

**Report of Proceedings**

**MEETING OF THE HOUSE OF LAITY**

**Wednesday 20 February 2019**

**Church House**

**In the Chair:**

**CANON DR JAMIE HARRISON  
(DURHAM)**

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THE CHAIR *Canon Dr Jamie Harrison (Durham)* took the Chair at 1.00 pm

*The Chair:* Welcome, everyone. Thank you for coming to this House of Laity meeting. We have until two o'clock to discuss this really important topic of clergy care and wellbeing. In a moment I am going to introduce Jacqueline, who is going to be leading our presentation and responding to our comments and our questions. Shall we just have a moment of silence and then I shall say a prayer before our meeting begins.

*The Chair* led the House of Laity in an act of worship.

*The Chair:* This is a presentation, it is not a debate, so we do not have Standing Orders, but I shall be severe with those who spend not enough time being brief, and my colleague here will note this. As I say, it is a Q&A but, please, I think Jacqueline will reaffirm the need for comment, advice and direction of travel statements. Many of you, I know, are in relationships of various sorts to clergy members, so it will be interesting to hear from you, various partners and spouses, and brothers and sisters and mothers and fathers, and everything else. Lots of us have lots of connection in this. Jacqueline, over to you, I think, and Pete as well, welcome, from the House of Clergy, hiding in the back there. We are running, as I say, until about five to two, I am going to ask Liz to sum up and then I will have a very brief mention about Article 7, which should not worry us. Okay, over to you.

*Mrs Jacqueline Stamper (Blackburn):* Chair, members of the House of Laity, Pete, and, I trust, all of you, friends. Thank you very much indeed for coming to hear an update and

to take part in the final part of the consultation on the draft Report of the Working Party on clergy wellbeing.

In this introductory presentation it falls to me to present this report briefly to the House, but the primary purpose of today's meeting is for the Working Group through us, myself and Pete Spiers, to hear any further comments or responses to the Report prior to the final drafting for the July group of sessions. Let me say it has been an enormous privilege to work as part of a fantastically gifted Working Group and to be able to focus on the issues of clergy wellbeing that clearly touch on an important and maybe undervalued element of pastoral care.

Whatever finally emerges from our work, it cannot be doubted that it has been a catalyst for a significant amount of attention being given to the issues our draft Report raises. You will be relieved to know, we do not intend to trouble you with re-presenting the contents of our draft Report, suffice it to say that based on extensive engagement with the guidelines for the professional conduct of clergy and the theological input from our consultant, Dr Margaret Whipp, the Working Party has produced a draft Covenant text in section 17, as we were instructed by General Synod in July 2017.

We have also produced a series of questions addressed, first, to clergy themselves, second to those whom they work alongside in the ministerial context in which they find themselves, usually the local church and usually you, us, the Laity, and also to the wider Church where it has specific responsibilities. In this last case, the primary, but not the

sole focus, is on the office of the diocesan bishop and the way in which in our Anglican polity a much wider network of care, support and oversight flows from that office. We wish to encourage a Big Conversation in the coming years around those questions, which we know has already begun in many places.

Finally, towards the end of the Report we have made a few specific recommendations, modest in number but significant in scope, which we hope the Church of England will wish to consider in the coming years. I will return to one of these later.

The primary purpose of today is to give this House of Synod, to whom this report is currently addressed, a chance to comment on the contents as they stand. Although we have received well over a hundred responses to the consultation, the Report before you today is the unamended draft. We felt it was right that you should comment on the same document that everyone else has commented upon. Broadly speaking, the Working Party has been very encouraged by the response, which in the main has been hugely supportive of the focus on mutual responsibility and accountability and on the care and wellbeing of the clergy household as well as of the individual.

I think it will assist the House of Laity, if only to reduce the number of speeches and comments, if I highlight some of the areas where we are giving further thought to the shape and content of what has been drafted. First, we recognise, as we know others do, that this is a document addressed currently at that rarest of Church of England breeds: the member of General Synod. It is not a document which we see landing in the laps of

the average churchwarden - and I am a very average churchwarden - or parish priest, with an expectation that they will find it user friendly. We are therefore intending to publish a short series of pamphlets, each addressed at the three audiences intended, containing the Covenant text itself, the Shared Commitments and the questions for consideration aimed at that audience.

