

## **GENERAL SYNOD**

### **Summary of decisions by the House of Bishops and by its delegated committees**

**March – November 2020**

1. This summary of decisions includes a summary of decisions made by the House and by committees delegated under standing orders to handle business on its behalf.

#### **THE HOUSE OF BISHOPS (HOB)**

2. Due to the pandemic, from the end of March 2020 the House of Bishops increased the frequency of its meetings. After the 10 March meeting which took place at Lambeth Palace, all subsequent meetings of the House were held remotely using Zoom software.
3. All the matters reported were taken in a Committee of the whole House under Standing Order 14.

#### **House of Bishops 10 March**

4. The House considered the situation with regards to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic.
5. The House approved proposals to establish two Church of England working groups: one on Vision and Strategy and one on Governance.
6. The House considered the draft book of resources for the “Living in Love and Faith” project. The House agreed to delegate approval of the final version of the book to the LLF bishops. The House agreed to commit themselves to supporting the learning process as opened up by the ‘Invitation’ and set out in the ‘Letter’.
7. The House took note of plans to establish an LLF “Next Steps” group chaired by the Bishop of London and expressed their support for the process of engagement by the whole Church of England with the LLF resources.

#### **House of Bishops 3 April**

8. The House met for the first time by teleconferencing facility.
9. The House assessed the evolving situation with regards to the pandemic and the impact of their decision to close the churches during the lockdown period. The House requested the Secretary General to continue his dialogue with representatives of the Diocesan Secretaries on a range of matters with regards to the handling of the pandemic.
10. The House took note of an update from the Bishop of Chelmsford on the working groups on Governance and Strategy.

11. The House heard an update on the formulation of the 2021 Budget and plans to offer financial assistance to cathedrals and dioceses during the pandemic. They requested that a long term budget planning exercise be established, including a re-consideration of the apportionment model.
12. The House considered a paper from the Ministry Council on interim arrangements for ordinations and training during the pandemic.
13. The House agreed to postpone the release of the LLF resources (originally scheduled for July) until later in the year given the situation with regards to the pandemic.
14. The House endorsed the decision made by the Archbishops to request an Order in Council in order to extend the life of the current General Synod by 12 months.
15. The House noted the decision made by the Archbishops to cancel the July 2020 General Synod and to hold a shorter Synod in November 2020 to despatch urgent legislative and other business.
16. The House requested the Secretary to the House of Bishops and the Clerk to the Synod to look into the options for operating an unofficial 'virtual' meeting of General Synod members in the absence of a July meeting of the General Synod
17. The House commended prayer materials prepared by the National Liturgy and Worship Adviser for the celebration of Easter during the lockdown period.
18. The House agreed to extend the mandate of the House of Bishops Delegation Committee as a Committee of the House for a further five years from 1 January 2021.

### **House of Bishops 28 April**

19. The House received an update on plans for an informal meeting of Synod members in July. The House approved plans to explore legislative options to enable Synod to meet remotely on an official basis should it need to do in the future.
20. The House endorsed the establishment of two new Working Groups: the Recovery Group and the Solvency and Liquidity Group to contribute to the Church's policy-making and future planning during the pandemic.
21. The House endorsed the revised role of the Co-Ordinating Group to oversee and join up the activities of the various groups on Recovery, Solvency and Liquidity, Vision and Strategy and Governance.
22. The House agreed that it should meet more frequently during the pandemic in order to hear regular updates on the progress of the groups.

### **House of Bishops 5 May**

23. The House heard a series of updates on the evolving situation regarding the pandemic and the Church's response to it.

### House of Bishops 13 May

24. The House considered a series of matters arising from the Emerging Church groups.

### House of Bishops 19 and 21 May (meeting interrupted due to software failure and resumed on 21 May)

25. The House considered the ongoing situation and heard from a number of the Emerging Church Groups including the Recovery Group. The House took note that Government restrictions were likely to lift from 1 June.
26. The House agreed to delegate the decision on how to respond to the Government's announcement on 1<sup>st</sup> June to the Recovery Group:
27. The House voted agreed that the guidance from the Recovery Groups should be sent directly to Diocesan Bishops, Archdeacons and Deans.
28. The House voted unanimously in favour of a formal Vote of Thanks to the outgoing Archbishop of York.

### House of Bishops 9 June

29. The House considered the on-going situation with regards to the Pandemic.
30. The House voted to approve a series of Guidance Notes from the Recovery Group, including guidance on Holy Communion, ordinations and opening churches for individual prayer.
31. The House agreed that funerals can take place in church buildings following guidance from Public Health England
32. The House noted and endorsed the proposals for remote Safeguarding (C2) training for ordinands during the pandemic.

