

# White Paper C

## GENERAL SYNOD – Report on the February 2020 Group of Sessions

Synod convened in Church House, Westminster & welcomed visitors from the wider Anglican Communion:  
The Most Revd Hector Zavala Munoz - Primate of the Anglican Church in Chile;  
The Most Revd Stephen Thyan Myint Oo – Archbishop of Myanmar;  
The Most Revd Zacharie Masimango Katanda – Archbishop of the Congo.

Membership of General Synod includes ecumenical representatives who have speaking but not voting rights.

The opening item was the Presidential Address delivered by the Archbishop of Canterbury, the full text of which can be found on [www.archbishopofcanterbury.org](http://www.archbishopofcanterbury.org). He looked ahead to the Lambeth Conference the theme of which is to be 'God's Church for God's World – Listening, Walking and Witnessing Together'. The text will be I Peter with its themes of love, suffering, resilience, holiness, witness and how to live in a hostile environment so that Christ is truly Lord.

**The Business of the Synod** is split between four, sometimes overlapping, categories:

**Standing items** such as the report of the Business Committee and Synod Question Time.

**Legislative business.**

**Ordering the life of the church** – business which concerns the way we order our own life together.

**The Church and the World** – debates on current issues.

**Standing Items.** The Business Committee always reports on how the items were selected and how the business of the Synod is to be conducted. Question Time took place on the Monday afternoon. 121 questions had been submitted, some lengthy. These are published in a booklet along with the written answers. They are answered by various bodies: The Mission and Public Affairs Council, House of Bishops, Faith and Order Commission, Pensions Board, Archbishops' Council, Finance Committee, to name a few. Supplementary questions are then asked of those bodies in the chamber. Always a lively and entertaining session.

**Legislative business.**

The Cathedrals Measure concerns the governance of Cathedrals and was first approved in July last year. It was returned to Synod after revision and will now go back for final drafting. Likewise the Diocesan Boards of Education Measure had received its first consideration last year. After debate Synod voted to take note of the progress of these items.

The Channel Islands Measure had a well described historical background. The Channel Islands are not part of the UK, and are fiercely independent within their own legal system. The Deaneries of Jersey and Guernsey have been part of the Diocese of Winchester since 1569. Pastoral breakdown between the Bishop of Winchester and the Deaneries occurred and following a commission established by the Archbishop of Canterbury the Measure provided for the transfer of the Channel Islands to Southampton Diocese. All three stages of the legislation were completed within the group of sessions and this is quite unique.

Other legislative business dealt with the 'Clergy Covenant for Wellbeing Act of Synod 2020'; 'The Church Representation Rules (Amendment) Resolution 2020'; 'The Care of Cathedrals (Amendment) Rules 2020' and the 'Draft Scheme Amending the Diocese in Europe Constitution'.

### Some significant outcomes in the area of Church Representation.

APCMs now need to take place by **31<sup>st</sup> May** instead of **30<sup>th</sup> April**. This should make life easier for PCCs keeping the date clear of Easter.

Voting by Deanery Synod Members for the House of Laity in General Synod to be electronic from 2020.

Carlisle representation in the House of Laity of General Synod to be reduced from 4 to 3. This follows a fall in Electoral Roll membership. However, the fall is probably more than compensated by the growth in 'Fresh Expressions' membership which begs the question as to the representation of that group.

Some members felt that there was a lot of legislation which was tedious and could have been handled better, (*Cameron has written to the Business Committee suggesting ways to improve the conduct of Synod watch this space!*)

### Ordering the Life of the Church – Three areas were considered.

- On the Tuesday afternoon there was a presentation by the 'Living in Love and Faith' group and the Pastoral Advisory Group. The 'fish bowl' discussion of the LLF material was refreshing and the report in the Church Times doesn't reflect the discussions and the positive reaction to the materials

presented. The LLF project is exploring relationships within and without marriage, issues of human sexuality and gender and aims to provide significant teaching and learning resources by the July group of sessions. There had been a great deal of criticism of the House of Bishops for releasing a statement on Civil Partnerships that appeared to undermine the LLF process.

