

# **Report of Proceedings 2020**

## **General Synod July Meeting of Synod Members**

**Saturday 11 July 2020**

**Informal Virtual Meeting**

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## **Saturday 11 July 2020**

THE CHAIR *Miss Debbie Buggs (London)* took the Chair at 10.30 am.

*The Chair:* Welcome to this meeting of Synod members. We will start the day with a minute's silence to reflect on and remember those who have been affected by Covid-19. To help us to do this I will read a few verses from Psalm 90, starting from verse 12:

Teach us to number our days aright, that we may gain a heart of wisdom. Relent, oh Lord! How long will it be? Have compassion on your servants. Satisfy us in the morning with your unfailing love, that we may sing for joy and be glad all our days. Make us glad for as many days, as for as many years as we have seen trouble.

(A minute's silence was observed)

## **INTRODUCTIONS AND WELCOMES**

*The Chair:* Welcome again to this meeting of Synod members held by Zoom. We have been practising over the past few weeks and we hope to be able to provide a seamless experience; however, if something goes wrong or there is an extended pause, someone will try to explain what is going on. This is the first time we have done something like this, so please bear with us if there are any glitches. Should this session end abruptly, please check your email as the Synod staff will send an invitation to resume the meeting.

As members cannot unmute themselves, if you are called to speak a member of staff will send you a request on Zoom to unmute yourself. You will need to accept that invitation in order to be heard. The Chairs will remind you of this at the start of each item. As with the formal session, this meeting will be live streamed and will be recorded and made available after the event on YouTube. Welcome to those watching our proceedings. We now move to a time of worship.

## **OPENING WORSHIP**

*Revd Michael Gisbourne (Chaplain to the General Synod)* led the Synod in an act of worship.

*The Chair:* I invite the *Revd Canon Sue Booyes*, Chair of the Business Committee, to address the meeting. It is expected she will speak for up to ten minutes.

*Revd Canon Sue Booyes (Oxford):* My friends, welcome to your study, your kitchen, your garden or wherever it is you find yourself this morning. I am missing your company

at Vanbrugh Bar already. I probably will not detain you for the full ten minutes but, in these strange times, as we learn to be Christ's body in new ways, I want to introduce this unusual meeting of the General Synod to you.

The Business Committee was asked by the officers of Synod to plan an agenda for an informal meeting of the Synod. This meeting has limitations because we cannot currently legislate nor pass any binding resolutions when we meet in this way. However, during this informal meeting, Synod members can see one another on screen. We can hear from one another about the way the Church has been navigating through and learning from the Covid-19 crisis both nationally and locally and we will all be holding particular people in our hearts and minds as we meet.

We shall have the opportunity to hear from the Presidents, including from his Grace, the Archbishop of York, for the first time speaking in a presidential role. We have the opportunity to ask questions, as we would in a normal Synod, and worship together in that physically but not spiritually distanced way that has become familiar over past months.

Despite the informal nature of the meeting, we will use the Standing Orders as far as possible as a guideline and discipline. The Synod staff and the Chairs deserve our heartfelt thanks for their willingness to meet the challenge of enabling this informal session and for steering us through the agenda. Please express your thanks by exercising patience with any pauses or hiccups that might appear.

As usual, I would like to remind you of the Code of Conduct and draw your attention to the House notices that were emailed yesterday afternoon to save me speaking at greater length this morning. Please do remember that you will be muted and that, if you go on and on and on, you may well be cut off. If you need any technical help you can email Synod Support and, if the meeting stops unexpectedly, let me remind you again to check your emails for the new link.

Before I close, I want to comment on arrangements for future meetings. There is formal business that the Synod must do before the end of the year. We are due to meet between 23 and 25 November and no one can say whether it will be possible to hold that meeting in the usual way.

As I have already made clear, we cannot enact formal business in a meeting such as this without legislative change. So the Synod officers and staff have been working hard to find a way through this and it seems clear that the only solution is for the Synod to meet and enact legislation to permit formal online meetings to take place. We plan to do this safely and effectively by holding a special session of the Synod to pass legislation allowing us to schedule a virtual meeting of the General Synod.

It is most likely that this special session will take place on 24 September from 10.00 to 3.30. We will need your help and co-operation in achieving a Synod which is small

enough to meet safely and large enough to be quorate. I know that we can rely upon you for this and that you will cooperate with the Prolocutors and the Chair and Vice-Chair of the House of Laity, who will be in touch.

Finally, with thanks again to the staff and the Chairs and to you for tuning in, I hope you enjoy this highly unusual meeting of the Synod. I have one final request: that, as far as possible, you will keep your camera on so that we retain that sense of meeting together as the Body of Christ. God bless you. Enjoy your day in company on screen.

## **PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS**

*The Chair:* That concludes our introduction. Next on the agenda is the Presidential Address which I am advised will be just over 20 minutes long. Therefore, it is likely that we will be ahead of the timetable and we may take the 15 minute break slightly earlier than indicated. I invite the Archbishops of Canterbury and York to address Synod members.

*The Archbishop of York (Most Revd & Rt Hon Stephen Cottrell):* First of all, a very warm welcome to the York Synod. Though I am sorry you are only here virtually, I very much hope that next year we can gather in person. Could I also take this opportunity to pay tribute to my dear predecessor, Sentamu, thanking him and Margaret for all their faithfulness. I received the baton from a very great Archbishop of York through whom God was very clearly at work.

Which leads me to scripture: In Galatians 1.16, Paul speaks of the God “who set me apart from birth, called me by his grace, and was pleased to reveal his son in me”. Some translations of the Bible lose their nerve at this point and say “reveal his son to me” instead. But the Greek text is clear: God is revealed in Paul and, as Rowan Williams said in the retreat address to the last Lambeth Conference (when we were able to have such things), “Every calling, every vocation in the church of God, is a calling to be a place where God’s son is revealed”.

This seems like a good place for me to start. Over the past few months we have all experienced a stripping back of our lives. This has been painful and illuminating in equal measure. Denied access to our church buildings, having to fast from the sacraments themselves, learning how to live each other without being able to meet or touch, enduring long periods of isolation, we have come face to face with ourselves and through that discovered with alarming clarity that we are the places where God is to be encountered and it is in us and through us that God can be made known to others.

Do not misunderstand me, I hugely miss our church buildings and our liturgy, just as I also miss going to the cinema and eating in restaurants or just having a coffee. And I grieve that I was not able to say goodbye to the Diocese of Chelmsford in the ways that

I wanted, nor am I able to hold my new grandson without donning a mask. And I cry out for the pain all of those socially distanced funerals, the thousands of people who have died alone, the baptisms, weddings and ordinations that have had to be postponed, the economic hardship which is around the corner and the devastating impact of this pandemic upon the whole life of our world.

But neither can I deny that it has forced me to encounter things about myself which I had allowed to remain hidden behind the security of the things I have had to relinquish. The journey of the Christian life is a journey where, one by one, we learn to let go of things that we thought were so important until there is only Christ, or should I say only the Christ who has through his death and resurrection and through the outpouring and indwelling of His Spirit revealed the God who is community and invites me - and you and everyone - to find ourselves in Him.

This, of course, is the heart of our message: Christ can save us and make us whole. In the desert monasteries of the third century, Abba Moses instructed the novices, "Go to your cell and your cell will teach you everything". We, the Church of Jesus Christ, are being purged. We are being asked to consider what really matters and where shall we put our trust and upon what things shall we depend. Therefore, this never was and never should be a weary debate about whether we should be the Church Online or in our buildings.

Just as there cannot be two Christs, so can there only be one Church. But I believe that God is calling us to be a Church of glorious and profligate diversity, though like all outrageously beautiful buildings this must be established on the firmest foundations. As many of you will know, I have been asked to lead a process in our Church that will map vision and strategy for the next ten years.

The vision is the easy bit. It is unchanging. It is what God has done for us in Jesus Christ and continues to do through the power of the Spirit, offering to the whole world a vision of a new humanity and the invitation to that fullness of life which we find in God. We, followers of Jesus Christ, are the ones in whom this life is revealed. We are called to live it and share it joyfully.

Spirituality and evangelism go together. We give from the overflow of what we have received. However, in every age and with both the limitless resources of the Spirit and the very constrained resources of our own time, abilities and finance, we have to make decisions about what our priorities should be and how they will work themselves out through the complex and dispersed diversity of a Church like ours. There have been one or two speculative reports in the press about what this group may or may not be proposing.

What I can assure you at the moment is that we have reached no conclusions but hope to bring to this Synod next year a number of propositions to discuss and this is where decisions will be made. At the moment, I am engaged in a very wide-ranging

discussion with people from all across the Church but with a particular determination to draw in and listen to the voices of younger Christians and all those whose voices are not usually so easily heard in a Church which is still overly dominated by a particular, usually white, usually male, usually with a certain sort of education, usually over 60 kind of voice.

Some of the conclusions we will come to are not hard to predict. I am sure we will be asking ourselves to have a renewed intimacy with God, a deeper love of worship and the sacramental life, a greater commitment to scripture and a desire that every Christian person becomes the place where God is revealed.

The hard thing will be working out what we can and should do with the time and resources at our disposal and, therefore, also what we might have to stop doing. I am excited by this work. Please pray for me and for those with whom I am working and please be patient. To give you a taste, a flavour, of our longings for this work, I have asked three members of our co-ordinating group to share a one minute hope for our Church as we move forward.

I have also asked Archbishop Justin, who has commissioned this work, to say a few words. In sharing the Presidential Address in this way, I hope that we can begin to model a more collaborative style of working. Jesus sent them out in pairs, and this is how Justin and I intend to work together. This is how God invites the whole Church, setting all God's people free to work together, bishops, priests, people, even the General Synod.

*Revd Dr Sharon Prentis:* My hope as we undertake this process is that it would allow us to discern what the Holy Spirit is saying. That by being attentive to a variety of voices from different backgrounds, especially those who are not normally part of our consultative processes, we can truly be an intercultural, that is a Church that represents all cultures, ethnicities and backgrounds, an intergenerational, a Church of all ages and an inclusive Church in Christ.

*Mr Ben Doolan:* It has been a real privilege to be part of the group that has been having some preliminary discussions about where we feel God may be calling us as the Church of England over these next few years. It is my hope and prayer that, as God's chosen people, we will be more joyful, more confident and more willing to take risks for the sake of the good of news of Jesus Christ and the Kingdom of God.

One of the things that has emerged as we have been discussing together is that children, young people and young adults must be at the heart of everything that we do. This is not because we want to see the average age of the Church of England come down, although we do; it is not even because these people are the Church of tomorrow, but it is because we believe passionately that children, young adults and youth are the Church of today.

They have so much to teach us. They have so much experience to bring and, in this new world that we find ourselves in, having them not just play a part but be at the centre of our life is going to be invaluable to us. We long to see this generation come to know the good news of Jesus and play a full part in the Church of England.

*The Rt Revd Dr Emma Ineson:* I am delighted to be helping with this process of discerning a refreshed vision and strategy for the Church of England for the next ten years. I think a key theme that has already emerged for me is the need for an absolute focus on lay discipleship. Above all, I think we need the Church to be the Church, by which I mean all of God's people, mostly lay, some ordained, released, inspired by the Holy Spirit and growing as disciples of Jesus, living out Christian faith in everyday lives, wherever and however God calls us. And I think if we saw this truly begin to happen, the world and the Church would be transformed overnight.

Yes, we need to look at governance and structures and stuff, but this is about the basic idea that God's people will find a new confidence in the Bible, discover gifts and ministries and be able to respond to the challenging issues of now, racism, mental health, the environment, with a Christian voice. So from the very oldest to the very youngest, my prayer is that, through what emerges in this process, God's Church will rise up and be who she is meant to be, not so that we will look great but so that everyone will come to know that Jesus Christ is Lord. To the Glory of God the Father.

*The Archbishop of Canterbury (Most Revd & Rt Hon Justin Welby):* Stephen, it is an extraordinary feeling after all these years to find myself with a different Archbishop of York and, like you, I want to start by saying how grateful I am to Sentamu. What huge shoes you have to fill, as I do with my predecessor being Rowan. And I want to thank him now too for the advice he gave me over the years and the guidance he gave me and the inspiration he gave me. But I am fascinated by what you are saying. I love that phrase that I keep hearing you use, from Abba Moses, "Go to your cell and your cell will teach you everything".

And this picture you have painted in the first part of your address about God stripping everything away from us, it reminds me of a story that you may have heard me tell before, which is of a man who ended up as a cardinal, was then an Archbishop of what was then Saigon in 1974.

He was arrested when the communist conquered South Vietnam and turned it into Ho Chi Minh City. He was arrested a few weeks later, stripped of his clothes, his name, everything, a number put his on his arm and thrown into the hold of a ship and taken north for nine years of solitary confinement. Extraordinary man - Van Thuan was his name. He died a few years back. And I remember him saying, "As I lay in the hold of the ship, the Holy Spirit said to me, 'now you have only me'."

The same thing, that stripping away, which is surely what has been happening to the Church, not just over this period of lockdown but even more so, steadily, almost

imperceptibly, over the last 70 years. It is not something to worry about or complain about. It is the work of God and you have said so much about this previously and you continue to speak about it. I am so excited about working with you.

If we go back in history, there have been good relationships between Archbishops of York and Canterbury and I have enjoyed one of those. And there have been more difficult times, going back to the 12th century where they came to a fist fight in front of the king - probably a mistake. With you I do not think there will be a fist fight - at least I hope not - but I think there will be a friendship. It will be a friendship based on difference.

You have talked about the diversity of the Church. It is in that rich diversity that we find the presence of Christ because God has created lavishly more than is necessary in terms of the world and the creation and also the different types of human beings. And, in Christ, he has called us to be the one new person, individually and collectively, for the Church to be the image, almost the word incarnate, the good news of the Gospel made flesh. You and I agree on that.

We agree on the need to differ and love. We agree on the need to communicate the good news of Jesus Christ. We agree on the need for a simple Church. I think that the next few years are going to be a huge adventure - not a retreat, not a defeat, but an adventure of exploring our way into being a new Church in a new world.

Primates from the Anglican Communion last week, or three weeks ago actually now, said, "The world has changed. We must forget our differences and become one Church for the sake of Jesus Christ". I think it is something we need to take hold of. Thank you so much for giving me a bit of space as this symbol of collaboration, in your Presidential Address.

*The Archbishop of York (Most Revd & Rt Hon Stephen Cottrell):* So, finally, we need to remember that the Gospel is for the world. As well as being a painful opportunity for encounter with Christ and Christ alone, this lockdown has brought much misery and enabled us to see more clearly many of the ingrained dis-eases in our society.

The pandemic has not been a great leveller, as some suggested. Those from black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds and those who are poor have suffered disproportionately, yet at the same time we have changed our understanding of whose work really matters. The person who drives the delivery van, the person who stocks the shelves in the supermarket, we have learned to appreciate their labour.

Meanwhile, with planes standing idle on the runway and cars on the drive, the planet itself was able to heave a sigh of relief. As we move towards a new normal, it is by no means inevitable that we will learn from this. It is, I am afraid, just as likely that opportunists and extremists will try to seize the controls. What is needed is a coherent narrative about how we inhabit the planet and order society.

That narrative is given to us in Christ. Christ shows us what humanity is supposed to look like. Christ shows us that we are meant to live in community with one another and with God. Christ commissions us to be stewards of God's creation and the midwives of the new creation. Therefore, we need to be bold in sharing with the world those values and principles that can shape a different way of living where everyone has a fair share and a fair opportunity and a different way of inhabiting the planet where we learn to live in a sustainable way.

But values and principles do not exist in a vacuum. They arise out of the beliefs and practices which are the foundation of our faith. It is because Jesus is Lord, because he has taught us that God is our Father, that we are able to recognise each other in our diversity as sister and brother, one humanity inhabiting one world. We are able to denounce prejudice, racism, homophobia and exclusion of any kind. We are able to be both just and merciful because the world belongs to God, not us.

We know how we should behave with each other and with the world and we also know that we get it wrong. Where that failing is acknowledged, let us be merciful and forgiving. It is what Jesus requires of us as the sign of a different world. Repent. Turn around. Live differently. I am very sorry for the mistakes I have made and for the ones I almost certainly will make in the future. But I will be honest about them. I will seek to learn from them. I will try to build a safe and loving Church that is merciful and just.

So, dear General Synod, as we enter some turbulent times and some challenging decisions, we are just going to have to learn how to love one another, love the world and love God, so that both individually and collectively we can be the place where God is revealed.

We have not always been so good at this. We have allowed ourselves to become tribal and divided. We have sometimes allowed secondary things to obscure our belonging to each other. The Holy Spirit reveals Christ in us and through us, so may we learn afresh how to live and share this Gospel in the world.

*The Chair.* Thank you. That concludes the address of the Archbishops of Canterbury and York and we now have a 15 minute break for personal reflection and refreshments. The meeting will resume at 11.30 am for question time.

THE CHAIR *Very Revd Andrew Nunn (Dean of Southwark)* took the Chair at 11.32 am.

## **QUESTIONS**

*The Chair.* Welcome back, members of Synod. It is very good to see you all here. We are now going to move to Item 4, questions. There have been an, I think I can say, unprecedented number of questions for this meeting, 131 in total. There also have

been a large number of supplementary question submitted in advance, as we have been able to do for this particular meeting.

The questions are going to be handled in two different sessions, this one and then this afternoon. Members have been sent a full questions Notice Paper, so you should have that with you. Those wishing to ask a supplementary, even if you have already submitted one, need to raise the blue hand because I am only going to be calling people whose blue hands are raised. And, then, we just need to think of ourselves back in our normal Synod chamber: please give your name, Synod number and diocese and, of course, you will have to unmute yourself when I call you.

Can I also remind you, as always, that, in questions, supplementary questions have to be a question and not a speech and I will be ruling questions out of order if they are not a question or if they are asking for an opinion.

There will be a minute to ask a question and a minute to answer the question and I have the terrific power of muting you when you go over that time limit and I will be doing that without fear or favour, so for both questioner and answer it will be a minute. We are now going to move to the questions.

## **HOUSE OF BISHOPS**

1. *Revd Canon Wyn Beynon (Worcester)* asked the Chair of the House of Bishops: Please could the House confirm the status of the Revised Catechism in the teaching of the Church of England?

*The Bishop of Exeter (Rt Revd Robert Atwell)* replied on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops: The Revised Catechism was most recently approved under Canon B2 (Of the approval of forms of service) by the General Synod in 1995, with effect from 1 January 1996 until further resolution of the Synod. Accordingly, it is authorised for use in the Church of England in accordance with Canon B 1 (Of conformity of worship) as an alternative to the Catechism in the Book of Common Prayer. Its approval under Canon B 2 conclusively determined that the Synod was of the opinion that the Revised Catechism was “neither contrary to, nor indicative of any departure from, the doctrine of the Church of England in any essential matter” (see the Church of England (Worship and Doctrine) Measure 1974, section 4 (Safeguarding of doctrine)).

2. *Mr Brian Wilson (Southwark)* asked the Chair of the House of Bishops: Has the House of Bishops discussed the Divorce, Dissolution and Separation Bill before or during its passage through Parliament?

*The Bishop of Durham (Rt Revd Paul Butler)* replied on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops: The House has not discussed this Bill.

The MPA Council made a substantial submission to the Consultation process preceding the Bill. This was the subject of the answer to a question at a previous Group of Sessions. MPA particularly stressed opposition to the concept of “no fault” divorce.

The Bishops of Carlisle, Portsmouth and Salisbury made interventions during the passage of the Bill through the House of Lords.

They spoke in favour of amendments on relationship support, and commented that the Bill created more problems than it solved.

3. *Mr Jeremy Harris (Chester)* asked the Chair of the House of Bishops: Noting the recent extensions of legalised abortion in the UK, what is the position of the Church of England regarding abortion?

*The Bishop of Carlisle (Rt Revd James Newcome)* replied on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops: As it has consistently done, the Church of England continues to oppose abortion in principle while seeking to show love and compassion to all involved.

The Church of England combines principled opposition to abortion with a recognition that there can be strictly limited conditions under which it may be morally preferable to any available alternative. This is based on our view that the foetus is a human life with the potential to develop relationships, think, pray, choose and love.

Women facing unwanted pregnancies realise the gravity of the decision they face: all abortions are tragedies, since they entail judging one individual’s welfare against that of another (even if one is, as yet, unborn).

Every possible support, especially by church members, needs to be given to those who are pregnant in difficult circumstances and care, support and compassion must be shown to all, whether or not they continue with their pregnancy.

*Mr Clive Scowen (London):* Why then has the House not publicly opposed (a) the Government’s decision to allow DIY home abortions during the Covid-19 emergency, even though that not only kills the unborn child but poses major risks to the health of the mother; and also opposed (b) the proposed amendments to the Domestic Violence Bill which would have decriminalised abortion up to 28 weeks; and (c) the unwanted imposition of extreme abortion laws in Northern Ireland. And will it now respond to the Government’s consultation by vigorously opposing the proposal to legalise DIY home abortions on a permanent basis?

*The Bishop of Carlisle:* With regard to the first part of the question, the Government assures us that this is a temporary measure in recognition of the fact that attendance at clinics has not been helpful during lockdown. If there was any suggestion it would be permanent, we would vocally oppose it. The second part, these were amendments put to the bill in the House of Commons. The bill has not yet come to the Lords. When it

does come to the Lords, we will respond to them there. We cannot speak against amendments in the Commons.

With regard to the Northern Ireland regulations, Mr Scowen may know that I spoke against those regulations when they came to the Lords. Eight Bishops voted in the first vote and seven in the second. The regulations were passed by the House by 350 votes to 77. With regard to the final question, yes, any amendments to make permanent the temporary ability to take abortion medication at home, if that comes to the Lords the Lords Spiritual will respond to that when it comes. We cannot respond at the moment.

4. *Revd Canon John Dunnett (Chelmsford)* asked the Chair of the House of Bishops: What advice has the House of Bishops offered to its members in response to the deficit financial situations currently being reported by a number of dioceses?

*The Bishop of Leeds (Rt Revd Nicholas Baines)* replied on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops: The House of Bishops has received updates on the emerging financial situation across the Church, including dioceses. The House has engaged with the development of the sustainability funding support package for dioceses.

Following discussion, the House has agreed that dioceses should continue to develop long-term strategic plans for sustainability, in terms of mission, deployment and finance. It has also agreed that the plans for deployment should be discussed with regional colleagues, and financial plans with national colleagues as part of the financial element of recovery work and central support.

We are grateful for the generosity of our worshippers which will continue to be vital to the financial health of our parishes and cathedrals.

*Mr Sam Margrave (Coventry)*: Current SDF funding does not support existing clergy posts and, while this may be a diocesan decision, GS Misc 1249 sets out how the bishops took a whole Church approach in recent months. Will the same approach now be taken to maintain our existing mission and ministry by suspending all new grant programme to fund our core business of clergy before establishing any new cafe churches?

*The Bishop of Leeds*: Well, in 2020-2022 the Archbishops' Council expects to distribute over £80 million in lowest income communities' funding, which is precisely aimed at supporting ministry in the most deprived parishes and this is the same sum as allocated to SDF in the spending plans for the period. In addition, the Council and Church Commissioners have made available up to £35 million in sustainability funding which dioceses can apply for to help them sustain mission and ministry in the light of the financial challenges arising from the current pandemic. I think it is the case of "both and" rather than "either or".

5. *Mrs Rosemary Lyon (Blackburn)* asked the Chair of the House of Bishops: What plans exist to promote mission throughout the country by correcting the vast disparities of wealth between dioceses?

*The Bishop of Leeds (Rt Revd Nicholas Baines)* replied on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops: The Solvency and Liquidity Group, referenced in GS Misc 1250, recommended work to ensure that a transparent assessment is conducted 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. This recommendation was agreed by the House of Bishops and will be overseen by the Coordinating Group referred to in the same paper.

6. *Mr Samuel Margrave (Coventry)* asked the Chair of the House of Bishops: Despite the Church Commissioners funds including sums that represent money granted by the Crown, in the form of Queen Anne's Bounty, to augment the incomes of poor clergy, some curates and other clergy have been furloughed with claims being made for state funding under the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme. Without the matter having been considered by this Synod, a committee has been established to explore cutting clergy numbers.

Did the House of Bishops consider reducing bishops' stipends or expenses allowances to prevent cuts to priest or other clergy numbers; or is this in the work programme of a future agenda for the House of Bishops to consider?

*The Bishop of Hereford (Rt Revd Richard Frith)* replied on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops: Although we advised dioceses that it might be possible for the small number of clergy licensed as assistant curates to be furloughed, we have not suggested that dioceses should do this.

The House of Bishops has not considered reductions in bishops' stipends or expenses allowances and does not currently have plans to do so. This is ultimately a matter for the Church Commissioners who fund these, as well as providing support for dioceses and cathedrals. Clergy numbers, by contrast, are primarily a matter for individual dioceses. The House of Bishops has recently agreed that plans for deployment in individual dioceses should be shared and discussed with regional colleagues. I am not aware of any Committee that has been established for the reduction of clergy numbers. RACSC is currently carrying out a review of clergy remuneration, which will address a spectrum of questions from diocesan affordability to clergy hardship and wellbeing.

7. *Mrs Anne Foreman (Exeter)* asked the Chair of the House of Bishops: Given that virtually no progress has been made since 2018 on the issue of being transparent to churchgoers concerning male headship (Church Times 26.6.20), will the House of Bishops please address the issue of how best Parishes who receive the ministry of the Bishop of Maidstone, under the House of Bishops' Declaration, can give transparent

information about their views on men's and women's ministry on their church websites and in written communications?

*The Bishop of Rochester (Rt Revd James Langstaff)* replied on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops: This is not an issue the House of Bishops has addressed. It is for parishes to determine how best to communicate Christian beliefs, across the range of traditions that make up the diversity of our Church.

*Dr John Appleby (Newcastle)*: When women were first permitted to celebrate Holy Communion in 1994, it was a very strong recommendation, if not a requirement, that churches should make clear in advance who would be the celebrant. In a similar way, although it remains the parish responsibility how it publicises all information, do you not agree that it is helpful to parishioners, visitors and potential clergy considering moving to a parish, to make clear whether the parish has any doctrinal views that might interest or affect attendance or an application for a post?

*The Bishop of Rochester*: Thank you both for the original question and for that supplementary. I think we are very clear, and I think Bishops are clear, what good practice looks like in this regard in relation to things like transparency and openness and clear information. The original question asked for the House of Bishops to address the matter. I am not convinced that a resolution of the House of Bishops is the best way to address this sort of thing. What is needed is pressure, if necessary, certainly encouragement at local level within dioceses and within deaneries, to encourage parishes to adopt best practice in relation to this kind of transparency.

*Mrs Anne Foreman*: Thank you, Bishop, and thank you for your reply, which was 25 words longer than your ten word reply before, so I shall take that as progress. My question was put because, in this instance, parishes have not heeded the Bishop's Maidstone's suggestion that they should make their policy and practice clear. By not addressing this issue, is the House of Bishops indicating that withholding such information is acceptable and can continue and how does that fit with the statement given by the Archbishop of York in his recent interview with *The Times* that we should expect openness, transparency and accountability from our leaders?

*The Bishop of Rochester*: As I have just said, I think the Bishops are clear about the importance of transparency and openness and, as you have said in relation to the Bishop of Maidstone, I think his views indicate that Bishops as a whole do know what best practice looks like. The issue is how that best practice is adopted at local level. I have to be honest and say I do not think resolutions of the House of Bishops are the way that we are going to get forward with that one. I think it is good practice locally. I think it is for the diocesan communications teams. I think it is Bishops engaging locally with the parishes to ensure that they follow what I think we all would agree is best practice in this matter.

8. *Revd Mark Lucas (Peterborough)* asked the Chair of the House of Bishops: In the 5 guiding principles we read:

- Since those within the Church of England who, on grounds of theological conviction, are unable to receive the ministry of women bishops or priests continue to be within the spectrum of teaching and tradition of the Anglican Communion, the Church of England remains committed to enabling them to flourish within its life and structures; and
- Pastoral and sacramental provision for the minority within the Church of England will be made without specifying a limit of time and in a way that maintains the highest possible degree of communion and contributes to mutual flourishing across the whole Church of England.

In the interests of mutual flourishing could the Chair of the House of Bishops please indicate how many:

- Diocesan Bishops,
- Suffragan and Area Bishops,
- Archdeacons,
- Cathedral Deans,
- DDOs

hold the traditional integrity, that presbyteral ministry should be male? And, of these, how many have been appointed since July 2014?

*The Bishop to the Armed Forces (Rt Revd Tim Thornton)* replied on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops: As there is no central record of clergy who cannot, on grounds of theological conviction, accept the ordained ministry of women, the information requested is not available.

We do hold some information from the diversity monitoring data provided by candidates during appointment processes. However, completion is voluntary and not all candidates choose to respond. Additionally, the labels which people use to describe their church tradition do not necessarily correlate with whether they are unable for theological reasons to recognise the priestly or episcopal ministry of women.

With those caveats, the available data indicates the number who describe themselves as traditional catholic or conservative evangelical is as follows:

- 2 Diocesan bishops (1 appointed since July 2014)
- 9 Suffragan or Area bishops (3 appointed since July 2014)
- 2 Archdeacons (both appointed since July 2014)
- 0 cathedral deans

Diversity monitoring data is not captured centrally for the appointment of DDOs.

9. *Revd Simon Talbott (Ely)* asked the Chair of the House of Bishops: Assuming the House of Bishops will finally have made time on 5 July to discuss the report of the Review Group established to enquire into the practical outworking of the Clergy

Discipline Measure, what assurances can he offer that moves towards its replacement will also address the underlying structural and cultural deficiencies in the church and their impact on clerical ministries that are identified in the excellent work of the Sheldon Hub?

*The Bishop to the Armed Forces (Rt Revd Tim Thornton)* replied on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops: I am grateful for the work of the Sheldon Community, as given expression both by their research project undertaken in conjunction with Aston University and in their maintenance of the Sheldon Hub.

You are right that these sources and others identify structural and cultural deficiencies in the Church in relation to the exercise of our disciplinary jurisdiction. I hope a new Measure will go some way to changing these matters, by, for instance, putting greater emphasis on pastoral support and ongoing training for those administering discipline. We are also exploring further ways of embedding such change, particularly in the inevitable interim between now and the enforcement of a new Measure.

*Revd Simon Talbott:* Thank you, Bishop Tim for your response and can I further ask you as a supplementary, as part of the process of devising a system more fit for purpose, are there any plans to conduct a systematic past cases review, both to establish lessons learned and also, where appropriate and possible, to offer some form of restitution for harm caused?

*The Chair:* Bishop Tim? Have we got the Bishop to the Armed Forces? We do not seem to. I hope you will be able to be given an answer to that. I apologise for that.

*Mr Sam Margrave (Coventry):* Chair, I did indicate at question 6 to give a supplementary and give advance notice of a question.

