

# General Synod Synopsis from Salisbury Members – York 2010

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**General Synod met at York University from Friday 9<sup>th</sup> to Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> July 2010. On the Sunday morning we worshipped together in York Minster. The dominant item on the agenda was the legislation to allow the ordination of women as bishops to proceed. This debate was scheduled to take several days and the various sections of this debate are collated into one report in this synopsis.**

## **Report of the Business Committee**

The usual free ranging debate which releases synodical hobbyhorses onto the race track for a brief run in the sunlight was muted. Perhaps this was a reflection of the seriousness of our agenda. Even the Chairman's remark that she hoped the committee had allowed too much time for women bishops was received in silence. Nevertheless a few members revealed their underlying concerns to be:-

- Wanting an address from a women bishop from elsewhere in what's left of the Anglican Communion.
- A debate on marriage after divorce.
- Confidentiality within the Crown Nominations Commission.
- A code of practice on conflicts of interest.
- The Archbishop of Canterbury's recent message to ECUSA.

These may, or probably won't, appear on a future agenda.

## **Additional Weekday Lectionary and Amendments to Calendar, Lectionary and Collects**

The previous Synod had recommitted this Liturgical Business with the view to the inclusion of three verses omitted from the reading for Monday of Lent 3. The Revision Committee agreed to re-instate the verses (now Luke 9:1-11) With this change the Business received Final Approval. The weekday lectionary is to be commended for those places and situations where an alternative to the continuous morning/evening lectionary is felt to be appropriate. The readings are largely shorter and do not require people to have heard what was read the day before, nor anticipates them being there the next day. It's used in Salisbury Cathedral for Evensong!

## **Clergy Pensions**

As with most pension schemes the post-1998 clergy pension scheme is under considerable pressure from overall financial market weakness and increased longevity of life. Following the February 2010 Synod, final approval was given to the changes then agreed, with one important difference. The changes, relating only to service after January 2011, are: opt into the State Second Pension, and reduce the clergy scheme benefit to half the stipend level from two thirds – benefit neutral but cost saving; 41½ years service for full pension (previously agreed at 43); pension age 68 instead of 65; increases to follow RPI; new arrangements for early ill-health retirement; civil partners to have same rights as spouses (cost 'negligible'). Not all were happy with this piecemeal approach, but to delay changes would exacerbate the problem. Consideration will be given to a hybrid scheme – part defined benefit and part defined contribution for the future, so further changes may follow.

## **Questions**

The last item on Friday was 93 questions for written or oral response. As always the questions covered a wide range of subject as members took advantage of the opportunity to challenge the leaders of different councils and commissions about Church policy and practice.

Two of the questions were asked by Mike Burbeck. The first covered "who was going to announce the period of reception for the ordained ministry of women had come to a close". The Archbishop of Canterbury replied that this cannot be answered by one part of the Universal Church - i.e. it is not over and continues until the Roman Catholics and Orthodox Churches agree. The second question asked for agreed definitions for "one", "holy", "catholic", "apostolic", "Church". The Bishop of Chichester stated that a glossary might run the risk of foreclosing on the Church's ongoing reflection on the meaning of these terms – i.e. there is no agreed understanding! Sadly, it is the lack of this understanding that allows people of different beliefs to argue using the same words but with a totally different meaning.

## **Presidential Address 10<sup>th</sup> July**

The Archbishop's theme was that the way to come closer to God is to be generous and honest towards

everyone. We constantly risk knowing the price of everything and the value of nothing. He quoted the Magna Carta of 1215 on Jury trial and free, swift justice for all and Winston Churchill who said “We make a living by what we get; we make a life by what we give”.

He suggested we should break the link between paid employment and work. ‘Good work’ is not necessarily paid employment. We need the pursuit not of profit, but of economic justice on a global scale. He spoke of the wonderful Quaker industrialists, Cadbury, Fry and Rowntree (the Trinity of Chocolate) as examples of how businesses can act ethically and responsibly in the creation of work and wealth. “Wealth creation is a good thing, with a spiritual health warning.”

The Archbishop said being generous and honest toward everyone is ‘social holiness’. We cannot expect to come closer to God if we are not working for the good of others.

Archbishop Sentamu said it deeply saddened him that there was not only a general disregard for truth, but a rapacious appetite for ‘carelessness’, compounded by spin, propaganda and resort to misleading opinions paraded as fact about Rowan Williams. He said enough was enough. We should all possess a high regard for truth.

He asked who may come close and dwell with God. The answer is those with generosity and honour to our neighbour, leading to human flourishing, giving rise to the fruits of sincerity, humility, dependability, stickability, compassion and justice. As St.Aelred said, our hearts are like a spiritual Noah’s Ark made of imperishable wood of virtues and good deeds. We should gather in and care for all those who are in any kind of need, particularly those likely to drown in the chaos of their lives.

