DIOCESE OF CHELMSFORD
DIOCESAN SYNOD

Minutes of the 147th meeting of the Synod held on
Saturday 16 March 2019 at the Chelmsford Cathedral

PRESENT : The President and 99 Members

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

The President opened the Synod with prayers for those affected by the terrorist attack in Christ Church, New Zealand. He then invited the Archdeacon of Harlow to lead the opening worship.

1. NOTICES

The Chair drew attention to the notices on the day paper. Filming would take place during the Presidential Address only. The presence of the bookstall was also highlighted.

2. MINUTES OF DIOCESAN SYNOD MEETING HELD 17 NOVEMBER 2018

The minutes were approved.

3. AMENDING CANON NUMBER 38

The Chair proclaimed Amending Canon No 38 and explained that this related to revised provision for ecumenical collaboration.

4. PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

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


5. MISSION AND MINISTRY UNITS

The Bishop of Bradwell introduced the item. He shared a personal experience of being challenged on listening to Jesus rather than Diocesan directives. Jesus desires the Church to be one and people need to be challenged on how they fulfil this desire. Jesus sent people out two by two. Mutual support is not something that was invented by the Parish Share Review Group, but is a biblical command. Practice by early Church communities showed the strong supporting the weak. These are all a
practical necessity, not limited to a Biblical concept. In other Dioceses the way to approach challenges over ministry deployment was to simply tell the parish in vacancy they will not be getting another priest. We want to have a bottom up process and working together we can make a difference.

The Revd Vanessa Conant was invited to share the experience of the Mission and Ministry Unit (MMU) comprising three parishes in Waltham Forest Deanery. The following points were highlighted:

- It had been 18 months since the MMU had been commissioned.
- The MMU included a diverse blend of church tradition, Anglo Catholic and Charismatic Evangelical.
- The MMU originated from a shared concern over poverty and knife crime in the local area. This led to the Churches helping to form Waltham Forest Citizens. This has now spread to other social issues and there is a sense of solidarity in their work.
- There is strength in sharing of wisdom and sharing troubles. The MMU has led to shared resourcing, for example, a Finance Officer who helps the parishes to look to get the best deals and is getting finance systems in line.
- The Churches are planning to share in two new Church plants and a new children’s work initiative.

The Archdeacon of West Ham spoke about the process of MMU formation across the Diocese. The map provided in paper DS(2019)01 showed an uneven picture across the Diocese. This is because in some places the formalisation as an MMU was based on a long standing arrangement. In other places there is a history of planting Churches in an oppositional way. Urban areas can also experience difficulty in MMU formation. However, many of those not currently in an MMU are not that far away from being approved and commissioned. There were various different models in MMUs, from Minister Models to ones based on parity.

The Revd Margaret Davis was invited to share about the formation of Saffron Walden Deanery MMU. The highlights from this were:

- The MMU was commissioned on 16 October 2016 and was the first MMU in the Diocese to be commissioned.
- The Deanery had reduced from 9 stipendiary clergy to 6 and this had been supported through a good Deanery plan and process.
- All parishes in the Deanery were either in a proposed or existing multi-parish benefice.
- There is a wide range of traditions in the Deanery and it was felt that the Deanery becoming the MMU would avoid adding in another layer for parishes to relate to.
- The MMU has a Deanery meeting four times a year and has four workstreams. Each of these has a lay and clergy lead. This is all done under the oversight of the Area Dean and Lay Chair.
- Through this process the sense of support has grown. Examples of how this was benefiting the Deanery included a volunteer Buildings Adviser and Gospel
weekends where teams of evangelists had been able to share their faith away from their parishes.

The Archdeacon of Chelmsford spoke on some of the common blockages to MMU development and examples of MMUs that were tackling these. These included:

- Differences in style, theology and stance on particular issues – the example of the North Romford PiMM was given as to how MMUs can exist with difference.
- Differences in context – the example of the North Chelmsford MMP was given to demonstrate how very small rural communities can work alongside larger, more urban communities.
- Parishes that ‘cannot pay their way’ – this can be a real challenge but the Presidential Address had offered some reflections on how this can be addressed.
- Geography, dispersed communities with poor transport links – The Compass Group of Churches was given as an example which included 12 parishes, some of which were very small communities but had managed to form a network of Evangelism Enablers and hold an Alpha Course together.

