DIOCESE OF CHELMSFORD
DIOCESAN SYNOD

Minutes of the 148th meeting of the Synod held on
Saturday 15 June 2019 at All Saints West Ham

PRESENT : The President and 80 Members

The House of Laity met prior to the meeting of the Diocesan Synod. Please see separate minutes.

The Chair invited the Revd Dr Jackson Ngari, Education Secretary in the Diocese of Embu, to deliver greetings from Embu.

The Archdeacon of Chelmsford led the opening worship.

1. NOTICES

The Chair drew attention to the notices on the day paper. Filming would take place throughout the meeting. There was also a short note on the national consultation for the proposed term limits for Deanery Synod members.

The Chair also reminded members that if they take their badges home, they need to keep them secure. They are welcome to leave them behind at the end of the meeting for safe keeping.

2. PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

The Bishop of Chelmsford delivered his Presidential Address. The text of the address can be downloaded from here:


3. MINUTES OF DIOCESAN SYNOD MEETING HELD 16 MARCH 2019

The minutes were approved.

4. INTERFAITH: PRESENCE AND ENGAGEMENT

The Bishop of Chelmsford introduced this item with recognition that there is a shared desire for peace and that interfaith dialogue has an important role in generating that peace.

The Chair suspended Standing Orders and invited Revd Dr Chigor Chike to address the Synod.
The Revd Dr Chigor Chike spoke about the Faithful Friends group, an interfaith project working in the Forest Gate area. The tension that existed between communities led to the desire to do something to respond. The project was largely driven by Revd Canon Barnabas Matloob, whose ministry was to reach out to people of other faiths. In addition the following points were made about this project:

- The project is supported by funding from the London Over the Border Council.
- Six times a year leaders from different faiths in Forest Gate gather to discuss issues. No topic is off limits. They listen to and respect one another. Meetings rotate between different venues.
- The central theme is friendship, so it includes a lot of socialising. Religious festivals and events are attended.
- There are numerous Christian denominations involved.
- There has recently been a shared retreat, the focus of which was a discussion on the environment and health.

A number of guest speakers were invited to share their reflections of involvement with Faithful Friends.

Abdul Karim Sheikh spoke of the strength and harmony the group brought.

Wahida Majeed, of the Sufi Order, spoke of the sense of family among the group and the learning that everyone benefited from being part of this group. Sufism is all about loving God and the actions of a few people can change the world.

The Revd Obi Chike spoke of the way we share faith in a respectable way. She offered reflections around prayer and posed a question on whether we remember specific people in prayer. There was also a challenge to share God's love outside of the walls of the church building. Jesus shows us how to share the love of God.

The Revd Canon Barnabas Matloob expressed his thankfulness to the God who has called people to this ministry. He also expressed his thanks to those individuals within the Church who had been supportive of establishing Faithful Friends. Jesus is a friend to saints and to sinners, all can find a wonderful friend in Jesus. This is the Holy Spirit's work. We must love God and love our neighbour, it is our responsibilities to make friends, not enemies.

The Revd Dr Chigor Chike summarised why it was important for this work to take place. There are forces of division and we cannot be reactive, we must be proactive. We have a responsibility to ensure a responsible and respectful dialogue. Some may say there is a contradiction between interfaith work and evangelism, but there is not because interfaith work is evangelism. Members were encouraged to start something similar, even if it does not work. Help was offered in establishing similar projects. We need to show the Kingdom that God wants.

The Chair reinstated Standing Orders.
The Bishop of Chelmsford moved the motion:

‘The Church of England’s Presence and Engagement strategy agreed at General Synod in July 2017 for its mission and ministry amongst people of other faiths affirmed ‘the pressing need for religions to find ways to live together’, and that ‘churches have a significant role to play in enabling diverse communities to “pursue the things that make for peace“’. In the Diocese of Chelmsford we commit ourselves to a confident engagement with the world rooted in our understanding of the revelation of God in Christ, and call upon all parishes to reach out in friendship, neighbourliness and witness to people of all faith traditions.’