### **Archbishops’ Council Budget for 2011**

Andrew Britton, the finance chairman, presented the 2011 budget. The Archbishops’ Council has committed itself to five years of tight spending control. The largest item is training, where slightly reduced numbers in theological colleges demand a modest increase of 2.2%. A larger increase for clergy retirement housing (5%) results from additional provision with the help of outside borrowing. The other three items, national responsibilities, mission agency pensions and grants contribute to an overall increase of 1.5%. This is charged to the dioceses under an agreed formula .

### **Faith and Order**

The setting up of a new Faith and Order Commission was approved.

Introducing the debate, the Archbishop of Canterbury said that the Synod might want to reflect on the purpose of theology and theological resourcing in the Church of England. The Church had been served by the Doctrine Commission (which had not operated in recent years), the Faith and Order Advisory Group, and the House of Bishops Theological Commission. Bringing these together would provide for a more focused handling of discourse.

Numbers would be smaller than the combined membership, at 16: six bishops, and ten clerical and lay theologians. Scholars would be invited for particular pieces of work. Cost savings were expected.

Canon Richard Franklin asked for reassurance that the new body would not become a Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. He also questioned whether it would be able to fulfil all the roles of the three bodies, which had different functions.

### **Legislative Business**

The Bishop of Hull continued his inept stumble through the employment jungle admitting at one point that “I’m procedurally up the spout”. Readers may share our concern given that this is an area of law in which procedure is all! Nevertheless, he succeeded in securing final approval of the subordinate regulations to the Terms of Service legislation. These deal with important details such as initiating capability proceedings against bishops and archbishops (because he forgot this in February!), maternity, paternity, parental and adoption leave, time off for the care of dependents and the commencement date – 1 January 2011 unless the bishop mislays his dairy.

### **Our Fellowship in the Gospel**

On Sunday afternoon there was a short debate on *Our Fellowship in the Gospel: Report of a Joint Study Group between the Church of England and the Church of Scotland*. We had been given a summary of the Report to read. It told of the turbulent relationships between the Church of England and the Kirk during the Reformation and the two centuries afterwards and of increasing good fellowship in the Gospel over the past 150 years. The Bishop of Guildford, the Rt Revd Christopher Hill, and a former Moderator of the Church of Scotland, The Rev Dr Peter Donald, set the scene. We formally welcomed the Report and looked

forward to further conversations between our two Churches on biblical and theological issues

### **Review of the Constitution of the Archbishops' Council**

In a brilliant effort to enliven a dull but important topic the Archbishop of York introduced this item by inviting the Synod to join him in the Marseillaise for reasons which are too abstruse to explain here. What a pity that only our own James Humphery and one other member knew the words in French and joined in for a few bars. The Council have salvaged something from the wreckage of Synods mangling of Dr Baxter's proposals in February and we agreed:-

- A reduction in the membership of boards and committees by 29%.
- To the proposal to require the Chairmen of the Audit Committee and the Mission & Public Affairs Council to be drawn from the membership of the Council.
- To alter DRACSC terms of reference and change it's name to RACSC.
- The finance committee will develop new arrangements for reviewing investments.
- The council will reflect further on accountability.

### **Deanery Synods**

The Diocesan Synod of Coventry brought to Synod the proposals extend the role of Deanery Synods "in order to develop effective missionary strategies across wider areas than single parishes", with the intention of giving greater flexibility and significance to deaneries. There was valuable debate on various amendments which emphasised the importance and value of Deanery Synods and gave many good examples of good practice. The following amended motion was clearly carried.

"This Synod a) welcome the wide measure of discretion that each diocese has to determine the extent of any delegation of functions to deaneries; b) note the increasing range of legal vehicles available to deaneries where it is agreed that a more executive role may help in promoting the mission of the church; and c) invite the Archbishops' Council, in consultation with the House of Bishops, to produce updated guidance on available options, with examples of how recent practice has been developing".

### **Archbishops' Council Annual Report**

At the same time that Spain were scoring 1 nil against Holland in the World Cup, it was a thin house that attended the report's presentation with questions to follow. The textural part of the report was more informative than in previous years and even included a number of photographs. The new design's motivation came from the Charity Commission's directive to show what is done for the public's benefit, to outline plans for the coming year whilst indicating how those for the previous year were accomplished. A panel of four members of the Council answered questions principally on finance and ministry.

### **Fresh Expressions**

On Monday evening, the Revd Richard Moy (Lichfield) moved a private member's motion, which 200 members had signed up to, seeking greater provision for online resources that would communicate with younger people. Mr Moy said that many of those aged 16-30 at his Fresh Expressions church were visual learners. "They don't tend to look for lectionary or liturgy on an iPhone app: they look for images."

