

Report and reflections for General Synod July 2023

Much of the July Synod was coloured by the sacking of the members of the Independent Safeguarding Board three weeks earlier. As a result of this safeguarding seemed to imbue almost every debate. Synod received a presentation from members of the Archbishop's Council about what had happened and business was adjourned to allow the two sacked members of the Independent Safeguarding Board to speak. In addition there were separate debates about the development of the Safeguarding Redress Scheme and the new Safeguarding Code of Conduct.

Synod received a private members motion about the **Church of England Youth Synod** which called on the Archbishop's Council to re-establish an elected body for young adults, to replace the recently disbanded Church of England Youth Council (CEYC). This was carried by the Synod, after impassioned speeches, including from the Archbishop of Canterbury, who said that young people would "shape, transform, and render our vision useful and extraordinary powerful in the society in which we live".

We received a presentation and debate on the contribution of faith to the **rehabilitation of offenders which** included a call on dioceses to nominate a contact person or office to link the Probation Service locally to clergy, parishes and chaplaincies and an additional 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.

On Saturday afternoon business was paused, for a more informal discussion about the prayers for Living in Love and Faith. This began with an introduction by Bishop Sarah Mullaly and then moved onto a

panel debate chaired by the Bishop of Truro and with a panel of six people from the three working groups. Bishop Sarah acknowledged that the current guidance was focussing on a relatively narrow brief and that going forward there would need to be further work on the relationship between Holy Matrimony and Civil Marriage; doctrine and teaching; routes for using the prayers of LLF.

There were a plethora of questions. In response to one we learnt that Guildford have set up a specific chaplaincy to support people through the LLF process, and Diocese of London have set up an LGBTQ+ advisory group.

Much of the debate seemed to come down to three key issues:

- Is it possible to make progress without answering the question as to whether sex between two people outside of marriage is sacred or sinful.
- That we need to give each other room and we cannot force each other to believe what we believe.
- A challenge for all of us to explore what as church are we called to be in the midst of disagreement.

Synod also debated a motion from the Diocese of Oxford about the climate emergency. The motion included a call to Bishops 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?'

Other debates included:

- a proposal to restructure **the National Church Institutions** to create more accountability whilst simplifying systems and reducing overlap.
- changes to the Faculty Jurisdiction Rules
- the review of the Mission and Pastoral Affairs measure
- changes to the Clergy Conduct measure