

General Synod Report

The women bishops legislation was at the centre of the General Synod's agenda when it met at York University from 6 - 9 July. The agenda also included world mission, church growth, the August 2011 riots, manifesting faith in public life, church schools, and Palestine and Israel.

The meeting was preceded by meetings of the House of Laity and the Convocations (provincial synods) of Canterbury and York on the Friday afternoon. To begin the final stages of the major legislative process designed to make it possible for **women to be bishops** in the Church of England while also making some provision for those who, for theological reasons, will not be able to receive their ministry. The draft legislation was approved, by simple majorities, by the House of Laity and by both Houses of each Convocation. That opened the way for it to be presented for final approval by the whole Synod on Monday 9 July.

However, on Monday the Steering Committee for the draft legislation moved a motion to adjourn the Final Approval debate in order to enable the House of Bishops to reconsider its amendment to clause 5 of the draft Measure. After two and a half hours of discussion, that motion was approved by 288 votes for to 144 against, with 15 abstentions.

The Archbishops have announced that, following reconsideration by the House of Bishops in September, the General Synod will meet in November (19-21) in London to resume the Final Approval debate.

Other Business

Saturday saw a debate on the role of **mission agencies** and on partnership between the Church of England and other churches of the Anglican Communion. The Synod approved the following amended motion proposed by the Bishop of Bristol:

- 'That this Synod, recognizing the Church of England's historic and continuing participation in world mission as essential to our identity as members of the universal Church
- (a) welcomes the report entitled *World-Shaped Mission* and commend it to the dioceses, deaneries and parishes of the Church of England for further study;
 - (b) affirms the ongoing role of the Mission Agencies in resourcing the mission of the Church of England at home and overseas;
 - (c) affirms the continuing growth, whether through the Diocesan Companion Links, initiatives by parishes or otherwise, in the relationships between the Church of England, the Provinces of the Anglican Communion and the world Church; and
 - (d) encourages the building of continuing partnership between all involved in Church of England world mission and development relationships.'

The **mission theme** continued on the Saturday evening with a debate on the 'fresh expressions' movement, which encourages new ways of being the Church within the contemporary context, in the light of a joint Anglican-Methodist report which considers how these initiatives relate to the doctrinal understanding of what it is to be a church. Following the debate and amendments Synod supported the motion in the following form:

'That this Synod, recognizing fresh expressions as authentic manifestations of Anglican ecclesiology:

- (a) expresses gratitude to the Fresh Expressions team for its leadership, inspiration and effectiveness as catalyst to over 1,000 fresh expressions within the Church of England, and many more ecumenically;
- (b) affirms the mixed economy of church as an enduring model for ministry and mission into the future;
- (c) affirms that radical social action and comment are essential elements of the Biblical witness and Christian tradition, and therefore of any ecclesiology;
- (d) calls upon the Archbishops' Council and House of Bishops to ensure that the report Fresh Expressions in the Mission of the Church and its recommendations are incorporated into the programme to "re-imagine ministry" and are reflected in the future work of the Ministry Division, the Mission and Public Affairs Council and other National Church Institutions; and
- (e) requests the Archbishops' Council to report to the Synod before July 2014 on how the Fresh Expressions team's legacy is to be secured within the life of the Church.'

[Further aspects of the Church of England's **engagement with society** - corporately and individually - were considered on the Sunday and the Monday. The Synod debated a report on the Church's role in local communities in the context of the August 2011 riots, and also approved a Private Member's Motion expressing the conviction that it is the calling of Christians to manifest their faith in public life as well as in private.](#)

[It also received a presentation on the report *The Church School of the Future*, which looks at ways in which the Church of England can extend its role in the education system, in the context of the current changes to that system.](#)

[On the Sunday afternoon the Synod authorised **new Eucharistic Prayers** for use from 1 September at services at which there are significant numbers of children present - at a Communion service in a church school, for example.](#)

The Synod approved two Private Members' Motions. The first affirmed support for the World Council of Churches' Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in **Palestine and Israel**, for agencies working for justice and peace in the region, and for Palestinian Christians and organisations that work to ensure their continuing presence in the Holy Land. The second called for amending legislation to enable a **PCC to own land** and other property in its own name without it having to be vested in the diocesan authority and without having to have the diocesan authority's consent to dispose of it.

[Items of legislative business considered on the Saturday afternoon included the final approval of a draft Measure amending aspects of the **Clergy Discipline Measure 2003** and of a draft Measure giving the Church Commissioners power to make financial provision for the mission of the growing **Diocese in Europe**.](#)

[The Synod also received presentations on the annual reports of the Archbishops' Council and the Church Commissioners, and approved the Council's budget for 2013. It passed a Diocesan Synod Motion from the Diocese of Bradford relating to the size of the committees that elect diocesan representatives to participate in choosing diocesan bishops.](#)