

GENERAL SYNOD

February 2016

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PENSIONS BOARD**The Revd Stephen Trott (Peterborough) to ask the Chair of the Pensions Board:**

Q1 In the light of the FRS 102 regulations affecting the reserves shown in organisational accounts for pensions, have any consultations taken place between the Pensions Board and Her Majesty's Government about the financial burden this will cause for small charities which, as 'responsible bodies' for the purposes of the Pensions Measure 1997, have to make contributions to the funded pension scheme, far in excess of their annual turnover in relation to their actual work, and have any representations been made requesting transitional arrangements?

Dr Jonathan Spencer to reply as Chair of the Pensions Board:

A No. This change in accounting procedure requires charities to disclose additional information about pensions (the present value of their deficit recovery contributions) in their accounts. It makes no difference whatsoever to the pension payments that charities have to make now or will have to make in the future, and so has no impact on the financial strength of dioceses and other responsible bodies. The Pensions Board is providing technical support to enable Responsible Bodies and participating bodies to comply with the requirements.

The Revd Canon Catherine Grylls (Birmingham) to ask the Chair of the Pensions Board:

Q2 What progress has been made by the EIAG and the NIBs on drawing up the ‘engagement framework’, as requested in the Climate Change motion passed by this Synod in July 2015; who has been involved in that work so far; and when is it hoped that it will be published?

Dr Jonathan Spencer to reply as Chair of the Pensions Board on behalf of the National Investing Bodies:

A The National Investing Bodies are currently developing the climate change engagement framework in consultation with relevant experts and academic institutions. A series of indicators is being developed that will provide a basis to judge what progress companies and key energy intensive sectors are making in the transition to a low carbon economy. Significant progress has been made in this work and we are committed to publishing the framework by June of this year.

In further developing the engagement framework a number of consultations will be undertaken with key stakeholders both within the Church and externally.

CENTRAL READERS’ COUNCIL

Mr Adrian Greenwood (Southwark) to ask the Chair of the Central Readers Council:

- Q3** (a) At the last count, how many licensed, non-retired Readers were there in the Church of England by diocese;
- (b) What is their current age profile by decade: 20-30; 30-40; 40-50; 50-60 and 60-70 (by number and percentage); and
- (c) Over each of the last 5 years, how many Readers have been newly licensed and how many have reached retirement age, resigned, died in service or otherwise left?

The Bishop of Sodor and Man to reply as Chair of the Central Readers’ Council:

A As at 31st December 2014, there were 6278 Licensed Readers, and a further 2800 active Readers with permission to officiate. A further 760 were in training. Only 2% of licensed Readers and 9% of trainees were under 40 at the qualifying date. Detailed statistics are available on the notice board. However, some dioceses include a wide variety of lay ministries under the broad category of “Reader” or “Licensed Lay Minister”, whereas others do not – meaning that the apparent decline in Reader numbers over the past decade obscures a burgeoning of other lay ministries with episcopal authority.

ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL

Mr Francis Spufford (Ely) to ask the Presidents of the Archbishops' Council:

Q4 When it is necessary for the Communications Office to react instantly on behalf of the Church on a subject where opinion in the Church is divided, how is it decided what line should be taken with the press?

The Bishop of Sheffield to reply on behalf of the Presidents of the Archbishops' Council:

A The Communications Office consults official statements, policies and teaching of the Church such as General Synod resolutions and motions, statements from the House of Bishops, statements from Archbishops and other official sources.

The Revd Canon Jenny Tomlinson (Chelmsford) to ask the Presidents of the Archbishops' Council:

Q5 What steps have been taken, and to what effect, to seek to ensure that each implementation group of the Reform and Renewal Programme includes BAME people, and a balance of men and women, and those who are lay and ordained?

The Bishop of Sheffield to reply on behalf of the Presidents of the Archbishops' Council:

A Previous Synod questions on the composition of the task groups have created much greater awareness. Each task group as it is formed is asked to ensure that its composition both reflects the nature of its task and the need for diversity of membership.

The composition of the currently active task groups is 38% female, 44% lay and at least 7% BAME (two of the recently formed groups didn't ask their members to declare ethnic background). The importance of diversity of membership will have been heard and all future task groups and current task group chairs will be asked to review the balance of their membership.

The Revd Canon Jane Charman (Salisbury) to ask the Chair of the Archbishops' Council:

Q6 Is the Reform and Renewal programme now definitely called the Renewal and Reform programme and, if so, what was the thinking behind this change?

The Bishop of Sheffield to reply on behalf of the Presidents of the Archbishops' Council:

A Yes, the programme is now referred to as Renewal and Reform. Although the work that lies behind the words is neither specific (individual elements of the work streams can't easily be categorised as solely renewal or reform) nor sequential, it is important to express the primacy of the renewing work of the Spirit.

Renewal and Reform cannot simply be a matter of internal reprioritisation or institutional reform, although no doubt it will contain significant elements of both. It must be about God's work of transformation in and through God's people and God's world and our attendant need prayerfully to discern and join in with how and where God is leading. Renewal and Reform expresses this a little better.

HOUSE OF BISHOPS

Mr Robin Lunn (Worcester) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q7 In the light of the recent reports of the possibility of agreeing a fixed date every year for Easter, what consideration has been given to the role that the General Synod, and indeed the wider Church, might play in making that possibility a reality?

The Bishop of Peterborough to reply on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops:

A There has not yet been an opportunity for the House of Bishops to consider possible responses to the recent reports regarding the date of Easter. Questions about either a fixed or a common (but not fixed) date have engaged the Church of England's attention on at least three occasions in the past hundred years, in 1927, 1966 and 1999. On the first two occasions, there were debates in the General Assembly, and if more progress had been made ecumenically at the end of the last millennium, doubtless the matter would have been brought to General Synod. As ecumenical consensus will again be critical in moving forward on this issue, the Council for Christian Unity is likely to have a significant role in advising on the appropriate point for time to be sought on the General Synod's agenda.

Mr Adrian Greenwood (Southwark) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q8 Given the importance of prioritising evangelism and mission among young people in urban areas reported by the Evangelism Task Group at the fringe meeting at the July 2015 Group of Sessions, what progress is being made to identify financial, human and training resources to turn this priority into reality as part of the Renewal and Reform agenda?

The Bishop of Liverpool to reply as Vice-Chair of the Archbishops' Evangelism Task Group:

A Renewal and Reform is a wide-ranging body of work. One current priority is to establish it as a coherent and robustly financed work programme capable both of implementing decisions already taken and also responding to new work given to it by Synod.

Assuming GS 2015 is endorsed by Synod we will work quickly to translate its priorities into action. The outcome of the day conference on 1 March at Bishopsthorpe will be key to identifying concrete steps to translate the priority of young people in urban areas into deep-rooted practice. We hope that this conference can also inform the 'beacon events' over the Pentecost weekend. We will ensure good links between the R&R programmes and relevant resources such as MPA's work on Mission Academies and the Gabriel Collective. MPA and the Education Division are also planning to appoint a Youth Evangelism Officer to work jointly with staff in both teams.

