

GENERAL SYNOD

February 2024

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 February 2024 Group of Sessions of the General Synod. This is divided between the afternoon of Friday 23 and the morning of Saturday 24 February. Notice has been given of 225 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.

INDEX

Questions 1 – 5	Remuneration & Conditions of Service Committee
5-day working week for clergy	Q1
Stipend increase and decrease in pension contributions: decisions	Q2
Revised stipend recommendations: impact on diocesan finances	Q3
Change from tax credits to universal credit: impact on stipendiary clergy	Q4
Move from tax credits to universal credit: national helpline	Q5
Questions 6 – 7	Mission & Public Affairs Council
Media bill: support for definition of public service broadcasting	Q6
Liberalisation of abortion: steps to oppose	Q7
Questions 8 – 9	Committee for Minority Ethnic Anglican Concerns
Plans to continue Racial Justice Commission mandate	Q8
Racial justice: support for dioceses implementing change	Q9
Question 10	Appointments Committee
Representation of self-supporting ministers in appointments	Q10
Questions 11 – 15	Business Committee
Triennium working group: reconsideration of GS 2307	Q11
Ordering of Synod Questions	Q12-13
Accessibility of Synod to those in self-supporting ministry	Q14
Redress if Synod vote not implemented	Q15
Questions 16 – 76	House Of Bishops (Living in Love and Faith (LLF))
Prayers of Love and Faith: use since December 2023	Q16
Prayers of Love & Faith: differing views within Team ministry	Q17
Prayers of Love and Faith: quantitative data and feedback	Q18
PLF: use of informal liturgies	Q19
LLF: experimental use, process and assessment	Q20
LLF guidance: balance and tone of language used in Pastoral Guidance	Q21
<i>Issues in Human Sexuality</i> : assent by 2024 ordinands	Q22
Drafting of new Pastoral Guidance	Q23
Draft Pastoral Guidance: length	Q24
Guidance for clergy in Europe re same-sex marriage	Q25
Continuing work on LLF: need for differentiation or settlement	Q26
Prayers of Love & Faith: need for differentiation or settlement	Q27
LLF: provision for ordinands who cannot accept oversight of their bishop	Q28
Canon B 30: impact on shaping of guidelines for clergy conduct	Q29
Same-sex marriage as an honourable estate	Q30
Correct statement of doctrine on sexual intimacy	Q31
PLF Guidance: sexual intimacy	Q32
Doctrine of the Church of England: consideration of ancient Fathers	Q33
Same-sex marriage: conclusions re clergy and lay ministers	Q34
LLF: Pastoral Guidance on sexual relationships	Q35
Change in doctrine for clergy to enter same-sex marriage	Q36
Cornes research: consideration	Q37
Public statements on faith as inherited	Q38
Churches not using same-sex blessings: concern over protests	Q39
Understanding of 'homophobia'	Q40
GS 2346: definition of homophobia	Q41
CPAS statement	Q42
Resignation of LLF Bishop: implications for process	Q43
Prayers of Love and Faith: lay participation in ongoing work	Q44

Publication of legal and theological advice re Prayers of Love & Faith	Q45
Publication of legal advice re Prayers of Love & Faith	Q46
Legal Advice provided to bishops not available to members of Synod	Q47
Interim Theological Adviser: press release	Q48
Pastoral Principles: use in communication with other Houses of Synod	Q49
Support for LLF 'ten commitments' by the House of Bishops	Q50
Legal advice on clergy and lay ministers in same-sex marriage	Q51
LLF: documents prepared by the Legal Office	Q52
LLF: provision of legal advice for discernment process	Q53
LLF: sharing of Legal Office assessments	Q54
Clergy in same-sex marriage: structure of formal provision	Q55
LLF: transparency re decisions and legal/theological advice	Q56
Standalone services: contradiction between commitment 6 and GS 2346	Q57
Authority to act outside Canon law	Q58
Authority to act outside doctrine	Q59
LLF: contradictory statements on same-sex marriage for clergy and lay ministers	Q60
Vote on clergy & same-sex marriage: legal & theological advice	Q61
Vote on holy matrimony & same-sex marriage: legal or theological advice received	Q62
9th October meeting: legal or theological advice received	Q63
PLF: assessment of routes for standalone services	Q64
PLF: assessment of risk of challenge using Canon B 5A	Q65
Handling of legal advice re LLF: independent review	Q66
Decision-making re LLF: independent review	Q67
Canon C 26.2: legal and theological advice	Q68
House of Bishops reporting: process	Q69
Legal advice on LLF debates	Q70
LLF: job description for 'independent reviewer'	Q71
Votes on Holy Matrimony and same-sex marriage: press announcement	Q72
9th October meeting: advice from Legal Office	Q73
Legal advice to House: comparison with GS 2055 Annex 1	Q74
Clergy and lay ministers in sexual relationships	Q75
LLF implementation strategy: vote	Q76

Questions 77 – 84

Crown Nominations Commission

Appointment to senior roles: parish experience	Q77
Paula Vennells: awareness of existing litigation	Q78
Appointment of diocesan bishops: review of transparency	Q79
Review of theological depth in House of Bishops	Q80
Doctrine of Marriage: guidance to CNCs	Q81
Episcopal appointments: requirement to uphold doctrine	Q82
Reflection on CNC arrangements	Q83
Backlog of appointments: consideration of bringing forward meetings	Q84

Question 85

Dioceses Commission

Guidance on requests for filling suffragan sees	Q85
---	-----

Questions 86 – 92

Faith and Order Commission

Doctrine of Marriage: consideration of biblical passages	Q86
Determination of 'essential' or 'non-essential' matters	Q87
Belief in Jesus as necessary for salvation	Q88
Definition of fornication	Q89
Theological Adviser: appointments process	Q90
Interim Theological Adviser: responsibility for appointment	Q91
Appointment of Vice-Chair	Q92

Question 93 Fees Advisory Commission

Legal fees for faculty submissions: consideration of reduction	Q93
--	-----

Question 94

Calendar revision: process and timetable	Liturgical Commission Q94
--	-------------------------------------

Questions 95 – 109

	Church Commissioners
Delay to clergy payroll	Q95
Percentage of funds invested in climate solutions	Q96
Divestment from fossil fuel: accolades	Q97
Hedgerows: steps to restore and increase	Q98
Specialised finance companies: financial exposure	Q99
Specialised finance companies: level of return	Q100
Triennium Funding Working Group: future membership and chair	Q101
Bishops' legal costs	Q102
Plans to increase funding to cathedrals	Q103
Costs of PEVs and support for women's ministry	Q104
Diocesan plans for merging parishes: assessment	Q105
Church Buildings Report: basis for figure of churches to close	Q106
Church Buildings Report: figures made from sale of churches	Q107
Transatlantic slave trade: update on fund	Q108
Rationale for reparations figure	Q109

Questions 110 – 116

	Pensions Board
Belief in doctrine and discipline: appointment to senior roles	Q110
Steps to increase investment in climate solutions	Q111
Help to buy retirement home: source of funding	Q112
Retirement housing scheme changes: effects on CHARM residents	Q113
Support for retiring clergy unable to afford mortgage payments	Q114
Clergy retirement housing: alternative providers and tenancy arrangements	Q115
Changes to provision of clergy retirement housing	Q116

Questions 117 – 118

	Ethical Investment Advisory Group
Climate change policy: plans to update	Q117
Paula Vennells: compatibility of former role with EIAG membership	Q118

Questions 119 – 152

	Archbishops' Council
Level of service provided by banks to charities: action	Q119
Banking difficulties for PCCs: actions taken	Q120
Wedding fees waiver	Q121
Supporting Asylum Seekers: plans to update	Q122
Resources available for understanding neurodiversity	Q123
GS 2307: commitment to implementation of proposals	Q124
Number of Charities in the Church of England	Q125
Governance review: independent safeguarding	Q126
Wilkinson and Glasgow reports: meeting to consider response	Q127
Wilkinson and Glasgow reports: minuted discussion	Q128
Safeguarding complaint: update on progress	Q129
Interview on BBC R4 Today Programme	Q130
BBC Radio 4 interview: contract with Kevin Crompton	Q131
Invitation from ISB survivors' group	Q132
Disbanding of ISB: actions to hold decision-makers to account	Q133
Completing ISB reviews	Q134
Christchurch review: stakeholders	Q135
Statistics for Mission: breakdown by ages	Q136
Setting All God's People Free: embedding of culture change	Q137

Plans for SDF and LInC funding: report to Synod	Q138
Diocesan and stipendiary posts: comparison of numbers	Q139
Net Zero target: assistance from Parish Buying and Total Energies	Q140
Dioceses facing annual deficits	Q141
Use of clergy housing during interregnum: diocesan data	Q142
Community of St Anselm: future plans	Q143
Occasional Offices fees: decision not to implement DSM	Q144
Chote report: numbers of new disciples	Q145
PCC and Officer recruitment in rural areas: steps to address	Q146
Churchwardens Measure 2001: plans to change	Q147
Stipendiary parochial posts: cuts by dioceses	Q148
Apprenticeship levy: annual expenditure	Q149
Apprenticeship levy: availability to other organisations	Q150
Delay to LLF pastoral guidance: impact on numbers of ordinands	Q151
Strategic Leadership Development Programme: syllabus	Q152

Questions 153 – 197

House of Bishops

Termination of NSPCC helpline: CofE involvement	Q153
Guidance on threshold for safeguarding report	Q154
Parish Safeguarding Officers	Q155
Comparative costs of Makin, Wilkinson and Jay Reviews	Q156
Safeguarding implications of LLF	Q157
Engagement with Diocesan Safeguarding Advisory Panels	Q158
Keith Makin: process of appointment for Smyth review	Q159
Domestic Abuse: inclusion in all discussions re safeguarding	Q160
Limit of hours on Makin review	Q161
Relationship of safeguarding bodies within central structures	Q162
Recent annual costs of safeguarding	Q163
List of Safeguarding reviews	Q164
Provisions of Canon F 16(1): enforcement	Q165
"Blue Monday" social media posts: mental health advice	Q166
Steps to rebuild public trust	Q167
House of Lords: hours spent on non-Church business	Q168
Input from anti-racism groups	Q169
Reducing number of senior and diocesan posts	Q170
Votes recorded at College of Bishops meetings	Q171
Discussion of holding meetings in public	Q172
Notes of meetings of House and College of Bishops	Q173
Future reporting of decisions	Q174
Meeting dates of the House of Bishops in 2023 and 2024	Q175
Appointments processes: discrimination	Q176
Environmental damage of floral foam	Q177
Elimination of single use plastics in places of worship	Q178
Carbon Net Zero: efforts made by dioceses	Q179
Progress by dioceses towards Net Zero in 2030	Q180
A Rocha Eco Church Scheme: awards	Q181
Churches Count on Nature: participation in 2023	Q182
Definition of mutual flourishing	Q183
Protection for parish's theological conviction re Prayers of Love & Faith	Q184
Canon C 4: removal of barriers to participation for disabled people	Q185
Canon C 4.3: full consultation in case of disabled candidate	Q186
Discrimination in church towards lay people with neurodiversity: process to be used	Q187
Support for clergy with autism	Q188
Decline in numbers recommended for ordination training	Q189

Common syllabus for ordination training	Q190
Continued theological learning by bishops: national framework	Q191
Estates Ministry: strategy to fulfil and monitor commitments	Q192
Estates Ministry: ordinands/leaders from lowest 25% of parishes	Q193
Consideration of clergy morale	Q194
Covenant for Clergy Care and Wellbeing: progress	Q195
Canon B 30: upholding the practice and pattern of marriage	Q196
Declining church attendance: discussion	Q197
Questions 198 – 200	Secretary General
Chairs of boards, councils and commissions	Q198
Copyright of General Synod Standing Orders	Q199
Collection of statistics and data	Q200
Questions 201 – 205	Clerk To The Synod
November 2023 Synod: central and diocesan costs	Q201
Charges for fringe meetings: rationale	Q202-203
Policy and legal votes by Synod: publication of audit	Q204
July 2023 Report of Proceedings: addition of transcript	Q205
Questions 206 – 209	Archbishops' Council Finance Committee
Estimate for average per capita giving	Q206
Review of Diocesan Finances: progress	Q207
Lowest income funding: timetable for review	Q208
Audit processes for SDF funding	Q209
Question 210	Archbishops' Council Audit Committee
Plans for further risk assessment	Q210
Question 211	Church Buildings Council
Changing Places facilities: progress in churches	Q211
Questions 212 – 218	Ministry Council
Candidate places provided and filled in 2022/23	Q212
Training institutions: ordinands by number and gender per year group	Q213
Numbers of UKME/GM stipendiary and self-supporting clergy	Q214
Becoming younger and more diverse: help for non-UK nationals	Q215
Numbers of male and female stipendiary/SSM clergy in 2022	Q216
Clergy retention: research into early leavers	Q217
Clergy retirements: plans to increase vocations	Q218
Questions 219 – 225	National Society Council
Grants for promoting Christian Education	Q219
<i>Valuing All God's Children</i> : Stonewall involvement	Q220
<i>Valuing All God's Children</i> : approach to gender questioning children	Q221
<i>Valuing All God's Children</i> : use in legal cases	Q222
Gender Questioning Children: advice to schools	Q223
Government draft guidance on gender questioning children	Q224-225

REMUNERATION AND CONDITIONS OF SERVICE COMMITTEE

The Revd Lindsay Llewellyn-MacDuff (Rochester) to ask the Chair of the Remuneration and Conditions of Service Committee:

Q1 Many thanks for your answer to Martin Thorpe's question in the November papers (Q219). Can the committee tell Synod whether, in the formulating of that answer (that a 5-day working week for clergy is unnecessary or even unhelpful) any consultation was made of the Sheldon Hub, the unions who represent clergy, or any other body that researches clergy welfare?

The Bishop of Hereford to reply as Chair of the Remuneration and Conditions of Service Committee:

A No. RACSC already has one bishop, one archdeacon, one stipendiary incumbent, one self-supporting minister, and one minister with PTO among its clergy members, who are able to represent the views of clergy (as well as one further vacancy yet to be filled). The Committee also has regular consultations with CEECA, the clergy union, although this issue has not been flagged up as of particular concern. The original question was about a statutory entitlement, which would imply a move to a 5 day working week as the norm for clergy, when many may not choose to carry out their ministry in that way. However, there is nothing to prevent full time clergy, who wish to work longer days, with an additional rest day, from discussing and agreeing this with their PCCs.

Mr Ian Boothroyd (Southwell & Nottingham) to ask the Chair of the Remuneration and Conditions of Service Committee:

Q2 The annual report of the Central Stipends Authority (GS Misc 1364) gives the welcome news that the recommended increase in stipends this year is 7% instead of the earlier proposal of 5%, reflecting the forthcoming reduction in pension contributions (from 28% of National Minimum Stipend to 25%). What were the reasons which prevented the application of a similar approach to the earlier and much larger reductions in pension costs (from 39.9% of NMS up to March 2022, to 28% from January 2023), to close the remaining gap between stipends and recent inflation?

The Bishop of Hereford to reply as Chair of the Remuneration and Conditions of Service Committee:

A Stipend recommendations are made in consultation with dioceses. Dioceses had communicated that the contribution rate of 39.9% up to March 2022 was at the upper limit of what was affordable. Many dioceses faced significant financial deficits and were only just emerging from the pandemic and the financial challenges this had brought. A reduction in the contribution rate had been expected and factored into diocesan budgeting processes. In making the stipend recommendations for 2022/23 of a 5% increase in the National Minimum Stipend and National Stipend Benchmark, the Archbishops' Council, as the Central Stipends Authority, were mindful of the aspiration that stipends should keep up with inflation over the long term. They considered the savings for dioceses from the reduction in the contribution rate, as well as the financial challenges faced by dioceses. Responses from dioceses demonstrated that a larger increase would not have been affordable for most dioceses at that time.

Professor Muriel Robinson (Lincoln) to ask the Chair of the Remuneration and Conditions of Service Committee:

Q3 In proposing the revised recommendations for stipend increases to a timescale precluding the inclusion of such figures in dioceses' annual budget planning and approval cycle, what consideration was given to the combination of a) falling

inflation b) many dioceses' practice of increasing employed staff salaries by the same percentage c) the impact on dioceses' finances should they apply the recommendations and d) the impact on clergy morale and recruitment should dioceses decide against applying the recommendations after their 2024 budgets have been agreed?

The Bishop of Hereford to reply as Chair of the Remuneration and Conditions of Service Committee:

A The usual consultation process with dioceses works on a timetable agreed with dioceses that is designed to align with diocesan budgets as much as possible (they do not all agree their budgets at the same time). This process was followed for 2024. However, concerns about the extent to which the National Minimum Stipend (NMS) had fallen behind inflation (and in particular the impact on retiring clergy whose starting pension was adversely affected) led to the Pensions Board agreeing a reduction in the contribution rate for pensions from 28% to 25% of the previous year's NMS. It was hoped that this saving (approximately £804 per person) to dioceses would allow for a further increase in the level of the NMS and enable additional stipend increases without disrupting diocesan budgets. As a result RACSC (which includes 2 diocesan secretaries in its membership) recommended a further increase in the NMS from 5% to 7%, which was approved by the Archbishops' Council. Whether dioceses decide to apply the same level of increase for their lay employees (whether or not they are engaged in ministry or have a house provided) is a matter for the dioceses concerned. Diocesan practice has often been to apply a different percentage increase from the national one (sometimes less and sometimes more).

Dr Andrew Bell (Oxford) to ask the Chair of the Remuneration and Conditions of Service Committee:

Q4 What work has been done to calculate the impact of the change from tax credits to Universal Credit on stipendiary clergy, and how that will be accounted for in recommendations for changes to the stipend?

The Bishop of Hereford to reply as Chair of the Remuneration and Conditions of Service Committee:

A An estimate has been made, using data from the clergy remuneration review survey of clergy in 2020, that the overall financial impact of the change from tax credits to universal credit on stipendiary clergy will be at least £1 million per year in total.

I have written to bishops, archdeacons, and diocesan secretaries to ask about their capacity to respond to hardship cases (including migration from tax credit to Universal Credit) from their discretionary funds.

We have also lobbied the relevant minister about the disqualification for universal credit where people own housing or savings, as this is unfair to clergy and others who occupy tied housing.

At present, the Committee takes the view that clergy who are disadvantaged by moving to Universal Credit are best supported by charitable payments made through discretionary funds. However, it is seriously concerned whether these payments will be sustainable in the longer term. The Committee will be considering these responses when it meets in early March.

Canon Karen Czapiewski (Gloucester) to ask the Chair of the Remuneration and Conditions of Service Committee:

Q5 People will be aware of the issues for clergy families caused by the move from tax credits to universal credit. Are there any plans to offer a national dedicated helpline or any other form of support for those affected?

The Bishop of Hereford to reply as Chair of the Remuneration and Conditions of Service Committee:

A There are transitional provisions for those who undergo “managed migration” onto Universal Credit. Clergy who are existing child tax credit claimants should be covered by these provisions and not immediately suffer a drop in income unless their child was born on or after 6 April 2017. However, it is not yet clear for how long these provisions will remain in place. Anyone concerned by this should contact their bishop in the first instance and it is hoped that they can be supported from their bishop’s discretionary fund. Clergy charities may also be able to help.

We have not put a dedicated helpline in place, partly because of the cost and partly because much depends on the detail of individual cases, and the staff of the Ministry Development Team do not have sufficient expertise or training to be able to advise the clergy concerned.

We are lobbying the Government (especially about the property and savings disqualification) although we are aware that, even without it, many clergy will no longer be eligible for Universal Credit. This is a matter of great concern, which will be considered by RACSC at its next meeting.

MISSION AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS COUNCIL

Mrs Michaela Suckling (Sheffield) to ask the Chair of the Mission and Public Affairs Council:

Q6 What progress is being made with the new media bill; currently before parliament, in ensuring that religion and other beliefs, culture and the arts, social and international issues are included in the definition of public service broadcasting, and effectively monitored, and do you endorse the efforts of those groups working to include those topics in the definition?

Mr Mark Sheard to reply as Chair of the Mission and Public Affairs Council:

A The Media Bill will be debated at Second Reading in the House of Lords on the 28th of February. The Bishop of Leeds, who is the Church of England’s lead bishop on the media and serves on the Communications Select Committee in the House of Lords, and the Bishop of Newcastle, are both due to speak in the debate. The Parliamentary Team will assist them and other Lords Spiritual who to raise specific concerns during the passage of the Bill through the House. These are likely to include public service broadcasting quotas, and the future of subject specific programming.

Mrs Sarah Finch (London) to ask the Chair of the Mission and Public Affairs Council:

Q7 What steps is the Church of England taking to oppose the further liberalisation of abortion currently being debated in Parliament?

Mr Mark Sheard to reply as Chair of the Mission and Public Affairs Council:

A Current Parliamentary debate includes an attempt by some MPs to decriminalise abortion via amendment to the Criminal Justice Bill, awaiting its Report Stage in the Commons (it has yet to come to the Lords), and to further liberalise abortion laws, including around permitted term lengths and home administration.

The Church of England has been consistent in its view expressed to successive Health Secretaries, ministers and heads of NHS England, most recently in a series of meetings requested by the recently retired bishop of Carlisle who was Lead Bishop for Health Care issues. Our position is set out in a Briefing Paper prepared by Mission and Public Affairs in 2005 and has not changed. It reads: ‘The Church of England combines strong opposition to abortion with the recognition that in strictly

limited conditions it may be morally preferable to any available alternative. The theological basis for this is that the foetus is God-given life with the potential to develop relationships, think, pray, choose and love.’ This is the position on which we base all interventions.

Recently, responding to government consultations, we have opposed extending medical abortions and have called for a reduction in the number and scope of Safe Access Zones.

COMMITTEE FOR MINORITY ETHNIC ANGLICAN CONCERNS

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

Q8 The work, partnership and achievement of the Racial Justice Commission, Racial Justice Unit and CMEAC, as displayed in GS 2338, is encouraging and should be celebrated. Many of the ongoing initiatives have been supported and implemented by the Racial Justice Unit. With the mandate of the Racial Justice Commission ending in November 2024, what are the plans to continue their actions? In addition, are there guarantees for members of the Racial Justice Unit to continue in their roles beyond the existence of the Racial Justice Commission? And for how long?

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

A The Church’s work on racial justice is guided by *From Lament To Action* (FLTA) and directed by the work of the Committee for Minority Ethnic Anglican Concerns (CMEAC) and the Archbishops’ Commission on Racial Justice (ACRJ), both supported by the Racial Justice Unit (RJU). There is much to be celebrated in terms of initial successes realised through the combined efforts of CMEAC and ACRJ. However, it must be underscored that this is the beginning of the journey.

Aware of concerns that momentum on racial justice could be lost when the ACRJ concludes in November, discussions between CMEAC and the ACRJ have begun, towards identifying options to strengthen the governance of racial justice in the Church over the long-term. Under FLTA, the RJU was established for a five-year period, but it is anticipated that this may need to be reviewed given the magnitude of the task still to be undertaken.

Mrs Busola Sodeinde (London) to ask the Chair of the Committee for Minority Ethnic Anglican Concerns:

Q9 GS 2338 Racial Justice (page 8), one-third of dioceses have shown minimal or no progress in implementing essential changes for racial justice. What additional support is needed to maintain a consistent and steady pace, reinforcing our vision and strategy to be younger and more diverse?

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

A We recognise and celebrate the progress made on racial justice in the Church through *From Lament To Action* (FLTA) as directed by CMEAC and ACRJ and supported by the Racial Justice Unit. However, as noted, dioceses, along with TEIs, and NCIs are at different points on the journey to this becoming the norm.

To ensure collective success on racial justice, there is the need for: condemnation by all of the evil and pernicious sin of racism; intentional commitment across the leadership of Church; available financial and technical resources for capacity building; the sharing of good practices; and the engagement of key stakeholders particularly at the parish level.

“Younger and More Diverse” emphasises that a younger Church must also be a more diverse one, achieved by intentionally ensuring diversity particularly on race and ethnicity across mission plans. Diversity is not simply a matter of inclusion: it is a biblical imperative.

APPOINTMENTS COMMITTEE

Mrs Jeanette Appleton (St Edmundsbury & Ipswich) to ask the Chair of the Appointments Committee:

Considering that approximately 30% of all licenced clergy in the Church of England are self-supporting ordained ministers and are not represented in General Synod, how does the Appointments Committee ensure their views are presented in the relevant boards, councils and committees of the Church?

The Ven Luke Miller to reply on behalf of the Chair of the Appointments Committee:

A When appointing to the different boards and committees of the Church, the Appointments Committee seeks to ensure that the bodies have the required skills, that there is a balance of expertise, and that there is diversity of members. This includes considering the following where appropriate:

- age
- the House of the member ie Bishop, Clergy or Laity
- church tradition
- disability
- ethnicity
- gender
- province ie Canterbury or York

There may be self-supporting ministers on General Synod, as they are eligible to stand for election for Synod. When recording the details for members of the House of Clergy, there is currently no separate category for self-supporting minister so the Appointments Committee can only be aware of the numbers of Synod members that may fit into this category if they ‘self-disclose’. The best way to do this is whenever we ask for expressions of interest in filling vacancies.

The Appointments Committee fills vacancies based on the need of the committee, so if there was a specific requirement for self-supporting ministers to contribute to the work of the committee, we would make that clear when inviting members for expressions of interest for the Appointments Committee to consider.

BUSINESS COMMITTEE

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

Q11 It is becoming clear that Paula Vennells played a significant role in the Coordinating group of the Triennium Working Group, attending meetings in April, May, and June 2020, where she was asked to focus on governance of the CofE. This supervision led to the formation of the Governance Review under Bishop of Leeds which had its report accepted by General Synod in July 2023 (GS 2307). Can the Business Committee confirm that it will bring back the debate on GS 2307 to Synod for further consideration?

Canon Robert Hammond to reply as Chair of Business Committee:

A The Report published as GS 2307 at the July 2023 group of sessions was the report of the National Church Governance Project Board which took over from the Governance Review Group which completed its work in February 2022. There has been significant engagement with various stakeholders since the National Church Governance Project Board has been established, but no request was received to bring a report to this group of sessions. The Business Committee expects that a

further report and draft legislation will be requested to be brought to the July 2024 group of sessions once consideration of the recommendations in the Wilkinson and Jay Reports have taken place, and will consider that request in the usual way.

Mr John Brydon (Norwich) to ask the Chair of the Business Committee:

Q12 What mechanism is used for determining the order in which those bodies or persons under Standing Order 112 appear during Synod Question Time to answer supplementary questions; and will the Business Committee undertake to ensure that the rotation is fair and even so that each person or body can be held to account?

Canon Robert Hammond to reply as Chair of Business Committee:

A The order of questions is rotated for each group of sessions. The process is that the last three bodies at the current group of sessions move to the start of the notice paper for the next group of sessions. So in July 2024, the first three bodies to answer questions will be the Church Buildings Council, Ministry Council and the National Society. The Business Committee occasionally agrees to change this, for example to answer all questions relating to LLF first.

With the significant number of questions now being submitted and limited time available it is almost inevitable that some questions will not be reached. By way of comparison, there are 224 questions due to be answered at this group of sessions, in February 2018 there were 93.

Mrs Gill Verschoyle (Salisbury) to ask the Chair of Business Committee:

Q13 Questions to the Secretary General are rarely reached at Question Time. Will the Business Committee undertake to ensure that there is a fair rotation of the order of answering questions to ensure that all can be held properly to account?

Canon Robert Hammond to reply as Chair of the Business Committee:

A As set out in my answer to Mr John Brydon, the order of questions is rotated at each group of sessions. The process is that the last three bodies at the current group of sessions move to the start of the notice paper for the next group of sessions. So for July 2024, the first three bodies to answer questions will be the Church Buildings Council, Ministry Council and the National Society.

The Secretary General was first on the list to answer questions at the February 2023 group of sessions and answered supplementary questions at this time.

Mrs Jeanette Appleton (St Edmundsbury & Ipswich) to ask the Chair of the Business Committee:

Q14 What steps has the Business Committee considered in order to make General Synod more accessible to those in self-supporting ordained ministry?