*The Chair:* I apologise for that.

*Mr Sam Margrave (Coventry):* Can I ask ---

*The Chair:* Are you asking a supplementary on this question though?

*Mr Sam Margrave (Coventry):* No, but can you bring me back at question 6, please.

*The Chair:* I am afraid I cannot at the moment now we have passed by that one, sorry.

*Mr Sam Margrave (Coventry):* Because if you do not like the question, it may be you do not like the question, but I gave advance notice and indicated ---

*The Chair:* Yes, well, I apologise for not calling you.

10. *Mr Tom Hatton (Southwark)* asked the Chair of the House of Bishops: Given that: in the EU Referendum 53.4% of voters in England voted 'Leave' and that in the General Election in December 2019 47.2% of voters in England voted for the Conservative Party and 2% voted for the Brexit party: and the Church of England exists to bring the grace of God to the whole nation, has the House given any consideration to:

- (1) whether the membership of the episcopate reflects the full diversity of the political and social perspectives and aspirations held by the people of England; and
- (2) the implications for the Church's mission if a great many of those to whom it is called to minister feel alienated as a result of being unable to see their political and social perspectives and aspirations reflected in the episcopate?

*The Bishop to the Armed Forces (Rt Revd Tim Thornton)* replied on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops: Whilst the House of Bishops considers a range of issues of national concern and aims to ensure a diverse range of viewpoints are considered, there is no central record of the personal political and social perspectives held by the members of the House.

The Lords Spiritual have a record of holding the government of the day to account in the name of the Gospel, fulfilling the charge of the Ordinal to "proclaim the Gospel boldly, confront injustice and work for righteousness and peace in all the world." That involves both criticism and support where either is due. The Lords Spiritual are not whipped and sometimes end up in different lobbies. Scrutiny of Hansard will show that in the days of Labour governments, the Lords Spiritual were sometimes critical of government policy (e.g. on debt) and that since 2010, the bishops have also spoken in favour of a number of Conservative policies.

11. *Revd Mark Lucas (Peterborough)* asked the Chair of the House of Bishops: What is the total number in the college of bishops? How has this number changed over the last 50 years? Can this change be justified in the light of rapidly declining congregations over this period?

*The Bishop to the Armed Forces (Rt Revd Tim Thornton)* replied on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops: There are 116 members of the College of Bishops (if there are no vacancies).

In the last 5 years, 4 dormant Sees have been revived, and Synod approved creating one new See. Two replaced former stipendiary assistant bishops, two have a focus of ministry with a national remit, and one was to provide additional episcopal leadership in a large diocese.

Even with these additional Sees, data from Ministry (previously Church) Statistics shows that the number of bishops in post has remained broadly consistent over the last 50 years.

The number of bishops is not governed by any single part of the Church. The Dioceses, Pastoral and Mission Measure 2007 requires Diocesan Bishops to keep episcopal ministry within their diocese under review, and to justify filling a vacant suffragan see to the Dioceses Commission for approval (on behalf of the national church) before the process to fill the vacancy can begin.

12. *Revd Canon David Banting (Chelmsford)* asked the Chair of the House of Bishops: In the light of one diocese where seven incumbents have chosen to leave in the last few years, what record is kept of the numbers and reasons of ordained clergy who in the last five years have 'left' the Church of England for local church ministry in other historic denominations or pioneer churches?

*The Bishop of St Edmundsbury & Ipswich (Rt Revd Martin Seeley)* replied on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops: The records of these leaving clergy are primarily a matter for their Diocese to keep and to conduct any exit interviews with them. At present, no national record is kept of the numbers and reasons for such departures.

*Revd Canon David Banting:* To lose one may be regarded as a misfortune information, to lose seven looks like carelessness. Churches do well to look to their back door as well as their front door. My supplementary is, for the sake of national Church's healthy self-awareness, will a national register of clergy leaving the Church of England for reasons of conscience and their reasons for departure be compiled and maintained from now on?

*The Bishop of St Edmundsbury & Ipswich:* David, thank you for your question and for the supplementary. First of all, I value this aspiration of healthy self-awareness and I would hope that, if the experience you describe happens in a diocese, then a diocese itself would engage in that process. I have questions about the value of maintaining a register because my experience of those sorts of maintaining lists with information on is that we do not actually do anything with them. What I will offer David is, the next time we speak with Regional Conveners of the regional groups of Bishops, that I will ask there what is emerging in the regions and, in the light of that, see how we might explore this matter further.

*Revd Canon Simon Butler (Southwark):* A question not related to the point that David is making but about keeping records of clergy leaving ministry. With the new national clergy register that is, we hope, coming soon, will there be an opportunity for this sort of information to be held on that?

*The Bishop of St Edmundsbury & Ipswich:* An interesting question for which I do not know the answer, but I will try and find out.

13. *Ms Jay Greene (Winchester)* asked the Chair of the House of Bishops: What directions have been given to dioceses, as they address their new financial challenges,

to ensure the continued diversity of churches and ministry across differences of gender, wealth, and theology?

*The Archbishop of York (Most Revd & Rt Hon Stephen Cottrell)* replied on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops: Whilst these are essentially decisions for dioceses themselves; the Finance Committee of the Archbishops' Council has a remit for ensuring that funds are used in accordance with the Church Commissioners' charitable objectives that provision is made for areas with greatest need. Funding to support dioceses' recovery from Covid-19 will be distributed, taking into account diocesan and resident wealth. A purpose of the funding referred to in GSC 2173 is to help dioceses avoid indiscriminate cuts which may have otherwise fallen on ministry in the poorest areas. Lowest Income Communities funding, directed to dioceses with poor communities, has been advanced in 2020 to assist these dioceses with cash flow. In allocating this funding, it is for dioceses to ensure that all aspects of the diversity of our Church are supported.

14. *Mr Stephen Hofmeyr (Guildford)* asked the Chair of the House of Bishops: Might re-structuring of dioceses (and even provinces) not help solve the financial crisis facing the Church of England? And, if so, is there currently underway any investigation into possible re-structuring?

*The Archbishop of York (Most Revd & Rt Hon Stephen Cottrell)* replied on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops: The House has in its recent discussions been giving some preliminary thought to a range of issues in the light of the current situation. As detailed in GS 1273, some immediate financial steps have been taken in consultation with the Archbishops' Council and the Church Commissioners. Rather than jump to conclusions about the longer term, the House has set up a number of time-limited groups (as indicated in GS Misc 1250) to take these forward. I am chairing the Group on Vision and Strategy.

I appreciate the urgency behind your question but any re-structuring of our dioceses and provinces is unlikely to be a quick fix, and would in any case need to be explored in consultation with key stakeholders including the Dioceses Commission (which has statutory responsibilities in this area). That said I can assure you that the House is serious about looking at ways of ensuring that our Church is fit to meet the missionary challenges now facing us.

*Mr Sam Margrave (Coventry)*: On the issue of the financial crisis that we are in, while the Bishops have no plans to consider your stipends or expenses, in these extraordinary times will this be reconsidered so that you can put clergy posts over bishops' chauffeurs?

*The Archbishop of York*: I am really sorry, Sam, I think I heard the beginning of that question. Did you say was that Bishops' stipends and expenses?

*The Chair:* Sam, do you want to repeat?

*Mr Sam Margrave (Coventry):* While you are considering restructuring, will you also consider Bishops' expenses and stipends to save clergy posts over spending on bishops' chauffeurs?

*The Archbishop of York:* Yes, thank you, I heard the question that time. I mean, two quick things. First of all, the primary work of the Vision and Strategy Group is not about structures. It is about how we live and share the Gospel itself. However, of course, in these circumstances, we are going to be needing to look at everything and I think all I can say is that it is my heartfelt desire and determination that everything we do is to support the life of the Church, or the local church, in its parishes, its chaplaincies, through Fresh Expressions and, therefore, we will need to look at everything, Bishops' expenses included. Everything will have to be looked at some point.

15. *Mr Chris Gill (Lichfield)* asked the Chair of the House of Bishops: Within GS Misc 1250 - 'The Emerging Church of England', Paragraph 16 includes the following: "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."

Given that it is envisaged that the approach to the consultation will be challenging etc. and take place over a number of days, what are the current thoughts on the timetable for this exercise, the process envisaged and the mechanism by which the 125 people will be selected so as to ensure good representation of the church both now and of the future?

Similarly how will the group of 10 in Phase 1 be selected and will it be they who produce the strategic propositions?

*The Archbishop of York (The Most Revd & Rt Hon Stephen Cottrell)* replied on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops: The process being used is known as Future Search, which has been deliberately chosen as a collaborative approach that enables large groups to collectively develop future vision over a period of several days. These sessions will happen over three days next week. Great care has been taken to ensure that the group is representative of the diversity of the church. The group is very diverse and weighted towards the young. There will be further iterations with Bishops and Diocesan Secretaries in September.

The group of 10 in phase 1 are selected to reflect a diversity of thinking and experience, to help develop initial thinking on strategic propositions. 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 in phase 3.

*Mr Chris Gill:* Archbishop, thank you for your reply to my question. I would dare to suggest that by saying “great care has been taken to ensure that the group is representative of the diversity of the church”, you may have offered me an opinion rather than the answer I was looking for and so I will try another way, if I may. What criteria have been used in selecting the members of the group of 125 and can an analysis of their profiles be provided to demonstrate their representative nature?

*The Archbishop of York:* I certainly cannot answer that one with precision right this minute but, as I indicated in my address, our determination, first of all, has been to go for younger Christians and in that way I think we are probably rather unrepresentative. So there has been a bias towards the young for which I do not make an apology. But, in other ways, we have worked very hard - for instance, I wrote specifically to the Bishop of Maidstone - to ensure that people representing a conservative evangelical view were part of that group. I wrote to a number of Bishops saying we need representatives of different groups. Certainly, there is a really strong BAME representation. I would need to speak to somebody else to work out whether we could give quite the precise information you have asked for. That is not a no. That is so as I do not want to make a promise that it turns out I cannot keep.

16. *Mrs Mary Durlacher (Chelmsford)* asked the Chair of the House of Bishops: With reference to the proposals for Emerging Church, will the Vision and Strategy Group include in their criteria the financial and legal costs associated with cutting clergy numbers and closing churches, the pastoral costs to church communities and clergy wellbeing issues, and past reports identifying factors of growth and decline, such as Anecdote to Evidence, including the ways God grows his Church found in the Biblical accounts?

*The Archbishop of York (The Most Revd & Rt Hon Stephen Cottrell)* replied on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops: The work of the Vision and Strategy Group 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. Collectively, we will need to consider what resources, tools and gifts we have and how we can make best use of them. At the heart of the vision will be a renewed commitment to Christ in worship, service and witness, as we believe it is through this that God grows his Church. Decisions about clergy numbers and church buildings are a matter for individual dioceses. The factors the questioner refers to are all issues that dioceses may want to take into account in their decisions on those matters.

*Mrs Mary Durlacher:* Thank you, Archbishop for your answer, which is welcome. Could you assure us that, in discerning an overall vision and purpose, care will be taken to understand the different contexts and cultures in which the Gospel takes root across the national Church and commit to discerning the resources, tools and gifts which are appropriate to those various contexts, not just for the urban but the increasingly needy rural context?

*The Archbishop of York:* Mary, how nice to see you and speak to you. One of the great sadnesses for me is I never really got to say goodbye to the Chelmsford Diocese that I love, so Mary how nice to see you. The short answer is yes. The really important thing to take hold of here, I believe, is the vision of what God has given us in Jesus Christ is unchanging; however, it is constantly having to be re-clothed and reformed and reshaped in all the different contexts and encounters that we have. So all I can promise you is we are working very hard to see what that will be like in rural areas, in urban areas, with young people, with older people and please pray for us as we do this.

17. *Canon Peter Adams (St Albans)* asked the Chair of the House of Bishops: In the motion passed unanimously in February Synod mandated the NSSG to bring forward proposals to give effect to that commitment that follow a more fully survivor-centred approach to safeguarding, including arrangements for redress for survivors. Can you please update Synod on progress toward a survivor centred approach, and especially progress on a national listening service for survivors?

*The Bishop of Huddersfield (Rt Revd Jonathan Gibbs)* replied on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops: The charity Victim Support has been awarded the contract for Safe Spaces, which includes a national helpline for victims/survivors, a website and small grants programme for community support groups. The helpline will be staffed by advocates trained in trauma informed advocacy support and advice. The decision to award the contract to Victim Support was taken in partnership with survivor representatives from across both Churches (CCEW, Church of England). The service is expected to launch later in the summer. Survivor engagement work by the NST continues, including working with the Survivors Reference Group which has recently been represented on interview panels and involved in the development of draft policy for learning lessons reviews, and responding well to survivors. There is also survivor representation on PCR-2 Project Board, the Clergy Discipline Measure Working Group and the National Safeguarding Panel.

The NST will be developing a strategic framework for survivor engagement, led by the newly appointed Deputy Director for Partnerships.

See also my answer to Question 18.

*Canon Peter Adams:* I am very grateful for your reply, Bishop Jonathan, and welcome the progress on the Safe Spaces project. Our debate in February drew attention to the huge need for a survivor-centred approach to rebuild trust in the Church's handling of these terrible matters. Has thought been given to the suggestion that this might be enhanced and made more accountable to Synod by some form of Synod representation on the NSSG, or I should say the National Safeguarding Panel, notwithstanding the obvious and utmost need for confidentiality in this work?

*The Bishop of Huddersfield:* Peter, thank you very much for your question and especially for its focus on survivors. Their needs and well-being must be our first concern. You are right, the Church has a long way to go in rebuilding trust over its handling of safeguarding and how we do that will involve work on many levels, especially our engagement with survivors, improved quality of safeguarding work and training at every level, prompt delivery of a redress scheme, and representation on different bodies is also part of that.

You have mentioned already that we have the National Safeguarding Panel as well as the NSSG. Now I have already agreed with Melissa Caslake that we need to look at the way the NSSG operates and the question of its membership is one aspect of that, so thank you for your suggestion which we will look at as part of that review.

18. *Revd Simon Talbott (Ely)* asked the Chair of the House of Bishops: Following the February General Synod's unanimous support for the Church offering additional redress to our Safeguarding victims, can you please give us a full update on progress to deliver a fully functional scheme?

*The Bishop of Huddersfield (Rt Revd Jonathan Gibbs)* replied on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops: An initial paper on how to develop options for redress, taking a project management approach, went to the National Safeguarding Steering Group on 2nd April, the Board of Governors of the Church Commissioners on 23rd April, Archbishops Council Finance Committee on 24th April, and House of Bishops in May, receiving endorsement. A subsequent paper setting out the detailed resourcing required for the project scoping has been agreed, and we hope that recruitment will start shortly to make progress on developing options, ensuring survivor voices are central to this work.

*Revd Simon Talbott:* Thank you, Bishop Jonathan, for your response. Can I further ask, in respect of redress being considered, would you be willing to disclose the minimum sum under consideration and has consideration been given to fast tracking the seriously urgent cases?

*The Bishop of Huddersfield:* Simon, thank you very much for your question. Getting a proper redress scheme in place as soon as possible is vital and redress will mean proper financial compensation. It will also mean all sorts of other things, counselling, support groups, financial advice where people are facing debt problems, life coaching, all the things it takes to help people rebuild their lives. I have no idea what it will cost but we all heard John Spence's promise at the February Synod, "This is a matter of justice and the money will be found". We are not letting go of that promise.

In regard to a fast track scheme, I have made it clear I think the scheme must include provision for early interim payments and help even before someone's claim is finalised. I have also made it clear that I would favour the setting up of an interim support scheme as soon as possible to make available immediate help in urgent cases, some of which

have been going on for far too long already. I have been told that this is complicated for all sorts of reasons, but I would very much welcome Synod's support for finding a way to make it happen as soon as possible.

*Canon Peter Adams:* Bishop Jonathan, thank you for your assurances and your candour.

19. *Revd Charles Read (Norwich)* asked the Chair of the House of Bishops: What mechanisms currently exist to identify and deal with the use of a complaint to the National Safeguarding Team for vexatious or vindictive purposes?

*The Bishop of Huddersfield (Rt Revd Jonathan Gibbs)* replied on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops: Where a person provides information which amounts to a safeguarding allegation or concern, a core group will have the option to commence a Church investigation before a recommendation is made or any conclusion drawn. Following the conclusion of the Church investigation, the investigator will prepare a summary report. The report will include a clear statement, in their opinion, on whether they believe the case is substantiated or unsubstantiated, unfounded, malicious or false and/or whether there are ongoing safeguarding concerns.

*Canon Peter Bruinvels (Guildford):* Has there been an increase in vexatious complaints and does that have financial implications in relation to Bishop Jonathan's reply?

*The Bishop of Huddersfield:* I am not aware that there has been an increase in vexatious complaints. The other problem is at what stage they would be defined as vexatious complaints. Obviously, there are statistics for the number of complaints that are made at a diocesan level. You have got an answer later on coming up I think with regard to the number of complaints there are at a national level but, for something to be defined as vexatious, that is a particular technical legal term if the conclusion is reached at the end that someone's complaint is vexatious.

*Revd Charles Read:* Thank you for that helpful reply. Could you confirm that it is the case that if a complaint were made to the diocesan safeguarding adviser officer rather than going directly to the national team, then in that case, with a diocesan complaint, it is for the diocesan person to rule the complaint out of order without setting up a core group or mounting an investigation, and that, therefore, if there was a kind of wily or devious complainant they might use the fact that they can go directly to the national team as a means of bypassing that level of scrutiny and ensuring that somebody - a priest, for example - was actually automatically suspended from ministry?

*The Bishop of Huddersfield:* Charles, thanks for your question and, of course, our overriding concern must be justice and fairness for everyone involved. You cannot stop people bringing a complaint and those complaints do need to be assessed and, if necessary, then investigated.

Most complaints, as we all know, are made at a diocesan level and they are handled by the DSA and the core group as necessary. They have the power to recommend what course of action should be taken, including whether to investigate and, under normal circumstances, when a complaint is brought at diocesan level it would be considered by a core group.

Now complaints are only dealt with by the National Safeguarding Team under certain circumstances, usually either where they involve a senior clergy, bishop, dean or where a case involves several dioceses. In my understanding, there is not an option for a complainant in other cases to bypass the diocese and go straight to the NST. That is the advice I have been given.

20. *Mrs Tina Nay (Chichester)* asked the Chair of the House of Bishops: What are the triage processes (if any) by which complaints received are reviewed to ensure that they are sufficiently evidenced and focussed to enable the formulation of a viable triage issue which can then be properly and productively considered by an NST Core Group?

*The Bishop of Huddersfield (Rt Revd Jonathan Gibbs)* replied on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops: The practice guidance “Responding to, assessing, and managing safeguarding concerns or allegations against church officers” (2017) does not provide for a triage process, but states the following: “where a safeguarding concern or allegation has been identified the Church should conduct its own investigation; the core group should establish a process for this to gather information and make an assessment on the facts. This convened core group will manage the process for the duration of the case, and will meet as required. All information should be made available to the group to support decision making, as required”. Following such an investigation – once it has gathered such information – the core group makes an informed recommendation to the bishop.

*Mr David Lamming (St Edmundsbury & Ipswich)*: Bishop Jonathan, particularly in the light of the circumstances relating to the current situation at Christ Church, Oxford, will the National Safeguarding Steering Group consider recommending to the House of Bishops that the 2017 guidance be amended to provide for a triage process before setting up a core group which would then, of course, be carrying out a full investigation with its consequent financial cost and emotional and other trauma suffered by the respondent during the time that that fuller investigation process takes?

*The Bishop of Huddersfield*: David, thanks for your question and, of course, I cannot comment on particular cases. I guess the underlying issue is how to do things as simply as possible while ensuring that they are done properly for the sake of all concerned. So I warm to the idea in principle, but I think the risk is that the triage process could actually become a core group before the core group. We need to understand too that the core group meets in the first instance to consider the information that has been received and to decide whether there should then be an investigation. So, really, that should be a sort of triage process. Having said that, the

NST is currently reviewing the functioning of core groups with a view to revising the guidance and clarifying their operation.

21. *Mrs Kat Alldread (Derby)* asked the Chair of the House of Bishops: How many National Safeguarding Team Core Groups are currently in existence?

*The Bishop of Huddersfield (Rt Revd Jonathan Gibbs)* replied on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops: There are currently 27 active National Safeguarding Team Core Groups.

*Canon Peter Bruinvels (Guildford)*: How long is their normal term of office and how much training do they get and are they all retiring at the same time or is there a phased reappointments process?

*The Bishop of Huddersfield*: Peter, core groups are set up when a case arises and they continue in operation until that case is concluded. The guidance specifies who should be members of the core group in terms of offices held, not particularly people. Under normal circumstances, the core group exists to manage a case and it just stays in existence. They are not a standing organisation. They are just set up to manage a particular case.

22. *Mrs Kat Alldread (Derby)* asked the Chair of the House of Bishops: As more people have been accustomed to conducting important meetings by zoom, has consideration been given to our Safeguarding Core Groups routinely meeting remotely, and recording their deliberations for the benefit of attenders/parties unable to be present, with all the attendant costs savings that might permit?

*The Bishop of Huddersfield (Rt Revd Jonathan Gibbs)* replied on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops: During the Covid-19 pandemic, Safeguarding Core Groups have operated effectively using video conference facilities at both a Diocesan and National level. The current practice guidance does allow for virtual meetings, the pandemic has shown us that we can operate in more cost and time effective ways and we anticipate that the practice of conducting core groups virtually will continue in the future. A written record of key points and actions is circulated to members of the group afterwards, including those who were not able to be present.

23. *Mrs Kathryn Tucker (Bath & Wells)* asked the Chair of the House of Bishops: In the secular Safeguarding world, in accordance with principles of Transparency and Accountability, parents who have allegedly neglected or abused their children, are routinely invited to attend Local Authority Core Groups, make representation thereto, and subsequently receive the minutes of the meeting so that, if appropriate, a challenge to any breach of their Human Rights by unfair process can be promptly identified and rectified. On what principles does the Church defend its current practice of not admitting respondents to the Core Group, even where the allegation is of process failure only, not routinely confirming who was present, advising, influencing and making those

decisions, and not providing the respondents with the minutes which record an outline of the allegations and evidence considered, and how the Group decisions were reached?

*The Bishop of Huddersfield (Rt Revd Jonathan Gibbs)* replied on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops: The example of a secular core group given has the function of being a multi-agency core group of practitioners and family members who will develop and implement a child protection plan. Parents are invited to such meetings because they are key to implementing the plan. The initial meetings held by multi-agency groups to decide upon an investigation or convening of a child protection conference are called strategy meetings, to which family members are not invited, nor are minutes shared.

Church core groups have a different purpose set out in practice guidance: “Responding to, assessing, and managing safeguarding concerns or allegations against church officers” (2017), namely, to manage the response to a safeguarding concern, ensuring that the rights of all involved to a fair and thorough investigation can be preserved.

There is no provision in the guidance for respondents to attend core groups, but I repeat the answer to Question 24.

*Mrs Kathryn Tucker:* You rightly identify that the respondents currently have no rights to attend core groups, though complainants and those reporting rumours of complaints do, but the Carlisle Report specifically records at paragraph 18 that, “I have concluded that the Church of England failed to follow a procedure which respected the sides of both sides”. How are those rights respected by the current guidelines?

*The Bishop of Huddersfield:* Thanks, Kathryn, for your question. Representation of the respondent, giving them the opportunity to respond to allegations made against them, is, of course, crucial to the process and it is the responsibility of the core group to ensure that that happens. Forgive me, I think there is reference in an answer to another question about the function of the core group. It is more like a strategy group in the world of social care. So it is about managing the process.

Of course, it is vitally important that the respondents should be properly represented, they have full understanding of the allegations made against them and they have opportunity to respond to those. That is a basic issue of justice. But there is a distinction about the nature of a core group. We are hoping to clarify that in the new guidance that comes out: that it is about managing the process and, of course, respondents must be properly represented in order that they have a full chance to respond to any allegations.

*Revd Stephen Trott (Peterborough):* How does this reflect upon principles of natural justice that somebody who is the subject of a complaint should be given opportunity to respond adequately to that complaint and, indeed, to know the nature of the complaint?

*The Bishop of Huddersfield:* Stephen, I would suggest that, from what I have said, the principles of natural justice are absolutely fundamental to this. There is a distinction between the group managing the process and the absolute vital necessity that the respondents should both be properly informed of what the complaint is and given every opportunity to respond to the complaint.

24. *Revd Canon Rosie Harper (Oxford)* asked the Chair of the House of Bishops: In the light of some recent concerns about access to safeguarding core group minutes and the ability of respondents to participate in safeguarding core groups, are there any rules or principles that determine who is permitted to be present at, and to access minutes of, core groups, that could explain the situations that gave rise to these concerns?

*The Bishop of Huddersfield (Rt Revd Jonathan Gibbs)* replied on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops: House of Bishops practice guidance “Responding to, assessing, and managing safeguarding concerns or allegations against church officers” (2017) outlines at section 3.1 who the membership of the core group may include. This list does not include the respondent. The guidance stipulates that minutes from core group meetings should be circulated to the attendees as soon as practicable after the meeting. Practice guidance provides for the respondent to be provided with sufficient detail of what they are alleged to have done, including timeframes and location, in order that they have a fair opportunity to respond.

Although the practice guidance is not specific on this point, respondents can and have been given details of who has attended a core group, and for example received a letter from a chair setting out the outcome of the meeting.

*Revd Canon Rosie Harper:* I think what I want to tease out is the gap between what sounds so good in theory in your answer and the lived experience, because some survivors still experience being kept entirely in the dark about the composition and conduct of the core groups that are managing their cases and, also, there is the experience of some people making accusations being invited to participate in making decisions which directly affect the lives of those whom they accuse. So I am asking you would you please assure us that, in future, there would be more consistency, accountability and transparency in the conduct of core groups?

*The Bishop of Huddersfield:* Rosie, thank you very much for your question. All the points you raise are really important ones and, if there are specific issues of concern, please do write to us about those. As I have said, we are proposing to introduce fairly soon new guidance on the conduct of core groups. I think there may well be lessons to be learnt from the past about how we do things. It is really important both to keep survivors informed.

Certainly, of course, I cannot comment on specific cases, but the whole issue of any conflict of interest, those questions do need to be addressed in terms of the way things are handled. But if you have got specific concerns, please let us have those and we are

in the process, as I say, of clarifying the guidance on the way that core groups are run. It is highly likely that their name will change as part of clarifying the issue and so they would become Safeguarding Planning Groups to avoid some of the confusion that has arisen in the past.

*Revd Canon Simon Butler (Southwark):* This is a case I can talk about because it was the case when I was the respondent. In my feedback to both the National Safeguarding Team and the diocese, I observed that core groups contained as full members communications specialists and that there was no particular reason why a communications officer should be a member of the core group.

Whilst the core group might need advice on communications, there was no particular grounds for a communications specialist to be an active member of the core group. I made that feedback to the National Safeguarding Team and, as far as I know, communications officers still remain active members of core groups. Could you clarify whether that is the case and what plans there might be to change that?

*The Bishop of Huddersfield:* It is my understanding that, under normal circumstances, comms officers can, indeed, be invited to be members of core groups. They do bring particular expertise in terms of the way things are handled and managed for the sake of everybody involved. I might get a chance later to say a bit more about the principles under which they operate. They are principles of transparency, of communication, of fairness to all parties concerned. But I do recognise there have been concerns about this is about, “Oh, we must defend the interests of the institution and how do we communicate things”, and are we really honouring those principles of transparency and fairness? So, as I say, we are undergoing at the moment a review of the practice of core groups and I think the comments you have made are an important part of that.

25. *Mrs Tina Nay (Chichester)* asked the Chair of the House of Bishops: What are the principles and guidelines that determine whether the existence of a respondent’s Core Group and the reasons it has been convened is kept confidential or released to the press at an early stage?

*The Bishop of Huddersfield (Rt Revd Jonathan Gibbs)* replied on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops: House of Bishops practice guidance “Responding to, assessing, and managing safeguarding concerns or allegations against church officers” (2017) sets out guidance in relation to core groups. The guidance makes no provision for details of a core group’s working to be made public by the Church and the Church does not release details about the working of such groups to the media. If asked the Church may confirm that a matter is being responded to according to the above guidance.

*Mrs Tina Nay:* Is it, therefore, the case that the House of Bishops is content that there are no principles or guidelines governing these matters but only arbitrariness and expedience, partly shaped by the communications officers present at each stage of the process?

*The Bishop of Huddersfield:* I am not sure I can agree with the second part about arbitrariness and so on and I just want to go back on that a little bit. I am informed that, in fact, guiding principles informing the work of comms directors were drawn up by the NST in conjunction with dioceses focusing on three key principles, transparency, survivor focus and fairness to all parties.

My understanding at the moment is that those guidelines have not been published. I think it would be really helpful if at least a summary of them were put into the public domain. I think it is then an open question as to whether they should be given some further status, perhaps by being included within the House of Bishops' guidelines. But I recognise the importance of the issue you have raised and I think I would favour greater clarity over that.

26. *Revd Canon Dr Judith Maltby (Universities & TElS)* asked the Chair of the House of Bishops: Organisations, such as in higher education and the NHS, operate under the 2014 Care Act in terms of the definition of an 'adult at risk' in terms of safeguarding. This definition differs from the 2016 Safeguarding and Clergy Discipline Measure which uses a wider definition of a 'vulnerable adult'. May Synod have clarification as to whether clergy employed as chaplains by secular bodies (such as universities and the NHS) are subject in the course of their ministry within those secular organisations, to the safeguarding protocols of their employers or of the Church of England?

*The Bishop of Huddersfield (Rt Revd Jonathan Gibbs)* replied on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops: From a safeguarding perspective there is likely to be little practical difference between a "vulnerable adult" and an "adult at risk". Clergy employed as chaplains in organisations wholly external to the Church will ordinarily be subject to the safeguarding policies, reporting requirements, and disciplinary processes of their employers in the first instance. But they are still required to have "due regard" to House of Bishops guidance where they are authorised to officiate in the Church.

*Revd Canon Dr Judith Maltby:* Thank you and thank you, Bishop Jonathan, for your answer and for undertaking this important role. Just for clarity, on what basis might an Anglican priest, not employed by the Church of England but engaged in sector ministry and whose workplace conduct is accountable to and comprehensively regulated by their employer, fall within the Church's regulatory structures in matters of safeguarding in the course of their ministry within that sector or secular context, particularly where policies and procedures differ?

*The Bishop of Huddersfield:* Judith, thank you very much for your question. I think it is difficult to give an answer that would cover all circumstances but, in general, a chaplain, for instance, who is employed by a non-Church body, would be subject to their procedures. Beyond that, it is difficult to say more because each case does depend on its own situation which would include the organisation's own safeguarding policies and procedures. I think that is why it is difficult to give a more specific answer. There is

further guidance in the House of Bishops' guidance on this. I recognise the issue, but the basic principle is that, under normal circumstances, they would be covered by the safeguarding policies and procedures of the organisation they work for, but that does not quite conclude the whole question.

