



# *Open Synod Group*

## *Newsletter*

### *Autumn 2020*

President : Right Rev Trevor Willmott, Bishop of Dover

Chair : Robin Back, Norwich

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*Editor : Tim Hind, Bath & Wells*

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## **Editorial**

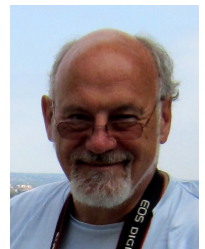
We still live in strange times. This will be my last editorial.

I gave an open invitation to members to let me have articles for this newsletter and received one, for which I am most grateful. I'm guessing that many are busy coping with the management of their churches and communities, That is aside from the challenges associated with the effects of Covid-19 on their families.

It has been an immense privilege to have hosted this newsletter over the last five years and I trust that whoever is my successor will have a chance to refocus the newsletter in their own inimitable style in the new year.

I am including in this final edition heavily edited extracts from the 42 contributions received during my period as editor. Looking back, I am pleased to note the variety of topics and the breadth of churchmanship that has agreed to make contributions. I tried to get topics of social interest as well as to expose the inner workings of the Synod.

I remind you that, as always, those who contribute do so from a personal perspective and the views expressed do not represent a position of the Open Synod Group.



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## LESSONS LEARNED FROM LOCKDOWN

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### *Penny Allen, Lichfield*

1. Clergy, Readers and Lay Leaders will make heroic efforts to master digital technology, even if it is difficult for them and they have not used it in church before. They will also become familiar with Zoom and Microsoft Teams, even allowing us to have interactive worship and Zoom coffee.
2. Worship continues whatever the obstacles that are placed before us. Lockdowns, Government instructions and confusion, health issues, children needing home schooling, taking care of parents and other family members, hospital and doctor visits, shopping, Christmas shopping in a hurry, chores, all the many things that need doing.
3. Daily prayer has become the new norm for some of us, experiencing Morning Prayer and particularly for me Compline, a service I have not used for many years, to close my day.
4. I can worship in whatever location I like, with my local priest, my clergy friends, lay leaders, the cathedral, other cathedrals, a church in Thailand, or Australia, wherever I wish.
5. The Church is the people and not the building. The building empowers some people and our heritage means a lot, but we can manage without it. Safeguarding the health of others at our expense is a sacrifice worth making and we will meet face to face again.
6. Keeping in touch is important. My church has a Whatsapp group which is a lifeline to those living alone, those in need, those in need of prayer and a way to share the care.
7. Meeting in a garden with church members can be worship. We had a series of Open Gardens to raise money and keep our fellowship alive.
8. Being out of doors is a great blessing when we cannot meet. Watching the changing seasons, planting and growing in the garden, walking locally and meeting others, also having a holiday where we can see new views, have new experiences and meet new people.
9. Communicating with family members via social media and digital platforms has become essential. Meeting and hugging someone has become the exception when allowed, and has been the most difficult hurdle in this long race with Covid. A new gratitude for our former freedoms has developed and is something to aspire to for the future.
10. Being grateful to be alive and well, being able to be calm in the face of adversity and being able to show God's love to others has been a gift.



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## From Summer 2016

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### ***Jamie Harrison, Chair, House of Laity***

So what about hopes and fears? Synod is often at its best when outward looking, considering issues of the wider world, needs beyond the church. So I hope for informed debates concerning issues of: the beginning and end of life, justice in its many forms, health, those on the margins, and what it means to live alongside those of other faiths and none. Fears would be about too much inward looking, with the risks of polarisation, or seeking simplistic solutions. It is important that we do theology together, creating relationship and rejecting tribalism.



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### ***Jayne Ozanne***

I suppose the greatest change is that within myself. I've "crossed the floor", quite literally, and found myself at home in places I would never have ventured before, whilst feeling somewhat out of sorts with those to whom I would have normally gravitated.

The truth is though that I'm just the same person as I was before. I'm still as passionate as ever about my faith, and keen to speak about the "elephants in the room". Thankfully there appears to be a growing number of members who are willing to challenge perceived wisdom and hold the central structures to account.