Canon Robert Hammond to reply as Chair of the Business Committee:

A There is no bar on self-supporting ministers standing for election to General Synod, and the Business Committee would always encourage all those eligible and who feel called to serve Synod to stand for election, so our Synod properly represents our Church.

The Business Committee expects that Dioceses would make it clear whenever elections happen that self-supporting ministers are encouraged to stand for election and that any loss of earnings can be claimed where applicable in the same way as eligible working lay members can. In terms of accessibility of meeting dates, we would welcome feedback by all members on the trial of holding February Synod over a weekend and note that the option of joining by Zoom is now well established.

The Revd Martin Poole (Chichester) to ask the Chair of the Business Committee:

Q15 What redress under the Standing Orders is there if the vote passed by Synod in November 2023 for the 'House to consider whether some standalone services for same-sex couples could be made available for use, possibly on a trial basis, on a timescale envisaged by the motion passed by the Synod in February 2023' is not implemented?

Canon Robert Hammond to reply as Chair of the Business Committee:

A Standing Orders set out the procedures for how General Synod operates, they do not specify how work arising from motions should be delivered.

Under SO 125(e), the Business Committee may '*take such action as may be necessary to ensure that decisions of the Synod are implemented and work is carried on between groups of sessions*'. The publication of GS 2346 'Living in Love, Faith and Reconciliation' indicates that the House of Bishops are considering this matter, so the Business Committee has not had to take action under this Standing Order.

If the House of Bishops requires any time on the Synod agenda at future groups of sessions, the Business Committee will, of course, consider that request.

HOUSE OF BISHOPS (LIVING IN LOVE AND FAITH)

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

Q16 Since the commendation of the Prayers of Love and Faith on December 13th 2023, how many times have these prayers been used in total, and what percentage of these have been for clergy and their partners?

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

A No data have been collected on the use of the *Prayers of Love and Faith* Resource Section and there is at present no mechanism by which such use might be reported. However, in line with the motion agreed by General Synod in February 2023, the House of Bishops will develop a way to monitor the Church's use of the *Prayers of Love and Faith* Resource Section, and will report back to Synod on their use in 2028.

The Revd Jonathan Macy (Southwark) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q17 Para 1.1.8 of the Pastoral Guidance is clear that 'no minister can ever be forced to use the prayers against their conscience'.

Teams within the Church of England are invariably accidents of geography, financial necessity and/or poverty and therefore rarely of compatible theological conviction or tradition. What protections have been put into place for congregations in a Team who uphold the doctrine of the Church and therefore are not willing to use the Prayers of Love and Faith when a Rector and wider PCC is strongly of an opposite opinion, and in the event of a vacancy how can the subsequent appointment of a new incumbent for the team honour and uphold the congregation who holds that different view?

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

A A scheme establishing a team ministry provides for the way in which the cure of souls is shared between the incumbent and other clergy licensed to the team. Each parish in a multi-parish benefice (whether or not a team ministry is established) can, if it wishes, retain its own parochial church council (PCC) and need not participate in a joint council (either generally, or not in relation to matters relating to forms of worship). If a parish church itself has more than one congregation, it is open to any of the habitual worshippers to seek election to the PCC to ensure that each congregation worshipping at the church is represented.

When a vacancy arises, an individual PCC in a multi-parish benefice may choose to prepare its own statement of conditions and needs. In which case, it will be for that PCC to decide what it wishes to say about use of the Prayers of Love and Faith (PLF) in the parish. The parish representative(s) for that parish can seek assurances about its position being respected when deciding whether to approve an appointment.

Dr Tim Scott (York) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q18 What quantitative data/feedback is being obtained to help General Synod assess the overall impact of introducing Prayers of Love and Faith?

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

A Whilst further work on Living in Love and Faith will certainly offer opportunities for reflection and feedback, and whilst it may be necessary in the future to include quantitative data in these deliberations, no such data are being formally collected at this time on the 'overall impact' of the PLF. However, in line with the motion agreed by General Synod in February 2023, the House of Bishops will develop a way to monitor the Church's use of the *Prayers of Love and Faith* Resource Section, and will report back to Synod on their use in 2028.

If experimental forms of service are introduced, those parishes which use them will be asked to provide feedback on their use in a local context which will be incorporated into the subsequent synodical process.

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

Q19 Prior to the publication of the Prayers of Love & Faith it was permissible for Ministers to pray privately and pastorally with and for same-sex couples in informal settings in accordance with previous advice from the House of Bishops. In some Dioceses informal liturgies were developed and used. Is it now the case that the Prayers of Love & Faith which have been commended by the House of Bishops should replace those informal liturgies so that the commended Prayers of Love & Faith are the only prayers that should be used in such circumstances?

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

A The *Prayers of Love and Faith* Resource Section has been commended by the House of Bishops for use by the minister in exercise of his or her discretion under Canon B 5. This means that the House encourages the use of the Resource Section as an option which the minister could adopt in appropriate pastoral circumstances for which no liturgical provision has been formally authorized.

Dr Janette Allotey (Chester) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q20 How will the archbishops be selecting the experimental areas for using the Prayers of Love and Faith, for how long will the experiment last, and who will be employed to evaluate it?

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

A In this scenario, the Archbishops would invite applications from parishes to be designated as parishes where the 'standalone' forms of service could be used. It has not yet been determined what the trial period might be. The Liturgical Commission together with the House of Bishops would be responsible for evaluating the feedback.

Further details on the use of Canon B 5A are available in GS 2346.

The Revd Dr Paul Chamberlain (Portsmouth) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q21 In the Living in Love and Faith Pastoral Guidance, the words "rejoiced" or "joyfully" are used four times to describe those who wish to use the Prayers of Love and

Faith, but at no point is anything positive said about those who decide not to, because they rejoice in the church's historic teaching on sex and marriage. What consideration has been given to the language used in the Pastoral Guidance, as to the tone and balance between different perspectives, and when the guidance is updated, what steps will be taken to produce an updated version which could include more balanced language?

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

A Great attention was paid to balance within the Pastoral Guidance and multiple stakeholder groups were consulted. Inevitably, current or future revisions are a balance of what any single group would wish to say, as this is a compromise document which cannot reflect all the wishes, vocabulary and thoughts of all parties.

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

Q22 Will ordinands looking to ordination in 2024 be required to assent to *Issues in Human Sexuality*, despite the decision that it would be replaced having been declared in February 2023?

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

A The House of Bishops has committed to replace *Issues in Human Sexuality* with new pastoral guidance. It has published the first two sections of these. It is still working on further pastoral guidance which would enable the document to be replaced entirely. *Issues in Human Sexuality* remains in place until this point.

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

Q23 Has new Pastoral Guidance to replace *Issues in Human Sexuality* been written in draft form?

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

A A working document was produced as a basis for conversation at the College of Bishops. This was an exemplar of what Guidance could look like if a number of premises were agreed. However, it is not quite a 'draft' in that more work needs to be done on the very premises underlying it.

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

Q24 How long (in pages or word count) is the most recent draft of the Pastoral Guidance?

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

A The Pastoral Guidance as published runs to 44 pages. It was published on the Church of England website in December 2023. Further work on other elements of the Pastoral Guidance is ongoing and may take a number of forms not decided as yet. An exemplar was produced for discussion at an earlier stage, but it does not constitute a 'current draft' per se.

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

Q25 Last November, in answering Question 78 (supplementary), the Bishop of London gave an undertaking to ask the Pastoral Consultative Group to consider the situation of clergy in Europe who are compelled to enter into a civil marriage with their same-sex partner in order to receive the equivalent legal protections of a civil partnership in the UK. What guidance is now available, especially considering the potential impact this may have on granting or renewing PTO?

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

A As the Pastoral Consultative Group has not yet been established, this has not yet been considered. Once that group is in place, it will return to this question.

Mrs Julie Withers (Chester) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q26 Did the text of the vote passed in November 2023 regarding Living in Love and Faith, which encouraged the House of Bishops to continue its work of implementing the February 2023 vote, require that the implementing be dependent on a form of settlement or differentiation for those who opposed the Prayers of Love and Faith?

Dr Diana Tremayne (Leeds) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q27 Did the text of the vote passed in February 2023 regarding Living in Love and Faith, which welcomed House of Bishops proposals to commend the full Prayers of Love and Faith and issue new Pastoral Guidance to replace *Issues in Human Sexuality*, require that those proposals be dependent on a form of settlement or differentiation for those who opposed the proposals?

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

A With permission, I will answer questions 26 and 27 together.

GS 2346 outlines that implementing the votes passed by the General Synod involves multiple interdependent workstreams, including those on the Prayers of Love and Faith, the Pastoral Guidance, Pastoral Reassurance and other areas, including an indicative timetable of this parallel work. The November 2023 motion 'recognised the progress made in implementation as reported in GS 2328' and 'encouraged the House to continue this work'. As the paper sets out, the hope is to move this implementation forward in a way that enable the greatest number to remain within the Church of England. This is a hope of the implementation, rather than a requirement.

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

Q28 Will there be any national provision made for those due to be ordained to deacon or priest in 2024, who cannot in good conscience be ordained by their diocesan or suffragan bishops due to the ongoing LLF process, and cannot seek oversight by existing flying bishops?

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

A There are currently no plans for such provision.

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

Q29 In answer to a supplementary question to Q129 in November, the Bishop in Europe, as Chair of FAOC, confirmed that the doctrine of marriage as set out in Canon B 30 is 'not a thing indifferent', i.e., it is something over which we could not 'agree to disagree'. How has this shaped the thinking of the House of Bishops in their recent meetings, their commendation of the Prayers of Love and Faith, and their preliminary thinking about the guidance for clergy conduct?

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

A The response of the Bishop in Europe was more nuanced, and it was pointed out that it is not helpful to make a purely binary distinction between first and second order issues, or things indifferent. Rather it is more accurate to acknowledge that while sexuality is not a credal matter, it nevertheless represents a significant disagreement which risks impairing the communion of the Church. The Faith and Order Commission publication, *Communion and Disagreement*, explores the different types of disagreements there may be as part of a continuum, and this is picked up in the LLF book, pp.230-234. There is currently not agreement about what type or level of disagreement we are actually having, which contributes to difficulties in mapping out a way forward.

Miss Debbie Buggs (London) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q30 Does the House of Bishops now consider same-sex marriage an honourable estate?

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

- A** The House of Bishops has not made a common decision on this matter, and there is ongoing disagreement as to whether this may be the case or not. The House of Bishops has agreed, as Synod has voted, that the doctrine of marriage should not be changed, and that marriage remains a covenant between one man and one woman.

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

- Q31** The Guidance on the use of the Prayers of Love and Faith says (page 1) : 'It is within marriage that sexual intimacy finds its proper place'. GS 2346 says (page 17) 'Marriage remains the ideal place for sexual intimacy'. According to the doctrine of the Church as expressed in previous teaching documents which of these statements is correct?

Dr Julie Maxwell (Winchester) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

- Q32** The Guidance on the use of the Prayers of Love and Faith says (page 1): 'It is within marriage that sexual intimacy finds its proper place'. GS 2346 says (page 17) 'Marriage remains the ideal place for sexual intimacy'. Which of these statements is correct?

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

- A** With permission, I will answer questions 31 and 32 together.

These two statements are in complete accord with each other and simply represent a variation of words rather than substance.

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

- Q33** "The doctrine of the Church of England is grounded in the Holy Scriptures, and in such teaching of the ancient Fathers and Councils of the Church as are agreeable to the said Scriptures." What consideration has the House of bishops given to the teaching of the ancient Fathers when it has examined the doctrinal acceptability of recent re-interpretations of Scripture that argue for the permissibility of same-sex marriage or sex outside marriage?

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

- A** This matter has been explored as part of the initial LLF working groups, in the Biblical Studies group, the History group and the Theology group. Relevant papers can be found on the LLF hub.

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

- Q34** What conclusion has the House reached as to how permitting clergy and lay ministers to enter into same-sex civil marriages which may include sexual intimacy could be said to be consistent with (i) the duty of clergy under Canon C 26.2, and (ii) the repeated acknowledgement by the House in recent Synod debates and in the Guidance on the use of the Prayers of Love and Faith that the doctrine of the Church is that only within Holy Matrimony does sexual intimacy find its proper place?

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

- A** The House has not reached a final decision due to the complexity of the work needed to establish legal and theological underpinning for the way forward. The Faith and Order Commission has been asked to do work specifically on these topics to inform further discussions of the House.

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

Q35 If "The Church of England teaches that Holy Matrimony is a lifelong covenant between one man and one woman, blessed by God in creation and pointing to the love between Christ and the Church; a way of life which Christ makes holy. It is within marriage that sexual intimacy finds its proper place" (Pastoral Guidance) how can it be stated that "to pursue holiness within a faithful, exclusive and permanent relationship which may include sexual intimacy" other than Holy Matrimony is "not a refusal to live by the teaching of the Church" (GS 2346, p. 17)?

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

A GS 2346 acknowledges that there is disagreement within the Church as to the interpretation of Scripture and of tradition. This statement reflects the fact that there are many Christians who read Scripture faithfully but come to different conclusions on the place of same-sex relationships (as they do on many other matters). GS 2346 reflects the fact that their Christian commitment is not in doubt, even if some may consider they are mistaken in their reading of Scripture.

Mrs Catherine Butcher (Chichester) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q36 If it were to be concluded that permission for clergy to enter a same-sex marriage required a change in doctrine would this not require a 2/3 majority in each House of General Synod?

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

A The cases where two-thirds majorities of those present and voting in each House of the General Synod are required are set out in Standing Order 36(4). They are:

(a) the Final Approval of a Measure providing for permanent changes in the Services of Baptism or Holy Communion or in the Ordinal under Article 8(1) of the Constitution;

(b) the Final Approval of a Canon making such provision as is mentioned in section 1(1) or 2(1) of the Church of England (Worship and Doctrine) Measure 1974 or of regulations made under a Canon made under section 1(1) of that Measure;

(c) the Final Approval of liturgical business or of the amendment, continuance or discontinuance of an existing service under a Canon made under section 1(1) of that Measure;

(d) the question on the motion in SO 88(1) (Final Revision of liturgical business following Further Revision Stage);

(e) the amendment of the Church Representation Rules under section 7(1) of the Synodical Government Measure 1969.

Provision for clergy to enter into same-sex marriages would not necessarily fall within any of those cases.

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

Q37 What steps, if any, has the House of Bishops taken to consider the findings of the research undertaken by the Revd Andrew Cornes, as outlined in his speech to General Synod in February 2023 (Report of Proceedings 2023 - General Synod February Group of Sessions, pp 161-162) and their application to the ongoing work of the House of Bishops on Living in Love and Faith and, in particular, the conclusion drawn from his findings that, to quote (page 162, para 4), "When Jesus used the word translated as *porneia*, all Jesus's hearers would have assumed that he included homosexual sex."?

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

- A** Research by a whole range of scholars was considered extensively in the first phase of the Living in Love and Faith project, by both the Biblical Studies Group and by the History Group. There is no settled and definitive judgement on whether Andrew Cornes' view is right, and the exact meaning of *porneia* and what it includes continues to be disputed and is commonly translated with the generic term 'sexual immorality'. You can find reference to this in the LLF book p. 247.

The Revd Christopher Blunt (Chester) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

- Q38** As it does not imply hate to abstain from something and call others to do the same, have the archbishops considered during the LLF process publicly making the case that the faith as inherited is not homophobic, and if they have made the case, how was it received?

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

- A** This case has been made repeatedly, including in the LLF material, in the work on the Pastoral Principles and in the Pastoral Guidance and Synod paperwork. However, it is equally important to interrogate personal and communal attitudes to ensure that theological conviction is not used as a way to mask or justify homophobia.

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

- Q39** In the other Provinces where blessings or equal marriage have been introduced no LGBTQIA+ inclusive protests have taken place against clergy or churches not using same-sex blessing. No LGBTQIA+ organisations or protesters in the UK indicated they will carry out any such protests. Therefore, on what evidence does the concern arise that these protests will take place in the Church of England?

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

- A** The LLF process has made clear with the publication of commended material that no minister can be forced to use the PLF: this would remain the case were further decisions made around standalone services. The House of Bishops remain committed to protecting the individual consciences of ministers, whether they chose to use the PLF material or not. The primary aim of the House of Bishops is to move forward with implementing what has been agreed by the General Synod while ensuring as many as possible can remain within the Church of England, rather than in reacting to any concerns around protests.

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

- Q40** GS 2346 states "We will call out homophobia and actively challenge it". Does the House of Bishops have an agreed understanding of what is meant by "homophobia", and if so, what is this understanding?

Mr James Wilson (Manchester) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

- Q41** What is the definition of 'homophobia' as used in GS 2346?

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

- A** With permission, I will answer questions 40 and 41 together.

The following definition of homophobia underlies the LLF resources and can be found on p. 426 of the LLF book: "sexual prejudice against gay/lesbian people; it is not a phobia in the strict sense and fear may be only one of the negative feelings experienced or expressed towards gay/lesbian people. Homophobia may be internalized by gay/lesbian people so that they experience negative feelings and attitudes towards themselves in relation to their sexual identity." Further consideration is found on pp. 4, 115, 117, 370, 420.

The Pastoral Principles further explore tackling prejudice and fear.

The Revd Jody Stowell (London) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

- Q42** Given the recent communication from the Church Pastoral Aid Society (CPAS) regarding their position as Patrons on the Living in Love and Faith process, has the House of Bishops considered
- (i) what support they might give churches with CPAS patronage that would like to revert to the Bishop as Patron, or another patronage board? And,
 - (ii) what support they might give clergy of CPAS parishes who now feel their position is threatened, or that they must now remain in their parish until retirement?

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

- A** This topic has been raised but not discussed in detail by the College or House of Bishops. Some preliminary work on patronages was carried out by the pastoral guidance working group. This is an ongoing piece of work which will be included in part 3 of the guidance to ensure that all parish and patrons are clear about their responsibilities, rights and sources of support. This work was part of the papers presented to the College of Bishops in 2023.

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

- Q43** In view of the resignation of the Bishop of Newcastle, and the threatened resignation of the Bishop of Leicester, from being the lead Bishops for the post-LLF process, what consideration has the House of Bishops given to replacing the current process with something more fit for purpose?

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

- A** The co-lead bishops for Living and Love and Faith are appointments made by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York. Discussions on a potential new co-lead bishop are ongoing. In addition to this episcopal leadership, a Programme Board to oversee the implementation of LLF workstreams is also being looked at and the membership of this body will be brought for consideration to the House of Bishops.

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

- Q44** At General Synod in November 2023, the Archbishops recognised the need for greater lay participation in any ongoing PLF discussions. In the light of this, could the bishops say exactly how many lay people, excluding those already consulted (eg lay members of stakeholder groups), have been invited to participate in the recent meetings, so that the full range of voices from across the Church are represented?

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

- A** Whilst we do not have specific numbers, a hallmark of the LLF process has been the wide engagement by a diverse range of people. We are also aware that most dioceses have held consultation events for clergy and laity and are in contact with dioceses around this feedback. As we continue with implementing decisions made by the General Synod, ensuring this diverse engagement remains a priority, including making sure there is good lay representation on working groups and wider consultation.

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

- Q45** In a dissenting statement on the Prayers of Love and Faith issued in October 2023, members of the House of Bishops stated that "legal and theological advice the House has received suggest clearly to us that the decisions of the House may fall short" of the bishops' declared intention (and the requirement in the February 2023 General Synod motion) that "the final form of the prayers should not be 'indicative of a departure from the doctrine of the Church of England'". Given the crucial importance of this issue, especially for clergy opting to use the prayers, and

notwithstanding the additional legal detail provided in GS 2346, when will this legal and theological advice be published or otherwise made available for the whole Synod?

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

A Details of that advice and the House's conclusion based on it were set out in GS 2328, Annex A at paragraphs 14 to 26 and published in October 2023, in advance of the November 2023 group of sessions.

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

Q46 In view of the statement by the Bishop of London in November's Synod that 'the legal advice is not being hidden', when will the legal advice given to the House of Bishops be released to the whole of Synod?

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

A The legal advice provided to the House of Bishops was given over a period of time, sometimes orally, sometimes in writing, often in response to questions as they arose for consideration. There is no single document that contains 'the legal advice'. However, the substance of the legal advice on which the House of Bishops based its decision to commend the Prayers of Love and Faith Resource Section was set out in GS 2328 at Annex A. The substance of the legal advice given to the House of Bishops on canonical routes for the formal authorisation of Prayers of Love and Faith Outline Services ('standalone' services) is set out in Annex A of GS 2346. The substance of the legal advice given to the House of Bishops on the question of clergy being in same-sex civil marriages is set out in Annex B of GS 2346. As those documents make clear, the decisions made and to be made are informed by impartial, expert legal advice provided by the Legal Office of the National Church Institutions; but decisions as to how it wishes to proceed are taken by the House of Bishops collectively and not dictated, or taken on our behalf, by our legal advisers.

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

Q47 What new legal advice was drawn up and provided to the bishops that persuaded so many of them in the November General Synod to overturn their decision in the October House (which had been based on the consideration of "legal, theological and pastoral implications of possible approaches" and defended in GS 2328) and why was neither this nor earlier relevant advice made available in any form to members of General Synod?

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

A No new legal advice was prepared or provided to bishops between the October 2023 meeting of the House of Bishops and the November 2023 group of sessions of the General Synod.

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

Q48 On the 1 February 2024 the Bishop of Newcastle issued a statement which announced that she was stepping down as joint Lead Bishop of LLF. In that statement reference was made to the appointment of the Interim Theological Adviser to the House of Bishops. Her statement, along with statements from the Archbishops and the Bishop of Leicester were then published on the Church of England website. Was the Interim Theological Adviser informed that his appointment would be referenced in statements published on the Church of England website prior to them going live?

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

A The person appointed to be Interim Theology Adviser was informed of the statement from the Bishop of Newcastle upon its publication. Dr Woolford was informed and consulted in advance of all further statements published on the Church of England

website, as was Dr Martin once appointed to the role of Joint Interim Theology Adviser alongside Dr Woolford.

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

Q49 How have the Pastoral Principles of addressing ignorance, acknowledging prejudice, speaking into silence, casting out fear, admitting hypocrisy, and paying attention to power, been made use of in the decisions of the House of Bishops in relation to the post-LLF process, their communications, and their relations with the other two Houses of the Synod?

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

A The Pastoral Principles are both drawn on and referenced frequently in discussions. Attention is paid to these principles in decision making, communications and relations with the other Houses of Synod, and other bodies.

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

Q50 Given that GS 2346 has seemingly not been formally agreed or approved by the House of Bishops, which (if any) of the Ten LLF “Commitments”, on which the whole paper rests, will the House of Bishops collectively undertake to adhere to as a firm commitment during the present quinquennium?

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

A GS 2346 outlines a set of draft commitments that have been informed through discussion at the College and House of Bishops. These have been brought to the whole General Synod for further discussions, which will inform any future considerations by the House.

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

Q51 Has the House of Bishops received or does it intend to receive legal advice (a) as to whether permitting clergy and lay ministers to enter same-sex civil marriages would be contrary to or at variance with the existing doctrine of marriage of the Church of England (including that the only rightful place for sexual intimacy is in Holy Matrimony) and/or contrary to the requirements imposed by Canon C 26.2 and, (b) as to whether standalone services for same-sex couples would be contrary to or indicative of a departure from the doctrine of the Church of England in any essential matter, and will the House of Bishops undertake to disclose any such legal advice or the gist thereof as has been or may be so received to the whole of General Synod before either matter is considered further by General Synod?

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

A The substance of the legal advice given to the House of Bishops on the question of clergy being in same-sex civil marriages is set out in Annex B of GS 2346. The substance of the legal advice given to the House of Bishops on canonical routes for the formal authorisation of Prayers of Love and Faith Outline Services (‘standalone’ services) is set out in Annex A of GS 2346. The substance of the legal advice as to the compatibility with doctrine of standalone services was set out in Annex A to GS 2328 at paragraphs 27 to 29. It is expected that further legal advice will be provided to the House of Bishops and to the General Synod as and when standalone services are introduced for consideration and approval by the General Synod under Canon B 2.

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

Q52 What documents have been prepared since September 2023 by the Legal Office to assist the bishops in their discernment regarding PLF, when were they drawn up, and when and with whom were their contents shared?

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

Q53 At what points since Sept 2022 has written Legal Advice on matters relating to the LLF discernment process been prepared, and on what date were the following made aware of its content: (a) the Bishop of London, (b) the Archbishops, (c) the LLF steering group, (d) the College of Bishops, (e) the House of Bishops, (f) members of General Synod?

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

Q54 In relation to GS 2346, on what dates were the Legal Office's assessments of (1) the legal risks concerning use of Canon B 5A and (2) the legal options concerning clergy entering same-sex marriage shared, verbally or in writing, in whole or in part, with: (a) the Bishop of London, (b) the Archbishops, (c) the LLF steering group, (d) the College of Bishops, (e) the House of Bishops, (f) members of General Synod?

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

A With permission, I will answer questions 52, 53 and 54 together.

The legal advice provided to the House of Bishops was given over a period of time, sometimes orally, sometimes in writing, often in response to questions as they arose for consideration. Legal advice was contained in, but not limited to, documents prepared by the Legal Office as follows:

Discerning in Love and Faith: Some Legal and Pastoral Issues, prepared by the Secretary General and the Legal Office in January 2023 – provided to the College of Bishops in January 2023.

Living in Love and Faith – Analysis of Legal Issues: prepared by the Legal Office in March 2023 – provided to the College of Bishops in March 2023.

Prayers of Love and Faith: Authorisation for Experimental Use and Approval by the General Synod: prepared by the Legal Office September 2023. Shared with members of the staff team and lead bishop September 2023 and circulated to the House of Bishops in December 2023.

Living and Love and Faith: the Current Legal Position: prepared by the Legal Office October 2023 – provided to the House in October 2023.

The substance of legal advice provided by the Legal Office has been shared with the General Synod in GS Misc 1339, GS 2328 and GS 2346.

The Revd Graham Hamilton (Exeter) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q55 Given the details now given in GS 2346 of amendments, formal motions and votes by the House of Bishops in relation to clergy in same-sex marriage and regarding the relationship of civil marriage to holy matrimony, has the House made but not announced any decisions in relation to the provision of formal structural pastoral provision, and if so could the formal motion, amendments and votes now be made public?

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

A In the interests of transparency I set out below the votes that were undertaken by the House of Bishops, including on amendments, in relation to the provision of formal structural pastoral provision (noting that this has been given other names at other times and I have interpreted this broadly).

At the House meeting on 15-17 May 2023 the House considered a motion from the Bishop of London as follows:

'The House of Bishops agrees that the work of the three Living in Love and Faith implementation groups, as presented to House members on 16 and 17 May, should be further developed for presentation to the College of Bishops with an update to

General Synod in July; recognising the need for provision to ensure that those who use, and do not use, the prayers are properly protected as part of the legitimate theological traditions of the Church of England.’

The final clause may be considered to reflect formal structural pastoral provision.

There was one amendment to that final clause – one from the Bishop of Bath and Wells that proposed removing the words “for provision”. That amendment passed by 21 votes to 20.

The final motion, with amendments on other matters as set out in the answer to question 143, passed by 35 votes to 3.

At the House meeting on 7 June 2023 the House considered a motion from the Bishop of London as follows:

‘That the House of Bishops agree that an update be presented to the General Synod in July 2023 of the work to implement the General Synod motion on Living in Love and Faith approved in February 2023, including the prayers of love and faith, the routes to authorisation, the shape of the pastoral guidance, pastoral consultative group, the involvement of the Faith and Order Commission and a draft statement from the House of Bishops. This will include the material discussed by the House of Bishops on the 15 to 17 May and at the meeting of College on 6 to 7 June.’

The Bishop of London also moved as an amendment:

‘After “pastoral consultative group”, insert “work on pastoral reassurance”’

That amendment was not moved because other amendments deleted all text after “February 2023”.

