

Report on Salisbury Diocesan Synod – Tuesday 22 June 2010

There was a full agenda at St Paul's Salisbury on the 22nd at 6.30pm, the last Diocesan Synod to feature the Bishop of Salisbury, Dr David Stancliffe, and also attended by the Bishop of Sherborne, Dr Graham Kings.

In his introduction, the Bishop noted that "Mission isn't something we do to other people, it's what we as a community do together," and expressed his hope that the Government's proposed 'Big Society' would learn from the mistakes of the past.

The Social Responsibility Officer for Dorset, Colin Brady, gave a presentation on becoming a Fairtrade Diocese. He thanked members of the working party, and made special mention of the work of Mothers' Union.

Diocesan Secretary Lucinda Herklots gave a presentation on General Synod Elections, urging delegates to think of the wider picture, and recommend those who would ably represent their constituencies. She also informed Synod that there would be an online forum to quiz candidates.

General Synod members David Jones and James Humphery also encouraged the gathering to think of membership as fun, not too time-consuming, and a chance to make a difference.

Gil Williams, Chair of the Diocesan Board of Finance, then presented the annual Reports and Accounts for 2009, noting that "Despite difficulties, the diocesan finances have been strengthened... leaving the diocese in an enviable position." 90% of Share went towards supporting parishes and ministers, with only 3.6% used for administration. Diocesan Accountant Phil Musselwhite was praised for the "titanic amount of work" achieved.

- There was a positive value of £540,169 on expenditure due to paying fewer clergy stipends than budgeted for, and income from the Property Department
- Over 96% of parish share was paid on time

The Reports and Accounts were approved unanimously.

A 1.46% budget increase for 2011 was proposed. The decrease in the clergy pension contribution rate to 42% formed part of a tough package for clergy. Mr Williams noted that a total budget increase of 14.9% since 2004 compared favourably with Retail Price Index increases of 22.6% and Consumer Price Index increases of 18.1%, "forming a stable base for parish mission planning."

After a question on the clergy unit scheme, the budget was approved unanimously. The auditors Mazars LLP were approved unopposed, with one abstention.

Bishop David presented an amendment to the Episcopal Ministry scheme, approved unanimously.

Bishop Graham introduced a proposal for a Diocesan Council of Mission, bringing together the two strands of evangelism and social responsibility. He noted that "Mission is the 'umbrella word' for what God sends us out to do," and quoted John 20:20 and Luke 4:18-19 in scriptural support.

Debate and questions followed, concerning naming, recruitment, scope, ecumenical component, possible tokenism and envisioning. Bishop Graham gave assurances that there would be appropriate staffing, research, ecumenical links, ongoing contact (such as Street Pastors), possible talks at Deanery Synods, and use of the new diocesan website. The proposal passed unanimously.

Bishop David then reflected on changes over the 17 years of Synod he had attended. He noted that parishes and deaneries had become less competitive and more co-operative, and that this had aided the growth of ordinations from parishes. Relationships with the Sudan had also grown and proven beneficial as an outward focus, as had the ideas of engagement: "Come to church with us" and "We listen before we talk." He commended Gil Williams' focus on 'What you've got to give', his positive relationship with the Cathedral and the Dean in particular, and with his team of senior colleagues.

The next meeting of Synod will be an all day session from 10am on Saturday 6 November 2010 at Market Lavington.