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General Synod Report July 2025

The July Synod is held at York University which gives it a different feel to the February and November Synods. Everyone is living and eating in the same space and the dress code is casual so it feels easier to get to know fellow synod members and make new connections. There are also stalls to be explored, fringe meetings to be attended when not in session and geese to be avoided. However, it does mean that the days are sometimes longer and it is exhausting for everyone. This was also the first time that we had a new cohort of young observers at Synod.

Synod met from after lunch on the Friday until lunch time on Tuesday so as you can imagine a lot was discussed and I am unable to include it all in this report so I have picked out some highlights. If you would like to look into any of these items or see what else we covered you can find all the papers here:

<https://www.churchofengland.org/about/governance/general-synod/groups-sessions/general-synod-july-2025>

Or watch it here: <https://www.churchofengland.org/about/governance/general-synod/watch-general-synod-live>

Armed Forces

The synod had a slight emphasis on the armed forces with an address by Brigadier Jaish Mahan, Deputy Commander of the Army's 1st UK Division who spoke about the global situation, recounting his own experiences as a Christian in the military. He urged the Church both to continue to pray for the Armed Forces and to consider how it might support the nation including in the event of a large scale conflict. Synod also passed a piece of legislation changing the way Armed Forces are chaplains. This was interesting as we went through all three sections of legislative change in one synod – whereas this would normally be

spread out over a number of Synods. I was a member of the revision committee and was thankful that it all went through unopposed.

National Church Governance Measure

This was the final reading of this measure which is a significant step in reforming how the Church is governed nationally. It includes reducing the National Church Institutions (NCIs) from seven to four, and creating a new body, the Church of England National Services (CENS), into which the functions of the Archbishops' Council will be subsumed. This legislation will now be put before parliament. Dean Mandy was a member of the steering group for this.

Spending Plans

There was a detailed presentation and questions on the Church of England's recently announced £1.6 billion three-year national spending plans (2026-2028). Members approved the financial package, which includes proposals to improve clergy pensions and support diocesan finances.

Clergy Pensions

A private member's motion seeking to restore clergy pensions to previous levels and provide compensation for those affected by past changes was passed by the Synod. This included an amendment also calling for further restitution for retired clergy and a wide-ranging independent review into what a fair and dignified retirement should look like. It was passed unanimously.

Abuse Redress Measure

Following a session that started and ended in silent reflection and prayer, members voted overwhelmingly to give final approval to a comprehensive Redress scheme for survivors of Church-related abuse.

Vocations Process and Issues in Human Sexuality

This was another private members mooring to have Issues in Human Sexuality (1991) removed from the Vocations (Shared Discernment) Process and replaced with the requirement of living consistently with the Guidelines for the Professional Conduct of the Clergy (GPCC) during the period of discernment and training. This was a slightly unexpectedly constructive debate with people speaking from across the theological spectrum in favour of an amended version of the motion. Sean Doherty spoke in this debate. The motion was passed by a substantial majority.

Response to Terminally Ill Adults (End Of Life) Bill

This was the final debate of Synod 'Resolved that this Synod, in light of recent debates on the Terminally Ill Adults (End of Life) Bill, reaffirm that every person is of immeasurable and irreducible value, and request His Majesty's Government work to improve funding and access to desperately needed palliative care services instead of enacting a law that puts the most vulnerable at risk.' It was a deeply moving debate and was passed almost unanimously.

Farewells

Synod traditionally ends with Farewells to key individuals who are leaving General Synod including retiring Bishops. These used to be prolonged events but because of time constraints have now been shortened. Of course one of the farewells was to Bishop Viv and this can be viewed here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9msrW6Of9Qc> at 4 mins and 41 seconds in.

Canon Alice Kemp