The Revd Alistair McHaffie (Blackburn) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q9 The 'Christenings' national website www.churchofenglandchristenings.org and leaflets inform parents considering presenting their child for baptism that "You don't have to have been christened yourself." What was the process by which this assertion was agreed, who was consulted and what is the theological, legal and liturgical rationale behind it?

The Bishop of Norwich to reply on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops:

A There is an obligation on clergy to baptise the children of any parent who wishes their child to be baptised.

The Canons do not say that parents of infants being brought for baptism have to be baptised themselves. However, the minister must instruct the parents on their responsibilities.

The website churchofenglandchristening.org and the related resources have all been produced as part of the Archbishops' Council project around the baptism of children under 12. This work is underpinned by a vision for church growth, so parents are encouraged to talk to their local church and discover all that it might mean to have their child baptised. This may also lead to exploratory conversations about their own spiritual journey, and where appropriate, they too may be baptised, if not already.

The Revd Dr Andrew Atherstone (Oxford) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q10 Who has oversight of the theological content of the Just Pray website (www.justpray.uk)?

The Revd Charles Read (Norwich) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q11 Who decided which prayers would be published on the resources section of the Just Pray part of the Church of England website and what advice did they seek about the doctrinal issues raised by including prayers to the saints such as the Hail Mary and the Prayer to St Christopher?

The Bishop of Norwich to reply on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops:

A The oversight of the Just Pray website, including prayers, rests with the Director of Communications for the Archbishops' Council. The site seeks to promote "a new spirit of prayer, using all the traditions, ancient and modern" reflecting the priority of the Archbishop of Canterbury for the renewal of prayer.

The site was launched with the advert featuring the Lord's Prayer. The prayers on the site were chosen to engage with a non-praying audience some of whom would have heard or engaged with prayer at some point in their lives.

The websites, prayers and video resources promoted come from a range of traditions and denominations.

A series of new Just Pray videos has just been launched for Lent and Easter based on Psalm 22.

The Very Revd Timothy Barker (Channel Islands) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q12 Is the House considering how to address the impact of the imbalance between the number of dioceses (identified in the annual report of the Dioceses Commission [GS Misc 1130 para 15]) upon the workload of the archbishops and their staff?

The Bishop of Portsmouth to reply on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops:

A In deciding not to pursue the Commission's proposals to redraw the Provincial Boundary the House recognised the present imbalance but felt that it had other priorities at the present time.

The workload for the archbishops and their staff in such areas as resourcing leadership in mission, episcopal ministerial development reviews, and clergy discipline cases remains unequal, but in its discussion last May members of the House felt that there were potentially other ways of addressing these.

It was left that the archbishops together with the House's Standing Committee would reflect further on the matter.

Miss Prudence Dailey (Oxford) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q13 Is the House of Bishops aware of concerns surrounding the response to allegations made against the late Bishop George Bell, and will it give consideration to the issuing of guidelines regarding the publication of evidence against deceased individuals before they can be presumed guilty of alleged crimes?

The Bishop of Durham to reply on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops:

A On February 3rd, the survivor in the case of George Bell gave a detailed interview to the Argus, a local newspaper in Sussex, detailing her abuse. The House of Bishops are well aware of this issue and the principle remains that it is legally impermissible for the Church to disclose any evidence used in the settlement, or any information that might lead to identification of the complainant. To be absolutely clear: no specific confidentiality agreement has been applied in Bishop Bell's case; confidentiality laws apply in all cases of this nature.

The desire for transparency does not sit easily with the requirement for confidentiality. Many vexed questions from local, national and international correspondents have been raised, which is understandable given the international standing of Bishop Bell as a theologian and church leader.

But here we must also consider the courage displayed by any survivor in coming forward both to report the abuse and to give an interview to a newspaper. The law rightly affords them protection to safeguard the confidentiality of their deeply personal information.

Further statements on this matter are available on the communications blog.

Dr Andrew Bell (Oxford) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q14 It is widely reported that a fragment of bone believed to have come from the body of Thomas Becket is to return to England from Hungary, to be displayed in venues including Westminster Abbey and Canterbury Cathedral, and to be the focus of services in which "senior Anglican clerics" will take part. In view of these reports, has the House of Bishops considered offering guidance on the holding of such events in the light of Article 22 which prohibits "... *worshipping and adoration, ... of reliques, and also invocation of saints...*"?

The Bishop of Coventry to reply on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops:

A The House of Bishops has not met since the press coverage referred to in the question occurred. Offering hospitality to Roman Catholic Christians who wish to make relics they value accessible to the public, thereby enabling thankful remembrance together of ‘thy servants departed this life in thy faith and fear’, is a powerful symbol of ecumenical reconciliation and is not incompatible with the teaching of the Church of England.

Mr Jack Shelley (Exeter) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q15 The House of Bishops reviewed ‘Communion by Extension’ in 2005 and reported to Synod in 2007 (GS Misc 873) that they would re-consider their guidance in the future in the light of further advice from the House’s Theological Group. Has that further advice ever been received, whether from the Theological Group or, subsequently, from the Faith and Order Commission?

The Bishop of Coventry to reply on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops:

A Neither the House of Bishops’ Theological Group nor the Faith and Order Commission has offered advice on this subject to the House of Bishops since 2007.

Miss Prudence Dailey (Oxford) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q16 In the light of the rapidly growing interest in gender fluidity and Transgender issues within our culture, what steps has the House of Bishops taken to review the Biblical, theological and scientific perspectives on the relevant issues with a view:

- i) to the House being resourced to form a coherent and considered Christian analysis of the issues,
- ii) to being able to offer clergy and the Church generally theologically credible moral and social teaching, and pastoral advice?

The Bishop of Coventry to reply on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops:

A The House of Bishops continues to value the substantial report produced in 2003, *Some Issues in Human Sexuality: A Guide to the Debate* (CHP 2003, also GS Misc 722). There has not been another major report since then that reviews transgender issues. Members of Synod will have noted the intention of the Business Committee as expressed in its report to schedule the Blackburn Diocesan Synod

Motion on ‘Welcoming Transgender People’ for debate after the July sessions of Synod have been completed. The debate will require all members of the Synod, including the House, to give these issues careful attention.

The Revd Canon Giles Goddard (Southwark) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q17 What was the basis for the reference to ‘mutual accountability’ in the response of “a Church of England spokesperson” (Guardian, 29 January) to the recent YouGov poll on C of E attitudes to equal marriage, given that a significant majority of dioceses rejected the proposed Anglican Covenant?

The Archbishop of Canterbury to reply as Chair of the House of Bishops:

A The response referred to the acknowledgement by the Primates at their recent gathering that to commit to walking together implied interdependence and mutual accountability. Such catholicity in relationships is not incompatible with the legitimate diversity and independence of each Province.

The Revd Canon Andrew Godsall (Exeter) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q18 Could the House be invited to reflect on the recent Primates’ Meeting and, if so, what undertaking might be given for particular reflection on whether it was appropriate to adopt an approach involving ‘relational consequences’ in relation to a member province of the Anglican Communion in the light of the fact that a majority of the dioceses in the Church of England declined to approve the Anglican Communion Covenant?

