

General Synod Report for Greater Dudley and Malvern and Upton Deaneries - July 2026

Lynn Nichol, Member of House of Laity for Worcester Diocese

The General Synod met for its final meeting of the quinquennium for 5 days from Friday 10th July – Tuesday 14th July. The following is a report on all the items debated. Please note I aim to summarise a 5-day meeting in a few pages and capture the key points, however it is challenging to include everything, and I can't guarantee complete accuracy as I take notes as the debates are in progress. To help provide more detailed information I've included links to relevant General Synod papers, for example the budget for Archbishop's Council. You can also access all the General Synod papers at [July 2026 General Synod Papers](#). I have included where there was a counted vote, rather than by show of hands, the voting figures in this format for/against/abstentions.

Day 1 Friday 10th July

1. The Synod began with worship followed by **introduction, welcomes and a presidential address** from the Archbishop of York. He reviewed the achievements of the last 5 years and the way forward, concluding that it is his view that 'the parish that is and remains the basic unit which makes up and constitutes the diocese and where each parish priest shares their ministry with the bishop in a cure of souls which is 'yours and mine.' Therefore, we have always known -though not always said - that it is only by enabling parish ministry to flourish that these new things, which we also need, can come to birth. And dioceses are increasingly prioritising the parish. Full details are available at [Archbishop of York Presidential Address](#)
2. The **report of the business committee** was debated and carried.
3. **All kinds of minds; affirming neurodiversity in the life of the Church.** The motion asked the Synod to recognised neurodivergent people as a blessing to the church, affirmed the work of the national neurodiversity working group to develop inclusive practices and training, appoint neurodivergent people as champions and encourage all to flourish. The motion was carried.
4. The Synod then moved to the first session of **Questions**. Members had submitted 239 questions in advice and received written answers. 2 supplementary questions can be asked on each question. We debated questions 1-77. Topics covered included Net Zero, FIFA World Cup Prayer approval, Clergy Pensions, Project Spire. Details of questions at <https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2026-07/questions-notice-paper-july-2026.pdf>

Day 2 Saturday 11th July

5. After worship the Synod debated a private members motion (PMM) on **Digital Comms and the Church**. PMMs are debated when more than 100 members support the PMM. The motion requested a review of digital comms in National Church Institutions. Although the Synod was supportive of the principles behind the motion it rejected a review as many of the ideas in the motion were already being implemented.
6. **National Governance Measure** – this was a take note debate about the withdrawal of the current proposed measure to enable focus on areas of concern raised after scrutiny by the Ecclesiastical Committee of Parliament. The key issue is safeguarding and the need 'to get this sorted' before proceeding to any other governance changes. The report was noted and further work will be undertaken.
7. The Synod passed **the Legal fees orders for Registrars and Ecclesiastical Judges**.
8. Synod then moved to a second session of **Questions**.
9. **Clergy Conduct Rules**. This debate considered the 'procedural engine' ie rules to underpin the new Clergy Conduct Measure. The actual Clergy Conduct Measure was given Royal Assent last week. They provide the framework to ensure all complaints are dealt with fairly, with relevant timeline/forms and safeguarding provisions for vulnerable complainants. They mirror best practice from the secular courts. The Synod approved the Clergy Conduct rules with some minor amendments.
10. Synod approved a few minor amendments to the **Lay and Clergy Election Rules** which had not been picked up at the February sitting.

11. The Synod was given a presentation on **Promoting unity in our nation** led by the Bishop of Leicester. The Synod then heard from 3 bishops, The Bishop of Lynn talked about listening in humility, The Bishop of Stepney gave us insight around racial justice and then the Bishop of Bradford asked us to consider who is my neighbour. He suggested the impact of far-right nationalism is particularly impacting on our non-Christian neighbours. He felt relations in our communities were as fragile as he had known them, but they have been strengthened in some areas by coming together to challenge far-right nationalism. We heard via video of the impact of far-right nationalism and racism on individual lives. Eg fearful of taking public transport. We learned about 'The Feast' a charity bringing people of different faiths to talk about their challenges. 3 practical examples were shared of how churches have responded to this situation. We then discussed the situation using the framework be curious, be present and reimagining; listening and sharing stories. The Bishop of Birmingham spoke about building and sharing resources to help individuals and churches work in this context and will be collating further resources. The Bishop of Leicester drew the session to a close – as an aside he mentioned that thought of wearing his England shirt for the session in preparation for the evening, given that a relative was the first England football manager, Walter Winterbottom. The group looking at unity in our nation are keen to develop the work further, share resources, continue the conversation and bring us together to tell our national story and as the final speaker said to rise against diversion.

