

# **A Member's Report of the Ely Diocesan Synod**

## **10am-1pm Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> March 2007**

### **Witchford Village College**

#### **Welcome and Opening Worship**

An inspiring multi-media worship service was led by the Revd Alan Jesson, Simon Kershaw and the Revd Diana Penny, which commemorated the bicentenary of the abolition of the slave trade. At the start of the service the Bishop of Ely commissioned two assistant Directors of Ordinands and two Vocations Advisers.

#### **Synod Agenda Items**

1. **Apologies** were received from .....clergy and ....laity
2. **The Minutes** of the meeting held on the 21<sup>st</sup> October were agreed upon and signed.
3. **Report from Bishop's Council.** This was previously circulated and was simply noted.
4. **Notices:** SPCK was thanked for supplying a bookstall for the Synod and it was noted that items not in stock could be ordered.
5. **Questions under Standing Order 41**

**Question:** Mr Nick Grantham (Huntingdon Deanery): Re: Ely Ensign

Concern was expressed at the cessation of the Ely Ensign. Nick asked why this happened when at the October Synod a budget of £16k had been set aside for the Ensign which seemed to be adequate then. He also asked who is on the membership of the review group and whether it would be possible to receive a report on progress so far. Lastly, he asked if there would be an opportunity to consider this at Diocesan Synod, bearing in mind how vital diocesan communications are.

**Reply:** from the Ven John Beer, Archdeacon of Cambridge

The Archdeacon, who is the Chair of the Diocesan Communications Committee, answered that at the time of the budget no final decision had been made by the Bishop's Council and because there was no possibility of the budget being increased, a nominal figure of £16k was included.

The membership of the review group include: Tim Elbourne, Pat Kilbey, Matthew Lavis, Helen Randall, Hugh McCurdy, Peter Taylor, Liz Hurst and Peter Maxwell with advice taken also from Simon Kershaw.

The archdeacon reported that the review group would welcome comments and these could be sent via him. The group will report to the Bishop's Council at the end of June and the Diocesan Synod will be given a chance to consider its recommendations and any budgetary implications after that.

**Supplementary Question 1** from Nick Grantham: Could the Archdeacon confirm that diocesan communications are very important and sufficient money will be made available to do the job properly?

**Reply** from the Ven John Beer: The Archdeacon said that as a former marketing manager, he knew communications to be of the utmost important and reported that the review exercise is not about reducing funding. The budget remains as it is – a case would have to be made to reduce or increase it.

**Supplementary Question 2** from the Revd Alan Jesson (Wisbech and Lynn Marshland Deanery) expressed sadness that the cessation of the Ely Ensign seemed to come 'out of the blue'. He was concerned that the decision hadn't come to Diocesan Synod before and reported that the Ensign was greatly missed in the parishes.

**Supplementary Question 3:** from the Revd Stuart Mews (Huntingdon and Leightonstone Deanery)

Why was so little effort put into getting advertising for Ely Ensign?

**Reply from the Ven John Beer:** Huge amounts of effort have gone into it but a balance has to be struck between it becoming too full of adverts so that the articles are lost and it having to cease because of a lack of advertising revenue.

At the end of the day, the Archdeacon argued that even if had increased the advertising by 50% it would still have had a significant deficit.

**Question 2: from the Revd Tom Ambrose:** re Ely Ensign

a. Why was no meeting of the Diocesan Communications Committee convened to consider the future of Ely Ensign before publication ceased and why was no provision made for future dissemination of Diocesan news before Ely Ensign's funding was withdrawn?

b. Are there plans to supply diocesan news, or for a diocesan communications officer who might have this responsibility?

**Reply from the Ven John Beer, Chair of the Diocesan Communications Committee**

In summary, the Archdeacon responded that the DCC has not met for a while since previous meetings of the group had not been well attended. However, the website and mailings continue as before so it is not fair to say that because the Ensign has ceased to exist, that all diocesan communications have stopped. The Review Group would look at the possibility of a hard copy form of diocesan news (which would be probable) in addition to the subject of appointing another Diocesan Communications Officer.