The Archbishop of Canterbury to reply as Chair of the House of Bishops:

A The House received a report on the Primates meeting along with members of the College when they met in January. The Primates addressed the impact on relationships within the Anglican Communion when any Province makes a unilateral change in doctrine. They have set out specific consequences in the functioning of the Communion and a task group will be appointed to carry forward the implications of their decision.

Mrs Anne Foreman (Exeter) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q19 What steps does the Church propose to take in the light of the reply given on 14 December by the Minister of State for the Armed Forces to a written question about the registration of military chapels for same-sex and other marriages?

The Rt Revd Nigel Stock to reply as Bishop to the Forces:

A I wrote to the Minister on 18 December saying that it was not clear what she had in mind where her reply referred to seeking advice “on

how Parliament's sanction of same sex marriages may be fully implemented". I offered to meet her. I also suggested that the reply may have over-simplified the position in saying, "none of the Sending Churches currently allows same-sex marriages to be conducted [in military chapels]". I explained that it was not legally possible for a marriage of two people of the same sex to be solemnized according to the rites of the Church of England; and, so far as I was aware, none of the other Churches whose ministers serve as military chaplains had opted in to same-sex marriage. Their clergy did not, therefore, conduct such marriages, whether in military chapels or in their own churches and chapels.

Mrs April Alexander (Southwark) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q20 "The Archbishops' Secretary for Appointments is charged by Synod with monitoring diversity through the appointments processes for Bishops, Deans, Archdeacons and Residentiary Canons." (The Diversity Monitoring page of the Church of England website). In view of the particular importance of this matter in the aftermath of the decision in 2014 to admit women to the episcopate, when is Synod going to receive a report on this monitoring?

The Bishop of Truro to reply as Chair of the Development and Appointments Group:

A Monitoring the diversity of applications for, and appointments to, senior roles is crucial in understanding where there might be barriers preventing suitably experienced people from posts of wider responsibility. The information allows us to consider what interventions might be required. However, publication of diversity data needs to comply with the requirements of data protection and equalities legislation. The Developments and Appointments Group will discuss the best way to take this forward.

The Revd Charles Read (Norwich) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q21 As the current funding for research into gender issues under the Transformations agenda runs out in August 2016, what plans are in place to continue this research, particularly into the many gender issues around creating and affirming different patterns of ministry, and the disproportionate numbers of women in self-supporting ministry?

The Bishop of Sheffield to reply on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops:

A All research being conducted and commissioned by the Ministry Council is mindful of diversity issues, particularly when sampling groups for study. The concern to attend to gender issues is not exclusively a feature of the Transformations work.

For example analysis conducted throughout the duration of the Clergy Experiences of Ministry Project from 2011 to 2016 has consistently sought to test its findings for gender effects (see further: <http://www.ministrydevelopment.org.uk/emproject>). The Transformations research has made important contributions to work in vocations, self-supporting ministry and how clergy move through ministry, including senior leadership (see further: http://www.ministrydevelopment.org.uk/gender_and_ministry_research). These areas continue to be on the Council's research agenda with work on self-supporting ministry planned for later 2016. Also the longitudinal research referred to in GS2020 para 32 will develop the Transformation research findings and assist in understanding better what issues, gender and otherwise, underlie our different patterns of ministry.

The Revd Dr Ian Paul (Southwell & Nottingham) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q22 What arrangements does the House have in place for a member or members to speak to the media on its behalf in relation to issues of human sexuality, in particular, to explain the teaching position of the Church and the statements of the House, and to correct any misunderstandings?

The Bishop of Sheffield to reply on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops:

A Approaches to members of the House from the media usually come via a diocesan communications officer and/or the communications office in Westminster. Human sexuality accounts for a very small number of those enquiries. As with all interview requests the key is availability of bishops and balancing long planned diaries against requests which are inevitably labelled "urgent" and arrive with a very short time frame to accommodate a response – especially with broadcast media.

The media are not duty bound to approach our offices prior to running stories on human sexuality and often will not do so as they will seek polarising views rather than reconciling voices in the mistaken belief that makes for a better story.

SECRETARY GENERAL

The Very Revd Frances Ward (Deans) to ask the Secretary General:

Q23 Sir Michael Wilshaw has announced that Ofsted has set up a special team of inspectors to crack down on unregistered independent schools that give rise to serious concern for reasons such as: fire hazards, unhygienic conditions, evidence of misogynistic, homophobic and anti-Semitic teaching material; and staff not being properly checked to work with children. Given the need not to waste valuable Ofsted time and resources, detracting from this important work, can the General Synod be assured that Church-sponsored education provision will not be liable to such inspection – such as youth groups, choirs, Sunday schools, Confirmation classes, cathedral choir schools and non-residential youth activities and holiday clubs?

Mr Nick Harding (Southwell & Nottingham) to ask the Secretary General:

Q24 What representations were made to the Government during the period of consultation regarding OFSTED registration and possible inspection of church-based children and youth activities, and what assurances or otherwise did you receive?

Mr Clive Scowen (London) to ask the Secretary General:

Q25 What representations have been made, in response to the Government's consultation or otherwise, in relation to the proposal, in the name of combating extremism, to bring church children's and youth work within the scope of OFSTED inspection and control, and what response if any has been received from the Government?

Mr William Nye to reply as Secretary General:

A The Government is consulting on whether and how to register and inspect what it calls 'out of school settings', including potentially youth groups, holiday clubs etc. The Archbishops' Council and the National Society have made representations to the Government and held several meetings with ministers and officials. We have argued firmly that there is no need for blanket registration of these activities. The problems the Government have identified in a few settings can be addressed without the need to register all of them. The Government has yet to respond to the representations received.

Mrs Heather Black (York) to ask the Secretary General:

Q26 Could the Secretary General please explain how an evaluation of the effectiveness of the Church and Community Fund was undertaken and the conclusions reached before closing the fund down at the end of 2015?

Mr William Nye to reply as Secretary General:

A Since the mid-1980s the Council's Church and Community Fund has funded some national Church work as well as local projects through grants. In reaching its decision to end the Church and Community Fund's grant making programme at the end of 2015, the Archbishops' Council considered the evidence from ongoing evaluation of the impact of the Fund, and the resources available to carry out the necessary work that can only be done, or is most effectively or efficiently carried out, at national level. The Council also noted plans to target funding to support work in the poorest parishes as part of the Resourcing the Future proposals.

The Revd Canon Catherine Grylls (Birmingham) to ask the Secretary General:

Q27 Following the closure of the Church and Community Fund what plans does the Archbishops' Council have to enable and support the initiatives and mission supported and enabled by CCF?

Mr William Nye to reply as Secretary General:

A From 2017 the aspiration is that the Archbishops' Council will distribute at least £20 million p.a. for investment in mission and growth opportunities, if sufficient money can be made available from the funds managed by the Church Commissioners.

