

GENERAL SYNOD

November 2023

QUESTIONS

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

The Business Committee has scheduled two and a half hours for Questions at the November 2023 Group of Sessions of the General Synod. This is divided between the afternoon of Monday 13 and the Morning of Tuesday 14 November. Notice has been given of 226 questions. 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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HOUSE OF BISHOPS

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

- Q1** Apart from the Synod vote in February 2023 and the LLF responses, representing probably less than 1% of worshipping members of the Church of England, what evidence do the bishops have to suggest that the majority of members of the Church of England support the commendation of the prayers of blessing?

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

- A** The Living in Love and Faith (LLF) motion that was brought to Synod in February 2023 represented the outcome of probably the biggest consultation and listening exercise the Church of England has ever undertaken, details of which can be found on the Living in Love and Faith Hub or through the national Church of England website.

As a result of that motion being passed, the House of Bishops has been asked by Synod to further refine, commend and issue the Prayers of Love and Faith (PLF). They have also been asked to monitor the Church's use of, and response to, the Prayers of Love and Faith, once they have been commended and published. There is a commitment in GS 2328 to do this.

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

- Q2** If the formal authorization of services for same sex couples is now agreed to be subject to Canon B 2, what benefits do the bishops consider will result from waiting until 2025 for a vote on this matter?

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

- A** The third section of the Prayers of Love and Faith contains the forms of service to be used for separate, standalone services for same sex couples. As stated in GS 2328, following the Canon B 2 process for these services will provide the firmest footing for those using them within the shortest possible timeframe. Synodical authorization for these forms of service entails preparing the material for authorization through the stages of liturgical business as set out in Annex G, GS 2328, which is why a final vote under B 2 cannot be held before 2025.

Mrs Christina Baron (Bath & Wells) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

- Q3** GS 2328 talks of providing services of Covenanted Friendship. May the research underlying this proposal, the theology behind it and the evidence of any pastoral demand for such services, be shared with Synod?

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

- A** A short explanation of Covenanted Friendships can be found in the Pastoral Guidance, section 1.2.6. Desire for such prayers was expressed at various points in the LLF process, with particular requests for attending to friendship as a discrete category and a different place of belonging from other types of relationships.

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

- Q4** In February 2023 General Synod voted to ask the bishops to further refine the prayers of love and faith in a manner not contrary to, nor indicative of being contrary to, the doctrine of the Church of England.

Mindful that much of the media coverage suggests that these prayers "bless same sex marriages," and mindful that many members of the public rely on media coverage for information, can the bishop state exactly what research and "stress

testing" has been done to assess public perception of the proposed prayers, so that Synod may be confident that they will not be perceived as being indicative of a change in doctrine?

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

- A** Whenever we issue prayers, liturgy or a statement, various interpretations and misinterpretations will potentially abound, and it is not possible, nor desirable, to control these. Media coverage – in particular headlines – does sometimes oversimplify or misdescribe what the Church is doing, and our Communications Team make considerable efforts to provide clear and accurate explanations to the media. The Prayers of Love and Faith, as well as the notes that accompany them, and the Pastoral Guidance make it clear that they are not a marriage service, or a Thanksgiving for Marriage or A Service of Prayer and Dedication after Civil Marriage. In Commending the PLF Resource Section with the Pastoral Guidance the bishops are also saying that they believe they do not contradict the doctrine of the Church. Consideration has been given at all stages of developing these resources of the public perception of what they contain, both in terms of the services and in the pastoral care of couples that ask for the prayers. This has involved an iterative process of refinement of the contents from pastoral, theological and legal perspectives.

Ms Fiona MacMillan (Lincoln) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

- Q5** Given that for more than 20 years priests have been the sole decision-makers with respect to granting exceptions to Canon B 30 for those remarrying after divorce, and that this has been largely uncontroversial, on what basis was it decided that the provision of prayers for the relationship of a same sex couple would not follow the same procedure of the local priest's decision?

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

- A** Marriage in church of divorcees does not involve making an exception to Canon B 30. In July 2002, the General Synod affirmed 'in accordance with the doctrine of the Church of England as set out in Canon B 30, that marriage should always be undertaken as a "solemn, public and life-long covenant between a man and a woman".' Legal advice provided by the senior ecclesiastical judges and the Synod's legal advisers was that the Canon "did not clearly prohibit further marriage but was ambiguous, being capable of being understood as allowing it."

Prayers for same-sex couples involve different considerations from marriage after divorce. The rationale for involving parochial church councils in decisions about use of the Prayers of Love and Faith is set out in GS 2328 and is summarised as being "to ascertain that use of the Prayers will be supported generally in the church concerned".

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

- Q6** With which qualitative and quantitative metrics do the House of Bishops plan to measure the success of the proposed *Prayers of Love and Faith Resource Section* that they plan to commend?

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

- A** There are no standard metrics for measuring the use of liturgical materials. There is the intention, as stated in GS 2328, to consult with dioceses on the prayers but how this consultation will be conducted has not been defined yet.

Ms Sammi Tooze (York) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

- Q7** What provision exists in the Book of Common Prayer, or authorized under Canon B 2 for a minister who wishes to ask for God's blessing on a same-sex couple?

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

- A** Ministers who wish to incorporate prayers for a same-sex couple in a service according to the Book of Common Prayer could make use of the widely accepted practice of including intercessory prayers after the third Collect at Morning or Evening Prayer according to the Book of Common Prayer, being 'variations which are not of substantial importance' to those services (Canon B 5.1). In a similar way, the minister could make provision for special prayers of intercession at a service of Holy Communion or at a Service of the Word (*Common Worship*). The *Prayers of Love and Faith* are provided for such occasions.

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

- Q8** The proposed Prayers of Love and Faith contain phrases such as 'to follow the way of holiness revealed in your Son Jesus Christ', 'walking before you in holiness and righteousness,' and 'uniting our wills in your will'. As the doctrine of the Church, (which remains unchanged), is that marriage is between one man and one woman, and that this is the only appropriate context for sexual intimacy, the use of these phrases highlights the need for repentance and celibacy outside of this context. In the light of this, what rubric will be included with these prayers to ensure that they are not indicative of a departure from the doctrine of the Church, and thus are able to 'glorify God and edify the people'?

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

- A** The Prayers of Love and Faith are not a form of marriage service, nor do they equate the relationships brought before God to Holy Matrimony. Nevertheless, they recognise all that is good, and holy, and faithful in these relationships and enable the people in these relationships to place themselves before God and ask for God's blessing for their journey of love and faith. The Pastoral Guidance provides detailed advice on preparation with a couple asking for the prayers. This includes the advice that "the overall ethos of the PLF is to help a couple grow in holiness with the help of the church around them, praying for them, where holiness is a goal to work towards rather than something already owned – as indeed is the case for all human beings".

Mrs Ruth Allan (Guildford) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

- Q9** In the draft prayers for Covenanted Friendships, given that friendship can be between two or more people, what is the rationale for referring to the friends as a "couple" rather than "friends"?

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

- A** The draft Pastoral Guidance (at 1.2.6) refers to the decision of 'two friends who wish to express their mutual love and loyalty before God'. However, in subsequent iterations 'friends' will replace 'couple'.

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

- Q10** The provision of the current suite of Prayers of Love and Faith now appears to be predicated on our being "in a time of uncertainty". In the discussion of the House, what was this "uncertainty" understood to be concerning — the possibility of a change in the Church's doctrine of marriage, or some other question, and if the

former, what will be the status of the prayers (and those who use them) should the Church's doctrine of marriage not in fact change?

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

- A** The nature of a 'time of uncertainty' is explored in Annex H of GS 2328, pp. 3-4. LLF was a process of discernment about our theology, our pastoral frameworks and how we relate to one another, in the area of sexuality and marriage. The outcome of several years of discernment is not a clear majority for change, nor is it a clear majority for no change. As a result, the PLF and accompanying work have sought to explore the widest possible space we can occupy as a church without changing our doctrine of marriage while being faithful to the desire for change and the need to embody repentance for the way in which LGBTQI+ people have been treated. As such, the PLF do not represent a change in doctrine, but a change in how doctrine and pastoral practice relate to one another. Pastoral Provision seeks to offer a theological space that affirms what we can affirm together – such as essential goods or virtues – but remains provisional on what we disagree on, and recognises that different churches and ministers will interpret these things in different ways.

Miss Debbie Woods (Chester) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

- Q11** Given that the Legal Office has said that the legality of the Prayers of Love and Faith cannot be assured without sight of the full pastoral guidance, on what grounds has the House of Bishops commended these prayers as having secure legal status?

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

- A** The pastoral guidance relevant to the Prayers of Love and Faith is contained in Parts 1 and 2 of Annex E of GS 2328. Part 3 – the part of the guidance which has not been completed – is not material to consideration of the Prayers. It is important to note that the PLF have not been formally commended yet, but will be after the meeting of General Synod. A formal announcement will be made to mark the date at which they are formally commended.

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

- Q12** In GS 2328 Annex A, paragraph 3 states: 'Such a service should not have the PLF as their principal focus or structure.' What rubric or guidance will be given in order to determine whether or not this criterion has been fulfilled; and if it is not, is such a service in danger of being indicative of a departure from the doctrine of the Church?

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

- A** As page 1 of Annex C indicates, the material in the Resource Section will be commended for use as part of a regular service, that is, a service which would take place whether or not the PLF material were to be used. Such a service should not have the PLF as their principal focus or structure. The suggestions for using them in appropriate contexts may be found in the draft Pastoral Guidance and in the general norms for regulating public worship.

Some authorized forms of service make their own provision for the use of prayers and other material at the discretion of the minister: for example, the prayers of intercession at the Holy Communion where "other suitable words may be used", or at a Service of the Word where the Prayers may include "petitions of intercession, litanies, thanksgivings and other forms of extempore prayer". Other authorized forms of service may have prayers inserted, for instance, intercessory prayers after the third Collect at Morning or Evening Prayer according to the Book of Common Prayer.

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

Q13 What steps are required for the Prayers of Love and Faith to be commended, and which of those steps have already been taken??

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

A Many of the steps to commending the PLF have been completed in the work that has already been done with the House of Bishops. We will be commending the PLF and issuing parts 1 and 2 of the Pastoral Guidance before the end of the year.

The Revd Neil Barber (Derby) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q14 What changes have been made to the draft Prayers of Love and Faith in light of the Cornes amendment being passed in February?

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

A The PLF as brought to the meeting of the February Synod were not intended to change the doctrine of marriage, and as a result, no amendments were needed in response to the Cornes amendment. The Implementation Group responsible for the Prayers did consider the extensive feedback from the Synod group work undertaken in the February 2023 Group of Sessions and made a number of changes based on that feedback and other inputs.

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

Q15 The theological rationale for the Prayers of Love and Faith that they are '*pastoral provision for a time of uncertainty*' appears to be completely novel compared to the rationale offered for the prayers in February. Where has this rationale originated, and what role has the FAOC had in developing this?

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

A The theological rationale builds on the work that had been done on blessing previously, which can be found on the LLF hub, as well as draw on the history of pastoral provision or accommodation within the Church of England. In this sense, it is not novel, but works within the framework of pastoral theology, and the consideration of how doctrine interacts with pastoral practice. Legal work was also done in February, based on the relationship between civil marriage and holy matrimony. Legal and theological work are different in nature, though they are interrelated.

The LLF Steering Group oversaw the production of the theological rationale. The chair of the Faith and Order Commission (FAOC) sits on the Steering Group, as does its secretary, but the Rationale itself is not a FAOC document.

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

Q16 Which of the Prayers of Love and Faith are new, and which are drawn from existing liturgy, and which of these are drawn from liturgy which is currently commended for use in relation to the celebration of marriage, and in the latter case, what rubrics will be required to clarify that the use of such prayers in a new context are not indicative of a departure from the doctrine of the Church?

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

A A table of sources will be posted on the Synod noticeboard.

It is intended that the PLF Resource Section be commended for use by the minister in private prayer and in regular forms of public worship, exercising their discretion under Canon B 5. Both the introduction to Annex C and the Pastoral Guidance (i.e. at 1.2.1) indicate that, like all prayers in public worship, intercessions including

materials from the PLF Resource Section should be such that they are not, as presented and in the given liturgical context, 'contrary to, or indicative of a departure from, the doctrine of the Church of England in any essential matter'. This is true whether the chosen prayers are newly written for the PLF or drawn from existing material.

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

Q17 In the Introduction of GS 2328, Point 2, it is stated that 'The motion also committed to new guidance and prayers for the blessing of same-sex relationships being issued...'. In February a great emphasis was placed on any blessing being for individuals within such relationships 'and not on the relationship itself.' Can the House please clarify whether it intends blessings to be on same sex relationships or on individuals within such relationships?

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

A Full details are provided in Annex H of GS 2328 section 3.4 on blessings and in particular 3.4.3 'What does 'blessing' symbolise or express?'. Blessing in Scripture encapsulates the posture of God towards creation, with a desire to see all flourish and walk more closely into the ways of God. Blessing is conferred on people in Scripture, and the Church of England's liturgies reflect this: it is people, rather than things, that are blessed. In the PLF, the people in a relationship are blessed too, while all the goods of their relationships are affirmed and celebrated.

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

Q18 Referring to the Prayers of Love and Faith and other Living in Love and Faith proposals, the Global South Fellowship of Anglican (GSFA) primates on 19th October 2023 stated that their recent Cairo gathering was "very aware of the reality of violence and persecution in other parts of the world, warning that we are deeply concerned that if the Church of England presses ahead with the proposed changes, this will increase persecution of Christians in many parts of the Global South". How will the House of Bishops support the Archbishop of Canterbury in ensuring that the words used, and actions taken by the House of Bishops and at General Synod do not catalyse to inflict more harm on Christians severely persecuted outside our boundaries, especially when there is so much disagreement on the same proposed changes in the Church of England?

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

A The Archbishop of Canterbury and many other bishops are very closely aware, through their contacts across the Anglican Communion, Diocesan Companion Links etc., of the risk of persecution and the potential for violence against Christians, purportedly justified as attacks on different views on sexuality. We are equally aware of the ways that violence against homosexual and trans people, among others, is sometimes, falsely, legitimated by perceived Christian views. It is important to be clear that no violence or persecution of individuals, communities or faith groups is ever justified, and it must be unequivocally condemned. The Bishop of Truro's Review of the FCO response to the persecution of Christians made it clear that there are multiple drivers of persecution, and it cannot be attributed to any one cause. The priority remains to address such persecution head on. It is equally important to be clear that allowing threats of violence to close down debate or derail the search for truth and the offer good pastoral care for all, is effectively to fuel further violence and let the persecutors win, with frightening escalations likely in the future. Whatever the Church of England decides on LLF, those remain truths to uphold. The Archbishops and Bishops continue to listen to, and to be advised by, voices across the Anglican Communion through the whole of these processes.

Mrs Nicola Denyer (Newcastle) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q19 What protections will be put in place for licensed lay ministers whose views do not accord with those of their Incumbent, both in terms of the use of the prayers and also in the exercise of preaching and teaching?

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

A As with very many pressure points in church life, finding consensus will likely entail compromise and generosity, grounded in a desire to focus on the church's mission and call, and should reflect an outworking of the deep bonds of trust and shared work between lay and ordained leaders.

Annex F of GS 2328 gives details of where reassurance is threaded through the Pastoral Guidance and the Prayers of Love and Faith, and of the ongoing work in this area. This includes proposals for a collective statement by the House of Bishops that seeks to provide a consistency of approach nationally but retain individuals' freedom of conscience; the proposal to set up an Independent Reviewer, who can be consulted in the event of concerns that individuals are not being treated fairly; and the setting up of the Pastoral Consultative Group to help address difficult questions or situations as they arise.

The Revd Canon Julian Hollywell (Derby) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q20 Please can you confirm that a draft form of Pastoral Guidance for Ministry has already been prepared, but that this draft was not shared with the House or College of Bishops?

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

A A draft version of the Pastoral Guidance part 3 on Ministry was shared with both the College and House of Bishops.

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

Q21 Does the House of Bishops have the authority to issue pastoral guidance without the prior approval of the General Synod on the content of that guidance?

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

A Yes, the House of Bishops has the authority to issue pastoral guidance without the prior approval of General Synod concerning its content. As explained in paragraph 3.13 of [The Governance of the Church of England and the Anglican Communion](#) (GS Misc 910), "any statement of the House of Bishops on [doctrinal and theological issues (including issues of moral and pastoral theology)] has an intrinsic authority which derives not from the Constitution of the General Synod but from the inherent individual and collegial authority of the House's members as teachers of the faith and guardians of sound doctrine, given to them in their ordination to the episcopate." The House of Bishops has brought parts 1 and 2 to General Synod prior to issuing them to show the work that has been done following the February 2023 Synod motion that asked for the bishops to issue the Pastoral Guidance.

Mrs Gill Ball (Chelmsford) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q22 Will it be permissible during a clerical vacancy for a patron to insist that a given position on the use of the Prayers of Love and Faith must be adhered to in order for an appointment to be made?

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

A The Patronage (Benefices) Measure 1986 sets out the procedure for the appointment of incumbents of benefices. An important part of that procedure is the

preparation by the PCC of “a statement describing the conditions, needs and traditions of the parish.” The PCC may, if it wishes, request a joint meeting with the patron and bishop. The patron must obtain the approval of the bishop (where the bishop is not the patron) and the PCC’s representatives to make an offer to a priest to present him or her to the benefice. The appointment process therefore involves co-operation in the identification of a suitable candidate. In the unlikely event that a patron sought to present a priest whose position was clearly at odds with that of the PCC, the bishop or the PCC would be able to prevent such a presentation from going ahead. Patronage would ultimately lapse to the bishop.

The Revd Dr Miranda Threlfall-Holmes (Liverpool) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q23 In suggesting that PCCs will need to give their consent to the PLF being used in a parish, what consideration was given by the House of Bishops to the situation of multi-church parishes?

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

A Consent by a PCC to the use of the PLF only applies to the provision of standalone services. The situation for a multi-church benefice or parish has been considered as part of the work developing the PLF. Part 2 of the Pastoral Guidance provides help with considering how to discuss using or not using the PLF in a local context. As stated there: ‘...the culture and church tradition of their local community needs to be taken into account... it is wise to come to an agreed, negotiated decision after a process of sensitive consultation, informed by the Pastoral Principles...’ This will be true for a multi-church setting, where the outcome of the conversation may be different between different churches, and in an individual church setting.

The Revd Jacob Madin (York) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q24 In GS 2328 in annex F point 13 you say that legal action could be taken against a clergy person using the PLF because it might be claimed that they are indicative of a departure from the doctrine of the Church of England in an essential matter. Has the House of Bishops considered how this risk will be communicated to clergy who wish to use the prayers when they are authorized?

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

A It is the view of the House of Bishops that the commended material, used as specified in the Notes and Pastoral Guidance, does not represent a departure from doctrine in any essential matter, and therefore should not incur a significant legal risk, though this can never be fully ruled out. The risk of legal action is greatly diminished if the prayers are authorized, rather than commended, which is one of the reasons for bringing standalone services to Synod via a B 2 process. In addition, if a form of service is authorized, legal action would not be taken against individual clergy.

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

Q25 Given that the Listening with Love and Faith report noted that a majority of respondents wished to see liturgical provision for same sex relationships, a finding echoed by the September 2023 survey of Church of England clergy by The Times, can the House of Bishops please explain their view that the will of the majority should not be taken as normative and that the use of the prayers should be subject to an opt in rather than opt out system?

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

- A** As illustrated by the Listening in Love and Faith Report the Church, as a whole, contains a diverse spectrum of views. On the Prayers of Love and Faith it is hoped that the material made available responds to that diversity of views. It is intended that the prayers for Covenanted Friendships and the Prayers of Love and Faith Resource Section will be commended for use so that any minister with the incumbent's agreement can use them. The authorization of the standalone services will ask a parish to opt in, which formally requires that the PCC and incumbent agree to the use of the particular form of service. If a parish does not decide to opt in it does not mean they cannot or will not use the PLF resources for same sex couples. The provision of an opt-in system is part of enabling transparency, particularly with the possibility of having a signposting system for couples seeking for a church that will welcome their request for a standalone service.

Mrs Gill Ball (Chelmsford) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

- Q26** Could a PCC pass a resolution that they wished to see the Prayers of Love and Faith used in their parish, even though this would not be binding on the incumbent, who has the right to ignore that resolution?

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

- A** The minister and the parochial church council are under a duty to consult together on matters of general concern and importance to the parish (Parochial Church Councils (Powers) Measure 1956, section 2(1)). Other functions of PCCs include:
- co-operation with the minister in promoting in the parish the whole mission of the Church, pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical;
 - the consideration and discussions of matters concerning the Church of England or any other matters of religious or public interest, but not the declaration of the doctrine of the Church on any question.

However, it is the minister who has the cure of souls in a parish, and it is ultimately a matter for the minister's judgement whether to accede to a request by a PCC that particular services be used in the parish.

No minister can be made to use the PLF against their conscience.

The Revd Stuart Cradduck (Lincoln) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

- Q27** In February 2023 General Synod rejected the following motion regarding the use of the Prayers of Love and Faith: 'In paragraph (e) at the end insert "for use in those churches where both the incumbent so desires and the PCC votes in favour of their use.".'

Given that General Synod expressed a view that a vote by a PCC should not be necessary to permit an incumbent to use the Prayers of Love and Faith, including the standalone service presented in draft form to the February 2023 Synod, why does GS 2328 introduce this requirement for the standalone service to be used?

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

- A** Part of the process of producing the Pastoral Guidance has included consultation and discussion of the PLF and has considered these matters carefully. It was agreed that the suite of resources, as a whole, should be used as flexibly as possible. However, there was also a desire for a form of 'opt-in' to the PLF in order to provide reassurance to churches and couples. It provides transparency, in that an opt in system enables a clear list to be held of churches offering standalone

services which couples can access in order to find a church that will welcome their request for a service. It also protects churches that wish not to offer the prayers.

This formal opt-in system works best in negotiation between incumbent and PCC. The importance of the question, and the potential for division and conflict is such that it was considered wise and necessary to enable a process for a church and its incumbent to come to a common mind, as far as is possible. It takes seriously the corporate nature of discernment and decision-making of the whole people of God, as well as encouraging full transparency.

The Revd Charlie Skrine (London) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q28 In Annex E of GS 2328, Pastoral Guidance 2.2.2 helpfully says, ‘If differences over the PLF and the wider questions it connects to threaten a pastoral breakdown between clergy and PCC, the archdeacon should be brought in at the earliest opportunity.’ In the event that the archdeacon’s assistance is unable to prevent such a pastoral breakdown, please could you direct us to an explanation of the possible consequences for the office holder and for the PCC?

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

A Section 2.2.2 of the Pastoral Guidance (GS 2328 Annex E) already points to a range of good practice and principles that clergy and PCCs should work through before needing to draw in the archdeacon. Situations of pastoral breakdown where the good practice and resources mentioned in 2.2.2 have not been used can be directed to try these. Any subsequent pastoral breakdown that occurs despite these steps will need to be worked through locally and contextually, as is already the case when these situations unfortunately arise in matters unrelated to LLF. The possible consequences for an office holder or PCC will necessarily depend on the particular context. Most dioceses will have adopted practices for dealing with pastoral breakdown already, which may include processes for mediation or reconciliation. In cases where unacceptable behaviour has been alleged, each diocese will have a procedure in place for dealing with these kinds of complaints.

The Revd Charlie Skrine (London) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q29 In respect of Annex E of GS 2328, did the House consider what clergy or PCCs should do if there is conflict with their Bishop (see the placeholder in the Pastoral Guidance 2.2.3) in the period of time between the commendation of the Suite of Prayers and the implementation of the Pastoral Reassurance or the independent reviewer?

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

A The collective statement from the House of Bishops (see Annex F.10) will introduce a shared expectation of episcopal practice in relation to the Prayers of Love and Faith, particularly around disagreement, including between clergy or PCCs and the Bishop, and how this can be managed well. This statement will be part of the pastoral reassurance being developed alongside the commendation of the suite of prayers and the introduction of the initial Pastoral Guidance. The statement will also point to the establishing of the Pastoral Consultative Group, as well as the introduction of an Independent Reviewer. Further work is being done on Formal Structural Pastoral Provision, which will be shared with Synod in due course.

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

Q30 GS 2328 states that no church is required to advertise that they do not use the PLF. How does the House of Bishops anticipate the transparency required in section

1.1.1. on page 4 of GS 2328 will be delivered with no need for a clear statement of doctrine or practice from those churches?

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

- A** Section 1.1.6 on page 6 and 2.1.3 on page 17 of the Pastoral Guidance provides suggested approaches for churches to be transparent about their position, whether they decide to use some or none of the PLF.

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

- Q31** Has the House of Bishops taken a vote or made any decision to pursue the possibility of a clergy person being able to marry/be married to a person of the same sex, and will this be addressed in the Ministry section of the Guidance (cf para 13, GS 2328)?

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

- A** The House of Bishops has been considering the possibility of clergy entering into same-sex civil marriages, but a final decision has not been made, as further theological and legal work is needed, as well as accompanying work on pastoral reassurance. Once a decision is made, this will be addressed in Part 3 of the Pastoral Guidance.

