

GENERAL SYNOD

July 2023

QUESTIONS

of which notice has been given under Standing Orders 112–116.

The Business Committee has scheduled two hours for Questions at the July 2023 Group of Sessions of the General Synod. This is divided between 75 minutes on Friday 7 July and 60 minutes on Saturday 8 July. Notice has been given of 237 questions. A significant number of questions that were received were out of order: many of these asked about the Coronation of His Majesty King Charles III. Members are reminded that questions must be submitted to the persons or groups listed in Standing Order 112(1).

Notes for members on Supplementary Questions

These notes have been included at the request of the Business Committee. They are intended to assist members by explaining the requirements of the Standing Orders relating to supplementary questions. The relevant Standing Orders are SO 113 and 115 and are available [here](#).

1. A member may ask only one supplementary question in respect of each original question contained in this Notice Paper.
2. Unless the Chair specifically allows more, two is the maximum number of supplementary questions that may be asked in respect of each original question.
3. The member who asked the original question has priority in asking the first supplementary question if he or she wishes to ask one.
4. A supplementary question must be strictly relevant to the original question or the answer that has been given to that question. A supplementary question about a different matter is therefore out of order.
5. A supplementary question must not contain “argument or imputation”. A question will be taken to include argument if it clearly seeks to advance a particular case by the way in which the question is expressed. A question will be taken to include imputation if it expressly or impliedly includes an accusation of wrongdoing or other reprehensible behaviour.
6. A supplementary question must not ask for an expression of opinion, including on a question of law, or for the solution of a hypothetical problem. In other words, a question must be about, and be capable of being answered by reference to, factual matters.
7. The Chair is obliged to rule a question out of order if it does not comply with the requirements of SOs 113 and 115. Where that happens, given the number of questions to be answered, the Chair is unlikely to have time to give other than a very brief reason why a member’s question is out of order. Under SO 15(2), the Chair’s determination of a question of order, business or procedure is not open to debate or question.

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LITURGICAL COMMISSION

Mrs Rosemary Lyon (Blackburn) to ask the Chair of the Liturgical Commission:

- Q1** The Church offers a range of national resources to help individuals and churches celebrate Mothering Sunday / " Mother's Day" What is the equivalent range of resources to help celebrate Fathers' Day each year?

The Bishop of Lichfield to reply as Chair of the Liturgical Commission:

- A** A sample service to mark Fathers' Day, including prayers of intercession and a Collect which could be used in other forms of service, can be found in *New Patterns for Worship* (p.424ff). There are also suggestions for some creative ways to pray with and for fathers on the Church of England website.

The Revd Canon Alice Kemp (Bristol) to ask the Chair of the Liturgical Commission:

- Q2** Following the motion which accompanied the paper *Affirming and including disabled people in the whole life of the Church* (GS 2270) which received unanimous support last July, could the Liturgical Commission offer a progress update on work to enhance the accessibility of language in authorised material, and estimate an approximate timetable?

The Revd Canon Alice Kemp (Bristol) to ask the Chair of the Liturgical Commission:

- Q3** Noting the very useful guidance in *Patterns for Baptism* "Making Baptism Services Accessible for all" pp259-265, does the Liturgical Commission have a plan to produce similar guidance for other published liturgies?

The Bishop of Lichfield to reply as Chair of the Liturgical Commission:

- A** With permission, I will answer questions 2 and 3 together.

The Liturgical Commission anticipates producing a resource provisionally titled *Patterns for Funerals* which will include similar guidance. More generally, it is committed to celebrating and encouraging best practice in the conduct of all services. I regret that other pressures on the Commission and its staff have meant a slower start to this work than we might have hoped. The Commission was very grateful for the debate last July and the unanimous support for the motion. We look forward to working with the Disability Task Group to produce a resource which will reflect many people's experiences, and which will be useful in different styles of worship and a range of local contexts.

NATIONAL SOCIETY COUNCIL

The Revd Graham Hamilton (Exeter) to ask the Chair of the National Society Council:

- Q4** What research has been undertaken on whether children who have attended Church of England schools are more or less likely to become adult disciples and active members of the church, with what findings, and if none has been conducted, what plans are there to take such research forward?

The Bishop of Durham to reply as Chair of the National Society:

- A** The Growing Faith Foundation is focusing research on the way partnership between church, school and household impacts the development of faith and discipleship amongst children and young people in a variety of different ways. The Faith in the Nexus research by the National Institute of Christian Education Research has demonstrated the way Church primary schools facilitate the exploration of children's faith in the home. The only recent longitudinal study that looks at the 10–15-year impact of Christian schooling on adults aged 25-30 is the international Cardus Education Study which shows the positive impact. With all of the developments being brought forward to focus on doubling the number of children and young people as active disciples, research is an important element, and we will be keen to explore how such research can be shaped in the light of this question.

Mr Guy Hordern (Birmingham) to ask the Chair of the National Society Council:

- Q5** What are the goals of the National Society in relation to the leadership and management of Church schools, and how do they relate to each of the Five Marks of Mission in turn?

The Bishop of Durham to reply as Chair of the National Society:

The National Society serves the Church's ministry with children and young people in schools, colleges and universities by:

- i **Developing leaders** who are called, connected and committed to a vision for education which is deeply Christian, serving the common good.
- ii **Shaping policy** to promote high quality education for all, particularly the poorest and most disadvantaged.
- iii **Growing faith** amongst children and young people through churches, schools/colleges and households

These strategic aims are shaped and underpinned by the Church of England vision for Education. We have not specifically mapped that to the five marks of mission but are confident that each of the marks are covered through this vision and the leadership development resources we provide.

Dr Julie Maxwell (Winchester) to ask the Chair of the National Society Council:

- Q6** There have been recent media reports of organisations that continue to promote material for use in primary schools which is inappropriately sexual—including discussing anal sex as a normal practice, encouraging masturbation, and claiming that children can choose their sex. What assessment has the national Society done in order to allow it to make any public comments and advise schools?

The Bishop of Durham to reply as Chair of the National Society:

- A** Diocesan Boards of Education provide advice and guidance to their schools in this area and Directors of Education are not reporting that inappropriate material is being used in primary schools. So whilst we treat the media reports with concern we

are sceptical that the use of inappropriate material is widespread and have no evidence of it being used in Church schools. However, the Ofsted and DfE review that has been announced will give us much more data to make informed judgements or comments with.

Our guidance on Relationships, Sex and Health Education and the particular need to be mindful of faith perspectives in this (for all schools, not simply Church of England schools) is here [Relationships, Sex and Health Education | The Church of England](#).

Dr Julie Maxwell (Winchester) to ask the Chair of the National Society Council:

Q7 Which stakeholders will be consulted as part of the review of the CofE Relationships & Sex Educations guidance and *Valuing All God's Children* once the DfE has published its guidance on transgender and the results of the RSE review?

The Bishop of Durham to reply as Chair of the National Society:

A As with all our guidance, we will consult widely with diocesan education teams, schools leaders and children and young people. In these particular cases we will also pay close attention to the connection with any guidance being developed by the House of Bishops as part of the response to Prayers of Love and Faith, as well as the wider debate in society and the views of parents about the issues.

ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL

Mr Sam Wilson (Chester) to ask the Presidents of the Archbishops' Council:

Q8 Following the [Statement from Archbishops' Council on the Independent Safeguarding Board](#) on 21st June 2023, where the Archbishops referred to the dispute with ISB members as having "damaged confidence" and the Council described the decision as "concerning and unsettling to victims, survivors and others," can you confirm that the Archbishops' Council have reported this dispute and decision as a Serious Incident to the Charity Commission under their obligation as charity trustees to report, in a prompt and timely manner, adverse events whether actual or alleged, which results in or risks significant harm to a charity's reputation or to those who come into contact with a charity through its work?

Ms Rebecca Mynett (St Albans) to ask the Presidents of the Archbishops' Council:

Q9 Before the February Synod, the ISB issued a public statement on its blog recording grievance about the way the ISB work had been undermined by decisions for which Archbishops' Council hold ultimate responsibility. Subsequently, it has been reported that a Dispute Resolution Notice under the terms of members' contracts was delivered. Can you confirm the dates upon which Archbishops' Council, having received these pieces of information, filed Serious Incident Reports with the Charity Commission?

Canon Dr Jamie Harrison to reply on behalf of the Presidents of the Archbishops' Council:

A With permission I will answer questions 8 and 9 together.

The Archbishops' Council submitted a Serious Incident Report to the Charity Commission in relation to the Independent Safeguarding Board on Monday 26 June.

Mr Robin Lunn (Worcester) to ask the Presidents of the Archbishops' Council:

Q10 Mindful of the vital importance of this matter, how long does the Archbishops' Council envisage taking to appoint a new Independent Safeguarding Board? Do they accept that this must be done by the end of 2023?

The Archbishop of York to reply as Joint President of the Archbishops' Council:

A Thank you for your question. The Archbishops' Council wishes to put the independent scrutiny of its safeguarding on a firm footing as soon as possible. It recognises the urgent need for a re-set. However, it wishes to do so in partnership with victims and survivors and in a way that learns the lessons of the last 18 months. It also recognises that there are a range of options a number of which may require the constitution of a new body corporate and may require legislation. If the organisational design were to require legislation then that obviously could not be introduced overnight but in those circumstances the Council would want to understand what could be introduced sooner. Nevertheless, I can assure you that the collective view of the Archbishops Council recognises the importance of making progress as swiftly as possible.

Dr Alan Downen (Chester) to ask the Presidents of the Archbishops' Council:

Q11 How can any 'Independent' panel or board claim to be truly independent if the Archbishops' Council retains the ability to meddle, or censure and disband its membership? Given their Terms of Reference is it not up to any 'independent' body to appoint their own membership, develop their own ways of working, resolve their own disagreements and, to an extent, define their own boundaries?

The Revd Canon Tim Goode to reply on behalf of the Presidents of the Archbishops' Council:

A As set out in GS Misc 1341 the Independent Safeguarding Board under phase 1 has not been a separate legal entity. Instead the members operated under contract to the Archbishops' Council. Although it had operational independence as regards its scrutiny, data and recommendations, the Archbishops' Council retained accountability for its expenditure and activities, which meant the Archbishops' Council was necessarily required to satisfy itself that the ISB was meeting its objectives. As part of the contracts members were required to develop proposals for phase 2 where the Board would have more clearly established independence.

Mr Peter Barrett (Oxford) to ask the Presidents of the Archbishops' Council:

Q12 Could the Presidents explain why they have disbanded the ISB and the extent to which the likely impact on the Church's reputation in the area of safeguarding was taken into account in making that decision?

The Archbishop of Canterbury to reply as Joint President of the Archbishops' Council:

A The decisions with regard to the ISB were taken by the Archbishops' Council and not by the two Archbishops personally. The reasons are set out in the statement from the Archbishops' Council of 22 June and GS Misc 1341. We and the Council bitterly regret that it has been necessary to take these steps and I can assure that the impact on the Church of England's reputation and practice on safeguarding were important parts of this decision.

Mr Peter Barrett (Oxford) to ask the Presidents of the Archbishops' Council:

Q13 Why did the ISB recently issue a formal dispute resolution notice to the Archbishops' Council?

Canon Dr Jamie Harrison to reply on behalf of the Presidents of the Archbishops' Council:

A It is a matter for the relevant members of the Independent Safeguarding Board to explain why they did so, but it is a matter of public record that their principal complaint was about the appointment of the Acting Chair and the Council not respecting their independence.

Mrs Kat Alldread (Derby) to ask the Presidents of the Archbishops' Council:

Q14 Given that the disbandment of the Independent Safeguarding Board will most likely put additional calls on the National Safeguarding Team by and for anxious and frustrated survivors, added to the magnitude of the Soul Survivor inquiry if retained in-house, has NST resource provision been reviewed and increased to avoid unacceptable stress being laid upon staff?

Canon Dr Jamie Harrison to reply on behalf of the Presidents of the Archbishops' Council:

A We are grateful for the concern of Synod for the wellbeing of the National Safeguarding Team. The Independent Safeguarding Board was established to scrutinise the work of the Church, including the National Safeguarding Team, and there are therefore no direct consequences for them. However the Archbishops' Council keeps the resourcing of the team, and organisations such as Safe Spaces, under review to ensure that resources are appropriate.

Dr Diana Tremayne (Leeds) to ask the Presidents of the Archbishops' Council:

Q15 What risk assessments were undertaken by the Archbishops' Council in advance of the implementation of the dismissal of the Independent Members to minimise the risks of adverse effects and dangerous reaction in those vulnerable survivors whose primary trust was invested in the Independent ISB members who had been promoted by the Church as competent and committed to protecting their welfare through sound safeguarding process?

Mrs Alison Coulter to reply on behalf of the Presidents of the Archbishops' Council:

A The Archbishops' Council took into account all factors, including the impact on survivors, in making its decisions. The decision was not taken lightly, but after a period of consideration and discussion when the Council considered all the factors involved and in particular the impact on survivors. This is the reason for the priority attached to securing continuity, in particular for those survivors who have case reviews with the ISB and providing support through Safe Spaces.

Dr Diana Tremayne (Leeds) to ask the Presidents of the Archbishops' Council:

Q16 At what time on or before the official announcement on 21 June 2023 at 1pm were Diocesan Safeguarding Officers notified of the dismissal of ISB members, so that they might make suitable provision for the pastoral support of those survivors who might see themselves as having been abandoned by the Church?

Canon Dr Jamie Harrison to reply on behalf of the Presidents of the Archbishops' Council:

A Based on the sensitivities around this issue and the fact that the Independent Safeguarding Board (ISB) members needed to be told first, DSAs and survivors were informed approximately an hour after the ISB members had been told.

Mr Paul Waddell (Southwark) to ask the Presidents of the Archbishops' Council:

Q17 Survivors gave their personal property/data to the ISB on the basis that it was a "fully independent" Independent Safeguarding Board. 76 Survivors have specifically notified the Church that they did not consent to their data being shared with the Church in general and Meg Munn in particular. What precisely has happened to that data to ensure it is lawfully managed?

Mrs Alison Coulter to reply on behalf of the Presidents of the Archbishops' Council:

A Members of the Independent Safeguarding Board are each data controllers who determine the purposes and means of processing personal data which they have collected from survivors.

Following the termination of the ISB members' contracts, the Council is not proposing to pass any person's personal data to a person of its choice, including to the Council itself.

It is a matter for the ISB members to ensure they comply with their obligations in data protection law, and that there are appropriate controls over the data that is held. I can assure you that we have been clear on that point in bringing their contracts to an end. The termination letters to members of the ISB required them to set in place arrangements to ensure their compliance with data protection law.

Mrs Abigail Ogier (Manchester) to ask the Presidents of the Archbishops' Council:

Q18 On 26th June 2023, following the termination on 21st June by the Archbishops' Council of the contracts of the independent members of the Independent Safeguarding Board, the following notice appeared on the ISB website: "We will continue to honour any reviews or complaints that are underway or are due to start. We will be in contact as soon as possible with survivors and complainants and reviewers to ensure these are completed."

Who authorised the posting of this notice and, given that 76 survivors had notified the ISB that they did not authorise disclosure of their data to the Archbishops' Council nominee as acting ISB chair, Meg Munn, by what mechanisms is it possible for that aspiration to be delivered while respecting the notified prohibition on the passing on of survivor identity data?

Mrs Alison Coulter to reply on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops:

A The text was inserted by the Independent Safeguarding Board. The Archbishops' Council has no control over the ISB website.

The Revd Canon Mark Bennet (Oxford) to ask the Presidents of the Archbishops' Council:

Q19 Given that there was a two weeks' notice period for terminating the contracts of the ISB members, did you consider permitting, or were you specifically asked to permit them to assist Archbishops' Council to phase their withdrawal of survivor support in an appropriately sensitive and safe manner?

Mr Simon Friend (Exeter) to ask the Presidents of the Archbishops' Council:

Q20 Given that the contracts of the ISB members provided for two weeks' notice, what were the minuted reasons of Archbishops Council (if any) for not permitting them to wind down their work and transition those survivors to new pastoral provision in a planned and orderly manner?

The Revd Canon Mark Bennet (Oxford) to ask the Presidents of the Archbishops' Council:

Q21 Recommendation 29 of the 2016 Elliott Review stated:

"The withdrawal of pastoral support to a survivor to avoid financial liability, is unacceptable practice from a safeguarding perspective and contrasts sharply with the stated principles upon which all Church actions are meant to be based. It is not in keeping with "Responding Well" and carries with it significant potential risk to vulnerable survivors of abuse".

The independent members of the ISB have publicly expressed disquiet that the speed and manner of their dismissal risked leaving survivors vulnerable to anxiety and distress given the supportive character of their relationships with that constituency; there are also a number of promised Reviews outstanding and impacted. Was the Council aware of this Elliott Review recommendation and did it

consider that it might have relevant application in implementing the termination decision?

The Revd Canon Tim Goode to reply on behalf of the Presidents of the Archbishops' Council:

A With permission I will answer Questions 19-21 together.

The Archbishops' Council recognises that, notwithstanding that the principal function of the Independent Safeguarding Board was to provide scrutiny and oversight of the Church's safeguarding functions, many survivors valued the support and contact that the role of the Survivor Advocate performed. The Council was aware of the report of the Elliot Review and its recommendations. The Board members remained under contract through the notice period. We have been endeavouring to work with the Board members to wind down their work and transition those survivors to new pastoral provision over that period. Other services are available to provide survivor support including through Safe Spaces.

Professor Helen King (Oxford) to ask the Presidents of the Archbishops' Council:

Q22 At the point at which it was disbanded, the Independent Safeguarding Board had published one individual case review. Six more independent reviews were in progress, and a further two were about to be commissioned. What arrangements have been made for

- (a) a response to be made to the Spindler Report;
- (b) the completion of the other independent reviews; and
- (c) the pastoral care of the subjects?

Mr Simon Friend (Exeter) to ask the Presidents of the Archbishops' Council:

Q23 Did the Archbishops' Council discuss and reach minuted decisions about what would happen to all ISB Reviews current or promised, in advance of finalising the decision to dismiss the ISB members?

Mrs Alison Coulter to reply on behalf of the Presidents of the Archbishops' Council:

A With permission I will answer Questions 21 and 22 together.

The Archbishops' Council discussed and agreed the importance of continuity for ongoing case reviews. The Archbishops' Council asked the three ISB members to agree and publish clear interim arrangements for handling case reviews, in consultation with the relevant survivors. We expect this to be published very shortly.

Mrs Tina Nay (Chichester) to ask the Presidents of the Archbishops' Council:

Q24 The former Chair of the ISB was "stood back" for several months leaving it with reduced resource whilst it was charged with re-conceptualising the second phase of the project as regulator/ ACAS/ ombudsman or newly devised hybrid. Given the urgency of that work, why did the Archbishops' Council not exercise its power under the ISB Terms of Reference to appoint suitable additional member/s so this important aspect of the ISB first phase should not be delayed?

The Revd Canon Tim Goode to reply on behalf of the Presidents of the Archbishops' Council:

A At the time when the Chair, Maggie Atkinson, was asked to step aside while the accusations of data breaches were investigated, it was unclear to the Council how long the investigations into the former Chair's case would take and accordingly it did not seem appropriate or reasonable to immediately replace her, especially given her right to receive a due and fair process. With the benefit of hindsight I fully recognise

that it might well have been appropriate for the Archbishops' Council to have moved more swiftly to fill the vacuum created by the Chair's absence and appoint suitable additional members.

Professor Muriel Robinson (Lincoln) to ask the Presidents of the Archbishops' Council:

Q25 Please publish the full costs of the ISB from its inception to date and in particular a breakdown showing:

- * Fees paid to each separate board member
- * Costs of providing legal Advice for ISB members
- * Separate costs of additional consultancy support provided for things such as communications, caseworkers, researchers, investigators, IT or anything else
- * Termination costs
- * Any other significant expenditure incurred.

Canon Dr Jamie Harrison to reply on behalf of the Presidents of the Archbishops' Council:

A The information available is set out in the table below.

Independent Safeguarding Board (ISB)	ACTUAL			
	2021	2022	Jan-Jun 2023	TOTAL to Jun'23
Board Members	30,480	249,405	83,490	363,375
Staff costs	27,062	55,232	51,909	134,203
Legal costs	5,260	151,546	31,405	188,210
Recruitment costs	25,347	2,025	1,795	29,166
Website + IT equipment	-	12,703	4,728	17,430
Other	47	674	1,925	2,646
TOTAL	88,196	471,584	175,251	735,030

The Ven Sally Gaze (St Edmundsbury & Ipswich) to ask the Presidents of the Archbishops' Council:

Q26 Bishop Julie Conalty, a deputy lead bishop for safeguarding “with a focus on survivor engagement” tweeted in response to the termination by the Archbishops' Council of the contracts of Independent Safeguarding Board members Jasvinder Sanghera and Steve Reeves: *“Today the church is less accountable. To remove, at short notice. the strongest independent voices holding the C of E to account for its safeguarding failings makes us look resistant to robust scrutiny and challenge – which, of course, we are.” (June 21, 2023)*

What consultation took place with Bishop Julie and the other lead bishops for safeguarding, prior to the decision to terminate the ISB members' contract and what notice was given to them of the decision prior to its public announcement?

Canon Dr Jamie Harrison to reply on behalf of the Presidents of the Archbishops' Council:

A The Bishop for Safeguarding (the Bishop of Stepney) attends meetings of the Archbishops' Council and, together with the other episcopal members of the Archbishops' Council, has been able to feed the views of bishops into the consideration of the Independent Safeguarding Board. This was a decision of the

Archbishops' Council not the House of Bishops and all bishops were informed in parallel with the public communication.

Mr Matt Orr (Bath & Wells) to ask the Presidents of the Archbishops' Council:

Q27 In light of the recent statement from the Archbishop's Council about the termination of the contracts of members of the Independent Safeguarding Board, what assurances can you give that all material in relation to the John Smyth abuse case has been submitted to the Makin review, including all correspondence to and from Diocesan Bishops?

Mr Matt Orr (Bath & Wells) to ask the Presidents of the Archbishops' Council:

Q28 In light of the recent statement from the Archbishop's Council about the termination of the contracts of members of the Independent Safeguarding Board, can you give an assurance that no information of safeguarding importance has been excluded as a result of falling outside the Makin review's terms of reference?

Canon Dr Jamie Harrison to reply on behalf of the Presidents of the Archbishops' Council:

A With permission I will answer Questions 27 and 28 together.

The Learning Lesson Review in relation to John Smyth is being conducted by an independent reviewer Keith Makin. The Independent Safeguarding Board did not have any oversight of this review. The reviewer has completed the collection of material in line with the terms of reference for the review and is in the process of consulting with victims and survivors on the draft report.

The terms of reference for the review of the Church's handling of allegations of abuse carried out by the late John Smyth were published in August 2019. The termination of the contracts of members of the ISB do not have an impact on the terms of reference for the review and how material has been gathered.

Mrs Rebecca Chapman (Southwark) to ask the Presidents of the Archbishops' Council:

Q29 In the Archbishops' Council Audit Committee Report (GS Misc 1340) it is reported (3.5.5) that some members of the Committee submitted a request to the Archbishops' Council to audit the formation and governance of the ISB, but that Archbishops' Council did not agree to this request. Please could you list the specific reasons why this request was refused, and confirm if this refusal was a unanimous decision, and if it was an item of business on which there was a recorded vote.

Canon Dr Jamie Harrison to reply on behalf of the Presidents of the Archbishops' Council:

A The Archbishops' Council considered the question of whether an internal audit of the Independent Safeguarding Board should be added to the internal audit programme at its meeting in September 2022 with members of the Independent Safeguarding Board present. There was no recorded vote. The Council considered that its priority was to move towards what it refers to as ISB phase 2 and therefore that notwithstanding its legal right to insist on an audit, the benefits of demonstrating independence outweighed the benefits of including within the audit programme at that time.

Mr Gavin Drake (Southwell & Nottingham) to ask the Presidents of the Archbishops' Council:

Q30 In the February 2022 Group of Sessions, I asked the Archbishops' Council (q 46) to publish a list of all the recommendations made in safeguarding Lessons Learnt Reviews commissioned nationally or by dioceses over the previous 10 years; and all recommendations contained in external safeguarding audits and inquiries (such

as IICSA) over the same time period; and indicate next to each recommendation whether it has been accepted or rejected; and if accepted the progress made in implementing it; and if rejected, the reason it was rejected and the body that made the decision?

In the response, Jamie Harrison for the Archbishops' Council said that the recommendations from Lessons Learnt Reviews are published on the safeguarding section of the Church of England website. In response to a supplementary question, he said: "I think this is one of the great difficulties of maintaining websites. We all know that when we have databases. I take your point that that could be better, but it would be quite difficult to do. I am not saying it should not be done, but I do think there should be a proper mapping."

If the National Safeguarding Steering Group is monitoring the implementation of accepted recommendations, then such a table showing which recommendations have been accepted and progress towards implementation should not be difficult to provide. So I repeat the question from February 2022: can we please have a list of all the recommendations made in safeguarding Lessons Learnt Reviews commissioned nationally or by dioceses over the past ten years; and all recommendations contained in external safeguarding audits and inquiries (such as IICSA) over the same time period; and indicate next to each recommendation whether that recommendation has been accepted or rejected; and if accepted the progress made in implementing it; and if rejected, the reason it was rejected and the body that made the decision?

Canon Dr Jamie Harrison to reply on behalf of the Presidents of the Archbishops' Council:

A At this time the NST do not have the resources to maintain a public document of progress of recommendations that have been made in National and Local reviews. The recommendations from NST Learning Lesson Reviews are monitored by the National Safeguarding Steering Group and local recommendations are monitored by the Diocesan Safeguarding Panel or the Cathedral equivalent. The NST takes the members point as this will help with transparency of actions and progress. The NST is committed to exploring how we might focus on progress/updates of reviews that have a National impact however this will depend on securing appropriate resources.

The Rt Revd Dr Robert Innes (Europe) to ask the Presidents of the Archbishops' Council:

Q31 Please could we have an update on the results of the Transforming Effectiveness programme. In particular:

- What are the particular areas in which service levels from the central church have been improved?
- How much money has been saved?
- What are the summary changes in metrics of Church House staff wellbeing and morale?

Canon Dr John Spence to reply on behalf of the Presidents of the Archbishops' Council:

A The transforming effectiveness programme consists of several strands. The Joining up project, involving the joining up and realignment of teams across the NCIs, delivered an annualised saving of £2 million. Whilst service levels are not directly measured, focus groups and surveys conducted showed encouraging and positive signs that there is an emerging culture of collaboration and learning between and across teams and with the wider church.

The Accommodation project is on track to deliver £1.2 million a year of savings by the end of 2023. Staff have found some of the building work annoying but once in the new offices, morale is expected to increase.

The Simpler Support strand of work which looks at additional national support for parishes and dioceses has been focusing on a growth in Parish Buying and the launch of Church Organiser amongst others. The Simpler Support Stand has more information.

Staff engagement scores measuring motivation, advocacy, and commitment remained stable between March 2021 and November 2022. Responses to questions about wellbeing fell by an average of six percentage points over the same period. If there are specific questions about staff morale or wellbeing, NCI colleagues would be happy to discuss them with +Robert.

Mr Robert Zampetti (London) to ask the Presidents of the Archbishops' Council:

Q32 Please provide a list, spanning the last 5 years, of all NCI job titles which have been made redundant, or otherwise eliminated (ie retire/move on and then not filled as a replacement); alongside a list of all new positions created as part of the Transforming Effectiveness program?

