

White Paper A

Minutes of a meeting of the Carlisle Diocesan Synod held on Tuesday, 18th June 2019 at Newton Rigg.

The meeting was Chaired by the Chair of the House of Laity

M19/14 Opening Devotions were led by Mr Peter Wardle, Lay Chair of Solway Deanery.

M19/15 Attendance. 64 members were present and 15 apologies for absence were received.

M19/16 Membership. The Synod noted the election of the Revd B Murphy (Brampton) to the House of Clergy and Mrs R Amey, Mr J Geering, Mr B Pateman, Mrs G Troughton (Calder) and Mr P Gardner (Barrow) to the House of Laity.

M19/17 Minutes. The minutes of the meeting held on 16th March 2019 were approved and signed.

M19/18 Matters Arising from the minutes, other than those on the agenda.

(a) Safeguarding (M19/05). The Archdeacon of Carlisle reported that a new national Director of Safeguarding at Church House, Westminster was going to be appointed following a reorganisation of the National Safeguarding Team. The context for these changes was the third set of IICSA hearings into safeguarding in the Church of England which would commence in July and were likely to result in increased scrutiny of the church's arrangements and requirements for new structures and practices.

The national Interim Director of Safeguarding (Sir Roger Singleton) had advised that in his view there should be no further printed editions of the Parish Safeguarding Handbook (PSH). This was for two reasons: cost and the difficulty in keeping printed editions up to date in a fast changing environment.

There was a project ongoing to produce an e-handbook of safeguarding guidance that would include the PSH. Originally this had been planned for piloting in March but it had been delayed. There would also be a national notification system for changes to policy, procedure and guidance, but as a diocese we would also produce our own update notes for Parish Safeguarding Officers, incumbents and parochial church councils. In the meantime, the only likely changes to the guidance in the current printed PSH were around training. This revised guidance had been due in May but had been delayed for further discussion.

The Archdeacon also reported that a survivors' group was currently scrutinising parish websites in many dioceses, checking to see whether House of Bishops' guidance on publicising safeguarding arrangements was being followed. Where websites were not compliant there was the potential for the relevant clergy person to be subject to Clergy Discipline Measure complaint. The Archdeacon asked members, as a matter of urgency, to check their parish websites to ensure that they were compliant. Safeguarding information should be prominently signposted on the front page of the website. The safeguarding information should detail the name of the Parish Safeguarding Officer and their contact details, and the name and contact details for the Diocesan Safeguarding Officer, together with a link to the Promoting Safer Churches website. If the local church's website was part of a community or parish council website this also needed a link to safeguarding.

(b) The Media - Religious Reporting (M19/12). The Chairman reported that Mr Nigel Holmes had very suddenly passed away a few days after the March meeting of Synod where he had spoken eloquently on the issue of religious reporting in the media. Synod recorded their appreciation for the immense contribution that Mr Holmes had made over the years to successive Synods, the Diocese and the wider Church in the community.

(c) God for All (M19/11). The Bishop of Penrith reported on plans for the “refresh” of the God for All Vision and Strategy. She reminded members that the God for All period came to an end at the end of 2020. She did not think that this meant we needed radically to rethink things, but we did need to start thinking about what God was calling us to next. Over the next eighteen months she hoped we would listen to one another and to God in order to discerning what God wanted us to do. This exercise would begin with 100 days of prayer from Pentecost and would continue with 100 days of listening. The Bishop drew attention to Vision-Refresh cards which had the dates for these initiatives.

Before the next item Mr Hurton introduced Mrs Catherine Bell, Head of Secretariat at Church House and told members that Mrs Eleanor Scott would be retiring after working for the Diocese for fifty years. Mrs Bell would take on some of Mrs Scott’s duties in respect of Diocesan Synod. The Synod recorded their enormous gratitude for Mrs Scott’s exceptional service.

M19/19 Proclamation of Amending Canon No 38. The Chairman read the following:-

“I give notice that, at its February 2019 group of sessions, held in London, the General Synod resolved that the Amending Canon No 38 be made, promulgated and executed.

Amending Canon No 38 replaces the former Canon B 43 (relations with other Churches) and Canon B 44 (local ecumenical projects) with a new Canon B 43 to be entitled “Of ecumenical relations”.

M19/22 Bishop’s Council Report. The Chairman moved the following motion which was carried.

“That the report of the Bishop’s Council meeting held on 7th March 2019 be received.”

M19/20 Vision for Education.

