



BIRMINGHAM DIOCESAN SYNOD (DS)

Saturday 18 November 2023 at 9.30am
Christ Church, Burney Lane, Ward End, Birmingham, B8 2AS

MINUTES

1. Prayers and Welcome

Prayers and worship were led by the Revd Ruth Donegan-Cross, Vicar at Christ Church.

2. Welcome to New People, Apologies and Previous Minutes

Bishop Anne was delighted to announce the following appointments: the Revd Tracy Browne, Vicar of St John & St Peter, Ladywood; the Revd Sarah Tillett, Vicar of Coleshill, SS Peter & Paul & Maxstoke and St Michael and All Angels; the Revd Thomas Singh, House for Duty Priest in Charge of Sparkbrook, St Agatha & Balsall Heath, St Barnabas.

Bishop Anne noted the apologies given before the meeting. No further amendments to the Minutes of DS 230713 had been received so they stand as agreed by Bishop's Council.

RESOLUTION: The Diocesan Synod approved the Minutes of DS 230713

3. Bishop's Presidential Briefing

Bishop Anne gave her Presidential Briefing, a copy of which is attached to the Minutes.

4. Racial Justice Update

The Revd Canon Bamidele Sotonwa (Warley & Edgbaston Deanery and Chair of the Racial Justice Board) gave an update from the Racial Justice Board. A copy of his report is attached to the Minutes.

5. Environmental Update

5.1 Net Zero Carbon Action Plan

Mr Dan Mayes, Property Director, reported on the Net Zero Carbon Action Plan that had been circulated to members in advance of the meeting.

The Net Zero Action Plan:

- Developed to achieve Net Zero Carbon by 2030
- Considers reducing carbon emissions for all CofEB buildings and work-related travel
- Recognises need for culture change across CofEB
- Focuses on actions to the end of 2025
- Lays a foundation for actions from 2026 to 2030

A meeting was held online to discuss the policy on 16 October 2023. Feedback noted that although the plan is ambitious it is a plan that the diocese should aim to achieve; the diocese has made a lot of progress in 3 years.

Mr James Whitehouse (Warley & Edgbaston Deanery) applauded the ambitious plan but was mindful of the additional cost that the diocese may have to incur in the way of technology to achieve its target. Dan responded that he was aware of various demonstrator projects that were available and that plans were required for different churches. A Net Zero Carbon Project Manager has now been appointed and they will look at cost effective changes.

Revd Dr Katie Stock (Warley & Edgbaston Deanery) raised a concern for those parishes where heating is an issue. Dan explained that funding from the National Church would take this into consideration.

5.2 Diocesan Environmental Policy

The Revd Patrick Gerard (Kings Norton, Moseley & Shirley Deanery and Diocesan Environmental Officer) reported that the original policy was initiated in March 2018 and had been due for an update. There has been much progress since 2018 and in 2019, Diocesan Synod had set a much tougher target by 2030 and our diocesan policy should reflect this. The Eco Church Group are committed to looking at implementation across the diocese and are also seeking to obtaining Silver Eco Diocese accreditation. Thanks were given to the network of Deanery Environment Champions and the Parish Environment Contacts across the diocese who have helped to bring the environmental agenda back to grass roots.

RESOLUTION: The Diocesan Synod adopted the following motion put forward by the Revd Patrick Gerard:

That this Synod, affirming the fifth mark of mission and our Transforming Church vision for environmental sustainability, and seeking to build on the Environmental Policies agreed by this Synod since March 2018, adopts the Diocesan Environmental Policy [DS 231118 5].

6. Young People and the Church

Bishop Anne welcomed Ms Emma Sargeant, Growing Younger Advisor, and members of Bishop's Youth Synod to the meeting.

The Bishop's Youth Synod were invited to present to Synod, considering the national agenda of 'growing younger'. They delivered a thought-provoking presentation including their own diocesan-based research. They answered questions generated from a lively debate which they invited Synod members to engage in, posing the question of how to engage with their findings and recommendations about welcoming young people to the church.

