

**DIOCESE OF CHELMSFORD
DIOCESAN SYNOD**

**Minutes of the 144th meeting of the Synod held on
Saturday 17 March 2018 at Chelmsford Cathedral**

PRESENT : The President and 78 Members

Opening worship was led by the Archdeacon of Southend and the Revd Canon Louise Williams.

1. NOTICES

The Chair drew attention to the date of Synod meetings in 2018 and 2019. The change of venue for the June 2018 meeting to the University of Essex was noted.

Also highlighted were the Lent Appeal and the stall for Essex Clergy Charity.

Amending Canons No 36 and 37 were promulgated by the Chair.

**2. MINUTES OF DIOCESAN SYNOD MEETING HELD 18
NOVEMBER 2017**

The minutes were approved.

The Revd Canon David Banting recorded his thanks to the Bishop of Chelmsford for responding to his point on including explicit reference to mutual flourishing within the documents for the appointment of the Bishop of Bradwell.

3. PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

The text of the Presidential Address can be downloaded from here:

<http://www.chelmsford.anglican.org/news/article/support-our-lent-appeal>

4. GROWING NEW CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES

The Chair invited the Bishop of Barking to introduce the item.

The Bishop of Barking emphasised the point that we need more Church not less. This item would detail our strategy for achieving this. There is an increasing challenge over how much to invest in this area. The scale of the opportunity is enormous. We have a lot to learn in respect of methodology, giving and practice. Grant money had been awarded from the Church Commissioners to support this project and the Diocese would be applying for further funding to grow the project.

The Chair suspending Standing Orders and the Bishop of Barking introduced the Director of the Church Planting Projects, Joel Gowen.

Joel Gowen expressed that there are differences in how people think about Church planting, but ultimately it was hoped that this could happen everywhere and for everyone. There are six essential questions around Church planting in the diocese:

- Why? This was grounded in our theological understanding and the reality of the population growth projected within the Diocese. We cannot be a Transforming Presence from a distance, there is a real and present need.
- What? The aim is to plant new organically reproducing Christian communities which are a transforming presence across Essex and East London.
- Who? The identification of planters is crucial. There is a need for greater diversity. Focus was also being given on ensuring a supportive network of accountability.
- Where? Where is God already at work and how do we join in? There were a number of potential further Church plants identified.
- When? The aim is to have 101 new Christian communities by 2028. This would result in a 1.2% to 1.4% increase in the size of the Church in the Diocese assuming no further decline across all existing churches and assuming new Christian communities averaging 50 people.

He then set out some ways in which the Diocese will continue to respond. Prayer was central as was continuing support for the existing Church plants. An application for a further amount of funding from the Strategic Development Fund will be made. He encouraged everyone to think about how they could respond to the need to plant new Churches.

The Challenge is a big one, but we have a big God.

The Chair invited members to make brief comments or ask questions.

It was noted that the St Cedd's Centre for Pioneer Ministry, based in Collier Row, was beginning its second course.

One member asked whether there was support in terms of planning issues for new housing areas, particularly where there is local opposition. Joel Gowen confirmed that he was working with the Diocesan Mission in Regeneration Adviser. A document was being prepared to understand the planning process and how to input.

It was also highlighted how important social media was in raising awareness of our message.

5. GOOD NEWS STORY: UTC CHAPLAINCY

The Archdeacon of West Ham introduced the Chaplain to the University Technical College in Beckton, Shermara Fletcher.

Members were treated to a performance by the College's Gospel Choir.

Shermara Fletcher explained that the Chaplaincy took a missional approach to ministry. People from different faiths and different backgrounds had come together under the umbrella of the Chaplaincy. The Chaplaincy aims to support the Transforming Presence strategy, particularly in inhabiting the world distinctively and serving with accountability in the local community.

The Chaplaincy began by listening to students and staff. It developed four strands; the Gospel Choir, Agape Prayers, a community organising programme and Jumu'ah Prayers.

This year the Chaplaincy has been given a designated space within the College. Some students involved with the Chaplaincy gave their reflections on being part of it.

6. MULTI-ACADEMY TRUSTS

The Chair welcomed the Chief Executive of the Vine Schools Trust, John Crane, who explained that there were sixteen schools currently part of the Trust and six more on the way.

John Crane introduced the Headteacher of one of the schools in the Trust, the Mistley Norman Primary School, Karen Jones. She explained the recent history of the school, which was placed in special measures, and how it had improved to 'requires improvement'. The school were developing a vision of excellence which was focused on the children and developing their faith. This had partly been done by weaving the Christian message in to lessons, rethinking collective worship and developing a link with their parish church.

The Priest in Charge of the benefice of Mistley and Manningtree with Bradfield expressed the importance of Churches building constructive links with their schools.

In terms of future developments the school is considering prayer spaces, child led worship and more involvement with the local community. The Headteacher spoke of how important the Trust had been in this journey and that each of the schools within the Trust was equally valued.

7. EDUCATION AND MISSION: SCHOOLS, CHURCHES & FAMILIES

The Chair invited the Diocesan Director of Education, Revd Tim Elbourne, to address the Synod.