The following members spoke in the debate on the motion:

Mark Tiddy (Bishop’s Nomination)
Revd Canon Ian Tarrant (Redbridge)
Bishop of Barking
Bishop of Bradwell
Revd Jane Richards (Basildon)
Mary Durlacher (Colchester)
Piers Northam (Epping Forest and Ongar)
Revd Jackson Ngari (speaking with Chair’s permission)
Archdeacon of Barking

The following points were made:

- The Bradwell and Colchester Area Youth Synods met and the young people were supportive of this motion. They would encourage meaningful and comfortable conversations. There was recognition that these conversations can be difficult, but we should recognise each other as humans. They felt it was important that those of no faith were not forgotten, given they are half of the country. The Bradwell Area meeting particularly reflected that two way conversations are helpful and that the Church has a key role to play whether participants are regular churchgoers or not.
- There is an East London Three Faiths Forum in Redbridge, which was established after the 9/11 terrorist attacks. This meets every two months and rotates meeting venues. There is a speaker from each faith and then a question and answer session. There is some study of each sacred text using scriptural reasoning techniques. The group is self-governing and self-funding.
- Together we can make a difference locally and nationally in confident engagement. These are international and national concerns and faith groups need to work together in solidarity. One outcome has been the living wage, which came out of the Citizens UK branch in Newham. Work is now underway on the areas of affordable housing and knife crime.
- We are called to be disciples and engage with others who have different perspectives. It is not about compromise and can sometimes lead to challenge, for instance on doctrinal matters. Mission is about working out together a methodology of God and calling to carry on in partnership for the common good. There is also opportunity for witness. Faith is a market place and we must share our faith and let other’s share theirs. When we share our faith we are witnessing Christ.
• One member, who spoke of their experience of growing up in an interfaith household, expressed a desire to develop a partnership with parishes engaged in this ministry.
• We need to recognise that underpinning all of this is identity.
• Can we apply these themes of friendship and respect across MMUs? If we do so we then become prophetic.
• We need to invite people to become Christians and that involves engaging. If we do not, we lose the opportunity to do so.
• Working together in this way can lead to strategic decision making. For example the recent displacement of people from a block of flats in Barking had received a positive response from different faith groups who had gone to support those relocated to a local hall.

The Bishop of Chelmsford thanked those who had contributed to the debate. He reflected that there is diversity everywhere, even in rural parts of the Diocese.

Members were invited to vote on the motion. The motion was unanimously carried.

5. CDBF AGM

See separate minutes.

6. 2020 BUDGET

The Chair invited the Chief Executive and Diocesan Secretary to introduce this item. The following points were highlighted:

• Previous increases had been in line with inflation. This budget proposed an increase of 0.6%.
• There would be a 2% increase in salaries.
• Pension provision remained unchanged.
• It was proposed to reduce budgeted stipendiary posts from 268 to 254. There would be no change to the number of curates to reflect the importance in continuing to invest in future ministry.
• National Church contributions will continue to increase by 2%, although as we have over budgeted the increase, in practice, will be 0.9%.
• Housing costs went over budget last year. To respond to this the 2020 budget had a 5% increase for housing repairs.
• It is likely that there will be a parish share shortfall in 2020 but budgeting for a short fall provision will only increase the apportionment to those paying their share.
• The new share process is not working yet and therefore the scheme will not be extended beyond the thirteen Mission and Ministry Units who went through this process last year. They will all be given the option to revert back to a benefice assessment.
• In respect of benefice share assessment there is a desire to move to the point where all benefices are covering their cost of ministry. Benefices that are doing
so will receive a 0% increase in 2020. Those benefices who do not cover their costs will receive a 2.5% increase.

- The Lower Income Communities funding remains committed to supporting deprived areas and we propose bringing forward payments in 2020.

The Chair invited members to ask questions for clarity.