We hope that will be of much greater use to those who need to give attention to the contents of what has to be the Synod-facing full Report. We will be thinking about how we can do this shortly. Second, there has been modest, though not overwhelming concern about the language of Covenant itself. For some, covenantal language appears inappropriate beyond the Covenant that exists between God and God's people. For others, it is hard to see how the language of Covenant is useful when it is not clear exactly who are the covenanting parties, and for a few the adoption of the language of Covenant from the military context seems inappropriate.

Having said that, it is clear that that language of the clergy Covenant is out there and is already being used to refer to this piece of work. Perhaps the cat is already out of the bag. We, as a Working Party, recognise that the analogies with the military Covenant are inexact. It was only ever intended as a starting point for our discussion and it may well be wise to leave that inexact parallel behind.

As to the language of Covenant itself, it is the case that a word used in theological circles has significance and meaning beyond that. The phrase "deed of covenant" is an example.

It may be that when seen as a non-theological use of the word, such concerns are mitigated. We would also draw critics' attention to the exploration of Covenant laid out in Dr Whipp's excellent theological essay, but we are very much persuadable to other language, if such can be found, and we would welcome your comments and ideas today.

Third, we have continued to ponder the enormous contribution that the people of God, that is to say we, the Laity, can play, particularly in the minister's local context. There is some evidence that dioceses are already beginning to think about this, but we would welcome thoughts as to how we can most effectively and appropriately engage those who might have proper concern for the wellbeing of clergy, chiefly, but not only, churchwardens and PCC members.

Throughout our conversations we have, of course, been alert to other agendas coursing through the Church, most of all *Setting God's People Free*. Although there has been little feedback in the consultation about any conflict between this priority of the Archbishops' Council and the clergy wellbeing work, it is important that Synod is reassured that we do not wish to make this a competing priority and no one is saying that it should be.

The priority of the Church of England is clear and it is *Setting God's People Free*. And, to be frank, that is where the money is going and where staff energy is directed. Clergy wellbeing is important, but it is secondary to that agenda. Our work and Report is not a central objective, nor a priority of the Archbishops' Council, and actually that may be to its advantage. We hope that many will see that if we do not have healthy, flourishing,

resilient, self-reflective ordained ministers, the chances of enabling the sort of culture change that *Setting God's People Free* envisages will be seriously limited.

Fourth, the Working Party is determined to avoid what in another military phrase is called "mission creep." It has been the death of many a Church of England initiative to have been caked in growing "What about these?", "What about this?", "Have we forgotten that?", "Has this group been overlooked." We are aware that we have overlooked significant, important considerations, simply for lack of time and space, and, where these are serious, we intend to correct our omissions. But our task is to produce a Report that is sufficiently general to be able to be of use across the diversity of the Church of England while specific enough to avoid the tendency to motherhood and apple pie. Despite the real and proper desire to cover all the bases, we intend to produce a Report that does not speak to every challenge faced by clergy, nor address every failure of the institutional Church to care. The question is, is this report capable of promoting and provoking the culture change we argue is needed in this report, so please do not expect too much of us. The more we add, the less effective the report will be.

Last, there is some concern across the Church, especially among those responsible for national and diocesan budgets, that the recommendation to explore pastoral supervision as normative is a blank cheque. We, as a Working Party, will be disappointed if this particular recommendation, which we invite the Church to ponder, should be seen as the tail which wags the dog of the wider Report or, more seriously, if the Report is ignored

because the only recommendation which comes with a price tag is allowed to dominate consideration of the Report as a whole.

Should we approve the Covenant later in the year, it does not commit anyone to any expenditure, although we hope that this recommendation will be given serious consideration, especially for those in training institutions and emerging from curacy into incumbency. It is our view, as a Working Party, that we are there to speak to the whole Church and advise on what we think is best practice. It is for others to decide whether that best practice is affordable.

It is our task, in the coming months, to provide some reassurance to the Archbishops' Council and diocesan secretaries as they face the challenges that they do. And it will be for General Synod to decide in July if it agrees with us about what we recommend. So over to you, Brothers and Sisters. We welcome your comments, your feedback, your brickbats, your bouquets. This process has always been about discerning the *sensus fidelium* on clergy wellbeing, so please do share your thoughts. Thank you.

