

INTO THE NEW QUINQUENNium

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PREFACE

To describe the Church of England as a complex institution is to run the risk of understatement. The myriad of people and bodies, many of them with their own distinct legal duties and responsibilities, give it a unique richness and diversity.

Equally, the sheer complexity can make it difficult to understand how everything fits together. This document is not designed to provide an organisational map of the Church of England. It has a more limited ambition, namely to try to describe the work that the national institutions of the Church, including the General Synod, are committed to undertake to support dioceses and parishes in their mission to all the people of this land.

Rather than produce a general account, the House of Bishops and the Archbishops' Council thought there would be value in attempting to set out for the first time in a single document a work programme covering the five years of the new Synod. It touches on the work of the Synod itself and each of the national institutions for which the Synod, in one way or another, has some measure of responsibility.

All human plans and programmes are provisional. In the course of the next five years the only certain thing is that God will lead us in ways that will continue to surprise us. Nevertheless there is a healthy discipline in regularly asking ourselves prayerfully what, by God's grace, we are seeking to achieve and reviewing how we are getting on. We believe that this document, which we commend to the Synod, will help us all in that continuing task.

As Archbishop Anselm of Canterbury said, 'I was created to see God and I have not yet accomplished that for which I was made.'

Archbishop of Canterbury

Archbishop of York

January 2006

INTRODUCTION

The life of the Church is shaped by God's mission – his passion for the world. It is nurtured through its worship and is expressed in releasing people for ministry as God's agents of change, and in its transforming engagement with the society in which it is set.

In the Church of England this work is primarily fostered in parishes and dioceses under its bishops who hold a collegial responsibility for articulating the Church's vision. At the national level it is the responsibility of the General Synod to provide a legislative framework and a 'culture' within which this work of the dioceses and their parishes can flourish. In addition, there is a range of activities- whether relating to Government and Parliament or delivering services of one kind or another to the Church- that can only be done, or can most cost effectively be done, nationally.

This document sets out the programme of work for the General Synod and the National Institutions of the Church for the next 5 years. It has been drafted in the light of the Archbishop of Canterbury's Presidential Address to the Synod in November, a copy of which is annexed. The Archbishop recognised the responsibility of Synod **'to hold and shape a vision for the Church, to seek for ways of making more things possible for the Church in its local face-to-face ministry and mission, and at the same time to look for ways of talking and acting that will somehow express what is universal and basic in our faith'**.

Some of the work of the NCIs is legislative, some inspirational and some necessarily mundane. All of it must ultimately further the mission of God and foster the mission and ministry of the dioceses while respecting their own responsibilities.

In discharging their responsibilities the NCIs will want to acknowledge the role of the House of Bishops, as part of the Synod, in articulating the vision of the Church. In doing so the bishops will want to listen to the representative voices of the Synod, the various member led bodies and their staff and the mind of the dioceses they serve. The ability of the national institutions to work as one body will best be served by a coherent vision of the mission of God that the Church is called to fulfil in the modern world.

The following pages set out:

- the **expected legislative programme** for the next quinquennium;
- **others matters relating to the unity and mission of the Church which are expected to come to Synod for debate and decision;**
- the **programme of work and service provision for which the Archbishops' Council and those accountable to it are responsible;**
- the **service offered to the Church by the Church Commissioners and Pensions Board.**

In endorsing this programme the Synod needs to accept the discipline of asking what needs to be done at 'the centre' to foster the mission of God for his Church and what is best done at diocesan and/or parochial level. 'To put ourselves at the disposal of the Kingdom of God' may require us not to do certain things but to encourage others to do them. **The NCIs, including the Synod, serve the Church and not vice versa.**

1. THE WORK OF THE GENERAL SYNOD

The General Synod consists of a maximum of 466 voting members (plus up to 10 co-opted members), together with 13 special representative (ecumenical, youth and deaf) who can participate in debates but not vote. The Synod normally meets each February for up to a week in London and residentially each July over a long weekend. Dates are held each November in case, exceptionally, a third group of sessions is required.

Legislation

This Synod will have a substantial legislative programme:

- The **Dioceses, Pastoral and Mission Measure** and associated Amending Canon and Amending Regulation which give effect to the **Toyne** Review of the Dioceses, Pastoral and related Measures — what the Archbishop of Canterbury called in his Presidential Address “a principled and careful loosening of our structures”.
- The **Ecclesiastical Offices (Terms of Service) Measure**, Ecclesiastical Offices (terms of Service) Regulations and associated Amending Canon, to give effect to the recommendations of the Review of Clergy Terms of Service (the **McClean** Review).
- Subject to the decisions the Synod is due to take in February, legislation to remove the legal obstacles to the **consecration of women to the episcopate**.