Mr Paul Waddell (Southwark) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

- Q32** What pastoral support and advice will be offered to same-sex couples wishing to use the Prayers of Love and Faith, who cannot do so in their home church due to an incumbent more conservative than their PCC, licensed readers and congregation? Why are only clergy consciences deemed important in this regard?

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

- A** The Pastoral Guidance outlines a number of ways in which services can be made available in a couple in their area. Sections 1.1.3, 1.1.6 and 1.1.10 specifically mention the need for transparency in local churches so that those who consider a church their 'home church' and are regular attenders, can be fully aware of their parish's position on the PLF. The Pastoral Guidance also advises on how a local incumbent may respond to a request. It is hoped that there would be churches and ministers willing to offer the PLF in every Deanery, hence locally to any couple, though it is incumbent upon each diocese to make these churches known through a system that can be easily accessed by couples. Churches that choose to offer the PLF would also offer pastoral care for couples. As such, it is possible to preserve the conscience of incumbents and/or church members and PCCs (since a church may equally have a PCC more conservative than their incumbent), but still enable couples to find a church that will be receptive to their spirituality and desire to place their relationship before God.

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

- Q33** What is the date of the latest draft of the pastoral guidance and who has had access to it?

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

- A** The latest draft of parts 1 and 2 of the Pastoral Guidance was prepared for this Synod following the meeting of the House of Bishops on 9th October and published as part of Synod papers.

Part 3 of the Pastoral Guidance is currently under review. Several drafts were prepared, in consultation with a number of people and departments representing a

range of skills, church traditions and lived experience. However, it is not a mature enough draft to share with Synod at this point and will be discussed further with the House of Bishops before it can be shared at a future meeting of the General Synod. Further work includes theological and legal considerations, as well as a fuller consideration of pastoral reassurance needed to ensure the proposals can be put into practice in ways that supports the whole church in all its traditions. It is the intention of the House that this work should be done as soon as possible.

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

Q34 At the July Synod the Bishop of London commented ‘*Very few of our congregations will have a same view. What we are trying to do is to understand the type of Church that we are being called to do and how do we then make a response at a time when there is uncertainty and disagreement. That is not just between churches. It is within churches and within communities.*’ With that in mind what work has the House of Bishops done in assessing the impact and risk of increasing disagreement, division and disunity in the local Church by formally requiring each PCC to decide on its own position, ‘*with some consultation with the wider congregation,*’ so ‘*a list and point of contact are available at deanery, area or diocesan level*’?

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

A Part 2 of the Pastoral Guidance sets out approaches to having these conversations in a local context that aim to minimise increasing disagreement, division and disunity. It is important in holding to the intention of becoming more welcoming to the LGBTQI+ community that we are more transparent in our churches and in our communities about our engagement with them.

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

Q35 GS 2328 says “The motion also committed to new guidance and prayers for the blessing of same-sex relationships” but there have also been assurances that the PLF do not bless relationships, but the people in them and the good qualities of those relationships, and that they are not changing the teaching that sexual intimacy finds its proper place in marriage. What consideration has the House given to the widespread talk of “blessing same-sex relationships” giving the impression the Church is willing to bless sinful relationships without repentance from sin?

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

A It is not the practice of the Church of England to bless anything other than people, though ‘blessing a relationship’ is a shorthand often used regardless of the words of the liturgy. How services and prayers are interpreted by those who attend will always be varied, and it cannot be controlled.

In addition, when we offer a nuptial blessing to a couple marrying, this is not conditional on their relationship being free from sin. Nor do we put conditions to a blessing offered at the end of a service, or to those who come to the altar in a Holy Communion service but do not wish to partake in the elements. A blessing does not represent the approval of the minister or the Church but is a prayer that God would bring that person closer to them and enable them to flourish.

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

Q36 In light of an increasing number of parishioners leaving the Church of England since February's Synod and the substantial challenge of Common Fund withdrawal that dioceses are facing, what consideration is being taken for a formal split of the institution in response to the irreconcilable differences on matters of Marriage and Human Relationships?

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

- A** The College and House of Bishops have consistently expressed a view that, despite differences that exist within the Church, they are committed to working together in following Jesus' prayer that his Church may be one. As set out in GS 2328, this work has been to develop as generous a theological, ecclesial and pastoral space as possible that holds the Church together while making provision for different views and interpretations on these matters held within it. Consideration has not been given to a formal split of the institution.

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

- Q37** GS 2338 sets out principles for pastoral provision. Could the House of Bishops please summarise their reflections on the lessons learned from the effects of the implementation of the Five Guiding Principles when framing these provisions?

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

- A** In GS 2328 Annex F provides details of the Pastoral Reassurance that is both already part of the proposals and that is part of the further work that needs to be done. More work is required on providing appropriate pastoral provision and this will be informed by work being undertaken by the committee of the House of Bishops, the Standing Commission on the House of Bishops Declaration.

Mr Paul Waddell (Southwark) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

- Q38** In Annex F, Exec Summary A2 of GS 2328, why is pastoral reassurance required for those who lost February's main motion, who recorded 41% of the vote, but not for the 38% who voted for equal marriage in February's amendment 64, for whom the Prayers of Love and Faith also do not satisfy?

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

- A** As noted, equal marriage is not part of the motion that was agreed in February and has not been part of the subsequent development of its implementation. I understand that does not diminish the desire for those that wanted to see equal marriage as part of the motion, but it does set the parameters within which we have been working. The definition of Pastoral Reassurance set out in Annex F A2 states that, for what is being proposed in response to that motion, it is there to support those who joyfully wish to use the Prayers of Love and Faith, those who do not or who might be opposed to their use, and those who are unsure. Further work is being done on formal structural pastoral provision to try and ensure that all parts of the Church can continue to live, minister and reach out in the fullest possible way.

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

- Q39** The LLF material distinguished different degrees of divisive disagreement. What consideration has the House of Bishops given to verses like 1 Cor 6.9–11, Gal 5.18–21, and Rev. 21.8, which say that fornicators will not inherit the Kingdom of God, and verses like Rom 16.17, 2 Thess. 3.14, and Titus 3.10, which instruct avoidance of those who do not obey apostolic teaching, and how such verses relate to the depth of present disagreement and how much "Formal Structural Pastoral Provision" they should offer?

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

- A** Disagreement is at the heart of the uncertainty before us right now; disagreeing over what type of disagreement we are having adds a layer to uncertainty, since not all agree that it is the kind of disagreement that necessitates sharp differentiation. In

addition, the form of the PLF and their theological undergirding influences what type of disagreement we are having.

Biblical material being considered includes the vast amount of counsel to attend to unity and avoid dissensions and factions. We also recognise that this is not a disagreement between a church and one believer who chooses to ignore the Gospel, but a disagreement between groups of believers all seeking to live as well as they can under God, and seeking to interpret Scripture and tradition in faithful ways in the present.

Balancing these different considerations will be part of ongoing work on possibilities and shapes of structural pastoral provision.

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

Q40 Please would the House of Bishops report which resolutions were debated on the afternoon of 9th October and in the preceding College of Bishops meeting, and the voting figures on those resolutions?

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

Q41 At the meeting of the House of Bishops on 9 October 2023, how many of the voting members of the House present voted in favour of the proposals and other materials contained in GS 2328, how many voted against, and how many abstained?

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

A With permission, I will answer both of these questions together. I am grateful for the questions. The proceedings of meetings of the House and College of Bishops, including details of votes, are confidential.

Mrs Nicola Denyer (Newcastle) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q42 Was the text of GS 2328 seen by and signed off by the whole House of Bishops prior to it being issued to General Synod on October 20th 2023?

Br Philip Dulson OSB (Religious Communities) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q43 Which members of the House of Bishops signed off GS 2328?

The Revd Canon Julian Hollywell (Derby) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q44 Were all of the General Synod papers on LLF circulated on Friday 20th October shared with all the members of the House and College of Bishops? If not, who was responsible for drawing each of them up and for signing each of them off?

Mr Andrew Farley (Salisbury) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q45 In GS Misc 1353 General Synod is informed that the House of Bishops met on 9th October 2023 to agree “the papers” to be presented to the General Synod on Living in Love and Faith. Which of the following papers were agreed by the House of Bishops in the form in which they have been presented to General Synod: GS 2328 (pages 1-4); Annex A; Annex B; Annex C; Annex D; Annex E; Annex F; Annex G; Annex H; Annex I?

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

A With your permission chair, I will answer these four questions together. I am grateful for the questions. The preparation of Synod papers routinely involves presenting drafts and accompanying papers to the House of Bishops, and the House having a discussion of what papers need to be prepared for Synod, which includes edited

versions of existing papers as well as additional papers. These papers will then be finalised by the working group responsible for them.

In this case, the House of Bishops agreed on the substance of papers needed to be presented to Synod, which were prepared under the oversight of and agreed by the LLF Steering Group. The final papers were based on feedback from the College and House and noting the diversity of opinions held by the bishops.

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

Q46 What amount of time was given by (i) the College of Bishops and (ii) the House of Bishops to considering the impact of GS 2328 on the veracity of the apology to LGBT people agreed by Synod in February 2023?

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

A The first part of the motion agreed in February, that laments and repents of the experiences past and present that LGBTQI+ people have encountered in the Church, has always been a prime consideration in the deliberations of both the College and House of Bishops. In introducing the work at the meetings, and in the individual contributions by bishops, the College and the House were reminded of the apology made. In the drafting of GS 2328 a lot of work went into trying to ensure the paper was pastorally sensitive, including incorporating feedback from readers with lived LGBTQI+ experience. We recognise that the paper does not include everything that was hoped for by this point, but both the College and the House have been clear that further required work should be done as soon as possible.

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

Q47 Do all the General Synod papers on LLF circulated on Friday 20th October accurately reflect the current position of both the House and College of Bishops?

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

A The General Synod papers on LLF circulated on Friday 20th October have been subject to a process of refinement that has involved both the College and House of Bishops. As is the case within the Church as a whole at this time, the College and the House contain a diversity of views on the issues addressed by LLF and the material presented has aimed to represent a position that takes proper account of that diversity while providing a basis for moving forward.

Mr Robert Zampetti (London) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q48 Can you confirm that there were clear recorded majorities in both the House and College of Bishops to allow clergy to enter into same-sex civil marriage and to remove the stipulation that currently requires celibacy for clergy in same-sex relationships?

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

A Thank you for your question. The proceedings of these meetings, including details of votes, are confidential.

Mr Robert Zampetti (London) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q49 Can you confirm that a further letter from evangelical groups threatening legal action was sent to the House or College of Bishops between the end of the meeting of the College and the House meeting in October?

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

- A** Correspondence was sent to the House of Bishops from a range of groups between the two meetings which included evangelical groups that gave legal opinion on the route of authorization for the PLF but which did not explicitly threaten legal action.

Mrs Jennifer Fellows (Gloucester) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

- Q50** What pastoral support is being offered to ordinands who have deferred ordination and deacons who feel unable to be ordained presbyter whilst the LLF process is ongoing?

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

- A** Pastoral support is always personal and contextual, which needs to be put in place locally, with sensitivity to the specificities of a person's circumstances. Where an ordinand defers ordination, their TEIs, DDO and sending church would be natural places of support. For a deacon feeling unable to be ordained presbyter, support should be offered via their IME officer, and if needed, through their archdeacon or bishop.

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

- Q51** GS 2328 makes 19 references to parishes being able to opt in to use the prayers, but no consideration is given to an opt out system where clergy and parishes opposed to the use of the prayers can pass resolution to positively affirm their wishes. Can an account be given of the amount of time and nature of debate that took place to reach the conclusion that opt in was preferred over opt out?

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

- A** An opt in or an opt out system is only possible under the route of Authorization for the Standalone Services of PLF and not Commendation, where use of the Resource Section of the PLF is up to the discretion of the minister. The details of the reasons for deciding to authorize the standalone forms of service are given in GS 2328. The option to opt out was considered but it was felt that if a parish opted out they would be considered to be opting out of all the PLF, when they may still wish to use some of the resources or the prayers for Covenanted Friendships. Opting in provides a transparent way of demonstrating that a parish is offering these standalone services. In addition, an opting in route does not force parishes who, for any reason, may not feel ready to have a constructive conversation on whether to use the prayers. An opt-in system enables every parish to move at its own pace.

Mr Paul Ronson (Blackburn) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

- Q52** When will Issues in Human Sexuality be withdrawn, and what is its current status?

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

- A** Those involved in the discernment process as well as TEIs need a framework within which to work with candidates and ordinands. *Issues* has been used as a guide though it is not in itself guidance and was not intended for that purpose. We recognise there is a need for a replacement document, and we hope to be able to agree this as a matter of great urgency. A draft of Part 3 of the Pastoral Guidance is being developed for this purpose.

This is done in collaboration with those involved in the discernment process and in ministerial training to identify what is needed for a coherent, fair and functional framework to replace *Issues* in a way that would be flexible and responsive. Consultation has happened with people of different theological traditions and lived experience. In addition to Pastoral Guidance, a Pastoral Consultative Group will be

set up to ensure that urgent, complex or new questions that may arise can be explored, people supported in their local contexts, and guidance updated as needed.

Until the time new Pastoral Guidance comes into place, *Issues* remains the only framework for DDOs and TEIs to work with.

Mr Paul Ronson (Blackburn) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q53 Does the legal advice received by the bishops suggest that the intended standalone services contain anything that deviates from the doctrine of the church?

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

A The intention is for the proposed standalone services to be subject to the process for authorization by the General Synod under Canon B 2. To be authorized under Canon B 2, a form of service must be “such as in the opinion of the General Synod is neither contrary to, nor indicative of any departure from, the doctrine of the Church of England in any essential matter” (emphasis added). To support this, the Synod’s standing orders that apply to liturgical business provide for the Synod to request a formal report on a question of doctrine. The basis on which the House of Bishops proposes the standalone services is described in GS 2328 at Annex A. The Synod will be provided with any legal advice it needs to determine whether it is of the opinion referred to above.

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

Q54 The fifth of the Nolan Principles, published by HM Government as the Seven Principles of Public Life, reads: ‘Holders of public office should act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner. Information should not be withheld from the public unless there are clear and lawful reasons for so doing.’ Given this, will the House of Bishops release all the legal advice given to them with regards to the Prayer of Love and Faith? If not, what are the clear and lawful reasons for withholding this information from General Synod?

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

Q55 What was the full and unredacted legal advice that was provided by Church House to the House of Bishops at their meetings on LLF during the autumn 2023, and how did this differ to that provided before the motion on LLF was passed by General Synod in February 2023?

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

Q56 At its meeting on 9 October 2023 did the House of Bishops agree (in line with the legal advice set out in GS Misc 1339) that same sex marriage is distinct from Holy Matrimony and that same sex marriage does not impinge on Holy Matrimony in a way that contradicts the Church’s doctrine? Or did the House of Bishops agree that the alleged distinction could no longer be maintained?

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

A With permission I will answer questions 54-56 together.

Similar considerations apply here as to legal advice obtained by the Government from its legal advisers. Legal advice obtained by bodies with specific governance and policy-formation functions in the Church of England – including the House of Bishops, the Archbishops’ Council and the Church Commissioners – is not normally disclosed outside those bodies. This is to enable them to obtain full and frank legal advice in confidence. Just as legal advice obtained by the Government is not normally laid before Parliament or cited in debate, legal advice obtained by the

Church's governance bodies is not normally provided to the General Synod unless the body concerned considers it expedient to do so.

Mr Peter Barrett (Oxford) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q57 Why the sudden decision to move to Canon B 2 for authorizing the stand-alone service, rather than Canon B 5A?

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

A Following the Canon B 2 process for these services will provide the firmest footing for those using them within the shortest possible timeframe. The House of Bishops decided that while B 5A could have enabled the standalone services to be brought into use more quickly, the process would ultimately require further B 2 authorization that would have taken longer overall for the status of the forms of service to be settled.

Mr Peter Barrett (Oxford) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q58 Has the House of Bishops considered whether the absence of legal protection for clergy who use the PLF will present a barrier to many clergy using them?

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

A The House has considered the welfare of clergy throughout the work of implementation. There is not an absence of legal protection for the clergy who use the PLF alongside the Pastoral Guidance that accompanies them, but what is present is the possibility of legal challenge concerning their use. While it is not possible to unequivocally say there is no legal risk, given the particulars of every circumstance, the prayers and the guidance have been worked on throughout so that they are robust in this regard.

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

Q59 Has the House of Bishops ever published liturgical material for consideration by the General Synod that it has considered "contrary to, or indicative of any departure from, the doctrine of the Church of England in any essential matter"?

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

A Canon B 2.1 indicates that 'any form of service ... approved by the General Synod shall be such as in the opinion of the General Synod is neither contrary to, nor indicative of any departure from, the doctrine of the Church of England in any essential matter.' I am not aware of any situation in which the House of Bishops has introduced liturgical material which it believed would not meet that test.

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

Q60 Given the decision of the House of Bishops to seek authorization of parts of *Prayers of Love and Faith* under Canon B 2 at a very late stage, can the House identify those groups or individuals whose threats of legal action informed their decision?

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

A The routes of commendation or authorization for the PLF have been under discussion by the House of Bishops since the LLF motion was passed at the February meeting of Synod. While authorization has been considered a preferable option Canon B 2 has always been a possibility. The decisions taken by the House have been informed by iterative discussion and material provided by the LLF

steering group. They have not been informed by specific threats of legal action by groups or individuals.

The Ven Adrian Youings (Bath & Wells) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q61 The Legal Advice upon which the House of Bishops' proposals in February 2023 were based (GS Misc 1339) included the opinion that "the institution of Holy Matrimony and the institution of civil marriage are now distinct". GS 2328 refers to the legal advice which the House of Bishops received at its meeting on 9 October 2023, but the alleged distinction is nowhere mentioned. Did the advice of the Law Office change between February and October 2023; and, if so, in what respect?

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

A The legal and theological basis for the Prayers of Love and Faith is set out in Annex A to GS 2328. The House does not propose to say more at this stage about the confidential legal advice it has obtained.

The Ven Adrian Youings (Bath & Wells) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q62 When will the House of Bishops be publishing the legal advice they received which General Synod is given to understand provides the legal foundation for the use of Prayers of Love and Faith?

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

A The legal and theological basis on which the House of Bishops are proceeding is described in Annex A of GS 2328. Legal advice obtained by the House of Bishops is not normally disclosed. This is to enable the House to obtain full and frank legal advice in confidence.

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

Q63 In the PLF debate in February the Archbishop of York told us that "... I will not be able to support commending these Prayers until we have the Pastoral Guidance and pastoral provision". Given that neither has been provided in full, on what grounds has the House of Bishops felt able to commend the prayers at this stage and thus reject the commitment given by the Archbishop of York?"

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

A Thank you for your question. Firstly, let me be clear – the comments I made were about myself, not the House of Bishops collectively. A synod speech, even from an Archbishop, cannot bind the Synod or the House of Bishops to a particular course of action. Since the February group of sessions, the House and College of Bishops have met many times, to work on implementing the decision made in February but also in a spirit of prayerful discernment to wrestle with the complex issues that face us in settling both the pastoral provision and pastoral guidance.

Miss Debbie Woods (Chester) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q64 GS 2328 confirms that the doctrine of marriage is unchanged, and that the teaching that marriage, as understood according to Canon B30, is the only proper place for sexual intimacy. On the basis of this, has the House of Bishops committed to refrain from its members making any public statements which contradict this confirmed teaching, and if not, on what basis?

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

A Ministers who wish to incorporate prayers for a same-sex couple in a service according to the Book of Common Prayer could make use of the widely accepted practice of including intercessory prayers after the third Collect at Morning or

Evening Prayer according to the Book of Common Prayer, being 'variations which are not of substantial importance' to those services (Canon B 5.1). In a similar way, the minister could make provision for special prayers of intercession at a service of Holy Communion or at a Service of the Word (*Common Worship*). The *Prayers of Love and Faith* are provided for such occasions.

Mr Andrew Farley (Salisbury) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q65 The letter from Ben Bradshaw MP to Andrew Selous appears to demonstrate knowledge of the confidential discussion of the House of Bishops on October 9th 2023. What action has the House taken to explore how Mr Bradshaw might have been privy to this information?

The Archbishop of York to reply as Chair of the house of Bishops:

A The House has not taken any action to explore what information Mr Bradshaw might have been privy to. The House of Bishops at its most recent meeting, noted how damaging of trust the leaking of information is.

The Revd Jeremy Moodey (Oxford) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q66 Annex H of GS 2328 ('Living in Love and Faith: Theological Rationale') explicitly builds on the arguments about blessings advanced by Walter Moberly and Isabelle Hamley in papers which are available on the LLF Hub. Yet Annex H does not engage with subsequent critiques of Moberly and Hamley, including in Dr Martin Davie's booklet "With God's Approval" (Oxford: Dictum Press, 2023). This argues (p58) that we cannot rightly ask God to bless forms of relationship that according to Scripture God has never decided to bless. For what reasons - in the interests of even-handedness - has there been no engagement to date with this and other critiques, and will there be a response to Dr Davie in due course?

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

A There has been engagement with critiques and different perspectives in the process of producing the paper. However, it is the view of the House at this point that the PLF offer a blessing on people (as indeed is the case with other forms of blessing, always conferred on people). Blessing is the posture of God towards all creation, and, in Scripture, is not conditional on creaturely behaviour or response, as the paper produced for the College of Bishops on the LLF hub argues (this was a paper requested by and produced for, the College and it does not represent the views of any one individual).

Following this logic, it is possible to offer a blessing to a couple coming forward wanting to grow in their life with God. Congregational blessings, for instance, are never given subject to certain conditions being fulfilled by the people being blessed; nor does the church assess wedding couples for worthiness to be blessed.

GS 2328 speaks of the diversity of views that are held within the Church in relation to a range of views that touch on the areas of marriage and sexual intimacy. The House of Bishops also contains this diversity of views and does not compel its members to go against their conscience in what they say or don't say. We are not changing the doctrine of the Church regarding marriage but we are exploring the space for a genuine, careful pastoral response: the kind of response that genuinely rejoices at the goods that we can see in same-sex relationships – faithfulness, stability, fruitfulness, love, faith, grace – and keeps looking for where God is at work, and how we may respond faithfully to God's call to holiness in the fashioning of our lives, rather than focus primarily on identifying the absence of virtue, or good, in others.

Mr Christopher Townsend (Ely) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q67 In Annex A to GS 2328 (Prayers of Love and Faith - A Basis for Moving Forward), para 29 says of the process for approval of the proposed 'standalone services' under the Canon B2 procedure that, 'The procedure for liturgical business also provides opportunities for the revision of the draft liturgical text.' Will this 'draft liturgical text' include some or all of the Prayers of Love and Faith: Resources Section?

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

A As Annex D of GS 2328 indicates, it is the service structures and Notes which are to be submitted for approval under Canon B 2.

Mr Christopher Townsend (Ely) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q68 GS Misc 1339, which was circulated to General Synod in January 2023, contained the following novel and contested claim: 'Because the sexes of the parties are irrelevant so far as the general law concept of marriage is concerned, the concept of civil marriage is now of a different nature from the concept of marriage set out in Canon B 30 (Holy Matrimony).' (para 6). Have the House of Bishops received any subsequent legal advice on the relationship between civil marriage (whether between people of the opposite sex or people of the same sex) and Holy Matrimony and, if so, when will such advice be disclosed to General Synod?

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

A The legal and theological basis for proceeding with the Prayers of Love and Faith is set out in Annex A to GS 2328.

Miss Rosemary Wilson (Southwark) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q69 GS 2328 para 22 talks of a desire for 'change but without changing the doctrine of the Church.' If the doctrine of the Church is remaining unchanged, what did the House of Bishops agree to be the nature of the change that is wanted?

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

A The PLF and accompanying work have sought to explore the widest possible space we can occupy as a church without changing our doctrine of marriage while being faithful to the desire for change and the need to embody repentance for the way in which LGBTQI+ people have been treated. As such, the PLF do not represent a change in doctrine, but a change in how doctrine and pastoral practice relate to one another. Pastoral Provision seeks to offer a theological space that affirms what we can affirm together – such as essential goods or virtues – but remains provisional on what we disagree on, and recognises that different churches and ministers will interpret these things in different ways.

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

Q70 Thank you for sharing more of your workings in the Living in Love and Faith Report GS 2328. This report refers to transparency 12 times, honesty 7 times and integrity 6 times, mostly through reference to the practice of Churches. In keeping with these references, at what date will the House of Bishops be releasing the full pastoral guidance, formal proposals for pastoral assurance, the legal advice that it has received, and the advice of the Faith and Order Commission?

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

A The full Pastoral Guidance will be released as soon as possible. It is hoped this may be in time for the February 2024 meeting of General Synod. The way the Pastoral

Guidance has been put together envisions it as an evolving document, so that new questions and answers to more complex questions can be incorporated over time.

Legal advice obtained by the House of Bishops is not normally disclosed. This is to enable the House to obtain full and frank legal advice in confidence.

The Faith and Order Commission has not written a formal paper of advice to the House, but they are working towards doing so. Whether this is released more widely will be at the discretion of the House of Bishops.

Dr Neil Burgess (York) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

- Q71** The Pastoral Principles are intended to be embedded in our life as a Church, and include the exhortation to ‘pay attention to power.’ What work has the House of Bishops undertaken to consider how well this has been enacted in the deliberations of the House, its communication with Synod, and the level of transparency around the presentation of the Prayers of Love and Faith and New Pastoral Guidance?

