

3rd November 2018 Salisbury Diocesan Synod; Presidential Address

Introduction

Welcome to this new Diocesan Synod, especially if you have not been a member before. The Presidential Address is usually the link between our worship and the work of Synod. At this first meeting of the new three years of Synod the address is set in the context of the Eucharist we celebrate together.

Richard Hooker

Today the Church remembers Richard Hooker (1554-1600) Master of the Temple Church in London and later Rector of St Andrew's Boscombe and Sub-Dean of our Cathedral.

Hooker came under the influence of my predecessor Bishop John Jewel (1522-1571) whose portrait hangs in my study. Jewel and Hooker were the principal architects of the identity of the post-Reformation of the Church of England as both Catholic and Reformed.

In 1585 Hooker was appointed Master of the Temple Church in London. He preached against Puritans and said salvation is possible for Roman Catholics. He began writing 'Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity'. It was primarily a defence of the Church of England against Protestant and Puritan objections to the Prayer Book and to the governance of the Church of England. "In particular he had to defend it against the charges of over-identification with Rome, a task which he accomplished by asserting the validity of reason and tradition in the formation of judgements, not simply alongside scripture, but in some sense as the essential context in which and the means by which scripture may be rightly interpreted."¹

So here are two aspects of Hooker's life for us to attend to at the start of this new Synod. The first is his seeking the will of God through the use of scripture, tradition and reason in forming our judgements about the issues of the day and in seeking God's direction for the Church in which we serve. It is relatively easy to say what scripture says but the task for us is to seek the mind of Christ and in this we need to use scripture working with our God-given reason and Christian tradition.

¹ G R Dunstan The Artifice of Ethics SCM 1974 p.40

The Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity were written in a period of sharp and profound disagreement. Hooker's deputy when he was appointed Master of the Temple was Walter Travers, a Puritan. When Hooker preached in the morning it was said that what the congregation heard was "pure Canterbury" but when Travers preached in the afternoon what they heard was "pure Geneva". The working relationship between the two of them was not sustained but it is worth noting that Hooker's tutor at Corpus Christi College Oxford was John Rainolds, a leading Puritan who remained a lifelong friend. Great and lasting theology is often formed in conflicts and it is possible within God's economy for Christians to disagree lovingly and well in such a way that we get the best from each other and not the worst and retain deep and lasting friendships in Christ.

Remembering Richard Hooker the first meeting of this new Synod is good news as we face some of the more difficult business that will come our way over the next three years.

Living in Love and Faith

It can be safely predicted that one such matter will be to do with sexuality. You will be aware that the House of Bishops is preparing a 'teaching document' with the working title 'Living in Love and Faith'. It is a major project which is due to be delivered within two years.

The project's website says it,

... is propelled by the Church's desire to learn how relationships, marriage and sexuality fit within the bigger picture of a humanity that is liberated by Jesus Christ and infused by the Spirit to reflect the image of God in which we are created.

The Church of England is keenly aware that issues of gender and sexuality are intrinsic to people's experience; their sense of identity; their lives and the loving relationships that shape and sustain them. We also know that the life and mission of our Church – and of the worldwide Anglican Communion – are affected by the deep, and sometimes painful, disagreements among us which have been debated and discussed on many occasions over the years.

This project involves many people across the Church and beyond, bringing together a great diversity and depth of expertise, conviction

and experience. We believe that the Holy Spirit will be active among us as we pray, study and deliberate together to discover Christ's call to the Church today. We do this with a deep sense of hopefulness for a future in which Christians can follow Christ together joyfully, fruitfully and with integrity. It is intended to produce a range of resources in 2020 which will be the basis for a further conversation about what this means in Christian practice for us as a Church.

The Business Committee of General Synod does not want to preempt this discussion so no private members motions on this subject are being taken for the time being until the work on the teaching document has been completed. It means there will be no discussion of the sort of motion passed by the Diocese of Hereford and Devizes Deanery seeking clarification about what is permitted under the present guidelines of the House of Bishops in respect of the pastoral and liturgical support of same sex partnerships. For that reason our standing committee – the chairs of clergy and laity, Diocesan Secretary and myself – have decided not to take the motion from Devizes Deanery for the time being.

Some dioceses are seeking greater clarity about present arrangements in what might be described as extra-synodical ways, such as the Oxford initiative reported this week in which volunteer chaplains for LGBTi people and their families have been appointed and groups have been formed for dialogue and conversation to assist clergy seeking guidance on the recognition of same-sex relationships within the Church of England's present arrangements.

At this stage I am not proposing we should do similar but Bishop Karen and I are asked from time to time to advise clergy on what is permissible. A pastoral practice is emerging across the Church of England that keeps within the guidelines and seeks to express the spirit of what the Archbishops referred to following the General Synod debate in February 2017 as "a radical new Christian inclusion in the Church". They said then that,

The way forward needs to be about love, joy and celebration of our common humanity; of our creation in the image of God, of our belonging to Christ - all of us, without exception, without exclusion.

