

These reflections are offered by the Lay members of General Synod: Keith Cawdron, Richard Denno, Chris Pye, Maggie Swinson and Debra Walker.

This is not a comprehensive report but seeks to highlight specific issues for further consideration, bringing things from theoretical to practical.

Remote Meetings

The November sessions are the first to be held online. Zoom was used and simple votes used Zoom Polls, similar to a show of hands. Counted votes by houses used a separate voting tool. About 400 members voted.

Presidential Address

The Archbishop of Canterbury listed problems in the world including COVID-19, economic downturn, lack of social justice and climate change. He reminded Synod that failure to adapt, or adapting wrongly not according to our history, tradition and values, are both doomed. As God said to King Ahaz: "If you do not stand firm in your faith, you will not stand at all".

The Archbishop of York emphasised Christ's saying, "The truth will set you free". He declared that Christ is our security, peace and hope.

You can watch the Archbishops' messages on YouTube

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kZmdHEelqOQ&t=1h18m>

Living in Love and Faith (LLF)

The Bishop of Coventry and Dr Eeva John reported on the LLF process about identity, human sexuality and relationships. Over the past three years, the Bishop has chaired the LLF Coordinating Group. Learning resources, including a book (468 pages), a 5-session course (68 pages), videos and an on-line library are now available. The vision of LLF is to encounter the reality of our diversity and divisions and to listen to one another. We are invited, not compelled, to engage in listening and learning together over the coming year. It is expected to be challenging. A Next Steps Group will be chaired by the Bishop of London.

You can watch the presentations by the Bishop of Coventry & Dr Eeva John:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kZmdHEelqOQ&t=1h38m>

COVID-19 Pandemic

Synod called on the church to pray for those ill, bereaved, unemployed or suffering mentally as a result of the virus, and for the government.

Synod gave thanks to NHS and social care staff, scientists and key workers in every sector.

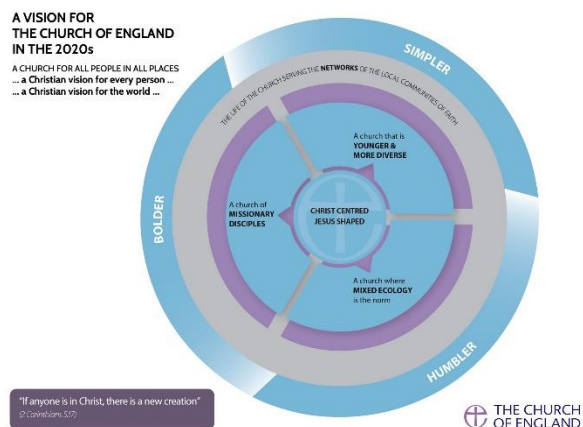
Synod asked the church's representatives to press the case with government to reduce social inequalities and the impact of COVID-19 especially on BAME people.

Synod celebrated the role of churches in building mental & spiritual resilience and called on government to review a decision to close churches during lockdown.

How will you reach out to those most affected?

Vision and Strategy

The Archbishop of York presented a vision for the Church of England in the 2020s. The vision is our calling to be 'Christ-centred, Jesus-shaped church that is simpler, humbler and bolder'. A strategy is to be a church of Missionary Disciples, in a Mixed Ecology of many forms of church, which is Younger and More Diverse. The vision was presented on a single piece of paper in diagrammatic form as seen below:



How does this vision and strategy help you to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ in your parish or network?

Cathedrals Measure

Synod approved draft legislation by which the existing corporate body of a cathedral will continue as the Chapter only. Its other two parts, the Council and the College of Canons, will no longer be part of that body. All employees and assets will remain with the Chapter.

A helpful consequence is to simplify implementation.

Archbishops' Council Budget and Apportionment

Synod approved a budget of £50.9 million for 2021. This is £4.0 million (8.5%) above the 2020 budget. Main increases are safeguarding (£1.2m) training for ministry (£0.9m) and environmental work (£0.4m).

Funding is from Diocesan Apportionment (£32.5m), External (£16.5m) and Reserves (£2m). External income from Church Commissioners has increased £4.8m for safeguarding, environmental work and to reduce the pressure on Diocesan Apportionment.

Apportionment for Diocese of Liverpool is £417,717.

Safeguarding and Clergy Discipline Measure

Synod considered an amendment to legislation to provide a Code of Practice for safeguarding children and vulnerable adults. Relevant persons include bishops, clergy, readers, PCC, Chapter of a Cathedral, and mission initiative workers.

Archdeacon Pete Spiers paid tribute to Diocesan Safeguarding Advisors, who work as best they can to do justice, love mercy and walk humbly with God.

Code of Practice replaces the legal term "have due regard", which was not generally understood. List of relevant persons is extended.

Are you up to date with your safeguarding training?

Safeguarding and Response to IICSA

Synod fully accepted the report of the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA) in the church. Synod sincerely apologises to victims and survivors for the harm done by the church and commits to urgently implementing six recommendations (in GS 2184).

Recommendations include a new role of Diocesan Safeguarding Officer replacing the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor role. Professional supervision of this role is by the National Safeguarding Team and the Officer will make decisions independent of the Diocesan Bishop.

Synod heard from survivors of abuse and agreed:

- Survivors must be put at the centre of our response
- We need a change in culture to include a challenge to deference and power
- The importance of independent oversight
- The role of Core Groups should be reviewed
- Revisions to the Clergy Discipline Measure (CDM)
- Mismanagement of abuse is itself abuse

How can you be part of the culture change within the church to help improve safeguarding measures and protect the vulnerable?

Diocesan Boards of Education

Synod approved legislation requiring each Diocese to make a scheme designating each Diocesan Board of Education (DBE) as one of the following: an incorporated body, an unincorporated body on the register of charities, or the Diocesan Board of Finance (DBF).

Allows a DBE to be a DBF committee.

National Ministry Register (Clergy)

Synod approved regulations to establish a central register of clergy having current permission to officiate.

Provides a way for members of the public to check that clergy are authorised.

Further information

Further information and all the papers, including the Questions and their answers, are available on the website:

<https://www.churchofengland.org/about/policy-and-thinking/work-general-synod/agendas-papers/general-synod-november-2020>