**From James Cary (Lay)**

General Synod always covers a number of topics over a few days. I was pleased to hear the debate on Resourcing Ministerial Formation (GS 2286) that the Bishop of Chester has been leading – and especially ensuring there is a lay training component kept in mind so that laity can have high quality options.

For me, the highlight was a twenty-minute lunchtime prayer meeting on the Tuesday where some of us gathered to pray for one of the Archbishops Councils aims for 2030, to double the number of children and young people in the Church of England. It was brilliant. Really engaging. Lay, clergy, a couple of bishops and an archbishop, plus people on Zoom. This is a meeting that happens every Tuesday at 1pm on Zoom and [you can be part of it here](https://www.churchofengland.org/about/leadership-and-governance/emerging-church-england/praying-doubling-number-children-and-young).

This links to another piece of business about Safeguarding, which remains a priority for Synod and Archbishops Council as we still have a lot of catching up to do. In that debate, I made the point that it’s unhelpful to brand historically orthodox teaching on human sexuality to be a ‘safeguarding issue’ as some seem determined to do. And I also said that if we’re serious about doubling the number of children in our churches, we should want the Church to be not just a safe place for children, but a brilliant and wonderful place. So please do the safeguarding training!

**LLF Debate**

The big item of business was obviously the LLF motion in which, contrary to public perception, the Synod did not in fact approve prayers for blessing same sex *relationships*. One member of the Anglican communion said that only the Church of England could debate something for eight hours and not come to a decision.

But this *was* a debate about the pros and cons of proposals from the House of Bishops which included sample prayers for blessing the people, *not* their relationships. If that sounds like angels dancing on the head of a pin, then I have some sympathy with that view. And many spoke in favour of these changes as just the first step on the road to same-sex marriages being conducted in church, for which the amendments demonstrated there was much less appetite.

Christina Baron of this diocese gave a brilliant and funny speech that I totally disagree with, and that deep disagreement was the one thing that really came across in the group work the day before, and in the brilliantly chaired eight-hour debate that you can watch on YouTube.

So that’s the rest of your Saturday sorted.

I fear these proposals don’t avoid schism but merely push it down into individual parishes, which is a disaster. And I’m already hearing stories to that effect in other diocese where PCC member or Church warders are resigning because their incumbent has said they will or will not be using thing prayers.

And given the nature of this debate and how each side sees the other, I struggle to see how new Pastoral Principles will be able to bridge that gap, but that’s what we’re waiting for. Whether they are ready for the July Synod remains to be seen.