*The Chair:* Thank you to Jacqueline. That was a very clear presentation. What I want to do is to ask you to stand in a moment, those who would like to contribute. We have heard it is not just questions, it is comments, things you think are missing, things you think need changing in some way. We are having a full recording of this, through our wonderful team at the front here, so do please give your name and your diocese and number so we can have a full understanding of what is being said. Could you please stand if you would

like to contribute? I cannot promise to know you by name but I will point at you. Do please stand if you would like to contribute. We will take three at a time.

*Mrs Alison Coulter (Winchester):* I am very honoured to be asked first. Two very brief points. Firstly, as someone who wrote the original *Setting God's People Free* Report, I just want to remind everyone that there were two parts to our Report. The first was enabling the whole people of God to be confident in their witness and the second part was about having good clergy/lay relationships. I do not see *Setting God's People Free* as a greater priority than this. I see them not mutually exclusive. I see them closely entwined. I really would not want this to be seen as something lesser, because I think it is a really important part of *Setting God's People Free*. We need the clergy to flourish for the whole people of God to flourish.

Secondly, and very briefly, if I may, a question. Have you included something about coaching? You talked about pastoral supervision, but for many of us in business and other professions, we find coaching extremely helpful.

*Ms Carol Wolstenholme (Newcastle):* I come with my colleague, Mark Emerton, both members of the Remuneration and Conditions of Service Committee (RACSC) to say, as members of RACSC, which is the Committee that looks at all sorts of aspects of clergy conditions, including wellbeing, we have been listening to the discussion up to now at RACSC. We have been taking notes of the points raised. We have a meeting on 27 February when we will consider further anything that emerges that you would like fed in.

*Professor Joyce Hill (Leeds):* I just wanted to make an additional comment. We have heard in this Report that clergy wellbeing is to be included in training, and that is admirable, necessary and an area which is not sufficiently well attended to across the board at the moment. I would like to just to add that overt conscious training in skills, skills of self-management in preparation for an unstructured job. Being a parish priest or a chaplain or any other role that one might fulfil in the Church of England, nearly all of them have structured points in them but, overall, they count as unstructured jobs. From my observation, quite a lot of the clergy lack those kinds of self-aware actual skills in managing their time, managing their diaries, managing their technology, and all the rest of it. So I would like that package to be visible within the Report at training level particularly.

*The Chair:* Do you want to respond now or later?

*Mrs Jacqueline Stamper (Blackburn):* Alison, thank you very much for that. We hope they are not competing agendas; they are mutually supportive. Coaching: yes, we have talked about coaching in the context of supervision and other appropriate support mechanisms. We welcome RACSC listening to this very much. Thank you, Carol.

Joyce, this is one of the things that is of particular concern to me and we have talked about a lot in the Working Group for the TEs in particular. I think it needs to start there. One of the concerns has been - and we have heard this from clergy and elsewhere - that

some clergy will see being asked to take on learning about time management, self-management and so on at a later stage as an extra burden. If it is something that is learnt, inculcated during training for ordination, then it is natural and it is not an additional burden. We are really very heavily dependent on the TEIs to take that message through and it is one that has recurred throughout our discussions. Thank you for that.

*The Chair:* More people, please, to stand.

*Mr Carl Fender (Lincoln):* I was interested to note that the purpose of the Covenant is to achieve culture change across the Church. I was curious as to whether or not you had considered, once the Covenant is passed as an Act of Synod, others away from here may see it in a legalistic way. Perhaps people who have a grievance against the Church, if they felt let down in some way, might try to hang their grievance upon it, which is not the intention of the Covenant. I just wonder whether some underpinning of the Covenant itself in terms of what it is there for and not there for ought to be thought about and perhaps some narrative around that could be included before it is actually passed so it is clear what the intention is to dissuade people from trying to use it in a way that it is not intended to be used for. Thank you.

*Mrs Heather Black (York):* Thank you very much for the Report. I really like the very in-depth questions that you have laid out for us for different people. My question is around the work of the local church. I am wondering what support and resources might be available to help representatives of the local church to look at clergy wellbeing with their

clergyperson. I am married to a clergyperson. I think he would really welcome it, but people may not have the confidence to have those conversations and there may be clergy people where it is a bit difficult to have that conversation. How are we going to invest in people in the local church to handle those questions?

*Mr Geoffrey Shuttleworth (Birmingham):* My observations actually reflect the previous speaker very much. I welcome this Report very much. From my personal observations, and perhaps I have been unlucky here, I recognise that the burden of being a parish clergy does present great strain and can present stresses which are difficult for the individual to deal with, with the result that there can be a breakdown of trust which has an effect, of course, on the congregation.