The following members asked questions:

Revd Canon David Banting (General Synod)
Mary Durlacher (General Synod)
Canon Harry Marsh (Chelmsford South)
John Bloomer (Chelmsford North)

The questions received were:

- The supporting paper states that stipendiary numbers will be reduced to 246, but it was said in the presentation that they will be reduced to 254. Which is correct? *It was confirmed that the correct number was 254.*
- Is it acceptable to withhold share payment to address fabric issues? *It was noted that this was not a question for clarification and will be addressed in the debate.*
- The new share scheme has cut out Deanery Officers. There is a Deanery Finance Forum on 3 July but the questioner was not aware of it. *Again this was not a question for clarification and would be addressed in the debate.*
- When would the guided statements be sent to MMUs? *The Chief Executive and Diocesan Secretary confirmed this would happen in July.*

The Chair of the CDBF moved the motion:

‘This Synod
a) approve the Diocesan Budget for 2020 and the total Share of £17,072,846.
b) approve the apportionment of the total Share according to the approved Share scheme; and

c) agree a cap of 0% in increases in gross share (before credits) for 2020 compared with 2019, for benefices operating under transitional Benefice Share who meet their costs of ministry (except where specific agreements are made or there is a material increase in ministry establishment)
d) agree a cap of 2.5% in increases in gross share (before credits) for 2020 compared with 2019, for benefices operating under transitional Benefice Share who do not meet their costs of ministry (except where specific agreements are made or there is a material increase in ministry establishment).’

Responding to earlier questions the Chief Executive and Diocesan Secretary confirmed that Area Deans, Lay Chairs and Deanery Treasurers had been notified about the Deanery Finance Forum on 3 July. The purpose of the forum was to talk about communications and invite solutions to get engagement with the share process. In relation to the question about fabric works, it was recognised that there are financial challenges for parishes, but it also must be recognised that there is
benefit from subsidy. There needs to be a move toward sustainability and in some scenarios the answer is to fund in partnership.

The following people spoke in the debate on the motion:

Nick Ellis (Hinckford)
Revd Dr Susan Lucas (Newham)
Revd Dr Tim Platts (Colchester)
Canon Gordon Simmonds (Rochford)

The points made were as follows:

- In a rural community the figures are skewed, populations are small but day to day costs remain the same as elsewhere. This is a significant problem. We need to work on the true cost of ministry in such contexts. It was acknowledged that this was a challenge and thought is being given to this.
- The Church’s financial system is one of the few places that redistribution is done well and in a prophetic way. There is a need to balance the books, but does this still allow us to be prophetic and share resources to enable a presence in every community? Redistribution is really important and it is not thought that this is at risk, however it will be monitored.
- It is surprising to see the housing costs went over budget last year, why did this happen? There were a number of reasons for this. Generally there is an ongoing cost to maintenance of properties. More focus has been given on the need to invest in to properties for the rental market. This had led to an improved rental income, but there is a cost involved as well. There are also increased costs in materials and labour.
- How realistic are the stipendiary numbers and are there risks in reducing posts? There is work underway, with the senior leadership of the Diocese, on patterns of ministry. There is an aim to balance deployment with financial need. There will be some more concrete proposals on this.

Members voted on the motion. The motion was unanimously carried.

7. GOOD NEWS STORY: CANNING TOWN

The Chair invited the Revd Benedict Atkins to address Synod.

He began by thanking those who had supported the development of a church plant in St Matthias Canning Town. He continued to explain the experience of planting in that area of the diocese:

- The vision to plant came whilst part of a Church community in Bow. There is planting in the DNA of All Hallows Bow and discernment as to where to go next.
- During prayer there was a call to go eastwards. After waiting for an invitation, there was an invitation to Canning Town, which at the time was part of a larger parish.
- A small group spent time prayer walking through the community.
Nine months later they moved to the local area, the new parish was not yet formed, the church building was not available and the vicarage was not ready. This was the best thing that ever happened as it reinforced the fact that these things are here to serve us not the other way round.

Focus was given as to how the Church joined in with what God is already doing.

It was hoped that this story would inspire Synod to think about how they use resources.

