

HOUSE OF BISHOPS

A meeting of the House of Bishops was held on Zoom on 12
December 2023

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS AND DECISIONS

THE BISHOP OF HEREFORD IN THE CHAIR

1. Welcome, apologies, minutes and matters arising

- 1.1. The BISHOP OF HEREFORD opened the meeting in prayer.
- 1.2. The minutes of the meeting on 29 November were agreed.

2. Standing order 14 and participation

- 2.1. The House agreed to the presence of acting diocesan bishops as observers.
- 2.2. The House discussed whether to meet in private under S.O.14 or not. The House decided, by majority, in favour of meeting on this occasion in private under Standing Order 14.

3. Living in Love and Faith: commendation of resources

- 3.1. The House considered motions in relation to the commendation of the Prayers of Love and Faith.
- 3.2. The BISHOP OF LEICESTER moved 'that this House, having agreed at its meeting of 9 October to commend the PLF Resource Section ('PLF RS') for use in the minster's discretion under Canon B 5, now resolve that the PLF RS be commended with effect from December 17 2023 and published accordingly' noting that the House had already decided to commend in principle; this was merely confirming the date.
- 3.3. The BISHOP OF ROCHESTER then moved as an amendment 'Leave out everything after "under Canon B5" and insert ', and mindful also of the narrow majorities in support of this proposal in the Houses of Clergy and Laity at General Synod, resolve to commend and publish PLF RS only once the House has agreed and published Parts 1, 2 and 3 of the Pastoral Guidance.' He argued that it would be open and transparent to publish a draft of part III before commending the prayers.
- 3.4. The House voted on this amendment. There were 13 votes in favour, 26 votes against and one abstention.
- 3.5. The BISHOP OF DURHAM then moved as an amendment 'Leave out everything after 'under Canon B5' and insert, 'and mindful also of the narrow majorities in support of this proposal in the Houses of Clergy and Laity at General Synod, resolve to commend and publish PLF RS only after the House has agreed and published draft proposals for firm pastoral provision that honour and offer reassurance to those with different views on these matters within the Church of England.' He argued that the House needed to offer proposals for formal structural pastoral provision swiftly to maintain unity.

HOUSE OF BISHOPS

- 3.6. The House voted on this amendment. There were 14 votes for, 24 votes against and no abstentions.
- 3.7. The House returned to vote on the unamended main motion. There were 24 votes for, 11 votes against and 3 abstentions. The Prayers of Love and Faith Resource section were accordingly commended with effect from 17 December.
- 3.8. The BISHOP OF LEICESTER then moved ‘that this House, having agreed at its meeting of 9 October to commend the Prayers for a Covenanted Friendship for use in the minster’s discretion under Canon B 5, now resolve that the Prayers for a Covenanted Friendship be commended with effect from December 17 2023 and published accordingly’.
- 3.9. The House voted on this motion. There were 30 votes in favour, 6 votes against and 2 abstentions. The Prayers for a Covenanted Friendship were accordingly commended with effect from 17 December.

4. Lectio Divina

- 4.1. The House broke into regional groups for Lectio Divina

5. Living in Love and Faith: implementation (i) authorization

- 5.1. Noting that the House had previously voted in favour of seeking authorization of the Prayers of Love and Faith standalone services under Canon B 2, and that the Synod had asked the House to reconsider whether other options might be possible, for example experimental authorization under Canon B 5A, the BISHOPS OF LEICESTER and NEWCASTLE led the House in a discussion of the options. No decisions were made.

6. Living in Love and Faith: implementation b) part III of the pastoral guidance

- 6.1. The BISHOPS OF LEICESTER and NEWCASTLE led the House through a discussion of the options for proceeding with part III of the pastoral guidance. No decisions were made.

7. Living in Love and Faith: implementation: c) pastoral reassurance/ formal structural pastoral provision

- 7.1. The BISHOPS OF LEICESTER and NEWCASTLE led the House through a discussion of the issues, reminding the House that it would need to consider what a shared episcopate might mean when the House was divided on this issue and proposing a small working group to develop ideas. No decisions were taken other than to agree to a small working group.

8. LORDS SPIRITUAL (WOMEN) ACT – UPDATE

- 8.1. The BISHOP OF ST ALBANS briefed the House on his discussions with the Government.

9. CLOSE

HOUSE OF BISHOPS

9.1. The CHAIR closed the meeting in prayer.

SECRETARIAT

15 DECEMBER 2023