

## GENERAL SYNOD HUSTINGS FOR CLERGY QUESTION 1

What do you see as the single greatest challenge the Church must face over the next 5 years, and how would you seek to address it?

<p>BAKKER, the Revd Jane</p>	<p>When I spend time with clergy colleagues, of all traditions, they are passionate and excited about engaging their communities. They are quick to suggest ways they would like their church to be more missional locally, but it does not take long before the frustration surfaces. They easily recognise the institutional limitations that impede the pursuit of new initiatives. If mission is the spiritual imperative for each generation, it is vital that decisions about our institution are shaped by the longing and missional aspirations of local parishes. This is not a theoretical understanding of mission, rather a practical necessity. The reform and renewal program, in particular the simplification agenda, is the greatest challenge during the next five years because its impact will be the most far reaching. Churches of all traditions, size and location will be affected by it. If a church is expending scarce resources on meeting the needs of a complex structure, then mission will suffer. If however, we are able to be more flexible; if clergy are given greater freedom to respond to local need; if we are less dependent on our buildings, then mission becomes a greater possibility for all churches, not just well resourced ones.</p>
<p>FOSTER, the Revd Gavin</p>	<p>If we don't act soon, we are at risk of becoming a society for the preservation of buildings, not a world-changing movement of disciples of Jesus. We have too many buildings, often in the wrong places and costing too much. They are skewing our priorities at every step. We haven't begun to think about what to do about them. We need national and diocesan level reviews of the buildings we need, the buildings we have and how to re-purpose, adapt or close some of them.</p>
<p>MICKLEFIELD, the Revd Andrew</p>	<p>I think the Church needs to grow both spiritually and numerically and at its most basic level to be much more intentionally missional and evangelistic. The Church Growth Research Programme states that 'there is no single recipe for growth; there are no simple solutions to decline' yet also says 'growth is a product of good leadership(lay and ordained) working with a willing set of churchgoers in a favourable environment'.</p> <p>The challenge is to harness and promulgate the stories of where this is evident and effective, freeing up resources, placing people and finance into other places which are ripe and ready to make those stories their own. One of the greatest drivers of others joining in is the power of the story. We need excellent communication; good news is infectious.</p> <p>The following I believe are the key drivers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• tenacious leadership which promotes and motivates change</li> <li>• good children/young people/family ministry - raising people as churchgoers of faith</li> <li>• use of courses such as Alpha and then importantly follow up and build life-giving relationships</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• using our buildings missionally and creatively</li> <li>• allowing new and innovative ideas to start and 'have a go'</li> <li>• growing leaders</li> </ul>
NOEL, the Revd Rachel	<p>The divide between faith &amp; the secular world, with faith becoming a marginalised, specialist religious pursuit. Within our churches, I think we need to ensure that our worship, our preaching, our teaching, our children's and youth work relate to the everyday world that people live in, and that they equip people to live out their Christian faith in all aspects of their lives.</p> <p>I think we need to affirm people's vocations in all areas, not just religious ministry (either ordained or lay) or in the caring professions. I think we need to recognise, within our congregations, the callings that people have to work in all sorts of commercial, industrial and practical ways. We need to equip them to reflect on how God is working in all these areas, on how their faith impacts their working life and relationships, on how God may be speaking into their choices of how to spend their time and their gifts. Releasing everyone in our congregations and communities to live out God's ministry and mission in the world.</p>
NUTT, the Revd Angela	<p>While the Church faces many issues currently and will continue to do so in the future I think probably the single greatest challenge is that of confidence; confidence in the Gospel message, in the transforming love of God through Jesus and in ourselves as messengers. There is a fear of standing up for our faith which has left that space open, confidence in our faith has become outside of the norm. Our challenge is to rediscover our confidence in the Gospel and the possibility of transformation. As a diocese we are committed to becoming authentic disciples. From the "bottom up" we need to teach and mentor all ages to understand the power and transformative love contained in our faith. Christians need to both speak of their faith with grace and confidence and live it out with conviction the in the areas of our society where God has placed us. The Church should not be either apologetic or arrogant, but confident to proclaim the love and transformation offered in Jesus.</p>
PERRY, the Revd Canon William	<p>Increasing secularisation will result in the Church being conceded less and less space in the public forum. The Church needs to become much smarter in its use of all forms of communication media, much less reticent about making plain the benefits to the whole of civic society of the Church's involvement in it, and much bolder in challenging politicians, public bodies and corporations when they apply policies which have the effect of marginalising Christian witness.</p>
PITKIN, the Revd James	<p>There are many challenges facing the Church over the next 5 years and I have difficulty singling one out. Perhaps, over time, one will emerge. The challenges, which will be huge, include <b>Finance</b> and <b>Church Growth</b>. Many of the challenges are involved in 'Reform and Renewal' - a major piece of work involving ministry, finance, vocations, evangelism, and simplification of some of our church rules.</p>