Other exercises which may lead to the need for legislation include:

- The review of **parochial fees**.
- Further consideration of the law relating to **clergy discipline in matters of doctrine, ritual and ceremonial**.
- Review of **marriage law** in relation to where marriages may be solemnized.
- Consideration of the Windsor Report’s proposal for a brief ‘Communion law’ and some form of **‘Covenant’ for relationships within the Anglican Communion**.
- **Accounting guidelines** for PCCs.
- The review of **synodical election processes**.

Ecumenical Relations

- The report of the **Anglican/Methodist Joint Implementation Commission** in 2008, which will consider how the covenantal relationship can be developed.
- The report of the **Anglican/Baptist Conversations** due for debate by the Synod in 2006.

- A probable Synodical debate on Anglican Roman relations, focusing for example, on the **ARCIC** report on *Mary: Grace and Hope in Christ*.

Reports

- A **Review of Senior Church Appointments** is due to report to the Synod in 2006, with recommendations about the appointment process for suffragan bishops, deans, archdeacons and residentiary canons.
- The Report of **the Commission on Urban Life and Faith** is due for publication in the first half of 2006.
- Other reports will include **schools, higher and further education, hospital chaplaincy and financial strategy**.

2. THE WORK OF THE ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL

The Archbishops' Council has 19 members of whom 10 (2 bishops, 4 clergy and 4 lay) are elected by the Synod, 6 appointed by the Archbishops with the approval of the Synod and 3 (the Archbishops and the First Estates Commissioner) ex officio. It reports regularly on its work to the Synod.

The Council's object, in partnership with the House of Bishops, is to 'co-ordinate, promote, aid and further the work and mission of the Church of England.' It has responsibility for overseeing the work of the permanent staff of the Archbishops' Council, led by the Secretary General, and organised in the 10 divisions set out below.

The Council works closely with the Church Commissioners and the Pensions Board. From February 2007 the staff of these three national church institutions will for the first time be located together in Church House, Westminster.

The key challenges for each division in the next five years are as follows.

The Ministry Division

- Secure the achievement of the target increase in **younger vocations**, to be agreed following the Archbishop of Canterbury's proposal in his Presidential Address. The plan for this, already in development, will be agreed, and implementation started, in the course of 2006.
- Put in place new arrangements to **train ministers for evangelism** in all its forms through **ordained pioneer ministries** by 2006/7.
- Guide the **new terms of service for clergy based on common tenure** (the **McClellan** report) through Synod. The Measure will be introduced in 2006 and the Ministry division will be closely involved in planning its implementation and providing support for dioceses in preparing for the major changes involved.
- Respond to the call of the Archbishop of Canterbury in his Presidential Address for a commitment "to **improving theological education** for the whole people of God" and the need for Synod "to show that theology doesn't kill you" by aiming for excellence in the training of clergy and Laity going into licensed ministry, through the flexible but effective implementation of the key principles set out in *Formation for Ministry in a Learning Church*. This will mean the development of regional partnerships across the country, facilitating rationalisation of colleges and courses, reviewing (by summer 2006) the present fee regime for training institutions and grant support for candidates, and working to raise standards through the introduction (by 2008) of a new quality and accountability framework for theological education.
- Conduct a **review of clergy remuneration arrangements** in time for decisions to be made in the second quarter of 2007.
- Run sufficient **selection conferences** each year for the number of ordination candidates – currently up to 52 a year for up to 832 candidates.

Mission and Public Affairs

- Work with the dioceses to take forward the agenda set by *Mission-shaped Church*, in partnership with *Fresh Expressions*. Follow up the suggestion made by the Archbishop of Canterbury in his Presidential Address that Synod remind itself annually of progress by a report or celebratory event “so that it may measure its work against the background of these new signs of what God is doing”.
- Pursue other mission activities including launching web based resources, through the Mission Theology and Advisory Group, to assist engagement with contemporary spiritualities, delivering the targets set out in *Sharing the Good News with Children*, take forward the **Youth Evangelism Fund**, and follow up the six opportunities Identified in *Presence and Engagement* in support of churches witnessing in areas of significant other faith communities.
- Draw up, by mid-2006, plans to build on the report of the **Commission on Urban Life and Faith** and continue to support the **Church Urban Fund** in its re-launch.
- Adopt a new strategy for the **Church’s role in rural communities** based on *Seeds in Holy Ground* to be debated by the Synod in February 2006.
- Champion the implementation of the recommendations of *Called to Act Justly* in support of the Committee for Minority Ethnic Anglican Concerns.
- Engage with government, Parliament, and society at large on **major public policy challenges**, bearing in mind the exhortation by the Archbishop of Canterbury in his Presidential Address that when we discuss public affairs ‘we identify what action we can take that will change us as part of the solution to what we have spoken about.’. The current agenda on which the church, working ecumenically, has something important to contribute includes, resisting proposals to legalise assisted suicide and euthanasia, embryo research, the forthcoming Mental Health Bill, chaplaincy in NHS Trusts, the response to terrorism, asylum and immigration legislation, issues of religious liberty, criminal justice policy, matters relating to marriage and family life, and issues of war, peace and international relations.
- Promote the Church’s involvement, in partnership with the mission and development agencies, in working towards the Millennium Development Goals particularly through the **Make Poverty History** Movement.
- Follow up the agenda set in *Sharing God’s Planet* it will support five diocesan environmental workshops per year.
- Encourage the development of **world mission**, through the Partnership for World Mission (FWM) and give support to the Churches of the Anglican Communion through the world mission agencies, diocesan companion links and parish networks.

