

## Diocesan Synod News March 2016

The synod opened with worship led by the Revd. Miranda Hayes of Wellingborough Deanery. The focus was on St Joseph, and how much we tend to overlook his contribution – as the stepfather of Jesus, and as the husband of Mary, as a descendant of David. Joseph was crucial - but he served quietly.

Bishop Donald then gave his [presidential address](#).

He spoke of the reports that were made to the synod twice a year.

“They could be seen as just business and routine.” Bishop Donald said, “But these things really matter. The few statutory official committees are really important because they enable everything to happen.”

Bishop Donald went on to thank all who were not in the report; “I’m conscious that 90% of what we do in the diocese isn’t mentioned here, I want to thank very much the people involved in finance, in administration in all the behind the scene stuff that enables the rest of it to happen. They know who they are and I thank them”.

Bishop Donald spoke next on the referendum on Europe and the EU. A question came in which he covered in a written answer, but said:

He went on: “I think referendums are a jolly bad idea and an indication that the government hasn’t got the bottle to make a decision themselves. That’s a purely personal view”

He then came to the crux of his message – the Passiontide Principle – letting something die in order to foster new life.

“Passiontide is about our willingness to sacrifice all for his sake, as it was about his willingness to sacrifice for our sake.”

“In all of our thinking, self-interest must not take first place. It is the mark of the Christian to think the common good takes precedence over our own good.”

“I ask sometimes what’s stopping the growth or the flourishing or the life or what’s slowing down the opportunity of the church living the new resurrection life.”

He went on to say that people say that they are just too busy and couldn’t launch that new initiative because of being everything else they were doing. The Bishop said that the answer has to be drop some of what we are doing and give them a proper, decent, honourable burial and then move on.

“Always be on the lookout for the new life that he wants you to have and to share with others.”

There was a question from Alan Chantler of Brixworth Deanery: “On the 24<sup>th</sup> of June, half of us who vote on the referendum will be disappointed. How can we as a church show a lead for everyone to put all of that behind us and to move on?”

Bishop Donald thanked Alan for having a role in politics in local government and providing some leadership as part of his Christian calling. He had praise for those who were part of our local government, and national government as well.

Bishop Donald said: “Yes, you make a good point, the church needs to be helping rebuild the peace when the war is over. Let’s be aware that that will happen and work hard to bring unity and peace.”

Bungoma Diocese link was discussed. Bishop Donald said, “I think it’s one of those things whose time has come to move on.”

We have been linked formally for 16 years bringing great blessing on both sides, but the bishop said for a number of reasons it’s time to move on.

“This link has done what it meant to do.”

The Bishop explained that here are three key elements to defining for a link to be effective.

1. It must be more broadly based than just a bishop-to-bishop friendship.
2. Links should be time limited from the outset. It is good for a season, and then it is time move on and do something different. The Anglican Communion recommendation for link dioceses is for five years.
3. The link should not be about one diocese being financially dependent on another. It can be about a transfer of gifts and skills.

Bishop Donald explained that there is a difference in understanding, culture and governance and the way things are done. He said that we were not blaming them; it was more about cultural differences.

“If we send money to Bungoma for a cause, it is quite easily moved to another cause. Financial oversight culture is different in Kenya there it is the culture that the bishop decides everything – and signs the checks. There aren’t the checks and balances we are used to. There is now a requirement as well that is if we give money to a charity overseas, we are responsible for how that money is spent –which is a difficult.”

He spoke about the second part of the recommendation that we look for another link for a poorer part in the world. We would be looking to give support in other ways, involving people as well as money.

“A double recommendation – I believe it right that we end it this year. It was a good time to end, some of the things that we were committed to financially were coming to an end.”

There was then discussion about ending our link with Bungoma.

Revd. Canon Mary Garbutt, one of the coordinators for the link felt that to “End by September of this year is just too quick”, only giving a short time to wind down projects. If the link ends abruptly she felt that the links in Peterborough would not continue because the diocese sends the money through their systems. She felt extending the link would be “a good Christian witness to our brothers and sisters in Bungoma.”

Revd. Deborah Marsh, Curate for Greater Northampton agreed with Bishop Donald and Mary Garbutt. She said although “There have been mistakes on both sides of this link” that ultimately it was about relationship and was a blessing to her personally.

Tim Coff of Peterborough Deanery asked: “One of the issues that threatens to divide the church is Human Sexuality. Does the Human sexuality issue play into the ending of this link at all? Or will it play in a new link to Peterborough Diocese.”