Mr Andrew Presland (Peterborough) to ask the Secretary General:

Q28 What elements of the Church's national funds will individual PCCs be able to apply for under the *Resourcing the Future* proposals, given that it was said during the November 2015 Synod that parishes would be able to apply for funding, but is stated in GS 2021 that the Funding for Mission in the Poorest Communities will not be distributed directly to parishes?

Mr William Nye to reply as Secretary General:

A The national funds managed by the Church Commissioners are distributed to dioceses to advance their plans for supporting local mission. The funds will largely be directed to parish work; but it is right, in view of the scale of funds, that diocesan leadership teams take the responsibility for how they are spent and take the lead in any application process.

The Funding for Mission in the poorest communities will be distributed between dioceses on a formula basis to support mission in low income areas. The Strategic Development Funding is available for dioceses to apply for – to support large scale programmes which will make a significant difference to their mission and financial strength. It is expected that diocesan applications will build on parish initiatives.

Mr Colin Slater (Southwell & Nottingham) to ask the Secretary General:

Q29 Can the Synod be informed of the cost of preparing and distributing by email the Church of England daily and weekly media digest, with particular reference to staff costs?

Mr William Nye to reply as Secretary General:

A It is difficult to provide an accurate assessment of staff costs as the digest is compiled on a rota basis involving different members of the communications team, on differing levels of seniority and pay.

The communications office subscribes to a digital cuttings service as part of the digest at a cost of just over £4,000 per annum. In addition just over £8,000 was paid for the services of former trained journalists to do the first draft of the digest at 5am each weekday morning when the cuttings arrive. That draft will then be sent to a member of the team who will edit, check and send.

The team aim to issue the digest before 8am each weekday morning. At weekends the Comms team compile and edit the digest themselves and seek to issue before midday.

CLERK TO THE SYNOD

The Revd Julie Conalty (Rochester) to ask the Clerk to the Synod:

Q30 Please provide the following statistics regarding the composition of this Synod and its predecessor:

- (a) the percentages of the membership (broken down by House) which is male / female; and
- (b) the percentages of the membership (broken down by House) which is white British / BAME / 'other'.

Dr Jacqui Philips to reply as Clerk to the Synod:

A The breakdown by gender of the membership of the Houses of General Synod is as follows:

	2010	2015
Bishops	100% male 0% female	96.2% male; 3.8% female
Clergy	71.2% male 28.8% female	66.5% male; 33.5% female
Laity	53.8% male 46.2% female	51.2% male; 48.8% female

In 2010 the following percentages of each House declared themselves as BAME:

	2010
Bishops	1.8%
Clergy	3.7%
Laity	3.3%

The self-declared figures for ethnic background for the 2015-2020 General Synod will be made available in early March 2016.

NATIONAL SOCIETY COUNCIL

The Revd Wyn Beynon (Worcester) to ask the Chair of the National Society Council:

Q31 Has consideration been given to whether it is legal and ethical for Diocesan Boards of Education to force Church of England schools to join their own Diocesan Multi Academy Trusts and to refuse permission for them to join smaller, local MATs?

Mrs Susan Witts to reply on behalf of the Chair of the National Society Council:

A It is the responsibility of every Diocesan Board of Education (DBE) to ensure the effectiveness and safeguard the Christian character of its Church of England schools. In fulfilling that responsibility the DBE must plan strategically for all of the schools in its family, rather than just for an individual school. Building a strong diocesan MAT or developing strong church school led MATs is essential to achieve this goal.

The National Society is in the final stage of agreeing a Memorandum of Understanding with the DfE which sets out the parameters in which all these decisions will be made, with a clear expectation that dioceses will be setting them within an overall strategy for ensuring all Church of England schools in the diocese remain strong. Any school wishing to convert to academy status should discuss the options with its DBE at the earliest stage.

CHURCH BUILDINGS COUNCIL

Mrs Rosemary Lyon (Blackburn) to ask the Chair of the Church Buildings Council:

Q32 What evidence is there to show that the online Faculty application system is proving less onerous as well as providing a speedier outcome for parishes?

Sir Tony Baldry to reply as Chair of the Church Buildings Council:

A The online system, introduced in November 2014, was designed to make the Faculty application process easier and speedier for parishes.

More than half of the dioceses are already using the system since its launch with some parishes having already applied for multiple Faculties through the system. Because the system keeps a record of the Standard Information form and the Statement of Significance, parishes have found Faculty applications less onerous and speedier, as they do not have to repeat this work.

In Leicester Diocese, the DAC Secretary explained that using the online system meant that “parishes are able to make applications for Minor Works authorisation and Faculties online with the ability to track their progress”, making the Faculty process more accountable.

Mrs Sheri Sturgess (Truro) to ask the Chair of the Church Buildings Council:

Q33 Are representations ever made to those bodies and agencies concerned with the preservation of bio-diversity and the rights of animals to consider whether the rights of bats to exist on Church premises are in any sense commensurate with the rights of those who have to clear up the consequences of their presence?

Sir Tony Baldry to reply as Chair of the Church Buildings Council:

A There is significant research and development to assess how we can reduce the impact caused by bats in churches. This has included a three year research project that concluded in 2013, as well as a pilot project led by Historic England that focused on churches with significant bat issues. Natural England is currently creating a licensing framework to provide the mechanism through which the impact of bats will be controlled in churches.

In partnership with Natural England, Historic England, the Churches Conservation Trust, and the Bat Conservation Trust, the Church of England is seeking Heritage Lottery Funding for a five-year Bats in Churches project to create a national support network for churches that have bat related issues and trial a range of solutions.

The outcome of the bid for funding will be known in March, and a major conference for the church, heritage and bat sectors will be held in Coventry on 13th May.

Mr Samuel Margrave (Coventry) to ask the Chair of the Church Buildings Council:

Q34 Can the Church Buildings Council please tell Synod the cost (including postage and staff time) of the Chairman of the Council's Christmas card and why an email (with a donation to charity or a Church in need) was not considered sufficient?

Sir Tony Baldry to reply as Chair of the Church Buildings Council:

A I believe in sending Christmas cards as part of the celebration of Christmas.

The cost of designing and printing the Christmas cards which I sent last year in my capacity as Chair of the Church Buildings Council was borne entirely by myself.

No costs fell to the Church Buildings Council or to any other part of the Church of England.

The cost of the postage of the Christmas cards which I sent out in my capacity as Chair of the Church Buildings Council was borne entirely by myself.

No costs fell to the Church Buildings Council or any other part of the Church of England.

There would have been a *de minimis* cost in staff time in emailing to my secretary, whom I pay, the address list of the Chairs and Secretaries of DACs and others to enable my secretary to print the necessary labels for the Christmas cards.

COUNCIL FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY

The Revd Paul Hutchinson (York) to ask the Chair of the Council for Christian Unity:

Q35 What reasons were given by the Scottish Episcopal Church in 2012-13 for its withdrawal from full formal participation in the Joint Study Group whose report is being presented at the current group of sessions?

