

Synod briefing for Diocesan Secretaries

Introduction

This is the summary of the July group of sessions. General Synod met from 5 to 9 July at the University of York. As always, this can be shared with colleagues and if there are any suggestions for improvements, we would be happy to hear them.

Synod Business

The Business Done is available on the [website](#). The voting records and report of proceedings will follow in due course. Details of the decisions taken on each item are as follows.

[Item 1: Introductions and Welcomes](#): There were 12 new members, 6 acting bishops where dioceses are in vacancy, 2 Anglican Communion guests and a number of guests from Finland welcomed to the meeting.

[Item 2: Presidential Address](#): The Archbishop of York gave his Presidential Address.

[Item 3: Address by Ecumenical Guest and Finnish Confirmands](#): There was an address from the Archbishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland, the Most Revd Dr Tapio Luoma; followed by a presentation of two young Finnish confirmands, the Rt Revd Matti Repo and Risto Korhonen, university chaplain.

[Item 4 Report of the Business Committee \(GS 2353\)](#): The Chair of the Business Committee, Canon Robert Hammond, spoke to the Report of the Business Committee and answered questions from members. The Synod took note of the Report on a show of hands.

[Item 5 and 6 Wisdom of Trust: Building and Sustaining Trust in the Church of England \(GS 2354\)](#): There was a presentation from Professor Veronica Hope Hailey who had been leading on this work along with Professor David Ford who was unable to attend. This was followed by a take note debate on the Report which was carried on a show of hands.

A further motion was moved on this item but this lapsed due to having timed business immediately following item 6.

[Item 7 Questions](#): There were 221 questions submitted at this group of sessions. In this session, questions 1 to 60 were reached. These were questions to Council for Christian Unity, Ministry Council, National Society Council, Remuneration and Conditions of Service Committee, Committee for Minority Ethnic Anglican Concerns, Mission and Public Affairs Council, Business Committee, Crown Nominations Commission and Living in Love questions to the House of Bishops.

[Items 511 and 512 Church Funds Investment Measure \(GS 2347 and GS 2347X1\)](#): This was the Revision Stage for the Measure which will enable the trustee of the CBF investment funds (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. There were no submissions to the Revision Committee and this was taken forward for Final Drafting and Final Approval later in the group of sessions.

[Item 500 Chancel Repair \(Church Commissioners' Liability\) Measure \(GS 2343 and GS 2343X1\)](#): This was the Revision Stage for the Measure which will detach the Church Commissioners' land-based chancel repair liability from the relevant land and turn it into a free-standing statutory liability. It received First Consideration at the February 2024 group of sessions. This was taken forward for Final Drafting and Final Approval later in the group of sessions.

[Items 30 to 53 64th Report of the Standing Orders Committee \(GS 2355\)](#): There were minor tidying up amendments to Standing Orders 21, 29, 30, 69I, 73, 77, 87 and 90 which were deemed to be approved. Synod debated amendments to the Standing Orders relating to the Crown Nominations Commission. All the amendments put forward were accepted by Synod without amendment.

[Items 8 to 14 Archbishops' Council Budget 2025 and Proposals for Apportionment 2025 \(GS 2356\)](#): Synod considered the budget for the Archbishops' Council for 2025 and the apportionment and agreed expenditure as follows:

- £17, 391, 847 for Training for Ministry
- £38, 242, 532 for National Church Responsibilities
- £1, 560, 642 for Grants
- £504, 924 for Mission Agency Pension Contributions
- £6, 444, 313 for Clergy Retirement Housing Grants

Synod also agreed the apportionment as set out in the Table of Apportionment in the paper.

[Item 15 Questions](#): In this session, questions 61 to 131 were reached. These were questions to the House of Bishops on Living in Love, Clergy Discipline Commission, Dioceses Commission, Faith and Order Commission, Liturgical Commission, Church Commissioners, Pensions Board and Ethical Investment Advisory Group.

[Item 505 Clergy Conduct Measure \(GS 2311A and GS 2311X1\)](#): This was the Revision Stage for the legislation to set out a new statutory framework and establish the jurisdiction for dealing with cases relating to clergy conduct. This was carried by Synod and will now go forward for Final Drafting and Final Approval.

[Item 510 Safeguarding Code of Practice Learning and Development Framework \(GS 2370\)](#): This item was undebated and debated. It is a code of practice sets out the safeguarding Learning and Development Framework under Section 5A of the Safeguarding and Clergy Discipline Measure 2016. This was carried on a show of hands and will come into effect as of 31 July 2024.

