

After General Synod February 2015: reporting back

The relevant section on the Church of England website that I previously linked to has now been updated <https://www.churchofengland.org/about-us/structure/general-synod/agendas-and-papers/february-2015-group-of-sessions.aspx> such that as well as the papers for Synod it now also has the “Business Done” document which lists the motions passed, and also of interest is the “Questions” document which lists the answers to the formal questions.

Questions

The answer to Q29 is of particular note, regarding the next generation of priests consenting to the five Guiding Principles regarding the ordination of women:

The House of Bishops agreed at its December 2014 meeting that prior to being sponsored for selection, candidates for ordination should be asked whether they assent to the five Guiding Principles. Assent is a condition of proceeding to a Bishops’ Advisory Panel or BAP. A note to confirm that the candidate has so assented is recorded in the sponsoring papers sent by the bishop to Ministry Division. This procedure was introduced for candidates sponsored from January 2015.

The five Principles are reproduced on the **Issues** page of my website. I was quite encouraged by this as it means that the next generation of priests should also be committed to the ‘mutual flourishing’ of the different traditions.

Task Groups

The Synod gave general approval to the direction of the Task Group reports. A post-Synod briefing paper has been issued which explains in more detail.

The paper is attached.

(I voted in favour of the work of the Task Groups proceeding to the next phase).

In the Discipleship task group discussion that I attended, we discussed how to get round the problem that when a Church lays on a discipleship course or Lent group or similar, only a small number of keen members attend. Bishop of Chelmsford suggested that, rather than at the end of the Sunday service giving out a notice inviting people back on a weekday evening for the course, the course is instead run for 30-60 minutes immediately following the service, because people are already present.

Safeguarding

The draft safeguarding legislation would create a new power to a bishop to suspend a reader or licensed lay worker. This new power would not be limited to safeguarding matters, but rather “for any cause which appears to him to be good and reasonable.” I put down an amendment that before a bishop can revoke the license of a reader or licensed lay worker, the bishop must first consult the registrar (their legal officer). My amendment was passed.

My briefing note is attached.

The text of my speech is attached.

Canon B38: Canon law in relation to funerals of those who have taken their own life

The motion was passed and draft legislation will be prepared to bring the Canon into line with current pastoral practise. (I voted in favour).

Fringe meeting regarding the Regional Shared Conversations on Human Sexuality

I attended a meeting where Canon David Porter explained the process for the conversations on Human Sexuality that will take place in thirteen regions, from April 2015-March 2016. A website has been set up www.sharedconversations.org which explains the process and includes downloads of two booklets of resources.

Before General Synod February 2015: inviting your views.

All the documents for the 10-12 February General Synod are on the Church of England website: <https://www.churchofengland.org/about-us/structure/general-synod/agendas-and-papers/february-2015-group-of-sessions.aspx> There are forty papers, the following are the more substantial.

TASK GROUPS

Several task groups have been established (GS 1976) to come up with new ideas and actions:

Developing Discipleship (GS 1977)

The report states (para. 38):

The 2014 Report, From Anecdote to Evidence, connects the growth of the Church clearly to lay participation and leadership and being intentional in nurturing discipleship. Yet this vision has yet to be fully realised.

It proposes (paras 41-46) more theological resources on lay discipleship, including a new Revised Catechism.

Resourcing the Future (GS 1978)

The investment income from the Church Commissioners, after paying historic pensions liabilities is currently distributed to dioceses by a formula (the 'Darlow formula') which includes several factors such as diocesan church attendance and wealth. The task group are critical of the formula whereby if a diocese has declining congregations and therefore declining incomes, they receive a bigger grant. Paragraph 18:

The financial weakness of many of these parishes is not because of the deprivation of the communities they serve, but because their recent attendance decline has meant they can no longer pay their costs. Across the whole diocese, more subsidy is being put into parishes that are less deprived, but declining, than those that are more deprived, but growing.

The Report proposes (paragraph 4):

a fundamental shift: removing the current formula systems which provide mechanical, ineffective subsidy and replacing them with investment focused on fulfilling dioceses' strategic plans for growth, and with a strong bias towards the poor.

