

Synod Summary for Diocesan Secretaries

Introduction

This summary is prepared for Diocesan Secretaries and their offices. Please do share with others as you wish.

The General Synod met from 7th to 11th July at the University of York. This summary provides an update for Diocesan Secretaries. The full **business done** can be found on our [website](#). The report of proceedings will be made available in the autumn.

Synod Business

Item 1: [Welcomes and Introductions](#): the usual start of the group of sessions. All members were welcomed by the Archbishop of York. In addition, there was the formal introduction of newly elected members.

Items 2 and 3: [Addresses to Synod](#): The Archbishop of York gave a Presidential Address. The Rt Revd Erik Eckerdahl, Bishop of Visby (Church of Sweden) and The Rt Revd Daniel Gutiérrez, Bishop of Pennsylvania (The Episcopal Church) addressed Synod on behalf of the Anglican Communion and Ecumenical Guests.

Item 4: [GS 2297 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.

[Presentation of Petition](#): one petition was presented to Synod under Standing Order 43. It stands referred to the Business Committee.

Item 5 [GS 2298A](#) and [GS 2298B Church of England Youth Synod](#): This was a Private Members' Motion presented by Sam Wilson (Chester) which sought to engage with young people. There were four amendments, three of which were carried by Synod. The final motion was as follows:

'That this Synod:

- (a) acknowledge the national strategy to 'grow younger and more diverse'
- (b) take note of the report 'Rooted in the Church' (2016) which observes that young adults feel a sense of belonging if they i) are included within the whole church family, ii) are treated as equal members of the church, iii) are supported by leaders who act as bridges or mentors, and iv) are given a safe space to ask questions;
- (c) re-affirm the importance of having young adults directly involved in decision-making and strategy;
- (d) recognise the valuable contributions made by members of the Church of England Youth Council (CEYC);
- (e) request the Business Committee to bring a report to Synod with recommendations that increase the voice and representation of young people within Synodical bodies and through Synod elections and detailing how the above has progressed enabling children and young people's opinions and concerns to be heard;

- (f) recognise the role played by children and young people in the development of the Church of England Vision and Strategy;
- (g) values the work being undertaken through the Growing Faith Foundation to listen to the voices of children, young people and young adults;

and therefore call on each diocese to work alongside Children, Youth and Family advisors and practitioners to develop ways of ensuring that children, youth and young adult voices are heard within their decision making processes; and actively involve them in decision making;

- (h) request the Business Committee to bring forward proposals, including legislation if necessary that:
 - i. seek to enable greater numbers of young adults be elected to General Synod;
 - ii. enable the voices of children, youth and young adults be heard within the debates of General Synod
- (i) encourage each General Synod member to work with Children, youth and Family advisors and practitioners to listen to the voice of children, youth and young adults in their preparation for each meeting of General Synod.
- (j) request the Archbishops' Council to:
 - i. ensure that all policies seek to ensure that they contribute to fulfilling the vision of being a younger and more diverse church;
 - ii. develop ways whereby the voices of children, youth and young adults are fed into their discussions and decision making processes;
- (k) call on the Archbishops' Council to establish a regular Church of England National Young Adults Gathering (name to be determined) which will enable young Anglicans between the ages of 18 and 25 to:
 - i. meet together for worship, prayer and fellowship,
 - ii. engage with and discuss issues identified as being important by young adults themselves, and
 - iii. relate to decision-making structures including Dioceses, General Synod and Archbishops Council;
- (l) request to the Archbishops' Council that funding be found from within the budget for a first such national gathering whilst exploring provision of longer term funding;
- (m) call on the Archbishops' Council to appoint three young adults to attend General Synod in accordance with Standing Orders

This was passed on a show of hands. Please note that the motion does include a role for dioceses:

“and therefore call on each diocese to work alongside Children, Youth and Family advisors and practitioners to develop ways of ensuring that children, youth and young adult voices are heard within their decision making processes; and actively involve them in decision making”

Item 500: [GS 2299 Legal Officers \(Annual Fees\) Order 2023](#) and [GS 2300 Ecclesiastical Judges, Legal Officers and Others \(Fees\) Order 2023](#). These are the usual annual fees orders providing for the annual retainers paid to diocesan registrars and for court fees in the ecclesiastical courts. The Legal Officers (Annual Fees) Order 2023 was approved and will be

laid before both Houses of Parliament. The Ecclesiastical Judges, Legal Officers and Others (Fees) Order was deemed to be approved and will also be laid before both Houses of Parliament.