At the House of Bishops meeting on 9 October 2023 the House considered the following motion from the Bishop of London:

‘That this House agree with the elements of pastoral reassurance set out in paragraph 11 of paper HB(23)37.’ [this was the text that was then incorporated into section B of annex F of GS 2328]

It also considered an amendment from the Bishop of Lancaster:

At the end insert “but in view of the contradictory legal opinion circulating regarding the significant threat (or not) posed to laity and clergy in the civil courts by commending the PLF (with loss of exemption under the 2010 Equality Act), the House obtain and present independent legal advice to Synod”

The Bishop of Lancaster’s amendment was put to the vote and lost by 11 votes to 23, with 1 abstention

The Bishop of London’s motion was put to the vote and carried by 18 votes to 4 with 13 abstentions

The Bishop of London then moved a motion

‘That this House agree to further work on additional formal structural pastoral provision set out in paragraph 32-40 of paper HB(23)37 for decision by the House of Bishops at a future date.’ [this was the material that formed section C of annex F to GS 2328]

The Bishop of Guildford moved as an amendment:

Leave out “at a future date” and insert “as soon as possible”.

The Bishop of Guildford's amendment was put to the vote and carried by 27 votes to 0

The amended motion was put to a vote and carried by 24 votes to 1 with 5 abstentions.

There were no relevant votes at other meetings.

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

Q56 In the light of the commitment to transparency and honesty and the increased evidence of this in the fresh information provided concerning votes in the House of Bishops in GS 2346, can Synod be assured that there are (a) no more decisions of the House related to LLF that have not been shared with Synod, and (b) no further relevant theological or legal advice relevant to LLF that has been shared with the House of Bishops but still not shared with Synod?

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

A This answer should be read alongside my answer to Question 46 on legal advice and Question 55 on votes on formal structural pastoral provision which details the decisions the House has taken on that topic.

Through 2023 the House has taken a number of procedural decisions:

- on 17 January 2023 it agreed to publish *Discerning in Love and Faith*, the paper to the General Synod in February 2023, the motion for the General Synod and the plans for group work at the General Synod;
- On 30 January 2023, the House voted without a formal motion unanimously to establish the Pastoral Consultative Group and a small steering group to consider other issues that the Church needed to attend to on Living in Love and Faith.
- On 17 May 2023 the House of Bishops resolved that "The House of Bishops agrees that the work of the three Living in Love and Faith implementation groups, as presented to House members on 16 and 17 May, should be further developed for presentation to the College of Bishops with an update to General Synod in July; recognising the need to ensure that those who use, and do not use, the prayers are properly protected as part of the legitimate theological traditions of the Church of England. Further, this House ask FAOC to work with the implementation groups to assess the impact of proposals on the doctrine of the Church of England."
- On 7 June the House of Bishops resolved that "That the House of Bishops agree that an update be presented to the General Synod in July 2023 of the work to implement the General Synod motion on Living in Love and Faith approved in February 2023"

In addition on 9 October the House of Bishops passed the following motions:

- 'That this House agree to commend the prayers of covenanted friendship.'
- 'That this House agree to commend [part 1] of the Prayers of Love and Faith'.
- 'That this House agree that the PLF [part 2] should be subject to approval by the General Synod under Canon B2, without any prior experimental period of authorisation under Canon B5A.'
- 'That this House agree to make available in draft parts 1 and 2 of the Pastoral Guidance HB(23)36 and this House agree that same-sex marriage is distinct from Holy Matrimony such that same-sex marriage is not seen as impinging on Holy Matrimony in a way that contradicts the Church's doctrine'.
- 'That this House agree that further work be done on part 3. (Ministry) of the Guidance for issuing as soon as possible with the intention that it remove all

restrictions on clergy entering same-sex marriages, and on bishops ordaining, licensing and granting permissions to officiate such clergy.'

- 'That this House agree with the elements of pastoral reassurance set out in paragraph 11 of paper of HB(23)37.'
- 'That this House agree to further work on additional formal structural pastoral provision set out in paragraph 32-40 of paper HB(23)37 for decision by the House of Bishops as soon as possible.'

On 12 December 2023 the House of Bishops resolved to commend the Prayers of Love and Faith Resource section and the Prayers for a Covenanted Friendship with effect from 17 December.

No further formal votes were taken by the House of Bishops.

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

Q57 Given the assessment that it is "possibly unlikely" that standalone services will pass with a 2/3 majority (GS 2346, p. 13) and that Canon B 5A can only be used for a form of service prepared with a view to its submission for approval under Canon B 2, why do the draft commitments include the phrase "we are committed to the experimental use of standalone services of PLF" (Draft Commitment 6)?

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

A GS 2346 is indicative of what such a set of commitments might look like. Commitment 6 expresses an intention that trial basis or experimental authorisation of standalone services, as requested in the Synod motion passed in November 2023, be explored and retained as a possible route for such authorisation.

Mrs Christiana Olomolaiye (Bristol) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q58 To what extent has the House of Bishops taken into account any theological or legal considerations on whether it has authority to vote or act in a manner contrary to Canon law; and, if so, what conclusions did it come to?

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

A The House is aware that it must act in accordance with Canon law and having taken relevant theological and legal advice considers that it has done so.

Mrs Christiana Olomolaiye (Bristol) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q59 To what extent has the House of Bishops taken into account any theological or legal considerations on whether it has authority to vote or act in a manner contrary to the doctrine of the Church of England; and, if so, what conclusions did it come to?

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

A Each member of the House of Bishops is conscious of his or her duty to teach and to uphold sound and wholesome doctrine, as required by Canon C 26. The theological and legal advice received by the House has been of central importance in the decisions taken by the House, but decisions are taken by the House of Bishops collectively and not dictated, or taken on our behalf, by our advisers.

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

Q60 If it is the case that "were a clergyperson to enter into a same-sex marriage (under current teaching) they would be failing to frame and fashion their lives in a manner that was consistent with Canon C 26.2" (GS 2346, p.16) and "the bishops' consistent approach in responding to Living in Love and Faith has been that they are not changing doctrine" (GS 2346, p. 15) and the commitments are intended to "pursue the implementation of the motions previously passed by Synod" (GS 2346, p. 1) which include a clear desire not to act in a manner "contrary to or indicative of a departure from the doctrine of the Church of England" why do the draft

commitments include “exploring the process for clergy and lay ministers to enter same-sex civil marriages” (Draft Commitment 8)?

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

A As the question indicates, GS 2346 sets out an illustration of the sort of commitments that might form the basis of a settlement. If “exploring the process for clergy and lay ministers to enter same-sex civil marriages” becomes one of a working set of commitments, that exploration will need to take account of all the matters referred to in the question. Annex B to GS 2346 sets out some possible avenues for that exploration to consider.

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

Q61 When the majority of the House of Bishops voted on 9 October 2023 for the amendment concerning clergy entering same-sex marriage reported on p14 of GS 2346 had they received theological or legal advice that pertained to these matters and has that advice now been fully published?

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

A No specific advice on the particular question was provided on that occasion but some advice which related to the question was included in GS 2055 and some additional advice had been given to bishops during the LLF process.

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

Q62 When the majority of the House of Bishops voted on 9 October 2023 for the amendment concerning Holy Matrimony and same-sex marriage reported on p15 of GS 2346 had they received theological or legal advice that pertained to these matters and has that advice now been fully published?

Mr Jacob Wigley (Oxford) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q63 Did the House of Bishops receive legal or theological advice at or prior to their October 9th meeting that set out the implications of passing the amendment that “same-sex marriage is distinct from Holy Matrimony such that same-sex marriage is not seen as impinging on Holy Matrimony in a way that contradicts the Church’s doctrine” and what was the content of that advice?

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

A With permission, I will answer questions 62 and 63 together.

No specific advice on the particular question was provided on that occasion but some advice which covered the question had been given to bishops at an earlier stage in the LLF process. That advice, in the form in which it was given, has not been published but it was in substance that set out in GS Misc 1339.

The Revd Lis Goddard (London) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q64 Was any of the assessment of routes for PLF standalone services summarised in the table on pp. 12-13 of GS 2346 (a) drawn up or (b) shared with the House of Bishops prior to the Synod debate in November, and if so why and by whom was it decided not to share it with members of General Synod despite requests for legal advice and given its relevance to the amendment from the Bishop of Oxford?

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

A The House of Bishops received a number of assessments of the issues involved in authorization or commendation of materials through different routes through 2023, although they were not provided with an assessment of canonical routes specifically relating to standalone services until papers were circulated for their meeting in December. This is summarised in GS 2346.

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

Q65 Given the assessment that any use of Canon B 5A has “medium to high risk of successful legal challenge” or “considerable risk of successful legal challenge” (GS 2346, p. 13), why do the draft commitments include “we are committed to the experimental use of standalone services of PLF” (Draft Commitment 6)?

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

A The commitments included in GS 2346 are indicative at this stage. However, the commitment to experimental use of standalone services of PLF reflects the vote taken by the General Synod in November 2023 on the amendment brought by the Bishop of Oxford, which asked the House to consider ‘whether some standalone services for same-sex couples could be made available for use, possibly on a trial basis, on the timescale envisaged by the motion passed by the Synod in February 2023.’

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

Q66 Will the House of Bishops consider commissioning an independent review of the handling of legal advice received by the House of Bishops during the LLF discernment process, to assist with the process of restoring trust and confidence?

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

A This has not been discussed by the House of Bishops and the Archbishop of Canterbury and I are not minded to commission such a review. However, a task and finish group has been convened to explore how the work of the House of Bishops could be more transparent and I would envisage that group exploring how advice given to the House of Bishops is shared more widely on occasions where that is felt to be appropriate.

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

Q67 Will the House of Bishops consider commissioning an independent review of the adequacy and transparency of decision-making by the House of Bishops during the LLF discernment process, to assist with the process of restoring trust and confidence?

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

A This has not been discussed by the House of Bishops, and the Archbishop of Canterbury and I are not minded to commission such a review. However, a task and finish group has been convened to explore how the work of the House of Bishops could be more transparent. Following recent meetings of the House we have already seen a more detailed account being published which has been a welcome addition.

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

Q68 Annex B to GS 2346 states that if a clergy person were to enter into a same-sex marriage, this would be inconsistent with Canon C26.2 (and indeed prior to this, in January 2017, Annex A to GS 2055 had stated that “by doing so, he or she is fashioning his life in a way that is inconsistent with the doctrine of Christ as expounded in Canon B 30 and making him- or herself a bad example to the flock of Christ”). Yet at its meeting in October 2023 the House of Bishops expressed the intention that new Pastoral Guidance should “remove all restrictions on clergy entering same-sex marriages, and on bishops ordaining, licensing and granting permissions to officiate such clergy”. What theological or legal advice concerning clergy conduct and Canon C26.2 had the House of Bishops received to provide the basis of such a significant change in approach?

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

- A** No specific advice on the particular question was provided on that occasion but some advice which related to the question was included in GS 2055 and some additional advice had been given to bishops during the LLF process.

Mrs Alianore Smith (Southwark) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

- Q69** Given that in the November General Synod the Archbishop of York refused to answer a number of questions concerning motions and votes at the 9th October meeting on the grounds of confidentiality and SO 14 but some of these have now been made public in GS 2346, what was the process that authorised this welcome move to greater transparency and what is the new policy in relation to making decisions concerning public release of information from the House of Bishops?

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

- A** The House of Bishops agreed in November 2023 to publish a summary of actions and decisions after each meeting (now available on the website [House of Bishops | The Church of England](#)). It also agreed to establish a task and finish group which I will chair to review transparency. That group has met once, and I look forward to its work continuing. I also want to note commitment 2 as set out in GS 2346 which I look forward to exploring together as a Synod.

Mrs Alianore Smith (Southwark) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

- Q70** In November the Bishop of London assured the Synod that nothing was being hidden in relation to legal advice pertinent to the LLF debate. Was none of the material contained in Annex A and Annex B of GS 2346, in particular the info summarised on pp. 12-13, therefore prepared for the September College or the October House discussions and votes in relation to the pathways for standalone services?

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

- A** The legal advice provided to the House of Bishops was given over a period of time, sometimes orally, sometimes in writing, often in response to questions as they arose for consideration. Material on the various routes for authorisation has been shared with the House and College of Bishops at several points in different ways. The material as summarised on pp. 12-13 GS 2346 was provided for the December meeting of the House of Bishops.

Dr Janette Allotey (Chester) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

- Q71** Has the lead Bishop(s) for LLF created a job description for an 'independent reviewer' and if relevant to the role, have they considered appointing two (who would each consider matters from the two main polarised perspectives)?

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

- A** As lead bishop, I am working with staff on draft terms of reference and role description for an interim reviewing body for consideration by the House of Bishops. We are considering options for this, including having a panel of members rather than a singular reviewer, which would provide for a diversity of skills, expertise, background and tradition. How this is developed further will be determined by the decisions of General Synod in the February 2024 sessions.

In parallel, work will need to be done on more permanent arrangements, subject to any decisions on a legislative framework being put in place.

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

- Q72** Why were the majority decisions on pastoral guidance and the relationship between same-sex marriage and Holy Matrimony taken formally by a vote of the House of Bishops on October 9th and now reported in GS 2346 not announced in the press

release of October 9th along with the announcement of the decision to commend Prayers of Love and Faith?

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

A On 9 October the House of Bishops took decisions around the work being presented to the General Synod in the November 2023 group of sessions. It did not commend the Prayers of Love and Faith. A number of the areas required further work before they were ready for discussion and accordingly were not presented to the General Synod or more broadly at that point.

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

Q73 Did the Legal Office advise the House of Bishops prior to its 9 October 2023 meeting that to proceed with commending the Prayers of Love and Faith would be contrary to the mind of Synod expressed in the Cornes amendment and final February motion, and did the House formally vote that they rejected such advice or that they accepted it but believed that the departure indicated was not a departure from the Church's doctrine in any essential matter??

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

A The substance of the advice that was provided to the House of Bishops by the Legal Office was set out in paragraphs 16 to 26 of Annex A to GS 2328. The House of Bishops voted to commend the Prayers of Love and Faith Resource Section in the light of that advice. The House did not take specific votes on the acceptance of advice.

Mr Jacob Wigley (Oxford) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q74 In what ways is the legal advice in relation to clergy in same-sex marriages now different from that as set out in Annex 1 of GS 2055?

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

A The substance of the legal advice remains as set out in Annex 1 to GS 2055.

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

Q75 If "The Church of England teaches that Holy Matrimony is a lifelong covenant between one man and one woman, blessed by God in creation and pointing to the love between Christ and the Church; a way of life which Christ makes holy. It is within marriage that sexual intimacy finds its proper place" (Pastoral Guidance) then do the three options set out in GS 2346 pp.16-17 in relation to clergy (and by extension Licensed Lay Ministers) entering same-sex marriage not also apply, given the logic of the argument and wording of Canon C 26.2, to clergy and LLMs entering into any sexual relationship (same-sex or opposite-sex) other than Holy Matrimony? Has the House of Bishops passed any motions addressing this matter?

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

A The House of Bishops has not reached a concluded view on these questions. The motions passed by the House of Bishops are included as part of the answer to question 143.

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

Q76 Did the House of Bishops vote to approve the new implementation strategy (outlined in GS 2346) and, if so, at which meeting?

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

A As the paper makes clear, paper GS 2346 is in my name alone. It has not been approved by the House of Bishops.

CROWN NOMINATIONS COMMISSION

The Revd Stephen Corbett (Blackburn) to ask the Chair of the Crown Nominations Commission:

Q77 In the light of the unfortunate revelations arising from the Post-Office scandal - particularly that someone with minimal parish experience might have been appointed to the third most senior episcopal position in the CofE - can this Synod (and indeed the wider Church) be assured that, in future, one essential criterion for appointment to episcopal (and other senior) office will be that of substantial post-ordination experience at "incumbent level" together with a depth of theological education and training?

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

A The Post Office Horizon IT scandal is a terrible miscarriage of justice that has led to heartbreaking suffering for many sub-postmasters. We hope and pray that the inquiry and the government's promise of legislation will move forward the process of proper justice and compensation for the sub-postmasters who have been so badly impacted.

Bishops in the Church of England are chosen following a lengthy process of discernment, culminating in a name being submitted to The Crown for approval. While of course I am bound by the confidentiality declaration that all CNC members make and am therefore not able to confirm or deny whether Paula Vennells was interviewed by the CNC for any vacant Diocese, I can confirm that when candidates without significant parish experience are considered, it is because they offer other comparable and relevant experience.

In virtually all cases of appointments being made at the moment, parish experience is deemed to be a really important part of the candidate's ministerial journey, but from time to time there will be exceptions.

Theological formation and training are themselves very important indeed, but may come in a number of ways. Discernment is a process of combining what is seen in a person's record and references, heard in interview and sensed in the working of the Holy Spirit.

Mr Charles Houston (Hereford) to ask the Chair of the Crown Nominations Commission:

Q78 When the CNC considered Paula Vennells to be the Bishop of London in 2017, were CNC members made aware of either the April 2016 High Court claim by sub postmasters against the Post Office or the Group Litigation Order by 555 claimants issued by the Court in March 2017?

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

A The Post Office Horizon IT scandal is a terrible miscarriage of justice that has led to heartbreaking suffering for many sub-postmasters. We hope and pray that the inquiry and the government's promise of legislation will move forward the process of proper justice and compensation for the sub-postmasters who have been so badly impacted.

Bishops in the Church of England are chosen following a lengthy process of discernment, culminating in a name being submitted to The Crown for approval. As I am bound by the confidentiality declaration that all CNC members make, I am not able to confirm or deny whether Paula Vennells was interviewed by the CNC for any vacant Diocese, nor what information may have been made available to the CNC.

As has been said more generally about Paula Vennells' involvement in various committees and working groups in the Church of England, by 2019 and 2020, it is

clear that more questions should have been asked about the appropriateness of that involvement when more had come to light about the Horizon scandal. We recognise this and will need to reflect on it.

The Revd Tim Edwards (Rochester) to ask the Chair of the Crown Nominations

Commission:

Q79 In the light of the report that Paula Vennells was shortlisted for consideration as the next Bishop of London, what review is planned on the need for greater transparency in the process of the appointment of diocesan bishops?

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

A The Post Office Horizon IT scandal is a terrible miscarriage of justice that has led to heartbreaking suffering for many sub-postmasters. We hope and pray that the inquiry and the government's promise of legislation will move forward the process of proper justice and compensation for the sub-postmasters who have been so badly impacted.

Bishops in the Church of England are chosen following a lengthy process of discernment, culminating in a name being submitted to The Crown for approval. As I am bound by the confidentiality declaration that all CNC members make, I am not able to confirm or deny whether Paula Vennells was interviewed by the CNC for any vacant Diocese.

The Crown Nominations Commission was comprehensively reviewed in the previous quinquennium of the General Synod and there is no further formal review planned. On the appointment of Diocesan Bishops, the CNC process works within the parameters set by General Synod who also elect the Central Members of the CNC.

The Commission strives to be as transparent as possible, publicising its meetings and reporting routinely to the General Synod, though this is always held in tension with the confidential nature of the discernment process.

The Revd Graham Hamilton (Exeter) to ask the Chair of the Crown Nominations

Commission:

Q80 In the light of the report that two bishops with advanced theological qualifications were on the shortlist for consideration as the next Bishop of London, and that neither was appointed, and that both are now no longer on the bench of bishops having moved to other roles, what review is planned of the theological depth now present in the House of Bishops?

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

A Bishops in the Church of England are chosen following a lengthy process of discernment, culminating in a name being submitted to The Crown for approval. As I am bound by the confidentiality declaration that all CNC members make, I am not able to comment on who may have been interviewed by the CNC for any vacant Diocese.

As part of that process of discernment, candidates are carefully scrutinised on a wide range of areas, including theological acumen, all of which are taken into account when a nomination is being made.

Theological formation and training are themselves very important indeed, but may come in a number of ways. Discernment is a process of combining what is seen in a person's record and references, heard in interview and sensed in the working of the Holy Spirit.

There are no plans to commission a review on the theological depth now present in the House of Bishops.

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

Q81 Given the confirmation that the doctrine of the Church on marriage remains unchanged, and confirmation by the Chair of FAOC that this is not a ‘thing indifferent’, what guidance has been offered to members of CNCs in appointing future diocesan bishops on the need for candidates to affirm their belief in the doctrine of the Church on marriage as a condition of appointment?

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

A Diocesan Bishops in the Church of England are chosen following a lengthy process of discernment. As part of that discernment process, a range of candidates are considered having been put forward by individual members of the Crown Nominations Commission.

As part of that process of discernment, candidates are carefully scrutinised on a wide range of areas and the Crown Nominations Commission would not seek to nominate someone who was unable publicly to uphold the doctrine and teaching of the Church of England. The CNC is also mindful to ensure that it nominates bishops who are able to make and uphold the declaration made during their ordination concerning teaching the doctrine of Christ, as the Church of England has received it, refuting error, and handing it on to others.

In addition, following the publication of GS Misc 1044 ‘Choosing Bishops – the Equality Act 2010 (Revised)’, and the subsequent discussion at the House of Bishops on this note, nomination paperwork for all individuals considered as episcopal candidates must include confirmation (normally from the Provincial Metropolitan for Diocesan Bishops or their Diocesan Bishop for others) that their lifestyle is consistent with the teaching of the Church of England in relation to marriage and personal relationships.

The Revd Dan Leathers (Liverpool) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q82 In making future suffragan and diocesan episcopal appointments, is it still expected that bishops will uphold the doctrine of the Church and teach and expound it and if so how is that made clear in the selection and appointment process—or are there any exceptions to this, and if so, by what process were such exceptions agreed, and how are these made clear at the point of ordination by qualification to the ordination vows in the liturgy?

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

A Bishops in the Church of England are chosen following a lengthy process of discernment. As part of that discernment process, a number of candidates are considered who are carefully scrutinised on a wide range of areas.

The Church would not seek to nominate an individual to the Crown for appointment who was unable publicly to uphold the doctrine and teaching of the Church of England in any area. It is also mindful to ensure that it nominates bishops who are able to make and uphold the declaration made at their ordination concerning teaching the doctrine of Christ, as the Church of England has received it, refuting error, and handing it on to others.

The Crown Nominations Commission is responsible for the nomination of Diocesan Bishops. The Suffragan Bishop nomination process is overseen by Diocesan Bishops, supported by the Archbishops’ Advisers for Appointments and Vocations.

The Revd Canon Simon Talbott (Ely) to ask the Chair of the Crown Nominations

Commission:

Q83 In the light of the recent failure by the CNC to appoint to the Vacant See of Carlisle, what assurances can the Chair of the Commission give that further reflection on the current arrangements for the CNC will be undertaken?

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

A The Crown Nominations Commission was comprehensively reviewed in the previous quinquennium of the General Synod and there is no further formal review planned. On the nomination of Diocesan Bishops, the CNC process works within the parameters set by General Synod who also elect the Central Members of the CNC.

We recognise the detrimental impact that the inability to nominate a Diocesan Bishop has on a Diocese and all those involved in the discernment process. In such circumstances, a period of reflection takes place on the specific context and on any steps that may need to be recommended on the wider CNC process.

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

Commission:

Q84 Given the answer to Q94 and Q95 in November 2023, the failure to appoint a new Bishop of Carlisle, the introduction of the 'pairs' of central members in this quinquennium, and the known and expected episcopal retirements over the next 18 months; what consideration has been given to bringing forward some CNC meetings in an effort to work through the existing backlog at a faster rate, and what is the limiting factor preventing this?

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

A There remains a high demand on the senior appointments system, which also includes Deans, and it is anticipated that this will continue for the foreseeable future. CNC dates are set at least a year in advance and there is limited ability to alter the timeline once the dates have been set and the discernment process for a particular vacancy has started. It takes time for a discernment process to flourish, in addition to a considerable investment of resource and planning in the Diocese and National Church.

The main limiting factor is diary constraints, remembering that many members of the CNC are volunteers, who have to take leave in order to attend the three days normally required (apart from very extensive reading) for a CNC.

DIOCESES COMMISSION

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

Q85 Thank you to the Diocese Commission for their annual report (GS Misc 1366). Given the request (that was refused by the Diocese Commission) from the Diocese of Canterbury to fill the see of Maidstone with a role that incorporated both that of an Archdeacon and elements of Episcopal support (paragraph 18), what guidance is available to dioceses on the role of a Bishop to help them to structure requests which are appropriate to the Ecclesiology of the Church of England?

Dame Caroline Spelman to reply as Chair of the Dioceses Commission:

A The Dioceses Commission has guidance for bishops wishing to present a proposal to fill a suffragan see which is available on the Commission's page on the CofE website: <https://www.churchofengland.org/about/general-synod/committees-and-commissions/dioceses-commission>

The Archbishops' Advisors for Appointments and Vocations are also available to bishops and dioceses as they develop role profiles and go through the recruitment processes.

FAITH AND ORDER COMMISSION

The Revd Dr Patrick Richmond (Norwich) to ask the Chair of the Faith and Order Commission:

Q86 The Chair of the Faith and Order Commission said in November 2023 that the doctrine of marriage "is not a credal matter, but it is a serious matter of doctrine, and it is rooted in creation and affirmed by our Lord, and it is held by the great majority of the Church catholic." What consideration has the Commission given to biblical passages, (such as 1 Cor 6.9-11, Gal 5.18-21, and Rev. 21.8), warning that the sexually immoral will not inherit the Kingdom of God, in evaluating how serious and divisive these matters are?

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

A Considerable time was devoted to examining all relevant passages within the first stage of the LLF process, which the Faith and Order Commission was heavily involved with. Relevant material can be found in the LLF book (pp. 283-294) and in detailed academic papers on the LLF hub.

The Faith and Order Commission has also done work on assessing the nature and seriousness of disagreements in *Communion and Disagreement*, and this work is reflected in the LLF resources, and has been highlighted since in conversations in the Commission and in the House of Bishops.

Mrs Rebecca Cowburn (Ely) to ask the Chair of the Faith and Order Commission:

Q87 Who determines what is an 'essential matter' and a 'non-essential matter' in terms of doctrine and on what basis?

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

A The Church of England rests on Scripture, the Creeds, historic formularies and the Book of Common Prayer in its discernment of questions that arise throughout its history. This is done in dialogue with reason and experience, and changes and challenges from culture and science. Discernment is led by bishops as teachers of the faith, but operates collegially and synodically in conversation with the wider church and experts in a number of areas.

Work by the Faith and Order Commission, *Communion and Disagreement*, has highlighted that simply to try to divide matters in a binary way between essential and non-essential is often counterproductive, since matters that are not primarily credal, for instance, can nevertheless be important and lead to considerable tension and disagreement.

Mr Luke Appleton (Exeter) to ask the Chair of the Faith and Order Commission:

Q88 Is it currently the position of the Church of England that eternal salvation is only possible if an individual explicitly believes that Jesus Christ is Lord and that God raised Him from the dead?

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

A The Church of England affirms the teaching of Scripture that salvation only occurs through the work of Christ, who is 'the Way, the Truth and the Life'. Belief in Jesus Christ leads to salvation, though salvation is and remains a pure gift of grace from God that cannot be earned by human efforts.

Mr Luke Appleton (Exeter) to ask the Chair of the Faith and Order Commission:

Q89 What is the Church of England's current definition of fornication?

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

A The Church of England does not keep a formal list of definition of terms. The LLF book and resources explore in detail the passages where we find the term as a translation for the original Greek word (pp. 137; 141; 246-252; 283-294. The LLF hub has additional detail on historical understandings of sexual immorality.

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

Q90 Can you confirm that the process followed in appointing the interim theological advisor to the House of Bishops was open, competitive, and fair? Was Dr Woolford the unanimous choice of all members of the interview panel?

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

A The post was advertised internally within the NCIs and externally to theology networks having taken advice from a number of key stakeholders. A number of applications were received. The interview panel met and shortlisted candidates to be invited for interview based on the competency shortlisting and interviewing framework set out by the NCIs.

It would not be appropriate to comment publicly on the discussions of the interview panel.

Mr Paul Ronson (Blackburn) to ask the Chair of the Faith and Order Commission:

Q91 Who was responsible for appointing the interim theological advisor to the House of Bishops?

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

A This was an Archbishops' Council appointment, and the panel was chaired by the Secretary General, William Nye. Given the large proportion of FAOC work within the portfolio of this role, as Chair of FAOC, I was on the panel alongside two other members of FAOC and was involved in the whole appointment process. The panel proceeded to an agreed position on the appointment.

Professor Muriel Robinson (Lincoln) to ask the Chair of the Faith and Order Commission:

Q92 How is the Vice-Chair of the Faith and Order Commission chosen?

