

SYNOD REPORTS

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General Synod of the Church of England

February and July 2023 (London and York)

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Standing orders for remote hearings

The first item of business at the February group of sessions was to revive the General Synod (Remote Meetings) (Temporary Standings Orders) Measure 2020, which enabled Synod to conduct hybrid meetings. Previously in operation during the COVID-19 pandemic, the standing order had lapsed and was brought back into operation until 5 February 2026.

Pensions, stipends and miscellaneous provisions

Three draft Measures that had been presented for Synod for First Consideration in July 2022 progressed through the revision stages and received final approval: the Diocesan Stipends Funds (Amendment) Measure, the Church of England (Miscellaneous Provisions) Measure, and the Church of England Pension (Application of Capital Funds) Measure. In addition, Amending Canons 42 (relating to diocesan safeguarding officers) and 43 (containing miscellaneous provisions) were approved. The Diocesan Stipends Funds (Amendment) Measure progressed through its Parliamentary stages and received Royal Assent in July.

Living in Love and Faith

The dominant item of business at the February group of sessions was an eight-hour debate on the Living in Love and Faith proposals. A total of 27 amendments were tabled to the motion; only one was carried, which endorsed the College and House of Bishops decision not to propose any change to the doctrine of marriage. Synod received first sight of draft *Prayers*

and Love and Faith which the House of Bishops signalled an intention to commend for use by ministers under the discretion in Canon B 5. It is anticipated that further liturgical material will be submitted to Synod for authorisation in 2024.

Clergy discipline

At the July group of sessions, the draft Clergy Conduct Measure received first consideration. The Measure proposes to replace the current Clergy Discipline Measure with a three-track system to investigate and determine grievances and allegations of misconduct and serious misconduct. The draft Measure has been committed to a Revision Committee which will report back to Synod in 2024.

Safeguarding

The first Code of Practice issued under section 5A of the Safeguarding and Clergy Discipline Measure 2016 was approved. This particular code sets out provisions relating to lessons learnt reviews. In July, Synod received an update on the implementation of a redress scheme for survivors of church-related abuse, for which legislation is expected to be presented later in 2023, and related abuse, along with the decision to disband the Independent Safeguarding Board.

Other business

In July, Synod passed a motion welcoming the ongoing review into the Mission and Pastoral Measure and the recommendations contained in the latest report.

In addition, during both sessions Synod passed motions welcoming proposals resourcing ministerial formation; calling on His Majesty's Government to address the cost of living crisis and to exclude charities, including churches, from Insurance Premium Tax liability and welcoming proposals for revitalising the parish for mission and measures to combat the climate emergency. Two diocesan synod motions were passed. The first was from the Diocese of Worcester, noting the decision of the Probation Service to recognise faith and belief as a protective factor in reducing reoffending. The second, from the Diocese of Blackburn, requested the Archbishops' Council to implement a time limited regional trial abolishing wedding fees. A private member's motion seeking to attract younger members of Synod was also passed.

The following were approved: the Faculty Jurisdiction (Amendment) Rules 2023; the Electronic Book of Services Form and Conditions 2023; the Parochial Fees Order 2023; the Legal Officers (Annual Fees) Order 2023; the Ecclesiastical Judges, Legal Offices and Others (Fees) Order 2023; and the Church Representation Rules (Amendment) Resolution.

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