It proposes a new distribution where half the money goes to the dioceses with the poorest populations, and the other half to be bid for by dioceses for mission work. If the mission money does not result in Church growth, the diocese may not get a grant in future years. They propose the new funding arrangements should begin in 2017, phased in over ten years.

The Report also notes that in 2021, dioceses are planning to employ a total of 8,115 stipendiary clergy, but the projections are that there will only be 6,397 stipendiary clergy in 2021. The Guildford Diocese currently gets round this problem by paying a higher stipend than other dioceses and employing more stipendiary clergy than our share. I am not sure how fair that is on other dioceses.

Resourcing Ministerial Education (GS 1979)

The Report recommends spending more money on vocations work for ordained and lay ministry. The Report also states (para. 28),

The Training Institution proves to be a more significant predictor of the effectiveness of training than the pathway or form of training.

So it does not matter whether clergy are trained full-time at a college, or part-time on a course, what matters is which particular institution they are trained at.

The Report makes twelve proposals. I am concerned about proposal 8, that candidates for ordination who are over 50 years old could be sent by the bishop for ordination training without first attending a Bishops' Advisory Panel. My fear is that the loss of this national selection would increase the risk of someone, who is not suitable for ordination, being ordained, to their detriment and to the detriment of the Church.

Discerning and Nurturing Senior Leaders (GS 1982)

This includes the report from Lord Green's working group, "Talent Management for Future Leaders and Leadership Development for Bishops and Deans". It proposes identifying 150 of the most promising clergy and giving them a dedicated five year training programme to be able to become the bishops and deans of the future. There has been controversy that the recommendations are apparently being implemented after an executive decision, and there is no motion at the February Synod to approve or reject the recommendations.

There has also recently been published a theological report from the Faith and Order Commission "Senior Church Leadership: A Resource for Reflection"

<https://www.churchofengland.org/media/2145175/senior%20church%20leadership%20faoc.pdf>

Simplification (GS 1980)

The Group had received the following feedback of concerns from dioceses (para. 12):

- The restricted ability to make short-term appointments in circumstances demanded by a mission agenda.
- The length of the process for pastoral reorganisation and church closure and repeated consultation procedures.
- The perceived complexity of Bishops' Mission Orders.
- The unusably generous compensation provisions for loss of office.

The Report proposes simplification of procedures in all these areas.

Church Commissioners' Funds and Inter-Generational Equity (GS 1981)

Currently the Commissioners provide money for dioceses out of the Commissioners' investment income. The proposal is to as a one-off also spend some of their capital (para 39):

some additional 'pump priming' type expenditure over and above its current support for the Church, even over a number of years, but only if the expenditure is non-recurring.

However, (para 40):

For every pound over-distributed now there would be a net reduction in what is available for distribution to the Church in perpetuity.

I am hesitant about this, however, the extra money would come from the Commissioners' capital growth. Paragraph 38 notes:

The Commissioners ...have been growing the value of the portfolio at a rate faster than simply maintaining the real value of the endowment – indeed had they only managed to increase it in line with inflation the fund would stand at £2.9 billion, less than half its current value.

OTHER ITEMS

General Synod Elections 2015 (GS 1975)

General Synod members are elected for a five year term. The current term of office will end after the July 2015 General Synod. 4 September will be the closing date for nominations, with the elections taking place between 18 September and 9 October. The Guildford Diocese currently

has five clergy and four laity places. In the forthcoming election that will reduce to four clergy and four laity places.

Canon B38: Canon law in relation to funerals of those who have taken their own life (GS 1972A & B)

My **November 2014 Synod report** explains this item, which has been carried over to the February Synod because of lack of time last November.

Alternative Baptism Texts “Christian Initiation: Additional Texts in Accessible Language” (GS 1958A and Y)

The draft texts to provide simpler alternatives to parts of the Common Worship baptism service have been amended by a Revision Committee. The Committee have made several amendments including (para.40 of GS 1958Y) addressing the concern that I wrote to the Revision Committee about – see my July 2014 report.

Mission and Growth in Rural Multi-Parish Benefices (GS 1985) **and Released for Mission: Growing the Rural Church** (GS Misc 1092)

The “Released for Mission” report discusses the problems of clergy in rural areas having to cover multiple churches. One problem is the bureaucracy in having to attend multiple PCC meetings. The report highlights the time saving and benefit to those parishes who have changed their structures to (para 101):

a formal united parish structure where there was a single PCC for all the churches in the group. This allowed for the creation of a core group that could engage in vision, planning and programming on behalf of all the churches.