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

- A** The Pastoral Principles have undergirded the conversations on LLF within the House of Bishops and they have been regularly repeated there. The House has also committed to bring its work to Synod and to consult with Synod, which it did at the meeting in July and is doing again now in November. There has been genuine listening to one another in the House, even when the views of members remain deeply opposed, and there has been no intention to exploit any perceived or real power in consulting with Synod, whose views are earnestly sought to inform the work. As such, not only has the LLF team engaged at the Synod meetings but also on separate occasions with stakeholder groups and those with significantly differing views on the PLF and the Pastoral Guidance.

Dr Neil Burgess (York) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

- Q72** GS 2328 Annex A para 17 notes: ‘We have also been advised that it would be difficult to say that making the PLF available for same-sex couples without there being an assumption as to their sexual relationships was not indicative of any departure from the Church’s doctrine.’ Given that this appears to be a contradiction of the final paragraph of the motion agreed in February, in what sense does the House of Bishops understand these prayers to be an ‘implementation’ of that motion rather than an undermining of it?

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

- A** The House considers that it should heed the terms of the Church’s Canons in exercising their collegial episcopal role in relation to matters of doctrine, liturgy and pastoral practice. Under Canon B 5, a minister may use forms of service which the minister considers suitable provided they are “neither contrary to, nor indicative of any departure from, the doctrine of the Church of England in any essential matter”. It would not make sense for the House to proceed on the basis that the discretion of ministers in the conduct of public prayer was narrower than provided for in the Canons.

Ms Gill Frigerio (Coventry) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

- Q73** Who made the proposal to introduce the standalone services under Canon B 2?

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

- A** The proposal that the standalone PLF services should be introduced in the General Synod for approval under Canon B 2 was a collective decision of the House of

Bishops. Different routes of authorization including B 2 have been under discussion throughout the implementation phase of the project.

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

- Q74** GS 2328 Annex A, paragraph 23 says that the House considers that, ‘what is envisaged by way of pastoral provision [in the Prayers of Love and Faith] ... is a new insight into doctrine that can be reflected in forms of worship.’ Into which doctrine or doctrines did the House consider this provision to be a new insight, and what is the new insight they considered it to be?

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

- A** LLF was a process of discernment about our theology, our pastoral frameworks and how we relate to one another, in the area of sexuality and marriage. The outcome of several years of discernment is not a clear majority for change, nor is it a clear majority for no change. As a result, the PLF and accompanying work have sought to explore the widest possible space we can occupy as a church without changing our doctrine of marriage while being faithful to the desire for change and the need to embody repentance for the way in which LGBTQI+ people have been treated. As such, the PLF do not represent a change in doctrine, but a change in how doctrine and pastoral practice relate to one another. Pastoral Provision seeks to offer a theological space that affirms what we can affirm together – such as essential goods or virtues – but remains provisional on what we disagree on, and recognises that different churches and ministers will interpret these things in different ways.

The Revd Neil Barber (Derby) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

- Q75** The 2007 Synod motion was clear that Synod did not want the Church of England to do “anything that could be perceived as the Church of England qualifying its commitment to the entirety of the relevant Lambeth Conference Resolutions (1978: 10; 1988: 64; 1998: 1.10)”. What work has been done in the deliberations of the House of Bishops since July to ensure that this decision is honoured?

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

- A** The 2007 Synod motion that you refer to also said that it: ‘welcomes the opportunities offered by these Lambeth Resolutions, including for the Church of England to engage in an open, full and Godly dialogue about human sexuality’ which has been a key part of the LLF process, where in the words of the 1978 and 1988 resolutions we have ‘taken seriously both the teaching of Scripture and the results of scientific and medical research.’ In the work that has gone on since the February Synod we have not sought to change the doctrine of marriage as received by the Church and have been in contact with the Anglican Communion about the work we are doing, noting the need for the ACC to monitor this work in Resolution 1.10.

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

- Q76** Can the Chair of the House of Bishops confirm that paragraph 7 of GS Misc 1353 is wholly accurate?

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

- A** Thank you for your question. Paragraph 7 slightly condenses what happened. As in answer to questions 42-45 the House of Bishops took the substantive decisions and the papers were finalised by the Chairs of the Living in Love and Faith steering group based on this feedback, and noting the diversity of opinions held by the bishops.

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

Q77 Can the Chair of the House of Bishops confirm that the second sentence of paragraph 15 of GS 2328 is wholly accurate?

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

A Yes.

Mr Robin Hall (Europe) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q78 In February and in July, I asked whether the apology offered to victims of Church homophobia would mean an individual apology and compensation, where appropriate, to those clergy who lost their home or income as a consequence of marrying their same-sex partner. Thank you for your answer that this will be considered by the Pastoral Consultative Group in due course. In the meantime, what work has been undertaken to assess the number of clergy who lost their home and/or income?

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

A As was said in the answer in July, this is an area that could be considered by the Pastoral Consultative Group. There has not been any preliminary work done ahead of this.

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

Q79 What is the theological rationale for continuing to promote *Issues in Human Sexuality* as the primary sexual ethic for clergy in the Church of England, including, for example, requiring all prospective ordinands to live within its guidelines?

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

A Those involved in the discernment process as well as TEIs need a framework within which to work with candidates and ordinands. *Issues* has been used as a guide though it is not in itself guidance and was not intended for that purpose. We recognise there is a need for a replacement document, and we hope to be able to agree this as a matter of great urgency. A draft of Part 3 of the Pastoral Guidance is being developed for this purpose.

This is done in collaboration with those involved in the discernment process and in ministerial training to identify what is needed for a coherent, fair and functional framework to replace *Issues* in a way that would be flexible and responsive. Consultation has happened with people of different theological traditions and lived experience. In addition to Pastoral Guidance, a Pastoral Consultative Group will be set up to ensure that urgent, complex or new questions that may arise can be explored, people supported in their local contexts, and guidance updated as needed.

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

Q80 The report of findings from the Church Growth Research Programme 2011-2013 "From anecdote to evidence" was written before the start of "Living in Love and Faith" and does not address sex or marriage directly. But the report includes as a factor for growth: "Quality of preaching – confidence in the Gospel and teaching". What evidence of church growth has the House of Bishops considered in relation to "Living in Love and Faith"?

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

A It is not possible to assess the impact on church growth of Living in Love and Faith before implementation of what was agreed at the February Synod. However,

consideration has been given to the potential issues and opportunities for mission by the church following the implementation of what is proposed. Our view is that there is not enough evidence yet to determine an answer to your question.

Mr Tim Hamilton (Exeter) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q81 LLF has brought up a number of questions around the relationship between the Church and Parliament. With this in mind, what work has been done to explore the implications of increased political pressure and questions around disestablishment?

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

A The National Church Institutions are in regular contact with the Government, especially the Cabinet Office, about a wide range of matters.

To date there has been no request to discuss the establishment of the Church of England.

Constitutional matters relating to the Church of England are regularly reviewed by the Archbishops' Council and the Church Commissioners, but no such assessment regarding the continued establishment of the Church has been undertaken.

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

Q82 The Covenant for Clergy Care and Wellbeing was made an Act of Synod at the February 2020 Group of Sessions, and included the statement: 'Conscious that such a calling is both a privilege and a demand, we as the Church of England commit together to promote the welfare of our clergy and their households in terms expressed in the Covenant for Clergy Care and Well-being.'

In the light of this, what plans have the House of Bishops put in place to address the increased stress caused to parochial clergy by the 'time of uncertainty' that has been created by the PLF process as it has been conducted?

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

A The 'time of uncertainty' that is spoken of reflects the reality of an uncertain time with its lack of consensus over the last six years, rather than creates uncertainty in itself. The Pastoral Guidance sets out a number of ways in which dioceses can support clergy as the PLF are made available in parts 1 and 2. Those from different traditions will have different views and different dilemmas regarding the PLF, and, as the Pastoral Guidance states, it is appropriate that support should be designed and offered at local level, in ways that attend to context and specificity.

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

Q83 Following meetings of the College and House of Bishops, the text and structure of the Prayers of Love and Faith have been refined into three parts. Two of those parts are (i) Prayers for Covenanted Friendships and (ii) Prayers for same-sex couples. Prayers for Covenanted Friendships have been separated out as they celebrate relationships that, by their nature, are different from those celebrated in the rest of the Prayers: "the prayers for covenanted friendships are intended for a pastoral context that is different from the other parts of the PLF." The inclusion of covenanted friendships in the Prayers of Love and Faith is said "to reflect the importance of deep friendship, particularly in a world in which commitment is often associated only with sexual relationships" and "covenanted friendships embody a type of relationship that is both committed and non-sexual, which is not exclusive, yet deeply meaningful, particular, and seeking to grow in holiness". Also separated out are prayers for same-sex couples. This suite of resources is for use "in private

pastoral prayer or within existing regular worship within parishes.” This second suite of resources has been separated out from prayers for covenanted relationships because the relationships with which the latter are concerned are committed and non-sexual. The clear implication is that the prayers for same-sex couples are for couples whose relationship is both committed and sexual. Is it a correct reading of GS 2328 that the House of Bishops are commending the second suite of prayers for use with sexually active same-sex couples?

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

- A** Prayers for Covenanted Friendship centre on relationships of a different type, which are by definition non-sexual. The PLF offered to same-sex couples make no assumption about the physical nature of their relationship, but concentrate on celebrating the goods of these relationship, their desire to grow in faith and love, and to seek God’s blessing.

Fr Thomas Seville (Religious Communities) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

- Q84** What feedback on GS 2328 has been sought from those most likely to avail themselves of what is offered by the proposed ‘pastoral provision’, both Christian and non-Christian?

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

- A** The drafting of both the prayers and the Pastoral Guidance has been an iterative process involving members of the LGBTQI+ Christian community. The drafting process has not involved those outside of the Christian community. The work of LLF, however, has engaged with wider societal views, scientific views and those of other religions as detailed in the LLF book.

The Revd Timothy Edwards (Rochester) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

- Q85** The Bishop of London was widely quoted in the press as saying with regard to blessings for same sex couples, "*These are difficult decisions. They will always be difficult decisions. I think our view is that this time of uncertainty is helpful in recognising that pastoral provision needs to be made, as, whilst individuals may be certain, the Church is not.*" (e.g. Church Times, 20 October 2023).

In saying "*whilst individuals may be certain, the Church is not*" was this intended to reflect a purely personal opinion (perhaps indicated by the words "*I think...*") or does this reflect the official position of the House of Bishops?

If the latter, when and by what process did the official position of the Church become "uncertain"?

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

- A** The nature of the time of uncertainty for the Church is explored in detail by Section 1 of Annex H in GS 2328.

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

- Q86** How many Anglican priests in the Church of England have married their same-sex partner?

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

- A** Some dioceses may hold records of clergy who have married their same-sex partner but the information has not been collected by the church nationally.

Dr Cathy Rhodes (Sheffield) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q87 When the church teaches that sexual intimacy outside of marriage is forbidden, what physical act(s) does it specifically have in mind?

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

A The Living in Love and Faith process has always sought to recognise that the expression of sexual intimacy between two people cannot be reduced to a small set of defined actions.

Ms Rebecca Mynett (St Albans) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q88 Does the Church of England recognise all civil marriages conducted in the presence of a Registrar as marriages?

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

A The Church of England recognises all civil marriages as conferring the status of marriage in secular law. The Church's law and doctrine remain that marriage is the union of one man and one woman. The Faith and Order Commission are undertaking work on the relationship between civil marriage and marriage as understood by the Church (Holy Matrimony). The PLF, without conflating same-sex relationships with the state of Holy Matrimony, affirm the very clear goods in those relationships that bear a family resemblance to the goods of marriage: stability, faithfulness, exclusive, lifelong commitment, fruitfulness, mutual nurture and work for the flourishing of each partner and all those with whom a couple comes into contact.

Ms Rebecca Mynett (St Albans) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q89 Is it Church of England doctrine that it is lawful for Bishops, Priests and Deacons to marry at their own discretion?

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

A Article XXXII of the XXXIX Articles of Religion states:

"Bishops, Priests, and Deacons, are not commanded by God's Law, either to vow the estate of single life, or to abstain from marriage: therefore it is lawful for them, as for all other Christian men, to marry at their own discretion, as they shall judge the same to serve better to godliness."

The reference to marriage in article XXXII is a reference to marriage as defined by the Church's law and doctrine, namely the union of one man and one woman.

The Revd Jeremy Moodey (Oxford) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q90 In Annex A of GS 2328 ('Prayers of Love and Faith - A Basis for Moving Forward') it is stated in paragraph 24 that the pastoral provision being offered 'would stand in a long line of the pastoral practice of finding ways to help people move forward in holiness in a world that falls far short of any ideals, without giving up on the idea of the ideal altogether.' Given that holiness in the Church's 'unchanged doctrine of marriage' (paragraph 15) sees marriage between one man and one woman as the only appropriate context for sexual intimacy, what consideration has the House of Bishops given to how the Prayers of Love and Faith will help a same-sex couple who are sexually intimate 'move forward' towards this vision of holiness?

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

A The concept of Pastoral Provision, as it has developed over many years, seeks to recognise what is good, faithful and holy and encourage these virtues to be developed further. Acknowledging the value of and celebrating faithfulness, commitment,

fruitfulness, mutual love, is the initial step, and praying for growth in these aspects of their relationship represents growth in holiness.

Mrs Ruth Abernethy (Channel Islands) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q91 Please can the House of Bishops explain how the statements contained in paragraph 17 of Annex A to GS 2328 interact with the established position of the Church of England that opposite sex couples who have had sex prior to marriage are permitted to marry in a Church of England church using a form of authorized public liturgy, including those couples in respect of whom it would not be unreasonable to conclude that they are (or have been) in a sexually active relationship due to the presence of their joint children at the wedding service?

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

A The doctrine of marriage has never been considered to prevent the solemnization of matrimony of a couple who have already had sexual relations. The solemnization does not condone the couple's previous situation; it creates a new relationship, which is blessed by the Church and within which it is now appropriate for the couple's relationship to be a sexual one. It is not, therefore, indicative of any departure from doctrine and it would be a misinterpretation of what the Church was doing to see it in those terms.

The House of Bishops previously considered that the Church's doctrine of marriage prevented public liturgies for same-sex couples who might not be living in accordance with the Church's teaching. If moving away from that position is "indicative of any departure from" the Church's doctrine of marriage, we do not think it is a departure from doctrine "in any essential matter" for the reasons we have set out. Any change is confined to the understanding of what that doctrine prevents or permits in terms of pastoral provision; it would be a misinterpretation to see this pastoral provision, which responds to the reality of people's lives, as an alteration to the doctrine of marriage itself.

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

Q92 The Bishop of London responded to the written Q64 in July 2023 Group of sessions that "the people in a marriage [where one has transitioned] are still the same people." Did this mean that it remains a marriage because it remains a union between one man and one woman?

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

A 'Marriage' cannot be reduced to simply one of its components; while marriage is defined as the union of one man and one woman, it also covers legal status, and a multiplicity of 'goods' that can be identified and celebrated, as well as a thick pattern of interwoven relationships and memories. In addition, the human person cannot simply be reduced to their sex or gender. The person who entered a marriage, then transitions, is a human person in all their fullness, in all aspects of their life. The marriage they contracted when they contracted it was both legal and recognised in the eyes of the church, and as such, unless they divorce, still remains marriage between the two people who entered it. These persons remain complex, multifaceted individuals, and their marriage is constituted by many more characteristics than simply sex or gender.

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

Q93 In response to a written question I raised in the February 2023 group of sessions (Question 148), the Bishop of London stated: "the draft Prayers of Love and Faith are silent on the question of sexual intimacy. While not explicitly stated in the

Church's Canons, for many years the Church has taught that the only rightful place for sexual activity is Holy Matrimony. The House of Bishops has not retracted this but acknowledges that there is disagreement in the Church about how this applies today. As part of developing the Pastoral Guidance bishops will need to clarify this situation." The Living in Love and Faith motion of February 2023 provided under clause (g) that the General Synod "endorse 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" (which was not further qualified by the words "in any essential matter").

In GS 2328 it is stated that the House of Bishops has been advised that "it would be difficult to say that making the PLF available for same-sex couples without there being an assumption as to their sexual relationships was not indicative of any departure from the Church's doctrine. Existing pastoral statements of the House of Bishops (issued in 2005, 2014 and 2019) state that because some same-sex couples will be "living consistently with the teaching of the Church, others not", it would "not be right to produce an authorized public liturgy in connection with the registering of [civil partnerships/same-sex marriages] and "that clergy of the Church of England should not provide services of blessing for those who [register a civil partnership/enter a same-sex marriage]". If the PLF are to be available for same-sex couples without there being an assumption as to their sexual relationships, there would have been a change in the Church's formal position on what its doctrine of marriage, and the place of sex within it, did and did not preclude in terms of public worship. Such a change might indicate a departure from the previous understanding that the Church's teaching precluded public worship being offered for a same-sex couple who were or might be in a sexually active relationship."

While it is said that the draft PLF being commended by the House of Bishops make no assumptions with regards to sexual intimacy, has the House of Bishops given consideration to the situation where it is known or has been disclosed that a same-sex couple are in a sexually active relationship and, if so, what conclusion did the House come to as to whether it would be appropriate for the PLF to be available to same-sex couples who are known to be in a sexually active relationship in light of the advice given as stated above and having proper regard to the strict wording of clause (g) of the Living in Love and Faith motion of February 2023 excluding as it does the words "in any essential matter"?

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

- A** The PLF are designed to celebrate all that is good and holy in a relationship, and to encourage and support a couple in growing in holiness and seeking God's blessing. The PLF are a pastoral provision to answer a need among the people of God. They do not seek to change doctrine, but they do represent a different way to articulate the relationship between doctrine and pastoral practice.

The position with regard to same-sex couples in a sexually active relationship is covered by paragraphs 16 to 26 of GS 2328. For the basis on which we have chosen not to fetter the minister's discretion in accordance paragraph (g) of February's motion, I refer to the answer I gave to Dr Neil Burgess at Question 70.

CROWN NOMINATIONS COMMISSION

The Revd Canon James Blandford-Baker (Ely) to ask the Chair of the Crown Nominations Commission:

Q94 Please list, by date and See, the announced CNC appointments since the start of this Synod (November 2021).

The Archbishop of York to reply as Vice-Chair of the Crown Nominations Commission

A Bishop of Salisbury: announced 13.01.22
Bishop of Rochester: announced 31.03.22
Bishop of Bath & Wells: announced 28.04.22
Bishop of Liverpool: announced 18.10.22
Bishop of Newcastle: announced 20.10.22
Bishop of Blackburn: announced 10.01.23
Bishop of Lincoln: announced 24.05.23
Bishop of Winchester: announced 06.07.23
Bishop of Birmingham: announced 30.08.23
Bishop of Peterborough: announced 28.09.23

The Revd Canon James Blandford-Baker (Ely) to ask the Chair of the Crown Nominations Commission:

Q95 Please list the current vacant sees (and if possible, known upcoming vacant sees - where a translation has already been announced, or a retirement is already announced) and the expected timeline for CNC meetings and appointment.

The Archbishop of York to reply as Vice-Chair of the Crown Nominations Commission:

A	Bishop of Carlisle:	Shortlisting: 7 Nov 23	Interviews: 13 & 14 Dec 23
	Bishop of Sodor & Man:	Shortlisting: 17 Jan 24	Interviews: 13 & 14 Mar 24
	Bishop of Exeter:	Shortlisting: 29 Feb 24	Interviews: 9 & 10 Apr 24
	Bishop of Ely:	Shortlisting: 13 May 24	Interviews: 11 & 12 Jul 24
	Bishop of Coventry:	Shortlisting: 26 Jun 24	Interviews: 11 & 12 Sep 24
	Bishop of Truro:	Shortlisting: 6 Sep 24	Interviews: 15 & 16 Oct 24
	Bishop of Durham:	Shortlisting: 11 Oct 24	Interviews: 26 & 27 Nov 24

Announcements are made once all the necessary checks have taken place and approval has been granted from the Crown. The Prime Minister's office then makes the announcement.

Mr Luke Appleton (Exeter) to ask the Chair of the Crown Nominations Commission:

Q96 It is common practice across the country for Vacancy in See Committees to depart from the regulations in how they are administered. What is being done to monitor this and address any discordance between regulation and reality?

The Archbishop of York to reply as Vice-Chair of the Crown Nominations Commission:

A We are not aware of any departure from the outworking of the Vacancy in See Committees Regulation. The operation of Vacancy in See Committees is the responsibility of individual dioceses, supported by the Archbishops' Secretary for Appointments.

Mrs Rebecca Chapman (Southwark) to ask the Chair of the Crown Nominations Commission:

Q97 Please describe what consultation, if any, is undertaken with the Crown Nominations Commission prior to the appointment of an Acting Bishop by an instrument of delegation under s.14 of the Dioceses, Pastoral and Mission Measure 2007.

The Archbishop of York to reply as Vice-Chair of the Crown Nominations Commission:

- A** No consultation takes place with the Crown Nominations Commission on this matter. Outgoing Diocesan Bishops are encouraged to consult with the Archbishop of the Province on the appointment of an 'Acting Diocesan Bishop' for the interregnum. Circumstances in dioceses will vary, as will the level of potential challenge and complexity facing an Acting Diocesan Bishop holding the Diocese during the interregnum. As such, consultation with the relevant Archbishop is important to ensure that a candidate is chosen who has the appropriate gifts, qualities, skills and experience to lead the Diocese at this moment of transition.

Professor Helen King (Oxford) to ask the Crown Nominations Commission:

- Q98** It is on record that three pairs of central CNC members come from traditions which do not believe that women should be diocesan bishops. Have those responsible for the CNC process considered how to respect the consciences of these members whilst preventing the voting rules from discriminating against candidates who are women?

The Archbishop of York to reply as Vice Chair of the Crown Nominations Commission

- A** The Crown Nominations Commission does not hold data on the church tradition of its members. As a Commission of the Church of England, it is expected that all Crown Nominations Commission members are committed to the Five Guiding Principles, as set out in the House of Bishops Declaration on the Ministry of Bishops and Priests (GS Misc 1076). At the start of each meeting, all members of the CNC are reminded that it meets under the guidance of the Holy Spirit to help discern who the next Bishop might be. Therefore, as the Holy Spirit is prone to do, members can be surprised by who may end up being appointed, which of course can be someone from outside an individual's tradition.

The Revd Chantal Noppen (Durham) to ask the Chair of the Crown Nominations Commission:

- Q99** Despite the Church of England, being "fully and unequivocally committed to all orders of ministry being open equally to all, without reference to gender" for over 8 years, only 2 out of the last 11 episcopal appointments has been a woman, only 8 out of the 29 episcopal appointments since 2015 have been women and of 42 Diocesan Bishops, only six are women. What is being done to improve the rates of women appointed to episcopal roles, especially as diocesan bishops?

The Archbishop of York to reply as Vice-Chair of the Crown Nominations Commission:

- A** The pipeline to senior roles is continually supported and reviewed to encourage and ensure the greatest possible participation of underrepresented groups in senior appointment processes. Since 2015, of the 67 suffragan appointments made (excluding 4 PEVs), 32 were women (48%). We recognise and share the concerns that, whilst there has been progress with the appointment of suffragan bishops, there is clearly further work to be done on diocesan appointments.

The Revd Canon Andrew Dotchin (St Edmundsbury & Ipswich) to ask the Chair of the Crown Nominations Commission:

- Q100** The Church has pledged itself to conducting its affairs as though the Equality Act applied in full (assurance given from the Platform in Women Bishops debater July 2014). Yet since October 2021 of the eleven diocesan bishops appointed only two have been women.

Have the processes and membership of the CNC been professionally and independently audited to ensure that there is no inbuilt discrimination?

The Archbishop of Canterbury to reply as Chair of the Crown Nominations Commission:

- A** The Crown Nominations Commission was comprehensively reviewed in the previous quinquennium of the General Synod. On the appointment of Diocesan Bishops, the CNC process works within the parameters set by General Synod. Within those parameters, the Archbishops' Appointments and Vocations team continually strive to ensure potential barriers to underrepresented groups are mitigated. Since 2015, of the 67 suffragan appointments made (excluding 4 PEVs), 32 were women (48%). We recognise and share the concerns that, whilst there has been progress with the appointment of suffragan bishops, there is clearly further work to be done on diocesan appointments.

Professor Joyce Hill (Leeds) to ask the Chair of the Crown Nominations Commission:

- Q101** Would the House of Bishops commit itself to auditing and amending the CNC voting process to give women an equal chance of being nominated as Diocesan Bishops?

The Archbishop of Canterbury to reply as Chair of the Crown Nominations Commission:

- A** The voting processes for the nomination of candidates by the Crown Nominations Commission was reviewed in 2015 by Professor Iain McLean, Professor of Politics, Oxford University and Vice- President for Public Policy, British Academy. In itself, the CNC voting process does not prevent women (or any other under-represented groups) being nominated to diocesan sees. However, it is not for the House of Bishops to audit and amend the CNC voting process, it is the role of the General Synod who also elect the Central Members of the CNC.