27. *Mr Martin Sewell (Rochester)* asked the Chair of the House of Bishops: The Church has embraced the concept of “unconscious bias”: will the Secretary General and the NSSP urgently review the composition of the Martyn Percy Core Group and confirm to General Synod members within a month, that having considered the importance of fair and proper process, they can assure us that that Core Group process was free from unconscious bias, and that the Core Group decisions were untainted by it?

*The Bishop of Huddersfield (Rt Revd Jonathan Gibbs)* replied on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops: House of Bishops practice guidance “Responding to, assessing, and managing safeguarding concerns or allegations against church officers” (2017) provides that the membership of core groups should not comprise those who may have a conflict of interest or loyalty. We are not able to respond to specific ongoing cases but as a general rule we would accept that as far as is reasonably possible in the circumstances of each case, a core group’s work should be free from bias and we always keep the membership of core groups under review where there is a challenge on the grounds of potential bias.

*The Chair:* Martin, can I just warn you that we are not allowed to take hypothetical questions and the supplementary you have put in helpfully has the word “hypothetical” at the end, so if you can make it less hypothetical then the bishop might be able to answer it.

*The Bishop of Huddersfield:* I am content for him to delete the word “hypothetical”, chair.

*Mr Martin Sewell (Rochester):* In the event of a core group’s integrity being fundamentally compromised, whether by bias, breach of guidelines, undisclosed conflict or otherwise, who has the responsibility and power to set aside its decisions as unsafe so that we can become merciful and just?

*The Bishop of Huddersfield:* The short answer is I do not know the answer to that question, Martin. It is absolutely essential in terms of good practice that potential issues like conflicts of interest should be recognised and managed as part of the process. It is also a principle of natural justice that, if a process is perceived as unfair, there should be some opportunity for appeal about that. So I think I will need to go back to my colleagues and clarify under what circumstances the working of a core group could actually be challenged in that kind of way.

*Canon Peter Bruinvels (Guildford):* Thanking Bishop Jonathan, could he explain how core group members are appointed and what is the recommended number of members

to be on any such core group and, presumably, once they are appointed they will be brought in from time to time on other cases?

*The Bishop of Huddersfield:* Okay, if I just deal with that ---

*The Chair:* Sorry, that question is out of order. It is not relevant to the original question.

28. *Mrs Kathryn Tucker (Bath & Wells)* asked the Chair of the House of Bishops: The 2017 Bishops Guidelines for Safeguarding investigations specifically require that a Diocesan Registrar should not represent respondents to an investigation neither should his legal practice. There is no similar provision preventing Diocesan Registrars or their firms from representing a complainant. Is there a rationale for that inconsistency or was this a simple oversight that needs to be corrected to prevent injustice through the same potential conflict of interest?

*The Bishop of Huddersfield (Rt Revd Jonathan Gibbs)* replied on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops: Diocesan registrars – as legal advisers to the bishop – are required to give legal advice to core groups including diocesan safeguarding advisers. They may be called upon in due course to advise on matters such as suspension and risk assessments. The guidance makes specific provision for conflict in this respect because the respondent will be a Church officer in the diocese who might ordinarily seek advice from the registrar as part of their duties. The position of a complainant is different, but a registrar would be unable to advise the diocese and a complainant because of the conflict of interest.

29. *Revd Canon Dr Judith Maltby (Universities & TElS)* asked the Chair of the House of Bishops: In the meeting of Synod in February 2020, the Revd Simon Talbott asked (Q58) if a protocol existed to ensure information was shared between the multiple John Smyth Inquiries – at current reckoning four in number: Makin (CofE), Titus Trust, Scripture Union, and Winchester College – to avoid further abuse of Smyth’s victims by requiring them to give evidence multiple times. Is such an agreed, signed, protocol now in place?

*The Bishop of Huddersfield (Rt Revd Jonathan Gibbs)* replied on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops: A draft protocol has been developed by Keith Makin, independent reviewer commissioned by the Church of England, to review John Smyth. This protocol has been discussed and shared with other relevant parties who have submitted feedback, which needs to be considered before a final version is agreed and signed. In anticipation of the formal agreement, the reviewers have established good working relationships. Regular meetings are being held and information is being exchanged, within the requirements of GDPR and confidentiality.

*Revd Canon Dr Judith Maltby:* Just so that Synod is clear and, more importantly, that the victims and survivors of Smyth can be clear, there is still no protocol in place to protect Smyth’s victims from the ordeal of multiple interviews across four inquiries,

although the Church of England Review has started work over a year ago. When can we expect such an agreement to be in place?

*The Bishop of Huddersfield:* Judith, thank you for your question and especially for bringing us back to the most important thing which is our care and concern for survivors. I think there are two things here. Firstly, the question of a formal agreement of a protocol between the different reviewers and, secondly, the informal working together of the reviewers, in particular, to take care of the needs of survivors. In regard to the former, my understanding is that a draft protocol has gone through several versions between the reviewers and we are now awaiting sign-off by the other commissioning bodies - the commissioning bodies of the other reviews, not the Church of England's one - and that is in their hands. But I am confident we should not have to wait too long. I cannot see why we should.

On the second point, on the other hand, the reviewers have already established a very good working relationship and they are doing all that they can to support those survivors who have shown such courage in coming forward to cooperate with the reviews and that would include, of course, avoiding the necessity of multiple interviews. It is, of course, on the survivors where our principal focus should be and our care and concern for them. So thank you for the question.

30. *Revd Neil Patterson (Hereford)* asked the Chair of the House of Bishops: What provision has been made, whether financially or in personnel, to support the Bishops in leading the Church's engagement with *Living in Love and Faith* following its publication this coming November?

*The Bishop of London (Rt Revd & Rt Hon Dame Sarah Mullally)* replied on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops: Leading the Church's engagement with the *Living in Love and Faith* resources is a significant project in its own right and represents a new way of working for the Church. That is why an episcopally-led group, chaired by the Bishop of London, has been set up and a budget for this work is currently being negotiated. The group will be supported by Eeva John, the Communications Teams and other staff of the NCIs.

*Revd Andrew Dotchin (St Edmundsbury & Ipswich):* Thank you, Bishop Sarah, for your answer. It is good to hear that you are leading this group, but when we will know who is involved in the group? Will LGBTI+ people be amongst its members? And who will help oversee and monitor its implementation and impact on the lives of LGBTI community members already in our churches?

*The Bishop of London:* At the moment, the implementation group is taking over the baton from the co-ordinating group and that will overlap for a short period of time, so I think that our view is that certainly by November we will have a much clearer idea of the programme of work, who is involved in it and how we ensure that the impact is appropriately measured. So we would hope that by November it will be much clearer.

31. *Revd Canon Rosie Harper (Oxford)* asked the Chair of the House of Bishops: What representation has been made by the House of Bishops to HM Government regarding the significant impact on the safety and wellbeing of the trans people brought about by the delay and uncertainty surrounding their reform proposals and fears that the current provisions may be undermined?

*The Bishop of Coventry (Rt Revd Dr Christopher Cocksworth)* replied on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops: The House of Bishops has not made a representation to HM Government regarding discussions relating to the Gender Recognition Act. However, as part of the work of the *Living in Love and Faith* project we have become aware of the increasingly difficult environment for trans people in recent months. Our hope is that the LLF resources together with the Pastoral Principles will enable the whole Church to engage in matters of gender identity in an informed way with sensitivity and compassion.

*Revd Canon Rosie Harper:* Thank you very much for your response, recognising the increasingly difficult environment for trans people at the moment. Could I ask that the female members of the House help them by issuing a statement that recognises, as I do, that trans women are women and that our real challenge is the need to address sexism and misogyny in our culture today?

*The Bishop of Coventry:* I think that is a matter for the female members of the House. We certainly hope though, as my answer indicated, that the *Living in Love and Faith* project as it moves into engagement and implementation will have something to contribute, not only to the debate in the Church but also the debate in society which is increasingly fraught and not well-meant.

*Ms Jayne Ozanne (Oxford):* With thanks to Rosie for her important question and to Bishop Christopher for his answer, although I would urge him to say that this is not a debate: you cannot debate people's rights to exist. I wonder if he recognises that Bishop Paul Bayes, with Senior Rabbi Laura Janner-Klausner, has recently made a statement in support of the trans community which notes their concern at the use of unpalatable phrases such as "transgender ideology" and "transgenderism" and calls for a softening of the rhetoric so that trans people can live their lives without fear. Is he aware of that statement?

*The Bishop of Coventry:* Actually, Jayne, I was not aware of it and so I am really grateful to be made aware of it. You are quite right, this is not about debating people's lives. Nevertheless, there are questions which people are asking and I think it is proper that we consider those carefully and kindly - that is my great hope. I think that exactly what you are suggesting is what I hope will very much come out of the LLF process, as the whole Church, whatever people's particular questions, they will want to affirm exactly what you have said: that language that denies people their identity, that hurts, is not at all helpful or good.

32. *Revd Canon Priscilla White (Birmingham)* asked the Chair of the House of Bishops: There have been documents issued from the communications department which have negatively impacted LGBTI people and allies for example the statement on heterosexual civil partnerships and the original, though perhaps inevitable statement about delaying LLF. How are people who will be most impacted by such statements considered in their production, and whose responsibility is it to consider and mitigate that impact?

*The Bishop of Coventry (Rt Revd Dr Christopher Cocksworth)* replied on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops: The *Living in Love and Faith* project has sought to involve LGBTI people in a variety of ways: through membership of the working groups; through contributions to the lived experience stories that form a part of the resources; and through the advice of LGBTI experts in the variety of disciplines that have been drawn upon. In relation to decisions about delaying the resources, the LLF project sought the views of LGBTI people and shared the outcomes of this with the House of Bishops so that these views could be taken into account. Their decision to publish the resources in November drew on those views among others.

*Revd Canon Priscilla White:* Thank you for your answer, Bishop. It does seem only to address half the question, so what consideration was given to the impact of the heterosexual civil partnership statement on gay and lesbian people in civil partnerships, given that many people found it very undermining and distressing? I am aware that there is another question later, question 62, covered by the Archbishop which does cover some of the same ground but, as this question addressed that issue, I would like an answer, please.

*The Bishop of Coventry:* Thank you very much, Priscilla, and, fair point, it did focus on the sort of second half. I can say that the pastoral statement was largely a restatement of existing guidance regarding civil partnerships and that is why special consideration was not given to its reception, especially among LGBTI people. Clearly, the House has much to learn from this, which is why the Lessons Learned Review is currently being conducted that we will hear about later. May I also say Synod that may remember that the Archbishops on behalf of the Bishops acknowledged that the release of the statement had jeopardised trust and caused hurt and that they committed themselves to the LLF process which was intended, of course, to help us all to build bridges that will enable difficult conversations about questions of human identity, sexuality and marriage to take place well.

33. *Ms Jay Greene (Winchester)* asked the Chair of the House of Bishops: What directions have been provided by the House of Bishops or the Pastoral Advisory Group to assist Diocesan Directors of Ordinands in responding to prospective candidates already in same-sex marriages?

*The Bishop of Newcastle (Rt Revd Christine Hardman)* replied on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops: The House of Bishops Pastoral Guidance on Same Sex Marriage, published in 2014, includes a section on ‘Clergy and Ordinands’. It concludes that ‘The House is not, therefore, willing for those who are in a same sex marriage to be ordained to any of the three orders of ministry.’ One of the responsibilities of the Pastoral Advisory Group is ‘To respond to requests for advice from bishops regarding specific cases of pastoral care and discipline involving clergy in same-sex relationships, clergy responding to lay people in same-sex relationships, and other cases concerning LGBTI+ people which may arise in the course of bishops’ ministries.’ This includes requests for advice regarding candidates and ordinands. Its advice is sought and received in confidence and always encourages bishops and their staff to embody a personal, compassionate and pastorally sensitive approach to the implications of the Church’s current position for the individual concerned.

34. *Ms Jayne Ozanne (Oxford)* asked the Chair of the House of Bishops: What actions should anyone who has undergone conversion therapy conducted in Church of England churches take in order to ensure that this practice is stopped in accordance with General Synod’s decision in July 2017?

*The Bishop of Newcastle (Rt Revd Christine Hardman)* replied on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops: They should speak with their bishop who will be fully aware of the 2017 Synod decision. The bishop will seek to discover the full facts of the matter and will frame an appropriate response. Should the bishop feel the need for support in coming to a decision, the Pastoral Advisory Group bishops are always ready to offer support and advice.

*Ms Jayne Ozanne (Oxford)*: Mindful of the General Synod’s decision in July 2017 and its vote to call on the Government to ban conversion therapy, what action will the House of Bishops take to ensure that people, churches and organisations that continuously refuse to accept the harm that they do in this respect are disciplined appropriately?

*The Bishop of Newcastle*: We were quite clear when we debated this in General Synod in 2017 about the absolutely clear evidence of the harm that conversion therapies could do. We also debated the definition of what conversion therapy is and what it is not and I do not want to reopen that now. All I would want to say is that I think we must be utterly committed to the decision made by Synod in 2017 and hold before us all the time - you might expect me to say this as the Chair of the Pastoral Advisory Group - the unique dignity of every son and daughter of God and everything we do must reflect that in the way we live and relate to one another.

*The Bishop of Liverpool (Rt Revd Paul Bayes)*: Bishop Christine, mindful of the decision of Synod, to which you have really positively referred, to call upon on the Government to ban conversion therapy, have the officers of the Synod or other representatives of the national Church made representation to the Government, or will they do so, as part of the present debate on banning conversion therapy so as to

remind the Government of the Synod's decision and, in consequence, to advocate for such a ban?

*The Bishop of Newcastle:* Bishop Paul, I think your question is to the officers of the Synod rather than to the House of Bishops and so I cannot give you an accurate answer to that. But I have been aware that the Government promised two years ago that they would be bringing in a ban on conversion therapy. That has not happened yet and so I think we as a Synod should note that and let it inform our actions.

35. *Mrs Andrea Minichiello Williams (Chichester)* asked the Chair of the House of Bishops: Does the Church support those who wish to get away from unwanted sexual attraction, of any kind, because of their Christian faith or their desire to keep the family unit intact?

*The Bishop of Newcastle (Rt Revd Christine Hardman)* replied on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops: We know that sexual attraction and orientation are complex matters which cannot be changed simply by an individual's wish to do so. We also know that psychological damage can be done if people deny the reality of their sexual attraction or seek to be attracted in ways contrary to their innate orientation.

Sexual orientation is no bar to church membership, as has been affirmed in numerous reports from Issues in Human Sexuality onwards. The Church's calling is to journey with people and help them learn how to live with their sexuality in ways which enable themselves and others to flourish.

36. *Revd Canon Paul Cartwright (Leeds)* asked the Chair of the House of Bishops: What consideration has been given to the theological and psychological importance of church buildings as venues for public worship and private prayer, and as a physical presence at the heart of local communities?

37. *Revd Canon Paul Cartwright (Leeds)* asked the Chair of the House of Bishops: Given the wide range of views held in the Church of England on the proper role of church buildings in its ministry and mission, has the House given any recent consideration to the theology of sacred space? If not, will it now invite the Faith and Order Commission to do so?

*The Bishop of Fulham (Rt Revd Jonathan Baker)* replied on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops: With permission, I will answer Questions 36 and 37 from Canon Cartwright together.

In 2015, the Report of the Church Buildings Review was published. The review was chaired by the Bishop of Worcester. Its wide-ranging 'principles regarding the use and stewardship of church buildings' and specific recommendations were anchored in a substantial treatment of the theology of church buildings, constituting the whole of Part 2 of the report. The community benefits of church buildings were also a significant part of

the report of the 2018 Taylor Review of Cathedral and Church Building Sustainability, which recognised the importance to people of all faiths and none and led to a £2m pilot project exploring just these factors.

38. *Brigadier Ian Dobbie (Rochester)* asked the Chair of the House of Bishops: Was legal advice taken before the guidance set out in the Archbishops' letters of 24 and 27 March 2020 was issued and, if it was, will the House agree to publish it?

*The Archbishop of Canterbury (Most Revd & Rt Hon Justin Welby)* replied as Chair of the House of Bishops: Legal advice was not taken as the pastoral letters were advisory and it was not considered that the guidance had any particular legal implications.

39. *Revd Charlie Skrine (London)* asked the Chair of the House of Bishops: Can the House explain how it considered the guidance set out in the archbishops' letters of 24th and 27th March to be consistent with the relationship between bishops and incumbents as understood by (a) the law and (b) the ecclesiology of the Church of England?

40. *Mr Richard Morgan (Ely)* asked the Chair of the House of Bishops: Can the House explain how it considered the guidance set out in the archbishops' letters of 24th and 27th March to be consistent with the relationship between bishops and incumbents as understood by (a) the law and (b) the ecclesiology of the Church of England?

*The Archbishop of Canterbury (Most Revd & Rt Hon Justin Welby)* replied as Chair of the House of Bishops: With permission I will answer questions 39 and 40 together.

It was not considered that the guidance had legal or ecclesiological implications for the relationship between bishops and incumbents. As guidance, incumbents needed to take it seriously and accord it due weight; but the taking of decisions within benefices remained a matter for incumbents in consultation with parochial church councils.

*Revd Charlie Skrine:* Since the first supplementary, I hope everyone understands that the guidance was produced under extreme pressure and in unprecedented times. The questions are for clarity on matters of the future. So the question, did the House of Bishops intend for archdeacons to enforce adherence to the House of Bishops' guidance where incumbents and PCCs have made their own decisions entirely within Government guidance, for example, by live streaming from within church buildings? And, if not, would the House commit to considering how to avoid such misunderstandings in the future?

*The Archbishop of Canterbury:* Charlie, thank you very much for your question and your preamble. As we say, it was advice not instructions and, yes, we will be considering that.

41. *Mrs Rhian Parsons (Leicester)* asked the Chair of the House of Bishops: Given that advice from the Church Buildings Division made it clear that it was acceptable for a

designated person to enter a church building for the purpose of checking that it remains safe and secure, why did the House not consider it acceptable for clergy to enter the building to use it for the purpose for which it exists - i.e. prayer and worship?

*The Archbishop of Canterbury (Most Revd & Rt Hon Justin Welby)* replied as Chair of the House of Bishops: Government guidance during 'lockdown' was to avoid all non-essential travel and to 'Stay Home, Protect the NHS, Save Lives'. Entering a church building occasionally during this period to ensure that it remained in a safe condition was an essential undertaking. While praying in a church building is very important for clergy (and others), it could not be considered an essential practice.

*Mrs Rhian Parsons:* How could the Archbishops and Bishops conclude that entering the church building to pray is "not an essential practice", if, as they admitted at question 38, they did not take legal advice on the canonical implications of the guidance?

*The Archbishop of Canterbury:* Thank you, Rhian, very much indeed. That is very helpful. First of all, the Government advice was about care for the community and the whole issue is not about ourselves. We issued advice not law and that is why we did not need to take legal advice at the time. We were in the middle of a very complicated process on 23 March. The Prime Minister stated that we could not go into places of worship, that they would be closed, and on the 27th that that was slightly revised. You will remember that it was a very fast moving situation. We were working with that.

*Mr Clive Scowen (London):* On a similar tack, given that incumbents are under a legal duty to say morning and evening prayer daily in church and to celebrate holy communion there every Sunday, on what basis is it asserted that travelling to church to fulfil that legal obligation is not essential or, indeed, less important than visiting the church to ensure that it is safe and secure, which is not a matter of legal obligation?

*The Archbishop of Canterbury:* I think this really covers a question you are going to ask a bit later, or a supplementary you had set out a bit later. The Church of England needed to demonstrate that it was the Church for England, helping to set an example to other faith communities.

There are more 29,500 registered places of worship in England and Wales in addition to the Church of England and Church in Wales' church buildings. If all of these ministers of religion had chosen to travel to their places of worship, either weekly or even daily, the cumulative effect would have been to undermine significantly the stay at home advice. You will remember that, at the time, the R factor was over 3, there were worries about having two million patients and that is why we were concerned about the national situation.

42. *Mrs Rhian Parsons (Leicester)* asked the Chair of the House of Bishops: Given that the closure of church buildings to their clergy was not required by the Government, but was the outcome of a policy decision by the archbishops and bishops, will the

House agree to reflect on whether the decision in that respect, which effectively equated church buildings with leisure facilities, was the correct one?

*The Archbishop of Canterbury (Most Revd & Rt Hon Justin Welby)* replied as Chair of the House of Bishops: The House will reflect on all aspects of its response to the first wave of the Covid-19 pandemic in the UK, particularly through the work of its Recovery Group. This will include the closure of church buildings which remained unique sacred spaces throughout that period.

*Mrs Rhian Parsons:* Will the House's process in which it will reflect on all aspects of a response to which you referred, Archbishop, be conducted in the near future and then the findings be reported to Synod?

*The Archbishop of Canterbury:* I hope very much it will be in the near future but it will have to be when the pandemic is over and, therefore, we can look at the thing as a whole. God willing, that may be in the near future but it may not be - it is beyond my control - and we have to wait and see life returning to normal to see the whole range of lessons that we need to learn.

*Mr Sam Margrave (Coventry):* Will the House of Bishops publish contact details for the Recovery Group to facilitate parishes, readers, laity or priests to make representation to ensure any reflection and learnings are well-informed?

*The Archbishop of Canterbury:* I have no doubt that we will consult very widely. I cannot give that undertaking without having to consult data protection law.

43. *Mr Richard Morgan (Ely)* asked the Chair of the House of Bishops: In the Prolocutors' letter of 31st March they stated that "we believe that it is right to accept and to take on trust our Bishops and Archbishops on this matter [sic]. They do not take these decisions lightly." How much time, precisely, did the archbishops and bishops in fact devote to collective consideration of whether clergy should be able to enter their own churches, during their closure to the public, for the purposes of prayer and worship?

*The Archbishop of Canterbury (Most Revd & Rt Hon Justin Welby)* replied as Chair of the House of Bishops: The precise time bishops and archbishops spent in prayer, reflection and discussion regarding advice for clergy to refrain from praying in, or streaming services from, church buildings has not been recorded, but it incorporated two online collective meetings as well as numerous conversations by email, phone and 'Zoom' in addition to detailed consideration of written material.

*Mr Richard Morgan:* Can the Archbishop, therefore, confirm that the House played a significant role in the formulation of the guidance?

*The Archbishop of Canterbury:* It did not do so on the meetings on the 23rd or the 27th because the House did not meet but, once it started meeting, yes, it played a substantial role.

*Revd Canon Simon Butler (Southwark):* As the question makes reference to the letter that Chris Newlands and I wrote, I wonder, given that the briefing we were given as Prolocutors was that the decision was made on the basis that it would save lives, does the House stand by its decision in retrospect and does it believe that lives have been saved by the decisions that it made?

*The Archbishop of Canterbury:* I think you are asking for my opinion in the second part of your question. Oh, I hope so. Certainly, we stand by our decision. We made it in the light of the best information we had at the time and the diocesan bishops, when they met, acted in prayer, with thought and with much anguish. Hindsight is a very great gift and we can all look back and that will be part of our reflective practice review. But, yes, we do stand by it and I certainly would not do anything different in the light of the knowledge I had at the time and I suspect my colleagues would be the same.

44. *Mr Paul Boyd-Lee (Salisbury)* asked the Chair of the House of Bishops: Will the House agree to consider whether the way in which the archbishops' letters of 24th and 27th March were expressed was adequate to enable the Church to understand (a) the precise character of the guidance they contained and (b) the justification for it?

*The Archbishop of Canterbury (Most Revd & Rt Hon Justin Welby)* replied as Chair of the House of Bishops: The House of Bishops reviews all its responses to the first wave of the Covid-19 pandemic in the UK, particularly through its Recovery Group, in order to learn from its experience. All issues will be thoroughly discussed.

45. *Miss Prudence Dailey (Oxford)* asked the Chair of the House of Bishops: If, as The Archbishop of Canterbury stated on the *Andrew Marr Show* on Easter Day, the policy on the closure of churches set out in the archbishops' letters of 24th and 27th March represented "guidance, not instruction", with the result that its effect was to give clergy a discretion as to how to apply it in the circumstances of their particular ministry, why did the archbishops' letters not contain any detailed guidance to clergy on how to exercise that discretion, particularly in terms of striking the appropriate balance, in the circumstances of their particular ministry, between (a) maximising the effectiveness of that ministry and (b) minimising the risk of infection?

*The Archbishop of Canterbury (Most Revd & Rt Hon Justin Welby)* replied as Chair of the House of Bishops: The guidance set out in the letters of 24th and 27th March was that clergy should refrain from praying in, or streaming from, church buildings in response to the government's instruction to 'Stay Home, Protect the NHS, Save Lives. This guidance was considered to be self-explanatory.

*Miss Prudence Dailey:* Could the Archbishop please clarify how the guidance can be regarded as self-explanatory when it contains no explanation of the authority for which it was given or how binding it was or how it related to canon law?

*The Archbishop of Canterbury:* Well, the guidance was written with some considerable care and it was left to diocesan bishops and archdeacons to explain, which they worked extremely hard at doing to their clergy. I know from Canterbury Diocese the work that Bishop Rose did and has done on a continual basis since and I am hugely grateful to the work of the Bishops. Advice is not the same as law. It was not a matter of giving law. We listened to medical advice and to guidance, to Government and to each other. We probably made mistakes. One does when we are in an unprecedented crisis and we will seek to learn from those when he when come to our review.

*Revd Peter Breckwoldt (Salisbury):* In the light of the decisions taken in March, will the Archbishop now seek to ensure that provision and support will be given to local churches such as teaching material so that discipling of children and teenagers can be effectively delivered in church-focused bubbles so as to maximise the effectiveness of that ministry when being challenged by Government guidance to limit direct contact between young people in out of school settings?

*The Chair:* I am sorry, the question is out of order because it is not relevant to the original question.

46. *Mr Tjeerd Bijl (Europe)* asked the Chair of the House of Bishops: Will the House consider whether the guidance on the closure of churches set out in the archbishops' letters of 24th and 27th March was expressed in terms which properly allowed for the diversity of churchmanship, sacramental theology, and theology of place within the different parish and other contexts in which it would need to be applied?

*The Archbishop of Canterbury (Most Revd & Rt Hon Justin Welby)* replied as Chair of the House of Bishops: The House of Bishops reviews all its responses to the first wave of the Covid-19 pandemic in the UK, particularly through its Recovery Group and seeks to learn from its experience. Empathetic pastoral care infuses all expressions of theology and practice in the Church of England and actively informed the advice given by archbishops and bishops in their letters of 24th and 27th March.

47. *Miss Emma Forward (Exeter)* asked the Chair of the House of Bishops: When the archbishops and bishops were considering in March whether clergy should be instructed not to enter their own church buildings during the Covid-19 pandemic, either for private prayer or for the purpose of streaming worship online from the church building, was any account taken of the fact that such a policy would have a more severe impact on some church traditions than others?

*The Archbishop of Canterbury (Most Revd & Rt Hon Justin Welby)* replied as Chair of the House of Bishops: Given the realistic possibility of hundreds of thousands of deaths

and millions of Covid-19 infections, the Prime Minister issued instructions on 23rd March that all non-essential travel should cease and non-essential services be suspended with the clear message, 'Stay Home, Protect the NHS, Save Lives'. On 24th March, the archbishops and bishops issued a pastoral letter strongly encouraging clergy to respond accordingly by closing church buildings for all purposes. Following this letter the Government made provision for 'ministers of religion' to pray in, or stream services from, church buildings. Subsequently, on 27th March the archbishops and bishops wrote a further pastoral letter reiterating this advice in the interests of the common good, while explicitly acknowledging the pain that this would cause many clergy and laypeople. In 'going the extra mile' clergy of all traditions sacrificially contributed to a national effort to limit the transmission of the virus.

48. *Mr Paul Boyd-Lee (Salisbury)* asked the Chair of the House of Bishops: Will the House (a) undertake an urgent review of the appropriateness of the guidance set out in the archbishops' letters of 24th and 27th March and (b) consult widely, including with representatives of a wide range of traditions in the Church, on the nature of any guidance on the use or closure of church buildings that may need to be issued in the event of similar circumstances arising again in future?

*The Archbishop of Canterbury (Most Revd & Rt Hon Justin Welby)* replied as Chair of the House of Bishops: The House of Bishops reviews the first wave of the Covid-19 pandemic in the UK through its Recovery Group and seeks to learn from its experience. The House of Bishops represents a wide range of traditions in the Church and seeks to listen to all viewpoints while acknowledging its leadership role in making any future decisions, particularly those that might require swift action.

*The Chair:* There is a supplementary, Emma Forward. Are you there, Emma?

*Miss Emma Forward:* On 47, Chair.

*The Chair:* Oh, you were wanting on 47?

*Miss Emma Forward:* Is that in order?

*The Chair:* Oh, well, you are too late. No, I stopped somebody before, so I will only be told off.

49. *Mr Tjeerd Bijl (Europe)* asked the Chair of the House of Bishops: Given that the guidance on the closure of churches set out in the archbishops' letters of 24th and 27th March bore disproportionately on certain traditions in the Church, how does the House intend to respond to the consequent dismay in those traditions, including the concerns that have been drawn from that guidance about the future general direction of travel of the Church of England?

*The Archbishop of Canterbury (Most Revd & Rt Hon Dr Justin Welby)* replied as Chair of the House of Bishops: The House of Bishops has established a Recovery Group which reviews and seeks to learn from the first wave of the Covid-19 pandemic in the UK. All issues will be explored thoroughly. No inferences on the ‘future general direction of travel of the Church of England’ should be drawn from the advice given in the archbishops’ and bishops’ letters of 24th and 27th March.

50. *Revd Paul Benfield (Blackburn)* asked the Chair of the House of Bishops: When the archbishops and bishops discussed the policy on the closure of churches set out in the archbishops’ letters of 24th and 27th March, did they understand it as involving the giving of (a) guidance or (b) instruction?

*The Archbishop of Canterbury (Most Revd & Rt Hon Dr Justin Welby)* replied as Chair of the House of Bishops: Both pastoral letters made clear the responsibilities that clergy had in adhering to government instructions to ‘Stay Home, Protect the NHS, Save Lives’ while the letter of the 27th March made explicit that the letters contained advice, not instruction.

51. *The Revd Canon Howard Stoker (Norwich)* asked the Chair of the House of Bishops: If, as The Archbishop of Canterbury stated on the *Andrew Marr Show* on Easter Day, the policy on the closure of churches set out in the archbishops’ letters of 24th and 27th March represented “guidance, not instruction”, why was it expressed in imperative terms?

*The Archbishop of Canterbury (Most Revd & Rt Hon Dr Justin Welby)* replied as Chair of the House of Bishops: The pastoral letters of 24th and 27th March emphasised the need to follow Government instruction and to respond positively to the Gospel imperatives to love our neighbour and to care for the vulnerable. The letter of 27th March, in particular, emphasised the advisory nature of the pastoral letters.

