



# SYNOD NEWS

Peterborough Diocesan Synod

5 April 2008

## Aim to achieve your ambition

*Extracts from Bishop Frank's address to Synod*

### What is your ambition? For yourself, your parish or chaplaincy? For your benefice or deanery, or indeed, for the diocese?

I have long been inspired by the vision of a man who was assassinated 40 years ago in Memphis, Tennessee: "I have a dream"... is the opening phrase of his most famous speech. Martin Luther King's ambition was the liberation of the oppressed and the calling to right living of the American people.

I've spent much of my life working in situations where the most positive thing people hoped for was to "get by" or "get lived". To avoid being dragged down, swallowed up by the negative side of life which surrounded and sometimes invaded them. Life, as it seems, without an horizon.

I spent a day in February this year with another inspiring leader, who reminds me of King; I was chaplain to the Archbishop of York. He was in the diocese for the official opening of Unity College; a splendid day, in a place with such potential, wonderfully expressed in its new buildings. The day was full of set-piece events, but it is not these that have stuck in my mind as much as an incident

which occurred as we toured the school. It was a brief encounter, with a single youngster, sitting in the corner of a classroom for those with special needs and challenging behaviour.



Archbishop Sentamu engaged this lad in conversation; he asked him to say what he hoped for most of all; what did he want to become? The boy became engrossed in this encounter with this extraordinary, Christlike figure; he almost visibly grew before our eyes as he shared his ambitions, things which he may never have said out loud before.

"Aim to achieve your ambitions" was the Archbishop's final word as we left the classroom, as we were hurried on to the next thing. If anyone has been lifted instantly out of the "slough of despond" I think we may have witnessed it that day!

So, I ask again, what is your ambition? For this Synod today? What contribution have you come to make to the debates?

In the Diocese of Peterborough we have set

ourselves a rather dangerous ambition. Sometimes we recount it as a statement of fact – but I think that it is an ambition, an horizon to aim for, a dream to accomplish; inspired by God's passion for the world.

It is dangerous because, like the Archbishop he inspires, God himself might be just urging us to "aim to achieve your ambition"; to believe it is possible, and to set our sights rather higher than simply "getting lived" or "getting by".

And I have come to believe that this ambition is to apply not only to the four great themes so clearly set out by Bishop Ian a few years ago. Worship centred, mission shaped, releasing ministry, transforming the world, yes indeed! And to the possibility in it all for the way we think, for the way we experience the encounter with God, and therefore the way we act and live. As a people who have a dream.

As an ambition, it offers the reason for deepening the way we engage in debate, and takes us into a richer stream of understanding of what it means to be Christian, Anglican, members of this

diocese in the 21st century. God's passion is not for the status quo, not for re-living the past, some mythical golden age; it is about realising the future.

So, how do we allow God's passion to be our ambition for the growing communities in our diocese; at the last count there are 20 or so large developments of between 1000 and 5000 new households either already begun or starting within the next three or four years.

There are also innumerable smaller developments, making a significant difference to many towns and villages. What is our ambition for the people who are coming to live among us; what is God's passion for them? What are we to share together as we realise our shared future?

This year we are teaching that God's heart is stirred by the releasing of people, lay and

**"The boy ... almost visibly grew before our eyes as he shared his ambitions"**

ordained, into the ministry he has for them. In a complex world of networks as well as communities the faith needs its ambassadors - its visible, commissioned and accountable witnesses.

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**NEXT SYNOD MEETING: 27 September 2008**

# “Releasing ministry” unpacked and encouraged



“Every day people are set free to express their own humanity and their ministry,” the Ven David Painter, Archdeacon of Oakham, told Synod as he opened a debate on issues surrounding “releasing ministry”, this year’s key emphasis in the diocesan strategy.

The Synod heard four brief presentations.

**Canon Bill Croft (P’boro)** on a recent Church of England report *The Mission and Ministry of the Whole Church*. “Ministry is a growing area of creative church life,” he said. The key is that all mission and ministry is God’s. We simply share in it. There is a distinction between discipleship (living as a Christian in the world) and ministry (an authorised activity within or on behalf of the church).

Ordained and lay ministry are distinguished not because one is more important than the other but that ordained ministry is life-long, intended to be

recognised across the whole church, and is comprehensive in its range.

**Canon Julie Hutchinson (Director of Ordinands and Vocations)** stressed the impossibility of being a disciple without following Christ’s example of service, bearing witness to him in the world. Some have a calling to authorised ministry; all have a calling to find out what God wants of us.

**Liz Holdsworth (Ministry Partnership Development Officer)** introduced the working discipleship programme (see the diocesan website or contact Liz at Bouverie Court).

**Chris Peck (Coordinator of adult education and training)** outlined the proposed new modular structure of training for accredited lay ministries which will begin in 2009 (details in the current Diocesan Office Newsletter).

Three main points were raised in the discussion that followed:

- **The role of the diaconate** had become merely a year’s preparation for priesthood and needed review (Revd Peter Breckwoldt, N’ton). “Reports on this have largely been kicked into touch,” David Painter admitted. Revd Jane Butler (Chaplain for the deaf) said it needed to be considered in relation to Reader ministry.