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### ***Ian Paul***

I have a confession. I spent five years on General Synod from 2000 to 2005, and when I looked back on my time, I could not decide whether this had been a valuable investment in the service of the wider Church—or whether it had been a complete waste of time.

One reason for my ambivalence is positive. Many—perhaps most—of the important ideas, initiatives and energy for the ministry of the Church comes from parishes, congregations and local church leaders—and this is how it should be. Anyone who thinks meetings of Synod are the things which will save the Church of England needs to get out more!



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### ***Elliot Swatridge, CEYC Representative***

To name the "elephant in the room", the major issue for this quinquennium is going to be the issue of human sexuality, something which almost everyone has a strong opinion on. Christian groups have an unfortunate tendency in this area to rush to sudden conclusions and knee-jerk reactions that achieve little except to further alienate the Church from wider society. It is an issue which could literally divide the Church of England down the middle, if it is not handled with the utmost care.



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## ***Anthony Archer***

Renewal and Reform is now the underlying and most pressing challenge. We need a substantial increase in the number and quality of ministerial leaders, ordained and lay. Few dioceses have addressed this. It is not just about more clergy, vital though they are. Discipleship and collaborative ministry need to be a priority. The role, equipping and empowering of the laity have been ignored for too long.



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## ***Mark Russell***

When I arrived back in November and looked around the chamber a number of things struck me as very different. The first and most obvious was that there were women in purple shirts! My previous term on Synod had been dominated by the endless debates on women bishops. We had the Guildford Report, the Rochester Report, the Manchester Report, and I began to wonder if we would have to go through reports from every Diocesan See before we could see women rightfully equal as bishops. So I rejoice in the amazing progress we have made. The other notable change is the absence of some people who were huge figures of influence in my last period on Synod.



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## **From Spring 2017**

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### ***Dame Caroline Spelman, MP***

Even on the continent there is no great love for the EU institutions and other referenda have produced close results. Blame for some of this has to be laid at the door of Europe's elite for failing to communicate the benefits which membership brings and to adapt the institutions in timely fashion to global trends, notably migration where the principle of free movement becomes almost unworkable without undermining social cohesion. Now it has been decided by a narrow majority that the UK will leave the EU there is a huge amount of work to be done to deliver it. The negotiations are likely to be characterised by reciprocity and regulatory equivalence.



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### ***David Martlew***

My first year on General Synod has been a steep learning curve. Overall, I'm finding the experience stimulating and interesting.

My first speech in the chamber in February was a cock-up (sic) because I was betrayed by the faulty Synod App - the call to speak came out of the blue, leaving me with just a couple of minutes to prepare what I wished to say. I am still wet behind the ears in terms of General Synod. But I remain convinced that we must develop the skill to collaborate in mutual respect.



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### ***Canon Anna Norman–Walker, Canon Chancellor & Missioner Exeter***

Cathedrals are such a ‘good news’ story for the Church of England and it is a real privilege to be given the opportunity to devote my time to nurturing discipleship and mission at Exeter Cathedral in recent years. Thank you ‘Open Synod’ for asking me to share my story with you.

In terms of our work with the cities homeless we opened a drop-in café once a week, where we simply provide a hot meal and drinks and an opportunity for some conversation and friendship. Most weeks we serve around 50 meals and it has been wonderful to see the way in which the wider Cathedral community has embraced this work with the offering of volunteer help, funding and an endless supply of sleeping bags and warm clothing.



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### ***Giles Goddard***

As I write this, the evidence is growing that 2016 will be the hottest year on record, warmer than 2015 or 2014 which were in their turn the warmest on record. Environmental degradation is a reality around the world, and the current political situation does not bode well for the future.

In February 2014 General Synod passed a motion encouraging the Church of England to be more active on climate change and the environment. It’s a good story which will be further strengthened by the launch of the Transition Pathway Initiative – EIAG’s new approach to monitoring and engaging with the companies in which we invest. There are also several Diocesan motions working through the system to be debated by General Synod in due course.



