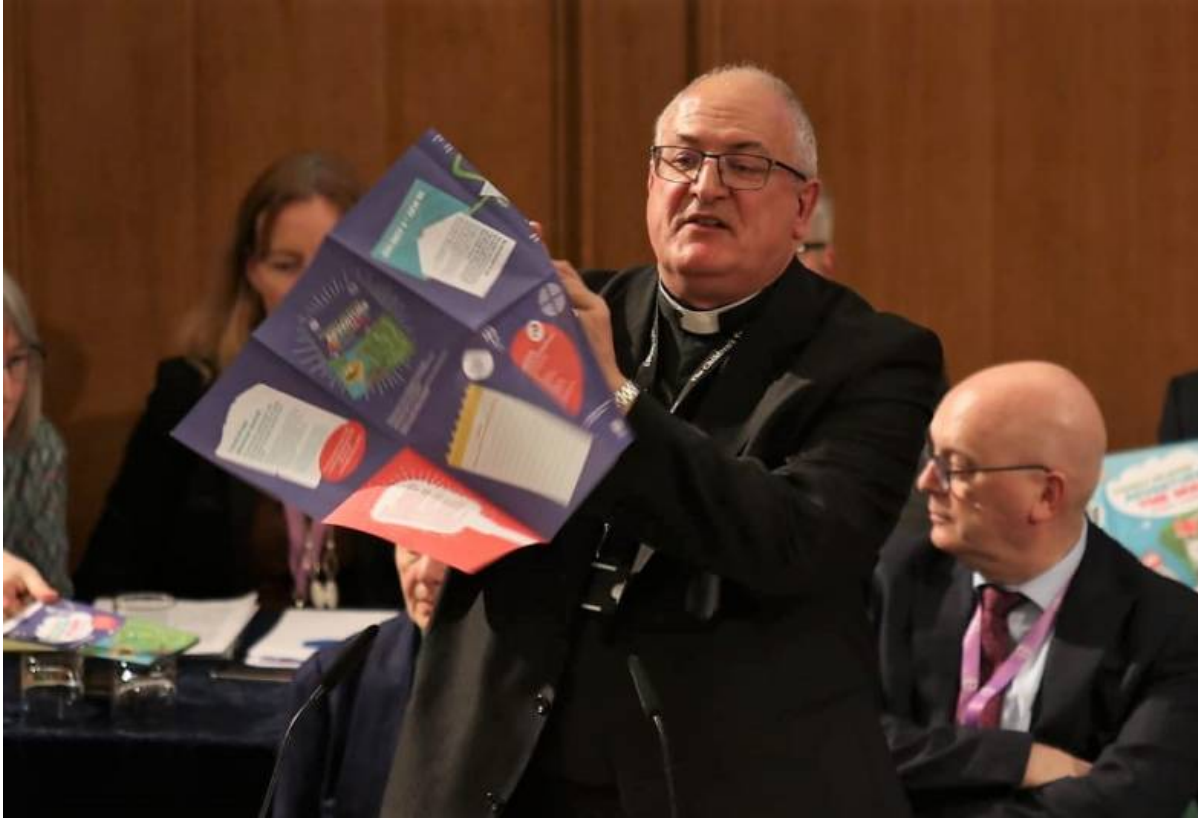


Hundreds of thousands of school children will receive a free “prayer map” as part of a new national commitment to children and young people’s ministry within the Church of England, which will focus on building confidence for families to pray at home.



A report by the House of Bishops, Growing Faith, was roundly welcomed by General Synod today, with dioceses and worshipping communities encouraged to adopt it at an early date.Â

In addition to recommendations for schools and churches, special resources will be made available to promote prayer in the home, and to increase the confidence of parents and guardians in encouraging prayer. Â

TheÂ background paperÂ noted that “parents have the largest influence on their children in matters of faith,Â” and that while 90 per cent of Anglican families thought it was important to teach their children about faith, only 29 per cent thought it was their responsibility.Â

At their February meeting, Synod members were the first to receive copies of the map, the first resource for families. It will be distributed to 300,000 schoolchildren in years 4, 5 and 6 in time for Thy Kingdom Come, the 10 days of prayer for evangelisation which runs between Ascension and Pentecost.

Meanwhile, dioceses will appoint a Growing Faith Champion within the bishop’s senior team to coordinate local adoption of the strategy.

The new report comes as research conducted by ComRes showed that 76 per cent of those who self-identified as Christian came to faith under the age of 18, with 50 per cent under the age of 11, emphasising the need for resources to be focused on youth activity.Â

The Bishop of Ely, Stephen Conway (pictured)Â introducing the motion, said that this data showed that early years were “vital for coming to faith” despite churches often focusing resources on older age groups.

“If we are not focused on growing faith with children and young people, then we are ignoring reality,Â” he continued.

“Yet it is the area of the church’s life which can be left to think about once we’ve done everything else.

“Growing Faith seeks to re-prioritise and change our church culture so that ministry with children and young people is woven through the structures of each diocese.Â

“It is not a silver bullet, but the House of Bishops is committed to championing significant change in emphasis and approach.

“It is about parishes, fresh expressions and chaplaincies and working with all schools and colleges, not just Church of England schools, and asking the question: what would it mean to see this through the lens of ministry with children and young people?Â”



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