(a) Mr Michael Mill, Diocesan Director of Education, introduced the document titled “Vision to Practice”. He reminded members that the document had been presented in draft to the last meeting of Synod and explained that since then it had not changed greatly. It was an evolving document which the Board would continue to review and renew. The document was colour coded to show which areas would be given emphasis over the next two years.

One area which needed further development was how to move forward in co-ordinating the approach with colleagues in the Diocese, especially the God for All team. This might, for example, include how the Board and the God for All team could come together to support clergy and laity in working with young people and schools in mission communities.

All this needed to be done alongside the national agenda for “Growing Faith”, which was the vision set by the House of Bishops. “Growing Faith” sought to get the church to view every

aspect of mission and ministry through the lens of what it meant for ministry with children, young people and households. As 76% of Christians said that they had come to faith under the age of 18, we had to re-focus on how children and young people were helped to grow in their relationship with Jesus Christ and how they could be rooted in the Christian community. The development of young people's faith would be sustained through the interaction of churches, households and schools, with each being integral to the whole, rather like a three legged stool.

He encouraged members to support the forthcoming Diocesan Board of Education conference titled "Embracing the Vision: Leading as a Governor" which was being held shortly and to draw this to the attention of others.

(b) The Revd Andrew Towner commended the enormous amount of work done with our schools by Mr Mill and Mrs Deborah Smith, the Deputy Director of Education. The Chair of Synod reminded members that strategy was a living and evolving document and Mr Towner then moved the following motion which was carried.

"That this Synod commends the Board of Education Strategy Document *From Vision to Practice* to all within this Diocese and County and asks them to consider, through formal structures and personal interactions, how they will work towards it."

M19/21 Deanery Synod motion. The Chair reminded members that Deaneries were entitled to bring motions to the Diocesan Synod, including asking Diocesan Synod then to take them forward to General Synod.

Mrs Val Hallard introduced the following motion on behalf of the Solway Deanery:

"In the light of the Kairos Palestine call to the international Christian community to speak up for the Palestinian Christian community, this Synod:

- Responds to the call for solidarity expressed by Palestinian Christians in the Kairos Palestine document 2009;
- Supports Palestinian Christians in their non-violent resistance to the illegal occupation of the West Bank and the blockade of Gaza; and
- Deplores the harm being done to children and young people of all races and creeds across the Holy Land as a result of injustice, and seeks to support progress towards a solution that provides human rights for all."

Mrs Hallard spoke about each element within the motion in turn. As background she said that difficulties in Israel and Palestine went back a long way, but she identified the 20th century as being a time when anti-Semitism in Russia and Eastern Europe resulted in Jewish immigration to Palestine as well as to Western Europe and the United States of America. There were a number of specific points on the 20th century timeline that were notable. The Balfour declaration in 1917 had made the intention of establishing a Jewish homeland overt. Unrest under the British Mandate in Palestine had led to British withdrawal in 1948. There had been two major conflicts in 1948/49 and the six day war in 1967. Those conflicts had particularly affected the Palestinian people as many had fled their homes, gathering up only what they needed in the hope that they would soon return and that normality would resume. It was only later that they had realised that they would not be able to go back. Many villages had been destroyed and homes occupied by Jewish families. People's right to

free movement had been restricted and unless someone had a pass they could not travel to be educated, to worship or to work.

Her wish in moving the motion was to encourage people to show solidarity with the Christians of Israel and Palestine. Her motto was prayer and share, meaning that we should pray for the situation as it needed understanding and reconciliation; and listen to what we heard and share that listening and learning. She encouraged Synod members to go and see the area and to worship with the local Christian community. She recommended staying in Bethlehem. Mrs Hallard encouraged members to support the work of Christian Aid and others operating in Israel and the occupied Palestinian Territory. She mentioned a potential joint pilgrimage with our partners in Stavanger Diocese to the Holy Land. Norwegian Church Aid and Christian Aid both worked in the area.

The second part of the motion urged Synod to support the non-violent resistance to the illegal occupation of the West Bank and the blockade of Gaza. This could mean supporting the economy of Palestine through purchasing goods produced by Palestinian Christians, including olive oils available through Traidcraft, Zaytoun olive oil, dates, embroidery, olive wood, Hebron glass and ceramics. It could also involve taking tours of the region or volunteering for the olive harvest, home building or the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel. Mrs Hallard urged people not to buy goods or invest in companies profiting from the occupation and to discourage others from doing this. The Quakers had been the first Church group in the United Kingdom to announce that they would not invest centrally held funds in companies profiting from the occupation of Palestine. The Quakers were looking forward to the publication of the UN Business and Human Rights database which would enable people to see which companies were involved in settlement-related activities in occupied Palestine.