He explained that Serving with Accountability did not just involve each school and the Church, but to the children, parents, government and local community.

There is a commitment to developing character. The Trusts had become shareholders in 36 other schools and this was an opportunity to expand mission and ministry.

He asked members to briefly discuss how the Church meets with children and families in their local area.

The Chair reinstated Standing Orders.

The Archdeacon of West Ham, Chair of the Diocesan Board of Education, paid tribute to the Education team. He then moved the motion:

'This Synod:

i) Note the Diocesan Board of Education mission statement: go more deeply, range more widely, relate more closely

ii) Affirm the work of the diocesan Vine Schools Trust, welcome the more recent development of new partnerships with other Multi Academy Trusts, and note the extended opportunities these partnerships provide for churches and schools to engage

iii) Require Mission and Ministry Units and local churches to give due priority to their work with their local schools and colleges, including exploration of new models and provision for chaplaincy in schools.'

The following members spoke in the debate on this motion:

Revd Peter Hillman (Bishop's Nomination)

Revd David Lower (St Osyth)

Revd Ruth Patten (Dunmow and Stansted)

Bishop of Chelmsford

Revd James Rodley (Harlow)

Revd Canon David Banting (General Synod)

Larry Morris (Havering)

Diana Bengé Abbott (Bishop's Nomination)

Colin Setchfield (Waltham Forest)

The points made during the debate were as follows:

- What support are the DBE giving to those who work with non-Church schools? *The Chair of the DBE clarified that the Education team do provide support in such cases, although obviously they are primarily focused on Church Schools and there are limitations on resources.*
- The motion 'requires' action under point 3, could we change that to acknowledge the primacy of the local Church? *The motion goes on to ask MMUs to give 'due priority' to mission with schools, it is up to them what this would look like.*
- A group of parishes in Dunmow and Stansted Deanery had appointed a Missioner to work in schools. It is early days in the project, but the signs are positive. Members were welcome to get in touch to find out more detail.
- We should stick with the word 'require' because a culture change is required. Schools need to take more a central place in mission and ministry.
- We need to get away from any ideas that mission to schools is just about getting people to fill pews. They should be seen as an opportunity for Fresh Expression.
- A good relationship with a school can do great things, a member shared their experience of how it linked to the Church holiday club, Christingle services and other opportunities.

- The organisation 'Explore Marriage' visit secondary schools and share the importance of marriage. The response from children is amazing and it is a great way to share the Gospel. *The Chair of the DBE noted this.*
- A member spoke of a different model of Chaplaincy in Colchester. Nine of the fourteen schools have Chaplains who are lay members of local congregations. The impact is invaluable, whether the Chaplaincy is paid, voluntary. Christian Youth Outreach would be happy to support the development of such Chaplaincies. *The Chair of the DBE noted this.*
- Does the Vine Schools Trust welcome schools of all success levels and abilities? *The Chair of the DBE clarified that the Trust has welcomed a good number of schools in need of improvement, but it does welcome outstanding schools as well.*

Members voted on the motion. The motion was carried.

8. BISHOP'S COUNCIL AND FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORTS

Paper DS(2018)03 was received.

Members also received the Annual Briefing for Parishes for 2017.

9. QUESTIONS

Q.1: Revd Canon David Banting (General Synod) to ask the Diocesan Bishop:

What lessons are there for Chelmsford diocese to be learned or reaffirmed from the publication of the Carlile Report (Safeguarding) and from the Independent Review by Sir Philip Mawer on the Sheffield nomination?

A:

For the benefit of Synod members who might not be completely familiar with the references in this question: the Carlile Report refers to the independent review by Lord Carlile QC into the way the Church of England dealt with a complaint of sexual abuse against the late Bishop George Bell. Sir Philip Mawer's report into the nomination to the See of Sheffield relates to the episcopal appointment process and the application of the five guiding principles. To be clear, Sir Philip's report is not to do with safeguarding.

Both of these reports raise important issues and I encourage Synod members to acquaint themselves with the detail of them, along with Dame Moira Gibb's report on the Peter Ball case. In addition, no doubt there will also be much to reflect on as a result of the recent hearings by the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse.

Our Bishop's Council has not yet discussed these reports, but the Standing Committee will be looking at this for the future.

Supplementary

Q:

The audit on the Diocesan Safeguarding Team reported favourably, however, a formal complaint was made about the Diocesan Safeguarding Team and a subsequent report suggested changes. Have these been implemented?

A:

The information is not available to answer the question in detail. Some of the suggestions have been implemented, others are being considered further.

Q.2: Mary Durlacher (General Synod) to ask the Diocesan Bishop:

Given the recent debate on freedom of religion and belief in Westminster Hall and the Government's proposed 'Equality Oath' which would oblige doctors, teachers and other public office holders to swear to uphold a largely secular list of 'British values', what part can or did Bishop Stephen play in upholding the right to exercise or practise one's religion without Government interference - in other words freedom of religion from the efforts of aggressive secularism to confine the expressing of religious views to the private sphere?

