

DIOCESAN SYNOD DIGEST 2015

This short summary of the annual Synod in Cologne in June does not represent formal “minutes” but offers a snapshot which may be printed or distributed electronically for information about this important gathering. This year’s edition is intended more for electronic sharing as it contains a number of web links to the relevant news story on the diocesan website

BISHOP ROBERT ENJOYS PRESIDING AT HIS FIRST SYNOD



Our Diocesan Bishop Robert was welcomed as he presided over his first Synod from Monday 8th June to Friday 12th. He presided and preached at the opening Eucharist which set the tone for the meetings. Bishop Robert recalled the life of Bishop Ken whose Saint’s day was on that day.

He reminded Synod members that Ken was, for a time, a former chaplain of the Diocese in Europe when he served in The Hague. The Bishop linked Ken’s experience with the words of St Paul from the scripture reading; “therefore having this ministry, by the mercy, of God we do not lose heart.”

Thomas Ken was a Non-Juror who lived in trouble filled times, including the years of the execution of King Charles 1st and the Cromwellian Puritan days when Anglicanism was suppressed.

Nonetheless Ken kept his Anglican roots and ministered in rural parishes in England before becoming Chaplain at The Hague in 1679, seventeen years after his ordination.

During his time there he was passionate about justice, appropriate as The Hague is now symbolic with its International Court of Human Rights. Ken later became Bishop of Bath and Wells and was renowned for his generosity in feeding the poor – at the expense of giving a fine banquet for his wealthy and influential congregation. With his concerns in collecting money for the Huguenots in France he cared for the exiles and migrants. He was forced to retire early and devoted himself to the writing of hymns and poems, including “Glory to thee my God this night” which the Synod congregation sang during the service. As members begin several days of deliberations, including shaping a new direction and mission statement for the Diocese, Bishop Robert urged them to focus on faithfulness and fruitfulness rather than on success.

VARIED TOPICS FOR OPENING SESSION

In the formal opening session of Diocesan Synod on Monday evening 8 June members were informed on a range of business matters affecting the Diocese in Europe, including . . .

NEW ARCHDEACON

The Bishop announced that from the additional money granted by the Church Commissioners it has been possible to fund the appointment of a free-standing full time Archdeacon. The Venerable Colin Williams, who has vast experience, including work within Europe, will cover the two existing archdeaconries of the East and Germany & Northern Europe. He will be inducted in October.

FACILITATED CONVERSATIONS

As the Church of England continues “facilitated conversations” on Human Sexuality each diocese has been asked to put forward people with a range of views to share with other dioceses at a meeting in November. Bishop Robert reminded members that the purpose of these discussions was to be able to “disagree well”. From this diocese Nigel Rowley, Jack McDonald, Hyacinth Osterlin, Martin Wreakes-Williams, Grada Schede and Carolyn Cooke will be taking part.

MINISTRY RESOURCES

Canon William Gulliford, Director of Ordinands, told Synod that the Church of England is considering how better to spend its money on training for ordination. A new approach has been agreed in outline and is likely to be approved. The aim is to



- Increase the number of ordinations by 50% from 2020
- Increase lay ministry training and resources

For the Diocese in Europe this is likely to mean that we will have to meet the full costs for married candidates and their families. We shall also have to meet costs above £5,000 for people in residential training. We shall meet costs for the over 50's. However, we have a good record of training and a robust case that should qualify us for new money from central funds.

At present there is uncertainty over the effect of these changes and concern about how we could meet any shortfall in costs.



LEGAL BUSINESS

Unusually, apart from the formal promulgation of two changes in Canon law affecting the diocese this is the first year for many years when there are no major legal changes to consider, although Aiden Hargreaves-Smith, Diocesan Registrar, assured members that there will be further changes in future to bring us into line with the other 41 dioceses.

BUILDING BLOCKS FOR THE DIOCESE'S FUTURE

The outline plan for a strategy to lead the work and mission of our churches in Europe and had already been introduced to groups around the diocese, was explained by Bishop Robert to delegates. You can also see Bishop Robert's presentation and hear his introduction online through the website links at <http://europe.anglican.org/news/news/post/899-building-blocks-for-the-dioceseas-future>

At the end of the session Synod members voted to receive the document which will now be distilled into an action plan which will focus much more of what is needed for mission and development across Europe. In a further session on Thursday, members worked in five discussion groups to deal with some of the more specific aspects. Their report now goes to the strategy plan facilitator David Coulston who will refine the document for further discussion at Bishop's Council in October in London.