The Bishop of Peterborough to reply as Chair of the Council for Christian Unity:

A A letter received by CCU staff from the Bishop of Glasgow and Galloway in April 2013 noted that the Faith and Order Board of the Scottish Episcopal Church 'remains concerned that the nature of the

talks has moved from faith & order conversations towards ecumenical discussions, the outcome of which may lead to the signing of a form of agreement or statement', indicating that the Scottish Episcopal Church would not wish to be a signatory to such an agreement. The Scottish Episcopal Church did however then appoint an observer, who attended all subsequent meetings of the Joint Study Group and contributed fully and constructively to the deliberations leading to the report being presented to Synod, including detailed discussion of the draft text.

MINISTRY COUNCIL

The Revd Dr Philip Plyming (Guildford) to ask the Chair of the Ministry Council:

Q36 Given that under the RME proposals, dioceses are being given greater control, flexibility and, therefore, responsibility over the resources for ministerial education, what consideration has been given to the training and support that will be needed to help diocesan teams navigate what will be an increasingly complex financial landscape?

The Bishop of Sheffield to reply as Chair of the Ministry Council:

A The Ministry Council is very aware of the added responsibilities for dioceses and Theological Education Institutions. Ministry Division staff will work with diocesan and TEI staff from April to September 2016 on detailed implementation to cooperate in designing the most efficient and effective financial and administrative systems. These will be kept under review and adjusted if necessary. A full-time Pathways Adviser will be available to DDOs and TEIs with advice and guidance on pathway choices. The Division's finance team will be available to support dioceses and TEIs with guidance and information. There will be the option of a controlled trial of the new arrangements in September 2016 for dioceses and TEIs who wish to take part and use this for training. Staff in the Division will plan for transition to the new system in September 2017 with the needs of dioceses and TEIs in view and in consultation with them.

The Revd Canon Jonathan Clark (Leeds) to ask the Chair of the Ministry Council:

Q37 What work is being done to test the relative effectiveness of Contextual Ordination Training against Residential?

The Bishop of Sheffield to reply as Chair of the Ministry Council:

A The first phase of research into the effectiveness of ministerial education commissioned by the Resourcing Ministerial Education Task Group suggested that all pathways could be used with confidence. Following feedback from Synod, Theological Education

Institutions (TEIs) diocesan staff and others, further research is being undertaken to scrutinise this important finding and to explore in more detail the benefits of the three existing IME Phase 1 pathways and Phase 2 provision. This work is currently in progress, qualitative in character, and involves listening to multiple perspectives, including ordinands, TEI staff, placement supervisors, church wardens, diocesan officers and training incumbents. Initial findings from this work will be reported at the Faith in Research Conference in May 2016. It will also make a significant contribution to the longitudinal described in GS2020 paragraph 22.

The Revd Dr Emma Ineson (Universities & TEIs) to ask the Chair of the Ministry Council:

Q38 GS 2020 'Renewal and Reform, Resourcing Ministerial Education' states that "*The final round of written consultation showed that 10% of dioceses were not content to proceed on principle. Some other dioceses and TEIs have varying degrees of concern either about the impact on their situation or about implementation*". Of the 21 Theological Education Institutions that responded to the December 2015 written survey of detailed responses to the funding proposals, to the question: 'Please indicate on the scale below your overall support for the current proposals', how many indicated that they were: Content to go ahead; Content to go ahead with changes; Not content to go ahead at this stage; or Uncertain?

The Bishop of Sheffield to reply as Chair of the Ministry Council:

A Of the responses received from TEIs, 1 was content to go ahead without any change, 13 were content to go ahead with changes, 5 were not content and 2 were uncertain. There was a high level of consistency between the changes required by the 13 who were content to go ahead and the concerns of the 5 who were not content. It is therefore clear what changes are now required and the Council is ready to address them in the implementation stage.

The Revd Canon Alan Bashforth (Truro) to ask the Chair of the Ministry Council:

Q39 Has consideration been given to the possibility that the sparsity of large well financed parishes in poorer rural dioceses that could afford the maintenance cost of a student undertaking a placement on a mixed mode-context based pathway will severely curtail the possibility of such pathways being used in those poorer rural dioceses?

The Bishop of Sheffield to reply as Chair of the Ministry Council:

A Yes. Indeed there is already a scheme that has over the last two years provided financial support to less well-resourced parishes to enable currently some 40 students to follow mixed mode-context based pathways that would not have been financially viable otherwise. The RME proposals look to strengthen this scheme by extending the reach

of this support to a wider range of dioceses, including rural dioceses, and apportioning the cost of across all dioceses as part of Vote 1. There will also be a review of mixed mode-context based issues and separately of family maintenance arrangements to ensure that the funding arrangements remain fair and that students and pathways are treated equitably.

The Revd Canon Alan Bashforth (Truro) to ask the Chair of the Ministry Council:

Q40 An ordinand trained on the South West peninsular travels an average of 2600 miles/year to access training, giving an expenses bill of £1,170/year. As travelling expenses under the RME provision are to be part of the tuition grant provided to dioceses, is it therefore the case that Truro and other rural dioceses, faced with such travel costs, will in effect receive at least £2,000 less than many of their urban counterparts to train each of their ordinands?

The Bishop of Sheffield to reply as Chair of the Ministry Council:

A The standard grant is calculated to include an allowance for travel as the average expense for ordinands in that age cohort. It is clear that this arrangement could for geographic reasons disadvantage students in the South West and other areas where distance from a teaching centre entails longer distance travel. The Ministry Council is aware of this issue and can provide assurance that as part of the work on implementing the RME funding arrangements the disadvantage to students in remote rural areas will be addressed. A possible solution, for example, is to offer a supplement to the standard grant where there are travel costs for a student above a certain ceiling. This and other options will be considered in discussion with dioceses and TEs.

The Revd Dr Andrew Atherstone (Oxford) to ask the Chair of the Ministry Council:

Q41 How many ordinands began Initial Ministerial Education in each of the last five years 2011-2015 inclusive? Please give the numbers for the four age bands (29 and under, 30-39, 40-55, over 55 at the start of their training), with each age band divided into numbers of men and women.

The Bishop of Sheffield to reply as Chair of the Ministry Council:

A The detailed analysis in answer to the question is below and has been provided on the noticeboard.

Total number of ordinands starting training

Year	Male	Female
2011/12	242	228
2012/13	288	251
2013/14	258	249
2014/15	271	202
2015/16	254	240

Number of ordinands starting training by age bands

Year	Under 30		30-39		40-54		55 and over	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
2011/12	55	19	81	35	72	126	34	48
2012/13	77	17	86	43	79	126	46	65
2013/14	75	25	78	55	82	115	23	54
2014/15	84	24	73	34	85	94	29	50
2015/16	66	29	75	45	85	115	28	51

Mrs Helen Lamb (Ely) to ask the Chair of the Ministry Council:

Q42 With respect to papers GS 2015 and GS 2020, and in light of the Ministry Council reviewing the ministerial selection criteria, what connections are being made by the Ministry Council with the work of the Evangelism Task Group to ensure that any revised selection criteria include the significance of a demonstrated commitment among candidates both to evangelism personally and the effective support and encouragement of others in evangelism?

