

The General Synod has voted to back moves to lift a restriction on allowing wealthier dioceses to share their historic wealth with poorer dioceses after hearing about inequalities in finances within the Church of England.

The Bishop of Sheffield is shown in portrait mode smiling

Members approved a request to begin the process of drawing up legislation that would give dioceses more freedom to be generous with historic wealth held in Diocesan Stipend Funds (DSF) to help other less well-off dioceses.

Currently dioceses can only use the funds for certain specified purposes within their dioceses.

The Bishop of Sheffield, Pete Wilcox, Chair of the Church of England's Mutuality in Finances Group, addressing the General Synod, described the move as the 'first step' towards a conversation about the full extent of the inequalities in financial resources between dioceses.

He said: "The legislation we are proposing today would remove an existing restriction on how particular historical endowments in dioceses can be used, giving dioceses more ability, but no obligation, to be generous.

"But If you have looked closely at this motion, and know a bit about the financial challenges which were already present for many dioceses across the Church of England, even before the pandemic, you will realise that this proposal is not in itself capable of fixing the whole problem.

"But this motion is a first step which can open up for us an urgently necessary conversation about the full extent of the problem."

He added that the Mutuality in Finances Group hoped to see a new financial settlement which would enable the Church of England to be a simpler, humbler, bolder church.

More information:

- The text of the motion approved is as follows: "That this Synod request the Archbishops' Council to develop legislative proposals, to be brought to a future Group of Sessions, to give dioceses more freedom to be generous with their historic wealth to other dioceses in the Church of England, and in this way enable a more equitable sharing of this wealth."

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