

## General Synod summary February 2022

Firstly a brief word of introduction: I'm Andrew Bell, I'm a churchwarden at St James Gerrards Cross and I've been a member of General Synod since 2015. I have been asked to be a contact for you in Wendover Deanery to keep you in touch with the proceedings of General Synod. I'm sorry that I am not able to attend your March meeting.

The new General Synod has met twice, in November and February. Here is a brief, and necessarily selective, summary of some of the business covered. All details are available as always on the General Synod pages of the C of E website.

### November 2021

The synod opened with a service in Westminster Abbey, and a formal inauguration in Church House. This was the first time since the General Synod was established that the Queen had not been able to address the new Synod in person. Prince Edward attended and delivered a speech on behalf of Her Majesty. Here's a brief excerpt:

*'It is hard to believe that it is over 50 years since Prince Philip and I attended the very first meeting of the General Synod. None of us can slow the passage of time; and while we often focus on all that has changed in the intervening years, much remains unchanged, including the Gospel of Christ and his teachings.*

*'The list of tasks facing that first General Synod may sound familiar to many of you: Christian education; Christian unity; the better distribution of the ordained ministry to the needs of the population. But one stands out supreme: "to bring the people of this country to the knowledge and the love of God".'*

Lets pray that the Synod and the Church take that task seriously!

There was a definite feel that things were starting up again, and much of the business was by way of introduction. There was a lot of talk of "the new normal" as we emerge from COVID (this was of course before we had heard of omicron). There is much nervousness about numbers, and about finances. In his presidential address ++Justin pointed out that the number of regular churchgoers has shrunk every year since around 1952. We have much work to do to bring our neighbours in to the kingdom!

We passed a motion requesting that legislation be put in place to give dioceses more freedom to be generous with their historic wealth to other dioceses (Oxford is one of the dioceses with the highest level of historic capital assets).

There was a presentation on part of the "Vision and Strategy" for the CofE. One priority that has been set is for us to be a church where "mixed ecology is the norm" – this includes a "parish system revitalised for mission" and "an aspiration of creating 10,000 new Christian communities across the areas of home, work/education, social and digital". This may include church plants, new congregations and new ministries – mostly arising from existing parishes.

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Racial justice. We received a report on the work and background to the Archbishops' Commission on Racial Justice, and a powerful speech from its Chair, Lord Paul Boateng. The Commission is charged with ensuring that the momentum for change is maintained, building on the recommendations of "From Lament to Action" which was published last year.

Safeguarding. This rightly remains a key subject for Synod. We received an update presentation from +Jonathan Gibbs (lead bishop for safeguarding) and from the recently appointed Chair of the Independent Safeguarding Board, Maggie Atkinson.

Faculty Rules. The only item of legislative business was to approve amendments to Faculty Jurisdiction. The amendments facilitate approval of works which support the aspiration to reach net zero CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by 2030.

Clergy Remuneration. We took note of a report on Clergy remuneration. The general conclusion was that the existing package is “adequate and appropriate for the majority” although it has not kept pace with inflation. A policy is proposed for future increases, on average, in line with CPIH inflation.

Governance. A report from the Governance Review Group, requesting introduction of legislation to simplify National Church governance was accepted.

Persecuted Church. Persecution of Christians shouldn't surprise us; Jesus and Paul promised it. It is a daily reality faced by many because of their allegiance to Jesus Christ, and the situation is getting worse. A motion was passed unanimously which called for prayers and support for the persecuted church, and that the issue is addressed at the Lambeth Conference.

Andrew Bell  
March 2022