Education

- Launch a new five year plan, building on the progress since Lord Dearing's report of 2001. If endorsed by Synod this will run from 2006-2011 and set a revised target, perhaps of working towards **200 additional Church of England Secondary Schools**, including academies and trust schools. The plan, supported by research evidence and the early results of the new inspection regime, will focus on the quality of provision. There will be guidance on admissions. There will also be recommendations about clergy and lay training, including a 'school in church' initiative, and an engagement with diocesan vocations advisers.
- Work with ecumenical and other partners to enhance the quality of **Religious Education and Collective Worship** for all schools.
- Implement the strategy for **Further Education** set out in the 2005 House of Bishops paper, *Pushing Further*, including spiritual and moral development for young people post 16, an infrastructure for FE chaplaincy support, and the Multi-Faith Development Programme which is being funded by the Learning and Skills Council.
- Implement the **strategy for Higher Education** set out in the 2005 Synod debate, including drawing up guidance on the recruitment, training and accommodation of chaplains and, together with colleagues in the Ministry and HR divisions working on the legislation for Clergy Terms of Service (McLean), formulate terms and conditions of employment for chaplains.
- Work with other divisions on the follow up to the Synod Report **on mutual expectations for Church Colleges and Universities**.
- Deliver the Church's **strategies with Children and Young People**, approved by Synod in 2002 and 2003 for the period to 2008.
- Provide opportunities, through CEYC and in other ways, for listening to **the voice of young Anglicans** and helping them gain a greater understanding of how to respond to God's call.
- Work to "improve **theological education for the whole people of God**" through development of Education for Discipleship programmes and the promotion of learning strategies within the Church.
- Promote the **discipleship and ministry of lay Christians** within both the world and within the Church, for example by encouraging the awareness of vocations such as teaching, and producing frameworks for non-canonical lay ministries and possible patterns of training / authorisation.
- Work to enhance the quality and scope of the Church's educational commitment through all partnerships, networks and contacts.

Cathedrals and Church Buildings

- Carry forward the agenda identified in *Building Faith in our Future* published in 2004.
- Aim to achieve a **significant and lasting shift in public funding** to benefit the maintenance and use of church buildings, taking into account the impact of VAT on church repairs and alterations through continuing discussions with government.
- Stimulate **initiatives and promote best practice in dioceses and parishes in the use and understanding of** church buildings.
- Implement the **Care of Cathedrals (Amendment) Measure**, due to come into force in 2006 which slightly amends the system for approving works to cathedrals. In parallel, continue work with two volunteer cathedrals and two dioceses, and with English Heritage and the Department for Culture Media and Sport, to rationalise the overlap of the secular and church systems.
- Work with Government and English Heritage on the formulation of the **new heritage protection system** due to be the subject of a White Paper in spring 2006 and Government legislation in 2007/8 to ensure the proposals aligns with the Church's own systems.
- Work with the Ministry Division on the parts of the draft Dioceses, Pastoral and Mission Measure which proposes **transfer of the functions of the Advisory Board for Redundant Churches to the Council for the Care of Churches**.
- Monitor, advise and respond to proposals from Government which will affect cathedrals and churches, for example **health and safety** and working at height.
- Advise the Archbishops' Council on the options available when the **National Aerials Agreement** between QS4 and the churches that chose to participate in this nationally negotiated arrangement ends in May 2007.

