

General Synod Report York July 2025.

This was a synod which was largely a LLF free zone. The Archbishop of York admitted in his opening address that “we seem no nearer a settlement which will hold us together” on provisions for same-sex couples — but there was a moment of unity as both progressives and conservatives worked together to remove the outdated report “Issues in Human Sexuality” from the discernment process for ordination. All sides agreed it was time to leave the report behind and instead agreed via an amendment to replace it with the Guidelines for the Professional Conduct of the Clergy (“GPCC”) as an interim document. GPCC comes under the relevant canons on marriage and relationships which maintain the historic position of the church. This was a win-win for all sides of the LLF debate, which I fear is unlikely to be repeated in February should we be discussing substantive motions from the House of Bishops.

Synod was addressed by Brigadier Jaishan Mahan on behalf of the armed forces (and a former member of our own Bishop’s Council). Jaishan spoke of the value of chaplaincy and requested the prayers of synod for members of the armed forces as well as issuing a challenge for the church to consider how best to support our communities in days of uncertainty and potential future conflict. Dr Hosam Naoum the Archbishop in Jerusalem also addressed the synod and spoke about how Palestinian Christians were working out how to be the church in a time of war. “Every part of our lives and our ministries is covered with the shroud of death.”

In legal business the armed forces chaplains measure completed all stages within our five-day sitting. It will enable military chaplains to move freely around the country without having to reapply for PTO every time they moved to a different part of the country.

There were several items around budgets, finances and pensions. Before we approved the next triennium budget, the Bishop of Hereford put a motion from several dioceses (including our own) to redistribute the Church Commissioners’ funds in a different way to that which had been planned. If successful it would have undermined all the preparation work for the next triennium budget. The redistribution proposal was amended by the Bishop of Sheffield, which meant that the current three-year budget stands, but there is to be an ongoing conversation between the Church Commissioners and stakeholders (dioceses) about the best way of using the Commissioners’ funds moving forwards post 2029 considering the multifactorial challenges around mission, clergy/ordinand numbers, clergy wellbeing and a perception about subsidising decline. How can the Commissioners best support the church’s ministry?

The good news for clergy is that the approved budget will bring an increase to their stipend and a restoration of their pension to pre-2011 levels. New pension proposals are coming back to the February 2026 synod and will take some time for the Pensions Board to work out.

We voted to replace the Archbishop’s Council with a new body called Church of England National Services (CENS) under the National Church Governance Measure. This is a streamlining measure which folds seven existing charities into four to ease working across the different parts of the C of E.

A Private Members Motion targeting and asking for a review of the culture of the House of Bishops was amended and then moved to next business so that it was not brought to a vote with the motion lapsing.

In Liturgical business two additions to the Church’s calendar were welcomed at their first consideration: an ecumenical festival honouring God as Creator, and a commemoration of the

Twenty-One Martyrs of Libya. There were presentations on church growth and revitalisation and Thy Kingdom Come with encouraging stories of growth and impact.

Final approval was given to the long-awaited redress scheme for victims and survivors of abuse in a church context, with a pledge to deliver what had been promised several years ago. This was chaired very effectively by our own Carl Fender who has been chair of the Redress Steering Committee.

Synod revised the Church Representation Rules which will be effective for the next elections to General Synod in 2026.

Our final piece of business was “extra business” to give the bishops moral backing in the Terminally Ill Adults (End of Life) Bill shortly to come to the Lords. There were some excellent speeches. Synod voted overwhelmingly for an increase in government spending on palliative care rather than enacting the Bill. Over to the Bishops in the House of Lords!

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25.07.25