I see this as very much an aspirational report without perhaps so much of the practical, pragmatic and useful in it. I hope it is useful. I hope it ends up being a really useful tool. I will tell you my background here. I worship in north Birmingham. There is an inner city area and an outer estates area and in this part of Britain - not to put too fine a point on it - very few of the people who remain there are as well educated as our clergy. One of the points I pick up here from the Report: "Church members who perpetuate a critical paternalism conspire to increase the burden." I think that is very true. A lot of responsibility in this appears to have been placed upon local churches. I would like to think that they may not be as well-prepared in many areas, certainly in the area that I worship in myself, as parts of the world where some of you worship. I am really looking for effective support from the dioceses in practical ways.

*The Chair:* Thank you. Jacqueline.

*Mrs Jacqueline Stamper (Blackburn):* I think this partly answers Carl's, Heather's and Geoffrey's points. This is a work in progress. This is not intended to be a "We've passed the Act of Synod, that's it." One of the things I hope you will have noticed that is included in the Report is the establishment of the Monitoring Group with terms of reference yet to be devised. Part of that group's role, I would anticipate, would be to see the way this works out in different dioceses in different kinds of contexts and what would be appropriate resources in different contexts in different dioceses. I think that is part of that ongoing process. We have tried to make it clear that we cannot answer all of the questions in this Covenant, but I think there has to be some improvement and the Monitoring Group will be taking that on.

*The Chair:* Thank you. Others who would like to contribute?

*Miss Debbie Buggs (London):* I value this Report and appreciate all the hard work that the clergy at my church lay before in the Lord, but I do wonder what the Church leaders in China and Africa would make of this, who daily run the risk of imprisonment and hardship. Indeed, the Apostle Paul commends Epaphroditus in Philippians for nearly dying for the work of Christ. So how do we balance the normal expectation that an under-shepherd of the Lord Jesus Christ is called to live a life of sacrificial service against the need to make sure that their day-to-day work is sustainable?

*Mrs Penny Allen (Lichfield):* Firstly, thank you very much for this Report. It has received a warm welcome from me and I think the goals in paragraph 5 are admirable. I am speaking to support Joyce in what she had to say about practical skills. I have had to buy a diary for a curate and teach her how to zone out her time when she became extremely stressed. I have also taken various clergy out to lunch and tried to find out what their difficulties are when I was lay chairing. In fact, when I was lay chairing in our deanery, I felt that some of the clergy were more in need of pastoral care than the congregations were. I think that is because the stresses are many. We do want to share responsibility, and, speaking now as a patron, patronage boards give you an opportunity to talk one-to-one with clergy and support them in an entirely confidential context, which has been helpful.

The other thing that has alarmed me is the fact that I have found some clergy with no spiritual director or cell and I feel this is a major weakness from their point of view if they do have some spiritual difficulties they do not wish to discuss with the laity. About achievability, I think Joyce is right to say to you that time management for those of us who have to manage our time, and we are all here managing our time, is something that has been a real difficulty for some clergy who feel a very strong pastoral call and feel that that needs to be fulfilled at their own expense and their families' expense and there is not a great deal of focus in here upon their families who also are sustaining them and also, at times, they are finding it very challenging. Some clergy have particular difficulties with their children, they may have to move posts at an inconvenient time for their children's

exams and so forth and the whole wellbeing of the family needs looking at in this Report as well as the individual clergy.

*Mr Adrian Greenwood (Southwark):* A couple of points. The first is a very specific question. I am not too bothered about the word “Covenant”, but I would like to know why an Act of Synod. What difference will having this as an Act of Synod as opposed to a Report which is passed actually make? Along with Alison, I want to ask you to really explore the full potential of *Setting God’s People Free* and, particularly, the call for full mutuality between lay and clergy. It is my belief that if we get *Setting God’s People Free* right, then the wellbeing of the clearly will fall into place and you will have a liberated and equipped and a confident laity who will be able to support and work with the particular gifts and care resource of the clergy.

I want to end with a specific. The powers of the PCC are set out in section 1 of the Parochial Church Councils (Powers) Measure, which I would argue is very long overdue for a comprehensive review. It calls on the PCC to support the incumbent in their work of mission, and I do not think that is the language that we use any more. We talk of partnership, the whole issue around charity trusteeship has come in, and I think if clergy understood that they were leaders of a team, part of a team which was doing the mission of God, that would change a lot.