Prayer walking happened on every street with a hope to meet everyone in the parish. The current hope is to create a Sunday gathering in each block.

Two and a half years in the work has been hard, but beautiful.

Members were invited to ask questions. The following members asked questions:

Ursula Davies (Newham)
Revd Nick Rowan (Rochford)
Archdeacon of West Ham

The questions asked were:

- Can you explain how you got to where things are now? Benedict Atkin said he didn’t really know how this had all come about. Listening to God is key. You shouldn’t be afraid of lack of resources. You need good ways of process and change management. Other than that, just say ‘yes’ to God.

- Could you explain prayer walking? Prayer walking is being present in the presence of God. You pray for people as you walk, sometimes you end up talking to people. All people that ended up joining the Church in worship were met on prayer walks. Worship develops a hunger for God and if we want more of Him that will be found in the streets.

- Could you tell us the story of the stolen wood? Benedict Atkin spoke about the time that some wood was stolen outside of his vicarage and how that had led to an encounter with the people who had stolen it.

8. CHILDREN, YOUTH AND FAMILIES

The Bishop of Chelmsford spoke to this item and updated members of Synod on the work that was developing for mission with children, young people and families. He stated that it was a priority to recognise the generations missing from the Church. What do you do if you miss the harvest? Find a field and plant a new one. A small group was meeting to consider how to do things differently. There will be some experimentation and pioneering. It is likely that there will not be one big idea, but a thousand small ones.

9. BISHOP’S COUNCIL AND FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORTS

Paper DS(2019)06 was received.
10. QUESTIONS

Q.1: Revd James Rodley (Harlow) to ask the Chief Executive:

In the light of the serious issues facing the finances of this Diocese, especially the failure of over 250 parishes to meet their costs of ministry, and the powerful address on this matter made by Bishop Stephen to this Synod in March:

1. Whether they intend to make special cases of those parishes which do not cover their costs of ministry but have petitioned for Alternative Episcopal Oversight on the grounds of their theological convictions regarding the ministry of women?

2. If they can outline to Synod how they propose to address the issue of failure to cover ministry costs in those parishes where the incumbent has the freehold?

A.

There is no intention to make special cases for parishes who have petitioned for Alternative Episcopal Oversight. Our aim is to help all parishes journey towards sustainability in their Mission and Ministry Units and cover their ministry costs regardless of tradition or theological views.

We hope that all priests will work with us to develop sustainable patterns of ministry across the diocese regardless of whether they have the freehold or, like the vast majority, are on common tenure.

Where parishes pay their share in full but this amount is less than the cost of ministry they are not failing. It is our system that needs to adapt to changing circumstances and we are working to produce a system that enables more parishes to contribute to full ministry costs. In the meantime, we are enormously thankful for the great majority of parishes who pay their share in full.

Q2. Canon Ron McLernon (Hadleigh) to ask the Diocesan Bishop

How many curates were placed with Anglo Catholic Parishes in this Diocese during 2018 and allocated for 2019 please?

A.

Of course, this rather begs another question: how do we define Anglo-Catholic? There are movements within movements. This is true of all the different tribes that make up the Church of England. That is its beauty and its challenge. Indeed, within our MMUs individual churches and clergy may well describe their tradition in very different ways. Furthermore, the decision about where to place curates is based primarily upon the training needs of the curate. We take great care in the selection of training incumbents and, wherever possible, place curates in existing or emerging
MMUs that will provide a good range of formational opportunities. This means that the mix of rural and urban, different church traditions and even our own Episcopal areas varies from year to year as the needs of each successive cohort of curates changes. However, within these constraints, we do all that we can to reflect and balance the diverse needs of our diocese. This is the best way of serving our future ministerial needs. However, for the purposes of this question, it is reasonable to assume that in 2018, 10 out of 29 training incumbents receiving a deacon would identify themselves within the Anglo-Catholic tradition and, in 2019, the comparative figures are 10 out of 28. The fact that this number is virtually the same two years running is an unusual coincidence. I would expect it to vary.