**Supplementary Question 1 from Revd Tom Ambrose (Cambridge South Deanery)**

Why couldn't the editor of the Ely Ensign be retained who could continue to collect diocesan news which could then have been put out in pdf format on the website? This would keep parishes informed without a printed format. This might also help as an insert into many parish magazines.

**Reply from the Ven John Beer:** The Bishop's Council and other bodies considering it wanted more time to review the whole communications policy from scratch...there was a sense that it was important to let go of the EE to facilitate this process. He stressed that it may still be possible that we end up with an Ely Ensign on line...this possibility hasn't been ruled out.

The **Revd Tom Ambrose** felt that this reply was not fair to the Diocesan Communications Officer who was not present 'to speak for himself' but the Archdeacon commented that he felt he had said nothing which was a slight on the DCO.

The Chair highlighted that the presence of these questions today and the several supplementaries which follows them highlights the importance of these issues in the Diocese.

## **6. Presidential Address (the Bishop of Ely)**

- The Bishop noted there was a clash today with a conference on churches in new communities. He noted that some of our usual Synod members were not present today because they were at that important conference instead.

- The Bishop highlighted that when visiting around the Diocese it seems that people are concerned primarily with local issues and not national and international affairs. Nevertheless, these matters are important.
- The Bishop wished to join with others around the country in offering the Archbishop of Canterbury our congratulations on handling well the Dar es Salaam meeting well.
- He reported that at a recent meeting of General Synod it was decided to experiment with electronic voting. He added that we wouldn't be replicating this at Diocesan level. The new system at Church House will register those in favour and those against and interestingly those not present!
- He reported on the two controversial motions about lesbian and gay Christians and civil partnerships and reported that the House of Bishop amended the two motions to restate the Anglican position on both situations.
- He explained the accompanying papers which were produced with the motions were less helpful than the actual motions themselves but as a consequence of the motions and their amendments there had been a good and long debate on the subjects. Nothing has changed as a result of that debate but the briefing papers circulated with them had value in setting out the history of the debate.
- Synod also debated Clergy Terms of Service and Pensions- where the General Synod endorsed the view we have previously adopted here at Diocesan Synod and the Pastoral Mission Measure which will prove to be particularly important in a Diocese such as ours.
- The Bishop closed his remarks on General Synod by commenting on the Covenant document produced by prominent conservative evangelicals. He commented that it's ecclesiology has a long pedigree but that none of the conservative evangelicals in our diocese had been signatories of the covenant. The Bishop continues to meet regularly with a group in the diocese from this constituency.
- The Bishop reported large Christmas congregations in the cathedral....so large that health and safety issues now had to be considered.
- He offered tribute to Canon Vanessa Herrick for the Young Vocations Conference she organised and the Bishop stressed the importance of encouraging young vocations. The Bishop stressed that once, many years ago, he was considered 'a young vocation'!
- On Jan 27 four new honorary canons were installed in the cathedral.
- A number of new appointments in the diocese had been made in the Diocese and he praised the archdeacons for their role in this. Consultation is quite right but it's tiring!
- The Bishop underlined the importance of the Anniversary of the Bicentenary of the end of the Slave Trade...something which is particularly important in Wisbech and St. John s College Cambridge.
- He drew attention to the Lent Appeal for CUF. This was launched on Ash Wednesday at St. Barnabas Huntingdon – he reminded us that the CUF are now

considering rural deprivation. Thanks were offered to Hilary Lavis for her hard work in this area.

- Preparations for the celebrations in 2009 are going ahead. The Revd Sue Wyatt will speak to the next Synod.
- Welcome to Peggy Banks, the new warden at Bishop Woodford House. The Bishop encouraged us to help and support her in any way possible in her new post. We are now part of a minority of dioceses who have such a resource and we must use it.
- The Ely/Peterborough link goes on slowly but steadily...the passing of the pastoral measure at General Synod will allow more flexibility in this field and shortly a new area will come into being which will form a trans diocesan boundary.
- There has been a Clergy Teaching Day arranged by Bishop John, where the Dean of Jesus College, Cambridge, the Revd Dr Tim Jenkins spoke –this was appreciated by many.
- Overseas links – thanks were given to those who kindly gave hospitality to the Indian visitors from the Diocese of Vellore, to the Ambroses and others especially.
- There is soon to be a North Elbe committee meeting.
- Lastly, the Bishop encouraged us to remember that since our last meeting, two members have died: Hugh Reed, a priest of this diocese and Sam Lawrence, a Chapter Steward at the Cathedral. A prayer was said.