Item 501: [GS 2291 Electronic Register Book of Services Form and Conditions 2023](#): This allows for 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. It was approved on a show of hands.

Item 6: [GS 2301 Appointment of a member of the Archbishops' Council](#): The Synod formally appointed Carl Hughes as a member of the Archbishops' Council and Chair of the Finance Committee, as required under the provisions of paragraph 1(3) of Schedule 1 of the National Institutions Measure 1998.

Item 7 Questions: There were 237 questions submitted at this group of sessions. In this session, questions 1 to 59 as set out in the Questions Notice Paper were answered.

Items 502 – 503 [GS 2272B Church of England \(Miscellaneous Provisions\) Measure](#): The Measure which covers a wide range of provisions, largely of a technical nature which would not merit free-standing legislation, went through the final legislative stages. It was approved in all three Houses as required. The results were as follows:

	In favour	Against
House of Bishops	20	1
House of Clergy	123	0
House of Laity	146	1

There was 1 abstention in the House of Bishops, 3 in the House of Clergy and 5 in the House of Laity

The Church of England (Miscellaneous Provisions) Measure 2023 now stands committed to the Legislative Committee and will be presented to the Ecclesiastical Committee of Parliament in due course.

Items 504 - 505: [GS 2273B Amending Canon No 43](#): This Amending Canon which covers a wide range of provisions in the Canons, largely of a technical nature, which would not merit free-standing legislation, went through the final legislative stages. It was approved in all three Houses as required. The results were as follows:

	In favour	Against
House of Bishops	19	0
House of Clergy	119	0
House of Laity	151	1

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

The petition for His Majesty's Royal Assent for Amending Canon No. 43 was approved.

Item 506: [GS 2269D Amending Canon No 42](#): This was a formal item to make, promulge and execute Canon no 42. It was approved by Synod and the Canon will be sent to diocesan synods for proclamation.

Item 8: [GS 2302 National Investing Bodies Report on July 2018 Synod motion on Climate Change](#): There was a presentation by the National Investing Bodies on the conclusion of the five-year engagement with high carbon-emitting companies and disinvestment from fossil fuels companies not aligned with the Paris Agreement.

Item 9 Questions: In this session, questions 60 to 101 as set out in the Questions Notice Paper were answered.

Item 10 [GS 2294A](#) and [GS 2294B Contribution of Faith to the Rehabilitation of Prisoners](#): this was a Diocesan Synod Motion from Worcester and discussed the way in which faith can have a positive impact on an offender's behaviour. There were two amendments, one of which was carried by Synod. The final motion was as follows:

'That this Synod, recognising that faith and belief can have a positive impact on an offender's behaviour:

- (a) note with pleasure the decision made by the Probation Service to recognise faith and belief as a protective factor in reducing reoffending, and its desire to work in partnership with churches, prison and community chaplains and faith communities to support rehabilitation;
- (b) commend the value of partnership working with the Probation Service as an important additional support in churches' welcome of people leaving prison, including training of clergy and authorised lay ministers;
- (c) call on dioceses to nominate a contact person or office to link the Probation Service locally to clergy, parishes and chaplaincies.'
- (d) call on dioceses to enable a swift welcome of offenders after release into an appropriate church community, subject to agreed and clear safeguarding boundaries; and to make this part of the brief for their Diocesan Safeguarding Team.

This was carried by a counted vote of the whole Synod, with 331 in favour, 21 against and 3 abstentions. Please note that paragraphs (c) and (d) set out an expectation on dioceses:

- (c) *call on dioceses to nominate a contact person or office to link the Probation Service locally to clergy, parishes and chaplaincies.'*
- (d) *call on dioceses to enable a swift welcome of offenders after release into an appropriate church community, subject to agreed and clear safeguarding boundaries; and to make this part of the brief for their Diocesan Safeguarding Team.*

[GS 2303 Living in Love and Faith](#): There was an update on the work related to Living in Love and Faith since the February 2023 group of sessions. This was an informal session.