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### ***Matthew Frost, Chair, Lay Leadership Task Group for the Archbishops’ Council***

Our report, Setting God’s People Free, concludes that what needs to be addressed is not a particular theological or ecclesiastical issue but the Church’s overall culture. We highlight two shifts in culture and practice that we see as critical to the empowerment of the laity, the flourishing of the Church and the evangelisation of the nation.

First. Until, together, ordained and lay, we form and equip lay people to follow Jesus confidently in every sphere of life in ways that demonstrate the Gospel we will never set God’s people free to evangelise the nation.

Second. Until laity and clergy are convinced, based on their baptismal mutuality, that they are equal in worth and status, complementary in gifting and vocation, mutually accountable in discipleship, and equal partners in mission, we will never form Christian communities that can evangelise the nation.



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## From Summer 2017

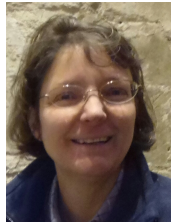
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### ***Sarah Tupling, Mary Bucknall, Catherine Farmbrough - Deaf Anglicans Together***

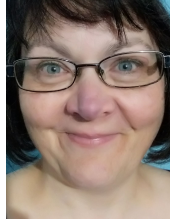
**Sarah** writes - On my first attendance it was scary, not knowing what to expect and on walking into the Main Hall, it felt awesome! As I attended more Synod gatherings in London and York, my confidence grew (knowing we were walking in the footsteps of previous DAT representatives). I was there as one of three Deaf Christian representatives, to 'walk' amongst other Christians to make them aware of Jesus' work in our 'world' (Deaf community). What was missing? What was needed? What was wrong? The Holy Spirit had certainly come upon me and amongst us: *Acts 1:8* "But the Holy Spirit will come upon you and give you power. Then you will tell everyone about me in Jerusalem, in all Judea, in Samaria and everywhere in the world".



**Mary** writes -The diverse membership of the General Synod is also a strong feature, with members of religious communities, the armed forces, youth groups all represented. It is a wonderful opportunity to meet and mix with people from all regions of England, from Newcastle to Truro, from major cities to remote rural spots. All have united in a common search for what makes life more godly, more worthwhile, more fair. There is tremendous spiritual power at work there, I feel, underpinned by regular times of prayer and worship in between Synod business.



**Catherine** writes - I am one of three representatives of DAT (Deaf Anglicans Together) for General Synod. I like to make my voice heard not only for the deaf people but also for others such as LGBT, BAME, autistic, blind etc and so the first speech I made was linked to it. It is challenging for me as I like to think what I can do to support the General Synod.



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### ***Paul Fiddes, Ecumenical Representative***

Not all voices have the same weight, but they are all listened to with courtesy and attention, and the standard of debate is very high. Faith, reason and experience join hands in remarkable ways. I have been impressed too by the way that local contexts are brought forward into conversation on this national level, so that a participant in Synod gains a picture of the life of the Church of England in quite vivid colour and detail. Nobody attending should fail to return home without having their horizons widened by discovering how congregations elsewhere than in their own patch hear the summons of Christ coming to them for their life and mission.



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### ***Robert Innes, Bishop in Europe***

In this grim political situation, the Church of England yet retains a vital role. We have important ecumenical relationships with European partners. Now is the time to be investing in these. As the 'divorce' negotiations get underway, we can expect the level of acrimony to increase. There has never been a more important time for Christians in the UK to develop, build and sustain the warmest possible relationships with our brothers and sisters on the European mainland.



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### ***Rachel Treweek, Bishop of Gloucester***

In October 2016 I launched a social media campaign #liedentity with pupils from All Saints' Academy in Cheltenham, challenging negative body image and encouraging young people to look within to discover true value and beauty. This has given me a great opportunity to speak with young people about my own identity in Christ and my desire for every person to discover their worth and potential as a unique individual created in the image of God. For more information about the liedentity campaign visit - [www.goucester.anglican.org/parish-resources/communications/liedentity](http://www.goucester.anglican.org/parish-resources/communications/liedentity).



