



DIOCESE OF SALISBURY

SALISBURY DIOCESAN SYNOD MINUTES OF THE 118th SESSION OF THE SYNOD HELD AT ST. NICHOLAS CHURCH, CORFE MULLEN ON SATURDAY 13 FEBRUARY 2016

1. **Opening Worship and Presidential Address**

Members took part in the Service of the Word and the Bishop delivered the Presidential Address. He began by thanking delegates for their support in his role as Church of England lead bishop for the environment and by welcoming to synod three bishops from the Episcopal Church in South Sudan and Sudan who had been attending a conference for new bishops in Canterbury.

Turning to the shared conversations on human sexuality and the Anglican Primates' Meeting the bishop noted that, as well as covering issues of human sexuality the primates had also addressed issues such as evangelism, persecution of Christians, and climate change. He highlighted the pressing need to recognise and respond to the biggest movement of refugees in Europe since the Second World War and encouraged members to "think, pray and act about refugees by asking ourselves what it means to love God and love our neighbour as ourselves and to be merciful."

The bishop took the opportunity to thank the Archdeacons of Sherborne and Sarum for their work in holding the portfolios for Dorset and Wilts respectively during the recent vacancies. He also thanked His Honour Judge Sam Wiggs who has been Chancellor of the Diocese of Salisbury since May 1997. The bishop said that Sam had served the diocese with distinction and asked Synod to join him in thanking him warmly for his exceptional service and wishing him well in his retirement. He will be succeeded by Ruth Arlow, who will be licensed as Chancellor on Monday 22 February.

A full copy of the presidential address is available from the web site at www.salisbury.anglican.org or from fiona.torrance@salisbury.anglican.org at the Diocesan Office.

2. **Notices, Co-options and Apologies**

There were no notices or co-options.
Apologies were received from 14 clergy and 11 laity.

3. **The Church Buildings Review**

The Bishop of Ramsbury invited Synod to consider the Report of the Church Building Review Group. He commended the report and noted that, contrary to some recent press reports, it was an excellent report that focused, not on closing churches, but on confidence in God. He stressed the importance of place in Christian faith and noted that the tendency to characterise buildings as a burden is unhelpful. He asked Synod to note the continuing need to campaign for more national funding to support historic church buildings and asked them to continue to campaign against changes to the law on landfill tax.

Charles Hodgson from Dorchester Deanery argued that although the burden of upkeep could be daunting, churches in small villages were dearly loved, and imbued with the prayers and hopes of countless people over centuries. Visitors' books demonstrate that, "People of faith and no faith feel a strong sense of presence within them."

The Revd Maria Shepperdson, Rector of the Upper Kennet Benefice, argued for a more integrated approach and cited the real "financial, emotional and spiritual cost" of maintaining

and improving buildings in the face of “endless paperwork”, especially in relation to introducing new facilities and wider community use. While being critical of inaccurate and demoralising media coverage of its contents, she gave the report a broad welcome but argued it needed to ‘have teeth’.

A large number of speakers, many from small rural parishes, contributed to the debate.

Richard Southwell reminded Synod of the excellent work done with Heytesbury and Sherborne Deaneries on ‘Rediscovering Our Parish Churches’.

Other points made during the debate included:

- Ensuring all church buildings are warm, have adequate parking, kitchen and toilet facilities is vital if we are to engage with communities.
- We need to look more imaginatively at allowing churches to be used by other denominations and by the civil community.
- Do we, nevertheless, have too many churches with all the pressures that maintaining them involves?

In answer to a question raised from the floor, the Registrar confirmed that a template agreement setting out the relationship between PCCs and Friends’ Groups was available on the church care web-site. (<http://www.churchcare.co.uk/churches/guidance-advice/looking-after-your-church/friends-and-trusts>)

Responding to the debate, the Bishop of Ramsbury said that the Greek root of the word “parochial” in Greek, implies ‘for all those who are outside the household’, giving us an imperative not to be inward looking. He warned against seeking to impose decisions from above, saying, “Diocesan strategies with teeth leave wounds!” Instead, we need to improve how we share ideas and best practice. He then moved the motion:

That this Synod welcomes the Church Buildings Review Report and notes the recommendations when giving consideration to form our own Diocesan Church Buildings Strategy.

The motion was carried overwhelmingly, with no votes against and one abstention.