A copy of the presentation is attached to the Minutes.

Mr Andy Winmill, Director Mission Support, was pleased to announce the first cohort of youth leaders taking part in Launchpad. Launchpad is an informed, practical and hopeful project that teaches church leaders how they can initiate youth work in their church. Members were encouraged to contact Andy or Emma if they were interested in taking part in the project.

7. Promulgation of Amending Canon No. 42

RESOLUTION: Promulgation of Amending Canon No. 42

The President:

I give notice that, at its July 2023 group of sessions, the General Synod resolved that Amending Canon No. 42 be made, promulgated and executed.

Amending Canon No. 42 amends Canon C 30 by replacing the requirement for the bishop of each diocese to appoint a Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser (DSA) with a requirement for the bishop to appoint a Diocesan Safeguarding Officer (DSO) with responsibility in the diocese, independent of the bishop, for professional leadership on and management of safeguarding matters. The Canon also provides for the professional supervision of DSOs and for the quality assurance of their work by the National Safeguarding Team. The changes will come into force diocese by diocese upon certification by the Archbishops' Council.

8. Report of the Proceedings of General Synod – November 2023

The Revd Ben Green (Kings Norton, Moseley & Shirley Deanery) noted that the House of Bishops had not published any subsequent legal paper to accompany November Synod papers and he asked why this was. Bishop Anne reiterated what had been said several times by Bishop Sarah Mullally, Bishop of London, that there was not a single legal document available to publish. Legal guidance had been woven into every aspect of what has been an iterative process.

The Revd Canon Bamidele Sotonwa (Warley & Edgbaston Deanery) asked what arrangements are being made for pastoral provision for those who cannot agree with the General Synod motion for standalone services. Rachel responded that the amended motion by the Bishop of Oxford, means that standalone services will go through a trial period, alongside the Canon B2 route whereby they will be discussed by diocesan synods before returning to General Synod. Over the next few months, the House of Bishops will

continue work on these processes, including the Pastoral Guidance and reassurance. No one would have to use the prayers or lead standalone services who does not wish to.

The Revd Chris Hobbs (Kings Norton, Moseley & Shirley Deanery) asked if thought had been given to the situation where bishops may not support the prayers/standalone services. Bishop Anne said that as she understood it, the consciences of bishops also would need protection and this was the intention.

The full nature of provision was still being worked on and more would come back to February General Synod. To close the debate, Rachel reminded members that we need to continue to journey on this together. We are talking about brothers and sisters in Christ and we need to discern with them.

Bishop Anne gave her thanks to the General Synod Representatives in, what had been, a demanding week.

9. Election of Members of Diocesan Synod for 2024-2027

RESOLUTION: The Diocesan Synod adopted the following motion put forward by the President:

That the composition of the Diocesan Synod to be elected in 2024 (as specified in Part 4 of the Church Representation Rules 2022) be as set out in [DS 231118 9] and any ballot be held by the method of the single transferrable vote system in accordance with the rules in force under the General Synod's Standing Orders using the voting paper set out in Form 7 of the Church Representation Rules 2022

10. 2024 Budget

Ms Karen Preece, Finance Director, gave a presentation on the following topics:

- Current financial context – 2023
 - National picture
 - Management Accounts to September and forecast to December
 - Common Fund – September
- 2024 Draft Budget
 - Income
 - Expenditure
 - Clergy/Lay numbers
- Management of deficit

A copy of her presentation is attached to the Minutes.

Bishop Anne thanked Karen, Steven and members of the Finance, Investment and Property Sub-Committee (FIPS) for their hard work and acknowledged the challenging situation. However, she had confidence in God and the first-class colleagues leading in finance. She felt there are many green shoots, and she gave her thanks to a prayerful and entrepreneurial team committed to their work.

RESOLUTION: The Diocesan Synod adopted the following motions put forward by the Chair of the DBF:

This synod authorises:

The following motion was put and carried on a show of hands with 1 abstention.