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### ***Simon Taylor, Canon Chancellor, Derby Cathedral***

The Archbishops' letter to members following the February group of sessions offers hope. The "radical inclusion" that Archbishop Justin spoke about in the debate will be challenging. The deep disagreements that divide us as Christians make this hard, but if we are to find a way through this quagmire then it is the hard road that we must follow. The promised teaching document will be difficult. I hope it will model how different views are held with theological integrity on a whole range of issues.



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### ***James Dudley-Smith, Bath & Wells***

The church is called towards holiness as well as to mission. That pair of callings stretches us sometimes to a cross. Holiness is distinctiveness, standing out, being different from the world, from its ways of living, speaking and thinking. You could say that holiness calls us away from the world.

It would be convenient in our western social setting to agree that the sexual expression of your commitment with anyone you love could be included in the arena of Christian holiness. But I really believe that marriage is for a man and a woman.



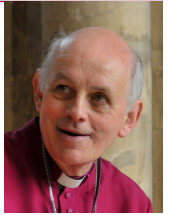
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## From Spring 2018

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### ***The Rt Revd Trevor Willmott, President, Open Synod Group***

One of the things I would most like to throw out of our public life are the ways in which much of our public discourse has become increasingly brutal. Moderation is now all too often seen as a sign of weakness or lack of conviction. Afraid of being seen as a “loser” we become combative in our approach to those with whom we profoundly disagree. OSG was founded to be a safe environment in which we could listen carefully to those with whom we might disagree profoundly. To quote the Dean of St Paul’s, “where we might find something of Christ in each other”.



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### ***The Rt Revd Dr Jonathan Gibbs - Bishop of Huddersfield***

Some of the most exciting and creative ministry in my Area is happening in Presence & Engagement contexts, for instance in Batley following the murder of Jo Cox MP. There, the clergy and churches have been at the forefront of community engagement and the profile and credibility of the Church have been greatly enhanced – alongside working with Jo’s sister Kim Leadbeater on the “More in Common” initiative.



At the same time, what saddens me is the difficulty of recruiting clergy in these contexts. There are many challenges in these areas, but there are also great opportunities to put the church back at the heart of our communities and to play a leading role in transforming the life of our nation. If you want to know more, Kat or I would be delighted to hear from you!

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### ***Rt. Hon. Canon Sir Tony Baldry - Chair, Church Buildings Council.***

The Church of England is responsible for some 16,000 church buildings across the country. A large number of these are listed, or put another way, a very large proportion of Grade One Listed Buildings in this country are churches. The majority of church buildings are in rural areas where there is a minority of the nation’s population.



They are an important part of our nation’s heritage but the costs of maintenance and repair are significant – and there are many in the Church of England who from their own perspective feel that these sorts of sums of money might be better spent on other mission and work.

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### ***Canon Peter Bruinvels - Vice Chair, Legislative Committee***

The Legislative Committee consists of a large number of Church VIP Ex-Officio Members – The Archbishop of Canterbury (Joint Chair), The Archbishop of York (Joint Chair), The Prolocutors of both Convocations, the Chair and Vice-Chair of the House of Laity, the Dean of the Arches, the Second Estates Commissioner. The Elected Members consist of one Bishop, three Laity including myself as the Deputy Chair and two Clergy. Our Secretary is the Church of England’s Legal Adviser with the Secretary General in attendance along with Standing Counsel.





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## From Summer 2018

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### *The Rt Revd Peter Hancock - Bishop of Bath & Wells - Lead Bishop for Safeguarding*

As we approach July's General Synod, which will once again have an important focus on safeguarding, I think it is important to stop and reflect on the Church's journey; our history (with many shameful episodes), our present (a commitment to improve but a work in progress) and our hopes for the future (and the current debates around that).

