

GENERAL SYNOD

‘Growing Younger and More Diverse’ - Hearing and Responding to the Voices of Children and Young People

Summary

In July 2023, Synod passed a motion (re: GS 2298 A & B) which called for greater engagement with the voices of children and young people, and the development of strategic engagement activities with young adults aged 18-25. This was taken to Archbishops’ Council in its Autumn meeting, where funding was approved for the Education Office to take this work forward. This paper focuses on the first element of this work. Further updates on the young adults’ work will come to a future group of sessions.

This presentation item is intended to enable Synod:

- To consider the practicalities of engaging children and young people (CYP) in a systematic and well-planned way to inform debates and thinking on a range of issues
- To experience/model a live example of this kind of engagement with reference to the Church’s vision to grow ‘Younger and More Diverse’ through input from the National Younger Leadership Groups, with reference to a range of development activities from across Education/Vision & Strategy/Ministry
- To commission staff to plan a detailed schedule which ensures the voices of CYP are both to be heard and responded to in subsequent groups of sessions through timely commissioning of resources (such as surveys, videos, in-person contributions)

To take this work forward through this presentation item,

The **RT REVD JONATHAN FROST, BISHOP OF PORTSMOUTH** to move that this Synod:

- a) welcome the voice of children and young people as part of the church of today and commit to intentionally hearing and responding to their voice on at least one substantive item of business in future groups of sessions, employing a range of presentational activities, including surveys, reports, live presentations and videos.
 - b) welcome the work being done across the whole church to become ‘younger and more diverse’ ensuring every child in every parish has access to a flourishing youth, children and families’ ministry.
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Hearing and Responding to the voices of Children and Young People

1. In order to commence the systematic engagement in this group of sessions, we have brought together a presentation item in which Synod can experience a range of methodologies of hearing the voice of CYP. This includes:
 - a) Presentation of survey data, both commissioned through the National Younger Leadership Groups, and through a range of other sources including recent Statistics for Mission and ComRes surveys
 - b) Video case studies of innovative practice and progress

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- c) Live presentation input on the subject of 'Growing Younger and More Diverse'.

We are very grateful to the staff and students at Archway Learning Trust (Nottingham) and Archbishop Holgate' School (York) for joining the session live and sharing their views with us.

2. This range of methodologies is clearly not exhaustive but rather gives a variety of presentation formats to consider for future engagement.
3. We have chosen to focus this item on a particular element of our shared work – namely 'Growing Younger and More Diverse'. This is simply to take an example of an issue where we should be hearing and responding to the voice of CYP, but clearly one where those voices have much to say in relation to current experiences and perspectives. In future sessions, other focus items would be chosen for this CYP input as outlined below.

Commissioning Future Sessions

4. The motion commits us to well-planned and systematic engagement with the voices of children and young people in future group of sessions, such that there would generally, be an item where these voices were heard and responded to. This requires wise planning between the Education Office and the Business Committee to ensure that the item (s) selected is/are confirmed within a reasonable time scale to enable the effective gathering of voices from a wide range of CYP, to be presented in a variety of formats to support the work of Synod. There may be for example a range of issues that are likely to come up over the coming groups of sessions that could be commissioned in due course, so that future thinking and debates could become well informed by the voices of CYP.
5. In addition, although this initial work is suggested at a national level, there may be opportunities to draw upon similar work that is being undertaken at diocesan level that could, in time, feed into this process. This could become part of the systematic commissioning of surveys/focus groups etc., particularly to support the breadth of contexts from which to draw.
6. Some of the initial work in this item has been drawn from the National Younger Leadership Groups – primary and secondary school contexts across the country. We would continue to deepen engagement with the education sector, but also ensure that voices of CYP from church contexts were fully integrated into future items. This would require close working with Dioceses to ensure that samples were appropriately representative.
7. It is suggested that a group of 'subjects' upon which to commission this work is agreed in principle at this stage through liaison between the Education Office and the Business Committee, to enable timely planning and implementation of this approach, and to ensure that this systematic engagement is fully embedded in each future groups of sessions.
8. In addition to the practicalities of enabling the voice of CYP to be heard in these ways in future, it will be important to consider the most effective mechanisms for these voices to be responded to – both in general terms in feeding back to large groups of CYP who

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have fed into the surveys, and also to individuals who have presented live/through video.

9. While the Education Office will take the lead on the operational implementation of this work, it will continue to be shaped in deep partnership between Education/Vision & Strategy/Ministry as part of our ongoing commitment to collaborative working across these departments.

The Rt Revd Jonathan Frost
Chair, National Society

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