### House of Bishops 24 June

33. The House considered a paper from the Solvency and Liquidity Group and agreed the following proposals:
  - The **Governance Working Group** to explore questions arising from the relationship between the House of Bishops, the Archbishops' Council and the Church Commissioners, bringing proposals for any change.
  - The **Governance Working Group** to establish a review of the process and rationale for potential diocesan reorganisation – including lessons learned (both positive and negative) from the West Yorkshire Scheme – considering the potential for regional collaboration or reorganisation.
  - The **Vision & Strategy Working Group** to include in its work an assessment of how the quinquennial goals have impacted the Church of England, and what Renewal & Reform and the Simplification Process tell us about future direction.

- The ***Vision & Strategy Working Group*** to conduct a transparent assessment of how a commitment to the mutuality of dioceses might generate a mission- and growth focused sharing of (inherited) wealth, paying attention to a nationally coordinated enterprise to generate new streams of income for the Church ('the giving of the living').
  - In order to keep both reality and urgency before our eyes, the ***Coordinating Group*** ensures that the House receives 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.
  - The ***House of Bishops*** to make frequent agenda space to share 'emergence' stories and strategies from dioceses and identify what are the key issues/questions facing them.
  - The ***Solvency & Liquidity Working Group*** should be disbanded.
34. The House agreed to postpone a farewell dinner to Archbishop Sentamu until it was feasible to meet in person but agreed to take up a collection for a farewell gift.

### **House of Bishops 8 July**

35. The House received updates from the Emerging Church Groups.
36. The House reviewed the interim arrangements for consecrations during the pandemic.
37. The House heard an update from the Bishop at Lambeth and the Legal Office on the work to reform the Clergy Discipline Measure. It endorsed further work on aspects of CDM reform.
38. The House took note of the arrangements for the upcoming informal virtual meeting of Synod members.

### **House of Bishops 22 July**

39. The House heard updates from the Emerging Church Groups.
40. The House discussed a paper on Legislative Reform and Simplification. They endorsed the proposals to look at clergy terms of service and pastoral reorganisation.
41. The House discussed the report of the Implementation and Dialogue Group on the Five Guiding Principles and approved its publication subject to some minor amendments.
42. The House also discussed the 2021 Budget, Safeguarding and Anglican Communion matters.

### **House of Bishops 4 September**

43. In their first meeting after the summer break, the House spent time reviewing in detail the work and outputs of the Emerging Church Groups.

44. The House considered a paper on Holy Communion and the Distribution of the Elements and noted that a study day on this matter would take place on 26 October for all Bishops to attend.
45. The House looked ahead to a number of upcoming policy matters for the autumn period, including Safeguarding, the publication of the Living in Love and Faith Resources, meetings of the General Synod and work to establish an Archbishops' Commission on Racism.

### **House of Bishops 29 September**

46. The House discussed the work of the Emerging Church Groups.
47. The House heard an update on national Safeguarding activity and the forthcoming publication of the IICSA report on 6 October.
48. The House engaged in a period of Reflective Practice to consider the Church's response to the pandemic and to identify learnings for the future.

### **NATIONAL SAFEGUARDING STEERING GROUP (NSSG)**

#### **National Safeguarding Steering Group 2nd April 2020**

49. The NSSG agreed that safeguarding paperwork, policies and processes need to focus on culture change in all areas of the Church. It should be centred around the fact that mission and ministry should be putting safeguarding at the heart of their work and embedding safeguarding into theological DNA.
50. The NSSG agreed for the PCR2 project not to contain the review of deceased clergy files and for this to be done in a separate workstream.
51. The NSSG endorsed a survivor and victim support scheme, in which financial compensation and life help and advice would be provided. Members agreed for a funding proposal to be taken to the Archbishops' Council.
52. The NSSG acknowledged that many Diocesan Safeguarding Advisors were being furloughed, which breaks the lawful requirement for Dioceses and Cathedrals to have Safeguarding Advisors. It was agreed that the National Safeguarding Team should make contact and ensure that each entity has appropriate safeguarding support.

#### **National Safeguarding Steering Group 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2020**

53. The NSSG agreed for the NST to prepare a proposal for a pilot phase of additional support to regional dioceses/cathedrals. The pilot would be two streams, one being managerial roles providing regional supervision and one being supervisory roles sitting centrally within the NST.
54. The NSSG agreed that the House of Bishops should read NSSG papers and raise concerns and issues directly with the NST.
55. The NSSG supported the proposed Quality Assurance Framework.

