

Report on the November 2012 General Synod from Salisbury Members

General Synod met in London from Monday 19th to Wednesday 21st November 2012. Although it is often the case that we do not use this third group of sessions, we had to meet because the debate on the ordination of women to the Episcopate had been adjourned in July and the legislation had been sent back to the bishops for revision, before being returned to us for the continued debate. The whole of Tuesday was given over to this issue.

In the opening stages of the synod the usual introductions were made to new members and there was prolonged applause for the Bishop of Durham, who is not a new member, but who will soon be taking on a new role.

Business Committee Report: The report focused on the need for Synod to meet this November to discuss the Final Approval of the Measure and Canon for women and the episcopate, together with some important discussions following up the Anglican Communion Covenant, youth unemployment and the living wage. It also gives Synod an opportunity to say farewell to Archbishop Rowan in the same group of sessions that we warmly greet Justin Welby as our new Archbishop. The following debate raised issues about the need for a debate on living with diversity, the value of debating Diocesan Synod motions, and concerns around fees and churchyards. The Report was taken note of nem con.

A presentation was given about the work of the **Anglican Consultative Council** and its recent meeting. This body was set up to facilitate the co-operative work of the Churches of the Anglican Communion and it is one of the four 'Instruments' of the Communion (the others being the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Lambeth Conference and the Primates meeting). Every two or three years it meets in different parts of the world at the invitation of one of the Provinces or churches in the Communion. Each province is invited to send up to three members whilst ensuring that the lay voice is heard among them. This year it was held in Auckland, New Zealand.

As well as sharing in worship, fellowship and discussion, the Council developed resolutions, which included 'the environment', presented powerfully in dance and music; 'Israel and Palestine', the Land of Promise, where a resource had been made available for study; 'trafficking of persons', seeking to promote awareness and action; 'birth registration' highlighting the fact that not all people across the Communion are registered and thus lose out on education access; and 'Save the Church', in which high standards of care were recommended in cases of violence both domestic and otherwise.

The Anglican Covenant: Consultation with the Dioceses had led to rejection of the proposals for an Anglican Communion Covenant, so it could not be presented to the General Synod for Final Approval. Instead, the Business Committee will arrange for a substantive debate at a future Synod. Meanwhile the Church of England recognises the range of opinions on the Covenant and will continue to work with all parts of the Anglican Communion. The Archbishop of Canterbury reported that smaller Provinces were more enthusiastic about the Covenant, that there was still a need for a conflict resolution procedure and that we must continue to talk to each other. The Bishop of Durham said we still need to address the issue of the Covenant robustly.

Questions: As always, the asking of questions gives every synod member the chance to compel a senior member of the church to come to the rostrum and answer questions on any subject of the moment. Questions on this occasion included such subjects as clergy stipends, times of weddings, human sexuality, training pathways for ordination, the faculty system, the care of terminally ill patients and funeral liturgies for pets. The full list of questions, and the answers given, can be found on the Church of England Website.

The Ordination of Women as Bishops: The Archbishop of York chaired the debate and exhorted Synod to be on its best behaviour. The Bishop of Manchester proposed the motion. The debate has been running so long

that he has had permission to continue some time after his 70th birthday to try and see this through. Over 130 people spoke and some towards the end of the debate due to the time constraints were only allowed to speak for 30 seconds! The main arguments both for and against the measure as amended by the Bishops (**the selection of male bishops and male priests in a manner which respects the grounds on which parochial church councils issue Letters of Request**) are summarised as follows:

FOR

- The word 'respect' means that the Bishop will have to connect with the parish issuing a Letter of Request. Parishes will have a Statutory Right to issue such requests and Bishops will have a Statutory obligation to have a Scheme to deal with them.
- The Church will be allowed to flourish by the full inclusion of women in all aspects of ministry and will also allow an honoured place for those who cannot accept this
- Thousands of churchgoers and 42 out of 44 Dioceses now want this measure passed and will look forward to making it work relationally at the local level
- Must seek God's Kingdom together and not put up virtual fears that may never actually be realised in practice
- A third of all clergy are women and their ministry could collapse if they do not have the opportunity to be discerned for leadership
- Head of the Church is the Queen and all priests have to accept her headship and authority
- Without women sharing leadership the mission of the Church will stall in this country
- The word 'respect' is recognised in law and will carry weight
- We must not continue to cast doubt on female Orders
- Church is wedded to the past by rejecting women who are ministering sacrificially
- Discussion has been going on for 20 years and there are no new arguments to prevent women entering the Episcopate
- We must take a leap of faith now and trust that the bridges will be there as we work together in love
- Make up of all-male House of Bishops needs to change to reflect the wider Church and potential of women clergy

The Revd Janet Appleby (whose suggested wording formed the amendment being debated) - God turns round all things for good. We have more in common than that which divides us and any concession to one side automatically undermines the other and so this is as good a compromise as we can get to.

