The Synod of the Diocese in Europe, 2019

The Diocesan Synod was held in Cologne from the evening of Monday, 10 June, until lunchtime on Thursday, 13 June, 2019.

Both bishops attended together with 19 elected members inthe House of Clergy and 10 ex officio members. There were 22 elected members in the House of Laity, together with some 5 ex officio members. Members of staff from the Bishop’s office in Brussels and the Diocesan Office in London attended. There were three guest speakers and some young people from CEMES (Church of England Ministry Scheme).

The Synod is convened to consider matters of the Church of England, other religious topics as well as matters of public interest and members then pass the information back to the Archdeaconry Synods. It is NOT there to declare the doctrine of the church on any matter.

The Synod took place within a context of church services (Eucharist, Morning and Evening Prayer) and a three-part Bible study entitled “Spirit, Scripture, Identity”.

**Session One**

At the beginning of the Session there were a number of sets of Minutes (the previous Synod, Bishops Council etc) to approve and there was information on proposed legal changes to the Diocese of Europe Constitution 1995. The measures were on appointments ie (allowing people over 70 to be licensed under certain conditions, restoring the power to the Bishop to revoke a licence etc). The measures were mostly to bring us into line with the rest of the Church of England.

Bishop Robert:

* introduced the new personnel in the office;
* announced that the Church Commissioners had approved a further grant of £116 000 for 2020. This will finance the appointment of a new free standing Archdeacon for Gibraltar, Italy and Malta. The post has recently been advertised;
* reported that the number of people attending churches in the Diocese had grown in the past year;
* reminded all the Synod participants that they were also members of the Diocesan Board of Finance, which would be meeting on Wednesday;
* drew attention to the fact that the Synod has a broader programme this time and would be discussing clergy wellbeing, safeguarding and the European electionsand the UK situation.

**Session Two**

**Report from the Common Fund Allocation Working group.**

The discussion revolved around the allocation of the fund **not** a discussion of the sum. The 2018 Synod had moved that there should be “***A review of the current common fund sharing formula be undertaken with a view for a more equitable formula” – report to Bishops Council 2018.***

This year chaplaincies have to date paid 80% of the contributions that were requested. The Working Group have drawn up certain criteria which will be applied in cases where chaplaincies ask for consideration or help. These include:

**Fairness** The ability of the Chaplaincy to pay

**Transparency** Clarity, disclosure of accounts

**Mutuality** Shared responsibility - the reduction of one chaplaincy’s quota means an increase for another chaplaincy

**Justice** aneven-handed approach to exemptions, making sure that the same critieriaare applied for granting exceptions

**Certain proposals to be implemented in the near future include: a**bolishing the penalty for late payment, setting up a sub-committee to look at exceptions and looking at the difficulties arising with the practice of using the electoral roll to determine quotas.

**Session Three Setting God’s people free**

“This is an initiative across the Church of England to enable the whole people of God to live out the Good News of Jesus confidently in all of life, Sunday to Saturday”

This message needs a coordinated effort to change our culture and to more clearly recognise and support the faith of “ordinary Christians” in everyday life and enrich mutual recognition and support between lay and ordained. At present 25 Dioceses and 300 parishes are engaged in piloting activities.

**Session Four Young People’s Ministry**

The above term is used to cover all activities - Sunday School, youth clubs etc.

Working groups at the Synod discussed the questions of how we can help young people to have a real sense of God, accept that they may be the only one in their groups who had a Christian belief, negotiate peer pressure etc

The following observations and suggestions for were made.

-Importance of an engaged chaplain

-Youth council

-Grow youth group from a thriving Sunday school

-Teacher training

-Good materials and consistency of staff

-Child led worship

-Engender a culture of confidence, knowledge for the «wider world».

-Acceptance of children/youth in the church

**Session Five**

*BAME Ministry (Black and Minority Ethnic Ministry)*

This Session covered a number of areas beginning with BAME Ministry. We had welcomed the Rev’d Augustine Nwaekwe in March and were quoted as a fine example with photographic evidence to prove our multi-ethnic character.

*Work of the Ministry Team*

*Spiritual Direction*

The Diocese is running a course on forming spiritual directors or “Soul friends.” Christine Bloomfield is one of the people who has completed this course.

*CEMES Church of England Ministry Experience Scheme* A group of five young people from this Scheme were present at Synod. They gave individual accounts of how they had spent a year exploring their vocation for the priesthood and widening their experience by travel on pilgrimages etc.

*Rule of Life*

Dr Clare Amos presented the “Rule of Life” she had been preparing for lay people as an aid towards assisting them to shape and structure their Christian lives. It was designed to help people to:

* Know God - commit to participation in regular worship
* Grow in Christ – prayer and intentional study
* Build community – offer time, treasure and talents
* Live beyond ourselves – relate faith to the wider world.

*Motion from the French Archdeaconry Synod*

The motion reads as follows “ The synod proposes the creation of a modular pathway of training for lay people in our diocese, supporting the Strategy “Walking Together in Faith” in order to equip God’s people for a range of authorised ministries recognised across the diocese, or for personal Christian development”

The motion was carried.