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

A The Chair of the Faith and Order Commission invited the vice-chair, and proposed his name to the Commission, who raised no objections.

FEES ADVISORY COMMISSION

Canon Nigel Bacon (Lincoln) to ask the Chair of the Fees Advisory Commission:

Q93 What consideration has been given to reducing the legal fees payable for faculty submissions where the work proposed is of relatively low cost yet does not qualify for consideration under Lists "A" or "B"?

The Venerable Robert Cooper to reply as Chair of the Fees Advisory Commission:

A The Commission has not considered this particular question in connection with the faculty jurisdiction. The Commission may make recommendations about the fees payable for duties carried out by ecclesiastical judges in relation to faculty proceedings and such functions as are carried out by advisory committees or archdeacons in connection with such faculty proceedings as it specifies, and an order may make provision as to exemptions from or reductions in fees. The Commission is always keen, in principle, to bring forwards proposals for reform for consideration by Synod for matters within its remit and it will consider this suggestion carefully. Before making any proposal the Commission would wish to ensure that it had a proper evidence base from which to work and would need to consult all interested parties.

LITURGICAL COMMISSION

The Revd Dr Michael Brydon (Sodor & Man) to ask the Chair of the Liturgical Commission:

Q94 Following the correct submission to the Liturgical Commission of an individual to be considered for inclusion within the calendar, what is the process and timescale for making a decision?

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

A The Liturgical Commission welcomes suggestions of names for possible inclusion in the Common Worship Calendar and maintains a file of all such submissions received in order that they may be considered in any review of the Calendar. No such review is likely to take place this quinquennium.

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

Mr Robert Zampetti (London) to ask the Church Commissioners:

Q95 Thank you for the update on the Clergy Stipend issue provided in GS Misc 1375. Paragraphs 4 and 12 suggest the underlying cause was the existence of a manual single point of failure in a critical process and indicate that the error "was not caused by the system itself". It is clear that human intervention was needed to verify that a BACS interface operated successfully (though it is unclear from this update whether the interface itself was automated or not).

Further, paragraph 5 indicates that "a 'faster payment' with the bank would have raised unacceptable risks because it would not allow time for human error checking and quality assurance. Will the Church Commissioners' Audit and Risk Committees undertake a review of all critical processes performed by the NCIs to identify and remediate any other similar single points of failure that might exist and identify opportunities for taking advantage of best practices in payroll automation as championed by the Chartered Institute of Payroll Professionals?

Alan Smith to reply as First Church Estates Commissioner:

A Before I answer this question, I would like to take the opportunity to reiterate our apology for the error which resulted in the clergy stipends being paid 24 hours late, and to assure Synod that we are working to ensure the mistake will not be repeated as well as reimbursing any bank charges that were incurred as a result.

In accordance with their responsibilities, senior leadership within the NCIs are undertaking the necessary reviews of critical payroll processes to ensure that we learn from this error.

In parallel, and in line with their role and responsibilities, the Church Commissioners' Audit & Risk Committee – together with the Audit & Risk Committees of the Pensions Board and Archbishops' Council – agrees an Annual Internal Audit Plan which sets out the key control risk areas and processes to be audited in the coming year. These are selected using a risk-based approach, which includes ensuring that all key processes are audited on a cyclical basis. Audits are performed by Internal Audit staff from the NCIs or the co-source provider BDO, according to requisite skills and experience. The resulting internal audit assurance reports are then presented to the appropriate Audit & Risk Committee for their consideration.

In 2023, audits were carried out on areas such as Accounts Payable and Investments. In 2024, the internal audit plan includes, for example, the People/Payroll system and Cyber Security. The full list of Church Commissioners' and Church of England Central Services' (ChECS) areas to be audited in 2024 is summarised in the table provided on the Synod noticeboard.

The Revd Robert Lawrance (Newcastle) to ask the Church Commissioners:

Q96 What is the current amount and percentage of Church Commissioners funds invested in climate solutions?

Alan Smith to reply as First Church Estates Commissioner:

A Our investments in assets that address climate change, and in publicly listed companies focused on climate and environmental solutions, add up to more than £800m - approximately 7% of the fund - as of December 2022.

In addition to this £800m, we also invest in and enable initiatives in other parts of the portfolio which seek to address climate change, in keeping with our “Respect for the Planet” responsible investment principle. For example, we work with and enable our farming tenants to provide climate solutions, including consent for renewable energy, supporting improvements to slurry infrastructure or updating lease terms to ensure climate resilience.

We have also invested with external asset managers who are investing in line with the energy transition (although those investments are not categorised as a solution) and in funds which have a broader focus on environmental and social impact, combined with the aim of setting science-based targets for the companies in the fund.

Mrs Sue Cavill (Derby) to ask the Church Commissioners:

Q97 Congratulations to the Church Commissioners on being named Environmental Finance’s ‘Endowment/Foundation of the Year 2023’. What other positive reaction has there been to the decisions to divest from fossil fuels and invest more in climate solutions?

Alan Smith to reply as First Church Estates Commissioner:

A Thank you for your kind words. At the time of divestment in July 2023, there was widespread coverage across national and international newspapers, TV, radio, online, and on social media, mainly in the UK and global English-language media, but also in international media. The story made the front page of the Financial Times (FT) on Friday 23 June and was published in six other national newspapers. The story, which was subsequently syndicated across various global publications. More than 100 million social media accounts saw the divestment story in their feeds.

The story continues to run. On 8 February 2024 the FT ran a story relating to Dutch pension fund PFZW removing Shell, BP and TotalEnergies from its portfolios (see: [Big European fund sells €2.8bn in oil holdings because of slow moves on climate \(ft.com\)](https://www.ft.com/content/2024/02/08/pfzw-divestment)) and noting that this followed a similar move by the Church of England eight months before and came after countries around the world agreed to transition away from fossil fuels at the UN COP28 climate summit in December.

In reflecting on the above, we must not be complacent. Divestment and engagement are essential for an effective strategy to enable the transition to a low carbon world. Our ethical and climate-related restrictions are reassessed regularly. If companies that we have divested of, at some point in time, come into alignment with the goals of the Paris Agreement, we would reconsider our position.

Mrs Sue Cavill (Derby) to ask the Church Commissioners:

Q98 Given that hedgerows are important for biodiversity and climate, what is the state of hedgerows on Church Commissioners’ land and what steps are being taken to restore and increase these?

Alan Smith to reply as First Church Estates Commissioner:

A In 2023, the Church Commissioners' Asset managers visited half of tenanted rural land holdings and are pro-active in engaging with tenants to understand their farming systems, including hedgerow management. This now includes asking tenants to complete a survey that focuses on their approach to regenerative farming methods and biodiversity improvements.

Whilst we have not undertaken a full ecological study of all hedges, based on tenant surveys so far, over 80% have actively been improving biodiversity with key areas of focus including hedgerows, field margins and establishing wildlife corridors. These include funding and provisions, under Countryside Stewardship Schemes, for hedgerow management and improvement.

Through Pre-Letting Environmental Assessments, in partnership with the Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group, we identify further hedge planting opportunities as part of a focus on improved field boundaries. Approximately 4,000 acres of farmland will be subject to these assessments in 2024.

Working with existing tenants, we have identified sites for future hedge planting. This includes an estate in the north-west where there is potential to plant more than 4km of hedges within the farming system.

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

Q99 In his answer to question 219 (July 23), the First Estates Commissioner confirmed that the Church Commissioners "have a small exposure to funds that invest in specialised finance companies, including personal loans." How large is that exposure, both in Sterling and percentage terms?

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

Q100 With reference to those funds which invest in specialised finance companies (including personal loans) - what level of return have they generated for the Commissioners on a year-by-year basis since 2019?

Alan Smith to reply as First Church Estates Commissioners:

A With the Chair's permission, I will answer Mr Gray's two questions together.

Based on our most recent valuations, the exposure to funds investing in financial services (banks and specialised finance companies, including personal loans) was approximately £160 million, which is equivalent to about 1.5% of the fund value (using the valuation at the last audited balance sheet). Approximately two thirds of this is invested in banks. The underlying investments include financial services, such as payment companies, personal loan providers and banks, who among other things provide loans to people and companies.

We do not track performance based on exposure to specific sectors, and our investments change over time. All investments contribute to the overall aims of the Church Commissioners' investment fund to meet our target return of CPIH+4% per annum. Some investments will perform well in some years and less well in others, whilst investments in other sectors will have different, often complementary, profiles. This diversification of our fund is important in delivering value in the long-term, and it is the long-term performance that is key to optimising our distributions to the Church.

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

Q101 Having made the Terms of Reference for the last Triennial Funding Working Group (for the period from 2023 to 2025) available to members of General Synod, and looking ahead to the next TFWG (for the period from 2026 to 2028) –

- i. Who will decide the membership of the next group and what criteria will be applied?
- ii. Will a commitment please be given to appoint an independent chair, who has deep experience of good governance & financial prudence, from outside of the Church's hierarchy?

Alan Smith to reply as First Church Estates Commissioner:

A The Terms of Reference of the Triennium Funding Working Group (TFWG) will be published via a Notice Paper.

The purpose of the TFWG is to provide recommendations to the Church Commissioners and the Archbishops' Council, as trustee bodies, on the prioritisation and allocation of the funds available for distribution from the endowment managed by the Commissioners on behalf of the Church to support its mission and ministry.

Later this year the Church Commissioners' Board and the Archbishops' Council will be invited to consider the membership of the group that will make recommendations on spending plans for 2026-28. I cannot prejudge what they will decide or give any commitments regarding criteria or composition of membership, but if the previous model is repeated the Commissioners' Board, Archbishops' Council and House of Bishops will be invited to nominate a number of their members to join the group. I would expect that when these decisions are made, good governance and financial prudence, as well as a deep understanding of the Church's needs and priorities, will be central. The qualities of being independent, values driven and collaborative, which place the interest of the whole Church as the top priority, will be essential for all members of the TFWG whatever their provenance.

The Revd Martin Thorpe (Liverpool) to ask the Church Commissioners:

Q102 Recognising that individual cases must remain confidential, can the Church Commissioners please set out the total sums paid out in reimbursement of Bishops' Legal Costs by the Commissioners in each of the last five years?

Alan Smith to reply as First Church Estates Commissioner:

A The Church Commissioners provide support for bishops' legal costs in a number of ways, including support with the costs of possible or actual legal challenges, the preliminary scrutiny of complaints under the Clergy Discipline Measure 2003, and part of the annual retainer paid to diocesan and provincial registrars. The total cost incurred in each of the last five full years is:

2019: £7,580,033

2020: £4,034,977

2021: £3,954,734

2022: £3,354,682

2023: £4,655,581

In addition, a modest amount may be paid to bishops where they require support which can't be met by their working costs, which we estimate is on average approximately £20,000 in total per year over this five-year period.

Mr Tim Fleming (St Albans) to ask the Church Commissioners:

Q103 In light of the increasing financial challenges facing many of the nation's cathedrals, as reflected in their financial statements and mirroring the position seen across many churches, what plans, if any, do the Church Commissioners have to increase the funding they make available to cathedrals, above that currently provided by

existing section 21/23 grants and the already announced allocations to the time-limited Cathedral Sustainability Fund and Net Zero Fund, in order that cathedrals may continue to thrive as beacons of church and cultural life into the next decade?

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

A Spending plans for 2023-25 included an annual uplift in section 21 (stipends of a dean and two residentiary canons at most cathedrals) and section 23 grants (towards the costs of lay and additional clergy staff), which total £35million. A further allocation for the Cathedral Sustainability Fund (CSF) was agreed to support cathedrals over the three-year period and almost £10m remains available for allocation during 2024-2025. Cathedrals are encouraged to submit applications for funding to the Bishops and Cathedrals Committee which is responsible for considering bids and allocating funds on a case-by-case basis.

When spending plans for the next triennium (2026-2028) are considered, I will be working with Deans to make the case for a further allocation of funds for the CSF so that, as was the case throughout the pandemic and the years since, they continue to thrive as beacons of church and cultural life at the heart of the diocese.

The Revd Chantal Noppen (Durham) to ask the Church Commissioners:

Q104 What are the average annual costs and expenses provided or budgeted for by the national church for:

- A) PEVs and the provision of pastoral support for those unable to accept the ministry of ordained women?
- B) support and resourcing the ministry of ordained women and those specifically facilitating it?

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

A As with other Suffragan Bishops, the Church Commissioners fund the stipend and working costs (including staff costs) of the sees of Beverley, Ebbsfleet, Oswestry and Richborough. From 2019-2023, the average total annual spend on these four sees was £497,000. The Commissioners fund 50% of the housing costs for these four bishops (the other 50% is recharged to Dioceses), and for 2019-2023 the average annual housing cost to the Commissioners was £67,500.

The Church Commissioners do not provide any funding specifically in support of the ministry of ordained women or those facilitating it. The Archbishops' Council administers the grants made from the Women's Continuing Ministerial Education Trust (WCMET) to assist individuals with their professional development. In 2023 grants amounting to £73,000 were made from this fund.

Mr Paul Ronson (Blackburn) to ask the Church Commissioners:

Q105 What assessment have the Pastoral and Closed Churches team made of the various diocesan plans for parish mergers and development of yet more multi parish benefices given the demands for clear lines for safeguarding and the wellbeing of clergy and lay administration?

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

A Assessing diocesan plans for pastoral reorganisation does not fall within the Pastoral and Closed Churches team's remit, nor that of the Mission, Pastoral and Church Property Committee (MPCPC). Instead, the Committee (supported by the staff team) is responsible for the consideration of representations about individual pastoral schemes. To assist with this, the team often asks dioceses to provide diocesan strategy documents and diocesan or deanery plans. This gives the team, in its support of the MPCPC, the background and context for the relevant scheme. The team always does this where a diocese wishes to rely on the "presumption of

favour" which applies where the scheme arises from an approved deanery plan. But even in these cases the MPCPC is responsible for assessing the merits of the scheme, and not of the deanery plan. Therefore, important issues such as safeguarding and the wellbeing of clergy and lay administrators are factors which would be considered if they arise in particular cases.

The Revd Marcus Walker (London) to ask the Church Commissioners:

Q106 In Paula Vennells' October 2019 report "CHURCH BUILDINGS REPORT: A Lessons Learnt Review" she says in point 33: "Closing churches: the 'looming crisis' of over a thousand closures, which some Commissioners believe(d) is necessary, requires a separate review." Could the Third Church Estates Commissioner explain upon what basis was that figure of "over 1,000 closures" arrived at, and has any separate review been undertaken on that crisis?

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

A The 2015 Church Buildings Review itself (Para 54) said only that the challenge of averting an increase in the number of church closures was likely to grow. It gave no estimate of the extent to which the then annual closure rate of 20-25 was likely to increase or over what timescale. It appears that the figure cited by Paula Vennells in 2019 arose from her conversations with some individuals whom she consulted. I assume it represented their personal estimates of the scale of closures required and I do not know how they arrived at this figure. It is not one recognised or endorsed by the Church Commissioners as a body. The actual number of closures in 2020-23 (since the Vennells Report in 2019) has continued at the rate of 20-25 a year which has been the case since the early 1990s.

No separate review of church closures has been undertaken as this comes within the scope of the review of the Mission and Pastoral Measure.

The Revd Marcus Walker (London) to ask the Church Commissioners:

Q107 In Paula Vennells' October 2019 report "CHURCH BUILDINGS REPORT: A Lessons Learnt Review" she says in appendix iv: "The CCs see the value of income, £2m a year - not massive but some dioceses are dependent. Manchester has closed more than anywhere and balances its books with closures. And Chichester - £1.5m deficit and was able to take £1.5m from closed churches and pastoral account and again this year. It's very very important [for] balancing books." Could the Third Church Estates Commissioner detail for each of the last ten years how much each diocese made from the sale of churches, broken down by diocese?

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

A Over the last ten years, in total, approximately £21.3 million of net proceeds from the sale of churches, under the Mission and Pastoral Measure, have been distributed to the dioceses. A schedule of net proceeds distributed, broken down by diocese, has been made available on the noticeboard. To summarise, over the ten years:

- 22 dioceses received under £100,000 net proceeds of which 5 received zero net proceeds.
- 7 dioceses received between £100,000 and £250,000 net proceeds.
- 6 dioceses received between £250,000 and £500,000 net proceeds.
- 4 dioceses received between £500,000 and £1.0m net proceeds.
- 2 dioceses, Chelmsford and London, received over £1.0m net proceeds. London received approximately £13 million.

It is important to note that all sale proceeds make an important contribution to off-setting diocese costs which are incurred after the church building has been formally

closed and vested with them for use-seeking; and that occasionally those costs may exceed the gross sale income.

Mrs Dawn Brathwaite (Birmingham) to ask the Church Commissioners:

Q108 Twelve months ago the Church Commissioners announced the establishment of a £100M fund to mitigate the long term consequences of the Commissioner's fund connection with the transatlantic slave trade. When might we expect to receive further information on the establishment of this fund, how it will operate and when it will be operational?

The Bishop of Salisbury to reply as Deputy Chair of the Church Commissioners:

A An independent Oversight Group has been working on creating a set of recommendations about the operation of the new impact investment fund and other aspects of the Church Commissioners' response to links between one of its predecessor funds and African chattel enslavement. These recommendations are due to be published in March and following this, a timetable for the establishment of the fund will be finalised. At this group of sessions Synod will receive a presentation to provide an update and give Synod members an opportunity to ask questions and share reflections. The presentation will involve members of the Oversight Group and will explain how the recommendations were developed and how this work has been approached. We hope that the new fund will be operational by the end of this year.

The Revd Folli Olokose (Guildford) to ask the Church Commissioners:

Q109 The Church's clear ambition, as stated in GS 2341, is commendable and encouraging. However, it is clear that as far back as 1793, around 44% of Queen Anne's Bounty could be linked to the trade in enslaved people, which was ongoing for at least 54 years (1723-1777). Could the Church Commissioners please give the rationale behind the allocated sum of £100M over a 9-year period, which is around 1% of current Endowment Funds?

The Bishop of Salisbury to reply as Deputy Chair of the Church Commissioners:

A We identified this sum knowing no amount of money will ever be enough to repair the horrors of the past.

The Commissioners' Board wanted to commit a significant, impactful amount financially while also being confident that it will not impact our ability to honour existing financial commitments to the Church. When considering the level of funding it would make available, the Board looked at other institutions with similar histories that had set aside funds in response.

We assessed that £100 million over 9 years was an appropriate figure which would enable us to act in thoughtful, meaningful ways whilst respecting our existing financial commitments and statutory mandate.

The total commitment is approximately 1% of the endowment fund. The £100 million funding over nine-years is about 3% of the Commissioners' expected total distributions of £3.6 billion in support of the mission and ministry of the Church over the same period.

The ambition is that the impact investment fund will grow in perpetuity and establish a lasting positive legacy for a wide range of communities. There is also potential for other institutions to participate, further enabling growth in the size and impact of the fund.

PENSIONS BOARD

Miss Debbie Woods (Chester) to ask the Chair of the Pensions Board:

Q110 Can you confirm that those who believe the current doctrine and discipline of the church are in principle appointable to senior roles in the NCIs, without being under additional scrutiny or suspicion?

Clive Mather to reply as Chair of the Pensions Board:

A I am responding as the current Chair of the JECSB, a board which oversees HR matters for the jointly employed staff of the NCIs. (The Chair rotates periodically between the Chair of the Pensions Board, the First Commissioner, and the Chair of the Archbishops' Council's Finance Committee.)

The answer is Yes.

Some, but not all, senior appointments within the NCIs have an Occupational Requirement (OR) to be of the Christian faith. Senior posts are assessed on an individual basis (before advertisement) on the need for such an exemption from the Equalities legislation. Where a Christian OR is included, that element is then explored at the interview stage alongside assessment against the specific role criteria in terms of skills and experience.

The staff of the NCIs at all levels are of the Christian faith, other faiths and no faith, with a wide range of perspectives and views, but with all working towards delivery of the Church's mission, vision, and strategy.

The Revd Robert Lawrance (Newcastle) to ask the Chair of the Pensions Board:

Q111 What steps are the Pensions Board taking to increase investment in climate solutions? What new investments have they made in this area in the last 12 months?

Clive Mather to reply as Chair of the Pensions Board:

A The Board have recently published a Climate Action Plan (CAP) that sets out our approach to climate change and the role we can play in the transition. Whilst we have not made any new allocations the Investment Committee and the Board are developing our approach to emerging markets and the climate transition. There is a particularly important role for institutional investors to play in financing the transition in these economies. This will enable governments to meet their climate goals and also enhance the possibility of an orderly climate transition which is the scenario under which our members interests are best served.

We have led a group of 12 UK pension funds which have developed a set of Emerging Markets Just Transition Investment Principles which is informing our approach.

We are now actively considering future investments in Emerging Markets and will report progress in our Annual Report and Stewardship Report.

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

Q112 The Pension Board proposals offer assistance to clergy wishing to buy retirement homes; will the funding from this come from new money or that currently earmarked for the rental scheme?

Clive Mather to reply as Chair of the Pensions Board:

A The Board has proposed that the Church rethinks the model of support with retirement housing, shifting from just offering one form of help (i.e. a rented home), at retirement, to offering a broader range of services across ministry, enabling greater choice for clergy in their housing plans. This could include investment to overcome barriers to home ownership for those in tied accommodation.

The funding for current and new services beyond 2025 will need to be determined as part of the national Church resource allocation process for the 2026-8 triennium. Given the expected level of demand across this decade it will not be possible to keep the current rental offer available to future retirees without very substantial extra funding. All support for retirement housing will have to be considered and prioritised among other demands on national church funding and the Board will ensure that those leading that process have the information they need.

The Revd Claire Lording (Worcester) to ask the Chair of the Pensions Board:

Q113 The Pensions Board says that changes to their retirement housing scheme will not affect existing CHARM residents. Why are those who request to move to more accessible and appropriate housing in later life being told they will not be housed by the Pensions Board but must now move to other providers?

Clive Mather to reply as Chair of the Pensions Board:

A The proposals set out to enable choice for future retirees about their retirement housing plans do not imply or require any change to the services offered to existing residents.

The Board continues to support retirees seeking a move in later life. However, this question highlights some confusion around what that support involves, and I am grateful for the opportunity to set the record straight.

When someone approaches the Board to start to explore a move later in life, we will work with them to look at their circumstances, where they want to move to, and what might be available in the area.

So great is the demand from those who are newly retiring and will otherwise be homeless, that they will naturally get priority under the CHARM scheme as currently configured. This means that those seeking a move in retirement could have a longer wait if relying on a Church property to be available.

For this reason, we will work with the individual to explore options with other providers which might appropriately suit their needs. This might include a move to purpose-built, more accessible accommodation as appropriate. While exploring alternative options is often the quickest route to a move, we may also consider moves to available Church homes. Every situation is different and much depends on the circumstances of the individual involved.

The Revd Canon Claire Lording (Worcester) to ask the Chair of the Pensions Board:

Q114 How does the Pensions Board propose to support any retiring clergy and their partners who take advantage of the proposed house purchase scheme but, due to a change in circumstances, find they cannot afford a mortgage and lose their homes?

Clive Mather to reply as Chair of the Pensions Board:

A Today 5 in 6 clergy have their own housing arrangements in place at retirement, including homeowners with mortgages. So the situation described in the question is already a possibility, and indeed one which we have occasionally seen. Where a clergy pensioner household approaches the Board in this unfortunate circumstance, we will always consider what we can do to help. This might include offering support through our Welfare Advice service to look at various avenues of financial help so that the household might remain in their home, or in some circumstances, supporting a move to new accommodation.

As part of setting out ideas to enable choice about retirement housing plans, the Board has put forward ideas that might make homeownership a more realistic prospect for those in stipendiary ministry and at retirement who wish to explore it. These ideas have received strong support, particularly from younger clergy.

Working with regulated institutions on new products will be essential to ensure that appropriate checks are carried out and advice received, just as for anyone else embarking on homeownership.

The Revd Rachel Wakefield (St Albans) to ask the Chair of the Pensions Board:

Q115 In the Pension Board's proposal to change its provision of retirement housing for clergy, they mention other housing providers: can you provide more information on these providers and their tenancy arrangements?

Clive Mather, to reply as Chair of the Pensions Board

A The Board already has contacts with a range of other providers, including faith-based housing providers. Charitable examples include the College of St Barnabas, the Home of Devenish, Pilgrims Friend Society, and Morden College. We also have contacts with housing associations and some alms houses. Some offer assured tenancies (akin to those offered by the Board); others have other arrangements based on property type e.g. licences for some community-based schemes. Some are able to offer lower rents than the Board can.

If a retiree takes up the offer of another home, they are still able to contact the Board for advice, guidance and other support, if circumstances change later in life.

The Board has proposed that the Church rethinks and broadens the model of support with retirement housing across ministry, enabling choice for clergy in their future housing plans.

In addition to continuing to provide quality Church retirement homes to those for whom there are fewer other choices available, we think there are further opportunities for partnering with or signposting to other providers, including a broader range of housing associations, especially those with Church connections.

The Revd Rachel Wakefield (St Albans) to ask the Chair of the Pensions Board:

Q116 When and how will the Pension Board bring any proposals to change its provision of clergy retirement housing to Synod for approval?

Clive Mather to reply as Chair of the Pensions Board

A The Board welcomes feedback from General Synod on its ideas as to the Church might best support future retirees with retirement housing.

The materials were launched and advertised to members during the November Group of Sessions. The materials remain available to view at:
www.churchofengland.org/enablingchoice.

More than 850 colleagues from across the Church responded by the 31 January 2024 closing date. Initial headlines are set out in GS Misc 1373.

There is a fringe meeting for Synod members on Monday 26 February as a further opportunity to engage in the discussion.

The Board will be working through the feedback over the course of this year to inform the national Church resource allocation decisions for the next triennium, the process for which I understand has not yet been determined. We will continue to engage with Synod as we develop and implement any changes to services, while respecting the formal responsibilities of the board as charity trustees. Synod will also have a formal opportunity to input each year as part of the AC budget deliberations.

While the Board is committed to keeping Synod updated on its progress, the agenda for future Synod sessions is of course the preserve of the Business Committee.

ETHICAL INVESTMENT ADVISORY GROUP

Mr Ian Boothroyd (Southwell & Nottingham) to ask the Chair of the Ethical Investment Advisory Group:

Q117 The 'Climate Change Policy' on the EIAG's webpages, including the National Investing Bodies' policy and the EIAG's advice, which was adopted in 2015, states that it was "Updated 2020". Neither the policy nor the advice therefore includes or reflect on the decision by the NIBs announced in June 2023 (and reported in GS 2302) to disinvest from western oil and gas companies, following extensive engagement. Although aimed at the NIBs, the policy and advice are referred to by other bodies in the Church of England. Are there plans for an early revision of the document?

Alan Smith to reply as Deputy Chair of Ethical Investment Advisory Group:

A Each of the NIBs independently implements their own policies for climate change restrictions, and the policies adopted by each are consistent with the EIAG's advice. The separate, independent decisions taken by each of the NIBs to disinvest from oil and gas companies were consistent with the climate change policy and advice on the EIAG website which commits to 'divest, after appropriate engagement, from companies that make a significant contribution to emissions of greenhouse gasses and that the National Investing Bodies consider are not taking seriously their responsibilities to assist with the transition to a low carbon economy'.

The EIAG and NIBs are in the process of reviewing the full suite of policies and guidance documents, including those on climate change, to ensure they are up to date.

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

Q118 Before the Revd Paula Vennells stood down as a member of the Ethical Investment Advisory Group in June 2020 "as she engages with the BEIS Select Committee Review" - to quote an email referred to in <https://www.postofficetrial.com/2020/06/paula-vennells-leaves-ethical.html> - what consideration, if any, was made by those running the Group as to whether her membership of the Group was compatible with her having been CEO of the Post Office, on the basis of what was then known about the long-term and continuing unjust treatment by the Post Office of thousands of its employees?

Alan Smith to reply as Deputy Chair of the Ethical Investment Advisory Group:

A Appointments of Independent Members to the EIAG are made through its Nominations Committee. Following an open advertising and selection process, the Revd Paula Vennells was appointed to the EIAG in January 2019. The Nominations Committee was aware of the matter at the time and, on the basis of what was known then and other roles held by the individual within the Church of England, the Committee was satisfied of her suitability to serve on the EIAG.