Many of you will remember the [2013 debate and public apology](#) to survivors of church-related abuse - unanimously endorsed by Synod. It was a moving, challenging and a stark reminder of how we have failed the vulnerable among us, both through abuse and then our poor and inadequate response..



### *Rt Rev Graham Tomlin, Bishop of Kensington*

In the days after the fire, with the smoke from Grenfell Tower still in the air, the Council and the government seemed unable to respond with the speed and flexibility required. The institution that did was perhaps unexpected: the church.

Along with local mosques and community centres, local churches opened their doors and become sites for respite, sympathy, cups of tea, a listening and praying ear, as well quickly turning into pop-up depots for donations and the many volunteers who flocked into the area wanting to help. In time, the relief effort kicked in, but the reason the church was able to help in the immediate days after the disaster was because it didn't need to come in to the local community to offer pastoral support – it was already there.

It has been an unexpected journey, requiring sensitivity, wisdom, prayer, emotion and time. It is far from over, and yet signs of hope and progress are slowly becoming visible for that better future.



### *The Very Revd Andrew Nunn, Dean of Southwark*

In June we commemorated the first anniversary of the terrorist attack on London Bridge and the Borough Market, Southwark Cathedral having been at the heart of the events of that dreadful evening. There have been other first anniversaries this year, in Westminster, Manchester, Finsbury Park and Grenfell Tower. Each was a scene of tragic events that brought people face to face with terror, in one way or another.

The decision was made not to repair all the damage that had happened to the Cathedral. The Sacristy door in particular had been forced open by the police using baton rounds. The oak is pitted by the force used; it is scarred and bears the scars. The option was to repair it but we have chosen to keep it. Like the wounds in the hands of Jesus, like the wound in his side the building bears the marks of the violence and will do. It is a way of being honest about tragedy and loss and grief.



### *Canon Peter Bruinvels - Chair, Queen Victoria Clergy Fund*

The Queen Victoria Clergy Fund is a registered charity and its objectives are “the relief of need, hardship and distress among clergy of the Church of England and their families and dependants, in particular (but not exclusively) by the payment of annual grants to the diocesan organisations with similar objects; and generally to advance religion by advancing the charitable work of the Church of England through providing material support to its clergy”.



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## From Spring 2019

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### ***Mary Chapman, Ex-Officio, Archbishops' Council***

The complexity of Church of England structures and inter-dependencies of decision-making leaves room for confusion about the roles and functions of the various bodies. A constant focus for the Council is to ensure that the work we do gives clear expression to our designated purpose. Every year we wrestle with decisions about priorities for the allocation of precious resources. The fruits of those debates are encapsulated in the Council's business plan and the budget proposed to General Synod. Council meetings are the opportunity to review progress against the objectives set for the year. It is a wide-ranging agenda that is intellectually and spiritually challenging.



### ***Anthony Archer, St Albans***

Private Members' Motions (PMMs) in General Synod probably owe their origin to the procedure in Parliament where MPs and Lords who are not government ministers can introduce Bills for debate. Only very few actually become law, but by creating publicity around the issue they may affect legislation indirectly. Likewise, in Synod, members have the opportunity to 'get their issue on the agenda'. But how to do it effectively. Keep the text clear and simple. Get some advice from other Synod members and the Legal Office before you table it. PMMs where the mover has produced a compelling paper in advance usually fair better. There will be members who may not support the thrust of the motion but they also want to see it debated. Their support at the early stages is as important as those, like you, who agree with the motion!



### ***Clive Scowen, London***

The Standing Orders Committee is charged with keeping "under review the procedure and Standing Orders of the Synod and must submit to the Synod such proposals for amendment to the Standing Orders as the Committee thinks fit". It has no elected members: 4 are ex officio (the Prolocutors and the Chair and Vice-Chair of the House of Laity) and the rest (including the Chair) are appointed by the Appointments Committee, presumably for the skills and expertise they bring. Many of us are lawyers, and those who are not tend to have a lawyer's eye for detail and clarity. Thus, to many, it must seem to be the ultimate "Anorak" committee. The committee does not "own" the standing orders: they belong to the synod and its members..



