

GENERAL SYNOD

**TRUST AND TRUSTWORTHINESS WITHIN THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND –
A PRELIMINARY REPORT****Summary**

Since 2022 a group from the Transforming Effectiveness programme has sought to understand the issues of trust, trustworthiness and distrust within the Church of England, and identify behaviours and practices that can repair and promote trust within the Church. This preliminary report outlines the findings so far and invites members of General Synod to contribute to the considerations.

We are very aware that we have produced an extensive report, with a number of chapters. We encourage you to read the whole report, which is structured so that each section builds on the ones before: outlining the research on the experience of trust and distrust in wider society, as well as in the Church of England; considering what we have heard through in-depth interviews and conversations in the light of theological wisdom and insight; leading to a consideration of areas where change can be addressed and five overarching provisional conclusions. The heart of the report is fourfold:

- the first biblical reflections, Chapter 2: Trust and Christian essentials (p.6)
- the research findings, Chapter 6: What did we find? Outcomes from interviews (p.22)
- the second biblical reflection, Chapter 7: A spirituality of trust (p.29)
- the concluding sections, Chapter 8: The ingredients of change (p.35) and Chapter 9: Provisional overarching recommendations (p.48)

We are intentionally presenting a preliminary report with provisional recommendations, asking Synod for wisdom and advice about further work and help shaping recommendations that can then be implemented. We need to hear what we have missed and what Synod members believe would enable the changes that we believe are needed, for the sake of the mission to which God has called us.

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GENERAL SYNOD

Contents

PART 1: THE CHALLENGE OF TRUST

1. Introduction
2. Trust and Christian essentials
3. Trust in the wider context and culture
4. Trust and distrust in the Church of England

PART 2: RESEARCHING THE CHALLENGE

5. Working principles for conducting the research
6. What did we find? Outcomes from interviews

PART 3: BUILDING TRUST

7. A spirituality of trust
8. The ingredients of change
9. Provisional overarching recommendations

ANNEXES

- Annex 1 – Trust within the Church of England: project background
- Annex 2 – Research design: sample, confidentiality, data collection
- Annex 3 – References

GENERAL SYNOD

PART 1: THE CHALLENGE OF TRUST

Chapter 1

Introduction, by Bishop Martin Seeley

1. This project began with a modest brief, which has expanded considerably and continues to expand. I had encountered particular issues of trust through the *Transforming Effectiveness* work I had been asked to undertake in June 2020; and so in 2022 the Emerging Church of England Steering Group (a body comprising representatives of the Archbishops' Council, the Church Commissioners and the House of Bishops) suggested I look at these issues – to help us understand them and explore how we repair and preserve trust in the Church's organisation and structures. The early work of the Governance Review highlighted similar trust issues.
2. In May 2022 I invited two people to help me, neither of whom are formally part of the structures of the Church of England. Professor David Ford agreed to work with me to ensure this work was theologically grounded and shaped, and Professor Veronica Hope Hailey to bring her long standing experience and expertise in the field of trust in organisations and institutions. Gordon Jump joined this small Task Group from the NCI *Transforming Effectiveness* secretariat. I am incredibly grateful to these three for the extraordinary wisdom and immense and sustained hard work they have brought to the project.
3. I then sought volunteers from the bodies I had been most closely engaged with in the *Transforming Effectiveness* work to form a Reference Group, which met for the first time in July 2022. The Task Group (David, Veronica, Gordon and myself) has met 14 times and the Reference Group six times. Annex 1 lists who has been on the two groups.
4. The Task Group has met with a number of individuals within and outside the Church, and a range of groups, including the National Church Governance Programme Board, to listen to their insight and wisdom. Professor Hope Hailey has conducted confidential in-depth interviews with clergy and laity, and these have provided the central component of evidence for our findings so far. We asked a handful of diocesan bishops, with a range of experience and perspectives, to nominate interviewees. We included military chaplains in the interview cohort, nominated by senior chaplains, to provide light from a different context. I am deeply thankful to these interviewees who showed courage and integrity, offering profound insights. We promised their anonymity, so they could be fully open with Veronica; and their trust, alongside months of deep qualitative analysis by Veronica, has made this work possible. Their collective gift to our Church is a seriously analysed piece of qualitative research. See Annex 2 for the methodological detail.
5. I asked the Business Committee for time to present to General Synod at this preliminary stage so we can continue the process of seeking insight and wisdom, and be guided to areas of further work.

GENERAL SYNOD

6. Trust, trustworthiness and distrust are related to a combination of structure, including our decision-making mechanisms, and culture, expressed in our behaviour and practices. Structure and culture need to be addressed. While the Governance Review offers the prospect of clearer structures and decision-making, as the report of the National Church Governance Programme Board acknowledges, more work is needed across all Church systems particularly around accountability and decision-making, and in people's behaviour. Our faith is rooted in trust – our trust in God and God's entrusting of us – so we have to ask why we can behave in untrustworthy ways and be distrusting of each other, with or without evidence of untrustworthy behaviour.
7. Pervasive yet patchy distrust is manifest in different ways across the Church, and this has been our first focus, enabling us to begin to shape some proposals to attempt to reduce and repair distrust.
8. However, the major and traumatising breaches of trust that have been of deep concern to the General Synod and many, inside and outside the Church, have brought profound and sustained breakdowns of trust into the life of the Church. It is in these areas that distrust is most profoundly evident. Racism, sexual abuse and issues relating to Living in Love and Faith all deeply affect the life and witness of the Church. The major breaches that have occurred have different dynamics but compound people's suffering through the incidents themselves, and the way the Church may inadequately or inappropriately handle and respond to them.
9. So while our work was not initiated in relation to these areas, we are now clear that all issues of distrust are interconnected to fundamental questions about the culture and structures of the Church of England. We believe that the serious breaches of trust and some of the profoundly inadequate ways they have been responded to, in terms of processes, procedures and decision making, are themselves acute manifestations of a wider culture of distrust.
10. So we have these questions: How can we repair and preserve trust across our wider culture and structures? How can we repair and preserve trust when people have suffered demeaning and profound harm? How can we repair and preserve trust across deep differences? How do we ensure that our responses to major breaches of trust are themselves trustworthy? The Task Group sees the next stage of this work as consulting on the work to date and drawing together concrete, coherent and specific proposals that could respond to this set of questions.
11. We began by seeking to try to understand general causes of distrust, and look for ways that might build and repair the trust that is so intrinsic to the true nature of the Church. We recognise that the Church of England is not alone in its experience of distrust, and of major breaches of trust, and we live in a society where these issues are prevalent. We recognise that in some cases repair seems impossible, and in many cases of serious breaches of trust, repair can only happen with deep and concerted attention and intention over many years, even decades. We have to ask, why is the Church not, by its very nature, modelling better behaviour and practice?
12. We have been clear that our task is to focus on the Church of England, but there remains a wider question about the trust and trustworthiness of the wider Church

GENERAL SYNOD

in English, and indeed western, society. There is also the factor that some may be more trusting of others in another denomination than their own, as networks and alliances along theological and doctrinal lines have developed. Some in the Church of England may find it easier to trust fellow Christians in other churches than to trust some other Anglicans, and not regard that as a failure of trust but as a feature of Christian life today. While we have not explored this explicitly, it does relate to our points later in the report about church tradition groups and the importance of developing a shared narrative purpose.

13. This preliminary report begins with a reflection on Christian essentials relating to trust, which is followed by wisdom drawn from wider society and other institutions, and an outline of where trust and distrust appears in the Church of England. We then consider what we learned from the interviews, and we return to the biblical and theological vision. Finally, we have drawn together reflections from all our conversations to offer areas which we, at the moment, see forming the basis of future recommendations, culminating in five key overarching and provisional recommendations.
14. We have listened, prayed and reflected through this process, and the Task Group is committed to continuing to do so in order to try to shape and propose the changes that we believe the Church of England must make. We bring this preliminary report to General Synod to invite the wide-ranging wisdom of Synod to point us to further dimensions to consider, and to help us shape clear recommendations for the Church. Learning to listen well to one another, generously and trustfully, is a key part of this journey.
15. At the heart of the report is the truth that love and trust are bound together. They are essential to the life of the Church and to bearing witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Distrust damages love and impairs mission. Trust is expressed by our love – by our attention to, regard for, and honouring of one another, and by our penitence, and being forgiven by each other. *‘By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another’* (John 13:35).

Martin Seeley

GENERAL SYNOD

Chapter 2

Trust and Christian essentials

16. Trust is utterly essential to being Christian, and it is inseparable from love.
17. It is usual to see 'faith' or 'belief' as essential, but a key fact about the New Testament is that the Greek word *pistis*, meaning 'faith' or 'belief', also means 'trust'. Moreover, in our culture, the meaning of *pistis* is often best understood as 'trust'. Our faith and belief cannot be understood apart from trust and love.
18. Jesus repeatedly says, '*Your faith has saved you*' (Matthew 9:22; Mark 5:34, 10:52; Luke 7:50, 8:48, 17:19, 18:42), which means, *Your trust, belief, and faith have saved you*. Later, in the early Church, the Christian way can be summed up as '*trust, belief, and faith in Christ Jesus*' (Acts 24:24).
19. *Pistis* is essential to enter the Christian community, as St Paul in his Letter to the Romans teaches at length. God '*justifies the one who has trust, belief and faith in Jesus*' (Romans 3:26). This *pistis* is fundamental to accessing everything else in the Christian life, both the astonishing gift of relationship with God through Jesus Christ in peace, glory, hope, and love, and also the perseverance needed to sustain our trust, belief and faithfulness through all that tests them:
- 'Therefore, since we are justified by trust, belief and faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand; and we boast in our hope of sharing in the glory of God. And not only that, but we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us'* (Romans 5:1-5).
20. God's freely given love, poured into the hearts of those who trust Jesus: that is at the heart of the Christian life. And so: '*Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know you are my disciples, if you have love for one another*' (John 13:34). '*This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you*' (John 15:12). '*I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another*' (John 15:17).
21. This is the gift of eternal life, the gift of abundant life, a vision of heaven, that loved by Jesus, we love one another. So how do we work to strengthen bonds of trust and love, and repair broken trust and love, in the Christian community today, that '*everyone will know you are my disciples*'?
22. Are we in our Church truly desiring to discern what a wisdom of trust for our time and situation might be, to learn habits of wise trust, to embody wise practices of trust in our communities, communications, and institutional structures, and, through all this, to be a better model and example of a community of trust and love? If so, then we are called to nothing less than a renewal and deepening of the *pistis* – the trust, belief, and faith – that are essential to being Christian. In this we begin from where we are, always with imperfect trust, belief, and faith, but looking to God, to the wider Christian community, past and present, and to many

GENERAL SYNOD

sources of wisdom (within and beyond the Church) for encouragement and inspiration as we seek to grow and mature in trust.

23. This trust is also about being trusted and trustworthy. Jesus makes vividly clear in a number of parables how vital it is to be *pistos* – trustworthy, faithful – with what has been entrusted to us. *‘Who then is the faithful [trustworthy, pistos] and wise servant, whom his master has put in charge of his household... ? ... “Well done, good and trustworthy servant; you have been trustworthy in a few things. I will put you in charge of many things: enter into the joy of your master” (Matthew 24:45; 25:23).*
24. So we are called both to trust and to be trustworthy.
25. In many books of the New Testament one pivotal word expresses the deep connection between, on the one hand, the essentials of our trust, belief and faith as followers of Jesus, and, on the other hand, what that calls for in how we live as Christians and as the Church, entrusted with this faith. The word is ‘therefore’ (Romans 5:1, 12:1; 1 Corinthians 10:14; 2 Corinthians 4:1, 5:16; Galatians 5:1; Ephesians 4:1, 5:1, 6:13, 14; Philippians 2:12, 4:1; Colossians 2:16, 3:5; 1 Thessalonians 4:11; 2 Timothy 2:10; Hebrews 2:1, 3:7, 4:1, 6:1, 12:1, 12; James 5:7, 16; 1 Peter 1:13, 2:1, 4:1, 19, 5:6; 2 Peter 1:10, 12, 3:14; Revelation 3:18). It is worth meditating on each ‘therefore’, both on what leads up to it and on what follows it, in relation to trust within the Church of England.
26. Embracing, enabling, and inspiring all of that is the God who is *pistos* – trustworthy, faithful – and ready to entrust us with abundant life, truth, love, responsibility, and capacity to endure severe testing. *‘God is pistos: by Him you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord... God is pistos, and He will not let you be tested beyond your strength, but with the testing He will also provide the way out so that you may be able to endure it’ (1 Corinthians 1:9; 10:13).*
27. It seems clear to us that attending to trust and trustworthiness needs to happen more widely, more deeply, more imaginatively, and in more sustained forms in the Church. This is an urgent summons to every single member and every part of our Church. It concerns the essentials of our calling as Christians. Who among us could claim to have already arrived at where we are called? Who among us could even claim to have the sort of God’s-eye overview that would let us compare ourselves with others in these matters, favourably or unfavourably?
28. But there is a second essential as we seek to trust and love one another more deeply – repentance and forgiveness. As we seem not to attend to love and trust, so we seem not to attend to repenting of that which we do that impairs love and trust. *‘Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven has come near’ (Matthew 4: 17),* Jesus declares at the start of his public ministry; and that repentance should shape our attitudes towards, treatment of, thoughts about, responses to and words about one another. So, *‘if another member of the church sins against you, go and point out the fault when the two of you are alone. If the member listens to you, you have regained that one. But if you are not listened to, take one or two others along with you, so that every word may be confirmed by the evidence of two or three witnesses’ (Matthew 18: 15).* The question for us is, how do we do this today?

