



Welcome to this edition of the General Synod Digest.

### Modern Childhood

The Synod was addressed by England's Commissioner for Children, Sir Al Aynesley Green. Since his appointment he has toured the country speaking to England's 11 million children, experiencing exhilaration, despair and anger.

We are one of the most child-unfriendly nations in the developed world and this was borne out by the recent UN report.

He expressed delight that the new Govt includes a cabinet post for the Children's Minister and he urged Christian people to be an advocate for children and to express their outrage on the poverty facing such a large proportion of the nation's children.

Children's Take Over Day will be on the 23rd November and we are asked to invite children to be allowed to do some of the things we do as adults.

Do look up [www.11million.org.uk](http://www.11million.org.uk) for more info.

### Main Item on the Agenda: The Anglican Covenant Proposal

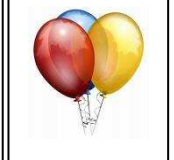
The debate opened to the sound of thunder and torrential rain beating down upon the roof – reflecting, for a packed Synod, the gravity of the situation facing the Anglican Communion. Archbishop Drexel Gomez spoke of our 'bonds of affection' being 'strained or broken' and of the proposed 'Covenant' as a way towards a process which would help us deal better with painful conflict. Three amendments, the first seeking to include sexual ethics in the motion and the others, seeking to tone down our enthusiasm for the covenant and make it more accountable to Synod were all defeated. People spoke with passion, but with seriousness and respect. Those in favour saw this as a last chance to avoid division. They pointed to the need to set limits to our unity and of the covenant content as 'uncontentious'. Those against feared it would be used as a means of 'excluding' some provinces from the communion and that it would constitute 'the biggest change to the Anglican Church since the Reformation.' They feared that written agreements (which have already been broken) would not solve the crisis, but only listening to one another in love. The Bishop of Durham's passionate appeal for the Covenant won the day and Synod voted, by a substantial majority, to support the process of working out a covenant for the Communion which all can support. It is unlikely to prove an easy task!



Archbishop Drexel Gomez

### Congratulations Bishop John

on being made Bishop of Worcester. You have done a fantastic job in Ely and we shall really miss you. We wish you, Denise, Eleanor & Olivia God's richest blessing for the future.



### The Church Commissioners

The Commissioners have recently moved to Church House & now work more closely with the Pensions Board & Archbishops' Council. They meet 18% of the Church's running costs through managing the Church's historic assets.

The Commissioners' investments are performing well. The 1<sup>st</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> Commissioners were thoroughly grilled during Synod and yet a motion for a more regular review of their work was widely defeated.



### Talent and Calling- A review of appointments to senior appointments

Synod received a report on senior appointments (e.g. Suffragan Bishops, Deans & Archdeacons) and endorsed the recommendations for appointing people to such posts. Synod welcomed the Government's recent proposals on the appointment of Bishops. Some of the Report's recommendations will soon become important to us as a Diocese when Bishop John's successor is appointed. Watch this space!



### Living God's Covenant- Anglican-Methodist Relations

Synod discussed the second interim report on progress towards full visible unity with the Methodist Church. There are some great encouragements, both in working together at the 'grass roots' and in theological understanding of our different traditions. The biggest issues still facing us concern Anglicans still not having equality of opportunity in ministry for women and over Methodist reluctance to embrace the idea of having bishops. On the ground those working ecumenically are forging ahead, challenging us not to drag our feet in seeking that unity for which our Lord so fervently prayed.



### Church Army

An inspirational presentation was made by the new Director of the Church Army, the youngest ever, Mark Russell, also a member of Synod & the Archbishop's Council. To see all the exciting things which are going on in the Church Army at the moment look up [www.churcharmy.org.uk](http://www.churcharmy.org.uk).

## Clergy Pensions

New government rules have forced the Clergy Pension Scheme, already under great financial strain, to be re-assessed and the necessary changes will begin in 2008. The Synod voted :

- To retain a defined benefit scheme (2/3rds of final salary related)
- To extend the qualification period from 37 to 40 years' service, phased in from 2008
- To link retired pension increases to RPI, (maximum of 3.5%), and not annual stipends

This is all because at a time when many have no pensions and most secular organisations have abandoned comparable schemes, the Church has to balance what it would really like to offer clergy throughout their working lives with what is realistically affordable.

## Ethical Investment

A motion was passed which asked the Church Commissioners, the Pensions Board & the Central Board of Finance to give more details of how they carry out their ethical investment policies.



## Minority Ethnic Concerns

Headed up by the Revd Rose Hudson-Wilkin, Synod was presented with a report entitled '*A place at the table*' which highlighted that many parts of the C of E (both individuals and corporately) still don't do enough to welcome people from minority ethnic groups. Change is needed and the challenge needs to start with us.

**General Synod**  
next meets from  
the 9<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup>  
February 2008 in  
London.

If you would like a question asked or to visit and watch from the gallery please let us know.

## 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?

- We will have to get our heads around new marriage regulations as of next summer if not before.
- We need to think through our approach to clergy with disabilities & ask ourselves whether we are doing everything possible to welcome minority ethnic individuals and groups into the Diocese.
- We need to look out for Transforming Worship initiatives as they come into the Diocese.
- We need to celebrate the work of the Church Army.



## Disability Issues

Synod held a debate on issues relating to clergy with disabilities. Several clergy with disabilities spoke movingly of the problems they face. Synod passed a motion affirming the contribution made by clergy with disabilities & asked dioceses to ensure that such issues are taken into account across the board.

## Please pray for:

- Bishop John as he prepares for moving to Worcester.
- The Church Commissioners in all their work.
- Our Archbishops and other Primates as they prepare for the Lambeth Conference next summer.

## Update on new Marriage Regulations

Synod has struggled to make its mind up on this issue – but hopes it has finally got there! Amendments to require churches to offer marriage preparation and to limit the scope of the 'qualifying connection' were defeated. So, before too long, as well as being resident in a parish or being on the electoral roll, you will be able to get married in a parish where you were baptised, where you once lived for at least 6 months, where you once worshipped for at least 6 months, where your parents once lived or worshipped for at least 6 months and where your parents or grandparents were married. Hopefully a great opportunity for more people to get married in church and thus discover God's love for them!



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## Transforming Worship

The Liturgical Commission's report '*Transforming Worship, Living the New Creation*' was debated on Saturday evening and presented a strategy for training in shaping and leading worship over the next few years. This will initially focus on working with new clergy and developing good all-age worship as well as training those who lead worship in church schools.

During the Synod there was a focus on the diversity of worship styles available to us, particularly the use of visuals and music. Every diocese was asked to ensure that the development of better worship became a central training issue now that all the new Common Worship texts are available to us. There will soon be a debate of the provision of Eucharistic Prayers for when children are present. Gill & Rhiannon in particular would be very pleased to receive your observations about this. Do look up [www.cofe.anglican.org](http://www.cofe.anglican.org) for more details.

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