There was further review of the matter as more information came to light, in line with the EIAG's Code of Conduct. One of the lessons that the EIAG must take from this issue is that, to be effective, it has to be able to make risk management and moral decisions, while not prejudging legal outcomes, or crossing legal boundaries. The high standards that the EIAG seeks to influence in others, must be applied to itself.

Following the announcement of the BEIS Select Committee Inquiry, the Nominations Committee agreed the leave of absence in June 2020, which lasted until her resignation in April 2021.

The EIAG Nominations Committee has subsequently reflected deeply on this matter and the lessons learned, which need to be acted on.

ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL

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

Q119 The Chief Executive of the Charity Commission for England and Wales recently wrote (with others) to the Chief Executives of the UK's high street banks about the poor standards of service experienced by charities from the banks (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/charity-banking-and-access-to-bank-services/letter-to-chief-executives-of-uk-banks>).

Given that the issues noted in the letter affect Church of England Charities of all kinds, including PCCs and parish based charities, what steps has the Archbishops' Council and its secretariat taken to promote improvements in banking services for charities?

Mr Tony Allwood (St Edmundsbury & Ipswich) to ask the Presidents of the Archbishops' Council:

Q120 The banking difficulties that PCCs are experiencing have got worse over the past year, with PCCs having accounts closed without notice and more banks raising charges. Please can the Synod be updated on the actions that the national church has taken to ameliorate this?

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

A With permission Chair, I would like to take Questions 119 and 120 together.

We have liaised with the Charity Commission and the industry to identify the problems. We saw no evidence that banks were actively withdrawing from offering services to churches or charities but noted problems with how anti-money laundering and other regulations are being applied, exacerbated by the loss of face to face contact as branches close.

The Secretary General wrote to the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA), copied to the relevant banks and the Economic Secretary to the Treasury, highlighting the problems and proposing that we work with the FCA to convene a round table with the banks and the Charity Commission to look for solutions.

The FCA, the Minister and some banks have responded and outlined steps they are taking to improve their service to our sector. The Director of Faith and Public Life has met with specialist staff at NatWest and has meetings at the FCA and Barclays in the diary.

We are now able to keep churches' experience on the banks' agenda and are gaining useful tips on how churches can make it easier for the banks to work with them. Material should be available soon.

Mrs Rosemary Lyon (Blackburn) to ask the Presidents of the Archbishops Council:

Q121 Following the update provided in GS Misc 1371- Wedding Fees Waiver, what consideration was given to the likely impact on Blackpool Deanery and Blackburn Diocese, where the motion passed overwhelmingly by General Synod originated, and on the likely impact nationally in the light of media coverage when the original proposals were approved?

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

A As noted in GS Misc 1371, the problem was not that the retention or waiver of wedding fees was desirable or not, but that the motion as amended, calling for an experiment aiming to gather data about the impact of waiving the fees, was

impossible to deliver in the way the motion intended. Among the impacts on parishes and the clergy, had we tried to proceed with such an experiment, were a considerable burden of responsibility to apply the experiment in a local context and a very long lead time – one of years not months – before a worthwhile volume of data could be collated. As the data was unlikely to be statistically reliable in the first place, that burden on the parishes and clergy, whatever area or diocese they served, was felt to be completely disproportionate. As the paper notes, no such experiment would clinch the question of whether a general fee waiver was what Synod or the wider church wanted. Given the support for the original motion in Blackburn and Blackpool among other places, it was clear that trying to act upon the amended version would frustrate rather than promote that impetus for change.

Mr Christopher Townsend (Ely) to ask the Presidents of the Archbishops' Council:

Q122 What plans does the Council have to review and, if appropriate, amend or expand its guidance document 'Supporting Asylum Seekers - Guidance for Church of England Clergy' and, in particular, Part 3 (Questions of conversion, preparation for baptism, and ongoing discipleship) and Part 4 (Stories to illustrate different approaches)?

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

A All such advice is reviewed periodically and the guidance on supporting asylum seekers has been under scrutiny publicly and therefore within the Church recently. Much has changed in asylum legislation and policy in recent years, and so an update is under consideration and this is an opportunity to reflect on Parts 3 and 4 also.

It remains that, despite misrepresentation in the media from various sources, it is the duty of the Home Office, not the churches, to make decisions on asylum applications. Our guidance stresses the need for any evidence we may offer to be factual and robust, but it is only one factor that the Home Office considers and is most unlikely to determine a case alone.

The Revd Stuart Craddock (Lincoln) to ask the Presidents of the Archbishops' Council:

Q123 What resources (eg material or training) are available to increase understanding of neurodiversity in the Church of England?

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

A This is a very timely question as a Neurodiversity Working Group has recently been formed under the auspices of CMDPP.

The group's role is to increase understanding of Neurodiversity, inform and encourage best practice and to develop and/or recommend resources. Several members of the group are experienced trainers in this field and are able to work with other bodies to develop appropriate training in various contexts.

I must stress that the group only met for the first time in September, so these are early days. The group does not claim a monopoly of wisdom or expertise, and if Synod members are aware of any materials or training resources that they wish to draw to the group's attention, the Director of Faith and Public Life will be happy to act as "post box".

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

Q124 Given the delay in the introduction of legislation to give effect to the reforms of national church governance welcomed by Synod in GS 2307 does the Council remain committed to the swift implementation of the proposals set out in that paper?

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

A Yes, the Archbishops' Council remains committed to implementing the proposals set out in GS 2307 and welcomed by this Synod. At its meeting in December 2023, the Council agreed that it would not be prudent or good governance to introduce this legislation without first having considered any possible legislative implications from the recommendations set out in the Jay Review.

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

Q125 Does the Archbishops' Council maintain a list of all charities which could be said to be part of the Church of England, and if so, how many are there?

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

A No such list is held by the Archbishops' Council.

We do know that there are over 12,000 PCCs, each of which is a charity. Other Church of England charities include the 42 Diocesan Boards of Finance, the 22 Theological Education Institutions, and Mission Agencies. Under the Cathedrals Measure 2021 Chapters are in a phased process of registering with the Charity Commission. This is not an exhaustive list.

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

Q126 Thank you for the update on the Governance Review provided as GS Misc 1367. Given that Recommendation 11 of the governance review doesn't conflict with either the recommendations of the Wilkinson review, or the principle of what is being asked by the Jay review - that of truly independent safeguarding; and given that when Synod discussed the Governance Review in July the response to suggested amendments was along the lines of 'time is of the essence - we must keep going and not delay' and 'we can work out the finer details whilst we are going'; what consideration was given by Archbishops Council to proceeding as planned and refining the details regarding Safeguarding as part of later legislation (including at revision stage, if required) and was this discussed with the Governance Project Board prior to the decision being made?

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

A In November 2023, the National Church Governance Programme Board discussed the possibility that the outcomes of the two safeguarding reviews could delay the introduction of the Governance Legislation. The Programme Board was unanimous in its view that the staff team should continue to press ahead with the drafting of legislation for introduction in February 2024, as a commitment had been made to the Synod to bring it forward at this Group of Sessions. In December 2023, the Secretary General attended the Programme Board and notified it of the Council's decision to delay the introduction of legislation. The Council remains committed to implementing the proposals set out in GS 2307 but agreed that it would not be prudent or good governance to introduce this legislation without first having considered any possible legislative implications from the recommendations set out in the Jay Review. As you will have seen in GS Misc 1367, the Programme Board continues to work on the assumption that the Governance Measure will now be introduced in July, at the earliest opportunity, affording the Synod its proper role in better framing the legislation through the Revision Stage.

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

Q127 When Archbishops' Council met on 22nd January 2024 to consider its response to the Wilkinson Review and the Glasgow Report, did the Secretary General or the Chair of the Audit Committee recuse themselves?

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

- A** Thank you for your question. The Archbishops' Council had a substantial item discussing the Wilkinson Review and this discussion did not raise any issue that would have required them to recuse themselves. The report produced by Professor Glasgow was not commissioned by the Council and so was not presented to the Council. However, the Council were also made aware of a complaint which had been made against the Secretary General which referenced the work of Professor Glasgow. The Secretary General recused himself during that item.

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

Q128 Following receipt of the Wilkinson Report as to history and the Glasgow Report referencing impact, has Archbishops' Council engaged in a minuted discussion about whether

- a) written apologies should be offered to the survivors who suffered "significant harm" as a result of hearing of the ISB sackings on public media; and
- b) they should make representations to the Redress Revision Committee that this event should constitute a separate head for compensation within the proposed Redress Scheme?

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

- A** Thank you for your question. As is widely acknowledged the disbanding of the ISB was not a decision made quickly, but in response to a complex series of situations. I want to reiterate what I said to the General Synod in July 2023 "we have made mistakes and that there are things we wished had been done differently". In line with current policy, church leaders and bodies should always be prepared to issue written apologies as appropriate. At present, however the identity of many of the survivors affected directly by the disbanding of the ISB are unknown to the Archbishops' Council.

The Redress Scheme, the architecture of which is set out in a draft Measure which Synod committed for revision in committee in November 2023, will have clear definitions which the assessors will consider, using published and unambiguous criteria. The Scheme is not intended to provide compensation but to provide acknowledgment to those who have suffered abuse as so defined. When the time comes, the Scheme will welcome applications and will help applicants to understand these criteria, which will have a bearing on the suite of resources which will be administered.

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

Q129 In answer to my question 162 at the November 2023 Question and Answer session, by which I sought news of progress in relation to a complaint against the Secretary General delivered on behalf of the survivor Gilo by his solicitor Mr Richard Scorer dated the 23 June 2023, the Archbishop of York promised to provide a substantial update to Mr Scorer.

Eight months after the delivery of the initial letter of complaint and at the time of delivering this question, neither Gilo nor Mr Scorer have received the courtesy of any substantial reply or explanation as to substance, process, neither have they received any invitation to participate in any such inquiry as may exist.

Can the Archbishop of York offer any explanation of these apparent delays and discourtesy?

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

- A** I apologise that no communication has been received by either Gilo or Mr Scorer and I appreciate how frustrating this must be. My understanding is that scoping this task has been more complex than initially thought and that both Gilo and Mr Scorer

will be approached by the auditors as anticipated. Making that approach has been delayed because of needing to deal with a large volume of emails and a Subject Access Request that has been received.

Nevertheless, I am informed it remains the auditor's intention to approach both Gilo and Mr Scorer for any information in relation to the matter raised as soon as they are able to. I am sorry if this has not been clearly communicated but I know all involved are hopeful that progress can be made swiftly and a resolution reached as soon as possible.

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

Q130 On 10th January 2024 Professor David Glasgow, a clinical psychologist, issued a report chronicling the personal and emotional impact of the disbandment of the Independent Safeguarding Board (ISB), and the termination of the contracts of its independent members, on a number of survivors of CofE clerical abuse who, hitherto, had been engaged with those members of the Board. In an interview on the BBC Radio 4 Sunday programme on 28th January 2024, in which Canon Dr Jamie Harrison, representing the Archbishops' Council, appeared with Professor David Glasgow and the Revd Graham Sawyer, Dr Harrison offered Professor Glasgow an apology for not having responded to him earlier when he was in touch with the Church. Is it the case that no response to Professor Glasgow's report, for or on behalf of the Church, was publicly offered until the public media took an interest?

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

A Professor Glasgow's report was not commissioned by the Archbishops' Council, and it was unaware of its contents until it was in the public domain. My apology in fact was relating to a previous contact Professor Glasgow had had with the Church.

The Archbishops' Council commissioned the review by Sarah Wilkinson available in GS 2336 to learn the lessons from the termination of the contracts of members of the former Independent Safeguarding Board. She recommends that all members of the Archbishops' Council should have mandatory training in trauma-informed practice to improve our response to victims and survivors. This is an important point that Professor Glasgow also picked up on. The Archbishops' Council also commissioned Professor Jay to develop proposals through the Future of Church Safeguarding. Those will be available for discussion at this Group of Sessions.

The Revd Robert Thompson (London) to ask the Presidents of the Archbishops' Council:

Q131 During the course of an interview with William Crawley on the BBC Radio 4 Sunday Programme on the 28th January 2024, whilst asserting the need to regain the trust of victims and survivors, Dr Jamie Harrison said "We have got a system in place run by someone called Kevin Crompton, which is trying to respond to those who have been particularly traumatised and upset by the ISB process."

Will you please confirm the (non-commercial) details of any contract which was in place with Kevin Crompton on 28th January when he made this statement including date of commencement, duration and how many reviews had already been commenced as at the date of the statement.

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

A Kevin Crompton, the Interim Commissioner for independent reviews (IC), was recruited and appointed in September 2023 on a contract for 8 days per month, until 31st March 2024, with an option to extend. He was recruited through an independent third-party and his contract is with that agency.

Since then he has engaged with those survivors who have chosen to explore the idea of an 'individual case review' as promised by the former ISB. These

conversations are at different stages as the IC works with survivors to identify and agree appropriate terms of reference and an independent reviewer. Survivors engaging with the IC have requested that their engagement is kept confidential therefore the IC cannot confirm the number at this stage.

The Interim Commissioner has also worked on clarifying the criteria for individual case reviews and worked with survivors to understand what a review means to them. Work has also been required to formalise data protection and contractual issues in order to ensure reviews are independent and comply with GDPR.

The first reviews are on schedule to be commissioned by early March 2024.

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

Q132 Can the Presidents of Archbishops' Council explain to Synod why they have not accepted the invitations sent 20th October and 29th November from the ISB survivors' group to take part in a mediated meeting between the two groups, to agree together a way forward for the individual survivor reviews?

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

A The Archbishops wrote to the coordinator of the ISB survivors' group on 14 December 2023 welcoming his proposal for a meeting and asking him to work with the Interim Commissioner and the National Safeguarding Team to develop a specific proposal for such a discussion. They look forward to seeing that proposal.

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

Q133 Given David Glasgow's report last month that survivors of church abuse suffered 'significant harm' due to the way the ISB was disbanded, apart from lessons learned, what consideration has the Council given to real steps that would be considered holding its own members to account for the decisions on this matter?

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

A The Archbishops' Council continues to reflect in depth on the lessons learned from events leading up to the termination of the contracts of members of the Independent Safeguarding Board as set out in the Wilkinson Report. The Council looks forward to the report from Professor Alexis Jay on the *Future of Church Safeguarding*. The General Synod will have an opportunity to discuss the plan for responding to those reports in this Group of Sessions.

The Archbishops' Council takes its responsibility to survivors of Church abuse seriously, noting that there are many more survivors than those who were working with the ISB. The Bishop of Stepney's plan for taking forward the response to the Wilkinson and Jay reports includes the involvement of survivors. In the meantime, the Interim Support Scheme and the Redress Scheme among other things illustrate the Council's commitment to justice for survivors.

Mrs Vicky Brett (Peterborough) to ask the Presidents of the Archbishops' Council:

Q134 At page 280 of the Transcripts of the July 2023 Synod Alison Coulter is recorded as reporting the priority Archbishops' Council accorded to completing the promised ISB Reviews (provisionally acknowledged as being 10 in number): as at the end of January 2024 has any one of those Reviews been established with a proper signed data sharing protocol in place to reassure the Survivor that lessons have been learned and priority is being accorded to their interests?

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

A It has taken longer than originally envisaged to establish the data protection arrangements required to ensure that case reviews commissioned by the Interim Commissioner comply with the requirements of GDPR and protect the data of

survivors involved in any review. This work is nearing completion, and I am told that some reviews will be commissioned by early March.

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

Q135 In answer to a question (Q.40) by Martin Sewell at York in July 2023 about the response of the Archbishops' Council to a complaint by the former Dean of Christ Church, Oxford, Dr Martyn Percy, into the handling by the Church of safeguarding allegations made against Dr Percy and the setting up of an Independent Review into that complaint, the Archbishop of York informed Synod that the Council *"recognises the importance of this Review... and is giving it active consideration proposing to work jointly with the Diocese of Oxford. We hope, in the near future, to be in a position to consult all interested parties on a proposed way forward."* [See Report of Proceedings, July 2023, page 77.]

On 2nd November 2023 a C of E press release announced that *"A Review Group has been appointed to oversee an independent review process of the handling of alleged safeguarding issues regarding the former Dean of Christ Church, Oxford, Dr Martyn Percy... This is the first Safeguarding Practice Review, formerly known as a learning lesson review, set up under the new Safeguarding Code of Practice approved at General Synod in July. Its aim is to improve safeguarding practice."*

Please identify the 'interested parties' who were to be consulted on the "proposed way forward," state whether (and, if so, when and how) they were consulted before the announcement on 2nd November and, in particular, whether such consultation included consideration of a review that would not only have the aim of improving safeguarding practice but would also be able to hold responsible parties to account for their actions?

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

A In order to answer this question, I am told by the Administrator of the Christ Church Review:

To maintain impartiality, the Christ Church review is being led at arms-length from its commissioners; the Archbishops' Council and the Diocese of Oxford. A list of interested parties, defined as stakeholders, was compiled independently by the Review Group, based on the evidence available. This list of stakeholders remains open to expansion if new information comes to light. However, in the interests of maintaining the data and privacy of those involved the list remains confidential.

I am told that stakeholders were informed of the safeguarding practice review in advance of the announcement and have since been informed of significant notices or changes. Where possible, those who have felt able to participate, have been consulted around Terms of Reference, and in time a choice of reviewer.

The Revd Charlie Skrine (London) to ask the Presidents of the Archbishops' Council:

Q136 Thank you for the publication of *Statistics for Mission 2022* and for the team who produced it. The excellent report did not include a breakdown by Diocese of the age profile of the worshipping community. The figures for the whole Church of England in aggregate are included on p.7. Please could you publish online and on the noticeboard the breakdown by Diocese of those aged 0-17, or 18-69, or over 70, ideally in a comparable format to that used in Table 4, p.24 of *Statistics for Mission 2019*? (If the data exists then it would be helpful to separate out 0-10 and 11-17 as per p.7.)

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

A Thank you for the question. The requested table has been published on the noticeboard. The table contains the worshipping community age breakdown by diocese, in age groups: 0-10; 11-17; 18-69; and 70 and over. Figures for 2019 and 2022 are included to allow a direct comparison to be made.

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

Q137 In February 2017, Synod endorsed the *Setting God's People Free* Report (GS 2056) which had been commissioned by the Archbishops Council. Seven years on, is the Council satisfied that the twin culture changes sought by the Report and endorsed by the General Synod (equipping lay people to follow Jesus confidently in every sphere of life and achieving equal worth and status, complementary gifting and vocation, mutual accountability in discipleship and equal partners in mission between laity and clergy) are fully, deeply and sustainably embedded within the life of the Church of England at all levels (national, diocesan, deanery, parish, chaplaincy and fresh expressions)?

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

A GS 2248 reviewed the implementation of the recommendations of the 2017 report as the programme of work to support this drew to a close, reporting that 29 dioceses and 2,500 worshipping communities engaged. Two ways of communicating the twin culture changes emerged from the programme and continue to have strong and sustained adoption throughout the church— *Everyday Faith* - finding and following God in everyday life and *Enabling ministry* – focusing on how ministry roles animate the vocation and ministry of the whole people of God. Whilst the named programme was completed, the shifts in practice and culture remain a priority within the Church of England's Vision and Strategy in the 2020s, primarily through the priority of becoming a church of missionary disciples and through work on lay vocations supporting the whole mixed ecology. To embed these fully, deeply and sustainably changes is an ongoing challenge for each of us as the 'gathered in' and the 'sent out' church. I am not yet satisfied this is complete but am encouraged by the increasing focus and progress. I am grateful for the opportunity to remind Synod of all our roles in continuing to champion these shifts.

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

Q138 When will the Strategic Mission & Ministry Investment Board report to the General Synod to enable Synod to understand its plans for SDF and LInC funding?

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

A The first annual report of the Strategic Mission and Ministry Investment Board will be published in advance of July General Synod. It will cover the first year of the new funding awarded under the Diocesan Investment Programme and People and Partnerships Funding. It will also report on the use of LinC funding and the SDF programme where there are projects which remain active and under its oversight.

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

Q139 What assessment has been made of the number of central diocesan FTE posts compared with the number of stipendiary parochial posts across the dioceses?

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

A From data collected as part of the Diocesan Finances Reviews exercise that is currently underway, we have figures for the number of people rather than posts as at the end of 2022. At this point in time, there were around 6,500 stipendiary clergy full time and part time posts paid by dioceses and around 1,800 full-time equivalent

lay staff. Of the latter over a third were employed in posts the purpose of which was to resource ministry and mission and just under a third were in posts to provide other support for ministry and mission.

The Revd Kat Campion-Spall (Bristol) to ask the Presidents of the Archbishops' Council:

Q140 With net zero carbon heating solutions reliant on electrical power supply, the installation of radiant heating solutions in particular into church buildings may require a three phase supply of electricity to deliver the power required. Whilst some churches may have a three phase supply to the building they may require a three phase meter to be installed to connect the power required which is the responsibility of the electricity provider, and others may only have a single phase supply to the building requiring installation of both a three phase supply from street level (local power distribution network responsibility) in addition to installation of a three phase meter. How do Parish Buying (and Total Energies as its preferred electricity supplier) plan to facilitate the rapid installation of the services which church buildings may require to help the Church of England meet its net zero carbon target by 2030?

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

A Many churches do not require a three-phase supply to be net zero carbon by 2030. Most of the churches in the Parish Buying energy basket, which comprises an allocation of power generated by the Hornsea wind farm in the North Sea, have a single-phase supply. For many of our smaller churches, small scale interventions which don't require electrical upgrades may be all that is needed. However, Net Zero energy solutions which result in larger electrical loads may require a three-phase supply. The Net Zero Programme has been piloting a Parish Match Funding campaign and electrical upgrades to enable net zero solutions are eligible for support under the scheme. An additional question has been added to The Energy Footprint Tool to ask if a church is currently on a single or three phase supply, so that we can understand strategically the potential scale of the challenge for those larger churches. For Parish Buying churches which do need a three-phase supply and meter, Parish Buying is happy to help facilitate requests to the relevant energy provider and churches should contact their customer service if this is something they require.

The Revd Dr Paul Chamberlain (Portsmouth) to ask the Presidents of the Archbishops' Council:

Q141 How many dioceses are facing annual deficits over the next three to five years, and of what amounts, and what plans are in place at a diocesan and/or national level to mitigate the impact of this on local parochial ministry?

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

A We have recently collected dioceses' forecasts for 2024 and 2025 as part of the Diocesan Finances Review work but the figures have yet to be fully reviewed and verified so cannot be reported on in detail. It is clear that most dioceses forecast deficits in both years.

Generous giving is the most significant part of the Church economy, with giving comprising two-thirds of PCC incomes and parish share comprising a similar proportion of diocesan incomes. The National Giving Strategy and the Parish Share Systems review are examples of recent work aiming to support parishes and dioceses in this area. I encourage those interested in this subject to attend the Tuesday lunchtime fringe meeting on funding support for parish ministry.

The planned review of financial flows that will follow the data analysis phase of the Diocesan Finances Review and the spending plans for 2026-28 are expected to aim to find ways to help parochial ministry thrive.

Dr Simon Eyre (Chichester) to ask the Presidents of the Archbishops' Council:

Q142 Is data available to demonstrate how each Diocese is utilising vacant clergy housing during interregnums to provide much needed additional income but more importantly to provide short term housing to those who need it at a time of considerable shortage?

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

A No such data is available.

The extent to which dioceses are able to let clergy housing during interregna depends on factors such as whether a property requires maintenance and the extent of certainty of the likely length of the vacancy.

Br Philip Dulson (Religious Communities) to ask the Presidents of the Archbishops' Council:

Q143 I understand that The Community of St Anselm was the initiative of the present Archbishop of Canterbury. Has the Archbishops' Council considered any plans for support for the Community to continue in its current format after the Archbishop retires, or will there be changes to the community?

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

A The Community of St Anselm (CoSA) is an initiative which invites young people from all over the world to experience a year of shared life, prayer, study and service whilst living at Lambeth Palace. As well as experiencing religious community life, CoSA members are also involved in practical ministry in hospitals, ports and other settings. It supports the Church of England's vision of a younger and more diverse church and developing missionary disciples. CoSA is managed by an independent board of trustees and is financially supported by the Lambeth Trust and by independent donations. The funding of CoSA has not been raised with or discussed by the Archbishops' Council.

Mrs Jacqueline Stamper (Blackburn) to ask the Presidents of the Archbishops' Council:

Q144 GS Misc 1371 updates the Synod on the rationale for the Council's decision not to progress the successful July 2023 DSM to underwrite a pilot to waive wedding fees to remove barriers to and encourage weddings in church. What is the planned timetable "within the next 12 months" for the broader exploration of the impact of all occasional office fees outlined in GS Misc 1371, in light of Synod's enthusiastic support for the (amended) motion and the particular urgency in areas of deprivation?

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

A Thank you for the question. We are bound, whatever happens, to begin work shortly on a new Fees Order – and we also have to take into account Synod's view on the London DSM which should have been debated on the first day of the present Group of Sessions. This gives us a great opportunity to consider our overall position on Parochial Fees, especially fees for occasional offices. I can assure the questioner that we have heard loud and clear the Synod's support for the issue to be on the table and the pastoral case for fees to be waived. However, I should remind Synod that the enthusiastic support mentioned in the question was for a motion amended to stop short of recommending a complete national waiver of wedding fees. The amendment was passed in good faith but, as it was put forward without an

opportunity for Synod to consider the legal, statistical and practical difficulties of the proposed experimental venture, the best efforts of staff working across several departments failed to find a way to design an experiment that would deliver what Synod had asked for.

Professor Roy Faulkner (Leicester) to ask the Presidents of the Archbishops' Council:

Q145 In 2022 Sir Robert Chote published a CofE-commissioned report on the results of the Vision and Strategy and Low Incomes Communities' funding which started in 2014. £176 million has been invested in these initiatives and only 12,705 new disciples have been recruited instead of the anticipated 89,375. Can the Church Commissioners please indicate what proportion of these 12,705 new disciples were recruited from immigrant communities on the basis of conversion from Islam to Christianity, a result of which being that those who converted were granted entry visa status to the UK?

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

A As we have consistently noted over recent weeks, it is the duty of the Home Office, not the Church of England or any other church, to determine the outcome of asylum and citizenship applications. It is therefore impossible for the church to know what weight, if any, the Home Office has given to the religious affiliation of applicants, since that will be only one of many factors the Home Office must consider and is likely to weigh differently in different cases when the full context of each is taken into account. In terms of SDF, we do not monitor the ethnic or legal background of new disciples.

Regarding the 89,375 figure as has been noted previously, this figure is what SDF projects hope for by their completion date. Most SDF projects are part-way through their delivery; it would be unrealistic to expect their full outcomes until they are completed. The good news is that last October 2023 the updated figure was 26-27,000 new participants, with 19 of the 92 projects awarded having completed their work by December 2023, but not their impact.

The Revd Canon Katrina Scott (St Edmundsbury & Ipswich) to ask the Presidents of the Archbishops' Council:

Q146 Many of our church communities, especially in rural areas, are facing a crisis moment with a struggle to recruit PCC members and officers and so an inability to meet the governance needs of the local church. What steps are the national Church taking to address this and how will this be communicated to local congregations?

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

A While we are sympathetic to the challenges faced by parishes seeking to fill vacancies on PCCs and in other roles, there has been no request for a centralised national intervention or evidence that this would either be welcomed by dioceses or parishes, nor have the desired outcome. Thus, there are no plans to do this at the present time.

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

Q147 Is the Council considering proposing any changes to the Churchwardens Measure 2001 which would assist those parishes unable to find two parishioners willing to undertake the duties and responsibilities of this role?

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

A No.

Mrs Rosemary Lyon (Blackburn) to ask the Presidents of the Archbishops' Council:

Q148 How many dioceses have now cut the number of stipendiary parochial posts in the last five years and by how much?

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

A Clergy HR and deployment data remains managed at the diocesan level. Due to the complexity of collecting and collating it across 42 dioceses and national church institutions, routine national collection isn't planned for the foreseeable future. However, from the data collected as part of the Diocesan Finances Reviews exercise, we know that there were around 6,500 full and part time stipendiary clergy posts paid by dioceses at the end of 2022.