*Miss Prudence Dailey (Oxford)*: Is the House of Bishops aware that some of its members indicated to their diocesan clergy that they may be subject of proceedings under the Clergy Discipline Measure should they choose not to follow the advice? And, if so, does it recognise this represents apparent confusion as to the status of the policy as advice rather than instruction? And has it reflected on how this misunderstanding might have arisen and could be avoided in the future?

*The Archbishop of Canterbury*: Thank you, Prudence, for three questions in one, much appreciated. Yes, yes and no, but it will.

*Revd Charles Read (Norwich)*: Thank you for dealing with all these questions on this matter and for being so candid. I think my question is this. I think what is confusing some of us - certainly confusing me - is how the word “must” used in the first letter, certainly, could be interpreted as being advice rather than instruction.

*The Archbishop of Canterbury:* The first letter was issued on 24 March, which was the day after the Prime Minister's statement in which he says: "To ensure compliance ... we will immediately close all shops selling non-essential goods including clothing and electronic stores and other premises, including libraries, playgrounds and outdoor gyms and places of worship". That was on the 23rd. The Archbishops and Bishops' letter of the 24th reflected that statement, "must", because that was the law. Subsequently, it changed and the Archbishops and Bishops clearly stated in their letter of 27 March, "We want to reiterate the advice we have sent". In other words, we removed "must" at that point. We were in a rapidly changing situation.

52. *Miss Debbie Buggs (London)* asked the Chair of the House of Bishops: When issuing the guidance set out in the archbishops' letters of 24th and 27th March what was the understanding of the archbishops and bishops with regard to the relationship between that guidance and the legal obligations imposed by:

- Canons B 11, B 13, B 14 and B 14A relating to the saying of Morning and Evening Prayer and the celebration of the Holy Communion in churches and cathedrals;
- Canon B 15 relating to the receiving of Holy Communion by all who have been confirmed;
- Canon B 18 relating to the preaching of sermons in parish churches;
- Canon B 22.4 relating to the delaying of baptism; and
- Canon C 24 relating to the responsibilities of priests having a cure of souls in relation to these matters,

and why did the letters not explain its understanding in that respect or any legal advice it had received about it?

*The Archbishop of Canterbury (Most Revd & Rt Hon Justin Welby)* replied as Chair of the House of Bishops: Given the urgency of the situation following the Prime Minister's announcement of 'lockdown' on 23rd March and the need to respond swiftly, the pastoral letters contained concise advice that did not explore the relationship between the guidance offered and the canons stated. In these unprecedented circumstances, legal advice on this issue was not sought.

*Miss Debbie Buggs:* Given that the Archbishop's answer to question 58 makes it plain that there was time to obtain advice from a range of advisers, why was the need to respond swiftly a reason for not obtaining legal advice, please?

*The Archbishop of Canterbury:* Well, because we were not making law, we were giving advice, and our priority at the time was medical, scientific and pastoral and that exhausted the time we had available. Everybody was at the end of their tether, under immense pressure. We were trying to work very very rapidly. And, you know, it was not about us. It was about seeking our duty to the nation and that is not about us. It is about the great commandments: to love God, love neighbour, and to love involves sacrifices and suffering. So that was why we were not able to deal with the legal side at that time. We were under enormous pressure.

*Revd Wyn Beynon (Worcester):* Would the House of Bishops welcome my thanks to what I considered very clear guidance from the Bishops through all of this that gave us some ability to act in a way that was best for the population, would you accept my thanks on behalf of I think a lot of people.

*The Archbishop of Canterbury:* Wyn, given the tenor of most of these questions, you may be assured that, unless this was not an individual meeting, I would leap down from the podium and embrace you warmly from a distance of two metres while wearing a mask and not singing! I have to say I am very grateful, thank you, and I think that you do represent a significant view. I suppose I have to say that I found it, if I am really candid, depressing and slightly surprising that so many of these questions - indeed, until that one all of them - were about us, not about essential workers, the bereaved, the dead, the long-term sick, a world in suffering, the compassion of Christ, the Anglican communion and the incredible work of local laity and clergy in every form of ministry. I hope our session on how we responded after lunch is more outward looking. It is really not all about us.

*The Chair:* I am going to finish this particular set of questions at this point. When we come back to questions later on in the afternoon, we will then pick it up yet again with the Archbishop of Canterbury from question 53, but this particular part of this meeting finishes now and we will resume later at 1.30.

THE CHAIR *Mr Aiden Hargreaves-Smith (London)* took the Chair at 1.32 pm.

## **RESPONSE TO COVID-19: PRESENTATION FOLLOWED BY QUESTIONS**

*The Chair:* Good afternoon, members of Synod and welcome to “Not the General Synod”, if that does not make us sound like a cross between an 80s comedy show and Songs of Praise! I am sorry, of course, that we are not breathing Yorkshire air this afternoon but we are here in the imaginatively named room 3. I hope that you are comfortable and refreshed where you are across the country.

We come now to the next item of our business, the Church’s response to the Covid-19 pandemic. This is a presentation that will be followed by questions. We have about an hour and a quarter for this business. This is intended as an opportunity for members to engage with some of the issues that have arisen over recent months in relation to the Covid-19 pandemic, its impact and the Church of England’s response. Members will need GS Misc 1249 and, the update, GS Misc 1251.

In a moment, I shall invite the Bishop of London to introduce this item. She will speak for up to 15 minutes. After the presentation, I shall invite questions from Synod

members and responses will be provided by a panel comprising the Bishop of London; the Bishop of Exeter; the Revd Dr Brendan McCarthy, who is the Archbishops' Council's Medical Ethics, Health and Social Care Policy Adviser; Mr William Nye, the Secretary General; and the Revd Alexander McGregor, the Chief Legal Adviser. I understand that the Third Church Estates Commissioner, Dr Eve Poole, will also be available to respond to any questions within her brief relating to cathedrals.

It will be for the members of the panel to determine who will respond to specific questions and to invite questions in groups of three. Given that the questions' sessions this morning and later this afternoon are following the normal procedural rules, I intend to be a little more relaxed about the introductory remarks leading to a question during this item. I know I can rely on members, nevertheless, to be brief and clear in coming to a question, given the limited time available, so that we might have the opportunity to hear from as many members as possible.

The Covid-19 pandemic has had an immeasurable impact on the Church, on the nation and on the world. As we come to this item, in a spirit of humility and love of our neighbour, let us first pause for a moment of prayer:

Oh, God, the protector of all who trust in You, without whom nothing is strong, nothing is holy, increase and multiply upon us your mercy, that with you as our ruler and guide we may so pass through things temporal that we lose not our hold on things eternal. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

I now invite the Bishop of London to introduce this item. Bishop, you have up to 15 minutes.

*The Bishop of London (Rt Revd & Rt Hon Dame Sarah Mullally):* Thank you. Also, can I draw to your attention GS 2173, which is the financial paper. I am very grateful for Brendan McCarthy being here today but also for his paper, GS Misc 1251.

Brothers and sisters, in the Gospel of Mark, there are two passages which come in quick succession where the disciples are in the midst of the storm. Jesus calms the waves which threaten to overcome them. The first account is a picture of the weariness of the great teacher when, the long day being over and the multitude dismissed, he retreats across the lake and sinks into a sleep in the stern of the boat, undisturbed by the raging tempest and by the waves that beat into the boat. He observed the reluctance of the disciples to rouse him until the peril is extreme and the boat is now filling. It is filling also with fear and panic and they believe that he did not care. In the second narrative, we see the boat far out on the lake, watched by the one who is alone on the land.

Through the gloom, he sees them tormented by fruitless ruin, but though this is the reason why he comes he is about to pass them by. The cry of their alarm is universal for they saw him and were troubled. In both accounts, the disciples are afraid and the

waves threaten to overcome them. The words of Jesus come to them with the sudden ceasing of the storm, “Why are you fearful? Where is your faith? Be of good cheer. It is I. Do not be afraid”.

Over the last four months, we have been in the midst of the storm with the waves threatening to overcome us and the whole of society. Our challenge has been to take our focus off the storm and onto Jesus Christ, to remember who he is for us and hear his words, “It is I. Do not be afraid”.

When I was in the Department of Health, we planned for a pandemic, albeit for a flu pandemic not Coronavirus. The Church of England did not plan for a pandemic. There is much for us to learn about how we responded as individuals and as a Church. That which we learn we need to pass on to those who will face another pandemic in the future because, yes, some will.

Covid-19 has been the greatest acute public health challenge that the UK has faced in living memory. It has caused at least 55,000 deaths, almost 130,000 hospital admissions and has stretched but not broken our healthcare system. Sadly, the burden of deaths has fallen upon those most vulnerable in our society, the elderly, those living with disabilities and with existing health conditions.

Members of the UK minority ethnic communities have been disproportionately affected as have those suffering from deprivation or working in low-paid public facing jobs. Residents of care homes have seen 20,000 of their friends and companions taken from them in this pandemic and those caring for them have also paid a heavy price.

Terrible as all this has been, it could have been many times worse. It is important to remember that, back on 23 March, when the Prime Minister announced lockdown, we faced a realistic prospect of millions of hospital admissions overwhelming the NHS and hundreds of thousands of deaths. This was not scaremongering. It was a real possibility.

Thanks to the concerted efforts of tens of millions of ordinary people, Church members among them, the disaster was averted. We stayed at home, protected the NHS and saved lives. However, we are far from out of the storm. There is a continuing risk of local outbreaks of the illness and the need for ongoing vigilance to avoid a second wave of the pandemic.

It is in this context that we must now review our recovery. If you put your minds back to the end of February and the beginning of March, I am sure none of us would have predicted what was to follow. The speed of change was enormous, as was the uncertainty. Decisions had to be taken and advice given. As the pandemic evolved, so did our governance arrangements. The Church, like any other institution, adjusted both to the demands of the crisis and the need to work remotely.

The national Church established a response based on the best of the public sector with gold, silver and bronze meetings to resource our efforts. The House of Bishops had a first discussion of the then emerging pandemic on 10 March. Regular meetings of Bishops were put in place before the start of the formal lockdown, beginning with the meetings of diocesan bishops and a meeting of the Regional Conveners of Bishops, meeting during the week of 23 March.

During that week, it was recognised that a more formal structure of governance and decision-making would be necessary during the pandemic and regular meetings of the House of Bishops were instituted, starting on 3 April. Since then, the House of Bishops has met at least twice a month, and sometimes weekly, whereas normally the House would meet only two or three times a year. From May, the Recovery Group - a group of Regional Conveners of the College of Bishops, which I chair - began to meet to prepare materials on recovery, to convene and to suggest where leadership was required from the House of Bishops and from the wider Church.

We must recognise that, individually, we have had to contend with surviving a pandemic. We have seen this worked out in our own lives and the wider Church. Our most profound desire is to come together with our neighbours. Christ taught us to come together as his body to celebrate the sacraments.

In all the history of Christendom in these isles, we have not before taken a step to move away from our church buildings. Partly, this is our modern understanding of how disease is communicated, which in former times plagues had not developed. But it is also borne out of the teaching of Jesus Christ and his two great commandments: to love God and to love our neighbour. The very love of neighbour that leads us to want to come together required us to sacrifice, for a season, congregating.

It was with a heavy heart that the diocesan bishops of the Church of England gave their advice about streaming from and praying in churches, that it should stop. We also recognised that this caused hurt and anger for some, whereas for others it was reassuring and a relief. This did go beyond the Government's advice in providing leadership of those not just within the Church of England but also to those of faith and of none in the interest of the common good.

Even though our buildings were closed, I have been inspired by the way the Church in our communities has stepped up and stepped out - whether in running food banks, soup kitchens, reducing loneliness or even storing PPE for the local NHS or supporting our chaplains, and the way in which churches have taken to Church Online. This does not always make media headlines, but it has and does make a difference to the lives of people and I thank all of those who have stepped up and stepped out.

Meanwhile, we are living with our own anxieties and vulnerabilities, our questions about how long this will go on and what challenges it will bring next and, yes, our exhaustion.

We have all felt vulnerable and, at times, afraid. Who would not be in a situation as traumatic and as uncertain as this.

The Revd Hilary Ison who works with a project called Tragedies and Congregation suggested in a recent blog about post-Covid-19 that Covid-19 is the trauma that keeps giving, an earthquake with aftershocks. She says that we are navigating our way through it. We are like medieval cartographers who, when they came to the edge of the known world, simply wrote, "Here be dragons".

She explains that we are now in the stage in our response to this tragedy where energy levels are low, frustration is high, disillusionment is common and we are struggling to know what the next phase of the new normal will look like and whether we have any agency in shaping it.

The nature of our anxiety has been played out in public or at least on social media. I wonder if they will say, "Look how those Christians love each other", or whether we will be perceived like the disciples who squabbled about who should sit on the right or on the left side of Christ in glory? The reopening of our church buildings will, for some, bring relief but for others fresh anxieties.

Each of our personal circumstances is different. Each church is different and has different resources. Each community has different needs. There will be difficult decisions to make in the coming weeks. I have a particular concern for those clergy who are shielding, either on their own behalf or because of the needs of their household.

If a member of clergy is not able to reopen their building yet, they cannot be judged to have been failing or falling short. They need to stay safe. They need to care for those they love. We need to learn from their experience because there are new things to understand about what it is to be human and to depend on God in a time of great uncertainty and vulnerability.

I know that in chairing the Recovery Group I have not always got it right. I am a bit like that cracked jar and I hope that the light of Christ continues to shine through me. Churches and cathedrals have risen to the recent challenges, finding new ways of meeting for worship, of serving our neighbours and of reaching new people with the love of God in Christ Jesus.

The challenge before us now is to take the next steps carefully and safely, without forgetting all that we have discovered about God and ourselves along the way, but we need to do this keeping focused on Jesus Christ and not the storm. Thank you.

*The Chair:* We now have a time for questions. As I have indicated, I shall invite questions in groups of three. Would those who wish to ask a question, please raise their blue hand. If you find that your question has been answered, please take down

your blue hand. That will help us. May I remind members that, if they wish to speak, they will need to accept the invitation to unmute themselves temporarily. Could I also remind members to introduce themselves by name, Synod number and diocese prior to asking their question in the usual way.

*His Eminence Archbishop Angaelos (Ecumenical Representatives):* First of all, I am very thankful to be able to be here on this session, although it is virtually, and I am very grateful for the opportunity to speak. I just wanted to reflect on one verse that has been at the core of our ministry coming forward. That comes from psalm 84:1-2, “How lovely is your tabernacle, oh Lord of hosts. My soul longs, yes, even faints for the court of the Lord”.

And I think we have all sensed that. What we have been going through for the past four months is incredibly new and uncharted for all of us and, if anyone has the slightest semblance of wisdom, the answer to most questions would be “I don’t know” at any level and in most ways. I think we have seen that in our deliberation and the way we have led our churches.

Of course, our situation as a church is very different, not being of the size or the influence or the visibility of the Church of England and so we understand the incredible challenges. For that, I do pay tribute to my sisters and my brothers in the House of Bishops and all the clergy who have taken such incredibly difficult decisions at an unprecedented time. Our response to our world is focused in Acts 1:8, Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and the ends of the earth, and I think that is the way that we have needed to address this; first of all, our own safety, that of our congregations, that of our ecumenical partners journeying and the world around us.

I just wanted to take this time to thank the Archbishop, the Bishop of London, and all of those who have worked, and particularly the Archdeacon of London, Luke Miller, who has been an incredible support and a connection with all of us in the ongoing process. I think what we have seen is also a time of collaboration and with the death of George Floyd that has compounded the complexity of this time. I think his Grace, the Archbishop of Canterbury, would agree that we have seen an incredible opportunity for partnership and journeying together and that I think we will be able to continue from this point on.

I suppose to stick with the Chair’s incredible generosity and to make this compliant with the procedure, my question would be to the Bishop of London, would you please entertain the notion of passing on my thanks and the thanks of my church and, I am sure, the thanks of many for all that has been done and to assure everyone involved that we are here alongside you and that we are here to support in any way we can.

*Mrs Enid Barron (London):* I also want to express my thanks to all our leaders in the Church and local clergy for the great leadership they have given. Looking at the paper, GS Misc 1249, I was delighted to see that at paragraph 48.5 it mentions climate

change. We have all been focused on the pandemic and getting over an absolutely horrid time and my fear is that, in the effort to rebuild society, many institutions will not really think about what is here called “the biggest existential threat we face”, which is climate change.

There have been some horrible things happening, but I believe in the pandemic we have also experienced some absolutely wonderful things and it has made very clear our dependence on each other within our local communities and across the globe, and the previous speaker also mentioned this. I think there are things from the pandemic we could build on. It has helped to cut CO2 emissions. It has given us a clear view of what is important. I am just afraid that, in the recovery process, people will forget this bigger threat and particularly the Government in “spend, spend, spend” will also “pollute, pollute, pollute”.

I think my question to Church leaders is will you, particularly those in the House of Bishops, exert pressure on the Government to head for a greener recovery? There is so much opportunity, so much that can be done. I hope that we can be assured that in the Church of England we will really try hard to meet our target of net carbon neutral by 2030.

Welcoming the new Archbishop of York and his look ahead to the future, he also wonderfully mentioned things about climate change in his Presidential Address and I hope in his vision for the future he will - perhaps he could answer this - focus amongst other things on the Church giving the lead on fighting climate change.

*Revd Canon Lisa Battye (Manchester):* Three small things. First, I believed at the beginning of this pandemic that God was turning round the prayer in Psalm 126:5, “May those who sow in tears reap with joy”, and saying “those who sow in tears will reap with joy” has helped me through the lockdown myself.

Secondly, I have become more and more convinced this is a wonderful opportunity for us to re-examine who we are, what we are doing, what it is all about and really go to core principles and build a leaner, fitter, more responsive Church for the future. So I wish the Recovery Group every blessing. Third, you spoke, Bishop, of not being ready with a policy for a pandemic. I wonder if we need to be ready for a policy which would address the possibility of widespread loss of electricity.

*The Bishop of London (Rt Revd Dame Sarah Mullally):* Thank you very much for those points. I will come back first and then I will see whether any of the other panel would like to comment.

I often have reflected that, in a sense, the pandemic has brought out both the best of us and the worst of us. I recognise that the work that we have put into our ecumenical relationships and also our connections with our multi-faith colleagues has really paid off because it has meant that we have been able to make the link. So thank you, your

Grace, for your comments about the work that we have done together. The Archdeacon of London will have heard your thanks because he is part of Synod today, but I will take back your thanks for that.

I also recognise that in our work with the Government that, because their faith literacy is not always high, we have had to also work to enable them to understand the other churches that form part of our Christian Church and our contact has enabled that to happen.

I also reflect that, in a sense, we have had three pandemics: We have had Covid-19, we have racism and we have climate change. In a sense, those three pandemics have come to the fore during this period. You are right, Enid, that we have to tackle all three of those. Certainly the work that the previous Synod did earlier on this year lays the groundwork for us to take that forward. So, absolutely, coming out of the pandemic, we cannot return to normal. We have to bring about change in that way.

Lisa, you are absolutely right, our learning from this is not just for a pandemic. In a sense, what we have learned is how you deal with an acute crisis and that crisis could do anything. So I think our reflective practice on this will be a lesson for us all. I do not know if anybody else wants to add anything from the panel. Bishop Robert?

*The Bishop of Exeter (Rt Revd Robert Atwell):* Yes, thank you very much for what people have said. Certainly, the concern for the environment is something that I would echo. It is very interesting that in all the surveys that have been done that what still continues to come top of people's list of concern is climate change and I am sure that, as we emerge from the lockdown, that has once again come to the top of the list of public awareness.

I suppose, to that list, I might actually want to add something else and that is my own personal concern with mental health issues because I think that is something that has come to the fore very strongly through this pandemic and, interestingly, it has touched both people young and old. It is often said of our fantastic Health Service that the *Cinderella* part of it has been the mental health part of it and I think that has been exposed loud and clear in recent months.

I had an email from an elderly parishioner in our diocese when she was lamenting of the fact that our church buildings have been closed and what she said to me was, "You don't understand that, when I go to church, it's the only time in the week that I'm touched, both being greeted when I walk in through the church but also in exchanging the peace".

That sense of bereavement came over loud and clear and there has been a cost to enforced isolation which has been damaging to human life and community, as well as also in that isolation as Archbishop Stephen said when quoting from the desert farmers,

“The cell will teach you everything”, and solitude is a gift. But there is a difference between solitude and loneliness and sometimes we confuse the two.

*Very Revd Tim Barker (Winchester):* I am grateful to the Bishop of London and Dr McCarthy for their assistance in providing advice to the deanery of Guernsey as we have been in the fortunate position of having returned to the status quo with no new cases of Covid-19 since the end of April and, therefore, have been somewhere ahead of England in our emergence from lockdown. I have appreciated hugely their support as I have sought guidance on how we have been able to open our churches safely.

I have been very conscious also of the work of the local media in supporting our community. Will you continue to support and encourage different responses in different parts of the country as we move through the next stages of this pandemic and, also, please, use the opportunities open to you for reinforcing the importance of local radio and local media?

*Canon Shayne Ardron (Leicester):* I found the paper, GS Misc 1251, very interesting and especially I was stopped at paragraph 23 when it says how the Government is designed more for peacetime and tends to work in silos. That got my mind roaming on all sorts of different things and thinking how the Church of England is actually based in many ways in some of that parliamentary style and for much of our own structure.

I was wondering how, if that is the problem with Government, can we learn from that as some of the problems that we have within the Church of England. In the same way that the Government should be more country focused and not focused on their own party rather than who they are governing for, how do you think we can be more Kingdom focused and not just Church focused?

Because I have seen lots of things in the news in how the community and how God has worked through not just the Church but in lots of different areas, how can we celebrate and enjoy that rather than just be focused on what the Church is doing? How can we celebrate what others are doing as well and move forward in all of that to be more Kingdom focused?

*Mr Gavin Oldham (Oxford):* I would like to carry on in that vein about the community. I would like to thank particularly Archbishop Justin for his comments directly before lunch in answer to the last question that we took, which I think were extremely appropriate and much appreciated and his personal commitment which he has shown in St Thomas’s and the work he has done there. We really appreciate that. Thank you very much for giving us all that example.

I would like to commend the massive community action work which has been going on throughout the country, and my question is this. How can we celebrate that community action which is the living witness to the second great commandment, to love our neighbour as ourselves, by prioritising it in all public statements from the Church and its

Bishops and, therefore, linking it directly with the outreach and mission of the Church itself?

*The Bishop of London (Rt Revd & Rt Hon Dame Sarah Mullally):* Thank you very much indeed for those questions. Shall we just take Tim's first of all. Certainly moving forward, what we hope is that what we are seeing as the Recovery Group is really to resource people to take local decisions. It is entirely likely that spikes will come now locally, so really the aim of the Recovery Group is to support people locally. Brendan, I do not know whether you would like to just add to that.

*Revd Dr Brendan McCarthy (National Adviser on Health Policy):* I think, Bishop Sarah, the only thing I would want to say is we really do still need to realise that we are just in the early days of this pandemic. Tim and I have communicated over this past few months successfully and happily, but we do not know what next month is going to bring. We do not know if the situation in Guernsey will remain as it is.

I would like to re-emphasise what his Eminence said. I just wish more people had bought into the answer "I don't know" earlier in this, because the truth is on very very many things we still do not know. You know, it is not called a "novel Coronavirus" for nothing.

Our knowledge of this and our knowledge of the future trajectory of it is still very much limited. So, while Guernsey is clear at the moment - and I hope and pray it will remain so - and while the situation is getting better obviously across the UK and in England, there will be spikes, there will be clusters, there will be outbreaks and there is no guarantee that any of those will look just the same as what we have come through.

I suppose I am just putting a little word of caution in. You mentioned in your address that people were getting weary and tired; that is true, but the virus is not and it is not taking a holiday and we just have to somehow catch our second wind, I think, and push on into the next phase. We have seen the suppression of the virus, and that is only the first bit of this, but now we have got to learn to co-exist with this and that is where we really do need to dig in.

*The Bishop of London (Rt Revd & Rt Hon Dame Sarah Mullally):* And I would encourage people to make good connections with their local resilience forums and with their local authorities because, going forward, that is where the information will come for around local lockdowns, as it did in Leicester. Of course, they are very specific, so they will be very specific areas and so I agree with you, Tim, about your point about using local media and local radio so that you are informed. Certainly, the Recovery Group will not be there indefinitely, but we will be there certainly until the end of the year, so to use us and in terms of advice that is required, but it will be done on a local basis.

I suppose, moving on to the other two questions around what are we learning around how we can work, there is a sense for me in which every community has a church and I

have the privilege of being able to see the way in which the Church has stepped out and stepped up and so, absolutely, churches have been there as part of demonstrating the love to their neighbours. Actually, whilst not all media picks it up, some have picked it up and certainly in all that I speak into, the media and the public square, I talk about the role of the local church.

Certainly, even a number of our boroughs, if they have a list of people that will help, the top seven are churches in one particular borough and so it is known about that the Church is part of the community and I have been really privileged to see a part of that. I am sure, Bishop Robert, that is the same in a rural diocese in Exeter as well.

*The Bishop of Exeter (Rt Revd Robert Atwell):* Absolutely. I mean, I think one of the things is we have a real opportunity to join in identifying and thanking the heroes of our local communities. It is the unsung heroes that we need to be celebrating and working with because one of the great things and important things about thanksgiving is that it turns “I” into “we” and that is a building block of community.

One of the things, certainly, that I have seen here in Devon is, right across the county, the way communities have come together in caring for one another. I do think there is also a very interesting thing about the media and that is the fact that, by and large, national media is dominated by a London agenda.

For those of us in other parts of the country, it is always interesting for me when I am watching BBC Spotlight, after you have had the national but you then go to the regional bit, it is often a very different flavour. In the local media, it is very interesting to see how often the churches are appearing there as being at the forefront of community action and that is something that we should rejoice in.

*Ms Josile Munro (London):* Thank you very much, Bishop Sarah, for all the work you are doing with the group, we appreciate it, and also all of the work the community has done to really help out people who are shielding, those who are vulnerable and so on.

One of the things that has been very useful has been the risk assessments that we have seen which have helped parishes individually look at their premises. I know that has been used and been encouraged to be looked at by all the other faiths and it is interesting that Muslims and Sikhs and various other faiths have also taken up and started to work on risk assessments as well.

My question is in relation to individual risk assessments because we know that the virus has affected certain parts of our community more. We have talked about (inaudible) and we have talked about people who are BAME - black, Asian and minority ethnic - people who have been much more affected by the virus. Now I wanted to find out whether we were looking at individual risk assessments for either clergy or for people who are working and to encourage that as a next step to make sure that everyone

remains protected, particularly as we are getting to the point where we are releasing lockdown when the virus still exists?

*The Bishop of Southwark (Rt Revd Christopher Chessun):* As a member of Bishop Sarah's Recovery Group, I would like to begin - I know I am allowed to give a little bit of a preamble - by attesting to the skill, energy and care with which she has chaired the Recovery Group and I am aware this has been a great burdensome task. But I think one of the rewards for the members of the Recovery Group is that we have been able to reflect together when we have met on different aspects of work.

One of my areas of work has been close ecumenical relations and so I was very heartened by the contribution made by his Eminence, Archbishop Angaelos. I just want to give Bishop Sarah the opportunity to say what we might be able to do as a Recovery Group to check out with our sister churches their different liturgical needs as we go forward in public worship, because their requirements are very different to ours and I think we need to be sensitive to that agenda.

*Mrs Anne Foreman (Exeter):* I have two questions and they are related to cathedrals. I speak as a member of a cathedral council. The first is in paper GS Misc 1251, paragraphs 52 and 53 about music. The missional opportunities for music in cathedrals is well-known. It can reach those parts that others cannot reach and so I would welcome an update, please, because it seems to change daily about the position regarding music that is mentioned there.

The second one is really probably for Dr Poole, if she is available, and that is on GS 2173 about the financial assistance already given to cathedrals and dioceses. It is obviously greatly appreciated and gratefully received, but is now not the time to follow the Government example of an unprecedented economic intervention in order to offer exceptional and much needed support to our cathedrals?

The Archbishop of York this morning said that the beautiful buildings need firm foundations and, by that, I took him to mean literally and spiritually and our beautiful buildings are needing their foundations shored up at the moment. So the rainy day is here now, Church Commissioners, and is it possible to have a think about releasing some of the treasures in your barns?

*The Bishop of London (Rt Revd & Rt Hon Dame Sarah Mullally):* Actually, if I first come to Brendan and then maybe if Eve Poole would be happy to answer Anne's question. But Brendan and I have been working quite closely with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. So, Brendan, would you answer the question about risk assessment and about a singing update?

*Revd Dr Brendan McCarthy (National Adviser on Health Policy):* Thank you very much for giving me the easy ones. This is how we work, it seems! Josile, thank you very much for a sort of really pertinent question or a series of questions about risk

assessments. The template that we have on the website I hope makes it clear that, of course, this is a risk assessment. It is not about trying to make any place risk free.

You will have known that over the last couple of weeks, this terrible term, “Covid secure”, has been bandied around and we do not use that terminology. It is not possible to make a place, or virtually not possible to make some place entirely secure. The DHSC currently is working on a detailed personal risk assessment template. It is a really difficult thing to do. Frankly, it is beyond us in the Church and in Church House to do it.

You will have been aware, and I think Josile you referenced two documents by Public Health England looking at risk factors and they went through about six or seven: age, gender, ethnicity, deprivation, employment and so on. To that, more recently, have been added disability and also LGBT+ concerns. Now to bring all of those together and to try to put them into a personal risk template is an incredibly complex job. Some people who have tried it even within the NHS have said, when they have done it, it has not been particularly useful because you cannot really treat people like numbers and work out percentages of risk.

What we have done on the website is we have put guidance for people who are in the clinically vulnerable group and the clinically extremely vulnerable group and then we have said that there is no shortcut here. People are going to have to talk with their employers, with their vicars, with their bishops, whoever it may be, and every individual is going to have to work through that with the relevant person themselves.

Of course, there is the caveat - and the Government has made this clear - that, even someone in the clinically extremely vulnerable group, at the end of the day the decision is hers or his. If they want to say, “I want to conduct a service, I want to volunteer”, then that is their decision but, of course, it is important that that personal risk conversation rather than necessarily personally risk assessment has taken place.

I do not know when the DHSC will have their risk assessment completed. Once they have, we will, of course, put it up on the website through our wonderful communications team. With regard to singing, Anne, you are absolutely right, it does seem that this changes not only every day but sometimes during the course of the day.

I sometimes reflect that it is a little bit of let us be careful what we wish for in the sense that we - but not just we alone, others of course in the entertainment industry - have managed to escalate this in Government thinking and PHE thinking because some people say, “Do something unless you can show it is unsafe”, and other people say, “Do not start doing anything unless it can be shown that it is safe” and singing is one of those things that falls somewhere in between.