Q3. Canon Ron McLernon (Hadleigh) to ask the Diocesan Bishop

What are the criteria for deciding which Parishes Vacancies should be filled by appointing a Stipendiary Priest and if a decision has to be made who has the responsibility for making that final decision please?

A.

Working with patrons and others, the final responsibility for appointments rests with me as bishop of the diocese. However, the approach we have been taking for many years is that within the constraints of the 2025 number of minimum sustainable stipendiary clergy which we are all working towards, each deanery has its own number and the decision about where these posts are placed should therefore detailed in each deanery plan. This plan is agreed by the Area Mission and Pastoral Committee and the Diocesan Mission and Pastoral Committee.

Two other points may be helpful: where a deanery does not have a deanery plan, as is unfortunately the case in one or two deaneries, decisions about deployment are much more difficult. I would therefore encourage every deanery to look at its 2025 figure and make strategic decisions about matters of deployment. Secondly, as I explained at the last Diocesan Synod, we are facing a challenging budget deficit and since many parishes do not cover their ministry cost we will have to review both the 2025 figure and the affordability of deploying clergy to parishes where their ministry is being subsidised by others. However, this does not fundamentally change the way these decisions are made. A good deanery plan where each parish is part of a Mission and Ministry Unit, should include decisions about where stipendiary clergy are to be appointed, where new lay and ordained ministers are needed, and how each deanery and each Mission and Ministry Unit can be financially sustainable. In other words, the short answer to the question is that these are decisions we make together based upon the missionary needs of each deanery and what is affordable and sustainable.
Q4. Revd David Lower (St Osyth) to ask the Diocesan Bishop:

On the 16th April 2019 churches across the diocese were encouraged to toll their bells for 7 minutes at 7pm as a mark of solidarity with the people of France following the Notre Dame Cathedral fire. On the 21st April 253 people were killed in churches and hotels in Sri Lanka, as far as I am aware, there was no mark of solidarity encouraged for the people of Sri Lanka. Who within the diocese decides who we are linked to and on what basis?

A.

The invitation for churches to toll their bells on 16 April 2019 was made, I think, by the National Church and the diocese passed on the invitation. It would be unwise to read anything into the fact that a similar invitation was not issued on 21 April following the tragic death of 253 people in churches and hotels in Sri Lanka, but that does not mean that messages of support and solidarity were not issued through other channels. As it happened, on the Tuesday of Holy Week – only two days after this horrific event – I travelled to Hong Kong as the Church of England’s episcopal representative on the Anglican Consultative Council and had the privilege of being able to pass on condolences and the assurance of prayers to Sri Lankan Christians who were present. However, I am grateful for the question. We need wisdom and discernment about how and when to invite coordinated responses to the all too frequent tragedies that beset our world and I happily invite anyone in the diocese to make contact with me when and if you think some central initiative from me personally or from the diocese would be appropriate.

Q5. Revd David Lower (St Osyth) to ask the Diocesan Director of Education:

As a father to an 8 year old child I would expect, as a parent, to be informed if another pupil in the class began the process of changing their gender. Please can the Bishop and Director of the Board of Education clarify what the policy on informing parents of children in primary school classes with children who are seeking to change gender is with the Church of England Schools in the Chelmsford diocese?

A.

Gender transitioning is one of many possible ways in which a child’s circumstance may change in a way that could impact other pupils in a class or school. In cases such as these, as with any situation in which a child has a special or additional need that might impact other children in a class or the school, it is a matter for the school’s leaders to determine how best to handle the situation in each case through dialogue with the child’s parents or guardian.
As each individual circumstance is unique to all those involved, it would be wrong for there to be a prescriptive diocesan policy requiring all parents to be formally notified if a particular pupil’s circumstances have changed or are about to change.

The wellbeing of the child most directly affected must always be uppermost. These are issues for a child’s own parents and school leaders to work through together, mindful of any implications for other children in the class or school. Parents do not have a right to be given advance notice of another child’s change of personal circumstances over this or any other personal matter.

