

GENERAL SYNOD

Report on the Archbishops' Council's activities

1. The Archbishops' Council presents this report on its activities since the July 2014 group of sessions in accordance with the requirements of the National Institutions Measure 1998. The Council is chaired by the Archbishop of Canterbury or the Archbishop of York and has met once since its last report was prepared – on 30 September.

Challenges for the new Quinquennium

2. The work of the Council and its staff is primarily focused on the themes identified for this quinquennium: Going for Growth, the Common Good and Re-Imagining Ministry.
3. The Council continues to work towards a vision of how the Church at national level can best support the work that is going on in dioceses to encourage the discipleship of the whole People of God, both lay and ordained. It considered a paper prepared by the Bishop of Sheffield and has agreed there should be a Synod debate on discipleship at a forthcoming group of sessions.

Task Groups

4. The Resourcing the Future Task Group (chaired by John Spence), the Simplification Task Group (chaired by the Bishop of Willesden) and the Resources for Ministerial Education Task Group (chaired by the Bishop of Sheffield) are due to report to the Council at the end of November and to the House of Bishops in December.
5. The Council considered the emerging themes from the Resourcing the Future and Resources for Ministerial Education Task Groups at its meeting in September. The Council has set aside substantial time at its next meeting to consider all the reports and how their findings might be disseminated to the wider Church and taken forward. Before that there will also be a joint meeting between some members of the Archbishops' Council and the House of Bishops' Standing Committee.

Governance

6. The Council continues to work to ensure that its processes, agendas and structures are best suited to carrying out its responsibilities.
7. There has for some time been a great deal of overlap between the Council (through its Board of Education) and the National Society in relation to work in education and with children and young people. The Council and the National Society have entered into a governance agreement under which the Council will remain responsible for setting policy and direction in these areas and the National Society will, in effect, act as the Council's agent. The work will continue to be co-ordinated through the Education Office.

Government, Parliament and legislation

8. The Council has responded to a government consultation on marriages by non-religious belief groups.
9. The Council also approved for circulation to the Synod draft legislation to amend the Diocesan Stipends Funds Measure 1953 to enable dioceses to manage their Stipends Fund on a total return basis (GS 1969).

Other matters

10. The Council received an update on safeguarding issues. With those in mind, the Council decided to commission work on the present law in relation to the confidentiality of the confessional (see GS Misc 1085).
11. The Council considered the motion passed by the Synod in July on the vesture of the clergy and offered some advice to the House of Bishops on how the proposed revision of Canon B8 might be pursued.
12. The Council agreed the arrangements by which decisions would be reached on the distribution of the £20 million of Government funding made available to cathedrals through the First World War Centenary Cathedral Repairs Fund.
13. It also agreed to fund a challenge to the first-tier tax tribunal against the view taken by HMRC of the definition of ‘connected charity’ for the purposes of the Gift Aid Small Donations Scheme. The Council noted that HMRC’s view is causing significant difficulty to parishes, is probably losing the Church of England several millions of pounds of potential Gift Aid each year and is regarded by Leading Counsel as wrong.

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Secretary General

16 October 2014