- On Wednesday morning Synod discussed 'Safeguarding: response to recommendations in IICSA (Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse) May 2019 report'. This is an ongoing matter as IICSA has further reporting to deliver. However, Synod expressed its deep sense of shame, particularly where clergy had been involved. Financial redress was assured but the failure to move forward earlier on this has been one of the major concerns of campaigners.
- Synod debated a motion on 'Children and Youth Ministry' that called for a greater drive by dioceses in this area. Carlisle Diocese is probably ahead of the curve in this area.

In addition to the above the 'Implementation and Dialogue Group of the House of Bishops hosted a fringe meeting and look to present a final report on the 'Five Guiding Principles' which relate to those unable to accept the ministry of women.

**The Church and the World.** This was a rich agenda with a motion from the Mission and Public Affairs Council, one Diocesan Synod Motion and three Private Members' Motions. The MPA Council motion on 'Climate Emergency and Carbon Reduction Targets' called on all parts of the Church of England to review environmental impact and achieve zero carbon emissions by 2050. By amendment the target date was 2030, which many members thought so unachievable that it lost credibility but others were pleased at the radical message it gave. The outcome was that the church estate as a whole (including local churches) should aim for year-on-year reductions in carbon emissions and to become carbon neutral by 2030. This is recognised as a very stretching target and means for example that churches where the boiler may need to be replaced within the next ten years should have in place a plan for use of alternative energy sources ready to be picked up off the shelf on the occasion of breakdown. In the meantime we should be looking to minimise fuel bills and switching to renewable energy suppliers, and maximising the benefits of our churchyards for the environment through more sustainable practise, tree planting etc.

The Diocesan Synod motion (from Leeds) called on the Archbishops' Council to commission a study to explore why the Church of England was generally less effective at attracting people from more disadvantaged communities.

The first Private Members Motion debated was entitled 'Windrush Commitment and Legacy'. It dealt with the manner in which Commonwealth citizens had been treated and the fact that black and minority ethnic people were still unwelcomed in many areas of the mainstream Anglican Church. Proportionately they were under-represented in ordained ministry and in hierarchy of the church. Archbishop Justin declared we are institutionally racist in some areas and pledged research and action.

The second such motion called for an 'End to Paupers' Funerals'. That actual title is no longer employed but horrendous accounts of inhuman treatment being inflicted on grieving families were narrated. We are fortunate in Cumbria that our Local Authorities do not have such policies but the issue of funeral costs is very real to many families.

The final PMM called for Legal Aid Reform. The 'Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012' brought radical alterations as to Legal Aid entitlement. It has been the families of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged that have suffered most. This is not in the case of crimes committed but in the family law divisions. One senior QC said that "... access to justice denied is injustice."

**Worship and prayer** is ongoing throughout the Synod sessions. The Community of St Anselm provide a continuing praying presence. On Tuesday morning Holy Communion was celebrated in the Chamber and Morning Worship on Wednesday included an inspiring Lectio Divina style on 1 Peter conducted by the Archbishop's Chaplain, the Revd Dr Isabelle Hamley.

**Fringe Groups** held breakfast, lunchtime and evening meetings on the following subjects: The Cathedrals Measure, Christian Aid Climate Crisis, Church Planting, Diocesan Board of Education, Donating smartphones to seafarers, Statistics around children and young people, Getting ready for Lambeth, Launch of Sports and Wellbeing Project,, Living in Live and Faith, Mission in deprived communities, New National Giving Strategy, Promoting Safer Church, The Children's Society, The Pioneer Build, Transgenderism and Transformation, USPG, Valuing people with Down's Syndrome, Women and the Church and Worshipping with those living with Dementia.

**your synod reps are Val Hallard, Chris Angus, David Mills, Geoff Hine Stuart Fyffe, Cameron Butland, Ruth Crossley and The Bishop of Carlisle.**