The General Synod of the Church of England has voted unanimously to approve the call of the Archbishops' of Canterbury and York "to unite in the common task of building a generous and forward looking country" during a debate on the EU referendum vote. The Archbishops added the item as urgent business to the Synod agenda, with the members' consent.
During the debate the Archbishops also warned that rushing too swiftly to reconciliation would be a mistake when the nation is still reacting to the impact of the vote.

Moving the motion the Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, said:

"Although it would be easy to be either utopian, or cataclysmic and apocalyptic, I think that Synod would be deeply mistaken to veer in either direction.

"The result has released a latent racism and xenophobia in all sectors, and challenges the prevailing consensus of tolerance and acceptance, thus threatening other areas of welcome liberalisation.

"This is a time for remembering the authority and power of God, revealed in Jesus Christ, and of the good news that we have in our hands for all people in this land. All round the world Christians suffer and yet trust. We can do no less. We are to be led by our theology, which must define our politics, our fears and our hopes.

"The clearest inspiration to those outside the church, the best way we will communicate, the way we bring hope in anxious times, is to be a holy community, and one which is recognised in its conduct as manifestly holy.

"That must mean that we keep the needs of the poorest in this country and around the world at the front of our minds. We must manage our own disagreements, whether over sexuality or other matters, with transparent love and delight, and not with words and actions that discredit the hope of unity. And we must be renewed in joyful and boundless love for each other and neighbor - expressed in action, shown in worship and prayer."

The Archbishop of York Dr. John Sentamu said:

"In situations of conflict we call for unity and reconciliation too quickly, mostly because the anger of others as well as our own is unbearably painful and we want it to end. But it can't end till it has been faced and it cannot be faced until it has been 'allowed out'. We have to find ways, not violent ways, of allowing it out.

"Meanwhile we shall not always or even usually know whether some particular rage we experience in ourselves or others is proper outrage at injustice, our own hurt pride or the result of reactivated hurts from our past. And the hard bit is that only by letting the anger out will we ever stand a chance of knowing. What often happens is a rush to attack the anger of others and expect them to calm down for the sake of a harmony that is not yet. Speaking personally, I've been there."

The original motion as proposed was amended Mrs Enid Barron (London) with the support of the Archbishops during the debate. The final text, which was carried unanimously, read:

"That this Synod, recognising the result of the recent referendum on the United Kingdom's membership of the European Union, (a) welcomes the Archbishops' call for all to unite in the common task of building a generous and forward looking country, contributing to human flourishing..."
around the world, and encourage all members of the Church of England to play their part actively in partnership with everyone in Civil Society in pursuit of this task, (b) commend the work already carried out by the Church in bringing communities together and recommend that as a minimum every bishop identify a champion in their diocese to assess what more the Church could do and to make recommendations for creating stronger and more constructive links between local communities as a basis for achieving this common task.”

ENDS

Notes to editors:

The full text of the speech of the Archbishop of Canterbury can be read here: http://www.archbishopofcanterbury.org/articles.php/5747/synod-archbishop-opens-debate-on-eu-referendum

The full text of the speech of the Archbishop of York can be read here: http://www.archbishopofyork.org/articles.php/3503/eu-referendum-debate-at-general-synod

The full debate will be available to listen to here: https://soundcloud.com/the-church-of-england