

Report on the February General Synod from the Salisbury Diocese Members

It was a good group of sessions with some concerns, expressed during Questions and the take note debate on the Business Committee Report, that there now seems to be a pattern of many Presentations with a limited number of questions thereafter. Where these are on the agenda rather than Take Note or motions for debate, Synod as a whole has more difficulty holding the Archbishops' Council and the various appointed Task Forces and Groups to account.

Business Committee Report

The first item of business is invariably the agenda. Ten issues were raised ranging from how this session might be technically improved to why a progress report on the Military Corporate Covenant was not on the agenda and why lay leadership training, an urgent need, might not be on the Agenda until after 2017, to which the reply was that the Task Group had only just been formed. There was a request for an eminent person to address Synod on the scourge of HIV Aids in countries where government sponsored homophobia was a hindrance to treatment. Being raised in Questions is often how items first come onto Synod's agenda.

Presidential Address

Archbishop Justin asked for extra time to report on the January Primates meeting because he wanted Synod to hear the full story not the partial report that had been leaked to the press before the meeting was over. Apart from matters of sexuality, the Primates had discussed the environment, evangelism and issues around the Muslim faith. The week had ended in a most moving Eucharist in the cathedral crypt, when, in the presence of the crozier of St Gregory and the Augustinian gospels, Archbishops had washed one another's feet and dedicated themselves to serve one another and the church. Read the Archbishop's address at <http://www.archbishopofcanterbury.org/articles.php/5669/archbishop-reflects-on-primates-meeting-in-synod-address>

Draft Mission and Pastoral (Amendment) Measure GS 2014

This first consideration debate offered Synod an opportunity to reflect on the significant changes proposed under the Simplification agenda. Proposals in relation to pastoral reorganisation include reducing the consultation where supported

by the existing Deanery Mission and Pastoral Plan and a compensation package for clergy dispossessed of their post based on years of service rather than, as now, years left until retirement. It proposes a new Bishop's Pastoral Order for certain pastoral plans, extended provisions in Bishop's Mission Orders, removing the need for a Diocesan Board of Finance to consult with Incumbent and PCC about glebe transactions and presentation falling to the Diocesan Bishop, rather than the Archbishop, when the vacancy exceeds nine months. The motion was passed, and the business will now go to a Revision Committee for a second consideration.

Shared conversations

Shared conversations on Human Sexuality have been taking place amongst the Bishops and regionally across England over the past year or so. On Monday afternoon we had a presentation on the Shared Conversations on Spirituality, Scripture and Mission (the change of title is to mark a new stage of the process) Synod will be taking part in the third round of Shared Conversations over two days in York in July. No fringe meetings or display stands will be permitted during that time. The Shared Conversations process encourages the sharing of personal stories in small groups, in order to encourage better understanding of each other's perspective. As many at Synod will have already taken part in regional Shared Conversations, hopefully all will come willing to engage.

Questions The questions came thick and fast on Monday evening: sixty-four questions on a range of subjects including the impact of pensions regulations on small charities to Reader ministry numbers and age profile and the fixed date of Easter! Jane Charman question was: 'Is the Reform and Renewal programme now definitely called the Renewal and Reform programme and, if so, what was the thinking behind the change?' The Bishop of Sheffield replied in the affirmative and in his response wrote that it is important to express the primacy of the renewing work of the Spirit: 'Renewal and Reform must be about God's work of transformation in and through God's people and God's world and our attendant need prayerfully to discern and join in with how and where God is leading.'

Contingency business – Blood and Organ donation
Some extra time allowed for a Diocesan Synod

motion from the Diocese of Leeds, calling upon all Church of England parishes to encourage their members to become blood and organ donors as part of their Christian stewardship and giving, to be debated. It was short but powerful and resulted in the motion being clearly carried.

Evangelism GS 2015 Our Tuesday morning started by meeting in groups of about 20. We shared out stories about how we came to faith, focusing on age and church background - or not. The groups were very fruitful and energizing. The group meetings were followed by a take note debate on a report introduced by the Archbishop of Canterbury with speeches from several members of the Evangelism Task Force who are mid-way through their four year task. What is clear is that evangelism is no longer to be seen as an option (like an 'app') to be used or not. It comes out of love, is a sign of discipleship and must be mainstream (the 'operating system') for the church.

One speaker pointed out that 84% of Christians came to faith under the age of 25, while only 1% were over 45. Black, Asian & Minority Ethnic (BAME) Christians were being failed. There is also a need to focus on Children and Young People if we are going to see the church becoming truly inter-generational and to focus on the urban estates where church participation is as low as 0.8%. In rural areas, the spend is £24 per head but it is only £5 in inner cities: "we are abandoning the poor".

Selection for ministry must reflect this priority. It is essential to equip clergy and laity for evangelism, especially to the young and families through Fresh Expressions. Mission, evangelism and witness must be part of day-to-day training and become what the church does. The debate was upbeat, engaging and positive with support for the drive towards greater overt evangelism and witness.