- a) expenditure of £11,149,000 in 2024 in accordance with the 2024 Budget based on a parish stipendiary clergy deployment of 99.25 with an average of 10 vacancies and an average of 30.4 stipendiary curates-in-training;***

The following motion was put and carried on a show of hands with 1 abstention.

- b) an incumbent's stipend of £28,544 (+5.0% from 1 April 2024) and a staff salary rise of +5.0% with effect from 1 April 2024;***

and notes that the Bishop's Council will determine the allocation of Common Fund (projected income of £4,905,000) in accordance with the Transitional Diocesan method under the People & Places framework as agreed by Synod at their meeting on 14 November 2020.

11. Meeting Dates 2023 followed by The Blessing

Members of the Diocesan Synod noted the meeting dates for 2024:

Saturday 16 March 2024 at 9.30am

Saturday 29 June 2024 at 9.30am

Saturday 16 November 2024 at 9.30am

On behalf of Diocesan Synod, Bishop Anne thanked the Revd Ruth Donegan-Cross and members of Christ Church for hosting the meeting.

Synod adjourned at 12.45pm with prayers led by Bishop Anne followed by the Blessing.

Summary of Resolutions

Agenda Item	Resolution
2.	The Diocesan Synod approved the Minutes of DS 230713
5.	<p>The Diocesan Synod adopted the following motion put forward by the Revd Patrick Gerard (Kings Norton, Moseley & Shirley Deanery and Diocesan Environmental Officer):</p> <p><i>That this Synod, affirming the fifth mark of mission and our Transforming Church vision for environmental sustainability, and seeking to build on the Environmental Policies agreed by this Synod since March 2018, adopts the Diocesan Environmental Policy [DS 231118 5].</i></p>
7.	<p>Promulgation of Amending Canon No. 42</p> <p>The President:</p> <p><i>I give notice that, at its July 2023 group of sessions, the General Synod resolved that Amending Canon No. 42 be made, promulgated and executed.</i></p> <p><i>Amending Canon No. 42 amends Canon C 30 by replacing the requirement for the bishop of each diocese to appoint a Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser (DSA) with a requirement for the bishop to appoint a Diocesan Safeguarding Officer (DSO) with responsibility in the diocese, independent of the bishop, for professional leadership on and management of safeguarding matters. The Canon also provides for the professional supervision of DSOs and for the quality assurance of their work by the National Safeguarding Team. The changes will come into force diocese by diocese upon certification by the Archbishops' Council.</i></p>
9.	<p>The Diocesan Synod adopted the following motion put forward by the President</p> <p><i>That the composition of the Diocesan Synod to be elected in 2024 (as specified in Part 4 of the Church Representation Rules 2022) be as set out in [DS 231118 9] and any ballot be held by the method of the single transferrable vote system in accordance with the rules in force under the General Synod's Standing Orders using the voting paper set out in Form 7 of the Church Representation Rules 2022</i></p>
10.	<p>The Diocesan Synod adopted the following motions put forward by the Chair of the DBF:</p> <p>This synod authorises:</p> <p>The following motion was put and carried on a show of hands with 1 abstention.</p> <p>a) expenditure of £11,149,000 in 2024 in accordance with the 2024 Budget based on a parish stipendiary clergy deployment of 99.25 with an average of 10 vacancies and an average of 30.4 stipendiary curates-in-training;</p> <p>The following motion was put and carried on a show of hands with 1 abstention.</p> <p>b) an incumbent's stipend of £28,544 (+5.0% from 1 April 2024) and a staff salary rise of +5.0% with effect from 1 April 2024;</p> <p>and notes that the Bishop's Council will determine the allocation of Common Fund (projected income of £4,905,000) in accordance with the Transitional Diocesan method under the People & Places framework as agreed by Synod at their meeting on 14 November 2020.</p>

Diocesan Synod Address – Bishop Anne

A former Bishop of Oxford, John Pritchard, wrote a book that has been recommended to ordinands by many a DDO. It's called *The life and work of a priest*. It is also a particularly rejuvenating read for existing hard-pressed parish priests, which I was myself when I first read it. He writes – “silence sifts and sorts our agitated hearts. It allows the sediment to drift to the bottom and leaves the spirit clear”.