*The Chair:* Do you want to respond, one of you? Some indecision here.

*Mrs Jacqueline Stamper (Blackburn):* Just to answer Adrian's question about why an Act of Synod. The mechanism of an Act of Synod enables the General Synod to express the mind of the Church on an issue, and this was what came out of the July 2017 discussions at General Synod, and that the proposed Act of Synod would mark the beginning of a culture change towards greater awareness of our shared responsibility to promote clergy care and wellbeing and a significant move towards preventative alongside responsive care. That is one of the reasons there. Thank you, Adrian. We recognise that many, possibly most of our clergy, their service is indeed sacrificial.

Coming on to Penny's point about the stresses of family life, not all clergy are married, not all clergy have families, and sometimes the stresses on them are at least as great because they have no one at home to share the strains and stresses with. I think I have probably answered some of those other points that Penny made when answering Joyce.

*The Chair:* The Ven. Pete Spiers, please.

*Ven. Pete Spiers (Liverpool):* Thank you. What a privilege to speak to the House of Laity. I just want to make a couple of points. As I understand it, one of the things about *Setting God's People Free* is the culture shift whereby clergy would not look out at their congregations on a Sunday morning and think, "How can I get them to help me in my ministry?" but "How can I help them in theirs?" in their Monday to Friday or Monday to Sunday or whatever it is. That is a huge cultural shift and, of course, to some clergy that will be perceived as, "Oh, this is another initiative that you want me to do" rather than a

fundamental cultural change which I see *Setting God's People Free* is calling for.

Of course, in local churches there are people who are very keen to want to help their clergy, help them in their ministry, and there are other people who are not, because they see their ministry as what they do the rest of the week. That is the conversation that needs to happen and that is the shift that needs to be made. I know, personally, a few years ago it was extremely liberating when I saw in front of me a whole load of people who were doing stuff during the week and even at the door I would be saying, "So what is your challenge this week?" in a little way. I think that is what *Setting God's People Free* is.

In terms of wellbeing, for some clergy this could be perceived as yet another thing to be doing and that will not help their wellbeing. What we are trying to do is integrate all the different changes. We are very enthusiastically going to be talking about evangelism, homelessness and gypsy communities, there is just more stuff to get through, is there not, and that can be overwhelming.

On the local church and supporting them, I have come to see that when a church goes into vacancy, that is when you have got peak opportunity to have these conversations with the local church. They are looking for a new vicar and you are helping them draw up a parish profile and you could be saying to them, "Well, why do you not put in your parish profile what your commitment is to your new vicar is going to be, you know, about honouring days off and holidays and all the rest of it?" and also say, "We want a vicar that

is going to come and help us in our ministry during the week”, which is the *Setting God’s People Free*.

That is the kind of mutuality I think we are trying to get to in this and I think for archdeacons who oversee the production of parish profiles and also role descriptions, and this is another thing, and picking up another point earlier on, certainly in the role description in Liverpool we ask for people who can prioritise, delegate and manage their time. How do you get a good interview question on that for an appointment, but it is there nonetheless and the assumption is that all our clergy will be able to do that? If we ask the TEI’s to put it into their training programme they might well say, “What else do you want us to put in and what else do you not want us to do?” and there is a sense in which perhaps that is when a training incumbent and a curate can help out.

My final story on time management. A few years ago in Liverpool, a number of MDRs were coming back and saying, “We really want some help with time management”, so we put on a time management course and then we cancelled it because no one could find the time to attend.

*The Chair:* Three more please.

*Dr Jack Shelley (Exeter):* Before I retired, I was responsible for trying to set up a system for sporting general medical practitioners who also have a tendency to overwork. There are three things. Paragraph 29 should be split. It talks about the need for reflective

practice and also supervision. Now, the supervision, if you need it in pastoral training or in coaching for something else, should come out of a ministerial review, in my view, and be very much controlled by the diocese. A ministerial review should be yearly, not two yearly. But reflective practice groups should be outside the structure of the diocese, funded by the diocese, but outside the structure with facilitators, so that people can be honest about what they are going through, which they may not be in a ministerial review.