GENERAL SYNOD

29. And we believe that in fact we have become less and less attentive to recognising the need for repentance of even the seemingly small untrusting and unloving responses to our fellow Christians, rendering us less and less alert to not just the small untrusting and unloving acts, but the much more serious ones, too. We believe we need to recover an honesty and humility about our treatment of one another that includes practices of repentance and forgiveness.
30. What we offer are just pointers, tasters, stimuli. We hope that everyone, individually and together with others, will go much further through reading and rereading scripture, wider study¹ and reflection, and through prayer and worship, leading into commitment not only to the 'therefore' of this report but also to a multitude of other wise and inspired 'therefores'. In each of our lives, in each situation, in every part of the Church, a Christian wisdom of trust has implications that we are invited to discern.

¹ For those who want a Christian treatment of trust that has been very helpful to us in preparing this report, Teresa Morgan (an Anglican priest, who was a Professor of Classics at the University of Oxford and is now a Professor of Early Christianity at Yale University) has written a two-volume study of trust, faith, and belief in the time of Jesus and the New Testament writers: *Roman Faith and Christian Faith: Pistis and Fides in the Early Roman Empire and Early Churches* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015); and *The New Testament and the Theology of Trust: This Rich Trust* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022). In the second volume she writes that for the New Testament writers, *pistis* is 'above all an identity-defining, life-changing commitment to God and Christ which makes possible right standing with God, salvation, new life and hope, an ongoing relationship with God and Christ, participation in a community, and certain types of activity' (p.5). Morgan substantiates thoroughly our opening insistence on the profound importance of always remembering that *pistis* in the New Testament should be understood as 'trust', as well as 'belief' and 'faith', and shows how damaging it has been that in later centuries this has often been forgotten. Morgan is preparing two further volumes on trust.

GENERAL SYNOD

Chapter 3

Trust in the wider context and culture

The “shadow of the past”? What is its impact on our willingness to trust?

31. Trust is the foundation of any institution. In the UK it was significantly undermined by the behaviour of many financial institutions and their leaders in the build-up to the global financial crisis in 2008. Since then a succession of high profile scandals within other major national institutions has only further eroded society’s capacity to trust. These breaches of trust have been shocking, profoundly serious, and deserving of the public outrage that has ensued. Their longer-term impact may have been to render all of us less trusting of each other (O’Neill, 2018).
32. Why does trust in institutions matter so much? High trust delivers numerous organisational benefits – faster decision making, more information sharing and problem solving, greater innovation – all of which result in more efficiency and pace plus enhanced engagement.
33. Trust matters most during times of uncertainty and that is the constant state in which we find ourselves today. In the UK we have emerged from the global pandemic but society is becoming increasingly polarised and unpredictable, exacerbated by economic disparities between the wealthy and poor; by geo-political threats of the escalation of war; and by other existential crises like climate change and the intimidating speed of technological advancement such as AI. People see a future that looks uncertain and that seems to be unfurling beyond their control.
34. All of this has affected our “*disposition to trust*”, not just in the future but in one another (Kramer, 1999; Mayer et al, 1995). Being let down in the past by others, individuals or institutions, coupled with uncertainty about the future, produces a filter in our mind’s eye which affects our willingness to take a “*leap of faith and trust one another*” (Colquitt et al, 2007).
35. As a counterpoint, it is also possible to trust too much. The murdering GP Harold Shipman, the trader Nick Leeson who brought down Barings Bank and the recent Post Office scandal reveal the problems of insufficient questioning, or a refusal to listen to those who do question, resulting in a collusion to be silent – a “*wilful blindness*” (Heffernan 2011).

Increased regulation and scrutiny

36. Right now it’s seen as insufficient for leaders to seek atonement through hand wringing or virtue washing. Everyone wants greater transparency in public life. This has prompted increased monitoring and regulation. However, philosopher Professor Baroness O’Neill reminds us that there are limits to transparency and that should not dent our willingness to trust: “*Trust is needed because all guarantees are incomplete... Trust cannot presuppose or require a watertight guarantee of others’ performance and (trust) cannot be withheld just because we lack guarantees.*” The more organisations increase investment of resources –

GENERAL SYNOD

time, systems and people – in checking for untrustworthy behaviour, the more we inadvertently constantly signal: “*Beware: people are not to be trusted*”.

37. And when increased regulation cannot satiate our levels of distrust, we turn to making our own judgements and seek information with which to inform or corroborate our opinions or our fears. To whom or to what do we turn?

The role of social media

38. There can be no doubt that the amount of time we all spend online and the ubiquity of social media in our work and personal lives has shifted how we relate to each other. The internet and social media give us the illusion of having access to reliable information. “*Digital technologies support voluminous, remote and often anonymous dissemination of material whose trustworthiness – or untrustworthiness – is hard to judge*” (O’Neill 2018).
39. Worryingly then, whilst we are increasingly trigger happy in our amplification, pace and tone of judgement on our individual leaders, paradoxically we are becoming lax in our scrutiny of whether the very information or source we are accessing to underpin those judgements is accurate or reliable. Some are in danger of failing to seek out counterarguments on the web and in so doing becoming less, not more, informed. In some exchanges we are insufficiently rigorous in tracking the identity of the source itself or questioning the source’s motives. We delude ourselves into thinking we are more informed because of the ease of access to volumes of information. However, through our indiscriminate use of social media we are in danger of becoming stupid in our judgement of where to place our trust.
40. So the key question becomes *how* we judge whether a person or an institution can be trusted. As O’Neill (2018) tells us, “*What matters most is being able to judge trustworthiness and lack of trustworthiness*”. This prevents us from falling into the valley of perpetual scrutiny and knee jerk judgement based on unreliable information and consequently prevents us escalating controls and regulation as a substitute for seeking trust in each other.

How to assess trustworthiness, when to forgive and when to repair

41. Trust is “*the intention to accept vulnerability based on positive expectations of the intentions or behaviours of another*” (Rousseau, 1998). People judge the trustworthiness of leaders by four criteria:
- *Ability*: Have they got the right competencies and abilities to do their job?
 - *Benevolence*: Are they bothered about others or entirely self-interested?
 - *Integrity*: Are they guided in their decisions and actions by a moral code?
 - *Predictability*: Can people see a consistency in their approach?
- (Mayer et al, 1995; Dietz and Den Hartog, 2006)
42. Research shows that lapses in *ability* can be forgiven. Each one of us is fallible and human. Most of us in senior leadership roles have made mistakes of competence in our career at some point. Someone has forgiven us that lapse to

GENERAL SYNOD

allow us to continue in our vocation or work. But betrayals of *integrity and benevolence* can destroy trust, and fast, at both an individual and institutional level (Lewicki, 2017). As an old Dutch proverb puts it: “*Trust comes on foot but leaves on horseback.*” In other words, trust is hard to gain but all too easy to lose.

43. A sense of proportion matters. Mistakes of ability or competence should not be afforded the same level of attention as breaches of integrity or morality, such as those concerned with racism, slavery, and sexual abuse. These breaches will take decades to heal and deserve considered and reverent repair, which we examine later in this section.
44. So it’s incumbent on us all to ensure that those attempting to escalate distrust around more minor lapses of ability, are calmed by others and these breaches should be rapidly repaired through immediate forgiveness and empathy. That enables the preservation of an organisation’s energy and resources for repair of the more serious trust issues concerning questions of integrity or morality.

How to preserve trust in the face of threats?

i. Active trust

45. The maintenance of trust is a continuous process and Giddens emphasises that this is particularly necessary in late modernity as society is more unstable (1994; Mollering, 2013). Trust is an ongoing accomplishment, continuously worked on by people and never taken for granted. More purposeful actions or practices need to be implemented when there is a sudden jolt, either from within or outside the organisation.

ii. Preserving practices

46. A study of 14 major public and private sector employers after the financial crisis showed that those who preserved trust in the face of such a jolt engaged in the following practices:
47. “*Bridging narratives connecting the past with the future*” – People needed stories about the future direction of travel but they also needed reassurance about what was not changing. Few of us revel in rapid transformation as an experience of change. Instead, it was found that, with a few stumbles along the way, trust was preserved by employees being given perpetual evidence of how certain traditions and practices were *staying constant*. Those explanations appeared alongside descriptions about other practices that were changing. The research revealed that those who preserved trust gave members multiple opportunities to develop a shared understanding of the *need* for change but, crucially, also a shared knowledge of *how the future still connected the organisation with its past and its roots*. It was about providing a firm cognitive bridge for people to “*walk over*” in their minds.
48. “*Emotionally supporting and inclusive enacting*” – Leaders recognized the emotional impact of disruption upon people and created safe places where employees and their emotional responses took priority. One senior manager said: “*Let’s make time to care for them – don’t expect them to make the emotional leap at the same pace they’re making the intellectual leap.*” Leaders

GENERAL SYNOD

understood that different stakeholder groups had a legitimate right and need to be heard in those safe spaces without judgement.

49. *“Mobilising existing trust foundations”* – Knowing and mobilizing individuals who people already trusted was important. Organisations that maintained trust ensured that change leaders were those who were already trusted by employees. These “trust centurions” might work at any level and any function. It could be the most junior and local of managers who epitomized trustworthiness in the eyes of others and led the change (Gillespie et al, 2021).

iii. Individual leaders matter

50. Increased regulation and monitoring are often a knee-jerk reaction to failures, and are necessary in many organisations, but they alone are insufficient. Individual leaders need to know the right thing to do to maintain trust in challenging circumstances: something that goes beyond rulebooks and codes of conduct and into a deep and genuine personal sense of responsibility and obligation to others.
51. When the rulebook does not give you any answers (such as during an unforeseen pandemic), it becomes the ultimate test of whether the organisation or an institution has developed a cadre of senior leaders who know and agree amongst themselves what the organisation stands for, who have a sense of personal integrity and a shared sense of what the right thing to do is in a situation where there is no certainty.
52. 127 interviews with CEOs and other senior managers during the COVID pandemic (CIPD: Hope Hailey, 2022) revealed how they perceived a shift in senior leadership style:

‘It’s about being truly open and able to admit I actually don’t know what to do. ... You’re not having to be the fount of all knowledge and the answer to everybody.’

‘It’s about listening to what people have to say about what’s right for them and then working on solutions that create the right environment for our business to thrive.’

‘I think people see me as more human and that’s a distinction when you’re a senior individual. I try and make sure I am human, I am authentic, I am approachable, I am humble. All of those things are a clear part of how I lead now.’

iv. Followers matter, too

53. Trusting followers make a difference. At its heart, trust is relational. Followers as well as leaders have a role to play in creating high-trust environments: people need to be willing to trust and to forgive the occasional misstep in ability or competence, especially when accompanied by a genuine and transparent apology. Barbara Kellerman at Harvard emphasises that we not only need responsible leaders but also responsible followers. Kellerman categorises followers as *isolates, bystanders, participants, activists, and diehards* based on their level of engagement in the leadership process (2008). Similarly, O’Neill emphasises that we not only have individual rights but we also have obligations one to another.

GENERAL SYNOD

v. Bring on more empathy

54. As a society we have become increasingly judgemental, but in high-trust environments both leaders and followers understand it is sometimes best to suspend judgement and draw on empathy instead. Whether in person or remotely, the focus needs to be on building human relationships and vibrant communities – work environments in which people can disagree respectfully and still trust each other to do the right thing (CIPD: Hope Hailey and Jacobs, 2022 and 2023).

vi. Therapeutic trust

55. This is the idea that trusting someone can inspire others to become more trustworthy by placing trust in them when it might not even be deserved. The trustee/trustor recognises they have done nothing to merit trust but nevertheless they give trust to each other. This gives rise to feelings of obligation reminiscent of emotions stirred up when we receive a gift: *“It is based on the human desire to reciprocate goodness and to live up to what others expect”* (Govie 1998, quoted in Stigall, 2022). Teresa Morgan, in *The New Testament and the Theology of Trust*, describes examples of how therapeutic trust, letting people feel what it’s like to be “entrusted”, can transform the lives of young offenders (2022).

How to repair when there are serious breaches of trust

56. Sometimes breaches of trust that are lapses in morality and/or integrity are so profound that little can be done to prevent a serious loss of trust. At an institutional level the research shows that to repair trust in these circumstances requires different response in the short-, medium- and long-term responses, and the organisation should prepare itself for a long road to recovery.

- a) In the immediate few days after the breach is exposed, best practice recommends (Dietz and Gillespie, 2010) that the most senior person in the organisation needs to take responsibility for what has happened, express regret to the people concerned, order an immediate investigation, suspend those who need to be investigated, await the outcomes of the investigation and exhort the rest of the organisation in the meantime to double down on their demonstration of trustworthiness to the rest of the world.
- b) In the medium term, once the investigation has completed its work and reported its conclusions, critical questions arise - critical because they will determine the focus of resources and energy for the institution over a matter of years. The first area for questioning is whether the investigation concludes that the incident or the behaviour of an individual is a “blip”. Is it a *one off* event amidst an otherwise trustworthy organisation or, at an individual level, a *rogue bad apple*, but there is nothing to suggest that the whole institution is corrupt or immoral in some way?
- c) If the investigation concludes that it is a one-off event or a rogue individual or team, which is unrepresentative of the general organisation, efforts to repair trust must continue with repeated apologies and often the tightening of systems and controls within the organisation to manage the risk. However, in this scenario, there may not be need for deep transformational change and further accusations towards other employees

GENERAL SYNOD

within the institution that imply they are similarly untrustworthy or corrupt. You can't argue from the specific to the general.

