

Report on Salisbury Diocesan Synod – Meeting on June 18th 2008

Funding for mission was once again high on the agenda at the Salisbury Diocesan Synod meeting which took place at St Paul's Church in Salisbury on June 18th.

The Bishop of Salisbury, The Rt Revd Dr David Stancliffe, opened the meeting with a celebration of the Ordained Local Ministry Scheme initiated in 1997. The scheme had changed our understanding of ministry and vocation and arrangements for training. Bishop David looked forward to the visit of the Sudanese Bishops and the Lambeth Conference in July and the forthcoming General Synod meeting with its debate on the ordination of women to the episcopate. He ended by applauding Bishop Tim's ministry in the diocese and wishing him well on his appointment as Bishop of Truro.

Presentations were given on the three new Pioneer Ministry Posts which have been selected to receive funding as a result of the motion to release surplus reserves for mission at Diocesan Synod in November 2007. The first is a Weymouth Town Centre Mission Project to develop meaningful engagement with people currently outside of faith and the Church. The second is a Pioneer Minister for the Central Poole Regeneration Area (a new area of housing which is already home to around 15,000 extra people. The third post is a Children and Families Worker based at Southbroom St James who will develop links between the church, schools and community groups in Devizes and the wider deanery.

Introducing the presentations on behalf of Synod Canon John Holbrook, Rector of Wimborne Minster, said, "This is a Good News story. We are looking for entrepreneurs, people who want to see new forms of church life; pioneers to boldly go where we have never been before." He added, "We hope to see many more such projects in the coming years. We want to encourage the whole Diocese to dream with their eyes open."

Also on the packed agenda was the subject of Better Training for our People and Ministers where Bishop Tim, at his last Synod in the Diocese, and Bishop Stephen updated Synod on plans for how ministerial training will be delivered through the new South Central Regional Training Partnership and on new proposals for the Ordained Local Ministers scheme.

The meeting also incorporated the Annual General Meeting of The Salisbury Diocesan Board of Finance at which the annual report and accounts for 2007 and the annual budget for Share Assessment for 2009 were approved. The increase of 2% on the 2008 budget is the fourth year running that the share increase has been held at or below the increase in the Retail Price Index.

A debate on a proposal for a voluntary system for parochial fees was introduced by the Revd Canon Trevor Stubbs, Lyme Bay Rural Dean. In making his case, Canon Stubbs said, "Charging fees is not compatible with authentic mission. They interfere with genuine pastoral care. They are not biblical, the gift of Jesus is free."

Concerns raised by Synod members included a reduction in income for retired clergy, if fees are abolished; a reliance on the clergy's ability to persuade people to make donations rather than pay fees and a possible lack of income for smaller parishes who already struggle to pay their way. Despite a close vote the proposal was lost.

And finally the request to approve the new constitution for the Diocesan Mission and Pastoral Committee was agreed.

The next meeting of Synod will be an all day session from 10am on Saturday November 22nd at Amesbury Baptist Centre.