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

Q149 How much Apprenticeship Levy has the Church of England paid since its inception by year, and how much has been spent by the Church of England?

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

A Since the inception of the apprenticeship levy in 2017 the annual Apprenticeship Levy contribution for the clergy payroll and NCI payroll has been approximately £1million p.a. and £250,000 p.a. respectively.

It is not straightforward to invest this money on clergy or other staff apprentices; in the last twelve months only £34,000 has been spent directly from clergy payroll and £73,000 from the NCI staff payroll.

We have no information on the Apprenticeship Levy in relation to other Church of England entities apart from that they are only required to pay it if they have an annual payroll of more than £3m.

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

Q150 Does the Church of England make available its unused apprenticeship levy to other groups and organisations?

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

A The main levy payment is from the clergy payroll, and under HMRC rules we, like all employers, are allowed to transfer 25% of the payments for use with people not on that payroll. Dioceses fund the majority of the clergy payroll and thus the levy payments and they are aware that we can make levy transfers to support DBFs, parishes and other connected organisations in training staff and agree requests as they are submitted.

We have also successfully undertaken work in partnership with others to secure an increase in the funding band for the Church Minister apprenticeship, which was previously unrealistic, and are actively investigating whether this could be practically used to support the training of lay ministers, especially those working with children and young people.

The Revd Dr Brenda Wallace (Chelmsford) to ask the Presidents of the Archbishops' Council:

Q151 Has the Archbishops' Council assessed the risk of decreased numbers of ordinands due to the uncertainty caused by the delay of the House of Bishops introducing new pastoral guidance to replace *Issues in Human Sexuality*?

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

A It is not possible to quantify the specific impact of the uncertainty caused by the planned replacement of *Issues in Human Sexuality*. However, Ministry Council and Archbishops Council are actively engaged in the matter of nurturing vocations of lay and ordained people across the full diversity of the Church, including at the most recent meetings of both bodies. This work has included consideration of all the factors which may be affecting candidates at the present time, including the potential impact of the continued uncertainty around the LLF process.

Mr Chris Gill (Lichfield) to ask the Presidents of the Archbishops' Council:

Q152 What subjects are covered in the syllabus for the Strategic Leadership Development programme, what amount of time is spent on each subject, and what is the reason for this balance?

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

A A high level summary of the Strategic Leadership Development Programme has been placed on the noticeboard.

HOUSE OF BISHOPS

Mr Clive Billenness (Europe) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q153 The NSPCC have recently terminated the contact telephone number dedicated to victims of Church abuse, although the number still appears on a great many diocesan and other church websites. Was the Church of England involved in this termination and if so what steps were taken to alert website managers so that amendments could be made?

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

A The NSPCC line was set up for the period of the Past Case Review 2 process. This specific line was closed on the 31st December 2021, two months after the PCR2 report was published. Dioceses were told about the closure of the helpline on the 30th November 2021 via the Safeguarding Newsletter and the diocesan communicators online handbook. A reminder to remove this number from Diocese and Parish websites was resent in January 2024 via the Safeguarding Newsletter.

Mr Clive Billenness (Europe) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q154 Are guidelines issued on what thresholds have to be met before a report of a safeguarding incident will be accepted as valid by a safeguarding officer and acted upon, and if so where are these published?

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

A Guidelines have been published in relation to what to do and who to speak with when a person identifies potential signs of abuse or harm. The guidance on reporting to statutory authorities and the safeguarding advisor, including the steps that need to be undertaken following a safeguarding concern being raised, are detailed in the "Responding to, assessing and managing safeguarding concerns and allegations against Church Officers" policy. For more information on the definitions of safeguarding and different forms of abuse, including any statutory thresholds, these are available in the ["Safeguarding Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults"](#) House of Bishops' policy.

These documents can be found in the safeguarding e-manual which is in the safeguarding section of the Church of England website.

The Revd Stephen Corbett (Blackburn) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q155 In the light of the recent conversations in Synod, and the IICSA Report and Recommendations, and the emerging anecdotal evidence that, in some dioceses, clergy (and/or family members) are acting as Parish Safeguarding Officers, what are the numbers involved, and is it appropriate for anyone holding a bishop's licence (clergy, laity (LLMs / ALMs) PTO etc) to take on the role of PSO?"

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

A We do not hold PSO numbers centrally.

[Roles and Responsibilities Guidance](#) advises that it is not good practice for a parish's incumbent/their family member to be the PSO. We are aware of difficulties in the recruitment and retention of PSOs and are developing resources to improve the recruitment of and, more importantly, the ongoing support which is provided to

PSOs. Some dioceses report working creatively to get around these issues e.g. pooling resources in a locality or benefice, and we encourage these approaches.

Where a member of clergy is the PSO for an interim period, the PCC must be informed of the reason why, and what plans are in place to try and recruit to the PSO role. It needs to be very clear to people how to contact the DSA directly if someone does not feel comfortable taking a safeguarding concern to the clergy member.

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

Q156 What are the comparative total costs, including billed and accrued, of the following three reviews: Makin, Wilkinson and Jay?

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

A The costs to date of these three reviews are:

Makin:	£600,000
Wilkinson:	£250,000 (final costs)
Jay:	£730,000

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

Q157 In the November 2023 meeting of Synod, I asked (Q191) how the learning from a number of Lessons Learned Reviews (LLRs) such as Gibb on Ball (2017), Robson on Griffin (2022), Cooper on Stowe and Maids Moreton (2022), as well as multiple references in the IICSA hearings (2018-2019) – all of which made a connection between discriminatory policies and attitudes towards LGBT+ people and catastrophic safeguarding failures – can be incorporated into the Church of England's safeguarding work and responsibilities.

The Lead Bishop in her answer responded: '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'.

Would the Lead Bishop update Synod on any developments in regard to safeguarding and the 'thinking around the issues raised by this question in relation to LLF'?

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

A Members of the NST and I, as Lead Bishop for Safeguarding, were glad to meet in November 2023 with the Revd Canon Dr Maltby and a DSA colleague for an initial discussion, and then in January 2024 at the NSSG to receive and discuss Dr Maltby's paper on this issue as highlighted in various LLRs. This paper will shortly be available in the [Safeguarding Training Portal \(cofeportal.org\)](https://cofeportal.org)

The NST will continue its thematic monitoring of all LLRs, paying attention to this theme and will do further learning and development work as priorities and resources permit. The Theology and Safeguarding Group will also be asked to review the paper and suggest further work, in coordination with the LLF team.

Mrs Margaret Sheather (Southwark) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q158 The Church has a very substantial resource of independent expertise and experience available to it in the independent chairs of the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisory Panels. How is it intended to engage specifically with them in the forthcoming work set out in GS 2336?

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

A The Archbishops' Council has commissioned a Response Group which will oversee wider engagement and further reflection regarding the Wilkinson and Jay Reports in order to brief the National Safeguarding Steering Group (NSSG) and then advise the House of Bishops and the Archbishops' Council. Following this, the response to these reports will be presented to General Synod for debate.

We issued open calls to survivors, Archdeacons, Diocesan Safeguarding Advisers, Cathedral safeguarding leads and Diocesan Safeguarding Advisory Panel Chairs to invite expressions of interest. We have found that open calls of this nature are a welcome step towards a more open approach to national projects, and people have come forward whose interest in this work was not already known to us. We expect to be able to appoint an independent chair of a Diocesan Safeguarding Advisory Panel to the Group.

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

Q159 Can the House of Bishops explain the process by which Keith Makin was selected to conduct the review of John Smyth QC, clarifying what due diligence was conducted (and by whom) to ensure his suitability prior to his appointment?

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

A Keith Makin was appointed by a former Interim Director of Safeguarding, Sir Roger Singleton in 2019, following an interview process. Keith Makin was appointed for his extensive knowledge of and background in safeguarding. He has been a Director of Social Services, a Chief Executive of an independent childcare company and the Director of a Local Government Improvement Agency. He has led on a large number of abuse inquiries and reviews for both children and adults.

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

Q160 Noting that a Domestic Abuse awareness module is now a part of core Safeguarding training, what steps are being taken to ensure that domestic abuse is always included in any discussion of safeguarding?

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

A Recommendation 26 of the PCR2 report made clear that Church bodies **must improve** their awareness of domestic abuse (DA).

Performance information tells us that the current online training module is being accessed and having an impact on individuals' knowledge in terms of DA. The current module is being revised and developed utilising the group dialogical approach to learning to ensure that DA is spoken about openly and confidently within our Church communities, with the language of DA becoming increasingly integrated within our culture.

The current revisions include the development of seven 20-minutes sections, each starting with a short audio/video clip introducing the subject and posing questions for discussion, the session will end with a final audio/video clip to draw out the key points in practice and culture.

In addition, we have partnered with Mothers' Union and Restored to raise the profile of DA and create resources to support parishes.

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

Q161 Is there an upper limit on the number of hours in preparation of the Makin report and, if so, how many of these hours remain?

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

A There has never been a limit set on the number of hours that Keith Makin and his team can work to ensure the delivery of this report. A time limit has never been set

as it has always been imperative that this review should be completed independently and to a high level. The NST has actively encouraged and will pay for Keith Makin to bring in additional support and resources to conclude this review.

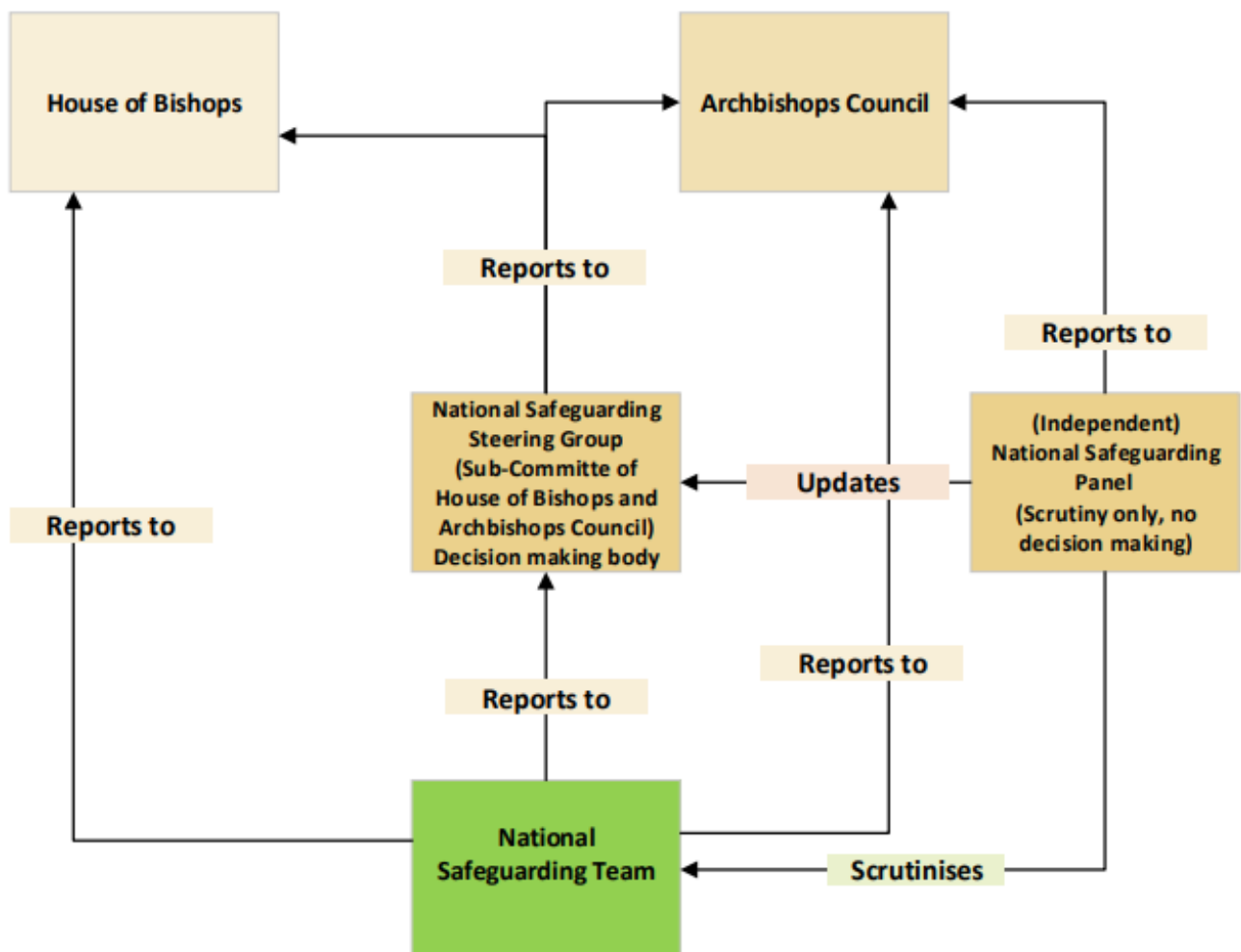
Professor Helen King (Oxford) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q162 'The NSSG is a committee of both the House and the [Archbishops'] Council' (GS 2336): Can Synod be issued with a chart summarising the current relationships between the NSP, NST, NSSG, Archbishops' Council and House of Bishops?

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

A The diagram below shows the Governance and Reporting structure as requested.

Governance and Reporting Structure



Mr Ian Johnston (Portsmouth) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q163 What has the most recently available annual cost of safeguarding been in:
 (a) our Diocesan managements; and
 (b) the NCIs and related bodies?

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

A Safeguarding within dioceses is a diocesan responsibility rather than a National Church responsibility. We do not have sufficiently recent data to be able to provide full costs but, from the work carried out so far on the Diocesan Financial Review, it is possible to say that at the end of 2022 there were a total of 153 FTE diocesan staff employed in a safeguarding capacity.

The NCIs' National Safeguarding function sits within the Archbishops' Council. Total expenditure of the National Safeguarding Team in 2022 was £5,330,000. This included grants to partially recompense dioceses for work in respect of the Past Case Review 2 (£0.8m) and funds payable to survivors from the Interim Support Scheme (£0.5m).

Safeguarding is built into and seen as foundational to work across all the NCIs. As such, it is not possible to quantify the cost of safeguarding activities at national church level outside the figures disclosed above in respect of the National Safeguarding Team. Work, and hence costs, will also take place in other departments such as the Legal Office, The Central Secretariat etc.

Mrs Tina Nay (Chichester) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q164 Can you please provide a list of every Safeguarding Review paid by the National Church since 2013 indicating where they can be found in the public domain. In your answer please reference numbers involved and the progress stages reached to enable Synod to evaluate developments since June 21st 2023 when ISB was closed?

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

A All the Safeguarding reports commissioned by the National Church are on the Church of England website [Reviews and reports | The Church of England](#) In January 2024 the National Safeguarding Steering Group reviewed the progress of the recommendations for these reviews.

The word limitation does not allow for the reports to be listed in this answer; however, they can be viewed on the above link.

Miss Prudence Dailey (Oxford) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q165 What procedures exist for the enforcement of the provisions of Canon F 16.1, namely that 'When any church or chapel is to be used for a play, concert, or exhibition of films or pictures, the minister shall take care that the words, music, and pictures are such as befit the House of God, are consonant with sound doctrine, and make for the edifying of the people'?

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

A It is always preferable if any concerns of this nature are addressed informally, by communication with those responsible, in the first instance. If they cannot be resolved in that way, then in the case of a parish church, the provisions of Canon F 16.1 could in principle be enforced by the consistory court and, potentially, under the Clergy Discipline Measure 2003 if the minister was personally at fault. In the case of a cathedral church, they could be enforced by way of visitation by the bishop and again, potentially under the Clergy Discipline Measure 2003 if an individual minister or ministers were personally at fault but in the case of a cathedral it is likely that any relevant decision will have been taken by the Chapter as a body rather than by individual ministers.

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

Q166 In relation to a "Tweet" (X) relating to "Blue Monday" posted on 15th Jan 2024 by the @churchofengland X account, what advice from mental health authorities or mental health charities was sought before the post was made?

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

A The Church of England's mental health resources, linked in the post mentioned, have been collated by The Church of England's advisers for medical ethics and liturgy in consultation with appropriate external bodies.

We are looking to update the existing support and add more resources to the Church of England website this year, as thousands of messages from those looking for help are sent nationally to the Church of England each year on social media.

We also use our social media channels proactively to share prayers and resources around mental health.

All social media posts are subject to an internal signoff process.

The Revd Canon James Blandford-Baker (Ely) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q167 A recent survey put the Church of England 13th in terms of public trust, behind the police, the BBC, and the Civil Service. What consideration has the House of Bishops given to this, and what actions have they considered in order to rebuild trust?

The Bishop of St Edmundsbury & Ipswich to reply on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops:

A As part of the Transforming Effectiveness Programme, since the summer of 2022, I have led a small working group and wider reference group with a brief to understand the issues of trust and mistrust for the Church of England; and to identify behaviours and practices that can improve trust for the Church. A trust expert from the University of Bristol has interviewed a range of Church of England clergy and laity, and the project has also attended to what makes other organisations trustworthy. The group will be asking the Business Committee for an item at the July 2024 Group of Sessions to present its findings, seeking to offer a theologically-based wisdom of trust that can benefit the Church internally and within wider society.

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

Q168 What consideration has the House of Bishops given to the increase in Parliamentary business involving the Lords Spiritual (as evidenced, between the 2021-22 and the 2022-23 sessions, by an increase of 136% in the aggregate number of written & oral questions, which they asked) and the consequent effect upon the ability of the House to function satisfactorily?

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

A The increase in the number of oral and written questions asked by the Lords Spiritual between the 2021-22 session and 2022-23 session has had no effect on the ability of the House of Bishops to function satisfactorily. The tabling and asking of oral and written questions is not so time-consuming that it would have such an impact. Lords Spiritual are supported in their work by the NCIs' Parliamentary Team, which is a part of the Faith and Public Life Team. Many Lords Spiritual also employ a dedicated parliamentary researcher, either situated in the Parliamentary Team or in the diocese. These are often part-time or shared posts. Research assistance enables bishops to effectively fulfil their complementary roles as diocesan bishop and parliamentarian, without detriment to either.

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

Q169 What involvement has there been of the respected anti-racism group 'Don't Divide Us' in the development of thinking and planning for addressing issues of race in the Church?

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

- A** 'Don't Divide Us', a grassroots movement that emerged in 2020, contests the idea that Britain is systematically racist. They reject the proposition that racial prejudice is embedded in educational, cultural and legal institutions. While their concern that every individual should be treated as "worthy of respect regardless of race, religion or the colour of their skin" is laudable, as is their desire to overcome divisions in society, their approach to racism seems at variance with the view taken by many in the Church, particularly following Synod's vote in 2020 apologising for the racism experienced by the Windrush generation, and Archbishop Justin's apology and statement he believed that there was 'no doubt' that the Church of England was still 'deeply institutionally racist'.

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

- Q170** Given the 30% decline in adult attendance over the last ten years, what consideration has the House of Bishops given to a corresponding 30% reduction in the number of archdeacons, suffragan, and diocesan bishops, and central diocesan staff, and with what result—and if none, when are they likely to consider this?

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

- A** The House of Bishops has had no such discussions.
- The Archbishops' Council has commissioned a review of diocesan finances and I look forward to considering the findings.

Miss Debbie Buggs (London) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

- Q171** Given the College of Bishops is not a formally constituted body, when and why did the House of Bishops start taking note of its votes? Please provide a list of all matters voted on by the College which were noted by the House of Bishops in the last 10 years.

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

- A** Thank you for your question. Members of the House of Bishops, in making decisions, have always had regard to the views of others in the Church of England, including those of other suffragan bishops. Episcopal discussions have long been enriched by the more diverse representation of the wider College of Bishops.
- Discussions in the College of Bishops are not minuted and therefore it is not possible to answer the second part of this question.

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

- Q172** What decisions has the House of Bishops and/or its Standing Committee taken as to (a) holding all the House's meetings in public unless it has identified and publicly recorded specific reasons why a specific meeting or part of it needs to be held in private; and (b) the House's future practice relating to the publication of the minutes of its meetings, in particular those which (i) record the House's formal resolutions and the voting numbers in relation to those resolutions; and (ii) the reasoning necessary to enable non-members of the House to understand the basis of its decisions?

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

- A** Thank you for your question.
- As set out in the answer to questions 173 and 174 below, the House of Bishops has established a working group to advise it on steps that may be taken to look at various areas including transparency and Standing Order 14. Those answers also set out the terms of reference for this work. In the interim the House of Bishops has agreed to publish a summary of actions and decisions. This is available on the website at [House of Bishops | The Church of England](#).

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

Q173 In the light of the welcome publication of fuller notes from recent meetings of the House and College of Bishops, when will fuller notes from the meeting of Oct 9th be made available, and what plans are in place to remove the misuse of standing orders to keep meetings of the House of Bishops, a house of this publicly accountable Synod, a secret?

Mrs Catherine Butcher (Chichester) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q174 Will the House of Bishops in future report all its formal decisions and the voting figures as it has apparently now done in relation to the meetings in November and December 2023?

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

A Thank you for your questions. With your permission chair, I intend to answer these questions 173 and 174 together.

I want to reiterate what I said to the Synod in November. We have set up a working group to advise on these areas and the Terms of Reference are set out below.

“Terms of Reference

1. To review the operating procedures and practices of the House of Bishops and to make recommendations to the House of Bishops for changes which can improve the effectiveness and in particular transparency of the way in which the House works with a view to increasing confidence in its work across the church.
2. To consider whether aspects of the membership and constitution of the House – for example on voting rights for suffragan bishops covering a diocesan vacancy could be improved.
3. The group will comprise the Archbishop of York, the Bishop of Dudley, Andrew Atherstone, Charlotte Cook, Margaret Swinson and Michelle Tackie, supported by staff as necessary. It may bring in others as necessary for its discussions.
4. Proposals that would involve legislation, amendments to Standing Orders are not out of scope. However, noting that such changes would take time and are not always in the gift of the House, the Group is invited also to consider other “quick wins”.
5. It intends to meet at least three times with a view to producing proposals for the May House of Bishops.”

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

Q175 What dates did the House of Bishops meet in 2022 and 2023, and what dates will it meet in 2024?

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

A Details are set out below.

In 2022 the House of Bishops met on:

- Thursday 24 March
- Monday 9 to Wednesday 11 May
- Monday 6 June
- Thursday 14 July
- Monday 26 September
- Tuesday 29 November

In 2023 the House of Bishops met on:

- Tuesday 17 January
- Monday 30 January

- Monday 15 to Wednesday 17 May
- Wednesday 7 June
- Tuesday 18 July
- Monday 9 October
- Monday 30 October to Wednesday 1 November
- Wednesday 29 November
- Tuesday 12 December

In 2024 the House of Bishops met briefly on 19 January at the end of the College of Bishops. Further meetings are scheduled for:

- Wednesday 20 March
- Wednesday 15 to Friday 17 May
- Monday 15 July
- Tuesday 22 to Wednesday 23 October
- Tuesday 10 December

Further meetings may be scheduled at the decision of the Standing Committee.

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

Q176 GS 2338 (page 4) Racial Justice report highlighted unfair recruitment and progression systems for GMH clergy, suggesting that racism and discrimination may hinder their advancement. How will the appointments process for senior clerical roles ensure that GMH clergy who opt not to use PLF due to conscience, aren't doubly disadvantaged when seeking progression?

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

A As a Church we are committed to addressing both the past and present consequences of racism wherever possible. As part of this, our national vision and strategy commits us to becoming more diverse so that we can represent the people we seek to serve. That diversity includes our ethnic diversity and our theological convictions, and we are committed to working towards becoming a church where all can flourish.

The Pastoral Guidance says that “no minister can be made to use a form of service against their conscience, and no incumbent may override a decision by the PCC not to offer the prayers in that parish”. The Bishop of Leicester’s suggested commitments for Living in Love, Faith and Reconciliation include at item 4 “we will ask all bishops to commit to supporting all clergy and lay ministers whether they use the PLF or not.”

The Church is also committed to implementing recommendation 7 under “Participation” of “*From Lament To Action*” that said shortlists for Senior Clergy Appointments (Archdeacon, Residentiary Canon, Dean, Bishops) should include at least one appointable UKME/GMH candidate provides positive action to ensure GMH/UKME clergy are considered for senior positions.

Mr Charles Houston (Hereford) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q177 In February 2022 I asked why the Eco Church process failed to include a section on Sustainable Church Flowers (suschurchflowers.com) which importantly highlights the damage to the environment from the widespread use of floral foam (Oasis) and the promotion of seasonal decorations locally sourced – grown not flown.

The answer was that “we’ve not, as yet, engaged... at national level” and “Individual parishes can make up their own minds”.

Whilst there has been much good work in some Dioceses (Hereford, Oxford and others), when will those centrally responsible engage with this?

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

A Local churches are increasingly aware of this issue. A grant from All Churches Trust enabled A Rocha to develop new supportive resources for local churches to address this directly.

The A Rocha Eco Church website now has two resources to help churches become more sustainable when it comes to church flowers. This document, [Church Flowers and Sustainability](#), encourages churches to use locally grown, seasonal flowers, gives advice about alternatives to floral foam, and suggests that people ask florists to wrap flowers in brown paper instead of plastic. The second document includes [case studies](#) so that people have some real-world examples of how to make the change.

The Eco Church survey itself is currently being re-drafted, and the new survey will include reference to sustainable flowers and flower arranging materials.

Professor Lynn Nichol (Worcester) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q178 In the light of recent legislation banning single use cutlery and food containers within the food industry, will the House of Bishops encourage the elimination of single use plastic in all places of worship, in particular the consumption of cellophane-wrapped flowers and floral foam (a single use plastic, that breaks down to microplastics), many of which are still being used in most churches throughout the UK?

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

A Local churches are increasingly aware and looking for ways to cut down on single use plastics.

The best way I have found to encourage sustainable actions within our churches is to encourage churches to participate in the A Rocha Eco Church scheme.

The scheme suggests that churches do not use single-use plastic cups, plates or cutlery, instead steers them towards reusable or at least compostable products.

A Rocha have also produced two resources to help churches become more sustainable when it comes to church flowers. This document, [Church Flowers and Sustainability](#), encourages churches to use locally grown, seasonal flowers, gives advice about alternatives to floral foam, and suggests that people ask florists to wrap flowers in brown paper instead of plastic. The second document includes [case studies](#) so that people have some real-world examples of how to make the change.

The Diocese of Sheffield recently hosted an Eco Church celebration and invited the renowned floral designer [Jonathan Moseley](#) to run workshops on sustainable flower displays.

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

Q179 What efforts have dioceses made towards the net zero carbon goal set by General Synod in 2020?

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

A While dioceses are all at different points on the road towards Net Zero, all dioceses are working to improve their understanding of their carbon footprint and using this to prioritise next steps. Dioceses have been commissioning and taking prioritised Net Zero Carbon Action Plans to their Diocesan Synods and all are engaging with the capacity building grants being made available through the Net Zero Carbon Programme (NZCP).

Every diocese is engaging in some way and, in total, to date:

- 18 dioceses have come together to form 6 collaborative clusters to work together on Net Zero;
- 13 Dioceses have submitted demonstrator church nominations in the first round;
- 4 dioceses are participating in the housing decarbonisation pilot; and
- 2 dioceses are piloting a parish Match Funding Campaign

The NZCP team are about to invite Dioceses to report on their Net Zero activities in the first year of the Net Zero Programme. The information gathered will inform the first Annual Progress Report for the Programme.

The Revd Canon Mark Bennet (Oxford) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q180 How many Dioceses have published a robust and credible plan which will lead to them achieving net zero by 2030?

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

A Routemap Milestone 4.1.4 asked all Diocesan Synods to consider developing and agreeing a costed Net Zero Carbon Action Plan for their diocese (ideally by the end of 2023). Many dioceses have either presented their plan at Diocesan Synod or are well on the way to doing so. But dioceses are not all starting from the same position, and some have not had the resources to tackle milestone 4.1.4 in any meaningful way. With support from the Net Zero Programme through the capacity building grant scheme, dioceses have been able to secure additional staff capacity to support the development and implementation of their Net Zero Carbon Action Plans but many of the people recruited are either very new in post or yet to assume their roles.