I was very tempted this morning to introduce 10 minutes of silence instead of a Bishop's Address! That need for silence and an ever-deepening encounter with God is my own simple, honest heart's desire as we draw near to Advent this year. But as a bishop, I know that I am also called to find words at times when words may be hard to find.

I am imagining that here this morning there are more than a few agitated hearts. There may be many reasons for this. Events in our wider world are a daily source of deep concern, outrage, maybe even despair, and certainly they should drive us to our knees in prayer. Awareness of what is happening in Gaza and Israel is never far from my own mind at the moment, especially having visited that holy but troubled land a few years ago to meet with Palestinian Muslim leaders, Jewish West Bank settlers, Israeli government officials, and struggling Palestinian Christian communities, as part of a delegation organised by the Council of Christians and Jews.

The daily news from the Middle East is so disturbing, that the continuing conflict in Ukraine has almost faded into the background, yet we need to remind ourselves that this conflict is far from over.

The roller-coaster of British politics meanwhile continues with reshuffles, changes in foreign secretary, a Supreme Court verdict on the illegality of the Government's Rwanda Policy, and yet there appear to be “emergency” efforts to revive it.

The cost of living crisis continues a challenge. Many of our church communities are on the sharp end of seeking to meet unimaginable needs as around 40% of Birmingham's children, continue to live below the poverty line.

On top of all this, many of our parishes and clergy are feeling the pressure of finances and resources, and of what can sometimes feel like CofE PLC targets for growth. Then of course, there is the anxiety of wondering where the current *Living in Love and Faith* journey will finally land.

Those in faithful, loving, committed same-sex relationships wonder when they are going to be granted the grace of prayer for God's blessing. Those who in all conscience find themselves in a place opposed to these prayers, wonder what this will mean for their place within the Church of England. I imagine that here this morning, are more than a few agitated hearts.

It was with a sense of deep exhaustion and an agitated heart that I left three days of attending General Synod this last week in a non-voting capacity, and for my final time as Acting Bishop of Birmingham. Fortuitously, rather than board a train straight back to Birmingham and back to the workload waiting, I boarded a train instead for Canterbury, ancient seat of Christian faith in England and of course of our Archbishop. I headed to Canterbury as a pilgrim for the annual short retreat prior to Advent that Archbishop Justin has initiated over recent years for the bishops of the Southern Province – an opportunity to meet not in council, not for business, not with an agenda, but simply for prayer and for retreat.

Someone asked me the other week what it was like to be present in House of Bishops' meetings during discussions about *Living in Love and Faith* amidst the disagreement that there is amongst some of our number with the overall direction of travel. I said that it is of course painful, but what the media reports do not see or understand, is that we are all in relationship. We know each other as sister and brother bishops. We like each other. We worship together, pray together, eat together, drink together, (often drink till quite late in the bar together!), and we support one another in the sometimes barely tolerable burdens that we know each other carries as bishop.

Our synodical structures mimic parliament. They so often plunge us into adversarial debate. When there are difficult issues to be navigated and decisions to be made, our synodical system and processes, operating through debate and voting, do offer us a way to move forward, but they do not, and should not, define who we are as Christ's church, or define the culture and values that we want to seek together as Christ's church. I am not going to speak here about the particular results of the voting at General Synod this last week. As usual, one of our General Synod reps will take their turn on the rota for reporting back later in our meeting. But I want to bring in again that question that I asked back at our own July Diocesan Synod in relation to our thinking about the changes we are navigating here in the Church of England Birmingham around the formation and culture of our new oversight areas, our ways of thinking about mission and ministry.

What kind of church do we want to be? What kind of church does God want us to be part of? I would say above all, one in which we are learning to love with the love of Christ, to be together as the Body of Christ, for it only as that Body with Jesus present in our midst that we have anything to offer our world.

