



Deanery: Wandsworth

Parish: All Saints with Holy Trinity  
Wandsworth

Mobile: 07836 697816

Home: 020 8788 0217

Email: [cdhughes999@gmail.com](mailto:cdhughes999@gmail.com)

20 Rusholme Road,  
Putney,  
London SW15 3JZ

# Carl Hughes - Reporting Back.....

February 2017

To members of the Deanery Synods in the Diocese of Southwark

Once again, it is a pleasure to have this opportunity to report back to you on the activities of General Synod. This brief report relates to the meeting of General Synod in London from 13 to 16 February 2017.

This group of sessions had a very full agenda! Clearly, the vast bulk of the external media coverage related to the 'Take Note' debate on the House of Bishops' report on *Marriage and Same Sex Relationships*; however, I hope that you will also be interested in the many other subjects which were covered and addressed.

As always, I would very much appreciate your feedback, comments and questions – so please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours in Christ, Carl

## Beyond the debates

Whilst the bulk of Synod business comprises debates on legislation, reports and diocesan and private members' motions, each group of sessions also includes several varied and interesting addresses.

There were four such speeches of note in February. Firstly ++Justin's Presidential Address, based upon Christ's temptations in the wilderness. Then there was a farewell to the First Church Estates Commissioner, Sir Andreas Whittam Smith, retiring after some fifteen years in role - the Commissioners' performance has been outstanding under his leadership during this period.

On the final day, there was a memorable farewell to the Bishop of London upon his retirement after over twenty years in post, during which time his diocese has grown and prospered. Finally, Synod was addressed by the Secretary General of the Anglican Communion.

## General Synod in London - February 2017

The business agenda comprised a number of key debates and an extensive array of legislation pursuant to the Reform & Renewal *Simplification* workstream. The key debates included:

### *500<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Reformation*

This was a very positive debate at the beginning of Synod which welcomed the convergence across Christian Churches on the doctrine of justification by grace through faith. The debate included a notable contribution for the Roman Catholic ecumenical representative.

### *Lay leadership and discipleship report 'Setting God's people free'*

This important report (attached) sets a new framework for enhancing the role of, and mobilising, the laity within the Church, around the theme of whole-life discipleship; this will be discussed in detail within our diocese and deaneries in due course.

### *Fixed Odds Betting Terminals (London Diocesan Motion)*

This was an excellent motion calling upon the government to reduce the maximum stake on FORTs from £100 to £2. I was called to speak in favour of this motion which was passed unanimously.

### *Reforming Preliminaries to Marriage (Private Member's Motion)*

This PMM called upon the Archbishops' Council to review the role of ministers acting as registrars given that identity checking, etc is becoming increasingly onerous and the reading of banns less relevant. The motion was lost - 163 in favour; 184 against.

### *Mission and Administration (Private Member's Motion)*

This PMM, which was passed, called upon the Archbishops' Council to look at further ways of streamlining church-wide admin functions to free up more resources for mission. I spoke in favour of the motion.

**General Synod in London – February 2017 (contd)*****House of Bishops' report 'Marriage and Same Sex Relationships after the Shared Conversations'***

This report overshadowed the whole of the group of sessions. In common with all Synod members, I received numerous letters and emails from various liberal groups prior to the Synod asking me to vote 'not to take note'. The debate on the Business Committee's report and the Questions' session on the first day were also dominated by sexuality issues.

Partially thanks to excellent chairmanship, the actual debate on the report was generally measured and civilised. The report affirms the Church's historic teaching on marriage and sexual relationships, whilst calling for '*a fresh tone and culture of welcome and support for lesbian and gay people...*' There were impassioned speeches from across the spectrum of views - from the LGBT community, those who are same-sex attracted but living under the Church's teaching, those who support the report's stance on doctrine and canon, those who wish to see '*maximum freedom*' of pastoral practice under existing law, and those who considered the report not to be sufficiently conservative.

At the end of the debate, there was a vote by Houses on whether to take note of the Bishops' report – note that this was never a debate about any proposal, but simply about taking note of the report. I voted to take note. Although a majority of Synod voted to take note, the motion was lost as the House of Clergy voted not to take note by 100 to 93.

A letter from the Archbishops subsequent to the Synod indicates, *inter alia*, that the proposal for a new teaching document on marriage and relationships will be progressed. For your reference, I am attaching with this report both the House of Bishops' report and the Archbishops' letter.

**Legislative work**

The legislative work of the Synod covered a significant number of *Simplification* measures, including:

***Amending Canon 36 – Clergy vesture***

This amending canon permits a minister to dispense with any of the prescribed forms of vesture at church services, subject to consultation with the PCC. I had previously provided written comments to the Revision Committee.

***Amending Canon 37 – Burial of people who have committed suicide***

This amending canon allows for the burial under canon, at the minister's discretion, of those who have committed suicide.

***Church Representation, Ecumenical Relations and Ministers Measure & Amending Canon 38***

This was the First Consideration of an extensive and complex series of revisions which include a complete revision and updating of the Church Representation Rules (CRR). It introduces the concept of a 'joint PCC' for multi-parish benefices and the ability for PCC's to amend their procedures subject to diocesan approval. I intend to provide written comments on the CRR proposals to the Revision Committee.

**Serving the National Church and the Diocese of Southwark**

In addition to General Synod, my engagement with our Church, at both a national and diocesan level, over the past four months has been as follows:

***National***

- *Member of the Finance Committee of the Archbishops' Council* – focus on Renewal & Reform agenda, including resourcing ministerial education and strategic development funding; consideration of longer term funding of The Archbishops' Council; and consideration of diocesan and cathedral financing.
- *Visitation of Peterborough Cathedral* – completion of report on Visitation of the Cathedral for the Bishop of Peterborough which provided the basis of +Donald's Charge published in January 2017.
- *Member of the Management Committee of the Evangelical Group at General Synod (EGGS)*

***Diocesan***

- *Member of the Diocesan Council of Trustees (DCT)*
- *Vice-chairman of the Policy and Finance Committee of the DCT and of the Diocesan Board of Finance; Member of the Audit & Governance and Investment Committees* – detailed review of financial policies, results and parish support fund; property operations, management and strategy; year-end audit plans; results of diocesan safeguarding audit; investment strategy and review.