## **National Safeguarding Steering Group 8<sup>th</sup> September 2020**

56. The NSSG agreed for a message to be sent to Diocesan Bishops to show recognition around the difficulty that is being experienced regarding the Leadership Pathway Training module and Bishops should use their discretion to decide who should do the training at present. The statement should also provide reassurance that the training will be reviewed to make clear who should undertake the training. The NSSG agree to report back to the HoB in the next month.
57. The NSSG agreed to support the survivor support scheme in principal and that progress needs to be made quickly but following members' feedback, further work needs to be done first and a more detailed paper needs to be brought back to a future NSSG meeting. The AC also needed to have approved the budget increase on 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2020 for this to move forward.
58. The NSSG agreed more clarity is needed on how members can feed safeguarding dialogue into other groups they are part of and vice versa. The Chair encouraged all members to actively promote safeguarding and create culture change.
59. The NSSG endorsed the survivor engagement remuneration proposal.
60. The NSSG endorsed the Survivor Reference Group Funding and agreed it should be factored into the national safeguarding budget.

## **National Safeguarding Steering Group 12th October 2020**

61. The NSSG agreed to provide a written report to the House of Bishops, endorsing the recommendations of the IICSA report, committing to urgently bringing forward the work to fulfil the promises made, emphasising the work required on culture change, accountability, and independence.

## **DEVELOPMENT AND APPOINTMENTS GROUP (DAG)**

### **Development and Appointments Group (DAG)**

#### **27<sup>th</sup>-28<sup>th</sup> May Decisions**

62. DAG agreed that an additional meeting would be required in late June/early July to discuss the programme outline of SLDP Cohort 4.
63. It was agreed that the Discernment process for SLDP Cohort 4 should be completed by the end of 2020. For the discernment process, Diocesan Bishops would be given the choice of two options as to how to nominate candidates – expression of interest, or nomination by the bishop and their senior staff.
64. It was agreed that DAG should retain close contact with the working Groups that had been established in response to COVID-19 and which were beginning to explore emerging church issues.

65. DAG supported the ongoing work of the group has been set up tasked with looking at Cathedral Ministry and how it can be made more open to diverse groups.
66. DAG agreed the main features of an approach to increasing UKME representation and inclusion, which they have been shaping alongside various groups in the Church.
67. DAG agreed that a Mini-MBA programme for Bishops and Deans should be run. A provider would be identified over Summer and potential participants in the group are being agreed.
68. DAG agreed that they should be alert to issues of Bishops' wellbeing during the COVID-19 pandemic and noted the ongoing work on this and wider clergy wellbeing.

## **2<sup>nd</sup> July Decisions**

69. DAG agreed the design proposals for a more condensed SLDP Cohort 4 programme and the arrangements for the discernment process were agreed.
70. DAG agreed the process for developing the mini-MBA and the process for engaging with potential providers.

## **29<sup>th</sup> September Decisions**

71. DAG agreed the core leadership themes for learning programmes over the next few years.
72. DAG noted the ongoing cross-NCI work in relation to inclusion and diversity and agreed areas of specific focus and reallocation of budget (subject to approvals) to bring additional focus to this work.
73. DAG agreed budget proposals to be submitted to the Archbishops Review Group and the Bishops and Cathedrals Committee.
74. DAG agreed that work on Episcopal Lists should be deferred until conclusions of the Emerging Church groups and the impact on Episcopal ministry became clearer.
75. DAG also agreed that an automatic review of individuals should take place when they have been on the Episcopal List for five years.
76. DAG agreed, following a presentation on the THRIVE material, that further consideration of Bishops' wellbeing was necessary.
77. DAG agreed the pilot of a social indices indicator for the SLDP discernment process.

## **ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES**

### **Meeting via Zoom 2 June 2020**

78. The Council received a report on the Tree of Life Community in Leicester.
79. The Council received a progress report on the revision of the Safeguarding Policy for religious communities

80. The Council received a report on the revision of A Handbook of the Religious Life. It is hoped to publish this on the religious communities website. The Handbook will form part of the Guidance that the House of Bishops will issue in accordance with section 9 of the Canon on religious communities.
81. The Council made some further amendments to the Religious Communities Regulations.
82. The Council received reports concerning the following communities: The Society of the Franciscan Servants of Jesus and Mary at Posbury Saint Francis, the Community of the Glorious Ascension, the Community of Saint Laurence, the Community of Saint Peter at Woking, the Society of the Sacred Mission and the Sisters of Charity.

William Nye  
Secretary to The House of Bishops  
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