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C of E General Synod votes to welcome transgender people

The General Synod of the Church of England has passed a motion on welcoming transgender people.

Members of Synod, meeting in York, supported a call for the House of Bishops to consider

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preparing nationally commended liturgical materials to mark a person's gender transition.

The motion also recognises the "need for transgender people to be welcomed and affirmed in their parish church".

It was moved by the Revd Christopher Newlands on behalf of the Blackburn Diocesan Synod.

Opening the debate, he said: "I hope that we can make a powerful statement to say that we believe that trans people are cherished and loved by God, who created them, and is present through all the twists and turns of their lives."

Speaking during the debate the Bishop of Worcester, Dr John Inge said: "Our response needs to be loving and open and welcoming and the passing of this motion would be a very important factor in that."

An amendment to the motion, moved by Dr Nick Land of the Diocese of York, calling instead for the House of Bishops to consider the theological, pastoral and other issues around gender transition, was rejected by all three houses of Synod.

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The votes in the House of Bishops were 30 for and two against, with two abstentions.

In the House of Clergy 127 backed the motion with 28 against and 16 abstentions.

In the House of Laity 127 supported the motion with 48 opposing and eight abstentions.

C of E General Synod backs ban on conversion therapy

The Church of England's General Synod has backed a motion calling for a ban on the practice of Conversion Therapy aimed at altering sexual orientation.

During the synod's session this weekend in York, members of the Church's national assembly voted to endorse a Memorandum of Understanding on Conversion Therapy signed by The Royal College of Psychiatrists and others condemning the practice.

The joint statement describes Conversion Therapy as unethical, potentially harmful and having "no place in the modern world".

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The motion was moved by Jayne Ozanne, who represents laity in the Diocese of Oxford, with amendments moved by Canon Dr Jamie Harrison (Durham) and the Revd Andrew Dotchin (St Edmundsbury and Ipswich) which were carried.

Opening the debate Ms Ozanne said: “In short, conversation therapy is harmful, dangerous and just doesn’t work.

“People may be able to alter their behaviour but they can never alter their innate desire.”

She added: “This debate is actually quite simple. Do we trust our medical health professions and academics (including many sincere godly Christians) to know what they are talking about?

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“Should we listen to the voices of those we and others have unwittingly harmed?”

“Should we learn from our mistakes, and seek to protect future generations from the sort of damage that was done to me and so many others?”

Speaking during the debate the Archbishop of York, Dr John Sentamu said: “The sooner the practice of so-called conversion therapy is banned, I can sleep at night.”

The Bishop of Liverpool, Paul Bayes, said: “As the world listens to us the world needs to hear us say that LGBTI+ orientation and identity is not a crime.

“LGBTI+ orientation and identity is not a sickness. And LGBTI+ orientation and identity is not a sin.

“We must distinguish between an ascetic and a therapeutic approach. In the Church we are certainly called to help one another to conform their lives to Jesus Christ and to live lives of holiness, but we do not need to engage people in healing therapy if they are not sick.”

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Members voted by houses on the amended motion.

The votes in the House of Bishops were 36 for and one against, with no abstentions. In the House of Clergy 135 backed the motion with 25 against and 13 abstentions. In the House of Laity 127 supported the motion with 48 opposing and 13 abstentions.

Meanwhile, the synod will vote on whether to provide special services for transgender people on Sunday.

Its being asked to offer a welcome to people to mark their transition. Supporters of the proposal say it would help those undergoing the process.

Others suggest it would contradict some parts of the Bible which state humans are created as either male or female.

A live stream of Synod proceedings, including previous sessions, can be [viewed here](#)

A background paper accompanying the motion by Jayne Ozanne is [available here](#)

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A background paper from the Secretary General is [available here](#)

Church offers a 'still, small voice of calm' in troubled times, says Sentamu

The Church of England offers a still, small voice of calm in uncertain times, the Archbishop of York said yesterday.

Speaking on the first day of General Synod in York, Dr John Sentamu said: 'As we now seek to reassess our relationships, in our local communities, in Europe, and internationally, our goal must always be the common good of all.'

His comments came as he moved a special motion on the state of the nation. It called, among other things, upon parties to consider the causes of voter apathy and non-participation in the recent election, and on 'Christians everywhere to maintain pressure on politicians of all parties to put the cohesion of the nation and its communities at the heart of their programmes'.

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Sentamu said: 'We must learn from our present political and economic challenges to think less about the price of things and more about the value of things.'