Canon Dr John Spence to reply on behalf of the Presidents of the Archbishops' Council:

A The information requested is not readily available and could not be obtained without disproportionate cost. However, the following may be helpful:

The majority of the Simpler NCIs programme involved realigning existing roles in order that the operating model could better serve the national church. During the programme 8 roles were eliminated including 3 senior posts removed in Phase 1.

In addition 12.6 FTE of vacant roles were removed from the structure.

Mr Stephen Hogg (Leeds) to ask the Presidents of the Archbishops' Council:

Q33 In answering my supplementary question to Q68 in February 2023 asking for information on staff morale and welfare Mr Alan Smith said he would have a copy of the Staff Survey sent to me. After several gentle reminders I was finally sent (but only in May) a one-page summary. This is not what I asked for and its 'areas for development' point to some concerning comments. I would like to see the data behind the areas for development and to receive an update on Next Steps. Will the full report and an update be provided?

Canon Dr John Spence to reply on behalf of the Presidents of the Archbishops' Council:

A I thank Mr Hogg for his interest in staff morale and welfare at the NCIs and apologise to him on behalf of the NCIs for the delay in the response to his request which Alan Smith passed on immediately after the February meeting of Synod. The NCIs are unable to offer more than summary data into the public domain due to its commitment to staff concerning with whom their response data is shared and the maintenance of trust. Alan offered to share the full report in good faith without this background to the survey. If there are any further specific questions on staff morale or welfare NCI colleagues would be happy to discuss them and the actions that are being taken to address the areas for development. However, please be assured that staff morale and wellbeing are closely monitored by the Church Commissioners, Pensions Board trustees and Archbishops' Council members who sit on the relevant board.

Mr Ian Boothroyd (Southwell & Nottingham) to ask the Presidents of the Archbishops' Council:

Q34 Noting that since 2020, the National Stipends Benchmark has so far fallen behind inflation (as measured by the CPIH index) cumulatively by over 13%; what work has been undertaken, or is planned, to identify and support those Dioceses which will be least able to increase stipends to recover some of this fall in real clergy incomes?

Canon Dr John Spence to reply on behalf of the Presidents of the Archbishops' Council:

A We live in fast moving times. Only three months ago it was the expectation that inflation would fall rapidly towards the government's 2% p.a. inflation target so that the increase of 5% in the National Minimum Stipend from April 2023 would significantly cut into the accrued shortfall. We now await the outcome of the stipends consultation for next year given the revised outlook. Archbishops' Council are acutely conscious of the financial pressures being faced at diocesan level.

I note that over the period 2001-2021 the National Stipends Benchmark (NSB) broadly kept pace with CPIH inflation. However, since then actual NSB increases have lagged the comparator used in setting the NSB (CPIH for the previous September) by a little over 6%.

As part of the package of spending plans from the Church's endowment managed by the Church Commissioners, last year it was determined that 28 dioceses would receive Lowest Income Communities Funding in 2023-25, most of which is used to support mission and ministry in the lesser resourced areas of the country.

Ms Fiona MacMillan (London) to ask the Presidents of the Archbishops' Council:

Q35 What levels of SDF funding (amounts or percentages) has been spent or set aside for spending on projects or work of or among minority groups, eg on basis of age, gender, ethnicity, disability etc?

Canon Dr John Spence to reply on behalf of the Presidents of the Archbishops' Council:

A In 2020-22 the criteria for SDF included "Promote growth within the largest urban areas and one or all of younger generations, UK Minority Ethnic / Global Majority Heritage populations and deprived communities."

In total, £198m was awarded under SDF. Detail has been gathered on the proportion of funding allocated to younger generations and deprived areas.:

	Total funding	Percentage
Younger generations	£87m	47%
Deprived areas	£76m	41%

For some other groups, work has identified the number of projects (of 101) which contain this as an element of their work – note that this may only mean one element of a much larger project, and the figures include the project totals.

	Total projects with this as an element	Total funding to those projects	Percentage of total funding
Children, youth and schools	51	£96m	48%
Young adults	52	£108m	54%
Estates	25	£56m	28%
UKME/GMH	13	£32m	16%

Note that for both analyses, projects may feature more than once.

There is no analysis on disability or gender. An additional note is that SDF is now closed, with new applications coming to the Strategic Mission and Ministry Investment (SMMI), which includes the Vision and Strategy's priority to be younger and more diverse in its criteria.

Ms Rebecca Mynett (St Albans) to ask the Presidents of the Archbishops' Council:

Q36 Do the NCIs have and enforce compliance with an official conflicts of interest policy to which all trustees, employees, servants, agents, service suppliers and contractors must conform?

Canon Dr Jamie Harrison to reply on behalf of the Presidents of the Archbishops' Council:

A The NCIs do not have one conflict of interest policy as outlined in the question.

The NCIs are all separate legal entities and as such each entity has its own policy and the trustees of each of these need to consider the interests of the particular entity when acting as a trustee.

For staff of the NCIs, conflict of interest is covered under various policies, and which cover a wide range of scenarios including dealing with supply chains.

The Rt Revd Dr Robert Innes (Europe) to ask the Presidents of the Archbishops' Council:

Q37 What is the strategy of the Archbishops Council in regard to national church investment in theological writing and research (across all areas of doctrine, teaching, ecumenism, etc.)? (Please note that this question does not refer to TEIs or investment in theological education/formation.)

The Bishop of Chester to reply on behalf of the Presidents of the Archbishops' Council:

A The Archbishops' Council is involved in theological writing and research in a number of ways.

The Faith and Order Commission (FAOC) is the primary focus for doing theology on behalf of the Church, especially on doctrinal matters, and brings together a broad and deep range of theologians. Much theology is also done outside FAOC – for example policies from the Ethical Investment Advisory Group (EIAG) always have a clear theological framework and EIAG includes a number of Christian ethicists to lead on this. The Faith and Public Life (FPL) team includes published theologians in fields such as Christian Ethics, Church History and Ecumenical studies who continue to write original material, both for FPL and for wider audiences. FPL continues to sponsor the theological journal *Crucible* which was begun many years ago by the Board for Social Responsibility.

A new strategic venture is a Theology Round Table involving FAOC, Universities from the Cathedral Group and other bodies which will bring together a wide range of academic and practical thinkers.

One concern is the decline in applications to study Theology in Universities. This is on the agenda of the Lords Spiritual leading on HE, but is not strictly a matter for the Archbishops' Council.

The Revd Robert Lawrance (Newcastle) to ask the Presidents of the Archbishops' Council:

Q38 Considering a number of high profile cases of the hacking of companies' data systems, what are the procedures in place to protect the new People System for the Church of England from hacking and is there a regular reappraisal of security and of the details held on the system?

The Bishop of Chester to reply on behalf of the Presidents of the Archbishops' Council:

A The People System is based on Oracle a global service provider as part of their Oracle Fusion Cloud Applications suite. From the outset this platform was developed with a focus on security first. Based on an industry leading design that includes data protection, scalability, and performance. The solution is monitored 24/7 by a dedicated security function to ensure potential threats are identified and remediated before they can cause disruption to the organisations they serve.

In addition, and following the National Cyber Security Centre's best practice guidelines, all access the system also includes a Multi-Factor authentication solution that requires every user to have a username and password, this is further validated by way of a time limited token delivered to the users' mobile device.

Our contractual agreements with the supplier include clauses that provide access to their penetration test reports, we also conduct code reviews of any bespoke software that we have commissioned as part of the implementation process for completeness.

The Revd Folli Olokose (Guildford) to ask the Presidents of the Archbishops' Council:

Q39 It is encouraging to hear that the Racial Justice Unit is operational. Having in mind that the Racial Justice Commission on which it depends has a three-year Tenure of Office, could the Archbishops' Council clarify what plans are in place to ensure the continuity of the work of the RJU?

The Archbishop of York to reply as Joint President of the Archbishops' Council:

A The Report of the Archbishops' Anti-Racism Taskforce: From Lament To Action (FLTA) made a number of recommendations of how best to make sure the work of racial justice is reflected in the work of the whole Church, rather than being seen as a minority concern. Accordingly, they recommended the creation of a Racial Justice Directorate (Racial Justice Unit) operating as part of the NCIs for a 5-year period to ensure delivery, monitoring and accountability for the actions outlined in their Report. Aware that the Archbishops' Commission for Racial Justice (ACRJ) has a three-year term, the ACRJ chairperson has commenced discussions with the chairperson of the Archbishops' Council's Committee for Minority Ethnic Anglican Concerns (CMEAC) to explore options for continued high-level monitoring of the progress on FLTA and ensuring ongoing support for and monitoring of the work of the Racial Justice Unit.

Mr Martin Sewell (Rochester) to ask the Presidents of the Archbishops' Council:

Q40 At the time of asking this question, no details of the process towards establishing the promised Independent Review into a complaint by Dr Martyn Percy have been published. Will the President of Archbishops' Council please provide Synod with a fully particularised chronology starting 1st February 2023 setting out, who has taken what decisions and practical steps on behalf of Archbishops' Council to collate the allegations, identify the issues and evidence to be considered, agree a suitable reviewer and devise a suitable timetable whereby all material steps required to bring this to a timely conclusion are expedited?

The Archbishop of York to reply as joint President of the Archbishops' Council:

A Although we are not able to supply a fully particularised chronology, the Archbishops' Council recognises the importance of this Review into the handling by the Church of safeguarding allegations made against Dr Martyn Percy and is giving it active consideration proposing to work jointly with the Diocese of Oxford. We

hope, in the near future, to be in a position to consult all interested parties on a proposed way forward. Synod members will understand that we should consult all of the interested parties first before making further details public.

Mr Martin Sewell (Rochester) to ask the Presidents of the Archbishops' Council:

Q41 A Review in response to a complaint by Dr Martyn Percy was announced by ISB Chair Maggie Atkinson, in February 2022, "paused" in October 2022 and withdrawn in February 2023 without consultation with either Dr Percy or the then ISB members: can the President of Archbishops' Council confirm that each of these steps occurred as a result of a formal decision taken by minuted resolution of the Archbishops' Council, and if not, clarify by whom, and under whose authority each of these steps have been taken?

The Archbishop of York to reply as joint President of the Archbishops' Council:

A A review into the handling by the Church of safeguarding allegations made against Dr Martyn Percy, has been proposed by the Archbishops' Council and the Diocese of Oxford acting jointly. Detailed decisions on the handling of individual cases and reviews are not always decided at the level of the Archbishops' Council board. However, as indicated on 1st February 2023, the decision to seek a route other than the Independent Safeguarding Board was decided at an Archbishops' Council meeting in January 2023. Furthermore, the Council recognises the importance of ensuring this Review happens as soon as possible, regrets the length of time it is taking to get started, and acknowledges the importance of the questions that have been raised.

Mrs Jane Rosam (Rochester) to ask the Presidents of the Archbishops' Council:

Q42 At the Religions Media Festival the Archbishop of Canterbury is reported as saying "until we have a fully independent central safeguarding system — and this is not the official view, but it's my view — until we have a fully independent safeguarding system in the Church of England, we cannot hold our heads up".

Can the President clarify his remark by explaining why, following the IICSA recommendations, it is not the official view.

The Archbishop of Canterbury to reply as Joint President of the Archbishops' Council:

A I was expressing a strongly held personal view with which others may differ. A move to Independent Safeguarding oversight at one level or another would require official decisions by the various governance bodies of the Church of England, including this Synod.

Mrs Rebecca Hunt (Truro) to ask the Presidents of the Archbishops' Council:

Q43 What was the rationale for the Archbishops' Council taking a "strictly neutral" stance in their intervention into the case of Higgs v Farmor's School when this Christian employee had lost her job for expressing her Christian beliefs?

Mr Mark Sheard to reply on behalf of the Presidents of the Archbishops' Council:

A It was necessary that the Council remain neutral in order to be given permission by the Employment Appeal Tribunal to intervene on the wider point of importance. An intervenor is not permitted simply to repeat the arguments made by one of the parties in the proceedings or align itself with one of the parties.

Our purpose was to offer the Tribunal a Proportionality Assessment, based on the Pastoral Principles, bringing into consideration the wider context of individual cases. There is little value in being able to hold a faith if it cannot be expressed in a meaningful way, We wanted to establish that how a person expresses their views is

as important to Christians as the content of their views, showing awareness of others' rights as well as their own, as Human Rights law demands.

The judge not only endorsed our analysis of the law but the Proportionality Assessment and the guidance we proposed. We consider that this will put all Christians, including Mrs Higgs, in a stronger position to defend their right to express their faith.

We are pleased that the judge remitted the case to another Employment Tribunal, applying the Proportionality Assessment. We await the outcome with interest.

The Revd Canon Tim Goode (Southwark) to ask the Presidents of the Archbishops' Council:

Q44 GS2270, 'Affirming and Including Disabled People in the Whole Life of the Church', which was unanimously passed in all three Houses in July 2022, referred to the development of data collection to quantify the numbers of disabled clergy, lay ministers and NCI/diocesan staff which it is now proposed will be done via the new People System. Please clarify how this data is being handled, and how and by whom this information can be accessed?

Mr Mark Sheard to reply on behalf of the Presidents of the Archbishops' Council:

A The development of systems to safely capture, store and enable reporting of this data is progressing well, The People System Payroll went live in March this year for NCI staff and Stipendiary Clergy, users are now accessing the new system to carry out various HR and Payroll tasks and there is now an opportunity to record disability data.

As the programme continues, other populations such as non-stipendiary clergy and laity will too be able to add their data. The next phases come with significant culture and technical challenges, so it is important to highlight that this additional data is not going to be available in the short-term future.

Data is held securely and is only accessible by the owner, it will only ever be used for statistical reporting which we hope to start providing when the quantity of data meets a suitable threshold.

We recently launched an NCI campaign to encourage this data capture and other initiatives are being shaped to for our Clergy too.

Malcolm Brown and Fraser McNish are very happy to work with the disability networks to encourage this data collection and welcome conversations on how they can support this.

Mr Adrian Greenwood (Southwark) to ask the Presidents of the Archbishops' Council:

Q45 Please would you confirm that of the 19 positions on Archbishops' Council, 4 are members of the House of Laity who are directly elected by the House of Laity (the Chair, Vice Chair and two others); 4 are members of the House of Clergy who are directly elected (the Prolocutors of each Province plus 2 others elected across both Provinces) and two are members of the House of Bishops elected from the House of Bishops (by recent custom, the Chair of Ministry Development Council and the Chair of the National Society)? This makes a total of 10 members of General Synod elected from their respective Houses out of a total of 19 positions on Archbishops Council – a majority.

Mrs Alison Coulter to reply on behalf of the Presidents of the Archbishops' Council:

A The National Church Institutions Measure sets out in Schedule I the membership of the Archbishops' Council. The membership of 19 comprises:

- Six Ex-Officio members by virtue of their office (the Archbishops, the Prolocutors of each Convocation, the Chair and Vice Chair of the House of Laity);
- Six members elected directly by their respective Houses (two members from each House in Synod);
- Six members appointed by the Archbishops acting jointly;
- One of the Church Estates Commissioners appointed by the Archbishops acting jointly.

The election of the Prolocutors by their respective Convocations and the election of the Chair and Vice-Chair of the House of Laity by that House are of course, direct elections. But their place on the Archbishops' Council is by virtue of that office, and not by a direct election to the Archbishops' Council.

Mr Adrian Greenwood (Southwark) to ask the Presidents of the Archbishops' Council:

Q46 Please would you confirm that the 'Charity Code of Governance', which is referred to extensively in GS 2307 (a) was written by a group of interested organisations, including the Association of Chief Executive Officers of Voluntary Organisations (ACEVO), The Institute of Chartered Secretaries (ICSA) and the National Council of Voluntary Organisations (NCVO); (b) was most recently reviewed and re-issued in November 2020; and (c) as far as the Charity Commission is concerned is expected to be operated by registered charities on an '**apply and explain**' basis, thus allowing each Charity to consider the relevance, appropriateness and proportionality of each recommendation of the Code in the light of its own unique context?

Mrs Alison Coulter to reply on behalf of the Presidents of the Archbishops' Council:

A Yes. The Charity Code of Governance was developed by a cross-sector steering group, which included the Association of Chief Executive Officers of Voluntary Organisations (ACEVO), the Chartered Governance Institute, the Association of Chairs and the National Council for Voluntary Organisations. The Charity Commission was an observer of its work. The refreshed code was published in December 2020, following rigorous consultation with the charity sector.

The Charity Code of Governance is intended for use by charities registered in England and Wales. It has been endorsed by the Charity Commission but is neither a legal nor regulatory obligation. You are correct that trustees are encouraged to make use of the code, by using the 'apply or explain' approach recommended in the code.

The guidance indicates that organisations may find it helpful to adapt the Code to reflect their context. An example is given within GS2307 of how the Code has been adapted by the Association of English Cathedrals for use in Cathedral governance. A core aim of the Code is that charities use this tool to continuously improve their governance arrangements.

Mrs Carolyn Graham (Guildford) to ask the Presidents of the Archbishops' Council:

Q47 Will the Archbishops' Council make available to General Synod the common terms of engagement / standard terms required of independent contractors over and above the published terms of reference, subject to the redaction of personal and financial data and with the consent of the reviewers, so General Synod Members

can carry out their work of scrutinising the control exercised by Archbishops Council over independent contractors in safeguarding?

Mrs Alison Coulter to reply on behalf of the Presidents of the Archbishops' Council:

A The Archbishops' Council has no standard terms for independent contractors in safeguarding. Such contracts are drafted to ensure they are appropriate to the specific functions for which it is contracting, and they are kept under review during the life of the term.

The Ven Stewart Fyfe (Carlisle) to ask the Presidents of the Archbishops' Council:

Q48 What does the national Church invest in developing rural strategy and through what bodies does it develop its understanding of and strategy for rural mission and ministry?

Mrs Alison Coulter to reply on behalf of the Presidents of the Archbishops' Council:

A Through the Strategic Mission and Ministry Investment Board (SMMIB), the Archbishops' Council distributes funds to dioceses to undertake their strategic plans. For many dioceses this will include their plans for rural areas. Each of the projects will have a monitoring and evaluation plan to provide learning to support the national Church develop its understanding of strategies for rural mission and ministry. A number of dioceses with projects in rural areas have upcoming final evaluations, and so the national church is exploring the possibility of a thematic analysis around this learning.

Dr Ian Johnston (Portsmouth) to ask the Presidents of the Archbishops' Council:

Q49 The Archbishops' Council asked the Church Commissioners to complete a review of the Mission and Pastoral Measure 2011. Their terms of reference were so narrow that many issues that have a strong bearing on our parishes' wellbeing were not even acknowledged as important enough for them or others to consider. The focus was on updating the old MPM rather than looking in any holistic way to the future.

Is the Archbishops' Council satisfied that the narrow approach taken by the review was appropriate; and, if not, what steps will it take to address these issues that are vital to the future of our church?

Mr Alan Smith to reply on behalf of the Presidents of the Archbishops' Council:

A The Council asked the Commissioners to review the Mission and Pastoral Measure 2011(MPM), as part of a wider process of legislative reform. The responsibility for the review was delegated to the Council's Legislative Reform Committee (LRC) and to the Commissioners' Mission, Pastoral and Church Property Committee (MPCPC) which is responsible for the legislation. The LRC and MPCPC agreed the terms of reference in October 2020 and General Synod then voted overwhelmingly to support the review in July 2021.

The Church's legal frameworks should facilitate our shared ministry and they need to be reviewed to ensure they are fit for purpose and are consistent with good administrative law practice. Within the context of the MPM review, the Commissioners have put an emphasis on parish wellbeing by listening and developing a consensus based approach which is more pastoral and collaborative. The need for the NCIs to provide more focused support services around the MPM tailored to parish needs has also been recognized. The Council supports the pastoral approach taken by the Commissioners and commend the draft proposals which are set out in GS2315 to Synod. Effective legal frameworks are a necessary and critical element to support the future of our Church.

Mrs Tina Nay (Chichester) to ask the Presidents of the Archbishops' Council:

Q50 On 13th December 2022 a letter signed by a wide variety of interested parties was sent to the Charity Commission to raise and explain concerns about the manner in which Archbishops' Council managed the regime for dealing with complaints in the fields of safeguarding and the related matter of clergy bullying; can the President inform General Synod who attended on behalf of the Archbishops' Council to brief the Charity Commission in respect of that letter?

Canon Dr Jamie Harrison to reply on behalf of the Presidents of the Archbishops' Council:

A On 7th November 2022, the Chair of the Charity Commission wrote to the Secretary General of the Archbishops' Council requesting a meeting between William Nye and colleagues in the Charity Commission to discuss correspondence which the Charity Commission had received. On 25th November, William Nye, along with an HR colleague, attended a meeting with the Director of Regulatory Services at the Commission. The specific nature of correspondence with the Charity Commission was not shared with William Nye and his colleagues. The Charity Commission wrote to William Nye on 18th January to confirm that the meeting and supplementary written correspondence had been helpful in giving them background information in order to reply to correspondents. The Charity Commission did not seek to speak to trustees, nor did it share any details of the correspondence it had received, and therefore the meeting between the Director of Regulatory Services and the Secretary General was for the purposes of gathering background information on Church of England policies and processes.

Mr Stephen Boyall (Blackburn) to ask the Presidents of the Archbishops' Council:

Q51 In the light of the Church's agreed and confirmed doctrine of marriage, what plans do the Archbishops' Council have for the Church of England to participate in the annual Celebrating Marriage Week, and what special resources will be developed to help local churches participate?

The Bishop of Durham to reply on behalf of the Presidents of the Archbishops' Council:

A It is for individual parishes and dioceses to decide whether to participate in ventures such as this, and to make use of the opportunities they afford for mission in the local context. With so many designated "weeks" in which parishes could participate, it would be invidious for the Archbishops' Council to single some out rather than others. The "Life Events" team, during its existence, did a great deal to support clergy and parishes in their work around weddings and marriage and many of those resources remain on the website. A number of Christian organisations produce further excellent resources to support marriage, and it would not be a good use of limited resources in the NCIs to duplicate that work. Upholding the Church's doctrine of marriage is the task of the whole church all the time and in many forums and that is where our energies are focused.

Mr Stephen Hofmeyr (Guildford) to ask the Presidents of the Archbishops' Council:

Q52 Given the Church of England's priority "*to be a church that is younger and more diverse*", are Average Sunday Attendance figures available by age-range (e.g. 18-30, 31-40, 41-50 etc) to enable us to know where and why the "younger" are being attracted? If the figures are currently available, can they be provided please? And, if the figures are not currently available, why not?

The Revd Kate Wharton to reply on behalf of the Presidents of the Archbishops' Council:

A Average Sunday Attendance figures are calculated from actual attendance numbers reported at Sunday services during the annual "October Count" exercise. These

numbers are counted as they would be in the normal course of church worshipping life and are not analysed by age-range, except that there are separate attendance reports for “adults” and “children and young people” (aged 16 or younger). Worshipping Community numbers, measuring persons rather than attendances, offer a more reliable basis on which to profile the age distribution of regular attenders across the range of church services, including at weekday services and at fresh expressions of church.

Churches can use the [Church Development Tool](#), a short anonymous survey for completion by the Worshipping Community, to produce a simple report giving a clear picture its demographics, discipleship and evangelism. Aggregate Worshipping Community age distribution numbers for end-of-year 2021 were compared with those for end-of-year 2019 in page 6 of the Church of England’s [Statistics for Mission 2021 Report](#), using the broad age categories 0 to 10 years; 11-17 years; 18-69 years and 70 years and over. Church of England Data Services continue working to embed these categories in support of Vision and Strategy priorities.

Mrs Debra Mclsaac (Salisbury) to ask the Presidents of the Archbishops’ Council:

Q53 The Archbishop of Canterbury recently (June 2023) said:

“... the Church of England is built on the rural communities and . . . the church is always at the centre of rural communities. It has been since St. Augustine was a lad. If we lose sight of the local in the Church of England, we lose sight of everything. We lose sight of God. If ... every bishop in the Church of England disappeared entirely, [the] Church of England . . . would go on working because it works at the local. It works through the churchwardens and parish priests and people who turn up to do the flowers.”

What specific financial and other direct and indirect support is or will be available to rural churches so that they can continue to work through parish priests and Churchwardens and volunteers?

The Archbishop of Canterbury to reply as Joint President of the Archbishops’ Council:

A All the work of dioceses and the national church is to support the fruitfulness of our churches and their priests, wardens and volunteers across the country. Much of the specific direct support for parishes will be from dioceses who know the needs of their local parishes better than the national church.

Nationally, the Archbishops’ Council is funding both rural and urban parishes through the Strategic Mission and Ministry Investment Programme. This includes investing significant sums into the pipeline of stipendiary priests, supporting the costs of the increased numbers of ordinands and curates, with around £40m in 2020-22, and around £60m allocated for 2023-25.

The Strategic Mission and Ministry Investment will also support diocesan plans as these relate to mission and ministry in rural areas, learning from funding for rural areas in dioceses such as St Edmundsbury and Ipswich, Salisbury, Exeter and Winchester.

Mrs Debra Mclsaac (Salisbury) to ask the Presidents of the Archbishops’ Council:

Q54 When the Archbishop of York was answering Questions last July at the RIGGS (Rural Interest Group on General Synod) meeting, he was asked about the priority being given to children and young people. He expressed the view that ‘younger’ was a relative concept and that anyone in their mid-50’s or older might be “positively youthful” in context such as in many rural areas.

Has this thinking been made known to the various Funding streams, how has or will it be reflected funding criteria and how will it be incorporated and implemented especially in rural churches in light of the spiritual malaise many experience in their older years?

The Archbishop of York to reply as Joint President of the Archbishops' Council:

A Yes. The thinking I expressed was directly reflective of the bold outcomes of Vision and Strategy. As we seek to become younger and more diverse, the bold outcomes set out below are vital. Both are reflected in the published criteria for the funding distributed by the Strategic Mission and Ministry Investment board.

- i) doubling the number of young active disciples
- ii) becoming a church which represents the communities we serve in age and diversity

The implementation of this thinking will vary because representing the communities we serve can look very different, for example between rural areas of Salisbury and central Birmingham. Of course, there is also significant variance between parishes even within dioceses. Sometimes when I visit parishes in York diocese, I feel remarkably young, and sometimes, perhaps not as often as I would like, I feel very old. The thinking is implemented only partially through funding in support of diocesan mission plans. Above all, it is implemented locally in mission as each missionary disciple in each parish (whether rural or urban) seeks to look outwards and engage those in our communities - young and old - who we are not currently reaching with the good news of Jesus Christ.

Miss Prudence Dailey (Oxford) to ask the Presidents of the Archbishops' Council:

Q55 Stephen Hance has said on Twitter that 'The papers [on Revitalising the Parish for Mission] were prepared in consultation with a wide range of stakeholders from within and without Synod'. Who was consulted as part of this exercise, and how were the consultees selected?

The Revd Kate Wharton to reply on behalf of the Presidents of the Archbishops' Council:

A The consultees included members of the Synod, chosen for representing a range of perspectives and including one member of Save the Parish, a serving bishop, and members of a recent SLDP project team whose project had been about the future of the parish.

Mr Andrew Orange (Winchester) to ask the Presidents of the Archbishops' Council:

Q56 Does the Archbishops' Council still support the Church of England's strapline: "A Christian presence in every community"? If so, how does it think the local Christian presence can be maintained in dioceses that are merging PCCs, and/or enlarging benefices, in what is sometimes described as a 'minster model', creating large church entities that risk being totally detached from the small rural communities that make it up?