Communications

- Ensure that the Church's position is clearly understood in **public debates about key social and moral issues** and that its voice is heard in an increasingly crowded multi-channel media marketplace, by delivering communications that are mission oriented, pro-active, professional and integrated.
- Develop a **networked way of working across the NCIs including Lambeth** to ensure the Church is punching its weight across the board.
- Review **the Communications Training Programme** in 2006 to help those involved in the Church's mission present the Church's message with confidence and in an engaging and attractive way.
- Develop during 2006 a **network of 'advocates'** who can speak for the Church.
- Examine a range of **web based technologies** that could be used within the Church and externally to encourage effective two way communication and ensure that the Church has the right profile in the digital age, including the development of the Church's national web site.
- Raise the profile of Synod externally via the media and within the Church via web and e-mail based communications, in particular by **communicating decisions from Synod promptly and assisting members in their communications role.**
- Review the scope of **communications liaison with dioceses** during 2006/7, developing relationships with the diocesan communications officers to ensure that they receive the support they need from the centre to fulfil their role.
- Lobby for **religious and faith issues to be given proper treatment by the BBC (as the prime public service broadcaster) and other channels.** Continue to build up a programme of liaison with senior broadcasting decision-makers and regulators. Monitor implications for the church in the run up to the switch over to digital broadcasting in 2012.
- Work with the Anglican Communion Office and Lambeth Palace on the communications aspect of **the Lambeth Conference** to be held in the UK in 2008.

Central Secretariat

- Provide Secretariat support for the follow up work of the Guildford Group's Report and subsequent Synodical decisions on **women in the episcopate**.
- Continue to provide efficient support for the **meetings of the Synod, the House of Bishops and its Standing Committee, the Archbishops' Council, Business and Appointments Committee**.
- Provide staff support for the next phase of the **Liturgical Commission's** work, as it seeks to enhance the formation of clergy and readers in relation to the leading of public worship.
- Service the **Senior Church Appointments Review** due to report in 2006.
- Prepare a work programme for the **Dioceses Commission** in the light of the new powers proposed for it.
- Provide Secretariat support for the **Marriage Law Working Group** which expects to be able to introduce draft legislation for First Consideration by the Synod in July 2006 and Final Approval in July 2007.
- Produce a code of practice to accompany the House of Bishops' policy document on national **child protection work**, and guidance on the related subject of protecting vulnerable adults. From 2006 there will be a joint arrangement with the Methodist Church for undertaking child protection work in both churches.
- Support a range of ecumenical initiatives through the **Council for Christian Unity**, including those set out in section 1, exploratory conversations under the Porvoo Agreement with the Church of Denmark and others and follow up work, involving the Faith and Order Advisory Group on the renewed diaconate and Christian initiation.
- Produce reliable and regular **statistical information** to further the work of the church in parishes, dioceses and the NCIs and to undertake regular monitoring of diversity across the Church as requested by Synod in the previous quinquennium.

Finance and Central Services

- Help parishes, through the national stewardship officer and in partnership with the dioceses, **to increase the giving of their members to reach the *First to the Lord* target of 5%** of take home pay and maximize their fund raising potential.
- Work with dioceses and the wider church to develop a **strategic overview of the finances** of the Church of England and indicators that can inform and guide decision making.
- Promote discussion of the proposals in the report of the Resourcing Mission Group with a view to decisions in 2007 on the **use of the Church's national resources** in 2008-2010. In this context, explore the scope for further **mutual support** among dioceses.
- Secure in 2006 the full merger of the activities of the three accounts departments of the Archbishops' Council, the Church Commissioners and the Pensions Board in a **single Accounts Department** to provide high quality cost effective services in financial accounting, asset accounting, treasury and taxation services to the national church institutions.
- Expand the provision of **internal audit services to dioceses**.
- Harness **information technology** to improve efficient data transfer and information sharing, particularly between the NCIs and the dioceses.
- Develop the brand of **Church House Publishing** and broaden its service role from being a publishing department to become a pro-active co-ordination centre for information dissemination, including publications for sale, free literature and the Internet.
- Work with the Diocesan Accounts Group (DAG) with the production of guidance for dioceses and parishes on accounting and governance issues arising from the **new accounting framework for charities (SORP2005) and the Charities Bill**.

Legal Office

- Provide **legal advice and drafting assistance for the new legislation** set out in section 1.
- **Monitor proposed government legislation and make representations to Whitehall** on behalf of the church to ensure it takes a form which respects the life and values of the church (including the further Equality Bill, consequent amendments to anti-discrimination legislation, and legislation flowing from the Heritage Protection Review).
- Provide **advice on legal issues arising from the administration of the national institutions**, for example the implications of charitable status in relation to **governance issues** and the proposed winding up of the Central Board of Finance.
- Support the Business Committee and the Standing Orders Committee in relation to the **progressive reform of the Synod's procedures**, in particular the changes required in connection with the introduction of electronic voting (expected in 2007).
- Support the **implementation of the Clergy Discipline Measure** and revised proposals in relation to doctrinal discipline.
- Be available for legal advice and support throughout the church, including **assisting the diocesan registrars and resourcing the Legal Advisory Commission**.
- Explore the feasibility of promoting the reform of the substantial body of existing church legislation through **the repeal of obsolete enactments**.