- d) If the conclusion of the investigation is that cultural and structural transformation is necessary because the underlying problem which gave rise to the breach is cultural, and therefore systemic, then the institution is in for a deep change programme, which should be planned and appropriately resourced.
57. Changing behaviours, attitudes, values, routines and rituals, is a mammoth undertaking and needs to go to the very heart of the institution. Both internal and external stakeholders should be informed that, in a large institution such as the Met Police, this will take years. Very often a change in leadership is also required at this stage for the commitment to change to seem credible to others. Purpose, vision and values are revisited as well. Change interventions go well beyond structures and systems into employee attitudes and behaviours. To achieve a complete cultural reset, all HR systems are also overhauled at all critical points in a people management life cycle – what trustworthy behaviours and attitudes are looked for at the point of recruitment and selection, what people are told about the culture and acceptable behaviour at induction, and how all of this is then consistently reinforced through training and development, performance management and promotion and reward criteria.
58. It is also necessary that leaders hone their judgement skills to find a proportional response; so they do not over-escalate matters which can be dealt with promptly through rapid apologies, repentance and forgiveness. But equally important is for senior managers to not engage in “*wilful blindness*”, a form of collusion. Instead everyone needs to be brave enough and honest enough to address a serious breach of trust head on, with eyes wide open and with hearts feeling the pain of others. Senior leaders must be prepared to implement an appropriate depth of change commensurate with the depth and breadth of the breach. The organisation can exacerbate a crisis situation by failing to respond with an appropriate *process* that demonstrates itself to be trustworthy in terms of appropriate reverence, empathy and effectiveness. Worst still is a process which might attempt to conceal the breach, crisis or mistake from others by failing to admit its existence – a cover up.
59. Occasionally all these efforts to reset the culture, values and behaviours are still inadequate and the institution may fail over time to recover. Roy Lewicki (2017) has called this the *Humpty Dumpty syndrome*. As the nursery rhyme tells us: *All the King's horses and all the King's men, couldn't put Humpty together again*. In these grave circumstances a public sector organisation is often broken up, merged into other departments or relaunched as a separate structure with a different remit. In the private sector, a business may not recover from the impact upon its reputation.
60. What this all indicates is the need for leaders and organisations to handle serious breaches of trust extremely sensitively and carefully or else they are in danger of creating a state of persistent distrust.

Cultures of distrust

GENERAL SYNOD

61. So what does a person see when they perceive leaders or organisations to be untrustworthy? Untrustworthiness beliefs are 'confident negative expectations regarding another's conduct' (Lewicki et al, 1998). Some suggest that untrustworthy beliefs are the mirror opposite of trustworthy beliefs:

ability v. incompetence

benevolence v. malevolence

integrity v. deceit

predictability v. unpredictability

62. However other studies go further and show that distrust also arises in situations of value incongruence – when one believes that the other actor does not accept one's core values or adheres to incompatible values (Bijlsma-Frankema et al, 2015). It can result from an open and truthful confrontation about values resulting in a shared understanding that both parties are guided by principles unacceptable to the other (Sik and Lacusek, 2023).

So what for the Church of England?

63. The increasing turbulence and fear in UK society presents a powerful opportunity – some might say an obligation even – for church leaders to provide some hope and be role models of trustworthiness. In times of uncertainty people need to be able to turn to a church and believe that it will act with integrity, goodwill and transparency. Church leaders also need to be seen to hold themselves to account for higher levels of trustworthiness than the society they serve.

64. However, there are significant complications.

65. The serious cases of abuse within the Church are not just about the horror inflicted upon the victims by the perpetrators but how the acts themselves were allowed to go unnoticed in the first place. So, systems and processes around safeguarding can be tightened but as long as those safeguarding systems and processes are embedded within a culture that perpetuates a lack of "noticing" by colleagues and a structure that encourages clergy to work as "sole operators" in "their" parish rather than in teams, the opportunity for "wilful blindness" would seem to be perpetuated.

66. The long-term racism that has now been acknowledged by the Church has also been perpetuated by a culture that does not seek to have difficult conversations about inclusion and exclusion of God's children. These serious breaches have significantly contributed to role of the Church of England being contested within UK society.

67. These serious breaches are not the only cause for widespread feelings of distrust within the Church. In a pre-COVID study of trust and trustworthiness in a diocese, clergy talked of their feelings of isolation, the diminishing respect they experienced in the wider community, the spread of fewer clergy across more parishes and all this coupled with heightened expectations and scrutiny on what they "deliver" in a consumer led society. Some felt unsupported, despite evidence of increased communication through technology. Feeling isolated and judged at a personal level by society for the institution's failings in the areas of

GENERAL SYNOD

abuse and race, perhaps some clergy find comfort and affirmation from within “tribes” and other group affiliations rather than from the wider Church and society.

68. Lastly, there is the emergence of divisions over Living in Love and Faith, where there is value incongruence across the Church between different groups’ attitudes towards sexuality and Christian doctrine.
69. Day-to-day 21st century ministry can, then, be a lonely, unaffirmed, contested and resource-starved experience for many clergy. This sense of declining affirmation from wider society can not only prompt a viral sense of despondency but also an overly critical and negative analysis of the institution and its leaders, almost as though a default position of distrust is a safety protection for many clergy from the possible disappointment from trusting too much. This prompts too many narratives and discourses in the national Church about decline and distrust. As Hance (2021) has observed: *‘Without losing the ability to be reflective and self-critical, we could get better at appreciating our strengths. This is not about curtailing comment or criticism, but of reminding ourselves of what we value about the Church, and trying to make our criticisms less public.’*
70. Reinvesting in trusting each other inside the institution might allow the Church to then direct its attention to its ministry outside in the communities and parishes it serves and rebuild its trustworthiness through service to others. The Church can no longer *expect* to be trusted. It needs to move away from seeing trust as something to which it is entitled towards a position whereby the Church looks outside itself to ask what it needs to become to regain the trust of society and the communities it serves.

GENERAL SYNOD

Chapter 4

Trust and distrust in the Church of England

71. When we began this project we started by trying to delineate the circumstances and dynamics of trust and distrust in the organisation and structures of the Church of England. This was to gain a picture of where distrust can be experienced in the “ordinary” operations of the life of the Church. This is not present everywhere, nor all the time in places where it is evident, but does represent the ground that we believe somehow makes more serious and major breaches of trust, and poor responses to them, more possible.
72. We did this very much recognising, as we have noted above, that the Church is caught up in the same circumstances and dynamics of trust and distrust as wider society, perhaps exacerbated by the pandemic but evident across organisations and wider society throughout history. We also recognise that we apply the terms ‘trust’ and ‘distrust’ to a variety of situations, where somewhat different dynamics may well be at work.
73. As we identify the circumstances of trust and distrust, it is worth keeping in mind the four ingredients of trust that we have been working with, identified for us by Veronica Hope Hailey: ability, benevolence, integrity and predictability. We can quickly see resonances in all four with Christian values and dispositions, and so as we consider each circumstance and dynamic, it is helpful to have these four in mind.
74. So where do we find distrust in the life of the Church, albeit patchily and inconsistently?

Circumstances of trust and distrust***i. Between individuals/groups and parts of the organisation***

75. There seems to be a tendency to a lack of trust between many of the components of the Church of England’s “system”, and it is important to note that this is usually a sense of consistent or even structurally determined lack, rather than a progressive or sudden loss of trust.
76. A lack of trust can be found between the local church and “deanery”, the local church and “diocese”, and any of those individual components and the “national church”. People from one component of the Church system can “other” a different part of the system that is usually referred to not as specific named individuals but as a faceless entity.
77. Distrust is also prevalent in relation to Church processes when the process outcome is anticipated to be, or actually is, unfavourable to the people on the “receiving end”, seeming to lack benevolence towards them. That might be around the processes of the allocation of funds, the decisions around vocational discernment, or the general decision-making processes at every level.
78. As we have stated above, most distressingly, there are specific areas where distrust within the Church is created through evident failures of integrity and benevolence and most particularly in the areas of child and vulnerable adult

GENERAL SYNOD

abuse, racism, and other areas of prejudice and abuse such as in relation to people with disabilities. As we have continued in this work, we have increasingly seen the connection between the “ordinary” forms of distrust and those that have arisen because of abusive, violating and demeaning behaviour, and then from the failure of the Church’s structures and processes to quickly, honestly and effectively respond.

ii. Between different parts of the system

79. A variant of the previous section is the lack of trust between often equivalent component parts of the “system”, particularly around issues of control and decision making. These situations seem to be heightened when the Church, or its component parts, sees itself or experiences itself more as a managed system which attracts certain expectations, rather than components of a more organically connected body.
80. One of the areas in which the lack of trust became evident in the early stage of the *Transforming Effectiveness* programme was between different parts of the National Church Institutions. Of course, this can be put down in part to a culture that may have developed over a period of time, but partly was due to people operating within unconnected sub-sections of the institution, leading to an erosion of trust in other parts of the institution. This is not unusual behaviour in any sort of organisation, but does compound distrust. The result in a few instances was a reluctance to work together, duplication of activity, and an unwillingness to combine operations. This same dynamic seems to be evident between dioceses where it may make sense to combine some areas of operation but the lack of will exists because of a belief that “we are better off doing it ourselves”.
81. This same situation was evident to the Governance Review Group where different parts of the Church organisation have difficulty trusting each other in the making of decisions, often because the decision makers were not experienced as having the good of the others at heart, or were not communicating what the process was and who was involved. Consequently, decisions have to be made multiple times and it remains unclear where that decision is actually finally made, and indeed the eventual decision may be significantly modified from that which was originally proposed. What perhaps lies behind this is a lack of clear delegated authority agreements and the question arises, why is that the case?
82. We also see a serious lack of trust displayed between different sections of the organisation, and for different reasons. So that might be between, or claimed to be between, the House of Bishops and the other Houses of Synod, or between the “parishes” (in general rather than a specific one) and “the dioceses” or “the National Church Institutions”. This can be around decision making and resource allocation, or a more general sense that one part of the organisation is not on the “same side” as the other part; so benevolence as well as clarity of process is considered to be lacking.

iii. Between individuals

83. Organisationally, as well as distrust between groups and components of the “system”, or indeed the Church as a whole, there are also high levels of distrust

GENERAL SYNOD

between individuals, generally between individuals in specific roles such as between a parish priest and a bishop or archdeacon. Often that is because a person does not feel known or understood by those in senior roles, or those in senior roles have become perceived as not making decisions that have the good of others at heart. As resources have been stretched, historic deference (itself of course problematic, as we know from serious safeguarding incidents) seems to have given way to distrust.

84. It is also evident that there can be distrust between peers, so between parish clergy or between bishops, for example. This does seem to be a rather different form of distrust than the forms that exist between individuals and a part of the system, and may have more to do with people's sense of insecurity, of their fear of being "found out" and revealed to be "inadequate".

iv. Between the Church and the world

85. The Church's ability to exercise the mission to which God calls it is dependent on trust. That trust is seriously undermined by what people outside the Church perceive as the Church behaving in ways that are seen as inconsistent with the values and purposes it espouses.
86. This inconsistency is seen first in the wider Church's own internal disputes, conflict and fragmentation, so between denominations as well as within the Church of England. The espousal of values of love, reconciliation, unity and forgiveness are undermined by such divisiveness and divisions.
87. It is also seen when the behaviour of the Church as an institution, or of individuals within it, appears at odds with the values the Church upholds. That is seen strikingly in the abuse of children and vulnerable adults both where an individual has seriously harmed another, and where the Church has failed to notice or respond. We also see this in the Church's racist behaviour, again expressed individually and collectively.
88. While the trust that society has in the Church is undermined to a degree by the differences and divisions within the Church, it can be undermined more by the way that those within the Church deal with the fact there are differences. Any large organisation will have difference of opinions (unless it is a cult). Whether that is either trust building or trust eroding depends on how people within the organisation agree to disagree whilst still delivering on the organisation's greater mission and purpose. The same can be said of the Church, and how we handle deep disagreement, how we build trust which is not about getting everyone to agree, determines how wider society trusts the Church.

Dynamics of distrust

89. We here separate out the dynamics of distrust from the circumstances of distrust, so as to begin to understand the ways different factors impinge on different circumstances. Some factors may be applicable to all, but others are specific to some, reflecting the different types of circumstance in which distrust is evident.
90. We simply here list, and in no particular order, some of the factors that seem to feed into the dynamics of distrust:

GENERAL SYNOD

- Unawareness of and abuse of power
- Lack of clarity of roles and expectations, and of accountability
- Challenge of trusting across deep theological differences, held with integrity
- Lack of attention to personal and role boundaries, including around confidentiality
- Lack of clarity and transparency about decision making processes
- Psychological distance between individuals and parts of the institution, and between different parts of the institution
- Perception that parts of the institution are not living the values of the Christian faith, or have adopted a different value system
- Perception that parts of the institution are governed by a managerial rather than a pastoral assumption
- A fear of being found out
- The often unconscious impact of feeling like an institution in decline
- And, to repeat the earlier points, a lack of ability, benevolence, integrity or predictability.

GENERAL SYNOD

PART 2: RESEARCHING THE CHALLENGE

Chapter 5

Working principles for conducting the research

91. The details of our research methodology are outlined in Annex 2. Here we provide a brief summary of the key research principles which have been followed.

92. As a research team we wanted to:

- build on research that some of us had conducted a few years before at a diocesan or national level, involving over a hundred clergy.
- adopt a constructive approach to data collection by asking, in an appreciative enquiry style, for examples of where there were groups with high trust for each other despite people working in teams with very different views.
- find out what were the underlying issues, not just have interviewees describe the symptoms of the problem.
- because of the complexity and sensitivity of this subject area, to design the research to be theory building, not theory testing.
- seek new, deeper explanations for the dynamics of distrust, trust and trustworthiness in the Church which could then be subjected to larger scale survey work at a later stage, if desired.