[Item 16 Rest Periods for Office Holders \(GS 2357A and GS 2357B\)](#): This was a Diocesan Synod Motion from Winchester looking to introduce 36 hours of rest within any period of seven days, including an uninterrupted rest period of not less than 24 hours. There were four amendments, two of which were carried by Synod, so the final motion was as follows:

‘That this Synod, recognising that

- a) Sabbath, as a time to cease and delight, is part of God’s plan for humankind and for all creation and is modelled by God in Genesis 2.1-3,*
- b) a weekly Sabbath rest is a life-giving gift of God and important for the wellbeing of all people,*
- c) a day off spent catching up on necessary tasks is not a Sabbath day,*

request that the Archbishops’ Council lay before it for approval draft Regulations amending the Ecclesiastical Offices (Terms of Service) Regulations 2009 so that an office holder is entitled to not less than 36 hours (a day and a half) of rest in any period of seven days, to include an uninterrupted Sabbath rest period of not less than 24 hours, but so that the statement of particulars of office may continue to specify that any rest period may not be taken on or include a Sunday or any or all of the principal Feasts of the Church of England or Ash Wednesday or Good Friday.’

This was carried on a counted vote, with 336 in favour, 3 against and 6 abstentions.

[Item 17 Living in Love and Faith \(GS 2358\)](#): This was a presentation from the working groups on Living in Love and Faith in advance of the debate on Monday.

[Item 18 Human Dignity of Disabled Children \(GS 2359A and GS 2359B\)](#): This is a DSM from Liverpool encouraging better support for disabled children. There were no amendments and the final motion was as follows:

‘That this Synod, reaffirming its belief that every person is unique and precious and made in the image of God, and endorsing section 6 of the Equality Act (2010):

- a) challenge the common assumption that bringing a disabled child into the world is a tragedy to be avoided;*
- b) call upon healthcare providers and other public authorities to improve the support they give to the parents and families of children born with disabilities;*
- c) call upon His Majesty’s Government and healthcare providers to ensure that mothers*

whose unborn child may be disabled in any way are given comprehensive and unbiased information about the condition and support available to them;

- d) call upon dioceses, parishes and chaplaincies to consider how they might better witness to the human dignity of disabled children, including the better pastoral advice and support they might offer to their parents and families.'*

This was carried on a counted vote with 312 in favour, no vote against and no abstentions. Paragraph (d) is of particular relevance to dioceses.

[Item 507 National Church Governance Measure \(GS 2360 and GS 2360X\)](#): This was the First Consideration Stage for this Measure which will introduce new governance framework for the national Church. This is now at Revision Committee stage and members are invited to submit amendments to the Revision Committee **not later than 5.30pm 6 September** via revisioncommittee@churchofengland.org

[Item 19 Inquiry into Allegations of Abuse within the Soul Survivor Network \(GS 2361A and GS 2361B\)](#): This is a Private Members' Motion from the Revd Robert Thompson seeking an independent inquiry by King's Counsel into the allegations relating to Soul Survivor. There was one amendment which was carried and the final motion was as follows:

'That this Synod, conscious of the ongoing safeguarding work around independence underway following the publication of the reports by Dr Sarah Wilkinson and Professor Alexis Jay.

- a) express deep sorrow for all instances of abuse within God's church, regardless of who committed them, and condemn in the strongest possible terms any and all attempts to cover up abuse;*
- b) reaffirm its commitment to listen to survivors and seek justice on their behalf;*
- c) call upon the Archbishops' Council to:*
 - i. ensure that learning from the review into allegations of abuse within the Soul Survivor network currently being undertaken by independent King's Counsel Fiona Scolding, is considered in any recommendations relating to the Future of Church Safeguarding;*
 - ii. engage with relevant survivors to understand their perspective on the review's conclusions;*
 - iii. continue to embed the National Safeguarding Standards into every Church of England ministry setting, and commend the points raised in GS 2361A*
 - iv. highlight the importance of healthy cultures and urge further theological reflection in guarding against potential abused of power and promoting safe and wise leadership, and around the ethics of social media; and*
 - v. commend the steps being taken by the National Safeguarding Team to ensure that victims and survivors have proper support including explanation of any legal*

processes – including the Clergy Discipline Measure – they find themselves involved with.'

This was carried on a counted vote with 303 in favour, 20 against and 38 abstentions.

[Item 20 Archbishops' Council Annual Report \(GS 2362\) and Annual Report of the Church Commissioners \(GS 2363\)](#): This was an opportunity for members to engage with the work of the Archbishops' Council and Church Commissioners' through a presentation with questions.