The Revd Kate Wharton to reply on behalf of the Presidents of the Archbishops' Council:

A Yes. The historic vocation of the Church of England is to be the church for everyone everywhere. We are the national Church. We want every person we serve to have an opportunity to encounter the transformation that a life centred on Jesus Christ can bring. So far from being detached, we will need to find ways of reaching and serving people in the very diverse communities and contexts of our national life today - in communities of leisure, workplace and education as well as local neighbourhood. On-line as well as in person. Our Vision and Strategy bold outcomes seek a parish system revitalised for mission through a mixed ecology

church creating new Christian communities across those four areas of home, work and education, social and digital – those communities in which we live our lives. And as we do this there will be diocesan and local decisions around simpler governance and how finite resources of people and money are deployed. All changes must always be with the aim of ensuring we enable everyone to have the opportunity to encounter the transformation of a Jesus-Christ centred life that we ourselves have known.

HOUSE OF BISHOPS

Mr Richard Brown (Chelmsford) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q57 Will the Pastoral Guidance that replaces Issues in Human Sexuality contain a definition of the word 'adultery'?

The Bishop of London to reply on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops:

A The Pastoral Guidance will be significantly different in tone and format from Issues in Human Sexuality, and seek to explore questions not covered elsewhere, and pertaining specifically to questions arising from the introduction of the Prayers of Love and Faith. Additional material may expand its range and concerns.

Dr Alan Downen (Chester) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q58 In just 4 weeks' time, I will be celebrating 50 years of marriage to the same woman – my one and only wife – however, I have to admit that I appear to be a member of an ever-decreasing minority! Sadly, many of my friends are now either divorced and single, on their second marriage, or in one case, married for a third time. The reasons for these 'failures' are far too complex and varied to summarise here but, whatever the cause, I am sure that none of them entered into matrimony with the view that 'this is only going to last for a few years' (or in some cases months!). I doubt whether I am the only person with this life experience, so, with those background observations, what criteria would be proposed by the LLF Next Steps Group to discern whether a relationship is 'demonstrably faithful, exclusive and permanent'?

The Bishop of London to reply on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops:

A The Pastoral Guidance will address this question.

Mr Clive Scowen (London) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q59 We confess one holy catholic and apostolic church. In reaching decisions concerning the proposed Prayers of Love and Faith and pastoral guidance has the House of Bishops considered whether their proposals (a) promote the oneness of the church; (b) are holy; (c) are Catholic; and (d) are apostolic; if so what conclusion did they reach; and if not will they now do so as a matter of urgency?

The Bishop of London to reply on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops:

A The bishops have considered all these factors as part of their deliberations over the six years of LLF work. These were explored extensively during the first part of LLF work and will form part of the background to ongoing work on the Prayers and Pastoral Guidance.

The Revd Chantal Noppen (Durham) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q60 Question 160 at the February 2023 group of sessions asked if clergy were permitted to enter a same sex marriage under the new pastoral guidance, and whether this would be a national policy observed by all diocesan bishops. The response stated that this would need to be clarified, so could an update be given on this and also

whether other aspects of policy arising from LLF would be applied nationally or subject to the postcode lottery of Diocesan autonomy?

The Bishop of London to reply on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops:

A There was a desire at both the House and College of Bishops that application of the Prayers and Pastoral Guidance should not create a disparate and unpredictable approach across the country. Bishops are the focus of unity for their dioceses, and corporately for the wider church. While it essential that every bishop have their own freedom of conscience, it is essential too that they exercise their collective responsibility across the whole church. The House of Bishops at its May meeting asked that further work be done on a proposed statement from the bishops that sets out this collective episcopacy and unity in practice.

The Revd Mae Christie (Southwark) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q61 Given that the Church of England existed for centuries prior to the publication of *Issues in Human Sexuality*, is there any reason why it can't be repealed with immediate effect while we wait for the publishing of the new Pastoral Guidance?

The Bishop of London to reply on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops:

A As *Issues in Human Sexuality* has been used in situations such as the discernment process it would create inconsistency if it was repealed before something was in place to replace it.

Mrs Kat D'Arcy-Cumber (Chelmsford) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q62 Can it be confirmed that once *Issues in Human Sexuality* has been retired from use by the House of Bishops, there will no longer be any expectation that any clergyperson who has been required to agree to its content in the past should continue to do so?

The Bishop of London to reply on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops:

A Once the Pastoral Guidance has replaced *Issues in Human Sexuality* the Pastoral Guidance will set the standard by which lives should be ordered.

Mr Benjamin John (St Albans) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q63 Where can I find the clearly stated official teaching and theological rationale, if any, of the Church of England which justifies the acceptance of the concept of "transgenderism" and "transgender persons"?

The Bishop of London to reply on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops:

A Transgender persons are persons in the eyes of God and of the Church and are accorded all the respect and love that we are commanded to show to all people. The House of Bishops agreed some time ago that a person whose transitioning has been legally recognized should also be recognized as such by the Church, and may therefore marry, according to the rites of the Church of England, a person of the opposite sex. The House also has a long-standing policy that transitioning is not an impediment to baptism, confirmation or ordination. The LLF process has recognized that more theological work needs to be done to fully understand Trans issues, and this work will be undertaken in due course.

The Revd Dr Ian Paul (Southwell & Nottingham) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q64 If a man and a woman marry according to the rites of the Church, and the man undergoes gender transition, are the couple still married in the eyes of the Church and in the view of the House of Bishops? If so, is that because the House and the

doctrine of the Church consider that he is still a (biological) man, or because the House and the doctrine of the Church in this instance sanction same-sex marriage?

The Bishop of London to reply on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops:

A Cases such as this were considered by the Pastoral Advisory Group in the earlier stages of the LLF process.

The group concluded that the union of a couple where one partner transitions, but both wish to stay together remains a marriage. The reasoning behind this is that the Church has never advocated divorce as a positive moral requirement, which would be the couple's only remedy if the Church declared their marriage invalid. Marriages survive many changes undergone by the partners and the theological goods of life-long commitment, and mutual support and comfort, for which marriage was ordained should continue to be honoured. The PAG did not wish to commend any approach which reversed the Church's view of divorce – and it wished to support and celebrate the self-giving love that allows many people to go on living in love and faith with a partner who has changed in unexpected, and perhaps challenging, ways.

The people in a marriage continue to be the same people, with a continuity of memory and experience, and the history of love within a marriage was considered a more significant pastoral factor than trying to define the status of that marriage in the abstract.

Mr Chris Gill (Lichfield) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q65 Paragraph 19 of GS2303 states that it "...was a majority desire by the bishops at both meetings that It should be possible to disagree and inhabit a generous theological, ecclesial and pastoral space that holds the Church together in different interpretations of the answers to these questions." Since it was only a majority saying that it should be possible to disagree, it suggests that there was no overall agreement, nor walking together. However, paragraph 20 has no such caveat in stating that "The bishops are upholding the Doctrine of Marriage and their intention remains that the final version of the Prayers of Love and Faith should not be contrary to or indicative of a departure from the doctrine of the Church of England." For clarity, could you please set out the Church of England's Doctrine of Marriage that all Bishops agree to uphold, and which will be the measure as to whether the final version of the Prayers of Love and Faith will be contrary to or indicative of a departure from said doctrine?

The Bishop of London to reply on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops:

A Church of England teaching on the nature of marriage can be found in a number of historical documents, including the 1999 Marriage: A Teaching Document, and the Faith and Order Commission's 2013 report, Men and Women in Marriage, as well as the Canons and the Book of Common Prayer.

Dr Ros Clarke (Lichfield) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q66 Does the Church of England's doctrine on marriage and the place of sexual intimacy remain as stated in the House of Bishops Pastoral Statements on Civil Partnerships of July 2005 and Dec 2019?

The Bishop of London to reply on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops:

A The College and House of Bishops has not proposed any changes to the doctrine of marriage and the place of sexual intimacy within it.

The Revd Dr Ian Paul (Southwell & Nottingham) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q67 The second communication following the House of Bishops' meeting on 15 to 17th May 2023 stated that 'the Bishops' views differ on matters of sexuality and marriage.' Does this mean that some bishops continue to believe, teach, expound, and model the Church's doctrine of marriage as found in Canon B30 and restated in recent statements by the House of Bishops and confirmed in this Synod, whilst others no longer do believe this doctrine? If not, what is the nature of the 'differing views'?

The Bishop of London to reply on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops:

A The LLF motion passed in February endorsed the Bishops' decision not to propose any change to the doctrine of marriage. Given this decision, the 'differing views' on matters of sexuality and marriage expressed at the House of Bishops in May, were largely focused around how the Bishops might seek to offer a genuine pastoral response to those in permanent, faithful, loving same-sex relationships. It was clear to the House that the different views range from provision of a more limited pastoral accommodation to a broader affirmation of same-sex relationships, which are appropriately defined.

Dr Andrew Bell (Oxford) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q68 At the House of Bishops' meeting on 15th -17th May 2023, in an indicative vote on Pastoral Guidance, a number of bishops voted that the Church should allow clergy to enter into same-sex marriages. Given that the doctrine of marriage ('holy matrimony') in Canon B30 is that marriage is between one man and one woman 'according to the teaching of our Lord', and that ordination vows commit clergy to believe in, teach, expound, and model their lives on the doctrine of the Church, were these bishops voting to change the doctrine of marriage, or voting for a revision to ordination vows?

The Bishop of London to reply on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops:

A The House of Bishops has not voted to change the doctrine of marriage, or for a revision to ordination vows. In its meeting on 15th–17th May 2023, the House of Bishops sought to give indications of areas where it was requesting more work to be done.

The Revd Dr Brenda Wallace (Chelmsford) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q69 What discussions have taken place in the LLF implementation groups on whether, and if so, when, licensed clergy in faithful, permanent and stable relationships with a partner of the same sex will be able to publicly regularise their relationship through marriage, and clergy who have already entered into a same sex marriage will have their licenses reinstated?

The Bishop of London to reply on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops:

A The LLF implementation groups have worked with the House and College of Bishops on the question of clergy being permitted to enter into a same sex civil marriage as documented in GS 2303. The Pastoral Guidance will include answers to these questions.

The Revd Barney de Berry (Canterbury) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q70 How does the church define and understand the word Holy in the phrase Holy Matrimony?

The Bishop of London to reply on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops:

A It does so in the way set out in the Church's marriage liturgy:

"Marriage is a gift of God in creation through which husband and wife may know the grace of God. It is given that as man and woman grow together in love and trust, they shall be united with one another in heart, body and mind, as Christ is united with his bride, the Church. ...Marriage is a way of life made holy by God, and blessed by the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ with those celebrating a wedding at Cana in Galilee. Marriage is a sign of unity and loyalty which all should uphold and honour. It enriches society and strengthens community. No one should enter into it lightly or selfishly but reverently and responsibly in the sight of almighty God." (*Common Worship, Marriage Service, Preface.*)

Mr Stephen Hofmeyr (Guildford) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q71 Is it the teaching of the Church of England that "sexual activity should be within permanent, stable and faithful relationships of marriage as that is understood in each society" or is it the teaching of the Church of England that "sexual activity should be within permanent, stable and faithful relationships of marriage" as that is understood in Canon C30 and the Book of Common Prayer?

The Bishop of London to reply on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops:

A It is only in very recent years, and as a result of very rapid cultural change in our society, that a divergence has emerged between marriage as it is understood by the Church, reflected in Canon C30 and the BCP, and marriage as it is understood by secular law and society. The Faith and Order Commission have been asked to reflect theologically on the relationship between the two.

Ms Jayne Ozanne (Oxford) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q72 How does the Church of England define sex between two women and is this act permitted between two female priests in a civil partnership?

The Bishop of London to reply on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops:

A The Pastoral Guidance will set out expectations of priests in same sex relationships. LLF has always tried to recognise that the expression of sexual intimacy between two people cannot be reduced to a small set of defined actions.

The Revd Joy Mawdesley (Oxford) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q73 In Dioceses where there are no bishops who uphold the traditional teaching of the Church on marriage, there is evidence that this is impacting on ordinations of both deacons and priests. Given the length of time it is likely to take for the issue of alternative episcopal oversight to be permanently resolved, what arrangements will be made in the interim to ensure that the mission and ministry of the church are not held back, and ordinations can proceed?

The Bishop of London to reply on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops:

A In a recent consultation with diocesan vocations teams, the impact of the current LLF process and the various episcopal perspectives on human relationships was found not to have had significant impact on ordinations, or on candidates in discernment and training, except in a very few individual cases.

As ever, diocesan teams work extremely hard to facilitate candidates in hearing and discerning God's call towards ministerial vocations. They are specifically and intentionally engaged in the work of reassurance and provision where differing views subsist.

Mrs Sandie Turner (Chelmsford) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q74 At a recent meeting of the House of Bishops, the House agreed that, while the Bishops' views differ on matters of sexuality and marriage, they wish to create a generous theological, ecclesial and pastoral space holding the Church together in one body, thus suggesting that there is freedom for bishops and other clergy to either accept or reject the Church's doctrine of marriage. This being so, what revisions are planned for the ordinal and the ordination vows, and what supporting theological work has been done to demonstrate that the doctrine of marriage is one of the 'things indifferent' (*adiaphora*)?

The Bishop of London to reply on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops:

A There are currently no plans to amend either the ordinal or ordination vows in the light of this subject and the decision has been made to continue to uphold the doctrine of marriage. The Faith and Order Commission are supporting the bishops' theological reflections.

Mr Martin Auton-Lloyd (Chichester) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q75 Are lay people disqualified from training for Reader Ministry if they are married to a person of the same sex?

The Bishop of London to reply on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops:

A Eligibility to train for Reader Ministry is determined individually by each diocese.

Mr Daniel Matovu (Oxford) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q76 In light of the fact that (a) in answer to a question from Mr Sam Margrave (Q36 in November 2022) the Bishop of London, on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops, affirmed that Canon B30 does indeed continue to articulate the doctrine of the Church [specifically, that, according to our Lord's teaching, marriage is in its nature a union permanent and lifelong, for better for worse, till death them do part, of one man with one woman], including asserting that holy matrimony is the proper context for sexual intimacy, and (b) the General Synod in February 2023 endorsed the decision of the College and House of Bishops not to propose any change to the doctrine of marriage, and their intention that the final version of the Prayers of Love and Faith should not be contrary to or indicative of a departure from the doctrine of the Church of England, does the House of Bishops then accept that the final version of the said Prayers must not be, nor are they intended to be, used for same-sex couples who are in a sexually intimate relationship, and that the draft Prayers should be so read, or, if not, please explain precisely how not, consistent with facts (a) and (b) as aforesaid?

The Bishop of London to reply on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops:

A The House of Bishops has not voted to change the doctrine of marriage. In its meeting on 15th–17th May 2023, the House of Bishops sought to give indications of areas where it was requesting more work to be done by the LFF Implementation Groups. Additionally the Faith and Order Commission have been asked to reflect theologically on the relationship between civil marriage and Holy Matrimony.

The Revd Mae Christie (Southwark) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q77 Whilst we do not have any record of when *Issues in Human Sexuality* was inserted into the vocations process, is there a date for when it will be removed?

The Bishop of London to reply on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops:

A *Issues in Human Sexuality* will be removed from the vocations process at the point at which the House of Bishops agrees new pastoral guidance regarding many of the

matters included in Issues in Human Sexuality. It is not yet known exactly when this will be.

The Revd Vinny Whitworth (Manchester) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q78 What is the current national church guidance for clergy appointment panels regarding whether they are permitted to enquire of potential candidates their views on LFF issues and their potential use of the Prayers of Love and Faith?

The Bishop of London to reply on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops:

A There is currently no national church guidance on clergy appointments, as the previous guidance was withdrawn, as it was out of date in a number of areas and needs to be amended to reflect legislative changes to the Patronage (Benefices) Measure 2019. What can be asked of candidates about LLF issues will need to be included in the Pastoral Guidance. We also need to issue an updated version of the general guidance to clergy appointments, which will be cross-referenced to the LLF guidance.

The previous guidance recommended that any requirements arising from a parish's theological tradition, for example the requirement not to be divorced or in a civil partnership, needed to be identified at the beginning of the appointments process and ideally included in the parish statement of needs and person specification. The Pastoral Guidance Workstream may find it helpful to bear this approach in mind as part of its deliberations.

Mrs Sandie Turner (Chelmsford) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q79 The prayers for sealing a covenanted friendship indicate that a couple show their desire to "dwell more deeply in the grace of Jesus Christ by sealing a covenant of friendship with each other" and the covenant is sealed with these words "Where you go, I shall go: I will seek to share your burdens and your joys. I will pray that you will know God's blessing and walk with you wherever God calls us; through Jesus Christ our Lord" Could the bishop explain the nature of this covenant in terms of how binding it is, and the consequences should such a covenant be broken?

The Bishop of Lichfield to answer on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops:

A None of the prayers in the PLF represent legally binding prayers; they are primarily prayers to be used with individuals who wish to bring their relationship before God and ask for God's wisdom, guidance and blessing. As such, a covenant of friendship is a promise between two individuals before God, similar to that between David and Jonathan who promised friendship to one another with God as their witness. It is as binding as the individuals making the promise make it.

Mr Luke Appleton (Exeter) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q80 The Prayers of Love and Faith process has marked an important precedent in removing the input of PCCs from determining the theological preferences of their Parish. Clearly this is inconsistent with the current practice of requiring PCCs to pass resolutions. To address this inconsistency, what plans are being made to enable incumbents to pass resolutions without the approval of their PCCs?

The Bishop of Lichfield to answer on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops:

A The exact route of authorisation (or commendation) for the Prayers of Love and Faith and how this is negotiated locally is currently under discussion and will be covered in the Pastoral Guidance. In reference to paragraphs 12 and 13 of GS 2303: If the PLF are simply commended, and available for use under Canon B.2, the choice of whether to make any use of them will be with the incumbent. If they

are approved by one of the routes described in paragraph 13, consideration will need to be given to the precise mechanisms around that, and the respective roles of PCC and ministers. The Prayers of Love and Faith do not remove any responsibilities from PCCs.

Mr Nic Tall (Bath & Wells) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q81 In February 2023 all three Houses of Synod welcomed the House of Bishops plans to commend the Prayers for Love and Faith and the replacement of Issues in Human Sexuality with new pastoral guidance. Since then the lack of timetable and overall delay in implementing the decision has caused disruption to couples' plans to marry, the progression of LGBTQIA+ ordinands, and to clergy whose ministry supports couples in same sex relationships. Given this disruption, what guarantees can be given that the PLF will be commended and new pastoral guidance issued by the House of Bishops in a swift and timely fashion to those couples, ordinands and clergy so they can make plans and set dates accordingly?

The Revd Martin Poole (Chichester) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q82 Given that some of us are planning services which might incorporate some of the Prayers of Love and Faith, and had been expecting some form of commendation or approval at the July General Synod, can we receive an update on the expected timetable for moving these prayers from draft to approved so that churches can start to make plans for use of these prayers without fear of censure or complaint?

The Bishop of Lichfield to answer on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops:

A With permission I will answer questions 81 and 82 together.

We recognize the frustration felt by those who were hoping to use the prayers sooner, as well as the uncertainty for couples and ordinands. However, it is important that the theological, pastoral and liturgical work promised by the Living in Love and Faith motion is conducted thoroughly and responds to the many questions raised by General Synod and others.

An update is to be presented to this Synod meeting that we hope gives clarity about where we are in the process of implementing the motion and the ongoing work. As a number of steps in the work remaining are potentially subject to approval by the House of Bishops and/or General Synod (as appropriate) a timeline cannot be guaranteed, but all efforts are being made to progress the work.

The Revd Rachel Wakefield (St Albans) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q83 In February the Bishop of London stated that the Prayers of Love and Faith and the Pastoral guidance would, hopefully, be ready in time for the General Synod meeting in July 2023 (Q161). Given that this has not happened, despite the support of all three Houses of Synod for the proposals, can the reason for this slippage be explained, and the timetable following the July Synod outlined?

The Bishop of Lichfield to answer on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops:

A The LLF motion passed in February 2023 gave no timetable for the completion of the work, but it was hoped to complete the majority of the tasks by July 2023. However, given the emerging necessity for well-considered pastoral reassurance to meet a range of needs, the implementation phase has required further work. This has impacted the production of guidance and the consideration of the routes by which the Prayers of Love and Faith are offered for use. The expected timetable now is that we are working to bring draft guidance to the November meeting of the General Synod.

Mrs Zoe Ham (Carlisle) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q84 In the February 2023 sessions of Synod, the Bishop of London claimed that the Prayers of Love and Faith ‘do not use any of the liturgical material of the Church of England’s authorised services of marriage.’ This contradicts the answer given to Q176, in which the Bishop of Lichfield listed the sources for the Prayers (see p.1 of the Annex to Questions Notice Paper 2 [here](#)) which showed that 15 of these were very clearly adapted from authorised liturgical material in Common Worship: Pastoral Services (the marriage liturgy). Which of these answers is correct, and what action will be taken to ensure that any future proposed Prayers will not use existing marriage liturgy in order to avoid being indicative of a departure of the Church’s doctrine of marriage?

The Bishop of Lichfield to answer on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops:

A The Prayers of Love and Faith do not contain texts which are essential parts of ‘The Marriage Service’ in Common Worship: Pastoral Services, or from the ‘Form of Solemnization of Matrimony’ in the Book of Common Prayer, or from that in Alternative Services: Series One, which are the ‘authorized services of marriage’ in use in the Church of England.

The document listing the sources which we provided in February does show that some of the material in the Prayers of Love and Faith appears among the optional texts which may be included in marriage services. Where this is the case, this material is not expressive of a distinctly matrimonial character. In some cases, prayers have been altered to this end.

The prayer that asks God to ‘pour into our hearts that most excellent gift of love’, an optional text included in Pastoral Services, is in its substance itself borrowed from the Collect for the Second Sunday after Trinity and also appears in *New Patterns for Worship* in a sample service for St Valentine’s Day, under the discretion of the minister allowed under Canon B 5.

Mrs Amanda Robbie (Lichfield) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q85 The House of Bishops have included a reading from Ruth 1.15-22 in the proposals for the Prayers of Love and Faith. The vows made by Ruth in this passage are of filial piety to her mother in law, and are not reciprocated at all. Has the House of Bishops considered whether this reading is suitable for the blessing of people in a) a romantic relationship given that Naomi and Ruth have a parent/child relationship or b) any other type of relationship, given the unbalanced nature of the vows made?

The Bishop of Lichfield to answer on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops:

A In including this reading the House of Bishops is not suggesting that the relationships celebrated with Prayers of Love and Faith are necessarily exactly the same as those in this passage. The inclusion of this reading helps one to reflect on how different kinds of love, friendship and commitment between people can help them to recognise and respond to the love of God.

Dr Gracy Crane (Oxford) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q86 What safeguards will the bishops put in place to ensure that the prayers for covenanted friendships will not be used to legitimize polyamorous relationships?

The Bishop of Lichfield to answer on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops:

A The pastoral guidance for the use of Prayers of Love and Faith will identify the contexts in which the Prayers may be offered, and provide advice to ministers who will be engaging pastorally with couples.

The Revd Canon John Dunnett (Chelmsford) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q87 Does the House of Bishops have a record of how many/which dioceses have now added possible implications of the proposed Prayers of Love and Faith to their risk registers - and if so, how many are there who have done so?

The Bishop of Lichfield to answer on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops:

A A Diocesan Board of Finance's (DBF) principal risks will be stated in its approved Annual Report and Financial Statements. However, there is no central record of running changes to Risk Registers of the DBFs which are not publicly disclosed.

Each DBF will be making an ongoing assessment of risks to its objectives and will be considering the potential impacts of the General Synod's decisions. Where those risks are assessed to be material, they will take mitigating actions to reduce their likelihood and impact.

Mrs Rebecca Cowburn (Ely) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q88 In introducing Some Issues in Human Sexuality to Synod in February 2004, Bishop Richard Harries explicitly rejected the idea of the Anglican 'three-legged stool' of Scripture, tradition and reason, and instead talked of Scripture as our final authority in all matters of faith and conduct, with tradition and reason functioning as hermeneutical lenses through which we read Scripture. Does that view still command the assent of the whole of the House of Bishops, and has that been the guiding principle in developing the Prayers of Love and Faith?

The Bishop of Lichfield to answer on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops:

A The idea of the "three-legged stool" can be traced to Richard Hooker (Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity, Book V, viii.2). In taking this position Hooker rejected the 'Genevan' tendency to derive all positions from scripture alone. However, Hooker did not treat scripture, reason and tradition as equal authorities – and that was Bishop Harries's point. For Hooker, and in contemporary Anglican thought, scripture is the primary source of ecclesial authority, but tradition and reason must not be ignored or belittled. This approach, with scripture as primary, read in dialogue with tradition and reason, characterizes Anglican thinking.

Thus, for Anglicans, theological reasoning usually involves debate about how, and how much, insights from reason and tradition illuminate readings of scripture. That is certainly both explicit and implicit in discussions in the College and House of Bishops and is a sign that the Church of England collectively is true to its inherited model of theological exploration.

The Prayers of Love and Faith, like all Anglican liturgy, draw upon scripture, both directly and in thematic terms, reflect the traditions of the Church, and are framed to engage with humanity's capacity for reason.

Dr Gracy Crane (Oxford) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q89 There have been anecdotal reports of bishops using threatening and even bullying language towards clergy who have expressed their disagreement with the direction of travel indicated by the House of Bishops' reports, and who have said they will not be willing to use the Prayers of Love and Faith. What is the House of Bishops' response to these concerns, and what measures are they planning to put in place to ensure that clergy can freely hold a view which differs from that of the Bishop?

The Bishop of Lichfield to answer on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops:

A Threatening and bullying language and behaviour are unacceptable in the Church. Bishops as chief pastors are committed to ensuring that the conscientious and theologically grounded decisions of their ministers (both ordained and lay) are respected, including when they differ from their own decisions. Work continues on pastoral reassurance which will make clear how this can be guaranteed in practice with reference to the Prayers of Love and Faith.

Dr Simon Eyre (Chichester) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q90 Has a documented risk assessment regarding the probable impact of the introduction of prayers of blessing for same sex couples been undertaken at any stage by the House of Bishops?

Mrs Zoe Ham (Carlisle) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q91 “If we have a recommendation, it is that the Church of England sets in place robust ways to assess the impacts, positive and negative, that will undoubtedly come whether decisions are made or not made to allow SSB or SSM” (see <https://llf.churchofengland.org/mod/resource/view.php?id=694>, p.14).

As a result, the Archbishops’ Council is undertaking its own risk assessment in the areas of finance, numerical growth, plans for church planting, calling young people to faith, risk of schism, clergy morale, vocations to ordained ministry, and possible reduction of ethnic diversity of the Church. What risk assessment has the House of Bishops undertaken in each of these areas, in response to the 2022 report; if none, then when is such assessment planned to take place?

The Bishop of London to reply on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops:

A With permission I will answer Questions 90 and 91 together.

The House of Bishops has undertaken no such risk assessment. Instead it monitors regularly all aspects of the implementation of the Synod’s motion on Living in Love and Faith, noting that there is much further work on the detail of the prayers, on pastoral guidance and on pastoral reassurance that will affect the nature of any threats and opportunities. The House understands that the Archbishops’ Council is conducting a risk assessment of the impact on its objectives of the Synod proposals on Living in Love and Faith.

Mrs Rebecca Hunt (Truro) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q92 What legal advice has been provided to the House of Bishops in relation to the best way to protect clergy conscience in the matter of the prayers of love and faith?

Mr Daniel Matovu (Oxford) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q93 Has the House of Bishops sought or received any legal opinion concerning the propriety of seeking the approval by General Synod of the draft Prayers of Love and Faith under Canon B2 and, if so, when will the same be published in the interests of promoting openness and transparency?

The Bishop of London to reply on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops:

A With permission I will answer Questions 92 and 93 together.

