
Questions under Standing Order 68

Asked by Kate Wharton: House of Clergy, General Synod

Has the Diocesan Risk Register been amended to include an assessment of the possible risks which may occur if/when the Prayers of Love and Faith are introduced?

Mike Eastwood, Diocesan Secretary responded: *Yes we have, under the sections 'Failure to develop resilient finances and church life.'*

Asked by Kate Wharton: House of Clergy, General Synod

Will an Impact Assessment be done ahead of the introduction of the Prayers of Love and Faith (which may be as soon as July) including reference to the possible impact of:

- The number of clergy in the diocese, if people choose to resign their license
- The number of people offering for ordained ministry
- Average Sunday attendance
- Electoral roll numbers
- Deanery mission plans
- Parish share contributions, if churches choose to withhold, or if individuals stop their giving such that churches can no longer afford to pay
- Fit for Mission future planning, if churches within Deaneries come to different positions about their acceptance of the Prayers of Love and Faith?

Mike Eastwood, Diocesan Secretary responded: *No. We don't have the skills or knowledge base to conclude such a complex or data sensitive an exercise. Instead we will continue to monitor our performance against the relevant measures within our metrics.*

Asked by Nigel Lea-Wilson: House of Laity, General Synod

Can the Bishop confirm that parish share payments from parishes are voluntary contributions, and that those parishes who have or might pause payments in the light of the House of Bishops *Prayers of Love and Faith* being commended will not be hindered from seeking a new incumbent following a future vacancy?

Mike Eastwood, Diocesan Secretary responded: *The status of Parish Share payments is unclear. However, Synod agreed a policy under the Reversing the Payment Trend that any parish that enters a vacancy and holding Parish Share arrears will not be able to appoint a new incumbent until there is an agreed Parish Share Payment Plan to cover off the arrears.*

Asked by Dan Leathers: House of Clergy, St Helens Deanery

Has the Diocesan Board of Finance indicated/identified the need to set aside funds for such eventualities?

Mike Eastwood, Diocesan Secretary responded: *No. Linking back to the presentation on Diocesan Finances earlier in the Synod we will need to manage any shortfalls in Parish Share payment – for whatever reason – within the context of the overall budget and financial challenge.*

Questions under Standing Order 68 (*continued*)

Supplementary Question asked by David Gavin: House of Clergy, Liverpool North Deanery

It was a thing of real hope in the [General] Synod Report for me, the idea of pursuing a new settlement, is the idea of allowing those of us who might have a need to differentiate from teachings that we felt are leading people away from Jesus and from scripture, to be able to do so and stay within the system. Is there energy in the Diocese for pursuing that idea? Would a meeting like the Bishop of London has done with clergy compelled to resist, in the words that were used there, be a helpful thing?

Bishop of Warrington responded: *Thank you for your question, David. Presently we feel that considerations to a settlement are premature so we are awaiting the outcome of the July [2023 General] Synod when there will be a revised suite of prayers and pastoral guidance presented to General Synod. [General] Synod reserves the right to accept or reject those. So at this stage, we feel this is premature. Conversations are really important and presently I am in conversations with Bishop Munro and we are trying to walk the path of unity.*

Asked by Nigel Lea-Wilson: House of Laity, General Synod

In the event of Prayers of Love and Faith being introduced, will those being offered curacies in this diocese in 2024 onwards be guaranteed the ability to be trained by an incumbent whose convictions on the use of Prayers in Love and Faith coincide with their own?

Bishop of Warrington responded: *Thank you for your question, Nigel. No ordinand can ever be guaranteed a curacy, whether with a training incumbent whose theological convictions are the same as the ordinands or otherwise. When arrangements for training curacies are made, best endeavours are always made to ensure that there is a good fit and this will continue to be the case.*

Asked by Dan Leathers: House of Clergy, St Helens Deanery

In the event of Prayers of Love and Faith being approved by General Synod and commended by the House of Bishops, what forms of support will be provided by this diocese to:

