

## **DIOCESAN SYNOD REPORT NOVEMBER 2010**

The Birmingham Diocesan Synod met on Saturday 20th November at Balsall Heath Church Centre.

The House of Laity met before the full Synod to consider some of the issues related to **Women in the Episcopate**.

This was so we could try to inform the Deanery Synod discussions which need to be held and reported to the Diocesan Synod by March 2011. There was some confusion over exactly what Deanery Synods should be discussing, as General Synod have already passed that the Church of England **will have** women bishops, but the Draft CODE OF PRACTICE doesn't now go to General Synod until 2012. So, we don't know what this will contain, but it will be statutory when approved. There will be a 'question and answer' session at the March 2011 Diocesan Synod with a debate and vote at a later date. We were reminded that the Deanery discussions can only inform on the issue but will have no actual force on the Diocesan Synod vote.

The Full Synod began with an update on **TRANSFORMING CHURCH** by Bishop Andrew. Most parishes have embraced the initiative, welcoming the consultants and the opportunities offered. There has been mostly positive feedback from both the parishes and the consultants.

The first two editions of TRANSFORM magazine have been produced and have been much appreciated.

The TRAINING CONFERENCES have been successful and well attended.

Parishes report how the initiative has helped them to: reflect and focus on where they are, become more accountable, develop new vision and ways of being church to serve the needs of the parish and community.

We need to make sure all TARGET FORMS have been returned. This will inform the Diocese of pressing issues it needs to consider in the future.

We were reminded that a TRANSFORMING CHURCH FUND is available and parishes are invited to apply for financial support when developing new initiatives.

A new CO-ORDINATOR has been appointed the **REV RHIANNON JONES**. Her priorities are to visit as many parishes as she can, listen to our stories and struggles to share with others and, where possible, find help and support.

Synod shared a time of worship which included the Licensing of the new Transforming Church Co-ordinator. In his Presidential Address Bishop David preached on The Great Commission - Matthew 28: 16 - 20 - As you go: as a person, as a Christian, as a Diocese, go together: to make disciples, to teach how to obey the Lord Jesus, to serve one another to transform the world.

We must use the resources available to us carefully, know the graciousness of the Lord in providing and releasing the practical resources and talents for our mission. There must be a willingness in this Diocese to serve sacrificially as disciples and to keep on growing. We must trust that Jesus will go with us in our adventure and we must be caught up in the Spirit to use the resources available to draw in others.

**COMMON FUND CALCULATION** Mr Phil Nunnerley (DBF Chair) moved on behalf of Bishop's Council that Synod :

1) notes and supports that:

- a) The Common Fund allocation for 2011 should be based on the current formula but with an increase in the fixed element to £12,000 and
- b) £100,000 of the Church Commissioners' Grant be withheld and applied in abatement of demands on poorer parishes drawing on criteria separately determined and agreed by Synod. (See attached sheet)

2) requests the Common Fund Review Working Party to continue to review options for 2012 both in respect of the constituents of the formula, the fixed element and use of the Church Commissioners Grant.

Discussion followed and some of the issues included:

- Should average number of communicants be used in the formula rather than average Sunday attendance to give a truer picture of a parish?

- The difficulty of persuading a parish in inter-regnum of the need to increase their common fund (Anthony Perry)
- The difficulty for poorer parishes to provide the evidence required in the Criteria when they don't have a parish administrator
- The Criteria are only recommendations
- Parishes who are using reserves to pay common fund - once their reserves are used up, what then?
- We have to find the fairest way of calculating the Common Fund for ALL parishes.

A fresh set of Common funds will be going out shortly.

The motion was carried with 1 against and 5 abstentions

The final session was a presentation on **FRESH EXPRESSIONS** by Bishop Graham Cray, Archbishops' Missioner and Leader of the Fresh Expressions Team. He shared examples of what is going on nationally and locally, bringing an inspiring picture of the Mixed Economy (where inherited forms of church and fresh expressions of church can support and work along side each other.) Some of the issues covered by Fresh Expressions:

- God's Spirit is on the move
- new types of church/congregations/ministers
- encouraged by church leaders, both ordained and lay
- will need help with training and resources
- congregations need to be encouraged to try Fresh Expressions
- Strong focus on MISSION
- re-imagining the Church and a commitment to the Mixed Economy
- do we need to change the times or even day of our worship? to fit in with the lifestyle of those we are trying to draw in?
- develop different ways of NETWORKING and CULTURE within our churches? to those more familiar with those outside church?
- need to identify spiritual needs of our communities
- remember much of what is central to us now is alien to many people who have never entered a church

Need new ways of thinking:

ATTRACTIVE METHOD - advertising ourselves and inviting others eg. Back to Church Sunday

ENGAGED METHOD - engage with the community and they will come to us

EMERGING METHOD - go to them and stay with them, creating NEW congregations

Examples:

- All Age After School Worship leading to a new midweek congregation planted based in the school
- Cell Networks on estates
- Deanery Youth Networks and congregations
- new Sister congregations to existing traditional service growing out of Alpha courses

NB Fresh Expressions is not rebranding existing work with new names, it is proclaiming faith afresh in each generation, it is MISSIONAL engaging with the contexts we find ourselves in to form new disciples and grow congregations. It is a theological response to the decline in Christendom.

Here in Birmingham Diocese our Transforming Church Initiative is very much part of Fresh Expressions

Many Resources available (see leaflet)

Check out website: [www.freshexpressions.org.uk](http://www.freshexpressions.org.uk)

A final thought: Luke 5:4 "Put out into deep water and let down the nets for a catch."

Elden Small, 23rd November 2010