

GENERAL SYNOD***Living in Love and Faith*****Living in Love and Faith: A Guide for Members of General Synod****Summary**

The attached Guide for Members of General Synod gives an overview of Living in Love and Faith.

Its purpose is to enable the new Synod to understand the LLF journey since the inception of the project in 2017 and to be better equipped to play its part in the LLF journey as it unfolds in the coming quinquennium.

The Guide describes the LLF resources, the LLF journey, where we are now, and how members of General Synod have engaged with LLF so far.

In addition, new members will have opportunities to engage with members of the Next Steps Group as follows:

- at the Induction Market Stall in Bishop Partridge Hall on Monday morning, 15th November 2021;
 - at a presentation by the Bishop of London on Monday afternoon in the Synod Chamber;
 - at a reception on Tuesday 16th November evening – timing and venue to be confirmed in a Notice Paper;
 - informally on the margins of the sessions on 16th and 17th November – venue to be confirmed in a Notice Paper.
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LIVING IN LOVE & FAITH

A Guide for
Members of
General Synod

November 2021

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The LLF resources

1. What are they about?

The resources are an exploration of questions of identity, sexuality, relationships and marriage within the framework of a Christian understanding of what it means to be human. They are wide-ranging and inclusive. They are about all of us.

2. What are they for?

The resources are designed for learning: they are not a report or recommendation or a document. They invite us to learn together, deepening our understanding of the complexities and common ground we share and the different perspectives we hold. They invite us to understand one another better and so to grow in our love for one another.

LLF raises questions that are deeply personal, sensitive and at the very heart of our identity. Some of the questions are ones about which we disagree deeply. Our history of engaging with these questions as a Church has caused deep pain to many people.

LLF calls us to a better way. It is an opportunity to be shaped into church communities that are safer and braver than they have been before.

3. Who are they for?

The resources are for the whole Church to use to learn together. They signal the belief that the Holy Spirit speaks through Scripture, tradition and the whole people of God as together we discern what it is that God is saying to the Church today about identity, sexuality, relationships and marriage – and perhaps other aspects of our life and witness.

4. What are they?

There is a wide range of resources: the LLF Book, the LLF Course videos and booklet, the podcasts, story films and online library. These are all available on the LLF Learning Hub <https://llf.churchofengland.org/>. It is likely that the majority of people will use the Course and the Book as a 'way in' to the resources. The Course is largely self-explanatory. A suggestion for how to engage with others using the LLF Book can be found on the Hub [here](#).

Learning calls us to be both brave and safe in our engagement with the resources and with each other. That is why there are resources to help everyone to learn together more safely and bravely. These include the Pastoral Principles Course, the LLF Course Commitments, the Guidance for Creating Spaces for Learning Together Well, and the set of Notes for Leading a Group, including notes for leading groups with young people. These are all also available on the Living in Love and Faith Learning Hub.

The LLF journey

1. The overview

The Living in Love and Faith resources are to enable the whole Church to embark on a journey together. The journey has four stages:



Learning together about the subject matter, about each other, about God and about our calling as a Church.	→ 30 April 2022
Listening to what is emerging from our learning together about identity, sexuality, relationships and marriage and about our life together as church communities and as a national Church.	→ September 2022
Discerning what the Holy Spirit is saying to the Church today.	→ December 2022
Deciding how discernment is translated into a way forward for the Church.	→ February 2023

2. The road map

Here is a more detailed road map of the journey, including how members of General Synod will be invited to engage.

Sep 21	College of Bishops	Bishops committed themselves to a series of conversations in regional groups, 'Centred on Christ: Conversations on the Way', to prepare for discernment and decision-making regarding Vision and Strategy, Organisational Change, and LLF.
Nov 21	General Synod	Provide a guide to LLF for new members; an update; 'Passing the Baton' reflections from Synod members of the previous quinquennium; the LLF Road Map.
Dec 21	House of Bishops	Reflect on the extent of church-wide engagement and consider how to prepare for the discernment process.
Feb 22	General Synod	Reflect on and engage with the Pastoral Principles.

Spring 22	Diocesan Synods	An opportunity to reflect on engagement in dioceses so far and the role of Diocesan Synods in shaping the Church's discernment process. Resources and a process will be offered.
30 Apr 22	'Listening to the Whole Church'	Feedback closed
May 22	House of Bishops	Reflect on Diocesan Synods' engagement and its implications for the process of discernment.
Jul 22	General Synod	Engage with LLF in small groups with creative and reflective elements.
Sep 22	'Listening to the Whole Church'	The findings of 'Listening to the Whole Church' and the resource, 'The Gift of the Church', are published in a variety of media.
Sep 22	College of Bishops	Begin the discernment process in the light of the LLF Book, the findings of 'Listening to the Whole Church' and 'The Gift of the Church'.
Oct 22	College of Bishops	Work on proposals for a way forward, indicating the implications for formal decision-making.
Dec 22	College & House of Bishops	Finalise proposals and reflect on what is needed to support the decision-making processes in General Synod.
Feb 23	General Synod	Consider proposals from the College and House of Bishops and agree a clear direction of travel.