- a. *Those who use the Prayers but, not appreciating the fact that the House of Bishops commendation has no legal effect, subsequently find themselves facing complaints brought under the Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction Measure 1963 alleging that their use of the Prayer is not permitted under Canon B5 and constitutes the commission of an offence*
- b. *Those who chose not to use the Prayers and as a consequence find themselves exposed to actions for discrimination under the Equality Act 2010?*

Bishop of Warrington responded: *Thank you for your questions, Dan. Your questions are being considered by the College and House of Bishops even at this time and will be addressed in the Pastoral Guidance. However, those in either position can be absolutely clear and assured of episcopal support in this diocese for decisions conscientiously taken by them.*

Asked by Richard Denno: House of Laity, General Synod

All three houses of the General Synod voted to 'endorse the decision of the College and House of Bishops not to propose any change to the doctrine of marriage', therefore what teaching materials will the Diocesan Board of Education commend to Church of England Schools to affirm the Church of England's doctrine of marriage?

Asked by Gabriel Chiu: House of Laity, General Synod

I know with our own linked church primary school and conversations with my own piano students in other CofE-linked secondary schools that there's real pressure to teach health education in such a way that is contrary to the CofE's doctrine of marriage. I note that all three of the General Synod houses have endorsed the decision of the College and House of Bishops to not propose any change to the Doctrine of Marriage. I was wondering if there's anything our Diocesan Board of Education will do to help CofE schools explain and promote the CofE's doctrine?

Questions under Standing Order 68 (*continued*)

Mike Eastwood, Diocesan Secretary responded: *I have written to the Diocesan Director of Education to ask that these questions are put onto the next Diocesan Board of Education agenda and that the relevant Minute of that discussion is made available to members of Synod.*

Asked by Richard Denno: House of Laity, General Synod

The Archbishop of Canterbury has said that he will not use the Prayers of Love and Faith in order to maintain unity in the Communion. Will our bishops, or one of our bishops, adopt a similar position in order to maintain unity in the Diocese?

Asked by Gabriel Chiu: House of Laity, General Synod

I'm really concerned that Bishops are going to struggle to be any focus of unity going forward given how divisive General Synod has been re these Prayers of Love and Faith. I also note that the Archbishop of Canterbury has said he won't use the PLF in order to maintain unity in the wider Anglican Communion (not that that seems to have worked so far!). I wondered if there's anything our Bishops (I realise +John isn't yet installed) will be able to do to maintain unity in this Diocese?

Bishop of Warrington responded: *Thank you for your question, Richard. Please be assured of the bishops' commitment to maintaining the unity of the church in this diocese. Bishop Rob Munro and myself are working closely and in unison, asking people not to make any fear-driven premature decisions that may lead to a fracturing of the church. I have made a call to pray for unity throughout Lent and I am glad for the people who join me for the Wednesday night prayer gathering and for all who are praying for the unity of the church. As you rightly state, Bishop John isn't yet in post, and so I'm unable to comment upon any agreement for one of us not to use the Prayers of Love and Faith at this time and until we see the final suite of prayers we are unable to give a comment. We shall give this due consideration.*

Supplementary question asked by Richard Denno: House of Laity, General Synod

Thank you for your answer, Bishop Bev. Given that you have told us that neither you nor our incoming bishop, Bishop John, will be able at this time to give us the assurance that both Gabriel [Chiu, House of Laity, General Synod] and I are seeking, given that the teachings of scripture concerning matters of same-sex sexual activity are univocal, does the Bishop understand that those who see those two bishops teaching away from Scripture could be called false teachers and what would the Bishop say should be done in the case of false teachers be in the episcopal seat?

Bishop of Warrington responded: *Thank you, Richard. This conversation isn't going to go away. I do refer you back to my first response which is, at this time, we feel it is premature to stand and make a statement. Bishop John is not yet installed and so we must live with that little discomfiture: 22nd April is the date of his installation. Please afford us graciously, if you will, that time so we can talk about Living in Love and Faith alongside the mission and ministry of this Diocese. The suite of prayers do not bless same-sex sexual activity. I am saying please hold on until we receive the suite of prayers as they are commended to General Synod and wait for that time until it either receives this commendation or rejects it.*