There was a further motion to this presentation which was carried by Synod on a show of hands. The motion was as follows:

'That this Synod

- a) Regret that the Annual Report of the Archbishops' Council does not refer to the relaunch of the National Burial Grounds Survey (NBGS) despite this being a significant piece of work in 2023;*
- b) Welcome changes made to the NBGS since its previous launch, in particular that:
 - i. Atlantic Geomatics are no longer formally partnering with FamilySearch, an agency of the Mormons (Latter Day Saints);*
 - ii. The financial offer to parishes has improved, saving parishes and estimated £1.5m a year in subscription fees;*
 - iii. The management of data under GDPR is much clearer, with the recognition is that the consent of each PCC is required;**
- c) Express its deep concern about other outstanding issues, in particular:
 - i. Commercial use of the data - giving AG;*
 - ii. International Ltd copyright ownership of the images collected and the right to sell this database to third parties for profit, which could well include the Mormon Church;*
 - iii. Data creep – the NBGS seeks to film all parish registers, not just burial records, including current Baptism registers;*
 - iv. Safeguarding – baptism registers hold information about children, including material that is highly sensitive in the case of looked after children, vulnerable children whose address may not be known to a parent who is abusive;**
- d) Request Archbishops' Council to consult with the College of Archdeacons to address these issues, and request that parishes are not asked to sign up until this consultation has taken place.'*

This was carried on a show of hands.

[Items 21 and 22 Safeguarding Independence Update \(GS 2364\)](#): This included a presentation

from Lesley-Ann Ryder, co-Chair of the Response group for the Wilkinson and Jay Reports, as well as a debate on a motion. The motion was as follows:

'That this Synod thank the Response Group for its work, welcome the progress update set out in GS 2364, and noting that feedback has identified concerns with:

- a) Professor Jay's recommendations on spiritual abuse and the definition of safeguarding; and*
- b) the role of bishops in decision-making on safeguarding cases,*

ask for detailed analysis of the options set out in the paper to be undertaken for the General Synod in February.'

This was carried on a show of hands.

[Item 23 Foodbanks and Inadequacies in Social Security \(GS 2351A and GS 2351B\)](#): This is a Diocesan Synod Motion from Sheffield which addresses the issue of increased use of food banks and the inadequacy of social security provision. There were four amendments, three of which were carried and the final motion was as follows:

'That this Synod, mindful that the fourth Mark of Mission of the Anglican Communion is to "transform unjust structures of society",

- a) note the major contribution to social welfare being made by the churches and others in the provision of food banks;*
- b) note with concern that levels of dependence on food banks have been increasing and that inflation is making the situation even worse;*
- c) note further that 2/3 of those who use food banks have disabilities or long-term health conditions who find it nearly impossible to navigate the benefits system and be supported adequately, and so applaud the incredible ministry and example of these churches and others who tirelessly run food banks, whilst lamenting and acknowledging the incredible personal and financial cost to this, which is driving some organisations to breaking point;*
- d) believe that this dependence reflects serious inadequacies in the social security system;*
- e) note that the Trussell Trust has said: 'we stand on the edge of a precipice with a clear decision to make: either we accept food banks as a 'new normal' or we work to create a more dignified, compassionate and humane society where everyone has enough money for essentials';*
- f) welcome the Chancellor's intervention to help the least well-off households with their energy bills but note this will not remove the problem of increased dependency on foodbanks; and*
- g) call on the House of Bishops to urgently engage with HM Government, in particular the Secretary of State, to press it to review the adequacy of current social security provision*

- and consider the feasibility of introducing an Essentials Guarantee; and*
- h) believing that all children are a gift from God and bear the image of Christ, urge the House of Bishops and in particular the Lords Spiritual, to use every opportunity available to them to engage with the new Government and strongly encourage them to do everything possible to bring about an immediate end to the two child benefit limit, which disadvantages families and forces large numbers of children into the use of food banks or to otherwise go hungry.'*

This was carried on a counted vote of Synod, with 274 in favour, 1 against and no recorded abstentions.