The staff team advising the House of Bishops throughout the LLF process has included members of the Church House Legal Office. External counsel have not been instructed. The legal advice has been comprised in a number of email exchanges, as well as comments on policy documents and oral advice during meetings, and a formal note of advice prepared for the meeting of the House of

Bishops on 23 March 2023 (it was also given to all members of the College of Bishops, which met on the same day). That advice has addressed the options available for commendation or approval of the Prayers, and the legal implications of those options, including for the protection of clergy conscience. In order to ensure that the House can get frank and full legal advice, we have chosen in the past, and now choose to continue, a policy of not publishing legal advice. The decision as to the appropriate option to take has not been finally made, and when it is, it will be based not only on legal advice but also on all other considerations.

Mrs Sue Cavill (Derby) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q94 Why are there no lay members on the Living in Love and Faith implementation group focusing on the draft Prayers of Love and Faith, and no or few lay members on the implementation group focusing on developing new pastoral guidance, given that the issues they are dealing with impact not only on the clergy but on the laity, including lay leaders?

The Bishop of London to reply on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops:

A The membership of the working groups tried to include a balance of views between those drafting material. The selection was made by the LLF Next Steps group primarily on an individual basis of who had the practical and theological expertise necessary to get the work done, both lay and ordained.

Dr Simon Eyre (Chichester) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q95 How were the members of the 3 LLF Implementation Groups selected and by whom?

The Bishop of London to reply on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops:

A The LLF Next Steps group discussed the membership of the implementation groups and invited people to join each group. The membership of the working groups tried to include a balance of views, but they were not intended to be representative bodies that had membership from the full range of different perspectives that were encompassed in the preceding LLF work. Instead the selection was made primarily on an individual basis of who had the practical and theological expertise necessary to take the work forward.

The Revd Will Pearson-Gee (Oxford) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q96 Who made the decision to terminate the work of the three subgroups working on the Prayers of Love and Faith, the Pastoral Guidelines, and Pastoral Reassurance, and on what basis, and when was this decision communicated to the groups themselves, the House of Bishops, and the Archbishops' Council?

The Bishop of London to reply on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops:

A When the working groups were set up it was initially envisaged that they would be in place until Summer 2023, to report back to this Synod meeting, and a commitment was sought of members on this basis. While substantial and fruitful work has been done by the groups, it became clear that the work would continue beyond the original commitment made by members and would need to focus on bringing the work of the three workstreams together for ongoing drafting. This work continues to draw on members of the implementation working groups.

This latest phase of work was communicated to the groups at their joint meeting on the 16th June, and confirmed by email after, following a decision by the Steering Group.

The Revd Steve Wilcox (York) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q97 We are grateful for the wide-ranging and deep work that is ongoing, in order to explore all relevant areas and possible blockages as we seek to move forward. With that in mind, how will proper opportunity be given to all currently involved in the LLF process / in all 3 Houses to safely identify and work through their strong emotions regarding the LLF process / those with whom they strongly disagree, to ensure that these emotions are not inadvertently blocking positive progress through the process?

The Bishop of London to reply on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops:

A The LLF group work that was conducted as part of the February General Synod sessions was aimed at building trust and discernment about the way forward between members of all three houses. Although plans are yet to be finalised for the November meeting it could be considered whether similar work would be of benefit to the process for members. We continue to urge all involved in the LLF process to inhabit the Pastoral Principles.

Mr Richard Denno (Liverpool) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q98 Has the House of Bishops considered calling a halt to the proposed Prayers of Love and Faith on the basis that false teaching leads to sexual immorality in the people of God?

The Bishop of London to reply on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops:

A The House of Bishops has not considered halting the work on the Prayers of Love and Faith. The overall LLF process has been one which has sought to encourage careful listening and discernment among the people of God, which has included paying attention to Scripture and the historic teaching of the Church, and recognising the range of interpretations and understandings of Scripture and teaching which we hold. The LLF process has not sought to characterise differing views as false teaching, but rather to help one another understand the different perspectives that exist in the Church.

Mr Philip Baldwin (London) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q99 Can the House of Bishops confirm that they consider all intersex people to be: (i) fearfully and wonderfully made in God's image; (ii) part of God's natural diversity and that being intersex is not an illness or disorder?

The Bishop of London to reply on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops:

A Yes.

The Revd Canon Dr Judith Maltby (Universities & TElS) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q100 Archbishop Welby said in his Second Witness Statement to IICSA (June 2019): "I am informed by Mr [Graham] Tilby [at the time National Advisor, CofE Safeguarding] *that these [LLF] resources will be reviewed by the NST before they are finalised to ensure that they sufficiently address safeguarding related issues.*" The only reference to IICSA in LLF (2020) is: "While acknowledging the reality of abuse in the church, *it is important that the specific work of theological reflection on IICSA be carried out separately from the Living in Love and Faith project...*" (p. 87). May Synod know what group is carrying out the separate work of theological reflection on the learning from IICSA to ensure the LLF process does "sufficiently address safeguarding related issues" as stated by the Archbishop in 2019?

The Bishop of London to reply on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops:

- A** The question asks about two separate things. Theological reflection on the findings from IICSA underpins the work of the National Safeguarding Steering Group in overseeing the implementation of IICSA's recommendations. Meanwhile, the materials arising from the Living in Love and Faith process are still in development, as reported in GS 2303. Material on pastoral guidance and pastoral reassurance will be reviewed from a safeguarding perspective before they are finalised.

The Revd Dr Patrick Richmond (Norwich) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

- Q101** The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith argued that it is not permissible to bless same sex unions, in a Responsum ad dubium issued on 15.03.2021. Has the House of Bishops engaged with these arguments as part of their ecumenical reflection on marriage and sexuality? If so, what is their theological response? If not, when do they plan to?

The Bishop of London to reply on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops:

- A** The Bishops and the staff who support them have considered ecumenical factors throughout the LLF process and remain in touch with Roman Catholic and other ecumenical colleagues through regular conversations. The House as a whole has not engaged or given a formal response to this document as a House, but instead concentrated on shaping an appropriately Anglican way forward, while maintaining warm ecumenical relationships.

Mr Benjamin John (St Albans) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

- Q102** In Q171 in February 2023 the Archbishop of Canterbury wrote that:

“Canon B30 expects bishops to stay within the discipline of the Church of England by not performing marriages outside of canonical provision, nor permitting clergy under their oversight to do so (which would be both illegal and invalid).

With regard to teaching, *bishops are expected to teach that this is the official position of the Church of England.*

Recognising the official position does not, however, exclude debate, exploration and ongoing conversations about doctrine – since *doctrine has developed over centuries and at times undergone significant change.*” [emphasis added]

The Archbishop further clarified in a supplementary that he assumes a Bishop does believe the current teaching unless stated otherwise.

Given the Archbishop's statements that doctrine develops and changes, and that Bishops only need to teach that the official positions of the Church of England are the official positions of the Church of England, and there are well known public statements from Bishops disagreeing with the official positions of the Church of England (for example the Bishop of Oxford on marriage): what specifically does a Bishop need to believe and uphold, if anything, or is it the case that, as appears to follow logically from the Archbishop's answer, a Bishop does not need to believe any of the official positions of the Church of England rather that they must simply acknowledge what is the current teaching of the Church of England?

The Archbishop of Canterbury to reply as Chair of the House of Bishops:

- A** With reference to my previous answer the preface to the Oaths and Declarations made by all clergy sets out the basis of our doctrine and teaching saying, “The Church of England is part of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church, worshipping the one true God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It professes the faith uniquely revealed in the Holy Scriptures and set forth in the catholic creeds, which

faith the Church is called upon to proclaim afresh in each generation. Led by the Holy Spirit, it has borne witness to Christian truth in its historic formularies, the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion, The Book of Common Prayer and the Ordering of Bishops, Priests and Deacons.”

The Revd Dr Sean Doherty (Universities & TEIs) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q103 I am grateful that a number of bishops, including the two archbishops, have spoken out against the Church of Uganda’s support for the Anti-Homosexuality Act. Will the House of Bishops be considering the impact on the relationship between the Church of England and churches in the Anglican Communion who do not uphold the commitment made by the bishops of the Anglican Communion at the Lambeth Conference in 1998, “to minister pastorally and sensitively to all irrespective of sexual orientation and to condemn irrational fear” of gay people, and by the Primates of the Communion in 2016 to reject “criminal sanctions against same-sex attracted people”?

The Archbishop of Canterbury to reply as Chair of the House of Bishops:

A It is very important that the full text of Lambeth 1:10 is understood and the lines quoted in the Question are of immense pastoral significance. Indeed, the address the core issues of human rights and dignity. However, the Anglican Communion works primarily through debate, prayer and the search for consensus and, on this as well as many other topics, those processes continue all the time. Synod will understand that the way in which each province’s words and actions on the subject of human sexuality affect the lives of other Anglicans worldwide is complex, especially at present. So, in answer to the question as put – yes, the House is considering the points raised, but as part of a much wider reflection on the issues, and on how provinces across the Communion relate to one another, especially including the historical contexts of each province. It is important that each province protects the lives of everyone.

Mrs Busola Sodeinde (London) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q104 During the LLF debate, I put forward an amendment to consult with the secretaries of the wider Anglican Communion on the impact positive or negative, of adopting Same Sex Blessing, which was dismissed on a technicality. The Archbishop of Canterbury agreed to follow this up with the Secretary of the ACC, Bishop Anthony Poggo, and report back. Has this now happened, and with what result—and if not, when will this consultation take place?

The Archbishop of Canterbury to reply as Chair of the House of Bishops:

A The Secretary General of the Anglican Communion has regular discussions with primates and others in provinces around the Communion. He has reported that these discussions have included provinces giving views on the “Prayers of Love and Faith”. Meanwhile, the new Adviser on Anglican Communion Affairs, The Revd Dr Sammy Wainaina, joined us in May and, as he settles into the post, is rapidly taking on board the history and content of the whole LLF debate and reflecting on its impact on the wider Communion. Discussions are currently under way to determine whether a formal and structured, or more informal, consultative process is likely to be most effective and where such a process should originate. We hope to progress this consultation later this year.

Mrs Abigail Ogier (Manchester) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q105 The Terms of Reference for the Humphreys Review (into the handling of allegations concerning the late Revd Devamanikkam) included that:

"5.6 So far as they are available, the Reviewer will review relevant documents from the following sources

....

- The Diocese and Bishop of Sheffield (including the suffragan See of Doncaster)"

Is this a standard provision routinely included within NST Review Terms of Reference?

The Bishop of Stepney to reply on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops:

- A** The terms of reference for a Learning Lesson Review are bespoke to each individual review.

The Revd Esther Prior (Guildford) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q106 I ask this with the declared interest of being a Zimbabwean. In 2022, at General Synod, the then Lead Bishop Jonathan Gibbs stated that there would be an investigation into the abuse by John Smyth in Zimbabwe and South Africa, but only after the Makin Review had been published. Given that seven years will then have passed since the abuse of African children became known, can the new Lead Bishop restate that commitment, in the light of the further delays to the Makin Review?

The Bishop of Stepney to reply on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops:

- A** When a review is commissioned, it needs to be clear about its own terms of reference: what is in scope and what is out of scope. It can only bring into scope matters over which it has a reasonable degree of responsibility and ongoing control. A review's conclusions may point to further areas that merit exploration, or where there would appear to have been consequences ensuing from the matters covered by that review. Where data sharing can be agreed and properly managed, it can commit to handing over evidence which it believes may be relevant to those further explorations and which, when pieced together with other evidence which will be outside of its ownership and therefore scope, might help to bring further clarity to other elements of the case or to the bigger picture. It cannot, however, mandate that these further explorations must take place. Our intention at the end of the Makin review is to liaise with those looking into the abuse perpetrated by John Smyth in Zimbabwe and South Africa and to seek to share relevant information in appropriate ways.

The Revd Canon Dr Judith Maltby (Universities & TEs) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q107 On 15 June 2023 the following statement about the John Smyth Review (announced on 13 August 2019) from the reviewer, Keith Makin, and posted on the 'Reviews and Reports' pages of the Safeguarding section of the Church of England website, included this: "*The review is now able to proceed to the next stages, which will culminate in it being handed to the Archbishops' Council, for subsequent publication. Relevant extracts from the draft report will soon be shared with the victims of John Smyth and with people who are named and criticised. This is to ensure that the draft report is factually accurate and is entirely framed within the Terms of Reference as well as being based on verifiable evidence.*"

What is now the earliest foreseeable and realistic date for publication of the Review, given the inevitable delay between completion of the draft report and the sometimes lengthy process of 'Maxwellisation', referred to in the statement, by which those criticised are afforded the opportunity to respond, sometimes via lawyers?

The Bishop of Stepney to reply on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops:

- A** The reviewer is starting the process of victims of survivors reviewing the draft report, due to the volume of people reviewing the report it is anticipated that this will take place in August and September, with the representation stage commencing in October. The report will not be published until both of these phases have been completed. The review team is aware of the distress and impact further delays are likely to cause survivors and is working hard to complete the report as soon as possible. Support continues to be offered for victims and survivors who are impacted by this review.

The Revd Sara Batts-Neale (Chelmsford) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

- Q108** The NST Director was required to respond to the ISB's first case review, Mr X, within 4 weeks. Now there is no ISB, what timescale is there for accepting and acting on the recommendations to ensure no further harm is caused to Mr X?

The Bishop of Stepney to reply on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops:

- A** The NST Director continues to progress some of the recommendations. It is anticipated that the recommendations will be presented to the National Safeguarding Steering Group in July as this is the group that would formally accept the recommendations. The outcome of any such decision would then be presented to the Archbishop Council.

The Revd Canon Simon Butler (Southwark) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops: Presidents of the Archbishops' Council:

- Q109** A number of Synod members have indicated support for a debate on a Private Members' Motion seeking independent investigation of a specific safeguarding case. Can the House confirm that the case in question is being investigated objectively, impartially, and with good quality assurance, and, as the Archbishops' Council moves towards a fully independent safeguarding *scrutiny* function, does it remain of the view that the current arrangements for the *investigative* function (i.e. external investigators overseen by Case Management/Core Groups) is the best way to deliver good outcomes for complainants and respondents?

The Bishop of Stepney to reply on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops:

- A** The National Safeguarding Team and Diocesan Safeguarding Team employ staff who are both experienced and qualified to conduct safeguarding investigations. This is an active investigation which is being conducted in line with the House of Bishops managing allegation policy. We are unable to comment any further on a live safeguarding investigation.

The Revd Robert Thompson (London) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops: The Secretary General:

- Q110** Will you please provide to Synod a summary of the proposed process, project management oversight, projected costs, and likely time frame for the currently proposed joint Review into the Soul Survivor allegations?

The Bishop of Stepney to reply on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops:

- A** This is an active investigation which is being conducted in line with the House of Bishops managing allegations policy. We are unable to comment any further on a live safeguarding investigation.

The Revd Canon Simon Talbott (Ely) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

- Q111** Who, within Archbishops' Council, the Secretariat, or the National Church Institutions, holds the executive responsibility to monitor compliance with, and /or

resourcing of the Church's responses to the formal recommendations of Learned Lessons Reviews?

The Bishop of Stepney to reply on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops:

- A** The National Safeguarding Steering Group has oversight and accountability to track and ensure recommendations are delivered and implemented. This would include updates to the Archbishops' Council on progress. Any resources would be allocated from the NST budget. If the resource was over and beyond the allocated funds within the NST budget the Archbishops' Council would be approached for any additional funds

The Revd Matt Beer (Lichfield) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

- Q112** What safeguarding provision and oversight are being provided for mixed ecology of churches?

The Bishop of Stepney to reply on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops:

- A** The Church of England Safeguarding policies and learning and development framework apply to a mixed ecology of church as they would a parish.

Professor Helen King (Oxford) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

- Q113** If an elected member of the PCC, churchwarden or other church officer refuses to take the safeguarding training modules which the diocese lists as being required for their role, are they able to continue in that role?

The Bishop of Stepney to reply on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops:

- A** The Safeguarding Learning and Development Framework sets out the required attendees for each of the safeguarding learning pathways and the Safer Recruitment and People Management Guidance states that Safeguarding learning is mandatory for all posts that fall within the scope of that guidance. Under section 5 of the Safeguarding and Clergy Discipline Measure 2016 all authorised clergy, bishops, archdeacons, licensed readers and lay workers, churchwardens and PCCs must have 'due regard' to safeguarding guidance issued by the House of Bishops. A duty to have 'due regard' to guidance means that the person under the duty is not free to disregard it but is required to follow it unless there are cogent reasons for not doing so. ('Cogent' for this purpose means clear, logical and convincing.)

Mrs Kat Allread (Derby) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

- Q114** Given the complexity of the Church of England as a confederation of independent charities in addition to the inherent challenges of Charity Law and actuarial calculation, what professional resource is available to those consulted by the Church to offer lay opinion on improving its Redress scheme?

The Bishop of Truro to reply on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops:

- A** Indeed we are a much more complex Scheme than other redress operations in our multiplicity of legal entities and charitable bodies, but we are determined that the Scheme will not appear complicated to the survivors who use it. We are designing a single point of contact, offered by a third-party supplier and this procurement process is in progress, to make sure that survivors are served promptly and equitably, wherever and however long ago their experience of abuse occurred. We are one body and, to express our shared covenantal commitment, we will bring forward legislation to General Synod to underpin a consistent approach to working together to demonstrate our repentance and willingness to change in order to be a safer church for everyone. We are inviting input from a range of lay and ordained people around the Church of England to help us anticipate and respond to the

practical implications of this whole church approach, including discussion here at this General Synod, and have undertaken exhaustive research of other redress schemes. We are currently recruiting staff to help churches and other local bodies to advise us on the resources and support they will require in order to participate in the Scheme.

The Revd Ruth Newton (Leeds) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q115 The Church has recently made a further announcement in respect of the promised Redress Scheme to compensate victims of abuse for which the CofE bears legal and/or moral responsibility. Given the inevitable complexity of forecasting the resourcing of an unknown number of claims, with a potential multiplicity of personal circumstances expressed through individual impact statements, from whom has professional actuarial advice and assistance been sought to ensure that the proposed £150m provision is reasonably commensurate with the magnitude of the problem?

The Bishop of Truro to reply on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops:

A Specialist staff with relevant professional experience were hired to work on the Redress Scheme and have taken advice from colleagues and external experts to help to develop the Scheme, which is overseen by a Project Board chaired by the which I chair.

Having reviewed the evidence already available to us about abuse perpetrated within the Church of England and available data relating to other redress schemes, we are clear that it is impossible to provide projections relating to levels of demand, and it is likely that the initial funds allocated will require replenishment.

Prior to the Scheme launch, we will develop a funding model which enables contributions from other parts of the Church, including through insurance claims where this is viable, expressing our shared covenantal commitment to survivors and to each other. As part of that model, we are grateful to the Church Commissioners for allocating £150 million to underpin the Scheme so that we will in due course be able to commence the Scheme and make financial awards promptly to people who are eligible for Redress.

Mr John Brydon (Norwich) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q116 Given the reorganisations in Truro and Leicester dioceses will be heavily reliant on volunteers, is there any record of national volunteer numbers and whether these have increased or decreased over the last 10 years?

The Bishop of Truro to reply on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops:

A The Data Services team does not collect national statistics on the number of volunteers who are supporting ministry and are therefore unable to answer the question on growth or decline over the last 10 years.

Every diocese depends on the work of volunteers. I cannot speak for the Diocese of Leicester, but given that plans in Truro include maintaining if not increasingly stipendiary clergy numbers, using our historic reserves for that purpose, I do not anticipate that we will become more reliant on volunteers, though of course we are always keen to see people step forward into Christian service and do all we can to encourage it.

Mr Clive Scowen (London) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q117 What conclusion has the House of Bishops reached on changing the national norm that Readers/Licensed Lay Ministers should have their licences revoked on

reaching age of 70 and replaced with permission to officiate, given that the same no longer applies to clergy?

The Bishop of Chester to reply on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops:

- A** The House of Bishops has not reached a conclusion on this matter. Approaches to permission to officiate for Readers/Licensed Lay Ministers differ between dioceses. The outgoing episcopal lead for lay ministries, Right Revd Martyn Snow, held a focus group about lay ministry canons with members of the College of Bishops in December 2022. The feedback from that consultation has been passed to the Lay Ministries Advisory Group, chaired by Canon Dr Paula Gooder and Right Revd Sophie Jelley to inform their ongoing work.

The Revd Will Pearson-Gee (Oxford) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

- Q118** There are widespread reports of clergy facing financial hardship as a result of the comparative decrease in the value of the stipend—and many retired clergy in the same position as a result of the loss of value in the pension. Does the House of Bishops consider its responsibilities as ‘shepherds of the shepherds’ to include addressing these issues, and, if so, what action have they taken to address the decrease in value of both stipend and pension?

The Bishop of Hereford to reply on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops:

- A** The decrease in the value of the stipend and of the pension is a matter of concern to the House of Bishops and involves the whole people of God because the money for stipends and pensions comes largely from the giving of the faithful.

The Remuneration and Conditions of Service Committee (RACSC) is responsible for making annual recommendations on stipend levels to the Archbishops’ Council and has to balance considerations about the appropriate level of stipend for clergy with what is affordable, in the light of current levels of giving and pressures on Church finances. As part of its work on these issues, it consults diocesan secretaries and CEECA, part of the faith workers branch of Unite, on stipend levels and affordability.

RACSC carried out a review of clergy remuneration, which concluded that the package was worth around £50,000 and was adequate for the majority of clergy and indicated that its value should be increased in line with increases in CPIH inflation except during periods of high inflation. We are experiencing high inflation at the moment, but we remain committed to the goal of catching up with inflation in the medium term, but this will depend on levels of giving, which are a matter for the whole Church. Discussions with the Finance Committee enabled £3m to be allocated to clergy facing hardship as a result of the cost of the living in 2022. A further £15m was distributed in 2023 to dioceses mainly to help PCCs with church energy bills, though there was some scope to help ministers if dioceses chose to do so.

Mrs Helen Smith (Durham) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

- Q119** Will the House of Bishops dedicate any time to reflection on the King's Coronation; and if so, will the House seek input from historians, liturgical scholars and the wider church?

The Bishop of Bath and Wells to reply on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops:

- A** The House of Bishops has spent some time reflecting informally on the Coronation. It has not at this time formally commissioned the kind of input from outside parties suggested in your question.

Mrs Vicky Brett (Peterborough) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q120 A handful of reports from 2008-2014 showed an association between the air particulate matter released from burning incense with charcoal and several acute health effects, including mortality, hospital admissions, respiratory symptoms, and lung dysfunction. More recently problems are coming to light with the particles in vaping causing lung damage. Have there been any recent investigations into the safety of burning incense in church or are there any planned?

The Bishop of Lichfield to reply on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops:

A Statistically, an association does not necessarily imply causation. We are not aware of any studies showing a direct causal relationship between the use of incense in a typical church context and acute respiratory diseases. The comparison with vaping is also unlikely to be indicative as the manner through which particulates might be inhaled or absorbed is very different and the number of exposures in a given time period likely to be much more frequent. Overall, the health risks associated with the use of incense in a normal parish setting are likely to be considerably lower than other forms of exposure to particulates such as proximity to major road traffic.

The responsibility for the conduct of worship in individual churches rests with the minister, and decisions on matters such as the use of incense should be shared between the minister and the PCC. Any member of a congregation who has concerns over possible risks should raise these with their incumbent or PCC.

We are not aware of any recent or planned studies in this area of research.

The Revd Lindsay Llewellyn-MacDuff (Rochester) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q121 It was heartening to hear the Bishop of Lichfield's confidence in the capacity of Church of England policy documents to establish culture (supplementary answer to q38 [[Questions Notice Paper 1 - February 2023](#)]). However, given that in most contexts theory is tested against evidence, what research has the Faith and Order Commission made to check that women do in fact flourish under the episcopate of a man who does not think they should have been ordained?

The Bishop of Lichfield to reply on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops:

A Practical research into the outworking of the Five Guiding Principles is not a task that the Faith and Order Commission would undertake. However, one of the responsibilities of the Standing Commission on the House of Bishops' Declaration and the Five Guiding Principles is 'to consider how effectively the Declaration, including the Five Guiding Principles, is being promoted throughout the Church.' The Standing Commission is undertaking a number of projects which will help with this consideration and continues to consider other projects which help with this responsibility while recognizing that there are limitations to the number of projects it can do at any one time.

Mrs Sarah Finch (London) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q122 How is provision made for conservative evangelical parishes which have passed a resolution in the dioceses where the Bishop of Ebbsfleet is not an Assistant Bishop?

The Bishop of Lichfield to reply on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops:

A The House of Bishops Declaration makes arrangements for parishes which have passed a resolution to receive extended episcopal care from another bishop, including from the three Provincial Episcopal Visitors or from the Bishop of Ebbsfleet. The arrangements state that '*The precise extent of the ministry entrusted*

to the bishop is for the diocesan to determine and is likely, for practical reasons to vary according to the pattern of episcopal ministry in that diocese and the extent of the bishop's other commitments.' However, the Archbishops of Canterbury and York have recently notified the College of Bishops that their preferred policy is now for Diocesan Bishops who choose to draw on the ministry of these bishops to make these bishop(s) Honorary Assistant Bishops in their diocese. This precedes work being done by the Standing Commission on the Five Guiding Principles on guidelines for PEV bishops which aims to produce guidelines for diocesan bishops which encourage a more consistent approach to extended episcopal care for parishes who do not accept the ordination of women to the priesthood.

Mrs Mary Durlacher (Chelmsford) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q123 What prayers and services have hitherto been commended or authorized under Canon B4.2 other than the Remembrance Day service mentioned in the online version of the Canons?

The Revd Tom Woolford (Blackburn) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q124 In light of the reference to Canon B4 in GS 2303, please could you supply a list of the forms of service approved under Canon B4.1 and B4.2?

The Bishop of Lichfield to reply on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops:

A With permission, I will answer questions 123 and 124 together.

There are no services which have been approved by the Convocations under Canon B 4.1.

The Archbishops of Canterbury and York have approved the following forms of service under Canon B 4.2:

- *A Service for Remembrance Sunday*
- *Special Forms of Service in commemoration of Her Late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II*
- *The Coronation of their Majesties King Charles III and Queen Camilla*

Mr Chris Gill (Lichfield) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q125 What plans are there to start holding meetings of the House of Bishops in public, with the usual notification, access to agendas, and minutes, as would be normal practice for any meetings of a House of this Synod, and has been the routine practice of the other two houses of Synod when they have met?

The Bishop of Manchester to reply on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops:

A Under the House of Bishops Standing Orders, the default position is that meetings are open to the public, but the House does regularly make use of SO 14, which allows the House to sit in Committee without members of the public present. This permits candid discussion in a collegial atmosphere. On occasions when it is dealing with legislation, which requires a formal vote, the practice has been to not use SO14.

The agendas, minutes and other papers are not published. We do usually issue a summary of business.

There are no plans to vary this practice.

Dr Ian Johnston (Portsmouth) to ask the Presidents of the Archbishops' Council:

Q126 The Governance Review's clear recognition of the existential issue of the trust deficit is very welcome. Others could take note of its emphasis. It is explicit in the

detail of many of its proposals. The obvious omission is the means of providing effective oversight of Church of England National Services (CENS) as referenced in para 12 of GS 2307. Is it the intention to have Synod provide effective, timely, comprehensive oversight of CENS and the other NCIs and for them to be obliged, by statute if necessary, to take due regard of Synod's opinions; and if not, what are the principles by which such oversight will be assured?

