

## **GENERAL SYNOD**

### **Summary of decisions by the House of Bishops and by its delegated committees**

**November 2023 – February 2024**

1. This summary of decisions includes those made by the House and by committees delegated under its Standing Orders to handle business on its behalf.

#### **THE HOUSE OF BISHOPS**

2. The House of Bishops has met three times since the November 2023 group of sessions.
3. All the matters reported were taken in a Committee of the whole House under Standing Order 14.

#### **House of Bishops 29 November**

4. The House met over Zoom. It began by reflecting on the General Synod in November, noting the narrow majorities for the motion on Living in Love and Faith and the reality of divisions in the Church this had revealed.
5. The House noted the feedback from members of General Synod and beyond that the lack of transparency on the work of the House was a contributory factor to the lack of trust within the Church. It agreed that steps should be taken to improve this – immediately to publish a summary of actions and decisions, and then to set up a small group to review the processes of the House and develop proposals for greater transparency. The group would also consider elements such as whether the law should change so that acting diocesan bishops could vote.
6. The House also considered the next steps on Living in Love and Faith and welcomed the Bishops of Leicester and Newcastle as the new lead bishops.
7. It also approved, by deemed business, minor changes to its Standing Orders (including replacing references to the Bishop of Maidstone with the Bishop of Oswestry).

#### **House of Bishops 12 December**

8. The House met over Zoom. It debated and agreed two formal motions:
  - “That this House, having agreed at its meeting of 9 October to commend the PLF Resource Section (‘PLF RS’) for use in the minster’s discretion under Canon B 5, now resolve that the PLF RS be commended with effect from December 17 2023 and published accordingly.”
  - “That this House, having agreed at its meeting of 9 October to commend the Prayers for a Covenanted Friendship for use in the minster’s discretion under Canon B 5, now resolve that the Prayers for a Covenanted Friendship be commended with effect from December 17 2023 and published accordingly.”
9. Both motions were passed without amendment.

10. The House discussed the request from the General Synod to reconsider whether it might be possible for standalone services to be authorized or commended under different routes to under Canon B 2. It took stock of the issues presented by Part III of the pastoral guidance. And it received an update on the work on formal structural pastoral provision.
11. The House was briefed by the Bishop of St Albans on the progress of conversations with HM Government on a potential extension to the Lords Spiritual (Women) Act

#### **House of Bishops 19 January**

12. The House of Bishops met at High Leigh after a meeting of the College of Bishops to discuss the paper to be presented by the lead bishops to the General Synod in February 2024 on Living in Love and Faith. The House provided useful feedback to the lead bishops that has been reflected in paper GS 2345.

#### **THE HOUSE OF BISHOPS STANDING COMMITTEE**

##### **House of Bishops Standing Committee 22 November**

13. The Standing Committee considered agenda items for future meetings of the House of Bishops, in particular for the 29 November and 12 December meetings. It agreed that there should be an additional meeting of the House in the margins of the College on 18-19 January.
14. It also considered a draft of the transparency work to be presented to the House of Bishops on 29 November.

#### **STANDING COMMISSION ON THE FIVE GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

15. The Standing Commission met in person and on Zoom during the July group of sessions. It also met on Zoom just after the November group of sessions. It intends to meet during the margins of the February group of sessions.
16. During the November meeting, the Standing Commission met with the Independent Reviewer and discussed the different and complementary roles and remits of the Independent Reviewer and the Standing Commission. The Standing Commission expects to meet regularly with the Independent Reviewer.

#### **NATIONAL SAFEGUARDING STEERING GROUP**

17. The National Safeguarding Steering Group (NSSG) met on 30 January. Key agenda items discussed were the Diocese of Europe PCR2 report and the evaluation of safeguarding responses in the diocese, including the findings and the recommendations for action. The NSSG were advised that the Diocese in Europe have completed the PCR2 review and provided clarity on how the recommendations will be implemented and monitored.
18. The National Safeguarding Team (NST) provided an update on the progress of implementation of recommendations from published Learning Lessons Reviews (LLR). The NSSG were provided with an overview of how the themes identified are being addressed and incorporated into the Safeguarding work of the NST in policy reviews, learning and development programmes and projects within the Safeguarding Programme. The group were advised that the recommendations are

reviewed on a regular basis to ensure that they are being incorporated into the work of the NST and disseminated for operational delivery in Diocese and Cathedrals.

19. Revd Canon Dr Judith Maltby presented the findings of some work on “Safeguarding & Living in Love and Faith: Learning for the Church of England from the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse & Lessons Learned Reviews”. The NSSG noted that the findings of this study could be taken forward through monitoring of the implementation of findings from reviews.

William Nye  
Secretary to the House of Bishops  
November 2023