

Church of England congregations will be able to share mission and ministry with a range of churches in their area more easily under plans due to receive final approval by the General Synod next month.

A long-anticipated overhaul of rules underpinning ecumenical relations is expected to open the way for parishes to take part in joint worship with more churches than previously possible.

For the first time this will include churches without a large national structure – something which will particularly affect newer independent evangelical, Pentecostal and Charismatic groups including many black-led churches.

The move - part of a drive to simplify ecclesiastical law - is among several significant legislative changes being considered at Synod which meets in York from July 6-10.

Dr Joe Aldred of Churches Together in England, who serves as an Ecumenical Representative for Pentecostals on General Synod and is a bishop in the Church of God of Prophecy, welcomed the change.

He said: “This is a great moment for relations between the Church of England and Pentecostal and Charismatic denominations and congregations, including many black-led churches, as we share the task of building the Kingdom of God in this country.

“In working together and worshipping together our churches have the potential to transform their neighbourhoods.

“The shape and style of the Church in England has changed considerably over the years and this legislation reflects the new reality on the ground.

“Through the work of the Pentecostal Presidency in Churches Together in England, I have seen just what is possible by strengthening relationships, engaging in prayer and mission together and I hope and pray this change in legislation will mean we can do even more together.”

In one of the most broad-ranging agendas in recent years, Synod will also discuss national and international issues from nuclear proliferation and responses to climate change to the future of the NHS.

There will be a major debate on the Church of England’s work on safeguarding and Synod will be asked to endorse the priorities for action outlined in the report (GS 2092) to be published with the second set of papers next week.

Synod will also have an opportunity for a detailed update on progress on the episcopal teaching document on human sexuality and marriage and to engage with those working on it through a series of seminars and workshops.

The document, due to be completed in 2020, will be entitled *Living in Love and Faith: Christian teaching and learning about human identity, sexuality and marriage*.

Synod papers published today also include the final report of the Church of England’s Cathedrals Working Group which sets out new ideas to

help secure the cathedrals for the future.

Further details on the Cathedrals Working Group report are set out in a separate [press release](#).

Notes to editors

A full set of papers from the first circulation is available [here](#). A second circulation will follow and will be available on Friday June 22.

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Source URL: <https://www.churchofengland.org/media/press-releases/new-links-between-church-england-and-black-majority-churches>