The truth of it is that the worldwide evidence to date is not great. PHE has done a comprehensive literary review and, on the back of that, it has decided to do, along with

DCMS, two bespoke sets of experiments. I think they have the potential of being the leaders in their field in the world and they will be used for years to come. But, of course, that is going to take time and it is going to be some weeks before the research is concluded and then the details of it are going to be published.

In the interim, I think we cannot really say, “Do the research, give us definitive answers but we will go ahead and do something different until those results come through”. So it is frustrating. My daughter and I run two community choirs in our spare time. What is that, Bishop Sarah? I have no idea! But people are hugely frustrated. They want to get back to amateur singing and professional singing. But, having raised the issue, I think we have to be as patient as we can until we get the definitive answers.

Currently, you will know that this week professional singers, which will include many church choirs, can sing outside in small groups. We do not like to use the term “audience” when we are talking about cathedral choirs singing, but that is how the Government terms it. And, also, cathedral choirs or professional church choirs in groups can meet inside in well-ventilated buildings for recording purposes. So things have moved forward a little but, I hate to say it, we are just going to have to hold our breath, as it were, and wait until those results come through.

*The Bishop of London (Rt Revd & Rt Hon Dame Sarah Mullally):* Thank you, Brendan. Eve, would you be happy to comment around cathedral and funding?

*Dr Eve Poole (ex officio):* Yes, of course. Anne, thank you very much for the question. You are right, the situation is very bad. The numbers we have from the cathedrals is that they are anticipating losses against budget this year of £28.4 million and at least 15 and a half next year. What we have done is we have adopted a sort of three-pronged approach.

The first thing we did was to try and help liquidity by front-loading payments that were due to cathedrals anyway and then, as you may know, as early as our March committee meeting, we were able to rededicate the money we had already earmarked for helping implement the Cathedrals Measure to go immediately for Covid response help. The first tranche of funding was to support the stonemasons and the heritage crafts because we know that, if those really vital people had to be laid off, we would never be able to rebuild that capacity for the entire country.

So the Commissioners have put about £1 million towards the yards and I know that has affected Exeter directly. We also found I think it was about £1 million for short-term payroll help for those cathedrals who were not actually in a position to pay the bills that were due over the next few months.

Then, just this week, we have signed off, I know something that will be very close to your heart in Exeter, some help for the back row for the lay clerks because, given this continued uncertainty, we were very concerned that, having missed Easter, we would all

miss Christmas and there would be a carol-free Christmas and voices would be silenced. So what we have done is we will be paying for lay clerks to be kept on paid for until Christmas and then the Cathedral Choirs Emergency Fund will fund them until Easter, so at least we can keep them available.

We have also signed off another two and a half million in support for key posts through the Sustainability Fund and we will have another chance in September to sign off some more grants to help cathedrals with that. We are very well aware that that is not enough. The scale and size of the problem is extraordinary.

We are spending quite a lot of time talking to Government and other funding partners like the Cathedral Choirs Emergency Fund to figure out what else we could do to help. It sounds as though part of the New Deal, Build Back Better money for heritage and for building projects will be something that the major churches and churches and cathedrals will be eligible for, but we are just checking out the detail on that.

We have written specifically to the Chancellor on the stonemasons and apprenticeships and we are also writing about music. So we are trying to get as much support as we can, wherever we can find it, to try and help the cathedrals get back on their feet. But, again, I am here to be accountable to the whole Synod for all the decisions we are making on that and, if you have any questions or any suggestions about what else we could be trying, then, please, I would love to hear them.

*The Bishop of London (Rt Revd & Rt Hon Dame Sarah Mullally):* And, just, finally, Bishop Christopher, on your ecumenical point, what we are trying to do is, those ecumenical relationships we already have, increase the amount of times we meet over the coming months so we ensure that their voices are fed in, if they have not got a forum in which to feed it in, but thank you.

*Revd Canon Elaine Chegwin Hall (Chester):* I just wanted to mention something to do with the well-being of the Church and the communities mentioned in GS Misc 1249. I am personally very grateful for the concern of our Bishops and Archbishops to ensuring the well-being of clergy and lay ministers and the reassurance of the working group convened by the Bishop of Carlisle. That has meant a lot. What I would like to ask, please, is what provisions are being put in place to give the same level of support to those who have supported us, namely our Bishops and our Archbishops, because I certainly am very concerned about the level of pressure that they have been under and continue to be under.

*Mr Tim Hind (Bath & Wells):* During the last few months, there have been some who have resumed attendance as they have no access to Church Online and others who are physically able to attend have not been able to continue their attendance. Some of the returnees were unable physically to attend, whereas others preferred not to attend a church building. To ensure that community can be reinforced or, if necessary, rebuilt as we emerge to new ways of doing things, can we consider some bias towards providing

logistic support for technological innovations, especially for those in poorer or remote rural communities?

*Revd Paul Cartwright (Leeds):* Thank you for calling me, Chair, and thank you, Bishop Sarah to you and your team for taking on this important work. Earlier this morning, I was in a prayer meeting with some police chaplains from the West Yorkshire Police area and considering our response to Covid-19 and a lovely analogy was used which compared chaplaincy to being like a fence at the top of a very high and steep cliff. Recognising the difficulties which have been experienced by our nursing and residential homes, I wonder if any consideration has been given by the Recovery Group to putting in place the need for a co-ordinated approach for chaplaincy services in these establishments?

*The Bishop of London (Rt Revd & Rt Hon Dame Sarah Mullally):* If I start off and I do not know whether either William or Bishop Robert would want to add. Elaine, thank you very much for your insight into the needs of the Bishops and Archbishops. I am very conscious that we, like you, have all been under strain and we have been, as I say, surviving a pandemic with all its anxieties.

There clearly is support around for us, but we are trying to reinforce our regional groupings of Bishops. We have regional groupings and certainly they have increased in the amount of times they have met over the last three months. And that is not just to do business. It is around providing peer support to each other. For example, one of our big questions is what does episcopal ministry look like in this strange world and what personal challenges do we face to that. Certainly, the regional group is one very good way in which we can find support of each other.

In terms of the question about chaplaincy to social care, the Recovery Group absolutely recognise this. The Recovery Group has members coming in and out of it depending upon the work. We have asked the Bishop of Carlisle in his role as lead for health services to specifically look at the needs of the health and social care and our role as a Church to do that and so he is doing some work around that. But, as you say, I think it has underlined the need both in terms of chaplaincy to the NHS but also our support to the care sector at this time.

A final comment from me before I ask either of my colleagues. In terms of Church Online, one of our challenges is that we are now in a world of a mixed economy and churches are going to have to make decisions about how they use their resources and I mean that in terms of people and time as much as money and we have got this sort of mixed economy.

The national Church, particularly under Adrian Harris, is beginning to do some work around how can we support churches in this and Adrian produced a very good blog only last week. But it is a question we face, how do we support churches to be able to make

those decisions in what is a very changing world? I do not know whether, either Bishop Robert or William, you would like to add to that?

*The Bishop of Exeter (Rt Revd Robert Atwell):* Yes, perhaps I could speak about a rural diocese and Bishop Sarah was saying about the new mixed economy. One of the things about this pandemic has been it is full of surprises. For example, in the very early days when we started to do worship online, one of the clergy in the diocese was being very cautious in saying, "I've got so many older people in my congregation, I'm not sure they're going to be able to do this Zoom business", and on the very first Sunday, she could not believe it, there were a whole lot of 85 year-olds all tuned up and raring to go. So it is full of surprises.

On the other hand, what has been a real frustration - and I am sure colleagues in other rural dioceses would echo this, and particularly those as Tim was saying in speaking about Somerset when you have got remote rural parishes - is the vexed question of rural connectivity. There are a whole lot of what are called "not spots" where there are simply no signals and no possibility, so in this brave new digital world what do you do in those circumstances?

It is also one of the reasons why some clergy are really exhausted trying to keep so many plates spinning, which is why I think what Bishop Sarah was saying was spot on in terms of the discernment about the use of our time, our energy and, yes, our money too because, actually, what also comes to it is it becomes the art of the possible. I think

I would make one other comment about rural Christianity and that is to say that, certainly in our diocese, place is very significant and, therefore, actually there was a real sense of bereavement and dislocation when our church buildings were closed and so there is real joy at them reopening now.

But, of course, there is also anxiety, particularly for some rural clergy who may have half a dozen or eight parishes and, therefore, all those buildings and so, therefore, trying in this mixed economy to both provide online worship and also open buildings is a huge ask and we need to travel with them, support them and enable them to make wise decisions.

*The Bishop of London (Rt Revd & Rt Hon Dame Sarah Mullally):* Thank you. William, would you like to add anything?

*Mr William Nye (Secretary General):* Yes, thank you, if I may. I very much want to agree, of course, with what Bishop Sarah and Bishop Robert have said, particularly as regards the challenge of the mixed mode and also to commend the extraordinary way in which so many churches, urban and rural alike, have risen to the challenge. I have also had that experience of finding Zoom services right from the first Sunday, but I recognise it has been difficult in many places.

The only thing I wanted to add is that, in this triennium, one of the things that the Church Commissioners and the Archbishops' Council have set aside money for was for innovation and so we will be looking to see if we can provide support for innovative things, as well as the conventional Strategic Development Fund grants, and ways in which we can build on the extraordinary way in which so many churches have innovated already and support that in the future would be something we would really want to support.

*The Bishop of London (Rt Revd & Rt Hon Dame Sarah Mullally):* And also I would like to thank Adrian Harris and his team for some of the amazing stuff that they have done during this period.

*The Chair:* I would now like to invite the Dean of Manchester, the Very Revd Rogers Govender, Miss Prudence Dailey and Canon Rachel Mann to put their questions.

*The Bishop of London (Rt Revd & Rt Hon Dame Sarah Mullally):* Rogers. We cannot hear you. Your reception is not so good. No, no good at all. Can I come back to you? Maybe if you turn your microphone off and turn it back on. I will come back to you.

*Miss Prudence Dailey (Oxford):* I very much commend all of the practical work that has been done by the Church, both nationally and especially in the parishes, to keep up with this unprecedented and very difficult situation. I just wanted to ask what opportunities were being taken to reflect on some of the difficult theological questions around pandemics. It is a manifestation of the age-old problem of suffering and how does something like a pandemic fit within God's providence. It feels as though, to some extent, we have been so caught up in the practicalities of trying to make things work on the ground that there are still opportunities to be taken to explore the theological implications.

*Revd Canon Dr Rachel Mann (Manchester):* Bishop Sarah, I was hugely grateful for your reference to Hilary Ison's work on trauma and its effects and I think many of us feel like we have spent three years' worth of adrenaline in three months. As someone who is really interested in the theology of trauma, I would like to invite you and the panel to offer some reflections on the theological work that has been done at the national level about inviting the Church to take seriously what I think it is what Fr Gerry Hughes says that we are made for rest, that we are a people of sabbath first and, given the lack of time off that we have all been taking, how can we structurally encourage people to find rest and refreshment in the midst of these demands.

*The Bishop of London (Rt Revd & Rt Hon Dame Sarah Mullally):* Thank you very much, Rachel. Rogers, shall we try again. No, I am afraid not. I will tell you what, you will have to email me the question.

*The Chair:* Mr Dean, we cannot hear you, I am afraid. What I have suggested is, if you either email the question or if you put it in chat, a member of the team will pass it to me and I will be able to put it to the panel for you.

*The Bishop of London (Rt Revd & Rt Hon Dame Sarah Mullally):* Shall we take those two then and, if I start and maybe Bishop Robert would like to come in. In fact, the Faith and Order Commission have been doing some work particularly around the theological issues of the pandemic and, hopefully, that work will be available. They have been the resource that is always there. They have been working with also the broader group and not just around the pandemic, but some of the issues, for example, around the Eucharist online worship. So there has been some work going there.

Rachel, your point about trauma, I found Hilary's work very helpful and, also, the second part for me is for us to find a space in which we can have some of that dialogue about what it has done for us. I know that many of my colleagues, in the same way that the London Diocese has, have made particular study days or events available so that we can ask some of those difficult theological questions we are having. But also it has enabled us to put over the need for people to look after themselves and the opportunity for us to encourage people to find rest and stillness in sabbath, although they are at home.

I know for some people that is quite a challenge because, of course, it feels like it is the same but the importance of finding rest, even in their place and the need for people to find retreats, even if it was online retreats. So, certainly from my perspective, which I know my colleagues have been doing, it has been encouraging people to see that in this time that rhythm and routine that they have always established they should follow through, although it might look differently different.

*The Bishop of Exeter (Rt Revd Robert Atwell):* Starting, first of all, with Prudence's questions about the pandemic and our response to it theologically. As you were speaking Prudence, I suppose what I immediately went back to, funnily enough, was St Cyprian of Carthage, centuries ago. In the third century he was, as you know, Bishop of Carthage and there was a terrible plague sweeping through North Africa. And many of the Christians were saying, "Well, we should be immune because we are Christians". And his sermons are extraordinary, the way he deals with that. Not only was the way he says, actually, "When there are diseases and there are problems it affects us all", but he says, "You could be in a boat on the coast and if there is a storm just because you are a Christian does not mean to say that the boat is not going to capsize".

One of the things also that he goes on to say is the way the Christian community in Carthage responded to that plague and that was the fact that, whereas many educated people legged it out of Carthage for safety to their villas, it was the Christians who stayed put. It was the Christians who ministered to the sick. It was the Christians who buried them. That was one of the things that, actually, led to the spread of the Gospel in North Africa.

One of the things which I think has been fantastic in this pandemic is the way that Christian people in their towns and their villages have responded with unbelievable generosity and taken real risks, actually, to reach out to those people in need, just like the people working in the NHS on the frontline. So, yes, we need to do some theological reflection and be reflecting with those people who have given so selflessly and sacrificially of themselves.

With regard to Rachel's comments, which I warm to enormously, I mean why do we rest? Why do we have sabbath? Well, not so that we might function faultlessly but so that we might be a human being. That is the purpose of this. To enjoy God's rest. Certainly, at a practical level with my own clergy in the diocese in a recent *ad clerum*, I specifically said, "Look, if you have not been able to take your allotted holiday because of this, roll it on to next year because you deserve that and you must not feel guilty of actually taking a holiday and a rest because that is what we would all want in our support of you and it is what I believe God would want".

*The Chair:* I am sorry that we were not able to hear directly from the Dean of Manchester but, by the miracles of technology, I do have his question in front of me. So on his behalf may I put this point. He says, firstly, a big thank you to Eve Poole, Michael Minter and the team at the Commissioners for their excellent conversations with cathedrals and thank you to the Recovery team. Are there creative and helpful ways in which we as cathedrals can be of service to the local and national Church that we are not already doing?

*The Bishop of London (Rt Revd & Rt Hon Dame Sarah Mullally):* Well, thank you, Rogers, for your thanks as well and also thank you for your point. The Recovery Group does have a link with the dean of the cathedral, so they certainly have been providing us with information. So sharing good practice has been really helpful. I do think, going forward, we have touched on it briefly, Bishop Robert with the Liturgical Commission are providing resources around memorial and community thanksgiving.

There will be, coming into next year, later on, when we are further through this pandemic, the question of how do we remember those that have died but also give thanks to our community and, of course, cathedrals play a significant part for us in that. So it is likely that, apart from all that you are doing, we would probably look to cathedrals again at that time.

Can I just thank all of those involved in the Recovery Group and particularly Brendan and Gina Radford and the team. They have turned around Government guidance incredibly quickly and they have been incredibly patient with us as the Church and so I am very grateful for all that they have done.

*The Chair:* Thank you, Bishop. I am sorry that it was not possible to call everyone who wished to speak. Before we end, may I thank the members of the panel both for their

contributions today and, indeed, for the continuing work that they are undertaking. Before we end, can I invite us to pray:

Oh, most mighty and merciful God, in this time of grievous sickness we flee unto thee for succour. Deliver us, we beseech thee, from our peril; give strength and skill to all those who minister to the sick; prosper the means made use of for their cure and grant that, perceiving how frail and uncertain our life is, we may apply our hearts unto that heavenly wisdom which lead us to eternal life through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

That now concludes this item. We will now have a short break and resume again at 3 o'clock. Thank you.

THE CHAIR *Very Revd Andrew Nunn (Dean of Southwark)* took the Chair at 3.00 pm.

## **QUESTIONS – PART TWO**

*The Chair.* Welcome back, members of Synod, to this second session of questions, Item 6 on our agenda for today.

We are going to be picking up questions from question 53, so these are still being answered by the Archbishop of Canterbury. Before I get to that question, just a message from Mark Lucas, who had asked a supplementary of the Bishop to the Armed Forces. Bishop Tim will be in touch with you. He was unable to connect this morning, so he will be in touch with regard to your supplementary question.

53. *Mr Clive Scowen (London)* asked the Chair of the House of Bishops: Was the guidance set out in the archbishops' letters of 24th and 27th March approved by the House of Bishops and, if not, what authority did it have?

*The Archbishop of Canterbury (Most Revd & Rt Hon Justin Welby)* replied as Chair of the House of Bishops: The guidance was issued by the Archbishops and Diocesan Bishops jointly, as the bishops of their respective dioceses. As guidance, it did not have authority in a legal sense but it is considered that guidance issued by diocesan bishops on such important matters has substantial persuasive force and needs to be considered carefully by those to whom it is addressed.

54. *Revd Charlie Skrine (London)* asked the Chair of the House of Bishops: Did the House consider that the guidance set out in the archbishops' letters of 24th and 27th March attracted the duty of canonical obedience? And, whether or not it took that view, why did the guidance not explain what the position in that respect was, so that clergy were clear what it was?

*The Archbishop of Canterbury (Most Revd & Rt Hon Justin Welby)* replied as Chair of the House of Bishops: The guidance contained in the archbishops' and bishops' letters of 24th and 27th March was advisory. The duty of canonical obedience was not considered in producing the guidance and is not considered to be relevant to it.

55. *Mr Bradley Smith (Chichester)* asked the Chair of the House of Bishops: If, as The Archbishop of Canterbury stated on the *Andrew Marr Show* on Easter Day, the policy on the closure of churches set out in the archbishops' letters of 24th and 27th March represented "guidance, not instruction", why did the House not dissociate itself from statements made in at least one diocese that disciplinary proceedings would be taken against clergy who failed to follow that guidance?

*The Archbishop of Canterbury (Most Revd & Rt Hon Justin Welby)* replied as Chair of the House of Bishops: The House of Bishops was not made aware of such statements at any of its meetings and consequently did not discuss them.

*Mr Bradley Smith:* Given that it is now aware of them through the original question, not to mention considerable media coverage over many weeks, will the House now publicly disassociate itself from threats of disciplinary action made against clergy for failure to comply with guidance that very clearly did not engage the duty of canonical obedience and, if not, why not?

*The Archbishop of Canterbury:* The House gave advice. There is no possibility of disciplinary proceedings of which I am aware.

*The Chair:* I am just going to go against my rules and go back to question 53 because Mr Scowen did have his hand up for a supplementary there and our system was not working here at that moment. So, Mr Scowen, if you want to ask your supplementary to question 53.

*Mr Clive Scowen (London):* Thank you for being willing to go back to this. Why was the approval of the House not sought for the guidance, especially that of 27 March, and will the House's approval be sought for any future guidance of this nature?

*The Archbishop of Canterbury:* Thank you, Clive, a very good question and it picks out the fact that I made an error of judgment in doing things through the diocesan bishops not through the synodical House at that point. I apologise for that and, yes, that will be the way in which it is done in future.

Mr Clive Scowen (London): Thank you.

56. *Mrs Mary Nagel (Chichester)* asked the Chair of the House of Bishops: In producing the guidance set out in the archbishops' letters of 24th and 27th March did the archbishops and bishops take account of how, at a time of crisis and when the laity would be unable themselves to worship or pray in their churches, it would be important

to many of them to know that their clergy were doing so, and to be able to see them doing so?

*The Archbishop of Canterbury (Most Revd & Rt Hon Justin Welby)* replied as Chair of the House of Bishops: In producing guidance set out in letters on 24th and 27th March the archbishops and bishops took account of a wide range of issues including the potential impact on all clergy and laity throughout the Church of England.

57. *Mrs Susan Kennaugh (Sodor & Man)* asked the Chair of the House of Bishops: Given the wide diversity of theology and practice that has previously pertained to the Church of England, why did the archbishops and bishops consider it appropriate in the letters of 24th and 27th March to direct clergy of all traditions to give overriding priority in their ministry during the Covid-19 pandemic to the perceived need to “show solidarity” with the laity, and why was the reasoning of the House in that respect not explained either in letter?

*The Archbishop of Canterbury (Most Revd & Rt Hon Justin Welby)* replied as Chair of the House of Bishops: Empathetic pastoral care infuses all theologies and practices throughout the Church of England and informed all discussions in the House of Bishops which, itself, reflects the diversity found within the Church. Such concern was implicit in all communications by the House and was made explicit on a number of subsequent occasions.

58. *Revd Paul Benfield (Blackburn)* asked the Chair of the House of Bishops: When the archbishops and bishops were developing their guidance for the use of church buildings during the Covid-19 pandemic, was any attempt made to establish whether the primacy of “showing solidarity” and “leading by example” reflected what the laity (whether active church members or others) might want of their clergy in such circumstances?

*The Archbishop of Canterbury (Most Revd & Rt Hon Justin Welby)* replied as Chair of the House of Bishops: Given the realistic possibility of hundreds of thousands of deaths and millions of Covid-19 infections, the Prime Minister issued instructions on 23rd March that all non-essential travel should cease and non-essential services be suspended with the clear message, ‘Stay Home, Protect the NHS, Save Lives’.

On 24th March, the archbishops and bishops issued a pastoral letter strongly encouraging clergy to respond accordingly by closing church buildings for all purposes.

Following this letter the government made provision for ‘ministers of religion’ to pray in, or stream services from, church buildings. Subsequently, on 27th March the archbishops and bishops wrote a further pastoral letter reiterating this advice in the interests of the common good.

These were truly unprecedented circumstances and the archbishops and bishops had to act swiftly and decisively after prayerful consideration and deliberation among themselves taking account of public health and other guidance from a range of advisers.

59. *Mrs Mary Nagel (Chichester)* asked the Chair of the House of Bishops: What is the response of the House to the many laity in the Church who consider that the pastoral provision made for them by the Church at a time of crisis was significantly impaired, following the issue of the letters of 24th and 27th March, by their inability to see the clergy continuing to pray, say the Daily Offices or celebrate the Eucharist in their churches, or even have the reassurance that they were doing so?

*The Archbishop of Canterbury (Most Revd & Rt Hon Justin Welby)* replied as Chair of the House of Bishops: The first wave of the Covid-19 pandemic in the UK significantly impaired many aspects of life for all members of our society including clergy and laity in the Church of England. In seeking to respect and address the needs of all, some in the Church were more greatly affected than others and to them the House is grateful.

60. *Mr Robin Whitehouse (Lichfield)* asked the Chair of the House of Bishops: Following the issuing of the guidance set out in the archbishops' letters of 24th and 27th March, a number of concerns were expressed about it, in the Church Times and elsewhere. Will the House consider whether the response made on behalf of the archbishops and bishops to those concerns was adequate and appropriate?

*The Archbishop of Canterbury (Most Revd & Rt Hon Justin Welby)* replied as Chair of the House of Bishops: The House of Bishops reviews all its responses to the first wave of the Covid-19 pandemic in the UK, particularly through its Recovery Group and will seek to learn from them.

*Mr Robin Whitehouse:* Will the Archbishop undertake that, when reviewing a matter, the House will consider not only whether there are any lessons to be learnt from the way in which the original guidance was formulated and communicated, but also whether the matter has become more diverse in the Church than it might be had the House conceded publicly that it could be handled differently?

*The Chair:* We need to unmute the Archbishop of Canterbury. There we are.

*The Archbishop of Canterbury:* People have been trying to do that, particularly over the last few weeks - you are the only one who can! By the way, just as a point of order, you are called "Platform Party". Honestly, if this is the standard of your parties, do not bother inviting me!

*The Chair:* We do better in Southwark!

*The Archbishop of Canterbury:* Yes, Robin, thank you for the question and it is a very valid one and, indeed, we will.

61. *Mr Clive Scowen (London)* asked the Chair of the House of Bishops: In formulating the guidance set out in the archbishops' letters of 24th and 27th March, what weight was given to "optics" and fear of what the secular press and media (including commentators on social media) would say if clergy were seen to be continuing to use their churches for prayer or celebrating the Eucharist or for livestreaming services?

*The Archbishop of Canterbury (Most Revd & Rt Hon Justin Welby)* replied as Chair of the House of Bishops: In formulating the guidance set out in the archbishops' and bishops' letters of 24th and 27th March the sole concerns were to act in the best interests of both Church and society, particularly its most vulnerable members.

*Mr Clive Scowen:* Since the vast majority of clergy can travel to their churches on foot or by bicycle or private motor vehicle so that there is no need for them to use public transport or otherwise to come into contact with anyone else and, since leaving home to fulfil their canonical duty to say morning and evening prayer in church could not, therefore, pose any risk of their infecting anyone provided they were alone in church, in what way was the guidance that no clergy should say morning or evening prayer alone in church in the best interests of both Church and society, particularly the most vulnerable as the original answer states?

*The Archbishop of Canterbury:* You asked almost exactly the same question in an earlier supplementary. In fact, I think it was pretty well exactly the same question and my previous answer applies. The Church of England has tried to demonstrate that it is the Church for England, helping to set an example for other faith communities. There are more than 29,500 registered places of worship in England and Wales in addition to the Church of England and Church in Wales church buildings. If all those ministers had travelled to their places, either weekly or even daily, the cumulative effect would have been significantly to undermine the stay home message. And I think that we were seeking to act in the interests of the nation by supporting the Government's call and supported also by the opposition at a time of immense difficulty and complexity.

62. *Miss Debbie Buggs (London)* asked the Chair of the House of Bishops: In the light of the reception given to two recent significant pieces of work (namely the pastoral statement on opposite sex civil partnerships and the guidance on the closure of church buildings during the Covid-19 pandemic), will the House conduct an urgent review of the way that significant decisions of the episcopal leadership of the Church are (a) taken and (b) communicated and explained?

*The Archbishop of Canterbury (Most Revd & Rt Hon Justin Welby)* replied as Chair of the House of Bishops: A lessons-learned review is being conducted on the communication of the opposite sex civil partnerships announcement. The review will be communicated to the House of Bishops. The lessons to be learned from the way the Church of England responded to the Covid-19 pandemic will, I have no doubt, be the subject of a review when the pandemic comes to an end.

63. *Revd Timothy Goode (Southwark)* asked the Chair of the House of Bishops: When the daily news of deaths from Covid-19 are shared in the media, we often hear what percentage of those who have died had underlying health issues. As a disabled person I am deeply concerned that the dignity and value of those who are living with underlying health issues, including disabled people and residents of care homes, are being diminished in this crisis and that, unless checked, we are in danger, as a society, of slipping into the language of eugenics. Would the House of Bishops once more go on record and state that all those living with underlying health issues, are made in the image and likeness of God, are of unique value to God and God's Church and should always be entitled to the same quality of healthcare as the rest of the population?

*The Bishop of Carlisle (Rt Revd James Newcome)* replied on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops: This is a message that the House of Bishops and other spokespersons for the Church of England have made consistently throughout the first wave of the Covid-19 pandemic in the UK and it is one that will continue to be made for the reasons stated. Every human being is of equal and immeasurable value and it is the privilege and responsibility of the Church to promote and protect this understanding of our God-given identity and to strive for it to be given practical effect in healthcare and all other settings.

*Revd Tim Goode:* Thank you, Bishop, for reaffirming that in Christ every human being is of equal and immeasurable value, regardless of age, economic status or ability. Would the Lords Spiritual be willing to counsel the Government to ensure that those delivering the latest death figures are alert to the sensitivities of sharing percentages of those who have died with underlying health issues, thus avoiding statements that may unintentionally diminish our shared God-given image and, in doing so, reinforcing that every life lost to Covid-19 is an absolute tragedy?

*The Bishop of Carlisle:* I am most grateful for this question and, Timothy, I can assure you that we will be very happy to do this whenever we can, including in discussions with NHS England and Public Health England and in future debates in the House of Lords. A commitment to our understanding of the innate and equal dignity of every human being made in God's image is basic to our stance on most issues, as was exemplified by the Bishop of Newcastle in her response to an earlier supplementary question today.

64. *Mr Robin Whitehouse (Lichfield)* asked the Chair of the House of Bishops: Given that Canon B41 provides that "No chaplain, ministering in a house where there is any chapel dedicated and allowed by the ecclesiastical laws of this realm shall celebrate the Holy Communion in any other part of the House but in such chapel", will the House consider issuing guidance to its members on whether that provision applies to see houses and, if it does not apply, on the relevance to see houses of the theological principles underlying it?

*The Bishop of Coventry (Rt Revd Dr Christopher Cocksworth)* replied on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops: The House has no plans to issue guidance on the provisions concerning chaplains ministering in houses, whether see houses or otherwise.

*Mr Robin Whitehouse:* Does the Bishop's answer indicate that the House considered that the theological and ecclesiological objections to the celebration of holy communion in the domestic quarters of a private residence that underlies Canon B 41 have no relevance in the case of Bishops and their see houses; if so, what is the reason for that?

*The Bishop of Coventry:* The short answer is that the House has not given consideration to the relationship between Canon B 41 and see houses, but perhaps I might mention that the theological principle underlying the Canon is also concerned that domestic celebrations of the holy communion should not detract from the sacrament's central place in the public worship of the Church of England in the parish church. Given the restrictions, some Bishops chose to celebrate the Eucharist in their see houses as an action of the shared life of the Body of Christ. For pastoral reasons, some chose to do so in places other than the see house chapel.

65. *Mrs Andrea Minichiello Williams (Chichester)* asked the Chair of the House of Bishops: Did the Government offer the Church of England to regulate its own mode of closing or opening during the Covid-19 pandemic and did the Church turn this offer down and ask the government to regulate?

*The Bishop of London (Rt Revd & Rt Hon Dame Sarah Mullally)* replied on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops: No such offer was made by the Government to the Church of England.

66. *Mr Robin Lunn (Worcester)* asked the Chair of the House of Bishops: What plans or ideas are being formulated to allow Carol Services to take place in some form if Covid-19 restrictions continue to December?

*The Bishop of London (Rt Revd & Rt Hon Dame Sarah Mullally)* replied on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops: Advent and Christmas are inevitably going to look very different. Assuming church buildings are open for worship, gatherings will need to be smaller to enable social distancing, with logistical challenges around cleaning, managing people flows etc. Resources for individual use and national online services will be produced by the national digital team. In addition, guidance notes for parishes are presently being worked on. For example, churches which have traditionally welcomed large numbers to a carol service may find that they need to offer several. Capacity issues may mean that these need to be simpler and easier to manage than may normally have been the case. Guidance has already been offered to the Children's Society in thinking about how to offer Christingle services this year. It may well be the case that an increased proportion of our population wish to engage with worship this Christmas, be that online or offline.