The Church: Towards a common vision (GS 1986)

In 1982 the World Council of Churches (WCC) Commission on Faith and Order published “Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry”, which has been an important document for ecumenism. In 2013, the Commission published their second major work, “The Church: Towards a Common Vision.” The report is available as a download from the WCC website, or can be purchased as a 46 page book (ISBN: 978-2-8254-1587-0). GS 1986 is the draft response from the Church of England’s Council for Christian Unity. This item is down as contingency business and will only be discussed if time allows.

A Programme for Reform and Renewal – Post-Synod Briefing

1. At the end of the Group of Sessions last Thursday a member of the Synod asked if a briefing note could be prepared to help Synod members report back to dioceses and deaneries about the Reform and Renewal Programme and what is to happen next. This note has been prepared in response to that request. It has no formal status but can be circulated or drawn on as Synod members find helpful.

What is the aim of the programme?

2. The programme has emerged from work undertaken by a number of Task Groups. It is designed to enable the Church of England to be better equipped for meeting the significant challenges that it faces as a result of decades of declining church attendance and an increasing age profile. As the Archbishops said in GS 1976, *‘Renewing and reforming aspects of our institutional life is a necessary but far from sufficient response to the challenges facing the Church of England.’*
3. Last week Synod members engaged with six elements of the emerging programme; a paper on **Developing Discipleship**; a report on **Resourcing Ministerial Education**; a report on **Resourcing the Future**; proposals relating to **Simplification** of the Church’s rulebook; new arrangements for **Discerning and Nurturing Senior Leaders**; and a paper on the possibility of some additional time-limited distributions from **Church Commissioner funds** to help support elements of the programme.
4. The programme will, in due course, include various other elements including what emerges from the Archbishops’ Task Group on Evangelism, which is due to report in the next few months.

What did Synod decide in February?

5. Synod spent more than a day engaging with various strands of the programme, with presentations, questions, discussions in small groups and larger groups and four debates. Only a limited number of decisions were taken at this stage. This was partly because further development and consultations with a range of stakeholders are still needed on many of the proposals before final decisions are taken. It was also because Synod is the decision-making body on some issues – most notably those which require legislation – but not on others.
6. The texts of the four motions that Synod passed on the Wednesday afternoon is attached as an annex. In summary, the Synod:
 - Commended the ten marks for developing **Discipleship** set out in GS 1977 and invited the House of Bishops to prepare a Revised Catechism and also to identify and commission other resources;
 - Welcomed the objectives and vision in the **Resourcing Ministerial Education and Resourcing the Future reports** (see below) and invited the Archbishops’ Council and the House of Bishops to reach early decisions on the specific

recommendations in each report once the current consultation period was over, these decisions then to return to Synod for scrutiny before implementation;

- Welcomed the proposals in the **Simplification** report and, once further comments were received from dioceses and others, asked for the necessary amending legislation to be brought to the Synod for more detailed scrutiny;
 - Supported the proposal that the **Church Commissioners** should, for a limited period, release additional funds.
7. Since they were specifically welcomed in the relevant motion it is worth noting that the objective of the Resourcing the Future report is set out at paragraph 4 of GS 1978 as follows:

‘Removing the current formula systems which provide mechanical, ineffective subsidy and replacing them with investment focussed on fulfilling dioceses’ strategic plans for growth, with a strong bias towards the poor.’

8. The vision set out in paragraph 8 of the Resourcing Ministerial Education report and welcomed by the Synod is as follows:
- **Every minister equipped to offer collaborative leadership in mission and to be adaptable in a rapidly changing context**
 - **A cohort of candidates for ministry who are younger, more diverse and with a wider range of gifts to serve God’s mission**
 - **An increase of at least 50% in ordinations on 2013 figures sustained annually from 2020**
 - **The rapid development of lay ministries**
 - **A continued commitment to an ordained and lay ministry which serves the whole Church both geographically and in terms of church tradition.**

What happens next?

