

## OXFORD DIOCESAN SYNOD

**Living in Love and Faith (LLF): Background paper****Introduction**

1. Following a national request that all Diocesan Synods provide time in 2025 to consider the issues raised by LLF (and Prayers of Love and Faith), Bishop's Council has scheduled this time together at this Synod. This is drawing on a series of national resources provided for this purpose, to which this covering paper provides links. It should be noted that this is not a formal reference to Diocesan Synods and no vote will be taken on this item in Diocesan Synod: it has the status of an informal consultation of diocesan synods.
2. Feedback will, however, be provided to the national process and this will be agreed by the agenda sub-committee (Bishop of Oxford, Chair and Vice-Chair of House of Clergy, Chair and Vice-Chair of House of Laity, DBF Chair, Diocesan Registrar and me) plus the Bishops of Buckingham and Reading, who will co-facilitate this item. Every attempt will be made to do so in as factual way as possible, acutely aware of strong views held by several Synod members and the sensitivities these issues raise.
3. We will be seeking to ensure that the item is handled in a way that is as respectful as possible of all views and would ask all Diocesan Synod members to be mindful of this. We would also invite General Synod members to consider if on this occasion they might wish primarily to be listening to what is said by others, which they can take into account in deciding how to contribute and vote at General Synod.

**National Resources**

4. The resources provided nationally (which we would encourage you to look at in advance of Diocesan Synod) [have been brought together on one dedicated webpage.](#)
  - They include two update leaflets from [the LLF Programme Board](#) on draft proposals that could serve as a possible way forward in the LLF process. (Bishop Steven is now also a member of the Programme Board.) Feedback from the informal diocesan consultations (of which discussion in our June Diocesan Synod forms part) and other key stakeholders will be brought to the College and House of Bishops for consideration. This will help refine and develop the final proposals which, if supported by the House of Bishops, will be brought to General Synod in 2026.
    - a [general update](#) on the process to date, detailing key aspects of the draft proposals for the use of the Prayers of Love and Faith (PLF) including in standalone services, and the accompanying proposed pastoral reassurance.
    - [The second leaflet](#) provides more detail on the theological work to date by the Faith and Order Commission and the Episcopal Reference Group.

- Additionally, [a video](#) is available to provide further information and updates on the LLF process. This will also be shown during the Diocesan Synod meeting.
- The full draft Code of Practice, draft Guidance for the use of the Prayers and several theological papers published to date in relation to the draft proposals by the Faith and Order Commission [are all available via the LLF website](#).

## National Guidance

5. The national briefing material for these informal consultations includes the following:

Why are these conversations being held?

- The first and foremost aim is to enable good conversations and shared understanding of the hopes and concerns people have in the context of their diocese.
- Secondly, the LLF Programme Board is looking for direct feedback on the principles and workability of the draft proposals to help shape the overall proposal, accompanying guidance, and planning of implementation

Who is being asked to offer feedback?

- We are inviting dioceses to host informal consultations with their diocesan synods. Some dioceses also seek input from deanery synods or hold a more open discussion in a day conference. The feedback will be sought from individual diocesan synod members with the expectation that this will also enable diocesan synods to hold constructive conversations around the challenges faced in navigating disagreements around LLF.
- We are also asking various networks and church bodies to offer their reflections on the approach and workability of proposals.

What feedback is being sought?

- How well-informed people are on the LLF journey to date?
- What levels of conversations have happened or are happening in parishes and other expressions of church?
- What do people think in general about the proposals – do they help and what challenges remain?
- How can the proposals be better expressed or explained?
- What questions are there that the ongoing work need to help answer?
- What other issue and ideas are there that it might be helpful to consider

## Plan for the time at Diocesan Synod

6. The agenda sub-committee will keep this plan under review until the day that the Diocesan Synod takes place but the intention is as follows:
  - a. Bishop Dave and Bishop Mary will introduce the item, which will include showing the above video (up to 15 mins)
  - b. Group discussion on the following questions (15 mins):
    - i. How familiar are you with the LLF process to date?
    - ii. What three words describe your feelings about participating in this conversation today?
    - iii. What types of conversations have taken place locally?

- iv. Where will further guidance be most helpful?
- c. Bishop Dave and Bishop Mary will introduce the specific current proposals (10 mins)
- d. Group discussion on the following questions (20 mins):
  - i. How well do you understand what is being proposed?
  - ii. What is your view of the use of Prayers of Love and Faith (suggested scale 1 firmly against, 2 against, 3 no particular view, 4 in favour, 5 strongly in favour)
  - iii. What is your view of Pastoral Reassurance provisions for those unable to accept PLF (same scale as above)?
- e. The Chair will provide for some feedback and any questions, to which Bishop Mary and Bishop Dave will respond where appropriate (15 mins)
- f. The Chair will ask all Synod members individually to complete a questionnaire with answers to these questions, which will be collected in so as to provide a response to the national LLF team (5 mins), followed by reflection and closing prayer (Bishop Dave and Bishop Mary) (5 mins)

Mark Humphriss  
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23 May 2025