'There will be many lessons to learn from the fire in Grenfell Tower – but we are already aware that false economies can lead to human tragedy.'

'Social care, specifically the so called 'dementia tax', should be an area where we are better off working together, and taking the risk jointly.'

'This issue of public sector pay has demonstrated that there is little sign of a coherent plan about how to fund the health service, education, social care, defence, housing, or transport infrastructure.'

'Proposed solutions pit one section of society against another to provide the funds – either by cutting public spending for some, or increasing taxes for others. Surely the nature of communal action is that it is precisely action taken together.'

The Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, said: 'In the last year one of the things that has become more apparent is that our sense of

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identity, has become more blurred and reached some kind of crisis and culmination.

'We are a society where there are rival attempts to seize and proclaim mutually exclusive identities.'

Caroline Spelman MP, the Second Church Estates Commissioner, called on the Church to be brave, look outside itself and take a lead issues such as intergenerational division and contribute with compassion on issues such as social housing and education. The Bishop of Southwark, Christopher Chessun spoke of the response of churches in his diocese to recent attacks. He said: "The church has shown the ability to respond rapidly and hold the trust of the whole community."

The motion, entitled After the General Election, a still small voice of calm, was carried overwhelmingly on a show of hands.

Church leader wants bishops to ditch headgear

Bishops are being urged to get rid of their mitres by a senior Church of England cleric who called t

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them an ‘unhelpful and unnecessary’ symbol of power.

Rev Ian Paul, a member of the Archbishop's Council, published an online article named "Why bishops should throw away their mitres". He claimed the hats are unflattering and look daft on most people. He also said the “wearing of mitres by bishops is a practice less than one hundred years old, and until recently it was far from universal”.

He continued: "The second reason is rather important, and oddly is something that many

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people are not aware of (including, it seems, not a few bishops): wearing mitres is not particularly Anglican.

"The practice more or less ceased at the Reformation, and only crept back into use through the influence of the Oxford Movement."

The theology professor also said bishops should carefully consider the visual signals mitres create, which he believes don't mesh with the today's culture.

He added: "To most, and I would suggest especially the young, the sight of bishops in mitres puts them in another world. It is world of the past, a world of nostalgia, a world of deference—and mostly a world which is quite disconnected from present experience and values.

"It confirms for many the impression of a church irrelevant to modern questions, contained in its own bubble of self-reference.

"And in its hierarchical understanding of authority, it is a culture of which contemporary society is becoming less and less tolerant, possibly for good reason."

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He plans to call for reform on the use of mitres during a debate on vestments at a General Synod meeting in York today - Monday.

South Sudan six years on: Church leaders call for prayers for peace

As the world's newest country reached its sixth anniversary yesterday - Sunday, Church leaders in South Sudan and in neighbouring Kenya and Uganda called for prayer for the restoration of peace and stability in South Sudan.

A movement of over 3,000 churches were united in prayer this weekend and a National Day of Prayer today - Monday - has been organised in Juba, the nation's capital.

The country has declared that official Independence Day celebrations will not go ahead this year due to ongoing conflict, a food crisis that has seen 50 per cent of the population dependent on food aid, 2 million displaced internally and a further 1.9 million flee the country.

In South Sudan, Tearfund is providing food to vulnerable households through vouchers and cash. It enables families to purchase staples,

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A South Sudanese woman at prayer at the African Inland Church in Juba.

such as pulses and oil, at markets. Children who are malnourished are also being given a high energy food supplement as part of a programme to help them and their families to get healthy again. Despite the troubled times, families are also provided with seeds and tools to be able to continue farming in small vegetable gardens so that they have a food source in months to come.

Bishop Anthony Poggo, former Bishop of the Diocese of Kajo-Keji, said: "We pray that the people of South Sudan, the people of my homeland, who are so fully loved by God, unite.

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“We pray that healing and restoration will come soon and that the South Sudanese find strength in their diversity and in the beautiful and resourceful country we call home. Be encouraged we are praying with you! Never give up!”

Father James Oyet of the South Sudanese Council of Churches, who organised the National Day of Prayer added: “In spite of all the thunderstorms of life, the food crisis, the economic crisis, we want to thank God. We thank God for life and celebrate the people of South Sudan. We thank God for Independence, but now we seek healing and reconciliation as the wounds are too big.”

