

The College of Bishops has spent the last two days together, meeting for Bible study, prayer and discussion at High Leigh Conference Centre in Hertfordshire.

On Thursday Bishops began the meeting with a Bible study from Romans 12, led by the Rev Dr Isabelle Hamley, reflecting on the theme of generosity and grace. Dr Hamley discussed blessing and what it means to be a body where we all depend on one another and live interconnected lives – as individuals and part of a church, both local and global.

That led into discussions about the operation of the “Five Guiding Principles” which were agreed as part of the package of legislation, 10 years ago this year, which paved the way for the consecration of women as bishops.

Bishops then heard from members of the Standing Commission on the Five Guiding Principles, set up in 2022, and the Independent Reviewer, Maggie Swinson, who handles concerns and disputes over the operation of the arrangements put in place in 2014.

They also heard first hand examples of the experiences of female clergy, including examples of misogyny and online abuse. There were then discussions in small groups and in plenary about lessons which could be learned from the 2014 arrangements.

In the evening the bishops took part in an informal question-and-answer discussion with three special guests – the BBC’s Chief International Correspondent Lyse Doucet; the historian Tom Holland and the musician Guvna B - chaired by the Archbishop of Canterbury. Questions ranged widely over subjects from current global events and conflicts to the origins and meaning of English identity; challenges facing young people; knife crime and the need for greater public knowledge of the Bible.

This morning bishops spent time considering issues in public life and proposals for a period of prayer for the nation to coincide with the expected General Election campaign.

Turning to recent developments on introducing public prayers for God's blessing for same-sex couples, the bishops discussed how we move forward as a whole Church, pay attention to the needs of those who hold profoundly different views, and consider making commitments on what a more unified approach to these next stages of implementation might look like.

- Following the meeting of the College, members of the **House of Bishops** held a short meeting to discuss Living in Love and Faith in more detail and looked forward to the lead bishops, Bishop of Newcastle Helen-Ann Hartley and Bishop of Leicester, Martyn Snow, further developing a paper for General Synod next month.