93. We saw the research process that underpins that theory building as an iterative process, involving:

- literature reviews of work by relevant scholars plus practitioners writing in the area of theology, trust and trustworthiness
- interviews with experts – the individuals we interviewed are listed in Annex 2
- establishing the use of a few organising conceptual frameworks or literature sources for analysis of the data
- in depth interviews with individual clergy and laity from across the length and breadth of the Church, including archdeacons and chaplains. We focused on individuals who work with varied complexities and challenges in the Church but need to establish high trust working environments. For details of the interview questions used, please see Annex 2.
- data analysis, coding and sensemaking of the interview data in numerous meetings as a research group.
- engaged and critical discussions with the steering group to help define the issues, understand the dynamics and sense check our approach, our findings and our recommendations.

GENERAL SYNOD

Chapter 6

What did we find? Outcomes from interviews

94. A lack of trust is endemic to contemporary society, and not just a problem in the Church. Onora O'Neill's question is, Have we become less trustworthy or more untrusting? Interestingly, and as we noted above, in the Church of England there are inconsistent but persistent patterns of distrust and trust – some locally distrust the diocesan/national Church; some nationally distrust the local; some distrust bishops; others trust them a lot. The following provides some headlines of what we have found, particularly from the in-depth interviews conducted by Professor Veronica Hope Hailey.

The Role of the Person in the Dynamics of Trust and Distrust***i. Relationships***

95. We heard from the outset of this project that the foundation for trust is relationship, a sense of connecting with others, knowing and being known, and where people believe the other has their good at heart. People trust people. On the night before he died, just after Judas had left the gathered disciples, Jesus said to those who remained, *“I give you a new commandment, that you love one another”* (John 15:12). Love enables trust, whatever happens. *“By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, that you have love for one another”* (John 13:34). For Christians, the relationship of love and trust is triangular: Jesus' love and trust for us, and our sharing in that through our love and trust for each other. This is the heart of our witness to the world.

96. As one archdeacon put it, *“So now if that is true, that God created all human beings to be like that, therefore the perfect way of being for us as human beings is to be living in relationship with one another. And to live in relationship with one another, at the heart of that must be love. And Jesus is clear about that all the time: “This is how people will know that you are my disciples, that you love one another.” So, if the love for one another is not evident, if unity is not evident, if the fact is that we are not in community and we are signalling something else to the world about what it is to be in community, then I don't know what the point of this is really. We should be a living testimony to God's original purpose for humankind.”*

97. We heard about the how the deep knowledge of another person as a fellow human being allows one to trust the other despite profound differences. Often that is forged in the very local context, for example, clergy serving together in a context of deprivation where one vicar said, *“The priority was on relationship with one another. I remember talking to a conservative evangelical priest and just noticing his ability to hold his positions in a genuine way and operate completely happily and with joy in those meetings. And to say what he thought, but also I suspect to be silent at times when he deemed this wasn't the moment to “sort of break ground” with everybody, but to actually listen.”*

98. People spoke about the need for safe spaces to build relationships of trust. One archdeacon said, *“It is the single most important thing to do. So, in terms of our*

GENERAL SYNOD

leadership, instead of leading by, if you like, demanding conformity or demanding that everyone's like me, if we just had more people who were around who could create safe places in which others could feel themselves to be safe."

99. The undermining of relationships of trust can happen in many ways, but the use of social media by some has become a pervasive and corrosive dimension of our society and the Church. *"It would be an interesting exercise in spiritual direction, wouldn't it, to say to all of us on social media, to everybody who's kind of a keyboard warrior, and indeed, in terms of anything we say, what if every single tweet and every single thing you ever said in your lifetime, was gathered into one piece of paper or document and you are asked to sit down with Christ and read it."*

ii. Primacy of Pastoral Care

100. One place in the life of the Church where trust is most evident is in the pastoral care of those in need. When people were asked where they saw trust in action, they invariably cited instances of pastoral care. This was often expressed as a local experience, as one archdeacon put it, *"People's desire to do better is from the ground up..."* Another commented, *"Where we have an Anglican and a Methodist working together locally, they just get on with it because being people together in this place, the local is more important than the big picture stuff."*
101. We found the focus of trust in pastoral care particularly expressed among military chaplains. One military chaplain, explaining how ministers of different traditions, denominations and even faiths built trust between them said, *"The thing that takes up our time is real salty, gritty, sweaty life stuff, really supporting people who are really suffering and trying to bring understanding and support but also, if it's wished to be brought, light, hope and love, and the way in which the resurrection can bring hope to the really difficult human situations that we are confronted with regularly, and the reason I'm sort of going down this line of thought is because in my experience, that's the first point of contact with other chaplains that we share – responding to the brokenness."*

iii. Selflessness and Humility

102. Our calling as individuals, communities and groups in the Church is always outward, away from ourselves, to the other, seeking to be living and serving through a disposition of self-denial, self-giving love and humility. In this way our behaviour as a Church underpins our witness in the world. One chaplain said Christian ministry is always for *"those who are genuinely selfless, genuinely able to put the needs of others and God's call and His hope and promise, front and centre."*
103. Selflessness can be costly. One lay person described putting their *"head above the parapet"* and speaking up for the Prayers of Love and Faith in their parish: *"I knew there'd be a reaction but a lot of members from the congregation came to chat to me after the PCC because they had similar views and haven't dared to say."*

GENERAL SYNOD

104. As in pastoral care, the focus is the good of others, reflecting our call to Christ-like service. As a military chaplain put it, *“There’s no individual who couldn’t make improvements in our treatment of others and our understanding of self... the truth is always something bigger than our ability to put it in any kind of box.”*

iv. Obligations and Rights

105. We have become a society that emphasises individual rights, without always acknowledging the place of individual obligations. An archdeacon remarked, *“We all have rights but we also have obligations to each other.”* As one vicar put it, *“Rather than the Church evangelising the culture, the culture has evangelised the Church to say it’s about the rights of the individual.”* An archdeacon observed, *“Human rights are not fundamentally about me and my rights. It’s fundamentally about the rights of all people that determine how I function in society.”*

106. Others made the observation that the Church like wider society seems to have become increasingly judgmental and that seemed to be particularly directed to those in leadership roles, and where followers do not accept their responsibilities as followers. When asked about obligations of followers to leaders, whilst a few clergy spoke about respect, compassion, always seeing leaders as human, unless prompted, very few spoke about forgiveness. In fact forgiveness in relationships and in response to the breakdown of trust did not come up. However, understanding of leaders in difficult roles was reflected by one archdeacon: *“Followership is about looking for the best in your leaders. They’re not perfect. People make mistakes. Don’t flipping shoot them down every time they make an error or get something wrong, I mean, there’s no compassion in that. It’s that Lock, Load and Shoot. The Archbishop of Canterbury, who’s got what has to be the most difficult job on the planet. Why can’t we support him a bit?”*

The Role of the Institution in the Dynamics of Trust and Distrust

i. A Shared Belonging and purpose

107. Jesus’ command to love one another creates a loving community of belonging and purpose, the Church. A shared sense of belonging and purpose creates the expectation of trust. In the Church of England we share in a particular expression of that belonging and purpose, rooted in history, responding to God’s call to worship and witness, and entrusted with the cure of souls of everyone. One vicar said, *“for me that’s a very strong driver that, as far as we can journey one with another down this road, I want to be able to keep journeying with my sisters and brothers who actually take a different theological position to the one I do on this primarily so that we might be more effective in our witness in the world.”*

108. But others had concerns, in particular that the Church of England had lost its shared sense of purpose, lost a compelling narrative that everyone recognised. One vicar said, *“Do we sometimes take our eye off the ball and debate our difference instead of recognising our calling?”* An archdeacon commented, *“The concern of the Church has narrowed and narrowed and*

GENERAL SYNOD

narrowed and narrowed to the point where it's really just about individuals.... the relatively narrow choices that people make about managing their personal relationships."

ii. Identity and Church Tradition Groups

109. The Church of England was born of the combination of different theological and social traditions, held together by a shared sense of purpose, the cure of souls of everyone. There have always been tensions between these traditions, but it has been possible by and large not only to co-exist but to recognise that each is part of the whole. But the bonds of affection between people who are shaped by different traditions within the Church of England have recently been placed under great strain. A particular tradition can seem to become the primary source of identity for some, superseding the individual's foundational identity as one of the baptised belonging to the amalgam that is the Church of England. This leads to situations of seemingly heightened trust within a group, or "tribe", sharing a tradition-based identity, and an increase of suspicion and distrust between those of different traditions.
110. Building relationships and thus trust is very challenging. As one archdeacon put it, *"It is just an issue of, you know, if you're playing cricket and I'm playing football and we can't play the same game."*
111. Some of this group identity is experienced as gendered. One female priest, talking about this, said, *"I'm thinking silver back gorillas here – come and join my tribe."*
112. These identity groups may not seem to have porous or flexible boundaries. One archdeacon said, *"If you sit down with quite a lot of people who hold particular sorts of theological views, if you really unpicked it, underneath it is "I can't shift because if I shift in where I am that risks me being expelled from my tribe and I can't do that."* Another suggested that ordination training and the different perspectives of theological education institutions bake in this tribal division – *"We build tribalism into the Church right from the beginning."*

The de-stabilising impact of breaches of integrity or morality upon everyday ministry

113. In the interviews people identified two different severe breaches of trust concerning issues of integrity and morality: abuse and sexual abuse; and racism. Their comments were focused on:
- the breach itself
 - the processes used by the Church to repair those breaches, and the relative effectiveness and transparency of those processes in delivering healing. How well could they trust the process of repair?
 - the wider and deeper impact of these serious breaches upon levels of general trust within the Church. How did it make local clergy feel about their church and its leaders?

GENERAL SYNOD

- the deep strategic cultural, structural and system changes that were necessary to prevent similar breaches of integrity and morality happening again.
114. As one interviewee said: *“The sexual abuse scandal within the Church of England is not a subjective projection of a distrusting populace. That is an objective fact and failure.”* In addition to the horrors of the incidents of abuse for the victims, there are necessary questions about how a caring and loving institution could let this happen in its midst. These then necessitate scrutiny of both the culture and structure of a ministry that allowed these things to go unnoticed: *“I think we definitely chose not to notice and we chose a culture that let people be sole workers and therefore quite free to perpetrate without being noticed.”*
115. Layering breaches of trust upon breaches of trust, interviewees reflected upon the cover up that then ensued and what some called *“the cover up of the cover up”*:
- “We also have a culture failure in terms of the cover up of that abuse... and even the cover up of the cover up, which is a whole level beyond that, which is absolutely a system failure ... Three areas: lack of prevention culture around the individual perpetrators, and their responsibilities for their own actions, and the absolute system culture failing, which is the failure to deal with what is patently apparent for everybody to see.”*
116. Interviewees observed that the first steps taken by the Church to provide redress were “poorly handled”. The response has been multi-layered containing the need to provide redress to victims, deal with perpetrators, implement a learning lessons review but one interviewee has said it has all been too slow. Others reflected on the need to now take a strategic approach and focus on culture, communication and governance and the interaction of those three at a national and local level. It’s moving to *“work out what the bigger culture is that would actually be preventative, to look at healthy cultures”*. This is the huge cultural transformation work that comes after any serious breach of integrity or morality within every institution or organisation. It seldom happens at a pace that is thought acceptable because it is so complex. In the Church it requires a questioning of traditional structures. Institutions, such as the NHS, have had to address lone-working arrangements, to reduce opportunities for concealment and build up accountability and support. The abuse scandals mean the Church must look at the levels of autonomy and accountability within deaneries and parishes and other ministry contexts, similarly to mitigate against cultures of concealment and to put in structures of mutual accountability and support.
117. However, whilst the wheels of strategic change move slowly at the top of the institution, in the meantime, there is an impact on confidence levels at local levels: *“I think we are in a vulnerable place... I think the Church is in a difficult place around safeguarding because we are seeking to do the right thing, to engage more honestly with past mistakes and to recognise we have failed survivors of church-based abuse. So the journey to try to rectify that and get to a better place is in itself a rocky journey... You always know when these things come out that nobody knows the full story and the people who are really involved are not able to tell the full story...and yet judgements are being passed around*

GENERAL SYNOD

and people are being criticised quite nastily sometimes on social media and in emails... The arrows fly in all sorts of directions."