Turning to the final part of the motion, Mrs Hallard's worry was for the future of the children and young people in the area. There were separate education systems for Jewish and Arab children and enforced separation of various population groups. This inevitably created suspicion and mistrust. A traveller in the West Bank would see signs on Palestinian villages stating that the villages were forbidden to citizens of Israel, but the villagers were actually very welcoming to outsiders. The demolition of homes when land was requisitioned for illegal settlements was very traumatic for children. Military action led to death, disablement and PTSD in children and young people in the West Bank and Gaza. Each year between 800 and 1000 of Palestine's children from the age of 12 upwards would be detained without access to their parents. In Gaza there was extreme unemployment and poverty, and failing health and sanitation systems. Fuel for generators, water and electricity were all limited. Over 3000 Israeli high school students had refused to do their military service leading to their imprisonment. Conscientious objectors sought to serve their military duty other than in the West Bank. Breaking the Silence was an organisation established by veterans of the Israel Defence Forces to give soldiers a change to talk confidentially about their experiences. There was now a ban on organisations speaking about events and issues that might damage the image of the Israel Defence Force. 30% of Israeli soldiers wounded during the 2014 Gaza War were suffering from PTSD. Young soldiers returning home were not allowed to talk to their families about what they had been asked to do.

Mrs Hallard urged Synod to support the motion and asked individual Synod members to do as much as they could in their own lives to support this cause.

In the discussion it was noted that we were called to have compassion for those who were suffering. We were fortunate in that we lived in relative comfort and that Christians were not persecuted in Britain. The Kairos document reminded us of what had happened with apartheid in South Africa when the Dutch Reformed Church had wrongly believed that apartheid was supported by the Bible. We should make sure we positioned ourselves firmly on the right side on this issue and therefore should support the motion.

A member spoke powerfully about his experience at St Philip's Anglican Church in Nablus on the West Bank. In that place there was a small group of Palestinian Christian families surrounded by Muslim neighbours. There was a school which educated anyone, irrespective of their creed. Muslim neighbours sent their children to the school and it was the only place in the area that educated girls and disabled children. When he had asked the local Christians what we could pray for, he had been told that they simply wanted to be allowed to stay. They had seen their neighbours leaving but they wanted to be allowed to stay. The quality of their faith was quite remarkable. If Christianity was wiped out in the Holy Land it would be catastrophic because of the positive impact it had there and in the wider Middle East. He hoped for the sake of his friends in Nablus we would give wholehearted support to the motion. He also whether this motion could be adopted by Diocesan Synod to go forward to General Synod.

Another member reminded Synod that Palestine was not the only place where Christians were persecuted. According to the United Nations, Christians were the most persecuted faith group worldwide. We should approve the motion to demonstrate our support for the Christians in Palestine and we should also support those who were trying to mediate between the different parties. We needed to maintain a Christian presence in the Middle East and support our persecuted brothers and sisters, particularly in Palestine.

A member said that there was part of him that wanted to support the sentiments behind the motion but he also had strong reservations about it. His concern was that this motion, while not being anti-Semitic, was insufficiently nuanced about the situation. The Kairos document referred to by Mrs Hallard was a detailed one and contained some elements that could be viewed as controversial. Synod had not had the opportunity to read all that document. He was worried that when anti-Semitism was currently a problem in our society and was in the news, the motion could risk playing into the hands of anti-Semites. He suggested that the motion be withdrawn, not because he did not agree with it but because he felt it would be stronger if it went further and condemned religious persecution across all countries.

The Revd Charles Hope then moved the following motion:

"That this synod pass to the next business because members had not yet had an opportunity to read the Kairos document in its entirety."

The Chairman pointed out that if the procedural motion was passed then the item could not be brought back to Synod for debate within its lifetime, except by permission of the Standing Committee.

The motion was then put and lost.

Mrs Hallard then moved the motion from the Solway Deanery Synod which was carried with five votes against and four abstentions.

The Chairman said that in the light of comments in the debate, the Diocese could subsequently pursue the idea of taking this issue to the General Synod as a Diocesan Synod motion. To do so might require some amendment to the motion to put it into a suitable format. He suggested that Synod members should read the Kairos document in detail prior to any subsequent Diocesan Synod item that sought to take the issue to General Synod.

M19/22 Reconciliation Post Brexit – What role does the Church Have?