A:

Debates conducted in Westminster Hall are overseen by the House of Commons and therefore the Bishop of Chelmsford would not have been able to take part in that debate.

The Church of England Mission and Public Affairs Division, based at Church House London, is currently engaged with the Government on issues around the British Values agenda and the Lords Spiritual regularly speak on these subjects and those of religious liberty and conscience in the House of Lords.

As this question does not relate to any current business of the Diocesan Synod, this question would be better addressed to the Mission and Public Affairs Division through questions at a future General Synod meeting, which the questioner can do being a member of General Synod.

Supplementary

Q:

How can we raise awareness of this issue and engage?

A:

It is extremely important that Christians engage with this. The Bishop of Chelmsford expressed his willingness to be held accountable for the opportunities he has to raise

awareness and speak for the Church. We would be happy to see discussions at Diocesan and Deanery Synods on this issue.

Q.3: Mary Durlacher (General Synod) to ask the Diocesan Bishop:

Are there any circumstances in which it remains acceptable for non-contiguous MMUs to be formed across deanery boundaries?

A:

There are no hard and fast rules of geography governing the formation of Mission and Ministry Units. Decisions are made locally and missiologically.

Actually I am somewhat surprised that with the exception of Chelmsford North and Chelmsford South so far all our MMUs have fitted into existing deanery boundaries. Perhaps we need to be more prepared to look outside the box.

However, if non-contiguous also means theologically uniform, which may be one possible driver for forming partnerships across boundaries, this would fly in the face of the pastoral and missional intentions of MMUs making them a comfortable place for the likeminded rather than an unsettling place for the pioneering. As it happens already formed and forming MMUs in Havering and Newham deaneries, for instance, already show us that parishes of different traditions can work successfully together in an MMU provided that the five guiding principles for our mutual flourishing are respected and cherished.

Moreover, I dare to believe this way of working will make us stronger, helping us to appreciate and learn from our differences and recognising, missiologically, that one size doesn't fit all.

Supplementary

Q:

Are there any reasons why non-contiguous units may not be acceptable?

A:

No, there are examples where we need to think outside of the box. However, the motivation must be the mission of God.

Questions taken together

Q.4: Larry Morris (Havering) to ask the Diocesan Bishop:

Whilst the bishop seeks to continue the debate on human sexuality, can he confirm that the newly ordained deacons this autumn will be required to live in line with the house of bishops guidelines on sexuality?

Q.5: Revd Kieran Bush (Waltham Forest) to ask the Diocesan Bishop:

Has the Diocesan position changed on the appointment of licensed ministers with regard to their public teaching on human sexuality?

A:

Thank you for these questions. They give me a welcome opportunity to pay tribute to the clergy in our diocese living faithful lives in civil partnerships: their commitment to the gospel and their faithfulness to the Church are to be commended.

No changes have been made either nationally or in the diocese to the questions asked of ordinands or licensed ministers with regard to issues in human sexuality, though there is some discussion of this at the national level and this will - I believe - form part of the work of the various groups looking into these matters.

The Criteria for Ordained Ministry says that “Candidates must be willing to live within the discipline of Issues in Human Sexuality” and it is the booklet “issues” which is still the standard reference point for them to read and discuss with the Diocesan Director of Ordinands.

No minister is at liberty to preach or teach what is contrary to the Christian faith as the Church of England has received it; but discussion on how matters of faith and doctrine may or may not develop and how their application is lived out (such as us explored in documents like Issues itself) is a legitimate interest for those whose responsibility it is to teach the faith.

Supplementary

Q:

How content is the Bishop with having a curate licensed in this Diocese who openly contradicts the Church of England’s guidelines?

A:

The Bishop of Chelmsford confirmed he was not in a position to answer the question as he was not aware of the case the questioner was referring to. In any case it was inappropriate to discuss specific cases at Synod.

Supplementary

Q:

Does the Bishop have any plans for issuing of teaching material on traditional marriage?

A:

There are no plans for this, the National Church have produced material for this purpose.

Q.6: Cat Trinder (Havering) to ask the Diocesan Bishop:

At Diocesan synod on 11th March 2017, following the General Synod where the House of Bishop's report on Marriage and Same Sex Relationships after the Shared Conversations (GS 2055) had been debated but not taken note of, Bishop Stephen told us in his address that he was "planning to meet with gay and lesbian Christians in the diocese to listen to their voices more closely". As part of these conversations, did the Bishop meet with anyone from Living Out, an organisation of Christian brothers and sisters who experience same sex attraction, are committed to living biblically faithfully and endeavour to support gay Christians to do the same and churches to be loving, welcoming places?

A:

I have not met formally with any members of Living Out, though I have heard and met with people associated with this group and the approach they take and it has been extremely helpful in enlarging my understanding of the range of views on these issues.

Supplementary

Q:

Would the Bishop of Chelmsford be happy to meet with representatives from 'Living Out'?

A:

The Bishop of Chelmsford confirmed that he would be happy to do so.

CLOSE The President closed Synod.