In summing up the General Synod debate, Bishop Sarah spoke eloquently about seeking to see the image of God in the face of each other. I believe we sought to do that prior to General Synod when a number of you accepted the invitation to gather with our General Synod reps and myself, to hear and receive each other's thoughts and reflections on the *Prayers of Love and Faith* and their introduction. Supported by the gentle chairing of Dean Matt, can I just say again how hugely moved and impressed I was by how that meeting was conducted, as sitting in a circle around the room, looking into the face of each other, different contributions were made. Some were challenging, but shared with such honesty, vulnerability, and a good deal of grace.

As Bishop Sarah quoted from Cole Arther Riley, in her book *'This Here Flesh'*:

'To be able to marvel at the face of our neighbour with the same awe we have for the mountaintop, the sunlight refracting – this manner of vision is what will keep us from destroying each other.'

She continued - "Let us choose not to destroy one another, but truly to encounter one another.....to embrace each other without judgement. To rejoice in the gift of one another's different understanding. To be one body, however messy. And by doing this, to know that God is in this place".

Already after 8 years as a bishop I fear that I am, a bit like St John the Divine, in danger of becoming a stuck record - to use a metaphor that may soon be a dead metaphor, probably already meaningless to the digital generation, including those members of Bishop's Youth Synod here to share with us this morning! As some will have heard me tell, there is a wonderful story about the elderly John as Bishop of Ephesus. As he aged, he would still be carried into the centre of the church's assembly where his most repeated word to them in summing up the way of Jesus Christ was this "my sisters and brothers, love one another".

This echoes what we read on the lips of Jesus in John 13.34-35:

“I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

It sounds so simple but love is so often the hardest thing to do, for it does call us to love not just the people who are like us, those we are drawn to, attracted to, easily understand, but those with whom we find ourselves in deep disagreement, who are not at all like us. Whether we can truly love one another, hold on to one another across our difference and disagreement, is the truest test of the Holy Spirit at work within us. In Matthew 7.15-18 Jesus says

“You will know them by their fruits A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit”.

And we have that lovely list of the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5.22 - “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness and self-control”.

Let’s ask God this morning and in the season of Advent on which we will soon embark, to enable the sediment to drift to the bottom, so that our spirits can be clear, so that we can see clearly where the fruit of the Spirit is to be found in one another and within ourselves. And when the swirl of sediment, the swirl of debate and argument settles, may we be enabled to see more clearly the life of Jesus in our midst.

Racial Justice Report to Diocesan Synod on 18th November 2023

This is a brief report aimed at updating synod as we continue to promote racial justice. Firstly, I would like to commend the synod for the commitment to racial justice in Church of England Birmingham.

The racial justice board has worked assiduously in the last one year to lay the foundation and sustain the momentum for culture change in our diocese, deaneries and parishes. This has not been an easy job to do, by any means but steady progress is being made with lots more grounds to cover.

Perhaps it may suffice to appreciate the efforts being made by various people in different places to establish the work of racial justice in CofEB.

The board has worked within the framework From Lament to Action reports, building on the key recommendations to achieve a culture change that is weaved around

- the promotion of racial justice,
- celebration of diversity as one of the key strengths of Church of England Birmingham
- Recognition of racism as a sin that should be challenged and repented of because it not only erodes our missional values as a diocese, but also casts aspersions on God's divine and beautiful plans for humanity

From lament to action report recognises that racism still remains endemic and there are people who suffer the consequences in

silence, with more people added to the list because no measure has been put in place to hear the voices of such people nor are they offered the right support. To this end, it was recommended that there should be the establishment of grievances and complaints procedures that would offer this succour.

Church of England Birmingham through the RJB is committed to putting in place this procedure locally, having recognised the importance of providing safe space that will allow victims of racism to be identified and heard, be provided with adequate pastoral support and ensuring that cases of racism in our parishes, deaneries or other layers of the diocese are investigated fairly and with proportionate closures. The procedure will also contain the necessary awareness materials to help those who may require it, to understand and engage well with those who are different from us.