Mrs Dawn Brathwaite (Birmingham) to ask the Chair of the Crown Nominations Commission:

- Q102** For each of the years 2019-2023 inclusive, can you confirm the composition of the permanent members of the CNC according to gender, the number of appointments made to the post of diocesan bishop made for each of those years and for each year's appointment the number of females?

The Archbishop of Canterbury to reply as Chair of the Crown Nominations Commission:

- A** We have taken 'Permanent Members' to mean the six Central Members (or their stand-ins), the two Archbishops (or their stand-ins) and the Prime Minister's Appointments Secretary and the Archbishops' Secretary for Appointments (the Secretaries are non-voting).

The make-up of the members varies by appointment due to the need for stand-ins and also the changes of both Appointment Secretaries and of the Central Members. There is no consistency of permanent membership across vacancies, even within the same year.

**Women amongst the Permanent Members of the CNC by year
(including the Secretaries who are non-voting)**

Year	Appointments – Women	Appointments – Men	Permanent Members of the CNC – Women*
2019	0	3	Between 4 – 5
2020	1	1	Between 3 – 5
2021	0	2	Between 4 – 5
2022	1	3	Between 3 – 6
2023	1	4	Between 4 – 6

*Out of a total of 10 Permanent Members

Mrs Dawn Brathwaite (Birmingham) to ask the Chair of the Crown Nominations Commission:

Q103 For each of the years 2019-2023 inclusive, can you confirm the composition of the permanent members of the CNC according to ethnicity, the number of appointments made to the post of diocesan bishop in each of those years (if not previously answered), and for each year, how many of these appointments were from individuals who identify as GMH/UKME?

The Archbishop of Canterbury to reply as Chair of the Crown Nominations Commission

A We have taken 'Permanent Members' to mean the six Central Members (or their stand-ins), the two Archbishops (or their stand-ins) and the Prime Minister's Appointments Secretary and the Archbishops' Secretary for Appointments (the Secretaries are non-voting).

The make-up of the members varies by appointment due to the need for stand-ins and also the changes of both Appointment Secretaries and of the Central Members. There is no consistency of permanent membership across vacancies, even within the same year.

UKME/GMH members amongst the Permanent Members of the CNC by year (including the Secretaries who are non-voting)

Year	Appointments GMH/UKME	Appointments White	Permanent Members of the CNC – GMH/UKME*
2019	0	3	Between 0 – 1
2020	1	1	Between 0 – 2
2021	0	2	Between 0 – 1
2022	1	3	Between 0 – 1
2023	0	5	Between 0 – 2

*Out of a total of 10 Permanent Member

Over this 5-year period, 16 CNCs were held of which 6 had no GMH/UKME representation within the Permanent Membership of the CNC.

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

The Revd Amatu Christian-Iwuagwu (London) to ask the Church Commissioners:

Q104 How many full-time stipendiary posts for clergy or parish evangelists could be funded over a five-year horizon by the £30m currently allocated for 'net zero'?

The Revd Canon Dr Flora Winfield to answer as Third Church Estates Commissioner

A A total of £190m has been specifically allocated to enable the Church to respond to the challenges of Net Zero, while £1.3bn has been allocated over nine years for strategic national investment to support local communities by investing in local ministry.

Depending on the level of inflation and other benefits, it can be estimated that, over five years from 2024, £30m would provide for between 80 and 85 full-time stipendiary clergy posts across the Church. This answer is based on the typical cost of full-time stipendiary clergy posts, drawing on material from the most recent Central Stipends Authority report (GS Misc 1330) on average stipend levels, housing provision, help with day-to-day costs and other benefits such as pension provision and professional and personal development. The cost of housing in particular varies considerably across the country.

The Net Zero Carbon programme is well-underway in dioceses and parishes, building on and supporting the implementation of the Routemap to net zero (GS 2258) that was endorsed by Synod in July 2022. The Archbishops' Council and Church Commissioners have approved the broad allocations for the £30m funding available for Net Zero Carbon activity in this triennium (2023-25) and various projects to ensure this funding is well-deployed are underway.

Care for God's creation is a core part of our Christian mission (Fifth Mark of Mission: "To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth") and it is important that the Church can play a leading role in the response to climate change and biodiversity loss.

Mr Sam Margrave (Coventry) to ask the Church Commissioners:

Q105 In July 2022 I asked the Church Commissioners a question regarding the cost of Bishops (Q226).

The answer (unlike in 2021 or 2015 when this question was previously asked) was *"placed on the 'noticeboard'"* and not made available to the press or public. This information was only provided due to a question being tabled.

This is a despite the commitment outlined below for an statement to be provided to Synod and published annually.

This was promised at the July 2021 group of sessions when I posed the following supplementary question:

"To help General Synod members understand and scrutinise the cost of bishops, will the Commissioners publish a breakdown of all costs of bishops for the last quinquennium by year and annually going forward, along with a data trend analysis, so we can fully understand the cost, or increasing cost of bishops?"

The Church Commissioners response committed them to publish the following information along with a data trend analysis annually:

- 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 members;
- and the average annual amounts given to bishops for expenses or hospitality, paid by the Commissioners?

Will the Church Commissioners therefore as previously agreed:

- publish an annual statement of the cost of bishops for the public to see
- tell General Synod (and the nation) how much the cost of Bishops has increased since 2015;
- and provide a data trend analysis and details of what the Church Commissioners are doing to bring down the cost of Bishops while the rest of the Church is seeing rationalisation of their budget expenditure?

The Revd Canon Dr Flora Winfield to answer as Third Church Estates Commissioner:

A We reconfirm our intention to publish the costs of bishops each year, likely in the Summer, and apologise for not doing so in 2022. As in July 2023, the requested information is posted in the annex to the Questions Notice Paper along with all other "notice board" items (this is a public document). The Commissioners have a legal

duty to pay bishops' housing, office and working costs and we seek good value for the Church's money.

The table demonstrates that the increase in bishops' costs over the period in question (2015 – 2022) is an average of 2.5% per annum, which is in fact lower than the rate of inflation over that time. Adjusted for inflation, the 2022 costs are 7% lower than the 2015 equivalent.

For the 2023-25 triennium budget, bishops worked with the Commissioners' staff to carry out a zero-based budget exercise, with the intention of seeking to ensure that the ministry of our bishops is appropriately supported, whilst also looking to offset cost increases due to the recent higher inflation and increases in the cost of living.

The Rt Revd Dr Pete Wilcox (Bishop of Sheffield) to ask the Church Commissioners:

Q106 To what extent have the Commissioners been able to take account of the great disparities in historic assets held by our Cathedrals (as illustrated in the attached table, with covering note *[see appendix to the Notice Paper]*) as well as the great disparities in assets held by Dioceses, as it considers how to resource the ministry of the Church of England fairly, nationwide?

The Very Revd Chris Dalliston (Deans) to ask the Church Commissioners:

Q107 What use will be made of the published table of Cathedral Assets in supporting our cathedrals in the challenges they face to be financially sustainable into the future?

The Revd Canon Dr Flora Winfield to answer as Third Church Estates Commissioner:

A With the Chair's permission I will answer the questions from the Bishop Pete and Dean Chris together.

The figures referred to were not published by the Church Commissioners but we have noted them. The figures are from 2020 and do not appear to give an overall indication of the financial strength of our Cathedrals, for example many of the indicated assets are tied to historic buildings that require additional money to maintain.

The purpose of transferring a significant proportion of assets held by cathedrals and bishops to the Ecclesiastical Commissioners in the mid nineteenth century was to create a national endowment which would continue to support those ministries and make "additional provision . . . for the cure of souls in parishes where such assistance is most required."

The Commissioners provide funding for a dean and two residentiary canons at almost all mainland cathedrals; selective grant support towards the cost of lay staff and any additional stipendiary clergy; and grants for specific projects to help Chapters meet the challenges they face to be financially sustainable into the future. The main measure to determine selective grants is average unrestricted incomes of Cathedrals. The Bishops & Cathedrals Committee is working with cathedrals to enable long term planning on sustainability, as well as short term grants for operational support.

In advance of work beginning on spending plans for the next triennium (2026-28), we will consider the options for how best to direct grants to support cathedrals' ministry. This could include how best to take the level of historic assets into account.

The Archbishops' Council is working with dioceses on a Diocesan Finance Review, one aspect of which is to improve the understanding of diocesan assets and how they are currently used to support mission and ministry across the country. This

information will feed into the planned reviewed of Lowest Income Communities Funding and diocesan apportionment.

Mr Robert Perry (Truro) to ask the Church Commissioners:

Q108 In a circumstance where several parishes are being amalgamated into one much larger parish, and where one of the parishes has a much larger electoral roll than the others, what can be done to ensure that each of the former parishes will have at least one representative on the Parochial Church Council of the newly created parish, at least in its early years?

The Revd Canon Dr Flora Winfield to answer as Third Church Estates Commissioner:

A Mr Perry is describing an example of pastoral re-organisation which is governed by the Mission and Pastoral Measure 2011 and, yes, it is possible to ensure that the new PCC has representation from each of the former parishes. This can be achieved in two ways; either by including a clause in the legal instrument (technically a Pastoral Scheme) to that effect, or by the Bishop making provision through another legal instrument which would be managed through the Diocesan Registrar. Those arrangements can last for five years, and if people wish them to continue a new scheme has to be completed under the Church Representation Rules to make the arrangement permanent.

If any Member needs any further advice, please contact the Pastoral department – peter.wagon@churchofengland.org

Mr Andrew Presland (Peterborough) to ask the Church Commissioners:

Q109 Have the Church Commissioners considered whether the current arrangement whereby the incumbent of the parish where a church building is being disposed of can veto a request by a Christian body that is not part of the Church of England to take on the building can be justified in the light of: i) the Church of England claiming to be committed to ecumenism; and ii) in today's climate of recognising members of other churches belonging to organisations such as Churches Together in England or the Evangelical Alliance as fellow Christians?

The Revd Canon Dr Flora Winfield to answer as Third Church Estates Commissioner:

A Assuming this question has in view the Commissioners' role in the disposal of a church building which is consecrated, their role is subject to the requirements of the Mission and Pastoral Measure 2011 ("the MPM"). Under the MPM, the Commissioners consider such proposals once there has been a declaration of closure for regular public worship and the church building has been vested in the diocesan Board of Finance.

The MPM does not give a right of veto to the incumbent of the parish where the church building is situated. Disposals under the MPM are subject to the overriding requirement that relevant parties must act in furtherance of the mission of the Church of England. The Commissioners' [Code of Practice](#) recognises that use for worship by other Christian groups is usually the best alternative use, and so disposals are often made to other Churches.

Mr Andrew Gray (St Edmundsbury & Ipswich) to ask the Church Commissioners:

Q110 In his answer to question 218 in July 2023, the First Estates Commissioner confirmed that the Church Commissioners have approximately 4% of their fund invested directly in Chinese companies, with 39% in North America and 43% in Europe/UK. Please would you provide a list, country by country, in which the remaining 14% of the fund is invested?

Mr Alan Smith to answer as First Church Estates Commissioner:

- A** The Church Commissioners measure geographical exposure on a regional basis in line with the investment industry. We do not have the split between individual countries for every part of the portfolio. This was factored into the answer to Q218 in July 2023. In the Church Commissioners' 2022 [Stewardship Report](#), we provide a geographical breakdown of our portfolio. While locations are based on company headquarters, many companies have global activities and supply chains, which is not visible in the geographical split.

Based on the portfolio value as of December 2022, of the remaining 14% mentioned in the question, approximately 1% of the fund is allocated to companies in Japan and India, respectively. Other larger portions are in South Korea, South Africa, Brazil and Australia. In addition to these investments, we also hold a significant amount of cash (~3%) to be able to meet our distribution commitments to the Church of England.

Mr Andrew Gray (St Edmundsbury & Ipswich) to ask the Church Commissioners:

- Q111** Given that China has been accused of genocide against the Uyghurs by two US Secretaries of State (Mike Pompeo and Anthony Blinken), do the Church Commissioners consider that continued direct investment in that country is morally justifiable?

Mr Alan Smith to answer as First Church Estates Commissioner:

- A** As with all our investments, we screen investee businesses for any activities which would be a breach of our ethical policies and exclude those companies. We also screen those investments for controversies relating to egregious violations of international norms, which may result in additional exclusions.

We are cognisant of the risks around investing in China, including ethical concerns. We do not invest in Chinese Government bonds.

Mr Ian Boothroyd (Southwell & Nottingham) to ask the Church Commissioners:

- Q112** Noting with thanks the reply to my question at the July sessions about engagement with Amazon (one of the Commissioners' top 20 equity holdings) relating to corporate taxation policy and other matters: what progress has been made through this engagement; and have such matters as working conditions and treatment of employees been raised?

Mr Alan Smith to answer as First Church Estates Commissioner:

- A** The Church Commissioners are continuing to engage with Amazon on the issue of Artificial Intelligence Ethics through the World Benchmarking Alliance (WBA) collaboration. The WBA publishes an assessment of leading tech-companies and their contribution to digital inclusion, which is supported by an investor collaboration seeking to improve company practices.

Working conditions and employee treatment are not part of our current engagement, but we follow other investor engagements concerning workers' rights. For example, CCLA has been engaging with Amazon and co-filed a shareholder resolution (to commission an independent, third-party assessment of Amazon's adherence to its stated commitment to workers' freedom of association and collective bargaining rights) in 2023. The proposal achieved just over 34% of the shareholder vote – a significant level of support in the context of shareholder resolutions - and CCLA will continue to engage with the company on workers' rights.

We are not currently engaging with Amazon on tax; this was part of an earlier collaborative engagement which has since closed.

Mr Jonathan Baird (Salisbury) to ask the Church Commissioners:

Q113 What proportion of the funds held by the Church Commissioners derives from the parochial endowments, which were transferred to the ownership of the Church Commissioners by virtue of the Endowments and Glebe Measure 1976? In other words, what were the funds worth before said transfer took place and what were they worth immediately thereafter?

Mr Alan Smith to answer as First Church Estates Commissioner:

A The Endowments and Glebe Measure 1976 had two major financial effects.

The main change concerned the ownership and management of glebe assets, which was transferred from incumbents to Diocesan Boards of Finance (not the Church Commissioners).

Secondly, benefice endowments which had previously been held by the Church Commissioners on trust for specific benefices (usually for stipends' augmentation) were pooled and transferred to the general fund. The value of the assets under the Commissioners' stewardship on behalf of the Church was unchanged.

Following on from this second element, the Commissioners became liable to pay fixed grants of up to £1,000 p.a. (around one-third of stipends at the time) as part of incumbents' stipends. These totalled £5m p.a. and were largely abolished by Measure in 2006, enabling the Commissioners to increase their targeted grant support for parish mission and ministry.

The changes brought about by the 1976 Measure were described in the Commissioners' 1976/7 annual report and accounts as "an important further stage in the century long process by which historic endowments of the Church of England will be shared more fairly for the benefit of the Church's ministry."

The Revd Barry Hill (Leicester) to ask the Church Commissioners:

Q114 As the Church Commissioners have significantly increased their mission investment in the local church, for which we give thanks, we note that, in God's grace, the Commissioners' total asset base has further significantly increased (in the past year alone by more than the entire stipend bill for the Church of England). Whilst these investments are making a significant missional impact in our communities, their outcomes and the Commissioners' principle of 'intergenerational equity' are now dangerously at risk because of the financial context within many parishes and dioceses. Would the Church Commissioners be open, therefore, to conversations with the Archbishop's Council and Dioceses about introducing legislation to additionally take on post-1997 clergy pension contributions, if the current analysis the Archbishops' Council has recently commissioned deems such an intervention would be helpful?

Mr Alan Smith to answer as First Church Estates Commissioner:

A In the current triennium (2023-25), the Commissioners will make distributions of over £1.2 billion, about 30% higher than the previous triennium. This is enabled by strong investment returns in past years. However, continued strong investment returns cannot be presumed – evident in the more challenging investment markets over the past couple of years. In particular, an element of the returns achieved in recent years has been driven by the abnormally low level of interest rates, and that we have in effect "borrowed from the future." As interest rates return to historical normal levels, it requires that we are prudent and disciplined about distribution

levels and commitments in ensuring that we support a sustainable and flourishing Church.

The annual review of the Church's endowment, which we manage, carried out earlier this year, confirmed that the increased level of distributions remains affordable. However, the fund achieved a total return of 5% in 2022 - whilst this was a good performance given the challenging market conditions, it was below our target return as well as the long-term figure used by the actuaries in their work to inform the Commissioners' decisions on overall distribution levels.

Although investment performance is only one factor in such assessments, it would be unwise to assume that the fund will have capacity to increase planned distributions following the next major assessment of the fund's capacity for distributions, which will be carried out in the first half of 2025.

The Archbishops' Council has not commissioned any analysis on clergy pensions recently. Were it to be proposed, any discussion or suggestion about the possibility of the Commissioners taking on post-1997 clergy pensions contributions would need to involve agreement on what distributions would be cut to provide the necessary funding.

Br Philip Dulson OSB (Religious Communities) to ask the Church Commissioners:

Q115 Given the significant debt that the Pension Board has undertaken to buy retirement properties, would it be more ethical and profitable for the properties to become part of the investment policy of the Church of England commissioners - and if not, why not?

Mr Alan Smith to answer as First Church Estates Commissioner:

A The Pensions Board and the Church Commissioners are separate bodies with separate purposes and obligations. The Church Commissioners manage the Church's historic endowment fund, which supports the Church of England's ministry in perpetuity, particularly in areas of need and opportunity. Any investment made by the Church Commissioners needs to be considered in the context of our investment strategy, and taking into account our return target (CPIH+4%), risk profile and a range of other portfolio metrics including overall existing fund composition.

The Commissioners have a significant allocation to residential property both directly in the form of the Hyde Park Estate, Strategic Land and Farmland Portfolios and through various indirect housing funds.

Also, the Commissioners' portfolio does in fact include some investment in the Pension Board's CHARM (Clergy Housing Assistance Retired Ministry) portfolio, as a result of providing loans in relation to retirement housing from 1983 to 2010. Since then, this portfolio investment has been reducing as part of a strategy to reduce the Commissioners' investment focus from over-exposure to the UK residential property market. Just under 300 Commissioner-financed properties currently remain in the CHARM portfolio.

The Revd Stephen Corbett (Blackburn) to ask the Church Commissioners:

Q116 Staff at Church House - in particular, the Clergy Payments Team - will, no doubt, be aware of problems and frustrations being experienced with the recently introduced "People System" for clergy & employee payments. Given that many found the previous "My View" System to be somewhat more user-friendly, could the Church Commissioners please explain why this new system has been introduced, and what progress has been made to alleviate the problems?

Mr Alan Smith to answer as First Church Estates Commissioner:

- A** The new People System was introduced to replace MyView which had come to the end of its supported lifecycle. The new People system enables us to manage people data in a consistent way and, as well as more effectively supporting the payroll processes, provides the source of information to support the Church of England to publish the National Clergy Register, an important safeguarding commitment. For this we needed a system that can interface in a more robust manner with other national and diocesan systems.

There is a full set of FAQs on the new People System on the Church of England website which can be found here [People System FAQs | The Church of England](#).

Whilst the project did take longer to deliver than originally planned, we are not seeing a large number of complaints or questions beyond the expected initial questions from those who need support in using a new system. We expect that, as diocesan staff get used to using the system and clergy feel comfortable with the new interfaces, it will prove a reliable critical system for the Church's broad and complex needs.

Canon Nigel Bacon (Lincoln) to ask the Church Commissioners:

- Q117** With reference to Table 1 of Schedule 1 to GS2299 (The Legal Officers (Annual Fees) Order 2023), what were (a) the algorithm and (b) the actual data used to determine the apportionment for each diocese?

Mr Alan Smith to answer as First Church Estates Commissioner:

- A** The fees in that table are calculated by reference to a formula which was agreed by the General Synod when it approved the 2014 Fees Orders and which it has further endorsed subsequently. Explanatory note [GS 1938-9X](#) (February 2014) sets out the details. Explanatory notes [GS 2299X/GS 2300X](#) (July 2023) set out the data collection process in connection with the 2023 Orders.

The established formula provides for the calculation of a figure for the national cost of the work reported and takes into account two key variables: the average number of hours recorded over a rolling five-year period, and average hourly rates. The division in each case between the allocation of cost to the DBF and the bishop (which falls on the Church Commissioners) is long-standing and reflects the fact that there were historically two distinct offices which could be held by different people: bishops' legal secretary and the diocesan registrar (these offices are now merged in the office of the diocesan registrar). We understand that the apportionment took into account the division of work in each case between the bishops' legal secretary and the diocesan registrar before the roles were merged.

PENSIONS BOARD

The Revd Christopher Blunt (Chester) to ask the Chair of the Pensions Board:

- Q118** Given that in General Synod's July 2023 Vote 5 debate Clive Mather reiterated the Pension Board's commitment to house retired clergy and widow/ers in need of Church of England owned properties with guaranteed tenure and rent levels, can you tell us when the Pension Board will be bringing the proposed changes that he outlined to Synod during that debate for approval?

Mr Clive Mather to reply as Chair of the Pensions Board:

- A** We aim to publish discussion materials setting out specific ideas about how the Church might best support future cohorts of retiring stipendiary clergy with their retirement housing plans before the end of the November Group of Sessions.

The core concept is that of enabling choice for clergy about future housing, instead of focusing on just one offer at one point in ministry. Enabling choice might involve new services, products and investment across ministry, to encourage retirement planning, overcome barriers to home ownership that stipendiary clergy face, and open doors to different retirement housing choices. These new services would sit alongside continued provision of Church retirement housing to the extent the Church is willing to fund it.

We are looking to test these ideas with the Church through a discussion process and welcome the engagement of Synod members in this process, whether formally or informally. (Formal Synod business is determined by its Business Committee.) We want to know which ideas resonate so that an informed view can be taken as the Church determines priorities for the next triennium.

To be clear, none of the proposals require, imply or involve change for existing residents.

The Revd Canon Katrina Scott (Gloucester) to ask the Chair of the Pensions Board:

Q119 Following the news from the Pension Board that they are preparing to change their provision of CHARM housing to working with other providers, is the Pension Board able to guarantee that retired clergy and their dependents housed by other providers are not at any risk, safeguarding, financial or otherwise?

Mr Clive Mather to reply as Chair of the Pensions Board:

A We aim to publish discussion materials setting out specific ideas about how the Church might best support future cohorts of retiring stipendiary clergy with their retirement housing plans before the end of the November Group of Sessions. These ideas are centred around how the Church might enable more choice for clergy, through implementing new services during ministry to sit alongside a portfolio of Church retirement properties available at retirement.

None of these ideas require, imply or involve any change for existing residents.

Working with other providers to open doors to different choices for clergy is certainly part of our thinking. Indeed the Board already supports retirees in considering options with other providers, where that might offer the best plan for their retirement. There are some wonderful Christian charities, almshouses and other providers who offer retirement housing to clergy, and those seeking housing should not be constrained to the property we can offer for want of information.

Appropriately managing safeguarding, financial and other risks is always at the heart of our thinking.

We hope that Synod members will engage with the forthcoming conversation, which invites the Church to consider ideas that put clergy in the driving seat of their retirement housing plans.

The Revd Dr Miranda Threlfall-Holmes (Liverpool) to ask the Chair of the Pensions Board:

Q120 How many of the Pension Board's current stock of retirement housing is empty or being rented to private tenants outside of their housing of retired clergy and dependents remit?

Mr Clive Mather to reply as Chair of the Pensions Board:

A The Pensions Board has a portfolio of 1,170 rental properties. As at 1 September 2023, excluding those which are in the process of being sold or prepared for new tenants, there were 18 empty properties. These empty properties are typically

recently vacated and pending surveyor reports to inform asset management decisions to dispose or retain for future tenants.

At the same date there were 13 properties externally let to private tenants. This usually arises when a property has been reserved for a clergy household in advance of their retirement, and in the interim the house is let on a short-term basis to supplement income, reduce costs, and provide short term accommodation for others.

Mrs Sue Cavill (Derby) to ask the Chair of the Pensions Board:

Q121 Currently tenants of the Pensions Board's retirement housing scheme have to take responsibility for reporting problems with their houses. Why does the Pensions Board not undertake quinquennial inspections of its properties?

Mr Clive Mather to reply as Chair of the Pensions Board:

A There is a 24 hour a day 365 day a year telephone helpline for residents to report maintenance concerns with their homes, as is best practice for all landlords. Where a maintenance concern arises we would want this to be reported straight away, not wait for a scheduled stock condition survey.

We comprehensively refurbish rental properties prior to them being occupied by new residents so that building works can then be kept to a minimum and customers can enjoy living in their homes without the inconvenience of building projects.

Inspection programmes include annual gas (or equivalent) safety checks. We have just completed a portfolio-wide electrical inspection programme, and – subject to funding – expect to embark on a portfolio-wide stock condition survey next year with a particular focus on those properties occupied by the same tenants for a longer period of time as such properties sometimes require additional maintenance during tenancies.

A quinquennial inspection regime applies to the legacy mortgage properties, where the maintenance responsibility rests with the resident.

The Revd Robert Thompson (London) to ask the Chair of the Pensions Board:

Q122 Can the Pensions Board explain why, as a charitable housing provider responsible for retired Church of England clergy, you adopted a government formula of target rents?