9. Each of the various strands of work – and also the separate strand on ‘Optimising the Role of the National Church Institutions’ (GS Misc 1094) – has its own work plan, timescales and decision-making processes.
10. In relation to **Discipleship** the next steps at national level are for the House of Bishops to consider, in May, the proposal to set in hand the preparation of a Revised Catechism. In addition it is proposed that there should be a larger conversation among bishops and others about discipleship and ministry at the September meeting of the College of Bishops. It is also for dioceses to study and reflect on the proposals in the report with a view to developing in each diocese an action plan.
11. In relation to the **Development and Nurturing of Senior Leaders**, the Archbishops and the House of Bishops have agreed an implementation plan, as set out in GS 1982. The first programme for the mini-MBA is being held next month and arrangements are underway for identifying the participants for the Leadership Development Programme. The Archbishop’s Review Group, which has met for the first time this week, and the

House of Bishops' Development and Appointments Group will be overseeing the new arrangements.

12. The Archbishops agreed that there needed to be further reporting back to Synod and the opportunity for further engagement. A Private Member's Motion designed to give the Synod the opportunity to take note of the related Faith and Order Commission report on Senior Church Leadership has attracted sufficient signatures for debate and it will be for the Business Committee to decide whether this should be scheduled for July.
13. There will now be extensive consultation with diocesan teams in the coming months over the implications of both the **Resourcing the Future** and **Resourcing Ministerial Education** reports. In the case of the latter there will also be careful discussion with the Theological Education Institutions.
14. There are still many detailed matters to be settled about the implementation of the new funding formula for distributing resources to dioceses, the transitional arrangements and the criteria for allocating money in support of dioceses' strategic plans for growth. The intention is that these new funding arrangements would start to operate from the beginning of 2017.
15. That means the Archbishops' Council will be taking decisions late this year or early next, though precise figures would not be available until after the Commissioners' actuarial valuation in spring 2016. The most likely timing of a Synod debate to scrutinise the Council's decisions before they are implemented is, therefore, next February.
16. In the case of the **Resourcing Ministerial Education** report the expectation is that the first cohort that might be affected by the specific proposals coming out of the review would be that starting training in September 2017. That means that it would be the budget coming to the Synod in July 2016 which would be the first to be set reflecting any new agreed arrangements. Again, therefore, the likelihood is that decisions will be taken by the Archbishops' Council and the House of Bishops when they each meet this December, in the light of the extensive consultations over the coming months. These too would then be the subject of Synodical scrutiny next February.
17. The **Simplification** report proposes a wide range of changes to the Church's rule-book. It will be for the Archbishops' Council and the House of Bishops to decide in May whether to bring to Synod in July the proposed amendment of Regulation 29, to make it easier for short-term appointments to be made under Common Tenure.
18. The more wide-ranging changes proposed to the Mission and Pastoral Measure will require fresh primary legislation which cannot, in practice, be introduced until early in the life of the Synod which will meet for the first time in November. The proposals in the report will be the subject of detailed consultation over the coming months before the draft legislation is prepared.
19. In addition the Optimising the Role of the NCIs report canvassed the idea of a new enabling measure which would make it significantly easier in future to change Church legislation. The Archbishops' Council will be considering this proposal in more detail in March and is likely to issue a consultation document with a view to taking decisions in the autumn. Any such enabling measure would potentially be for introduction early in the life of the new Synod.

20. It is now for the **Church Commissioners** to consider the basis on which they might, for a period, be prepared to release additional funds over and above the normal amount which they make available for distribution. Specific requests for additional funding would need to be made by the Archbishops' Council, in consultation with the House of Bishops and the dioceses in the light of the emerging conclusions on the various elements of the reform programme.

How can people keep in touch with what is happening?

21. There will, as set out above, be specific consultations on various elements of the programme. In addition, all dioceses have been offered the opportunity of an engagement event over the next few months to draw into the discussion a wider range of people than the diocesan senior team. A number of members of the Archbishops' Council have agreed to make themselves available to take part in these events. In addition there will be progress reports in advance of each group of session and in some cases further debates.