Lastly, we need a system where you can refer for psychological support when things have got too bad. Again, that psychological support system needs to be clearly in place, it needs to be available for the families of our incumbents as well as the incumbents themselves. It needs to be a self-referral type system. Okay, yes, some people might be referred after a ministerial review, but they need to be able to confidentially get help and so do the partners, and that, again, needs to be funded and be clearly available. I would like split paragraph 29 into three places because they are slightly different.

*Mr Simon Baynes (St Albans):* First of all, thank you very much for the Report. I think it would be really helpful if the group could tell us a bit about the extent that you considered the needs of non-stipendiary ministers and other ministers who are not on full stipends in what might be regarded as normal appointments, House-for-Duty ministers and the like, because I think their needs are different but equally important. If you want to put that into the analogy of the military Covenant, we are probably talking about the Reservists and the Territorial Army different from the Regular forces.

*Mrs Mary Chapman (Archbishops' Council):* I would just like to say a few words about the loneliness of leadership. I was, for ten years, chief executive of the Chartered Management Institute and it was a subject that we spent a lot of time studying and it is a subject I think that the Church has become more aware of over recent years, demonstrated by the work that is now being done for senior leadership with the bishops in the Church.

I can think of no other situation compared to a parish priest where the burden of leadership potentially weighs so heavily, because that individual not only has the responsibilities of spiritual leadership and everything that brings, but also all the practical considerations of leadership in a parish supported well or not, or in partnership or not, with the laity in the parish. That person also has, in quite an unusual situation for somebody who is actually at the top, if you like, hierarchically of an organisation, the responsibility for individual pastoral work with individual members of the community. So they are at once frontline leaders and the most senior leader. Time and time again, it has been shown that the pressures of leadership, unless they are able to be shared, take a heavy toll and some people break more easily than others, that is how we are made.

We talk about a culture change and this Report, which I welcome, has a huge number of very practical ideas in it, but I do not think it has bridged the gap, and I am not convinced that a Covenant or an Act of Synod will bridge the gap between what we do at the moment and a real understanding of what shared and distributed leadership looks like. I would add my pleas to those who have already said let us look at this as working in partnership

with the *Setting God's People Free* work and, also, let us look not just at what is done in theological educational institutions, which is important, but what is done in the period shortly, two, three years after ordination, to equip young ordained people to assume those leadership roles. The practicality of life is you do not like what it is like until you are doing it, until you find yourself in that position with the responsibility for just about everything from a crisis for one individual, to the state of the drains, to your numbers on the electoral roll that end up on your shoulders. I think we need something that is a bit less structured. A structure is great, but we need to think about how we address that cultural development, educational issue to change the way we behave.

*The Chair:* Jacqueline, do you want to comment?

*Mrs Jacqueline Stamper (Blackburn):* Very briefly to thank Jack for the suggestion of splitting paragraph 29, which is very helpful. Simon, yes, we did discuss different types of ministry and considered the TAs as well as the Regulars, but it was impossible to get every possible context in. Thank you, Mary, for that valuable contribution. I am conscious that there are lot of people who want to speak and we are in listening mode, so I will shut up.

*The Chair:* We have three more, I think.

*Brigadier Ian Dobbie (Rochester):* Paragraph 18, under Our Shared Commitments, refers to “the ordained minister follows Christ in prayer, reflection and study.” I would like to

have seen that spelt out a bit more, because I think the priorities which should rest with this are not as fulsome as they could be. What are the priorities that the clergy should have when spelt out in New Testament terms? I would have thought it comes in Acts 6:4 when the Deacons are appointed. The Disciples say at that time, "We will give ourselves to prayer and ministry of the Word." Now, whenever I have seen a survey on how much time our clergy devote to those two means of grace, it is embarrassingly small. Of course, if it is with the laity it is even more embarrassing. We, the laity, I think are substantially responsible for this unfortunate situation because we expect our clergy - and previous speakers have really alluded to this - to be accountable for far more than really the case should be. My point is this: I would like to see Acts 6:4 included in the scriptural perspectives and spelt out a bit.

*Mrs Margaret Sheather (Gloucester):* Just to share a handful of reflections from a small group that the Bishop asked to look at this Report and offer back some thoughts to the dioceses about where we stood in relation to the actions that might flow forward. We had three things I would like to share.