The NZCP team are about to invite Dioceses to report on their Net Zero activities in the first year of the Net Zero Programme and this will include a progress update on Milestone 4.1.4. The information gathered will inform the first Annual Progress Report for the Programme, which will provide a fuller response to the question.

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

Q181 Under the A Rocha Eco Church Scheme how many Churches, Dioceses and other church buildings have achieved Gold, Silver and Bronze awards?

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

A As of end January 2024, 4671 churches had registered with the Eco Church scheme. Of those, 1505 have achieved the bronze award, 597 the silver award, and 23 the gold award.

20 Cathedrals have reached the bronze award, 15 silver and 2 gold. 3 more cathedrals have registered for the award and are working towards bronze. Every diocese is registered to become an Eco Diocese. 26 have reached the bronze award. We will be able to announce a silver diocese very soon.

Diocesan offices can also gain an award. 23 have reached bronze and 8 have reached silver. Church House Westminster gained the silver award just this week.

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

Q182 How many churches participated in Churches Count on Nature in 2023 and will it be repeated in 2024?

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

A Churches Count on Nature is hosted as a partnership between the Church of England, the Church in Wales, A Rocha UK and Caring for God's Acre. It is a week when churches are encouraged to invite people to events in their churchyard and take notice of the nature which they can see. It is an opportunity for churches to

connect with their local community and to celebrate the natural beauty in our churchyards. Participants can record the different species of plants and trees, birds, mammals and insects which can be found in our churchyards. Noticing and appreciating the biodiversity on the land around our churches is the first step towards protecting it.

364 churches registered to participate in Churches Count on Nature in 2023, compared to 268 in 2022. 460 people registered to join one or more of the webinars on nature and biodiversity hosted by the Environment Programme and Caring for God's Acre during the week. Over 27,000 wildlife records have been submitted during this dedicated week over the past two years.

Churches Count on Nature will be repeated in 2024, taking place from Saturday 8th to Sunday 16th June, at the same time as [Love Your Burial Ground Week](#).

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

Q183 I thank the Bishop of Lichfield for his answer 121 on the July 2023 answer paper. Could I therefore ask the Standing Commission what is the operating definition of "mutual flourishing" and how they expect to a) monitor and b) demonstrate it?

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

A Thinking around "mutual flourishing" is set out in [The Five Guiding Principles: A Resource for Study](#) written and published by the Faith and Order Commission in 2018 following calls for more theological commentary on the [House of Bishops' 2014 Declaration](#). This builds on the Declaration itself which considers mutuality in paragraphs 14 and 15. The Standing Commission works to these two documents and would not wish to create its own definition of "mutual flourishing", but it might be helpful to point to two key lines in these documents. In paragraph 14 of the Declaration: *Mutuality reflects the Church of England's wider commitment to sustaining diversity. It means that those of differing conviction will be committed to making it possible for each other to flourish.* And in the Resource for Study, page 36: *Flourishing means that we fulfil God's purpose for us, and the purpose of the church is communion with one another in the Lord Jesus Christ through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.*

The Standing Commission's terms of reference do not specifically ask it to monitor "mutual flourishing", but rather expects it "to consider how effectively the Declaration, including the Five Guiding Principles, is being promoted throughout the Church." As such, all pieces of work undertaken by the Standing Commission are held against this remit and include ensuring that "mutual flourishing" is taking place across the Church. The Standing Commission demonstrates its commitment to "mutual flourishing" in its membership, meetings and pieces of work.

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

Q184 Paragraph 24 of the House of Bishops' Declaration protects the right of a parish whose theological convictions mean they do not wish to have a woman as incumbent, from the patron insisting on appointing a woman. In the light of the value of reciprocity, does the same principle apply if a parish's theological conviction supports the appointment of an incumbent who is a woman, supports equal ministry or offers prayers of love and faith?

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

A The House of Bishops' Declaration on the Ministry of Bishops and Priests provides arrangements for those whose theological conviction leads them to seek the priestly or episcopal ministry of men. However, should the bishop or parish representatives become aware that a patron had excluded women from consideration for

appointment to a parish where no such arrangements were in place, it would be open to any of them to withhold the approval that is required by section 13 of the Patronage (Benefices) Measure 1986 before the patron may make of an offer to a priest to present him for institution to a benefice. The House of Bishops' Declaration does not cover areas other than those pertaining to the ministry of ordained men and women.

The Revd Canon Alice Kemp (Bristol) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q185 In July 2022 the Synod committed to work towards the removal all remaining barriers to full participation for disabled people in the life and ministry of the Church (GS 2270). The provisions of Canon C 4, however, have the potential to reinforce these barriers. Accepting that discerning a vocation is not a tick box exercise and that bishops carry the ultimate responsibility for decisions on ordination, Canon C 4 leaves open the possibility that decisions continue to be made about disabled people without input from those with knowledge and understanding of their disability. Will the House of Bishops please tell the Synod when it intends to set up a working group, which will include people with relevant lived experience and expertise, to come up with a way to ensure good practice across the dioceses, within a limited time period?

The Revd Kat Campion-Spall (Bristol) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q186 Could the House of Bishops reassure Synod and disabled people that any Bishop who is considering using Canon C 4.3 will consult fully with all relevant parties, including with the disabled candidate and with well-informed experts, and take steps to ensure that the Canon is not interpreted in a way that automatically excludes a disabled candidate?

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

A With permission I will answer questions 185 and 186 together.

Canon Kemp asked a similar question in November. No working group to consider this is planned because the House of Bishops are 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 advice of the Legal Office remains 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.

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

Q187 What measures are in place, or what process should be used, if a lay person experiences discrimination, prejudice or exclusion by their clergy or church community relating to neurodiversity eg autism or ADHD?

The Revd Canon Alice Kemp (Bristol) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q188 What measures are in place at a national or diocesan level to support an autistic priest experiencing discrimination from colleagues, incumbent or diocese due to lack of understanding or adjustments?

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

A With permission I will answer questions 187 and 188 together.

How we treat one another matters and I welcome the discussions of GS 2335, GS 2337 and GS 2339 in this session of Synod, each of which have value in addressing these questions. The Church as the Body of Christ should be a place where all can find a welcome in the name of Christ and this welcome should include reasonable

adaptations and adjustments to enable all to find their place and use their gifts. Where we fall short of this, then normal pastoral support, and if necessary complaint and disciplinary channels, should be employed.

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

Q189 In his answer to Question 209 in November 2023, the Chair of Ministry Council disclosed that the figure for those recommended for ordination training in 2023 was down by 36% on the equivalent figure for 2020. The actual decline is believed to be higher, with some candidates deferring the start of their training last autumn. What consideration has the House of Bishops given in their recent meetings to this decline and its impact on Theological Education Institutions, with what outcome, and leading to what actions?

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

A Several points need to be made in response:

1. Synod should not conflate the number of people recommended for training with the number actually entering training (as there is always a difference between the two due to deferrals).
2. In 2020, 591 people were recommended for training and 582 entered training. In 2023, 379 people were recommended for training and 342 entered training. Thus, between 2020 and 2023 there was a 36% drop in the number of candidates recommended and a 41% drop the number of people entering training.
3. With regard to support for the TEI sector, the Ministry Development Team took swift action in September 2023 to provide temporary additional financial support and a full assessment of the financial circumstances of all TEIs is being commissioned.
4. I gently request care in wording questions: some would interpret the word 'disclosed' to imply an unwilling sharing of information. Whilst I am sure this is not the intended meaning, I stress that I willingly answer all questions as fully as I can.

The Revd Canon James Blandford-Baker (Ely) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q190 What objections are the House of Bishops aware of to the need for a Common Syllabus for ordination training, in order to avoid embedding structural theological division in the Church?

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

A This question rests upon an unfounded assertion; there is no consensus that there is a need for a common syllabus for Ordination training, nor has any compelling case been made for one. Further, any such syllabus would require a high degree of centralised control, and could limit the proper exercise of Higher Education, raise concerns about the respect of distinctive traditions within the church and potentially limit the ability of those involved in forming future deacons and priests to be creative and innovative. Such innovation is key to our ability to meet the missional challenges we face and is currently being supported with the new £2million per annum RMF Innovation Fund.

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

Q191 What national framework is in place that sets out expectations of continued theological learning by bishops?

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

- A** While there is no framework specified for the continued theological learning by Bishops, in common with Deacons and Priests, at their ordination Bishops commit themselves to being “diligent in prayer, in reading Holy Scripture, and in all studies that will deepen your faith and fit you to bear witness to the truth of the gospel”.

The Revd Canon Kate Massey (Coventry) to ask the Chair of Ministry Council:

- Q192** Following the GS 2122 motion passed in February 2019 re estates ministry, what strategy is in place to fulfil these commitments and monitor progress?

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

- A** The Ministry Development Team and Ministry Council together with the Vision and Strategy Team are committed to supporting the work of the Estates Evangelism Task Group which is providing a focal point to take GS2122 forward. I am therefore pleased that we have time in this sitting of General Synod to consider GS 2345 on Estates Evangelism.

The Revd Canon Kate Massey (Coventry) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops

- Q193** Following the GS 2122 motion passed in February 2019 re estates ministry, what proportion of ordinands/licensed leaders come from our bottom income 25% parishes, and what is being done to increase leadership representation from those contexts?

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

- A** The requested data are not readily available, but the Ministry Development Team and Ministry Council now monitor the socio-economic background of candidates within the national discernment system for ordained vocations using established metrics from the Social Mobility Commission. In 2022/23 25% of candidates were from working class backgrounds, as against 39% of the wider population. 17% were from a free school meal background, as against 15% of the wider population.

We continue to take steps to address this, including supporting the proposed follow up work from the ‘Let Justice Roll’ report into working class clergy wellbeing, which Ministry Council unanimously endorsed at our 12 February 2024 meeting.

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

- Q194** In view of the widespread reports of poor clergy morale, particularly amongst those who have a decade or more of experience of incumbency, what consideration has the House of Bishops given to this issue in their meetings over the last 12 months and with what outcome?

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

- A** The House of Bishops has discussed this indirectly in items on – amongst other things – discussions of clergy housing, Living in Love and Faith and on diocesan finances. Subject to the decisions of the Standing Committee I hope the House will have an opportunity to discuss in more depth in Spring 2024.

Mr Adrian Greenwood (Southwark) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

- Q195** The Covenant for Clergy Care & Well-being (GS 2133) was approved by General Synod in July 2019 following a long period of consultation within and beyond Synod. The Covenant was affirmed and proclaimed as an Act of Synod on 10 February 2020 (GS 2153 and GS Misc 1246). Since then the COVID 19 pandemic has come and, mostly, gone. Is the House broadly satisfied with the ‘roll-out’ of the Covenant across the Dioceses and what feed-back has been received about the difference it has made to clergy care and well-being, especially during and following the COVID 19 pandemic?

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

A I have recently taken on chairing the clergy covenant implementation group, which has been without a chair for some considerable time. The intention is to have discussions at the House of Bishops on Clergy Wellbeing in the very near future as we are aware of the need to do more work in this area.

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

Q196 It is known that marriage is of great benefit to the whole of society, massively boosting the stability of relationships so enhancing the wellbeing of children, yet marriage rates are falling in England. Since, the House of Bishops has consistently stated it upholds the doctrine of the Church of England as set out in Canon B 30, what evidence can the House provide to demonstrate its support for promoting the practice and pattern of marriage, both within the Church and in the 'public square', including through the Lords Spiritual?

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

A In December, the Archbishop of Canterbury's annual House of Lords debate focussed on *Love Matters*, the report of the Archbishops' Commission on Families and Households. This report has had a wide circulation, both within the church and among numerous secular bodies.

The report mentions the word 'marriage' over 250 times, and it speaks of scripture and tradition combining to present marriage in positive terms embodying fidelity and life-long commitment, as well as for the procreation and raising of children.

Within the debate, I spoke on the importance of supporting those entering marriage through promoting pre-marriage courses. He asked the Government to consider requiring registrars to signpost couples considering marriage to such courses to prepare them for healthy and lasting marriages. The Government minister responded that he would reflect on his suggestion and respond in writing.

I also spoke on including marriage in relationship education within schools and stated that 'we believe that marriage, with the seriousness of the vows undertaken and the covenant made, is the best option'.

To collate the numerous other occasions when bishops and others have publicly promoted the virtues of marriage is a task beyond our present capacity.

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

Q197 The preliminary reports of the *Statistics for Mission* for 2023 show a decline in attendance of 30% for adults and 40% for children over the last ten years, and no sign of this decline slowing. How many sessions of meetings of the House of Bishops have focused on this issue, and with what outcomes?

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

A The response to these statistics is the priorities and outcomes of the vision and strategy. Both residential meetings of the House of Bishops in 2023 – in May and September – included substantial time on the vision and strategy of the Church of England to grow younger and more diverse. In October, the bishops committed to diocesan strategies that focus resources on ensuring that there is a flourishing children's, youth and families' ministry within reach of each young person. They spent time learning from one another on different approaches and reflecting on the possibilities in rural, urban and intercultural contexts.

SECRETARY GENERAL

Mr Timothy Hamilton (Exeter) to ask the Secretary General:

Q198 General Synod's new online question submissions system has helpfully highlighted the range of Church of England commissions and bodies that are currently in operation. Would the Secretary General kindly provide a list of the chair of each commission and when it was established? The full list is below:

Presidents of the Archbishops' Council; Chair of the House of Bishops; Chair of the House of Clergy; Chair of the House of Laity; Secretary General; Clerk to the Synod; Chair of the Audit Committee; Chair of the National Society Council; Chair of the Church Buildings Council; Chair of the Council for Christian Unity; Chair of the Finance Committee of the Archbishops' Council; Chair of the Ministry Council; Chair of the Central Readers Council; Chair of the Committee for Ministry of and among Deaf and Disabled People; Chair of the Remuneration & Conditions of Service Committee; Chair of the Committee for Minority Ethnic Anglican Concerns; Chair of the Mission & Public Affairs Council; Chair of the Appointments Committee; Chair of the Business Committee; Chair of the Legislative Committee; Chair of the Rule Committee; Chair of the Standing Orders Committee; Chair of the Cathedrals Fabric Commission; Chair of the Clergy Discipline Commission; Chair of the Crown Nominations Commission; Chair of the Dioceses Commission; Chair of the Faith & Order Commission; Chair of the Fees Advisory Commission; Chair of the Legal Advisory Commission; Chair of the Legal Aid Commission; Chair of the Liturgical Commission; The Church Commissioners; Chair of the Pensions Board; The Corporation of the Church House; Chair of the Ethical Investment Advisory Group

William Nye to reply as Secretary General:

A The table below sets out the Chair of each body. Many of these bodies have been in existence for decades and have been reformed over time to meet changing needs of the Church. I regret that it is not possible to find and list the dates of establishment for all of these bodies within the deadline of publication of answers to Questions. We will therefore come back to you with these dates after Synod.

Body	Chair
Presidents of the Archbishops' Council	Archbishop of Canterbury and Archbishop of York
Chair of the House of Bishops	Archbishop of Canterbury
Chair of the House of Clergy	The Ven Luke Miller (and the Revd Kate Wharton). The Chair is alternated every 12 months.
Chair of the House of Laity	Canon Dr Jamie Harrison
Secretary General	William Nye
Clerk to the Synod	Jenny Jacobs
Chair of the Audit Committee of the Archbishops' Council	Maureen Cole
Chair of the National Society Council	The Rt Revd Jonathan Frost
Chair of the Church Buildings Council	Jennifer Page
Chair of the Council for Christian Unity	The Rt Revd Jonathan Baker
Chair of the Finance Committee of the Archbishops' Council	Carl Hughes
Chair of the Ministry Council	The Rt Revd Mark Tanner
Chair of the Central Readers Council	Imogen Clout
Chair of the Committee for Ministry of and among Deaf and Disabled People	The Rt Revd Richard Atkinson

Chair of the Remuneration & Conditions of Service Committee	The Rt Revd Richard Jackson
Chair of the Committee for Minority Ethnic Anglican Concerns	The Very Revd Rogers Govender
Chair of the Mission & Public Affairs Council	Mark Sheard
Chair of the Appointments Committee	The Ven Pete Spiers
Chair of the Business Committee	Canon Robert Hammond
Chair of the Legislative Committee	Archbishop of Canterbury and Archbishop of York
Chair of the Rule Committee	The Rt Worshipful Morag Ellis KC
Chair of the Standing Orders Committee	The Revd Canon Joyce Jones
Chair of the Cathedrals Fabric Commission	Dame Fiona Reynolds
Chair of the Clergy Discipline Commission	The Rt Hon Lady Justice Sarah Asplin DBE
Chair of the Crown Nominations Commission	Archbishop of Canterbury (Chair) and Archbishop of York (Vice-Chair)
Chair of the Dioceses Commission	Dame Caroline Spelman
Chair of the Faith & Order Commission	The Rt Revd Dr Robert Innes
Chair of the Fees Advisory Commission	The Ven Bob Cooper
Chair of the Legal Advisory Commission	The Worshipful David Pittaway KC
Chair of the Legal Aid Commission	His Honour Judge Andrew Rutherford
Chair of the Liturgical Commission	The Rt Revd Dr Michael Ipgrave
The Church Commissioners	Archbishop of Canterbury
Chair of the Pensions Board	Clive Mather
The Corporation of the Church House	Stephen Barney
Chair of the Ethical Investment Advisory Group	Barbara Ridpath

Mrs Kat Alldread (Derby) to ask the Secretary General:

Q199 The document containing the Standing Orders of the General Synod on the Church of England website claims that it is the copyright of the Archbishops' Council. As the General Synod and the Archbishops' Council are two separate legal entities (the General Synod being established by the Synodical Government Measure 1969; and the Archbishops' Council being established by the National Institutions Measure 1998), when, and by what means, did the General Synod vest copyright in its Standing Orders to the Archbishops' Council?

William Nye to reply as Secretary General:

A The General Synod makes standing orders under article 11 of the Constitution contained in Schedule 2 to the Synodical Government Measure 1969. The Standing Orders currently in force are those contained in GS 2000 (approved by the Synod at the July 2015 group of sessions), as amended by subsequent motions passed by the Synod.

As stated in the [legal opinion](#) issued by the Legal Advisory Commission in September 1999, "since the National Institutions Measure 1998 [copyright of Synod documents] vests in the Archbishops' Council as the entity which holds the copyright and other assets of the General Synod. The Synod has no corporate existence, whereas the Archbishops' Council, which acts as the financial executive of the Synod, is a body corporate established for charitable purposes and can hold copyright and other assets." Prior to 1999, copyright in Synod documents was held by the Central Board of Finance.

The document published here <https://www.churchofengland.org/about/general-synod/members-resources/standing-orders> is a working edition of the text of the

Standing Orders prepared by staff in the Central Secretariat. The copyright in that working edition is also held by the Archbishops' Council.

Mr Chris Gill (Lichfield) to ask the Secretary General:

Q200 On a number of occasions Synod has been told, in response to requests for information in question time, that the central church does not have access to information because it is held within Dioceses. However, it is clear that there are mechanisms in certain areas to gather data nationally - the Return of Parish Finance and Statistics for Mission being two such examples. Can the Secretary General please outline which data is already gathered centrally and what plans there are to extend this to cover all of the Central Services, including HR and Ministry deployment?

William Nye to reply as Secretary General:

A The Church of England's online parish returns system (<https://parishreturns.churchofengland.org/login>) offers a centralised platform for churches and parishes to submit data. It currently collects reports on Statistics for Mission, Parish Finance, and Energy Footprint.

The Data Services team manages and supports various data collection tools like the Church Development Tool and Online Service Register. The team is eager to help you navigate the available datasets and answer any questions. To connect with the team, please contact to Fraser McNish, Director of Data Services by email: fraser.mcnish@churchofengland.org

Clergy HR and deployment data remains managed at the diocesan level. Due to the complexity of collecting this data across 42 dioceses and national church institutions, national collection is not planned for the foreseeable future.

CLERK TO THE SYNOD

Mr Nic Tall (Bath & Wells) to ask the Clerk to the Synod:

Q201 What was the approximate financial cost of holding the additional General Synod set of sessions in November 2023? Could an estimate be given for a) the national church and b) dioceses?

Jenny Jacobs to reply as Clerk to the Synod:

A The cost to the national church was approximately £140,000 excluding staff costs. It was not possible to get the equivalent information from dioceses within the time frame for producing answers to the questions.

The Revd Andrew Mumby (London) to ask the Clerk to the Synod:

Q202 Can the rationale for charges made to members of Synod voluntarily hosting Fringe meetings here in Church House please be made available to Synod?

Jenny Jacobs to reply as Clerk to the Synod:

A As Fringe Meetings do not form part of the formal business of Synod any additional costs incurred through holding such meetings are the responsibility of fringe meeting organisers. Charges for AV and catering are set by Church House Conference Centre and are passed on to fringe meeting organisers. As we do not incur costs for room hire at Church House, it is possible to hold a fringe meeting in London without incurring any additional costs.

The Revd Andrew Mumby (London) to ask the Clerk to the Synod:

Q203 Who decides the rationale for charges made to members of Synod voluntarily hosting Fringe meetings here in Church House working to strengthen the life and work of our Church and our engagement in society; for example, the costs of equipment to increase accessibility (e.g. microphones), the addition of VAT, and the

prohibition on members supplying refreshments which are more affordable and more culturally appropriate for Synod members?

Jenny Jacobs to reply as Clerk to the Synod:

A As Fringe Meetings do not form part of the formal business of Synod, the practical and logistical arrangements for these are managed by the Central Secretariat staff responsible for these aspects of Synod. We work collaboratively with colleagues in the Church House Conference Centre and are subject to their standard operating conditions which govern arrangements for AV and catering, including pricing. These additional costs are passed on to fringe meeting organisers who request AV and/or catering.

Food catering has not been permitted at fringe meetings for a number of years and external catering at meetings is not permitted. The Synod Support Team have very limited capacity to support fringe meetings during what is a busy event and so these arrangements have to be kept as simple as possible.

If Synod members are concerned that the catering on offer during Synod through the Members' Café is not culturally appropriate, we would welcome feedback via the Synod Survey.

Mr John Brydon (Norwich) to ask the Clerk to the Synod:

Q204 Following the publications on racial justice which highlighted the lack of delivery of synodical decisions over a 10 year period and lack of transparency and accountability to Synod, please will the Clerk conduct and publish an audit for Synod of all other votes on policy and legal matters by department which have failed to be implemented and the reason(s) why?

Jenny Jacobs to reply as Clerk to the Synod:

A Since the start of this quinquennium, a running tally of decisions made by Synod has been presented to each meeting of the Business Committee. This is to help the Business Committee when setting the agenda for future groups of sessions.

Unfortunately, to meet the deadline for publication of answers to questions, there has not been time to produce the audit requested by Mr Brydon. In order to produce this audit, the following process would need to take place:

1. Compile a list of decisions made by Synod since February 2013;
2. Establish which body is responsible for responding and within those, which department is the policy lead;
3. Seek a view on progress from each responsible body and department;
4. Identify which if any synodical decisions have not been implemented, and the reason why; and,
5. Collate this information into a report.

Mr John Wilson (Lichfield) to ask the Clerk to the Synod:

Q205 In November 2023 the Venerable Sally Gaze asked (Q.204) that a verbatim record of the speeches by former ISB members Steve Reeves and Jasvinder Sanghera made during an adjournment of the formal sitting of the Synod on 9 July 2023 be added as a second Appendix to the Report of Proceedings of the July group of sessions (and posted on the C of E website) so that there would be a complete and accurate public record of what was said in response to the presentation by members of the Archbishops' Council relating to the ISB and the decision to terminate the contracts of its members. In reply you informed Synod that anything that occurred while the sitting of the Synod was adjourned "was not recorded as the Synod was not sitting" and that "what was said by Mr Reeves and Ms Sanghera will not be added to the verbatim report as they did not form part of the Synod's proceedings." [See Report of Proceedings, November 2023 pages 165-166]

In fact, what was said by Mr Reeves and Ms Sanghera was recorded on YouTube and is summarised by Sarah Wilkinson in the Report of her Review of the Independent Safeguarding Board, dated 30 November 2023: see paragraphs 615 and 616 (and footnote 466) on pages 137-138. Accordingly, and in the light of the Wilkinson Report, will you reconsider the matter and, in the interests of fairness and transparency, undertake to ensure that a full transcript of the speeches of Mr Reeves and Ms Sanghera is now added as an appendix to the Report of Proceedings of July 2023 (by placing it in an appendix thereby recognising that what they said was not part of the formal Synod proceedings)?

Jenny Jacobs to reply as Clerk to the Synod:

A The fact remains that Synod was not sitting when Ms Sanghera and Mr Reeves spoke. The answer given to Q204 at the November 2023 group of sessions remains accurate. It would not be appropriate for the Report of Proceedings to be amended.

FINANCE COMMITTEE

The Revd Canon Martyn Taylor (Chester) to ask the Chair of the Finance Committee of the Archbishops' Council:

Q206 What is the latest estimate for average giving per capita by diocese and overall across the Church of England, and how does that compare with both our goals and what we know from average giving in other denominations?

Mr Carl Hughes to reply as Chair of the Finance Committee of the Archbishops' Council:

A We give thanks for the many generous givers in our Churches, whose giving is essential for the funding of parish ministry. In 2007, General Synod approved the motion that members should give "5% of their after tax income to and through the church, and a similar amount to other work that helps to build God's kingdom". There has not been a recent analysis of giving levels to churches compared with a giver's income. In 2019, the median was estimated to be 3.6% of after tax income, with a significant variance across dioceses.

Our understanding is that many other denominations do not hold information on average giving levels, though we know, for example, that giving levels using digital giving methods are broadly similar between Roman Catholic and Anglican givers.

The National Giving Strategy focuses on increasing the support for giving in parishes by dioceses, developing digital giving and offering resources and training to clergy and laity on the encouragement of generous giving.

The Revd Jonathan Macy (Southwark) to ask the Chair of the Finance Committee of the Archbishops' Council:

Q207 What progress is being made in the review of Diocesan finances and when will those findings be made known to Synod?

Mr Carl Hughes to reply as Chair of the Finance Committee of the Archbishops' Council:

A We are very grateful for the positive engagement of diocesan secretaries and finance teams with the Diocesan Finances Review. We have now received and validated data from almost all dioceses which has enabled BDO, our partners in this work, to begin the analysis so that we can provide initial feedback to the Inter Diocesan Finance Forum in March. We will consider how best to share key findings with General Synod members in July.

The second phase of the work will consider what changes to financial flows within the Church might be proposed (including but not limited to Diocesan Apportionment and Lowest Income Communities Funding). We will begin the discussion on key principles against which to test any proposed changes at the Inter Diocesan

Finance Forum in March. We will engage with General Synod on this aspect of the Review in due course.

The Revd Christopher Blunt (Chester) to ask the Chair of the Finance Committee of the Archbishops' Council:

Q208 What is the timetable for the review and implementation of changes to lowest income communities funding?

Mr Carl Hughes to reply as Chair of the Finance Committee of the Archbishops' Council:

A This will be considered as part of the review of financial flows within the Church we will undertake as the second phase of the Diocesan Finances Review. The major work on this will be undertaken during 2024 and agreed in early 2025. Any changes that might be made are likely to be implemented, or begin to be implemented, as part of the spending plans for 2026-28.

Mr Simon Friend (Exeter) to ask the Chair of the Finance Committee of the Archbishops' Council:

Q209 Can the Chair please clarify what audit procedures and if necessary mechanisms for repayment are in place to assess if SDF funds given to dioceses for church planting where Revitalise Trust (formerly Church Revitalisation Trust) has been or is an enabling partner, are now being used to recruit those SDF funded church plants to the Alliance, a new network formed by Revitalise Trust and Church of England Evangelical Council, which seeks to offer alternative episcopal oversight, alternative repositories for Parish Share and alternative ordinand training to those church leaders who cannot agree with the House of Bishops recent commendation of the Prayers and Love and Faith?

Mr Carl Hughes to reply as Chair of the Finance Committee of the Archbishops' Council:

A The Strategic Mission and Ministry Investment Board reviews the progress of programmes supported by Strategic Development Funding at every meeting. The progress of all programmes supported by Strategic Development Funding is regularly monitored by national Church staff, including through attendance at Programme Boards and annual reviews.

