

# **BRISTOL DIOCESAN SYNOD**

Report of the meeting held on 9th May 2009 at St Paul's Church, Covingham, Swindon.

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*The Rev Canon Peter Bailey in the Chair*

## 1 Introductions and welcomes

The Chairman welcomed those present, including several of the visiting Bishops and their wives with us from Uganda, here to join in the celebrations of the 40th anniversary of the Link.

Peter also took the opportunity to speak of his retirement in July and reflected on his years within the Diocese. He explained that he could remember the introduction of the Share system, approved in 1995, and commented that it was only right it be on the agenda again today, right that we move onto something new, that the Diocese move on in new and exciting ways.

## 2 Prayers

Prayers were led by the Chairman.

## 3 Appointment of the members of the Bristol Diocesan Board of Finance Ltd

Peter explained that, as this was the final meeting of the triennial period due to the cancellation of the July Synod, formal notification to follow, there were no new members for appointment to the Board. He took the opportunity to thank members for their service and spoke of exciting times ahead for the new Synod to be elected and effective from August.

## 4 Bishop's Address

A copy of the Bishop's Address is now available via the home page of the Diocesan Website.

## 5 February General Synod Report

Professor Glynn Harrison spoke to the meeting of the February General Synod, for which the General Synod Review had been previously circulated. He made particular mention to the debate on the financial crisis, commenting that it was Synod at its best. He also spoke of the Women Bishops legislation, now under way, which included a code of practice for those unable to accept Women Bishops and explained that the legislation would go to the Revision Committee, following which it would come back to General Synod again, for further consideration. He also commented that this Group of Sessions had been unusual in that there were a large number of Diocesan motions and private members' motions, several of which had allowed the Church to comment on social justice issues and had resulted in lively debates, for example one about the uniqueness of Christ – an excellent debate with real passion expressed. Finally, he spoke of the discussions relating to the BNP, for which Synod had supported a motion that Clergy should be banned from its membership, and the water drainage and charges issue, which had since been resolved.

A question was raised relating to prayers for children and young people, mentioned in the General Synod Review, and methods for developing this locally, given the increase in all age worship and the desire to encourage families to worship together. In response the Archdeacon of Malmesbury confirmed that something along these lines was possible and that he would be happy to advise on request.

## 6 Question Time

The Rev Dr Simon Taylor (Bristol South) asked whether there was support available to parishes to assist with Health and Safety Issues.

The Diocesan Secretary in response explained that training could be provided if the demand was there, but that it would need to be chargeable and that, although Health and Safety was a serious matter, much could be dealt with by using common sense and the resources already available, for example the EIG had produced some very good literature which might be of assistance.

## 7 Report of the Bishop's Council and Board of Directors 4th February and 31st March 2009

The Dean spoke to the main body of the report circulated, as the 7th May meeting, due to be reported on also, had been cancelled. Beginning with the Transparency Policy, still to be rolled out, he reassured members that it had not been developed as a "name and shame" exercise but as a method of disseminating information of concern to those within the public domain, primarily within the deaneries. He also spoke briefly of the asset allocation review, already mentioned in greater detail by the Chairman of the Board, within the AGM, and of the request from ISR for funding to continue for the post of Social Responsibility Officer.

He then focused on the main item of the Council's work for February, the consultancy report by Stewart Rapley, which had enabled the Council to look at the issues connected to the delivery of the Diocesan Strategy following which, at the meeting in March, approval had been given to the composition of the Strategy Delivery Team and the Strategy before members today.

As there were no questions, he handed over to the Archdeacon of Bristol, who spoke in greater detail to the Diocesan Strategy.

The Ven Tim McClure introduced the Strategy and spoke of its aim to "encourage and support, so that every part of the diocese could engage with its core purpose" and shared personal reflections of what a community with Christ at the centre might look like (presentation attached) before focussing on each of the strands designed to move the Diocese forward.

During the discussion that followed some members expressed concern and disappointment that the Strategy had not been circulated sooner. Questions were also raised relating to the new role of the Area Dean and the call within the Strategy for a different kind of stipendiary priest, the impact the Strategy may have on the Cathedral, the process for leadership development during a vacancy, the make up of the Deanery Leadership team and Diocesan Support Services and whether they were elected, appointed or voluntary and therefore the budgetary implications. Also, the impact the Strategy might have at parish level, the result of departmental changes to Mission and Ministry, the difference between SSM's and Stipendiary Clergy, financial limitations and their impacts i.e. "vision limited by what we can afford to perform", and concern about a change in Share system to "godly gifts" without consultation.

The Archdeacon and others addressed each of the questions raised by grouping them thematically. Tim spoke to the questions and concerns regarding stipendiary priests and the place of priesthood within the Strategy. He spoke of an expectation for the role of stipendiary clergy to change, probably quite radically, and sought to give assurance that, although the fine details were not within the documents circulated, nor could they be, the role of stipendiary and non-stipendiary clergy were critical to the strategy process. He added that the Strategy was, in his mind, encouraging them to see and explore their roles and their understandings of ministry and that the ordained were a precious commodity.

In considering the role of Area Deans, he explained that the appointment process had been undertaken three years ago and that, at that time, Area Deans were appointed to a new job description with the intention that they would have a proactively strategic role.

With regard to Leadership Development within a vacancy, he spoke of the missional orientation within the relevant strand and of the importance of being realistic when dealing with processes of this nature, adding that there were certain points where it was possible to raise questions in a pointed way to encourage exploration about the way forward.

He also spoke of the Deanery as the central, or prime, unit for the parish enabling them to participate more fully.

