

## **Notes on the February General Synod for Stroud Deanery Synod**

These notes are compiled from my own and colleagues' reflections. It is not a comprehensive account of the sessions.

This was a high profile set of sessions both because it was the first one following the resignation of Archbishop of Canterbury and there was a major decision to be made about safeguarding arrangements. Overall, I think most of us felt that the Synod was both, at different times, more positive and more difficult than we anticipated.

### **Safeguarding**

Deanery Synod members were directed at the last meeting to Bishop Rachel's reflections on this debate and there is not much more to add to this. There was agreement across the Synod that we need to do better on safeguarding but there were differing views about how we live this. However, do remember that it was agreed that an independent organisation should be established to deal with all aspects of complaints and oversight which is a major positive change.

Separately, further new codes of practice for aspects of safeguarding were agreed, continuing to strengthen local and central practice.

### **Church Diversity**

There were two very good conversations around the wider diversity of the church and our vocations - around racial justice and working class ministry. Synod was at its best in these.

### **Clergy Conduct Measure**

This received final approval. This overhauls fully the current Clergy Discipline Measure the shortcomings of which have been evident for a long time. It introduces three separate categories of complaint: grievance, allegation of misconduct, allegation of serious misconduct with separate processes for each one, which should make for more proportionate responses and greater clarity for both complainant and respondent.

### **Living in Love and Faith/Prayer of Love and Faith**

There was no major item about this and the ongoing uncertainty about the likely timing of the completion of this work made for some tensions.

### **Crown Nominations Commission and Vacancy in See Committee**

A number of amendments were proposed to arrangements for both these bodies. In the case of the CNC these were intended to improve its operation in a variety of ways, following feedback from CNC members over the last year and the failure of the CNCs to make a nomination in Carlisle and Ely dioceses.

In the case of the ViSC, again a number of amendments were proposed which were intended to ensure the diversity of a diocese is appropriately represented on the ViSC and then similarly widely represented on the CNC. There were very divided views in Synod on these with some proposals being rejected and some accepted, including on whether it was OK to have more than one person from the same congregation on ViSC and/or CNC and I don't think I am confident enough of getting it right to offer you the final outcome! I do know, though, that the CNC will continue to operate on a secret ballot, rather than, as proposed, a show of hands.

### **Diocesan Finances**

There was an update on the Diocesan Finances review which proposes a package of £220m time-limited funding over 9 years, and £30m in perpetuity. This potentially eases the pressures on diocesan budgets and supports parish ministry. The Diocesan Motion on the same topic, focussing on the Redistribution of Funds, which we supported at Diocesan Synod has been held over to July as other items had run over their expected time.

### **National Church Governance**

The reorganisation of the central bodies of the C of E was discussed and will continue to be revised.

MS May 2025