The Bishop of Guildford to reply on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops:

- A** The Governance Review sets out in Annex One, paragraphs 27 to 35, its recommendations in relation to strengthening the arrangements for synodical oversight of the National Church Institutions, including the proposed new CENS body. It will be for Synod to determine if these proposals provide adequate assurance.

Canon Peter Bruinvels (Guildford) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

- Q127** With the report from the National Church Governance Project Board (GS 2307) before General Synod, what further evidence is required to underline the Independent Appellate Function of the, Pastoral and Church Property Committee Function for it to remain in operation as a permanent separate stand-alone body and function within the remit of the Church Commissioners, rather than revert to the CENS at some time in the future as indicated in GS 2307?

The Bishop of Guildford to reply on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops:

- A** The Governance proposals before Synod, which are to be debated on Sunday evening, and are contained within GS2307, include a set of recommendations and a clear rationale for these changes. The Project Board does not anticipate that there will be reasons to keep the Mission, Pastoral and Church Property Committee function in the long-term within the Church Commissioners, given the proposals to give a clear focus to each of the national bodies. The proposals have been welcomed by the Church Commissioners Board of Governors. But it is for the Synod to determine where the function should rest in any legislation that may be brought forward, assuming Synod approve the proposals before it.

Mr Jonathan Baird (Manchester) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

- Q128** The Archbishops' Council and General Synod share a Secretary General. This appears to lead to increased conflicts of interest and an over concentration of power. If the General Synod approves the motion confirming the recommendations of the National Church Governance Project Board (GS 2307), will the draft legislation include having an independent and exclusive Secretary General for the General Synod?

The Bishop of Guildford to reply on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops:

- A** Within any organisation, ensuring there are proper segregation of duties in place to avoid potential conflicts of interest is an important internal control that needs to be carefully balanced alongside resourcing implications, cost and whether there is a material risk. In accordance with the National Institutions Measure the Archbishops' Council appoints a Chief Executive to be known as the Secretary General. It is a requirement of General Synod's Standing Orders (SO. 145) that the Secretary General of the Synod, is the person appointed by the Council as its Chief Executive and, separately, under the standing orders of the House of Bishops (SO. 11) that the Secretary General acts as Secretary to the House. These arrangements arose out of the previous review of Governance which led to the passing of the National Institutions Measure.

The National Church Governance Project Board has not made recommendations in relation to specific roles or yet considered the executive structures which may be required to support its proposals.

Canon Peter Bruinvels (Guildford) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q129 Now that under the recent Legislative Reform (Church Commissioners) Order 2021, elected Church Commissioners have their terms of office restricted to a maximum period of ten years falling into line with the other Committee of General Synod where their elected Members terms of office are similarly restricted to a maximum period of ten years, what consideration if any has been given to applying the same restrictions to all Diocesan Bishops who are also elected by the College of Canons and whether all new post holders as Diocesans in the long term should be similarly restricted to a maximum term of office of 10 years, as are the Diocesan Bishops who serve as Church Commissioners on the Board of Governors.

The Archbishop of York to reply on as Joint Chair of the House of Bishops:

A Thank you for your question. The duration of membership of Committees of the General Synod is governed by Standing Order 128, which does not preclude a Synod member being re-elected to a Committee even if they have served more than ten years. The change to the Church Commissioners' period of service was made because that is a trustee body. However, no such consideration has been given to the suggestion made in the question. The election by the College of Canons of a Diocesan Bishop is done so at the direction of The Sovereign and as such constitutes a very different process from the election of Church Commissioners or other General Synod Committees. Bishops, in common with other Ecclesiastical Office holders, vacate their office when they choose so to do, or automatically upon attaining the age of 70. It is possible to extend such appointments beyond 70 in certain circumstances.

Mrs Rebecca Chapman (Southwark) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q130 Please provide a list of current members of the College of Bishops, and the current criteria for membership.

The Archbishop of York to reply as Joint Chair of the House of Bishops:

A The College of Bishops is not a formally constituted body. It is a body that brings together diocesan and suffragan bishops. In addition three UKME clergy participant observers attend. There are currently nine bishops who hold other roles within the life of the Church of England who still attend College of Bishops meetings.

The Revd Chris Moore (Hereford) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q131 What advice has the House of Bishops given to the Archbishops on the exercise of their discretion in the matter of allowing bishops to continue in office beyond the age of 70?

The Archbishop of Canterbury to reply as Chair of the House of Bishops:

A The House of Bishops has not given advice on this matter to the Archbishops because it is not the role of the House of Bishops to give such advice. The Archbishops' Council has issued such guidance, as it is required by the legislation to do, and that is here.

The request from bishops to continue in office beyond the age of 70 happens infrequently. In recent years, in the Southern Province, if a bishop has requested an extension of ministry after the age of 70, I have asked one of my senior team to conduct a short consultation in the diocese, to establish what the pastoral need

was, and used the outcome of that consultation to inform my decision on whether or not to grant an extension of ministry and for how long.

In the Province of York, there has only been one occasion in recent years which involved an extension by a few months purely for pastoral needs within the diocese.

Mr Nigel Lea-Wilson (Liverpool) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q132 Research from the Bible Society shows that Christian faith and church attendance is not in decline in England but is at least holding steady. What work has the House of Bishops done to explore with other denominations the reasons for their growth, and what we can learn from them?

The Archbishop of Canterbury to reply as Chair of the House of Bishops:

A The Bible Society research was conducted by survey and was not denominationally specific. We are not in competition with other denominations but rejoice when they grow. The conclusions from the Bible Society were encouraging. In practice consideration of missional strategies and outcomes of ecumenical partner churches is dispersed across a wide range of bodies and relationships, with varying strengths. Specific bodies such as the Anglican-Pentecostal Steering Group and the Methodist-Anglican Panel on Unity and Mission mutually explore missional experiences and approaches, and where possible insights gained are fed back into reflection on the Church of England's own strategy. A wide range of other interdenominational relationships, at local as well as national levels, enrich the Church's work in various ways. Reasons for decline and growth are inevitably complicated, just as the social and economic contexts of different churches are extremely varied, and do not always translate easily into practical measures to counter the one and encourage the other. But the spirit of a joint missional enterprise is very strong in Churches Together in England, in which we participate fully, as well as elsewhere. It would be better if we were all one church, of course, if one follows the commands of the Bible.

The Revd Robert Lawrance (Newcastle) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q133 What is the progress on reducing the carbon footprint of the Church of England?

The Bishop of Norwich to reply on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops:

A There is a full update to General Synod on this in the pack; GS Misc 1347 "Routemap to Net Zero Carbon by 2030 – Annual Carbon Emissions Report

Data from the 2021 Report indicates that the total estimated carbon emissions for that year were 411,000 TCO_{2e}, some 4,000 tonnes of CO_{2e} lower than the same figure for 2020.

However, these figures are based on data from just 35% and 40% of all Church buildings (cathedrals, churches, schools, housing, church halls, TEI's etc,) submitting energy returns in 2020 and 2021 respectively. While it is far too early to confirm this as an actual reduction in overall emissions, the results are encouraging as they pre-date the adoption of the Routemap to Net Zero in July 2022 and the establishment of the Net Zero Carbon Programme which formally commenced in January of this year.

The more we can do to encourage uptake in the use of the Energy Footprint Tool and Energy Toolkit the more reliable the results will be. Much good work is already being undertaken and this will hopefully be reflected in future Annual Emissions Reports.

The Revd Andrew Yates (Truro) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q134 There are several milestones in the Routemap to Net Zero Carbon due to be completed in 2023. What is the news on progress towards reaching these milestones at this stage??

The Bishop of Norwich to reply on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops:

A The Routemap to Net Zero Carbon contains milestones for all parts of the Church and the Programme Team are still in the early stages of developing the reporting mechanisms to track progress against all of these since the Programme formally commenced at the start of this year.

Of the 126 milestones, 91 sit with the NCIs to progress. Of this group, 44 are scheduled to be completed by the end of 2023, and 67% of these are either completed or on track to be completed this year.

The NZC Programme will be working with diocesan officers to understand overall progress against the 6 diocesan milestones. Net Zero Carbon Capacity Building grants are being rolled out to provide the additional capacity needed to work on net zero carbon actions within dioceses and to develop diocesan Net Zero Carbon Action Plans.

Mrs Sue Cavill (Derby) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q135 How can the Church ensure that the crisis of biodiversity loss and nature degradation is not overshadowed by our focus on tackling the climate crisis?

The Bishop of Norwich to reply on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops:

A When I became Lead Bishop for the Environment, I set out three priorities, one being to enhance biodiversity on all church-owned land.

“Land and nature” is one of seven key areas of work for the national environment programme. Churches are encouraged to take action through Churches Count on Nature, and through A Rocha UK’s Eco Church scheme, which has a section on land. Guidelines for managing diocesan-owned land have just been published [here](#), and many more resources from the environment programme can be found on its [webpage on land and nature](#).

The climate and biodiversity crises are inextricably linked. [This webinar](#) addresses this issue directly. A motion has been submitted (LAND AND NATURE, GS 2319) which can be found as contingency business on the agenda, with the aim of ensuring that we keep our focus on both areas as we seek to care for God’s creation and tread more gently on our single island planet home. I point members of Synod to the fringe event being hosted by RIGGS on Saturday morning.

Mrs Rebecca Cowburn (Ely) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q136 Is the Church of England Net Zero Carbon Programme planning to issue advice to churches on the best mixes of trees to plant within their churchyards and on their land (subject to Faculty rules) that are:

a) suitable for their localities; and

b) adapted to cope with, and help combat, the effects of climate change; and

that could also be planted by parishioners in their gardens to help create long-term sustainable green corridors for plants and wildlife within their localities?

The Bishop of Norwich to reply on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops:

A The current scope of the Net Zero Carbon Programme does not extend to tree planting as the focus is on emissions reductions from the built estate and work-related travel. Trees do play a part in carbon sequestration and can offset some of the Church's emissions, but work on offsetting policy is not planned in the Routemap until 2024 (Section 6.1). Counting carbon sequestration on church land would only be legitimate if the whole carbon footprint of land is accounted for. The emissions on our land are not currently in scope for the purposes of the 2030 target, the Routemap showing that this will be reviewed in 2025 (Section 6.2.5). Churchyards can also provide valuable wildlife habitat and it is important to keep these multiple benefits in mind when considering changes in land use.

There is existing advice about trees on the Environment Programme website [here](#), and advice on biodiversity and creation care [here](#). Caring for God's Acre also have this advice on [improving the carbon footprint of your burial ground](#).

The Revd Rachel Webbley (Canterbury) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q137 What steps are being taken to encourage more dioceses to engage with the Communion Forest, which was launched at the Lambeth Conference in 2022?

The Bishop of Norwich to reply on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops:

A Several members of the Communion Forest team joined the Environment Working Group meeting in May 2023 to share information about the project and to discuss ways to take this forward. The Communion Forest is about habitat creation, protection and restoration, and will look different in varied places around the world. It does not have to be about planting trees.

The Church Commissioners' Rural Team is working with the Communion Forest team to identify a project which would make a good showcase. Once the right project has been identified, it can be shared across national and diocesan communication networks to highlight the Communion Forest initiative and encourage dioceses to take part, for example on suitable parcels of glebe land.

I am encouraging other bishops to follow the bishops in the Diocese of Norwich who give a hazel tree sapling to all who we confirm.

Members of General Synod can share information with their own diocese to encourage participation. Find out how to get involved [here](#).

Mrs Michaela Suckling (Sheffield) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q138 Will the House of Bishops lend its support to the Essentials Guarantee Campaign launched by the Trussell Trust and the Joseph Rowntree Foundation calling on the UK Government to enshrine in law the amount people need to ensure that the basic rate of Universal Credit at least covers the essentials?

The Bishop of Durham to reply on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops

A Bishops are extremely active on this theme.

In the Lords, I tabled a question to Government on the 'Essentials Guarantee'.

Lords Spiritual continue to press for adequate levels of UC. In the past six months:

- My Private Member's Bill – the Universal Credit (Removal of Two Child Limit) Bill – completed its House of Lords stages and has passed to the Commons. This would remove the restriction on UC payments to the first two children only.

- I also tabled questions asking how many children receiving UC are ineligible for free school meals, and on debt deductions for those on UC and unable to afford essentials
- The Bishop of Manchester supported a motion “That this House regrets that the Rent Officers (Housing Benefit and Universal Credit Functions) (Modification) Order 2023 will freeze Local Housing Allowance at the levels applied in April 2020 and therefore fails to account for inflationary increases in rent, resulting in vulnerable claimants spending a greater proportion of income on rent”.
- The Bishop of Chelmsford asked Government about debt management for UC claimants, citing Trussell Trust research showing that 57% of people referred to food banks who are in receipt of UC face government deductions from benefits income.

Mr Guy Hordern (Birmingham) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q139 The Archbishop of Canterbury recently affirmed, in response to a question, that we should be more confident and unapologetic in communicating the Church’s doctrine of marriage and sexuality. What resources and support has the House of Bishops offered to chaplains and lay Christians working in education who teach and explain the Church’s doctrine of marriage, particularly in situations where they are criticised or threatened for doing so?

The Bishop of Durham to reply on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops

A Diocesan Boards of Education provide advice and guidance to their schools in this area. We have produced national guidance on Relationships, Sex and Health Education and the particular need to be mindful of faith perspectives in this (for all schools, not simply Church of England schools) is here [Relationships, Sex and Health Education | The Church of England](#). In this guidance we make particular reference to the need to teach the Church of England’s view of marriage in a Church school setting.

Mr Stephen Boyall (Blackburn) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q140 What action has been taken by the House of Bishops, to lobby the Government to take actions to support marriage according to the doctrine of the Church?

The Bishop of Durham to reply on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops

A Our active engagement with HMG about marriage is currently focused upon the recent Law Commission report on Weddings. At the consultation stage, I responded to the draft proposals, severely criticizing the Law Commission’s approach. The fundamental problem is that they focused on the law surrounding weddings whilst explicitly refusing to engage with the meaning of marriage. Consequently, their report was seriously deficient, suggesting, for example, that a wedding must be “dignified” without any notion of what that would mean or how it could be enforced.

The fundamental shift they called for was to move from a premises-based to a celebrant-based system. Whilst that approach works adequately in Scotland, the recommendations were clearly intended to open the “weddings market” more widely to commercial celebrants operating for profit.

However, HMG wishes to implement the recommendations of the report, and staff from FPL have already met the Ministry of Justice team and stressed our position. We do not believe that every legal change must be resisted, but that the move to commercialise weddings is likely to undermine the Christian understanding of marriage.

Mr Sam Wilson (Newcastle) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q141 In GS 2289, Annex A, the bishops committed to working with the National Society to produce an updated version of the guidance for church schools, Valuing All God's Children. When can we expect to receive this updated version, and how will both the guidance and the timeline be affected by the government's plan to issue new guidance for schools on issues around gender identity?

The Bishop of Durham to reply on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops

A The guidance will most certainly be updated in the light of the government guidance. It is expected that the government guidance will be published this term for consultation in the Autumn and final publication in 2024. We expect our guidance to be updated on a similar timeline.

HOUSE OF CLERGY

The Revd Canon John Bavington (Leeds) to ask the Chair of the House of Clergy:

Q142 At a recent meeting between members of the House of Clergy and representatives of the LLF groups a considerable number of questions were submitted. How many questions were submitted, and when and where will answers to those questions be published?

The Revd Kate Wharton to reply as Chair of the House of Clergy:

A Between points raised in the meeting, in the Zoom chat and by email after the meeting there were 83 comments on the Pastoral Guidance, 31 on Pastoral Reassurance, 27 on the Prayers of Love and Faith, and 28 on process matters, although some were very similar, and some members made several comments in one or more of the areas.

The paper containing all of the submissions has now been circulated to members of the House as promised. Although the paper is mentioned in paragraph 17 of GS 2303, at present there has been no formal response from the LLF Implementation Group.

SECRETARY GENERAL

Mr Adam Kendry (Armed Forces) to ask the Secretary General:

Q143 What is the breakdown of General Synod boards and committee membership by each church tradition: a) Central, b) Liberal, c) Traditional Catholic, d) Modern Catholic, e) Conservative Evangelical, f) Charismatic Evangelical, g) Open Evangelical?

Mr William Nye to reply as Secretary General:

A I am afraid that the information requested could not be collated without disproportionate time being spent in doing so. In any case, it is optional for General Synod members to state their church tradition when submitting their data to the Central Secretariat, and therefore any answer would not be complete.

Mr Adam Kendry (Armed Forces) to ask the Secretary General:

Q144 How many Church of England parishes belong to each church tradition (as provided as options for General Synod members to describe themselves), namely: a) Central, b) Liberal, c) Traditional Catholic, d) Modern Catholic, e) Conservative Evangelical, f) Charismatic Evangelical, g) Open Evangelical?

Mr William Nye to reply as Secretary General:

- A** The Data Services Team does not collect data which asks parishes to describe their church tradition.

Canon Nigel Bacon (Lincoln) to ask the Secretary General:

- Q145** With the welcome use of Reference Groups in the early stages of formulating legislative proposals, what processes are followed, or guidance provided, such that the membership of such a Group provides a reasonably balanced representation of the range of pertinent opinions and concerns?

Mr William Nye to reply as Secretary General:

- A** It is good to hear that the use of Reference groups has been welcomed. There is no formal policy or guidance for the use of such groups as they are a recent development. The expectation would be that project leaders would decide what kind of group would be appropriate and that would be agreed with the group/senior officers overseeing the work as part of the governance of the project. It would be good practice to ensure that the role and responsibilities of any such groups are clear, through terms of reference or project documentation. As the purpose of these groups is to gather a range of opinions a broad and diverse membership would be appropriate and expected.

Mr Clive Billenness (Europe) to ask the Secretary General:

- Q146** Please provide details of where the Church of England's Conflicts of Interest Policy can be inspected or, if no such policy exists, please provide details of how conflicts of interest are identified, managed and recorded?

Mr William Nye to reply as Secretary General:

- A** The Church of England is not one single institution and therefore there is not one single conflicts of interest policy. Each legal entity which makes up the Church of England will have its own policy on conflicts of interest.

With respect to the Archbishops' Council, in accordance with normal practice in the charity sector, we require trustees to complete written annual declarations of interest, and conflicts of interest is a standing item on the agenda of each meeting, so trustees must consider whether any item of business to be discussed might give rise to a conflict.

Mrs Jane Rosam (Rochester) to ask the Secretary General:

- Q147** Where can members of Synod read the CofE conflicts of interest policy the application of which will explain to them why Meg Munn would not have a conflict of interest in acting simultaneously as Chair of the ISB and NSP with a passported seat from the NSP onto the NSSG.

Mr William Nye to reply as Secretary General:

- A** The Church of England is not one single institution and therefore there is not one single conflicts of interest policy. The Archbishops' Council requires trustees and members of the board to declare any relevant interests.

The National Safeguarding Panel and Independent Safeguarding Board are not trustee bodies of the Church of England. Both the NSP and ISB have been set up to advise and scrutinise the work of safeguarding in the Church. They both expect members to declare conflicts of interest at each meeting.

The role of Independent Chair of the National Safeguarding Panel is not automatically in conflict with the role of Chair of the Independent Safeguarding

Board. The independent chair of the NSP attends the NSSG to contribute NSP perspectives into the formulation of NSSG policy, in the same way that members of the ISB attend the Safeguarding Programme Board to contribute their perspectives into safeguarding developments.

CLERK TO THE SYNOD

Mr Clive Billenness (Europe) to ask the Clerk to the Synod:

Q148 Please provide a detailed technical explanation of why signatures for Private Members Motions submitted via the website were not received by staff between May 4 and June 20 including details of what technical mitigations were put in place to prevent a repetition of the issue?

Mr Andrew Orange (Winchester) to ask the Clerk to the Synod:

Q149 Concerning PMMs, please can you provide a detailed account of how the failure of the registration system during May-June has been dealt with, and can you give an assurance that all attempts to register support during the period of failure have been captured and re-registered, and may the published list of members who have signed each PMM be updated so that it is comprehensive and correct?

Mr Tony Allwood (St Edmundsbury & Ipswich) to ask the Clerk to the Synod:

Q150 General Synod Standing Order 6(7)(b) provides that "*The number of names supporting each [Private Member's] motion is to be... made known to members in such manner as the Business Committee determines from time to time*", and SO 6(7A), added by amendment to the SOs in July 2018, provides, "*In the case of each motion, the name of each member supporting the motion is to be published on the Synod website.*" Bearing in mind the recent "technical issue with signatures for PMMs via the website (referred to in paragraph 24 of the Business Committee report, GS 2297), what procedures are in place to ensure that the website is updated frequently (a) to show the number of supporting signatures for each PMM, and (b) to provide a link to the list of members supporting each motion?

Ms Jenny Jacobs to reply as Clerk to the Synod:

A With permission I will answer questions 148, 149 and 150 together.

The issue that arose in May was that the signatures for Private Members' Motions via the website was not synching to the generic PMM mailbox. This meant that when staff went into the mailbox, only those signatures via the App were being seen. There were no signatures lost as those submitted via the website were still stored in the website database.

To address this issue, our IT team has set up a new mailbox for the PMMs which staff have access to. This has been vigorously tested internally, and this issue should not arise again.

The signatures that had been submitted via the website have now been added to the rolling list of signatures and the list of PMMs is correct up to 21 June. It will be updated following the group of sessions with any signatures received from 22 June and during the group of sessions. We will then ensure that the list of signatures is updated regularly until 30 October which will be the cut-off date for the November 2023 group of sessions.

Mr Tony Allwood (St Edmundsbury & Ipswich) to ask the Clerk to the Synod:

Q151 Please explain why the Report of Proceedings of the February 2023 group of sessions of General Synod does not include the text of the answers to the questions asked in November 2022 pursuant to SO 117 (as set out in a Notice Paper

circulated on 1 December 2022), as required by Standing Order 117(3), and inform Synod of the procedures that are in place to ensure compliance with this Standing Order.

Ms Jenny Jacobs to reply as Clerk to the Synod:

A The answers to written questions in November 2022 had been included on the Synod web pages and circulated in their own right. It is correct that these should have been added to the February 2023 Report of Proceedings. This was an oversight which has since been corrected. This has been included on the staff work plan so should not happen in future.

The Revd Tim Edwards (Rochester) to ask the Clerk to the Synod:

Q152 Will the Synod briefing document that is sent to diocesan secretaries in advance of a group of sessions also be routinely sent to members of General Synod before future groups of sessions?

Ms Jenny Jacobs to reply as Clerk to the Synod:

A The briefing for Diocesan Secretaries is put together by summarising information found in the Business Committee Report, the Agenda and the emails sent out to members from Synod Support. It had not been sent to members as we are aware that there is already considerable documentation sent by our team for Synod, and did not want to add to it, particularly as the information can be found elsewhere.

We do encourage the Diocesan Secretaries to share this but if members would like to receive this directly, we would be happy to include them on the mailing list. We would suggest that members contact us directly on synod@churchofengland.org to be included in the circulation.

There is also a post-Synod summary that is sent to Diocesan Secretaries which pulls together the results of votes, final versions of motions and other key points of relevance. We would be happy to share this with members as well if this was of interest.

Mr Philip Baldwin (London) to ask the Clerk to the Synod:

Q153 Why did the Synod membership details form, sent out in early May, ask about age, disability, race, ethnicity and sex, but not gender reassignment or sexual orientation, also protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010?

Ms Jenny Jacobs to reply as Clerk to the Synod:

A The form which members were invited to complete included demographic data (year of birth, race and ethnicity, gender and disability). This data is used to enable us to produce anonymised statistics about the demographic make-up of the General Synod. Further detail can be found in the General Synod Privacy Notice. It is optional for members to provide the demographic data.

We did not review the categories of data requested, but simply repeated those from the previous quinquennium. It would be possible to conduct a review of the data requested, if there were an interest in obtaining such statistics either about the other protected characteristics, or indeed any other factor.

The Revd Sara Batts-Neale (Chelmsford) to ask the Clerk to the Synod:

Q154 Following the recent confirmation of November 2023 sessions, many Synod members began to book hotel rooms. Already, charges for this period at basic hotels within safe reach of Church House are at, or exceeding, the accommodation limit. A recent press article highlighted the trend ([Premier Inn room rates soar as](#)

[budget hotel era 'evaporates,' Guardian. 22 June 2023](#))*. What is the basis on which expenses allowances for General Synod members are set?

Ms Jenny Jacobs to reply as Clerk to the Synod:

- A** The expenses policy applies to staff, trustees and committee members. Dioceses are also encouraged to follow this policy. It has been recognised that the current rates within the policy are at times challenging or not possible to remain within. Therefore, a benchmarking exercise was taken early this year to review the expenses policy for the National Church Institutions. The exercise looked at comparable charities and led to an uplift of 10%. This equates to bed and breakfast rates increasing from £141 per night to £155 per night.

Dioceses are encouraged to follow these guidelines but as they are responsible for reimbursing the expenses, it is for the diocese to consider if they are willing to pay more, recognising they are using charitable funds.

CHURCH BUILDINGS COUNCIL

Canon Robert Hammond (Chelmsford) to ask the Chair of the Church Buildings Council:

- Q155** Now that the UK is no longer governed by EU law, has the Church of England asked HM Government for VAT relief for work on church buildings? If not, have Church of England representatives had any recent discussions with HM Government on revising the unrealistic rules on the Listed Places of Worship Grant scheme?

The Ven Bob Cooper to reply on behalf of the Chair of the Church Buildings Council:

- A** The Church of England is engaged with partners in Historic England, the Heritage Alliance, the DCMS and elsewhere over the impact of VAT on works to historic buildings, including churches.

The DCMS is the responsible department for the VAT grant scheme and keeps the operation of the scheme under review. The Council and the Historic Religious Buildings Alliance write around at least once each year to ask for concerns over the operation of the scheme to raise with the department. The scheme is generous, and we always encourage parishes who receive a grant to write to thank their MP and invite them to see the completed work. The scheme must be careful to fund only things that are permanently in the building and expenses that directly lead to works to the listed building. This can lead to frustration over where boundaries are drawn. The DCMS will listen to proposals for review of what is eligible but must always keep the focus of the grants on the fabric of a listed building.

A new website, with online application form was recently launched, more consistent with other modern government websites. This will make the application process more straightforward.

The Revd Graham Kirk-Spriggs (Norwich) to ask the Chair of the Church Buildings Council:

- Q156** Many churches find themselves with very valuable and historically important Communion Plate and Vessels, yet they are unable to sell them to raise funds or have them stored safely somewhere secure. Many counties' Museums are not accepting any more plate, and Cathedral treasuries are full. Can we have guidance and a national strategy on this?

The Ven Bob Cooper to reply on behalf of the Chair of the Church Buildings Council:

A The church buildings of the Church of England are home to an amazing variety of treasures and artworks that are of high significance, including church plate. The Church Buildings Council considers that church treasures belong in churches and should only be removed in the most exceptional circumstances. In some circumstances a loan to a museum or cathedral treasury is possible through a deed of gift.

The Church Buildings Council has guidance on the ChurchCare website on the care of church plate, and also a template deed of gift for where there is a suitable museum or treasury to house the plate. There is also guidance on the law around potential disposal when there is an exceptional reason to consider this. The Council can assist with advice and sometimes grant aid towards the cost of secure display or repair of church plate.

The church and its historic furnishings, including plate, are an intergenerational resource and part of shared memory in a place. After the pandemic we have come to see just how important place and all that contributes to it is.

The Revd Graham Kirk-Spriggs (Norwich) to ask the Chair of the Church Buildings Council:

Q157 Where should historically important and valuable plate be put if it is at risk?