The Archdeacon of Chelmsford also shared some input from the Youth Synod meeting. The Youth Synod believed that formation of MMUs is possible and they encouraged people to engage with different backgrounds, communicating stories of where this had happened. They perceived a benefit in getting to know other young people in neighbouring Churches to help prevent isolation. They also stressed that the ownership of the MMU development needs to go way beyond leaders of the Churches and engage everyone in the conversation. There was some sense of frustration that Churches get stuck and are resistant to change. It was also noted that few of those attending the meeting had heard about MMUs. Copies of the comments from the meeting of the Youth Synod are appended to these minutes.

The Archdeacon of Chelmsford ended by reflecting on Romans 12:5, we are all members of a body and we need to think through what this means.

The Revd Susan Iskander, John Bloomer and Revd Dan Pierce contributed with the experience of their MMU, the North Chelmsford Mission and Ministry Partnership. The main points from this contribution were:

- The MMU covered an area which comprised rural and urban areas.
- A Bishop’s Mission Order had been granted to support Church to a large new housing area within the MMU.
- The MMU was formed from scratch.
- It began in prayer, raising awareness among parishes and looking at possible options. There was a discussion on mission priorities.
- A MMU Council was formed and this is an important link between the PCCs within the MMU, Deanery and the Diocese.
- A series of networks have been set up, for example, a network of parish treasurers.
- There was transparency in parish finances and the MMU has developed its own approach to parish share calculations.
- Support is given during vacancies.
• They had an MMU coordinator who helped to form the MMU identity.
• The next areas of focus include strategy and training together.
• The main benefits of the MMU included; Being rooted in prayer together; building the networks & relationships; a major project to focus on; sharing ministry resources; new parish share process; clergy and laity working together and receiving generous financial support.
• The main challenge highlighted was a sense of loss of identity. This has been responded to through a sharing of core purpose and having principles to underpin these than can be cherished.
• We are not many outlets of one brand, but departments that make up one organisation. We are ‘we’.

The Bishop of Chelmsford thanked all who had spoken in the item. He stressed that the deadlines proposed in the motion were believed to be realistic. There is an urgent challenge to address sustainability and Church planting through MMUs. There is room for mutual flourishing, no one size fits all. The critical thing is to have a plan.

The Bishop of Chelmsford moved the motion:

‘This Synod:
  a) support and celebrate the work that has been done across the diocese to develop Mission and Ministry Units,
  b) recognise the way this is enabling us to provide a sustainable ministry in all of our parishes and work together to be more missioanlly effective and plant new worshipping communities; and
  c) ask the Area Mission and Pastoral Committees to give Bishop’s Council a timetable and plan on MMU formation across their Episcopal Area by March 2020 with a view to concluding MMU formation by the end of 2020.’

The following members spoke in the debate on the motion:

Diana Benge Abbott (Bishop’s Nomination)
Mark Tiddy (Bishop’s Nomination)
Revd Canon David Banting (General Synod)
Bishop of Colchester
Mary Durlacher (General Synod)
Revd Clive Hillman (Hadleigh)
Revd Canon Jenny Tomlinson (General Synod)
Canon Gordon Simmonds (Rochford)
Piers Northam (Harlow)
Canon Roger Ennals (Colchester)

The contributions made, with responses in italics, were as follows:

• One member spoke of the privilege it was to work across parishes in an MMU.
• The Youth Synod felt it was important for awareness for MMU to be raised, telling stories and successes are important. Churches should not be forced in the MMUs but engage. There was opportunity for partnership on trips and that
would mean youth leaders learn from one another. They encouraged MMUs to form from different backgrounds.

- The word ‘unit’ sounds formal and imposed. **MMU is a general term, we want people to come up with their own titles.**
- We are all called to be good neighbours.
- We need to aim for self-sufficiency.
- Could we look again at local ordained ministry and the principle of tithing? **We do have Locally Deployed Self Supporting Ministers and we will return to the principle of tithing.**
- We are grateful of the views of young people and it was particularly interesting to hear their thoughts on MMUs being a way to end isolation. It was requested that the Youth Synod’s views be recorded in the minutes.
- This is an excellent initiative, but we need to recognise that those MMUs which have been commissioned have found a way forward. There are differences in theology involved. The truth will make us free and we have a received truth and an emerging truth. If we change people’s hearts we will be generous. **We do recognise the challenges, but these issues have been addressed in a number of MMUs which have been commissioned. The Five Guiding Principles are a challenge to make this happen.**
- Where did the MMU plan for Hadleigh Deanery come from, as it bears no resemblance to the one being discussed? **Yes, we are aware that the Deanery plans are changing. The Bradwell Area has been through a difficult time, but there is now a settled team in place.**
- This is a great idea, but the people that need to hear it are not here and do not understand the need. For around a 1000 years we have told parishes that they will get a priest, now the pattern has changed and it is difficult for people to understand how we have got here.
- One member spoke of the training course they had led within three MMUs and these had formed valuable networks of unlicensed lay people who value working together. MMUs may overestimate what they will do in a year and underestimate what they will do in five years. When we look back we may be surprised to see how much God has done.
- The deadline of the end of 2020 is too soon. There are areas where MMUs have not been formed and this is not through lack of trying. There is a good deal of fear and boredom about these proposals and adding too close a date will make matters worse.
- Relationships and trust are important to the development of an MMU.
- This is an organic process and when priests apply for posts in this Diocese in the future they will be expecting to have MMUs.