Human Resources

- **Deliver efficient and cost effective HR services**, including support for recruitment, in relation to the nearly 500 staff employed by the NCIs, the further 400 staff solely employed by the Church Commissioners or Pensions Board and the 170 staff of diocesan bishops.
- Support the NCIs in the delivery of the targets set in accordance with ‘Called to Act Justly’ to double by 2009 the **employment of people from minority ethnic backgrounds** and to increase to 35% the proportion of **senior posts held by women within the national church institutions**.
- Design increased **flexible working patterns** for staff for implementation in 2006.
- Enhance the performance of the NCIs and diocesan bishops’ offices in relation to **health and safety requirements**.
- Provide professional support for the implementation of the Review of Clergy Terms and Conditions recommendations, (**McClean**), support the implementation group in drafting the Regulations, help **dioceses put in place local HR functions** with the right national backing to secure a smooth changeover to common tenure and produce national guidance on Ministerial Review and training for those who will conduct it.
- Support the redesign and implementation of a **national job evaluation system for use in dioceses**, working initially with eight north eastern dioceses.

Libraries, Archives and Information

- Deliver the proposals in the **Documentary Heritage Review** for an effective Libraries, Archives and Information Service across the NCIs to embrace the Lambeth Palace Library, the Church of England Records Centre, the Library for the Council for the Care of Churches and the Cathedrals Fabric Commission for England, and other libraries of the National Church institutions.
- Create an **inter- disciplinary staff structure** to manage resources for investing in project work e.g. cataloguing, electronic records management and online access to the archives.
- Create a **records management system** embracing both electronic and paper records including corporate record retention schedules, subject thesaurus and a data archive.
- Explore scope for the **advisory and consultancy services to dioceses**.

3. THE WORK OF THE CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

The Church Commissioners are an organisation with assets of over £4.5 billion. Their mission, as summarised in their mission statement, is - *to support the Church of England's ministry, particularly in areas of need and opportunity* - and their key responsibilities are:

- to obtain **the best possible long-term return from a diversified investment portfolio** in order:
 - to meet their **pensions commitments**; and
 - to provide **the maximum sustainable funding for their other purposes such as support for the work of bishops, cathedrals and parish ministry**;
- in doing so, to pay particular regard to making **'additional provision for the cure of souls in parishes where such assistance is most required'**¹.
- to administer the legal framework for **pastoral reorganisation** and settling the future of **redundant churches**.

Over the next five years, the Commissioners' key objectives are to:

- Achieve a **return from their assets that is in excess of their minimum target** (c.7.5%p.a.) and compares favourably in each asset class and at total level against appropriate benchmarks.
- Continue to **meet their pension obligations** (partly funded out of capital) and provide the Church with a stream of **non-pensions support which is rising in line with earnings inflation**.
- Help resource the Church's mission by making money available to **support bishops', cathedrals', parish and other ministry**, paying particular regard to making 'additional provision for the cure of souls in parishes where such assistance is most required'.
- Work with the Archbishops' Council and House of Bishops to follow up (in consultation with all interested parties) the proposals of the **Resourcing Mission Group** in order to develop the best way Commissioner funds can serve the Church's mission and ministry in the future, focusing on the **development of spending plans for 2008-10**.
- Use the Commissioners' links with Parliament to **help the Church gain more State help to pay towards the cost of maintaining its buildings (active as well as redundant churches)**.
- Help bring in to being the **new Pastoral Measure** (and accompanying guidance and Codes of Practice) to enable the Church to **maximise its mission opportunities**.
- Continue to seek and evaluate ways to **improve the delivery of all their activities** in line with Church-wide needs and priorities and with due regard for **ethical investment and ecological good practice**.

¹ This quotation is an extract from the mission statement of one of our parent bodies, set out in section 67 of the Ecclesiastical Commissioners Act 1840, and reinforced in the National Institutions Measure 1998.

4. THE WORK OF THE PENSIONS BOARD

The Board has 20 members of whom 11 (1 bishop, 4 clergy and 6 lay) are elected by the Houses of General Synod, 5 by the members and employers of the participating pension schemes, 3 are appointed by the Archbishops and 1 by the Church Commissioners. The Board's mission is 'to **efficiently administer the pensions, housing, retirement home schemes and charitable funds entrusted to its care to provide the best possible support and care to those who have retired from clerical and lay ministry within the Church of England and their dependants**'. The focus of the Board's work over the next five years will be on improving the efficiency of our operations, responding to the **significant changes taking place in relation to pensions legislation /administration** and working with the Archbishops Council and the Church Commissioners on a number of major policy reviews.

