

## **Diocesan Synod 19 June 2012: Presidential Address**

Earlier today, at long last, it was announced the new Bishop of Ramsbury will be Canon Edward Condry. I am delighted that that he and Sarah with us for this first part of Synod tonight. During the day they have been introduced to the Diocese and the Leader of Wiltshire County Council, Cllr Mrs Jane Scott hosted tea this afternoon for some of the county's civic leaders to welcome them to Wiltshire. The Bishop of Ramsbury will live in Warminster. We look forward to welcoming him and Sarah to the Diocese. Edward will be ordained bishop on 21<sup>st</sup> September in Westminster Abbey and welcomed to the diocese at Cathedral Evensong on Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup> September.

Whilst thinking about bishops, because of the amendments proposed by the House of Bishops to the Ordination of Women as Bishops Measure that will go to General Synod in July, space has been cleared on tonight's agenda for an urgent motion calling on the House of Bishops to withdraw its amendment to Clause 5 of the draft Measure. The House of Bishops was asked by General Synod last February to try to bring it back substantially unamended but in a form more likely to gain final approval from the Synod. What was being looked for by opponents was greater reassurance about their continuing place in the Church of England without making substantial change to the proposal supported by 42 of the 44 dioceses.

The Bishops agreed two amendments. That to Clause 8 is not controversial. It clarifies the *delegation* by the diocesan bishop to another bishop to perform acts of Episcopal ministry whilst recognising that the ministry of the bishop is *derived* from his or her ordination in the whole Church of God. This seems to be helpful to those opposed to the ordination of women as bishops in separating legal function from episcopal orders.

It is the amendment of clause 5 which is creating controversy and there is a good deal of concern among some of the Measure's strongest supporters.

In making this amendment the Bishops included in the Measure what everyone accepts would otherwise have been in the Code of Practice: at the request of a parish, a diocesan woman bishop will delegate her Episcopal duties of sacramental and pastoral care and Episcopal oversight to a male bishop with a theology consistent with the theological convictions that prompted the request. The Bishops did not see this as a substantial change to the Measure because it is how it would have operated.

Those unable to accept the episcopal ministry of women have expressed the anxiety that the Code of Practice cannot be written until the Measure is past. A draft Code of Practice has not given them sufficient reassurance. More particularly, by not including this in the Measure itself, it will be for each Diocese to agree its Code of Practice and over time they fear their legitimate place within the continuing life of the Church being eroded until they are disregarded. This is not a huge problem in the Diocese of Salisbury where there are currently 4 parishes in what is currently alternative Episcopal oversight. In my diocesan conversations I have given reassurance through the way in which the Code of Practice will work generously and graciously.

The trouble is that by including the way a division of views will be handled within the Measure itself, some of those who previously supported the Measure feel that the legitimacy of the ministry of women has been called into question in a way that detracts from the rightness of the principle that the Church should ordain women bishops. This is not a matter of pragmatics but of principle and what the House of Bishops has done is to destabilise a very carefully crafted proposal, which already had significant compromise within it to recognise the reality of difference within the Church of England, but which had substantial agreement from the dioceses.

How the Church of England, and subsequently Parliament, will respond to the amendments proposed by the House of Bishops is still unfolding. The motion that has been tabled tonight is in keeping with the strong support this diocese has previously given to the ordination of women bishops and Bishop Graham and I welcome it as a contribution to what is indeed a very urgent debate which will help to clarify the consequences of what the House of Bishops has proposed.

One of the aims in my first year was to visit each deanery for at least a day. I have done 17/19 visits with Heytsbury and Weymouth and Portland still to do. The visits have been very varied and I have very much enjoyed the opportunities they have given me.

Yesterday I was in Purbeck Deanery. The day began at the National Trust in Studland. The NT has grown its membership from below 1 million to over 4 million and expects to be more than 5 million by 2016. Many of us become members because we see it as a financial transaction; you don't have to visit many properties for the membership fee to be recovered. The NT want some of us to become passionate about the cultural inheritance for which they care. They keep their understanding of membership deliberately broad so that people can be members in a variety of ways from being customers and consumers of history and culture to people whose live and breathe the NT. They have hundreds of thousands of volunteers. In order to meet the expectations of their members, and to serve the nation, each property has a written description of the 'Spirit of the Place'. I wonder what we would say is the 'Spirit of the Place' of this Diocese of Salisbury, what is our personality?

The pre-history of this diocese is striking: the geology and fossil legacy of the Jurassic coast; of Stonehenge, Avebury, Maiden Castle and so on. The coming of Christianity in Roman times and the earliest known image of Christ from the floor of the Roman villa at Hinton St Mary. There is a rich Saxon history of the diocese of Saints Aldhelm and Cuthberga, of men and women in authority. St Osmund uniquely included Saxons and Normans on an equal basis in the foundation of the cathedral at Old Sarum, sharing power. In this diocese the Church of England took shape through the teaching and example of Richard Hooker, John Jewel, George Herbert. Successive Bishops exercised a benign toleration of Roman Catholicism. It is the 'Spirit of the Place' captured by Constable who added a rainbow to one of his rather brooding paintings of the cathedral now in the National Gallery.

This is deep Christianity and the values that go with the 'Spirit of this place' are inclusive, affirming the whole community, pointing to God at work in the world, not just the Church. It

will help us to articulate this diocesan spirit or personality, to give direction and also to help us be accountable to one another and to Christ. It is the face we show internally and externally. Do you recognise my sketch and is it beginning to say what we want to say about ourselves in the present day?

My intention is to keep thinking and talking about this spirit or personality of the diocese through the summer and early Autumn and to bring it back to Synod in November. It will give a sense of identity and direction. This is rather different to creating a diocesan strategy. What I would like us to develop is decentralised, something which works with the spirit of the place and personality of the diocese.

From my first year some of our core commitments are becoming clear to me. They are not 'mine' but are what I have seen and been given and at this year's Archdeacon's Visitations, I have started to articulate them. They include:

- The need to growth in numbers and depth;
- To be an outward facing church;
- With children and young people at the heart of everything we do;
- Making good use of our buildings for church and the wider community;
- Aiming for excellence in worship and what we do as the Church;
- With a capacity for experiment and innovation;
- And an ability to celebrate and share what we do well.

In addition there is the framework set by the Diocese which has to be both realistic and creative. We will continue to need to address patterns of ordained and lay ministry and mission as well as organisation and finance enabling the life and work of the Church. Tonight we are discussing aspects of this with agenda items on Licensed Lay Worship Training and the Aldhelm Certificate as well as the DBF AGM and the Diocesan Budget and Share Assessment for 2013. I was told this is a good diocese and it is, especially because of the commitment of its people. Thanks to those who have prepared this evening's meeting.

Finally, I am grateful to Bishop's Council for agreeing we should appoint a new Archdeacon of Wilts in succession to The Ven John Wraw. The reasons are in the paper tabled under item 9 making a case for ministry and mission which is the core purpose of the Church.

There are always a number of comings and goings that we should note but this is the last Synod of this triennium. Thank you to everyone who has served and particularly to those who are not standing again.