

GENERAL SYNOD

The Emerging Church of England

Summary

1. This paper provides a very brief overview of the 'Emerging Church of England' workstreams that have been commissioned to review our strategic context, recovery, governance structures and a vision and strategy for the Church as we step out from the tightest grip of the pandemic and into the future.

The Emerging Church of England workstreams

Overview and Coordinating Group

2. In early 2020, prior to the current coronavirus pandemic, the Archbishops and House of Bishops commissioned work to discern the Church's Vision and Strategy for the 2020s, and also a review of its governance of the national church institutions. The current global and national crisis has intensified the need for this work and so it has been adapted and accelerated accordingly, with the addition of a further stream to focus on the Church of England's short-term recovery as it emerges out of lockdown.
3. The Triennium Funding Working Group has become the coordinating group for the work with the role of ensuring that the governing bodies of the Church of England are presented with a coherent approach to developments for the "emerging Church of England". The Triennium Funding Working Group, and now the Coordinating Group, is made up of members of the Church Commissioners, the Archbishops' Council and the House of Bishops, and is chaired by Bishop David Walker (Bishop of Manchester and Chair of the Church Commissioners Board). The Chairs of each of the three working groups are also members of the Coordinating Group, supported by appropriate staff.
4. The purpose and overall remit of the Coordinating Group is to renew the purposes of the Church of England and, in the light of the current context, to discern the shape, life and activity of the emerging Church of England and ensure it is sustainable; and recommend to the appropriate governing bodies proposals to ensure the necessary changes happen at the right time.
5. It remains as the Triennium Funding working group for the purposes of making major financial recommendations to the governance bodies ensuring there has been – and continues to be – significant collaborative engagement to help understand the challenges dioceses expect to face and what support might be provided by the national Church. Discussions of this group and subsequent recommendations to the House of Bishops, Church Commissioners and Archbishops' Council led to two packages of financial support being arranged in recent months as outlined in more detail in **GS 2173**.
6. The three key working groups are the Recovery Group, Vision and Strategy Group and Governance Group. The original groups included a group known as the Solvency and Liquidity Group led by Bishop Nick Baines (now complete).
7. The work is informed by ongoing research and discussion of internal and external

strategic context, and the Faith and Order Commission will feed into each of the groups in order to ensure a strong theological foundation as the work progresses.

8. Work to look at the strategic context in which the Church's mission will be active throughout the 2020s was already under way in early 2020 and has been adapted to reflect the changing context.
9. The internal context work reminds us that the well evidenced trends of decline in the church have continued for some time. Specific challenges remain about our reach in specific places, age groups and ethnicities. The changes we have started in recent years, if continued, demonstrate the potential to change things – but may not go far enough. A number of barriers, including financial and governance challenges, impede our ability to effect the change we need. And clearly, COVID-19 has accelerated the urgency and necessity of change.
10. We must consider not simply “Where is the Church and how are we doing” but also “What is happening in society?”, and “What might happen to the context in which the Church operates over the next 10 years?”, reflecting on questions and insights raised by the current Covid-19 crisis. This work will underpin and support the work of the working groups.
11. NCI staff have set up a series of roundtables with experts within and beyond the church on key themes which will affect the ministry and mission of the Church of England as we respond to the changing social context. These sessions have included groups of economists and experts on secularisation/desecularisation, technology, demographic and environmental change, resourcing the Vision and Strategy Group with research papers and insights on nationhood, identity and the state, on political trends, trends in inequality and welfare provision. environment, technology and demography. All this work is aimed at understanding the impact of the immediate crisis in terms of longer-term trends and social shifts.

Recovery Group

12. As detailed in **GS Misc 1249**, para 28-33.

Vision and Strategy Group

13. Bishop Stephen Cottrell, incoming Archbishop of York, has been asked to head a group to put forward a new strategy for the Church of England. Using the Five Marks of Mission of the Anglican Communion as a starting point this group will think about the purpose, shape and activity of the Church of England, discerning what must be its key strategic priorities for the next ten years and beyond. This work had been commissioned in early 2020 prior to the COVID-19 crisis, but is now of course being undertaken with this context very much in mind.
14. An initial reflection is that the vision for the Church of England in the 2020s should be about glorifying God and enjoying him forever, witnessing to God's love and working together for the coming of God's kingdom. At its heart will be a renewed commitment to Christ in worship, service and witness. The five marks of mission will provide the overarching framework within which the life and ministry of the Church of England will be ordered and developed from which some specific strategic priorities for the next ten years will flow. This work encompasses both vision – an overall sense of purpose and calling – and also strategy – what we believe God is

calling us to do in this time to fulfil that purpose, what resources, tools and gifts we have, and how best we can make use of them.

15. In creating vision and strategy for an institution as complex and multifaceted as the Church of England an iterative, consultative and emergent methodology will be required.
16. There will be three phases which are distinct but linked through the continuous presence of a core Group to give the process a coherent basis. Phase 1 involves an initial consultation group of ten people from diverse backgrounds This group will develop preliminary ideas. Phase 2 will involve large consultative sessions with a group of 125 from right across the Church over three days to test and refine together a set of strategic propositions - what God is calling us to be - that will shape our model of church for the 2020s. The approach to this consultation will be challenging, working at pace, collaborative and we pray, transformative. There will also be a similar wider consultation with the Bishops in September. Phase 3 involves an implementation/delivery group. As the vision develops, we will know what kind of group and people will be required to crystallise and flesh out the vision and strategy, alongside the core members. The final report will be presented at the December 2020 House of Bishops and then presented to General Synod in February 2021.

Solvency and Liquidity Group

17. This group was led by Bishop Nick Baines, supported by a number of bishops and appropriate staff. Its brief was to obtain a snapshot of current diocesan financial realities and ask what these tell us about future viability, to establish a common voice for bishops regarding financial pressures, to promote a realistic debate in the House of Bishops about commitment to medium- and longer-term solutions to the financing of dioceses and to identify potential structural and dynamic ways of acting as One Body.
18. Having completed this work, the Group made recommendations for further work which were agreed by the House of Bishops and will be included in the scope of the working groups on Vision and Strategy and governance under the auspices of the Coordinating Group. The Solvency and Liquidity group, having completed its work has been disbanded. The House of Bishops will continue to receive a frequent high-level account of how the current solvency and liquidity questions are being addressed and mitigated in the light of necessary change in the immediate, medium-term and longer-term.

Governance Group

19. The work is in its early stages, informed by the work of the Solvency and Liquidity group. A small working group, chaired by Bishop Nick Baines, will shortly be established and will be consulting with a wide range of internal and external stakeholders as it puts together its recommendations.
20. The Governance Review Group was set up at the request of the Archbishops and House of Bishops in December 2019. The Terms of Reference of the Review are as follows:

To review the effectiveness of the governance structures for and across the national functions of the Church of England, and to make recommendations to the Archbishops for possible changes to improve the functioning and effectiveness of those structures, processes and activities.

21. The Governance Review is likely to have two main outputs:

- **Non-legislative** recommendations for improvements in the governance and work of the national structures which do not require primary legislation, and which could therefore be introduced over the period 2021 – 2022
- **Legislative** recommendations for improvements in the governance and work of the national structures which would require primary legislation, and which could be brought forward during the forthcoming Synodical Quinquennium, which is expected to last from 2021 to 2026.

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