Respect can work as we trust each other otherwise we are saying that we are not capable of that.

Bishop Nicholas – We must be able to bring the best of our clergy into the House of Bishops

Bishop Justin Welby – expressed thankfulness for the ordination of women and we must now finish the job. We must demonstrate the reality of us all being reconciled to God. A Code of Practice will do this in spirit as well as letter.

Archbishop Rowan Williams – the Measure is now the best way forward. The Code of Practice will allow further Discussion . A no vote would not be positive for the Church's Mission. We need to liberate ourselves and move forward to the next stage.

Canon Robert Key (*our Chair of House of Laity*) – in our happy Diocese of Salisbury we have had an inclusive way of doing things for 1300 years and will continue to do so.

The Revd Canon Jane Charman (*our Director of Ministry in Salisbury and on a time limit of 1 minute!*) – a very inward looking debate about rights. Excluding women from leadership roles is not good news outside the Church.

AGAINST

- The word 'respect' is subjective and vague will not be enough in law
- The Code of Practice has yet to be drawn up and agreed and so it is not certain what the provision will be and may prove to be another battlefield
- Those who hold traditional views will not come forward for ordination
- Those holding traditional views will no longer be legitimate Anglicans
- Will have a detrimental effect on our Ecumenical relationships
- Church of England will no longer be a broad church allowing all traditions to thrive and flourish
- We should wait until we have a consensus
- We must be able to live in unity with integrity and so more thinking is required to enable this
- This legislation is bronze and we should be going for gold
- Legislation should not be based on goodwill and trust for it to work

- We should have regard for those who need building up and not just go with the strong majority
- Those holding the minority view will become oppressed in the Church

Bishop of Chester – believes women bishops should happen but not through this Measure. We should spend more time getting it right.

After 6 hours of debate a vote was taken by a Division of Houses and required a two thirds majority in each House to succeed.

Results

House of Bishops – 44 for, 3 against, 2 abstentions

House of Clergy – 148 for, 45 against, 0 abstentions

House of Laity – 132 for, 74 against, 0 abstentions (*this did not pass the two thirds majority rule*)

Of the twelve members of General Synod from our diocese, eleven of us voted for the motion and Paul Boyd-Lee voted against it. Paul believed he needed to act for a constituency within our diocese who do not support the legislation. Details of how every member votes are now recorded and are published on the Church of England website.

Post Debate Note: There was a sense of shock, anger, sadness and dismay amongst most of the Salisbury Members that the Measure failed and, according to Standing Orders, cannot now be debated in its present form during the life of this Synod which lasts until the summer of 2015. We are sorry that, after so many years of debate, we were not able to get this measure through and we affirm the valued ministry of the many women clergy in our diocese.

The day after the debate, Rowan Williams addressed Synod expressing his sense of disappointment at the outcome. He said the Church had a lot of explaining to do and should consider that Synod's practice of giving a strong voice to minority views needs explaining and exploring. He stated that parking the issue is not possible.

The bishops have met to take stock and consider the way forward after what has happened.

Administration of Communion by Children:

Should bishops be spending their valuable time signing countless permissions to distribute the Holy Sacrament when this could be done, if the particular bishop agrees, by incumbents? And should not children who have been admitted to Holy Communion prior to Confirmation also be authorised to administer the Sacrament? These two partly related matters were debated in a motion moved by the Diocese of Southwell and Nottingham. Issues raised regarding the first question included the value individuals placed on permission being given by the Diocese and its bishop, the size of the administrative task, the lack of personal knowledge by the bishop and how this ministry related to other ministries. Regarding children assisting, comments were made as to the place of Confirmation, what it means to be a child and whether some ministries should not be looked forward to, how some parents would feel about selection process and whether children might drop the elements (though Alan Jeans pointed out that dropping the chalice was in his experience a greater concern with some of the older assistants he knew!) After an hour's debate the motion was passed and now goes on to the next stage of the legislative process, so no change to Canon B 12 as yet.