## **7. Abolition of the Slavery – A presentation by the Revd Canon Wim Zwalf**

Thomas Clarkson was a man very important to Wisbech- He has a school, pub, sheltered housing and a road or two named after him.

He was the son of a clergyman...was baptised in Wisbech ... won first prize in an essay in Cambridge on whether it is right to enslave men against their will. He abandoned a probable career in the church, after he was deaconed, and decided to dedicate his life to end the slave trade ... In his time he became a very important abolitionist. He joined with Quakers and wrote many works and pamphlets.

He worked tirelessly to find details of the 20,000 servants who lived on slave ships...and tried to get evidence for his case.

In 1789 he published a picture of a slave trade ship which will appear on a stamp later this month.

He argued with passion that slavery is incompatible with Christian faith and became a friend and collaborator with William Wilberforce.

The Bill he worked towards received the Royal Assent on 25 March 1807

When he was aged 80 Clarkson was accorded a silent standing tribute. If he had the chance to live another life, he said he would do the same all over again.

When he died, a memorial was erected in Westminster Abbey which simply said

- a friend of slaves.

His name will now become known again.

The Revd Wim Zwalf explained how slavery is still a huge issue today. Child labour still thrives, and the trafficking of women and children for sex still goes on. Many workers even in this diocese work well under the minimum wage.

Wim will be putting details of events connected with this subject on the Web. These included:

- July 4-7 Wisbech Rose Fair
- July 21 Concert with Willard White
- Major exhibitions in Cathedral and Houses of Parliament and in Wisbech and Fenland Museum

## 8. Format of Diocesan Synod

The Diocesan Secretary spoke to this subject: This review is taking place partly as a response to the lack of competition for Synod places and partly as a more general attempt to review what we do.

We need to know we are not alone. Lots of Dioceses have difficulty in filling places. A former member of Synod described Diocesan Synod as 'housekeeping'. You may not necessarily enjoy doing it but there is a satisfaction about knowing that what is done is done.

Dr Matthew Lavis suggested discussion needs to consider the following 5 issues:

1. The **Business of Synod** – by law various things must be considered eg finance, annual reports, refs from General Synod etc
2. **Venue** – Where should Synod be held? Not always possible to hold near the Cathedral so we can have a service there first (which many value). Easy administratively to have in the same place. Are there other places we should go?
3. **Frequency and Timing of Synods** – just two Synods a year? Saturdays, weekday evenings...
4. **Format** – we have experimented with a horseshoe shape....would it be better to be grouped around tables?
5. **Sorts of support** papers we receive – Are these adequate background?

What is the most fruitful way of using Synod?

One important responsibility of membership is to carry back information to our own Deanery Synods and to PCCS.

After comments today a report will be written and will be brought back to the next Synod.

### Comments:

#### The Revd Stephen Leeke ( Cambridge South)

Felt that the Diocesan Secretary had missed out the area of content and agenda. ML said this was included in the Business of Synod section.

Felt that if the matter concerning the Ely Ensign isn't something that comes to Synod to debate, why are we here?

The Ely Ensign is exactly the type of issue which should have come to Diocesan Synod.

The Revd Stephen Leeke also expressed a concern that Diocesan Synod doesn't seem to make decisions.

**Daphne Spink (Bourn Synod)**

Expressed the view that she was very impressed with the amount of business discussed at coffee time. Could coffee time be extended to 30 minutes so we can raise issues that are bothering people...or might it be possible to have table discussions so people could talk about issues that matter to them?

**Edward Otter (Wisbech and Lynn Marshland Deanery)**

Suggest that if we got the minutes sooner we could use them to report .

Adrian Wright commented that Rhiannon Jones was busy typing up notes of the meeting to go on the website soon after the Synod.

**The Revd Will Adam (Diocesan Ecumenical Officer)**

In the Diocese of Oxford they experimented with the form of seating (Richard and Judy style) and it didn't make much difference.

