

General Synod Report – February Sessions 2023

This report is designed as feedback to Deaneries. Your representatives are happy to hear how you feel about the issues being debated and decided upon. For full details of debates and decisions made, go to: www.churchofengland.org/more/policy-and-thinking/work-general-synod. The Sessions were held over four days in February 2023. The sessions were 'hybrid' (people who were only able to join on Zoom were able to speak and vote as well as watch and listen to the debates). In addition to 'Fringe' Meetings, Topics included:

Presidential Address – this and other debates can be seen at:

www.churchofengland.org/about/leadership-and-governance/general-synod/watch-general-synod-live

Amending Canon No 42 (GS2269) – approved change of title from Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser to Officer

Draft Diocesan Stipends Funds (Amendment) (GS2255) – enable money from the income account of a diocesan stipends fund to be given to other dioceses – passed for further work

Draft CofE Pensions (Application of Capital Funds (GS2264) - to extend until 31st December 2032 the period within which the Church Commissioners may make capital payments towards the cost of lump sums and pensions payable under certain pension and superannuation schemes – approved

Questions – Previously asked answered Questions allowed Supplementary Questions

Diocesan Boards of Education Measure 2021 (GS2285) – minor amendments approved

CofE (Miscellaneous Provisions) Measure (GS2272) – minor changes to legislation – approved

Loyal Address – read and approved to be presented to His Majesty the King

Resourcing Ministerial Formation (GS2286) – reforms and proposals as to the funding of training for lay and clergy ministries approved

Cost of Living (GS2287) – a debate about the Cost of Living Crisis and urging action from Government, Charities, Dioceses and individuals (carried 301 to 0!)

Draft Parochial Fees Order 2023 (GS2288) – restricting increases in fees to 5% rather than CPI (10%) - carried

Amending Canon No43 (GS2273) – changes needed to reflect change of Sovereign (change from Queen to King)

Governance Review (GS2290) – proposed changes to the NCIs (National Church Institutions) welcomed and legislation (needing Synod's approval) to follow

Safeguarding (GS2293) – a presentation was made by the National Director of Safeguarding and report noted

Insurance Premium Tax (GS2265) – a request to Government to exempt charities (incl churches) from the tax.

Living in Love and Faith (GSMisc1329 & GS2289) – Presentation (www.youtube.com/watch?v=IvaicO05bNs) and Groupwork. Much of the debating time was spent dealing with Amendments of which only one was approved so the motion was:

That this Synod, recognising the commitment to learning and deep listening to God and to each other of the Living in Love and Faith process, and desiring with God's help to journey together while acknowledging the different deeply held convictions within the Church:

- a) lament and repent of the failure of the Church to be welcoming to LGBTQI+ people and the harm that LGBTQI+ people have experienced and continue to experience in the life of the Church;*
- b) recommit to our shared witness to God's love for and acceptance of every person by continuing to embed the Pastoral Principles in our life together locally and nationally;*
- c) commend the continued learning together enabled by the Living in Love and Faith process and resources in relation to identity, sexuality, relationships and marriage;*
- d) welcome the decision of the House of Bishops to replace Issues in Human Sexuality with new pastoral guidance;*
- e) welcome the response from the College of Bishops and look forward to the House of Bishops further refining, commending and issuing the Prayers of Love and Faith described in GS 2289 and its Annexes;*
- f) invite the House of Bishops to monitor the Church's use of and response to the Prayers of Love and Faith, once they have been commended and published, and to report back to Synod in five years' time.'*
- g) endorse the decision of the College and House of Bishops not to propose any change to the doctrine of marriage, and their intention that the final version of the Prayers of Love and Faith should not be contrary to or indicative of a departure from the doctrine of the Church of England.*

The final motion was carried after a counted vote by Houses. The voting was as follows:

	FOR	AGAINST
Bishops	36	4
Clergy	111	85
Laity	103	92

2 abstentions were recorded in the House of Bishops; 3 in the House of Clergy; and 5 in the House of Laity.