- **The level of training in the new scheme may be too “academic” for some.** Mr Alan Chantler (Brixworth) asked if prior experiential training would be taken into account as well as prior educational achievement. Chris Peck said that discerning it was a specialist skill the department would need to source.

- **There had been inadequate consultation in arriving at the new training scheme.** Canon Philip Nixon (N’ton and Warden of readers) moved an amendment to the motion to ensure that more consultation took place.

## The motion, as amended, was carried nem con:

“In this year of ‘Releasing Ministry’ this Synod:

**Notes** the report *The Mission and Ministry of the Whole Church* and commends it for study in the diocese

**Invites** every benefice to be more pro-active in seeking out the gifts of each member and encouraging their development;

**Encourages** every benefice to review the support it gives to lay people in living as disciples in the world

**Welcomes** the proposed new pattern of training for licensed lay ministers to take effect from September 2009, but recognising that between now and then substantial consultation needs to take place with those who are currently involved in the selection and training of the three lay ministries.

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From all we see around us we may have only begun to scratch the surface, for we know that God’s love is communicated in and through relationships. There are more than enough opportunities to be God’s person, God’s people, with this group or that project.

A key part of Jesus’ motivation was his desire to set the prisoners free. We are not so naïve as to believe that in our society it is only in penal institutions that such people exist – they are in every street and community, in every workplace, and yes in every church. All waiting

for the experience of the Spirit of God, for the day of the Lord’s favour. “Unbind them and let them go” were Jesus’ words to the friends of Lazarus, and they are a call to us also.

And yet, and yet, in a period when we are offered unrivalled opportunities to share God’s passion we are being hampered by an increasingly problematic financial situation. My understanding of the gospel is that its first call to us is generosity, not self-interest.

Look at the figures in this year’s annual report, by no

means all of the substantial underpayment of parish share is due to lack of resources; some, perhaps in your parish, benefice or deanery may be due to ignorance or a serious lack of awareness of the effect underpayment has on others; the desire to simply “get lived” by some others means that the mission given to the church in this diocese cannot be fully undertaken.

What would our diocese look like if we realised the ambition of generosity, of genuinely offering and sharing our resources? Inspired by God’s passion.

Ambition can of course be misdirected but surely it isn’t when we dedicate ourselves to the one whose passion for the world and its wellbeing took him to the cross and whose ambition was realised and vindicated in his resurrection? Raised from the dead by the God whose passion was never that we should simply “get by”.

Let’s not sit back today, or tomorrow or any day; God’s passion for the world is a dangerous ambition worth owning and pursuing for it will take us into the future which God himself inhabits.

# Synod calls for greater support for armed forces

**Synod called on church members to lobby government, MPs and local authorities for greater practical support for armed forces personnel.**

Speakers in the debate expressed concern at the reported lack of equipment for front line personnel and especially the apparently inadequate provision of long-term specialist medical and mental care for people who have been injured or traumatised in recent conflicts.

However, those propos-

ing the call strongly emphasised that it was issued out of a pastoral concern and should not be interpreted as an endorsement of any particular armed conflict.

Several speakers voiced doubts over the legality of the current conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan, but still supported the call for greater assistance to be given to the personnel involved who have no choice but to obey orders.

The Synod motion was carried with only one abstention (see below).



## Selected comments from the debate:

**Canon William Burke, Rector of Castor**, whose Goddaughter had been killed in the recent conflict and whose son had served there, criticised the government for attempting to stop coroners from commenting on the apparent lack of equipment or support which, if provided, may have helped prevent troop deaths.

**The Dean of Peterborough, the Very Revd Charles Taylor**, who was unable to attend Synod in person, had circulated a paper supporting the motion. He has a nephew serving in the army who has been deployed in Afghanistan. "Like many of us, troops also are not entirely sure what they are doing in Iraq, although most are more positive about their role in Afghanistan ... many feel largely unsupported, if not let down, by the great British public." Above all, he claimed, those who are badly injured, "need better long-term care." Such care should not fall solely on charities "and it's high time this nation woke up and demanded proper care for service men and women

and also for civilians caught up in our current conflicts."

**The Revd Stephen Trott, Rector of Pitsford** and member of General Synod, spoke of his experience in the army 30 years ago when injured troops could expect good long-term care. "But the government, it seems for economic reasons, has closed down specialist military hospitals"

**The Vicar of Werrington in Peterborough, the Revd George Rogers**, who is also Padre to the Royal British Legion, stressed that the motion was not about debating the rightness of current conflict but of supporting human beings who have been sent to the front lines. He said that he was deeply disturbed by the vilification of returning troops, something he had also seen in North America during the Vietnam War.

**Canon Grant Brockhouse, Vicar of Higham Ferrers** said "Whether we believe what they are doing is wrong, through this motion we are supporting them as people," he said. "We may hate the sin of war, but we

are none the less called to love and care for those who are damaged by it."

**The Vicar of Christ Church Northampton, the Revd David Wiseman**, supported the call but expressed several reservations about the limitations of it. "The primary call of Christ is for his people to be peacemakers," he said.

