

Diocesan Synod News September 2015

The Synod began with a separate meeting of houses of clergy and laity to elect Vice Presidents. Revd Lee Francis-Dehquani was elected for the House of Clergy, and Mr John MacMahon was elected for the House of Laity.

Bishop asks: "Let the same mind be in you that is in Christ Jesus"

Bishop Donald in his presidential address talked about Holy Cross Day, and our focus on the Cross, the symbol of our faith but also a symbol of torture. "The cross is the centre, because Christianity is about God's self-giving. Our response must equally be self-giving. In Philippians chapter two it says, 'let the same mind be in you that is in Christ Jesus.'" He went on to say that this verse was also very practical - the solution to arguments in the church. The cross isn't there as a theoretical centre of our faith, but as a reminder of what he has done for us. "He didn't vote for his own comfort, conveniences or privileges but for the best for all." This was particularly relevant to the Diocesan Synod. "You are here as trustees of the Diocese, and you are here to vote for what is best for the diocese and its mission."

The full presidential address is here: <http://www.peterborough-diocese.org.uk/finance-and-administration/synods>

Diocesan Board of Finance Reports:

Chairman Michael Truman moved that "we take note of the Chairman's report and the Accounts of the Diocesan Board of Finance for 2014." The accounts have already received a "clean bill of health" by the auditors. This was passed unanimously.

The Chairman then proposed the budget for 2016.

"It is a financial expression of what we want to do to maintain the life of this Diocese. We start by deciding what it is that we want to do, and then we quantify how much that will cost. Often people will start at the other end, of how much it will cost and what we can afford, but that is not the most useful way to do the budget."

Currently the parish share doesn't match the cost of our clergy, the extra comes from investment. The increase in cost is rising faster than the 5% projected parish share rise for the ordinands, the rise in numbers of clergy and the training. "The illustration of how the cost of clergy increases is at a different rate to the parish share goes up."

Bishop Donald said, "At some point in the future, we are not likely at all to receive monies from the National Church in the long term. At some point we will have to raise enough in Parish Share to pay the full cost of all our clergy including training, recruitment, housing, pensions and so on. We are not there at the moment and Synod did agree to simply have a 5% increase in parish share over the next few years. We will eventually have to pay the whole lot, but we are not there yet. It is transitional."

The Approval of the budget was carried unanimously and a vote of thanks for Michael Truman who has worked so diligently and well in the role of Chairman.

Archdeacon Gordon Steele proposed the Parish Share Scheme Amendment discussing the need for larger clergy numbers to combat decline. That it was proven increasing numbers led to growth. But that "the last thing to be converted was the wallet". He said the key to this working was a degree of gradualism, with a key target year of 2020.

There was then an amendment proposed to the amendment by Mr Selwyn Charles-Jones from Brackley that took note of the target year of 2020, that members consider the overall effects of this proposal that the Synod only approves this change until 2016 for a review after one year rather than five years.

This was debated at length by the members. Archdeacon Gordon Steele explained that one year would not be enough to determine the effect of the Parish Share Amendment; it needed the five years to ascertain if it was effective.

The proposed amendment to the amendment lost by a majority.

The new Parish Share Scheme Amendment was debated, with concern from rural churches as to the cost of some of their Grade One Listed buildings. Some urban parishes were concerned that their numbers were not affluent enough to support the giving needed to meet the cost of priests.

Archdeacon Gordon Steele reiterated Bishops Donald's vision for growth involves recruiting extra clergy, which brings with it additional costs. Studies have shown that a decrease in priest numbers leads to a decrease in church member numbers; that an increase in numbers of priests is directly correlated to the growth.

The proposed amendment to the parish share scheme was passed by a majority.

General Synod Matters

Synod heard from Reverend Stephen Trott, a member of General Synod who reported on the business conducted in the General Synod July 2015. He said that some extremely important issues were discussed, and that there was a major debate on climate change. The General Synod "pledged that urgent action is needed to tackle climate change" and asked for all to draw attention to an initiative to pray and fast for "the success of the Paris talks". Bishop Nicholas Holtam in *In Focus* said:"

Revd Trott said it was crucial to "not only reduce the carbon dioxide, but to reduce the pollution on the planet."

In the last 150 years we have burned fossil fuels that took one billion years to lay down in the Earth. The Earth cannot sustain this level of consumption... Climate change disproportionately affects the poorest. They are most vulnerable to increased storms, rising sea level, changing patterns of rainfall, floods and drought."

The Synod overwhelmingly backed "a call for world leaders to seek to limit the global rise in average temperatures to a maximum of 2C – considered the threshold above which the impacts of climate change will be the most severe." More about climate change and the Church's work:

www.churchcare.co.uk/shrinking-the-footprint

The Synod gave final approval to a package of proposals to make the Church a safer place for vulnerable adults and children. Read the full news story here: <https://churchofengland.org/media-centre/news/2015/07/synod-gives-final-approval-for-safeguarding-legislation.aspx>

The General Synod discussed Simplification and the Task Group formed in 2014. The Task Group aims to reduce and simplify Church rules and legislation which may be forming barriers to mission for those working at diocesan and parish level. More about this here:

<https://www.churchofengland.org/reform-renewal/simplification.aspx>

You can read the full report of the General Synods here: <http://www.churchofengland.org/about-us/structure/general-synod/reports-of-proceedings.aspx> .

Andrew Roberts read the very brief Proclamation of Amending Canon No 35, "Changing in Canon B 12 (Of the ministry of the Holy Communion), in paragraph 3, for "by the bishop acting under" substitute "in accordance with"

Bishop Donald explained the amending of Canon no 35, making the change from each Bishop deciding who would administer Holy Communion, if the Bishop wished, to the individual churches, who are acting 'in accordance with' the Bishop.

Collect for Holy Cross Day:

Almighty God,

Who in the passion of your blessed Son

Made an instrument of painful death

To be for us the means of life and peace:

Grant us so to glory in the cross of Christ

That we may gladly suffer for his sake;

Who is alive and reigns with you

In the unity of the Holy Spirit

One God, now and for ever.

Amen