Gordon Simmonds (Rochford) proposed an amendment to replace the date of ‘2020’ with the date of ‘2025’, in both instances where they appeared in the motion.

The Bishop of Chelmsford responded to the amendment to the motion. He stated that if this were happening a year ago he may have agreed with the amendment, however, too long a time frame has clearly been given and this has led to the boredom mentioned in the debate. There is also an urgent financial need and if we do not progress we will need to make difficult decisions in a few years time. He also added that ‘conclude’ does not necessary mean that every single parish will be in an
MMU. He confirmed he would be willing to extend the final deadline for the completion to the end of 2021.

Gordon Simmonds agreed to withdraw his amendment on the basis of the extension put forward by the Bishop of Chelmsford. The Bishop of Chelmsford put forward his own amendment to replace the second reference in the motion to ‘2020’ with ‘2021’. The Bishop of Chelmsford moved the amendment.

Members of the Synod voted on the motion. The motion was carried with three recorded abstentions.

Members voted on the motion as amended:

THIS Synod:

a) support and celebrate the work that has been done across the diocese to develop Mission and Ministry Units,

b) recognise the way this is enabling us to provide a sustainable ministry in all of our parishes and work together to be more missionally effective and plant new worshipping communities; and

c) ask the Area Mission and Pastoral Committees to give Bishop’s Council a timetable and plan on MMU formation across their Episcopal Area by March 2020 with a view to concluding MMU formation by the end of 2021.

The motion was carried with four recorded abstentions.

6. NEW CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES

The Chair invited the Chief Executive and Diocesan Secretary, Joel Gowen, to address the Synod. Joel Gowen updated members on the progress of the initiative to grow 101 new Christian communities within the Diocese. In particular he highlighted:

- £2 million had been awarded by the National Church to support an initial wave of new Christian communities. Each one now had leaders appointed and were progressing at different speeds. St Francis Community Church in Beaulieu was probably the most advanced.
- There was a cohort of Lay Pioneer Ministers going through the St Cedd’s Centre for Pioneer Ministry. The Colchester Pioneer Hub was now up and running also.
- A second wave of National Church funding, amounting to £3.8 million, had been provided and will support a further 11 new Christian communities.
- We stated that this would be Church ‘everywhere for everyone’. One of the new communities is in a coastal town, another in a rural market town. Four of the communities are in socially deprived areas. Five of the priests involved are from the Anglo Catholic tradition.
- The Revd Canon Dave Wade has been appointed as the Head of Development of New Christian Communities.
- All this work still leaves 80 new Christian communities to be found. The thought of the multiplication of work is overwhelming, but we will get there through the
members of Churches in the Diocese. This cannot be achieved centrally so the aim is to have three new communities in each Deanery over the next ten years. Looking at it this way makes it achievable.

The Bishop of Chelmsford paid tribute to Joel Gowen. He pointed out that a key next step will be at this year’s visitation services. After the usual formalities, there will be a presentation on the vision behind this and begin to work on how this might look. MMUs are key to this developing further. There will be a focus on Mission Priority Areas.