4. Social Justice

The Archdeacon of Sherborne introduced the Annual Report of the Social Justice Group and presented the annual Social Justice Awards. Colin Brady, the Social Justice Programme Manager, highlighted a number of areas of work that had helped to raise the profile of social justice across the diocese, including the Green Ribbon campaign in support of the UN talks on climate change in Paris, the increasingly strong links formed by the Social Justice Working Group with the voluntary sector and the recent Conference on social justice in worship led by John Bell of the Iona Community. A video presentation was shown featuring people assisting in the refugee crisis from Blandford, Weymouth and Portland, and the Community Foundation for Wiltshire and Swindon. The Revd Jonathan Herbert, the Diocese’s new Chaplain to Gypsies and Travellers, gave a presentation about his work. He said his role included providing pastoral support, advocacy and education, and offered to speak at services or mediate where that would be helpful.

Social Justice Awards

Social Justice Awards were presented to: Mothers’ Union, for their work with Syrian refugees arriving in Wiltshire under the UK government scheme; St Thomas’ in Salisbury for their work in promoting public awareness during the UN climate change talks; and St Francis of Assisi, Weymouth, for long years of community engagement on the Littlemoor Estate, including the recent opening of a church-supported laundrette after years of planning.

5. **Developing Disciples**

The Director of Learning for Discipleship and Ministry introduced the extract from the General Synod paper GS1977 'Developing Discipleship' and invited Synod to split into groups to consider the following questions:

- What does being a disciple mean to me in my family, work and community?
- What will renew my hope in developing my discipleship?
- How can the Learning for Discipleship and Ministry team help?

Groups were invited to feedback their responses to the last question. Responses included:

- Sharing stories of what has helped others
- Delivering more courses locally
- Offering courses at different levels
- Communicating what is already available
- Focusing discipleship resources on baptismal vows
- Providing more 'bite-sized' resources for the busy and time-poor
- Making greater use of social media
- Supporting people in answering challenging questions
- Emphasising that discipleship is about all of life
- Proving clarity around what being a disciple means
- Using skills audits to identify and address gaps

Group facilitators were invited to e-mail any detailed feedback to the Director of Learning for Discipleship and Ministry.

6. **Renewing Hope: Pray, Serve, Grow**

The Bishop introduced a session continuing the conversation about the strategic direction of the diocese. He noted that throughout his visits around the deaneries and through the process of developing the vision, there did not seem to be an appetite for closing churches or managing decline. There was a clear recognition that progress would need to be made in developing ordained and lay vocations together. There was work still to do in developing related strategies on church buildings and the response to new housing. Whilst all of this will clearly have resource implications, at this stage it is important to ensure that the plan is broadly right and to agree the key messages.

Synod was asked to consider whether the vision and priorities, especially in terms of vocations, discipleship and sustaining ministry, and key messages provided the right basis for Bishop's Staff to present to deaneries and parishes. In discussion the following points were made:

- Needs to begin with God, who He is and what He does.
- There should be an explicit reference to working with ecumenical and secular partners.
- It needs to be recognised that encouraging vocations can be costly for the local church, especially if it means seeing a key church member move on.
- Needs to celebrate our heritage, not just recognise it.
- The second paper on vocations, discipleship and ministry is uninspiring: it doesn't 'make the heart sing'. It needs to celebrate where we are more.
- Too much emphasis on decline.
- Lacks 'meat' – where are the SMART targets?
- We have around 40 chaplains, but their role is not mentioned.
- Can we speak into the national debate on RME training?
- Sounds a bit negative. We need to be more on our front foot.
- Is it possible for parishes to bid for development funding directly, or can it only be dioceses?

Key Messages

- Pray – Serve – Grow is good but, resourcing is crucial:

- New housing needs resourcing
- 0 – 18 and families needs investment as growth will be likely to come from here

Noting that the strategy and key messages will require further work and will inevitably remain a work in progress, the Bishop moved:

That this Synod endorses the vision and strategic direction outlined in the ‘Renewing Hope: pray, serve, grow’ papers (attached).

Synod voted unanimously in favour of the motion.

7. Finance Report – Year End 2015

Synod noted the Finance Report for the Year end 2015. In response to a question the Diocesan Secretary confirmed that the full income and expenditure figures would be presented to Synod with the Annual Report and Budget in June 2016.

8. Questions

There were no questions.

9. Date of Next Meeting

Synod will next meet from 1830 to 2100 on Thursday 16 June 2016 at St Francis’ Church, Salisbury. Any Motions, proposals for business or other matters should be with the Diocesan Secretary by 25 May 2016. The final meeting for 2016 is planned for 12 November.