Item 11: [Presentation on developments of Independent Safeguarding Board](#). There was an update on developments relating to the Independent Safeguarding Board. There was an adjournment during this session to enable the former members of the ISB to address Synod.

Item 51: [GS Misc 1340: AC Audit Committee Annual Report](#): This was the annual report from the Audit Committee of the Archbishops' Council which was circulated to Synod for deemed approval. There was a request for this to be debated. Synod took note of the report on a show of hands.

Items 12 and 13: [GS 2305 Redress](#): There was a presentation on developments on a safeguarding redress programme for the whole Church. This was followed by a debate on a motion as follows:

'That this Synod:

- (a) acknowledge and deeply regret the safeguarding failures of the Church of England and especially their effect on victims and survivors, noting the vital importance of their voice in the Church's ongoing safeguarding work;
- (b) welcome the work undertaken to develop the Redress Scheme as a proper expression of that regret and look forward to its further development.'

This was carried on a counted vote of the whole Synod with 324 in favour, 0 against and 1 abstention.

Item 511: [GS 2295 Safeguarding Practice Reviews Code of Practice](#): This Code of Practice was presented under Section 5A of the Safeguarding and Clergy Discipline Measure 2016 and focused on processes related to lessons learned reviews. It had been circulated as an item of deemed business but there was a request for this to be debated. It was approved following a count by Houses. The results were as follows:

	In favour	Against
House of Bishops	27	0
House of Clergy	113	0
House of Laity	112	18

There were 18 abstentions in the House of Clergy and 24 in the House of Laity

This will come into operation on 31st July.

Item 14: [GS 2306A](#) and [GS 2306B Responding to the Climate Emergency](#): This was a Diocesan Synod Motion from Oxford asking the Church to strengthen its work addressing climate change. There were five amendments, three of which were carried. The final motion was as follows:

'That this Synod, affirming the fifth mark of mission, concerned by the scientific evidence that climate change is proceeding at a rapid rate and by the impact of climate events, and seeking to build on the decisions taken with respect to GS 2159:

- (a) commend the recent disinvestment announcements by the Church Commissioners for England and Church of England Pensions Board, and urge each of the National Investing Bodies of the Church of England to prioritise and scale up investment in renewable energy and other climate solutions, in line with their fiduciary duties, and ask each to report back on progress to General Synod each quinquennium;
- (b) urge all parts of the Church of England to review their relevant policies and procedures, in order to ensure that they are up to date and give due priority to creation care;
- (c) urge the Church of England to further develop pre- and postordination and lay

- training to deepen understanding in how care for the earth is part of our Christian faith and a missional imperative;
- (d) urge all parts of the Church of England to seek to support, through prayer, advocacy and practical action, the poorest in the world who are suffering the most from the impacts of climate change, in the awareness that our nation has been among those who have benefited most from the emissions that have caused the crisis;
 - (e) commit earnestly and regularly to pray - and to promote prayer - about the climate and wider environmental crisis.
 - (f) call upon all institutions of the Church of England to make urgent practical preparations for the delivery of substantial reduction of the Church's carbon footprint, including, but not restricted to, the following immediate actions in respect of Church buildings:
 - i. ensuring that the NCIs are adequately resourced to provide DACs, Buildings Departments, Education Departments and others with authoritative national guidance notes, advice and training on key technical and procedural questions relating to adaptation of buildings for the net zero target; and
 - ii. ensuring that Parish Buying and other national-level entities have the capacity to engage with manufacturers and suppliers of products and processes recommended for making our buildings more efficient, with a view to using the scale of the national net zero project to achieve both sympathetic design and economies of scale on cost;
 - iii. commit expenditure, reflective of the £10 million committed by Oxford Diocese, on environmental works to improve the carbon footprint of vicarages.
 - (g) request that Bishops and the Liturgical Commission to encourage confirmation services to include an additional question 'Will you strive to safeguard the integrity of creation, and sustain and renew the life of the earth?'
 - (h) ask that HM Government review the weight given to the environmental public benefit in planning regulations to facilitate the installation of renewable technologies, including for buildings that are listed or in conservation areas.'