In addition to this, the Strategic Mission and Ministry Investment Board is able, on behalf of the Presidents of the Archbishops' Council, to commission any necessary investigations into reported misuse or misuse identified through various accountability processes, of Strategic Development Funding. Under the funding agreement, the Archbishops' Council has the right to withhold a grant or require repayment if any part of the grant is misused. No report of misuse of funds has ever been received.

The Board looks to support all traditions of the Church to make the Church's Vision and Strategy a thriving reality in local parishes and communities.

AUDIT COMMITTEE

Mr Tim Fleming (St Albans) to ask the Chair of the Audit Committee:

Q210 Further to paragraph 10 of GS Misc 1362 (Report on the Archbishops' Council's Activities), what work, if any, does the Audit Committee intend to perform, or commission, to evaluate the adequacy of the Council's conclusions following its planned in depth discussions, in relation to those risks where the Council's current assessment of risk is greater than its desired risk appetite (specifically vision and strategy, safeguarding, reputation, finance and governance)?

Mrs Maureen Cole to reply as Chair of the Audit Committee:

- A** Finance, Safeguarding and Governance are all included as reviews in the 2024 Internal Audit Plan for Archbishops' Council, as they were in the 2023 plan. In addition, the Archbishops' Council senior management team is due to complete its next regular review of the strategic risk register in May 2024, where they will be carrying out an in-depth review of ALL risks scores and ALL risk appetites, including determining any mitigating action that needs to be taken. This will then be reviewed by the Archbishops' Council Audit & Risk Committee on 25th June 2024.

CHURCH BUILDINGS COUNCIL

Mrs Katia D'Arcy-Cumber (Hereford) to ask the Chair of the Church Buildings Council:

- Q211** In July 2022 I asked how many cathedral and church buildings in the Church of England had Changing Places high dependency toilet facilities. In the response from the Chair of the Church Buildings Council it was confirmed that there was only one at that time, but that new guidance from the Church Buildings Council would encourage churches to 'give careful consideration to installing Changing Places facilities, advising that compelling reasons should be given for not doing so...'. Reference was also made to government funding that would enable some cathedrals to also install these facilities. Bearing in mind the importance of these facilities not only for those attending worship and community activities, but also for those ministers who might have high dependency needs, further demonstrating our serious commitment to a more diverse church, please could you give an update of how many facilities with the necessary specification – in particular hoist, adult-sized changing bench and space for two carers – are there in Church of England buildings now, whether they are officially registered with Changing Places UK or not?

Mrs Wendy Coombey to reply on behalf of the Chair of the Church Buildings Council:

- A** The Council continues to strongly support and encourage all measures which make church buildings more accessible for everyone. Currently, 21 churches have registered themselves as having Changing Places spaces, though only one is officially registered with Changing Places. Blackburn Cathedral has an officially registered Changing Places facility. Lincoln has an un-registered facility, and one is currently being installed at Exeter.

It is recognised that Changing Places offer much more appropriate facilities for people with disabilities, but it can be difficult to provide those facilities due to the associated costs, the challenging funding climate, and the constraints of the existing buildings. The Council will always push for fully accessible facilities, even where this might mean greater intervention into historic fabric. Our guidance continues to advocate that Changing Places should be incorporated into plans wherever possible, and should be the first option considered in prominent and highly visited churches. The Council continues to review and update its guidance in order to help churches to make changes which will encourage an inclusive welcome to our church buildings.

MINISTRY COUNCIL

Canon Nigel Bacon (Lincoln) to ask the Chair of the Ministry Council:

- Q212** For the ministerial discernment year 2022/23, how many candidate places were provided and what proportion of them were filled for (a) Stage 1 and (b) Stage 2 panels?

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

A For Stage 1 a total of 604 candidate spaces were provided. 521 of these spaces were filled. For Stage 2 a total of 616 candidate spaces were provided. 426 of these spaces were filled.

Canon Dr Felicity Cooke (Ely) to ask the Chair of the Ministry Council:

Q213 Please list, by training institution, the numbers and gender of ordinands in training by year group and show this in 5-year age bands.

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

A A table of this information has been posted on the noticeboard.

Miss Rosemary Wilson (Southwark) to ask the Chair of the Ministry Council:

Q214 Please could you tell me what are the current numbers of UKME/GM self-supporting clergy, in contrast to the numbers of stipendiary UKME/GM clergy?

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

A This question matters. The fundamental issue is that we have clergy who have been ordained over many decades for whom we have no ethnicity data. Thus, overall data on the racial demographics of our clergy are not currently available. However, the Racial Justice Commission and NCI teams are launching a communication program to encourage clergy and congregations to provide this important information in existing data systems. This initiative will help us better understand the diversity of our clergy, congregations and inform our efforts to promote racial justice.

The Revd Dr Michael Brydon (Sodor & Man) to ask the Chair of the Ministry Council:

Q215 As we seek to become younger and more diverse what work is being done by Ministry Division to help non-UK nationals, who are members of the Anglican Communion, with a recognised vocation to ordained ministry in the Church of England, to be able to serve in the United Kingdom?

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

A Synod should note that our response to this question is, rightly, constrained by the immigration rules set by the government.

Where a vocation is discerned in a candidate who is not yet ordained, there are TEIs able to sponsor the candidate for a student visa, if this is required, and the TEIs offer experience in obtaining these.

If the person has already been ordained outside of the Church of England, Scottish Episcopal Church, Church in Wales or Church of Ireland, they require Overseas Permission to Officiate from the relevant Archbishop. The Candidates Panel advises on the candidate's vocation and readiness to act as an ordained minister in the Church of England context, and on what further learning, if any, they might need to enable this. Obtaining a visa is a matter for the relevant diocese.

Canon Dr Felicity Cooke (Ely) to ask the Chair of the Ministry Council:

Q216 What were the numbers of male and female stipendiary clergy, and the numbers of 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 This question arose at the last Synod, and we committed to delivering the data by the end of 2023, which we have yet not been able to do. We recognise this and apologise for the delay.

Analysing and verifying the final figures is taking longer than anticipated due to the complexity of pre-People System data collection. We aim to provide these figures on the upcoming Synod noticeboard and directly to Canon Cooke as soon as possible.

Additionally, efforts are underway to make best use of the new People System's efficiency with regard to future data retrieval and accessibility.

The Revd Canon Paul Bradbury (Salisbury) to ask the Chair of the Ministry Council:

Q217 Much attention, investment and effort has been made in the last 10 years to increase the number of people training for ordained ministry. Has the Ministry Division given any attention to the issue of clergy retention? Has any research been done in recent years to explore the numbers of clergy leaving the ministry early? In particular those who are leaving not to take early retirement but to continue working elsewhere? What are their reasons for leaving? What are they are moving on to do instead?

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

A The current national data available on this are minimal because departures from ministry occur locally within dioceses and no system exists to gather and collate this data in a consistent way for analysis at a national level. Creation and administration of such a system would require a significant investment of diocesan and national resources.

However, the Ministry Development Team do research into clergy wellbeing as part of the Living Ministry Project. [Living Ministry Research | The Church of England](#) including into specific groups such as Global Majority Heritage Clergy and Clergy who identify as working class. The latest wave of the Living Ministry work suggests low mental wellbeing among incumbents and increasing financial and other pressures on stipendiary clergy. These are issues that are of concern to the House of Bishops, and I hope that we will discuss clergy wellbeing at our meeting in May 2024.

Mr Robert McNeil-Wilson (Gloucester) to ask the Chair of the Ministry Council:

Q218 Given the projected number of clergy retirements in the next five to ten years and the time taken to train members of clergy, what is the plan to increase vocations in order to ensure 'a local priest in every community'?

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

A There is no one key to unlock vocations but the Ministry Development Team, supported and overseen both by Ministry Council and Archbishops' Council, are taking steps to address this. This work includes recent staff restructuring to free up additional resources to focus on vocations, the re-establishment of an episcopally-led vocations advisory group and learning from the experiences of those who are currently in training. Work is also underway to improve our clergy population model so as to better understand the needs of the Church in the coming years.

NATIONAL SOCIETY COUNCIL

Mr Timothy Hamilton (Exeter) to ask the Chair of the National Society Council:

Q219 What financial support, grants or funds is the Church of England able to offer individuals, groups or businesses who wish to promote Christian education in England? If nothing is available, is the Council exploring this as a future possibility?

The Bishop of Portsmouth to reply as Chair of the National Society Council:

A The National Society is providing grants for Growing Faith Hubs and some research grants as part of the work of the Growing Faith Foundation, developing mission and ministry with children and young people in the context of Church, School and Home. Our 2023 impact report is available at <https://www.churchofengland.org/about/education-and-schools/growing-faith-foundation/about-us>.

We are also providing grants (through Archbishops' Council Triennium Funding) for a pilot programme of 40 FLOURISH worshipping communities in schools. We do not provide grants towards the provision of or the running of schools at a national level, but Diocesan Boards of Education continue to use their resources and education trust funds to enable the growth of Church school education in England.

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

Q220 In Q98 of the November 2021 Questions, the Bishop of Durham said that “*Valuing All God’s Children* was written and produced by the Education Office, with help from a consultant who works as a member of a diocesan education team. Stonewall were not involved in writing it.” This was in response to my question, which referred to “the *Valuing All God’s Children* Guidelines drafted in consultation with Stonewall.” If “Stonewall were not involved” why were Dominic Arnall, the Head of Projects and Programmes at Stonewall from 2015 - 2018, and Sidonie Bertrand-Shelton, the Head of Education Programmes at Stonewall from 2016 - 2022, specifically thanked for their help in both the 2017 and 2019 editions of *Valuing All God’s Children*?

The Bishop of Portsmouth to reply as Chair of the National Society Council:

A As explained in the answer to Q25 of the February 2017 synod questions, Stonewall were given a significant grant and contracted by the Department for Education for work in this area.

Stonewall (and the Department for Education) understood the need for the Church of England to be able to work independently of them. They recognised the quality of our work in *Valuing All God’s Children*, so were keen that we should be enabled to develop it to include the prevention of transphobic bullying through an updated version. Stonewall were not involved in the writing of our document but simply passed on a grant to enable us to do so, and to help with the distribution costs. That is the help for which we thanked them in the second edition.

Mr Benjamin John (St Albans) to ask the Chair of the National Society Council:

Q221 Is the National Society Council aware that the approach to gender-questioning children in *Valuing All God’s Children* is being used in legal cases, for example the cases of Kristie Higgs, Joshua Sutcliffe, the Revd Bernard Randall, and the Christian Legal Centre client known as “Hannah”, as evidence against Christians who hold biblical positions on sexuality and gender, in some instances with specific reference made to reliance on the guidance to justify the approach taken?

The Bishop of Portsmouth to reply as Chair of the National Society Council:

A Many people, schools, organisations, media outlets and campaigning groups and their legal teams cite *Valuing All God’s Children* for a range of reasons. Often such citations are misrepresentative of the document itself which has never purported to be guidance about how schools respond to gender questioning children – it is about prevention of bullying and affording each child their dignity.

Schools continue to tell us that they value the document and use it as they continue to strive to eradicate any form of bullying in this area. We are currently updating it to refer to the new government guidance.

Mr Benjamin John (St Albans) to ask the Chair of the National Society Council:

Q222 What efforts have been made by the National Society to ensure that *Valuing All God’s Children* is not used as evidence in court against Christians who hold the biblical positions on sexuality and gender?

The Bishop of Portsmouth to reply as Chair of the National Society Council:

A The Church of England Education Office takes every opportunity to explain the purpose of *Valuing All God’s Children*. For the avoidance of doubt, it is not guidance about how schools respond to gender questioning children. Nor is it the Church of

England's teaching on sexuality, gender, trans issues or gender questioning children. VAGC is about prevention of bullying and affording each child their dignity.

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

Q223 Given the draft guidance for schools - *Gender Questioning Children* that was published in December and some of the issues raised, what plans are now being made to advise CofE schools on how gender questioning children should be supported?

Mrs Sarah Finch (London) to ask the Chair of the National Society Council:

Q224 Will the Church of England support the Government's draft guidance on gender-questioning children in schools in allowing teachers and pupils to refer to pupils according to their biological sex?

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

Q225 Will the Church of England Education Office broadly support the government's draft guidance on gender questioning children?

The Bishop of Portsmouth to reply as Chair of the National Society Council:

A With permission I will take these three questions together.

The Church of England Education Office has welcomed the publication of the Government's draft guidance and will be responding to the consultation. We have always said that *Valuing All God's Children* will need updating in the light of this guidance and now that it is finally available we have started that process in expectation of the new guidance being finalised and published in the summer.

Valuing All God's Children is not guidance about how schools respond to gender questioning children (that is what the government guidance is for) – it is about prevention of bullying and affording each child their dignity.

APPENDIX

Further information for display on the Noticeboard

Questions 95, 107, 136, 152 and 213

Additional information**Summary Annual Internal Audit Plan 2024 for Church Commissioners and ChECS**

IAP Ref No.	Planned Audit Area/ High-Level Scope: 1 to 6 ChECS; 7 to 13 Church Commissioners
1.	Budgetary Control & Financial Management: pan-NCI assurance review of the NCIs' approach to budget monitoring.
2.	IT Disaster Recovery Plan: Computer audit assurance review of the NCIs' DR Plan (deferred from Q4 2023).
3.	Cyber Security & IT Resilience: Follow-up assurance review following the BDO limited assurance audit in 2022 and the work done since then.
4.	Payroll: Pan-NCI assurance review of a key financial system including starters and leavers.
5.	Procurement (including P-card & Staff Expenses): pan-NCI assurance review of the NCIs' key financial controls/policy compliance in these areas.
6.	Diocese Financial Management: Further to the advisory review last year and the ongoing external support/Diocesan Finances Review, a follow-up assurance review of the DFM and monitoring arrangements.
7.	Investments Recruitment & Retention: Assurance review of the CC's mitigating actions in place to address this Investments Risk Register risk.
8.	Cash Management (including Treasury Policy): Review to provide assurance including on policy compliance in this investments area.
9.	Investments Post Bond Issuance: Over 1 year since the bonds were issued so provide assurance on whether the associated processes being managed as they should be.
10.	Fund Manager Performance Fees: Assurance review by BDO Specialist Investments Auditor.
11.	Final Accounts Closing Process: Advisory work on CC accounts closing process completed in 2023. Follow-up assurance review to do in 2024.
12.	Conflicts of Interest: Assurance review of declared/ undeclared conflicts in CC, including investments commercially sensitive information flow.
13.	Project Spire: Advisory review to make sure CC's response is set up to deliver in the best way.

Question 107

Additional information

Closed Churches Net Sale Proceeds (distributed to Dioceses between 2014-2023).

Closed Churches Net Sale Proceeds (distributed to Dioceses between 2014-2023)											
<i>Note: this does not include net sale proceeds from approximately £1.25m of gross sale proceeds in recently completed cases (4no) for which Diocesan costs are yet to be received.</i>											
	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	10 year total per Diocese
Bath & Wells	0	1,960	2,096	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4,056
Birmingham	117,834	-1,108	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	116,726
Blackburn	0	42,961	0	0	0	41,173	0	0	0	0	84,134
Bristol	0	0	0	0	0	23,497	0	0	0	0	23,497
Canterbury	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	14,455	0	0	14,455
Carlisle	0	17,615	24,736	0	0	0	6,854	28,087	149,873	32,348	259,515
Chelmsford	101,546	0	0	457,719	0	500,000	0	4,694	472,393	54,184	1,590,538
Chester	0	173,191	0	3,390	0	0	0	0	0	1,436	178,018
Chichester	0	355,378	73,093	0	0	0	0	0	304,675	0	733,147
Coventry	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Derby	0	0	22,322	0	0	0	0	0	0	1,137	23,459
Durham	0	35,432	76,031	50,766	22,654	0	0	0	0	0	184,884
Ely	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	131,456	0	0	131,456
Exeter	0	0	36,930	2,266	0	142,262	30,793	0	0	0	212,253
Gloucester	0	0	0	0	0	0	72,607	0	0	20,263	92,870
Guildford	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	357,787	0	8,721	366,509
Hereford	525	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	525
Leicester	103,831	1,000	0	2,000	0	41,439	0	0	0	0	148,270
Lichfield	0	46,495	0	0	0	0	190,000	0	0	48,617	285,113
Lincoln	0	0	0	0	0	4,600	0	0	0	0	4,600
Liverpool	27,464	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	89,109	116,574
London	5,832,032	889,002	575,972	0.00	2,054,004	1,384,606	1,257,548	0	1,000,000	0	12,993,165
Manchester	0	0	0	192,983	0	110,607	0	0	0	75,891	379,482
Newcastle	53,439	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	31,853	0	85,293
Norwich	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Oxford	0	0	138,512	300,195	0	0	236,897	0	0	0	675,606
Peterborough	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Portsmouth	0	17,797	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	17,797
Rochester	0	0	16,306	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	16,306
St Albans	0	0	0	0	0	0	13,415	0	0	0	13,415
St E & I	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Salisbury	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	54,716	54,716
Sheffield	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	35,024	35,024
Sodor & Man	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.00
Southwark	502,518	25,265	0	0	0	0	0	0	74,820	0	602,605
Southwell & Notts	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	9,015	9,015
Truro	0	45,124	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	45,124
Winchester	177,319	6,666	0	0	0	248,386	0	0	0	48,807	481,179
Worcester	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	58,375	0	0	58,375
York	0	38,244	0	0	0	111,681	60,635	0	7,498	95,951	314,010
Leeds	0	0	0	18,015	211,787	176,086	140,000	134,643	0	242,720	923,255
											21,274,966

Question 136

Worshipping Community age distribution, diocese by diocese

This file contains a comparison of the 2019 and 2022 worshipping community age distribution, diocese by diocese.

The 2022 figures in this file are taken from the dataset used for the 2022 Statistics for Mission report.

This table should be used in conjunction with the Statistics for Mission report and in particular with consideration of the methodology and explanatory notes:

[https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2023-](https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2023-11/statisticsformission2022.pdf)

[11/statisticsformission2022.pdf](https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2023-11/statisticsformission2022.pdf)

The comparison is based on the subset of records where the same church (or set of churches) submitted data in 2019 and 2022, in which there was a non-zero worshipping community total and in which the total matched the age breakdown.

This means that the comparison between the 2019 and 2022 age distributions is, as far as possible, like-with-like.

However, it means that the 2019 figures are based on a slightly different set of churches from those used for the equivalent numbers in Statistics for Mission 2019.

In general this makes little difference.

Large, or apparently large, differences between the 2019 figures as previously published and those shown here are likely to be the result of one or two large churches that submitted figures in 2019 but not in 2022.

Dr Ken Eames

Church of England Data Services team

ken.eames@churchofengland.org

15/02/2024

Question 136

Diocese ID	Diocese/area	2019: % 0-10	2019: % 11-17	2019: % 18-69	2019: % 70+	2022: % 0-10	2022: % 11-17	2022: % 18-69	2022: % 70+
National	Church of England	13.9%	5.6%	47.2%	33.4%	12.7%	5.3%	46.4%	35.6%
1	Bath & Wells	7.2%	3.5%	40.4%	48.9%	8.5%	3.5%	37.9%	50.0%
2	Birmingham	15.9%	4.4%	52.4%	27.4%	13.3%	5.1%	53.3%	28.3%
3	Blackburn	16.6%	5.9%	42.7%	34.9%	14.6%	5.9%	42.8%	36.7%
5	Bristol	16.1%	5.9%	50.0%	28.0%	16.6%	5.6%	48.6%	29.2%
6	Canterbury	13.1%	5.2%	42.6%	39.1%	10.9%	4.0%	41.1%	44.0%
7	Carlisle	10.7%	12.5%	33.9%	43.0%	8.0%	11.6%	35.3%	45.1%
8	Chelmsford	12.3%	5.6%	49.4%	32.7%	11.3%	5.1%	49.4%	34.2%
9	Chester	12.5%	5.8%	43.5%	38.2%	10.7%	4.6%	41.5%	43.1%
10	Chichester	12.0%	5.3%	48.2%	34.6%	12.0%	5.2%	47.2%	35.6%
11	Coventry	13.6%	5.3%	47.2%	33.9%	12.3%	6.1%	46.1%	35.4%
12	Derby	11.5%	4.6%	44.1%	39.8%	8.4%	4.5%	42.1%	45.0%
13	Durham	13.7%	4.3%	42.6%	39.5%	11.6%	3.8%	44.4%	40.2%
14	Ely	15.6%	5.8%	48.8%	29.8%	15.6%	5.3%	47.4%	31.7%
15	Exeter	6.7%	4.1%	41.6%	47.5%	7.2%	4.1%	40.5%	48.2%
16	Gloucester	12.0%	6.9%	45.8%	35.3%	11.4%	4.2%	43.2%	41.3%
17	Guildford	15.1%	6.5%	51.4%	27.0%	15.3%	7.0%	48.3%	29.3%
18	Hereford	12.7%	4.0%	38.7%	44.6%	10.3%	3.0%	37.6%	49.0%
19	Leicester	13.2%	5.0%	44.3%	37.6%	11.3%	5.0%	43.5%	40.1%
20	Lichfield	14.6%	4.9%	45.4%	35.1%	13.9%	4.3%	43.4%	38.4%
21	Lincoln	12.9%	6.4%	38.3%	42.4%	9.5%	6.3%	41.4%	42.8%
22	Liverpool	19.1%	5.1%	44.1%	31.7%	22.6%	5.4%	41.6%	30.4%
23	London	17.3%	6.8%	60.8%	15.1%	14.9%	6.3%	62.2%	16.6%
24	Manchester	20.2%	5.4%	44.5%	29.8%	19.6%	4.8%	44.4%	31.2%
25	Newcastle	10.8%	5.3%	45.8%	38.0%	9.2%	5.2%	44.5%	41.1%
26	Norwich	8.9%	3.4%	42.8%	44.9%	6.8%	2.9%	38.8%	51.5%
27	Oxford	14.4%	6.7%	50.0%	28.9%	11.1%	6.3%	51.1%	31.5%
28	Peterborough	13.6%	5.6%	44.5%	36.3%	12.2%	5.1%	43.7%	39.1%
29	Portsmouth	10.9%	4.2%	45.5%	39.4%	13.2%	4.4%	43.9%	38.5%
31	Rochester	15.9%	6.7%	50.8%	26.6%	15.5%	7.2%	49.2%	28.2%
32	St. Albans	14.7%	5.4%	47.9%	32.1%	11.9%	5.2%	45.8%	37.1%
33	St. Edms & Ipswich	18.1%	4.2%	37.5%	40.2%	14.5%	3.8%	35.0%	46.7%
34	Salisbury	10.1%	4.8%	41.9%	43.3%	8.5%	4.4%	39.5%	47.6%
35	Sheffield	16.6%	5.5%	46.9%	31.0%	14.6%	5.9%	48.2%	31.3%
36	Sodor & Man	7.5%	4.9%	41.2%	46.3%	4.9%	1.8%	38.0%	55.3%
37	Southwark	17.7%	7.7%	55.2%	19.4%	16.4%	7.5%	53.6%	22.5%
38	Southwell & Nottingham	14.0%	5.0%	47.0%	34.1%	13.4%	5.2%	46.5%	35.0%
39	Truro	8.1%	3.2%	38.6%	50.1%	8.2%	3.2%	34.8%	53.8%
41	Winchester	11.2%	5.6%	47.3%	35.9%	9.8%	4.2%	46.1%	39.9%

Question 136

42	Worcester	8.6%	3.3%	40.1%	48.0%	10.0%	3.5%	37.9%	48.7%
43	York	10.4%	3.9%	42.9%	42.8%	9.4%	3.3%	42.5%	44.8%
44	Europe	13.3%	6.9%	56.1%	23.7%	11.1%	6.5%	58.2%	24.2%
46	Leeds	14.7%	5.0%	43.2%	37.1%	16.3%	4.7%	40.8%	38.2%
77	Channel Islands	16.1%	5.3%	56.4%	22.2%	10.5%	6.5%	55.3%	27.6%

N.B. For the purposes of this comparison, figures for the Channel Islands have been calculated separately, but will be reported in with the figures for Salisbury.

Strategic Leadership Development Programme

This summary has been prepared in response to question 166 at the February 2024 sessions of General Synod

Programme Aims & Approach:

SLDP aims to enable participants to deepen their leadership practice in current role and to help to prepare people for potential wider leadership in the future. The core approach is to provide space to explore mainstream thinking on leadership and management and to consider which aspects may be applied by those offering Christian leadership within the Church.

Note that major reviews of the programme were undertaken in 2014 and again in 2023.

Programme Overview

There are four broad leadership themes throughout the programme shaped around the world, Church, others and self.

The programme is delivered by a wide range of people including Christian lay people, clergy, bishops, theological educators and external experts through a series of six residential modules and six on-line sessions/webinars, summary details below. Participants are also required to undertake a senior leadership experience outside their current role and participate in a project linked to our national Church of England strategy.

The development of participants is supported by three one to one coaching sessions and four facilitated small group sessions. There is also a mid-programme review with their nominating Bishop and an end of programme small group evaluation with an invited Bishop. From May 2024 residentials will be supported by a Chaplain.

Question 152

Module Detail

Main Modules:

1. **Launch** – 2.5days – is focused on establishing a healthy learning community. In this context there is an exploration of elements of leadership psychology from both an individual and organisational perspective, grounded in reflections on leadership in the Church from senior clergy.
2. **Disruptive strategy** – 2.5days – An exploration of different approaches to entrepreneurialism, innovation, and disruptive strategy together with reflection on strategic leadership approaches, particularly in dioceses.
3. **Co Leadership** – 2 days – Investing in becoming better equipped collaborative leaders within the Church and beyond, including developing a better understanding of managing difference well.
4. **Pilgrimage and briefings** – 5 days – Confronting the reality of the brokenness of this world and the place of reconciliation within leadership.
5. **Finding your voice in church & world** – 2 days – Gaining confidence in speaking as a Christian leader into the public square.
6. **Leadership day** – 1 day – Embedding the participants learning so far and building upon it.

Bitesize modules (all 0.5 days):

1. Project preparation
2. Understanding Power
3. Ministry of Defence
4. Safeguarding
5. Moral and Spiritual leadership
6. Issues associated with wider leadership

Question 213

Age of ordinands in training as at 1st February 2024

Age Gender	20-24		25-29		30-34		35-39		40-44		45-49		50-54		55-59		60-64		65+	
	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M
College of the Resurrection Mirfield		1		4		4		1		1		2								
Cranmer Hall Durham	2	1	5	2	9	7	1	3	2	3	1	1		2						
Eastern Region Ministry Cse				1		2	4	3	8	2	1	5	8	6	2	2		1	4	1
Emmanuel Theological College	2	2	3	3	2	7	5	2	7	7	8	4	7	8	8	2	4	2	5	3
Guildford LMP								1		1	1		1	1	4	2	1			
Lindisfarne College of Theology					2		2		1	1		1	2	1	2		2	1		
Oak Hill Theol College		1		3		13		4	1	3				1						
Oxford Pathway									1						1					
Queen's Foundation, Birmingham			1		2	3	1	2	4	1	5	2	2	1	2	2	2	1	1	1
Ridley Hall Cambridge		2	8	4	3	4	1	4	1	3		1		1	1					
Ripon Cuddesdon		1	2	3	3	7	4	2	4	6	11	6	12	3	6	1	4	1	1	
Sarum College		1			3	1	1	1	4	2	3	1	5	5	5	3	2		4	2
South West Min Training Course							1			1	1	1	1	1	2	2	3	1		
St Augustine's College	1					1	2		7	4	5	3	9	6	8	3	3	2	2	1
St Hild College			1	1	1	5	3	3	2	3	12		10	4	4	2	2	2	3	1
St Mellitus College			13	18	16	18	19	10	17	9	19	13	23	8	9	3	2	1		
St Stephen's House - Oxford		2		6		1	1		1		1									
Trinity College Bristol	1	4	6	5	11	5	3	9	2		2	4	2	2		1	1			
Westcott House Cambridge	1	1	6	3	6	2		2	1	1	2	2		1						1
Winchester SoM									1				1		3	1	3		2	1
Wycliffe Hall Oxford		4	7	13	4	10	4	6	2		1	3		1						