118. Some interviewees were razor sharp in their criticism of the Church around race: *"There's still jobs for the boys, the boys club, that kind of thing is still happening... So you cover for one another and you cover for your colleague... As a black person I know that kind of thing goes on... We're in this place because the Church has not had the integrity to be what it should be and to be honest and put things out in the open... It's all in the culture."*
119. As with its handling of abuse, the Church came under criticism for its implementation of the Anti-Racism Taskforce recommendations: *"We were given the impression it would be a good thing, a game changer and we should have a racial justice officer in every diocese, not just to serve the Church but the wider community. [When this did not happen] we were absolutely devastated... The breach that I thought was going to be repaired wasn't because a dishonesty had taken place."*
120. The long-term impact upon individuals is described as making people very sceptical, becoming distrusting by default, even when that has not historically been their natural disposition: *"I'm not that kind of person but it's almost as though the Church has made me like that because I have seen the dealing."*
121. For others, the mismanagement of these issues, and the attempts by some to dial down the level of outrage, has become a defining condition of trust: *"If I can't trust you on that issue of racial justice, which matters so much to me and is so fundamental, I'm not going to listen to what you have to say."*
122. Other interviewees could see more "green shoots" around the issues of racism such as the appointment of "8 or 9" bishops from diverse heritage: *"so there is a little bit of unity coming together in some ways and trust coming back."*

Integrity in Governance and Leadership

123. The organisation, governance and decision-making of our life as a Church is widely seen as contributing to distrust in the Church. There are numerous examples of this, and they become amplified around major breaches of trust. Lapses in ability and competence happen to all in leadership roles but are usually forgiven. Lapses in integrity are of a different magnitude. It seems the breaches of trust that have happened because of the lack of integrity in single situations have resulted in a situation where all "breaches", even minor lapses of competence, are becoming unforgiveable in the eyes of many.
124. Some perceive a lack of transparency and honesty and gave examples from the way in which recommendations in *From Lament to Action* has been handled, where certain recommendations were made but not implemented.
125. Some perceive a manipulation of the process or communications concerning Living in Love and Faith within the House of Bishops. *"I think if I'm honest, I don't trust the House of Bishops. The process... it's lacked transparency at a number of levels, especially in terms of the legal advice they received, the theological consultancy that they've been willing to receive as well. Promises that were made at General Synod on a number of occasions that the prayers of love and faith*

GENERAL SYNOD

would not be brought to General Synod without the pastoral guidance and pastoral reassurance alongside them. That wasn't on at the November Synod. And so those are just small examples, but they're representative of a process that has twisted and turned and just hasn't seemed to be led with any great clarity or authority or, yes, trustworthiness, to be honest."

126. One archdeacon observed, *"I have been a member of a number of church bodies at a number of different levels I have certainly had the impression sometimes that decisions have all been made somewhere else and that this agenda is being very carefully managed so that there's no possibility that this body will do something unexpected that would interfere with the master plan. That that's quite common and the sheer complexity of the Church as an organisation I think, encourages that kind of behaviour."*
127. Some perceive the Church is now too complex and too managerial/secular, requires too much consultation with too many diverse bodies and is too defensive. As one archdeacon remarked, *"Actually, no, I haven't consulted the mouse in the bog."* Institutional expectations can seem disproportionate to available resources and capacity.

GENERAL SYNOD

PART 3: BUILDING TRUST

Chapter 7

A spirituality of trust

128. Every Christian and every Christian community needs a spirituality of trust – a wise and practical ongoing formation in what the New Testament calls *pistis* – trust, belief, and faith – and in being what the New Testament calls *pistos* – trusting and trustworthy, believing, and faithful. There are innumerable forms this can take, and we hope the brief example we give in what follows will help to inspire others to work out and live out their own spirituality of trust.
129. In part 1 we laid out some core elements of Christian trust: above all, God, who is utterly trustworthy, given to us and present to us through Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit, and who entrusts us with so much; and what we described as being on both sides of the ‘therefore’ – on one side, the essentials of our faith, our *pistis* – who and what we trust in – and on the other side, the essentials of our life of faith: being entrusted with so much, called to be trusting and trustworthy (*pistos*) as a Church community and as individual members of the Church.
130. The Letter to the Ephesians can be read as a matured distillation of the essentials of Christian trust within the communities founded by Paul. It has both a profound understanding of the Church, and also faces the ways the Church can go wrong.
131. The Gospel of John can be read as a matured distillation of the Good News of Jesus, resonating deeply both with the narratives of the other Gospels and also with key Pauline theological pillars: the glory of God; trusting, believing and having faith; living ‘in Christ’; receiving the Holy Spirit and bearing the fruits of the Spirit (love above all, and joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness and humility, and self-control); building up a community through trust and love; and the superabundance of God’s grace and love.

Towards a Biblical Wisdom of Trust

132. John culminates with the resurrection of Jesus and the evangelist’s statement of his core purpose. Thomas does not trust the testimony of his fellow disciples that they have seen the crucified and resurrected Jesus on the first Easter Sunday. A week later Jesus appears to Thomas, shows the marks of crucifixion in his side and hands, and says: ‘*Do not be apistos [untrusting, distrustful, unbelieving, lacking in faith, doubting] but pistos [trusting, trustworthy, believing, a believer, having faith, faithful].*’ Thomas responds with the climactic theological statement of the Gospel: ‘*My Lord and my God!*’ Jesus replies, ‘*Have you pepisteukas [trusted, believed, had faith] because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet pisteusantes [have come to trust, believe, have faith] (20:24-29).*’
133. John then immediately goes on to address us, his readers. He says that he selected, from among the many things Jesus did, the essentials that might enable

GENERAL SYNOD

us to be blessed by trusting him: *'Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written so that you may pisteusēte [come to trust, believe, have faith] that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that pisteuontes [through trusting, believing, having faith] you may have life in his name'* (20:30-31).

134. The later chapters of John include a great deal that is oriented towards deepening in community the life of trusting, believing and having faith, especially in the Farewell Discourses of Jesus on the night before his death (John 13-17). Those discourses culminate in a prayer of Jesus to his Father in which he pours out his ultimate desire. The Gospel can be read as an education of desire: *'What are you looking for?' (1:38); 'Whom are you looking for?' (20:15).*

"I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will trust, believe and have faith in me through their word, that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may trust, believe, and have faith that you have sent me. The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me. Father, I desire that those also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory, which you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world. Righteous Father, the world does not know you, but I know you; and these know that you have sent me. I made your name known to them, and I will make it known, so that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them" (17:20-26).

135. The ultimate desire of Jesus is for our unity, in mutual trust and love, with himself and his Father, and with each other, for the sake of the whole world. This sets the priority for our spirituality of trust: to desire as Jesus desires. It is another way of approaching the core commandments of Jesus in the other Gospels: to love God with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength, and our neighbours as ourselves.
136. One-way love can happen without mutual trust. Jesus embodies that by laying down his life. But his desire is for the mutual trust that enables fully mutual love, like that between himself and his Father. That is what his community of followers is about. That is our calling as the Church.
137. This becomes clearest in the final chapter of John, when Jesus repairs the broken trust between himself and Peter. There is commitment in trust and love by Peter: *'Do you love me? ... Yes... Do you love me? ... Yes... Do you love me? ... Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.'* Peter is also trusted by Jesus, who entrusts him with a responsibility that will eventually lead to him, like Jesus, glorifying God by laying down his life in love: *'Feed my lambs... Tend my sheep... Feed my sheep'* (21:15-19). This mutuality of trust and love is the practical living out of what Jesus has prayed for in his final prayer.
138. The letter to the Ephesians resonates throughout with this depth of trust and love: *'I have heard of your pistin [trust, belief, faith] in the Lord Jesus and your love towards all the saints'* (1:1, 2, 15); *'Peace be to the whole community, and*

GENERAL SYNOD

love with pistis [trust, belief, faith] from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace be to all who have an undying love for our Lord Jesus Christ' (6:23-24).

139. Peace is often joined with *pistis* in New Testament greetings and blessings (Romans 1:1-7, 14:13; Ephesians 1:1-2; 1 Timothy 1:2; Titus 1:1-4; 1 Peter 1:1-9; 2 Peter 1:1-2). Like love, peace reflects the desirability of mutual trust as essential for the community. And in the Gospel of John, Jesus promises his disciples his peace (14:27), and when he appears to them after his resurrection he repeatedly says, '*Peace be with you*' (20:19, 21, 26).
140. So what are the essentials for a spirituality of trust according to Ephesians and John? We can name three.

1) Trust in God

141. By far the most important thing in our lives is who it is we trust above all.
142. The New Testament is steeped in what it knows simply as 'the Scriptures' – the Scriptures of Israel, which the Church came to call the Old Testament. There are several Hebrew words for trusting and being trustworthy, believing, and having faith, often resonating with reliability, truth, and hope, and as much associated with doing as believing and understanding. The lasting covenantal commitment between God and us through Jesus Christ, in line with the covenants between God and Noah, God and Abraham, and God and Moses, is at the heart of Christian faith and faithfulness, generation after generation, and essential to the organisations and institutions that enable that continuity in worship, community, teaching, and service.
143. The greatest truth of this wisdom of trust is that God is worthy of all our trust, love, and praise. This is rooted in what Jesus called the greatest commandment, quoting Deuteronomy 6:4-5: '*Hear, O Israel: The Lord is our God, the Lord alone. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might.*'
144. The life-shaping practical consequences of this wisdom of trust for the Church are of the greatest importance. They include the priority of wholehearted worship, and of stretching all our capacities of heart, mind, imagination and action in loving, understanding, and pleasing God. Ephesians demonstrates this Church-shaping worship, not only in its opening chapter, but also in a remarkable prayer (3:14-21) that resonates deeply with both the Lord's Prayer and Jesus' prayer in John 17. God is '*the Father, from whom every family in heaven and earth takes its name*', which encourages us in pastoral and other commitments to all those among whom we live. Christ dwells in our hearts '*through pistis [trust, belief and faith], as you are being rooted and grounded in love... the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God*'. The climax of the prayer is even more daring: trusting God '*who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.*' We are called to trust God like that for our Church.
145. Ephesians gives its pivotal 'therefore', directly flowing from its first three chapters and especially from the prayer quoted above:

GENERAL SYNOD

'I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one pistis [trust, belief, faith], one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all' (Ephesians 4:1-6).

146. Our research has revealed a deep yearning for that sort of Church, and here it is described as something already existing, a gift of God, something into which we are called, a home and family whose head can be utterly trusted. There is here no anxiety about the future of the Church as a whole. The question is whether we, in our small corner of the Church, lead a life worthy of our calling.

2) Trust in Jesus

147. When Jesus is asked, "*What must we do to perform the works of God?*", he replies, "*This is the work of God, that you pisteuēte [trust, believe, and have faith] in him whom he has sent.*" (John 6:28-29).
148. In between two extraordinary prayers in Ephesians 1 and 3 is testimony to the decisive event that has brought the Church into being (2:1-22). The non-Jewish, Gentile readers are told what God, in his love and mercy, has given them '*in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through pistis [trust, belief, and faith] and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God*'.
149. The gift is Jesus Christ, and the crucial event is his death. It is described as breaking down the dividing wall of hostility between Jews and Gentiles, opening up to the Gentiles the '*covenants of promise*', removing the necessity to enter '*the commonwealth of Israel*' by keeping all the law, opening up access for both Jews and Gentiles through Jesus '*in one Spirit to the Father*', and creating a new community of fellow citizens, fellow members of '*the household of God*'.
150. How is this to be understood? The momentous event is this person making a community of peace that is open to all. Between them, Jews and Gentiles make up all humanity. What has happened is that '*in Christ Jesus you who were once far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace... he has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us.*' It is peace embodied in a person.
151. The hostility of human division, conflict, and alienation from God happens to Jesus Christ in his death; but he himself, the Son of God, happens to that hostility, and, because of who he is, hostility and death do not have the last word. He is the Son of God and now he is the head of the Church, described as '*a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are built together spiritually into a dwelling-place for God.*'
152. A spirituality of trust in Jesus Christ, '*our peace*', brings us into a community that invites people into this '*new humanity*', to fulfil a vocation of trust and reconciliation together.

GENERAL SYNOD

3) Trust within the Church

153. When the resurrected Jesus appears to his disciples, he gives a greeting of peace, shows them the marks of his crucifixion, and then gives them their mission, their vocation, breathing the Holy Spirit into them, and giving authority to forgive sins: *‘Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained”* (20:21-23). To trust Jesus is to be sent as he was sent.
154. This is an astonishing commission, and the ‘you’ is plural, so this is a commission to the community of the Church as well as to each member. In the Gospel of John we see Jesus gathering a community that trusts him (but can also betray or deny him), doing life-giving signs, having deep conversations, teaching, arguing, washing feet, praying, and more. Above all, his mission is described in terms of love (3:16), life (10:10), and truth (17:18-19; 18:37). So one way of summing up our vocation as Jesus’ followers is that we are sent, inspired by his Spirit, to happen to each other, to people outside the Church and to whatever situations we enter, through love and friendship, through enabling abundant life, and through testifying to the truth.
155. In another pivotal ‘therefore’, Ephesians points us to Jesus’ sacrificial love that creates a community of love: *‘Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children, and live in love, as Christ Jesus loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God’* (4:1-2).
156. New Testament language about Jesus, his Father and the Spirit is that of long-term abiding and mutual indwelling – the language of family, friends and home (e.g. John 14:2-3, 10-11, 16-17; 15:1-11, 12-17; 17:20-26). The Holy Communion, the Lord’s Supper, the Eucharist, in both the Book of Common Prayer and Common Worship, gathers together essential elements of a Christian spirituality of trust. Through growing further into these, we become the trustworthy Church we are called to be.
157. Yet, unlike God and Jesus, we know only too well that the members of our Church, and the Church itself, are not always trustworthy. Our brokenness is part of the world, and like Peter on the water in the storm, we will repeatedly stumble and fail. This failure, this sinfulness is shockingly and acutely evident in racism and abuse in the Church, and the further failings of the responses to these failures. These are shameful and profound failures of love and breaches of trust.
158. The Scriptures call us to deep and sustained repentance, to facing into and rooting out the behaviour and attitudes that have led to such harm, to care for the victims, to provide all that is necessary for the slow process of healing, and to pray prayers of lament.
159. Our sinfulness also causes deep divisions in the Church. The Church of England with its wide breadth contains deep divisions over ecclesiology, polity and even doctrine. These divides are not mere matters of religious taste; they are considered issues of theological integrity. We witness painful accusations of heterodoxy and false teaching. The Church needs to ask the very difficult question, How do Christians trust one another while disagreeing to the extreme extent of questioning one another’s Christianity or orthodoxy?