*Mr Robin Lunn:* I welcome the Bishop of London's helpful response and completely agree with her point that more people are likely to engage with worship this Christmas. Therefore, can she confirm the guidance to parishes re carol services and advent and Christmas worship will centre on ways of making sure this physically and virtually happens to fulfil people's spiritual needs and thereby confounding misleading headlines that Christmas is cancelled within the Church of England.

*The Bishop of London:* Thank you very much for your supplementary question. Unfortunately, I have no control over media headlines but I promise you, as far as I know, Christmas is not cancelled. However, we will be dictated, as we have been all the way through this, by Government guidance. There is a risk that there will be a second peak in December of Covid-19, so we will be led by them, but what we want to do is to ensure that in as many creative ways that we allow those that want to come to a carol service are able to do that.

67. *Mr Gavin Oldham (Oxford)* asked the Chair of the House of Bishops: Bearing in mind the significant number of older folk in our congregations and that the average risk of death from COVID19 is 37 times greater for 65 & overs, and 127 times greater for 85 & overs, compared to those of 'working age' and young people, what continuing special provisions are being taken to ensure that physical congregations do not lead to increased danger by inter-generational transmission?

*The Bishop of London (Rt Revd & Rt Hon Dame Sarah Mullally)* replied on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops: The House of Bishops' Recovery Group has published detailed guidance on a wide range of services and activities as well as a comprehensive risk-assessment template on the Church of England Covid-19 webpage which contain advice on how best to minimise risk, especially to those who are clinically or otherwise vulnerable to Covid-19.

*Mr Gavin Oldham:* While I appreciate the high standard of overall care which is required in the guidance and risk assessment templates, there is little encouragement to restart activities for young people. How can we become more discerning in our approach to different age cohorts as it is essential that our mission to young people is re-energised?

*The Bishop of London:* Thank you, Gavin, for your supplementary question. It is, indeed, essential that our mission to children and young people is re-energised at this time. I have been privileged to see some really wonderful examples up and down the country of how churches, school chaplaincy, church schools, Sunday schools, youth groups and uniform groups have gone online in very creative and very helpful ways. The advice documents attempt to show how activities can be undertaken safely and to help us navigate the Government guidance and it seeks to try and explain how they can be applied in church settings. Now that guidance is, by its nature, a narrow focus on how things can be done safely. It does not try to set an agenda for local churches and,

of course, it must be driven on a local contextual basis. We would hope that local churches and chaplaincies will make use of the guidance to engage safely and with energy to our mission to young people.

68. *Mrs Mary Durlacher (Chelmsford)* asked the Chair of the House of Bishops: Will the House of Bishops reconsider the prohibition of use of small individual cups as a valid 'common sense' pro tem way of sharing the Communion wine while current constraints remain?

*The Bishop of London (Rt Revd & Rt Hon Dame Sarah Mullally)* replied on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops: The Legal Advisory Commission has stated "it is contrary to law for individual cups to be used for each communicant" and that "the doctrine of necessity cannot be appealed to in order to justify the use of individual cups even in circumstances where there is a fear of contagion from the use of a common cup. ... the Sacrament Act 1547 makes provision for cases where a necessity not to deliver a common cup arises: in such a case the normal requirement that the sacrament be delivered in both kinds is disapplied by statute. Even if a shared cup cannot be used for medical reasons, the use of individual cups remains contrary to law ... . In such cases reception should be in one kind only." The House cannot authorise or encourage a practice which would be contrary to law.

*Mrs Mary Durlacher:* Your answer really gives no reference to the fact that this is legal advice and where it is found. If I was to try and quote Sacrament Act 1547 to the parishioners who are so upset that there is no communion of any kind, they will not understand. Given that this is the Church of England for the Church of England, it is actually first the Church of Christ; and so many references to "it is not lawful" in the gospels, Jesus gives a robust answer that the sabbath was made for man not man for the sabbath. So, would, please ---

*The Chair:* I am sorry, Mary, your question does not really lead on from the question itself.

*Mr David Lamming (St Edmundsbury & Ipswich):* Bishop, if compliance with ecclesiastical law on the use of the common cup so that the use of individual cups is contrary to law, what is the legal basis for the use of several chalices at different communion stations ---

*The Chair:* Sorry, David, you are asking for an expression of opinion which is not allowed in questions.

69. *Miss Emma Forward (Exeter)* asked the Chair of the House of Bishops: The Professional Guidelines for the Clergy state that "The clergy must remember that they are public figures whose opinions when proffered have weight and significance. ... The power of the internet for doing harm as well as good must always be borne carefully in mind and weighed before saying anything which may prove be damaging to oneself as

well as to others.” In the light of the criticism made of Dominic Cummings on social media for his conduct during the ‘lockdown’, including by a number of bishops, will the House consider offering more specific guidance to bishops and other clergy on:

- (a) the circumstances in which it is, or is not, appropriate for bishops and other clergy to comment adversely on Twitter and other social media on the conduct of a particular person in public life (including whether the person concerned should have had the opportunity to respond to the criticisms being made of him or her before an adverse judgement is expressed publicly); and
- (b) the tone and content of any adverse comments (including guidance on the need to avoid the Church being seen to promote, or to be complicit in, the damage to the character of the person whose conduct is in question)?

*The Bishop of Manchester (Rt Revd David Walker)* replied on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops: Specific advice to Bishops, clergy and lay people in relation to the use of social media is available on the Church of England website and forms part of the Digital Charter, launched in 2019.

This advice is already well established and understood, with thousands of individuals and organisations having signed up to it since the launch.

The Church’s Digital Charter and Social Media Guidelines set out helpful principles which the House would encourage everyone across the Church and beyond to consider when using social media.

*Miss Emma Forward:* Does the House have any mechanism directed to monitoring whether the existing advice is not only understood by serving Bishops but also acted upon by them?

*The Bishop of Manchester:* We work closely with Adrian Harris and the digital team and they advise us. I think if they felt that Bishops were failing to follow the guidelines in some significant and relevant way, then I am sure they would tell us such.

*Mr Sam Margrave (Coventry):* Will the Chair of the House of Bishops pass our thanks to the Bishop of Worcester for his leadership on racism and also those Bishops who showed we are a moral force as the established Church in holding those in public life to account and highlighting the hypocrisy and impact of Mr Cummings’s actions.

*The Chair:* I am sorry, that is not relevant to the question that was asked.

70. *Mr Graham Caskie (Oxford)* asked the Chair of the House of Bishops: The Professional Guidelines for the Clergy state that “The clergy should promote reconciliation in the Church and in the world wherever there are divisions.” With a view to ensuring that the Church promotes reconciliation rather than division, particularly in the case of matters on which society is already sharply divided, will the House consider offering more specific guidance to bishops and other clergy on (a) the circumstances in

which it is, or is not, appropriate for bishops and other clergy to comment on Twitter and other social media on such matters and (b) the tone and content of any such comment (including by the making of unevidenced claims that figures in public life have engaged in lying)?

*The Bishop of Manchester (Rt Revd David Walker)* replied on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops: The Professional Guidelines for the Clergy state that “The clergy must remember that they are public figures whose opinions when proffered have weight and significance. ... The power of the internet for doing harm as well as good must always be borne carefully in mind and weighed before saying anything which may prove be damaging to oneself as well as to others.”

The Guidelines for the Professional Conduct of the Clergy also go on to state that:

‘Reconciliation lies at the heart of the Gospel: “God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself” (2 Corinthians 5.19). The clergy should promote reconciliation in the Church and in the world wherever there are divisions, including those which exist between people of different faiths.’

The House fully appreciates the need to promote reconciliation where there are divisions.

*Mr Graham Caskie:* Notwithstanding the responsibility on Bishops to speak out on public matters of the day, will the Bishop point to recent posts on social media regarding the allegations surrounding the Prime Minister’s chief adviser by serving Bishops which support his assertion that the House fully appreciates the need to promote reconciliation where there are divisions.

*The Bishop of Manchester:* Yes, I think in this particular instance, Bishops’ tweets were a contribution to a discussion that was very much of natural importance. I think it was the headline news for several days. Those tweets were, as I understand it, motivated particularly by a deep conviction of the need to uphold the principle of truth in public life. I think we do well to remember that when our esteemed colleague, Desmond Tutu in South Africa, headed up a commission following the apartheid era, it was called truth and reconciliation and truth and reconciliation have to go together. Without truth, it is very hard to achieve reconciliation.

*Dr John Appleby (Newcastle):* I was pleased that the Bishops and others did speak out on an issue of such public interest and I wonder whether any consideration is given to whether the guidelines are, in fact, worded such as to discourage people when we should have our leaders speaking more often on issue of such importance in the public sphere?

*The Bishop of Manchester:* Thank you, John. That is something that we can certainly take back to the House. I agree that the guidelines must not be such as to interfere with

people's ability to make appropriate contributions of very high public importance. So thank you for your comments.

71. *Mr Graham Caskie (Oxford)* asked the Chair of the House of Bishops: At a time when people's freedoms are constrained by law and Government guidance in the interests of public health, will the House remind archbishops, bishops and other clergy of the need to avoid giving the impression by their public statements that either:

(a) they are partisan, or at least inconsistent, in the judgements they make about compliance with the law and Government guidance, whether by particular individuals (such as Dominic Cummings) or by particular sections of people (such those demonstrating against racism); or

(b) they are encouraging or condoning behaviour which is inconsistent with that law and guidance, or with the law on public order more generally?

*The Bishop of Manchester (Rt Revd David Walker)* replied on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops: It is appropriate for the clergy to play a positive part in civic society and politics, promoting the Kingdom values of justice, integrity and peace in public life.

It is well established by the House that clergy should not encourage or condone behaviour which is inconsistent with the law and guidance, whether on public order or any other matter.

The Church of England's Digital Charter, launched in 2019, sets out helpful principles which the House would encourage all church members to take into account when making decisions on how to engage with social media.

We will continue to participate while emphasising the need to maintain civility and compassion in the face of hostility, underscoring the importance of considered and thoughtful debate.

*Mr Graham Caskie:* In pursuit of the laudable aim of underscoring the importance of considered and thoughtful debate, will the House encourage serving Bishop to reflect that, although there are times of divisions, that sometimes is better served by a policy of silence or perhaps even simply a pause before rushing to post judgments on social media?

*The Bishop of Manchester:* I think what we have found is that in recent months the social media platforms have been a very crucial way in which the Church is able to get across its messages around Covid-19 to share the Christian message more generally. I think in the time of division perhaps sometimes times of division are times when it is important to speak out, and I trust that Bishops judiciously determine whether it is appropriate on a particular issue to speak or to remain silent.

*Revd Charles Read (Norwich):* Regarding paragraph 2 of your answer, Bishop David, can you confirm that the House of Bishops is aware that the moral complexities might

mean that there are occasions when a commitment to Christian discipleship might lead some Christians to reluctantly break the law of their land?

*The Bishop of Manchester:* That is a very good point ---

*The Chair:* Sorry, Bishop, you are being asked to express your opinion and that is out of order, I am afraid.

72. *Revd James Hollingsworth (Chichester)* asked the Chair of the House of Bishops: Does the Communications Team, or any other entity within the national Church institutions, seek to monitor whether content posted on the social media accounts of serving Church of England bishops complies with the Church's and Archbishops' media guidelines? If not, why?

*The Bishop of Manchester (Rt Revd David Walker)* replied on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops: The Communications teams of Lambeth, Bishopthorpe and Church House are responsible for keeping abreast of what is happening on social media.

They are mindful of the Professional Guidelines for the Clergy state that "The clergy must remember that they are public figures whose opinions when proffered have weight and significance. ... The power of the internet for doing harm as well as good must always be borne carefully in mind and weighed before saying anything which may prove be damaging to oneself as well as to others."

In recent months social media platforms have been a crucial way for the Church to cascade information on Covid-19 and to share the Christian message with regular churchgoers and those exploring faith at this very challenging time. Many millions have engaged with a wide variety of content and weekly online services.

*Revd Dr Jason Roach (London):* I just wondered, Bishop of Manchester, whether you would appreciate the opportunity to thank those Bishops who ramped up their online contributions in pointing people to the Lord Jesus at a time when there clearly is a national need for more spiritual guidance and comfort in amongst all that they were doing, I just wondered if you would appreciate an opportunity to be able to thank them.

*The Bishop of Manchester:* If the Chair allows me to do, I would appreciate that opportunity.

*The Chair:* Oh, go on, yes.

*The Bishop of Manchester:* Yes, I want to pay tribute to the way that, at this time, I have read a lot of tweets from colleagues and been very impressed in the way in which every opportunity has been taken to promote the Christian faith using social media.

73. *Mrs Karen Galloway (St Edmundsbury & Ipswich)* asked the Chair of the House of Bishops: The Church's and Archbishops' media guidelines (which apply to all content posted on the national social media accounts run by the Church of England, The Archbishop of Canterbury and Archbishop of York) involve commitments to be respectful (including by not posting or sharing content which is "inflammatory, hateful, abusive, threatening or otherwise disrespectful") and kind (which involves considering "not just whether you would say it in person, but the tone you would use"). Will the House agree that those guidelines should also in future apply to all content posted on the social media accounts of the serving bishops of the Church of England? If not, why?

*The Bishop of Manchester (Rt Revd David Walker)* replied on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops: The Digital Charter was published by the Church of England in 2019. This a voluntary pledge that we are encouraging individual Christians as well as churches and other organisations to sign to help make social media and the web more widely positive places for conversations to happen.

The Digital Charter and guidelines have been widely seen and engaged with, both across the Church of England and in wider society. The Charter encourages truth, kindness, welcome, inspiration, togetherness and the importance of safeguarding in all that is done.

74. *Mrs Rosemary Lyon (Blackburn)* asked the Chair of the House of Bishops: Given the frequency with which some bishops comment on social media on matters of public interest, will the House issue guidance to bishops encouraging them to make it clear on whose behalf they are speaking when doing so, so that readers know whether the views they are reading are those of the Church of England, the diocese concerned or simply the individual bishop concerned?

*The Bishop of Manchester (Rt Revd David Walker)* replied on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops: Statements issued as being the formal position of the Church of England, or House of Bishops are flagged as such, and would appear on the official national website and social media accounts.

Bishops, as leaders of the Church, have long spoken on a range of issues of the day. The usual presumption is that statements from individual clergy and laity reflect their personal views, albeit these views are formed in the light of their faith in Jesus Christ and their lived experience as church members and ministers.

75. *Revd Graham Hamilton (Exeter)* asked the Chair of the House of Bishops: What training or guidelines on the use of social media in commenting on current affairs does the House of Bishops offer its members?

*The Bishop of Manchester (Rt Revd David Walker)* replied on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops: New bishops are given media training on appointment. In addition, the Church of England provides national social media training for clergy and laypeople.

Thousands of people across England and in Europe have taken part in this and it continues to be offered via online webinars.

When taking part in national debates about current affairs, the Guidelines for the Professional Conduct of the Clergy state:

“9.5. It is appropriate for the clergy to play a positive part in civic society and politics, promoting the Kingdom values of justice, integrity and peace in public life, calling attention to the needs of the poor and to the godly stewardship of the world’s resources”.

*Canon Peter Bruinvels (Guildford)*: I note that there is media training given to new Bishops but do the existing Bishops also get the training? Not, of course, that Bishop David needs any training!

*The Bishop of Manchester*: Some may beg to differ on that last point with you, Peter, but for now there is specific bespoke training given to new Bishops. I think serving Bishops on the whole will pick up training on the job, so to speak. Certainly, one of the reasons we have a particular group of Bishops who tend to act as spokespersons for the Church of England is so that a smaller group of us are in fairly regular contact with some of the robust interviewers that we meet out in the wider world of broadcasting and journalism and are equipped to deal with some of the questions that get put to us. But I think you make a very good point and perhaps the House might want to consider through those who assist with the training of Bishops whether some general refresher courses from time to time might be appropriate for all Bishops.

76. *Mrs Karen Galloway (St Edmundsbury & Ipswich)* asked the Chair of the House of Bishops: The Professional Guidelines for the Clergy state not only that “The call of the clergy to be servants to the community should include their prophetic ministry to those in spiritual and moral danger”, but also that “The clergy must remember that they are public figures whose opinions when proffered have weight and significance”. Will the House therefore consider offering guidance to bishops and other clergy on how and when to exercise a prophetic ministry properly on behalf of the Church, and in particular how they can avoid the dangers of:

- (a) creating a perception that they are simply using their office to promote their own political views; and
- (b) compromising their ability to minister effectively to those with different political or social views?

*The Bishop of Manchester (Rt Revd David Walker)* replied on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops: It is appropriate for the clergy to play a positive part in civic society and politics, promoting the Kingdom values of justice, integrity and peace in public life. All bishops and clergy should of course be consistently mindful that they are ministering to all people, irrespective of political or social views.

77. *Miss Prudence Dailey (Oxford)* asked the Chair of the House of Bishops: Those who sign up to the Church of England's Digital Charter commit themselves, amongst other things, to:

(a) "hold ourselves to high ideals of checking that what we post online is fair and factual";

(b) "Think the best of people, whether they share our views or are speaking against them [sic] and aim to be constructive in the way we engage"; and

(c) agree to the Church's and Archbishops' media guidelines.

Will the House invite all its members, and all other serving bishops of the Church of England, to (i) sign up to the Charter and (ii) state publicly that they have done so? If not, why not?

*The Bishop of Manchester (Rt Revd David Walker)* replied on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops: The Digital Charter, issued in 2019, was the result of a collaborative effort across the Church, both nationally and locally. Everyone is encouraged to sign up and thousands have done so, including clergy, lay leaders, regular churchgoers and those of other faiths and none.

When signing up, individuals or groups are encouraged to share this on social media using materials available on the Church of England website. The response over the last year has been very positive indeed, and colleagues in the Archbishops' Council have been encouraged by the positive reaction to the Charter and guidelines, both across this country and internationally.

*Miss Prudence Dailey:* Given the particular and public role of (inaudible), is the House willing to extend a specific invitation to its members and to all other Bishops in the Church of England to sign up to the Charter and to state publicly that they have done so?

*The Bishop of Manchester:* The House has not considered making a specific recommendation just to Bishops. The recommendations that the House has made are to all of us in the Church of England. I think the same standards apply to all of us.

Perhaps I could, with the Chairman's permission, take this opportunity to pay my respects to those Bishops who, as a result of engaging in public debate, often then find they are on the receiving end of threats, including threats to their lives, and several Bishops have experienced that recently and I hope Synod members will join with me in deprecating such attacks.

78. *The Revd Canon David Banting (Chelmsford)* asked the Chair of the House of Bishops: What risk assessment has the House of Bishops taken on its public Statements, Communications, Reports or Guidelines during this quinquennium and their effects on the Church's stipendiary work-force?

*The Bishop of Manchester (Rt Revd David Walker)* replied on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops: The House of Bishops works closely with both colleagues across the National Church Institutions, other relevant bodies and dioceses. They consult as widely as possible within reason, ensuring materials are issued in as timely and accurate manner as possible.

Statements issued as the formal position of the Church of England, or House of Bishops are flagged as such, and appear on both the Church's national website and social media accounts. These are checked with the relevant people and signed off for distribution.

Ongoing monitoring of publications and reports is carried out and key articles are collated and distributed.

*Revd Canon David Banting:* This competent answer could be gainsaid by the response to the House of Bishops' guidance issued on December 11, 2018. This was the most quoted reason for clergy leaving the Church of England. The Chair of the House of Bishops' Delegation Committee distanced himself from the guidance a month after its issue and an open letter of concern and critique gathered 3,000 signatures and precipitated a few months later a top level consultation with serious senior Bishops in the Church of England. My question is will the Bishops tell us what admissions of shortcomings in this guidance were accepted at that consultation and whether the changes agreed have been implemented, not least the changes on the national website of the Church of England?

*The Bishop of Manchester:* In the situation you described, there were indeed some modest changes made to the press release retrospectively where it was felt the original communications did not fully reflect the scope and purpose of the pastoral guidance that had been issued. However, although it was accepted at the consultation to which you refer that the LLF process needs to lead to greater mutual understanding, and that may have implications for pastoral provision, no change in the guidance itself was agreed at that meeting, neither was any change made in commendation in the revised press release.

More generally, the Standing Committees now ask comms leads to be present and active at House of Bishops' meetings so that they can advise members of the House on how any particular decision might be received within the Church and the wider society. That may include comms staff providing papers to support the House in its deliberations.

There is also now a group of us Bishops who meet regularly with comms leads both to review past communications and to think how best emerging issues will be communicated. We also get monthly media data compiled and distributed to us. So I hope the more general point that you raise, David, has been dealt with as well as the specific ones about that instance to which you refer.

## ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL

79. *Mr Nigel Bacon (Lincoln)* asked the Presidents of the Archbishops' Council: What proportion of each diocese's total annual income is paid to fulfil its "Total Apportionment post pooling" obligation towards the funding of the Archbishops' Council in line with the Table of Apportionment approved annually by Synod? Please provide the answer in tabular form for the most recent year for which data is available.

*Canon Dr John Spence (ex officio)* replied on behalf of the Presidents of the Archbishops' Council: A table showing the total apportionment requested from each diocese in 2020 before and after the pooling adjustment as a percentage of their budgeted income (before any transfers) is given below.

The apportionment calculation is not just based on income and expenditure but has regard to expected giving income and parish investment income.

It should be noted that the 2020 pooling adjustment in respect of additional maintenance costs for ordinands depends on the level of such grants paid by each diocese in 2018/19.

Diocese	Apportionment pre-pooling as percentage of budgeted 2020 income	Apportionment After pooling as percentage of budgeted 2020 income
Bath & Wells	7.0%	7.4%
Birmingham	4.0%	4.4%
Blackburn	5.6%	5.4%
Bristol	5.3%	4.2%
Canterbury	4.9%	5.2%
Carlisle	6.4%	7.6%
Chelmsford	5.6%	5.0%
Chester	8.2%	8.7%
Chichester	8.2%	7.7%
Coventry	5.9%	6.4%
Derby	5.3%	5.7%
Durham	5.0%	5.3%
Ely	6.7%	7.4%
Exeter	5.7%	6.1%
Gloucester	7.4%	7.8%
Guildford	8.8%	8.4%
Hereford	6.5%	7.0%
Leicester	4.5%	2.6%
Lichfield	5.7%	6.2%

Lincoln	7.1%	8.3%
Liverpool	5.6%	4.6%
London	8.5%	7.0%
Manchester	6.0%	6.0%
Newcastle	5.4%	6.5%
Norwich	4.9%	4.9%
Oxford	8.0%	8.6%
Peterborough	5.9%	6.1%
Portsmouth	5.4%	6.4%
Rochester	8.4%	9.3%
St Albans	7.2%	7.3%
St Edmundsbury & Ipswich	5.9%	6.4%
Salisbury	7.9%	8.4%
Sheffield	5.5%	5.1%
Sodor & Man	6.5%	7.2%
Southwark	6.5%	6.8%
Southwell & Nottingham	4.4%	4.3%
Truro	4.5%	4.1%
Winchester	7.9%	7.7%
Worcester	5.9%	5.4%
York	5.7%	6.6%
Leeds	5.2%	6.0%

*Revd Brunel James (Leeds):* I wanted to ask, can any indication of the future strategic direction of the Church Urban Fund be given, especially regarding its relationship to the network of joint ventures with dioceses established in recent years?

*Canon Dr Jamie Harrison (Durham):* I am not sure how this fits quite with the original question in relation to the apportionment but I will try to respond. Obviously, what has happened is there has been a significant review, as we heard from earlier comments in previous Synods, of the financial status and budget of the Archbishops' Council. As yet, we are still having to work that through. We are in a process and you can imagine that the current situation has not helped that. The status of the Church Urban fund is very important to us. All I can say is absolutely real hearing what you are saying and it is something we would want to consider very carefully.

80. *Mr Samuel Margrave (Coventry)* asked the Presidents of the Archbishops' Council: According to reports to this Synod previously, parishes in the poorest areas are already struggling to make ends meet; and are having their priests taken away by dioceses seeking to save money or abandon parish ministry.

Will the Archbishops' Council direct resources in a way that ensures the poorest communities do not lose their local churches or priests?

*Canon Dr John Spence (ex officio)* replied on behalf of the Presidents of the Archbishops' Council: There is no evidence that any diocese is deliberately targeting the poorest areas for cuts. Dioceses are facing hard choices in response to financial difficulties and the national church's role is to support them in delivering sustainable ministry.

The Archbishops' Council provides support (£26.3m in 2020) in the form of Lowest Income Communities Funding. This seeks to target monies on dioceses to provide some extra capacity for the strategic reallocation of funds to support the Church's mission in the lowest income communities. Funding goes to those dioceses whose populations have lower than average incomes.

Each year dioceses are asked to account for how the funding has been used, to ensure it is targeted on low income communities as intended.

One of the Strategic Development Funding criteria is a focus on deprived communities, and a significant amount of funding has already been targeted on those areas.

*Mr Sam Margrave:* Many clergy and laity are concerned that the SDF funding criteria has unintended consequences leading to reorganisations involving cuts to clergy numbers or moving resources away from parishes. For example, Chelmsford received £3 million but cut clergy posts by 60. Will Archbishops call on dioceses to make no further cuts to clergy numbers until the national Church has considered how it will maintain the present community and will funding now be prioritised for parishes and priests?

*Canon Dr Jamie Harrison (Durham):* I think there are two parts to your question, one I can try and answer, which is in relation to the Archbishops' Council and SDF funding. I think the second question was about what the Archbishops were willing to do and I cannot really answer, I am afraid, on their behalf. But I can remember the words of Archbishop Justin when he reminds us that when we do finance and budgets we are doing theology in numbers.

Obviously, this is a serious business and something that we are very concerned of, so it is very good that you should raise such matters with us. I think, as you heard from the Bishop of Leeds in the answer to your supplementary question to question 4, there are significant and recent ongoing responses to the needs of dioceses and their liquidity and solvency, which is great and going well. I think on SDF, which is around £21 million a year in strategic funding, but that is in the context of £1.7 billion of the total Church's income, so we are looking at 20 or so million out of £1.7 billion.

So, actually, although we try to obviously influence and help the system as best we can across the Church, it is a relatively small number. It is a significant sum but it is not a massive sum. You make I think comment at some point around Chelmsford where the £3 million SDF grant actually is going into Newham, which is one of the most deprived

areas of the country with one of the highest Covid-19 death and sickness levels. I think it is for all of us to take seriously on how on earth we do fund properly and correctly across the whole Church and, of course, as members of Synod, that is a responsibility we carry very closely.

I think from the Council's perspective, we can give out money - as it were, give out money, of course it comes from the Commissioners, we can distribute it through SDF grants and also through nearly £35 million this year to the lowest income funding across the dioceses and the transition funding which helps 27 dioceses. I think your comments have been heard but I think, as far as SDF funding which is often for mission and development, it has got to be seen the whole. The whole Church is very large sums of which this is a small part.

*Mr Christopher Pye (Liverpool):* Rather than go through the dioceses, would it have been more practical and beneficial to the whole Church to send the help directly to parishes as per the CUF deprivation score as the parishes then would feel part of the whole of the Church of England?

*Canon Dr Jamie Harrison:* Chris, that is a great question and one, of course, which has been mulled over for quite some time. I think we have to accept that the fundamental unit of the Church is both the diocese and the parish. We can argue that one. The Bishops will take one view and those of us in pews will take a different view.

I think we have seen this as part of something that needs to fit into the whole strategy and direction of the diocese. So we do not want to undermine that and often when we do look at SDF bids we particularly look at the impact of the bid on young people and how that will affect young people across the diocese, in areas of deprivation and in areas where we can see significant growth occurring where the church-going numbers are low. I think those calculations are probably best assessed at a diocesan level, but I have some sympathy with your view.

81. *Revd Brunel James (Leeds)* asked the Presidents of the Archbishops' Council: As a board member of a Together Network Joint Venture I have been alarmed by the recent departure of key staff from the Church Urban Fund. Can any assurance be given to CUF supporters that the organisation has a financially viable future please?

*Mr Mark Sheard (ex officio)* replied on behalf of the Presidents of the Archbishops' Council: The Church Urban Fund is an independent charity. The Archbishops' Council appoints two members of the Board and has made an annual grant.

The loss of a major funder last year created a funding crisis for CUF prompting some staff redundancies while a rescue strategy was put in place. The Archbishops' Council liaised closely with CUF, making available expert support on the financial situation and way forward. The Council was advised that the measures taken by CUF to cut costs meant that, whilst the next few months' funding may be fragile, projections indicate

future viability, and are based on realistic assumptions. As an earnest of its support for CUF, the Council confirmed that it would honour its commitment to its usual annual grant for 2021.

CUF now has a new Chief Officer, Rachel Whittington, and MPA is looking forward to working closely with her and CUF on future strategic priorities.

*Mr Robin Lunn:* Looking at the answer, it talks about “projections indicate future viability, and are based on realistic assumptions”, have these projections been reviewed in light of the current crisis?

*Mr Mark Sheard:* These projections are developing projections under review constantly and the Archbishops’ Council has now agreed that they will be submitted to the Strategic Investment Board for further scrutiny and we are very hopeful, in line with a previous answer, that they will prove viable.

82. *Mr Richard Denno (Liverpool)* asked the Presidents of the Archbishops’ Council: The Synod agreed on 2030 to reach net zero emissions, which will be challenging given the number of buildings with heating systems using 100% fossil fuels, but Manchester Cathedral has a ground source heat pump system for 80% of its heating, supplemented by gas boilers for 20%, installed 2013, so would the responsible group clarify whether ‘net zero’ is achievable with that example?

*Mr Mark Sheard (ex officio)* replied on behalf of the Presidents of the Archbishops’ Council: The 2030 target is challenging, however a strategic focus on buildings using the most energy (cathedrals, major churches, secondary schools, and offices) makes the task more achievable. Our webinars and guidance on “defining and measuring net zero” aim to help dioceses think through the challenge. The consultation is open now, and the EWG will report back to Synod in November.

Tackling heat loss (through draught-proofing and insulation) and decarbonising heat (through electric heating + renewables, heat pumps, or potentially hydrogen) need to be a major focus for work. Heating makes up 70%+ of church energy use.

If Manchester Cathedral’s electricity is from 100% renewable sources and they either use ‘green’ gas or offset the residue, then – yes – they could be rightly proud that their heating and lighting were ‘net zero’. There will be some carbon footprint from the reimbursable travel of staff and volunteers, needing to be reduced or offset.

*Mr Richard Denno (Liverpool):* My predecessor under this number was Dr David Martlew. Thank you, Synod, for remembering David in your prayers in the opening worship. My supplementary concerns the consultation which was mentioned in the report by Mark Sheard on behalf of the Environmental Working Group, the national definition of net zero carbon for the Church of England and the approach to measuring it.