[Item 24 Living in Love and Faith \(GS 2358\)](#): This was the debate on Living in Love and Faith. There were two amendments to the motion, one was carried. The final motion was as follows:

'That this Synod:

- a) support the overall proposal and timetable set out in GS 2358;*
- b) request that the House of Bishops, with the advice of the LLF working groups:*
 - i. revise the Pastoral Guidance to remove restrictions on the use of PLF in 'standalone' services alongside the introduction of an arrangement to register for Pastoral Reassurance;*
 - ii. establish the basis for the provision of Pastoral Reassurance through a House of Bishops' Statement and Code of Practice which provides for the delegation of some specific and defined episcopal ministry, and which is overseen by an Independent Review Panel;*
 - iii. report to this Synod at its February 2025 group of sessions on the further theological work carried out under the auspices of the Faith and Order Commission around the nature of doctrine, particularly as it relates to the doctrine of marriage and the question of clergy in same-sex civil marriages; this work to be appropriately budgeted and resourced by the Archbishops' Council in terms of theological advice, travel and meeting costs in order to increase the likelihood of meeting the timescales as set out in GS 2358.*
- c) Agree that taken together the Pastoral Guidance, the Bishop's Statement and Code of Practice for pastoral provision will replace Issues in Human Sexuality.*
- d) Agree for the arrangements for Pastoral Reassurance to be regularly monitored over a period of at least three years before being formally reviewed by General Synod.'*

This was carried following a counted vote by Houses. The voting was as follows:

	For	Against	Abstention
Bishops	22	12	5

Clergy	99	88	2
Laity	95	91	2

[Item 508 Legal Officers \(Annual Fees\) Order 2024 \(GS 2367\)](#) This item was undeemed and debated. After a brief debate, the Synod moved to next business which means a revised Order will be presented at the February 2025 group of sessions.

[Item 509 Ecclesiastical Judges, Legal Officers and Others \(Fees\) Order 2024 \(GS 2368\)](#). These are the usual court fees in the ecclesiastical courts. These were carried on a show of hands. It will come into force on 1 January 2025.

[Item 69: Address by Anglican Communion Guest](#): The Most Revd Leonard Dawea, Archbishop of the Anglican Church of Melanesia, addressed Synod.

[Item 28 Farewell](#): The Archbishop of Canterbury gave a farewell to the Rt Revd John Inge, Bishop of Worcester.

[Item 506 Abuse \(Redress\) Measure \(GS 2325A and GS 2325X2\)](#): This was the Revision Stage for the Measure which will enable there to be a consistent approach across the Church to redress following abuse. This was carried by Synod and will now go forward for Final Drafting and Final Approval.

[Item 501 and 502 Chancel Repair \(Church Commissioners' Liability\) Measure \(GS 2343 and GS 2343X1\)](#): This was the Final Drafting and Final Approval Stage for the Measure which will detach the Church Commissioners' land-based chancel repair liability from the relevant land and turn it into a free-standing statutory liability. As required under Standing Orders, there was a count by Houses and the voting was as follows:

	For	Against	Abstention
Bishops	16	0	0
Clergy	82	0	0
Laity	94	0	2

This will now go to the Legislative Committee before consideration by the Ecclesiastical Committee of Parliament.

[Items 503 and 504 Church Funds Investment Measure \(GS 2347 and GS 2347X1\)](#): This was the Final Drafting and Final Approval Stage for the Measure which will enable the trustee of the CBF investment funds (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. As required under Standing Orders, there was a count by Houses

and the voting was as follows:

	For	Against	Abstention
Bishops	13	0	0
Clergy	77	0	0
Laity	93	0	1

This will now go to the Legislative Committee before consideration by the Ecclesiastical Committee of Parliament.

[Item 25 Day of Prayer and Action for the Persecuted Church \(GS 2366A and GS 2366B\)](#): This is a Diocesan Synod Motion from London which builds on the decision taken at the February 2022 encouraging the creation of a national day of prayer for the persecuted Church around the world. There were no amendments and the motion was as follows:

‘That this Synod, in the light of the motion passed at the February 2022 Group of Sessions relating to the persecuted Church (i.e. item 18 on the Agenda, as amended), request the Archbishops’ Council to work ecumenically with other churches to establish a national day of prayer and action for the persecuted Church around the world.’

This was carried on a counted vote of Synod, with 230 in favour, none against and 1 recorded abstention.

[Items 26 and 27 Hearing and Responding to the Voice of Young People \(GS 2367\)](#): This included a presentation by children and young people, before a debate on a motion. There were no amendments to the motion and the motion was as follows:

‘That this Synod:

- a) welcome the voice of children and young people as part of the church of today and commit to intentionally hearing and responding to their voice on at least one substantive item of business in future groups of sessions, employing a range of presentational activities, including surveys, reports, live presentations and videos;*
- b) welcome the work being done across the whole church to become ‘younger and more diverse’ ensuring every child in every parish has access to a flourishing youth, children and families’ ministry.’*

This was carried on a show of hands.