Mr Clive Mather to reply as Chair of the Pensions Board:

A The Board adopted the 'target rent' approach, as a way of calculating the starting rent for its properties from 2015, after extensive consultation with the Church through 2013-14. The approach is similar to that used in the social housing sector, although the Board is classed as a private landlord.

A target rent-style formula offered a fairer, more transparent way of setting starting rents for retirement properties, while ensuring homes continue to be offered at a significant discount to comparable local properties.

Please also note the question takes a rather expansive view of the Board's charitable responsibilities. The Board is responsible for operating the Church's clergy retirement housing provision, within the funding available. In doing so, the Board's responsibilities to the Church and residents are subject to many requirements including landlord compliance, good stewardship of resources, and guidance from this synodical forum.

Ms Fiona MacMillan (Lincoln) to ask the Chair of the Pensions Board:

Q123 Why does the Pension Board not take into account the income of its tenants when setting rents?

Mr Clive Mather to reply as Chair of the Pensions Board:

A Prior to 2015, rents for retirement properties were set as a straight % of household income. This approach was changed after extensive consultation with the Church, and residents. Setting rents based purely on income had several challenges, not least, it led to unfair outcomes between residents, e.g. some were paying a lot more than others for similar properties in the same areas. The process of calculating rents was also difficult and intrusive, as households were required to disclose extensive personal financial information.

A 'target rent' model was adopted in 2015. This model, similar to that used in the social housing sector, is designed to provide a fair way of setting rents while ensuring properties continue to be offered at a significant discount compared to market rates. The target rent takes account of local circumstances, ensuring that properties are affordable for the areas in which they are located (in line with the approach advocated by the *Coming Home* report).

However, there is a genuine question about whether household income should be considered in determining eligibility for Church-subsidised rental retirement housing, alongside savings and length of service. This will be picked up in the major discussion process about to start.

The Revd Canon Andrew Dotchin (St Edmundsbury & Ipswich) to ask the Chair of the Pensions Board:

Q124 Noting that the rent for those using the Charm housing scheme is set at a 'Social Rent'.

Noting that this amount varies across the Dioceses of the Church of England.

Noting that not all residents draw a full Church of England pension.

- What is the average rent charged in each Diocese?
- Where a cleric (other than Bishops and Senior Staff) is in receipt of a full pension, what percentage of that pension is spent on paying rent?
- What additional help is offered to those who are not in receipt of a full Church of England or State Pension?

Mr Clive Mather to reply as Chair of the Pensions Board:

A The target rent approach is described in answers to other questions. Note that this approach is similar to that used in the social housing sector but the Board is classed as a private landlord.

The median rent for a Church retirement property is c.£680 per month. The typical Church retirement property is a 3-bedroom detached house or bungalow, though this average includes both larger and smaller properties. Rents vary across the country.

By way of comparison, ONS data suggest monthly rent for a 3-bed property (all types) in England is £900 (median) and £1,039 (mean).

Data by diocese is not readily available, and may not be particularly helpful given significant variations in property and rental prices even within dioceses, however rents for Church retirement properties will largely follow the variation in rents/property prices across the country.

All properties are advertised with clear rent information, and the Board seeks to offer a variety of properties to cater for different budgets, locational preferences, etc.

As set out in GS 2330T, a cleric retiring on a full clergy and state pension would have an annual gross income of c.£27,900. Assuming no other household income/spouse pension (i.e. a single person in a 3-bed property) the average rent equates to c.29% of this income.

Additional support offered to all residents includes access to advice on eligibility for state entitlements, and a charitable grant scheme which provides an additional monthly grant for those on low incomes and few savings.

The Revd Canon John Dunnett (Chelmsford) to ask the Chair of the Pensions Board:

Q125 Noting the answer given to Q236 at the July 2023 Group of Sessions, please can the Pension Board explain how a decision to increase CHARM rent by 10.1% is 'in line with the increases in clergy and state pension'?

Mr Clive Mather to reply as Chair of the Pensions Board:

A The state pension increased by 10.1% in April 2023. Clergy pensions in payment also increased by 10.1% in April 2023.

It should be noted that the guaranteed increase to clergy pensions is 5% or 3.5% depending on the period of service. Following excellent investment performance, and improvements in scheme funding, the Board was able to exercise a discretionary power to override the guarantees and provide an additional increase in April 2023. The Church Commissioners took a parallel decision in relation to pre-1998 clergy pensions in payment.

Mr Ian Boothroyd (Southwell & Nottingham) to ask the Chair of the Pensions Board:

Q126 Noting that the amount of a clergy pension at retirement is linked to the previous year's National Minimum Stipend, which increased by 1% between 2020 and 2022; whereas inflation cumulatively from 2020 up to date totals almost 18% (my calculation, using CPIH): what action could be taken to respond to the reduction in the real value of pensions for clergy entering retirement during this period of high inflation?

Mr Clive Mather to reply as Chair of the Pensions Board:

A Although the figures quoted do not appear to be entirely comparable due to reference dates for pensions/stipends increases, etc, I am grateful to Ian for highlighting this important issue, which is further discussed in GS 2330T.

The Board's role is to administer the clergy pension scheme according to the Rules set by Synod. The policy for the NMS is the responsibility of the Central Stipends Authority.

Starting pensions are based on the *previous year's* National Minimum Stipend. Hence: 1) to the extent that the NMS does not keep up with inflation, the real value in the starting pension will reduce, and 2) there is a lag effect.

Over the last decade the increase in starting pension and pensions in payment have been fairly close. The difference has been more pronounced in this current year (2023-24), and the Board is exploring this issue in more detail in its meetings this autumn.

ETHICAL INVESTMENT ADVISORY GROUP

The Revd Paul Benfield (Blackburn) to ask the Chair of the Ethical Investment Advisory Group:

Q127 Does the Ethical Investment Advisory Group guidance place any restriction on investment in companies that profit from abortion, and if not, why not?

Mr Andrew Presland (Peterborough) to ask the Chair of the Ethical Investment Advisory Group:

Q128 As the Church of England's policy is to oppose abortion in all but the rarest and most extreme cases, does EIAG guidance ensure that CCLA excludes investment in abortion provision, as is the policy of other church bodies, such as the Methodist Central Board of Finance and the Roman Catholic Church?

The Bishop of Manchester to reply on behalf of the Chair of the Ethical Investment Advisory Group:

A With permission, I will take these two questions together.

The EIAG's ethical investment advice and the investment policies of the National Investing Bodies (NIBs) - the Church Commissioners, the Church of England Pensions Board and the CBF Church of England Funds, managed by CCLA - recognise that the work of many companies is morally complex. In many cases, the majority of a company's production may serve the common good whereas the same company may have a smaller activity in more problematic areas and engagement with these companies is an important stewardship tool. We do not have advice on every kind of investment or every moral issue, although we are gradually building up our range of advice, developed largely in response to requests from the NIBs for consideration of a particular issue.

It is not possible or morally advisable to impose a blanket ban on every company with any link, however small, to the provision of abortion, since to do so could involve disinvestment from, for instance, major pharmaceutical companies or medical supply companies which make a huge contribution to human flourishing worldwide.

FAITH AND ORDER COMMISSION

Mr Stephen Hofmeyr (Guildford) to ask the Chair of the Faith and Order Commission:

Q129 Did the Faith and Order Commission provide the House of Bishops with advice on the draft Prayers of Love and Faith between February and October 2023; and, if so, could General Synod please be provided with copies the advice (if in writing) or the gist of the advice (if given orally)?

The Bishop of Gibraltar in Europe to reply as Chair of the Faith and Order Commission:

A The Faith and Order Commission was not asked to provide advice on the draft text of the PLF.

The Revd Jake Madin (York) to ask the Chair of the Faith and Order Commission:

Q130 What theological work has the House done on the nature of 'things indifferent' (adiaphora) in Scripture and the tradition of the church catholic, and whether issues around the doctrine of marriage are included within this or not?

The Bishop of Gibraltar in Europe to reply as Chair of the Faith and Order Commission:

- A** These questions have been part of LLF conversations throughout, and are reflected in the LLF book, pp. 230-234. In addition, the Faith and Order Commission also explored these matters in *Communion and Disagreement* ([communion and disagreement faoc report gs misc 1139.pdf](https://www.churchofengland.org/communion-and-disagreement-faoc-report-gs-misc-1139.pdf) ([churchofengland.org](https://www.churchofengland.org))).

Both of these highlight the fact that a simple diaphora/adiaphora distinction may be too crude, and that there exist different types and levels of disagreement, with different shapes of consequences for the life of the Church. Significant disagreement can arise without it necessarily be a disagreement over credal matter and therefore leading to schism, yet of enough importance to have consequences for the ordering of our common life. The LLF book further considers the complexity of the current situation, where there is not only disagreement over the question we are discussing, but disagreement over the type of disagreement we are having.

Dr Diana Tremayne (Leeds) to ask the Chair of the Faith and Order Commission:

- Q131** In the Church of England, how is doctrine formed and agreed, by whom, what are its sources and where is it recorded?

The Bishop of Gibraltar in Europe to reply as Chair of the Faith and Order Commission:

- A** The Church of England is not a confessional Church, and, as such, does not have a recorded body of doctrine formulated systematically by subject. Doctrine emerges out of the consideration of Scripture, Creeds, historic formularies and the ongoing life of the people of God. It is reflected in our liturgies, as well as in teaching documents issued from the House of Bishops, FAOC, and reports agreed by Synod.

Mr Nigel Lea-Wilson (Liverpool) to ask the Chair of the Faith and Order Commission:

- Q132** What is the most recent statement concerning the incompatibility of belief in universal salvation with Christian faith as the Church of England has received it (see Articles 17, 18)?

The Bishop of Gibraltar in Europe to reply as Chair of the Faith and Order Commission:

- A** The 1995 report by the Doctrine Commission 'The Mystery of Salvation' argued that moral and spiritual choices have real and ultimate significance, that it contradicts the nature of love to think that anyone can be compulsorily installed in heaven, and that hell is choosing a path of complete opposition to God.

LITURGICAL COMMISSION

The Revd Canon Howard Stoker (Norwich) to ask the Chair of the Liturgical Commission:

- Q133** Given the "important and vital contribution grandparents make to the family, society and to the church" will the Church of England affirm grandparents and the elderly by following the example of the Roman Catholic Church, led by the Catholic Grandparents Association, and adopt the World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly in the universal Church Calendar, this being the nearest Sunday to the Feast of St Anne and St Joachim, (26th July) and provide appropriate liturgical material and encourage parishes to help grandparents pass on the faith to their grandchildren?

The Revd Andrew Atherstone (Oxford) to reply on behalf of the Chair of the Liturgical Commission:

- A** Thank you for your suggestion. The World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly was instituted by Pope Francis in 2021 and prayers have been issued by Roman Catholic bishops' conferences on a yearly basis since then. Since (like many themed occasions of this type) it falls on a Sunday, it is unlikely that full liturgical provision would be made. The Liturgical Commission will consider whether to issue material for use as part of its standing brief to develop topical prayers for use in the Church of England.

Mrs Abigail Ogier (Manchester) to ask the Chair of the Liturgical Commission:

- Q134** Could the Liturgical Commission provide an update on what progress has been made thus far by the joint project on gendered language, and outline a provisional timetable they are working towards so that Synod will be able to consider new liturgical material in due course?

The Revd Andrew Atherstone (Oxford) to reply on behalf of the Chair of the Liturgical Commission:

- A** The working group (comprising members and staff of the Liturgical Commission as well as of the Faith and Order Commission) has now been constituted. Its brief is to consider the best use of current liturgical material, not at this stage to draft new liturgical material. The next meeting of the group is scheduled for December. The intended outcome of its work is a guidance paper with a practical focus, informed by theological and liturgical scholarship, for the benefit of those responsible for writing, planning, and leading worship in the Church of England.

The Revd Rachel Wakefield (St Albans) to ask the Chair of the Liturgical Commission:

- Q135** Press reports over recent years have noted cases of clergy and bishops saying prayers and giving blessings for a wide range of things, including toilet blocks, burger vans, beer kegs, gritting trucks and sewage works. What is the formal liturgical basis for such blessings?

The Revd Andrew Atherstone (Oxford) to reply on behalf of the Chair of the Liturgical Commission:

- A** There has been a long-standing theological conversation over the nature of blessing, including whether inanimate objects can or should be blessed. The contemporary liturgical practice of the Church of England, shared by the Roman Catholic Church and others, is to pray that such objects may be a blessing to those who use them (so-called invocative blessing) rather than praying for the objects to be blessed intrinsically (so-called constitutive blessing). Examples in *Common Worship* include: 'By the power of your Spirit, may your blessing rest on those who are anointed with this oil in your name;' 'By your blessing, let this plough be a sign of all that you promise to us'.

Mr Richard Brown (Chelmsford) to ask the Chair of the Liturgical Commission:

- Q136** The modern version of the liturgy of ordination of a Bishop includes the promises to 'teach the doctrine of Christ as the Church of England has received it' and 'to refute error'. The BCP version of this also included the phrase 'both privately and openly to call upon and encourage others to do the same.' When was the omission of this final phrase approved by Synod?

The Revd Andrew Atherstone (Oxford) to reply on behalf of the Chair of the Liturgical Commission:

- A** The promises in the BCP Ordinal and the *Common Worship* Ordinal cover very similar ground, though the modern liturgy does so in a more succinct fashion. The *Common Worship* Ordinal reads: 'Will you teach the doctrine of Christ as the Church of England has received it, will you refute error, and will you hand on entire the faith that is entrusted to you?' The BCP Ordinal remains the authorized standard. The *Common Worship* Ordinal was authorized as an alternative by General Synod in November 2006, and received significant backing at Final Approval stage in voting by Houses: Bishops 25-0, Clergy 155-4, Laity 175-8.

NATIONAL SOCIETY COUNCIL

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

- Q137** What review has been undertaken by the National Society and/or the Education department to review the widely used material produced by 'PSHE Association' and other third parties which at key points contradict the doctrine of the Church on marriage and sexuality, and what resources have been offered to schools to equip them to communicate the Church's teaching in this area?

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

- A** It is the responsibility of Diocesan Boards of Education to provide advice and guidance to their schools in this area. It is the responsibility of schools to determine which resources they use and to ensure that the Church of England's teaching about marriage is understood.

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](#) including a link to the Goodness and Mercy resources produced by the Diocese of Bristol as an example.

Ms Christiana Olomolaiye (Bristol) to ask the Chair of the National Society Council:

- Q138** In the written response to Question 4 in July, the Bishop of Durham suggested that there had been no research on the effectiveness of the Church's schools work on young people coming to faith. However, in the response to supplementary questions, he did note the 2021 research of Francis et al which showed that there was zero measurable impact. What further research is planned to explore this question, and how will both this research and any future research shape the strategy of the National Society and the Education department?

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

- A** Professor Leslie Francis is a prolific and able researcher and academic in this area. The Chief Education Officer has been in conversation with him and Professor Francis is very clear that his research cited above is not about young people coming to faith or the effectiveness or impact of Church of England schools in that journey, but is specifically about the attitudes of church going young people in one diocese towards their church and Christian living.

One of his conclusions in this research is that it is "students from non-white backgrounds and attending churches in deprived areas who are most likely to be attending church schools. This is an interesting and important finding in light of an accusation often levelled against church schools that they tend to prioritise students from white and privileged backgrounds."

Our own Growing Faith Foundation is focused on how the relationship between church, school and home is vital for ministry with children and young people and we are ensuring careful research on the impact of this is built into all work in this area.

Mrs Rebecca Hunt (Portsmouth) to ask the Chair of the National Society Council:

Q139 Has the National Society considered the view expressed by the Diocese of Derby that Church of England doctrine poses a safeguarding risk to children whereas the campaign group Educate and Celebrate which aims to “smash heteronormativity” should be welcomed into Church of England schools?

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

A We do not understand this to be the position of the Diocese of Derby. Please contact the Diocese of Derby for clarification.

COUNCIL FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY

Mr Clive Billenness (Europe) to ask the Chair of the Council for Christian Unity:

Q140 Given the recent public statements by an ordained minister within the Free Church of England to the effect that Anglican women clergy are ‘witches’ and the failure of the Free Church of England to operate a clergy discipline procedure equivalent to the Clergy Discipline Measure, will the Council request the House of Bishops to conduct a formal review to determine whether it will be appropriate to recommend a revocation of the Church of England’s recognition of the Orders of the Free Church of England in accordance with the provisions of Section 1A(5) of the Overseas and Other Clergy (Ministry and Ordination) Measure 1967?

The Bishop of Gibraltar in Europe to reply as Vice-Chair of the Council for Christian Unity:

A Recognition of another Church’s orders is an ecclesiastical judgement, Church to Church, determined primarily by doctrine, church order, and ecclesial density (i.e. ‘spread’ and longevity), and not by the opinions of individual members of that Church, nor by its disciplinary actions; it does not imply that Permission to Officiate (PTO) will always be granted to individuals applying to exercise ministry in the Church of England. When a minister of another such Church wishes to participate in ministry in the Church of England, there must be proper scrutiny of the individual’s fitness, and PTO granted or withheld accordingly. There is no *prima facie* case for revoking the (long-standing) recognition of the orders of the Free Church of England, and I resist the suggestion that the cited section of the Overseas and Other Clergy (Ministry and Ordination) Measure 1967 could be used in this way.

ARCHBISHOPS’ COUNCIL

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

Q141 At the July 2023 Group of Sessions, Archbishop Justin expressed the laudable aspiration that more could and should be done to provide affordable and secure housing for employed and salaried chaplains and youth workers/ministers and others, as part of their terms and conditions of service. Will the Archbishops Council, and/or other relevant bodies, prepare advice and guidance to Dioceses to encourage and equip them to achieve this aspiration? And if so, by when?

Mr Carl Hughes to reply on behalf of the Presidents of the Archbishops’ Council:

A As part of the pursuit of our national vision and strategy work is beginning to develop a comprehensive understanding of the terms and conditions for those employed within Church of England contexts to work with children and young

people. This work is due to report to the 30,000 Project Board chaired by the Bishop of Leicester in mid-2024.

The Rt Revd Dr Pete Wilcox (Bishop of Sheffield) to ask the Presidents of the Archbishops' Council:

Q142 What plans does the Archbishops' Council have in place to support a systematic approach to land use, as set out in the 'Coming Home' report from the Archbishops' Commission on Housing, Church and Community?

Mrs Michaela Suckling (Sheffield) to ask the Presidents of the Archbishops' Council:

Q143 How is the Archbishops' Council assisting dioceses and parishes that want to support those needing truly affordable homes both now and in the future?

Mr Robert Perry (Truro) to ask the Presidents of the Archbishops' Council:

Q144 What practical plans does the Archbishops' Council have in place for a national response to the housing crisis that would support dioceses like Truro where housing is an overwhelming priority for local communities?

Mr Carl Hughes to reply on behalf of the Presidents of the Archbishops' Council:

A With your permission Chair, I will answer the questions from the Bishop of Sheffield, Mrs Suckling and Mr Perry together.

The Archbishops' Council currently has very limited resource to focus on affordable housing and no staff with specialist expertise, in part as it owns no suitable land or property itself. However, its social impact investment programme has made a commitment to the Women in Safe Homes Fund. This fund helps address the housing crisis for women escaping domestic abuse, leaving the criminal justice system and at risk of or experiencing homelessness.

The Council is in the process of considering proposals from the Archbishops' Housing Advisory Board that seek to respond to the challenges in 'Coming Home.' The Council will consider the opportunities and risks of the proposals and will have to assess them alongside other current and likely future calls for support from the sums it has available.

Mr Robert McNeil-Wilson (Gloucester) to ask the Presidents of the Archbishops' Council:

Q145 What action is the Archbishops' Council taking to support better stewardship of Church land resources that could lead to more funding at a parish level, as put forward by the Housing Advisory Board under Bishop Guli?

Mr Carl Hughes to reply on behalf of the Presidents of the Archbishops' Council:

A The Council is in the process of considering a number of proposals from the Archbishops' Housing Advisory Board that seek to respond to the challenges in 'Coming Home.' The Council will consider the opportunities and risks of the proposals and will have to assess them alongside other current and likely future calls for support from the sums it has available.

The Revd Paul Benfield (Blackburn) to ask the Archbishops' Council:

Q146 Following the publication of the report Evaluation of Transforming Wigan which shows that the investment of £1.2m of Strategic Development Funds in Wigan has failed to halt the decline in attendance or financial giving, will the Archbishops' Council be re-considering grants to similar schemes in Liverpool and other dioceses?

Mr Carl Hughes to reply on behalf of the Presidents of the Archbishops' Council:

A The Church of England has been in persistent attendance decline for many years. This is the case in Wigan which was financially the most challenged part of the diocese. Transforming Wigan was ambitious, even without Covid impact. Missionally, the evaluation shows some positive outcomes to January 2023 which continue to develop. September 2023 shows 490 people regularly worship in 19 new worshipping communities. 930 further people meet at least monthly in 33 mission initiatives. These numbers are in addition to regular attenders of 1150 quoted in the evaluation as attending existing churches (which did not include data from all existing Wigan churches). While that would not overcome loss in attendance at traditional church, 2015-2022, a revised estimate would put the decline over the period at -12%. This compares with -32% reported across Liverpool diocese (though the inclusion of fresh expressions in the latter figure may not be comprehensive). The financial position remains more challenging.

Across SDF, each investment is reviewed annually and evaluated at its conclusion. Clearly, some missional development projects will yield more benefits than others which is the nature of the programme. £1.2m was the total investment in Transforming Wigan. £0.9m was SDF funding: £0.3m from the Diocese of Liverpool's own funds.

Mr Nigel Lea-Wilson (Liverpool) to ask the Presidents of the Archbishops' Council:

Q147 How much money was invested in the Wigan SDF scheme, and how many full-time evangelists could that have funded over a five-year period at the usual rates of remuneration and provision?

Mr Carl Hughes to reply on behalf of the Presidents of the Archbishops' Council:

A £1.2 million over 7 years was the total investment in Transforming Wigan of which £0.9 million was from SDF funding: £0.3 million was from the Diocese of Liverpool's own funds. Assuming an evangelist has a broadly similar level of costs to that of an incumbent, we calculate that 2.5 full-time evangelists could have been employed for 5 years if the SDF grant had been differently applied.

The Revd Mark Miller (Durham) to ask the Presidents of the Archbishops' Council:

Q148 Parish Buying are able to demonstrate that the Energy Basket prices are lower than the variable rates of energy however many parishes will not be on variable rates and will have negotiated with other providers or brokers rates which are also lower than the variable rate (or will have been approached by providers/brokers with an offer of such rates). What steps have been taken by Parish Buying to ensure that prices in the Energy Basket are lower than a parish could achieve through other energy procurement routes?

Mr Carl Hughes to reply on behalf of the Presidents of the Archbishops' Council:

A The energy basket in Parish Buying has fixed prices for a 12 month period. It is able to do this as it buys energy in advance, benefiting from economies of scale to offer significant savings for its 3,500 parishes. For parishes who wish certainty over prices for a longer period, Parish Buying also offers fixed term contracts. As with all fixed term contracts, the customer may benefit initially but it may be more expensive than shorter term or variable rate contracts depending on the fluctuations in energy costs. As well as the financial savings, Parish Buying's energy products reduce the administration of energy procurement and also protect parishes from rogue brokers, as well as eliminating the need for credit checks. The Parish Buying power procurement contract comprises an allocation of power generated by the Hornsea

wind farm in the North Sea. The wind farm's generation is classified as premium pure green which aligns with our Net Zero Carbon 2030 aspirations.

Mr Richard Denno (Liverpool) to ask the Presidents of the Archbishops' Council:

Q149 The report of findings from the Church Growth Research Programme 2011-2013 "From anecdote to evidence" has a finding: "The strategy of grouping multiple churches together under one leader has in general had a detrimental effect on church growth. Multi-church amalgamations and teams are less likely to grow. Churches are more likely to grow when there is one leader for one community."

What evidence of church growth has the Strategic Mission and Ministry Investment Board considered in relation to grant requests for grouping multiple parishes into a single larger parish?

Mr Carl Hughes to reply on behalf of the Presidents of the Archbishops' Council:

A The Strategic Mission and Ministry Investment Board was created in February this year. To date the Board has not received any grant requests for grouping multiple parishes into a single larger parish. Any funding proposal from a diocese or para-Church organisation is required to set out for the Board how their learning, and what God has blessed, informs the proposed programme of work. Dioceses are also learning from each other, for example staff are facilitating learning reviews in which dioceses which are in the process of developing funding proposals learn from other dioceses with experience in delivering similar programmes.

Mrs Sarah Finch (London) to ask the Presidents of the Archbishops' Council:

Q150 How is progress being measured on the Archbishops' Council's objective of creating 10,000 new Christian communities across the four areas of home, work/education, social and digital, and what progress has been made so far?