**Supplementaries**

Q. Could you confirm the requirements around confidentiality?

A. The Director of Education confirmed that School Governors do not act alone, they always act corporately.

Q. All children are valuable, what are the safeguarding implications here?

A. The Director of Education responded that this depends on approach. If medical intervention is involved, then this is governed by law. Others are not so covered. However it would be unwise to generalise.

Q. Foundation Governors would welcome help in upholding Christian teaching, what support can be given where one child’s rights do not override the others?

A. The Chair ruled this question out of order as it did not relate to the original question.

**Q6. Mary Durlacher (General Synod) to ask the Diocesan Bishop:**

Until such time as the Human Sexuality Group and the Living in Love and Faith (LLF) have completed their work, and the House of Bishops are satisfied that the legitimate concerns raised by professionals over the allowing of gender transition treatments for children has been thoroughly investigated, so that the long-term effects of treatments like hormone therapy are better understood, will the Diocese withdraw its advice to schools as outlined in Valuing All God’s Children together with any commendation of trainers who have been reported as dismissing legitimate concerns, the right of duties of parents to have a say in how their children are taught, or governors who seek to fulfil their duty to question practice and content?

A.

*Valuing All God’s Children: Guidance for Church of England schools on challenging homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying* is a guidance document produced by the Church of England’s Education Office and commended by the Archbishop of
Canterbury, who writes: ‘This updated version of Valuing All God’s Children seeks to offer further guidance and support, and places it within this vision (i.e. the Church of England’s Vision for Education, Deeply Christian Serving the Common Good).’ This diocese, like others, simply commends it as a resource to schools and has not sought to add to it or subtract from it. Concerns about any of its content are better directed to the Church of England’s Education Office rather than to this Synod. It is guidance about bullying and not a critique of the ethics of gender transition nor of the biological effects of puberty blockers, which are indeed contested. The questions and debate about the appropriateness or otherwise of certain hormone therapy are beyond the scope of the document.

However, the document does point out that gender reassignment is a protected characteristic under the Equality Act (2010, s.7),

‘A person has the protected characteristic of gender reassignment if the person is proposing to undergo, is undergoing or has undergone a process (or part of a process) for the purpose of reassigning the person’s sex by changing physiological or other attributes of sex’.

Children are included under the protected characteristic ‘gender reassignment’ and must not be treated less favourably than other children who do not share that characteristic.

It is for each school to balance the interests of a particular child against the perceived preferences of other children’s parents. Our maintained schools are part of the publicly funded provision of the nation and serve children of all faiths and none. They are subject to the same legal frameworks as other maintained schools in these matters.

Neither this diocese nor Valuing All God’s Children recommends any particular support provider which may or may not have its own agenda, although several are listed as further resources. The Guidance is clear: ‘the choice of resources is a decision to be made that knows its unique context best.’ All decisions taken by a school’s governing body are decisions taken corporately.

Supplementary

Q. Why does the report only focus on three types of bullying?

A. The Chair ruled the question out of order as it did not relate to the original question. However the Bishop of Chelmsford commented that the reports are not of the Diocese and the decisions taken in individual cases are not of the Diocese either. These need to be dealt with appropriately. There are real children involved and we need to protect them. We need to find another way of having this conversation as the Church. The Bishop also noted that homophobic hate speech is on the increase and we do need to find a way to move forward peaceably.
Q7. Revd John Dunnett (General Synod) to ask the Diocesan Director of Education:

What assessment has been done by the Diocesan Board of Education of material used by Mermaids to assess their compatibility with the Church of England doctrine of marriage?

A.