William Fittall
Secretary General
17 February 2015

DISCIPLESHIP (GS 1977)

‘That this Synod, mindful that the Church of Jesus Christ inspired by the glory and grace of God shown in the face of Jesus Christ and is called to be a community of missionary disciples and in view of its resolution of November 2013 which highlighted the priority of evangelism and making new disciples:

- (a) commend the Ten Marks for Developing Discipleship for further study and reflection with a view to the development in each diocese of an action plan for implementation at diocesan, deanery and parochial level; and
- (b) invite the House of Bishops:
 - (i) to prepare a new Revised Catechism with a view to its approval by the General Synod under Canon B 2; and
 - (ii) to identify and commission other resources to help the whole Church to live out our common discipleship.’

RESOURCING THE FUTURE (GS 1978) AND RESOURCING MINISTERIAL EDUCATION (GS 1979)

‘That this Synod,

welcoming the objective set out in paragraph 4 of **GS 1978** of investment focused on dioceses’ strategic plans for growth, and with a strong bias to the poor; and

the vision set out in paragraph 8 of **GS 1979**,

invite the Archbishops’ Council and the House of Bishops to reach early decisions on the specific recommendations in the two reports once the current consultation period with dioceses, theological training institutions and others is concluded and bring those decisions back to Synod for more detailed scrutiny before implementation.’

SIMPLIFICATION (GS 1980)

‘That this Synod, welcoming the proposals in **GS 1980** and noting the support that the Archbishops’ Council, the Church Commissioners and the House of Bishops have given them, invite the Archbishops’ Council and the Business Committee, in the light of any comments from dioceses and others, to bring the necessary amending legislation to the Synod for more detailed scrutiny.’

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS' FUNDS AND INTER-GENERATIONAL EQUITY (GS 1981)

‘That this Synod,

welcoming **GS 1981**; and

noting that the funds of the Church Commissioners are a permanent endowment, held in perpetuity to support the Church of England as it seeks to proclaim the faith afresh in each generation,

support the Commissioners, in consultation with the House of Bishops and the Archbishops’ Council, giving consideration to the basis on which they might, for a limited period, release additional funds in order to support changes that will equip the Church of England more effectively for sustainable mission and ministry over the coming generations.’

Item 503: Draft Amending Canon No. 34 (GS 1953A)
Briefing note from Adrian Vincent regarding his amendment (Notice Paper 6)

Text of my amendments (I am grateful for the drafting assistance of the Legal Office).

In paragraph 4(2), after the inserted paragraph (3C), insert—

“(3D) Before revoking a licence under paragraph 3 or 3B, the bishop of a diocese must consult the registrar of the diocese.”

In paragraph 5(2), after the inserted paragraph (5C), insert—

“(5D) Before revoking a licence under paragraph 5 or 5B, the bishop of a diocese must consult the registrar of the diocese.”

Background

On 12 February, Synod will debate: the *Draft Safeguarding and Clergy Discipline Measure* (GS 1952A); the *Draft Amending Canon No.34* (GS 1953A); and the *Report of the Revision Committee* (GS 1952-3Y). The *Draft Amending Canon* will introduce a new power to enable bishops to suspend readers and licensed lay workers.

Page 4 of GS 1953A:

“4. (1) Canon E 6 (Of the licensing of readers) is amended as follows.

(2) After paragraph 3B insert—

“3C. The bishop of a diocese may suspend a licence granted to a reader by giving the person notice in writing, pending a decision on whether to revoke the licence under paragraph 3 or 3B.””

Page 8 of GS 1953A:

“5. (1) Canon E 8 (Of the admission and licensing of lay workers) is amended as follows.

(2) After paragraph 5B insert—

“5C. The bishop of a diocese may suspend a licence granted to a lay worker by giving the person notice in writing, pending a decision on whether to revoke the licence under paragraph 5 or 5B.””

This new power is not limited to use in safeguarding matters. As can be seen from the above wording, there is no restriction on its scope. Under Canon E6.3 and E8.5 it could be used by the bishop “for any cause which appears to him to be good and reasonable”.