This was carried on a vote of the Synod, with 256 in favour, 36 against and 16 abstentions. There are no specific actions for dioceses but dioceses should be aware that paragraphs (b), (d) and (f) may be of relevance.

Items 15 and 16: [GS 2307 National Church Governance](#): there was a presentation on the proposals for the implementation of Governance reform following the February 2023 group of sessions, followed by a debate on a motion. There were five amendments, three of which were approved. The final motion was as follows:

'That this Synod:

- (a) welcome the recommendations of the National Church Governance Project Board set out in GS 2307 as the basis for the reform of the National Church Institutions and Governance Structures of the Church of England except in respect of recommendation 13, where specific provision should be made so that a majority of the members of the CENS board are either elected or appointed from the members of Synod and except in respect of recommendation 14, where specific provision should be made so that two members of the Audit and Risk Committee are members

of either the House of Laity or the House of Clergy of the General Synod and are jointly elected by the members of those Houses;

- (b) request the introduction of draft legislation to give effect to the necessary statutory changes for the implementation of these proposals no later than the February 2024 Group of Sessions.'

This was approved on a count of the Synod, with 328 in favour, 17 against and 10 abstentions.

Item 17 [GS 2308 Archbishops' Council Annual Report](#): There was a presentation on the Archbishops' Council's Annual Report. This was followed by a further motion. There was a request for Standing Orders to be suspended to enable this further motion to be debated further but the required 75% of members voting was not reached, so the motion lapsed.

Items 18 to 24 [GS 2309 Archbishops' Council Budget 2024 and Proposals for Apportionment](#): This is a regular item for the July group of sessions, as under its Standing Orders, General Synod must be invited to approve the Archbishops' Council's annual budget and its proposals for the diocesan apportionment. The proposals for the budget and apportionment as agreed were as follows:

£14,998,000	Training for Ministry
£34,180,628	National Church Responsibilities
£1,518,779	Grants
£426,510	Mission agency pension contributions
£6,137,441	Clergy retirement housing grant

Item 507 [GS 2310 Faculty Jurisdiction Rules](#): The scope of the proposed amendments to these Rules are limited and impact on Chancellors determining petitions for faculty that involve contested heritage. This was approved on a show of hands and the Faculty Jurisdiction (Amendment) Rules 2023 will now be laid before both Houses of Parliament.

Item 508: [GS 2311 Clergy Conduct Measure](#): This was the First Consideration of the legislation which will set out the statutory framework and establish the jurisdiction for dealing with cases relating to clergy conduct, replacing the Clergy Discipline Measure. This Measure now stands committed to the Revision Committee and members are invited to submit proposals via revisioncommittee@churchofengland.org not later than **5.30pm on Friday 8th September**.

Item 26: [GS 2312 Report from the Elections Review Group](#): This provided an update on the work of the Elections Review Group which has been reviewing the elections to Synod in 2021 and preparing for the elections in 2026. It was approved on a show of hands.

Item 509: [GS 2313 Church Representation Rules](#): This legislation gives effect to three of the recommendations of the Elections Review Group and sets out changes to the Church Representation Rules concerning the conduct of elections at APCMs and declarations to be made by PCC members following election. It was approved following a count by Houses. The results were as follows:

	In favour	Against
House of Bishops	18	0

House of Clergy	115	2
House of Laity	137	5

There were 2 abstentions in the House of Clergy and 2 in the House of Laity

Item 27: [GS 2314 Revitalising the Parish for Mission](#): This item reaffirms Synod's support for the parish as a central component of the mixed ecology. It aimed to embed learning about growth and missional vitality in the life of each parish and diocese, while supporting the Vision and Strategy priorities of mixed ecology and younger and more diverse. There were six amendments, four of which were carried. The final motion was as follows:

'That this Synod

- (a) welcome the emphasis in the Church of England's Vision and Strategy for the 2020s on the revitalisation of the parish for mission as one of the six 'bold outcomes';
- (b) affirm the parish system as the central component of the mixed ecology as we seek to offer a living and contextually-appropriate expression of church for every person in England, and a vital means of fulfilling our calling to become younger and more diverse;
- (c) note the research presented in 'From Anecdote to Evidence' as well as other recent research which contributes to our understanding of the factors supporting church growth and vitality;
- (d) request the Archbishops' Council bring a report collating the research that has already been in place to a future group of sessions so that the Synod might have greater confidence that church growth and revitalisation alongside other mixed ecologies of church are taking place in line with our six bold outcomes, enabling local churches to develop and implement local mission plans;
- (e) welcome the Church's commitment to increasing the numbers of ordinands, as well as increasing emphasis on lay ministry and the expansion of Licenced Lay Ministers in many dioceses;
- (f) encourage dioceses to work in new and creative ways to increase lay and ordained vocations;
- (g) encourage each parish and diocese to support a process of local missional discernment (Mission Action Planning) to enable greater effectiveness in parochial mission and put a plan in place to meet the discerned missional outcomes to be reviewed annually.

It was approved on a show of hands. Paragraphs (f) and (g) are of particular relevance for dioceses:

- (f) encourage dioceses to work in new and creative ways to increase lay and ordained vocations;*
- (g) encourage each parish and diocese to support a process of local missional discernment (Mission Action Planning) to enable greater effectiveness in parochial mission and put a plan in place to meet the discerned missional outcomes to be reviewed annually.*

Item 28: [GS 2315 Review of the Mission and Pastoral Measure](#): The review of the Mission and Pastoral Measure began in 2020 and this gave an update on proposals for new legislation. This was approved on a show of hands.

Item 510: [GS 2264 Church of England Pensions \(Application of Capital Funds\) Measure](#): This Measure 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. This completed its final legislative stages and was approved in all three Houses as required. The results were as follows:

	In favour	Against
House of Bishops	23	0
House of Clergy	123	0
House of Laity	141	0

There were 2 abstentions in the House of Laity

The Church of England Pensions (Application of Capital Funds) Measure 2023 now stands committed to the Legislative Committee and will be presented to the Ecclesiastical Committee of Parliament in due course.

Item 29: [GS 2282A](#) and [GS 2282B Reduce Parochial Fees for Marriages](#): This was a Diocesan Synod Motion from Blackburn which sought to set the fees relating to marriages at nil or a minimal amount. There were three amendments, one of which was carried. The final motion was as follows:

‘That this Synod

- (a) request the Archbishops’ Council to design, fund and implement a time-limited, regional trial of providing weddings free of all statutory fees; and
- (b) report back to Synod on the impact it made on the number of weddings conducted, pastoral and missional contacts made, on charitable giving in connection with provision of wedding services, and on projected parochial and diocesan finances.

This was approved following a count by Houses. The results were as follows:

	In favour	Against
House of Bishops	15	4
House of Clergy	104	19
House of Laity	118	17

There were 2 abstentions in the House of Bishops, 8 in the House of Clergy and 7 in the House of Laity

Item 30 [GS 2316 Synod Code of Conduct](#): There was a presentation on proposals related to complaints. Members are invited to send in any reflections on a complaints process. There will be further discussions related to this at future groups of sessions.

Item 25 and 31 [Farewells](#): Farewells were given to Canon John Spence, the Rt Revd Robert Atwell (Bishop of Exeter); the Rt Revd Peter Eagles (Bishop of Sodor and Man); the Rt Revd Christopher Cocksworth (Bishop of Coventry); and the Rt Revd James Newcome (Bishop of Carlisle).

Items 33 and 35 to 50 [GS 2292 Revised 61st Report of the Standing Orders Committee](#): This sets out a number of proposals to amend the Standing Orders.

[GS 2317 Scheme of variation of membership of Deanery Synods](#): This was a deemed item

setting out the scheme of variation from the Diocese of Lincoln and was approved. It came into effect as of 12th July 2023.

[GS 2318 Draft Scheme Amending the Diocese in Europe Constitution](#): This was a deemed item. The amendments relate to the date by which a chaplaincy annual meeting must be held, the admission to office of churchwardens, and holding meetings by electronic means and was approved. It came into effect as of 12th July 2023.