Members were invited to comment or ask questions. The following members did:

- Diana Lowry (Epping Forest and Ongar)
- Mary Durlacher (General Synod)
- Revd Canon David Hague (Havering)
- Revd Clive Hillman (Hadleigh)
- Revd Canon David Banting (General Synod)
- Revd Tim Goodbody (Dunmow and Stansted)
- Revd Dr Susan Lucas (Newham)
- Revd Canon Philip Ritchie (Chelmsford South)

The following points, with responses in italic, were made:

- One member offered the suggestion of engaging with Sunday Assemblies.
- How linked to finance are the new Christian communities? It was noted that recent Church Army research shows that the average size of a Messy Church congregation is larger than an average weekly congregation, yet generally run on a very small budget. One size does not fit all, some require a lot of money, others very little.
- The St Cedd’s Pioneer Centre focuses on forming missionary disciples irrespective of context. The training is offered by the Church Mission Society.
- The language we use in this area can often be limited to that used by one tradition. How can we better use language to make people better see this?
- Are we talking about Anglican communities? Many ‘dechurched’ people are from other communities. The expectation of the funding provided is that they are Anglican, but it is the heart of Christ to be one. The Pioneer Hub in Colchester offers a broader training.
- The hardest topic to talk about in communities is housing development. Can the assistance be enhanced? Housing is an issue for us as a nation. The Church needs to be at the forefront of this and prophetically oppose ‘nimbysim’, especially supporting schemes for affordable housing.
- A concern was expressed at how the new communities may fit within the governance systems of the Church of England. In response the illustration of the new community in Beaulieu was offered as an example of how this had been well integrated. The Bishop’s Mission Order had offered a structure of support and maybe in the future this will become a new parish. In terms of financing and sustainability that is an area we need to have greater focus on.
- One member shared the experience of two church plants becoming separate parishes within a Team Ministry. It was encouraging to see the fruits of this development.
7. FINANCE UPDATE

The Chief Executive and Diocesan Secretary spoke to this item. He showed a simple table to demonstrate the financial challenges facing the Diocese. This showed:

- The income in 2018 amounted to £20.7 million, whilst the budget income figure was £22 million.
- The income did increase in real terms, but not in pace with inflation.
- Expenditure was more or less what was budgeted for.
- This resulted in £1.4 million variance. This had increased on the 2017 figure, £771,000.
- £200,000 of transitional funding will be used to reduce the deficit to £1.2 million.
- We do have investments that can cover the deficit, but every time we do that we reduce the pool from which we can generate income or increase our missional footprint.
- One of the responses to this has been to look at Ministry Strategy.
- The Finance Working Group have been looking at a wide range of issues including; processes, roles and responsibilities, joined up decision making, communications, training and generosity. There is a lot more to do.
- At the June Synod meeting the 2020 Budget will be discussed and invited for approval. It has to address some of these challenges and therefore will look a bit different to previous ones.
- We are still in a good position because of our foresight, but we need to improve.
- Members were invited to get in touch if they had an idea.

Members were invited to give their reaction to the presentation. The following members addressed the Synod:

Revd Susan Lucas (Newham)
Revd Canon Nick Rowan (Rochford)
Revd Canon Darren Barlow (Thurrock)
Andrew Holt (Witham)
Revd Katie de Bourcier (Hinckford)
Nick Ellis (Hinckford)
Lesley Judd (Havering)

The contributions made, with responses in italics, are as follows:

- The term ‘Catholic’ means we are all part of a whole and belong to each other in a reality which is sacramental. God always gives us enough. We need to hold the reality of God’s economy with these challenges.
- Will the Diocese look at the finances of parishes? There are a number running at a deficit. It was noted that there had been a number of illustrations of faithful parishes who had depleted their reserves. Some, not all, will need to work in closer partnership with other parishes.
- It was requested that greater clarity be given to the role of the Deanery in parish share? It was noted that the Finance Working Group are looking at this very question as part of their consideration of roles and responsibilities.
• The importance of prayer and trusting in God was emphasised. The example of one parish gathering to pray through their financial challenges was given. Could this become a Diocesan wide prayer initiative?
• The new share scheme meant that parishes had the opportunity to understand the finances in a way they could not do under the previous scheme. This resulted in greater engagement in a grouping of ten parishes.
• Parishes will sometimes encounter urgent maintenance requirements, which can lead to depletion of reserves. This needs to be taken into account.
• One member spoke of how their parish had prayed and tithed through a deficit budget and come out with a surplus the following year.

8. BISHOP’S COUNCIL AND FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORTS

Paper DS(2019)02 was received.

9. QUESTIONS

Q.1: Canon Robert Hammond (General Synod and Chelmsford North) to ask the Chief Executive and Diocesan Secretary:

To ask the Chief Exec how many parishes in the Diocese have now signed up to the Parish Giving Scheme, how many regular givers are there and how does this compare to other Dioceses?