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

A This is an important question and there are several elements to the answer:

- 1) There are about 700 new worshipping communities planned as part of projects and programmes awarded national Church funding since 2021.
- 2) We are encouraged by numbers of planned new communities reported in Diocesan Plans and are working to collate these figures.
- 3) We anticipate more new worshipping communities will emerge in parishes and at a local level. There are some measurements of this in Statistics for Mission;
 - a) We recognise that it can be hard to discover all that is happening with small and emerging communities across these four areas;
 - b) We are introducing a one-off question in Statistics for Mission for 2023, asking churches to report their number of "new worshipping communities" (this builds on previous reporting of fresh expressions), and;
 - c) We are also working on an Outcome Framework which aims to provide a common definition of new worshipping communities. This will be rolled out for relevant projects in the SMMIB funded programmes in the coming months.

Mrs Amanda Robbie (Lichfield) to ask the Presidents of the Archbishops' Council:

Q151 What consideration has the Archbishops' Council given to producing training materials for members of Bishops' Councils to enable better functioning of those councils? If they have not, what are the reasons for that?

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

- A** To date, there has been no demand from Bishops' Councils for a centralised training offer and so there is no provision.

Mrs Amanda Robbie (Lichfield) to ask the Presidents of the Archbishops' Council:

- Q152** I am aware of a high vacancy rate in some dioceses, and a disparity of vacancy rates between dioceses. Please can you provide a list of actual parish vacancy rates and desired parish vacancy rates by diocese.

Mr Carl Hughes 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.

The Revd Martin Poole (Chichester) to ask the Archbishops' Council:

- Q153** The Church Commissioners have allocated a £6m fund to build diocesan capacity for work on Net Zero Carbon, with £430k to enable £15k 'starter grants' for each diocese and the balance to fund larger grants. What is the progress on allocating this funding?

The Revd Charlotte Cook to reply on behalf of the Presidents of the Archbishops' Council:

- A** All dioceses have received a starter grant of £15k.

Of the large grants, 14 grants covering 15 dioceses have already been approved, these included the first partnership grants to Exeter & Truro, and to the East of England cluster (5 dioceses).

10 applications covering 14 dioceses will be coming to the November Grants Panel for consideration, with the remaining 13 dioceses anticipated to apply to the December Grants Panel.

To date £2.97m of this fund has been allocated, including the starter grants, and the applications being considered in November add up to an additional £1.61m. The funding is supporting dioceses to carry out energy audits across housing and the highest energy using schools and churches and also to recruit roles to support delivery of their NZC action plans including programme and project managers, fundraising experts and engagement officers.

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

- Q154** What progress has been made on each of the milestones set out for funding options in Section 5.4 on Page 52 of the Church of England Route Map to Net Zero by 2030?

The Revd Charlotte Cook to reply on behalf of the Presidents of the Archbishops' Council:

- A** **Milestones 5.4.3/5.4.4/5.4.7:**

The Net Zero Carbon (NZC) Programme Board has been established and governance agreed with both Church Commissioners and Archbishops Council. This Board has now allocated the £30m of Triennium 1 funding to support detailed project proposals and grants across the workstreams (Schools, Cathedrals and See houses, Churches, Clergy Housing, and TElS). Projects are now being initiated, with details on how dioceses and parishes can apply for support to be shared in the coming months as the various strands come on stream.

Milestones 5.4.1/5.4.2/5.4.8:

An initial study into the potential for funding decarbonisation activities from statutory, institutional and individual funders has been completed and the NZC Programme and National Giving Team are exploring ways to increase capacity to engage with

these. Alongside this diocesan teams are being supported in developing funding bids for these audiences through a series of webinars over Q4 2023, and in-person workshops in Q1/2 2024. Discussions are ongoing with funders regarding the potential to leverage Church Commissioners investment in the NZC Programme through match funding.

Milestone 5.4.5/5.4.6:

An Expression of Interest on repayable lending for solar was issued in Summer 2023, with 25 responses. From this, discussions have been had with potential partners and a paper is being prepared for the January NZC Programme Board on options to take forward a selection of financing structures as a pilot. The intention is that these pilots would use grant funding to develop an implementation toolkit including template legal agreements for standard approaches.

The Revd Aneal Appadoo (Co-opted) to ask the Presidents of the Archbishops' Council:

Q155 Please make available to Synod the most recently available version of the Archbishops' Council's Conflict of Interest Policy.

The Revd Aneal Appadoo (Co-opted) to ask the Presidents of the Archbishops' Council:

Q156 Given the desire in the Church for transparency and good governance, and the stated desire of the Archbishops' Council to conform to this, please provide an explanation as to why the Archbishops' Council Conflict of Interest Policy is not currently publicly available on its website, unlike other charities (Oxfam, British Heart Foundation, National Trust, amongst others) and a timeline for when this apparent oversight will be corrected.

The Revd Charlotte Cook to reply on behalf of the Presidents of the Archbishops' Council:

A With permission I will answer these two questions together.

The Archbishops' Council does not have a distinct conflicts of interest policy. We intend to develop such a policy which, subject to the agreement of the Council, could be made public before the next Synod.

Members of the Archbishops' Council, in line with good practice for charity trustees, maintain a register of their interests and where relevant new interests are declared at each meeting. This approach is also followed at meetings of Archbishops' Council committees.

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

Q157 In the last group of sessions I asked for some of the generic precedents used when drafting contracts in safeguarding cases. I note the supplementary answer that the contracts have been made available to Sarah Wilkinson who is leading the review of the ISB to determine what information should be made available. However I explained last time that I was not asking for confidential information such as financial or personal data, but simply the generic precedents. I am deeply aware how long safeguarding reviews take in the Church of England so I ask again, can the generic precedents, not confidential information, be shared with Synod now, rather than wait for confidential contracts to be reviewed as part of the review of the ISB?

The Revd Charlotte Cook to reply on behalf of the Presidents of the Archbishops' Council:

A We do not have any generic precedent contracts which apply across safeguarding matters generally because the range of work is so broad (for example covering

learning lessons case reviews, support with procurement, and data work in connection with the National Safeguarding Casework Management System). In circumstances where the contracts agree to contract on the Archbishops' Council's terms, i.e. where the service provider does not wish to contract on their own terms, the contract is negotiated in light of the particular deliverables which are required in each case, and taking into account matters such as data processing.

Mr Sam Margrave (Coventry) to ask the Presidents of the Archbishops' Council:

Q158 In 2020 the second estates commissioner Mr Andrew Selous in Parliament said "the General Synod is the National Assembly of the Church of England, and it is a Church that is episcopally led and synodically governed. The General Synod is a devolved body of this Parliament. It is the first devolved body of the Westminster Parliament and has been since 1919".¹

However in answer to my question in July 2022 which stated "we are episcopally led and synodically governed" The Archbishop of Canterbury said "we are not episcopally led and synodically governed. This is a myth and it always has been a myth. That is completely what we are not."²

At the July 2023 the General Synod during in the presentation of GS2307³, National Church Governance Report and Recommendations from the National Church Governance Project Board - Sir David Liddington cited GS MISC 1319 saying there is:

"A confusing lack of clarity over who is responsible for decisions"

"Some governance bodies failing to realise they had a duty to take decisions. under charity law to take decisions under a particular policy area"

"Others were asserting their right to take decisions without any legal authority"

"Scrutiny by the Synod not working well leading to deep dissatisfaction and frustration among members"

"a lack of transparency"

Sir David further said as chair of the Governance review that:

⁴ "members of synod could use their existing powers to better effect than hitherto and indeed [we] were surprised to hear from some synod members they did not know about the powers available"

Bearing in mind the above comments, as Presidents of the General Synod, will the Archbishops please write (and publish the response) to His Majesties Government to ask for:

- confirmation of whose position on this matter is correct constitutionally and in respect of powers given to us by Parliament who Synod acts in loco
- to outline the powers and undertaking expected by members of General Synod and from the General Synod?

1. Hansard: Coronavirus Bill - Volume 674: debated on Monday 23 March 2020

2. Record of proceedings July 2022

3. <https://www.youtube.com/live/kq-h-0JvsjQ?si=ZQjtlYn0f5yepszO&t=769>

4. <https://www.youtube.com/live/kq-h-0JvsjQ?si=zKL793OPmhKjIRxM&t=1190>

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

A Thank you for your question. The legal structure of the governance of the Church of England is helpfully set out in paper GS Misc 910, including a discussion of the question of whether the Church of England is indeed "episcopally led and

synodically governed” and accordingly I see no requirement to seek a view from the Government on this point.

GS Misc 910 is available under the Members’ resources section of the Church of England website: <https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2023-11/gs-misc-910.pdf>

The functions of the General Synod are set out in the Synodical Government Measure 1969, schedule 2 paragraph 6 and elsewhere in the Measure.

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

Q159 Please could you provide Synod with an update on the Independent Review to be set up in response to a complaint by Dr Martyn Percy, following up from the answers given to Qs 40 & 41 at July 23 Synod. Please could the update cover the consultation happening prior to the Review, when a Reviewer is likely to be appointed and the Terms of Reference and timescale for the Review?

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

A Thank you for your question. On the 2 November, details of the review group were announced alongside an outline of the work they are due to carry out, including the appointment of an independent reviewer. [Christ Church Review Group announced | The Church of England](#) The terms of reference are currently being finalised. The report is expected to be completed and published in the summer of 2024. If anyone would like to be in contact with the review group, please contact: christchurchreview@churchofengland.org

The Revd Canon Simon Talbott (Ely) to ask the Presidents of the Archbishops’ Council:

Q160 When Synod next meets, the reviews of Prof. Jay into the new form of ISB and the ISB dismissals, currently being conducted by Sarah Wilkinson, should be published.

Will the Presidents assure Synod that it will be given substantial time in February to consider these important Reports, to hold power to account, and to reflect upon how they impact upon the growing list of unresolved survivor complaints including those of Gilo, Matt Ineson, Adrian, Mr X of the Spindler Report and Dr Martyn Percy, and the 11 survivors whose promised reviews were curtailed by the ISB sackings?

The Archbishop of York to respond as joint President of the Archbishops’ Council:

A Thank you for your question. The shape of the agenda for the February Group of Sessions is a matter for the Business Committee but I can assure you I have heard your point and will be happy to recommend to the Business Committee that time is allocated to discuss these important matters relating to the future of safeguarding in the church and lessons learnt on the Independent Safeguarding Board.

The General Synod should always be careful in how it speaks publicly about individual cases to make sure it is not increasing the trauma for survivors nor prejudging independent processes that have not yet concluded.

The Revd Andrew Yates (Truro) to ask the Presidents of the Archbishops’ Council:

Q161 In the light of the contrast between the Archbishops’ Council press release welcoming Professor Alexis Jay’s work to develop proposals for independent scrutiny of safeguarding, and Professor Jay’s own press release saying that she has been asked to lead work to recommend a model for fully independent safeguarding; precisely what brief was given to Professor Jay: a) by the Archbishops’ Council and b) if different, by either or both of the archbishops?

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

A Thank you for your question. The Future of Church Safeguarding website states:

“Professor Jay was appointed by the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Archbishop of York in July 2023 to independently:

- provide options and recommendations for how a new independent safeguarding and scrutiny body for the Church of England might be formed and how it should operate;
- make any recommendations for how further independence of safeguarding for the Church of England might be achieved; and
- make any other recommendations that are necessary or appropriate.

The programme is focused on a number of key issues relating to independent safeguarding arrangements including: independence; fairness; and impartiality.”

Professor Jay will be publishing her report by the end of the year and I, like many of you look forward to reading her thoughts and recommendations.

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

Q162 On the 23 June 2023 writing on behalf of his client Gilo, Solicitor and IICSA Advocate for Survivors Richard Scorer wrote to the Archbishops of Canterbury and York raising specific concerns about a historic dismissal of complaint against the Secretary General asking questions, and referencing new documentary evidence from a third party source.

On the 18 October 2023 Mr Scorer wrote to Prof Alexis Jay enclosing a copy of the unanswered letter stating “Since I sent this letter in July I have been repeatedly promised by the personal private secretary to the Archbishop of Canterbury, that the letter is receiving the Archbishop’s attention and that a substantive reply will be sent. However, nearly 4 months later, no substantive reply has been received. I chased again today.”

Will the Archbishops undertake to respond fully to Mr Scorer forthwith explaining why there has been such a lengthy delay, and will they deliver a copy of that reply to Professor Jay?

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

A Thank you for your question. Whilst neither myself nor the Archbishop of Canterbury are obliged to do so, we have asked external auditors to undertake a targeted review of the matters raised, prior to providing a substantive response. This work will begin shortly, and we hope it will be completed as soon as possible. We will shortly provide an update to Mr Scorer.

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

Q163 Does the Archbishops' Council maintain a register of reputational risks to the Church which have been identified, and if so, who is responsible for maintaining it and identifying variations in its levels of sensitivity and acuteness?

The Revd Dr Ian Paul to reply on behalf of the Presidents of the Archbishops' Council:

A The Archbishops' Council maintains a strategic risk register, as part of which reputational risks to the Church are considered. The Archbishops' Council senior leadership team is responsible for maintaining the strategic risk register with support from the NCIs' Risk and Assurance Department. The Archbishops' Council Audit Committee consider and approve the Archbishops' Council strategic risk register bi-annually.

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

Q164 Were there any answers advanced for and on behalf of Archbishops' Council in respect of Safeguarding either at the formal Question and Answer Sessions or during the debates on Safeguarding at the July York 2023 session, which, in retrospect and upon reflection, the Council would wish to correct?

Mr James Cary to reply on behalf of the Presidents of the Archbishops' Council:

A The answers given at the July York Synod on safeguarding and comments made in debates were done in good faith based on information available at the time and in the knowledge that these matters remain extremely sensitive. The Council is of course open to correction or challenge if for example new facts come to light through Sarah Wilkinson's review of the events leading up to the termination of the contracts of members of the Independent Safeguarding Board.

HOUSE OF BISHOPS

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

Q165 Will the House of Bishops raise concerns with Ministers about the severity of the current sanctions regime and its impact on the usage of food banks, as argued by the Joint Public Issues team in its 2015 report on the subject?

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

A The simple answer is, yes. We do our best, whenever we have the opportunity, in particular to share our local experience of how the benefit sanctions regime works in practice – and not only in terms of the impact on foodbanks, crucial though that link is.

Mr Adrian Greenwood (Southwark) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q166 Given the first of the 6 Bold outcomes, namely to 'double the number of children and young active disciples in the Church of England by 2030' what can and will the House of Bishops do to develop Confirmation Services as important opportunities of Christian gathering to pray for the gift of the Holy Spirit and to celebrate and encourage active discipleship, especially amongst teenagers?

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

A Bishops seek to use Confirmations positively as a key occasion in the discipleship journey not only for the confirmands but also for all gathered at these events. Many Bishops offer an opportunity for a response to Jesus in the service for those attending. They have even discovered that some of those being confirmed the following year were those who made such a response.

Bishops share good practice around confirmations so that we can learn from each other and ensure we make the most of such a key movement in the life of young people. Clearly excellent preparation in local parishes and schools is important, as is continuing discipleship following the confirmation itself.

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

Q167 It is now over a year since the final IICSA report was delivered to Government. Although the Church of England has begun to address its recommendations in relation to the Church, there has been no governmental response despite the Inquiry having spent many years and much public money investigating this important issue. What actions have the House of Bishops taken to ensure Child Protection receives appropriate governmental priority?

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

- A** The Government commenced a consultation on IICSA recommendation 13, Mandatory reporting of child Sexual abuse in May 2023. In consultation with Diocesan and Cathedral safeguarding officers the National Safeguarding Team did submit a response to the call for evidence and will continue to take part in any government led consultations on the IICSA recommendations.

The House of Bishops values the work of IICSA. The Church of England is working hard to implement the recommendations made by IICSA and directed specifically at us. We would encourage the Government to address IICSA's other recommendations with equal seriousness.

The Revd Christopher Blunt (Chester) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

- 168** When an ordained minister in the Church of England finds themselves no longer able to uphold their ordination declaration to believe, expound and teach "the doctrine of the Christian faith as the Church of England has received it", procedurally and with integrity, what should they do and how will the church facilitate the appropriate action and fulfil its duty of care to them?

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

- A** All clergy in the Church of England are required to uphold their ordination declaration to believe, expound and teach "the doctrine of the Christian faith as the Church of England has received it". In the event that someone finds that they are no longer able to fulfil this commitment then they should approach their Bishop who would deal with it appropriately.

The Revd Alice Kemp (Bristol) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

- Q169** Canon C 4.3 (Of the quality of such as are to be ordained deacons or priests) states:

'No person shall be admitted into holy orders who is suffering, or who has suffered, from any physical or mental infirmity which in the opinion of the bishop will prevent him from ministering the word and sacraments or from performing the other duties of the minister's office.'

This Canon offers no route of appeal or protection against what may be an ill-informed view held by a bishop with no relevant experience of disability matters.

Given that Synod has voted unanimously to 'commit to working towards the removal of all remaining barriers to full participation for disabled people in the life and ministry of the church' (GS 2270, July 2022), when does the House of Bishops intend to remove or amend this discriminatory Canon so that disabled people with a vocation to ministry are no longer subject to the unilateral and unaccountable decisions of individual bishops?

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

- A** The House of Bishops is committed to enabling those with disabilities to access the discernment process and training for ordained ministry and there are many clergy with disabilities who exercise an effective and fruitful ministry. With regard to this Canon, the Legal Office have advised that Canon C 4.3 should be interpreted in a way that does not result in candidates who are disabled being automatically excluded. Canon C 4.3 would exclude a person from ordination only if that person was not able to do things essential for a priest or deacon to do. The facts of each case have to be considered, including what, if any, reasonable adjustments can be made.

Dr Diana Tremayne (Leeds) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q170 The Routemap to Net Zero milestone 4.5.5. on Theological Education Institutions (TEIs) is for all TEIs to be registered with Eco Church and have achieved at least Bronze by the end of 2024. How are we progressing on this?

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

A There is much commitment to the environment by ordinands and TEI staff. Examples include:

Lindisfarne College and Ripon College have achieved Silver Eco Church award.

St Hild (which includes Mirfield College of the Resurrection and Lincoln School of Theology) has achieved bronze award.

Ridley Hall has achieved silver for its college chapel.

One of the challenges is that colleges are being asked to submit for the Eco Church award which does not really fit their community life. Criteria for a specific Eco College award were written over the summer. They are currently with A Rocha UK for their trustees to agree, and then the Eco College award can be piloted in early 2024. This should help us reach the milestone of all colleges with a bronze award by the end of 2024.

The Revd Canon Kate Massey (Coventry) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q171 How are the Transformations Steering Group and Transformations Research and Implementation Group being resourced to investigate identified problems faced by women clergy?

The Revd Canon Kate Massey (Coventry) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q172 What is the mechanism whereby the concerns raised at the Transformations Steering Group can be heard more widely and agreed courses of action progressed?

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

A With permission, I will answer both of Canon Massey's questions together.

The Transformations Steering Group and Transformations Research and Implementation Group do not receive any direct financial support but staff from the Ministry Development Team support their work. This provides a direct link for concerns to be forwarded to Ministry Council, which is a committee of Archbishops' Council.

Mrs Ruth Abernethy (Channel Islands) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q173 What work (if any) has been done in order to effect extending the Lords Spiritual (Women) Act 2015 and thus prevent its falling into abeyance in March 2025?

The Revd Lis Goddard (London) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q174 What work (if any) has been done in order to effect extending the Lords Spiritual (Women) Act 2015 and thus prevent its falling into abeyance in March 2025?

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

A With permission I will answer Questions 173 and 174 together.

The Lords Spiritual (Women) Act 2015 was introduced following consultation between Government and the church in the period that followed General Synod and Parliament passing legislation to enable women to be consecrated as bishops. It remains in effect until 18th May 2025. The Act was warmly welcomed in Parliament

and its impact and operation has been kept under periodic review by the Lords Spiritual Convenor and the Church's Parliamentary Office. To date six women have entered the House of Lords under its terms.

The House of Bishops discussed the Act at their most recent meeting and resolved to initiate discussions with Government on possibly extending it for a further period whilst also exploring other ways to ensure a more equal representation of women among the Lords Spiritual.

Dr Cathy Rhodes (Sheffield) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q175 As revealed in the recent *State of Nature* report we are at a critical juncture with loss of habitats and species decline. What can our dioceses be doing in this area and what national resources are available to dioceses?

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

A The Eco Church and Eco Diocese framework is an excellent resource for parishes and dioceses. The section on land enables church communities and dioceses to engage in caring for their environment and take action, putting in place robust policies and land management plans with biodiversity at the centre.

There is also recent guidance about enhancing biodiversity on glebe land, which can be found here, alongside a host of other guidance:

<https://www.churchofengland.org/about/environment-and-climate-change/land-and-nature>

The Environment Programme is also working in partnership with Caring for God's Acre, who have many resources here: <https://www.caringforgodsacre.org.uk/>

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

Q176 The Routemap to Net Zero milestone 4.2.9 on Eco Church is for 10% of local churches in every diocese to be registered and 5% of local churches awarded at least Bronze (Bronze Eco Diocese standard) by the end of 2023. How are we progressing on this?

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

A Overall, we have reached the target of 10% of churches registered for Eco Church and 5% of churches reaching at least bronze award.

Broken down by diocese, only one diocese has not yet reached this threshold. New churches are being registered all the time and the data is changing rapidly. Two dioceses have reached the threshold in the last few days.

22 out of 42 dioceses have achieved the full bronze Eco Diocese awards, with 4 more aiming to be there very soon. See:

<https://ecochurch.arocha.org.uk/denominational-awards/eco-diocese/>

We expect this engagement to increase and the Net Zero Carbon Programme is providing funding to support this; a partnership grant to A Rocha UK has funded the appointment of an Eco Diocese Officer to support dioceses with their applications and advise on meeting the criteria. The Net Zero Carbon Capacity Building Grants are enabling additional diocesan roles which can support and encourage engagement with Eco Church.

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

Q177 What support is available for dioceses working towards A Rocha Eco Diocese awards?

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

A A Rocha UK's appointment of an Eco Diocese Officer will help support dioceses with their applications and advise about meeting the criteria. This new role has been enabled by the partnership grant awarded to A Rocha UK from the 2023-2025 Net Zero Carbon Programme triennium funding.

There is recognition of the different circumstances of individual dioceses and it is good to note that there is much sharing of good practice via the many committed individuals involved with Eco Diocese and Eco Church across the Church of England and ecumenically.

The Net Zero Carbon Capacity Building Grants being made available to dioceses are also enabling additional diocesan roles which can support and encourage engagement with Eco Church.

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

Q178 Is the Church of England Net Zero Carbon Programme providing or considering providing some straightforward 'calculators' on their webpages which would enable churches to explore the potential likely costs and benefits of installing different renewable energy systems at the start of their decision making and before it becomes necessary to incur any expenditure on consultants - such as for churches considering the installation of solar Photovoltaic (PV) panels on a suitable roof, where, by inserting, for example, the dimensions and area of the roof into an online 'calculator', the user would be provided with a series of general estimates and useful information, such as:

- a) an indication of the potential number of solar panels required for the roof;
- b) a likely cost range for purchasing the panels and their installation;
- c) an estimate of the potential amount of electricity that could be generated for the roof area; and
- d) the likely value to the church of the electricity generated, both for use within the church or church building and the value if exported to the National Grid;

to help inform their early decision making?

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

A There are a number of online calculators already available but these are typically oriented towards the residential sector. To develop reasonably accurate calculators for our churches, church halls and schools would take time and money. Given how varied our church buildings are in size and construction methods there will be a limit as to how accurate such calculators can be.

A better approach is for church communities to follow the steps outlined in the Practical Path to Net Zero ([The practical path to net zero carbon for churches | The Church of England](#)) in the first instance, as this should yield immediate energy savings, and then to undertake an energy audit of their building as this is relatively inexpensive.

The Net Zero Programme is working with Parish Buying to provide fully funded energy audits for 600 of the highest emitting church buildings and partially funded audits for a further 1000 church buildings. It is expected that eligible PCCs will be able to apply for this support from January 2024. The Energy Footprint tool returns are a key dataset for the Net Zero Programme and having accurate information about every church building is important to assess our progress. The tool provides church communities with basic information about their energy usage and we are exploring how the tool can be improved to help assess net zero options.

Canon Peter Adams (St Albans) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q179 I'm sure I express the gratitude of all of Synod for the pastoral concern expressed to Christians in the Holy Land at this time by the Archbishop's recent visit. As the House of Bishops will know the conflict is doing huge harm to interfaith relations and more widely community relations around the nation, and especially at the grassroots. Hate crimes have escalated and community tensions have increased. Would the House advise Synod on how they and their advisors are responding to this challenge?

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

A It is indeed troubling to see the impact of the conflict in the Holy Land on community relations here in the UK and the rise in antisemitism and Islamophobia that has ensued. Bishops across the Church of England, especially in some of our diverse cities, have participated in and helped facilitate important statements of solidarity in order to diffuse tensions and keep friendships intact. In the city of Bradford, for example, there was a significant united call from the council of faiths urging that the conflict in the Middle East does not undermine the good work of community relations here. A similar statement was issued by faith leaders in Birmingham with the support of the Bishop of Aston. Archbishop Justin stood with Rabbi Jonathan Wittenberg and Sheikh Ibrahim Mogra as they each condemned antisemitism and Islamophobia in the week following October 7th. Diocesan Inter Faith Advisors recently had a special online meeting sharing examples of good practice for the shoring up of community cohesion and there have been a number of behind-closed-doors gatherings where Church of England clergy and lay leaders hosted or have been in private conversation with Jewish and Muslim leaders to hold space for difficult conversations.