John Freeman, from the Chester Diocese, proposed a Private Member's Motion that both affirmed "**the Christian values inherent in the concept of the Living Wage**" and strongly suggested that all our Church institutions should pay it. This met with overwhelming support, though speakers pointed out that the Church of England lagged behind other Christian denominations in this country in making such an affirmation. Examples were given that such policies were indeed applied widely in the country with beneficial effect not only for employees but also for employers. Two amendments, supporting the concept, but varying the wording, were defeated.

Youth Unemployment: 1.4 million young people aged 16-24 are not in employment, education or training (NEET). Nearly 1 in 5 of

all young people and 1 in 3 in rural areas and the most deprived urban areas are NEETs. In rural areas, they suffer from 'access poverty'. Youth are 4 times more likely to be unemployed than adults and at least 1 in 4 suffer from depression resulting from the social scourge of enforced idleness. Their chance of recovering lost ground when the economy recovers is minimal. They are caught in the vicious cycle of employers wanting experience but being unable to get employment because they lack experience.

In a refreshing change, the presentation and Synod motion (passed overwhelmingly on a show of hands) focussed on what the local church can do rather than calling on government to take action, important as that is. Currently, only 3% of churches do anything intentional to help young people, a statistic that we can and must improve upon.

The briefing paper from the Mission and Public Affairs Council, the stories told by members of Synod about what is happening in local churches and the website www.how2help.net (which offers an easy route for local church groups to find out what others are doing) makes it clear that each and every church and every one of us can make a difference to these young people's lives by helping them to write CVs, review their draft job applications, putting them in touch with people who can help them, and especially, providing them with the experience that they need. Perhaps we can mitigate some of the reputational damage to the church in the debacle of the women bishop's vote by acting now to support, encourage, mentor and provide practical help to our young people.

Farewells: There were farewells to the Bishop of Manchester, the Bishop of Bath and Wells, Canon Glyn Webster, Prolocutor of the Province of York, Dr Colin Podmore, clerk to General Synod and Judith Gracias, staff member.

The Archbishop of Canterbury: Synod ended with a fond and very grateful farewell to Dr Rowan Williams who has served the Church of England as Archbishop of Canterbury for the past decade. Dr Williams spent much of his earlier career as an

academic, first at Cambridge and then at Oxford. He became Bishop of Monmouth in 1992 and Archbishop of Wales in 1999 before becoming Archbishop of Canterbury in 2003.

The farewell took the form of a short debate in which Dr John Sentamu, Archbishop of York, the Venerable Christine Hardman, Joint Chair of the House of Clergy, and Mr Philip Giddings, Chair of the House of Laity all paid tribute to Dr Williams's wisdom, courtesy and sense of humour as well as to his spiritual and intellectual stature. During a turbulent ten years he had dedicated himself to preserving the unity of the Church, for which he had often received scant thanks from those he sought to serve. The Archbishop of York moved '*That this Synod record its deep gratitude for the Archbishop of Canterbury's outstanding ministry to Church and Nation, and offer him and Mrs (Dr) Williams its very best wishes for the future.*' This was passed unanimously. In his reply Dr Williams thanked the Synod warmly and offered some reflections on the importance of trust. He was given a standing ovation of over 2 minutes. Instead of gifts he has asked for donations to be made one of the following two charities which he has supported during his time in office:

Kids Company (kidsco.org.uk) provides practical, emotional and educational support to vulnerable inner-city children. Its services reach 17,000 children across London, including the most deprived and at risk whose parents are unable to care for them due to their own practical and emotional challenges

The Archbishops' Zimbabwe Appeal (uspg.org.uk/article.php?article_id=507) was launched by both Archbishops at the 2009 February Group of Session, to aid the Anglican Church in Zimbabwe which has suffered heavily as a result of the continuing political turmoil in that country

Dr Williams stands down formally at the end of December and will take up the post of Master of Magdalene College, Cambridge, in the New Year.

As we have met in November, we will not now meet in February, so the next group of sessions will be in York next July.