

GENERAL SYNOD

Report on the Archbishops' Council's activities

1. The Archbishops' Council presents this report on its activities since the February 2014 group of sessions in accordance with the requirements of the National Institutions Measure 1998.
2. The Council is chaired by the Archbishop of Canterbury or the Archbishop of York and has met twice since its last report was prepared – on 26 March and 21-22 May.

Challenges for the new Quinquennium

3. 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.
4. The Council has given extended consideration to the findings set out in the report *From Anecdote to Evidence* (www.churchgrowthresearch.org.uk/report) and the role it can itself play in encouraging the dissemination of the report's findings and in supporting and sharing good practice around the Church. It will be returning to this very important issue in future months and ensuring that the various Task Groups that have been established (see below) are picking up the most important aspects of the research.
5. 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.
6. It also endorsed proposals for a covenant between the Church of England and the Armed Forces, both locally and nationally. The Synod will have the opportunity to debate the proposals at the July group of sessions (GS 1960).
7. The Council discussed the importance of diversity within the Church and the need to have a reliable basis of evidence on which to base future policy decisions. To that end, it agreed that the 6-yearly diversity audit of congregations should begin in the autumn.

Task Groups

8. The work of 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 (chaired by the Bishop of Sheffield) continues with cross membership between groups and meetings between the chairs to ensure co-ordinated working. The Council expects to receive reports from each of the task groups in the autumn.
9. The Evangelism Task Group (chaired by the Archbishop of Canterbury) was established by the Archbishops as one of the recommendations in a report to Synod on intentional evangelism (GS 1917). The Task Group began its work in March and will report annually to the Archbishops' Council and the Synod.

Budget 2015

10. The Council has approved a budget (GS 1959) for 2015 which represents an overall increase in the apportionment of 1.3% over 2014. This has been achieved by careful management and the targeted use of restricted, designated and reserve funds.

Stipends

11. The Council agreed a 2% increase in the National Stipend Benchmark from April 2015.

Governance

12. The Council continues to work to ensure that its processes and agendas are best suited to carrying out its responsibilities. It has established a small working group to consider a number of aspects of the way the Council conducts its business with a view to a final report in the autumn and the introduction of more streamlined procedures.
13. The Synod will be invited (GS 1950) to approve the re-appointment to the Council of Mary Chapman, Philip Fletcher and Rosalyn Murphy.

Government and Parliament

14. The Council discussed a number of current legislative and other public affairs issues of particular relevance to the Church, and agreed responses to the consultation on the future of Civil Partnerships and the HS2 Bill.
15. The Council considered legislation that will be before the Synod in July including the draft Church of England (Ecclesiastical Property) Measure (GS 1921A), the draft Ecclesiastical Offices (Terms of Service) (Amendment) Regulations 2014 (GS 1962) and possible new legislation to amend the Diocesan Stipends Funds Measure 1953 to enable dioceses to manage their Stipends Fund on a total return basis.

Other matters

16. The Council has also considered its risk register, business plans for each of the divisions and received the annual report of the Audit Committee and a half-yearly report from the Investment Committee.

Church House
Westminster SW1P 3AZ

William Fittall
Secretary General

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