The board is currently working on the framework of this procedure would be commended to synod for use in Church of England Birmingham.

To round off, the regional conversations on racial justice collaboration is ongoing and a funding bid to support the work amongst the West Midlands dioceses, a part of which we are, have been submitted and we await a response from the national church in the coming weeks. It is hoped that by the next synod, this bid would have been approved and implementation of this shared collaborative project would have started gathering momentum.

I would like to covet your continuous thoughts and prayers for a successful outcome.

Thank you.

The Revd Canon Dele Sotonwa

Chair of Racial Justice Board
Church of England Birmingham

Report of the General Synod Group of Sessions Monday 13 to Wednesday 15 November 2023

General Synod met this week from Monday 13 to Wednesday 15 November at Church House, Westminster.

Apart from the inauguration of a new General Synod, it has become infrequent for the Synod to meet in November. Thus, meeting this week was unusual. The Group of Sessions was necessary because of where Synod is in its process of Living in Love and Faith, following the passing of the motion at the February Group of Sessions, commending prayers of blessing for same sex couples in church; and where the House of Bishops was in its role, contributions and deliberations which it wanted to offer to General Synod.

The Group of Sessions began, as it always does, with worship. In fact, worship book ends each day. This was swiftly followed by welcoming new members - it never ceases to amaze me the turnover of Synod membership, along with welcoming our siblings from across the Anglican Communion.

This time:

Kay Goldsworthy, AO, the Archbishop of Perth, Australia
and

Albert Chama, the Archbishop of Central Africa

Incidentally, I had an interesting conversation with both of them, especially Archbishop Albert whose province covers our link diocese of Malawi, and he sends his warm greetings to us! They both spoke well in the Living in Love and Faith debate, too.

As is customary, the Presidential Address follows. On a number of occasions now, Archbishops Justin and Stephen, have given a joint Presidential Address. Archbishop Justin was keen to focus on the wider church and world. So it was good and humbling to hear the Archbishop in Jerusalem, Hosam Namum, share some thoughts with us - the wonders of technology! And with that in mind, we can hear his message now...

Thank you...

Canon Robert Hammond from Chelmsford Diocese, in his capacity as Chair of the Business Committee then moved their report.

Questions took up most of the remainder of the day. Two hundred and twenty-six questions were submitted! Even with two slots on the agenda, it

was impossible to get through all the questions and allow for up to two supplementaries for each question from the floor - as you can imagine!

Shortly, before Evening Worship, Clive Mather was re-appointed as the Chair of the Church of England Pensions Board. Interestingly, he did emphasise, on a couple of occasions in answer to questions about the importance of clergy getting in touch directly with the Board, particularly concerning future housing, post retirement.

Tuesday's business began with Legislation. We need to remember that the primary role of General Synod is as a legislative body.

The Abuse (Redress) Measure GS 2325 was up for First Consideration. During this type of debate the Steering Committee is keen to hear from fellow Synod members about their ideas for clarification and improvement of the draft Measure. The Measure concerns the setting up of the compensation scheme for those who have suffered abuse in the church. The Scheme has been welcomed by everyone. However, concerns were expressed by some members about the potential liability aspect for PCCs. It was good that Dawn Brathwaite from our Diocese, was called to speak so that she was able to ask for further reflection on some of the points made, for example, about the appeals mechanism; and comment on how the legislation could be improved, for example, through robust stress testing.

There then followed, strong backing for the annual payments to the Churches Conservation Trust.

It is worth noting that there is a Standing Orders Committee which works hard, on our behalf, at being thorough with keeping abreast of how standing orders are used and could be implemented by members of Synod to enhance its deliberations and processes. Canon Joyce Jones a member of the clergy from Leeds Diocese ably and tirelessly chairs the Committee. Consequently, various amendments were made to the Standing Orders.

