

GENERAL SYNOD
HOUSE OF BISHOPS
SUMMARY OF DECISIONS

Meeting of the College of Bishops, 12 - 15 September 2016

1. The College of Bishops of the Church of England met at St Hugh's College Oxford from 12-15 September 2016.
2. As is the usual pattern of meetings of the College every third year the College of Bishops were joined for part of their meeting by **bishops from the Scottish Episcopal Church, Church of Ireland and Church in Wales**. Representatives from each of the sister churches made presentations to the College and engaged fully in discussions during the first days of the meeting.
3. A wide ranging agenda included presentations and discussions on **Safeguarding, the Renewal and Reform programme, the post-Brexit political landscape, clergywomen in leadership, clergy wellbeing and issues of sexuality**.
4. Discussions on issues of **sexuality** took place as part of a process of episcopal discernment which continued at subsequent meetings of the House and College in 2016. The contents of the conversations remain private and participants have agreed not to comment on the contents of the discussions beyond their own views.

Joint meeting of the House of Bishops and Archbishops' Council, 22 November 2016

5. The House of Bishops held a joint meeting with the Archbishops' Council on 22nd November 2016 to discuss some areas of joint interest. These included the report of the **Lay Leadership Task Group** and a number of papers regarding **financial management in dioceses and cathedrals**.
6. The meeting was not held under the Standing Orders and no formal decisions were made.

Extraordinary meeting of the House of Bishops, 23 November 2016.

7. An Extraordinary meeting of the House of Bishops was held at Lambeth Palace on 23 November 2016. The House received an update on the work of the **Bishops' Reflection Group on Sexuality**. The meeting took place in private, with reflections which were shared with the wider College of Bishops at the joint meeting on 12 December.
8. At the end of the meeting, the House announced plans for material to be prepared to bring to the General Synod for initial consideration in February 2017.

Meeting of the College of Bishops on Monday 12 December 2016

9. The College of Bishops met at Lambeth Palace on Monday 12th December. The College continued with discussions on issues of **sexuality** as part of the process

of episcopal discernment which began at the College meeting in September. The discussions took place in private and participants agreed not to comment on the contents of the meetings beyond their own views.

10. The Bishops agreed to consult the General Synod in February as well as updating Synod as to where their discussions had reached.

Meeting of the House of Bishops

11. A meeting of the House of Bishops was held in at Lambeth Palace on Tuesday 13 December 2016. Those matters reported below were taken in Committee of the whole House, under SO 14.
12. The House discussed a paper from the Secretary General suggesting some improvements to the **processes of Bishops meetings**. The House agreed to the suggestions and requested the Bishop of Chester to work with the bishops of Birmingham and Lincoln on proposals to improve the effectiveness of **Bishops' regional meetings**, reporting back to the House in May 2017.
13. The House discussed a paper from the Education Office on **Students and Evangelism**. They agreed the direction of travel set out in the paper and encouraged the exploration of funding options for national and local initiatives.
14. The House held a brief review of the discussions held the previous day in the College on the report from the **Bishops' Reflection Group on Sexuality (BRGS)**. They requested that the House have a final opportunity to review the paper due to come to Synod at the meeting of the College in January 2017.
15. The House heard a presentation from the Bishop of Coventry and from the Revd Canon Gareth Powell, secretary of the Methodist Conference on the draft report containing **proposals for the interchangeability of ministries between the Church of England and the Methodist Church**. The House requested that further work be undertaken prior to publication and requested a further update at the meeting of the College in January 2017.
16. The House agreed that the proposals for changes to the **Ecumenical Measure and Canons** should proceed to February Synod as part of the overall **Phase II Simplification Agenda**.
17. The House discussed a number of items related to the **Renewal and Reform** initiative. These included a review of the progress report on the **Resourcing the Future Work stream** and approval of the **Phase II Simplification legislation** for the February 2017 General Synod. The House endorsed the report *Setting God's People Free* and the accompanying implementation plan endorsed by the Archbishops' Council and prepared by the **Lay Leadership Task Group**, and agreed that it should go forward for debate at the February 2017 General Synod.
18. The House discussed a number of matters with regards to **Safeguarding**. They voted to endorse a new **over-arching Safeguarding policy** entitled "Promoting a Safer Church" as the policy of the House. The House approved two sets of regulations on **Clergy Safeguarding Risk Assessment** and **Diocesan Safeguarding Advisors**. The House approved new practice guidance on

Responding to Domestic Abuse and voted to approve the roll-out of the new **Safeguarding Learning and Development Framework** in the dioceses. The House agreed the proposals on **Safeguarding Quality Assurance and Audits** set out in a paper from the National Safeguarding Team and requested further updates in due course.

19. Finally, the House agreed to **delegate powers** on approving Safeguarding technical regulation and practice guidance to the new **National Safeguarding Steering Group**, with the understanding that existing practices of widespread consultation in the formulation of such technical policies and practice guidance should continue.

Church House, Westminster SW1P 3AZ

January 2017

William Nye

Secretary to the House of
Bishops