The Bishop of Sheffield to reply as Chair of the Ministry Council:

A The current criteria for selection include the requirement that a candidate should have a personal commitment to mission and evangelism (Criterion H1) and enable others in mission and evangelism (Criterion H4). Candidates are currently asked at interview to refer to evidence of their practical engagement in both of these. In preparation for the review of the criteria document, staff from Ministry Division have met members of the Evangelism Task Group and have worked with one of its members to support research exploring the assessment of candidates at Bishops' Advisory Panels under the criteria relating to evangelism. The fruits of this research will be used in the review and further comments from the Evangelism Task Group will be invited in the course of the review. The current criteria are publicly available on the Church of England website for members to see.

The Revd Dr Ian Paul (Southwell & Nottingham) to ask the Chair of the Ministry Council:

Q43 What is the expectation of time spent in study (as opposed to being on placement) towards taught modules for those on 'full time' ordination training?

The Bishop of Sheffield to reply as Chair of the Ministry Council:

A There are no nationally set expectations for the time spent in study for taught modules in full time ordination training. Validating Universities have their own expectations for the class contact hours for each taught module and all Theological Education Institutions will abide by

these as a condition of validation by the University and by the Church. Universities also set expectations for the amount of private study which should accompany each module, but in practice, such expectations are difficult to enforce because students work and learn at different paces.

The Revd David Craven (Carlisle) to ask the Chair of the Ministry Council:

Q44 What progress has been made towards the implementation of recommendations made in the report GS 1407 looking at the permanent diaconate titled *For Such a Time as This*?

The Bishop of Sheffield to reply as Chair of the Ministry Council:

A When *For Such a Time as This* was debated at the November 2001 Synod, it was referred to the Bishops and the dioceses to take forward locally. That remains the position. The ministry of deacons has most recently been considered nationally in *The Mission and Ministry of the Whole Church* GS Misc 854. There are currently no proposals to take action nationally on the development of the diaconate. It remains open to Bishops and dioceses to develop their own approach to the encouragement of the permanent diaconate. The national selection system includes candidates for the permanent diaconate and candidates for this order are eligible for funding through Vote 1 to train alongside other ordination candidates in the theological education institutions.

Dr Simon Clift (Winchester) to ask the Chair of the Ministry Council:

Q45 In the context of seismic shifts in the working landscape for ordained clergy, as they grapple with acquiring new skills and ways of working amidst ever-increasing expectations from parishioners and senior church leaders alike, and in the light of the latest 2015 edition of Guidelines for the Professional Conduct of the Clergy; what steps are being taken to promote and sustain the health and well-being of our clergy thus ensuring that one of the Church's most precious resources is safeguarded?

The Bishop of Sheffield to reply as Chair of the Ministry Council:

A The Archbishops' Council's advice to dioceses in relation to the provision of Continuing Ministerial Development (CMD) advocates taking "seriously the flourishing of the whole person in their ministerial context". This year's national CMD Officers' conference, recognising the context described in the question, is featuring input on this area, as are the HR Advisers' conference. In addition national Officers are in conversation with a range of both grant awarding trusts and service providers who work in this area to encourage greater transparency around their activities and their engagement with dioceses. In this context, Dr Tim Ling, Head of Ministry Development, is contributing to

the Society of Mary and Martha's Doing Healthy Ministry Together working group, presenting findings of research commissioned by the Ministry Council's CMD Panel.

REMUNERATION AND CONDITIONS OF SERVICE COMMITTEE

The Revd Paul Hutchinson (York) to ask the Chair of the Remuneration and Conditions of Service Committee:

Q46 Further to two answers given to questions at the groups of sessions in both July and November 2015, what progress has been made in examining the mandatory retirement age for clergy?

The Bishop of Manchester to reply as Chair of the Remuneration and Conditions of Service Committee:

A After carefully considering this matter RACSC does not recommend any change to the current legal provisions. A GS Misc paper, detailing the arguments that RACSC considered, will be brought to General Synod in July, subject to the approval of the Archbishops' Council.

The current provisions enable clergy to carry out a stipendiary ministry that can continue to accrue pensionable service past the retirement age. Trends in clergy deployment and retirement indicate that most clergy choose to retire before 70.

RACSC recognises that the most significant impact of the mandatory retirement age is for incumbents. Priests in charge and assistant curates can minister after 70 on a time limited and renewable basis. The option of not renewing the term preserves the dignity of clergy in cases where they are no longer able to carry out the duties of their office to an acceptable standard whilst avoiding invoking the capability procedure.

The Revd Shaun Morris (Lichfield) to ask the Chair of the Remuneration and Conditions of Service Committee:

Q47 Noting that the stipend principles in para. 2 of the 43rd Report of the Central Stipends Authority differ from those of previous reports, could the Chair of RACSC describe the consultation process that was behind the setting of these new principles?

The Bishop of Manchester to reply as Chair of the Remuneration and Conditions of Service Committee:

A RACSC consults annually with dioceses, on behalf of the Archbishops' Council, as part of its core stipend setting function, and keeps the stipend setting process under constant review.

RACSC was asked by the Archbishops' Council, who take stipend decisions informed by our recommendations to them, to revisit methodology and process issues that had been raised by dioceses.

RACSC has widened its data sources, made adjustments to the stipend setting timetable and built in opportunities for more engagement with stakeholders throughout the process.

In re-articulating the stipend principles, RACSC has tried to provide a set of clear and unambiguous statements to guide decision making around stipends and which can be applied consistently by the Council and its Committees. I am available throughout Synod if members wish to speak about stipends methodology with me.

MISSION AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS COUNCIL

Mr Andrew Presland (Peterborough) to ask the Chair of the Mission and Public Affairs Council:

Q48 What steps are being taken in advance of the referendum on EU membership to make (i) the man or woman in the pew; and (ii) the wider British public aware of the wide range of views that are expressed on the *Reimagining Europe* blog?

Mr Philip Fletcher to reply as Chair of the Mission and Public Affairs Council:

A The blog Reimagining Europe (@ReimaginingE) is supported by MPA as a safe space to air the wide variety of views held by Christians on European issues. It is marketed via twitter and other social media platforms. It features regularly in the Daily Digest issued by the Communications Department. The aim is to make the blog the premier resource for Christian reflection on matters concerning the referendum on Britain's membership of the EU. The MPA Division is exploring whether blog contributors might be interested and willing to engage off-line in café style conversations. The blog material should we hope assist Church and community groups planning hustings or other events ahead of the planned referendum.

Mr Bill Seddon (St Albans) to ask the Chair of the Mission and Public Affairs Council:

Q49 Recognising that: funerals can be expensive; many people struggle to cope with the cost; the death of a loved one can plunge those on low incomes and few savings into serious long-term debt; and there is an acknowledged lack of transparency relating to the costs of funerals; could consideration be given to encouraging clergy to ask funeral directors in their parishes to sign up to the Fair Funerals Pledge and provide the bereaved with information about affordable funerals?