One is perhaps thinking about the fact that culture change is a long, slow process. We want to all engage with this very welcome Report with commitment and with enthusiasm, but let us be clear that we are working on something that is going to take us time and continued effort and not expect, in the monitoring that is mentioned, to go too far too fast and demoralise ourselves on the way.

We were a bit intrigued about who actually is the local church. I was very pleased to hear about the intended communication of some of these issues to local level once the main Report is agreed. People can interpret that in all sorts of ways and there are all sorts of structures at local level: single parishes, multi-parish benefices, people who might consider themselves to be the local church when they are only a little bit of it. We felt that some further reflection on that would be very helpful.

Finally, we thought that some parts of the Report were really cleverly and thoughtfully worded, particularly the kinds of questions we are being invited to think about, and some were slightly more tricky to get to grips with. We especially liked section 25 and the questions there, which we felt were very open and facilitative in the way they are expressed. That section is about the minister's household and that related to one final concern we had about making sure there is a balance between the local church looking to support, and so on, but not be intrusive in ways that the minister and their family might not find very comfortable.

*Ms Valerie Hallard (Carlisle):* I would like to commend the questions section. I think it was really helpful. I can see how it might be produced as a summary booklet for the local church so that it is actually a tool that can be actively used. We have recently gone into interregnum in our parish. Fortunately, the former incumbent is living in the locality, which means that I can have a conversation using those questions for the local church around

how did we do and what could we do better. I think it would be useful in an exit conversation with a church as well as preparing the profile for the future.

Secondly, I would just like to ask a question for clarification really. I wanted to know if the consultation was still open to a wider membership than just General Synod, because, in refreshing myself with the document as it came to Synod, I could see some very useful conversations in the future and some potential feedback for the consultation. I think the amount of response is rather disappointing. I hope we can all encourage if that is still open. Thank you.

*The Chair:* I will take two more questions from Lucy and Janet and then we will get a response from the folk at the front. Or Janet and then Lucy, given the speed of movement.

*Canon Janet Perrett (Ely):* On a purely pragmatic level, I could not detect where any funding is going to come from for all of this. One of the things that I think contributes very harshly on clergy is inadequate or inappropriate housing. That is something that I think is beyond the scope of this particular Report, but could well do with being emphasised to dioceses when they are making reappointments or, indeed, assisting their existing clergy.

*Canon Lucy Docherty (Portsmouth):* First of all, thank you for the Report. I found it really interesting reading. There is a slight sense of motherhood and apple pie because of the difficulty of knowing whether it would ever be properly followed through. I could not help thinking about the NHS Big Conversation, with which I have been closely involved locally

and feel very cynical about, and I really hope that our Big Conversation will not have the same overtones of going on forever with drift and no outcome. We need to try and avoid that. I know this document is not about setting outcomes, et cetera, but the comments about the questions that everybody has made are very good questions. Is it possible to have some kind of suggestions to people about doing it rather than just thinking, “Oh, this is very good? Are we ever going to do it?” I am interested about that.

The other thing is to mention about Covenant, Carl’s comment about Covenant and worrying about that. I think that Margaret Whipp answers beautifully in her theological reflection anything that people might have to fear about covenants. I really do not think we should take any concerns about the military Covenant and think anything of it, because Covenant is all about relationship, contract, it is about legal necessities. This is about our relationship, the relationship that we have with our clergy and they have with us. It is in that context, I think, that the word Covenant is so much the right thing to use.

*The Chair:* I am now going to ask for a response. You have up to two minutes. We have had 17 speakers. I am sorry for those who did not get to speak, but I presume there is still the option to write in to you and to keep in contact. Over to you guys for a response.

*Ven. Pete Spiers (Liverpool):* I am going to allow Jacqui to have the last word. If I could just go back to a few things. What we are envisaging is we bring this back to Synod in July and that it will go out to the dioceses, and it seems to me the dioceses is the proper level at which the fleshing out of these proposals should take place. That will cover

funding. Some dioceses already do reflective practice groups, for example. Not every clergy person will want to be part of such a group, but the decision can be made at the local level. I am looking at chairs of laity but I could also be talking about chairs of clergy. I know the chairs of clergy are particularly concerned about that. What are they going to do to take it forward in the local church? People like me, archdeacons, in our parish profiles and in our role descriptions, we can say that.