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

Q180 The Archbishop of Canterbury in response to written question Q102 in the July 2023 Group of Sessions wrote that *"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."*

This was in response to a question trying to clarify what Bishops actually need to believe and uphold.

The Preface to the Marriage Service, that is in the historic formularies which we are told witnesses to Christian truth, teaches that marriage is between a man and a woman and the 39 Articles were "Agreed upon by the Archbishops and Bishops of both Provinces and the whole clergy in the Convocation holden at London in the year 1562 for the avoiding of diversities of opinions".

Given ongoing dissent by some Bishops on the doctrine of marriage, which seems to contradict the Archbishop's previous answer, and the apparent toleration of "diversities of opinions" what do Bishops actually have to believe?

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

A I refer to the answer I gave last time with the emphasis that the faith is proclaimed 'afresh in each generation' and 'Led by the Holy Spirit'.

Canon Nigel Bacon (Lincoln) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q181 What is the expectation placed on members of the House of Bishops regarding the exercise of collective responsibility for decisions made by the House?

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

A Bishops are required to comply with Canon Law, and their Ordination Oaths and Declarations. When meeting as a House of the General Synod, Bishops are operating under Standing Orders. Debates and discussions are conducted with a strong ethos of personal and collegial support. Although there is no requirement of collective responsibility of the kind required in Government and often expected of trustee bodies, there is an expectation of courtesy and appropriate confidentiality.

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

Q182 Could the Archbishop of Canterbury, on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops, give a World AIDS Day message on World AIDS Day 2023?

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

A Having consulted with the Anglican Communion Office and the Anglican Alliance, I can confirm I will be giving a World AIDS Day message for 2023.

Miss Jane Patterson (Sheffield) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q183 When either diocesan & suffragan episcopal appointments are made, is it still expected that the bishop(s) will uphold, teach and expound the doctrine of the Church and how is this expectation made clear during the discernment & appointment processes?

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

A Each person consecrated to the order of Bishops is asked the following question during the ordination service: 'Will you teach the doctrine of Christ as the Church of England has received it, will you refute error, and will you hand on entire the faith that is entrusted to you?' the ordinand responds 'By the help of God, I will'. In addition, and in common with all those clergy licenced to an office, Bishops too make the declaration of assent, which is a public affirmation of their belief in the 'faith which is revealed in the Holy Scriptures and set forth in the catholic creeds and to which the historic formularies of the Church of England bear witness'. The discernment process for episcopal appointments pays great emphasis to these matters of doctrine and belief, particularly exploring how they will help the Church proclaim it afresh in each generation.

Miss Debbie Buggs (London) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q184 How will the work towards a national housing strategy being led by the Bishop of Chelmsford take into account the research evidence that marriage (contrasted with cohabitation) leads to more stable relationships which in turn has a positive impact on the use and availability of housing stock?

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

A It is a sad reality that one of the drivers of housing demand is the breakdown of marriages and couple relationships, because one family then needs two houses, which renders them economically and relationally poorer. Therefore the wider work of the Church, inasmuch as it seeks to strengthen family life and hold out the ideal of stable, committed marriage, can go some way towards easing the housing crisis. Our national housing strategy work seeks to respond to the needs of households of varying sizes and formations, by ensuring there is sufficient decent, affordable

housing for them all. This is especially important because high housing cost and lack of available homes to rent can put immense strain on family relationships.

The Housing Initiative is only one part of the church's wider mission to support the lives of people in all their diverse circumstances, and the promotion of marriage, with its whole range of social and personal goods, is the task of the whole church. The question nicely demonstrates how the church's mission is holistic and inter-dependent, despite the fact that discrete programmes may be needed to deliver it.

Mrs Carolyn Graham (Guildford) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q185 The Makin Review into abuse by John Smyth QC is now over 1250 days overdue. In view of the excessive length of time this is taking and the effect on survivors and victims, can you confirm how many days per week Keith Makin is currently contractually obliged to work on the Review?

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

A Because of the complexity of the Makin review, it has taken longer than anticipated to conclude this review. The review is dealing with sensitive and extensive material. It is important that its conclusions are robust, and that due process is followed. There have been some unforeseen difficulties and new material has come to light as the review has progressed.

The contract with Keith Makin is to deliver a service in line with the terms of reference for the review. It does not specify the number of days the reviewer should work. This reflects the fact that the work required may change from week to week depending on the stage of the report.

The resourcing for this review has been reviewed and additional support to the lead reviewer has been provided.

Canon Shayne Ardron (Leicester) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q186 Do we know roughly the proportion or number of people who have been helped by us having safeguarding teams in the Dioceses? Sadly there is abuse all over and I have found doing the safeguarding course has been useful in a church context regards supporting people coping with abuse within their families and not related to church. I know others who have personally been helped by doing the safeguarding courses then been able to address long held abuse with help from the Diocesan safeguarding team. Is there any way we can capture these positive changes?

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

A Unfortunately, the current data collection systems do not capture all the positive safeguarding work that is being conducted in Dioceses and Cathedrals to keep people safe and respond well when abuse is identified.

The Parish Dashboard, to which 6600 parishes have signed up, does capture some of the key safeguarding requirements of a parish as outlined in the Parish Safeguarding Handbook. The Parish Dashboard is being developed further to measure the implementation of the new Safeguarding Standards.

The Safeguarding audits, a new round of which will start in 2024 and the implementation of the National Safeguarding Management System will enhance our ability to capture positive outcomes and change.

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

Q187 Whose consent is required for immunities from the Clergy Discipline Measure (CDM) process to be offered to potential respondents by the National Safeguarding Team (NST), and under whose formal legal authority the terms of such immunities are advanced?

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

A The NST do not have any legal authority to offer immunity from proceeding under the CDM. The circumstances surrounding any allegation of serious misconduct will be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

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

Q188 There is an established precedent for a Director of the NST having “locus standi” (legal status) to initiate proceedings under the Clergy Discipline Measure against a Diocesan Bishop in a safeguarding context; can you confirm if the discretion to exercise that power lies exclusively with the Director and if not, explain who makes or contributes towards making the final decision?

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

Q189 There is an established precedent for a Director of the NST having “locus standi” (legal status) to initiate proceedings under the Clergy Discipline Measure against a Diocesan Bishop in a safeguarding context; can you confirm if the discretion to exercise that power lies exclusively with the Director, and if not, outline the process by which such decisions come to be made?

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

A With permission, I will answer Questions 188 and 189 together.

Proceedings under the Clergy Discipline Measure 2003 may be instituted by any person who has a “proper interest” in making the complaint. There are cases where the Director of Safeguarding and senior caseworkers in the National Safeguarding team have instituted proceedings against clergy, including bishops, and it has been accepted in those cases that they had a “proper interest” enabling them to do so. All the relevant decisions are taken by staff at the appropriate level in the National Safeguarding Team. That level varies according to the nature and facts of the case.

Mr Ed Shaw (Bristol) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q190 When including disputed ‘spiritual abuse’ language and definitions in Church of England safeguarding literature, what account was taken of the recommendation of Lord Clyde, following the Orkney child ‘satanic’ abuse inquiry, that terms should not be used “without a common understanding of the definition and purpose of the label” (1992, p. 269)?

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

A The definition of “spiritual abuse” was agreed by the House of Bishops in December 2021 ([2. Definitions | The Church of England](#)). This followed the development of the definition and full guidance over several years by a working group involving survivors of such abuse, and extensive consultation with church safeguarding professionals and clergy. The definition has an evidenced academic background, which has also been adopted by, for example, the Methodist Church, and its aim was to bring a common understanding of an abuse already being reported. A comprehensive training programme has also been delivered on Spiritual Abuse.

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

Q191 At last July's Synod, GS 2295 spoke of a 'Learning Loop' by which the drawing out of themes from independent Lessons Learned Reviews (LLRs) – now to be called Safeguarding Practice Reviews (SPRs) – on catastrophic safeguarding failures are incorporated into policy and training:

On a wider scale, the NST will have a role in reviewing the themes that are emerging from all the Reviews carried out. This will feed back into the NST's planning cycle for learning and development thus closing the learning loop. Linking the recommendations to the Safeguarding Standards also allows for them to be included in any further external audits, again ensuring that the learning is captured and implemented (GS 2295).

The report from the National Safeguarding Team (GS Misc1358) for this Synod reports under Safeguarding Learning 'This revision to the Framework will not introduce widespread changes but rather seeks to maintain the excellent progress which has been made to date within safeguarding learning' (5.1). Given the number of LLRs, e.g. Gibb on Ball (2017), Robson on Griffin (2022), Cooper on Stowe and Maids Moreton (2022), as well as multiple references in IICSA hearings (2018-2019), which explicitly draw out a theme between discriminatory policies and attitudes towards LGBT+ people as a significant factor in catastrophic safeguarding failures, may Synod know how the 'Learning Loop' works to ensure 'that the learning is captured and implemented' in regards to this significant and recurring theme from a number of independent reviewers as well as IICSA?

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

A Recommendations from Learning Lesson Reviews, now Safeguarding Practice Reviews, are collated by the NST.

Dioceses and cathedrals are responsible for the implementation of local recommendations, which should be monitored through local governance processes.

The NST looks at the national implications of local reviews and shares with the relevant departments to ensure that this learning is incorporated into future policy and practice.

The Lead Bishop for Safeguarding and NST colleagues involved with learning and development are keen to develop thinking around the issues raised by this question in relation to LLF and to receive any further thoughts on necessary learning.

The Revd Andrew Atherstone (Oxford) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q192 In order to promote greater transparency and cohesion between the three Houses of General Synod, will the House of Bishops initiate a review into its current procedures for the publication of agendas and minutes, and the use of Standing Order 14.?

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

A Thank you for your question. It is important that bishops have a space where they can discuss and discern matters of episcopal ministry privately to encourage open and honest dialogue. If discussions were fully accessible and broadcast on social media this would inhibit the sort of honest discussion needed.

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

Q193 Please provide a complete list, by name and current role within the life of the Church of England, of those Bishops who were invited, or attended, the most recent

'College of Bishops' meeting and were not at the time serving as Diocesan or Suffragan Bishops.

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

- A** At the most recent College of Bishops residential in September 2023, the following bishops, who were not at the time serving as diocesan or suffragan bishops, attended or gave apologies.

Attended:

The Rt Revd Jan McFarlane, Residentiary Canon (House for Duty) at Lichfield Cathedral and Honorary Assistant Bishop in the Diocese of Lichfield
The Rt Revd Mark Rylands, Rector, Ashburton and Moorland Team Ministry and Honorary Assistant Bishop in the Diocese of Exeter
The Rt Revd Humphrey Southern, Principal of Cuddesdon
The Rt Revd Rob Wickham, CEO, Church Urban Fund
The Rt Revd Jo Bailey Wells, Bishop for Episcopal Ministry in the Anglican Communion

Apologies:

The Rt Revd Mark Sowerby, Principal, College of the Resurrection, Mirfield
The Rt Revd Nicholas Dill, Bishop of Bermuda
The Rt Revd Graham Tomlin, Director, Centre for Cultural Witness

Note:

The Rt Revd David Urquhart, Bishop to the Archbishops of Canterbury and York attended in his capacity as Bishop to the Archbishops of Canterbury and York.

Mrs Ruth Allan (Guildford) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

- Q194** Given that Alpha has reached 169 countries in 112 languages and over half a million prisoners have completed Christianity Explored in 36 countries, on this basis, would the continued use of these effective tools be commended for achieving our strategic priorities?

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

- A** We certainly need to develop diverse mission strategies if we are to reach the world in which God has placed us with the Good News of Jesus. The use of evangelistic courses is a key part of this God given task and courses such as Alpha, Christianity Explored and others including Start, Table Talk, Essence and Pilgrim are great resources for the Church as well the bespoke courses which many local churches create.

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

- Q195** Given the Bishop of Dover's comments at the last Synod reflecting "... the women bishops thing ain't working", what work has the College of Bishops recently undertaken towards the outworking of the 5 guiding principles and how they might support each other in fostering a consistent and generous approach to the original agreement and the rationale behind its existence?

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

- A** The College of Bishops will spend time at its meeting in January to consider a number of related topics under the banner of Generous Ecclesiology. This will include a session with the episcopal members of House of Bishops Standing Commission on the House of Bishops Declaration and Five Guiding Principles during which bishops will have the opportunity to discuss how this Commission can support the College and House of Bishops with the working out of the Declaration.

The Standing Commission continues to meet and discuss these matters on a regular basis as a committee of the House of Bishops.

The Revd Mark Lucas (Peterborough) to ask the Chair of the House of bishops:

Q196 In the July group of sessions this year the Bishop of Dover expressed a strong view that the five guiding principles are ‘not working’ and are ‘discriminatory’. May I ask how many, and who, among the bishops agree with her? And would they support a motion to rescind them were such a motion tabled?

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

A It is not known how many members of the House of Bishops agree with the remarks made by the Bishop of Dover during the July group of sessions this year. Neither is it known whether there are members of the House of Bishops who would support an amendment to the House of Bishops Declaration on the Ministry of Bishops and Priests. A motion in the House of Bishops for the amendment of the Declaration is not deemed to have been carried unless a draft proposed amendment has been approved by a majority of two-thirds of each House of the General Synod present and voting (see SO 10A of the Standing Orders of the House of Bishops). Any draft motion to this effect would need to be initiated by the House of Bishops.

Mr Charles Houston (Hereford) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q197 Given that it is mandatory for PCCs to include Safeguarding on the agenda for each PCC meeting, is the absence of Mission as an obligatory agenda item an indication of the church’s priorities or just an oversight? If the latter, can this be rectified?

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

A The functions of a Parochial Church Council (PCC) include “co-operation with the minister in promoting in the parish the whole mission of the Church, pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical” (Parochial Church Councils (Powers Measure) 1956). Most aspects of a PCC’s activity should therefore be directed towards mission. The Church Representation Rules do not prescribe the business which must be included on a PCC’s agenda. Statutory guidance on Safeguarding contained in *Key Roles and Responsibilities of Church Office Holders and Bodies Practice Guidance* (2017) mandates the inclusion of Safeguarding on PCC agendas. Any requirement to include mission as a standing agenda item for PCC meetings would require legislation to amend the Church Representation Rules. However, nearly all of a PCC’s business should come within this category and it is not therefore clear how useful it would be as a single obligatory agenda item.

Dr Jule Maxwell (Winchester) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q198 What consideration has the House of Bishops given to the Government proposals for a ban on so-called ‘conversion therapy’?

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

A A formal Church of England response to the Government’s consultation on a ban on Conversion Therapy was submitted.

In addition, in 2022 the LLF Next Steps group asked the Faith and Order Commission to lead a collaborative piece of work around questions raised by conversion therapy. A group was drawn together, including Faith And Order Commission members, a safeguarding professional, and experienced church leaders from a variety of church traditions and lived experience. The group consulted with a number of additional LGBTQI+ people for feedback on material.

The group has produced two documents. The first is a briefing on conversion

therapy. The second is a wider document which explores underlying principles for good practice in praying for one another. At its meeting on 31st October, the House of Bishops has agreed that both documents should become public subject to some minor changes.

SECRETARY GENERAL

Mrs Rosemary Lyon (Blackburn) to ask the Secretary General:

Q199 What steps have been taken by the NCIs to ensure accessibility to their online presence by those whose sensory perception (vision, hearing) is limited in some way?

Mr William Nye to reply as Secretary General:

A We aim to follow industry accessibility standards across the Church of England's national digital platforms. The digital team commissions audits and responds to user feedback where possible to ensure our content and resources are accessible.

The Church of England is working to follow Web Content Accessibility Guidelines version 2.1 AA standard across national websites, such as churchofengland.org and AChurchNearYou.com. Any current non-compliances will be addressed by upcoming development work.

To ensure our social media content can be engaged with by as many followers as possible, all images have Alt text, all videos are manually subtitled, and our national online services have British Sign Language in-vision. In October, we saw our first service conducted entirely in BSL.

These national online services, which began during the pandemic, are still being well received by a large number of followers who are not attending their local church – some due to accessibility requirements. Each service is seen on average 150,000 times.

We also help local churches to consider the accessibility of their digital content through our Digital Labs training and by promoting accessibility features – both online and in person – on AChurchNearYou.com.

The Revd Alice Kemp (Bristol) to ask the Secretary General:

Q200 There have been a number of instances recently when documents have been sent out from the NCIs, or used in training, that do not meet standard accessibility guidelines. For example the Church of England website says that 'Any new PDFs or Word documents we publish will meet accessibility standards.' However the new National Safeguarding 'Our Parish...' documents do not meet accessibility guidance. In addition PowerPoints used in training frequently do not meet guidance for accessibility. Could enhanced accessibility guidance be created to sit alongside the current Accessibility Statement for the website. Could the NCIs commit to ensuring that all staff follow these guidelines in all communications and published materials. The Business Committee Statement of Accessibility includes some basic guidance on font size. The National Government also produces guidance on publishing accessible documents for public bodies.

Mr William Nye to reply as Secretary General:

A Thank you for your question, with which I have a lot of sympathy. I recognise that materials produced by the national Church institutions have not always followed the standards that we set for the material we put on the Church of England website. Updated accessibility guidance will be issued for Word documents, PDFs and PowerPoints in the coming months.

Thank you for raising the issue of the “Our Parish” documents, which I am assured is already being addressed.

Further training will be made available for NCI staff and work to ensure accessibility guidelines are followed across the Church of England website will be carried out.

Mr Martin Sewell (Rochester) to ask the Secretary General:

Q201 At the July 2023 Question and Answer sessions of the General Synod, by Questions 27&28, answered on behalf of the Presidents of Archbishops’ Council by Archbishops’ Council member Dr Jamie Harrison, confirmation was sought that all relevant correspondence of safeguarding importance between Diocesan Bishops had been forwarded to the Makin Review and that “ no information of safeguarding importance has been excluded as a result of falling outside the Makin Review’s terms of reference”.

Will you now place on the record of Synod, confirmation that a communication dated 13 October 2021, meeting those criteria of potential relevance, which had been in the possession of Church House shortly after being written, was not sent to the investigating Reviewer until days after the questions were tabled, and answered in July 2023?

Mr William Nye to reply as Secretary General:

A This is a question about a safeguarding casework matter. By convention, questions of this kind are transferred to the House of Bishops for the lead bishop on safeguarding to reply to. However, as the questioner has objected to this normal practice, in this case I am content to provide the following answer which the lead bishop would have given and has approved:

In September 2021 the NST started a safeguarding investigation linked to the content of both the emails referred to. The investigation by the casework team included communicating with the reviewer on the issues raised in the emails, tracing potential witnesses and seeking corroborating information.

In the first email the author of the email clearly states that the confidential attachment had been provided to the reviewer by the joint owner of the confidential report.

For completeness the emails were sent in their entirety to the Makin review on 13th July 2023.

CLERK TO THE SYNOD

The Revd Amatu Christian-Iwuagwu (London) to ask the Clerk to the Synod:

Q202 Please state which software is used for the storing of formal Synod information such as members’ personal details, and how access to this information is protected under the required data protection laws.

Ms Jenny Jacobs to reply as Clerk to the Synod:

A The information received from members through the registration form is stored in a highly secure database system that is password protected and requires two-factor authentication for all its users. Users have to request permission from one central administrator to gain access, and access is only granted to users with clear reason for that access. Within the database, personal data relating to Synod members is locked down so it is only viewable by Synod staff who have the direct permissions to see that data. The system is compliant with GDPR policies and procedures and also complies with internal NCI policies.

Mr John Brydon (Norwich) to ask the Clerk to the Synod:

Q203 Please advise who specifically has access to the text of Synod questions submitted and the proposed answers in advance of Synod members receiving them.

Ms Jenny Jacobs to reply as Clerk to the Synod:

A The questions administrator, legal adviser and Clerk have access to the questions as they are received into the Questions mailbox. This mailbox is only accessible to these members of staff.

Once the deadline for submitting questions has passed, the questions are allocated to the appropriate body and each question is sent to the individual responding to the question. The question is copied to any relevant member of staff who can help provide information on the answer.

Staff of the Central Secretariat receive the proposed answers once they are drafted and they are then collated to put into the Questions Notice Paper.

The Ven Sally Gaze (St Edmundsbury & Ipswich) to ask the Clerk to the Synod:

Q204 In Synod at York on Sunday afternoon, 9 July 2023, and following a number of points of order, the session on Item 11, "Presentation on developments relating to the Independent Safeguarding Board", was suspended for about 15 minutes to enable Synod members to hear speeches from former ISB members Jasvinder Sanghera and Steve Reeves in response to a presentation by four members of the Archbishops' Council on those developments, including the decision of the Council to terminate the contracts of the Board's members. In adjourning the sitting, the Chair (the Revd Zoe Heming) said that she did so "for the better conduct of Synod business to allow those to be heard who need to be." [See Report of Proceedings, July 2023, page 294].

Currently, the Report of Proceedings, while containing a verbatim report of the presentation, does not include the speeches in reply by Ms Sanghera and Mr Reeves. Will the Clerk to the Synod please undertake to ensure that a verbatim record of their speeches is added as a second Appendix to the Report (and posted on the C of E website) so that there is a complete and accurate public record of what was said in response to the presentation?

Ms Jenny Jacobs to reply as Clerk to the Synod:

A The sitting of the Synod was adjourned by the Chair; anything that occurred during this time was not recorded as the Synod was not sitting. What was said by Ms Sanghera and Mr Reeves will not be added to the verbatim report as they did not form part of the Synod's proceedings.

ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL FINANCE COMMITTEE

Mr Clive Billenness (Europe) to ask the Chair of the Archbishops' Council Finance Committee:

Q205 In July 2022, General Synod voted in a Following Motion to GS 2261 (Review Of Strategic Development Funding And Lowest Income Communities Funding) to request that a follow-up review be conducted with results presented for consideration in July 2024. Can you please provide details of progress made towards conducting this follow-up review?

Mr Carl Hughes to reply as Chair of the Archbishops' Council Finance Committee:

A Terms of reference for an independent follow-up to the review are currently being developed. It is anticipated that the Strategic Mission and Ministry Investment Board will commission the review by the first quarter of 2024.

To inform this work and the review of apportionment it has committed to, the Council has commissioned a Diocesan Finances Review to enhance our shared understanding of the financial condition of each diocese including the risks to sustainability and a transparent presentation of how resources are held and used.

The Revd Mark Miller (Durham) to ask the Chair of the Archbishops' Council Finance Committee:

Q206 What risk assessment has been carried out by the Finance Committee of the impact of the uncertainty currently being created by the PLF process on the size of worshipping communities, the number of regular givers, and the overall level of giving in the Church and where can synod members access this risk assessment?

Mr Carl Hughes to reply as Chair of the Archbishops' Council Finance Committee:

A As noted in GS Misc 1354, at its September meeting the Archbishops' Council considered a preliminary analysis of the threats and opportunities to its objectives from Living in Love and Faith (LLF). In addition to the discussion at the meeting, Council members were asked to offer detailed comments by correspondence so that an updated version can be prepared for consideration at the Council's December meeting.

The initial conclusion of this work was that there are substantial risks and opportunities arising from the LLF work to the objectives of the Council, particularly in the areas of young people, a more diverse church, and underlying finances, but that at this stage there was insufficient evidence to conclude that the balance of those risks was more towards opportunity or threat.

Mr Jonathan Baird (Salisbury) to ask the Chair of the Archbishops' Council Finance Committee:

Q207 In February 2020, GS 2159 (Climate emergency & carbon reduction target) was amended (with 144 votes in favour, 129 against & 10 abstentions) in order to achieve net zero by 2030 rather than by 2045. Following the passing of the amendment, the erstwhile Bishop of Salisbury and then relevant lead Bishop stated: "... You've put an enormous burden on yourselves and the wider Church in setting the targets that you have ..."; "... I don't know how we're going to do it ..."; and "... I have to say I think it's a very tall order that you have set yourselves". Later in the debate, the now Chair of the Finance Committee of the Archbishops' Council stated: "... I fear that we have set a target which is totally unrealistic [and] is unsupported by any plans"

In February 2020, Synod was provided with neither costings nor any cost benefit analysis as to how net zero might be achieved by 2030. Since then, whilst some judicious expenditure may be wise, there are: still yawning gaps in the technology & its appropriateness; genuine doubts and concerns about both renewable energy & energy security; and a growing secular realisation that a deadline of net zero by 2030 is hopelessly unrealistic.

Does the Chair of the Finance Committee of the Archbishops' Council stand by his comments & can he now commission the relevant costings & cost benefit analysis?

Mr Carl Hughes to reply as Chair of the Archbishops' Council Finance Committee:

A In 2020 Synod supported an amendment to bring forward the Church's net Zero aspiration from 2045 to 2030. Personally, I would have preferred a longer timescale supported by a financial plan and a cost-benefit analysis. Consequently, £190m has been built into spending plans to 2031 to help the Church address this issue (see GS2262).

