

GENERAL SYNOD REPORT

On Saturday 27th February Members experienced a one-day meeting of the General Synod, which could only be described as bizarre.

The meeting was held via Webinar. Although members could hear what was happening, we could only see the main speaker and not each other. We were not allowed to take any part, not even points of order. At times, we could ask questions, but we could not see the questions of others, so members have no way of knowing how many questions there were, their content, or whether or not the chair was fair in his or her choice of questions.

The meeting began with prayer led by the Revd Canon Michael Gisbourne, who had spent 23 years as a parish priest in Blackburn Diocese but had recently been appointed a residentiary canon at Ripon Cathedral.

The two archbishops then held a discussion between themselves about the effects of COVID-19, adding in a couple of chosen speakers, and its effect on parish life.

The Archbishop of York then updated on his new Vision and Strategy. Replying to previous criticism, he stated that they were not disabling the parish system but expanding into other areas. They were encouraging the flourishing of lay ministry - ministry of the whole people of God. It was called a mixed ecology church. A new diagram emerged, of his Christocentric concept, but it still had no mention of the Trinity.

Other matters were interspersed with 'Story of hope and salvation'. These included a woman who had started a bakery in Coventry; an East London priest delivering meals; a hospital chaplain working with other faith communities; and a mental health café with a mindfulness programme.

There was an item on Safeguarding concerning the Church of England's response to IICSA (independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse). We were assured of a thorough review of all aspects of the Church's work and a need to rebuild trust. Safeguarding is to be called learning, not training; policies are to be updated. There is to be a 3-person independent Board and Diocesan Officers are to be called Officers not Advisers.

The final item was concerning the Archbishop of Canterbury's Commission on Housing. This is called 'Coming Home' and can be found here <https://www.archbishopofcanterbury.org/priorities/coming-home> It raises some interesting legal questions which no doubt will at some point be addressed by the Synod.

The meeting closed with worship.

Richard Morgan