Kirk voices support for nuclear weapons ban

On Friday 7 July over 120 states voted to adopt a treaty prohibiting Nuclear Weapons. Speaking after the decision Rev Dr. Richard Frazer, convener of the Church of Scotland's Church and Society Council said:

“In 1972 the world banned biological weapons; we have subsequently banned chemical weapons, anti-personnel landmines and cluster

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munitions. Today the UN has agreed the Nuclear Ban Treaty.

“While there is much more that needs to be done before we can rid the world of nuclear weapons, this represents a significant step forward and will make the possession of these weapons morally and practically more difficult.

“Nuclear weapons are indiscriminate in their impact and the disproportionate scale of suffering that they are capable of unleashing makes them unjustifiable. Steps now need to be taken to urge our own government to take further their own commitments to nuclear disarmament, particularly in light of last year’s disappointing decision to renew Trident.

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“The text of the Treaty agreed at a meeting of the United Nations at its headquarters in New York prohibits member states from developing, testing, producing, manufacturing, acquiring, possessing or stockpiling nuclear weapons. While regrettably all nuclear-armed states and NATO member states, except the Netherlands, boycotted the meeting, this nonetheless represents a significant step from the international community.

“Since 1983 the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland has held the position that nuclear arms are by nature morally and theologically wrong. In 2015 the General Assembly reaffirmed the Church’s position that the ownership of, use of and threat to use nuclear weapons are inherently evil and stated its support for an international Nuclear Ban Treaty.”

Speaking last year, the Very Rev Dr Russell Barr, then Moderator of the General Assembly said:

"Attempts to sustain peace through the threat of indiscriminate mass destruction could not be further from the peace to which Christ calls us. It is vital that the UK demonstrates the sort of change it wants to see in the world; building peace through strong and courageous

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leadership and not by commissioning more nuclear weapons."

The Joint Public Issues Team, an initiative of the Church of Scotland, the Baptist Union, the Methodist Church and the United Reformed Church, has produced a briefing on [the Nuclear Ban Treaty with actions to be taken by MPs](#)
[Read the full text of the Nuclear Ban Treaty](#)

Christian Aid welcomes G20's global momentum to tackle climate change

The world is navigating away from fossil fuels and sailing towards a clean, sustainable energy future, despite Trump's attempts to sabotage global efforts to tackle climate change, says Christian Aid at the close of the G20 summit.

Christian Aid's International Climate Lead, Mohamed Adow, said: "After this G20 summit, there's no doubt that the world's largest economies are taking climate action seriously. The message from world leaders in Hamburg is clear: Donald Trump's isolationist stance on climate policy is simply not going to derail

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plans to implement and advance the Paris Agreement.

“The US President’s weak attempts to capsize the climate movement have failed: he is now marooned on a political island of his own making, with his head buried in the sand. Meanwhile the rest of the world is moving ahead, having outlined a comprehensive Climate and Energy Action Plan which allows them to get on with the business at hand – the transition to a green economy.

“The G20 (or G19) have collectively sent a strong signal that they’re committed to implementing and advancing the Paris Agreement, and that they’re working together to deliver better growth, prosperity and stability. They have proven that the global evidence-based values which bind us together, and which allow us to confront global challenges, are secure.”

“We are pleased that the EU and China – two of the world’s top three biggest economies – have demonstrated their commitment to steer the way towards a low-carbon economy. Their leadership – and that of Angela Merkel’s – has strengthened the global resolve to make a big

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shift away from dirty energy. Now, perhaps we can finally shift gears from just defending the Paris Agreement, to enacting it and delivering at home.”

Some [1.2bn people](#) worldwide don't have access to electricity – predominantly in sub-Saharan Africa and Asia. “From our work, we've seen how renewables are already delivering access to efficient, sustainable and affordable power for poor communities, in a way that helps them overcome their energy poverty,” said Mr Adow.

He continued: “Earlier this week, we saw the Least Developed Countries (LDC) Group challenge the G20 to commit to agree a comprehensive climate plan that focuses on clean energy, rather than traditional energy.

“As the LDC group rightly says, ‘clean coal’ is not a legitimate source of energy for mitigating carbon emissions, nor should it be considered part of climate finance support for developing countries. That's why, multilateral banks must scale up their investment in renewable energy sources, rather than on fossil fuel investment.

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“Some of the world’s poorest, most climate-vulnerable nations – like Haiti, Bangladesh and Ethiopia – have already pledged to rely solely on renewables by 2050. They are eager to leapfrog to a low-carbon economy: the world should enable them, not hold them back.”

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