



General Synod Report – July 2024

General Synod met from Friday 5 July to Tuesday 9 July 2024 in York.

Members of General Synod from the Diocese of Bristol are the Bishop of Bristol; the Rev Canon Paul Langham, the Revd Canon Alice Kemp and the Revd Kat Champion-Spall (Clergy Representatives); Brendan Biggs, Christiana Olomolaiye and Ed Shaw (Lay Representatives); the Very Revd Dr Mandy Ford (Deans); and the Revd Dr Sean Doherty (Universities and Theological Education Institutions).

Building and Sustaining Trust

Proceedings began with a presentation from the Bishop of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich and Professor Veronica Hope Hailey (Dean of the University of Bristol Business School) on **Building and Sustaining Trust in the Church of England**. The paper was well received, and the debate will be resumed in February.

Legislative business

Synod gave first consideration to the draft **National Church Governance Measure**, which will reduce the National Church Institutions to four, including Church of England National Services (a new body replacing the Archbishops' Council). The draft will now be considered for revision. The **Clergy Conduct Measure** was considered at the revision stage and will undergo final drafting. The **Abuse (Redress) Measure**, which will provide compensation for victims of abuse, also passed its revision stage.

Final approval was given to the **Chancel Repair (Church Commissioners' Liability) Measure**, dealing with land owned by the Commissioners which is subject to chancel repair liability, and the **Church Funds Investment Measure**, which enables a reorganisation of investment funds. The **Ecclesiastical Judges, Legal Officers and Others (Fees) Order 2024**, providing for a 5% increase in judges' fees, was approved; but Synod did not agree to a 25% increase in diocesan registrars' fees, as proposed in the draft **Legal Officers (Annual Fees) Order 2024**, and a different proposal will be brought to Synod in February. Synod changed its Standing Orders to

enable a pair of elected members of the **Church Nominations Commission** to nominate a substitute when one of the pair stands down.

Safeguarding

The Bishop of Stepney and Ms Lesley-Anne Ryder (an external consultant) presented an interim report on **Safeguarding Independence**, and Synod passed a motion calling for detailed analysis of options to be brought back in February. A private members' motion about **Soul Survivor** was carried in amended form, calling for learning from the Scolding Review to be considered in the safeguarding independence options. A **Safeguarding Code of Practice Learning and Development Framework** was approved.

Living in Love and Faith

After a presentation from members of the LLF working groups, Synod debated, and by narrow majorities approved, a motion moved by the Bishop of Leicester. The motion requests the House of Bishops to revise the Pastoral Guidance to enable the use of the Prayers of Love and Faith in standalone service, to establish the basis for Pastoral Reassurance (including the delegation of some specific and defined episcopal ministry), and to report to Synod in February 2025 on work done by the Faith and Order Commission on marriage and clergy in same-sex civil marriages.

Diocesan synod motions

There were debates on diocesan synod motions on **Rest Periods for Office Holders** (Winchester), the **Human Dignity of Disabled Children** (Liverpool), **Food banks and Inadequacies in Social Security** (Sheffield), and a proposed **Day of Prayer and Action for the Persecuted Church** (London).

Annual reports and budget

Synod received annual reports from the **Archbishops' Council** and the **Church Commissioners** and approved the **Archbishops' Council's Budget for 2025**. This followed the usual pattern, but in future it is hoped to simplify financial flows between dioceses and the national church as part of the governance review.

Other business

Synod was addressed by the Archbishop of Turku and young people from the **Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland**, by the **Archbishop of Melanesia**, and by schoolchildren from York and Nottingham (on **Hearing and Responding to the Voice of Young People**). The **Revd Canon Jessica Martin** (a member of the Faith and Order Commission) preached on Mark's gospel at York Minster on the Sunday morning. The Archbishop of Canterbury bade farewell to the **Rt Revd John Inge** on his retirement after serving for 16 years as Bishop of Worcester.

Brendan Biggs
October 2024