

# Diocesan Synod

Report from Session at St Paul's Salisbury, Thursday 15 May 2014

## **Presidential Address**

The Bishop of Salisbury, Nicholas Holtam, touched on four main themes. Regarding the ordination of Women Bishops, he said, "As a Diocesan Synod I would encourage you to take the opportunity tonight to engage with the issue one last time. Though it is almost miraculous to have turned round this measure so quickly after the failure of its predecessor in November 2012, we should not take it for granted that it will sail through General Synod." He spoke warmly of the public welcome received by women priests in central London as they celebrated 20 years of women's ordained ministry in the Church of England, after a long and difficult journey to reach that milestone.

Turning to a topic of 'loving the stranger', initially related to the European Elections, the Bishop noted, "Christianity is non-tribal and cares for the stranger, the alien in our midst. You couldn't jump from that to political policy. Christianity is non-tribal and it is non-party political but we can't pretend we have nothing to say about what it is to be an outsider, and we care for them as we care for one another and for our families." He gave examples of foodbank use arising from changes to the benefits system, disability categorisation and delays while changing from one benefit to another.

Regarding South Sudan, Bishop Nicholas said sadly, "In the South Sudan the conflict has deepened since we met in February. Thousands have died and the UN estimate the number of displaced people has risen to 1.2million with a serious risk of famine likely to affect over 4 million. The peace agreement of last Friday is encouraging but it does not yet look stable." He mentioned a strained relationship with the Archbishop of the Episcopal Church of Sudan and South Sudan over human sexuality; that Bishop Graham was tasked with rebuilding relationships, and expressed gratitude for the £18,000 given to the diocesan appeal.

Concluding, he added, "I am very much looking forward to leading a pilgrimage of 63 people to the Holy Land from next Wednesday, 21st May to 2nd June. I have no doubts that we will engage both with the Biblical stories and experience the risen Lord who was 'here or hereabouts' and the present political realities of Israel and Palestine.

"We live as Christians in a context, which is sometimes sharp and uncomfortable but we find the resources for renewing hope our prayer, by growing in discipleship and serving God's world... Were the way always smooth and the path easy, we would be very much less the people God would have us become: so to God be the glory, now and forever."

## **Minutes of the last meeting, matters arising and notices**

Minutes will now be sent out with the next pre-Synod mailing. Regarding discussion of the Pilling report, national material will be drawn up and considered in September. Once senior diocesan staff have reviewed it, the next steps in the process will be decided on.

A range of parishes signed up to the Carbon Fast, with many finding it helpful for engaging with the issues. A new website has been launched: [www.ecochurch.org.uk](http://www.ecochurch.org.uk).

Christine Romano was commended by the Archdeacon of Sarum for her service in a number of roles including Diocesan Trust Officer (providing effective management of hundreds of trusts for PCCs), Pastoral Secretary and Secretary to the Board of Patronage. She retires at the end of July and received sustained applause.

## **Women in the Episcopate**

Robert Key, setting ground rules, noted that all 19 Deaneries had considered the legislation and all were in favour, with only two abstentions in only one deanery. Quoracy was defined as a minimum of one bishop, 23 clergy and 27 laity.

Chris Corteen, General Synod, moving the motion, gave background details on a perceived lack of respect and trust at the November 2012 General Synod, as well as a lack of a Code of Practice; a much-needed Steering Group set up in February 2013, which included Canon Jane Charman; a process of listening and setting-up of key underpinning principles; encouraging small-group sessions in July, with provision for those not in agreement; momentum leading to full revision after November 2013; and full revision completed in two hours in February 2014.

Noting that 34 dioceses had voted, giving a 93% majority, Mrs Corteen quoted the Archbishop of Canterbury's concluding words from his sermon on 3 May: "Let us therefore celebrate with fullness of heart and no holding back, not in triumphalism, but in awe at the God who so loves us that He gave us his whole self – so that all of us, men and women equally, may give our whole selves in following Christ our Lord."

Full text here: [www.archbishopofcanterbury.org/articles.php/5309/archbishop-justins-sermon-at-service-to-mark-20-years-of-women-priests](http://www.archbishopofcanterbury.org/articles.php/5309/archbishop-justins-sermon-at-service-to-mark-20-years-of-women-priests)

Paul Boyd-Lee, General Synod, opposing, said that "Exuberance doesn't obscure pain", adding that many of those having "a different integrity" felt intimidated into voting with the majority despite feeling that the Measure was theologically unsound- and not a matter of denying equality but of compromising their faith.

He welcomed the new mood based on openness and trust as a very positive step, but asserted that there was still a lack of offered compromise on either side and warned that voting in favour, despite conscience saying 'no', was dishonest. He asked for due consideration to be given to provision for dissenters in the event of a 'yes'.

