

General Synod Report

July 2022



General Synod met in York in glorious sunshine from 8 – 12 July. This report is selective rather than comprehensive. It summarises some of the presentations, debates and decisions in the main chamber and highlights a few initiatives and resources showcased at workshops and the bookstall.

Church of England

Net Zero by 2030 is a 'hugely ambitious' target. Now, a route map for this journey (see [GS2258](#)) has been endorsed by General Synod and will cascade down to dioceses and parishes.

An initial report on the work of the Independent Safeguarding Board (see [GS2263](#)) was the context for a fresh resolution urging the Archbishops' Council to 'ensure that IICSA's recommendations for the Church of England are met as soon as possible' and a request for 'regular updates on progress ... especially concerning the strengthening of independent accountability'.

Finance was a key theme with a review of:

- the Archbishops' Council annual report ([GS2267](#));
- Strategic Development Funding (SDF) and Lowest Income Communities Funding ([GS2261](#)); and
- the spending plans of Church Commissioners' and Archbishops' Council for 2023-25 ([GS2262](#)).

For 2023-25 the Church Commissioners plan to distribute £1.2 billion (a 30% increase compared with 2020-22), including £400m for SDF (with similar amounts earmarked, provisionally, for 2026-28 and 2029-31). In debate, the merits of the 'mixed ecology' and 'save the parish' perspectives were aired and the Archbishop of York acknowledged the need for 'balance' between these two outlooks when drawing up spending plans.

The Archbishops' Council's £107m budget for 2023 was approved ([GS2268](#)).

Affirming and including disabled people in the whole life of the Church ([GS2270](#))

The Disability Task Group brought to Synod a motion '*affirming disabled people (with hidden as well as visible disabilities) to be fearfully and wonderfully made in the image and likeness of God*'. The motion was '*mindful of the progress already made*' but allowed Synod to express its commitment '*to working towards the removal of all remaining barriers to full participation for disabled people in the life and ministry of the church*'. The motion was passed *nem. con.* (i.e., without any dissent) and called for work to develop more inclusive liturgy, to gather more extensive data, for every Diocesan Advisory Committee to include someone with experience of accessibility issues, and encouraged the appointment of full-time Disability Advisers working across manageable clusters of dioceses. All speeches supported the motion, with some powerful personal testimony about the way barriers for disabled people were excluding and disempowering. One asked Synod to make the issue a "priority of prayer" and take it back to dioceses and parishes as part of bringing about change.

Diocesan Stipends Funds

The endowments held by different dioceses vary hugely: Liverpool has less than £1 per head of population, Lincoln nearly £90 (see [GS2255P](#)). The Diocesan Stipends Funds (Amendment) Measure was forwarded for consideration by the revision committee. This draft legislation (see [GS2255](#)) is intended to **permit** any diocese to direct part of the income from its Diocesan Stipends Funds for use outside the diocese.

A 'younger and more diverse church': youth and children's work

There were some really helpful workshop sessions on working with young people. At present, only 1 in 10 churches do youth work. A speaker from Youthscape (youthscape.co.uk) focused on starting a youth work or growing from a small base. Key messages were: churches where the vicar is engaged are 3x more successful; the need to underpin everything with prayer; to 'build up' (focus first on retaining and building up the faith of any existing young people), then 'build out' (offer initiatives, such as a Christian Youth Group), and 'build in' (for churches with no youth work, start small, e.g., with music or drama clubs linked to services, and gradually build on this); and make youth work a priority at PCC meetings. Interestingly, 5pm on Sunday appears to be the best time for youth work (ideally meeting with pizza around the vicarage table!). Elsewhere, Church of England research into over 200 parishes, from different traditions and in different contexts, which have growing numbers of under 16s was presented (see [here](#)).

The need for an overhaul of the Clergy Discipline Measure (CDM) has been widely recognised. We welcomed a report ([GS2277](#)) which set out proposals for a new Clergy Conduct Measure (CCM) which would distinguish between alleged 'grievances', 'misconduct' and 'serious misconduct', establish different processes for each, and define a more limited role for the bishop (to receive the complaint, support the parties and implement the outcome). Synod asked for draft legislation to be brought forward for consideration at the earliest opportunity.

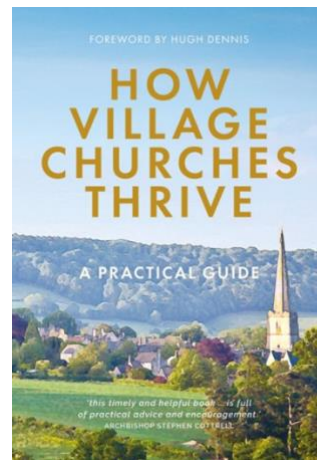
Church of England and the Anglican Communion

The composition of the Crown Nominations Commission (CNC) for the appointment of the Archbishop of Canterbury was a key topic ([GS2260](#)). Synod was asked to approve an increase in the number of representatives from the Anglican Communion (beyond England) from one to five to reflect the Archbishop of Canterbury's distinctive role in the Communion. While several members of Synod felt strongly that the role of *primus inter pares* (first among **equals**) was better served by limiting membership of the CNC (almost) exclusively to members drawn from the Church of England where he/she would serve as an Archbishop, the majority of Synod supported this development.

The wider world

There were passionate debates, and motions passed, on the war in Ukraine (calling, inter alia, for a just end to the war), on assisted suicide (calling for palliative care to be better funded and no relaxation of the current law), and age verification for pornography websites (calling for government action).

How Village Churches Thrive



This helpful new book, published in June, was available on the bookstall. Tackling ten themes (including extending a warm welcome, making the most of Life Events, creative use of buildings, caring for God's acre, being the heartbeat of the community, and so

on), this book combines practical advice and case studies designed to encourage and increase confidence in all who work or worship in a village church.

Last but not least ...

We didn't spend all our time in the chamber, debating motions, considering amendments, and casting votes ...