However, when there was a feeling that what was being discussed made a difference everyone wanted to be involved.

Suggested that if the content was seen to make a difference then more would want to come along.

**The Revd Teresa Dixon (Ely Deanery)**

Synod can be an intimidating place for new people.

When she joined as a lay person 16 years ago, it was very intimidating and extremely difficult to speak. Even generally speaking, it is difficult to stand up and present a point with little notice.

Smaller discussion groups are very important....they would enable all to participate.

Both laity and clergy – many need a chance to think before they stand to speak,

Lots of people feel they can't contribute unless they can prepare a speech at short notice.

**Janet Perrett (St Neots)**

Wasn't sure the Revd Will Adam was right. Being able to see the faces of people at Synod makes a real difference.

If the March Synod sometimes has less business, could we use it to discuss thorny issues eg human sexuality which they did successfully in St Neots Deanery?

Another issue to discuss: Christianity and Islam

**Della Fletcher (Cambridge South)**

Synod is very cliquy and it is very difficult to meet people

Badges therefore are very important

*Members were asked to send in their questionnaires on this subject or hand them in at the end of the meeting.*

**Viv Richer (Ely Deanery)**

On her third term on Diocesan Synod and felt it was still intimidating speaking at Synod, all shake when we speak in public,...could the Chair actively encourage people to speak...?

The Chair reminded people that if they have a long speech they can go to the podium or use the roving mic(s). And he would try to send out encouraging signals. At the same time he encouraged members of Synod not to let 'the moment pass'.

### **Simon Kershaw (St Ives)**

- a) Content: we should remember we can all put things on the agenda through Deanery Synod motions and PCCs ... This is a 'ground up' body.
- b) Expressed support for all those people who say how intimidating it is to say things. It is particularly difficult for lay people to stand up and speak. Occasionally having small tables would be really useful so we can hear more views.

### **Shirley Dex (Cambridge South)**

Could we go to a venue where we don't have to use cars as much? ... This also means that it isn't the same people who have to make a long journey all the time. It also means that we get to see more of the Diocese.

## **9. Presentation by the National Stewardship Officer – John Preston**

The Bishop of Huntingdon invited John Preston to speak to us and commended the motion in front of us (see later).

He felt stewardship is crucially important. We owe a great debt of gratitude to Martyn Saunders in this Diocese for refusing to let it drop from our agenda.

Martyn always insists rightly on setting stewardship within a theological framework.

We are made in the image of God, whose nature it is to give. God calls us to give. If we are to be faithful to the image of God in us we have to give. It is only by giving ourselves away that we find fullness of life.

We mustn't avoid talking about money. Where our treasure is there our heart is also

Apocryphal story: 'The vicar has upped his planned giving. Up yours!'

Bishop John has always tithed his stipend and income and would encourage others to do so too.

### **Presentation by the National Stewardship Officer: John Preston**

On the 2<sup>nd</sup> day of the job he was told over breakfast by a Vicar what a ghastly job he had taken on. On the contrary he feels it is a privilege!

### **3 positive and maybe surprising facts about church giving:**

- a. Church Members give generously to the church. The combined income of PCCs = £790 m pa  
Christian Aid, RSPCA and other charities named by John all put together raise only £761m
- b. In 2005 over £50 million was given by PCCs to other charities and mission organisations (£10m more than *Children in Need*).
- c. Gift Aid efficiency has made a huge difference to the Church- Over £60 million is given by the tax office back to the church in a year.

### **Giving per diocese**

John then showed a chart showing level of giving per diocese.

People in Ely give on average 2.8% of their income. In the league tables we come 34<sup>th</sup> place out of 42.

Yes, we are already giving a lot but there is a long way to go,...a challenge and opportunity! General Synod suggested a challenge of 5% per individual last time it debated the issue

### **What is stewardship?**

- A personal response to a generous God---- AB of C described God's generosity as falling on us like Niagra falls
- Corporate stewardship is an opportunity to resource mission

### **Good practice in stewardship**

1. Encourage every parish to *own* stewardship for themselves and to promote giving by identifying an individual who will lead this. A parish giving officer.