Debate on the Living in Love and Faith report GS 2328 began mid Tuesday afternoon and concluded late Wednesday afternoon - it was marathon! Sarah Mullally, the Bishop of London, spoke to and moved the motion standing in her name. She later duly responded to each of the fourteen tabled amendments in turn.

In the end, two amendments were passed, and thus incorporated into the main motion:

- one from Paul Butler, the Bishop of Durham
- and the other from Steven Croft, the Bishop of Oxford

During the middle of Wednesday afternoon, once the amendments had been worked through, the whole motion as amended, was debated. It was then that I was fortunate to be called to speak, especially as I had not put in a request to speak! There was a three minute speech limit.

This is what I said...

'It is important, I feel, in this debate and on-going post General Synod conversations for each of us to try hard to *locate* ourselves a little - to resist the temptation to speak from an imagined and illusory abstract, objective or universal place.

So I come to this as a straight, member of the Laity. With the structural privileges and experiential ignorances which accompany that location.

I come also as someone who is exploring and continuing to work out how to be a faithful disciple of Jesus, in giving and receiving love.

In *this* moment on *this* long journey together, including from what we have heard already in this debate, it has particularly struck me that there's a need to 'dig down' into the on-going conversation: to try to discern what's going on 'in the depths', 'in the roots' of the issues, the disagreements, the wrestling. And it appears that so much of the current conversation is *not*, at its roots, about sex, or marriage, or how we read Scripture.

Actually, it's about *ecclesiology* - our understandings of what it means to be church.

It's about what we do with deep difference.

It's about how we acknowledge *power* and *vulnerability*; and how we *use* power; and *respond* to vulnerability. That requires *us* to be willing and able to recognize that, especially when the conversation polarizes, as it so often does, into 'sides'. These sides are *not* symmetrical. Power and vulnerability are *unevenly* distributed.

THAT has been sooo evident from what many of our LGBT plus siblings in this chamber have bravely shared about their personal narratives and life experiences.

It is also, at root, about *who we are prepared to recognize as fellow members of the body of Christ*. That is why this is fundamentally a question of ecclesiology.

Therefore, let us wholeheartedly vote in **favour** of the amended motion.'

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Al Barrett for his invaluable kindness and generosity in helping me to galvanize my thinking and use of language around Living in Love and Faith.

In *her* concluding remarks, supporting the prayers of blessing, Bishop Sarah made this rather poignant point:

She noted that while she was fully aware that she could be excluded from the tables of others; they would not be excluded from hers! If she were to be found with those shut outside the door, she fully expected to find Jesus there, too!

The amended motion before Synod read:

'That this Synod, conscious that the Church is not of one mind on the issues raised by Living in Love and Faith, that we are in a period of uncertainty, and that many in the Church on all sides are being deeply hurt at this time, recognise the progress made by the House of Bishops towards implementing the motion on Living in Love and Faith passed by this Synod in February 2023 as reported in GS2328, encourage the House to continue its work of implementation, and ask the House to consider whether some standalone services for same sex couples could be made available for use, possibly on a trial basis, on the timescale envisaged by the motion passed by the Synod in February 2023.'

A member asked for voting by Houses.

The voting was as follows:

In the House of Bishops

23 in favour

10 against

4 abstentions

In the House of Clergy

100 in favour

93 against

1 abstention

In the House of Laity

104 in favour

100 against

0 abstentions

Therefore, the motion was passed in all three Houses.

So in summary, after many amendments and hours of discussion, disagreement and debate, Synod agreed to trial standalone services of Prayers in Love and Faith; alongside the process to formally approve them under Canon Law. It is not blessing marriages of same sex couples and certainly, not marriage itself. It is a step in the right direction.

The final item of business approved the legal transfer of the Channel Islands of Guernsey and Jersey from the Diocese of Winchester to being incorporated into the Diocese of Salisbury.

Archbishop Justin prorogued us and gave a blessing before folk headed home.

Please remember that all relevant information, documents and papers are available on the Church of England website and videos of the proceedings can be viewed there and via YouTube.

Thank you!

Dr Rachel Jepson