Sunday 12th July

12. On Sunday morning General Synod members gathered at **York Minister**. The preacher was Sarah Mullaly, the Archbishop of Canterbury whose theme for her sermon was 'how we can grow hope in the Church by tending the soil in which lives can be changed, and trust restored'. The full text of her sermon can be found at [Archbishop of Canterbury Sermon York Minister](#).
13. The afternoon session started with an address by **Rt Revd Jorge Cabral from the Anglican Church in Portugal**. He started by reflecting on the sessions he had experienced in Synod including the extra one he had enjoyed, the late-night session from 10 pm – 1 am where about 300 members gathered to watch the England football team. He congratulated us on our victory! He talked then about his church and its mission.
14. Synod then heard a presentation on '**Hope for all Creation**' the House of Bishop's teaching document. This was a rare occasion as it is the first House of Bishop's teaching document that has been issued in the 21st Century. It stresses how the human and natural system are a mutually dependent eco system and provides a theological resource for churches on the Church of England's response to the environment crisis. Current resources can be accessed at [Hope for all Creation Resources](#) and further resources will be added in the next few months. On a practical level, one of the speakers suggested the C of E undertook a national litter pick – any interest??
15. We moved to liturgical business and approved **two new festivals** – 'Festival of Creation in Christ and Commemoration of the Twenty-One Martyrs of Libya'. They Synod voted in houses Bishops 29/0/0 Clergy 101/0/0 Laity 120/1/1 motion carried.
16. We are 3 years into the **Net Zero Programme**. There is encouraging news and ambition has been turned into practical action. The focus is currently on reducing carbon emissions from our buildings. We have over 30,000 buildings of which 60% are churches. There is increasing engagement with the number of churches submitting energy data. There is at least one net zero specialists in each diocese, multiple grant streams and live projects and there are 7 regional diocesan clusters sharing knowledge. Eco church engagement has grown with over 1/3 churches registered and ½ of these having received an award. 69% of funding provided by the Church Commissions has been used to support parishes, with remaining supporting other buildings including schools. The challenges are lack of expertise in parishes to pursue net zero, heritage and affordability considerations that limit what we can do. They aim to work with parishes to work out what they can affordably do. Benefits – decarbonization projects deliver community benefits, commitment to progress is growing, most parishes need to decarbonise gradually. Next triennium there will be further investment. By 2030 we will have reduced emissions by 29%,

beyond that there is a 'long tail' to reduce emissions in some buildings. By late 2040s we should have reduced our emissions by +95%. In terms of progress, we are in line with other organisations such as the National Trust. Synod voted to take note of the report and supported the continuation of the work.

17. Kairos Palestine – Standing in solidarity for a just and lasting peace in Israel and Palestine.

The debate started with a procedural motion to move to next business to stop the debate taking place as it would not in the view of the proposer be helpful for unity. The motion was not carried and the debate carried on. Due to the sensitive nature of this debate, I have provided the full details of the amended motion that was carried below:

Amended Motion

That this Synod respond to the call of Palestinian Christians to stand in solidarity with them and their fellow Palestinians in non-violent resistance to the ongoing occupation. We lament the loss of Israeli and Palestinian lives and the violations of human dignity and rights on both sides, as well as the displacement of population. We commit to a better understanding of the situation in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory, seeking peace and security for all the peoples of those lands and pursuing that which leads to the establishment of a just and lasting peace.

In particular, we:

- a. reject antisemitism, anti-Muslim hostility and all forms of prejudice based on religious affiliation and ethnicity;
- b. pray for all victims of the current conflicts in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory and for a lasting peace;
- c. hear the Kairos Palestine Declaration (2009), the Cry for Hope (2020), the Call for Repentance (2023) and Kairos Palestine II (2025) as heartfelt expressions of the lived experience of Palestinian Christians and:
 - i. encourage the Church of England at all levels to engage with those documents as part of a quest for greater understanding of the situation
 - ii. ask the Faith and Public Life Division to commend resources that enable Dioceses and local churches to promote a full understanding of the situation and to respond through prayer, theological study, advocacy and practical support for the work undertaken by the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem and other Churches in the service of the people of Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory; encourage the Church of England at all levels to engage with those documents as part of a quest for greater understanding of the situation, alongside continued dialogue with Jewish and Muslim voices in the pursuit of justice, equality, peace and reconciliation
- d. call on Church investors to implement and demonstrate a leading approach to responsible investment relating to the Occupied Palestinian Territory, and:
 - i. to review their investment policies in the light of the International Court of Justice Advisory Opinion of 19 July 2024 on the illegality of the occupation of Palestinian territory;
 - ii. to request the Church Commissioners and Church of England Pensions Board to report back, on a triennium basis, on the progress and success of their approaches;
 - iii. the bodies named above to support the EIAG to develop guidance for wider Church of England investors on how to manage human rights risks relating to occupied territories and conflict.
- e. ask His Majesty's Government to work urgently for a lasting peace in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory, that will ensure safety and security for all parties and the upholding of the rights and inherent dignity of all people.'

The debate was adjourned as we had reached 9.45 pm, the time for the end of business.

Monday 13th July

We resumed on Monday morning to conclude the debate.

