vote where a special majority is required.

Item 15 [GS 2321 Commission on Families and Households](#): This item invited Synod to engage with the 'Love Matters' Report from the Archbishops' Commission on Families and Households. There was one amendment which was rejected by Synod. The original motion was carried after a vote by Houses and the results were as follows:

	In favour	Against
House of Bishops	23	0
House of Clergy	97	30
House of Laity	97	38

There were 19 abstentions in the House of Clergy and 12 in the House of Laity.

Item 16 [GS 2341 Transatlantic Chattel Slavery](#): This was a presentation from the Church Commissioners and provided an update on the research into links with the Transatlantic Slave Trade. Synod members were addressed by:

- Bishop David Walker
- Archbishop of York
- Bishop Rosemarie Mallett
- Jonathan Guthrie, former associate editor of the Financial Times
- Roy Swan, Director, Mission Investments for the Ford Foundation
- Bishop Stephen Lake

Item 503 [GS 2342 Parochial Fees Order](#): This sets the parochial fees payable to diocesan boards of finance and PCCs to be prescribed by a Parochial Fees Order for up to two years from 1 January 2025. Following the debate on Friday, the Order was amended so that for “Funeral service in crematorium or funeral service (including burial of body or burial or other lawful disposal of cremated remains) in cemetery”, the base figure for the Diocesan Board of Finance will be 194 and the figure for Parochial Church Councils will be 34.

Item 500 [GS 2343 Chancel Repair Liability Measure](#): This Measure is a small discrete piece of work and will detach the Church Commissioners’ land-based chancel repair liability from the relevant land and turn it into a free-standing statutory liability. Synod agreed that this should be considered by a revision committee, and any amendments to the Measure should be submitted to revisioncommittee@churchofengland.org not later than **5.30pm on Monday 8th April 2024**

Items 17 and 18 [GS 2344 Reappointment of two AC members](#): This was to formally approve the reappointment of the Revd Charlotte Cook and Mr Joseph Diwakar as members of the Archbishops’ Council. Under the provisions of paragraph 1(3) of Schedule 1 of the National Institutions Measure 1998, the approval of the General Synod is required for appointments to the Archbishops’ Council. These were carried on a show of hands.

Item 19 [GS 2345 Estates Evangelism](#): This was an update on the work done by the Estates Evangelism Task Group and seeks to encourage better resourcing of evangelism in economically marginalised parishes. There were four amendments which were all carried by Synod. The final motion was as follows:

‘This Synod:

- a) dedicate itself afresh to the goal of achieving a loving, serving and worshipping Christian community on every significant social housing estate to mark the fifth anniversary of Synod Motion GS 2122;*
- b) commend the work of all who minister on our estates and gives thanks for those Dioceses who have responded positively to the 2019 Motion;*
- c) call on all Dioceses to include in their strategic mission and ministry plans the goal of planting and renewing churches on and/or doubling the number of young active disciples in social housing estates/other economically marginalised communities;*
- d) call on the whole church to address as a matter of urgency the structural and financial injustices that prevent flourishing and sustainable worshipping communities on every estate (for example the financial inequalities between dioceses and the distribution of LInC Funding);*
- e) commit itself to taking the necessary steps to raise up and support a new generation of lay and ordained leaders from estates and working class backgrounds (by for example addressing the recommendations of the Ministry Council’s Report ‘Let Justice Roll Down’) at all levels in the church including a commitment to invest creatively in local and grassroots forms of ministry and leadership training*
- f) request the Estates Evangelism Task Group to work alongside diocesan vocations advisors, the 30,000 Project and other related bodies to ensure that priority is given to the formation of young people from estates and lowincome communities to serve*

as children's and young people's leaders, as well as in other forms of Christian ministry.'

This was carried after a vote of the whole Synod with 364 in favour, none against and no recorded abstentions. There is one action which relates to the work of dioceses which is highlighted above.