The Ven Bob Cooper to reply on behalf of the Chair of the Church Buildings Council:

A The Church Buildings Council considers that plate belongs in the church. It is also aware of current heightened concerns over security after some well-publicized thefts during this year.

The Council is part of the National Police Chiefs Council Heritage Crime Group and works closely with Historic England over its crime prevention advice. The church contributed to the recently published Historic England advice on Heritage Crime Prevention, and at a forum for police and crime commissioners where church crime was featured.

Police crime analysts at Opal have been tracking church burglaries as they emerged from the start of 2023. Their analysis shows that these crimes, though serious, are still very rare. Attempted burglaries can be thwarted by following the security advice published on the ChurchCare website and by insurers. For churches that have installed an alarm, extending it to the vestry will make a church a less attractive target. In the same vein, if there is CCTV keep the recording where it is not easy for a thief to find and take it, or otherwise disable the system.

Mrs Amanda Robbie (Lichfield) to ask the Chair of the Church Buildings Council:

Q158 How much money has been spent on the development of the Quinquennial Inspection App, when will it be available and how has the demand for it been assessed?

The Ven Bob Cooper to reply on behalf of the Chair of the Church Buildings Council

A The Council has developed a function to add Quinquennial Inspection reports to its Church Heritage Record and Online Faculty System. The function is not currently supported by a digital "app".

The QI function cost around £15k to develop. It is presently not widely used as reports are most often added as PDF documents. This has not allowed development of interrogation of inspection reports as intended – for example to understand costs and urgency of work across the diocese. The facility to add

reports has however proved to be successful in that diocesan officers now have a single repository to view ongoing and past Quinquennial Inspection reports, and the facility provided allows inspectors to add the reports directly to the system.

As part of the redevelopment of the Online Faculty System and Church Heritage Record, we will look at options for developing a more integrated QI report feature. We will work with the Ecclesiastical Architects & Surveyors Association to discuss options for onsite recording to streamline the process for all.

FINANCE COMMITTEE

Mr Robert McNeil-Wilson (Gloucester) to ask the Chair of the Finance Committee:

Q159 Total Return Accounting is making additional Diocesan Stipends Funds available to those dioceses using it, to be spent on clerical stipends. Latest figures suggest that an additional £40 million could have been generated in this way in 2022, nationally. On average, this provides each Diocese with an extra £1 Million per annum, which is the equivalent of an extra 18 vicars per diocese per annum. Can the Church explain why only 13 of the 42 Dioceses applied Total Return Accounting to their DSFs in 2022?

Canon Dr John Spence to reply as Chair of the Finance Committee:

A Every DBF is an independent charity and makes its own decisions. Nationally, we have strongly encouraged every diocese to consider this option seriously and continue to do so. However, we cannot enforce adoption.

The financial benefit of adopting a total return approach varies considerably between dioceses depending on the value of their investments, so using averages in this case is somewhat misleading. Of course the money can only be spent once. What total return does is to enable the spending of investment funds today which would otherwise be locked away to support future distributions. The level of additional funds that can be spent depends on the period over which a DBF decides to spend its unapplied total return and whether or not this is intended to be a sustainable rate in real or nominal terms.

The £40m Mr McNeil-Wilson states in his question may be an illustration of all dioceses spending 5%p.a. of their DSF (the average expenditure rate for the ten dioceses which had adopted total return accounting by the start of 2021) compared with DSF income stated in DBF accounts. But some dioceses transfer DSF income directly to defray stipend costs so this figure will be overstated.

Professor Roy Faulkner (Leicester) to ask the Chair of the Finance Committee:

Q160 All trends in church statistics show that there will be no congregation by 2045. At that time, trends predict that the number of stipendiary clergy will be 3607 (80 per Diocese), and the number of Diocesan support staff will exceed 10,000 (approximately 200 per Diocese). Does the decreasing congregation size and decreasing number of stipendiary clergy, contrasted with an increase in Diocesan support staff, suggest an alternative approach that the Church might make to limit the decrease in congregation size?

Canon Dr John Spence to reply as Chair of the Finance Committee:

A It is our intention, ambition and prayer is that our Church will grow through a combination of the Vision and Strategy for the 2020s set out by the Archbishop of York, the finances for which were approved by Synod in July 2022; the ministry of all God's people, lay and ordained, in parishes, chaplaincies, and other contexts; and the gifts and blessings of the Holy Spirit.

An emphasis on increasing our Church's engagement with children and young people is a key part of our combined efforts to encourage numerical and spiritual growth.

It is true that in recent years there have been increases in diocesan support staff. This has been driven by factors including staff involved in creating and delivering strategic change programs; and strengthening the resource for safeguarding management and oversight and DDO teams as we successfully increased the number of ordination candidates between 2015 and 2019. The recent trend in diocesan running costs is not expected to continue into the future, nor would it be affordable.

COMMITTEE FOR MINORITY ETHNIC ANGLICAN CONCERNS

The Revd Folli Olokose (Guildford) to ask the Chair of the Committee for Minority Ethnic Anglican Concerns:

Q161 The annual CMEAC report shows many encouraging initiatives from dioceses working with UKME. Could the Racial Justice Unit share some of the success stories more widely? Are there lessons to be learned from these stories? And how are these being shared with the wider Church?

The Dean of Manchester to reply as Chair of the Committee for Minority Ethnic Anglican Concerns:

A In 2022, the Committee for Minority Ethnic Anglican Concerns (CMEAC) undertook a review of actions at the diocesan level to promote racial justice and further the implementation of the report of the Archbishops' Anti-Racism Taskforce: From Lament to Action. It is anticipated that such a review would be a recurring process, preferably annually. While the findings were presented to the Archbishops' Council in December 2022 and subsequently shared with dioceses, some dioceses requested that the information shared be updated to ensure a complete up to date account is available. Accordingly, further information and data gathering is currently taking place with the expectation that the completed report will be published in accessible formats, complete with success stories and lessons learned, later this year.

MINISTRY COUNCIL

The Revd Canon Ian Flintoft (Newcastle) to ask the Chair of the Ministry Council:

Q162 Given the apparent difficulties in finding Advisers for stage 2 residential panels, when will Ministry Council carry out a further review of the current discernment process, including the issues of the recruitment and retention of Bishops' Advisers?

The Bishop of Chester to reply as Chair of the Ministry Council:

A In the current year (September 2022 – August 2023) we have run 77 Stage 1 panels requiring 462 Bishops' Advisers for Discernment. We have set up 50 Stage 2 panels requiring up to 400 Bishops' Advisers for Discernment.

Only one panel (at Stage 2) has been cancelled because of not having the required number and type of Bishops' Advisers, but in the same week another panel still has spaces. Therefore, no candidates have been prevented from coming to a panel because we have not been able to find Bishops' Advisers.

Where Advisers have needed to withdraw from panels it is normally for good reasons and often illness-related (including covid).

We agreed that Ministry Council would review the new Shared Discernment

Process after the first two years, and this will take place in Autumn 2023 in connection with the DDO Consultation.

The Revd Fiona Jack (London) to ask the Chair of the Ministry Council:

Q163 What guidance has been given to DDOs supporting LGBTQ+ candidates, given the uncertainty created by the House of Bishops' decision to withdraw "Issues in Human Sexuality", but in the absence of any replacement?

The Bishop of Chester to reply as Chair of the Ministry Council:

A *Issues in Human Sexuality* remains in place until the House of Bishops provide new pastoral guidance. However, there is a deep recognition of the uncertainty caused for candidates as well as for DDOs around this (as well as about many other aspects of Living in Love and Faith) at the current time. DDOs have been encouraged and supported in their work to treat LGBTQ+ candidates, and all other candidates concerned by this uncertainty, with empathy, care and sensitive awareness. Members of the Ministry Development Team have made clear that any DDO is welcome to seek support in offering the best care and support for candidates in any particular situations they are facing.

The Revd Andrew Yates (Truro) to ask the Chair of the Ministry Council:

Q164 Already we see adverts for clergy mentioning the need to lead church communities through the effects of sea level rises. Conversations with TEI staff indicate that the provision of teaching enabling emerging church leaders at Theological Colleges and other Ministry Training Courses is patchy in regard to matters relating to the 5th mark of mission.

What is being done to address this and how will the Church of England tackle this serious weakness in the teaching of Ordinands to ensure that they are adequately prepared to provide appropriate guidance, teaching, missional leadership and pastoral care for their future parishioners as we all face the dire consequences of sea level rise, climate change and ecological breakdown?

The Bishop of Chester to reply as Chair of the Ministry Council:

A The new Formation Framework for ordinands, makes explicit references to creation and to the *Five Marks of Mission* – in the Formation Criteria which previously applied environmental issues was nowhere explicit, though implicitly included in references to mission. This year's annual Common Awards conference, open to all TEI staff, is on the theme of theological education and the environmental crisis. As well as plenary sessions with speakers, staff will be invited to discuss in disciplinary subject groupings how their learning from the conference should affect their own teaching. The recently formed Theological Colleges Environmental Network, with which we liaise, is also doing work on integration of environmental issues across the curriculum as well as specific modules. They are seeking to develop the Eco Church awards for TEIs to include curricular and formational issues.

Clearly the formation of clergy continues beyond IME1, so further learning should take place in curacy and beyond.

The Revd Esther Prior (Guildford) to ask the Chair of the Ministry Council:

Q165 In the consultations about the development of ministerial training, there was a strong sense of the need for a move towards a common syllabus/shared framework for training across the different institutions and range of pathways. What progress has been made towards this?

The Bishop of Chester to reply as Chair of the Ministry Council:

- A** The premise of this question correctly reflects the desire for a shared framework but any desire for a common syllabus was, and is, contested (as reflected in previous responses to synod questions).

The new Formation Framework offers clear overarching expectations for the initial training of ordained and licensed lay ministers (available at [Training institutions | The Church of England](#) for IME1 and [After Ordination | The Church of England](#) for curates in IME2). Likewise, Common Awards offers elements of common practice for TEIs, except where an exception is granted by Ministry Council. We have begun discussion with TEIs and dioceses to consider whether greater coherence between IME1 and IME2 can be achieved and what level of commonality of syllabus best serves the formation of the Church's diverse ministers, but there is not sufficient capacity to do this work while the Resourcing Ministerial Formation review remains underway.

The Revd Neil Patterson (Hereford) to ask the Chair of the Ministry Council:

- Q166** Has the Ministry Council considered the impact on the theological education sector of the widespread growth of training pathways for older candidates on the 'Caleb' model, outside Bishops' Guidelines, where discernment takes place simultaneously with a single year's theological education before ordination?

The Bishop of Chester to reply as Chair of the Ministry Council:

- A** This question addresses the impact on the theological education sector, which is dynamic, responsive, and seeking to engage with innovations such as 'Caleb' in which discernment and formation take place concurrently. Ministry Council continues to note the impact on the TEIs of such innovative approaches.

It is also important to note that the year's 'Caleb' training takes place at TEIs, though not within the normal funding for the training of ordinands. As [GS 2286](#) stated, the Council is committed to sustaining and expanding the work of TEIs to have the ministers we need. In the medium term, even with initiatives such as Caleb, we require TEIs to train more ordinands within the standard pathways than they currently do. The RMF funding model, agreed by Synod in February, offers TEIs significant protection against reduced ordinand fee income when they have a temporary downturn in numbers for any reason.

The Revd Rick Stordy (Sheffield) to ask the Chair of the Ministry Council:

- Q167** What is the agreed national requirement in place for ensuring understanding of, familiarity with, and competence in the use of the Book of Common Prayer in public worship for ordinands, and how are the training institutions assessed for their meeting of this requirement?

The Bishop of Chester to reply as Chair of the Ministry Council:

- A** Canon C7 requires that all those to be ordained must possess 'sufficient knowledge...of the doctrine, discipline, and worship of the Church of England as set forth in the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion, *The Book of Common Prayer*, and the Ordinal.' There are no specific requirements for how TEIs ensure this, just as in other areas TEIs have discretion in how they ensure ordinands receive the necessary formation. As part of the Periodic External Review process, TEIs are specifically required to provide as evidence their worship policy including information about the rites used and the frequency as well as documentation on training ordinands in leading public worship. Reviewers are specifically asked to comment in their report on the TEI's use of the Book of Common Prayer. It is clearly

an important function of IME2 to extend the candidate's competency in leading worship, building on the foundations laid in IME1.

The Revd Dr Sean Doherty (Universities & TEIs) to ask the Chair of the Ministry Council:

Q168 This year the number of ordinands in training has fallen by over 14% (from 1,285 in 2021-22 to 1,101 to 2022-23), with the numbers in full-time training dropping by over a fifth. TEIs have been told that the numbers of new starters this year has fallen sharply to about 380 in 2022 from 475 in 2021. How many people have been recommended for training so far this year following a Stage 2 panel, and how many are booked to attend one between now and the end of August?

The Bishop of Chester to reply as Chair of the Ministry Council:

A 239 candidates have been recommended to train for ordained ministry at Stage 2 panels since 1 September 2022 until 30th June 2023

156 candidates are registered to attend remaining Stage 2 panels before 31 August 2023 (123 of these will come before the end of July and 33 by 8th August)

There is also a much higher number than usual of recommended candidates who have deferred the start of their training from previous years, and it is not yet clear how many of those will enter training this year.

The Revd Jeremy Moodey (Oxford) to ask the Chair of the Ministry Council:

Q169 Given the major drop in the number of ordinands who entered training in 2022, and the potentially low intake again this year, what ongoing support has been offered to Theological Education Institutions given the dramatic impact this is having on their income?

The Bishop of Chester to reply as Chair of the Ministry Council:

A TEIs were offered one-off additional funding in 2022 to mitigate the financial effect on them of the drop in the numbers entering IME1 in that year. Payments totalled approximately £1 million. The RMF funding model, as agreed by Synod in February, offers TEIs significant protection against a loss of ordinand fee income when they have a temporary downturn in numbers for any reason.

The Revd Jeremy Moodey (Oxford) to ask the Chair of the Ministry Council:

Q170 According to GS 2286, the church needs at least 630 new ordained ministers per year to achieve the 'bold outcomes' set out in the Vision and Strategy initiative. This will require an increase of two thirds on the numbers entering training in 2022. In the light of such ambition, what work is being undertaken to increase the number of ordinands entering training each year?

The Bishop of Chester to reply as Chair of the Ministry Council:

A The Ministry Council and the Archbishops' Council both share the concerns around lower numbers of new ordinands starting training.

At its May meeting, the Ministry Council approved a stream of work to renew the Church's shared task in discovery and nurture of new ministerial vocations across the Church of England, both lay and ordained. Work will start in the autumn. In the meantime, all Synod members are encouraged to pray for God's provision of ministers for his Church.

The Revd Neil Patterson (Hereford) to ask the Chair of the Ministry Council:

Q171 Will the Ministry Council please supply a full breakdown of ordinand numbers at the several TEIs for the academic year 2022-3, for the information of Synod?

The Bishop of Chester to reply as Chair of the Ministry Council:

A The requested information has been posted on the noticeboard.

The Revd Canon Nick Moir (Ely) to ask the Chair of the Ministry Council:

Q172 In the debate on GS 2286 Resourcing Ministerial Education at the February 2023 Synod the former Pro-Vice-Chancellor of Leeds University challenged the failure to assess the true cost of ministerial training and the relative costs of full-time residential, full-time non-residential and part-time training, making it clear that such costings are regarded as essential in the higher education sector however difficult they are to calculate. The report suggested that the task was too difficult and chose simply to accept the current settlement with adjustments for inflation. In the light of Professor Hill's criticism are there any plans to revisit this and to establish the true cost of training for ordained ministry?

The Bishop of Chester to reply as Chair of the Ministry Council:

A The RMF Working Group concluded that assessing fee levels would not form part of the current project. This does not preclude the Ministry Council from requesting a review in future although there are no specific plans to do this at present.

The Revd Paul Bradbury (Salisbury) to ask the Chair of the Ministry Council:

Q173 GS 2142 stated a Ministry Division target of doubling and doubling again the number of pioneers (lay and ordained) by 2027. The aims of Vision and Strategy set out in GS 2223 include the bold outcome of 'creating ten thousand new Christian communities across the four areas of home, work/education, social and digital'. Given that pioneer ministers are those called and gifted in the area of forming new ecclesial communities, can I ask:

- How many candidates were accepted for training as ordained pioneer ministers in each individual year between 2019 and 2022?
- What progress has been made toward the targets set out in GS 2142?

The Bishop of Chester to reply as Chair of the Ministry Council:

A In each of the following years, the number of Ordained Pioneer Ministers recommended to train were:

2019: 19

2020: 32

2021: 45 (32 through the national discernment process and 13 through pioneer panels)

2022: Due to transferring to a new IT system we are not currently able to identify the number of OPMs coming through the national discernment process in this year. One OPM came through a pioneer panel.

In 2021, the introduction of the Shared Discernment Process meant that ordinands coming through the national discernment process could also discern a pioneer charism at the same time. Lay and previously ordained pioneers continue to go through pioneer panels.

Whilst much of the disruption in 2022 can be attributed to the pandemic, some may also be a result of staffing changes and work on this priority is currently delayed.

The Revd Paul Bradbury (Salisbury) to ask the Chair of the Ministry Council:

Q174 Whilst Vision and Strategy continues to encourage a mixed ecology of church there appears to be no-one within Ministry Division named as holding a responsibility for

pioneer ministry, fresh expressions, or for the development of Greenhouse which plays a really important role in growing and sustaining new worshipping communities.

Who is now holding this brief with Ministry Division? And how do they plan to connect with, for example, the pioneer panels, the network of Ordained Pioneer Ministers, the network of Diocesan FX and Pioneer ministry advisers and the work of Greenhouse?

The Bishop of Chester to reply as Chair of the Ministry Council:

A As a result of recent staffing changes, this work is currently shared.

The discernment of OPMs is shared between the National Discernment Team (as part of the National Discernment Process) and the Gregory Centre for Multiplication (pioneer panels for lay and previously ordained candidates).

The work of Greenhouse on fresh expressions is held for the Archbishops' Council by the Vision and Strategy Team.

There is not currently a pioneer focused role in the Ministry Development Team (formerly 'Ministry Division') although each of the various teams share the brief in respect of Lay Ministries, Vocations, Discernment and Formation of pioneer ministers.

Mrs Catharine Butcher (Chichester) to ask the Chair of the Ministry Council:

Q175 What are the central strategic plans for training and supporting those who are starting new worshipping communities?

The Bishop of Chester to reply as Chair of the Ministry Council:

A Published diocesan plans to date suggest over 4,000 new worshipping communities are currently planned. Appropriate leadership is crucial to this and there needs to be a right balance between central and local training and support. Most church leaders will need to be equipped to start and oversee the start of new expressions and some will be involved in church planting.

This is being considered throughout ministerial formation both centrally and locally, ordained and lay. The national Shared Discernment Process for ordained ministry and associated new formation frameworks have been developed with widening access and the mixed ecology in mind. In line with the aim that at least 2,000 of the new worshipping communities are in our most deprived contexts there is a strong focus on growing leaders on urban estates and other areas of deprivation, with examples including the Birmingham [Local Ministry Pathway](#), [Become](#) (in London), [M:Power](#) (Diocese of Blackburn) and [Stepping Up](#) (Mustard Seed, Diocese of York).

Nationally we continue to fund and support the Greenhouse project in partnership with dioceses, developing leaders in fresh expressions. So far 16 dioceses have participated with a further 9 in current discussion. The national work also supports the sharing of learning leading to expansion and multiplication of particular new worshipping communities such as Choir church.

The Revd Dr Patrick Richmond (Norwich) to ask the Chair of the Ministry Council:

Q176 Dioceses like Leicester, Sheffield and Truro increasingly want clergy to exercise oversight of multiple parishes and wide areas, not just a traditional parish. What is being done centrally to help select, train and support clergy regarding these new roles?

The Bishop of Chester to reply as Chair of the Ministry Council:

A Initial discernment focuses on candidates being able to build relationships that are enabling and collaborative, and leading in a way that enables thriving and healthy churches. For incumbent level ministry, managing change, seeing the big picture, growing vision with others and showing nuanced negotiation and problem solving skills, whilst being able to hold the ring in decision-making are key. Responding with missionary imagination in God's world is also important.

IME1 forms all clergy for collaborative leadership in the context of a church where a range of multi-parish benefice arrangements are normal.

IME2 is the responsibility of each diocese and has to strike a balance between forming those who will continue to serve in that diocese with its particular vision and approach to ministry and equipping those who will serve elsewhere to do so.

Rural/Area Deans and Archdeacons continue to support clergy in these and other kinds of roles.

Mrs Kat D'Arcy-Cumber (Chelmsford) to ask the Chair of the Ministry Council:

Q177 Recognising that non-residential training is the only practical option for many ordinands, what measures are in place to ensure breadth of churchmanship and theological perspective within these non-residential institutions?

The Bishop of Chester to reply as Chair of the Ministry Council:

A We make no comment on the assertion with which the question begins.

All TEIs are required to ensure ordinands are well-formed in the breadth of Anglican traditions, equipped to reflect critically on their own practices, and able to engage generously and respectfully with those whose liturgical preference or theological position differs from their own. Periodic External Review teams always include reviewers drawn from a diversity of traditions, and consider the breadth of approach evident in the TEI's worship. There are no additional (or reduced) requirements for TEIs offering non-residential training. TEIs offering non-residential training will be particularly engaged with their local dioceses who will expect them to offer appropriate formation to the widest range of ordinands, and in most cases the diocese will have representation in the TEI's governance.

The Revd Claire Robson (Newcastle) to ask the Chair of the Ministry Council:

Q178 What progress has been made in the areas addressed in [GS Misc 1285](#) concerning the nature and role of ordained ministry, and in particular the matters raised in its conclusion?

The Bishop of Chester to reply as Chair of the Ministry Council:

A In the area of clergy discipline as raised in GS Misc 1285, the first draft of the new Clergy Conduct Measure is on the agenda for consideration at this Synod (GS 2311).

In relation to the wider issues raised by the paper: the Clergy Role Group, chaired by the Bishop of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich was established at the end of 2022, having been delayed by the 'Transforming Effectiveness' programme. The group has met four times (with two further meetings scheduled during 2023) and has been focusing on reviewing the nature and role of ordained ministry, using the current formation framework as a starting point. The group expects to report on this first stage to Ministry Council and the Legislative Reform Committee, to which the Group is accountable, in the autumn. Consideration of the Guidelines for the Professional Conduct of Clergy should commence towards the end of this year.

Miss Rosemary Wilson (Southwark) to ask the Chair of the Ministry Council:

Q179 How many licensed clergy in resolution parishes are ready to be appointed to a senior position?

The Bishop of Chester to reply as Chair of the Ministry Council:

A This data is collated based on the position of the priest concerned rather than the parish (or other context) in which they serve.

Thus we cannot provide information relating to parishes which have passed resolutions. However, of the current clergy who have been discerned as ready for episcopal leadership, five describe themselves as either Complementarian Evangelical or Traditional Catholic.

This data is not independently available for other forms of senior leadership such as Cathedral Deans, Archdeacons or TEI Principals.

The Revd Marcus Walker (London) to ask the Chair of the Ministry Council:

Q180 How many parishes have a vacancy for (a) an incumbency and (b) a priest-in-charge in each diocese; and how many (i) incumbents and (ii) priest-in-charge vacancies there have been in each diocese in each of the last five years?

The Bishop of Chester to reply as Chair of the Ministry Council:

A There is no central record of vacancies.

Mr Paul Ronson (Blackburn) to ask the Chair of the Ministry Council:

Q181 What progress can the [Clergy Care and Wellbeing Facilitation] Group report on its monitoring and evaluation of the rollout of the Covenant for Clergy Care and Wellbeing since its adoption as an Act of Synod in 2020 and what is the anticipated timescale of the Group's report back to General Synod?

The Bishop of Chester to reply as Chair of the Ministry Council:

A The Facilitation Group for the Covenant for Clergy Care and Wellbeing is not currently meeting while the Appointments Committee seeks a new chair. Meanwhile, the Ministry Development Team is considering a possible resource to facilitate dioceses in developing wellbeing strategy and good practice which will also capture review data for collating and forming the basis of the next report to Synod. A new timeline will be proposed once the new chair is in post.

The Revd Chantal Noppen (Durham) to ask the Chair of the Ministry Council:

Q182 Is data collected and collated centrally around the numbers of ordinands, curates, and post-curacy clergy taking maternity leave, and if so, please could the figures for the last 5 years be provided?

The Bishop of Chester to reply as Chair of the Ministry Council:

A This data is not collected centrally.

Dr Felicity Cooke (Ely) to ask the Chair of the Ministry Council:

Q183 What were the numbers of male and female stipendiary clergy in each diocese in the years ending December 2021 and December 2022?

The Bishop of Chester to reply as Chair of the Ministry Council:

A The information in reply to this Question and Question 182 is displayed in the Table on the noticeboard. 2022 data is not yet available, but data is provided up to 2021.

Dr Felicity Cooke (Ely) to ask the Chair of the Ministry Council:

Q184 What were the numbers of male and female SSM clergy in each diocese in the years ending December 2021 and December 2022?

The Bishop of Chester to reply as Chair of the Ministry Council:

A The information in reply to this Question and Question 181 is displayed in the Table on the noticeboard. 2022 data is not yet available, but data is provided up to 2021.

REMUNERATION & CONDITIONS OF SERVICE COMMITTEE

Mrs Jeanette Appleton (St Edmundsbury & Ipswich) to ask the Chair of the Remuneration and Conditions of Service Committee:

Q185 Why do clergy receive financial assistance when moving to a new post from the appointing diocese, but when they retire, there is no financial assistance from either the diocese where they have been a priest, or central Church of England, for the cost of moving to their new home where they will live out their retirement?

The Bishop of Hereford to reply as Chair of the Remuneration and Conditions of Service Committee:

A Clergy are generally required to live in the house provided for the better performance of their duties in the parish(es) where they minister. On this basis, it is recommended (but not required) that dioceses should pay stipendiary clergy a minimum Resettlement Grant of at least 10% of the National Minimum Stipend (payable in addition to the cost of the van) for all moves.

In retirement, there is no requirement that clergy need to live in a particular place or continue to have a ministry, although many apply for Permission to Officiate and make a valuable contribution to the Church's ministry after retirement from stipendiary office. In addition, when clergy retire, they receive a lump sum that can be used to pay removal costs.

The Revd Graham Hamilton (Exeter) to ask the Chair of the Remuneration and Conditions of Service Committee:

Q186 How has the clergy stipend compared with average earnings over the last ten and twenty years in percentile terms? What increase in stipend would be needed to restore it to its previous comparative value?

The Bishop of Hereford to reply as Chair of the Remuneration and Conditions of Service Committee:

The table below shows how the National Stipend Benchmark for 2021 compares with total income before tax by percentile points for 2021 (the latest year for which HMRC data is available), and how it compared in 2011 and 2001.

Year	National Stipend Benchmark (NSB)	Percentile point for total income before tax
2020/21	£27,000	52 nd
2010/11	£22,470	58 th
2000/01	£16,420	56 th

Looking at just the stipend, clergy receiving the NSB are towards the middle of the income distribution. Between 2001 and 2011 clergy receiving the NSB moved slightly up the distribution, though over the ten years to 2021 clergy fell back towards the middle of the distribution.

To restore the NSB to its previous comparative value in 2011, the NSB would need to have been £29,200 (rather than £27,000) in 2021, and to restore it to its comparative value in 2001 the NSB would need to have been £28,700 in 2021.

The Revd Matt Beer (Lichfield) to ask the Chair of the Remuneration and Conditions of Service Committee:

Q187 Without telling clergy and their families to turn to charities, how is the Church of England going to help clergy with the cost of living? It has been announced that the child tax credits are changing, the cost of living has risen above 10% and cost of Gas has gone up 129% and Electricity 67%?