3. The vision for the LLF process: What is our hope?

Recently, the Next Steps Group considered what it would look like for our deepest hopes for the LLF journey to have been met. They are:

- Participation

There has been the widest possible participation across the whole Church. We have engaged in deep learning together about God and about being human.

- Relationships

We have learned to be kinder, understanding one another's perspectives better. We have become more at ease with ourselves as a Church.

- Outcome

Everyone can see that they have been listened to, heard, loved, and taken seriously. The Spirit's work among us has resulted in a revelation of something new, unexpected.

- The Future

Our deeper understanding and love will enable us to face new questions in a better way. We are hopeful as we move into the future together in love and faith.

Where are we now?

The LLF resources were published in November 2020. Here is a summary of activities since then.

1. The formation of the LLF Next Steps Group

The [Next Steps Group](#) is comprised of 9 bishops, chaired by the Bishop of London. The group has met 14 times since June 2020. It has produced the overarching strategy for engagement and listening across dioceses, and a timeframe for the discernment and decision-making phases of the process. It has also formed a [Reference Group](#) which will act as a sounding board for the group's work.

2. The development of the LLF Learning Hub

Over 11,000 people have registered on the LLF Learning Hub. The LLF Course Videos are downloadable and the Hub is regularly updated and reviewed in the light of users' comments. It also contains accessibility options and all films can be viewed with subtitles.

3. Listening to the whole church

Everyone who engages with the LLF resources is encouraged to share their reflections with the wider Church. There are three ways in which individuals' and groups' learning and reflections are being captured:

- a) The LLF online [questionnaire](#) – also available offline as a word document. This is a vital way of gathering responses and gauging the diversity and extent of engagement. So far over 800 completed surveys have been gathered.
- b) Creative responses – offering individuals and groups the opportunity to express their LLF experience, learning and reflections in creative ways: through photography, painting, colouring, poetry, music or in a recorded conversation or video.
- c) Focus groups – these will take place towards the end of 2021 and spring 2022 and will enable deeper reflections on emerging themes.

4. Engaging with Dioceses

37 Dioceses have held or plan to hold LLF Taster Events. Approximately 5,750 people have participated.

5. Appointment of LLF Advocates

LLF Advocates have been appointed to almost all dioceses to encourage, enable and support participation in LLF across the dioceses and to connect with the LLF process at a national level. There are a total of approximately 74 Advocates and they meet every month to share good practice, make suggestions and support one another in their work.

6. Facilitation training

Courses for facilitating LLF engagement have been held nationally over the past 7 months. Over 500 people have participated and many dioceses have cascaded this training locally.

7. LLF Chaplains

Many dioceses have appointed LLF chaplains who are available to anyone within the diocese who wants a safe space to reflect on whatever has been stirred within themselves as a result of engaging with LLF. This is an aspect of creating safer and braver spaces for learning well together.

8. Listening beyond the Church of England

The LLF resources have been shared with partner churches in England and with leaders of other faith communities – both in the production and engagement phases. A gathering of leaders of the Abrahamic faiths has taken place and an ecumenical seminar is being planned.

9. Further resources

‘The Gift of the Church’ will be an accessible learning resource that supplements the LLF Book and encourages theological reflection across the church about what it means to be church in the light of the LLF process and the questions it raises. It also aims to ensure that the work of discernment and decision-making is biblically, theologically and experientially grounded in what it means to be church.

An annotated bibliography relating to gender identity and transition will gather and summarise resources to help the Church:

- to be better informed about the questions relating to gender identity, fluidity and transition that are being debated in society;
- to better understand the impact of these debates on trans and gender fluid people and others affected by them.

It will involve gathering resources from experts in different fields, from transgender and gender fluid people as well as other people affected by these questions.

LLF and General Synod

1. Synod engagement from 2017 to 2021

An important part of the LLF vision has been to offer General Synod members opportunities to be informed about and participate in the project's development at every stage. The LLF team has encouraged members to engage in a variety of ways that encourage a dialogical approach and openness to learning with and from one another.