A DIOCESE WHICH TAKES SAFEGUARDING SERIOUSLY





The importance of safeguarding in our churches is getting through and local training is underway. That's the message to members of Diocesan Synod in a presentation by Charles Clarke, Safeguarding Chairman, and Lesley Weaver, Safeguarding Co-ordinator.

In a presentation to Synod on Tuesday 9 June Mr Clarke urged delegates to understand and inform local congregations about the importance of safeguarding.

Lesley Weaver reported an encouraging take up for the online safeguarding training course which is now being used, and has been completed by many people in the diocese. This Safeguarding Children Training will be followed by similar courses relating to Vulnerable Adults & Domestic Violence. New guidance is now available on who needs a Safeguarding check which has a flow chart to clear up any potential confusion

And a newly written Diocesan Safeguarding policy is in preparation. It will be shorter and simpler. Via this website link you can view the presentation and hear from Charles Clarke's introduction <http://europe.anglican.org/news/news/post/900-safeguarding-is-high-on-our-agenda>

EVERY STRATEGY NEEDS SUPPORT FROM TRUE DISCIPLES



The second day of Diocesan Synod closed with a fast moving challenging address by Rt Rev Tim Thornton, Bishop of Truro. It included a number of quotations about church life and practice and presented some positive ideas about change for people to think about and take back to their parishes.

The following morning Bishop Tim continued to share his ideas and experiences.

He highlighted Communication as a possible obstacle to sharing the Gospel, reflecting on church culture and language and that found in the rest of life.

He then set a challenge in group work (pictures of the "buzz groups" in action) to compile a tabloid newspaper

headline in no more than 20 words, summarizing what the Gospel is about.

Some of the results from the groups were:-

- Lost your way? Looking for truth? Dare to take a risk? Live life on the edge with God
- Centurion claims executed criminal was God's son on mission of love. Story not over. Disciples continue to infiltrate British institutions.
- Good News!!! LOVE, LIFE, DEATH, We have an App for that (picture of Bible) Click here!
- Because of His love for us. God sacrificed His own son. We should love others in walking with Jesus.
- Chillax with an OK life. Get a hold on who you are and what it's about. Meet God!

Bishop Tim reflected on the ideas and underlined the need for our meaningful communication of the Gospel to be backed up in daily life.

You can get a flavour of Bishop Tim's enthusiasm and message through the website link

<http://europe.anglican.org/news/news/post/902-the-challenge-of-discipleship>

WORSHIP AND BIBLE STUDY AT THE HEART OF SYNOD



Daily worship forms an important part of Diocesan Synod and the daily offices and Eucharist help bind members together and, not least, to encourage delegates from isolated locations to share in holy fellowship with fellow Christians.

Bible Study also has an important part to play in the hope that when important discussions take place at Synod they should be founded in Christian truth and done in Christian unity. So each of the main days sessions begin with a Bible Study. This year Richard Briggs, an Old Testament scholar led 3 sessions from Genesis, Numbers and Daniel and provoked some new thinking about a few long held notions and

misperceptions.

We recommend taking a little time to sample his thought on the Tower of Babel from Genesis 11. It raises questions about human desires and intentions and God's greater plan as well as the diversity of human language and experience. The audio file can be found via this webpage link.

<http://europe.anglican.org/news/news/post/898-babble-babel-confusion-at-synod>

TRAFFICKERS? SMUGGLERS? – WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?



The plight of migrants has been in the headlines in recent days and a presentation to Diocesan Synod has highlighted the need for greater understanding by our churches and the consideration of taking action on the problem.

Annie Morris, from the International Organisation for Migration, revealed some alarming facts and statistics. In her presentation she talked about the methods used by traffickers and what is being done to tackle the problem.

She concluded with a challenge to Christians, saying that training important for clergy and church people to know what to look for and to understand the complexities of the problems of trafficking.

If you want to hear some of what she had to say or to follow this presentation more fully, a link to her accompanying notes can be found here <http://europe.anglican.org/news/news/post/901-traffickers-or-smugglers-a-whatas-the-difference>

David Fieldsend, Attaché to the Archbishop of Canterbury's Representative to the EU, then added some more information about how the problem affects our diocese.



