



Deanery Vine

A Personal Reflection on General Synod

July 2025 By Canon Kashmir Garton

The General Synod met for 5 days in York in July and discussed a number of pertinent topics. I have picked out the ones that I believe readers may be interested in but you can hear all the debates by visiting the Church of England website.

Opening address by the Archbishop of York

In his address, the Archbishop of York, Stephen Cottrell, said that research like [The Quiet Revival](#) 'encourages us and challenges us in equal measure as it appears to be those churches that offer a depth of tradition that are noticing new people in their midst. Also, that churches are becoming more diverse. He said they need to renew the disciplines of prayer, the liturgical life, the contemplation of scripture to sustain and replenish all ministry and mission. 'For this to happen, we need clergy and lay leaders who are formed spiritually and theologically so that we can nurture Christian community and discipleship and be able to teach, declare and defend the Christian narrative in an increasingly fractious, confused, vulnerable and sometimes hostile world... It is that compelling narrative of what it means to be human – and in all our glorious diversity, made in the image of God, and living Jesus shaped lives – that will enable us to withstand and even turn back those utilitarian tides of opinion that risk making, for

instance, assisted dying a reality in our national life, changing forever the contract between doctor and patient, pressurising the vulnerable, and assuming an authority over death that belongs to God alone. Likewise, our complacency in the face of climate crisis, the challenges of racial justice, and the easy way we continue to accept appalling inequalities of wealth, opportunity and education in our country.... point again to the widening gap between what we say we believe about what God has done in Jesus Christ and how we actually live, teach and proclaim the gospel It is all too easy to give into despair or become very understandably weighed down by our own internal struggles. But sisters and brothers, we of all people are called to hope. We should be enchanted and transformed by what God has done in Jesus Christ, offer the world a narrative shot through with hope: hope for salvation in Jesus Christ – for it is his blood shed on the cross which breaks down the barriers of separation which are the source and cause of so much that is wrong in our world – and hope that the truth and beauty that we see in Jesus will inspire us to build a better world...’.

Address by a member of the Armed Forces

Brigadier Jaish Mahan, Deputy Commander of the 1st UK Division, a practising Christian, addressed General Synod and spoke of how the world is in a ‘complex place’ currently with conflict in Europe and in the Middle East, and several other unstable regions around the world. He said the Army is hugely privileged to be supported by truly exceptional chaplains who are ‘part of the fabric of our family... Their role is complex, from pastoral and spiritual, through to moral, often helping our leaders make the right decisions on a difficult day’. He

added 'The church has always stood steadfast and the leadership it has provided in times of crisis has been pivotal'. He asked the church to consider 2 areas: 'to pray for the men and women who put themselves in harm's way to protect our nation, and to consider how the church leadership might support our nation in time of uncertainty and if we should find ourselves in a large scale conflict ... The military like the church is part of the fabric of our nation, fundamental pillars that hold together our house, our society, sometimes overlooked but always there; a key cornerstone that can always be relied on in our nation's time of need'.

Abuse redress

General Synod gave final approval to a comprehensive redress scheme for survivors of Church-related abuse. This landmark vote completes the Church's legislative process, paving the way for the scheme to open for redress applications, subject to parliamentary approval and royal assent. It is designed to address the profound harm caused by Church-related abuse. The new scheme will offer not only financial redress but also formal apology, acknowledgment, therapeutic support, and other forms of bespoke redress. The scheme has been developed over the past four years in response to the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA) and with decisions taken with survivor input. A key principle of the scheme is its independent administration, ensuring that decisions are made by trained assessors, free from influence by Church officials or bishops. The Church Commissioners have already committed money to ensure its implementation and long-term sustainability.

Issues in Human Sexuality

The General Synod reached a consensus on an issue relating to Living in Love and Faith and voted unanimously to remove a key document from the ordination process. 'Issues in Human Sexuality' is a teaching document that was approved by the House of Bishops in 1991 and became part of the discernment process where candidates were asked to accede to its provisions. Several Synod members spoke of the harm that this document had done to people during the discernment process particularly LGBTQ people. This document will now be replaced with the Guidelines for the Professional Conduct of the Clergy and so those testing their vocation will be able to accede to these guidelines for the conduct of priests in future.

Address by the Archbishop in Jerusalem

The leader of the Anglican church in the Holy Land urged Christians to 'speak out in the face of injustices' including the current arrangements for food aid in Gaza. He called for a permanent ceasefire to end the war and said hospitals continue to be bombed in Gaza, with medical supplies in short supply. Calling for a restoration of humanitarian supplies including food and medicine, under UN supervision, Archbishop Hosam said there should be no targeting of civilians, especially emergency workers and medical staff. He called for the release of all hostages and captives and a permanent ceasefire for the end of the war and rebuilding of Gaza – 'not ethnic cleansing that is presently being discussed by the Israeli and US Government The church is committed to peace building and reconciliation but these are alien terms

that people across both sides of the divide refuse to talk about or even listen to I realise that as a church we live and embody the gospel and we are not politicians, however, we need to speak out in the face of injustices and be prophetic for the sake of our people and our calling as Christians ... But where a church is wounded and constrained, we need the wider body of Christ to help us to be the church in brutal and damaging times'. The Archbishop of York led the General Synod in prayer for peace and for Archbishop Hosam following his address.

Response to terminally ill adults (end of life) bill

Members of the Synod backed a call by the Bishop of London for the Government to increase funding for palliative care and palliative care research to enable people to live their lives in full until they die. Bishop Sarah Mullally, Bishop of London and a former Chief Nursing Officer for England, said she was deeply concerned by the Terminally Ill Adults (End of Life) Bill, which would legalise assisted suicide. She reiterated her opposition to both the principle of assisted suicide and the risks that this legislation posed to the vulnerable. 'A Church whose hands are consecrated to bring life cannot support the prescription of life-ending drugs'. She called on General Synod members to pray and to engage with peers in the House of Lords as the Bill goes to the House of Lords. She told the Synod the Bill was 'unsafe and unworkable' and would put vulnerable groups at risk, including terminally ill people who cannot access the end-of-life care they need. 'Successive governments have failed to reduce inequalities in health. These inequalities mean that some people will have up to 20 fewer good years in health than others and certain groups

face persistently worse health outcomes than others. These inequalities are also pronounced at the end of life, with only one in four people who need end-of-life care being able to access it, and there continues to be widespread misunderstanding and distrust of palliative care’.

The NHS currently funds 30% of hospices, and the proposals are for the government to fund in full an assisted suicide service if the bill is passed. ‘Rather than funding assisted dying, the Government should be funding palliative care and palliative care research to enable people to live their lives to the full until they die’. The debate heard speeches from a range of Synod members including clergy who work in hospice care, NHS consultant surgeons, GPs and a psychiatrist, opposing a change in the law and backing increased funding for palliative care.

Bishop Sarah said the Government’s own equality impact assessment recognised that people may choose an assisted death either because they cannot access the care that they need, or because they may feel pressure to end their lives due to the cost of the care. ‘We don’t only put others at risk by making this change, but our view of what constitutes a valuable life will be altered as a society ... Scripture tells us that every person is made in the image of God and holds an immeasurable value and worth. This value does not diminish with physical ailment, or loss of faculty, even if a condition is terminal’.

The motion approved overwhelmingly was:

That this Synod, in light of recent debates on the Terminally Ill Adults (End of Life) Bill, reaffirm that every person is of

immeasurable and irreducible value, and request His Majesty's Government work to improve funding and access to desperately needed palliative care services instead of enacting a law that puts the most vulnerable at risk.

Yours in Christ

Canon Kashmir Garton