

The Bishop in Canterbury

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Dear colleagues,

Lent is a season of challenges. For some of us, the challenge involves giving up something to emulate the sacrifice and temptations that Jesus encountered in the desert. For others of us, the challenge is to be more generous during Lent. Whatever the challenge, Lent invites us to think less of ourselves and more of the world and of others.

As we journey together during this Lent, let me draw to your attention two initiatives from the national church that invite us all to be more outward looking, more prepared and ready to consider the needs of others over our own.

Who is my Neighbour?

The first is the Pastoral Letter from the House of Bishops in preparation for the forthcoming General Election. Whilst the report has received some criticism from the media, it is a strong document which calls on the church to engage constructively in the forthcoming Elections and to help challenge politicians and the political process so that together we can build a society which is fairer for all. It is also fair to say that the letter has been somewhat overtaken by other publicity regarding the Living Wage Debate, but perhaps the questioning of the church's response to the Living Wage, shows that our pastoral letter is raising some serious issues.

The letter asks all Christians to vote. It encourages us to use our vote to support those who wish to reverse inequality in society, who wish to improve the way society treats people unable to speak for themselves and who wish to support a common good for society rather than self-interest. You can read the letter, which is addressed to the 'people and parishes of the Church of England' [here](#).

Churches hosting hustings is one visible out-working of the desire to engage constructively in the General Election. I am aware of many churches in the Diocese hosting such events and I am chairing one husting in Dover and one in South Thanet. I encourage all those considering running hustings to explore the advice and resources issued by Churches Together in Britain and Ireland <http://ctbielections.org.uk/>

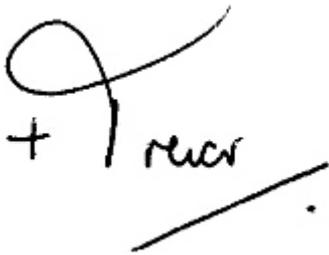
Work of General Synod

The second piece of work I'd like to draw your attention to is one which we began at General Synod earlier this month. There are many challenges that face our church, including dwindling resources, over-complicated structures, and a need to improve every-member discipleship, falling numbers of ordained clergy and succession planning for talented senior leaders. I am pleased to say that General Synod voted almost unanimously to face up to these challenges and whilst there is still much work to be done, Synod has shown that it is capable of putting its own house in order. An example is Synod's plans to introduce a new funding formula for dioceses that focusses on strategic plans for growth with a bias for supporting the poor. You can read about this and other progress in the post

synod briefing 'A Programme for Reform and Renewal' which is available [here](#).

Finally, let us together look more closely at developing discipleship, one of the topics discussed at Synod. On Saturday 7 March, at our own Diocesan Synod, we will be asking the challenging and unsettling question that is – *do we really, genuinely see children as fellow pilgrims and as equal disciples, or do we see them merely as a group who can help us attract more adults so that we can continue as we are?* Are we able to sacrifice our own needs and wants and think more of others than ourselves? My hunch is that, only when we do, will our church flourish. [Please do come to Synod and add your voice to this important conversation.](#)

With my blessings this Lent,

A handwritten signature in black ink. It features a large, stylized initial 'T' that loops back down to the left. Below the 'T', the name 'Trevor' is written in a cursive script. A horizontal line is drawn under the signature, ending with a small dot.

This email has been sent to all clergy, Readers and Churchwardens. Please share with your colleagues not on email.