The Dean of Salisbury, June Osborne, in favour, began by saying, "I hope that this is the last time I speak on this," and went on to review overwhelmingly positive on-the-ground responses to the 20th anniversary of women's ordination, pointing out that "We are a church which ordains women" and calling for unity in saying yes, "making sure this is not about victory or defeat... let's pledge ourselves to one another."

Philip Sankey, Lyme Bay, in favour, noted that a Forward in Faith congregation in a multi-parish team in his Deanery had been provided for, that goodwill had continued to exist, and that the Deanery itself had ensured this.

Peter Breckwoldt, Wimborne, abstaining, welcomed the guidelines for integrity, stressed the need to engage with the issue of 'headship', and expressed his hope that the legislation would go through so that the re-evangelisation of Britain could become a higher priority.

Richard Franklin, Weymouth, in favour, added that most of those on Synod who were opposed in principle now supported the Measure, deeming it 'sound and sufficient', and that it was not a vote on principle but a vote on the legislation with excellent safeguards for those of a particular integrity.

David Jones, Lyme Bay, in favour, believed that the Church of England had suffered reputational damage, with Christian misogynists mentioned during a performance of the Mikado; called for Paul Boyd-Lee to make his position on women bishops clear when standing for re-election; and wished for a unanimous 'yes'.

Votes by house:

Bishops 2 yes, 0 no, 0 abstaining

Clergy 35 yes, 0 no, 3 abstaining

Laity 48 yes, 1 no, 2 abstaining

Total 85 yes, 1 no, 5 abstaining

Robert Key, Lay Chair, welcomed the result but remarked that Synod should not assume that the legislation would get a clear run, and asked for ongoing prayer.

### **Communicating to those beyond the church**

The Bishop of Sherborne, Dr Graham Kings, led a short session featuring Synod members talking in buzz-groups about what they would say if they were in a lift with someone who was not a Christian, but who asked, 'Why believe in Christianity?'

Large post-its were produced, one per group, and were added to boards to be photographed and discussed later in the year by the diocesan Communications Group. Results of the discussion will be fed back to Synod in due course.

### **Annual Report and Accounts 2013**

Antony MacRow-Wood, Chairman of the House of Laity, reported that London Diocese had just voted 'yes' to the Women in the Episcopate legislation.

Chairman of the Board of Finance, Gil Williams, introduced the Annual Report and Accounts for the year ended 31 December 2013. He commented cautiously that "we have weathered the times and emerged stronger" thanks to support from parishes and diligence in spending and investments, and that over £2m had been raised for mission work in local communities. He added that "Share payment was spectacular this January... but we've been underspending due to not filling posts."

With just under 98% of 2013 Share paid, and 15 parishes still giving cause for concern, he acknowledged that Share payment was supposed to be 'what is needed and no more'. He apologised for the underspend, assured Synod that lessons learned would be applied, and thanked colleagues in the Accounts Department, on the Finance Committee and at the Diocesan Office.

Geoff Taylor, Chalke Valley, asked when a Lay Worship Leaders course would be available. The Diocesan Secretary, Mrs Lucinda Herklots, assured him that the Director of Learning for Discipleship and Ministry was working on it while on sabbatical.

The motion to approve the report and financial statements was carried unanimously, as was the re-appointment of Mazars as independent auditors.

### **Diocesan Budget for Share Assessment 2015**

Noting that "A budget should never be a wish list of things we'd like to do, but what is expected to happen", the Chairman of the Board of Finance then introduced the Budget for Share Assessment 2014: "the lowest budget increase I have ever proposed", from £9,720,857 to £9,787,385 (0.68%).

To aid this small increase, Budget vacancies would be raised to 19, with 2.5 posts (1 clergy, 1 lay, 0.5 curates) removed, saving £125,000. Learning for Discipleship and Ministry would save £30,000; Property would save £40,000 on subcontractors, rates and council tax; and all other departments would save £19,000. The diocesan portfolio would be consolidated, with slightly more emphasis on overseas equities and fixed interest. Ten unused clergy houses would be sold to make up lost rental income, with the money used for mission.

The Motion to approve the Budget was carried unanimously. The Budget will be made available on the diocesan web site.

### **General Synod Elections**

Mr Robert Key, General Synod, thanked Mrs Miriam Longfoot for her explanatory paper and briefly commented on the issue of Dorset being disadvantaged by fewer electors for the same number of seats. He remarked, "We need to put this anomaly right!"

Philip Sankey, Lyme Bay, added that a more proportional representation would allow the different integrities of the CofE to have a voice.

The motion was approved nem con.

**Questions**

The Revd Peter Breckwoldt asked the Bishop of Salisbury, following comments in his Presidential Address, whether the Archbishop of the Episcopal Church of Sudan and South Sudan had broken fellowship with the Diocese, refusing appeal funds due to the issue of same-sex marriage. The Bishop explained that fellowship had not been broken but that clarification of Sudanese views was being sought, and this would take some time.

Synod closed at 9.05 pm.