“The issue of the large number of migrants fleeing conflict zones in the Middle East and North Africa and putting their lives in peril at the hands of inhuman traffickers in unseaworthy boats to reach Europe has shot up the agenda since Pope Francis told the European Parliament last October ‘*we cannot allow the Mediterranean to become a vast graveyard*’. Our small congregations in countries which border the Mediterranean, especially the Greater Athens Chaplaincy, have been active in providing ongoing care and support for those arriving with nothing, many of them Christians fleeing persecution. But the burden on these nations and communities is getting intolerable. We therefore

welcome the decision of EU leaders at a recent summit meeting to scale up the rescue operation and to seek to spread the burden of caring for those who arrive across the EU as a whole by initially redistributing 40% of those arriving in Greece and Italy to other countries. The European Commission tabled emergency legislation to give effect to this at the end of May and is asking for the Council of Ministers to adopt it as soon as possible. A separate naval mission proposed to go

after the traffickers and confiscate their assets is awaiting authorisation from the UN Security Council.

“Please pray for those in desperation putting their lives in jeopardy to flee and all those seeking to help in their rescue and oppose those who are exploiting their vulnerability. Also for national government Ministers (which does not include the UK for this particular legislation) to be willing to endorse the European Commission’s proposal to share the burden”.

LEARNING CHRISTIAN GENERIOSITY IN SYNOD

Why do we give presents to people? Because we love them, because there’s a special reason or occasion, to say thank you or sometimes because we feel it is our duty to give something.

These thoughts were part of the short discussions in Diocesan Synod during a session which focussed on Christian giving, stewardship and generosity. Dr John Preston, the National Stewardship Adviser for the Church of England outlined the Biblical and ethical principles on Christian generosity as well as suggesting that relying on “passing the plate” collections was neither an efficient or effective way of churches raising money.



You can hear highlights from his talk via the web link

<http://europe.anglican.org/news/news/post/905-learning-christian-generosity-in-synod>

MONEY TALKS – AT SYNOD



All Diocesan Synod members are also automatically the members of the Diocesan Board of Finance which holds its main meeting during Diocesan Synod. On Thursday 11 June the accounts were discussed and approved unanimously.

The budget for the coming year was approved and formal approval was given for grants to local churches for 2015 and 2016.

The Board’s Chairman, Michael Hart, closed the meeting with thanks to Adrian Mumford, Diocesan Secretary and Nick Wraight, Finance Officer for their work on the finances and accounts during the past twelve months.



MOTHERS' UNION MINISTRY – IN EUROPE AND BEYOND

Synod members learned more about the work of Mothers' Union in the diocese and among link partners around the world. Carol Johnston, Diocesan MU President, took the opportunity to explain their aims:-

- To promote and support married life
- To encourage parents in their role to develop the faith of their children
- To maintain a worldwide fellowship of Christians united in prayer, worship and service
- To promote conditions in society favourable to stable family life and the protection of children
- To help those whose family life has met with adversity



Carol also gave an insight into Diocesan MU branches in Spain, France, Lanzarote, Denmark, Malta and Gozo, Italy and Finland – but reminded Synod members that there are many individual MU Members throughout Europe.

You can see Carol's presentation via our website link <http://europe.anglican.org/news/news/post/908-mothersa-union-ministry-a-in-europe-and-beyond>

HAIL AND FAREWELL IN FINAL SYNOD SESSION



In the closing session of Diocesan Synod Rev Elizabeth Bussmann was welcomed as the new Diocesan Environmental Officer. She spoke about her aims in the role including the possibility of full day workshops for Archdeaconry Synods. Elizabeth also spoke about some of the ecological challenges facing us all, not least our diocesan carbon footprint which is higher than other Church of England dioceses because of the vast travel distances involved.

Just before Bishop Robert formally closed Synod he paid tribute to Ven Patrick Curran who has served as Archdeacon of the East for the past 13 years. With the appointment of a full time Archdeacon, Ven Colin Williams, Patrick is stepping down from the role and will continue his existing parish ministry in Christ Church, Vienna. Synod gave him a standing ovation in honour of his long and valued service.

AND FINALLY – SYNOD’S OTHER SIDE – IN PICTURES

An evening out in Cologne



Serious discussion – in groups



Synod – as seen by the Bishop – and fine head of hair too!!