### ***Charles George QC, Ex Officio, Dean of the Arches***

The Dean of the Arches presides in the Arches Court of Canterbury, which hears appeals from diocesan consistory courts (chancellors) in faculty matters (mainly works to churches and churchyards) and appeals from bishops' disciplinary tribunals under the Clergy Discipline Measure. As Auditor he presides in the Chancery Court of York hearing similar appeals in the northern province. As Master of the Faculties he has overall responsibility for the work of the Archbishop of Canterbury's Faculty Office adjoining the West End of Westminster Abbey, which issues Special Marriage Licences in England and Wales.



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## From Summer 2019

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### ***Sophie Mitchell, CEYC Representative***

As representatives of CEYC, we do not have the ability to vote on the motions proposed. This makes our voice in speaking during debates so important. We hope to offer a new insight to the debates, by describing our experiences of being young people in the church today. As representatives of CEYC, we were accumulatively called to speak five times at Synod in February. One of my speeches was during the environment debate. In my speech, I spoke about the young people who were out on the streets during February 2019, protesting for the government to declare a 'climate emergency'.



### ***James Cary, Bath & Wells***

A Turbulent Priest is a comedy with plenty of jokes and comedy songs which have been by written James Sherwood. He has summed up the central relationship brilliantly in his song called 'Best in Friends' in which Henry and Becket sing together like Hope and Crosby on a Road movie, except it's obvious to everyone except Henry that you can never be truly friends with an autocratic ruler. Especially one like Henry. Were they ever really friends?

When it does come, Becket's death is not played for laughs, since it's not a comic moment, but an heroic one. Becket may have been politically naïve or underestimated his former friend, the King, but he was prepared to pay the price for being the prophetic voice of Mother Church.



### ***Michael Gisbourne, Chaplain to Synod***

Being the broad church, that it is, we all worship in different ways and have our own preferences when it comes to liturgy or music or style, but we all worship the God who is revealed in Jesus and lives in us through his Spirit. Not everyone will like every one of the acts of worship that have been lead by a variety of members from each of the three houses, but they have been crafted in such a way as to help everyone to encounter God and some may have actually done that!

New initiatives have born fruit as well, with the Continuing Praying Presence supporting Synodical business as well as the moving of the time of the morning Eucharist during the York sessions. Having the daily Communion service beginning at 7 am rather than 7.30am has doubled the attendance to over 50!



### ***Rt Rev Christopher Cocksworth, Coventry***

Through LLF I am learning more about God, revealed in Jesus, manifested in the Spirit, that God is patient and kind. I'm learning about the Church and its people, that we are at our best when we are not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. I'm learning about myself, that it's no good trying to insist on my own way and it helps no one if I am irritable or resentful. I'm learning about how people, very different people, sometimes with very different ideas, work better together when they don't rejoice in wrong doing, or even in wrong thinking, but rejoice in the truth. I'm learning that faith, hope and love abide, these three; and that the greatest of these is love, because our faith is in the love of God and our hope is set on Christ.



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## From Spring 2020

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### ***Will Adam, Archbishop of Canterbury's Ecumenical Adviser and Director for Unity, Faith and Order for the Anglican Communion***

The Porvoo Communion of Churches is unique in the world. Most of the member churches share national or folk-church characteristics, all are episcopally ordered and, as a result of the agreement, the episcopates of the churches are all united in being within the historic episcopate as Anglicans understand it. Since 1996 there have been additions: the Church of Denmark did not join up originally but did so in 2010. The Latvian Church Abroad and the Lutheran Church of Great Britain (not national churches as the others are), along with the Lusitanian and Spanish Episcopal Reformed Churches have also been brought into the fold. The Evangelical-Lutheran Church of Latvia, however, remains outside, although the relationship of intercommunion between the Church of England and that Church, which was forged in 1938, remains in force.