The Diocesan Board of Education has not formally ‘assessed’ materials used by Mermaids. Its website offers over 100 resources, from TV interview clips to reports in the British Medical Journal to posts about the Equality Act 2010 for schools. We are not aware of discussion about the doctrine of Christian marriage among those many resources. Following coverage of an article in the Mail on Sunday, Mermaids issued its own press release defending its training: https://www.mermaidsuk.org.uk/press-enquiry-from-the-mail-on-sunday-25th-may-2019.html. This in turn has been criticised by others, among them an organisation calling itself Transgender Change claiming no religious or political affiliation, but which has its own views on the issues concerned. (https://www.transgendertrend.com/analysis-mermaids-press-statement/)

This is evidence of the lively and ongoing debate about these matters. It has also subsequently come to light since the Mail on Sunday article that at another church school which successfully navigated this issue without public controversy, at least one person attending the Mermaids training the school contracted did offer a mixed feedback.

In the light of some of the concerns expressed and before publication of the Mail on Sunday article, I contacted the Church of England Education Office since Mermaids is among the ‘further resources’ listed in ‘Valuing All God’s Children, the Church of England’s guidance for Church of England schools on challenging homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying’. It should be noted that this list of resources is headed by the statement, ‘These are suggested rather than recommended, and the choice of resources is a decision to be made by the school that knows its unique context best.’ The diocese has never promoted Mermaids or enlisted it as an advisory body.

In the light of the concerns we raised, the Church of England’s Education Office wrote to all directors of education on 31 May to canvass feedback of experiences schools have had in accessing Mermaids training, ‘As we review lessons to be learnt from this I’d appreciate it if any of you who are aware of schools that have accessed external training from Mermaids or any other organisation in relation to transgender children could let me have any feedback about the quality and scope of the training.’ We have responded to this request.
Supplementaries

Q. What advice or guidance can be given around the confidentiality and safeguarding aspect here?

A. The Director of Education responded that *Valuing All God’s Children* is the guidance. There are a team of schools advisers who are available to offer support. Many of these cases go unreported and are dealt with in a professional manner.

Q. Will a full scale review take place with all interested parties?

A. The Director of Education confirmed a review is happening nationally. Locally lessons need to be learnt. It is a moot point as to what constitutes an interested party.

Q. This situation is a real worry for parents, please can the diocese take a full review of the recommendation?

A. The Director of Education would not comment on the material but affirmed that safeguarding is a top priority. There are different discussions taking place among the different organisations campaigning on such matters. As had already been mentioned there is an increase in assaults and we need to ensure safeguarding and the appropriate confidentiality.

Q8. Revd Canon David Banting (General Synod) to ask the Diocesan Bishop:

In view of the questions and disquiet around some details of the Bishop’s most recent Ad Clerum, what now is the status of the Ad Clerum and will it be revisited or revised in any way?

A.

For those who do not know Ad Clerum means simply ‘to the clergy’ and this question refers to a letter I recently sent all the clergy in the diocese. It is also posted on the website. I stand by what is written there, but if there are questions or even disquiet, then until I am told what they are, I am unable to respond. We could all talk to each other a bit more. The first I and the Director of Education knew about this situation was from the newspaper.

Supplementaries

Q. Is the Bishop aware that people have discussed the Ad Clerum and that there is no disquiet among many?

A. The Bishop confirmed he was aware of this.
Q. Can we express gratitude for the Ad Clerum?

A. The Bishop accepted the gratitude and stated that the Revd Canon David Banting has always discussed matters directly him. He thanked him for not stoking up the situation.

Q. Can we pass on our thanks to those who are currently supporting the young people in these situations?

A. The Bishop urged members to pray for the school and family and that a good way forward may be found.

Q9. Revd Canon David Banting (General Synod) to ask the Diocesan Bishop:

At least four Vicars and/or churches in our diocese have resigned or ‘left the Church of England’ in recent months or years. What reasons have been given and what has been the diocese’s response or engagement?

A.

Sadly, the number of clergy leaving the Church of England in recent years is slightly greater than this. As I am sure you will appreciate, it would be inappropriate for me to name anyone, and of course I do not know which particular clergy are being referred to here, though I have a reasonable idea about one or two.

What I can say, is that in every case where a priest has felt it right to leave the Church of England they have written to me generously and courteously, explaining their reasons and in each case I have done my utmost to ensure that, however sad the parting, we have left as friends. In every case I have offered to meet the person in question. This offer is usually taken up, but not always.