A:

We currently have 87 parishes in PGS with 833 donors. This means we have 19% of our parishes signed up. Of these, 850 are monthly givers, 36 are quarterly givers and 19 are annual givers. 93% of the donations are gift aided and 56% of donations have gone up with inflation (which donors can opt in to). The average weekly gift in Chelmsford Diocese is £17.66 (excluding gift aid). The national average weekly gift is £17.46.

A table will be published with the minutes showing comparison to other Dioceses.
The data on PGS uptake shows that good progress has been made with almost 1 in 5 parishes signed up to the service across Chelmsford Diocese. However, there remains huge scope for development: for example, Portsmouth Diocese started their PGS project 2 months later than Chelmsford and have achieved a 61% uptake. Synod members are encouraged to promote the service within their deaneries and parishes.

Supplementary

Q. What practical steps are being taken to increase the uptake?

A. Every member of Synod has a role to play in raising awareness of the project. There are central resources available through a pack which can be provided upon request. As part of the Finance Working Group’s deliberations it will be considering the communication and training around the promotion of the PGS.

Q.2: Revd Canon David Banting (General Synod) to ask the Diocesan Bishop:

Background

This question is part of research into ‘continuing education’ around The Five Guiding Principles across the dioceses, on behalf of the Implementation & Dialogue Group (IDG), which is due to report to the House of Bishops (HoB) this year, an interim report by May
and a final report by December. The IDG was set up (and a FAOC Study Guide published) in early 2018 by the House of Bishops after the Archbishops had referred the situation surrounding the appointment to the See of Sheffield in early 2017 to the Independent Reviewer (IR), whose Report was delivered in September 2017. The questions revolved around the outworking of the Five Guiding Principles and the commitment to Mutual Flourishing that lay at the heart of the ‘Settlement’ for Women Bishops. The IR’s Report and the IDG’s Report focus and will focus the Church, not on the Settlement itself, but on the understanding and implementation of The Five Guiding Principles in the spirit of ‘reception’ and in the interests of securing the peace.

Question
How and to whom has the booklet published in early 2018 by the Faith & Order Commission (FAOC), entitled The Five Guiding Principles – a Resource for Study, been circulated and publicised in this diocese, and how and where has it been actively studied and purposefully used in training for those in ‘senior leadership roles’ in the Church?

A:

The five guiding principles provide the framework within which the whole Church of England honours legitimate difference and works well together so that every church can flourish. Adherence to and understanding of these principles is written into the job descriptions of all senior clergy in this diocese and the report from the Faith and Order Commission into these principles is an invaluable guide. Furthermore, all Ordinands receive training in the 5 Guiding Principles and this is led by the Director of Ordinands using the Resource for Study. In this way we hope that every priest in the diocese understands what the 5 Guiding Principles are and their importance to our mutual flourishing.

Supplementary

Q. The answer only references Ordinands, what about senior leaders in the Diocese and appointment panels before all appointments?

A. Yes, we want to make clear our commitment to this and the booklet will be circulated to all Area Deans and Lay Chairs.

Q. Are there any figures on the appointment of Conservative Evangelical clergy?

A. Although not specifically relevant to the original question, yes, these are available.

CLOSE

The President paid tribute to the Revd Canon Jenny Tomlinson for her ministry in the Diocese, including Adviser on Women’s Ministry, the Colchester Area Mission and Ministry Adviser, Chair of the Share Review Group and lead on the Bullying and Harassment Adviser.

The President closed the Synod.
If churches worked together:

- give young people a better experience
- youth leaders could learn from others with more experience
- easier to invite friends to - more of a ting/buzz
- saw new sides of church through partnerships
- wider family engagement
- could join together for trips + Soul Survivor, Focus etc.
- make more Christian friends for smaller youth groups - support!
- focus on ice breaker activities + relationship building
- coming together for outreach - could pool youth leaders.
- can help close age gaps - could do joint Bible-going deeper in faith groups

What stops us?

- how can we make people mingle?
- got to be more than just leaders.
- people resistant to change.
Encourage sharing of success from nodes to next nodes.

- Better focus on traction (to know how far you went).
- Encourage Churups (a term for entrepreneurship) to meet potential investors.
- Make it open to public to invite anyone who is interested in contributing.
- Create different categories of names to raise awareness of paste + existence of name.
churches share ideas

* how do we make sure everyone is aware on what is going on within all in the unit?

* difference in beliefs, groups of people
  
  elderly + young
  up-beat + tradition

* some game that every person - young and old - can come together and share different views.

* family services - includes everyone

* issues - money - some churches pay shares, others don’t

* telling stories of where it has worked

* being stuck, unable to see the whole picture