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### ***Gavin Oldham, Oxford***

The core teaching is in the second great commandment, to love our neighbour as ourselves. Jesus not only provides a direct interpretation of who is our neighbour in the parable of the Good Samaritan but also, in advocating support for those in distress, went on to say clearly 'whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me'. So - it is by carrying out the second great commandment that we do the first: to love God with all our heart, soul, strength and mind. And this is the reason why action in the community is at the cutting edge of our mission because not only is it central to our Christian faith but it also resonates clearly among the millions of people who otherwise see no link to God.



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### ***Christina Baron, Bath & Wells, Elected Member of CNC 2017-2022***

It is both an immense privilege and an immense responsibility to be a central member of the CNC. we started with the search for a new Bishop of London and people said "Isn't that a big job for your first one?"

All episcopal appointments are important and every nomination process is a big job. Bishops make a difference! (Should that be on a T-shirt?) Everything we do is undergirded at every stage by prayer. Much time is spent studying the Diocesan Statement of Needs, the Person Specification and the papers of possible candidates, to try to discern whom God is calling. Then, occasionally, the Holy Spirit comes among us and we discern that God is calling the most unlikely candidate.



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## From Summer 2020

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### *The Rt Hon and Rt Revd Dame Sarah Mullally, Bishop of London*

You can take the nurse out of nursing, but never nursing out of the nurse. I am both the priest and bishop because of my experience as a nurse; practically, pastorally and as a leader. I undertook some of my hardest work theologically as a nurse and as the Government's Chief Nursing Officer. My model of leadership has always been as one who serves.

Florence Nightingale said that she gave her heart to the Church and it would not have it. I am grateful that when God called me, I gave my heart too, and it has been a privilege to serve the Diocese of London over the last two years.



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### *Aiden Hargreaves-Smith, London*

For those wishing to help the Chair in facilitating a good debate, it is always worth remembering three key points:

- (i) If you wish to speak, always try to submit a Request to Speak at the earliest opportunity, having completed it succinctly and carefully. You might even mention it en passant to the particular Chair if you bump into him or her earlier in the Group of Sessions.
- (ii) If you wish to be called in a debate, do find a place from which you will be more easily visible to the Chair when you stand (or otherwise signify). Chairs do their best, but do not have X-Ray wonder-vision!
- (iii) If your points have been made by another speaker, do consider whether, in the limited time available, it would be more helpful for the Synod to hear a different perspective.



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### *The Revd. Simon Talbott, Ely*

My first memory was when I had planned a very short contribution to the debate on the future of church buildings. To my shock (and horror!) I was called to speak very early in the debate and given a five minute slot. Some quick thinking enabled me to expand my planned contribution to fill the time.

My second memory will be the debate and vote on the 'take note' paper on Marriage & Same Sex Relationships. The vote to decline to 'take note' showed the General Synod at its best in holding the senior leadership of our church to account.



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### *Robin Back, Norwich*

I welcomed the June 15<sup>th</sup> relaxations and authority to reopen under limited circumstances for private prayer. I'm not sure I would have been quite as keen if I had known the conditions in advance. However, with the aid of our PCC Treasurer and Secretary (my wife) we set to. First thing was to define what we needed to do, walk the routes, measure social distancing, etc. In our case we roped off the chancel, including the choir and stalls and pulpit, and every 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> pew. Decisions made on what signs, sanitiser etc. were needed we were now ready to start.



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## Contacts

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### *OSG Officers & Committee Members*

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Robin Back, Norwich (Chair, Membership Secretary & Webmaster)

Tim Hind, Bath & Wells (Vice-Chair & Newsletter Editor)

Penny Allen, Lichfield - (Minute Secretary)

John Freeman, Chester - (Treasurer)

Simon Talbot, Ely - (Committee Member)

Janet Perrett, Ely - (Committee Member)

John Mason, Chester - (Committee Member)

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### *OSG NEWSLETTER EDITOR Tim Hind*

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Contact [tim.hind252@btinternet.com](mailto:tim.hind252@btinternet.com) 07977 580374