

GENERAL SYNOD

10-14 February 2025

Presidential Address

There was an attempt by one member to prevent the Archbishop of York from making an address and this is a concerning time for him as he faces a Charity Commission investigation with a number of others after the publication of the Makin Report into the John Smyth abuse cases. He was able to make an address and expressed his apologies again to survivors. + Sarah [London] sat with him in place of ++Justin.

Presentation of Petition

Presented by Rev Mai Christie to remove 'Issues in Sexuality' from the discernment process for clergy.

Address from the Archbishop of Estonia

He called for recognition of the situation in Estonia in this Post Modern age where the number of people now forsaking the Church is growing and the realities of reducing congregations and spiritual awareness are being felt throughout Europe. The need to keep hope.

Safeguarding

The principal concern of this Synod. There were two models 3 and 4. Model 3 preserves all Diocesan Safeguarding Officers in their roles employed by dioceses. External scrutiny is by an independent company which looks at each diocese in turn. Model 4 is to move all Safeguarding to an independent charity which would employ all DSOs, standardise training and paperwork and update all DSOs as required. This would give consistency, as already recommended in the Professor Jay Report. Bishop Philip North moved an amendment to keep Model 3 while getting legal advice on Model 4. The survivors were attending in the gallery and disappointed that despite the debate points made in favour of Model 4 the amendment was carried. Carl Hughes, the Head of Finance, will now be required to finance the legal advice in the 2026 budget, not yet prepared. I spoke in this debate about the difficulties in representing abused children in the care system.

The safeguarding in Religious Communities was also detailed.

The Makin Review

This review has detailed the amount of abuse he gave to young boys and men in the UK and Africa. The trauma was recognised and the need to redress the survivors, many of whom have been retraumatised by the Report.

Clergy Conduct Measure

In future clergy complaints will be triaged as grievances, conduct complaints and serious conduct complaints. Grievances will be dealt with by HR. Conduct complaints by DSOs and serious complaints by the Central Safeguarding Department.

CNC system

There has been a lot of concern over the new system of appointing the central members to this in pairs and what happens when one person leaves the pair. There have been two non-appointments due to conflicts of interests and theology. This motion gives the possibility to replace one of the pairs to avoid overwork and to take away the influence of suffragan bishops. Several amendments were moved, including one to stop the recommendation of at least one woman clergy to the panel. At this point +Sarah Mullaly, Bishop of London, spoke against the micromanaging of women in the C of E and was moved to tears. Most members stood to express support for her. This amendment was lost as was another to maintain people who worship in the same church in the panel.

Vacancy in See Committee

This is to amend the process for appointing to the committee in the diocese to give better representation.

Living in Love and Faith

A presentation was given and the continual delays were explained as a consequence of different theologies and the need for more work. + Martin [Leicester] said that this was unlikely to be resolved by July.

Racial Justice

This work is now drawing to a conclusion and Paul Boateng gave a rousing speech recognising the continuing issues. Most dioceses have a Racial Justice officer now and are addressing the recruitment and are working together regionally.

Younger and More Diverse

An important idea to take the voices of young adults into GS by asking 5 young adults from each diocese to meet termly on Zoom and in person and for that group of 200 to elect 3-5 to attend GS each time. This would encourage more young adults to stand for the elected posts after their term of office. their voices could then be heard. Many of us have missed having them at GS as a Youth Council. Kenson Li spoke warmly about his reception at GS. We need to reduce the average age of elected members. GS2385

Working Class Ministry

A lively Private Member's Motion which presented the difficulties for those who have lacked formal education, financial help and organisational help in entering ministry. Wholeheartedly supported.

Diocesan Finances

This motion was postponed until July as we met a lot of delays caused by many amendments to other measures.

National Church Governance

This measure to reform the governance of the C of E using simplified committee structures.

Mission and Pastoral Measure

This dealt with issues with ministry, patronage, church buildings and church property. More details are in GS 2394.

Sports and Wellbeing Ministry

+Libby Lane gave this presentation emphasis as a way to engage younger and sports minded people.

Legal Officers' Fees

These have been increased as the workload has not been paid for in the last few years. The increase was delayed last time.

Thy Kingdom Come

The team had come from SW England and unfortunately we had no time to hear their presentation but they took the final service.

Farewells were given in a more brief form to ++Justin,

An intense and emotional session but much calmer and more reasoned approach. Still disquiet about the main issues with LLF and Safeguarding.

Penny Allen GS335

19/02/25