Pensions

- Implement the scheme administration changes consequent from the Pensions Act 2004 and Finance Act 2004 including the introduction of new administration software.
- Equip Board members to meet their new responsibilities in relation to trustee knowledge and understanding.
- Collaborate with the Archbishops' Council and the Church Commissioners on reviews of both lay (NCI) and clergy remuneration including pension provision.

Housing

- Implement the new Financial Services Authority regulatory regime in respect of CHARM mortgage activity.
- Complete the redevelopment/modernisation of the Board's supported housing network and a review of future strategy.
- Follow up and implement the recommendations of a recent review of the CHARM housing scheme.

Finance and Investments

- Implement long term arrangements for the strategic oversight of the Board's investment property holdings.
- Bed in the new global equity equity manager appointed in 2005 and regularly review the performance of all the Board's investment managers.
- Review the Board's professional appointments (auditor, actuaries, strategic investment advisers).
- Participate with the other NCIs in the implementation of the new accounting system.

General

- Review and introduce service standards for all the Board's activities.
- Look for opportunities to promote the Board's activities, extend fundraising and improve communication with beneficiaries and scheme sponsors.
- Pursue further opportunities for collaboration and the sharing of resources with the other NCIs.

**Archbishop of Canterbury
Presidential Address**

General Synod, London Sessions
Wednesday 16th November 2005

To begin by asking this audience, ‘Why are you here?’ may sound just a bit negative (shades of the wartime challenge, ‘Was your journey really necessary?’). But it’s meant as a serious and an open question. Why were you elected to this Synod? What do you and your electors hope for from your presence here?

Well, presumably, you were elected because enough people believed that you would defend and advance their vision of the Church, their sense of the priorities that confront us. And those who voted for you also voted because they believed that Synod was important enough to take time with – important enough to ask someone to sacrifice their leisure and energy over a substantial chunk of time. Both of those things ought to tell us that Synod is, in the eyes of at least some, a body that takes responsibility for the Church’s vision of itself.

And that’s why you’re here. You’re here to take responsibility for a vision. You have been elected, perhaps, to serve a particular kind of vision within the spectrum of our Church. But once you’re here, you are also committed, just by being here and praying together, to listen and look for a vision that is that of the whole Church, a vision that is in accord with God’s purpose for his people. Synod is, in the full, ancient sense of the word, a *Catholic* body, or it is nothing. It is an organ of the Church’s constant search for a fuller grasp of the all-encompassing mystery in the middle of which it lives and prays.

Synod may be a legislative body; it may be a sort of parliament; it may feel variously like a debating society, an amateur dramatic society, an interminable revising committee or a scene from *Groundhog Day*, but before and beyond all of this, it is part of our Church’s way of discerning God’s purpose for us, and it is utterly meaningless if we lose sight of that. You are here to serve and to nourish a vision, to try and find for the Church of England a sense of its mission that is strong and deep-rooted enough to be owned by the whole of our community and owned as part of the work and witness of the entire worldwide church.

That means specifics, of course, not only aspirations, and I’ll come back to what some of those might be in a minute. But I’d like to repeat something I’ve said before in this setting, asking your forgiveness for saying it yet again. To the extent that Synod is a gathering of Christians who meet for (among other things) prayer and reflection on Scripture, Synod is a sort of Church. And the ethos, the ‘feel’, of the synodical meeting can contribute, positively or negatively, to the feel of the whole Church. An inward-looking Synod, an anxious Synod, a suspicious, ungenerous or legalistic Synod, will have an impact on the kind of Church we become in the next five years. A Synod that is capable of patience where needed *and* impatience where needed, that

is primarily concerned with honest and joyful sharing of what it has been given as part of Christ's Body – that too has an impact.

But of course it is a *part* of Christ's body; and St Paul's thoughts about the members of the Body are of great relevance here. Synod serves the Church's mission, but seldom carries out that mission directly in the way that local communities do. The day we go out to evangelise on the streets of Westminster we will become a very different body. Whether we are thinking about interfaith and ecumenical dialogue, the 'fresh expressions' agenda, church schools, community regeneration and the Church Urban Fund, or the simple and central work of continuing pastoral care from birth to death, what makes a difference in the Church's work is largely there on the ground, in the local gathering of believers. It is essential to recognise the quality and depth of so much that is done and never to forget that this is what we are serving; the vision we try to hold, we hold for that work to go on and to be better supported and resourced. We live in an age cursed by over-management and over-regulation, by a confusion about where decisions are best made, and Synod is not exempt from the general curse. We need a sober realism about what our importance is: the dignity of serving the Church's mission is great; we shouldn't have to entertain exaggerated ideas of this Synod as the engine of all change.