The Bishop of Hereford to reply as Chair of the Remuneration and Conditions of Service Committee:

A The best way of helping clergy with the cost of living is to ensure that stipends do not fall behind inflation, and this is the policy of the Archbishop's Council. Unfortunately with the current high levels of inflation and the drop in giving following the pandemic this is not affordable at present. However, it is hoped that, in the medium term, once inflation starts to fall, it may still be possible for increases above inflation to enable stipends to catch up.

RACSC remains concerned at the level of clergy hardship and the effect on clergy morale of reductions in the value of the stipend. Discussions with the Finance Committee enabled £3m to be allocated to be allocated to clergy facing hardship as a result of the cost of the living in 2022. A further £15m was awarded to help churches with energy bills in 2023. This was distributed to dioceses mainly to help PCCs with church energy bills, though there was some scope to help ministers if dioceses chose to do so.

MISSION AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS COUNCIL

Canon Nigel Bacon (Lincoln) to ask the Chair of the Mission and Public Affairs Council:

Q188 What progress has been made in following up on the motion, passed at the February 2023 Group of Sessions, calling on His Majesty's Government "to exempt charities, including churches, from liability for Insurance Premium Tax"?

Mr Mark Sheard to reply as Chair of the Mission and Public Affairs Council:

A As with all motions which call upon His Majesty's Government for anything, a letter was sent by the Clerk to the Synod, in this case to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with details of the motion as passed. The Chancellor responded with an acknowledgement. So the Treasury is aware of Synod's views.

With the Public Policy team in Faith and Public Life depleted by staff sickness, vacancies and a secondment to LLF, and having lost our specialist in economic affairs in the Transforming Effectiveness/Simpler NCIs process, we have not had staff capacity to pursue the matter further.

Canon Peter Adams (St Albans) to ask the Chair of the Mission and Public Affairs Council:

Q189 Synod last reviewed the church's work in interfaith relations, and especially its Presence and Engagement programme, in July 2017. Recognising the importance of this work over the past two decades in securing strong engagement with other faith communities when world and national events have sought to divide us and exploit our differences, what plans does the Mission and Public Affairs Council have to report on this work to Synod and seek its views on future work?

Mr Mark Sheard to reply as Chair of the Mission and Public Affairs Council:

A Thank you for the question. The Coronation of King Charles III included for the first time participation from other faith representatives and was commented upon widely. This was a very public affirmation that our role as the Church of England includes serving all religious communities. The Presence & Engagement Programme helps equip the church for this role.

Since 2017, the National Census has shown an increase in people identifying with a religion other than Christian: now over 25% of people in London, our most religiously diverse city. The Presence & Engagement Programme, the P&E Task Group led by Bishop Lusa Nsenga-Ngoy and the network of Diocesan Inter Faith Advisers, work to ensure that the Church of England remains present in religiously diverse areas and engages positively with other faiths. This is not always easy. Global politics impact local relations as the question notes. It is vital that clergy and lay people are informed and supported to act with confidence and sensitivity at times of tension across religious boundaries. The Presence and Engagement programme enables this to happen.

If the Business Committee agrees, we would be delighted to bring a report for debate to Synod at a time of their choosing.

APPOINTMENTS COMMITTEE

The Revd Canon Lisa Battye (Manchester) to ask the Chair of the Appointments Committee:

Q190 With the pressure on some GS interest groups to fill GS Committees with like-minded candidates, and the fact that the only information most voters will have is that contained in a very short electoral Statement, what checks are applied to ensure that people standing for particular roles have the kind of experience they require?

The Ven Pete Spiers to reply as Chair of the Appointments Committee:

A I am answering this question as it relates to appointments not elections. The Appointments Committee works hard to ensure that there is balance on committees, and has a transparent set of [guidelines](#) that it works to. Members of the Committee strive to engage with all Synod members to better understand their skills, expertise and experience.

For both appointments and elections, it is important to recognise that we are a Christian body, and we need to trust that when members state that they have particular experience they are being truthful.

BUSINESS COMMITTEE

Dr Ros Clarke (Lichfield) to ask the Chair of the Business Committee:

Q191 Can you inform Synod which members have received letters from the Business Committee as sanctions for their behaviour in the chamber during the February 2023 sessions? If this is not public information, can you explain how Synod can be reassured that sanctions are applied appropriately and impartially?

Canon Robert Hammond to reply on behalf of the Business Committee:

A No members of Synod received letters from the Business Committee or its Chair, relating to their conduct in the chamber during the February 2023 group of sessions.

Mr John Brydon (Norwich) to ask the Chair of the Business Committee:

Q192 If it is subsequently found that the answer to a question, either at question time or during Synod debates etc was wrong, misleading or evasive, there is no mechanism in the Standing Orders to oblige the person who gave the answer to correct it and publishing the revised answer. Is there any plan to address this?

Canon Robert Hammond to reply on behalf of the Business Committee:

A Standing Order 116 (5) allows for the information asked for to be provided after the group of sessions has concluded and this be included as an Annex to the Report of Proceedings. This is also how corrections to answers are made (eg the answer to Supplementary Question on Q56 in February 2023).

Should there be a need for further guidance on answers to Questions, the Standing Orders Committee could look at that.

The Revd Lindsay Llewellyn-MacDuff (Rochester) to ask the Chair of the Business Committee:

Q193 It has become a common feature of synodical questions that more complex or statistical supplementary answers are offered as a one to one exchange between questioner and committee member (for example "I will write to you" or "I will meet you"). What steps are the Business Committee taking to ensure that supplementary answers promised to Synod members outside the chamber are available to all Synod members?

Canon Robert Hammond to reply on behalf of the Business Committee:

A Where the responder to a supplementary question offers to provide more detailed information, under SO 116 (4) this should appear in an Annex to the report of proceedings and so made available to all members.

Where a responder offers to meet with a member to discuss a point in more detail, that is not covered by the Standing Orders, although I would expect any detailed statistical information to also be included as an Annex in the report of proceedings.

STANDING ORDERS COMMITTEE

Mrs Mary Durlacher (Chelmsford) to ask the Chair of the Standing Orders Committee:

Q194 In the interest of clarity can you please confirm - in the amendment to the definition of "liturgical business" in Standing Order 78 (notice paper 1 point 34), is it the intent that liturgical business be restricted to Canon B2 matters exclusively?

The Revd Canon Joyce Jones to reply as Chair of the Standing Orders Committee:

A There is no provision for Synod to commend a form of service under any Canon except Canon B2 as Liturgical provision is proposed, pursuant to the Church of England (Worship and Doctrine) Measure 1974, for approval under Canon B2.

The House of Bishops has authority to commend a form of service under Canon B5. Canon B5 does not give any role to the Synod, so it would ultra vires for the Standing Orders to impose restrictions on the operation of Canon B5. Rather, Canon B5 would itself have to be amended to create some sort of role for Synod on a form of service before it is commended.

DIOCESES COMMISSION

Miss Debbie Buggs (London) to ask the Chair of the Dioceses Commission:

Q195 What work has been done to explore the economies of scale available, if some of the central functions of some or all of dioceses were to be merged?

Dame Caroline Spelman to reply on behalf of the Dioceses Commission:

A The Dioceses Commission has consulted key stakeholders at the end of 2022 to hear their views on diocesan structures and experiences of collaboration between dioceses. We are in the process of gathering and discussing the feedback, determining any next steps, and will communicate the results and recommendations to those consulted shortly.

CROWN NOMINATIONS COMMISSION

The Ven Mark Ireland (Blackburn) to ask the Chair of the Crown Nominations Commission:

Q196 Given the amendment to Standing Orders for the inclusion of additional Anglican Communion representatives to the CNC for the See of Canterbury, have any discussions taken place with the Anglican Consultative Council or others to clarify how and in what manner these people are to be chosen, how long that process would take, and the extent to which those provinces with self-declared “impaired” relationships with the ACC and Primates meetings will be included (or not) in the process?

The Revd Tom Woolford (Blackburn) to ask the Chair of the Crown Nominations Commission:

Q197 Given the amendment to Standing Orders for the inclusion of additional Anglican Communion representatives to the CNC for the See of Canterbury, have any discussions taken place with the Anglican Consultative Council or others to clarify how and in what manner these people are to be chosen, how long that process would take, and the extent to which those provinces with self-declared “impaired” relationships with the ACC and Primates meetings will be included (or not) in the process?

The Archbishop of Canterbury to reply as Chair of the Crown Nominations Commission:

A With permission I will answer questions 196 and 197 together.

I am not involved in such discussions, quite properly, but I understand that the Secretary General of the Anglican Communion and the Archbishops’ Secretary for Appointments have met to discuss the changes to General Synod Standing Orders as they relate to Anglican Communion representation on a CNC considering a vacancy in the Archbishopric of Canterbury. Given that there is no vacancy, current or imminent, in the See of Canterbury, these discussions are at an early stage, but will continue in the coming months, with others, as appropriate.

LEGAL ADVISORY COMMISSION

The Ven Fiona Gibson (Hereford) to ask the Chair of the Legal Advisory Commission:

Q198 In answer to Q39 at the last Synod in February 2023 the Commission said that its meeting on 08 March 2023 would consider the alleged effect of s.8 of the 1894 Local Government Act stopping parish councils from contributing to the maintenance of open churchyards under s.214(6) Local Government Act 1972. What was the outcome of that meeting?

The Rt Worshipful Morag Ellis KC (Dean of the Arches and Auditor) to reply on behalf of the Chair of the Legal Advisory Commission:

A The Commission discussed this issue at its meetings on 8 March and on 5 June. It agreed that the legislation as it stands is unclear, and the only way to resolve that is to amend the legislation to make clear the intent that Councils can provide such funding. It noted that in June Bishop Vivienne Faull put down amendments to the Levelling-up and Regeneration Bill (at Committee stage in the Lords) which would fix the problem. That had wide support in principle from across the House, and so (as is customary) the Bishop withdrew her amendments following a commitment from the Government to a conversation to agree suitable amendments at Report stage, likely to be in July. Discussions are still underway between the Bishop (supported by the NCI's Faith & Public Life team) and the Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities on that.

If those amendments are passed, the matter will be successfully resolved. If not, and pending a further opportunity for amendment, an opinion explaining why the better interpretation of the existing legislation is that councils may make these payments would be helpful. The Chair of the Commission and I have prepared a suitable draft, which if needs be will be discussed by the Commission at its next meeting on 2 October and published promptly thereafter.

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

The Revd Treena Larkin (Lichfield) to ask the Church Commissioners:

Q199 In January, the Church Commissioners published a full report into historic links to transatlantic chattel slavery and announced a new funding commitment of £100m in response to these findings. Could the Church Commissioners provide an update on how this sum will be invested and how growth funding will be allocated and distributed for projects focused on improving opportunities for communities adversely impacted by historic slavery?

The Bishop of Manchester to reply as Deputy Chair of the Church Commissioners:

A When the report was published in January, the Church Commissioners made a commitment to working with people from communities impacted by the legacy of transatlantic chattel slavery to shape the response, including the design of the fund, listening widely to ensure this work is done sensitively and with accountability.

The Church Commissioners will progress this work with the help of an Oversight Group. This group has just been recruited through an open process and its role is to help the Commissioners' Board to design the impact investment fund and the grant funding programme. Specifically, the Oversight Group will make recommendations on the aims and criteria for the fund and grant programme, suggest areas for further research, commission any further work to inform their proposals, and advise on engagement plans. It is hoped that a recommendation regarding these matters will

be made to the Board of the Church Commissioners in November 2023, with a view to the funding/investment programme commencing in 2024.

Worshipping communities are being encouraged to input their thinking to help shape the fund and details of how to do this will be communicated via Diocesan teams later in July. A video which gives more information for churches has been produced and this will be shown at the Church Commissioners' fringe event on Friday night. We can share this, on request, with any Synod member who is unable to attend the event.

The Revd Roger Driver (Bath & Wells) to ask the Church Commissioners:

Q200 At a time when the Church Commissioners have stated that their assets are valued at £9,056m (Annual Report 2022), is it the case that they are in a position to address the current deficits in diocesan finances, and could choose to allocate funds according to the actual financial positions that many dioceses find themselves in, and to this end what is the plan?

The Bishop of Manchester to respond as Deputy Chair of the Church Commissioners:

A Last year, the Commissioners announced they would increase distributions by 30% in 2023-25, a total amount of £1.2billion. Plans for the allocation of these funds were agreed by the Archbishops' Council and the Commissioners, which included significant funds for a Diocesan Investment Programme to focus on enabling the Church's Vision & Strategy to become a reality in parishes and communities, and prioritising investment in the most deprived and resource-poor contexts. These plans were presented to Synod in July 2022.

The Diocesan Investment Programme supports dioceses and parishes in their plans to develop new areas of mission as well as revitalising parishes across the Church. When considering diocesan bids for funding, the Archbishops' Councils' SMMIB takes diocesan resources and financial circumstances into account. The programme also includes funds for formulaic distribution of Lowest Income Communities Funding to the 28 relatively lesser resourced dioceses. We have also responded to provide targeted funding to address particular challenges, such as in response to Covid and the energy-cost crisis.

Our aim and prayer is that such work will over time lead to spiritual and numerical growth which will address diocesan deficits through long term sustainable change, rather than providing subsidies which do not address the structural and missional challenges dioceses face, and so do not support the long term health of the Church.

The Revd Dr Paul Chamberlain (Portsmouth) to ask the Church Commissioners:

Q201 What is the ceiling for growth of the Church Commissioners' assets - the point at which all real terms surplus over the previous year's assets will be distributed - and what is the financial rationale for reaching this figure or deciding that growth should be unlimited?

The Bishop of Manchester to reply as Deputy Chair of Church Commissioners:

A The Church Commissioners seeks to provide the maximum sustainable level of funding to support the mission and ministry of the Church of England. We don't seek to grow the fund for its own sake – we aim to earn returns that will enable us to maintain and grow this financial support.

The level of distributions is determined in light of actuarial advice and based on expectations over the long term for future investment returns from the portfolio, inflation (to understand the cost of maintaining expenditure in real terms), and pension obligations.

The long-term outlook is reviewed each year and thoroughly updated every three years to incorporate actual experience, including growth in the asset base. Growth in the fund in recent years is what enabled the Commissioners to announce last year that they plan to distribute £1.2billion from 2023 to 2025, up 30% from the previous triennium, and to hope to maintain this level of funding in the following six years.

Distributions are not determined with reference to one-year investment performance, as the aim is to provide sustainable support for the Church of England's mission and ministry, maintaining intergenerational equity rather than the Church having to respond to significant swings in levels of support from year to year.

Dr Andrew Bell (Oxford) to ask the Church Commissioners:

Q202 What has been the growth, in actual real terms, of the assets of the Church Commissioners and the distributions to other parts of the Church each year over the last ten years?

The Bishop of Manchester to reply as Deputy Chair of the Church Commissioners:

A Between the end of 2012 and the end of 2022 the value (before the deduction of the estimated value of pension obligations) of the Church's endowment fund, managed by the Church Commissioners, increased from £5.6billion to £10.3billion. This was an annual increase of 6.3% p.a., or 3.6% p.a. in real terms after taking account of CPIH inflation which averaged 2.6% p.a. over this period. The non-pensions distributions from the fund in 2022 were £186.8m. This was an average annual increase of 7.6% p.a., or 4.9% p.a. net of CPIH inflation, on the equivalent distributions of £89.5m in 2012.

Our average investment returns of 10.2% per annum over the past ten years have enabled this growth in distributions, which is roughly three times the rate of inflation.

Professor Roy Faulkner (Leicester) to ask the Church Commissioners:

Q203 Surely, the job of an Investment Body is to maximise returns so that it can invest more effectively in its core business. The returns on fossil fuel companies are currently between 10 and 15%. Those for green industries are between 5 and 8%. The demise of the Silicon Valley Bank earlier this year was because of its excessive investment in risky green technology. Can the National Investing Bodies for the CofE explain why they are prioritising investment in non-fossil fuel companies, and not investing to maximise returns?

Mr Alan Smith to reply as First Church Estates Commissioner:

A The Commissioners manage the in-perpetuity endowment fund in a long-term responsible, sustainable way so as to maximise distributions to support the mission of the Church. We do indeed have a duty to maximise risk-adjusted returns over the long term and an aim to remain at the forefront of Responsible Investment whilst doing so. These are complementary rather than contrasting aims. The Commissioners are a long-term investor with a return target of CPIH+4% per year and we have delivered a return of c.10% per annum on average over the past 30 years. The portfolio is genuinely diversified across sectors and asset classes.

Fossil fuel companies performed relatively well in 2022, but this was an exceptional year for them compared to the long-term trend. The sector has not prepared for the energy transition, which is already underway, and we believe their assets ultimately will be stranded if they do not transition. Hence our decision to disinvest. The risk of stranded assets is an important capital allocation and stewardship consideration for

us. Our “in-perpetuity” time horizon extends well beyond the 2050 timeline for achieving Net Zero which, based on current scientific, economic and financial forecasts, will be critical for a flourishing economy, companies, communities and Church. Companies that, through action and inaction, are not aligning to this timeline, do not meet the financial or ethical criteria which we set at the Commissioners.

We have invested in climate and environmental solutions for a long time, which have the same return targets as the rest of the portfolio. For example, our investments in sustainable forestry have returned on average 16.5% per annum over the past 10 years. We continue to believe that there are very attractive investment returns available from good climate solutions investments.

The Revd Canon Andrew Dotchin (St Edmundsbury & Ipswich) to ask the Church Commissioners:

Q204 The Anglican Communion recently signed the Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty and more than 20 Southern African bishops have called for no new fossil fuel developments in Africa. What steps are the National Investing Bodies taking to amplify these calls for an end to new fossil fuel developments?

Mr Alan Smith to reply as First Church Estates Commissioner:

A The Church Commissioners and Church of England Pensions Board seek to lead by example, each using our voices as responsible investors, including in relation to our own ethical exclusions. Our strong reputation for responsible investment means we can have an amplified impact, disproportionately large compared to the size of our funds under investment, which are relatively modest in the context of global financial markets.

On 22 June 2023, the Commissioners and the Pensions Board each announced they will independently disinvest from fossil fuels this year. There was widespread coverage across national and international newspapers, TV, radio, online, and on social media, mainly in the UK and global English-language media, but also in international media. The story made the front page of the Financial Times on Friday 23 June and was published in six other national newspapers, including The Times, which ran a second day story. Agence France-Presse, Bloomberg, and Reuters covered the story, which was subsequently syndicated across various global publications.

Dr Cathy Rhodes (Sheffield) to ask the Church Commissioners:

Q205 The National Investing Bodies’ divestment from fossil fuel companies is a hugely welcome and important step that has attracted national and international media coverage. Following the letter to the Prime Minister and Chancellor signed by 49 Church of England bishops calling for no new fossil fuels, have the National Investing Bodies excluded future investment in oil and gas companies continuing with exploration and extraction of new fossil fuel reserves?

Mr Alan Smith to reply as First Church Estates Commissioner:

A The Church Commissioners are excluding all oil and gas majors from their portfolio and will exclude all other companies primarily engaged in oil and gas exploration, production and refining, unless they are in genuine alignment with a 1.5°C pathway, by the end of 2023.

We will continue to assess whether companies become aligned with the Paris Agreement - this assessment of alignment will include TPI hurdles and whether the company is investing in new exploration and whether the way the company invests

is aligned with the International Energy Agency Net Zero scenario. No fossil fuel company currently aligns with this.

We might be prepared to re-invest in energy majors in the future if any such companies are seen to become Paris-aligned, in a clear, evidence based, and data driven manner, whilst also meeting the risk/return financial targets consistent with our overall portfolio capital allocation principles;

We already do and will continue to invest in renewable energy in a disciplined manner where these investments also meet our risk/return financial targets.

We believe in the use of engagement and divestment as a dynamic mechanism as part of our approach to responsible investment – both are essential to being able have a real and lasting impact on the outcomes we want for people and the planet to flourish.

Dr Cathy Rhodes (Sheffield) to ask the Church Commissioners:

Q206 What is the current amount and percentage of Church Commissioners funds invested in climate solutions?

Mr Alan Smith to reply as First Church Estates Commissioner:

A Currently, our investments in assets that address climate change and in publicly listed companies focused on climate solutions add up to more than £800million (more than 7% of the fund).

In addition to this £800mn, we also invest in and enable initiatives in other parts of the portfolio. For example, we work with and enable our farming tenants to provide climate solutions, including permits for renewable energy, supporting improvements to slurry infrastructure or updating lease terms to ensure climate resilience.

The Revd Nicki Pennington (Carlisle) to ask the Church Commissioners:

Q207 What steps are the Church Commissioners taking to increase investment in climate solutions such as renewable energy, battery storage and energy efficiency?

Mr Alan Smith to reply as First Church Estates Commissioner:

A Investing in climate solutions is one of the Church Commissioners' three key levers for change to achieve a net zero world. 'Climate solutions' covers a range of activities, including investing directly in sustainable forestry, funds investing in climate infrastructure or green buildings, or investing in shares of listed companies that deliver products and services to help decarbonise the economy. Currently, our investments in assets that address climate change and in publicly listed companies focused on climate solutions add up to more than £800million (more than 7% of the fund).

The Church Commissioners continue to look for investment opportunities across the portfolio that can help address the climate crisis, safeguarding creation whilst also ensuring that we meet our financial obligations to the Church of England.

The Revd Rachel Webbley (Canterbury) to ask the Church Commissioners:

Q208 What examples of investment in climate solutions have the Church Commissioners made during the first six months of 2023?

Mr Alan Smith to reply as First Church Estates Commissioner:

A Currently, the Church Commissioners have more than £800 million invested in climate solutions covering a range of activities, including investing directly in sustainable forestry, funds investing in climate infrastructure or green buildings, or investing in shares of listed companies that deliver products and services to help

decarbonise the economy. We continuously look for good climate solution investment opportunities across our portfolio.

An example of a recent investment is a battery manufacturer where we invested in June 2023 through one of our infrastructure funds. Also, the Church Commissioners agreed a tenancy agreement to promote nature alongside sustainable agriculture on Hereford's Bartonsham Meadows, located in the heart of the city. This agreement will help restore the 100-acre site on the banks of the river Wye to a more natural state and create a wildlife haven for nature and people alike.

The Revd Canon Dr Anderson Jeremiah (Universities & TEs) to ask the Church Commissioners:

Q209 Nearly 800 million people around the world are still living without access to electricity. Have the Church Commissioners explored opportunities for investment in decentralized, clean energy access in the Global South, as the Episcopal Church and United Methodist Church in the US have done?

Mr Alan Smith to reply as First Church Estates Commissioner:

A The Church Commissioners are looking to address the lack of investable opportunities in climate solutions in the Global South by seeking to ensure a suitable enabling environment is created through our leadership of the Net Zero Asset Owner Alliance (NZAoA) Policy workstream.

In April 2023 the NZAoA wrote to G7 Finance Ministers urging them to call for systemic change in the governance and business models of the multilateral development banks, particularly the World Bank to enable and accelerate the increased flow of investment capital, both private and public, to finance the transition and climate resilience needs in the Global South. [The Net-Zero Asset Owner Alliance urges G7 Finance Ministers to join its call for MDB and DFI reform – United Nations Environment – Finance Initiative \(unepfi.org\)](#)

At this point in time, the Commissioners have not yet identified suitable investments in climate solutions in the Global South which would meet our risk, return and responsible investment profile.

The Revd Tim Goode (Southwark) to ask the Church Commissioners:

Q210 With the Church of England securing planning permission for a 1,087-home development in Bracebridge Heath, Lincoln, a fifth of which will be affordable housing, will this housing development be built to accessibility standards, thus increasing the chance that people may continue to reside in these properties as their mobility potentially decreases with acquired illness or old age, thus reducing pressure on the care system?

Mr Alan Smith to reply as First Church Estates Commissioner:

A At Bracebridge Heath, which lies to the south of Lincoln city centre, we will be delivering over a thousand much-needed new homes within a new community where there will be a range of housing tenures and size. This will ensure a diverse range of people can live within the development and upsize or downsize within their community over the years and through changing life circumstances.

The development will include different types of affordable housing, bungalows, 2 and 3 storey housing and retirement accommodation, in the form of a care home. The development will also meet all current building regulations' standards in relation to dwelling accessibility. The scheme was unanimously supported by members at the planning committee in 2022 and we were delighted to secure the planning permission in April 2023.

Mrs Christina Baron (Bath & Wells) to ask the Church Commissioners:

Q211 What examples can be given to Synod of co-production in housing developments between the Church Commissioners and local communities, as recommended in Coming Home, the report of the Archbishops' Housing Commission?

Mr Alan Smith to reply on as First Church Estates Commissioner:

A In respect of potential housing developments, the Church Commissioners' team seeks to have early and continuous engagement with local councils, key stakeholders, local Churches and residents, as supported and championed by the Housing Commission's 'Coming Home' report.

Our engagement approach encompasses a variety of methods by which new housing proposals are developed in consultation with local communities, seeking their input and feedback. The positive and detailed nature of our approach has been recognised in our recently published, independently assessed, ESG baselining report.

Innovative and wide-reaching forms of engagement and proposal development have recently been followed at West Bersted in West Sussex for example, where the Church Commissioners is bringing forward a new community development of 2,200 new homes, and comprising a new primary school, parkland area, allotments, orchards, play areas, local centres offering shops and areas of employment land that will facilitate new local jobs. The scheme is currently the subject of a live planning application.

Mrs Christina Baron (Bath & Wells) to ask the Church Commissioners:

Q212 What proportion of "affordable" housing to be built on Church Commissioners' land since the publication of the Coming Home report, is planned to be available for social rent in perpetuity?

Mr Alan Smith to reply as First Church Estates Commissioner:

A The development land portfolio held by the Church Commissioners currently has the capacity to deliver approximately 30,000 new homes, of which approximately 30% or 10,000 will be 'affordable housing'. Within that number, the level of social rented homes will be determined on a site-by-site basis, in full consultation with the local authority in question and in accordance with the requirements of national and local planning policy.

Ms Sammi Tooze (York) to ask the Church Commissioners:

Q213 What progress has been made on the Church Commissioners' land regarding natural capital assessments, farm carbon audits and sharing this data publicly?

Mr Alan Smith to reply as First Church Estates Commissioner:

A The Church Commissioners conducted a natural capital assessment that completed in 2022, which looked at a range of areas including biodiversity, agricultural productivity, SSSI (Site of Special Scientific Interest) and greenhouse gas emissions. We will be publishing a report during July that reviews 'Our Approach to Sustainability for Real Assets'. This will include further details on our emissions profile and initiatives that we are taking in our land holdings.

All new publicly-marketed farm lettings include a carbon audit process which is a collaborative initiative between the Commissioners and new tenant, with many involving detailed soil sampling and assessments. In addition we are utilising technology such as LiDAR (laser imaging, detection, and ranging) and satellite imagery to undertake landscape scale assessments of soil carbon.

Within existing tenancies these carbon audits are voluntary and tenant-led. Through frequent tenant meetings, we have established an increasing number of farmers have conducted farm carbon audits for a variety of reasons, including supplier contract requirements, and efficiency and yield analysis.

The Revd Joel Love (Rochester) to ask the Church Commissioners:

Q214 How are the Church Commissioners responding to the Lambeth Conference call to join in with the Communion Forest initiative at scale, given their considerable resources and influence?

Mr Alan Smith to reply as First Church Estates Commissioner:

A The Commissioners are actively engaged with the Communion Forest initiative and have been working with the Anglican Alliance to identify projects that can be registered. We recognise these projects can include land use change as well as tree planting. For example, we have identified a site focusing on water meadow creation combined with increased public access and will be sharing details of this site shortly.