The motion that was carried was: 'That this Synod request the Archbishops' Council to identify sources of funding for the production of an online library of visual and video resources for worship, so that hard-pressed local worship leaders may access and use them in both mission and congregational contexts'

### **Farewells**

On Tuesday morning after the final debate, the Archbishops of York and of Canterbury led tributes to those who were leaving Synod. Archbishop John Sentamu spoke warmly of the contribution of Bishop David James, Bishop of Bradford, and of Bishop Tom Wright, Bishop of Durham.

Archbishop Rowan Williams also praised the leadership of Bishop Tom Wright on theological issues.. From the 80 or so members who were not seeking re-election Archbishop Rowan singled out the contributions of Christine Baxter, Chair of the House of Laity, Archdeacon Norman Russell, Prolocutor of the Southern Province, and Prebendary Kay Garlick, Chair of the Business Committee.

He was particularly warm in his praise and affection for our own Bishop David Stancliffe, not only for his 17 years as Bishop of Salisbury, but also for his 12 years as chair of the Liturgical Commission when he steered through and introduced *Common Worship*. He mentioned Bishop David's

musicianship, his writing and love of church architecture. Above all he thanked Bishop David and Sarah for their gift of hospitality

Archbishop Rowan's remarks were greeted with warm and sustained applause.

### **Women Bishops**

There were two main debates on Women Bishops. The first was to 'take note' of the report by the Manchester group, which recommends the way forward for the ordination of women as bishops. The second debate was the longer one. This was the revision stage of the process in which the proposed legislation was debated clause by clause and many amendments were put, although most were defeated. There is a long and drawn out process at work here. In 1975 the Synod agreed that there are no fundamental objections to the ordination of women. In 2008 the Synod called for legislation to be prepared. This last meeting of synod debated the legislation and fierce battles were fought over each clause of the measure. With minor amendments, the measure was agreed and the legislation will now be sent down to the dioceses for debate and comments, so as to be returned to General Synod in 2012 for a final vote. At that stage a two thirds majority will be needed in each of the three houses of Synod.

It can be said that there are two main positions over the question of the ordination of women as Bishops. The first position is to say that Holy Orders must be open to either gender for, if we baptize both male and female, then both men and women must be eligible for ordination as deacons, priests and bishops. We must welcome the gift of women's ministry with joy and thanksgiving. It is unacceptable to bring in legislation which allows the ordination of women as bishops, yet at the same time discriminates against them and declares that they are not fully ordained bishops within the Church. Perhaps the favoured option for those who hold this position is the so called 'simple clause' option, which simply states that it is lawful for a woman to be ordained as a bishop.

The second position is to reject the possibility of ordaining women at all. There are two sub-categories of this position. First of all, some evangelicals believe that a woman cannot exercise headship in the Church. It might be acceptable for women to be priests (but not local leaders), but it is certainly much harder to accept women as bishops. Secondly, some from the Catholic wing of the Church challenge the possibility of a woman being validly ordained at all. They seek 'sacramental assurance', which is to say that they want the

assurance that their sacraments are valid, which can only be the case if they are certain about the validity of their priest and bishops. Yet those under suspicion of being invalidly ordained form a large group, which include not only women bishops, but all priests (male or female) ordained by them and all male bishops who ordain women as well.

So, by and large, the opponents of women bishops say that it is time that we got on and ordained women as bishops, just so long as they do not have to relate to them in any way. Various amendments attempted to create separate areas of the Church of England, which would be free of women clergy and anyone associated with them. One solution, which was defeated, was to create separate dioceses for those opposed to women clergy. Another solution, proposed by the Archbishops, was to create parallel jurisdictions so that each parish could chose which bishop it came under. More importantly for the opponents of women bishops, such dioceses or jurisdictions would exist of right. They would not need a woman bishop to delegate such responsibility to alternative Episcopal oversight.

But the other side of the argument is that the existence of such dioceses (or arrangements) would mean that a future woman bishop would not be in charge of her own diocese, as every parish would have the right to opt out of her jurisdiction if they so wanted. In the end the Synod agreed that a bishop is a bishop, with sole control over his or her own diocese, but that he/she will have to make provision for any parish which writes a 'letter of request' for this purpose. A code of practice will be set up to regulate this. Any bishop will have to make provision if it is asked for. This is a generous concession from the supporters of women bishops, yet for the opponents this is not enough. They object to what they see as suspect bishops having any authority over them and certainly do not want alternative arrangements granted to them by any such bishop, whom they see as not meeting the necessary headship criteria or sacramental validity.

So the legislation allows women to be bishops, but makes provision for those who oppose this move. For such opponents, the provisions made do not go far enough. All those on Diocesan Synod will have the chance to debate this matter, sometime in the near future. For those who want to be in on the final vote in 2012, now is the time to stand in the elections to a new General Synod.

The new Synod will opened by the Queen in November 2010, following a special service in Westminster Abbey.