Mr Philip Fletcher to reply as Chair of the Mission and Public Affairs Council:

A Openness and transparency are vital in relation to helping people cope with death and the arranging of a funeral. The Church's 'Grave Talk' initiative is being used by many parishes to help people to talk openly about these matters.

Funerals have to be arranged under pressure of time and under the stress of bereavement. It is very important that the pricing and other details of funeral packages, especially the more affordable options, are made visible and clear by funeral directors. This is the main thrust of the Pledge, and the National Association of Funeral Directors has supported it.

Clergy and church councils generally have a very good working relationship with funeral directors, and many may wish to discuss with them the best ways of supporting and helping bereaved people; the Fair Funerals Pledge could be a natural part of that conversation.

Mr Bill Seddon (St Albans) to ask the Chair of the Mission and Public Affairs Council:

Q50 Given that the cost of the average funeral now averages over £8,400, having risen by twice as fast as CPI over the past decade, and that the shortfall between the cost of funerals in aggregate is estimated to exceed the money people have available by over £190 million; are there any plans to encourage the Government to have an inquiry into funeral and bereavement poverty, including what many perceive to be an inadequate and confusing Social Fund Funeral Payments system?

Mr Philip Fletcher to reply as Chair of the Mission and Public Affairs Council:

A The recent report on the churches' role in tackling funeral poverty drew attention to a marked increase in funeral costs over the last ten years, and the fact that Social Fund Funeral Payments only cover a limited proportion of the normal cost, even when a grant is made. Many people have difficulty with funeral costs, and accordingly the Church of England keeps funeral fees relatively low. I welcome the active part which the Lichfield Diocese has taken in the Funeral Poverty Alliance. The Work and Pensions Select Committee is currently conducting an inquiry into bereavement benefits, including the issues raised in this question, and we await with interest the outcome of that inquiry.

Mrs Heather Black (York) to ask the Chair of the Mission and Public Affairs Council:

Q51 In the light of the recent reports about asylum seekers in Middlesbrough being accommodated in houses with red doors, leading to intimidation and fear, how is the influence of the Church of England being used to ensure that asylum seekers and refugees are housed in suitable and safe accommodation, without fear of intimidation?

Mr Philip Fletcher to reply as Chair of the Mission and Public Affairs Council:

A Over 2000 asylum seekers are living in the Tees Valley area, with over 1000 in Middlesbrough. Churches are playing a full part in helping them to settle, and the evidence of stigmatisation through uniform door colour was disturbing. I welcome the fact that the doors have been repainted.

In Parliament and elsewhere, several bishops have highlighted the dangers of stigmatising asylum seekers, refugees and other migrants, and creating a culture of suspicion and hostility. The need for adequate provision of accommodation and finance is an issue in the current Immigration Bill, and bishops have spoken very recently on this in the House of Lords.

Under the leadership of the Archbishop of York, we work nationally with the 'Still Human Still Here' coalition, which advocates for decent treatment of asylum seekers, and we shall continue to work to ensure that suitable and safe housing is available.

Mr Elliott Swatridge (Church of England Youth Council) to ask the Chair of the Mission and Public Affairs Council:

Q52 In the light of the continued imprisonment of Pakistani Christian Asia Bibi on charges of blasphemy, following her being sentenced to death in November 2010, as well as the plight of similar individuals who have been targeted due to their Christian faith, what work is being done by the Church of England to raise awareness of, support, and campaign for the release and protection of Asia Bibi and her family and other vulnerable Christians in Pakistan?

Mr Philip Fletcher to reply as Chair of the Mission and Public Affairs Council:

A MPA has been working with the International Panel of Parliamentarians for Freedom of Religion or Belief (IPPFoRB) since its inception in Oslo in October 2014. IPPFoRB is an informal international coalition of parliamentarians committed to combatting religious persecution and advancing freedom of religion or belief. The bishops of Coventry, Peterborough and Leeds have been closely involved with its work which includes amongst other activities

supporting the work of those parliamentarians in Pakistan in their efforts to press for a review of the blasphemy laws and a suspension of Asia Bibi's sentence. In October 2014, the Bishop of St Albans pressed the case of Asia Bibi in a written parliamentary question. The bishops are assisted in their efforts by briefings supplied by the MPA Division which arise out of the excellent relationship that exists with the United Church of Pakistan following the Archbishop of Canterbury's visit in May 2014.

Mr Samuel Margrave (Coventry) to ask the Chair of the Mission and Public Affairs Council:

Q53 Does the Council hold information as to the financial or other support provided, not just by the Archbishops' Council but also by the other national Church Institutions, to fund the fight for the legal rights of Christians and Christian groups (such as Christian Concern, the Christian Legal Centre or the Christian Institute); and, if it does, can it confirm what support has been provided over the last decade to stem the erosion of rights for Christians and Christian groups to help stop us reaching a situation in which we would see the banning of the Lord's Prayer in cinemas, or Christians sharing prayers or wearing a cross at work?

Mr Philip Fletcher to reply as Chair of the Mission and Public Affairs Council:

A No funds have been earmarked in advance by the NCIs for the costs of legal actions designed to protect the rights of freedom of religious belief and its expression. But MPA makes appropriate representations to Government and public bodies stressing the importance of such rights – for example, a forthcoming submission to the EHRC inquiry into the refusal by a commercial cinema chain to show the pre-Christmas advertisement on saying the Lord's Prayer.

Mr Clive Scowen (London) to ask the Chair of the Mission and Public Affairs Council:

Q54 What representations have been made to the Government about the desirability of radically reducing the £100 maximum stake which can be wagered every 20 seconds at the 34,500 fixed-odds betting terminals present in high street betting shops, and what response if any has been received from the Government?

Mr Philip Fletcher to reply as Chair of the Mission and Public Affairs Council:

A We have been concerned about these machines for a long time; in 2008 this Synod called on the government to monitor their addictive effects. Since then, MPA has been regularly involved with the issue through the Community Liaison Group of the Gambling Commission and other fora. We have pressed on Ministers the importance of the

issue. Much research has been done and some changes have been made, but the basic situation unfortunately remains as described in the question.

The Bishop of St Albans, with other Lords Spiritual, is currently seeking early opportunities to raise concerns on the maximum upper limit in Parliament and with Government.

BUSINESS COMMITTEE

Dr Graham Campbell (Chester) to ask the Chair of the Business Committee:

Q55 When the original handsets for electronic voting were introduced some years ago, the then Chair of the Business Committee said that they were a Mark One version, and that in due course, a Mark Two version would be introduced which would contain a microphone to enable members to speak from their seats and not have to go to a lectern. Do the new handsets contain a microphone, and, if so, is the intention of the Business Committee to use that facility to enable members to speak from their seats and avoid having to make their way to a lectern?