GENERAL SYNOD

160. Clearly, we cannot in this short consideration produce an incontestable reason for people of different Church traditions to trust one another despite their deep differences. However, we have seen that our trust in each other is rooted first of all in our trust in Jesus Christ, in the grace received from him. How does this affect our divisions and disagreements? Can we begin by accepting that we are all starting with him, with the love, peace and trust he enables? Is that enough for us to take risks with trusting each other, knowing it can make us vulnerable to betrayal and disappointment?
161. Theological consideration embarked upon together across divisions of tradition is needed if we are to gain a better understanding of the spirituality of trust on offer to us from our loving God.

GENERAL SYNOD

Chapter 8

The ingredients of change

162. When we began this small research project on trust, we started by looking for examples of good practice in ministry which helped to build high trust. We have heard from inspiring individual clergy who have either been beneficiaries of such trustworthy practices or who themselves are leading in a way that constantly renews or repairs trust. Many clergy in many deaneries or chaplaincies do constantly renew their trust with each other despite experiences of difference or disagreeing in often profound ways.
163. However, despite our good efforts to conduct what some might call an “appreciative enquiry”, it became clear that the shadow of toxic recent past events is very much part of the present reality of the Church at an everyday level. Whilst *Living in Love and Faith* is a current lightning rod for trust discussions, deeper questions persist and recur about how the Church could have been wilfully blind to the issues of abuse and racism; and how much better it could have responded as an institution when these issues surfaced. As we said at the beginning of the report, the role of the Church and religion generally are also now contested in an increasingly secular UK society – What’s religion and the Church for? – but these specific breaches within the Church of England have meant that the questions about purpose have become interlaced with questions about trustworthiness.
164. That does not mean that the excellent expressions of good trustworthy practice we have described in previous sections are insignificant. They are not. They point to how everyone can demonstrate trustworthiness in everyday church life. They empower and they inspire, and are clearly visible to people around them. Similarly the progress which is starting to be made with new safeguarding procedures and systems gives some grounds for confidence.
165. However, designed on their own, all these positive changes are not enough. They will not deliver a new trustworthy culture founded upon a new external compact with society that examines what ability, benevolence, integrity and predictability look like in the Church of England. In an under-resourced Church, with clergy and lay leaders stretched by the ecclesial and community expectations placed upon them, how do we also engage with addressing the fundamental issues of trust? It may be that something more transformational is required.
166. Transformational change is defined as “*change which cannot be handled within the existing paradigm and organisational routines: it entails a change in the taken-for-granted assumptions and the way of doing things around here.*” (Johnson and Scholes, 2023). You don’t contemplate transformation wantonly. It is a very serious endeavour. A real culture change within the organisation requires a shift in everyone’s attitudes and behaviours, which together over time effect the transformation.
167. Transformational change emerges over time, albeit with a clear purpose and plan underpinning the change. Without that clear purpose guiding change efforts, each worthy attempt to repair or rebuild trust following breaches or fallouts can

GENERAL SYNOD

appear project based and can fail to penetrate the underlying routines and rituals, systems and processes, that might have contributed to the breakdown of trust in the first place. Often the projects are centrally driven and sometimes wholly concerned with remedying and repairing the past rather than asking fundamental questions about the future. Some vital questions are: What does the Church of England have to do to earn trust and be trustworthy in the 21st century? If we are to transform into a highly trusted Church once more, what do we have to stop doing to make time for the required new activities? If it is really important work, what activities should cease?

168. So in this section we take a deliberately broad sweep across what we have heard from others; and we reflect on what changes are necessary across a number of different areas of the Church of England in order to renew and rebuild trust. These are the interpersonal, the cultural, power, structures and processes, and a final ingredient on a shared sense of belonging.

Interpersonal

i. Love one another

169. We all know and recognise Christian communities where trust is tangibly present, and yet we also know how hard it is to build that trust and that it does not come about without leaders and members embodying the dispositions that make for trust. Building trust requires us to inhabit the spirituality of trust we have outlined in the previous section. Practices and dispositions such as listening to each other and not simply waiting for the other to finish so we can say our piece; paying genuine attention to one another; having the good of the other at heart – are all part of loving one another with the love of the one who enables us to love because He loves us first. The simple act of listening has been shown to be received as an act of benevolence.
170. Trust requires making time to get to know each other, and allowing people to get to know us. This cannot just be incidental time, at coffee after a service, or at the coffee machine in the diocesan office, but deliberate planned time whether in a congregation, or in a staff team, so that such trust-building and trust-sustaining practices are part of the culture of the group.
171. In each community, such as a congregation or a diocesan staff team, trust is built as people get to know each other and experience one another participating in a shared purpose, at the heart of which is to serve Jesus Christ. People trusting and having faith in people builds trust across a congregation, or a diocesan office staff, as it can in all communities and groups. We learn something of each other's gifts, their strengths and weaknesses, their foibles, their differences, and we learn to operate taking these into account, sometimes needing to challenge one another, but working hard to enable the community to be and to work together for good, for the common purpose of serving Jesus Christ.
172. The importance here is that these relationships themselves embody integrity and benevolence. They should provide spaces where people can be open and honest, trusting that others will listen and care. The danger in some Christian communities is that they are defined by their homogeneity, and so do not seem

GENERAL SYNOD

safe places to voice or value difference. Yet the Church is an utterly diverse body, and the call to love one another is across our differences, of whatever sort those are. Repairing and building trust happens when we make space in our Christian communities to listen to each other's stories, to value who each person is, and to celebrate that each is called by God to be part of that community.

173. For every Christian community to be a safe spaces means continued vigilance and ensuring safeguarding best practice so that no one is victim to those who may seek to exploit the trusting relationships for their own evil ends. Especial care also must be taken to support those who do feel vulnerable in a community where trust is being developed, so that the relationships and trust building can happen at a pace and in ways that make sense for them.
174. Just as within a Christian community, so between communities personal connection is crucial. We are all too familiar with conversations where an amorphous group – “the diocese”, “the bishops” or even just “they” – are held responsible for the trouble we are in. Yet each of those is another collective expression of the life of the Church, called to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We have seen how powerful it is when the conversation moves from blaming “others” to active engagement between people who are seeking to be trustworthy and build trust between them, however difficult the matter at hand may be.
175. The same principles of building trusting relationships applies across and between different communities, different parts of the Church. So in our engagement with different parts of the Church, we need to recognise that we are engaging with people who themselves have been called into the Lord's service, and treat and regard each other accordingly. We are not to speak ill of others behind their backs. We are to see each part of the Church as a community of the faithful, and to engage on that basis. We are to love one another whatever role or position we each have.

ii. Safe Spaces

176. We have referred to the importance of safe places above, and we believe this is a key ingredient for trust repair and trust building. Safe spaces can take many forms, and we would argue that for trust in the Church to flourish every regular gathering of people – for worship, for study, for governance – could be developed to be a safe place. We recognise a congregation, for example, or a staff team, where trust has been built and people are able to be open and honest with each other. This would be our aspiration for all Christian communities and groups.
177. There are times when a particular difficult issue requires a safe space to be created for people to have the conversations that they need to have to repair and rebuild trust. Experience shows that having the courage to set up such opportunities, creating a protected environment with clear ground rules to have the conversation, is far more fruitful than avoiding the issue. The values of capability, predictability, integrity and benevolence are clearly critical here. It is important again to recognise that repair of trust takes time and cannot be rushed.

GENERAL SYNOD

iii. Use of Social Media

178. In the interviews, in conversations and in group discussions, the harm of social media was a recurrent theme. While accepting its remarkable value in connecting people and sharing information, the behaviour within and outside the Church of posting comments without regard for those about whom or to whom we are writing has become an immensely destructive behaviour in the use of social media. It is as if we feel we are somehow protected from the consequences of verbal unkindness, and even cruelty, just because we are not standing in front of the person about whom we are writing. The Epistle of James' direction to guard the tongue can be applied to the posting of social media comments. As one interviewee observed, if all your social media posts were printed out and you were to present them to Jesus, what would Jesus say to you?
179. This is much more complex than 'Please be nicer to one another online', however. What some readers receive as hurtful and disparaging, the author and their allies may believe to be words spoken with integrity, prophetically challenging a culture they feel called to speak against. This difference of interpretation is painfully complex. We value freedom of speech, and disagreement should not be a matter for censure. Different views can be valuable as part of how we learn and reach a clearer understanding. Yet we know that people can be deeply hurt by what they encounter online, and our priority not to cause harm should sit foremost in our mind. Attacks on views we believe to be incorrect should be confined to the opinions expressed and never to the individual. And yet in a world where people's identities are so intertwined with their deeply held views, is such safely targeted critique even possible? We are on very difficult terrain when we embark on such debates online without the face-to-face fullness of in-person discussion, and we should tread exceedingly carefully.
180. The other and related dimension of the harm caused by social media is through the development of "echo chambers" where one person's ideas are reinforced by those with similar ideas, and where there is no challenge from those of different perspectives. One commentator referred to this as "narrow-casting" as opposed to "broadcasting".
181. The challenge is how to change what can be a toxic environment so its value can be enhanced without generating the harm.²

iv. Leadership

182. The primary disposition of the Christian leader, called to love those among whom they are placed, is to be one of service. At the Last Supper Jesus declared, '*I am among you as one who serves*' (Luke 22:27) and in John's Gospel we read, '*After he had washed their feet, had put on his robe, and had returned to the table, he said to them, "Do you know what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord – and you are right, for that is what I am. So if I your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have*

² The Church has been aware of this challenge for some time and has made moves to address it. [The Church of England's Digital Charter](#) is worth a fresh read, as are [the Pastoral Principles](#).

GENERAL SYNOD

done to you” (John 13:15). We believe that this instruction from Jesus needs a more central place in the formation and continuing development of the Church’s leaders, and the culture of service needs to be embedded in its institutions.

183. As we think of building trust, we note that “Trustworthiness” is one of the qualities sought and developed in ordinands. The “Qualities and Evidence” of the “Formation Framework” developed by the Ministry Development Team indicates that this means that the candidate “Follows Christ in every part of their life; Leads maturely which promotes safe and harmonious Christian communities; Lives out their life as a representative of God’s people; Has a high degree of self-awareness.” We can see here echoes of much that we have seen and heard through our conversations and research. The presence of this quality in the “Formation Framework” reflects the key role of clergy, and indeed lay leaders, in developing a culture of trust in the Church.
184. “Follows Christ in every part of their life” speaks of the integrity required of clergy which is rooted in their love of Christ – and in knowing they are loved. Clergy and lay leaders know, as can all Christians, what it means to be entrusted by God with living out the calling God has given them.
185. “Leads maturely which promotes safe and harmonious Christian communities” echoes what we have discerned in the need to build loving communities where people know one another and care about one another. This is particularly important for building a culture that places a high priority on safeguarding, as one key aspect of an overall quality of safety and harmony. This is a congregation, or a staff team, that has become a safe place, where people can be accepted, loved, repent and be forgiven. There is an important process that happens in a congregation or group where meeting for worship, prayer and service together over time builds bonds of affection and respect – of love – that transcends differences.
186. “Lives out their life as a representative of God’s people” implies both being trusted by the Christian congregation and wider church they represent, and trusted by the community and other contexts in which they serve. Neither of those is possible without a measure of demonstrable ability and predictability, as well as integrity and benevolence. This is where the clergy’s representative role is crucial to the witness Jesus calls us to: “By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” (John 13:35).
187. “Has a high degree of self-awareness” means that they have a realistic sense of themselves, and of how they come across to others. St Paul exhorts us to such realism when he writes, *“I say to everyone among you not to think of yourself more highly than you ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned”* (Romans 12:3). He goes on to remind us that we have different gifts, and then writes, *“Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honour”* (Romans 12:9). In this passage we see the intrinsic connections between self-awareness, love, honouring each other, and building up the community.

GENERAL SYNOD

v. Initial and Continuing Formation of Leaders

188. While we can see the absolute importance of the role of the clergy and lay leaders as agents and exemplars in building trust in the Church, and trust for the Church in the wider community, we are also aware of systemic issues that need to be addressed if Church leaders are going to be able to exercise this aspect of their vocation as fully as they might.
189. First, concerns are voiced, and these are not new, that the theological education and formation for the Church's ministers, and particularly of the clergy, as one interviewee put it, "bakes in" tribal differences from the outset. We recognise that theological education institutions strive to form candidates with an appreciation and understanding of the different traditions within the Church of England. We see a key issue continuing to be that people are formed in ways that enable them to develop a deep understanding, valuing and even affection for other traditions within the Church of England. This applies as much to diocesan and other training programmes as it does to theological education institutions.
190. We believe there are two areas that need to be addressed here, recognising that efforts to address them have been made in the past. First, that in institutions and programmes that are designed to form candidates in a particular strand of Anglicanism, substantial effort should continue to be made to ensure that they have developed a deep understanding and empathy for other traditions, recognising that all make up the whole that is the Church of England.
191. Secondly, theological education institutions and diocesan training programmes serving the range of traditions should aim, or continue to aim, for depth of understanding and empathy that enables such programmes to be harmonious embodiments of Jesus' command to love one another.

vi. Clerical Autonomy

192. There is a second substantial systemic concern that has emerged through our conversations and research that relates to the area of the autonomy of the clergy, and lay ministers. Men and women continue to be formed to some extent as isolates to serve as isolates, even in the intensely creative formational experience of many of our theological education institutions. There are a number of inter-related factors here, perhaps stemming from the profound sense an individual may have that they are called personally by God to serve. Indeed, they are, but they are called by God to serve with others whom God has similarly called, lay and ordained. So we believe more can be done to build a sense of interdependence among those being formed for public ministry, with less implicit focus on self-sufficiency.
193. The question of autonomy then is at work in exercising ministry and patterns of deployment. Men and women are deployed to serve, often on their own or with limited contact with colleagues, with less a sense that they are participating in a flow of ministry that runs through time and across space and more a sense that it is "all up to them". This can encourage a degree of individualism and even separatism, which promotes a lack of trust rather than the welcome individuality that is a reflection of a person's gifts for the service of the whole Church. The sense that it is "all up to them" can lead to over-work and anxiety that flows from

GENERAL SYNOD

not knowing when to stop and not being able to prioritise. We would encourage the development of models of supervision and other approaches that can break down isolation. We also recommend exploring ways in which the expectations for clergy in their roles are more fully spelled out, in conjunction with, say, the church wardens and the rural dean, and regularly reviewed. This needs to be thought through but we do think some greater clarity of expectations, and indeed mutual expectations, would help to build trust and trustworthiness.

