

**General Synod  
York 2009  
Reverend Max Osborne**

The July 2009 Synod was primarily concerned with legislation, liturgical business, and financial business and other governance responsibilities.

**A Report From The National Stewardship Committee "Giving For Life"** which asked Synod to (a) *encourage church members to live generously as disciples of Jesus Christ, joyfully giving time, skills, money and other resources to God's mission in the world;* (b) *reconfirm its challenge to church members to assess annually their financial giving as a proportion of income and to adopt as an initial target the giving of 5% of their after tax income to and through the church, and a similar amount to other work that helps to build God's kingdom; and (c) commend **Giving For Life** to parishes and dioceses/deaneries for prayerful discussion and action.*

**Report By The Council For Christian Unity On The Anglican/Roman Catholic International Commission Report "Life In Christ"** in order to prepare members of synod for group work on Saturday morning. The Bishop of Guilford asked members to consider *what it means to be disciples of Jesus Christ and live the Gospel more fully for the sake of the world* and in regard to our growing fellowship respect and mutual understanding with Rome suggested that we are called to *move toward a vision of the whole person in communion with God*. He spoke of the work of ARCIC as breaking new ground in corporate social concerns and moral theology which led to group discussions on themes such as abortion, marriage and divorce and issues in human sexuality.

**Faithful Cities: Urban Life & Faith** presented by the Bishop for Urban Life and Faith. Here Synod affirmed and acknowledged the excellent work undertaken in many areas of social deprivation by Clergy, lay people and youth workers taking note of their considerable energy, expertise commitment and sacrificial living. The Bishop also highlighted the need to encourage vocations to ministry from people in areas of social deprivation and ethnically diverse backgrounds.

**Clergy Pensions.** Synod being informed of the Big Picture regarding national pension schemes that 87% are in deficit and that the aggregate deficit comes to £179 billion! The Clergy Pension Fund is presently facing a deficit of £350 million. This inevitably means that significant changes are required in order to make adequate provision for clergy in retirement that is sustainable in the long term. The Archbishop's Task Group's judgement is that a solution needs to be found that is consistent with the proportion of their budgets that dioceses are already devoting to pension costs. Currently dioceses have to pay the Pensions Board 39.7% of the national minimum stipend. From January 2010, that will increase to 45% with further increases being anticipated from 2011.

The Task Group have asked Synod to consider the following changes for the future (1) Cap increases in stipend to RPI (keeping increases below inflation) (2) increase the pensionable age from 65 to 68 years (for those in future service) (3) increase pensionable service from 40 years to 43 years (for those in future service) (4) Contract back into a Second State Pension (S2P) Which means that clergy will effectively have three sources of pension funding (Basic Pension+Church+S2P) Synod will have to decide on final proposals for July 2010 for these to apply from April 2011.

**Archbishops' Council's Draft Budget and Proposals for Apportionment 2010** a take note report previewing expenditure for the forthcoming year, Training for Ministry (Vote 1) £11,803,600 National Support for the work of the Council generally (Vote 2) £10,300,258 Grants and provisions (Vote 3) £1,535,450 Mission agencies, Inter-Diocesan support and clergy pension contributions (Vote 4) £830,625 and CHARM (Vote 5) £3,252,900 Church Housing Assistance for Retired Ministry  
It was further noted that the dioceses do not want to see a further reduction in stipendiary clergy and therefore these monies will be required to ensure that future ministry.

**The Archbishops' Council's Annual Report and Church Commissioners' Annual Report.** (These are available from the Church of England Website)

**Opening The Doors: Ministry with People with Learning Disabilities and People on the Autistic Spectrum.**

The Bishop of Blackburn presenting the report began by inviting the whole church to welcome, accept and empower people with disabilities seeing them not as people to be prayed for and ministered to but acknowledged as members of the kingdom of God! This report was unanimously welcomed and supported by the Synod with some wonderful examples as to how parishes are engaging in this area of mission and ministry. The Bishop encouraged every diocese to appoint an advisor for Ministry with People with Learning Disabilities. (A very good introduction DVD is available from the Ministry and Mission and Public Affairs Division of the Church of England)

The **Review of Constitutions** followed with the intention to make the various Synodical boards, councils and committees more open and transparent in their practice in the belief that present working practice is complex, cumbersome, costly and confused. Despite this being the view of the Archbishop's and other members of the Archbishop's Council, Synod rejected the review of constitutions on the grounds that although complex the present set up of elected bodies allows for wider representation from members than the new terms would allow. A successful amendment requests the Archbishops' Council after consultation with the boards and councils concerned to produce revised proposals.

**Episcopal and Senior Church Appointments led by Bradford Diocese** proposing a reduction in the number of senior posts in view of the reduction of stipendiary clergy since 1979. A stimulating debate (not really about the number of Bishops but how best to use the resources of senior staff within the National Church) that again concluded with amendments requiring the Archbishops' Council to consider future policy on the number of bishops and dioceses and inviting a report for the commencement of the New Synod 2010. Synod also asked **the Faith and Order Advisory Group** to produce a report for a future Synod setting out biblical and theological perspectives and developing patterns of senior leadership.

**Being Adult About Childhood: A Consideration Of The Good Childhood Inquiry: Report From The Children's Society And The Mission And Public Affairs Division.** (Available from the Children's Society website)

Presentation by the Bishop of Leicester with many contributions from the Synod giving evidence of good practice in the dioceses and wholly welcoming the report.

### **Legislative Business (Church of England Funded Pension Scheme**

The Pensions Act 2008 has made a change to the legislation that governs the increases that must be given to pensions in deferment (ie pension benefits already earned by members who are no longer in active service but have not yet retired). The pensions for members of the CEFPS who have deferred benefits increase in line with the increase to the maximum benefits under the scheme, i.e. in line with increases to the National Minimum Stipend for the preceding year. For example, if the National Minimum Stipend increases by 4%, then deferred pensions will also be increased by that percentage.

Legislation requires that deferred pensions must increase (be revalued) by a minimum level. The increase applied to an individual pension is the lower of the increase in the Retail Price Index or 5% pa, measured over the period of deferment. (This is not calculated year-by-year but is an aggregate over the whole period). The Pensions Act 2008 has amended the revaluation legislation and introduced a provision allowing schemes to adopt a lower rate for statutory revaluation. This is the lesser of the increase in RPI or 2.5% over the period of deferment. This lower rate can only be applied in respect of Service from 6 April 2009.

**Clergy Discipline Measure 2003** The Dioceses of London and Chelmsford both asking the Archbishops' Council at the earliest possible opportunity to review its practical out workings and with reference in particular to the attached Code of Practice, noting concerns that exist about aspects of the Clergy Discipline Measure 2003, (especially as regards the perceived pastoral implications of the Code of Practice and to welcome the response by the **Clergy Discipline Commission** to its consultation on aspects of the Measure and invite the Archbishops' Council to seek a report from the Commission before the end of the quinquennium, (life time of this Synod 2005-2010), on whether there is a case for bringing forward, early in the lifetime of the next Synod, draft legislation to amend the Measure or amendments to the Code of Practice.

Numerous presentations were made by Clergy expressing fears that the Measure as it presently exists is not explicit in regard to the means in which Clergy will be supported when a complaint is made against them, the role of the Bishop as Pastor and Judge being open to question. This is further complicated in that the Bishop is not only pastor to the Clergy but the whole parish as the people of God including the complainant. Overall many painful issues raised but sensitively handled.

**Note: further information regarding Clergy terms of service can be found on [www.common tenure.org](http://www.common tenure.org)**

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