

GENERAL SYNOD

Living in Love and Faith

UPDATE

Summary

This paper gives an overview of activity relating to Living in Love and Faith over the past year; of members' engagement with LLF during this group of sessions; and of plans for the coming six months.

1. The activities of the LLF Next Steps Group

This group of nine bishops has continued to meet monthly. Reports of the meetings can be found [here](#). The areas of work that the group oversees are as follows:

a) Encouraging and resourcing churchwide engagement

- Leading taster sessions in dioceses and deaneries

Over 50 sessions involving approximately 6,000 people were held between November 2021 and November 2022.

- Offering facilitation training

Approximately 40 online facilitation training sessions were offered nationally between March 2021 and February 2022. Many dioceses also ran their own facilitation training.

- Working with the Diocesan LLF Advocates

The LLF Advocates played a crucial role in encouraging and enabling engagement across the dioceses. They also acted in an advisory capacity as the LLF process unfolded. The Advocates met monthly until January 2022, and then every two months.

- Creating a new film about engaging with LLF

A film in which four people who had taken part in a Living in Love and Faith course together with others talk about their experience.

- Publishing stories of engagement

A series of stories was published on the Church of England LLF [website](#) in autumn 2021 describing the experiences of particular church communities and other groups which had engaged with LLF.

- Producing material for diocesan synods

A range of materials was prepared for dioceses to use at their synod meetings in the first half of 2022. Often these sessions were ably supported and/or led by the diocesan LLF Advocates

b) Inviting churchwide reflections, learning and experience of engaging with LLF

- Encouraging everyone who took part in LLF to complete the LLF questionnaire

People who engaged with the LLF Course were encouraged to complete the LLF Questionnaire. The window for completing the questionnaire closed on 30th April. Over 6,500 completed questionnaires had been received from across all the dioceses. This represents an unprecedented depth and breadth of engagement from across the Church.

The questionnaire was designed, monitored and analysed by Brendan Research.

- Inviting creative responses to engaging with LLF

People were encouraged to communicate their reflections, learning and experience of engaging with LLF together with others by submitting a creative response. Over 50 responses were received, including poems, artwork, craftwork, photos and videos. These are available to view in the LLF Hub [Gallery](#).

Alongside the submitted creative responses, a larger public art installation has been created to visualise and inspire reflection about the LLF process and living together in love and faith across difference and diversity.

The creative responses were gathered and curated by ASD Arts and Education Ltd.

- Receiving independent responses

A number of individuals and church groups sent in responses by email through the LLF website. Over 250 such responses were received and read.

The independent responses were gathered and curated by Brendan Research.

- Running focus groups

Nine focus groups were held involving people who had expressed an interest in participating in a Focus Group via the questionnaire.

The Focus Groups were organised and facilitated by the Church Army Research Unit.

c) Gathering churchwide responses

- All the responses described above are being gathered into a report that will be published at the beginning of September 2022.

d) Resourcing episcopal discernment

- Producing material for regional bishops' meetings

The Next Steps Group prepared materials entitled, 'Centred on Christ: Conversations on the Way' as a means of inviting bishops to reflect on the LLF process and other changes taking place in the Church of England

- Facilitating conversations at the House of Bishops meetings

The Next Steps Group offered the House of Bishops opportunities to reflect on different aspects of the LLF journey at their meetings throughout 2021 and 2022. The LLF focus at the May 2022 meeting was to contribute to the planning of the discerning and decision-making phase of LLF.

- Producing reflections on what it means to be church

A small group has been formed to write an accessible learning resource that supplements the LLF Book and encourages theological reflection about what it means to be church in the light of the LLF process and the questions it raises. It aims to ensure that the work of discernment and decision-making is biblically, theologically and experientially grounded in what it means to be church.

It is a collaboration between the Faith and Order Commission and the LLF Next Steps Group. This will be published alongside the report of engagement in September 2022.

e) Overseeing other activities related to LLF

- Exploring good practice in prayer

In relation to the Government's plan to ban conversion therapy, a group has been convened by the Faith and Order Commission and the Next Steps Group to undertake writing guidance on good practice in intercessory prayer.

- Formation of a Pastoral Consultative Group

The Next Steps Group has acted in an advisory capacity regarding the formation of a Pastoral Consultative Group. The aim of the Pastoral Consultative group is to support and advise dioceses on pastoral responses to circumstances that arise concerning LGBTI+ clergy, ordinands, lay leaders and the lay people in their care. The membership and Terms of Reference for this group have not yet been established.

2. Synod engagement with LLF at the July 2022 Sessions

a) Group work

Members of Synod will be invited to take part in an hour of group work on Sunday afternoon, 10th July. There will be 30 groups of up to 15 people each, each with a facilitator. The aim of the group work is for members of Synod to engage with each other and the subject matter of LLF in a way that sows the seeds of deeper mutual understanding that will cultivate hopeful and gracious discernment and decision-making in February 2023.

b) Engagement with an exhibition of creative responses from churchwide engagement

A multimedia installation of creative responses will be available throughout Synod for members to engage with. This will be located on the atrium of the ground floor of the Spring Lane building as well as in SLB118 and SLB007.

c) Engagement with an art installation in York Minster

A sculpture inspired by the LLF process has been installed in York Minster and will be on view until September. Members of Synod will have the opportunity to view and interact with it before the service on Sunday morning, 10th July.

3. Discernment and decision-making

In September 2022, the College of Bishops will meet for the first of three residential meetings, all of which are almost wholly devoted to LLF. They will have as resources for their discernment:

- Scripture, tradition and reason
- The LLF Book and other resources
- The report of churchwide engagement
- The reflection on what it means to be church
- Their own experience of engaging with LLF

The members of the Reference Group will accompany the bishops for part of each of the residential meetings. The meetings will be suffused with prayer.

4. Outcomes of discernment

The aim of this phase of LLF is to discern and articulate a clear sense of direction for the Church about the diverse questions that the LLF resources and the Church's engagement with them raise. In particular, bishops will offer a response to the challenge posed to the Church by the Archbishops in 2017, to find ways forward that embody "a radical new Christian inclusion in the Church – that is founded in scripture, in reason, in tradition, in theology and the Christian faith as the Church of England has received it; that is based on good, healthy, flourishing relationships, and in a proper 21st century understanding of being human and of being sexual."

The outcomes of this discernment will be brought to General Synod in February 2023.