This is welcome guidance to those who can control energy use, that is PCCs, school governing bodies and cathedral chapters, but it lacks quantified examples of how we transition to net zero, whether defined with or without building projects. Would the responsible group publish examples of transition to net zero, quantified using the two definitions, before the report to Synod in November?

*Mr Mark Sheard:* It is a very good question and we are glad the guidance on defining net zero has been welcomed. What is in scope of February's landmark motion is in some ways a technical issue but it is also of real strategic importance. Whatever is in scope has to be reduced to zero or offset from 2030 onwards. But, you are right, getting a handle on practical examples is a challenge at the moment.

Our intention is that the Church Energy Footprint tool and energy audits are starting to provide useful data on our baseline and the actions to take and the potential cost and, as you rightly say, the intention is to report at November's General Synod on this. I think your suggestion is a good one and I will certainly take it up with the Environmental Working Group and see if we can bring some stuff afloat earlier than that that will help.

*Mr Sam Margrave (Coventry):* In relation to the answer given as some examples of how to achieve net zero, has the Archbishops' Council or the wider Church spoken to the Government about the Chancellor's new Green Grants and are there any opportunities for churches to take advantage of this?

*Mr Mark Sheard:* I am sorry, Sam, I do not have specific information on that at the moment, but we can certainly get back to you on that.

83. *Mr Richard Denno (Liverpool)* asked the Presidents of the Archbishops' Council: The two page document 'The practical path to net zero carbon for churches' dated April 2020 does not comment on biomass boilers, but a corresponding webpage refers to St Michael and All Angels Church, Withington as 'perhaps Britain's first zero carbon church' having installed a biomass boiler with a solar cell system in 2010, so would the responsible group clarify whether 'net zero' is achieved in that example?

*Mr Mark Sheard (ex officio)* replied on behalf of the Presidents of the Archbishops' Council: St Michael's has taken a whole package of measures to cut its carbon footprint including swapping to LED lightbulbs, installing solar PV panels, and installing a biomass boiler. Much of their electricity come from the PV panels and the remainder from a 'green' tariff. Their heating is from the biomass boiler, with wood chips purchased as a waste produce from sustainable sources, plus more recently they have added electric under-pew heating. St Michael's is therefore – yes – very largely 'net zero'. There will be some small residual emissions associated with occasional printing and clergy mileage, but these are minimal.

Biomass is not in the 'practical path to net zero' because it has not been recommended in any church energy audits so far. Also, its sustainability depends critically on the source of the wood pellets. It is, however, covered in the "heating principles" on our website, as one possible energy source.

84. *Mrs Caroline Herbert (Norwich)* asked the Presidents of the Archbishops' Council: What effects has the COVID-19 pandemic had on the work of the Evangelism and Discipleship Team in relation to Children and Youth Ministry (as described in GS 2161)?

*Mr Mark Sheard (ex officio)* replied on behalf of the Presidents of the Archbishops' Council: The impact of COVID-19 on work with children and young people appears to be mixed. Many churches have found fruitful contact through use of digital platforms. In other places this has proved more difficult. Two projects are underway to help identify clearer patterns.

As called for in GS 2161 a piece qualitative research has been instigated with 36 churches with data indicating sustained growth of more than 10 under 16's in the last five years. Whilst focussed on general trends, this will now offer insight into the impact of COVID-19.

There is anecdotal evidence of 'shared provision' approaches emerging, where a centralised hub of on-line programmes is put in place whilst maintaining individual group identities. Work is underway to identify what learning might be more generally applicable in this model.

The E&D team is also involved in the wider Faith at Home provision that has seen broad engagement across churches.

*Mrs Caroline Herbert:* Thank you for this answer. I just wondered if the projects and the work mentioned in the first and third paragraphs, how and when the learning might be made available so that we then might be able to take any lessons learned forward in our churches and parishes as we seek to sort of start to think about children youth ministry from September?

*Mr Mark Sheard:* Thank you, Caroline, a really good question. It is really important to make that learning available as quickly as possible and I understand from the Evangelism and Discipleship Team that they are well advanced with that, notwithstanding the challenges at the moment and are now hoping to publish that later this summer. I do not have a specific date, I am afraid, nor I am afraid do I have the mechanism, but we will make sure that you definitely get to hear about it as soon as possible.

*Mrs Lucy Moore (Winchester):* Given that Synod has recognised the importance of work among children and young people, may I ask why the National Going for Growth Children and Youth Adviser has been put on furlough at this time?

*Mr Mark Sheard:* Lucy, that is a very good question. I simply do not know the answer to that, but I do believe that he has also had some paternity leave as well at the time if we are talking about Jimmy Dale. We are not talking about Jimmy Dale. Well, in that case, I quite definitely will need to come back to you and give you an answer. I am afraid I am not familiar with the detailed staffing issues.

85. *Revd Stephen Trott (Peterborough)* asked the Presidents of the Archbishops' Council: With weddings in Church of England churches at an all-time low, is consideration being given to reform of the law to make the celebration of marriage celebrant based, rather than building based, as happens in Scotland and various other jurisdictions, so that clergy can lead the solemnisation of marriage whatever the location?

*Mr Mark Sheard (ex officio)* replied on behalf of the Presidents of the Archbishops' Council: The Law Commission is conducting a major review of UK Marriage Law which has not yet reported. The Archbishops' Council gave evidence to the review.

England currently has a premises-based, not a celebrant-based system. We have considered the matter and do not favour a change to this situation. There is much evidence that, for couples who chose a church wedding, the location is significant and no evidence that widening the range of locations at which a wedding can take place would result in additional demand for a religious ceremony.

The pressure for a celebrant-based system is coming largely from secular organisations who do not have a network of their own premises but see this as a market opportunity akin to funerals where secular ceremonies have grown rapidly in recent years.

*Revd Stephen Trott:* Given that we already have a monopoly on church weddings, why not unbind the hand of the clergy to allow us to conduct weddings elsewhere, what is to be lost by doing so?

*The Chair:* That is an expression of opinion, I am told, and so I have to rule that out of order.

86. *Mr John Mason (Chester)* asked the Presidents of the Archbishops' Council: What plans, if any, does the Legislative Reform Committee have to consider which of the formalities and legalities surrounding parishes and benefices could be lightened or removed so that congregations and PCCs can build on the successes during lockdown of "online" church working collaboratively with others over larger geographical areas in furthering the mission of Jesus Christ? Please can you give any specific examples of such legislative or administrative reforms which are being considered to rethink the parish system and unlock it for mission?

*Revd Canon Simon Butler (Southwark)* replied on behalf of the Presidents of the Archbishops' Council: The Legislative Reform Committee is considering how the legislative framework could change, in response to the experience and consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic, and to more long-standing obstacles to mission. This includes examining what can be done within existing frameworks, and providing better guidance and communications.

The Committee agreed to a consultation on a Legislative Reform Order to address challenges caused by the complex and restrictive provisions which apply to diocesan funds and other assets. It is seeking the approval of the Archbishops' Council and the House of Bishops for other work which would require legislation by Measure and hopes to consult through a new 'green paper' approach. If this work is approved, it is likely to require significant legislative time during the remainder of the lifetime of this Synod.

If Mr Mason or other members would like to make further suggestions, the Committee will be pleased to consider them.

*Mr Sam Margrave (Coventry)*: Canon Butler, can the contact details for the Committee please be passed to all members of dioceses and details of how we can input into the consultation be made?

*Revd Canon Simon Butler*: Of course, you can write to the legal office and they will make sure that the information gets to us.

87. *Revd Brunel James (Leeds)* asked the Presidents of the Archbishops' Council: As a participant in the 'Windrush Debate' in February, please could I ask what concrete steps have been taken at the different levels of the church towards pursuing the goals identified in the original motion and its amendments?

*The Archbishop of York (Most Revd & Rt Hon Stephen Cottrell)* replied as President of the Archbishops' Council: Since February much consultation and thinking has gone into addressing this motion. Later events have drawn even greater attention to the church's failings in this area. The fruit of that earlier thinking and consultation is crystallising in the plans for a Task Force to address immediate action and for a Commission to drive culture change across the church. We want that work to be led by someone with independent credentials as requested in the motion.

Clause (b) of the motion, calling for research on the loss to the Church of England from our neglect of the Windrush generation, is methodologically challenging. MPA was planning a case study approach in specific parishes which would enable us to evaluate the "might have been" questions. As this would rely on personal interviews, best conducted face to face, further development of the plan is on hold until that approach is once again possible.

*Revd Brunel James (Leeds):* Given the crucial role of the task force in driving forward culture change and what Martin Luther King called “the fierce urgency of now”, what assurances can be given about potential timescale for the work, especially as the National Adviser’s post is currently vacant?

*The Archbishop of York:* It is nice to be answering on behalf of the Archbishops’ Council, a body that I have been a member of now for 48 hours and have not been to any meetings yet. This matter is hugely important for our world and for our Church at the moment, but actually we are still right at the beginning of the process of working out what the membership of this task force will be and how we will work and so I am really not in a position where I can go into any detail right now.

But I can give you the assurance of announcements in September about the membership and the work and the scope of this. I think I want to tell you and the Synod that it is a piece of work that I am personally extremely committed to. As Synod will know, I have led some of the debates in Synod on these issues in recent years. I am myself a member of CMEAC and have been for some years but, right this minute, I am not in a position to give you those answers. That is not because of the lack of stuff that is going on or any lack of urgency, but we are not yet at a position to make those announcements.

*Revd Canon Priscilla White (Birmingham):* In relation to putting together this task force, are those putting the plans together aware of significant research work already recently done on the experience of various marginalised groups, “Beyond the Lych-gate” by Dr Sanjee Perera?

*The Archbishop of York:* Yes, I am. As it happens, this is a related piece of work. Sanjee is a member of the co-ordinating group for the Vision and Strategy Group, somebody I have done a lot of work with over the last couple of years and somebody whose voice alongside others I anticipate helping to shape our thinking going forward.

88. *Revd Dr Anderson Jeremiah (Universities & TEs)* asked the Presidents of the Archbishops’ Council: Given the recent departure of His Grace the Archbishop of York John Sentamu, the Archbishops’ Council and the entire senior management staff do not have any membership (except one member of the council) from a BAME background. Now that a task force has been announced by the House of Bishops to address racial equality in the structures of CofE, what are the steps, immediate and long-term, being taken to address the visible lack of representation in the Council (given its role in providing leadership, strategy and executive responsibility to the national Church)?

*The Archbishop of York (Most Revd & Rt Hon Stephen Cottrell)* replied as President of the Archbishops’ Council: The Council recognises the importance of its role in providing leadership, strategy and responsibility to the national Church, and acknowledges that there should be better diversity within the Council.

The Council consists of a maximum of 19 members, of these only 6 are appointed, the others are elected or ex officio. When appointing members, the Council considers the skills and diversity gap within the Council, and actively seeks to encourage applications from under-represented groups, including those of BAME backgrounds. The most recent recruitment round in 2018 was supported by a professional recruitment company, and resulted in two women being appointed and one BAME man.

The Council would encourage the electorates of the House of Bishops, Clergy and Laity to consider this issue when electing their new representatives later next year. There are ten members elected by Synod, and a more diverse Council would be welcomed.

*The Chair:* Anderson Jeremiah, the question you have submitted is not a question, so could I encourage you to put a question mark in what you ask now, please.

*Revd Dr Anderson Jeremiah:* The question that I wish to ask the Archbishop of York, as he is coming new to the Archbishops' Council, is would he rather take up the responsibility given the Archbishops' Council and the way it has been represented, rather than abdicating responsibility for such change to other bodies which historically have failed to see BAME absence as significant? Will the leadership accept that now is the time to re-examine the limitations in the structures of Archbishops' Council?

*The Archbishop of York:* The short answer, Anderson, I think is a yes to that. It is really important that the leadership of the Church at every level reflects the Church and the communities that we serve. Diversity is important, not because of some sort of misunderstood political correctness. It is because God has made us in this glorious diversity and, unless that diversity is present around the table, we are less than we could be.

I have learnt so much, dear, Anderson from people like you. I have learnt so much in recent years about a different way of approaching these questions. I still have much to learn, but I hope that I will bring to the work of the Archbishops' Council and to the other councils of our beloved Church those things and, hopefully, create a Church where more voices are heard so that we can give a richer witness to the Gospel to our nation and to our world.

## **SECRETARY GENERAL**

89. *Mr Stephen Hofmeyr (Guildford)* asked the Secretary General: During Covid-19 restrictions could churches and church buildings be used (1) as food banks or (2) as additional space for local schools to offer spatially distanced tuition?

*Mr William Nye* replied as Secretary General: From 26 March until 3 July the Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (England) Regulations 2020 required that places of worship be kept closed, subject to certain permitted exceptions. From the outset, the exceptions permitted using a place of worship "to provide essential voluntary services or

urgent public support services (including the provision of food banks or other support for the homeless or vulnerable people, blood donation sessions or support in an emergency)". From the 1st June, early years childcare was permitted. The permitted uses did not allow places of worship to be used as additional teaching space for schools. From 4th July, when the statutory closure requirement ended, churches have been permitted to provide teaching space for schools in accordance with relevant guidance.

90. *Revd Anne Stevens (London)* asked the Secretary General: Could the Secretary General update the Synod on the progress towards equal pay in the NCIs and explain what steps are being undertaken to correct any imbalance?

*Mr William Nye* replied as Secretary General: Staff are covered by a unified pay policy underpinned by job-evaluation to ensure the same pay level for posts with work of equal value. We conduct an annual review of the gender pay gap, 2019 data indicates our mean pay gap is 21%. Causes are explored on our website.

We take a short and long-term view on actions to reduce our gender pay gap as part of an action plan on belonging and inclusion. We introduced unconscious bias training for panel members and ensured balanced representation. We pressed Executive Search providers to identify diverse candidates. We ran sessions for leaders on bias and analysed staff survey data, with questions on discrimination. Longer term work includes reviewing policies and exploring behaviours that may present barriers to retention and progression. During Covid we are aware of society-wide gender-related evidence on domestic duties and ensured inclusive communications, noting particular concerns for BAME staff.

*Revd Anne Stevens (London)*: Thank you to the Secretary General for his reply and for everything he is doing to bring that stubborn pay gap down. 21% is still distressingly high, however, so would he consider now setting specific targets to bring that figure down over the next 12 months?

*Mr William Nye*: The figures given for the gender pay gap, as measured, refer to the National Church Institutions as a whole, so it is a matter for the Archbishops' Council and the Church Commissioners and the Church of England Pensions Board and, indeed, Lambeth and Bishopthorpe Palace. So it is something that we would need to look at together. It is something I will certainly happily take to the Joint Employment and Conditions of Service Board, which is the body that looks after the employment of all the staff in the National Church Institutions. The JECSB have taken this very seriously and they ask us very regularly what we are doing about it. They have not so far set targets, but I think it is a reasonable question for them to address.

91. *Mr Martin Sewell (Rochester)* asked the Secretary General: In your statement of evidence to IICSA, you explained in clear terms, at paras 87-90, that there were anomalous historic legal immunities enjoyed by "Peculiars", and further, confirming that,

whilst required to meet the National Church's standards of Safeguarding conduct, for historical but still current structural reasons, there is a class of clergy within such places who remain outwith the jurisdiction of the Church of England at a national corporate level. What, therefore, is the Church/NST authority for now saying that the immunity you so carefully described, does not presently apply to the Dean of Christ Church Oxford?

*Mr William Nye* replied as Secretary General: The clergy of any peculiars other than Royal Peculiars are subject to the ordinary disciplinary processes of the Church including the provisions of the Clergy Discipline Measure. Christ Church, Oxford is not a Royal Peculiar. I apologise for the error in my evidence to IICSA. I have written to the Inquiry to correct my evidence and to apologise for the error.

*Mr Martin Sewell*: The claim to jurisdiction in the unprecedented case of the Christ Church Dean is now in its third iteration and includes a necessary correction to evidence given at IICSA. Given the complexity of the law and its potential for unintended consequences across other sector ministry fields, has consideration been given to the Church and Christ Church jointly funding a test case limited to jurisdiction matters to obtain an authoritative legal judgment?

*Mr William Nye*: I really do not think I can give an answer on a specific case that is being looked into. You invite me, in any case, to launch some legal action, which I am not proposing to do in the course of question time at General Synod.

*Revd Preb. Simon Cawdell (Hereford)*: Given that we are to understand from the answer and the question that there are clergy serving in the Peculiars who are not subject to the normal disciplinary processes of the Church, can it be explained how they are regulated given the possible reputational damage to the Church and any other ramifications for failures in their behaviour?

*Mr William Nye*: I hesitate to give an answer to that because I fear I may have to write to you with a more learned view about Royal Peculiars. I suspect the answer is that they are regulated by the statutes that pertain to particular Royal Peculiars rather than being through Church regulations. That is in the nature of Royal Peculiars, but if I have got that in any way wrong I am sure I will be advised and I will write to you accordingly.

*The Chair*: Nice to hear your excited dog there, Simon, as well! Thank you for that.

## **CLERK TO THE SYNOD**

92. *Mr Adrian Greenwood (Southwark)* asked the Clerk to the Synod: When was the size and membership of General Synod last considered and reviewed? What was the outcome in terms of the reduction in the numbers of members? In outline, please describe the process that was followed, including how the process was started.

*Dr Jacqui Philips* replied as Clerk to the Synod: Between 1993 and 1997 the operation of Synodical government was reviewed by a Commission chaired by Lord Bridge of Harwich which produced the Bridge Report. Synod debated the Bridge Report and subsequently established a group to review the proposals. The report from this Group was debated in July 2001. As this debate raised some concerns, the Business Committee agreed to undertake more work, and presented a further report to Synod in July 2002. Synod approved the report and its recommendations and as a result new legislation in the form of the Church Representation Rules was put before Synod. These proposed that the House of Laity would consist of 140 members from Canterbury province, and 60 from York. The Church Representation Rules were debated in 2003 and 2004, and finally approved in July 2004. They were implemented in time for the 2005 quinquennium.

*Mr Adrian Greenwood:* As well as the reduction in the size of the House of Laity in 2005, it would be good to know the reductions in the House of Clergy and the House of Bishops respectively and the reduction in the overall size of the Synod. Please, will you forward all this information to the House of Bishops' Governance Review Group with a request that it considers whether the time is right for a further reduction in the size of General Synod in order that it may become a more cost-effective legislative body in the second half of 2020s and the 2030s?

*Dr Jacqui Philips:* As it happens, the Bridge Review did make proposals for reductions to the membership of the House of Bishops and the House of Clergy, including recommending a repeal of the Rules enabling each diocese to elect an archdeacon to the General Synod. They also recommended reducing the number of members of each House from a total of 575 to the present 467 members, so just over a hundred member reduction. A full analysis of the recommendations of the Bridge Review and the Turnbull Report as well as other material will, indeed, be supplied to the Governance Review Group and it will be for them to consider any recommendations they may wish to make about any other governance bodies in the future.

## **NATIONAL SOCIETY COUNCIL**

93. *Mrs Sarah Finch (London)* asked the Chair of the National Society Council: Can the Chair of the National Society Council confirm that materials from the charity Brook, a leading provider of sexual health services, are not used in its church schools?

94. *Dr William Belcher (Gloucester)* asked the Chair of the National Society Council: In view of the political and agenda-driven, campaigning nature of Stonewall, on what basis does the Church of England allow the use of Stonewall resources and training within Church of England Schools?

95. *Mrs Kathy Playle (Chelmsford)* asked the Chair of the National Society Council: In light of the decisions of Oxfordshire, Shropshire, Warwickshire, Doncaster, Barnsley and Kent Councils to withdraw Relationship and Sex Education (RSE) materials,

following widespread parental concerns, is the Church of England now planning to review materials for use in RSE, across all ages in all its schools to ensure that they promote safety and reflect the teaching of the Church of England on sex and marriage, and honour both girls and boys as fearfully and wonderfully made in the image of God?

*The Bishop of Durham (Rt Revd Paul Butler)* replied as Chair of the National Society: Questions 93, 94 and 95 are answered together. There are nearly 4,700 Church of England schools. It is the responsibility of each individual school and its governing body, in consultation with parents, to set policy and agree the curriculum offer in this area (following the DfE guidance). The National Society has no authority or remit to insist on any particular resource being used or not being used in any school, but we have set out principles and guidance for how the subject should be approached in our charter which can be accessed on the website at <https://www.churchofengland.org/more/education-and-schools/church-schools-and-academies/relationships-sex-and-health-education>.

The publication of the Church of England's *Living in Love and Faith* resources will be invaluable in helping schools address this subject.

*Mrs Sarah Finch:* Given that the guidance offered by the Church of England in the website resources that you mentioned in your reply does not recommend the teaching of the historic Christian understanding of marriage as normative but, instead, commits the Church and its schools to follow in the Government's inclusive approach of not giving moral judgments on any form of relationship, will this policy of apparently no longer upholding the historic Christian view of marriage be made clear to parents and other interested parties rather than being obscured by reference to articles on websites?

*The Bishop of Durham:* We need to be very clear that the Charter is intended to be available for use by all schools not simply Church schools. The Charter was produced as we hoped it would be used more widely than simply Church schools. Then, if you look at point 5 of the Charter, it states that, "RSHE will promote healthy resilient relationships ... [and] ... reflect the vision and associated values of the school". Being based on the school's values clearly means that Church of England schools will teach the tenets of the Christian faith and explain the vital role of marriage in Christian teaching.

*Dr William Belcher:* In the Church of England's Charter for Faith Sensitive Relationships and Sex Education in church schools, which you have mentioned in your reply, commitment 1 requires dialogue between the school and parents through all stages of RSE policy development and including discussion of the resources which will be used to teach their children. There have been examples of RSE pilot schools completely ignoring this required dialogue process with parents. How does the National Society Council propose to ensure that all parents of children in Church of England schools ---

*The Chair:* I am sorry, that question is out of order, William, because it contains an imputation and so I am sorry for that.

*Mrs Kathy Playle:* Given that it is the responsibility of individual school governing bodies to set their policies in this area but that *Living in Love and Faith* will not be published until well after the next school year has started and that the resources on the Church of England website mentioned by the Bishop do not, in fact, make the Church of England's official teaching on sex and gender clear, can the Bishop recommend other resources that do make this teaching clear, would that be on the website, which schools could be using from September 2020?

*The Bishop of Durham:* Yes, there are some resources already signposted from the website and on Monday of this coming week the Diocese of Bristol is launching some new specific resources and the link will be made from the national website to the Diocese of Bristol's resources and, therefore, we are very grateful to the Diocese of Bristol for their production of this.

*Revd Canon Simon Butler (Southwark):* Just to ask the Bishop how the National Society intends to roll out Living and Love and Faith in church schools and how then to engage with it?

*The Bishop of Durham:* The simple answer to that at the moment, Simon, is that that is work that needs to be done once we see the resources that LLF actually produce because, until we have the LLF resources, we will not know how best to roll them out across church schools. But please be assured that it will be an issue that is picked up and we will work on very clearly because we believe the LLF resources will be useful and valuable.

96. *Mrs Caroline Herbert (Norwich)* asked the Chair of the National Society Council: Sections 75 and 82 of the DfE Guidance on Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education call for investigation into gender identity. What steps is the Church of England making to ensure schools remain loyal to the biblical and scientific models of one man and one woman "as He created them" and the marriage model of a man and a woman?

*The Bishop of Durham (Rt Revd Paul Butler)* replied as Chair of the National Society: The DfE guidance makes it clear that pupils should be "taught the facts and the law about sex, sexuality, sexual health and gender identity in an age-appropriate and inclusive way." It is the responsibility of individual school governing bodies to set policy in this area and we are confident that Church of England schools will, with appropriate support from their diocese, want to ensure that the Church of England's teaching is understood. The Church of England's *Living in Love and Faith* resources will be invaluable in helping them to do so.

97. *Dr William Belcher (Gloucester)* asked the Chair of the National Society Council: What provision is there in the Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) curriculum requirements for CofE, church school, secondary aged youngsters for basic anatomical and physiological information about adolescent development and the realities and impact of sexual activity on still-developing adolescent bodies?

*The Bishop of Durham (Rt Revd Paul Butler)* replied as Chair of the National Society: Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) will be compulsory for all pupils receiving secondary education and the Department for Education has set out guidance for the subject which can be accessed at [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/805781/Relationships Education Relationships and Sex Education RSE and Health Education.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/805781/Relationships_Education_Relationships_and_Sex_Education_RSE_and_Health_Education.pdf)

Schools are free to determine how to deliver the content set out in that guidance, in the context of a broad and balanced curriculum. The school is responsible for setting that curriculum, not the national church or diocese. The guidance sets out what pupils will be expected to know by the time they leave secondary school and the details of this in relation to intimate and sexual relationships are found on p29 of the guidance and include the fact “that all aspects of health can be affected by choices they make in sex and relationships, positively or negatively, e.g. physical, emotional, mental, sexual and reproductive health and wellbeing.”

98. *Ms Sophie Mitchell (Church of England Youth Council)* asked the Chair of the National Society Council: Since the decision was made by the Education Office and the National Society Council to disband the Church of England Youth Council in November 2019, how does the Church of England plan to engage young people in General Synod and ensure that their voices are heard in the next quinquennium?

*The Bishop of Durham (Rt Revd Paul Butler)* replied as Chair of the National Society: The proposal that the Church of England Youth Council (CEYC) should cease to exist was made following discussion with its chair and core group, recognising its engagement with young people in recent years has been restricted to a rather small group. The National Society agreed to the proposal to transition to an annual gathering for young Anglican adults, retaining the breadth of tradition that CEYC has embraced and continuing to give a voice to young adults in the Church of England. This will be planned by young adults with the intention of exploring lived faith within the Anglican tradition. Representation to General Synod will be drawn from those involved, with a 2-year term of office as is currently the case. General Synod Observers will also be drawn from this work. Progress on this has been impacted by the current Pandemic but will be picked up again soon.

## **FINANCE COMMITTEE**

99. *Mr Gavin Oldham (Oxford)* asked the Chair of the Archbishops’ Council Finance Committee: In these times of severe financial strain in so many parts of the Church,

how can reserves marked 'restricted' and 'designated', and substantial pools of investment returns, within both parishes and dioceses, be made more accessible across the Church so that we do more to live up to the principles of sharing which were such a feature of the early Church?

*Canon Dr John Spence (ex officio)* replied as Chair of the Archbishops' Council Finance Committee: Diocesan and PCC trustees must decide how their funds are used to support their charitable objects which may include supporting mission and ministry in other parishes and dioceses as well as their own. They must act within Charity Law and use restricted funds for their defined purpose.

Trustees can designate unrestricted funds for a particular purpose and reverse that designation. They can also consider passing a total return resolution to enable them to spend accumulated total return on their charitable purposes, within parameters decided by the trustees. There is both scope and immediate need for dioceses to work together to support those suffering most from projected parish share loss during 2020, sharing ideas and initiatives to enhance the overall picture.

Work has begun on a draft Legislative Reform Order to propose broadening restrictions for various restricted diocesan funds. This will be brought to General Synod for consideration in due course.

100. *Revd Andrew Yates (Truro)* asked the Chair of the Archbishops' Council Finance Committee: How many Diocesan Glebe Committees have members of the Clergy (excluding Archdeacons) sitting on them as co-opted or elected representatives?

*Canon Dr John Spence (ex officio)* replied as Chair of the Archbishops' Council Finance Committee: As far as I am aware, the NCIs do not hold a record of the membership of Diocesan Glebe Committees.

101. *The Revd Andrew Yates (Truro)* asked the Chair of the Archbishops' Council Finance Committee: What percentage of staff employed by the Diocesan Boards of Finance have been furloughed under the Government scheme during the pandemic?

*Canon Dr John Spence (ex officio)* replied as Chair of the Archbishops' Council Finance Committee: My understanding is that 40 DBFs have furloughed some of their staff. The percentage of staff furloughed ranges between 7% and 65%. The median proportion of DBF staff who have been furloughed is around one-third.

102. *Revd Dr Ian Paul (Southwell & Nottingham)* asked the Chair of the Archbishops' Council Finance Committee: How do any diocesan plans to make stipendiary clergy posts redundant affect applications to the Strategic Development Fund for grants to enable appointments and church planting initiatives?

*Canon Dr John Spence (ex officio)* replied as Chair of the Archbishops' Council Finance Committee: The aim of Strategic Development Funding (SDF) is to help dioceses invest in their strategies to deliver long-term mission and financial strength. In assessing applications, the Strategic Investment Board considers how the proposals fit with the broader strategic plans of the diocese.

The Board recognises that such plans may include the reorganisation of ministry provision. This may include changes which result in specific posts being made redundant for good reasons, such as the reallocation of resources, improving sustainability, and the introduction and development of new models of ministry.

All applications must demonstrate additionality, so that SDF cannot be used to replace funding for posts already supported by the diocese.

103. *Mr David Lamming (St Edmundsbury & Ipswich)* asked the Chair of the Archbishops' Council Finance Committee: In your short speech at the end of the safeguarding debate in Synod on 12 February 2020, you said, clearly in relation to that part of the amended motion urging the NSSG "to bring forward proposals... that follow a more fully survivor-centred approach to safeguarding, including arrangements for redress for survivors": "Let us be very clear. This is not about affordability; it is about justice. Justice cannot have a different value depending on the finances of this or that diocese. Whatever we are told is required by those responsible that is required for redress, then those funds will be found."

In the light of this statement, will you confirm that, notwithstanding the impact of Covid-19, the Archbishops' Council will, in its 2021 budget, continue to support the safeguarding work of the national Church and, in particular, ensure that the necessary resources are in place to fund the preparations for a redress scheme that the motion in February called on the NSSG to promote?

*Canon Dr John Spence (ex officio)* replied as Chair of the Archbishops' Council Finance Committee: From GS2173 members will be aware of the financial challenges the Council is facing in setting its 2021 budget. But I confirm that the budget will continue to support the safeguarding work of the national Church and that preparations for a redress scheme are expected to be in the work programme for the National Safeguarding Team in 2021.

104. *Mr Andrew Presland (Peterborough)* asked the Chair of the Archbishops' Council Finance Committee: Given the need to change the culture of the church (and hence of this Synod) to focus on equipping Christians for everyday life – as identified in 'Setting God's People Free' - what priority will be given to resourcing this in the 2021 budget?

*Canon Dr John Spence (ex officio)* replied as Chair of the Archbishops' Council Finance Committee: From GS2173 members will be aware of the financial challenges the Council, in common with other parts of the Church, is facing in setting its 2021 budget

which I hope will be brought before Synod in November. The Council will need to consider which of a wide range of priorities, including work identified in 'Setting God's People Free' can be funded in the light of the resources expected to be available.

However, resourcing this workstream goes beyond what is in the Council's budget. For instance, Ministry Council are considering how greater focus might be given to the development of lay leaders and ministers.