Report of the Church of England – Church of Scotland Joint Study Group GS 2016

On Tuesday afternoon Synod received a report from the Church of England – Church of Scotland Joint Study Group. The Moderator of the Church of Scotland, the Revd Dr Angus Morrison, addressed the Synod, an historic 'first'. Read his speech www.churchofscotland.org.uk/news_and_events/news/recent/moderators_address_to_the_general_synod_of_the_church_of_england

We were invited to approve the so called 'Columba Declaration', proposing future ways of working

together as national churches and exchange of ministries. This proved unexpectedly controversial due to the premature leak of the Declaration just before Christmas and adverse reaction from the Scottish Episcopal Church, our Anglican sister province in Scotland. Concerns about interprovincial relations in the wake of the recent Primates' meeting may also have added to the sensitivity. An amendment calling for further work to be done attracted substantial support but failed. Another amendment calling for the SEC to be involved in the implementation phase was passed. Although the Archbishop of Canterbury and others assured the Synod that the SEC was now content for the Declaration to be approved, it is clear that some tensions remain. In the event around 30% of Synod either voted against the motion or abstained, giving the impression that some ecumenical repair work remains to be done.

Parochial Fees This Worcester Diocesan Synod motion sought to include the costs of a verger and heating the church for weddings and funerals in the national tariff of parochial fees. Speakers alternated between supporting and disagreeing with the propositions but in the end decided that these costs should be left for local decision. (Some may recall that in 2011 Synod refused to approve the Parochial Fees Order because these fees had been included.) The motion on verger's fees was defeated and since the arguments are similar there was a procedural motion for closure on heating, accepted by the mover of the motion. The consequence is that subject cannot be raised again during this Quinquennium.

Proposed Enabling Measure GS 2018 Part of the Simplification agenda, this motion aimed to set a course for amending or repealing some Acts of Parliament or Church Measures by Orders approved by the General Synod without going through the full legislative process. Debbie McIsaac spoke in favour of the principle of simplification but emphasised the need to be careful about this proposal, with regards to delegation of responsibility and the representation of members. Canon John Spence and then the Vicar General of Canterbury (a legal position once held by Thomas Cromwell) supported the motion and gave an amusing speech starting with the Medes and Persians and their inability to change to the law (Daniel 6.2). An amendment to try to add a 'calling in' procedure was lost. Synod supported the motion that the Measure come back in July.

Impact of Sanctions on Benefits Claimants This was a lively debate with many excellent speeches from younger members of the Synod, including our own Fenella Cannings-Judd. Story after story relayed how punitive the sanctions could be. It now seems as though half the users of food banks do so as a result of being sanctioned which means an individual loses 4 weeks of benefit payments. The motion calling on the government to revisit these sanctions was passed unanimously by Synod.

This motion was brought to Synod from the Airedale Deanery in Yorkshire. It is an encouragement to our deaneries who might bring forward motions and shows that synodical government does work!

Renewal and Reform Presentation The various task groups associated with the 'Renewal and Reform' programme (as it is now called) seem to have settled down into nine work streams which are, in no particular order: Resourcing the Future, Resourcing Ministerial Education, Lay Leadership, Growing Vocations, Senior Leadership Development, Optimising the Role of the NCIs, Simplification, Developing Discipleship and Evangelism. Canon John Spence, Chair of the Archbishops' Council's Finance Committee, gave a powerpoint presentation on progress so far and a limited number of questions were answered in groups of three.

Renewal and Reform: Resourcing Ministerial Education GS 2020 The Bishop of Sheffield spoke about future funding for ministerial education. Future resourcing of lay and ordained ministry needs to be flexible to ensure that the whole people of God are equipped to be agents of God's love. Investment in formational training must be missional, adaptive and intentional in attracting younger candidates and those from ethnic minorities. The proposals are designed to enable Diocese to make confident decisions from a mixed economy of training choices and provide a greater degree of flexibility. The Bishop exhorted Synod to resist fear about the changes which he insisted a way of allowing Dioceses to make the most appropriate decisions about funding candidates' individual training requirements.

An amendment was passed that a further report be brought back to Synod in a year which would take into account dialogue with theological institutions. A further amendment tabled by Chris Corteen and accepted by the Bishop of Sheffield and Synod will see a further report to Synod by 2018 about how the Dioceses are securing a step change in

increasing the numbers and variety of authorised lay ministry.

Resourcing the Future: Implementation Plans GS 2021 The Group of Sessions concluded with a take note debate on Task Group Report on Resourcing the Future under the impressive leadership of Canon John Spence. He set out more details of the plans to reorganise the way that the Church distributes national funds to the dioceses so that the money is focussed on driving growth and helping mission in the poorest communities. Peer review arrangements are being put in place to ensure mutual accountability. The transitional funding period from old to new will be 10 years. Subject to conditions, the Church commissioners have agreed to make an additional £72.7m of funding available between 2017-2026. After a lively debate, it was encouraging to hear that this process will play a significant part in the renewing of the Church through the coming century.

Fringe meetings *There is more to General Synod than the formal sessions. Optional 'fringe' meetings are held over breakfast, during the lunch 'break' and after the early evening session. Attending fringe meetings helps members of Synod stay in touch with those who share a similar interest or perspective, hear about issues not (yet) on the formal agenda or find out about interest areas.*

*For example this time there was a breakfast fringe meeting about **Festival Churches**, a time to learn how the dioceses of Norwich and Exeter are supporting their village churches. There was the usual fringe meeting organised by the **Rural Affairs Group** who are undertaking some new and potentially exciting research to follow-up the Released for Mission Report. Bishop Nicholas chaired a well-attended fringe meeting **The Road from Paris** under the auspices of the CofE Environmental Working Group where Liz Perry from the Woodford Valley benefice was one of the Paris Pilgrim presenters, and an **interfaith environmental fringe meeting** with Jewish, Christian and Muslim speakers from the Arava Institute in Israel on water in the Holy Land and surrounding countries.*

Fringe meetings are an important part of Synod for many members . **22 February 2016**