**GENERAL SYNOD**

**RESUME OF THE WINTER 2020 MEETING: 10th – 13th FEBRUARY, LONDON**

**INTRODUCTION**

As has become the practice during this quinquennium, this note summarises matters of relevance to our Diocese which were discussed during the February 2020 session of the General Synod. You can find all of the papers and other relevant documents via the link at the end of this note.

**HUMAN SEXUALITY (GS Misc 1235)**

As has been covered in UK media, this topic continues to be of significant interest within the Church and beyond. The session was structured around a review of the working of the Pastoral Advisory Group and Living in Love and Faith. The former reminded members of the 6 pervasive evils of prejudice, silence, ignorance, fear, hypocrisy and power and you can find an explanatory video clip by googling ‘Pastoral Advisory Group’ and following the links. ‘Living in Love and Faith’ will be a suite of learning resources which will be published later in the year (and which will be the subject of discussion at the July 2020 session). It does not provide answers or solutions but is intended as a resource to help dioceses and local churches to explore the issues. A further working group is planned to continue this journey.

The debate on LLF was conducted in the light of the January publication of a ‘Pastoral Statement’ by the House of Bishops following the change in the law to extend civil partnerships to opposite-sex couples. This Statement attracted a good deal of questioning, both *pro* and *contra,* during the Synod. Whilst the Statement expresses the doctrine of the Church of England it was not received as ‘pastoral’ and its release (following approval by a delegation committee) breached a moratorium on matters relating to human sexuality while the ‘Living in Love and Faith’ project was ongoing. Although the Archbishops had not withdrawn the statement, they (with the support of many bishops including Bishop Robert) apologised for its release, acknowledging that it had jeopardised trust.

**SAFEGUARDING (GS 2158)**

This covered the covers the Church’s response to the recommendations included in the May 2019 report published by the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA) covering the Chichester/Peter Ball issue. The paper was endorsed and all recommendations are accepted. In summary these cover: ensuring Religious Communities are safeguarding compliant; tightening up wording in regards of the importance of clergy complying with safeguarding; imposing sanctions on those who refuse to follow checking or training requirements; and sharing information on any internal reviews (in Religious Communities). The Church also supports a further recommendation to government that clergy should be included in those in a ‘position of trust’ in respect of the UK Sexual Offences Act 2003.

A considerable part of the debate centred on the needs of victims and survivors including compensation for victims of abuse and the original motion was amended to overtly reflect all of these aspects (including compensation). You can find the totality of the response in the Synod papers and the IICSA reports are all available on line at their website.

**THE WINDRUSH LEGACY (GS 2156A & 2156B)**

Originally intended as a paper to commemorate the anniversary of the arrival of the ‘Empire Windrush’ liner and the martyrdom of Revd Dr Martin Luther King Jr, the resulting discussion embraced both open and unconscious racial bias within the Church of England. The former includes exclusion (in whole or from particular roles). The latter takes many forms, is less overt, but is nonetheless is very insidious (eg ‘where do you come from’ –meaning ‘not where in England’ but ‘where is your family’s country of origin’!). The Archbishop of Canterbury gave a very personal and from the heart response recording his sorrow and shame and noting that the Church ‘is still deeply institutionally racist’. Synod resolved to continue to seek to ‘stamp out’ all forms of racism and exclusion.

**CLIMATE CHANGE AND CARBON REDUCTION TARGET (GS 2159)**

This paper prompted a lively debate with the result that the Church now commits itself to a zero carbon position by 2030 (not 2045 as originally proposed by the authors – see link at the end of this note). In addition all dioceses are required to seek a year on year reduction and to address progress every 3 years. This is hugely significant for the Church (and for our diocese given our need for extensive travel). It will be challenging but sends a strong signal of the Church’s commitment to preserving God’s Creation.

**CHILDREN AND YOUTH MINISTRY (GS 2161)**

Concerned with a statistically predicted collapse in attendance by children and young people, the paper seeks to promote the sharing of good practice by successful parishes with others. Implicit in this is for us is a pointer to continue to learn from each other and perhaps from the broader Church.

**POVERTY**

The Diocese of Leeds brought their Diocesan Synod motion on ‘Social Inequality and Poverty’.  There is a need for wider change to ensure the Church responds prayerfully to need. We need to reflect with and learn from impoverished communities. The motion was carried

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**LEGISLATIVE AND OTHER BUSINESS**

A number of matters were covered of which the following are of interest to the Diocese:

* ***The Diocese in Europe Constitution:*** Synod  passed the scheme proposed by our diocesan synod to amend the constitution of the Diocese in Europe (essentially about retirement age in our diocese) without comment.
* ***The Clergy Covenant (GS 2153):*** As noted in the 2019 session at York, the Covenant has now been ‘Proclaimed as an Act of Synod’ and will in consequence be proclaimed at all Diocesan Synods to ensure that it is given proper attention at a local level. (*NB the work is already in progress in our Diocese following the 2018 survey of Chaplains).*
* ***Standing Orders Report (GS2157):*** One of the key provisions was to do with appeals in relation to elections. Synod endorsed the approach.
* ***Church Representation Rules (GS 2155 & GS 2154):***  As well as some tidying up of the already published rules (the 1st paper - a few errors and updating to ensure consistency with other recent legislation and decisions regarding appeals see above) the key issue agreed by Synod (the 2nd paper) was to discuss a change to the ‘new’ requirement that laity could only be elected to 2 consecutive terms on a Deanery (including Archdeaconry in parts of our Diocese) Synod unless the Annual Chaplaincy Meeting voted to ‘disapply’ the rule. The result of extensive consultation is that this will be reversed – ie the number of terms is not fixed unless the Annual chaplaincy Meeting chooses to do so. This will be brought to the July session in the form of a proposed legislative change. (In the meantime the status quo should continue in the 2020 elections).
* ***General Synod Elections 2020: Allocation of Seats (GS 21620):*** There was discussion over the relative numbers of General Synod seats to be allocated to the Northern (York) and Southern (Canterbury – of which we are a part) Provinces. The important news for us is that we retain 3 Clergy and 3 Laity seats.
* ***Draft Cathedral Measure (GS 2136A):*** This returned to Synod following its passage through the revision committee. It is included in this note as it applies to our Diocesan cathedral and the 2 pro cathedrals. The (new) Dean and the 2 Chancellors will obviously need to be aware of the detailed provisions.
* ***Election Rules (GS 2164, 2165 & 2166):*** The key point of note is that this makes possible electronic voting and nominations. Clearly of real value to us – but our registrar informs me that there are a number of local matters to be resolved – so patience please!
* ***Channel Islands Measure (GS 2152):*** This transfers the Channel Islands (CI) from the diocese of Winchester (where there had been a breakdown of the previous relationship) to Salisbury. All parties agreed and the measure was fast tracked to completion to expedite the change. (NB a link to our Diocese had been considered but rejected on the grounds of the greater similarity of the parish structure in the CI’s to that in England.)

David Coulston

20th February 2020

On behalf of ‘Team Europe’ (who have contributed to this text – as always please forgive any residual ‘typos’!!)

*House of Bishops: Bishop Robert*

*House of Clergy (elected members): Debbie Flach, Giles Williams, Tuomas Makipaa (absent due to illness)*

*House of Laity (elected members): Mary Talbot, David Coulston, Tjeerd Bijl*

***The following links may be of assistance to readers.***

<https://www.churchofengland.org/more/policy-and-thinking/work-general-synod/agendas-papers/general-synod-february-2020>

<https://www.churchofengland.org/more/media-centre/news/general-synod-sets-2030-net-zero-carbon-target>