The Revision Committee Report refers to the amendment that I proposed, which would have required the bishop to consult the registrar prior to suspending or revoking the license of a reader or licensed lay worker. Paragraph 171 of the Report sets out the reason why the Committee did not accept my amendment:

“[...] Mr Vincent argued that the amendment was necessary to protect a reader against a rash or wrong decision. The Committee rejected Mr Vincent’s second submission. It noted that if the bishop considered legal advice was desirable the bishop would seek it in any event. As for guarding against the risk of a wrong decision, the reader was

already protected because there was a right of appeal to the archbishop under Canon E 6.3 against the revocation.”

The amendment that I am proposing (Notice paper 6)

This amendment is a narrower proposal than the one rejected by the Revision Committee. The amendment will require a bishop to consult the registrar only prior to revoking the license of a reader or licensed lay worker. I have abandoned the proposal for consultation prior to suspension (there may be occasion where a bishop has to act so quickly to suspend that there isn't time for the bishop to consult the registrar).

Points which Synod may wish to consider:

- Unlike clergy, who are protected against a rash or wrong decision to revoke their licence by the careful procedures of the Clergy Discipline Measure, readers and licensed lay workers may have their license revoked by the bishop “for any cause which appears to him to be good and reasonable”. A simple requirement for the bishop to consult their registrar prior to ‘dismissing’ a reader or licensed lay worker, will give a minimum level of reassurance to lay ministers, without the need to introduce bureaucratic procedures.
- The argument that “if the bishop considered legal advice was desirable the bishop would seek it in any event”, is unfortunately insufficient. Whilst not a directly comparable case, the Cahill report is an instance where an (arch)bishop did not consider it necessary to consult their registrar,¹ and, in the absence of that advice, a wrong decision was taken.
- Regarding the argument that “the reader was already protected because there was a right of appeal to the archbishop under Canon E 6.3 against the revocation.” An appeal post dismissal can indeed be made to the archbishop. But by then the damage will have been done to the person's reputation and sense of (lay) vocation. It is preferable to have a check to prevent a wrong decision being made in the first place, than to leave it to an appeal stage.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Adrian Vincent, Guildford, 320.
email: avwebsite@hotmail.co.uk

6 February 2015

¹ Paragraph 13.13, “there was no consultation with his representative or Diocesan Registrar”, *Inquiry into the Church of England's response to child abuse allegations made against Robert Waddington*, 2014.

“Adrian Vincent, Guildford 320

Madam Chair, my speech explains both of my amendments – items 513 and 515. And I wish to thank the staff of the legal office who have helped me with the wording of the amendments.

The safeguarding package includes the *Draft Amending Canon* which will introduce a new power to bishops, to suspend readers and licensed lay workers.

This new power is not limited to safeguarding matters. Under the new Canon E6.3 and E8.5, the bishop will have the power to suspend a reader or licensed lay worker [quote] “for any cause which appears to him to be good and reasonable”.

Last year I suggested to the Revision Committee that they introduce amendments to require the bishop to consult their registrar prior to suspending, and prior to revoking, the license.

The Committee did not accept my proposal, and so the amendments that I am putting to Synod today are more modest. They will require the bishop to consult the registrar only before revoking the license. I have dropped my suggestion for consultation prior to suspension.

I make three points in support of my amendments.

Firstly, unlike clergy, who have the careful procedures of the Clergy Discipline Measure, which give protection against a rash or wrong decision to revoke their licence.

By contrast, readers and licensed lay workers have no such procedures. They may have their license revoked for any cause which the bishop personally considers to be reasonable. My proposal is a simple requirement for the bishop to consult their registrar prior to ‘dismissing’. This will give a minimum level of reassurance to lay ministers, without introducing bureaucratic procedures.

Secondly, some have said that a bishop would always consult their registrar in these cases, and so it doesn’t need to be written down as a rule. But, unfortunately, the Cahill Report, whilst not a directly comparable case, it is an example where a bishop (in this case an archbishop) did not consider it necessary to consult his registrar, and in the absence of advice, the wrong decision was taken.

Thirdly, some have said that the right of readers, under Canon E6.3, to appeal to the archbishop after their dismissal is sufficient protection against a wrong decision. But, by the time it gets to appeal stage, the damage has been done to the reader’s reputation and sense of lay vocation. It is surely preferable to insert a check, to prevent a wrong decision being made in the first place; than to leave it to the appeal stage to correct it.

I invite the Synod to support this amendment, which I now move.”