

Synod calls for values-based politics based on the common good.

The Church of England offers a still, small voice of calm in uncertain times following the General Election and tragedies such as the Grenfell Tower fire, the Archbishop of York said today.

Speaking on the first day of General Synod in York, Dr John Sentamu said: "As we now seek to reassess our relationships, in our local communities, in Europe, and internationally, our goal must always be the common good of all."

His comments came as he moved a special motion on the state of the nation.

Asking what might enable community to flourish, Archbishop Sentamu said: "We must learn from our present political and economic challenges to think less about the price of things and more about the value of things.

"There will be many lessons to learn from the fire in Grenfell Tower - but we are already aware that false economies can lead to human tragedy.

"Social care, specifically the so called 'dementia tax', should be an area where we are better off working together, and taking the risk jointly.

"This issue of public sector pay has demonstrated that there is little sign of a coherent plan about how to fund the health service, education, social care, defence, housing, or transport infrastructure.

"Proposed solutions pit one section of society against another to provide the funds - either by cutting public spending for some, or increasing taxes for others. Surely the nature of communal action is that it is precisely action taken together."

The Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, said: "In the last year one of the things that has become more apparent is that our sense of identity, has become more blurred and reached some kind of crisis and culmination.

"We are a society where there are rival attempts to seize and proclaim mutually exclusive identities."

Caroline Spelman MP, the Second Church Estates Commissioner, called on the Church to be brave, look outside itself and take a lead issues such as intergenerational division and contribute with compassion on issues such as social housing and education.

The Bishop of Southwark, Christopher Chessun spoke of the response of churches in his diocese to recent attacks. He said: "The church has shown the ability to respond rapidly and hold the trust of the whole community."

The motion, entitled *After the General Election, a still small voice of calm*, was carried overwhelmingly on a show of hands.

Notes to editors

The full text of the motion was:

After the General Election, a still small voice of calm

That this Synod, mindful that the recent General Election has left many questions unanswered about the shape and priorities of our government at a critical time in the nation's history:

- a. give thanks, nonetheless, for the increased turnout and call upon all parties to build on this by addressing the causes of voter apathy and non-participation;
- b. pray for all those elected to Parliament that they will prioritise the common good of all people in everything they do, especially in negotiations between parties to secure support for a legislative programme;
- c. pray for courage, for our political leaders as they face the constraints and opportunities of uncertainty and weakness, and for the people of the nation as they too face unprecedented questions about the future;
- d. call upon Christians everywhere to maintain pressure on politicians of all parties to put the cohesion of the nation and its communities at the heart of their programmes;
- e. commend the continuing work of the churches serving the poor and vulnerable, at home and worldwide, as an example of the priorities which we hope to see in the programmes of government; and
- f. commit the Church of England to maintaining strong and generous international relations, through our dioceses, the Anglican Communion and ecumenical links, as relationships within the United Kingdom, across Europe and worldwide face new tensions and challenges.

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