**Session Six**

*Report on the Ministry and Public Affairs Unit.*

This unit exists to serve the networks which focus on the five marks of Mission

* To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom
* Teach baptise and nurture new believers
* Respond to human need through kindness
* To seek to transform unjust structures, to challenge violence of every kind and to pursue peace and reconciliation.
* To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth on earth.

Its current areas of activity include the environment, human trafficking, refugees and migrants

*Pastoral Reality and Politics of Brexit*

Damian Thwaites, Bishop’s Attaché to the European Institutions, at this point gave an update on Brexit as it was then and looked at possible outcomes and their effects. The Venerable Geoffrey Johnston outlined the consequences of the uncertainty and fears of expatriates and mentioned the partnership formed in Calais with the Chaplaincy.

**Session Seven** Meeting by Houses

The House of Laity held elections for:

* the Lay Chair of the Diocesan Synod,
* the Standing Committee (one from each Archdeaconry)
* a lay representative for Communications Committee a lay representative for the Ministry and Public Affairs Committee. (As the last body mentioned includes work on European issues I was chosen as representative.)

**Session Eight** Legal matters

This session examined the proposed legal changes to the Diocese in Europe Constitution 1995 already mentioned by Bishop Robert in the first session. These were approved.

*Formation of the Interim Ministry Committee*

It then looked at the proposed terms of Reference for Interim Ministry Committee. This Committee meets when needed to consider all applications from chaplaincies for an interim minister.

An interim Minister *can* be appointed after a long incumbency or when a chaplain is facing serious difficulties and/or when a need for a change of direction had been identified. Priests who serve as interim ministers have undertaken a course of training, which has already been completed by seven priests. These are temporary appointments.

**Session Nine Clergy Wellbeing**

This was an interesting talk a talk by the Rev’d Dr Alison Gray. I have just included the bullet points.

Introduction

* Huge lack of balance in the workplace.
* **Resilience is paramount**
* Bounce back -cope -find meaning in challenges - rise above adversity-
* Communication skills, time management, planning and organisation self-esteem and assertiveness.
* This leads to healthy and whole lives.
* Investing in human relationships
* *Humans are built for connection - wholehearted living requires vulnerability.*
* Shame is the most toxic emotion – leads to more mental illness.
* Guilt is good as it drives you to resolve the issue.
* Lack of Resilience leads to low self-worth and feeling that I should be coping but I don’t know how.

Burnout

* Opposite of resilience, loss of personal accomplishment and exhaustion.
* Personal misery
* High staff turnover
* Poor quality and satisfaction
* Isolation
* Caused by: prolonged stress and unmanageable workload, dysfunctional work environment, work /life imbalance
* Working harder is not the solution -as it’s never ending but a certain amount extra effort is good until it reaches optimal performance THEN stop as it goes downhill after.
* **Realise you are stressed**
* **Breathe**
* Figure out what’s triggering it
* Reality check- Your story might not be the whole truth
* Whose judgement are you going to listen to? Take care to discern
* Recognise lack of resources that can’t be improved

PERMA

* Positive emotions – 3 things that are good. Repeat them
* Engagement – discover what works for you
* Relationships- constructive engagement must be sought
* Meaning – believing in a positive future
* Accomplishment- celebrate small wins

**Session Ten**

*Safeguarding and Communications*

As both these topics are included in the report on the Archdeaconry Synod and some of the same points were discussed in both I have just cumulated the two into one.

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**Report of the Annual Meeting of the Diocesan Board of Finance**

**Points**

* 97% of common fund request was paid in 2018. Leading to £97.000 more than 2017.
* Which makes up 63% of the funds available. 14%Church Commissioner 18% interest on funds.
* Pays for 2018 Archdeacons, safeguarding, legal and secretariat, appointments, training and ministry.
* 2019 reflects more or less the same story with some slight increase e.g. in Archdeacons, a slight reduction e.g. IT
* £390.00 deficit £70-00 more than predicted. (Bishop’s chaplain’s house was sold which offset the deficit to £75.000, but another rental property fit for purpose will have to be made available at some time in the future meaning costs and masks the actual overall deficit).
* Thus, the financial concern continues.
* Income from reserve funds did well given the markets.

**2019**

* £250.000 deficit (£140.000 more than stated in the financial plan).
* Estimated shortfall of common fund £100.000 (chaplaincies unable to pay). 66% chaplaincies paid the full amount of common fund. It was noted that Italy and Malta only 34 % has been paid.
* Church Commissioner grant secure for 3 years from 2020.
* *Motion synod notes the report of the Common Fund Allocation Working Party, commends the work so far and approves the proposals as outlined in sections 6 and 7 to improve on the current basis for the calculation. Synod requests that the group continues to report to the Finance Committee of the DBF and brings a further update to the 2019 Bishop’s council in October and Diocesan synod 2020.*
* **Risks**
* Some chaplaincies can’t pay
* Brexit (health insurance /clergy recruitment )
* Increased safeguarding costs due to PCR2 and further training.
* Finance team is small

Diane Murray.