So: we are here both to hold and to shape a vision for the Church, to seek for ways of making more things possible for the Church in its local, face-to-face ministry and mission, and at the same time to look for ways of talking and acting that will somehow express what is universal and basic in our faith. We have to beware of 'poisoning the wells' by doing our business with suspicion and hostility or lack of mutual respect. We have to remind ourselves that the Church's central focus is not on its own housekeeping, necessary as that is, but on its communication of a revealed truth and hope to the world. Given the actual business that lies before us in the next five years, how does that translate into practical priorities?

Here are a few thoughts on specific matters.

Everyone knows the threats that face us, internally and internationally, over divisions in the Communion. We are painfully aware of the quarrels over sexuality, and the tensions and complications around how we handle the question of women's ordination as bishops. I suggest two considerations for us. The sexuality debate is infinitely complicated by high levels of mutual ignorance and anxiety between 'North' and 'South', and by perceptions, not always unfair, about the uncritical use of power and influence by older and wealthier churches. If every member of this Synod made a commitment to make contact with someone in another province who is not likely to share their view, we might at least move away from demeaning caricatures on both sides. Similarly, in regard to women bishops, I suggest that we make some individual commitments. When my diocese in Wales was discussing women priests a decade ago, we arranged prayer partnerships between people on opposing sides, on the basis that we should need some ingrained habits of shared prayer and patience if we were going to carry on a common Christian life after a divisive vote. Are Synod members ready to undertake such a commitment and to commend it to the Church at large? And, in relation to the detail of the discussion on women bishops, let me simply say that I still passionately believe it is wholly worthwhile to seek for a structure that will allow what I have been calling 'interactive pluralism' in one or two

recent lectures on politics – sorry about the jargon – that is, a situation in which difference is publicly acknowledged and given space, but not regarded as an excuse for ‘ghettoisation’ or exclusion from a serious degree of shared work, shared resources and mutual responsibility.

We have already made commitments to encourage new expressions of the Church’s local life, and what has been done in a short space of time by Steve Croft and others is immensely encouraging (we already know of some 300 new initiatives, and calculate that about 20,000 people have been contacted through these initiatives; and this is only a small part of a picture whose details are being further uncovered every day). In this area, I suggest that Synod reminds itself annually about what is happening here, by some sort of report or, better, celebratory event, so that it may measure its work against the background of these new signs of what God is doing. Some of our legislative programme is about what could be called a principled and careful loosening of structures to assist the process. For this to be effective and to have integrity, we need opportunities to be clear about the difference between some of the basic principles of order in the Church and the fairly varied ways in which they are worked out. There are solid theological reasons for holding to our threefold ministerial order. But I suspect that we shall need a good deal of imagination to find appropriate ways of incarnating this order in new settings. A deacon is a great deal more than an apprentice priest, a sort of ministerial probationer. A priest is someone gifted by God with the authority to gather and give voice to the common prayer of God’s people – not a leader or manager on a secular model, not even just a teacher. A bishop is not simply a territorial co-ordinator or even just a sacramental focus, but the person who makes a community of ordained and lay ministers of the gospel work effectively in mission. So if this Synod is going to give the support it should to the continuance of the Mission-Shaped Church agenda, let it be willing to use its imagination about ordained ministry.

This reinforces the need for Synod to model for the rest of the Church the need for Christians to be a *learning community*. We had yesterday a chance for a seminar on the nature of the bishop’s ministry which I sense was well-received. I should be delighted if Synod could use this model rather more, and spend time in common reflection without votes, so as to let itself be informed and even inspired. I spoke earlier of how the very fact of being here commits us to finding a vision that is not solely ours or that of our ‘constituencies’. This kind of common engagement would say powerfully to the Church at large that we do not solve our problems by slogans, and that we cannot assume we already understand our opponents’ views better than they do themselves. And if, as I devoutly hope, the Church of England, in common with the Communion, is committed to improving theological education for the whole people of God, we as a Synod need to show that theology doesn’t kill you – indeed, that it can be a source of life and health. And in our hectic, conflict-driven, short-attention culture, wouldn’t this be one small contribution to being a transforming counter-cultural presence?