The motion was carried in a counted vote by houses Bishop 25/0/5 Clergy 115/20/30 laity 113/27/35
17 The Synod heard a report from the Archbishop's Council. There is an impact report available covering the work of the Council at [Archbishop's Council Impact Report](#). There will be a review of allocation of funding for ministry to Dioceses. They invested £27.7 million in diocesan youth management, and they are progressing with the Regulatory Action Plan agreed with the Charities Commissioners. They have improved financial support for ordinands, stipends and pensions.

18, **The Archbishop's Council Budget.** The details of planned expenditure are available here at [Archbishop Council Budget](#). There is an increase in funding for ministry in 2027, including further funding for ordinands, ministry amongst children and young people, ministry experience scheme and incumbent leadership programme. Safeguarding is a priority with funding for national safeguarding schemes including, survivor support fund. There is additional funding for clergy retirement living and wellbeing, transformation, reduction of carbon emission and work on social and racial justice. The aim is to support parishes in a mission focused church.

19. **PMM on Same-sex relationships compatibility with Christian Discipleship.** The mover of the motion acknowledged that the motion would show our divisions but encouraged us to face them. It was a motion that sought to affirm the principle that same-sex relationships are compatible with Christian Discipleship. Voting in a counted vote of houses was as follows, Bishops 11/14/4 Clergy 93/79/0 Laity 101/83/0 meaning that although the motion received the support of a majority of members, 205 in favour, 176 against, the motion was lost because when voting by houses, there must be a majority in all houses, and the House of Bishops did not vote in favour.

20. **Vacancy-in-See Committee Regs** – The Synod debated the new regs. I spoke in this debate based on my experience as Chair of the Worcester VISC speaking on the principle that only one person from each parish should be on the VISC to ensure good representation from across the diocese. Synod passed the new regulations. However, in Worcester Diocese we hope that won't have to bring the Vacancy in See Committee into action anytime soon!

21. We took note of the report from the **Audit and Risk Committee.**

22. **Renewing Trust: Addressing the challenge of trustworthiness in the Church of England.** The research reported that there was high trust at an interpersonal level but low institutional trust. The full report is available at [Renewing Trust addressing the challenges of trustworthiness](#). Here's a few insights I managed to capture during the presentation.

The report identifies that the C of E is ready for change with high levels of commitment from clergy. There is very good work locally. There is a call in the report for effective professional supervision for clergy. The report suggests that the institution is 'odd': at a local level it is dependent on volunteers alongside a professional diocesan and central structure. This is a very unusual structure. There is a lack of accountability. Although the church may be comfortable with this, the public are not accepting of it. There is a 'tribal' culture and a blame culture. We need to revisit leadership, culture, structures, and policy and process. We took note of the report and the work will continue.

23. We appointed Revd Robert Springer as a **member of the Archbishop's Council.**

24. Synod were then given an update from the **new Lead Safeguarding Bishop** and an opportunity for questions. Full details are at [Safeguarding paper 1](#) [Safeguarding paper 2](#). The Bishop of Tewkesbury remained strongly committed to reach out to survivors and 'stand in the processes of pain' and put survivors at the heart of what we do. He confirmed commitment to mandatory reporting and people 'way beyond this chamber' will want to know what we will do. Alongside safeguarding there is work to do on complementary processes associated with the management/leadership of people. He commented that safeguarding training received positive feedback. After the presentation there was an opportunity for members to ask questions.

25. Worcester Diocese members, Fraser, Kashmir and Robin led the closing worship.

Tuesday 14th July

25. **PMM - Support for Looked after Children and those in care** This motion requested the House of Bishops to appoint a lead bishop to ensure the voices of looked after children, young adults and their carers are heard. In a heat map it was noticeable that Worcester Diocese is one of the dioceses that has one of the highest numbers of looked after children by percentage of the under 18 population. Billy-Jo O'Leary, lay rep Rochester Diocese and herself a former looked after child was given a standing ovation by Synod. Kashmir spoke in the debate drawing on her experience of working in the Criminal Justice System. The motion was carried unanimously.

26. **Abuse (Redress) Rules** This legislation puts in place the framework for the Abuse Redress Programme. We now have (assuming that this is approved by Parliament) legislation to provide redress to victims and survivors of abuse in the Church of England. Before we voted we prayed for the victims and survivors of abuse. The motion was passed unanimously.

27. PMM – Protecting Nature on the Church Commissioners Land within the scale and urgency of the climate and biodiversity crises. Synod debated this motion, passed an amendment put forward by Graeme Usher, Bishop of Norwich, that requested the church commissioners to consider responsible investment and to report back in 2027. Synod voted in favour of the amended motion.

28. The Synod was formally dissolved by the reading of the **writ from King Charles III** ordering the Archbishops to dissolve the Convocations and Synod. Synod concluded with a celebration of **Holy Communion** by the Archbishops and was prorogued.

If you have got this far with the report thank you for reading to the end. As this quinquennium comes to an end and we move into elections, thank you also for your engagement with these reports over the past 5 years and for giving me the opportunity to serve in this role and represent the lay people of the Diocese of Worcester, it has been an immense privilege to serve in this role. If you have any questions or want more details, please do get in touch at lynnnichol4@gmail.com.

With best wishes

Lynn Nichol