	<p>As to Finance, there are plans to release money to increase the number of clergy by 50% by 2020 and, to distribute money for Church growth. How can the decisions be made and will the money help?</p> <p>Church growth has been described as the ‘golden thread’ which ties all the reforms together. But how to encourage and measure growth? One Church observer says that clergy are panicky about the reforms because they seem ‘very bottom line — if you can’t get more punters in then you’ve failed’. In addressing any challenge it is necessary to listen and to understand (and pray) before taking action. I believe that decline is not inevitable and that the Church will grow. God has given the Church all that it needs to be the Church – and fulfil its mission.</p>
<p>ROUCH, the Ven Dr Peter</p>	<p>Our predominant patterns of church life and mission have been astonishingly productive for many years. They remain so, but for a diminishing proportion of the population. We are however a national Church and must innovate to connect with a broader swathe of our nation. This is a faith imperative and not just about survival. It implies a significant cultural change and some reallocation of resources.</p> <p>It is of the nature of cultural change that it requires real impetus, conviction, and strong momentum. But it also needs care so as not to simply devalue what is already good or dismantle what needs only refurbishment. The challenge is to hold these together effectively.</p> <p>Two things that will help are –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• clear and visionary leadership, and</li> <li>• strengthened and accessible synodical structures.</li> </ul> <p>I believe it is right to invest in the training and resourcing of those holding episcopal office. I also believe we need to be far more deliberate in seeking a broader range of voices in synodical and parochial governance. Recognising the limited range of our cultural reach as a church, we need to draw in voices and perspectives that can help us see ourselves and our decisions from a different perspective.</p>
<p>RUTHERFORD, the Revd Rosalind</p>	<p>The challenge which the Church of England is facing, is that in each generation fewer and fewer people are responding to God through what religion offers, and so we are living with the anxiety that in a few decades there simply will not be enough people to keep the church as we know it going. A linked challenge is preventing this anxiety from over-influencing our actions. We must support (including releasing finance) ministry among young people; we must encourage clergy, stipendiary, self-supporting and pioneer, to work creatively together with laity. General Synod started considering some of these challenges and how to finance them, when the reports of “Reform and Renewal “ were introduced last February and these issues will be returning to Synod, when it will be important for members to be able to share the experience from different dioceses.</p> <p>We also need to remember that those outside the church look to see if we practice what we talk about. An institution that is seen as discriminating against people because of their gender, sexuality, and ethnicity is not attractive to the majority of people in this country, and the younger they are the less attractive it looks.</p>

<p>SARGENT, the Revd Dr Benjamin</p>	<p>The single greatest challenge to the Church, both locally and nationally, is, as it has always been, a lack of mature, well-resourced, well-informed and passionate disciples of Jesus Christ who are ready to labour to bring in the harvest that is plentiful (Matt 9:37). The people of this nation have deep spiritual needs which only the Gospel of Jesus Christ can meet. I know from experience what difference a few keen and clued up Christians can make to the mission of the local Church. The General Synod, through its Reform and Renewal programme, needs to do its utmost to encouraging the training of both lay and ordained Christians who will want to get their hands dirty because they see the everlasting value of what Jesus Christ has to offer.</p>
<p>STEED, the Revd Dr Christopher</p>	<p>Being taken seriously. All I want to say flows from this:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Recovery of spiritual, not just moral authority – to speak prophetically and theologically so our voice counts with new boldness;</li> <li>2. God is the most interesting reality about religion and faith so we must find ways of communicating we have something to say—and why! Synod should talk more of God and speak theologically.</li> <li>3. There must be, in my view, a call for a new evangelisation that somehow performs the trick of being disentangled from one culture but wrapped in incarnate love, replete with community engagement and using the tools of social media amongst other well-trodden ways! (the retreat of the State and the ‘slash and burn’ of local authority spending offer massive opportunity for the church to move back in)</li> <li>4. Especially is this true amongst young people; a new evangelisation should invest urgently in finding routes and messages that enable the church to network amongst young people with greater effectiveness;</li> <li>5. Apologetics – commissioning an emphasis, having debates etc on how we build a plausibility shelter to show that people of faith need not be pushed to the margins or on the retreat but are thought leaders.</li> </ol>