The Revd Canon Sue Booy to reply as Chair of the Business Committee:

A The voting handsets were updated recently because the software for the previous ones had become obsolete. The new handsets were chosen primarily for their reliability and security, although they happen to include a microphone function. In deciding whether to activate this function at General Synod, the Business Committee would need to take into account the following considerations: a) the practicality of activating this function; b) the feasibility and costs of amplifying speeches made using the microphones around the Synod chamber; and c) whether enabling Synod members to speak from their seats would make it harder or easier for them to be seen and heard by other members around the Synod chamber and those watching on the web cast, taking into account the limited number of fixed cameras used in the chamber.

Mrs Sue Slater (Lincoln) to ask the Chair of the Business Committee:

Q56 For what reason are the Shared Conversations referred to in the Agenda for this group of sessions as being on “Spirituality, Scripture and Mission”, when the Regional Shared Conversations have been entitled “Scripture, Mission and Human Sexuality”?

The Revd Canon Sue Booy to reply as Chair of the Business Committee:

A Given the size and role of the General Synod, the Shared Conversations at the July Synod will take a different approach to those which have been taking place in the regions. The Shared Conversations in July will enable the Synod to explore 'good disagreement' as the Church of England's national legislative body, taking into account matters of shared faith, scripture and mission, which is why they have been described in this way in the presentation listed in the February Agenda. The shape of the Shared Conversations in July will be presented in outline during the February Synod. They will include discussion on the Church's response to matters related to human sexuality in our culture.

The Revd Canon Giles Goddard (Southwark) to ask the Chair of the Business Committee:

Q57 What procedures exist for allowing the Synod to obtain reliable information on matters concerning Anglican Communion affairs?

The Revd Canon Sue Booy to reply as Chair of the Business Committee:

A Synod members are welcome to write to the Secretary General of the Anglican Communion, the Most Revd Dr Josiah Atkins Idowu-Fearon at his *Anglican Communion Office* address in London. The Anglican Communion Office produces news and updates on a regular basis.

CLERGY DISCIPLINE COMMISSION

The Revd Stephen Trott (Peterborough) to ask the Chair of the Clergy Discipline Commission:

Q58 How many complaints are made annually under the Clergy Discipline Measure; has any assessment been made of the proportion of them that might properly be considered vexatious; and what steps, if any, are being taken to reform the Measure so as to prevent it from being abused as a distressing form of personal harassment of those serving in ordained ministry?

The Bishop of Lincoln to reply as a member of the Clergy Discipline Commission:

A The latest available figures are for 2014, when 79 complaints were made against priests and deacons. If a complaint is vexatious, the bishop already has power to dismiss it at the preliminary scrutiny stage under section 11(3) of the Clergy Discipline Measure; and if he or she does so the respondent cleric is not even required to answer the complaint. In 2014, 15 complaints were dismissed in this way.

The Clergy Discipline Commission does not believe the Measure needs amending with regard to vexatious complaints, but it will give further thought as to whether additional guidance should be provided to bishops and registrars on how to deal with them.

CROWN NOMINATIONS COMMISSION

Mr Francis Spufford (Ely) to ask the Chair of the Crown Nominations Commission:

Q59 Does the CNC plan to assess the effect that the increase in the number of diocesan representatives has had on the work of the Commission?

The Archbishop of Canterbury to reply as Chair of the Crown Nominations Commission:

A The increase in Diocesan Representatives from four to six has been in place since 2005 following a decision by Synod to this effect. As Synod is aware, the central members do keep the operation of the Commission under regular review and I will discuss with them whether they would like to consider such an assessment.

The Revd Dr Hannah Cleugh (Universities & TEIs) to ask the Chair of the Crown Nominations Commission:

Q60 What specific measures are in place to ensure that the CNC is able to interview a diverse range of candidates?

The Archbishop of Canterbury to reply as Chair of the Crown Nominations Commission:

A The challenge is twofold – to ensure a diverse pool of candidates from whom members can propose people for consideration; and to ensure that any candidate who is part of a selection process is enabled to share their gifts and experience to the best of their ability. With regard to the former, Diocesan Bishops are actively encouraged to nominate candidates to the pool across the breadth of diversity. The nomination process for specific vacancies is kept as wide as possible through the announcement inviting the submission of names. We also work with groups of women, BAME clergy and different church traditions to help individuals imagine a future vocation as a bishop through training courses, creating learning groups, personal coaching and support with paperwork. As a Commission of the Church of England, voting members are also regularly reminded of the significance of the Guiding Principles.

DIOCESES COMMISSION

Canon Pamela Bishop (Southwell & Nottingham) to ask the Chair of the Dioceses Commission:

Q61 As we go into 2016, what items are on the agenda for the future work of the Dioceses Commission? For example, are there plans under consideration for the reorganisation/ reconfiguration of any existing dioceses?

Professor Michael Clarke to reply as Chair of the Dioceses Commission:

A This year is one of transition for the Commission as the terms of its current membership expire at the end of April. A substantially refreshed Commission will be considering its future priorities when it meets in June.

There are no immediate plans for a major diocesan reorganisation scheme though I continue to visit bishops' regional groups with a view to identifying geographical obstacles to mission which we as a Commission could help to unblock.

In addition to its ongoing task of reviewing suffragan sees as they become vacant, the Commission continues to engage with issues of episcopal oversight, following its Lambeth Symposium in October 2014.

The Commission also continues to encourage joint working across diocesan boundaries.

FAITH AND ORDER COMMISSION

Mrs Lorna Ashworth (Chichester) to ask the Chair of the Faith and Order Commission:

Q62 What work has the Faith and Order Commission done on the recognition of orders of other churches, and in particular of the Anglican Church in North America?

The Bishop of Coventry to reply as Chair of the Faith and Order Commission:

A The Faith and Order Commission has given significant attention to these matters since its inception in 2010. In 2013, it published a report on *Recognition by the Church of England of Orders Conferred by Other Churches*, reviewing the general criteria to be used in cases arising under the Overseas Clergy (Ministry and Ordination) Measure 1967. The report remains available on the Church of England website. A supplementary paper advising the Archbishops on the specific issue of recognition of the orders of clergy ordained within the Anglican Church in North America was then produced by the Commission in 2014.

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

Mr Philip French (Rochester) to ask the Church Commissioners:

Q63 Where is the information technology/digital strategy for the National Church Institutions set out?

Mr Philip French (Rochester) to ask the Church Commissioners:

Q64 What are the principal information technology/digital investment projects within the NCIs' remit over the next 2-3 years?

Sir Andreas Whittam Smith to reply as First Church Estates Commissioner:

A With permission, I will answer questions 63 and 64 together.

The NCIs have in the last two years undergone a significant renewal of their ageing IT infrastructure. The aim is faster and more reliable systems, improved governance and resource management, improved security and lower total cost (including better procurement).

The IT strategy for the next three years is currently being finalised and will need to be approved by our IT Governance Group and the NCIs.

The principal investments envisaged in the next 2-3 years (subject to approval following analysis of the requirements, costs and benefits) are the provision of a common Customer Relationship Management platform, improved electronic records management and data security, better business intelligence, more mobile hardware to enhance work flexibility, and an improved digital presence for the Church of England.

These investments are in line with the Renewal & Reform and Simplification agendas – they are about optimising our support for the wider Church.