We have planted 819 acres of new woodland in the UK since 2014. Over the past two years we have purchased 438 acres of land in Wales and Scotland, with the intention of establishing new woodlands with 350,000 trees. In total, we have planted 11.8 million trees across the land portfolio over the past five years. We participated in the Queen's Green Canopy initiative including an 11,080 mixed tree plantation in north-west England. We also facilitate a range of other initiatives including trees within hedgerows and wetland creation.

The Revd Canon Lisa Battye (Manchester) to ask the Church Commissioners:

Q215 What steps are the Church Commissioners taking to increase the biodiversity within its forestry holdings and ensure greater resilience to the threat of wildfires?

Mr Alan Smith to reply as First Church Estates Commissioner:

A All our forests are managed according to local best practice and are managed in line with third-party certification (e.g. Forest Stewardship Council, FSC), which goes beyond legal requirements to ensure sustainable management, including in relation to biodiversity and the environment. In the UK, at least 20% of the area within our forests are managed with biodiversity as the primary objective and we have more than doubled the area of native woodland in just under a decade.

Wildfire is a higher risk in some parts of the US, where we also have forestry holdings. Appropriate risk management and response procedures are in place to limit the risk and impact of a fire. Forest ownership is additionally dispersed to limit the overall portfolio impact of any fire that may occur. In the UK, where the risk of wildfire is relatively lower, fire response procedures are in place to ensure appropriate action is taken in the unlikely event of a fire.

The Revd Canon Dr Anderson Jeremiah (Universities & TElS) to ask the Church Commissioners:

Q216 What ambitions do the Church Commissioners have to reduce greenhouse gas emissions on all their agricultural holdings, encouraging them to increase biodiversity and natural climate solutions on their land, recognising that this needs to be a collaborative process with farm tenants?

Mr Alan Smith to reply as First Church Estates Commissioner:

A We are fully committed to reducing our portfolio emissions to meet our 2050 net zero portfolio commitment and as we seek to enable our ambition of a net zero world.

All of our new publicly-marketed farm lettings include a carbon audit process which is a collaborative initiative between the Commissioners and the new tenant. We carry out a pre-letting environmental assessment to identify the best ways to increase biodiversity on the farm and ensure these are taken forward.

Over 2022, our Farmland team visited over 50% of our equipped farms to speak in person to our farming tenants and work with them on environmental initiatives, including running farmer workshops on topics such as lowland peat and managing marshland. We are members of, or signatories to, Fenland SOIL, Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust Blue Recovery Leaders Group, Nature Friendly Farming Network, Future Land Forum, and the National Trust nature-based solutions compact.

This July we will be publishing a report that reviews 'Our Approach to Sustainability for Real Assets'. This will include further details on our emissions profile, collaboration initiatives and the next steps we are undertaking.

Mr Ian Boothroyd (Southwell & Nottingham) to ask the Church Commissioners:

Q217 Noting that Amazon continues to be listed (in GS Misc 1324) as one of the Commissioners' top 20 equity holdings, have the Commissioners engaged with the company about its corporate taxation policy and/or its business and employment practices?

Mr Alan Smith to reply as First Church Estates Commissioner:

A The Church Commissioners have been in a process of engagement with Amazon since 2019 on a range of topics including corporate taxation, human rights and supply chain due diligence. Most recently, we have been engaged on the issue of AI Ethics, as part of a collaboration with other investors via the World Benchmarking Alliance, and are continuing this engagement in 2023.

Mr Andrew Gray (St Edmundsbury & Ipswich) to ask the Church Commissioners:

Q218 How much money do the Church Commissioners have invested (either directly or indirectly through intermediaries) in companies who undertake business in or with the People's Republic of China?

Mr Alan Smith to reply as First Church Estates Commissioner:

A China is the second largest economy in the world. This means that most global businesses, wherever they are headquartered or their shares are listed, will either directly, or indirectly through supply chains, deal with Chinese companies. That will be true of very many of the companies that we invest in as the Church Commissioners.

At the current time we estimate we have less than less than 4% of the fund invested directly in Chinese companies. This compares to 39% in North American investments and 43% in European (incl. UK) investments.

Investments and holdings in China, consistent with investments in any country or jurisdiction into which the Church Commissioners allocate capital, are subject to our Responsible Investing reputational risk policies, which screen, inter alia, for any potential controversies which might be associated with a particular investment which the Church Commissioners might make to ensure that they are consistent with our values and principles.

Mr Andrew Gray (St Edmundsbury & Ipswich) to ask the Church Commissioners:

Q219 Do the Church Commissioners have any investments (directly or indirectly through intermediaries) in companies which offer personal loans?

Mr Alan Smith to reply as First Church Estates Commissioner:

A The Church Commissioners invest in a very broad and diversified portfolio. This includes a range of companies providing personal loans, including banks as well as specialised loan companies.

The National Investing Bodies each have a policy on high-interest lending, informed by advice from the Ethical Investment Advisory Group. The Church Commissioners exclude “any company, whose main business activity or focus (defined as exceeding 10% of Group turnover) is the provision of home-collected credit ('doorstep lending'), unsecured short-term loans ('payday loans') or pawnbroker loans, directly or through owned-subsiaries.” The EIAG's advice is that, through this policy, investment should be avoided in specialist consumer finance businesses that may exploit, or over-burden with debt, lower income borrowers.

The Church Commissioners have a small exposure to funds that invest in specialised finance companies, including personal loans. When investing in these types of investments, the Investment and Responsible Investment teams do in-depth additional due diligence to ensure that the investee businesses treat customers fairly and do not exploit, over-burden consumers with debt or target lower income borrowers.

Mr Luke Appleton (Exeter) to ask the Church Commissioners:

Q220 Funding made available to assist churches in reaching 'net zero' is very welcome. However currently funding is skewed towards large urban churches. What resources are being specifically made available and ring fenced for small rural parishes, which may have great appetite to improve their buildings, but lack the resources to do so?

The Revd Canon Dr Flora Winfield to reply as Third Church Estates Commissioner:

A The Triennium funding allocated by the Church Commissioners to the Net Zero Carbon Programme is being applied strategically to maximise impact across our schools, churches, cathedrals, houses, offices, and more.

The challenge to decarbonise the circa 32,000 buildings that the Church of England encompasses by 2030 is a big one and the Net Zero Programme is focussing the first triennium's funding (£30million in 2023-25) on creating the capacity needed to deliver carbon action plans and providing financial support for a range of innovation pilots and demonstrator projects, which will include a broad range of churches.

All churches have a role to play in achieving Net Zero Carbon; however the main work for this does not fall on small, rural parishes, where the Energy Footprint Tool data shows us carbon footprints are already very low. Nevertheless, every church can play its part by undertaking simple measures such as installing LED lighting, localized heating solutions or draught-proofing entrances, and a lot of excellent work is already being done in aid of reducing our emissions and saving energy costs. We recognise that some parishes are facing immediate challenges with old gas or oil boilers which are at end of life and have taken this into account in the design of the grant funding streams which will commence later this year. Where their specific projects meet the criteria, small rural parishes may be eligible for such financial support.

The Revd Ruth Newton (Leeds) to ask the Church Commissioners:

Q221 How is the national church supporting TEIs to reach milestones in the Routemap to Net Zero Carbon?

The Revd Canon Dr Flora Winfield to reply as Third Church Estates Commissioner:

A Whilst the TEIs represent a very small fraction of our overall carbon footprint, their role in equipping the church leaders of the future with the skills needed to embed climate action and creation care at the centre of the Church's mission is recognised.

The NCIs' Environment Officer is supporting the Theological Colleges' Environment Network (TCEN). Within this network, she is developing the Net Zero Carbon workstream, convening bursars and operations managers to become a peer-led group sharing wisdom and best practice on decarbonisation. The TCEN is also working with A Rocha UK to revise the criteria for Eco Church to make it more suitable for TEIs so that they can make progress with the award.

The Net Zero Carbon Programme formally commenced at the start of 2023, and work is in early stages on the TEI workstream. The focus to date has been on supporting dioceses to build their net zero capacity and developing workstreams to scope, pilot and test a range of decarbonisation actions across churches, cathedrals, schools, and clergy housing. The Net Zero Carbon Programme Board will be focused on ensuring that the funding allocated by the Church Commissioners to the Net Zero Carbon Programme is being applied strategically to maximise impact across our schools, churches, cathedrals, houses, offices, and the Board will be considering proposals for an allocation to progress decarbonisation work in relation to the TEIs in this triennium (2023-25) at its Board meeting on July 5th.

The Ven Nikki Groarke (Worcester) to ask the Church Commissioners:

Q222 How many pastoral schemes are currently with the Church Commissioners awaiting processing, and what is the average length of time from submission of a scheme by a diocese to it being made?

The Revd Canon Dr Flora Winfield to reply as Third Church Estates Commissioner:

A There are currently 160 pastoral schemes and orders with the Commissioners, encompassing a range of different types of cases, and the majority of cases usually progress without representations against the proposals being made. The time taken for individual cases can vary widely depending on several factors including the type of case and its complexity and whether representations are received. A straightforward case where there are no representations would typically take about 10-12 weeks. Those requiring more complicated drafting, such as churchyard disposals or complex patronage arrangements may take longer.

When representations are made against a proposed scheme or order, the case requires consideration by the Commissioners' Mission, Pastoral & Church Property Committee. This involves additional correspondence and can add typically a further three to four months to the process, sometimes more. Significantly more time can be taken if a subsequent appeal is made to the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council (JCPC), the timescale for which is outside the Commissioners' control. In the review of the Mission & Pastoral Measure, the Commissioners have recommended that new service standards are put in place to give greater clarity and certainty on timescales.

Canon Andrew Presland (Peterborough) to ask the Church Commissioners:

Q223 What plans do the Commissioners have to provide guidance or practical support for parishes seeking to actively engage their local community in the life of their church

buildings, both to prevent closure and to ensure that the Gospel can be proclaimed at a local level, taking account of existing initiatives such the work done recently by the Churches Conservation Trust that resulted in the reinvigoration of an almost-extinct PCC in Suffolk, as reported at its fringe meeting at the February Synod?

The Revd Canon Dr Flora Winfield to reply as Third Church Estates Commissioner:

A The Church Commissioners provide advice, guidance and practical support to dioceses and parishes through the work of the Cathedral and Church Buildings team. Additionally, as part of the 2023-25 triennium funding package, £11m has been provided for the 'Buildings for Mission' programme which will provide additional church-building focused staff in dioceses to enable them to support their parishes, including some funding for minor repairs. The impact of this programme will be evaluated to inform future initiatives.

Dioceses also provide advice on these matters and some examples are given in the case study in the Review of the Mission and Pastoral Measure ('MPM', see GS 2315 p28). In the MPM Review, the Commissioners also made recommendations for improving the guidance for parishes around community engagement.

The Church Commissioners provide funding for the Churches Conservation Trust (CCT), alongside the Government (through DCMS). As part of their wider work, the CCT have completed a pilot project to provide consultancy support to a fragile parish in Suffolk and the learning from that pilot was recently discussed by the Commissioners and CCT Board with a view to being fed into the work on the MPM review.

The Revd Marcus Walker (London) to ask the Church Commissioners:

Q224 What pastoral schemes have been made, or certificates issued, by the Church Commissioners under section 11 of the Mission and Pastoral Measure 2011, to enable or facilitate the establishment of minster communities in the dioceses of (a) Leicester and (b) Truro?

The Revd Canon Dr Flora Winfield to reply as Third Church Estates Commissioner:

A The way that dioceses organise their partnership and mission structures varies: Leicester diocese is following a 'minster' community model, but others such as Truro take a different approach and use the terminology of mission communities. These are usually informal groupings or partnerships which facilitate joint working and complement the formal benefice and parish structure. There is no requirement to seek Church Commissioners' approval for establishing these structures as they may not be permanent. However, if the diocese wishes to align the underlying structures of deanery, parish and benefice with those partnerships then the Commissioners' permission is required, under the provisions of the Mission and Pastoral Measure 2011.

No pastoral schemes have been made in Leicester or Truro dioceses in relation to these mission structures. However, we have recently received three draft proposals for pastoral schemes in Truro which flow from the diocesan plan. The proposals will be published over the summer and people will have the opportunity to make written submissions for or against the draft proposals. As usual, the Commissioners' Mission, Pastoral and Church Property Committee would consider any objections and may conduct committee visits or hearings if they assess that this would better inform their decision making.

Mr Jonathan Baird (Salisbury) to ask the Church Commissioners:

Q225 The Review of the Mission and Pastoral Measure 2011 could and should provide an appropriate opportunity to help to address the widespread collapse of trust in the Church and the alleged misuse and episcopal and diocesan power. Thus far, the opportunity has not been seized.

Regrettably, in attempting to address meaningfully and substantively such matters, members of the General Synod Reference Group have been hampered by restrictive Terms of Reference.

For the next phase of the work, is it intended that the General Synod Reference Group will continue to be used, and if so will the Commissioners undertake to ensure that its Terms of Reference be broadened suitably?

The Revd Canon Dr Flora Winfield to reply as Third Church Estates Commissioner:

A The Church Commissioners have recognized the importance of trust in their work on the review of the Mission and Pastoral Measure 2011. The review process involved wide consultation, engagement and listening, including through the establishment of the General Synod Reference Group, to help develop confidence in the process and to identify the consensus around what needed to change and what those changes might look like. The Commissioners have immensely valued the participation of all those involved in the Group, which has played a key role in shaping the final recommendations.

The current phase of work on the MPM review, and hence the role of the Reference Group, is complete. If Synod approves the proposals in GS2315, the work will move to preparing draft legislation and it will be for the Steering and Revision Committees to take the development of the detailed proposals forward.

Building trust is at the heart of being church – this is widely recognised and is receiving particular focus through a major project on trust in the Church of England led by the Bishop of St Edmundsbury that began in Autumn 2022 and whose aim is to understand the dynamics of trust and mistrust in the Church and to offer recommendations of how we mitigate mistrust. The project expects to produce an interim report later in the Autumn and a full report by Spring 2024.

Mr Sam Margrave (Coventry) to ask the Church Commissioners:

Q226 Can the Commissioners provide the Synod with the following figures relating to bishops' costs in a table with a comparison also showing the answers given to question 3 in July 2021, question 16 in February 2015, and whether costs have increased or decreased:

- the average cost of diocesan bishops' housing;
- the average cost of suffragan bishops' housing;
- the average annual cost for the ongoing maintenance of bishops' houses;
- the number of bishops living in houses with more than 6 bedrooms;
- the number of bishops with chauffeurs, and the cost of providing them;
- the number of bishops with a gardener;
- the annual cost of bishops' private club membership; and
- the average annual amounts given to bishops for expenses or hospitality, paid by the Commissioners?

The Revd Canon Dr Flora Winfield to reply as Third Church Estates Commissioner:

A We are grateful for this question, which was previously asked in 2015 and 2021, and are pleased to provide the latest information as at 2022, the final year of the last triennium. We have placed on the 'noticeboard' the requested information, showing the comparison between the figures we gave in our 2015 and 2021 answers and the figures for 2022.

The expenditure figures for 2020 are obviously impacted by Covid restrictions. Since then, expenditure has been impacted by high levels of inflation and cost of living pressures in the last 2 years, including energy bills. Nevertheless, average expenditure is broadly in line with that in 2019, pre Covid, and lower in real terms. The cost of maintaining See house properties and carrying out works has increased in line with similar costs seen elsewhere in the property/building sector.

Under the Ecclesiastical Offices (Terms of Service) Measure 2009, the Commissioners are required to provide a house for a diocesan bishop which is "reasonably suitable for the purpose". The Church Commissioners also pay bishops' stipends and other costs in support of their ministry as per the requirements of the Episcopal Endowments and Stipends Measure 1943. We recently reviewed Episcopal costs, working with Bishops and their offices to support them to carry out a zero-based budgeting. The exact allocation of how each Bishop manages their resulting expenditure budget (made available to them as a block grant each year) is determined by each Bishop and their office, so individual queries would need to be taken up with Bishops directly.

PENSIONS BOARD

The Revd Canon Andrew Dotchin (St Edmundsbury & Ipswich) to ask the Chair of the Pensions Board:

Q227 What steps are the National Investing Bodies taking to encourage other investors to divest from fossil fuel companies, invest in climate solutions and refocus their engagement on other key sectors such as electricity utility companies, car manufacturers and banks that are financing the fossil fuel industry?

Mr Clive Mather to reply as Chair of the Pensions Board:

A Through its recently published Stewardship Report and the report to this Synod, the Board has been transparent about the approach taken to disinvestment from fossil fuel companies. We have also set out our priorities for future engagement with energy demand side sectors and companies. The Board is legally not in a position to offer advice to other investors as to how they should invest. It is the duty of each fund to independently make such decisions in line with their respective fiduciary duties. We do though hope that other funds can learn from the experience of the Board as a result of the transparency of our reporting.

The Board also continues to lead the Transition Pathway Initiative (TPI) which is supported by 130 funds with over \$50 trillion in assets under management; the Paris Aligned Investors Initiative which governs the Net Zero Investment Framework, which is used by 135 funds with \$33 trillion in assets under management; and continues to lead the Initiative for the Responsible Climate Lobbying Standard that was supported by funds with \$130 trillion in assets under management.

The Revd Joel Love (Rochester) to ask the Chair of the Pensions Board:

Q228 What steps are the Pensions Board taking to increase investment in climate solutions, given the International Energy Agency statement that investment in renewable energy must treble by the end of this decade?

Mr Clive Mather to reply as Chair of the Pensions Board:

A In line with the Board's fiduciary duties and our use of the Net Zero Investment Framework to help guide our investment decision making, we already invest in climate solutions and will continue to seek opportunities for future investments which meet our criteria. Specifically, we are considering this in private markets, infrastructure and in emerging markets as well as encouraging companies in which the fund is invested through our active stewardship.

The Very Revd Joe Hawes (Deans) to ask the Chair of the Pensions Board:

Q229 Following the National Investing Bodies' significant and welcome decision to divest from fossil fuel companies, have the NIBs ruled out future investment in oil and gas companies that are pursuing new fossil fuel developments, given the International Energy Agency statement that new fossil fuel projects are incompatible with limiting global heating to 1.5°C?

Mr Clive Mather to reply as Chair of the Pensions Board:

A The position of the Church of England Pensions Board was set out in the report that we have provided to General Synod. The Board is disinvesting from oil and gas companies that do not have short, medium and long term targets aligned to 1.5°C. As a result, it is exiting the oil and gas sector as no companies meet these criteria. Should a company increase the ambition of its targets, demonstrate that its capital expenditure is aligned to those targets, and evidence a credible track-record against those targets, then in principle the Board would consider reinvestment. We do not expect this to be a situation likely to occur any time soon given recent backward steps by a number of companies and the high bar we have set. So, for the foreseeable future we will have to seek other ways to engage with these companies as a key part of the international effort needed to address climate change.

The Revd Rachel Wakefield (St Albans) to ask the Chair of the Pensions Board:

Q230 What investments in climate solutions have the Pensions Board made in emerging markets?

Mr Clive Mather to reply as Chair of the Pensions Board:

A The Board has an existing allocation to Emerging Market Debt of £79 million as at 31 March. However, this allocation is not explicitly in support of climate solutions, and we are currently developing our approach in this regard. To aid our understanding we have convened an initiative of eleven UK pension funds, which was supported by the UK Pensions Minister, to explore how we can do this impactfully and result in real world emissions reductions. As a consequence of this initiative, we have developed and consulted on a set of 'emerging market just transition principles' to guide any future allocations. We will continue to review our approach and seek opportunities that meet our investment criteria.

Mrs Vicky Brett (Peterborough) to ask the Chair of the Pensions Board:

Q231 What examples of investment in climate solutions have the Pensions Board made during the first six months of 2023?

Mr Clive Mather to reply as Chair of the Pensions Board:

A The Board will report on investments in climate solutions as part of the 2023 Annual Report and Stewardship Report. One area we anticipate being able to report further on will be our approach to emerging and developing markets. In addition, the FTSE TPI Climate Transition Index – used for our passive equity allocation – has built into its methodology a prioritisation on weighting (increasing) investments in companies that offer green solutions. The Board also continues to look for climate solutions through our private market allocations.

Dr Neill Burgess (York) to ask the Chair of the Pensions Board:

Q232 Please can you supply a table showing overall annual Diocesan contributions to the central clergy pension fund, with rows showing actuals by year from 2010 to 2022 plus 2023 budget, and with 3 columns of data: “base contribution”, “deficit reduction” and “total”?

Mr Clive Mather to reply as Chair of the Pensions Board:

A The information requested is not readily available exactly as requested, however, hopefully the tables on the Notice Board provide sufficient information to be of assistance.

Table 1 sets out the total employer contributions to the Church of England Funded Pensions Scheme (CEFPS, commonly called the ‘clergy scheme’) in cash terms as set out in the Scheme accounts from 2011. Table 2 sets out the contribution rates over the same period.

Following the latest valuation, deficit contributions were halved from April 2022 and removed entirely from 1 January 2023. This represents a material cash reduction in pension contributions. The scheme remains well-funded. We are confident of the Scheme’s ability to meet pension commitments, and the risk of future deficits emerging is low.

The strong funding position also enabled the Board to award a 10.1% increase to pensions in payment from 1 April 2023. This included a discretionary increase such that the total increase was double (or more) than the guaranteed increases in the Scheme Rules.

The Revd Canon Dana Delap (Gloucester) to ask the Chair of the Pensions Board:

Q233 Will the Pensions Board confirm that it is still committed to providing housing for retired clergy who need it, through Pensions Board owned housing, equity sharing schemes such as CHARM, or other means?

Mr Clive Mather to reply as Chair of the Pensions Board:

A The Board is committed to providing housing support for retired clergy who need it. Specifically, we will offer retirement housing to new retirees for as long as the Church is willing to fund it. However, with costs having risen dramatically through inflation and interest rates, the current Rental offer has only been maintained by emergency additional funding. It is hard to imagine the Church could support the likely funding needed in perpetuity.

As part of our continuing commitment to the Church in general and retiring clergy, we will be bringing forward ideas as to how all our housing services might best evolve to meet the needs of future generations, provide more choice, and be financially sustainable.

The ‘Shared Ownership’ product was withdrawn because the market now offers better value alternatives, notably the Older Persons Shared Ownership scheme.

We continue to support those interested in home ownership at retirement through information, signposting and discounted mortgage/financial advice via Ecclesiastical Financial Advisory Services.

We encourage clergy to consider all their options at retirement including other faith-based charities and housing associations (and hopefully the Church's new Housing Association as it grows) alongside the properties the Board can offer.

The Revd Canon Ian Flintoft (Newcastle) to ask the Chair of the Pensions Board:

Q234 Given that the nearest available property is sometimes 70 miles from the desired retirement location, and given the recent 10.1% increase in rents (well above the 7% directed for social housing by the government), what steps is the Pensions Board taking to improve both the availability and affordability of clergy retirement housing?

Mr Clive Mather to reply as Chair of the Pensions Board:

A The Board offers clergy the opportunity to reserve a property in advance of their retirement from a national portfolio. The shape of that portfolio is regularly reviewed based on demand from retiring clergy. I confirm we are continuing to buy for the portfolio in response to the current surge in retirement numbers, even though securing new properties is harder in the prevailing climate of a slowing property market.

The portfolio offers a choice of locations and rents, which are set well below market for the local area. We carefully considered the rent increase this year and sought to keep this in line with increases to clergy pensions (see other questions on this).

We encourage all applicants to consider the range of properties carefully and we can assist clergy to explore housing providers, including other faith-based charities and housing associations, as a route to broader choice.

We continue to encourage anyone who might need help with housing in retirement to contact us up to 5 years in advance of retirement.

The Board is already working on proposals for the future that would enable broader choice for clergy, whilst being financially sustainable for the customer, the Church and the Board.

Ms Fiona MacMillan (London) to ask the Chair of the Pensions Board:

Q235 In the light of the findings of the Coming Home report, the Church Commissioners' reserves, and the Gospel imperative to bring good news to the poor, how does the Pension Board justify a 10.1% rent rise for CHARM residents during a cost of living crisis, when the poorest retired clergy and widow/ers are paying 50-100% of their church pension on rent?

Mr Clive Mather to reply as Chair of the Pensions Board:

A The Coming Home report sets an ambition that rents should be truly affordable. For many years, the Board has offered its homes at significant discount to market equivalents.

Historically, the Board has increased rents in line with RPI and with reference to the increase in clergy pensions. All organisations face rising costs: the Pensions Board is no different. With the cost of debt service equivalent to c75% of rental income the impact of inflation and interest rates has been severe. Indeed, the current rental offer has only been maintained in the short term by emergency additional funding from the Archbishops' Council. In this context, the Board increased rents by 10.1%, which is lower than RPI and in line with increases for clergy and state pensions.

I recognise that the cost-of-living crisis may be more acutely felt by those who retired early and/or who receive a partner pension. I encourage any resident struggling financially to contact the Board's staff to discuss their situation. Support can include assistance with state entitlements and the Board's own charitable grant scheme which offers an additional monthly payment towards living costs for those on the lowest incomes.

I cannot comment on the Commissioners' reserves.

The Revd Canon John Dunnett (Chelmsford) to ask the Chair of the Pensions Board:

Q236 The Government announced in late 2022 that it will impose a 7% rent ceiling to social housing rent increases in the 2023-24 financial year as a temporary measure amid the cost of living crisis. In view of this and the hardship being experienced by many retired clergy, on what grounds has the CHARM scheme raised rents by 10.1% in 2023?

Mr Clive Mather to reply as Chair of the Pensions Board:

A The current "cost of living" is challenge for everyone and the Board carefully considered what rent increase to apply in 2023.

The Board is a charitable housing provider, not a registered social landlord. We do not have access to the same funding streams as social landlords. We operate a different rent increase policy.

Historically, the Board has increased rents for Church retirement property in line with RPI and with reference to the increase in clergy pensions. Like all organisations facing rising costs, the Pensions Board must be able to cover the costs of running the services to meet demand from retiring clergy and meet its landlord obligations. With the cost of debt service equivalent to c75% of rental income the impact of rising inflation and interest rates has been severe. Indeed, the current rental offer has only been maintained in the short term by emergency additional funding from the Archbishops' Council. In this context, the Board decided to increase rents by 10.1%. This is lower than RPI and in line with the increases in clergy and state pensions.

I encourage any resident struggling financially to contact the Board's staff for 1-1 support and advice.

The Revd Robert Thompson (London) to ask the Chair of the Pensions Board:

Q237 Given that local authority/housing associations have had their rents capped at 7%, with no access to government funds except to build new properties, why is the Church of England charging CHARM residents 10.1% when the Commissioners have such large reserves?

Mr Clive Mather to reply as Chair of the Pensions Board:

A The Board is a charitable housing provider. It is classed as a private landlord, not a registered social housing provider. The funding model is very different to that of social landlords. The Board is obliged to purchase properties at full market rate and financed through commercial borrowing. Added to this are the costs of running the service e.g. repairs, surveying and compliance.

All organisations are facing rising costs and pressures from inflation: the Pensions Board is no different. With the cost of debt service equivalent to c75% of rental income the impact of rising inflation and interest rates has been severe. Indeed, the current rental offer has only been maintained in the short term by emergency additional funding from the Archbishops' Council.

All rent increases are considered carefully. Rent increases have historically followed RPI, with reference to the rise in clergy pensions. In some years this will have been higher than that for social landlords; in other years lower. The 10.1% rent increase from April 2023 is lower than RPI while being in line with the 10.1% increase in clergy pensions this year. The state pension also increased by 10.1% this year.

I cannot comment on the Commissioners' reserves.