

Bishop's Address by Rt Revd Vivienne Faull

In her address to Diocesan Synod on 2 March 2019, Bishop Viv spoke of how churches across the Diocese can be safe places in times of turmoil and uncertainty.

Speaking of the announcement by Honda to close its plant in Swindon, Bishop Viv emphasised the role that the Church must play in providing support for those affected.

She said: *"Our churches can be safe places where people can express both their anger and their fears, whether in pastoral encounters or in worship."*

"It is in worship we proclaim our faith in what God in Christ wants our world to be, and where we lament at our failure to make Christ's rule a reality. So, with this news, we lament the loss of good jobs."

Bishop Viv went on to explore the spiritual gift of lamenting, considering how it was exercised by prophets, by the Psalmist, by Job, and by Jesus as he wept over the city. But alongside this need to lament, she said that there must also be the offer of hope, of peace and of justice.

She said: *"For the coming many months may we, whether from South Glos or North Wilts or the city of Bristol, may all of us hold Swindon and its people close to our hearts, that they may know our care for them, and our holding out Christ's hope to and for them."*

"For each of us, all of us, are the Diocese of Bristol."

Downloads and Links

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DIOCESAN SYNOD REPORT

2 March 2019

"Best Diocesan Synod Ever"

In an engaging Synod, which was described by a number of people as the best Diocesan Synod they had attended, members participated with energy and generated a lot of questions.

A wide range of topics were brought before members, from local issues to global items. During the session, members were able to take part in discussions around the closure of Swindon's Honda plant, the celebrations of the Uganda Link's 50 years and raising awareness of action we can take in relation to the environment.

With a number of new members still settling in following the start of the new triennium, it was also an opportunity for many to learn more about aspects of wider governance, such as General Synod motions. There was a strong desire to engage with the process and it was encouraging to see constructive and challenging questions raised as members rose to the task of involving themselves in the discussions.

Creation care and the environment

Recognising the significant impact of climate change and the part which churches can play in caring for the environment is one of the Five Marks of Mission.

Sarah Wiggins, Global Advocacy Leader with Tearfund, talked about what individuals and churches can do to care for creation. She was supported by Martin Gainsborough, in his role as Diocesan Environmental Officer.

Sarah told Synod that the Church has a special role to play in protecting the planet. She said: *"Communities are looking to us to see how we will respond to the issues of our time. Time and time again, secular organisations say that Christians need to be in that space to talk about values."*

"God wants to reveal himself and his promises through nature. I believe there is hope, but all the work that we have done to eradicate poverty is at risk, because we are not taking care of God's world."

The Diocese has registered to become an EcoDiocese and there were lots of constructive ideas, particularly around renewable energy such as solar power in churches.

Simon Pugh-Jones, chairman of the DAC, told Synod: *“The DAC encourages parishes to demonstrate how they are engaging with environmental issues; we would like to be in a position where we insist that engagement with the environment is the default position.”*

Parishes are now being encouraged to take action to become EcoChurches and a policy and strategy is to be put in place. The Synod will look at this again in November.

Bristol-Uganda Link at 50

As we celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Diocese of Bristol's link with Uganda, Chris Dobson gave an excellent presentation on the continuing ministry between the two places, with contributions from those who had experienced it.

He told Synod members: *“The link is about friendship and relationship building.”*

“The point of going to Uganda is not to ask ‘what can we give?’ but ‘what can we learn?’ We go in order to learn and not to tell them what they should be doing.”

Matt Holman, a youth worker from St Edyth's Sea Mills, and 16-year-old Emily Gwinn shared their experiences from traveling to Uganda with the Diocese last year as part of trip with young people.

Emily said: *“It is not something I could imagine myself doing but it is an experience I will treasure forever. It has helped me to grow in confidence and to become more involved in my own church.”*

Jones Mutemwakwenda, Priest-in-Charge at All Hallows Easton, is originally from Zambia. He echoed that, as an African, he was heartened by the desire of those in the link to focus on friendship and said that he would encourage everyone to take the time to nurture relationships with those in Uganda, as he knows how much it can mean to those in both countries.

Members considered how their own churches could engage with the link, with many commenting on the need to ensure young people were given the opportunity to go.

General Synod

Ed Shaw, House of Laity, gave a report on the General Synod, which had met a week earlier. He outlined what had been described as “the evangelism Synod” with a focus on estates evangelism, Growing Faith amongst young people in churches, schools and households and the State of the Nation debate.

Ed explained that there had been some surprisingly lively debates (e.g. setting parochial fees and the workings of the Crowns Nomination Commission) whereas the Pastoral Principles on welcoming LGBTI+ were received warmly but without controversy. Ed himself is on the Pastoral Advisory Group.

Ed praised the involvement of young people, including Sophie Mitchell from Bristol, who stands on the youth council. Along with a other Bristol members, she was invited to speak twice in debates.

Elections for Synod reps will be in 2020, and Ed encouraged people to consider who might stand.

How Synods relate

Following a question at the previous Synod in November, Oliver Home, Diocesan Secretary, explained the process of how a parish could raise a motion which could eventually be debated by General Synod.

Giving an idea of timescales, he spoke about how motions could be raised from the PCC to a Deanery Synod, then to a Diocesan Synod before being heard and debated by members of the General Synod.

Oliver also encouraged members to report back from Diocesan Synod to the PCCs and Deanery Synods, to help communicate the issues and topics being considered.

Question Time

A number of excellent questions were raised by members during Question Time.

Following a question from David Tunley (Swindon), Bishop Viv said she would conduct a more wider ranging review over the possibility of House for Duty posts.

Bill Brookshaw (Kingswood and South Glos) asked about the implications of parishes not meeting parish share requests; Bruce Finnamore warned that it would have a serious effect on the Diocese's ability to achieve its vision, particularly around vocations and growing leaders.

A written answer was given to a question around the setting of the salary for the new Director of Ministry Development post.

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