How do we carry through what we say? Synod has always been pretty expert at articulating ideas and principles, on a huge range of subjects. It would do us much good if we could, when we discuss public affairs, once again model something for the Church at large by making sure that we identify what action we can take that will change *us* as part of the solution to what we have spoken about. There is an obvious

example in the debates about environmental crisis: We do largely agree when we talk about it that it is probably the most urgent public moral issue of our time. But what is pressingly urgent for us as a Church is to make sure that we are doing those specific things in our own common life that make whatever difference we can make; which means auditing our environmental policies and practices at every level and resourcing people who can identify further changes. But this is a more general challenge, if we are to have credibility as a moral commentator. Continuity isn't always something that Synod, or the Church overall thinks about; but in fact our past discussions and decisions can build up into a huge library of well-meaning hot air if we don't review implementation regularly and exercise some self-denying ordinances about discussion that doesn't have such change in view for ourselves.

A last thought about the immediate future. Some of what I've said assumes that we shall have a creative and flexible and intellectually well-resourced body of clergy and laity. The hopes for such a laity without such a clergy are slender: can we be confident about clerical vocations? Well, God will always call those he needs for his work; the question is not about that, but about our own readiness to help in the discernment of the call and to give it voice. We are blessed by the readiness of older candidates to come forward and no-one denies their indispensable importance. But there is a challenge to do with how we really speak the language of a different generation, and it's often been said that we have let slip the priority of encouraging younger people to come and share in the work of ordained ministry. So, let's take it for granted that part of the new evangelistic initiatives we have taken responsibility for is the effective communicating of the good news to the young; then it makes sense to fill that out further by saying that it should include a challenge to think about the public ordained ministry. What would happen – a daring thought – if we set ourselves a target in this respect – whether through Synod, Archbishops' Council or the House of Bishops or all of them? If we said that by the end of the next five years we wanted to see a twenty per cent increase in the number of candidates for ordination coming from amongst the under thirties? Numerical targets are risky things, and they may be a way of inviting embarrassment – yet they may also be a way of expressing trust in God. What do you think?

There are many more matters on which we could reflect in this way. If the list I've given is dominated, in spite of everything, by concerns about the internal business of the Church (and it is, rather), that's partly because it is there that we can and must begin to change. But I hope that it may have given a few clues about how being a certain sort of Synod might help us be a certain sort of Church. Whatever we might like to think, there is no one sure-fire recipe to reverse the trends in the life of our Church that we might deplore; if our electors sent us here to do this, I'm afraid we are going to disappoint them. But I'd like to think that perhaps they also sent us here in order to serve something greater, to put ourselves at the disposal of the Kingdom of God. On the whole Synods don't renew churches – neither do archbishops, for that matter. God does, and he does so by the most extraordinarily unpredictable means and people, and our ingenuity and skill is sometimes best exercised by seeing how we can get out of God's way when he is moving. That depends a great deal on our working as a Synod in a way that suggests we really do believe that God exists; and what I have said is no more than a modest set of ideas for what this might entail.

So, in summary: take *personal* responsibility for maintaining communion as best you can in forming some new relationships, in the Church of England and more widely. Pray with people you might not otherwise pray with. Show that you are ready to learn from each other and from God, not least in how you think and plan about our ordained ministry. Work for a theologically educated church – a church that gives thanks to God and sings praise with mind as well as heart. Keep asking what visible difference (it doesn't have to be a huge difference, just a real one) any discussion or ideal or plan will make for the Kingdom of God – and if you can't answer, look again at the importance you're giving it. Find a voice to challenge younger disciples into deeper faith and fuller ministry. Above all, remember that you – we – are a community of people committed to seeing and hearing Jesus Christ Our Lord in one another.

Renewing wisdom is found in odd places. For me, one of the most penetrating spiritual commentators in the English-speaking world is the Australian cartoonist, Michael Leunig. I leave you with two extracts from a recent book of his prayers and meditations; looking for words with which to end, I found these were the ones that seemed to me to be possibly the sort of thing that our Lord might want a Christian Synod to hear.

*There are only two feelings.
Love and fear.
There are only two languages.
Love and fear.
There are only two activities.
Love and fear.
There are only two motives,
two procedures, two frameworks,
two results.
Love and fear.
Love and fear.*

*God help us to find our confession;
The truth within us which is hidden from our mind;
The beauty or ugliness we see elsewhere
But never in ourselves;
The stowaway which has been smuggled
Into the dark side of the heart,
Which puts the heart off balance and causes it pain,
Which wearies and confuses us,
Which tips us in false directions and inclines us to destruction,
The load which is not carried squarely
Because it is carried in ignorance.*

*God help us to find our confession.
Help us across the boundary of our understanding.
Lead us into the darkness that we may find what lies concealed;
That we may confess it towards the light;
That we may carry our truth in the centre of our heart;
That we may carry our cross wisely
And bring harmony into our life and our world. Amen.*