In Liverpool - I do not know how wide it is - we have Bishop's statements. They are produced and the Bishop can say, "We expect all our clergy to look after themselves", et cetera, et cetera. When you get to the installation of a new vicar, what we are suggesting is that there should be a local liturgy that dioceses could write, so as well as the clergy person promising to look after the people, the people are saying, "We promise to look after the clergy and to co-operate in the mission that God has given us together." I think that we can pass what we like, but it is not going to work until the decisions are made at diocesan level and that is why we are proposing the Covenant should be agreed at diocesan synods and that should provoke a discussion in deaneries and parishes in particular.

Role descriptions. Role descriptions are increasingly being used with the Ministerial Development Review. They can be added to, taken away from. Most of the clergy, in my experience, have a role description when they start and quietly put it in the bottom drawer of their desk and say, "Right, what am I really going to be asked to do?" It seems to me when a role description is agreed by a church, somehow or other there needs to be a

mechanism by which clergy can be reminded of them and they can also say to people, “That’s not part of my role description. You want me to make a priority of these two or three things, and that’s what I’m going to do, and I’m not going to do everything that you’ve asked me to do.” We invest a lot of money in clergy and laypeople primarily pay for the costs of clergy, so you have got an important voice in this debate to say how are we supporting, encouraging but making the most of this resource and how are they making the most of us as well.

*Mrs Jacqueline Stamper (Blackburn):* Thank you, everybody. It has been really helpful to listen to your comments. There were a lot of people standing who have not yet been able to speak but, yes, we are always open to more.

Lucy helpfully mentioned Margaret’s theological underpinning of our work and at the end of it she says: “Transcending all our proper concerns for just and sustainable patterns of tenure and reward, work and rest, supervision and support, remains this larger vision of sheer covenantal grace. Seeking the spirit more than the letter of the law, we long for a deeper wisdom and mutual generosity among the whole people of God, above and beyond any legalistic charter of duties, rights, and entitlements.” Thank you very much, everybody.

*The Chair:* I am going to ask Liz now just to do the vote of thanks.

*Canon Elizabeth Paver (Sheffield):* Can I, on behalf of the House, thank most sincerely Jacqueline and Pete for coming to make this presentation to us. I know when we said we were going to have a meeting of the House of Laity, some people said, “Why? A presentation? All the words that turn us off. We’re going to work longer than anybody else”, but this has been so important for us, as a House of Laity, to actually engage with this work so that we have been able to have, through all the questions that have already come and the questions that have not been asked but I hope will be written into the Working Party, so that we know that we are part of this ongoing work.

I always feel that the members of General Synod in the House of Laity are sort of an action packed group, I hope, who will go back to their dioceses, back to their parishes and inform them, share with them. I am afraid, in years gone by, I often had a doubt that some people actually spoke to their nearest and dearest and parishioners about what was going on here. It is our responsibility. It is our responsibility to take back because we are privileged - we are privileged to have had this presentation today, to engage with this work at an early stage and to offer our talents, our skills and anything we can in the place we find that God has put us to do our ministry to make sure that this work is known and it is informed.

Please, if any of you have not engaged in your parish then say, “At least it’s on the agenda”, but encourage our clergy and our laity to bring forward their particular concerns and also, much more important, their suggestions of the best way forward. If it is called Covenant or other, we want it to be the very best our clergy can have. We are very

indebted to our clergy as they are to us for our lay ministry. Thank you so much, both of you.

*The Chair:* Just very brief notices to say thank you to Adrian for being our Legal Adviser, keeping us legal; to Andrew, who is actually now working in Bishopthorpe, so is going to be finishing this time as our wonderful Secretary. Our new Secretary is hiding at the back, Jenny Jacob. Please stand up, Jenny. You are our new Secretary of the House of Laity, so if you need anything to do with the House of Laity go to Jenny.

Also, could all members of the House of Laity Standing Committee please do what they are meant to do and stand at this point. We are going to be meeting immediately on the platform. They are going to give Liz and myself some advice about Article 7. You may sit down for a moment. Article 7 business, as some of you may know - not all of us know - is around things that affect particularly worship in this context and the issue relates to Canon 39 which, as you will know, changes how parishes and benefices manage and deal with the Holy Communion services. So the question for debate tomorrow will be resolved today. The House of Laity has the ability to call for a debate tomorrow, as does the House of Clergy, so watch this space.

Thank you all very much. I hope you have enjoyed the event as much as I have. We are back here at 2.30 for our opening of formal business. Thank you.