They would have 4 key tasks:

- Drip feeding the message of giving at timely intervals
- Encouraging preaching on stewardship in its widest form
- Magazine articles- download sample articles
- Make legacy leaflets available

Finding a giving officer for every parish is hard....but even if half our parishes have this it would make a significant difference.

2. Organise and lead a process of annual renewal within the parish
3. Assisting communication of financial info. relating to budgets and parish share to the congregations.
4. Ensuring with the Gift Aid Officer that all planned givers are thanked annually.

### **Resources**

[www.parishresources.org.uk](http://www.parishresources.org.uk)

[www.givinginrace.org](http://www.givinginrace.org)

### **Rural stewardship Good Practice**

Rural stewardship toolkit – available for input on parish resources website

Stories of good practice- available April/May '07

Rural stewardship toolkit includes:

- Sustainability factor
- Footfall tool
- Budgeting tool
- 4 key tasks to encourage giving
- Rural giving programme
- Setting up a friends scheme
- The stewardship cycle
- Web resources

**Stories:**

Ways of generating new income streams that are also mission oriented need to be publicised and encouraged e.g. A post office under the tower, art gallery etc

**Legacies**

If we could get 15% of income from legacies, we would be worth an additional £70m

Ely gets 5% of PCC income from legacies.

See PCC leaflet on making your will – sit down and develop a policy in your PCC

Main reason people won't leave a legacy to the church is because they don't know what the church will do about it.

Also, sometimes parishes fall out after a legacy has been received...best to decide a policy before...

See [www.churchlegacy.org.uk](http://www.churchlegacy.org.uk)

**Presentation by Martyn Saunders:**

Began with 4 biblical quotations: 1 Chronicles 29.11, John 3.16 and 2 others

Explained that he and John would be offering training later in the year for giving advisers

10 years ago in 1997 we had a diocesan stewardship year....too much paper and too many complicated ideas

So, in contrast, this year there will be much less paper and simple things to do!

Keep it simple, stupid!

**Top tips from Martyn Saunders**

- Stewardship must be seen as part of mission
- We teach on giving not because the treasurer says so
- But because the gospel says so
- Theology must come first
- Vital importance of prayer
- God will guide us through prayer
- The concept of giving advisers has worked well in other dioceses and could do well here too
- Make sure you don't get to a place in your parish where no-one takes the initiative

**Primary duty and characteristics of Parish Giving Advisers:**

1. Initiate and stimulate theological teaching
2. Carry out stewardship reviews (annual)

Listed qualities needed: a person is needed who:

respects confidentiality, knows the theology, does not over pressurize, is prepared for tricky questions and surprises, is persistent, encouraging and positive, is happy with their own giving

## **Mechanics of Annual Review-**

Compile a list of parishioners, send a letter of explanation from the Vicar and CWs, a pledged giving form, notes on Christian giving, a brief statement of general account, a return envelope to the treasurer & don't forget to thank them!

Important to preach on it annually

When to have annual review: early in new year, early in summer, in autumn?

Small parishes- only needs a small amount of time, don't give it to the treasurer- already overworked.

Think about a Benefice Giving Adviser if appropriate to your area.

Having a parish giving officer etc has results....

Balancing the books is not the aim of giving review...

Best to change language from paying to giving.....

Do see Martyn for help if you need it

## **Parish Giving timetable for the Diocese of Ely**

Martyn will send a letter to each incumbent at the end of march

There will be two sessions of training- in the summer

Remember the joy of giving 2 Cor 9.7 God loves a cheerful giver!

## **Questions and Comments**

**Revd Rhiannon Jones (General Synod)** spoke of how she had at first been reluctant to preach on giving but had found the stewardship websites had changed her mind on this and had provided a wealth of resources which made preaching and preparing liturgy on the subject last month a very good experience.

### **Sheila Bennett (Cambridge South Deanery)**

Suggested that stewardship letters go to every person on the electoral roll and not just one to be shared by couples.

After questions, the motion that 'this Synod support the plan for stewardship for 2007 and encourages all parishes to take part' was carried unanimously.

The Synod finished business at 1.00pm and the Bishop led us in the grace.

*Notes taken by the Revd Rhiannon Jones and posted on the website by Simon Kershaw  
10 March 2007*