If we can achieve that it will be worth the effort and the wait.

Big Issues

What we have to say about sexuality is one part of a whole set of big issues that face us as a society about how we belong together in community. The

Budget last Monday focussed some of these for us by giving small increases to those of us who are moderately well off whilst not addressing growing inequalities for the poorest. How are we to sustain our common life when there is a basic assumption that tax is unwelcome and best minimised? After 10 years of economic austerity, public services are under an untenable strain – hospitals, the emergency services, armed forces, prisons, local government, social services, education.... are all failing to deliver what we say is required of them. It is not sustainable. We Christians have a greater commitment to our neighbours which is worked out through a system of tax and benefits as well as through our commitment to volunteering and making a major contribution to the social capital of our communities.

Our county Community Foundations do an excellent job in pulling together information about how we are doing in Wiltshire and Dorset². The recently published report on Hidden Dorset focusses on the contrasts of a county that outwardly looks wealthy but where there are extraordinarily high levels of isolation and loneliness, serious problems with health, wellbeing and mental health and much higher levels of disadvantage and poverty than most of us would expect. 18,300 children in Dorset live in low income families. There are 22 foodbanks in Dorset. 20 areas are in the top 10% most educationally deprived in England with low levels of aspiration. Businesses estimate that by 2024 they will have an extra 29,600 high skilled jobs but there is a shortage of high skilled workers. As has been widely reported, 1 in 10 older people say they often feel lonely and of the 83,000 unpaid carers in the county, 8 out of 10 are lonely or socially isolated.

As a diocese, we are about Renewing Hope. Churches build community like nothing else. An outward facing church offers a great deal, especially when we are able to show that we are a diverse, hospitable and welcoming. People respond to being taken seriously and to churches that seek to address the big issues of the day. We are not all required to think the same. What is required is genuine love and care. That is the great missionary commission, to love as God loves us.

Church local and global

The Church is local everywhere. We have a long and deep partnership with the Anglican Church in the South Sudan and Sudan. The new Primate of the

² Dorset Community Foundation, Hidden Dorset: Shining a light on local needs and inspiring local giving, 2018.

Episcopal Church of the South Sudan, Archbishop Justin Badi Arama visited us in early September. He spent the best part of a week in the diocese. It was good to meet as friends and brothers in Christ. His House of Bishops will be meeting next week and we pray for them as they seek to address the very significant problems of violence in a country of 11 million people in which about 350,000 people have been killed and millions displaced internally and abroad. We know that the nearly 50 year partnership between us as churches is one that is to be cherished and in which our disagreements can be handled creatively and the partnership will be renewed and strengthened under the new Primate's leadership.

Appointments

There have been a large number of senior appointments in the Diocese. In September we welcomed the Dean, Nicholas Papadopoulos, and today we welcome him back to this Synod.

At the end of November, we will say goodbye to Lucinda Herklots after 16 years as Diocesan Secretary. At the end of this meeting we will thank Lucinda for all she has done for the Diocese. If you would like to contribute to a gift in recognition of her outstanding contribution, the details of how to do this were in this week's e Bulletin and will be in the online version of this Address. Please send your gift to Liz Ashmead, Church House, Crane Street, Salisbury, SP1 2QB. Cheques should be payable to the Salisbury Diocesan Board of Finance and marked clearly for Lucinda Herklots. We will be presented to her at the end of November so would be grateful for gifts to be received by Monday 26th November.

From an outstanding shortlist David Pain has been appointed as her successor. He comes from the Directorate of Christian Aid and will start in January. He has a strong affection for the Diocese in which his father served as a priest and where his mother still lives.

Penny Sayer has moved in and will be welcomed to the Diocese as Archdeacon of Sherborne in Sherborne Abbey at Evensong at 5pm on Sunday 25th November.

At last it has been announced that Andrew Rumsey will be the next Bishop of Ramsbury. He will be consecrated in Southwark Cathedral on 25th January.

At this Synod we also welcome Carole Peters King, our new Communications Director. We have also welcomed Nigel Done as our new Diocesan Director of Ordinands.

The only downside at the moment is that Benny Hazelhurst, who has been a successful vocations coordinator, [has been very unwell for a number of months](#). He is taking early retirement from the end of this month but in reality Benny has already finished work. We remember him and Mel, Zak and Iona in our prayers.

Cardinal Newman used to say that, “Here below to live is to change and to be perfect is to have changed often.” Every new person means we are a new team and each brings new experience, skills and energy. We hope it will be so with this new Synod to the glory of God, the wellbeing of the Church and for the good of the world.