

General Synod Report

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The November Group of Sessions began today in London.

Prior to the Synod there were separate meetings of the House of Laity and the Convocations of Canterbury and York. The Convocations were called to rescind long-standing resolutions relating to remarriage. The Synod had decided in July that in exceptional circumstances it should be permissible for divorced people to remarry in the Church. However, the previous resolutions of the Convocations stated that marriage was indissoluble (except by death) and that the marriage service should not be used for remarriages (the oddity being that under law clergy could conduct a remarriage as registrars). There were a number of people who, whilst in favour of remarriage in certain circumstances, were concerned that the rescission sends out the wrong signals or that the presence of the resolutions provides backup for those clergy who will not conduct remarriages. However the majority now think that remarriage is permissible and therefore saw the resolutions as contradictory to what the Synod had decided in July.

After the normal introductions and details of the progress of legislation (the Clergy Discipline Measure goes to the Ecclesiastical Committee of Parliament in December) came the debate on the agenda.

The only other debate of the day was on a report from the house of Bishops on military action against Iraq. It was recognised that the report was out of date more or less as soon as it was written. There was an amendment from the Bishop of Southwark that would have meant saying that only the United Nations Security Council had the authority to make a decision about war with Iraq. This was defeated, though not with a very large majority. The unamended resolution essentially urges caution and reaffirms the traditional just war principles. The report did say, and the Synod therefore affirmed today, that the conditions for war have not yet been met. The unamended resolution was passed without anyone voting against.

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