£30m of this funding is available in 2023-25. The Council has approved funding allocations within this to build national and diocesan capacity and support a range of projects to help develop a broader plan of actions including estimated costs and benefits (approximate figures):

- Energy audits / net zero carbon action plans in 1,600 parishes
- Decarbonisation demonstrator projects in 70 churches, 60 of which will receive 25% grant funding
- Small scale decarbonisation works (e.g. LED lighting and draught proofing) in 1,000 churches
- Piloting new net Zero technologies (annual target: 8-12 Church pilots)
- Parish Match Funding campaign initially in 90 churches in two dioceses with expansion in the second year if successful
- Energy/emissions surveys across a representative sample of 110 houses in 4 dioceses to inform the development of the housing decarbonisation workstream
- Work supporting schools, cathedrals and TEs.

The aspirational target set by the Synod in 2020 remains an immense challenge.

MINISTRY COUNCIL

The Revd Dr Sean Doherty (Universities & TEs) to ask the Chair of the Ministry Council:

Q208 How many people have been recommended by Stage 2 discernment panels in 2023? For comparison, please could you include with your answer the numbers recommended each year for the preceding five years?

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

A In total, 379 candidates were recommended to train for ordained ministry in 2023. This compares as follows:

2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
580	551	591	501	374	379

Dr Felicity Cooke (Ely) to ask the Chair of the Ministry Council:

Q209 What are the figures for the cohort of ordinands which began training this September (2023) by gender, and in five-year age bands, when separated into the three different modes of ordination training: full-time residential, mixed mode and part time?

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

A Figures for ordinands entering training this autumn are still provisional so their accuracy cannot be guaranteed. However, the figures such as we have them at present will be placed on the noticeboard.

Mrs Jennifer Fellows (Gloucester) to ask the Chair of the Ministry Council:

Q210 How many Ordinands deferred their ordination in 2023 and is this significantly higher than previous years?

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

A Dioceses do not in general report in advance which candidates will or will not be ordained each year. During the autumn we gather information about the ordinations that have taken place which can be compared with information about those completing training. The information has not yet been gathered this year. It would in

any case not indicate whether the candidate chose to defer ordination or whether they were not ordained this year for any other reason.

Mrs Sarah Finch (London) to ask the Chair of the Ministry Council:

Q211 Please would you list, by training institution, the numbers of ordinands in training by year group, giving the numbers of ordinands aged under 30, 31-40, 41-50 and over 51 in each institution?

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

A All figures for this term are still provisional so their accuracy cannot be guaranteed. However, the figures such as we have them at present will be placed on the noticeboard.

Miss Debbie Buggs (London) to ask the Chair of the Ministry Council:

Q212 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 This question has arisen before. Given that both the wording and punctuation of the previous question, asked by the Revd Canon Rick Stordy in July 2023, were identical in every detail to this question we respectfully direct Miss Buggs' attention to our previous reply.

Mr Robin Lunn (Worcester) to ask the Chair of the Ministry Council:

Q213 Why has the length of time between a person passing away and having a Church Funeral Service and burial, lengthened considerably in the last 50 years? What actions are being taken to reduce the waiting time?

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

A As far as we know data are not available to substantiate any answer to this question which means any response would be based on opinion rather than fact.

Dr Felicity Cooke (Ely) to ask the Chair of the Ministry Council:

Q214 What were the numbers of male and female stipendiary clergy and male and female SSM clergy in each diocese in the year ending December 2022?

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

A The 2022 Ministry Statistics are currently being compiled and are scheduled to be completed by the end of this year and so this information will not be available until then.

Mrs Jeanette Appleton (St Edmundsbury & Ipswich) to ask the Chair of the Ministry Council:

Q215 Employers do not generally require their employees to move out of the geographical area of service upon their retirement; the Church of England is the exception. This necessitates the newly retired clergy to move and pay for removal expenses. These costs may be significant and will often necessitate the retiree to use their savings or some of their pension pot to pay for them. Could this be re-considered and for the Church of England to introduce a 'Removal Contribution' for retiring clergy? This would seem to be appropriate and justified for the years of service given to the Church and God's people?

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

- A** Clergy office holders are provided with accommodation for the better performance of their duties, with the result that they need to vacate the provided house, to make it available for their successor. In this they are not dissimilar from employees who are provided with tied housing. Clergy moving to a home in retirement would need to pay tax on any contribution to their removal costs. The idea of a Removal Grant could be considered by RACSC if there is appetite, but these grants would probably have to be funded by the sending Diocese, and it would be necessary to consult dioceses first. Given existing pressures on diocesan finances, it is likely that few of them would consider this additional demand on their funds to be affordable.

The Revd Mark Wallace (Chelmsford) to ask the Chair of the Ministry Council:

- Q216** Given that there is now no fixed date for retirement in law, what plans are there to explore the repeal of 1975 Measure which introduced a fixed retirement age for clergy; and if there are no such plans, on what grounds?

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

- A** Legislation requires clergy to retire at 70, but also enables clergy over 70 to hold office for a fixed (and renewable) term in certain circumstances. For more information, see [ac-age-limit-measure-guidance-for-website-october-2017_0.pdf \(churchofengland.org\)](#)

Changes were made to the 1975 Age Limit Measure which were approved by the Synod and Parliament in 2017. There are no further plans for them to be amended.

We note that it is lawful to have a compulsory retirement age for employees provided that it can be shown to be a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim. Moreover, because the clergy default retirement age of 70 is conferred by statute, an objective justification for having a default retirement age is not legally required for clergy office holders in the way that it is for employees.

Fr Thomas Seville (Religious Communities) to ask the Chair of the Ministry Council:

- Q217** How many clergy who have withdrawn from full time or part time parochial ministry or have transitioned to other forms of labour in recent years (2020-2) give as reasons such as stress or disillusionment for their so doing?

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

- A** The number of clergy ceasing ministry for reasons other than death, retirement, or moving to another role was 70 in both 2019 and 2020, and 90 in 2021.

Clergy are not required to give their reasons for ceasing ministry and, even when a reason is given, it is not reported to the Ministry Development Team, which means that we are unable to provide information on how many clergy have ceased ministry because of stress or disillusionment.

Canon Izzy McDonald-Booth (Newcastle) to ask the Chair of the Ministry Council:

- Q218** Current confirmation forms ask the person to state their gender. Presenting this as a binary choice has proven to be a barrier for some young people completing this form.

Can I ask:

1. What is this data used for and why is this question necessary? And
2. If dioceses are required to collect this data, has consideration been given to making the form more inclusive, for example adding an option allowing people to self-describe?

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

- A** Canon law requires that a register of confirmations is retained by each parish but does not specifically require gender to be included in the register. The data is collated at a diocesan and national level to report on trends in confirmation services across the church. We aim to align any data collection which includes gender to the Office of National Statistics model and will review our practice for confirmation data collection against this standard.

REMUNERATION AND CONDITIONS OF SERVICE COMMITTEE

The Revd Martin Thorpe (Liverpool) to ask the Chair of the Remuneration and Conditions of Service Committee:

- Q219** Given the increasing prevalence and proven benefits of the 4-day working week in UK institutions, which committee of the Church of England could give consideration to a 5-day working week for clergy (ie. by recommending amending standard Terms of Service to give entitlement to a 48 hour rest period)?

The Bishop of Hereford to reply as Chair of the Remuneration and Conditions of Service Committee:

- A** After a similar question in February last year from the Revd Prebendary Rosie Austin, RACSC considered whether it might be helpful to confer on clergy a statutory entitlement to a 48-hour rest period once a week. We noted that clergy already have a high degree of discretion about when they work that enables them to work flexibly, respond appropriately to pastoral emergencies, and to take care of themselves and their families. We concluded that clergy were best placed to determine their own working patterns and that there was a risk that some clergy might feel that they were being put under pressure to condense their workload over a shorter working week. We commend the practice in many dioceses of recommending clergy to take a 48-hour continuous rest period once a month, and take the view that guidance is preferable to conferring more legal entitlement.

Mr Gabriel Chiu (Liverpool) to ask the Chair of the Remuneration and Conditions of Service Committee:

- Q220** What justifies differing levels of stipends in the CofE based on role (as opposed to family situation) if we are sticking with the language of stipend?

The Bishop of Hereford to reply as Chair of the Remuneration and Conditions of Service Committee:

- A** The principle of differing levels of stipend was examined in detail in “Generosity & Sacrifice,” a review undertaken in the early 2000s about clergy remuneration. That review concluded that additional payments in recognition of additional responsibility were not incompatible with the principle of a stipend. The Remuneration Review debated by the General Synod in Feb 2021:
<https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2022-01/gs-2247-clergy-remuneration-review-report.pdf> also came to this view.

Although the stipend is seen as a payment that enables someone to carry out their ministry, this has never been understood as meaning that all clergy should receive an identical stipend. Dioceses are free to fix their own stipend levels with reference to the National Minimum Stipend and the National Stipend Benchmark and some pay area/rural deans an additional amount. The differentials for Archdeacons, Deans, Bishops and Residentiary Canons were last discussed at General Synod in November 2002, when the Synod agreed that the level of the differentials should be reduced.

MISSION AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS COUNCIL

Mr Clive Scowen (London) to ask the Chair of the Mission and Public Affairs Council:

Q221 Since early May in the Indian state of Manipur, what appear to be orchestrated and pre-planned attacks against the predominantly Christian Kuki-Zo people have broken out, led by armed groups of mainly Hindu Meitei radicals, leading to the displacement of 70,000 people, thousands of homes burned down, and hundreds of Christian villages destroyed. The violence has severely impacted both the Kuki and Meitei Christian communities, with up to 500 churches, Christian schools and seminaries burned down by Meitei radicals, according to a BBC report. There have been several hundred deaths.

What has been done on behalf of the Church of England (i) to urge His Majesty's Government to use its influence and make representations on behalf of the suffering Christians of Manipur; and (ii) to provide spiritual support and practical help to our persecuted brothers and sisters in that state?

Mr Mark Sheard to reply as Chair of the Mission and Public Affairs Council:

A The reports emerging from Manipur paint a bleak picture of grave abuses against human rights, human dignity and disruption of peaceful relations between communities. With access to Manipur restricted and the internet shut down, it is impossible to draw definitive conclusions on either the breadth of the violence, or whether it was pre-meditated and co-ordinated. Against this uncertain but worrying background, the Archbishop of Canterbury issued a call to prayer for those affected by the violence while Bishops have tabled parliamentary questions in the House of Lords. Faith and Public Life staff have raised this matter with the Prime Minister's Special Envoy for Freedom of Religion or Belief and with the Indian High Commission. Staff have also been in touch with the Church of North India to offer support and have met pastorally with Anglican Christians in the UK that have connections with Manipur. This is a matter that will continue to be on the Church's agenda going forward as will broader concerns regarding freedom of religion or belief in India.

Canon Peter Adams (St Albans) to ask the Chair of the Mission and Public Affairs Council:

Q222 In light of (1) the strong support shown by both Archbishops, who jointly launched Gypsy Roma Traveller Friendly Churches in June this year, (2) General Synod's 2019 recommendation that Churches look at making land available for Traveller sites, and (3) given the desire of the Archbishops' Commission on Housing to provide safe sustainable and stable housing for those most in need using Church land; can the Mission and Public Affairs Council update Synod on what has been done to make land available for urgently needed Gypsy and Traveller sites for both people travelling (which can be achieved through identifying land where people can stay for short periods of time) and for residential pitches (for people to live on when they are not travelling)?

Mr Mark Sheard to reply as Chair of the Mission and Public Affairs Council:

A I am happy to respond on behalf of the Racial Justice Unit and the Archbishops' Housing Advisory Board who are both active in this area.

Enabling church land to be used by Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities, for both short term and residential pitches, starts with building relationships at the local levels where land holdings are located, and where, in most cases, the land is owned. The Racial Justice Unit is engaged in an extensive programme of work with

GRT communities and local churches to build trust and inclusivity in church life. This work is part of the capacity-building that must precede practical provision.

The fruits of this will take time to be realised, but we know of two areas where dialogue has begun between the Local Authority and local churches to work in partnership to provide land for short term pitches. It will take time to reach firm commitments, but we always knew there were no quick fixes here.

In the provision of long-term pitches, we are exploring examples of good practice from other organisations, especially housing associations, some with church connections, which could help local churches and dioceses to get started.

BUSINESS COMMITTEE

Mrs Rosemary Lyon (Blackburn) to ask the Chair of the Business Committee:

Q223 What conclusions have been drawn from the questions in the post-Synod survey re Synod members' travel to and from York last July?

Canon Robert Hammond to reply as Chair of the Business Committee:

A Of those who completed the post-Synod survey, 182 people used some form of public transport to get to York, while 57 travelled by car alone. Obviously, this is only a snapshot and not all members completed the survey but it is encouraging to see that public transport is the most popular means to travel to the July group of sessions.

The Revd Martin Thorpe (Liverpool) to ask the Chair of the Business Committee:

Q224 Given the ever-growing list of Private Members' Motions and Diocesan Synod Motions requested to be debated at General Synod, please could the Business Committee give serious consideration to using the remaining November sessions of this quinquennium to clearing some of that backlog rather than releasing those dates?

Canon Robert Hammond to reply as Chair of the Business Committee:

A The Business Committee is pleased to see members and dioceses engaging with the Synodical process and submitting motions. The decision to go ahead with November sessions is made by the Presidents on advice from the Business Committee who do give serious consideration to the items of business and their relative importance, the costs of holding the meetings, the impact on members, particularly working laity and the number of items in the pipeline.

Members are always advised to keep November dates free, and the Business Committee aims to give as much notice as possible about November synods.

RULE COMMITTEE

Mrs Jeanette Appleton (St Edmundsbury & Ipswich) to ask the Chair of the Rule Committee:

Q225 Under Schedule 1 of The Faculty Jurisdiction (Amendment) Rules 2019 there is a subsection called "Matters which may be undertaken without a faculty: List A 7 (2) allows church paths and other hard surfaces to be repaired, including resurfacing, using the same materials and colour without a faculty or consultation.

This could potentially allow the main access path to the church or church car park to be resurfaced in gravel, or other similar materials, which are acknowledged as inaccessible surfaces for disabled people.

Could the Church of England address this matter by moving A 7 (2) to List B so that consultation is required by the Archdeacon and stipulate that, where paths require resurfacing, this work is carried out using materials that provide a bound, firm and level surface that is accessible for disabled people (particularly wheelchair and mobility scooter users), and are therefore compliant with the Equality Act 2010?

The Rt Worshipful Morag Ellis, Dean of the Arches, to reply as Chair of the Rule Committee:

- A** The intention of the question to encourage equal access to church buildings is one that is supported by the staff of the Church Buildings Council and is consistent with the intention of that Council's guidance on equal access. This specific request will need to be considered by the Rule Committee to determine if the requested amendment would be an efficient way of achieving the outcome requested.

The rules as drafted would not prevent a church seeking permission to change the surface of its paths to provide more equal access. A change to churchyard paths may also require planning permission from the local authority and this would leave any requirement for the archdeacon to stipulate a particular surface subject to local authority consent, a point that the Rule Committee would need to take into consideration.

STANDING ORDERS COMMITTEE

Mrs Rebecca Cowburn (Ely) to ask the Chair of the Standing Orders Committee:

- Q226** Has the Committee considered whether there should be a procedure in place to address any case where a motion passed by Synod is subsequently found to have been predicated on legal advice that was, inadvertently, incorrect, unreliable, or subsequently withdrawn or revised; if so, what was its conclusion; if not, will it now do so?

The Revd Canon Joyce Jones to reply as Chair of the Standing Orders Committee:

- A** This has not been considered yet by the Standing Orders Committee. However, the Committee is always open to listening to members' suggestions for how the Standing Orders can be improved. As you have raised this question, the Committee will consider this at its next meeting.

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**Annex Information placed on the Notice Board
and referred to in Q106 from the Bishop of Sheffield**

Question 16

Draft *Prayers of Love and Faith*: source texts (November 2023)

Prayers of Gathering

A prayer of preparation	CWMV p.168
An introductory bidding	n.c.
For the fruit of the Spirit	CWPS p.162 alt.
For the gift of love	CWPS p.163

Prayers of Dedication and Thanksgiving

A prayer of dedication	n.c.
A prayer of thanksgiving	n.c.
For guidance	CWPS p.161
For companionship	CWPS p.176 alt.
For grace to live well	CWPS p.162
An acclamation	n.c.

Prayers for God's Blessing

'God of generosity and joy...'	n.c.
'Blessed are you...'	n.c.
'The Lord bless you...'	NPW J62

Prayers which may be said with or by a couple

A general thanksgiving	CWDP p.405
A prayer to the Holy Spirit	CWDP p.409
For lifelong peace	CWPS p.165 alt.
A prayer of commitment	CWPS p.178 alt.
A prayer of Augustine of Hippo	CWDP p.36
A prayer of Richard of Chichester	CWDP p.48
For faithfulness and peace	CWPS p.166 alt.
For the healing of memory	CWPS p.164
For discipleship	CWPS p.162
For the support of friends	CWPS p.168

Prayers for a household and family

For a home	CWPS pp.127 alt., 158 alt.
The Blessing of a Home	n.c.
A prayer for a couple's family	n.c.
For a new family brought together	CWPS p.167
A prayer as a couple make a home	n.c.

Guide to abbreviations

CWDP	Common Worship: Daily Prayer	NPW	New Patterns for Worship
CWMV	Common Worship: Services and Prayers for the Church of England	n.c.	new composition
CWPS	Common Worship: Pastoral Services	alt.	denotes amended text

revised November 2023

Question 106

Table of Cathedral assets and endowments Covering Note

Church of England Cathedrals are undergoing the most significant governance change in a generation with the implementation of a new Act of Parliament, the Cathedrals Measure 2021. Alongside registration with the Charity Commission, the new legislation fosters greater transparency in governance and day-to-day operations.

Cathedral Deans therefore welcome this next stage of General Synod's movement towards transparency around the relative resources available to their cathedrals. This builds on earlier work which highlighted the wide range of historic endowments attached to Church of England Dioceses.

The long view of Cathedral reserves is that the creation of the Church Commissioners in the 19th century involved the disendowment of cathedrals so that the funds could be applied to serve the national church. While many of those long-standing cathedrals remain relatively wealthy, a number of them face building repair costs which outstrip their reserves available to fund them.

Of the 42 Church of England Cathedrals, roughly half of them are in dioceses which postdate the disendowment of 1840 and were not given significant assets at their creation. Just as in the dioceses they serve, there is a strong correlation between the date of their establishment as cathedrals and the level of their long-term reserves.

The cathedrals with the largest reserves are often characterised by property assets which mirror their historic location in prime residential or office settings, or reflect the fact that their property portfolio has been converted into investments at an earlier date. Similarly, cathedrals with the smallest reserves are mostly in dioceses created in the 19th and 20th centuries, when little historic resource was transferred to support them.

The scale of financial liabilities across cathedrals varies enormously with most of them experiencing challenges in relation to unrestricted funds whilst other funds are also often held in accordance with donor wishes to support specific purposes such as fabric or music.

The Very Revd Andrew Tremlett
Dean of St Paul's

Question 106

Cathedral assets end 2020							
	Fixed Assets: Investments	Fixed Assets: Property Investments	Fixed Assets: Non Investment Assets	Net Current Assets	Creditors: due after 1 year		Net Assets
	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
Norwich	3.3	48.8	18.8	2.5	-		73.5
Salisbury	31.4	15.8	11.6	3.8	-	0.1	62.5
Durham	21.0	29.1	8.7	3.6	-	0.2	62.3
Canterbury	12.1	31.0	17.1	5.7	-	3.7	62.2
Lincoln	19.2	22.4	11.5	4.5	-	0.0	57.6
York	22.8	15.8	10.3	2.0	-	0.1	50.7
Winchester	7.4	19.3	18.8	4.3	-		49.7
St Pauls	18.6	7.9	7.9	10.0	-	2.0	42.4
Chichester	4.1	22.0	11.0	1.2	-	0.4	38.0
Lichfield	6.2	18.2	7.4	1.1	-	0.2	32.7
St Albans	9.1	5.1	10.5	0.8	-	0.1	25.4
Rochester	5.4	13.2	4.6	0.4	-	0.3	23.3
Gloucester	5.4	10.7	3.9	1.7	-	0.7	20.9
Southwark	0.8	0.9	15.3	0.7	-	0.1	17.7
Chester	1.1	13.4	4.1	0.1	-	1.5	17.2
Ely	11.6	3.3	0.8	0.7	-	0.4	16.0
Wells	2.4	2.8	9.3	1.0	-	0.1	15.4
Liverpool	3.8	5.8	3.8	1.0	-	0.3	14.1
Worcester	2.6	6.1	4.2	0.8	-	0.2	13.6
Exeter	2.8	2.5	3.9	1.9	-		11.1
Carlisle	3.0	1.8	5.2	0.6	-	0.1	10.6
Southwell	2.0	5.2	2.8	0.8	-	0.4	10.5
Hereford	4.7	4.0	0.4	0.9	-		10.0
Peterborough	0.0	4.3	5.3	0.7	-	0.5	9.8
Ripon	4.4	1.3	2.3	1.4	-		9.4
Birmingham	5.0	1.6	1.2	0.4	-		8.1
Leicester	1.7	-	1.7	3.7	-		7.2
Bristol	2.2	-	3.1	1.8	-		7.1
Coventry	2.8	0.1	2.8	1.4	-	0.1	7.0
St Edmundsbury	0.2	-	6.1	0.3	-		6.5
Guildford	1.7	0.5	3.9	0.3	-		6.5
Chelmsford	2.3	-	2.9	0.5	-		5.7
Newcastle	1.9	0.2	2.8	0.7	-	0.0	5.6
Portsmouth	1.3	0.4	3.3	0.1	-		5.1
Blackburn	0.5	0.5	3.3	0.0	-	0.8	3.5
Derby	0.8	-	2.0	0.5	-		3.3
Sheffield	0.4	-	1.9	0.6	-	0.5	2.4
Truro	0.0	0.4	2.4	0.3	-	0.9	2.3
Wakefield	0.3	-	1.2	0.7	-	0.0	2.2
Bradford	0.4	0.2	-	0.8	-		1.3
Manchester	0.0	0.0	-	1.1	-		1.1
Note: not all cathedrals have December year ends. These figures relate to 2020 year ends.							

Question 209

Age at 1 st September	Gender	Residential	Full-time non-residential	Part-time
20-24	F	1	2	-
	M	9	1	-
25-29	F	10	4	1
	M	16	9	2
30-34	F	7	10	1
	M	14	10	2
35-39	F	5	15	10
	M	7	6	6
40-44	F	4	10	18
	M	5	4	6
45-49	F	3	9	15
	M	2	6	7
50-54	F	-	9	19
	M	-	2	12
55-59	F	1	2	22
	M	1	1	9
60-64	F	-	2	13
	M	-	-	6
65-69	F	-	1	8
	M	-	1	5
70-74	F	-	1	2
	M	-	-	-
75-79	F	-	-	1
	M	-	-	-

Question 211

TEI	Age	2023 starters	2022 starters	2021 starters	2020 or earlier starters
Cranmer Hall	30 or under	8	1	5	
	31-40	4	6	5	1
	41-50	1	3	1	
	51 or over		2		
Eastern Region Ministry Course	30 or under	1			
	31-40	6	2	1	
	41-50	7	5	8	
	51 or over	8	5	6	
Emmanuel Theological College	30 or under	4	5	4	1
	31-40	2	10	2	
	41-50	12	11	5	
	51 or over	26	11	10	
Lindisfarne College of Theology	30 or under				
	31-40		4	2	
	41-50	1			
	51 or over	4		3	
Mirfield	30 or under		4	2	
	31-40	1	1	1	
	41-50	2	1		
	51 or over				
Oak Hill College	30 or under	2	4	1	
	31-40	2	5	8	
	41-50		3		
	51 or over		1		
The Queen's Foundation	30 or under	1	2	1	
	31-40	4	1	1	
	41-50	5	4	4	
	51 or over	4	4	1	
Ridley Hall	30 or under	4	5	5	1
	31-40	3	5	3	
	41-50	2	3		
	51 or over	2			

Ripon College Cuddesdon	30 or under	5	3		
	31-40	4	6	4	
	41-50	12	13	5	
	51 or over	7	8	10	
St Augustine's College of Theology	30 or under	1			
	31-40	4	2	1	
	41-50	5	12	2	
	51 or over	10	10	9	
St Hild College	30 or under		1	1	
	31-40	6	5	2	
	41-50	6	8	5	
	51 or over	7	11	7	
St Mellitus College	30 or under	15	14	10	
	31-40	26	24	12	
	41-50	25	27	7	
	51 or over	19	13	7	
St Stephen's House	30 or under	2	4	2	
	31-40	1	3		
	41-50	1			
	51 or over				
Sarum College	30 or under				
	31-40	1	1	4	
	41-50	6	5	5	
	51 or over	10	9	3	
South Central TEI	30 or under				
	31-40	1			
	41-50	1	2	3	
	51 or over	10	4	3	1
South West Ministry Training Course	30 or under				
	31-40	1	1	1	
	41-50		1		
	51 or over	4	3	3	
Trinity College	30 or under	4	10	6	
	31-40	10	10	4	
	41-50	1	5	1	
	51 or over		7		

Westcott House	30 or under	4	4	3	
	31-40	2	3	5	
	41-50	2	1	2	
	51 or over		1		
Wycliffe Hall	30 or under	16	7	3	
	31-40	7	8	6	2
	41-50	2	2		
	51 or over	1			