

## Synod summary

The Church of England's 'parliament', the General Synod, met at York University from 8 to 12 July where members debated a range of issues. See [full summary](#) for links to background papers and audio of sessions

## Parochial Fees

Following various media reports about Synod voting against a rise in wedding and funeral fees (declined to approve the Draft Parochial Fees Order 2011) the following should clarify what this means.

Because the Synod declined to approve the Draft Order, the Parochial Fees Order 2010 which came into operation on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2011, remains in force and the fees in that Order remain payable to incumbents and to PCCs.

### ‘Extras’

The Draft Parochial Fees Order proposed an increase in wedding fees from £284 to £425, to include certain extras and to standardise the system. The Draft Order was not approved, and the provisions it contained specifying that certain costs and expenses were included in some of the prescribed fees are not in force. However, it has never been lawful for an incumbent or PCC to impose compulsory charges, over and above the statutory fees, except for genuinely optional extras (*see below*). That is because parishioners<sup>1</sup> have a legal right to receive the occasional offices of the Church and neither the incumbent nor the PCC has any power to make the exercise of that right conditional upon the payment of money. The law in that regard remains unchanged.

It is permissible for incumbents and PCCs to impose charges for certain items **if those marrying or those arranging a funeral etc genuinely opt to have them and agree in advance to the charges being made. Examples include—**

- organist, choir and other musicians (including recording fees where applicable)
- bellringers
- flowers and flower arranging (if provided by the church)
- printing of service papers (if provided by the church)
- vergers
- special heating and lighting (i.e. where the church would not otherwise be heated or lit – or heated or lit to a particular extent – on the occasion, and heating and/or lighting is therefore provided specially)

There is **no lawful authority** for an incumbent or PCC to require charges to be paid for items that are not genuinely optional, including the following—

- opening the church building for a wedding or a funeral
- use of the church building (including ordinary wear and tear to the fabric) for a wedding or a funeral

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<sup>1</sup> And certain others: e.g., in the case of marriages, those on the electoral roll of the parish or those who have a ‘qualifying connection’ with the parish.

- “administration” such as the completion of registers, booking dates for a wedding or funeral service etc.

And there is no lawful authority for an incumbent or PCC to impose an additional non-specific, ‘general’ charge or supplement in addition to the statutory fees and any charges for genuinely optional extras.

### **Future**

The Archbishops’ Council will be considering at its next meeting in September what conclusions to draw from the points made during the July debate and how best to create the conditions in which revised proposals might be brought back to Synod for approval, probably in February.

### **Minority Ethnic Anglicans**

Synod considered a report (*Unfinished Business: A Pastoral and Missional Approach for the Next Decade*) on the inclusion of minority ethnic Anglicans within the ministry and structures of the Church of England. The debate followed a presentation by the Ven Danny Kajumba, Archdeacon of Reigate and chair of the Committee for Minority Ethnic Anglican Concerns, CMEAC. After the wide-ranging debate Synod voted in favour of the motion to implement the recommendations in the report and “in order to provide a baseline against which to measure the progress to be reported in 2014, request the Archbishops’ Council to collect and publish for each diocese the current numbers of Black, Asian and other Minority Ethnic (i) clergy and (ii) laity in specified significant roles, including suffragan bishops, deans, archdeacons, residentiary canons, directors of ordinands, examining chaplains, bishops’ advisers for selection conferences and other diocesan officers.”

### **Archbishop’s presidential address**

“Two weeks ago in Eastern Congo, listening to the experiences of young men and women who had been forced into service with the militias in the civil wars, forced therefore into atrocities done and suffered that don’t bear thinking about, I discovered all over again why the Church mattered,” said the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Rowan Williams at the start of his wide-ranging presidential address. The Archbishop also spoke of the importance of listening to each other as his address preceded Synod members meeting in small groups on the theme 'Sharing the Good News for the World Today'.

### **The Church and Education – 200 years of church schools**

In this 200th anniversary year of the National Society, which promotes and resources 4,700 Church of England schools (and 172 schools of the Church in Wales), the Synod held a debate on the future of church schools and the challenges ahead. Following a presentation from the Bishop of Oxford the Rt Revd John Pritchard, chair of the Education Division, members spoke about what it meant to have a church school in their area and addressed concerns about current legislative changes in the education system. Synod approved the motion to affirm the continued importance of Church of England schools being 'distinctively Christian institutions, rooted in the life of the parishes while being open to the diverse communities they serve'. The motion also included the proposal to invite the Archbishops’ Council to report regularly in

this quinquennium on the impact of the work set out in the background report *Education and the Church: into the next 200 years* on enhancing the effectiveness of the Church of England's stake in the public education system and promoting improved standards of religious education in all schools.' Synod also approved an amendment from Professor Richard Burrige to also report back on enhancing the Church of England's involvement in the Higher Education system.

### **Relations with other Churches- ecumenical agenda**

A number of ecumenical representatives and guests were present at Synod. The Archbishop of Tirana, Durrës and All Albania, His Beatitude Archbishop Anastasios, Orthodox President of the World Council of Churches, addressed the Synod on the first day. At the Sunday Eucharist in York Minster, the Bishop of Copenhagen, the Rt Revd Peter Skov-Jakobsen preached. The Church of England is now in Communion with the church of Denmark following the Porvoo Declaration in October 2010. The Synod also considered the report of the Church of England's conversations with the **United Reformed Church** and voted for recommendations include the holding of a service in Westminster Abbey in February 2012 marking both the 350th anniversary of the separation of Congregationalist and Presbyterian churches from the Church of England in 1662 and the 40th anniversary of their coming together in the United Reformed Church.

It also debated and took note of an interim report on the second phase of the work of the Joint Implementation Commission for the **Anglican-Methodist Covenant**

### **Higher Education Funding Changes**

The forthcoming changes in the funding of higher education will have significant implications for the cost of training clergy. Synod debated a range of issues in the report *Review of Models and Funding of Pre-Ordination Training in the light of the Proposed Changes to HE Funding* and then voted to endorse far-reaching recommendations on how the increased cost can be contained, as part of the process leading to decisions by the Archbishops' Council.

### **Lay representation on Synod**

Members debated and voted in favour of a motion (amended) from the Diocese of London asking for a fresh look at how lay members are elected onto Synod. The motion read: 'That this Synod request the Business Committee to commission a thorough review of how the House of Laity of this Synod and the houses of laity of diocesan synods are elected, particular consideration being given to: whether the electorate should be some body of persons other than the lay members of deanery synods; and ensuring that the diverse membership of the Church of England is fully reflected and represented.'

### **Admission to Communion**

A motion from Bradford Diocese asking for the admission to Communion of adults who have been baptized but have not been confirmed and are not ready to be confirmed, was lost.

## **Mission Action Planning**

The Bishop of Southwell and Nottingham, the Rt Revd Paul Butler, moved a private Member's Motion calling for a 'national mission action plan' for the Church of England. Following a debate an amended motion affirming the importance of Mission Action Plans was approved. The motion called on Synod to “recognise the urgent missionary task facing the Church of England to reverse decades of numerical decline and make new disciples for Jesus Christ in every community in our land”. It also called on the Archbishops' Council to work with the House of Bishops to develop the priorities identified in *Challenges for the New Quinquennium* (GS 1815) and further outlined in *Challenges for the New Quinquennium – Next Steps* (GS Misc 995) into a national mission strategy that will support dioceses, deaneries and parishes in their own church growth and mission planning.