Item 20 [GS 2330A](#) and [GS 2330B Clergy Pensions](#): This was a Private Members' Motion from the Revd Dr Ian Paul (Southwell & Nottingham) which was seeking to restore the Clergy Pension to its pre-2011 benefit level. There were two amendments which were carried by Synod and the final motion was as follows:

'That this Synod

- a) request the Archbishops' Council, the Pensions Board, and the Church Commissioners to work together with dioceses to explore ways in which the level of clergy pensions and stipends might be improved in a sustainable manner, with reference being made to the impact of changes to clergy pension benefits and the National Minimum Stipend (NMS) since 1998, including the change in level of the pension benefit from 2/3 of NMS prior to 2011;*
- b) in doing this work to have regard to the findings of the Clergy Remuneration Review (GS 2247 and GS Misc 1298) and in particular the policy that the National Minimum Stipend should, in future, on average, increase in line with inflation (as measured by CPIH) subject to three yearly reviews and the need to review this position if high levels of inflation establish themselves; and*
- c) request the Archbishops' Council, the Pensions Board and the Church Commissioners to consider what steps may be taken to remedy the fall in the real value of pensions for clergy retiring since 2021, and to avoid such a fall reoccurring in any future period of high inflation.'*

This was carried after a vote of the whole Synod with 382 in favour, none against and no recorded abstentions.

Item 21 [GS 2346 Living in Love and Faith](#): This was an update from Bishop Martyn Snow as the lead bishop and invited members to continue their engagement with this work. There were four amendments considered by Synod, two of which were carried. However, there was a move to next business which was carried by Synod so the motion lapsed. This means that the specific motion presented at the February group of sessions cannot be considered again by Synod during this quinquennium except with the permission of the Business Committee and general consent of Synod.

Item 501 [GS 2347 Church Funds Investment Measure](#): This Measure enables the trustee of the Central Board of Finance (CBF) investment funds (Church Charity and Local Authority Investment Management Limited or CCLA) to make a scheme of arrangement under which the existing funds that are covered by the Church Funds Investment Measure 1958 can be transferred to a Charity Authorised Investment Fund. The result would be that the funds in question became regulated by the Charity Commission and the Financial Conduct Authority, providing greater assurance to investors. Synod agreed that this should be considered by a

revision committee, and any amendments to the Measure should be submitted to revisioncommittee@churchofengland.org not later than **5.30pm on Monday 8th April 2024**

Item 22 [GS 2348 War in Ukraine](#): This item considered the war in Ukraine, particularly in light of the second anniversary of the start of the war. It set out the challenge to freedom of religion or belief, and to the rules-based liberal international order and considered the response from the Church and opportunities for further engagement. There was one amendment which was carried and the final motion was as follows:

‘That this Synod, recognising the ongoing suffering and terror caused by the war in Ukraine and the repercussions and anxiety felt globally for our common future:

- a) affirm with gratitude the church’s work with others to support conflict parties and mediators and call for continued efforts to develop pathways to peace, justice and reconciliation in Ukraine;*
- b) call on all parties to the conflict to ensure that everyone in Ukraine has full freedom to manifest and practice their religion or belief, in line with international human rights law;*
- c) call on all UK political parties to set out ahead of the General Election their vision for a desirable international order and their strategies for ensuring that existing international rules and principles are attractive both domestically and to a broader global constituency; and*
- d) call on all UK political parties to affirm their continued support for Ukraine until such time as a just and lasting peace is secured.’*

This was carried after a vote of the whole Synod and there were 254 in favour, 3 against and 2 recorded abstentions.

Item 23 [GS 2349A](#) and [GS 2349B Ordination after Divorce](#): This was a Private Members’ Motion from the Revd Mark Bennet (Oxford) which seeks to introduce legislation to remove the impediment to ordination for those who have been divorced. There were two amendments, one of which was carried and the final motion was as follows:

‘That this Synod request that the Archbishops’ Council introduce the necessary legislation to revise Canon C4.5 so that a diocesan bishop or acting diocesan bishop may grant a faculty to remove the impediment under Canon C4.4, with national assessment guidelines issued by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York acting jointly to ensure consistency across dioceses.’

This was carried after a vote of the whole Synod and there were 300 in favour, 12 against and 7 recorded abstentions.

Item 24 [Farewells](#): There were two farewells, one to the Revd Canon Stephen Trott who had been Synodical Secretary for the Convocation of Canterbury since 2010 and the Rt Revd Paul Butler, Bishop of Durham.

[GS 2350 Clergy Discipline Rules](#): These Rules were deemed to be approved and sets out some minor updates to the Rules relating to who can access the Archbishops’ Lists.