February 2017	<p>GS 2055 <i>Marriage and same-sex relationships after the Shared Conversations: A Report from the House of Bishops</i></p> <p>The motion 'That the Synod do take note of this Report' was lost: the Houses of Bishops and Laity voting for and the House of Clergy against.</p>						
July 2017	<p>GS Misc 1158 Next Steps on Human Sexuality</p> <p>The Living in Love and Faith project was set in motion.</p>						
July 2018	<p>Presentation and questions</p> <p><i>The presentation set out the vision for the LLF resources and how they are being produced, involving a wide constituency and assisted by the work of the Pastoral Advisory Group.</i></p> <p>Seminars</p> <table><tr><td><i>Biblical Studies</i></td><td><i>History</i></td></tr><tr><td><i>Theology</i></td><td><i>Pastoral Advisory Group</i></td></tr><tr><td><i>Social and biological sciences</i></td><td></td></tr></table> <p>Participatory workshops</p> <p><i>Members were invited to contribute to the LLF vision and process, to ask questions and to pray.</i></p> <p>GS Misc 1188</p>	<i>Biblical Studies</i>	<i>History</i>	<i>Theology</i>	<i>Pastoral Advisory Group</i>	<i>Social and biological sciences</i>	
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February 2019	<p>Presentations</p> <p><i>Members of the Pastoral Advisory Group presented the 'Living Letter' which outlined the Pastoral Principles and the rationale for them. The Pastoral Principles were published in April 2019.</i></p> <p><i>The LLF presentation set out the LLF 'learning outcomes' and the shape and breadth of resources planned.</i></p> <p>Questions addressed to a panel</p> <p><i>LLF and PAG members responded to questions from members.</i></p> <p>Fringe meetings</p> <p><i>Members had an opportunity to join one of 4 informal drop-in' fringe sessions with members of PAG and LLF present to respond to questions and open up discussions.</i></p> <p>GS Misc 1200</p>						

July 2019	<p>LLF Presentation <i>The presentation described the challenges and hopes of the process of producing the resources and showed an introductory film about LLF featuring members of the LLF groups.</i></p> <p>LLF Seminars <i>Members were invited to seminars addressing key questions that shape the LLF draft book: Who are we? Where are we? How do we hear God?</i></p> <p>Bible study <i>'Encounters on the way' offered members an opportunity to reflect on the Emmaus story alongside lived experience stories</i></p> <p>Pastoral Principles Workshop <i>Members were offered an opportunity to use the Pastoral Principles in small groups led by members of the Pastoral Advisory group.</i></p> <p>GS Misc 1217</p>
February 2020	<p>Presentations <i>The work of the Pastoral Advisory Group was presented, and a film describing the Pastoral Principles was shown.</i></p> <p><i>A short presentation described the final stages of producing the LLF resources, calling the church to commit to engaging in learning together and to participating in a change of culture about how we relate to one another as individuals, in our church communities and within the national Church. This was followed by reflections from LLF members.</i></p> <p>Questions <i>Members of General Synod were invited to join the LLF members to ask questions and engage in conversation.</i></p> <p>Fringe meetings <i>Members had an opportunity to join one of 3 fringe meetings, offering a sample small group study around the LLF topics.</i></p>
November 2020	<p>Publication <i>The LLF resources were published on 9 November 2020.</i></p>

2. Passing the baton: Reflections from the last quinquennium

At the Synod meeting in July 2021 members reflected on what they wanted to pass on to the new Synod by means of a questionnaire. 131 responses were received. These are some of the questions that were asked with a summary of the responses.

- a) *As you recall Synod's engagement with LLF between 2017 and 2020, what moments stand out as particularly memorable for you?*

For many members, the February 2017 'Take Note' debate was still the most memorable moment. In relation to the LLF process, opportunities to interact through

seminars, workshops, in small groups and in informal conversations all rated highly as did the regular presentations. The figures below show how many respondents mentioned each of the aspects listed as memorable. On the whole they were memorable for positive reasons, although a minority were for negative reasons.

LLF Seminars & workshops	48
Small group interaction and informal conversations	27
Presentations and workshops related to the Pastoral Principles	24
LLF Presentations	19
Publication of the resources	19

A few respondents did not feel positive about any of the engagement, and a few referred to situations that caused pain for individuals.

- b) Name up to 3 values that you hope the forthcoming LLF discernment and decision-making process will embody.



There were also longer responses that are not reflected in the word cloud above, for example:

- Faithfulness and obedience to Scripture and the Church’s tradition
- Attentiveness to the need for safety and the higher cost of the process for some
- Courage to be counter-cultural in our understanding of holiness
- Unity in Christ with mutual respect across our differences
- Openness and humility to listen to the Spirit
- Awareness of the church and world beyond Synod