## **MINISTRY COUNCIL**

105. *Mr Adrian Greenwood (Southwark)* asked the Chair of the Ministry Council: For the last annual period with reliable figures, (A) How much, approximately, was spent by the national Church and the Dioceses on the discernment, selection and training of candidates for ordained ministry? (I'm looking for the total spent in the year). (B) How many were ordained deacon in that same year? (C.) What were the equivalent amounts spent for those training for licensed lay ministries? (D) And how many lay ministers were licensed in that period?

*The Bishop of St Edmundsbury & Ipswich (Rt Revd Martin Seeley)* replied as Chair of the Ministry Council:

- (a) We only have figures for the national church spend in these areas which is £24,818,000 for ordinands across all the year groups of initial training. This does not include any diocesan expenditure on discernment and selection;
- (b) There were 575 ordained deacon (355 stipendiary and 220 self-supporting);
- (c) The costs of discernment, selection and training of candidates for lay ministries are met by Dioceses. Information on the overall spend is not collected nationally. The National Church staffing budget for Lay Ministry is £70,000;
- (d) The number of Readers / LLM (Readers) admitted for the first time during 2019 was 286.

Reader/LLM (Readers) are vitally important in the life of the church but are only a small part of the wider picture of lay ministry which encompasses other licensed lay ministries, including Pioneers and Evangelists, alongside authorised lay ministries and the thousands of people in locally recognised ministries in their worshipping communities. The ongoing lay ministry data project, due to be completed later this year, will provide additional insight into the numbers of people in public, recognised lay ministries.

106. *Revd Canon Rebecca Swyer (Chichester)* asked the Chair of the Ministry Council: Given the recent national drive for a 50% increase in vocations to ordained ministry, what steps is the national church taking to assess how many title posts dioceses can afford in 2021 in the light of the current pandemic, and is consideration being given as to possible additional financial support for dioceses to ensure there are enough title posts for all those due to complete IME 1 training in 2021?

*The Bishop of St Edmundsbury & Ipswich (Rt Revd Martin Seeley)* replied as Chair of the Ministry Council: The Ministry Council is fully committed to ensuring that, wherever possible, those who are expecting to be appointed to a stipendiary title post in 2021 can do so. The National Ministry Team is currently ascertaining exactly from each Diocese the number of stipendiary curates that they at present would expect to fund in 2021 given financial pressures made more complex by the pandemic. We continue to monitor and review those numbers against the numbers expected to leave training in summer 2021. A paper with the outcome of this work will be presented to the Strategic Ministry Board at their meeting on July 9. We will then be working with Dioceses to seek the best outcomes for everyone concerned.

107. *Revd Charles Read (Norwich)* asked the Chair of the Ministry Council: Many ordinands currently in formation for stipendiary ministry are expressing anxiety about whether there will be sufficient stipendiary posts for them on ordination in 2021 or 2022. Can the Chair please explain:

- (a) What the funding mechanism is for stipendiary curacies;
- (b) What discussions have taken place in the Ministry Council, House of Bishops or elsewhere to ensure that all those currently sponsored for stipendiary ordained ministry will have a reasonable chance of securing a title post?

*The Bishop of St Edmundsbury & Ipswich (Rt Revd Martin Seeley)* replied as Chair of the Ministry Council: I would like also to refer to my answer to Question 106 concerning the process held by the Strategic Ministry Board for ensuring that all those sponsored for stipendiary ministry will have a reasonable chance of securing a title post. The funding of stipendiary curacies is in general the responsibility of dioceses. The SMB have set up a rigorous process to assess, against a number of criteria, applications from Dioceses for funding for additional curacies. Given the exceptional circumstances arising from the pandemic, the SMB are also discussing with other national church colleagues how best to assist Dioceses in meeting their wider ambitions for all stipendiary curacies.

108. *Mr James Cary (Bath & Wells)* asked the Chair of the Ministry Council: What work has been done to reconcile the planned 50% increase in vocations to ordained ministry with the possibility of a reduction in the number of stipendiary posts across the Church?

*The Bishop of St Edmundsbury & Ipswich (Rt Revd Martin Seeley)* replied as Chair of the Ministry Council: I would like to refer to my answer to Question 106 concerning the work being done to bring together the 50% increase in vocations with curacy posts, and also to my answer to Question 109 below on the ways in which work is being done to help Dioceses draw up their ministerial development strategies which might tie into this 50% increase in vocations target.

109. *Mr Nigel Bacon (Lincoln)* asked the Chair of the Ministry Council: What are the current forecasts, by year, for the total number of (a) stipendiary clergy positions, and (b) clergy leaving stipendiary positions, across the Church of England as a whole?

*The Bishop of St Edmundsbury & Ipswich (Rt Revd Martin Seeley)* replied as Chair of the Ministry Council: The National Ministry Team is focusing its data collection work at the moment on establishing the connection between the vocational targets set by the House of Bishops and the provision of stipendiary curacy posts.

Dioceses hold responsibility for their ministerial deployment strategy and the House of Bishops recently agreed that Regional Bishops Meetings will together consider the plans of their constituent dioceses and share these with the Ministry Team. The Ministry Team will draw together the data on all ministerial posts once dioceses have developed their forecasts. As a contribution to this work, the team is involved in developing a tool to help dioceses plan their posts (at incumbent level) over the next ten years.

110. *Revd Stephen Trott (Peterborough)* asked the Chair of the Ministry Council: Can the Church of England afford to provide the necessary funding for the training, housing and future stipendiary ministry and pensions of the current cohort of those approved for theological training?

*The Bishop of St Edmundsbury & Ipswich (Rt Revd Martin Seeley)* replied as Chair of the Ministry Council: Yes, I am confident that this will be the case. The Strategic Ministry Board meeting on 9th July will, in particular, look at the cohort or those preparing for ordination in 2021. We recognise, as with any cohort, that not all are training for stipendiary ministry.

The most important factor in the long-term financial health of the Church of England will remain the mission and financial health of its parishes and the continued generosity of its worshipping communities. This is a shared responsibility and endeavour which includes its parishes and dioceses, as well as the national institutions.

The Archbishops' Council, working together with the Church Commissioners, aims to support dioceses both through funding programmes such as Strategic Ministry Funding and Strategic Transformation Funding, and through activity such as the National Giving Strategy, and resources to enhance digital engagement.

111. *Mr Anthony Archer (St Albans)* asked the Chair of the Ministry Council: What element of the national BAME vocations strategy is dedicated to ensuring BAME ordinands are fully supported through IME Phase 1 and what resources are provided by Ministry Division to dioceses to ensure title posts for these ordinands are made available?

*The Bishop of St Edmundsbury & Ipswich (Rt Revd Martin Seeley)* replied as Chair of the Ministry Council: The Mentor programme which accompanies minority ethnic candidates and ordinands through the whole discernment and formation process is one aspect of the vocations strategy aimed at those in IME1. The programme also includes

regional conferences for minority ethnic candidates to engage with role models. Along with Common Awards colleagues, the TEI sector is actively considering how their practices can be inclusive of all, for example by a process of decolonising reading lists by widening the theological texts and resources from which ordinands draw in their learning to ensure that minority ethnic heritage voices are more clearly heard. Work is also underway to offer specific open days for minority ethnic candidates. Title posts are rightly the responsibility of the Dioceses. However, one of the criteria used by the Strategic Ministry Board in evaluating Diocesan applications for funding additional curacy posts is the support they provide to minority ethnic candidates.

112. *Mr Anthony Archer (St Albans)* asked the Chair of the Ministry Council: What advice was given by Ministry Division to dioceses concerning the use of the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme for the purpose of furloughing curates?

*The Bishop of St Edmundsbury & Ipswich (Rt Revd Martin Seeley)* replied as Chair of the Ministry Council: The National Ministry Team were consulted in the formulation of advice which was issued to dioceses by the National Church Institutions. The advice explained how it was legally possible to furlough curates, and outlined the consequences, such as that the curate would have to refrain from all ministerial activity and that the curacy might in some circumstances might need to be extended. However, it made clear that this was not a specific recommendation, and it was for dioceses to decide whether or not it was reasonable to do so.

113. *Mr James Lee (Guildford)* asked the Chair of the Ministry Council: Regarding study of biblical languages by ordinands, how many ordinands undertook modules in biblical languages in each of the past three years for which statistics are available, with this number broken down by training pathway (e.g. full-time residential, full-time non-residential (mixed-mode) and part-time)?

*The Bishop of St Edmundsbury & Ipswich (Rt Revd Martin Seeley)* replied as Chair of the Ministry Council: As stated in the answer to Question 25 in November 2019's Synod Questions, study of biblical languages is included as a requirement or option in some pathways across all the different forms of training, and this is encouraged by the Quality and Formation Panel. We do not have statistics for the number of ordinands who take these or any other particular courses in any given year. However, our estimate is that last year there were approximately 75 people involved in taking credits in Greek or Hebrew in the Common Awards programmes.

## **REMUNERATION AND CONDITIONS OF SERVICE COMMITTEE**

114. *Revd Canon John Dunnett (Chelmsford)* asked the Chair of the Remuneration and Conditions of Service Committee: Please can you confirm any provision that is made for retiring clergy in addition to pension provision – and in particular whether any support is available for retirement expenses including removals?

*The Bishop of Hereford (Rt Revd Richard Frith)* replied as Chair of the Remuneration and Conditions of Service Committee: I am not aware of any national provision or recommendations, although it is possible that some dioceses may assist with removal expenses.

Removal expenses are paid by the DBF when clergy move house following a new appointment, because the house is provided to enable clergy to carry out their duties. This is not the case with their retirement home, although many clergy continue to exercise a ministry in retirement after applying for PTO.

Clergy incurring removal costs on their retirement have a lump sum paid at retirement and would be able to use part of this if necessary.

115. *Revd Canon Martyn Taylor (Lincoln)* asked the Chair of the Remuneration and Conditions of Service Committee: Is there a national framework for handling clergy redundancies to ensure that there is parity across the whole church?

*The Bishop of Hereford (Rt Revd Richard Frith)* replied as Chair of the Remuneration and Conditions of Service Committee: As the great majority of clergy are office holders, it is not legally possible to make them redundant, and there is no national framework for this. Clergy may be dispossessed from offices which cease to exist as a result of pastoral reorganisation. This is subject to the processes in the Mission and Pastoral Measure, which gives clergy, parishioners, and other interested parties the right to make representations to the Church Commissioners' Mission, Pastoral and Church Property Committee against draft pastoral schemes.

116. *Canon Jenny Humphreys (Bath & Wells)* asked the Chair of the Remuneration and Conditions of Service Committee: Who is responsible for updating the Dignity at Work policy so that it complies with the 2010 Equality Act?

*The Bishop of Hereford (Rt Revd Richard Frith)* replied as Chair of the Remuneration and Conditions of Service Committee: RACSC produced advice called Dignity at Work in 2008 to assist dioceses with producing their own anti bullying and harassment policies. This advice is available on the Church of England website, and needs to be updated to reflect not only changes in legislation, but also developments in the understandings of abuse, and the availability of further guidance. At the request of the House of Clergy, the Committee is engaged in a review of clergy remuneration. This limits our ability to carry out other work, but we shall do this as soon as we can.

## **MISSION AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS COUNCIL**

117. *Mr Andrew Presland (Peterborough)* asked the Chair of the Mission and Public Affairs Council: What is the Council is doing to promote the proclamation of the Gospel (first mark of mission) overseas in line with the Great Commission to make disciples of all nations, as recorded at the end of Matthew's Gospel?

*Mr Mark Sheard (ex officio)* replied as Chair of the Mission and Public Affairs Council: The longstanding practice of the Church of England is that overseas mission is done through the Mission Agencies and the Diocesan Companion Links. The MPA Council provides a co-ordinating function through Partnership for World Mission and the World Mission Adviser. The Mission Agencies and the Dioceses promote the Great Commission through exchange of mission partners, visits between partners, local church support and financial assistance. The Church of England also receives encouragement through these partnerships to fulfil the Great Commission.

118. *Ms Jayne Ozanne (Oxford)* asked the Chair of the Mission and Public Affairs Council: What plans are there to assess, address and influence the government policy over growing inequality gap between rich and poor in England that has been brought into sharp focus by the impact of both Covid-19 and the lockdown?

*Mr Mark Sheard (ex officio)* replied as Chair of the Mission and Public Affairs Council: In the short-term, MPA's work in this area is focusing on the financial needs of low-income families with children, including the need for more targeted support for children, as well as leading the ongoing campaign to lift the two-child limit. MPA has initiated a joint research project with CPAG to monitor the financial impact of Covid-19 on low income families with children, with the first report due in August. In the longer-term, MPA will continue to highlight the structural drivers of inequality in income and wealth, and the ways in which this is manifested in the housing market and across other policy areas. For example, the Archbishop's Commission on Housing, Church and Community, which reports in early 2021, will offer a Christian perspective on the housing crisis, with a particular emphasis on addressing inequalities in access to decent and affordable housing.

119. *Mr Carl Fender (Lincoln)* asked the Chair of the Mission and Public Affairs Council: Following the legal aid debate in the February 2020 session of General Synod, has contact been made with any government department about the impact of Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders (LASPO), and if so, what response has been so far received?

*Mr Mark Sheard (ex officio)* replied as Chair of the Mission and Public Affairs Council: There have been no formal discussions with government departments on this topic since the Synod debate. We all await announcements on the ongoing government review of the thresholds for legal aid entitlement, and how to simplify the Exceptional Case Funding (ECF) scheme. These were expected to report towards end of this year (but be delayed further by recent events). We had prepared materials and support to enable bishops to take part in a House of Lords debate on access to Legal Aid in March 2020, but that debate was suspended indefinitely.

MPA continues to hold a watching brief on this subject and will pursue the issues whenever opportunities to influence policy appear.

120. *Mr Jeremy Harris (Chester)* asked the Chair of the Mission and Public Affairs Council: What representations has the Church of England made about the increasing persecution of Christians in India, including by the Indian police?

*Mr Mark Sheard (ex officio)* replied as Chair of the Mission and Public Affairs Council: The Mission and Public Affairs Council is conscious that in several countries, India included, religious and minority groups are facing social stigma and harassment as a result of Covid-19, while extremists are exploiting fears to spread hate by blaming the outbreak on ethnic or religious groups and encouraging those affected to spread it to these groups. Religious freedom conditions in India, which were deteriorating before the pandemic, have therefore experienced a significant turn downward with religious minorities under increasing assault. Bishops have raised these concerns in Parliament, while MPA has briefed relevant staff at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) as well as the Office of the Prime Minister's Special Envoy for Freedom of Religion of Belief. MPA continues to assist the FCO in implementing the recommendations arising from the Foreign Secretary's 2019 Review of FCO Support for Persecuted Christians.

## **COMMITTEE FOR MINORITY ETHNIC ANGLICAN CONCERNS**

121. *Mr Bradley Smith (Chichester)* asked the Chair of the Committee for Minority Ethnic Anglican Concerns: In the light of The Archbishop of Canterbury's claim in his video posted on 2nd June 2020 that 'white supremacy' is "endemic and longstanding" in this country, will the Council prepare a briefing for the House of Bishops on:

- (a) the concept of "white supremacy";
- (b) the evidence in favour of the argument that British society manifests "endemic and longstanding ... white supremacy";
- (c) in the light of its conclusions on (b), and of the potentially inflammatory nature of the term, whether the Church's vocation not only to challenge racism wherever it occurs but also to promote racial harmony will be helped or hindered by making the charge that British society manifests "endemic and longstanding ... white supremacy"?

*Very Revd Rogers Govender (Dean of Manchester)* replied as Chair of the Committee for Minority Ethnic Anglican Concerns: If the House of Bishops asks for such a briefing, we will certainly provide it.

But the answer is implicit in clause (c) of the question.

We cannot progress much further until white people start to understand the implications of being white, question attitudes they absorb as "normal", and overturn lingering beliefs about racial hierarchies. The daily experiences of BAME people, who are labelled in many derogatory ways, reveal how they can be perceived as inferior to white people.

Racism is not a problem for BAME people to resolve so that white people's ideas can remain comfortably untouched. Prayerful reflection on one's own identity, and how one places oneself within a world view, is central to Christian discipleship.

If it takes a "potentially inflammatory" phrase to prompt change, maybe advancing God's Kingdom on earth requires that. Promoting racial harmony means challenging any notion of racial superiority in Church and society.

## **BUSINESS COMMITTEE**

122. *Mr Carl Hughes (Southwark)* asked the Chair of the Business Committee: In outline, what are the plans for any remaining meetings of the General Synod during 2020, either in person or virtually?

*Revd Canon Sue Booy (Oxford)* replied as Chair of the Business Committee: The Synod is due to meet during the period of 23-25 November in Church House London. It requires a change to legislation in order to permit Synod to conduct its official business on a remote basis. The Officers of General Synod are considering the option of holding an Extraordinary physical meeting of the Synod in September solely for the purpose of enacting legislative change to enable Synod to meet officially on a remote basis should it be necessary for it to do so in November or a later date. Planning is under way to ensure the safety of members attending any physical meeting of Synod whether in September or November.

## **CROWN NOMINATIONS COMMISSION**

123. *Mr Tom Hatton (Southwark)* asked the Chair of the Crown Nominations Commission: Has the Commission given any consideration to the need for the episcopate to be sufficiently diverse, in terms of the political and social viewpoints of those nominated to diocesan sees, to avoid a situation in which a great many of those to whom the Church of England is called upon to minister are alienated from it as a result of its collective leadership lacking any empathy with, or being actively hostile to, their own political and social perspectives and aspirations?

*The Archbishop of York (Most Revd & Rt Hon Stephen Cottrell)* replied as Vice-Chair of the Crown Nominations Commission: The Crown Nominations Commission is concerned with how those being nominated to diocesan sees reflect the whole body of Christ, but the personal political affiliations of those being considered for episcopal ministry are not known.

The Commission is charged to discern who God is calling to serve as Bishops in the Church of God in a particular place at a specific time. That discernment includes considering how individuals will be a prophetic voice in society, as charged by the

Ordinal “to proclaim the Gospel boldly, confront injustice and work for righteousness and peace in all the world”, irrespective of their political and social viewpoints.

124. *Revd Dr Ian Paul (Southwell & Nottingham)* asked the Chair of the Crown Nominations Commission: What role does evidence of current ministry play in the consideration by the Crown Nominations Commission when making decisions about appointments?

*The Archbishop of York (Most Revd & Rt Hon Stephen Cottrell)* replied as Vice-Chair of the Crown Nominations Commission: The members of the Crown Nominations Commission have access to a wealth of information to assist in their discernment. This includes the candidates’ own reflections on their current and previous ministries in a “CV” and personal statement, and references from their bishop and three other people who collectively offer a broad range of perspectives from first-hand experience of serving alongside them. At interview, candidates answer questions by sharing examples from their own ministry.

These sources of information provide what the Discerning in Obedience report (GS Misc 1171) refers to as “clues” to help give the Commission “an insight into what God intends to do through this or that person in this or that place”.

## **DIOCESES COMMISSION**

125. *Mr Robin Lunn (Worcester)* asked the Chair of the Dioceses Commission: Will the financial pressures on the Church caused by the economic aspects of Covid-19 lead to a change in emphasis by the Dioceses Commission, leading to fewer or different dioceses in the future?

*Revd Paul Benfield (Blackburn)* replied as Acting Chair of the Dioceses Commission: The Commission is indeed very conscious of the financial pressures facing the Church. When it met last month these were at the forefront of its mind as it carefully considered the business before it (including a number of submissions to fill suffragan sees from diocesan bishops).

The Commission was also briefed about the strategic work initiated by the House of Bishops (as indicated in GS Misc 1250). It fully expects to engage with this work as part of its statutory role in respect of the diocesan structure of the Church of England.

## **LITURGICAL COMMISSION**

126. *Mr David Lamming (St Edmundsbury & Ipswich)* asked the Chair of the Liturgical Commission: The paper, published on the Church of England website, “Guidance on Spiritual Communion and Coronavirus”, states (inter alia): “Making a Spiritual

Communion is particularly fitting for those who cannot receive the sacrament at the great feasts of the Church, and it fulfils the duty of receiving Holy Communion ‘regularly, and especially at the festivals of Christmas, Easter and Whitsun or Pentecost’ (Canon B 15).”

What legal advice was obtained before making this statement, bearing in mind:

- (a) that one of the conditions a lay person must meet to be qualified for election to this Synod is that he or she “has received Communion according to the use of the Church of England, or of a Church in communion with it, at least three times in the twelve months preceding [the date of dissolution of the Synod]” (Church Representation Rules, rule 50(1)(a), (2) and (10)), and
- (b) that a similar requirement applies to those bodies for which eligibility for membership depends on the person being “an actual communicant” (as defined by CRR rule 83(2)(a)), namely a PCC, Deanery Synod or a Diocesan Synod (see CRR rules M8(1)(b) and 36(3))?

*The Bishop of Exeter (Rt Revd Robert Atwell)* replied as Chair of the Liturgical Commission: The definition of ‘actual communicant’ in the CRR does not require receiving Holy Communion at the festivals mentioned in Canon B 15 (this being impossible for almost everyone at Easter and Pentecost this year). To qualify for election under the rules, one must receive Holy Communion three times in twelve months.

The practice referred to as Spiritual Communion is by definition not the same as receiving Holy Communion physically. As the Book of Common Prayer indicates, someone who is desirous and prepared but unable to receive (as many have been this year) may yet ‘eat and drink the Body and Blood... profitably to his Soul’s health.’

The impact of the pandemic and churches being closed for public worship have indicated the need for further theological work on Holy Communion. It is not likely that such work would be concluded before the next round of elections.

127. *Revd Graham Hamilton (Exeter)* asked the Chair of the Liturgical Commission:

“Behold, the LORD’s hand is not shortened, that it cannot save,  
or his ear dull, that it cannot hear” (Isaiah 59.1)

The Book of Common Prayer contains specific prayers for deliverance in, and thanksgivings after, times of dearth and famine, war and tumults, common plague or sickness.

None of the prayers in the Common Worship library (even in the Litany) and in the recent publication “Prayers for use during the coronavirus outbreak”, seem to ask God for deliverance. Would the Liturgical Commission consider producing prayers to articulate this biblical expectation of a Sovereign and loving God?

*The Bishop of Exeter (Rt Revd Robert Atwell)* replied as Chair of the Liturgical Commission: The Liturgical Commission welcomes the widespread use of material from the Book of Common Prayer, and normally produces new material to complement it at the request of the House of Bishops. It would welcome opportunities to craft prayers with this Biblical theme.

The language of deliverance is already used a number of times in *Common Worship* (notably at baptism, and in the Litany with its refrain, 'Good Lord, deliver us.'). The Common Worship Psalter contains eighty-two references to deliverance, some of which are echoed in the prayers which conclude each psalm. In specific relation to famine, war, and sickness, the Litany specifically prays for deliverance 'from famine and disaster [and] from violence'.

## **CHURCH COMMISSIONERS**

128. *Canon Peter Adams (St Albans)* asked the Church Commissioners: In the motion passed unanimously in February, Synod mandated the NSSG to bring forward proposals to give effect to that commitment that follow a more fully survivor-centred approach to safeguarding, including his speech to Synod on 12 February 2020 the Chair of the Finance Committee of the Archbishops' Council, John Spence, said at the end of the debate in Synod about safeguarding: "Let us be very clear. This is not about affordability; it is about justice. Justice cannot have a different value depending on the finances of this or that diocese. Whatever we are told is required by those responsible that is required for redress, then those funds will be found." Will the Church Commissioners please outline what they are doing to put in place and fund a redress scheme for survivors of abuse as called for by the Synod?

*The Bishop of Manchester (Rt Revd David Walker)* replied as Deputy Chair of the Church Commissioners' Board of Governors: The Church Commissioners recognise the importance of a holistic redress scheme including financial compensation as well as emotional or therapeutic support and apology. We are committed to helping this work move forward expeditiously and are working with the National Safeguarding Team and National Safeguarding Steering Group. We stand ready to help the Church fund the work to develop such a scheme and look forward to its introduction.

129. *Revd Canon Howard Stoker (Norwich)* asked the Church Commissioners: Due to the financial pressures of Covid-19 pandemic has place upon dioceses, I understand that Church Commissioners are allowing Dioceses to accrue up to a 3-month debt in payment towards clergy stipends. Yet why are dioceses being charged interest on the debt at a rate of 2% over the base rate when high street banks are offering loans at a lower rate of 1.7%? Why are dioceses being charged interest at all?

*Loretta Minghella (ex officio)* replied as First Church Estates Commissioner: The Commissioners do not have power to make preferential loans. In March, in order to make a swift response to the financial impact of Covid-19, we made £50m of liquidity

support available to dioceses by extending the existing Stipends Account forbearance facility (from a previous maximum of £5m). The intention was to provide cashflow support quickly; therefore we did not revisit the pre-existing interest rate. The same terms apply to any diocese using the forbearance facility and this is unsecured, so we recognise that some dioceses may be able to borrow at a lower rate elsewhere.

This initial liquidity support has subsequently been supplemented by making grant support available to dioceses and cathedrals. The grants to dioceses funded by the Commissioners and made available by the Archbishops' Council can include a sum for up to one year's interest costs (up to a maximum of base rate +2%).

130. *Mrs Anne Foreman (Exeter)* asked the Church Commissioners: It is noted that the Commissioners were able to find £55 million for the Lambeth Palace Library given its exceptional collection and need. Covid-19 has placed the rest of the Church in exceptional need and hugely weakened financially. Please can the Commissioners respond even more generously to safeguard our dioceses and cathedrals in these unprecedented circumstances by releasing some of their considerable reserves to enable ministry to this and future generations to be continued.

*Loretta Minghella (ex officio)* replied as First Church Estates Commissioner: The budget for the Library was £23.5m plus VAT and fees. Apart from a short delay for COVID, it is on time and within budget and is a remarkable building which we can be proud of.

In late March, in the early days of the Covid-19 crisis, working with the Archbishops' Council, the Commissioners provided over £75m of urgent liquidity assistance to dioceses and cathedrals by way of extending the forbearance arrangements on the clergy stipends accounts and making advance payments of grants including Lowest Income Community and other grants for 2020.

In May, the Council and Commissioners announced further financial support for dioceses and cathedrals: up to £35m in grants for those dioceses in most need which will give short-term financial assistance whilst they develop transformation programmes; and grants to Cathedrals from a £10m Cathedral Sustainability Fund.

131. *Revd Canon Priscilla White (Birmingham)* asked the Church Commissioners: Given the immense public interest over the last weeks in individuals and companies which benefited from the international slave trade, what are the Church Commissioners doing to ascertain whether Queen Anne's Bounty, which forms the seed base of the funding for the Commissioners now, has more than a passing connection with the slave trade?

*Loretta Minghella (ex officio)* replied as First Church Estates Commissioner: The Commissioners' Board discussed this matter last month and has established a working group to explore whether it is possible to throw more light on whether Queen Anne's

Bounty (1704), or the Ecclesiastical Commissioners (1836), benefitted from the historic slave trade.

The assets the Church Commissioners inherited in 1948 were primarily UK agricultural property and bonds. We have diversified the portfolio in recent decades, with an expansion into global equities and other global asset classes, and are not currently aware of these including profits from historic slavery.

Sadly, we recognise that slavery is not only an historic phenomenon and we devote significant energy to trying to help eradicate modern slavery through our Responsible Investment work.

*The Chair.* That brings the questions to a conclusion. I am sorry that we could not do all of the questions. I never, for one moment, imagined we would be able to but I am really grateful to the way that both questioners and answerers have kept very strictly to the kind of timeframe that we were asking for. I will be seeing blue hands in my sleep tonight, I think. If I missed your blue hand, I do apologise. I will have my nightmares about that from this point onwards.

## **CLOSING WORSHIP**

We move to Item 7 and I am going to invite the Synod Chaplain to address Synod with a short scriptural reflection on Ephesians 2:19-22. This will take three parts: the reading of the passage, a reflection on the text in the light of the pandemic and then there is going to be a short group discussion and we will be put into breakout rooms. That will take a couple of minutes to process but that will all happen for you instantly, as it were. Over now to the Chaplain to the Synod.

*Revd Michael Gisbourne (Chaplain to the General Synod):* Good afternoon, Synod. We begin with reading from Ephesians 2:19: “So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone in whom the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord in whom you also are built together spiritually into a dwelling place for God.”

The round “One Song to the Tune of Another” is a favourite on BBC Radio 4’s panel game, “I’m Sorry I Haven’t a Clue”. As you may know, in the game panellists are invited to sing the lyrics of one song to a tune that is usually associated with another song and always with hilarious comedic effect. Examples might include Elvis’s *Love Me Tender* to the theme tune that you would associate with the *Archers* and so we get: “Love me tender, love me sweet, never let me go”.

Another example might be that of a friend who, as part of his downtime in theological training, looked for different tunes to well-known hymns. If I were to say: “Father, hear

the prayer we offer”, you might think of the tune *Sussex*: “Father, hear the prayer we offer”. Or to the tune, *Marching*: “Father hear the prayer we offer”. My friend worked out that the hymn also goes to a tune that I shall call “Flintstone”: “Father, hear the prayer we offer, not for ease that prayer shall be”.

I introduced the theme of “One Song to the Tune of Another” deliberately because it seems to me an apt motif for where the Church finds itself today. Having had the public worship in the season of Lent cut short and the season of Easter denied us, we now find ourselves in the season of recovery or emergence and we are having to reflect carefully on how we sing the song of faith in Christ to a different tune, to a tune none of us has sung before.

Having been exiled from church buildings for so long, the Church now finds itself in tender days where we are called to perform that intricate dance between vision and detail, realising the vision of places of worship, open for prayer and praise and lament and the details of making those places as safe as possible.

Even though it may be months since we saw fellow members of the community of faith in the flesh, Paul reminds us as he reminded the church in Ephesus that we are not strangers and aliens. He says we are all citizens with the saints and members of the household of God. He reminds us that our life, our faith remains built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets with Christ Jesus as the cornerstone. Whilst the foundation of the way we have got used to living our life and ministering from our church buildings has certainly been shaken, our faith has not.

But that is not new. The story of faith is littered with people who find themselves having to sing that song of faith to a different tune, no longer surrounded by all that is familiar: Abraham is told to go from the land of his fathers; Moses and the people of God led towards the promised land; Daniel and friends find themselves in Babylon; the disciples leave all that is familiar to follow Christ.

The challenge for the Church now is to ponder what it is that we have gained through lockdown, new ways of doing things that we would do well to hold on to and what we have lost through lockdown that we could do well not to find again. If we trust that the whole structure is joined together and will grow into a holy temple in the Lord, as Paul reminds us in our reading, then we may find new ways to be built together spiritually, that we may become again a dwelling place for God in a new way.

I believe that we now split into breakout rooms for further reflection and to ponder some questions I have posed. Thank you.

(Members split into breakout rooms)

*Revd Michael Gisbourne (Chaplain to the General Synod)* led the Synod in an act of worship.

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