

## **General Synod February 2020 group of sessions**

### **Briefing for Diocesan Secretaries**

General Synod met from **10-13 February** at Church House, Westminster. This update details the various items of legislative and non-legislative business which was discussed during the Group of Sessions and which decisions were made.

All of the papers, including the summary of the business done, are available on the General Synod pages of the Church of England website via the following link:

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

#### **Legislation**

##### **Revision Stage**

- **Draft Diocesan Boards of Education Measure (GS 2131A)**
- **Draft Cathedrals Measure (GS 2136A)**

both completed their revision stage and now go back to their respective steering committees in preparation for Final Drafting and Final Approval at (probably) the July group of sessions.

##### **Approved**

- **Church Representation Rules (Amendment) Resolution 2020 (GS 2155)**
- **House of Laity Election Rules 2020 (GS 2165)**
- **Clergy Election Rules 2020 (GS 2166)**
- **Convocations (Elections to Upper House) Rules 2020 (GS 2167)**
- **Single Transferable Vote Rules 2020 (GS 2167)**
- **Care of Cathedrals (Amendment) Rules (GS 2168)**
- **Draft Scheme Amending the Diocese in Europe Constitution (GS 2169)**
- **Draft Channel Islands Measure (GS 2152)**

The Draft Channel Islands Measure undertook all the legislative stages at this Group of Sessions

##### **Proclamation as an Act of Synod**

- **The Clergy Covenant for Wellbeing Act of Synod 2020 (GS 2153)**

The text of the Act of Synod is as follows:

*The Church of England is part of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church, worshipping the one true God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It professes the faith uniquely revealed in the Holy Scripture and set forth in the catholic creeds, which faith the Church is called upon to proclaim afresh in every generation.*

*In its formularies, the Church of England recognises that God calls men and women to serve as deacons, priests and bishops to build up and equip the whole People of God.*

*Conscious that such a calling is both a privilege and a demand, we as the Church of England commit together to promote the welfare of our clergy and their households in terms expressed in the Covenant for Clergy Care and Wellbeing.*

*We undertake to work together to seek to coordinate and improve our approach to clergy care and wellbeing that ordained ministers flourish in their service of the mission of God within and beyond the Church.*

Further information and directions for the proclamation of the Act of Synod in diocesan synods will be sent separately.

### **Non-legislative business**

Other key business before the Synod included:

- a debate on **Deanery Synod Term Limits (GS 2154)**. An amendment resolution will be brought to the July Group of Sessions to reverse the default position so that there would be no term limit unless the APCM resolved to impose it, and giving the APCM the power to specify what the term limit should be in the parish;
- a debate on **General Synod Elections 2020: Allocation of Seats (GS 2162)**. Dioceses have been informed of their allocation for the 2020 – 2025 quinquennium.
- a presentation on the Living in Love and Faith and Pastoral Advisory Group work.

There were a number of motions that were presented to Synod and which were amended following proposals by Synod members.

### **Windrush Commitment and Legacy (GS 2156A and GS 2156B)**

The motion, as amended:

*'That this Synod, commemorating in 2018 the martyrdom of the Revd Dr Martin Luther King, Jr., noting with joy the 70th anniversary of the arrival of the Empire Windrush liner in the United Kingdom in June 1948 bringing nearly 500 Commonwealth citizens, mainly from the Caribbean, to mainland UK; and the eventual arrival of approximately half a million people from the West Indies, who were called to Britain as British subjects to help rebuild the post-war United Kingdom:*

- a) lament, on behalf of Christ's Church, and apologises for, the conscious and unconscious racism experienced by countless Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) Anglicans in 1948 and subsequent years, when seeking to find a spiritual home in their local Church of England parish churches, the memory of which is still painful to committed Anglicans who, in spite of this racism from clergy and others, have remained faithful to the Church of England and their Anglican heritage;*
- b) request the Archbishops' Council to commission research to assess the impact of this on the Church of England in terms of church members*

*lost, churches declining into closure, and vocations to ordained and licensed lay ministries missed, and to report back to this Synod and the wider Church;*

*c) express gratitude to God for the indispensable contribution to the mission, ministry, prayer and worship of Christ's Church in this nation made by people of BAME descent in the Church of England;*

*d) acknowledge and give joyful thanks for the wider contribution of the 'Windrush generation' and their descendants to UK life and culture in every field of human activity, including service across the Armed Forces and other services during and after the Second World War;*

*e) resolve to continue, with great effort and urgency, to stamp out all forms of conscious or unconscious racism, and to commit the Church of England to increase the participation and representation of lay and ordained BAME Anglicans throughout Church life; and*

*f) request the Archbishop's Council to appoint an independent person external to the Church to assess the current situation as regards race and ethnicity in the Church, in order to present a report to this Synod with recommendations for actions to achieve reconciliation and authentic belonging so that we can move towards truly being a Church for all people; to the greater glory of the God in whose image every human being is made.'*

Dioceses would be encouraged to reflect on paragraph (e) and to consider ways in which the participation and representation of lay and ordained BAME Anglicans can be increased throughout Church life.