The Diocesan Secretary responded to the comments regarding the dissemination of the Strategy and spoke of the consultations prior to the papers before Synod today, which had included circulation of the outline Strategy, prior to the Diocesan conferences in order that those discussions would contribute to the final Strategy.

In response to the question relating to the Cathedral, the Dean spoke of the importance of growth, something the Cathedral takes very seriously, and of the partnership in the City to grow in numbers and development, and made mention of the first article of the Cathedral's constitution. He stated that there was an overriding duty to take into account that the Cathedral was the Seat of the Bishop and a centre of mission and that such a Seat relates to the life of the Diocese for which the Cathedral prays.

The Chairman of the Board, Mr David Froude, addressed the financial questions raised, first echoing the sentiment of the Archdeacon about the preciousness of the stipendiary clergy. He spoke of the number of posts envisaged for the future as something relative to how much is being given i.e. to decide what we can afford as we can only "eat what we can afford to buy" and confirmed that there were to be cuts at the centre too. Despite the financial grounding he then spoke of the importance of vision first and of the revised Share system, intended to bring more responsibility and accountability locally. He stated that Christian giving, in his experience, was linked to spiritual maturity.

In conclusion, the Archdeacon, spoke of the effect that the Strategy may have on the parishes, adding that any difference at ground level would largely depend on the parish and its leadership.

Two additional comments were taken from the floor, prior to the motions being taken.

One from Mrs Aurea Hart (Chippenham), who wished to add a lay person's view and gave her support for the Strategy as an exciting but daunting way forward, adding that she was, in particular, looking forward to building a Deanery Leadership Team. She spoke of the vacancy process and sought to reassure clergy that some of the burden of routine jobs could be removed from new clergy to allow them to more easily develop mission within the parish.

The other comment from the Rev Gwyn Owen (Bristol South), raised as a point of order, gave full support for the Strategy and stressed the importance for members of Synod not to assume that if approved the Strategy would be set in stone, adding that the responsibility would lie with each person to work with the document and for Deaneries to have proper and full debates to move forward.

The Dean moved:

- i. that the report be received;

Approved nem. con.

The Archdeacon of Bristol moved:

- ii. that this Synod replaces the existing Share collection system as approved in June 1995, and amended in July 2005, with a system based on realistic and generous parish gifts as outlined in the document entitled 'Share Review' within the Diocesan Strategy for 2010-2015 proposals and be fully implemented by 2012;

Approved with one against and six abstentions

- iii. that this Synod gives approval to 'Releasing the energy', the Diocesan Strategy for 2010-2015, as outlined in the proposals presented to Synod, for implementation in parishes, Deaneries, and Diocesan boards and committees.

Approved with four against and five abstentions

## 8 Instrument of Delegation

The Chairman explained that the Instrument of Delegation, as circulated, was required under the Measure, as explained within the motion, to ensure that such functions as needed to be delegated at various times could legally take place.

The Chairman moved:

that this Synod, acting in accordance with Section 13 (8) of the Dioceses, Pastoral and Mission Measure 2007, approves the making of an Instrument of Delegation by the Diocesan Bishop in favour of the Right Reverend Lee Stephen Rayfield, Bishop of Swindon, in the form of the enclosed draft

Approved nem. con.

## 9 Departmental Report – Mission Strategy for New Housing Areas

Mrs Jackie Waters-Dewhurst introduced this item, explaining that the Mission Strategy for New Housing Areas was about getting people together first; that it's not structures that encourage people but people.

The Rev Derek Chedzey continued, with the aid of a PowerPoint presentation and circulated handout, to explain that £500k had been awarded from the Church Commissioners for a project to "build communities where they are yet to exist", thanks to the hard work of Bishop Mike, the Diocesan Secretary and Oliver Home who had put together the successful bid. He spoke of working with schools, as a crucial aid to mission, and of the partnership with the Board of Education. The project aims to create self-supporting pioneering leaders to work towards transforming people's lives, to develop Christian disciples and not just increase the numbers attending church, by placing Christian people at the heart of an emerging community.

During the discussion that followed a question was raised relating to the ecumenical aspect of the project and clarification regarding the use of the monies awarded was sought.

In response Derek spoke of discussions held ecumenically and Jackie commented that, when talking about schools, they were primarily referring to Church of England schools, with a view to joint denomination schools in the future.

With regard to the use of monies, Derek confirmed that, due to the economic crisis, there had been a reduction in the number of new housing areas and that the Church Commissioners, in response, had slightly widened the remit by giving consideration to areas that were either almost finished or with planned expansion, so there was a need to consider all options very carefully. The first step would be development of a pilot, following

discussion with Area Deans about the best areas and working in partnership. Jackie added that the Board of Education worked closely with all local authorities and were therefore kept in the loop about the location of planned new schools, which would also be a large factor.

## 10 The Blessing & Depart

Prior to the Blessing, Bishop Lee thanked those visiting Synod from Uganda for their time and encouraged all Synod members to hear the choir, not only at the Cathedral service on Sunday morning, but also at Downend, as many had said that the music had been having a dramatic and powerful effect within the schools in the areas visited, and should not be missed.

Canon Peter Bailey was also thanked for his devoted service to the work of the Diocese over the years, often behind the scenes, as was the Dean, who had served a wider Church in a number of ways and had brought a great deal of learning and experience.

Applause was given to both as a mark of thanks, following which the Dean spoke of the valued relationship between the Diocese and the Cathedral stating that “we want you to come to the Cathedral as we can’t have a Cathedral without you”. Following a moment of silence as a mark of respect and thanks to the communities of Wiltshire, who attend the repatriation of the bodies of service personnel, he closed Synod with the Blessing.