**Alan Chantler, a lay member from Brixworth Deanery**, suggested that whatever our views on particular wars, "troops' loyalty to their command demands our loyalty to them."

Synod was also told that the Priest in charge of St Andrews in Kettering, the Revd Nick Wills, who was not present at the Synod, has begun working informally with other churches and civic groups to offer practical and pastoral support to current and former services personnel who are experiencing a variety of personal needs. The Archdeacon of Oakham, the Ven David Painter, commended the initiative as one others could emulate.

## The motion carried

Proposed by Penelope Escombe (Corby) and seconded by Canon William Burke (Peterborough).

"This synod, in the light of personnel and pastoral experience in the Diocese of Peterborough,

- Assures members of Her Majesty's Forces currently on active service and their families of our support and prayers, and
- Encourages Parochial Church Councils and leaders of other church communities in the Diocese to lobby Her Majesty's Government, Members of Parliament and Local Authorities requesting
- Full moral and logistical support for personnel on active service
- Appropriate and adequate medical, mental and financial support for those wounded, traumatised or bereaved, and
- Due public recognition for troops returning home."

## Training in partnership

Synod received a report on the progress of the Eastern Regional training Partnership, for which several dioceses and other denominations were signing a covenant. The Partnership is not a tight legal entity employing staff but a covenant to promote

ecumenical training of a consistent standard.

In discussion, it was asserted that the residential theological colleges in the region are among the chief drivers for the Partnership and that they are not in decline.

## Releasing Ministry DVD

Every parish should have received at least one copy of the DVD "Releasing Ministry" which is presented by Bishop Frank and intended to be shown to PCCs and other appropriate parish groups. Please contact the Bishop's Administrator Derek Williams (01733 887014) if you cannot locate one.

## Diocese lobbies General Synod

During a report on the February 2008 General Synod, Synod heard how Peterborough had worked with Durham to put forward a motion calling for Eucharistic liturgy suitable for young people to be prepared.

The proposal as agreed in London did not address all the concerns from the Diocese, and so the Archdeacon of Northampton moved a following motion to be submitted to General

Synod which said: "That this Synod requests the House of Bishops to commission the preparation and collation of materials for Eucharistic worship, including Eucharistic prayers for use on occasions when a significant number of young people are present, having a mind to Church Secondary Schools as well as Youth Services and events."

It was passed unanimously.

## Schools matters

A written question was submitted on the possibility of the Diocesan Board of Education working with the United Learning Trust in the establishment of a new Academy in Kettering. The written answer explained that such a school, notwithstanding its Christian ethos, would not be a Church School. The Board is currently in

discussion with the government over the possibility of Unity College becoming an Academy.

Members were also given a copy of a statement concerning recent media allegations that church schools had been flouting admissions regulations. Extracts are printed below on this page.

## Business items

Among the legislative and other matters dealt with, Synod received a printed set of reports from the various boards and committees, noted that the greater Northampton Deanery had now been formed, and heard Bishop Frank proclaim Amending Canon 27 which deals with ecumenical relations.

## Meeting frequency

A need was expressed to give more time to some deeper social and other issues.

It was agreed that in 2009 there would be three meetings of the Synod, and that the value of that would be reviewed. The next 2008 meeting is on Saturday 27 September.

## Church School Admissions in the Diocese of Peterborough

Extracts from a statement, the full text of which is at:  
[www.peterborough-diocese.org.uk/downloads/press\\_admissions.pdf](http://www.peterborough-diocese.org.uk/downloads/press_admissions.pdf)

**Recent media coverage of research by the Department for Children, Schools and Families across three local authority areas (including Northants) has led to considerable confusion as to the reality, and has caused needless anxiety for families in our area. Church Schools have been especially singled out in the publicity.**

The Diocesan Board of Education and the Northants County Council have spoken with one voice on the issue, and have vigorously responded to the research and especially to the way in which it has been fed by the Department to the media.

The key issues to note are these:

In our area, virtually all the instances of non-compliance with the government code related to minor details which did not and could not disadvantage any family applying to the school or to looked-after children;

Some of the non-compliance arose over the interpretation by schools of guidance given in the code; now further helpful detailed comment has been provided to the schools and they are able to amend individual policy wording;

The Department effectively gave schools only one month to make

changes to their policies to conform to the new code, which across the county was insufficient time;

All the instances of non-compliance had been rectified before the parliamentary statement by Ed Balls and the subsequent publication of the "named and shamed" schools;

It has never been true that Bishop Stopford school was asking a question about parental marital status; the school erred in the category of errors for which "marital status" was used as a "for instance" in the heading by the Department, by asking about church community

involvement. This has never been objected to in the past but has now been omitted.

No church or community school in Northants has ever asked for a financial donation from prospective families.

Dr Stephen Partridge, Diocesan Director of Education, issued a statement to the media when the issue first arose (see our website). Whilst much local media coverage has been balanced and fair, the national coverage has not been. Representations have been made by the County and the Board to the Department over the unhelpful way the matter was handled.