The reasons themselves vary, but although I have not had time to thoroughly research them, as I look back over fifteen years of episcopal ministry I would say the main reasons fall into three categories –

1. Disagreement with the direction of travel of the Church of England, particularly on matters to do with the ordination of women to the priesthood and the episcopate (this has been by far the biggest reason why clergy have left, including more than ten to join the Ordinariate) or human sexuality.

2. Frustration that the Church of England is moving too slowly to embrace changed attitudes towards human sexuality in society, such as same-sex marriage.

3. Burnout, and with it sometimes the loss of faith, or simply a growing lack of capacity to face the pressures and demands of ministry.
Finally, a church leaving the Church of England is also mentioned and if David doesn’t mind I will address this when I reply to Cat Trinder’s question in a minute.

Supplementaries

Q. Could you confirm the Church of England’s direction of travel?

A. The Bishop of Chelmsford responded to confirm that the disagreement formed broadly two types. The first was around women being accepted into the Episcopate. This was now a settled position although that was not accepted by some. The study guides referred to at the previous Synod are being circulated. Secondly is the position in respect of human sexuality. There is disagreement over the direction of travel here. Doctrine has not changed but there is fear in both areas that those who feel not enough has been done and those who feel too much has been done.

Q. Could you clarify the direction of travel?

A. The Bishop of Chelmsford confirmed that he honestly believed that those on both sides of the debate are under authority of Scripture. Every priest confirms this in the Declaration of Assent.

Q10. Cat Trinder (Havering) to ask the Diocesan Bishop:

The idea to plant 101 new Christian communities in Essex and east London over the next ten years sounds exciting. However, it is concerning that Immanuel Church Brentwood, a growing conservative evangelical church, is leaving the Church of England and another minister has resigned. What steps are being taken to reassure those who are faithful to Anglican doctrine that their ministry and church planting is valued and can continue to flourish?

A.

Immanuel Church, Brentwood was a church plant from St Peter’s Harold Wood and it was with great sadness that I received their decision not to renew the Bishop’s Mission Order that had enabled them to grow and flourish. Since David Banting and I worked hard together to enable this church to be planted in the first place, I know that he will share this sadness. The reasons given were about the direction of travel of the Church of England on matters to do with a number of issues to do with human sexuality. I do not think it was necessary for this church to leave, but I respect their decision and have wished them well and assured them of my prayers and of my hope that even though they are now outside the Church of England we will continue to work in partnership for the building of the kingdom of God and so that Christ may be made known. I can therefore give the assurance Cat is asking for that all who are faithful to Anglican doctrine are valued and we encourage every
parish in the diocese to rise to the challenge of establishing 101 new Christian communities in Essex and East London over the next 10 years. Every church of every tradition has a part to play in this. We also need each other.

Supplementaries

Q. What steps are being taken to assure those who have concerns?

A. The Bishop stated that the fact this conversation is taking place should provide assurance. At the local level Area Bishops, Archdeacons and Area Deans are having conversations with all traditions working together.

Q. What is the best way for this communication to take place?

A. The Bishop of Chelmsford confirmed he would prefer conversation and that his door, as well as those of his colleagues, is always open. If any Church is not being faithful to Scripture the Bishop needs to hear about it. We all need to take this responsibily.

Q. Is the Bishop aware that a Conservative Evangelical Church meets in the University of East London and is he also aware of the flourishing of the Church in Canning Town and other places?

A. The Bishop of Chelmsford confirmed that he was aware and that he had visited these Churches. He pointed out that there is no such thing as Anglican doctrine, there is the doctrine of the Church of England. We have a responsibility to one another and doing this well will be a great sign of hope.

CLOSE

The President recorded that recent by elections to fill casual vacancies on the General Synod had resulted in the Revd Canon Louise Williams, the Ven Elizabeth Snowden and the Revd Canon David Hague being elected to represent this Diocese.

The President closed the Synod.