### **Safeguarding: Response to Recommendations in IICSA May 2019 Investigation Report (GS 2158)**

The motion, as amended:

*'That this Synod*

*a) endorse the Archbishops' Council's response, set out in GS 2158, to the five recommendations made by the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse in its investigation report Anglican Church Case Studies: Chichester/Peter Ball (May 2019) at pages 206 to 207;*

*b) welcome the statement in paragraph 4.1 of the response that the National Safeguarding Steering Group (NSSG) "remains committed to ensuring that words of apology are followed by concrete actions";*

*c) urge the NSSG to bring forward proposals to give effect to that commitment that follow a more fully survivor-centred approach to safeguarding, including arrangements for redress for survivors;*

*d) request that the NSSG keep the Synod updated on the development and implementation of responses to recommendations relating to the Church of England that are made by the Inquiry, including by submitting a report for debate by the Synod not later than July 2021.'*

### **Climate Emergency and Carbon Reduction Target (GS 2159)**

The motion, as amended:

*'That this Synod, recognising that the global climate emergency is a crisis for God's creation, and a fundamental injustice, and following the call of the Anglican*

*Communion in ACC Resolutions A17.05 and A17.06:*

- a) call upon all parts of the Church of England, including parishes, BMOs, education institutions, dioceses, cathedrals and the NCIs, to work to achieve year-on-year reductions in emissions and urgently examine what would be required to reach net zero emissions by 2030 in order that a plan of action can be drawn up to achieve that target;*
- b) request reports on progress from the Environment Working Group and the NCIs every 3 years beginning in 2022; and*
- c) call on each Diocesan Synod and cathedral Chapter to address progress toward net zero emissions every 3 years.'*

Dioceses have been committed to a number of actions in this motion, specifically those outlined in paragraphs (a) and (c). It should be noted that the target date has been set at 2030.

### **End to Paupers' Funerals (GS 2160A and GS 2160B)**

The motion, as amended:

*'That this Synod noting:*

- a) the substantial rise in the number of 'pauper funerals' in England and the pain and hurt arising from them; and*
- b) the call of the Gospel to meet people as Jesus does, in their time of need, as well as the duty of Christians to the poor as set out in Proverbs 31.8-9 and Deuteronomy 15.7-8;*

*call upon the Archbishops' Council to direct and resource the Life Events Advisory Group, in consultation with the Churches Funeral Group and the British Council of Funeral Services to:*

- i). undertake the formation of plans at national, diocesan and parish levels to utilise Church resources (whether in the form of finance, volunteers or buildings) to tackle the issues relating to and, where possible, end 'pauper funerals';*
- ii). work with other stakeholders to find ways, at an affordable price, to deliver a more compassionate send off for the departed and to meet the spiritual and emotional needs of those left behind; and*
- iii). report progress made with reference to the above by the end of 2021;*

*and further call on Her Majesty's Government to develop with Council leaders a national plan and basic standards for 'pauper funerals', which should include allowing a Christian funeral service to take place in Church or at a Crematorium, for family or others to attend, and the return of the departed (where permitted) to family members.'*

### **Children and Youth Ministry (GS 2161)**

The motion, as amended:

*'That this Synod, recognising the continuing decline in numbers of under 16's engaging with Church:*

- a) encourage dioceses to act urgently and consider practical ways they can support and resource those churches both with significant numbers of children and young people and with specific aspirations to increase their numbers of the same;
- b) encourage dioceses to make provision to support and resource those churches serving communities which currently have small numbers of children, teenagers and young people;
- c) request dioceses to share good models of practice through churches helping to resource others so that we have many more churches engaging with children and young people;
- d) request the NCI's to commit funding for qualitative research on the data received to help understand best practice in a variety of contexts;
- e) encourage dioceses to explore new ways to grow new church communities with young people as a primary missional focus;
- f) request the Evangelism and Discipleship team to ensure this work is clearly joined up with Growing Faith; and
- g) request an update from the Evangelism and Discipleship team in two years with analysis of progress in these areas.'

Dioceses have been committed to a number of actions, specifically those outlined in paragraphs (a), (b), (c), and (e).

### **Through His Poverty (GS 2149A and GS 2149B)**

The motion, as amended:

*'That this Synod call on the Archbishops' Council to commission a study that*

- a) explores the reasons why the Church of England is generally less effective in communicating with, and attracting people from, more disadvantaged communities despite the gospel being good news for the poor;
- b) explores ways of addressing and reversing this situation, such as:
  - i). actively seeking to select and train more people from disadvantaged communities
  - ii). deploying more resources into reaching people from disadvantaged communities
  - iii). gathering and disseminating stories of good practice from churches working in disadvantaged communities; and
- c) builds upon the work of the GRA:CE project in exploring the links between social action, discipleship, and church growth.'

Dioceses are invited to source and share good practice from those churches working in disadvantaged communities.

### **Legal Aid Reform (GS 2163A and GS 2163B)**

The motion:

*'That this Synod, mindful that a justice system should be open and free from barriers of any kind, and also provide easy access to enable the most vulnerable and disadvantaged people in our society to seek professional help in bringing their claims before our courts and tribunals;*

*a) recognise our legal aid system as an essential public service and fully endorse its preservation for the benefit of the nation;*  
*b) welcome the reports by Amnesty International and the Bach Commission about the impact of the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012 and note both their findings about its impact on the most vulnerable and disadvantaged groups in our society and their recommendations for reform of the current system; and*  
*c) call on Her Majesty's Government to respond positively to these reports and explore ways of alleviating the impact that the 2012 Act has had on these groups.'*

Synod also gave farewells to Chris Palmer, Secretary to the Corporation of Church House; Rt Hon Dame Caroline Spelman, Second Church Estates Commissioner; the Rt Worshipful Charles George; and the Archbishop of York.