The Bishop began by speaking about the situation in which the United Kingdom found itself: something which was familiar to everyone who had read a newspaper, watched television or been on social media in recent months. Brexit had quite clearly exposed a big divide within our nation, dividing us on grounds of age, education and class.

The overall mood of society had become increasing fractious and unsettled. People were talking, particularly the Archbishop of Canterbury about the corruption of public discourse, the coarsening of political debate and the use of divisive language. There was a feeling of powerlessness and discouragement intensifying, and betrayal was a word being used. Outside Parliament people were shouting at each other and politicians were being verbally and physically attacked. There was huge public dissatisfaction with the pace of events, and a growing public appetite for simplistic solutions, stoked by some of what passed for political comment. Brussels had been associated by some commentators with Babylon as described in the book of Revelations. Of the reasons behind the leave vote that he particularly noted were discontent with the political elite and popular fears about immigration and governance. There seemed to be a great pessimism within the population about the future.

In the Church of England there was a general impression that the leadership, including most of the bishops, were pro-remain, while many in our congregations backed leave. The leave sentiment appeared to be by far strongest in the most deprived parts of the country which in itself said something about the state of the nation. Looking at other faiths in the light of the current mood, it seemed that many Muslims, some Jews and some members of other faith groups were very concerned about their place in an increasingly intolerant society.

The Bishop suggested a number of possible political implications and scenarios. The Conservative leadership election was taking place and we would have a new Prime Minister. There was a real possibility of serious economic hardship if we left the European Union with no deal, though that did not appear to have changed the view of many in the communities that could be hardest hit, including many Cumbrian farmers. We might have a second referendum resulting in Article 50 being revoked. This itself could lead to a huge public backlash. We might have a general election which, given the success of the Brexit party in the recent European elections, could have a dramatic and unexpected result. Whatever happened there was going to be a long process of readjustment, of which departure from the EU was just one part. The trajectory of that process was not yet apparent but it was quite possible that there would be major political upheaval. Half of the population would be angry and unhappy with whatever government might emerge from the process. We did not know what the “new normal” might hold.

The Bishop then turned to the theological considerations in this situation. He felt we should return to the goodness of God who drew all people to himself and to Jesus in whom we believed. There was an imperative from God to love our neighbour and to understand that through Christ we could have hope even in difficult times. We were also called to respond to those who felt ignored and marginalised. The Church had a very important role to play in

times such as these. His colleagues in the House of Lords could not recall a time when the country was so divided.

Most of us recognised the depth of feeling on both sides and that people were passionate about this for a whole variety of different reasons. Bishops had been trying to respond to the narrative of hostility and hatred. In our lives we should try to model good relationships with others, including those with whom we disagreed. We should actively show that we were listening to all views and sectors of society, show kindness and generosity towards our MPs, welcome concern and debate and refuse to allow others to be abused. There was a lot of abuse aimed at our MPs. The Bishop suggested that members should write to their MPs saying that whether we agreed with their position or not, we supported them in trying to be reasonable in reaching a solution.

The best thing we could do was to pray. This should include praying for people across Europe. We could also engage in practical social action to show that even when there was chaos and tension we could choose as individuals and communities to do something positive and show we cared about our country.

We should examine harnessing the power of the Church which still existed in this country to bring people together. A number of Dioceses had opened churches and invited people in for prayer, tea and conversations about the future, whatever their views on Brexit. We really needed to bring people together to help them listen to one another and respect one another rather than just shouting. A number of churches had been lighting three candles, one for themselves, one for their neighbour and one for our shared future, and around these candles working humbly to foster hope and understanding. These were just a few suggestions of approaches that the local church could take. There were some resources available from the Rose-Castle Foundation to help with this including a six session intensive series based on Jesus' personal encounters and a very practical reconciliation toolkit. The Foundation also offered a half or full days' training to help people with mediation. This was not just something designed for Brexit but could be used more widely.

He hoped that churches right across the country would start thinking about how we might be useful in the whole process of bringing people together. He was sure that the church could make a big contribution to the public mood and the way in which people related to each other.

The Revd Jane Maycock told members about related talks being given by Anna Rowlands from the University of Durham on Friday evening and Saturday morning of the 21st and 22nd of November. We did not know what the situation would be by then, but the speaker would address whatever situation we found ourselves in. She had worked in some of the most deprived communities in the North East and her theological reflection was very much done with feet on the ground. More information would be available at the October Synod. She asked Synod members to tell others about these events.

The Chairman thanked those who had attended the meeting and those who had taken part.