Bishop Donald stated that it didn’t influence the decision. “Kenya’s leadership is more conservative that we are and Bungoma is very conservative in a number of ways – and clearly very much on one side in the sexuality debate.” But that played no part at all in their thinking either way.

He went on: “Holding the Communion together is important, and having links is an important part of holding the Communion together. We should be able to have links with diocese which have very different views on those things.”

There was a motion to amend the recommendation to end the formal link to Bungoma Diocese in 2017 rather than 2016 by Mary Garbutt, seconded by Deborah Marsh.

Discussion was opened regarding the amendment, with Bishop Donald opposing it. Bungoma had a year of notice and that was enough.

Mrs Jenny Smith from Wellingborough Deanery had a question regarding the letters that were part of the synod pack. The letters were edited and the letter from the Bishop of Bungoma said it is a positive ending. “Could Bishop Donald comment on what was edited out?”

Bishop Donald said that there was mention of a centenary at the beginning of October and Peterborough Diocese could be part of that, but there wasn’t anything of huge substance that was edited out.

“But my reading of his letter was that he clearly accepted the end of the link at the end of 2016.”

Revd. Ian Pullinger of Corby Deanery said that there might be middle ground to this amendment, but he wasn't certain how that would work. If we could end the formal links end in 2016 but have the diocese continue to support and facilitate parishes and schools who have on-going links coming to a healthy conclusion. "If there is on-going work, it seems a shame that it is just cut off because the formal link has come to an end."

Sarah Martin, Greater Northampton: "I agree with what the Bishop said about having a finite time." She asked: "If the wider link is removed, what is the framework for individual parishes to negotiate their links?"

Revd. Steve Webster, Oundle Deanery had a question: "In Bishop Donald's letter it stated that when you went out in January 2012 you agreed an extension. That extension takes us to the end of this year. So in one sense they have known since 2012 was an agreement to end the link in 2016. They've had a little bit longer notice, perhaps?"

Nigel Aston, Kettering Deanery said that there were two points against the amendment. "First of all, 8 months in this year – plenty of time to have a clean break and not have this messy continuation. This gives us a wonderful new challenge we should get on with that promptly."

It was confirmed that there an extension to the link granted in 2012 to end this year.

The amendment was then voted on to end in 2017 rather than 2016. The majority voted against the amendment.

The original motion was then put to the vote: To end the link with Bungoma in 2016 and to investigate a new link. The majority voted in favour of the motion.

Mark Lucas and Nigel Aston then gave their report from General Synod:

They explained that there was a website and blog to look at the papers and agenda for the General Synod; <https://www.churchofengland.org/about-us/structure/general-synod/about-general-synod.aspx>

They spoke of the fringe meetings, and the discussion in government of the sanctions and the effect on benefit claimants. Mark said, "The General Synod and what they do is crucial to the process of making laws. I'm proud to be part of it."

Becky Wills and Chad Chadwick then gave a report as the Youth Missioners for Peterborough Diocese.

They discovered that there is a gap in the 11 – 25 ages demographic in the parishes. Chad stated that this is very important to support the churches to develop provision for those age groups as "84 % come to faith under the age of 25, and only 1 % over 40."

He went on: “Children’s ministry is strong because of Rona’s work. What would happen when they became teenagers?”

Becky and Chad have started to train and support parishes to develop ways to retain their Tweenagers. One of the resources they are launching is the Golden Ticket invite to a reunion party at the end of the year of primary school, hoping to create engagement into secondary school.

One of their new initiatives is training young leaders as part of Starburst in May, and using social media for online worship. Becky explained that this new and experimental way of meeting young people where they were via “Twitter helped the young people to feel less isolated, and more part of the fellowship of other young people.”

They spoke of other ways to foster the youth community are deanery youth gatherings; to help the young people feel part of something bigger.

They are looking to have a worship service as part of that in the future.

After the Youth Missioners report, it was time to receive the formal reports of the boards and committees. All voted in favour in receiving the formal reports.

Andrew Roberts then made a proclamation regarding amending the [canon number 34](#) – to make provision to strengthen safeguarding; And Canon C30– a new power of bishops to require clergy to undergo risk assessments. B43 C8 and e8, amending. The canon does not come into force immediately.

The day ended with a blessing.

Date of the next meeting is the 10<sup>th</sup> of December Budget meeting.

Collect for the Day:

God our Father,  
Who from the family of your servant David raised up Joseph the Carpenter to be the guardian of your incarnate Son and husband of the Blessed Virgin Mary: give us grace to follow him in faithful obedience to your commands; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever,

Amen

