

Race Equality

Vasantha Gnanadoss invited Synod to ask the House of Bishops to produce a statement (comparable to that of the association of Chief Police Officers) which would prevent those acting on behalf of the Church of England being members of organisations which contradict the duty of Christians to promote race equality. Synod were happy to vote this through and particular attention was drawn to affiliation with the BNP which was viewed as absolutely unacceptable for Christians to support.



The Archbishop said:

There are many areas of life where we simply wished people would go away so we wouldn't have to deal with them: asylum seekers, people of other races & religions, supporters of women bishops, opponents of women bishops, gay people and those who oppose them. But, said the Archbishop, these people are not going away. They will be with us, alongside us, for the foreseeable future. Indeed, they are indispensable to us. Our challenge is not to try and get rid of them, but to listen to one another, to love one another, and to learn to live together well, as a sign that Christ has only one bruised and broken body, of which we are all a part.



General Synod

next meets from the 10th – 14th July in York. If you would like a question asked, do write to one of the Synod Reps.

Do you have a question you are burning to ask?

Contact your synod reps. who can table it for you.

It must be a question of fact, not a hypothetical question, on the subject of the Church of England nationally.



How does this session of Synod Business impact on the Diocese of Ely?

- All of us will face the consequences of the financial crisis in our parishes. How can we help those who are struggling financially?
- Use or lose our own retreat house!
- Think now about who you want to represent you on General Synod when elections come up next year.
- Think about the people you find difficult. How can you begin to get to know them better, listen to them, love them, pray for them and see them as indispensable to us?

Uniqueness of Christ in multi-faith Britain

Speaker after speaker assured us that interfaith dialogue and evangelism are not incompatible. A Muslim woman, who did not wish to be named, spoke movingly of her gratitude that people had shared Christ with her, even though becoming a Christian had cost her dearly. Evangelism needs sensitivity but there is a 'hunger for Jesus' among some people from other faiths.

Please pray for:

- All on the Revision Committee to take the women Bishops legislation forward.
- The work of CHASTE (started in our Diocese) and Stop the Traffic
- Our diocesan retreat house and others in the UK
- All those affected by our current financial crisis
- Those representing churches to the water companies

Justice and Asylum seekers

Listening to this debate and hearing story after story of the appalling treatment of those who have fled to this country to escape persecution, hunger and war, made me feel ashamed of being British. We were reminded that, when Jesus tells us to 'love our neighbour as ourselves' he is quoting from Leviticus 19. That same chapter goes on to say: 'Do not oppress the foreigner who resides in your land. You shall treat the outsider as a citizen among you. You shall love the foreigner as you love yourself.' *Leviticus 19:33,34*

If you want to know more about anything you've read here: check out the General Synod Website at www.cofe.anglican.org/news, beg, borrow or steal a copy of the church press or give one of us a ring. See above.



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Human Trafficking



A moving and shocking presentation was given on the abuse of human trafficking of people in the UK and abroad. Synod agreed to support the Dioceses of Newcastle, Winchester and Europe in their motion and to lend support to those organisations fighting to end the unacceptable trade in human beings.

Visit:
www.chaste.org.uk
and
www.stophetraffik.org

**General Synod
February 2009
Church House
London**



**Welcome to this edition of the
Ely General Synod Digest.**

The Church's Response to the Financial Crisis and Recession



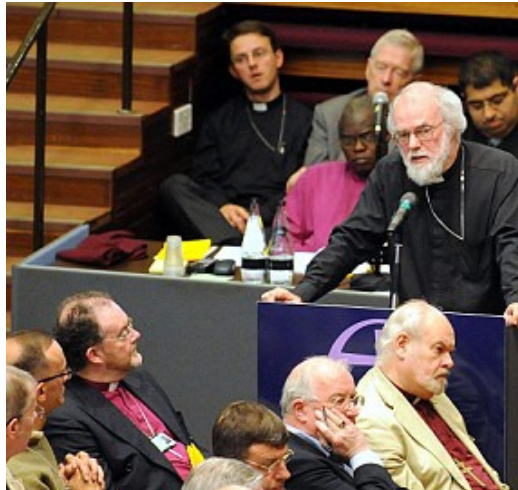
Two debates were held on this important subject. Andreas Whittam Smith (First Estates Commissioner and Financial Journalist) Lord Griffiths (former advisor to Mrs Thatcher) and Peter Selby (former Bishop of Worcester - definitely from another perspective!) opened the debate. Helpful and often moving speeches about repentance, greed, the local affects of unemployment and were made. Most of us are complicit, as we have voted for successive governments which have promoted a debt culture. There was general agreement that there is no quick fix.

The Future of Church of England Retreat Houses

It was brought to Synod's attention that many of the Diocesan Retreat Houses around the country are struggling financially and often depending on help from the dioceses in which they are based, even though they are made use of by many people from across the Province. We are fortunate to have Bishop Woodford House, newly refurbished, but it will not survive unless we use it and support it.



Women Bishops



Synod was presented with the draft legislation for Women Bishops. It consists of three elements:

1. A 'Measure' to enable women to become bishops, to repeal of the current arrangements for those who cannot accept women priests, creation of 'complimentary bishops' and other arrangements for those parishes and ministers unable to accept the ministry of a woman.
2. A change to the 'Canons' to allow people, for reason of theological conviction, not to receive the ministry of a female bishop or priest
3. Provision of a statutory 'Code of Practice' issued by the House of Bishops which will define exactly how this will function in practice

After a long debate the motion was passed with substantial majorities in each house. It will now go for revision, where the committee will have to consider hundreds of suggested changes before returning to Synod in February. This process still has a very long way to run and the outcome is by no means certain.

Climate Change and the Church's Property



The Bishop of Dudley urged the church to review its legislation to allow PCC's, Diocesan Boards of Finance and other church landowners to give proper weight to environmental considerations when disposing of land so as to cut carbon emission and give a moral lead to the country.

Church Water Bills



Thanks to an enormous amount of work by Dr Martin Dales, synod agreed unanimously to lobby the government and OfWat to address the scandalous new system of billing, often referred to as 'Raintax' resulting in many churches, village halls & scout huts being charged thousands of pounds.

Anglican-Roman Catholic Relations

Cardinal Cormac Murphy O'Connor was invited to address Synod. The Archbishop of Canterbury & the Bishop of Guildford (Chair of the Council for Christian Unity) then introduced the debate. It focussed on our understanding of the word 'communion'. We discussed what it means to be in 'impaired' or 'partial' communion, a partnership of imperfect Christians in imperfect churches. We need to distinguish between what is tolerable and what is intolerable. People expressed the hope that the ARCIC process might continue to build bridges between our two churches. As the Bishop of Guildford said: 'This is not just about removal of obstacles but sharing of gifts.'

Ecumenical Canon change....

Following the bizarre situation in the ecumenical church in Cambourne, where C of E law required the church to have Anglican Communion services at all the major festivals, we were delighted to come to the last stage in the process of amending the necessary canon to remedy this situation nationally. Now the provision of Anglican Communion services in LEPs will be a matter for discussion between the Bishop and local church.