194. We recognise that none of us is meant to serve alone, and so whether working closely with colleagues is achieved through changing deployment models, or through the provision of support such as pastoral supervision, we need to address the fact that many clergy, and lay leaders, exercise ministry at huge cost to themselves, because of their isolation.

Culture

i. Worship

195. The centre of the formation of Christian communities of trust, trusting in each other and trusting in Jesus Christ, is worship. In our interviews and conversations, the place of worship and prayer as contexts where trust can be built came up frequently. Indeed, this was expressed not just for formal worship in church, but as the anchor for staff teams and other groups who gather together to serve. Worship orientates us and shapes us, and we recognise in our participation in worship our common identity and common calling. Our worship, our expression of praise to our trustworthy God, manifest in Jesus Christ, enabled by the Holy Spirit, shapes our trust and love of one another.

196. The role of the Church's ministers, ordained and lay, is critical in the formation of communities of trust. Congregations want to, and by and large do, trust those who are leading them. They trust those leading worship, to enable them to worship and pray, to draw them closer to God, and to feel held even when the territory seems unfamiliar. This is one of the key relationships where the trust of clergy, in particular, is built. The congregation gets to know their clergy through their conduct of worship, their preaching, their manner, and the care they show through exercising this particular ministry, and that builds trust. The congregation also knows if the clergy and lay ministers trust them, and that mutuality is important.

ii. Repentance and Forgiveness

197. Worship is also the foundation of our practice of seeking forgiveness. Most principal acts of worship include an act of penitence. This orientation, to recognise and acknowledge our sinfulness, and to recognise and acknowledge even in general terms our specific sins, is crucial to the disposition that builds trust. Through the interviews and conversations, we have come to believe that failing to recognise our sins and seek forgiveness for them, including failing to acknowledge the ways we have hurt one another, contributes to our not noticing more major and then very serious breaches of trust. Our loving one another depends on honesty about how we let each other down.

GENERAL SYNOD

198. Failures of ability and predictability (getting something wrong, forgetting to do something) are much more readily forgiven than failures of integrity and benevolence (being dishonest, betraying the good of the other). These faults within a community can lead to irreparable harm, and we have seen this in congregations where the fault centres on the misuse of money, the manipulative use of power, the arrogation of one group over another, and the devastation of sexual and emotional abuse. As we have said at points in this report, a great deal of work is needed to be done, including profound repentance by the offender or perpetrator, if forgiveness is ever to be possible. This work requires the personal qualities of careful attentive listening, of vulnerability and openness, of empathy and compassion, and in all of these the gift of time under God. In some instances healing and forgiveness does not occur, where the harm is too great. But sometimes reconciliation and forgiveness does not occur because too little effort and commitment has been made by those in leadership roles to help achieve this.

iii. Pastoral Care

199. As well as through worship, congregations and their wider communities, and other church groups, also develop trust in their experience of pastoral care. This is particularly the case between the clergy and their congregations and wider communities, and also applies to lay ministers exercising pastoral care on behalf of the Church. By “pastoral care” we include the range of pastoral care outlined in the ordinal: “to teach and to admonish... to feed and provide for his family... With all God’s people they are to tell the story of God’s love... to resist evil, to support the weak, defend the poor and intercede for all in need. They are to minister to the sick and to prepare the dying for their death.”

200. When we asked people for examples of where they saw trust being built, they almost invariably turned to experiences of pastoral care. Showing and sharing the love of Christ through word and deed is powerful embodiment of God’s trust in us, and that engenders trust between us. Pastoral care only works because those receiving care, in whatever form, trust those giving the care. The presumption of trust is very high and widely held, including in the wider community, and so when such trust is betrayed, it is especially devastating.

201. As Jesus’ story of the Good Samaritan makes clear, pastoral care trumps all our prejudices and fears, all the distinctions and differences that we may hold dear. As one of our interviewees remarked, “*We’d all come unstuck in our context if we assumed those we serve believe the same as us.*”

202. So, in terms of the embodiment and living out of trust in the collective life of the Church, the ministry of pastoral care as well as worship is foundational. Worship and pastoral care are essential dimensions of the nature of the Church, and in building communities of trust. They are the central practices that embody Jesus’ double commandment to love God and love our neighbour. Furthermore, the pastoral ministry of the Church expresses Jesus’ command to Peter to “feed my sheep”, which not only builds up the body of the faithful in mutual trust but also builds a body that others see and trust. We see attending to the pastoral nature of the Church as an important element in building and sustaining trust in the collective life of the Church.

GENERAL SYNOD

iv. Recognising the Role of Fear

203. *'Perfect love casts out fear'* (1 John 4:18) and, as we have seen, love is intrinsic to trust and fear is inimical to it. Much of the challenge we have in the Church, and again this has come through many of our conversations and interviews, is to recognise where fear is at play. That may be a generalised fear of the state of the Church, or of the continuing impact of secularisation. It may be fear of what another person, or a part of the institution, might think or do that will impact negatively on us. Fear is also often based on ignorance, not knowing a person as a person, and indeed as a fellow disciple, and therefore we can be fearful based on our assumptions about them. Fear arises too when our systems and processes are unclear – How is a decision going to be made and who is involved?
204. Recognising that fear is at work is a key step, and bringing that recognition into our lives of prayer and worship is vital, since we know that our fear is a falling short, a lack of love.

Power***i. Use and Abuse of Power***

205. Power is the ability to influence or control others, while authority is the recognised and entrusted exercise of power in an organisation. You have authority to exercise power, in given circumstances and according to given means, granted to you by the organisation or society in ways that are acknowledged and accepted. Authority can be overstepped, when power is used beyond what has been deemed the limits of a person's authority, and that becomes an abuse of power.
206. For example, that happens when a person entrusted with authority in an organisation exercises that authority in ways that seek to influence or control others beyond the limits of authority given to them. That can be a Church leader using power beyond the remit of their authority to secure ends that serve themselves or a sub-group, and not the whole body. Power can be exercised outside the accepted givens of authority, subverting or manipulating the patterns of authority, for aims different from those agreed for the organisation. So we see people outside the formal patterns of authority seeking to subvert the operation of the organisation or achieve goals other than those that have been agreed. Essentially this is the behaviour of those who set their own purposes as higher than those of the organisation, and in the Church, those who abuse authority or use power to achieve goals that benefit themselves or a sub-group within the Church.
207. Trust breaks down in both instances because those exercising authority, or assuming power, are not, or do not seem to be, seeking the good of the whole. Trust can often break down if people come simply to suspect, or imagine, that authority is being abused, even if it is not, because there has not been sufficient communication and clarity by those exercising authority towards those to whom they are accountable.

GENERAL SYNOD

208. The fundamental Christian disposition of those who are in authority is one of service, and developing that disposition and the practices that flow from that is at the heart of what we would see in the exercise of authority in the life of the Church. The disposition of service is, after all, one of seeking the good of the other, and if we can lift that up as the primary quality of the exercise of authority, and indeed of all leadership in the Church, we will be expressing one critical dimension of what it means to love one another.
209. We recognise that the use and abuse of power in the Church, and its relationship to the building up or the erosion of trust, permeates much of what we have heard about through conversations and interviews, and that we need to do further work in this area.

ii. The Distribution of Money

210. The use of money is a particular expression of the use of power, and the way money is used and distributed in the Church is a clear area where trust breaks down quickly. Why do parish share amounts vary? Why does that diocese receive funding and this diocese does not? Why is that project being funded and ours is not? Who makes the decisions about distributions? The reasons for share allocation or national project fund distributions, for example, are only as good as the communication of those reasons to everyone concerned. In a Church dependent upon the generosity of congregations, where that local generosity is deeply valued, the wider expectations of funding and its distribution have to be conducted with clarity that is well communicated. The reasons may be disagreed with, and disagreed with profoundly, but that is a different situation from distrusting those involved because the reasons seem opaque.
211. Of course the two come together where money is used to wield power. For example, personal generosity is something we all encourage as part of our discipleship, but that generosity becomes compromised when it is also used as an instrument of power to serve the giver's own aims that may not be aligned with the local or wider Church.

iii. Church Tradition Groups

212. A frequent theme in the interviews and in other individual and group conversations has been the growth of groupings around church tradition, known by some as "tribal groups" in the life of the Church of England, where the internal narrative of a group becomes self-reinforcing and more powerful in terms of shaping identity and a sense of security than any overarching narrative about the whole Church of England. These groups can be very influential power-bases, and in terms of formation and engagement, separate from those of different understandings. While we think of these as theologically, or even politically, defined groups, a similar concern can apply to those in specific roles – groups of bishops, or diocesan or National Church Institution staff, for example, who can so reinforce their own narrative and identity that they could be in danger of being impervious to the understanding, experience and insight of the wider whole.
213. We are clear that groups like these are bound to exist, for theological and operational reasons. The Church of England was born of difference and its

GENERAL SYNOD

continued existence is the result of a capacity to hold together a range of unresolved differences and conflicts of a profound nature, to do with theology, ecclesiology and power, for the sake of enriching the Church in her mission for the people of England. However, that tension – and conflict – has to be held in a way where each part acknowledges and in some way values the presence of the other, that each is part of a tapestry of the whole.

214. That means that identifying with a particular group does not supersede identification with the overall mission and purpose of the Church of England, nor negate the possibility of people of one disposition learning from and valuing people of different dispositions. This would be the command to love one another in action.
215. Trusting across deep differences begs the question, trusting for what? The response lies in recovering a sense of a common purpose, and for many, especially at the local level, that is likely to be found in shared outreach, particularly in response to local social needs and issues of justice, as we have seen through the experience of the COVID pandemic and the continuing cost of living crisis.

Structures and Processes

216. As we have indicated before, there is a two-way causal relationship between our institutional structures and our culture of trust or distrust. Our structures can foster trust or distrust, and untrustworthy behaviours can render sound structures ineffective. Neither is a silver bullet without the other. Improving broken structures will not in itself overcome a culture of distrust. There can be no perfect structure that could always overcome distrust. We can improve our structures, at regular intervals review and refine them, but this will only increase a culture of trust alongside the practising of good behaviours and practices we know to foster trust and trustworthiness.
217. Nevertheless, there is a great deal that can and should be done in this area. It is clear to us that this needs extensive reform beyond the current changes proposed at the national level in the Governance Review, and affecting structures and processes across the Church from the local up. We will touch on three areas here.

i. Clear Accountable Leadership

218. Across all our conversations and interviews, two factors have been consistent. First, that everyone has a part to play in the building and sustaining of trust. Secondly, that one essential factor is clear, identifiable and accountable leadership at every level, lay and ordained. People trust trustworthy people, and need to know who is acting on their behalf, and who is responsible not only for the decisions being made, but for their implementation.
219. So we believe that more needs to be done to ensure that at every level there is clarity about who is responsible, and for what, and that there is also clarity about the nature of their accountability, and to whom.

GENERAL SYNOD

220. A related consideration is the individual and collective responsibility and accountability of members of boards and committees and again these would seem to be areas that need greater clarity. The Governance Review Group witnessed different parts of the Church organisation having difficulty trusting each other in the making of decisions, often because the decision making element was not experienced as having the good of the others at heart, or was not communicating what the process was and who was involved. Consequently, decisions have to be made multiple times by different entities, and it remains unclear where that decision is actually finally made, and indeed the eventual decision may be significantly modified from that which was originally proposed. What perhaps lies behind this is a lack of clear delegated authority agreements and so the question arises, Why is that the case? We look further at the decision making process below.

ii. Transparency

221. While trust is at such a very low ebb in some areas of the Church's life, it is vital that we move towards a much more transparent communication of processes and procedures, including decision making. While we recognise that trust entails accepting what we cannot see everything, building trust at this stage in the Church's life requires more transparency, to be able to build trustworthy practices.

222. This will require a more nuanced understanding of the relationship of transparency to confidentiality, which is not the same as secrecy. A good culture of trust and openness will require us to distinguish the necessarily confidential from untrusting secrecy that should be avoided.

223. The matter of transparency has recently been considered for the House of Bishops, including such areas as the publication of minutes. We see this as a crucial part of repairing trust and applies at all levels of the Church's life.

iii. Decision Making

224. Transparency about the process of decision making is vital to repair and build trust. We would also particularly draw attention to the quality of the decision making processes used in governance and management processes. Agendas of meetings, again at every level, are often over-full, without necessarily proper consideration of how a good decision, including time to listen, think and reflect, might be made. There are good examples in the Church and outside, and we would wish to propose some approaches that could enhance the quality of decision making.

