

DIOCESAN SYNOD REPORT MARCH 2011

The Birmingham Diocesan Synod met on Saturday 12th March at St Peter's Church, Harborne.

Canon Dr Paula Gooder gave a report on the February meeting of the General Synod.

Areas debated included:

- International Development
- Vision for the Church for the next quinquennium
- Parochial fees
- Baptism services and cultural relevance
- Marriage after divorce in relation to ordained ministry and ordination to Bishop
- The 'Mary Document' which considers the significance of Mary to the Anglican and Roman Catholic Churches

Year of the Bible update - Rev Pete Sainsbury

Various events planned including:

- Walk Through the Bible - Old Testament Sat 2nd April, New Testament Sat 8th October, StJohn's Ladywood
- The Bible in an Hour - various dates, first one is on Sat 26th March at St John's Harborne
- Art Competition for Church Primary Schools, closing date is Thursday 7th April

For more information visit the website www.yearofthebiblebirmingham.org or contact admin@christchurchsummerfield.org

Report and motion on Malawi, Rev Canon Peter Howell-Jones

We were informed that the Malawi Octave commences 13th March and that the Church in Malawi is celebrating its 150th Anniversary this year.

Parishes were thanked for generous support in 2010 and asked to maintain their giving but with the Diocesan target for 2011 reduced to £60,000, taking account of the current economic situation.

We are asked to continue to pray for the Anglican Church in Malawi and its Bishops. Also for the continuing development of the Birmingham Malawi Partnership, ongoing parish links, and for those planning to travel to Malawi as part of the Education Skills Share Team.

Women in the Episcopate

The Rev Canon Nigel Hand proposed and Rev Priscilla White seconded the motion:

That this Synod approve the proposals embodied in the draft Bishops and Priests (Consecration and Ordination of Women) Measure and in draft Amending Canon No. 30.

This motion relates to the Code of Practice.

Following speeches supporting the motion and also responses from the Conservative Evangelical and Catholic traditions generous time was given for synod to debate the motion. When the motion was put to the vote it was carried by large majorities in both the Houses of Clergy and Laity and by the Bishops.

Two following motions were then put to Synod *expressing disappointment that the contents of the Code of Practice will not be detailed until after the legislation is passed, and asking that sufficient and improved provision be made for those clergy, of whatever churchmanship, who are unhappy about serving under a woman as their Bishop, to enable them to remain within, and feel a valued part of the Church of England.* Following further debate both of these motions were voted against by large majorities.

Question to the Diocesan Director of Education

Mr Stephen Fraser (Yardley and Bordesley Deanery and Chair, House of Laity) asked a question regarding changes in the Education system which will incorporate the new English Baccalaureate. It appears that Religious Education will now become an optional subject, which is causing concern for the teaching profession, Local Government and the Church. Some RE teachers have already been issued with redundancy notices. What steps are being taken at Diocesan Level to encourage a change to the decision? Also what steps could individual churches and church members take to assist in this matter? The Director of Education, Jackie Hughes provided a paper outlining the steps she would be taking locally. The Chair of SACRE has sent the views of Birmingham SACRE to the Secretary of State. Bishop David is raising the issue both locally and in the House of Lords. It was suggested that lobbying the Secretary of State by PCCs, Deanery Synods, Foundation Governors or individual church members would add impetus to the Diocesan strategies. Stephen Fraser provided a suggested text for use in relation to this issue. We have to respond by the end of March.

Elden Small, 14th March 2011