Who We Are

225. Throughout our interviews and conversations the issue came up over and over again about what the common narrative was about the Church of England that everyone was able to assent to, and which indeed animated them. This is not about a shared vision and strategy, but a core understanding of what we are for, upon which we all agree. The need for this is clear, not just because there seems

GENERAL SYNOD

to lack a positive narrative, but also because, largely implicitly, there is a negative narrative operating, the narrative of decline, that seems to shape so much of our attitudes, our actions and responses.

226. Can we formulate an overarching account of the Church of England that is both compelling and embracing, and in which everyone in the Church of England would find a sense of belonging? Can we formulate such an overarching account within which group, tradition or ecclesiological sub-group affiliations (“tribes”) have a place but whose own narrative does not supersede the Church of England’s narrative? And can this overarching account be about our mission, and so outward looking and one of hope for the people among whom we are sent to proclaim the Gospel, and so not just about “us”?
227. We might already have a formulation familiar to us that we do embrace as our overarching narrative, but the fact that a lack of a common narrative was a recurrent theme from our interviews and conversations suggests to date none of these are holding this position for the Church:
- ‘The Church exists primarily for the sake of those who are still outside it’ (William Temple).
 - ‘A Christian presence in every community’ (The Church of England website refrain)
 - ‘A Church for the whole nation which is Jesus Christ centred and shaped by the five marks of mission’ (Vision and strategy for the Church of England in the 2020s)
 - ‘Deeply Christian, serving the common good, with Jesus’ promise of “life in all its fullness” at its heart’ (Church of England’s Vision for Education)
 - The Church of England’s vocation is and always had been to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ afresh in each generation to the people of England (from the Church of England website homepage and based on the declaration of assent, which is made before every ministry is begun)
228. So, can we discern an overarching account that is so compelling as to dispel the implicit overarching narrative of decline that seems to infect so much of who we are as a Church? We believe that is possible and actually vital for the Church of England moving forward, as part of the process of rebuilding trust.

GENERAL SYNOD**Chapter 9****Provisional overarching recommendations**

229. If we follow the pattern we have outlined above, there are a number of steps for change that would be necessary. However, at this stage we want provisionally to highlight five key recommendations that we believe are critical for this process. There is one for each of the main headings. We value Synod's input on whether we are on the right track.

Who we are

230. Discern an overarching narrative or purpose of the Church of England that is compelling and embracing, across even our deepest divisions. Over time this narrative should help guide and inform future development in the following activities.

Interpersonal

231. Ensure that in all formation and continuing development programmes clergy and laity are enabled to gain through learning and experience a deep, empathetic and benevolent understanding of different traditions and expressions within the Church of England, and develop the skills to engage constructively with conflict and difference. On a permanent basis, design and provide "safe spaces" for non-judgmental exploration of new ideas and practices for the 21st century Church. Encourage communication that is high in benevolence and integrity.

Culture

232. Develop a culture of honesty and openness, and a willingness to admit mistakes, with the appropriate support to repent and make amends, in all configurations of the Church's life, be that a congregation, a board, a community project group, or the House of Bishops. Sustain a culture of honesty and openness by ensuring those who are called to lead in Jesus' name lead in a way that models the love we are called to have for one another, expressed in the abilities and practical forms of benevolence and high integrity that will drive a trustworthy culture.

Power

233. Develop among all leaders, especially among senior clergy and lay leaders, a deeper exercise of service as the core of leadership, a greater awareness of the dynamics and informal networks of power, their use and potential or actual abuse of power, and their understanding of the proper use of authority.

GENERAL SYNOD

Structures and processes

234. Change systems and processes to maximise transparency and accountability, be clear about where decisions are being made and by whom, and greatly enhance the capacity at all levels of the life of the Church to make good decisions, ensuring structures and processes are sufficiently robust to minimise the likelihood of previous failings.

GENERAL SYNOD

Annex 1

Trust within the Church of England: project background

1. The Transformation Effectiveness programme is part of the Church of England's Emerging Church of England programme of change. The Emerging Church of England Steering Group asked Martin Seeley, Bishop of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich and Episcopal Lead for the Transforming Effectiveness programme, to lead a small working group looking into the subject of trust within the Church of England. The goals of this sub-project are to:
 - Understand the issues of distrust within the Church of England; and
 - Identify behaviours and practices that can improve trust within the Church.
2. The work began in July 2022. A small Task Group is helped by a larger Reference Group. The larger Reference Group has met six times: July 2022 (online), November 2022 (Westminster), March 2023 (online), October 2023 (Westminster), April 2024 (Westminster), and May 2024 (Westminster).
3. The small Task Group meets regularly. On the small group are:
 - Martin Seeley – Bishop of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich; Transforming Effectiveness Episcopal Lead
 - David Ford – Regius Professor of Divinity Emeritus, University of Cambridge
 - Veronica Hope Hailey – Dean and Professor of Strategy, University of Bristol Business School
 - Gordon Jump – Diocese of Winchester; Project Manager, National Church Institutions
4. The members of the larger Reference Group are:
 - Sonia Barron – Diocese of Lincoln; Diocesan Director of Ordinands and Vocations; Archbishops' Racial Justice Commission
 - Maureen Cole – Diocese of Southwell and Nottingham; Archbishops' Council; Chair of the Archbishops' Council's Audit Committee
 - Charlotte Cook – Diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich; Parish Priest; Area Dean of Ipswich; Bishop's Ministry Officer; Archbishops' Council
 - Joseph Diwakar – Diocese of Lincoln; Archbishops' Council; St Mellitus College
 - Julie Dziegiel – Diocese of Oxford; General Synod
 - Timothy Goode – Diocese of York; Canon Residentiary York Minister
 - Robert Hammond – Diocese of Chelmsford; Diocesan Lay Chair; Chair of the General Synod Business Committee
 - Jamie Harrison – Diocese of Durham; Archbishops' Council; Chair of the House of Laity

GENERAL SYNOD

- Rachel Jepson – Diocese of Birmingham; Archbishops’ Council; Appointments Committee; Vice Chair of the Council for Christian Unity
- Joyce Jones – Diocese of Leeds; Parish Priest; General Synod
- Hugh Nelson – Diocese of Truro; Bishop of St Germans
- Peniel Rajkumar – Diocese of York; Canon and Prebendary York Minster; Global theologian, Untied Society Partners in the Gospel
- Kate Wharton – Diocese of Liverpool; Parish Priest; Prolocutor of the Northern Province; General Synod

GENERAL SYNOD

Annex 2

Research design: sample, confidentiality, data collection

Sample size and composition

1. **Diocesan study: Focus Groups, Parish level data collection and Workshops – n = 120 clergy.** In 2018 and 2019 (in an unnamed diocese) a project on trust and trustworthiness was conducted over an 18-month period. Approximately 130 clergy, broken into small groups, chose to each take part in 2 x half day workshops separated by a 3 month period which gave them time to collect data on trust and trustworthiness within their own parishes or chaplaincy. In the second workshop they shared the data they had collected with their cohort. In all 8 workshops averaging 25 - 30 people were held lasting 3 hours each giving a total of **24 hours in discussion**. The data they collected and their feedback in the workshops was recorded, analysed over **several months** and a report was presented to the Bishop's team in September 2019.
2. The major themes which emerged were similar to the data collected in the last year with the exception of mentions around Living in Love and Faith, for obvious reasons. Main themes– striking balance between local or individual autonomy and national unity; the need for more relational bonds between diocese and parishes, rather than managerialist encounters over finance and procedures; the corrosive effects of the major breaches of trust concerning child abuse, safeguarding and sexuality as well as the Church's handling of those breaches which was seen to be lacking; the way local relationships and an outward focus onto those in need could start to heal the breaches reported at national levels; the appreciation of the workshops as safe places for discussing hurt, struggles and breaches of trust that were occurring for them as clergy.
3. **National Study: Individual interviews: n = 20 laity and clergy.** Through 2022 to 2024, I interviewed 20 clergy and laity for one hour each = **20 hours of individual discussion**. The sample was drawn up for me by the Task Group and Reference Group. Interviewees were drawn from different geographies, a variety of roles and represented a spectrum of opinion within the clergy. The names were sent to my University of Bristol Dean's Office and the PA team approached people on my behalf. Some never replied but every person who agreed to take part was interviewed.
4. **National study: Reference Group: n = 13 laity and clergy.** The Reference Group comprises 13 clergy and laity and has met **6 times for 19.5 hours since July 2022** to discuss the underpinning conceptual framework for the study, the particular issues facing the Church and to advise on sample composition, to discuss the initial feedback from the interviews as a validity and reliability test. **Total hours in discussion = 19.5**
5. **International experts:** Members of the Task Group benefited from discussions and meetings with international experts on this subject matter: Onora O'Neill, Baroness O'Neill of Bengarve – Philosopher and Member of the House of Lords; Teresa Morgan, McDonald Agape Professor of New Testament and Early Christianity at Yale Divinity School; Dame Barbara Woodward, Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom to the United Nations.

GENERAL SYNOD

Research approach***Philosophy***

6. The approach taken is interpretivist using qualitative data. This approach is used when one is trying to understand a phenomenon in a new context, both temporal and organisational, and where one is seeking to gain a deep understanding **build a conceptual and practical position. It is theory building, not theory testing. To facilitate this**, semi-grounded theory was used. We did not asked open questions (why, how, what, tell me about) but framed our questions using theoretical frameworks from either the trust/trustworthiness or theological literature.
7. From this report it would be expected that larger scale quantitative studies may be commissioned to test some of the recommendations that might require larger scale change around structures or systems.
8. **Study 1:** In the first study at diocesan level the clergy were asked in workshop mode to give their perceptions of levels of trustworthiness in the Church as an institution, in senior leaders in the Church at diocesan level and in the local clergy and to explain the causes of those different levels of trust using the conceptual framework of drivers of trustworthiness: ability/competence, benevolence, integrity and predictability/reliability (Mayer et al, 1995; Dietz and Den Hartog, 2006). . They were then asked to repeat that process by collecting data within their own parishes or chaplaincies by whatever means they chose. In the second workshop they shared that data with their original cohort. Not everyone came back to the second workshop but approximately 70 did. The participants all noted their appreciation of the diocese in giving them a means in which to discuss their perceptions and feelings about the erosion but also the preservation of trust.
9. **Study 2:** In the second study each interview was conducted virtually. I asked each interviewee their permission to use the Microsoft Teams *Record and Transcribe* function which permits simultaneous transcription. Each interviewee was told that these transcripts would only be seen by the 4 strong project team (and not shared with the Reference Group). The interviewees were guaranteed anonymity.
10. My aim in collecting data was not to repeat the previous pieces of research by beginning with the sources of division and distrust but instead to ask interviewees to focus on where practices, systems or attitudes and behaviours, were building or preserving trust despite colleagues having differences of opinions. Inevitably the interviewees strayed into the causes as well as solutions.
11. Each person was asked a warmup question about their career to date and an introductory question about Christian trustworthiness. Drawing on the literature and research presented in Section x, 3 substantial questions were asked over the remaining hour:
 - 1) *Given there has always been a certain amount of difference and division throughout the long life of the Church of England, can you describe for me examples of where, despite a difference of opinion or belief, trust was either preserved or repaired or built between people? You can choose examples from the past or the present, from the micro level of individuals working well*

GENERAL SYNOD

with each other, or from the diocesan level or from the level of the institution. It can be behaviours, attitudes, structures, systems, or processes.

- 2) *The 21st century is characterised by an increase in forms of media and communication. Can you tell me which forms of communication you trust within the C of E and why, and which forms of communication you distrust, and why?*
- 3) *The Cambridge philosopher and commentator on trust, Professor Baroness Onora O'Neill, has commented that since the 1950s onwards there has been an increased emphasis on the rights of the individual but without a corresponding reminder of obligations and duties one to another. Can you tell me what you think are the obligations and duties of leaders in the Church of England to their followers and what you think the obligations and duties of followers are to leaders within the Church of England?*

12. Overall, these three questions provoked a thoughtful and rich response in every person I interviewed. We occasionally ran out of time and went over the hour. Every interviewee offered to speak again if we wanted more data. We did discuss this as a project team but the time it has taken to analyse the data from this modest number of interviews made us decide to not do a second round although that option is still open to us.

13. There were some aspects to the interviews in the second study that were unusual to me as a seasoned interviewer with nearly 40 years' experience of both qualitative (and some quantitative) data collection across the globe. I have conducted thousands of interviews in my career within a broad range of organisations, public, private and third sector ranging from organisations in the UN system, multinational corporations, large global charities, the City, government, NHS etc. What struck me as distinctive about the content of these interviews and the earlier work within the diocese, was this.

- a) The general topic of trust was front of mind. All were distressed by what was happening, but their distress was founded on different motivations.
- b) A few struggled to find positive examples of trust building or preserving.
- c) Outside those from military chaplaincy, there was freedom of thought, no "corporate style" mantras were parroted back to me. Concern about the breakdown of trust was the unifying theme.
- d) However, people had different perspectives on its cause. So, the clergy are encouraged to hold very diverse views and the institution should be applauded for allowing such freedom of thought and spirit compared with the *group think* that often emerges within so many institutions.
- e) I ask, at what point does this become destructive? When does the institution's needs to serve God trump those of the individual's right to be just that – an individual rather than a member of an institution.

Analysis

14. In Study 1 the participants in the study made sense of their experience and the data they collected themselves. In Study 2 we coded the data to identify practices associated with trust preservation as well, at a secondary level, trust

GENERAL SYNOD

erosion. The data was then copy and pasted into the identified practices and shared across the research team. Research team meetings read the coded data and created meta themes that were then discussed and shared with the both the reference group but also a theological retreat for feedback and sense checking.

Veronica Hope Hailey

GENERAL SYNOD

Annex 3

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