

## **TAKING STOCK & LOOKING FORWARD**

### ***Synod Report 2019***

The Archdeaconry Synod of France and Monaco of 2019 gathered in a new location, over a shorter time, with a more focussed agenda, as it met in Lyon from 16<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> May. Due to unforeseen circumstances, the Bishop was unable to be present but sent a message to synod via video.

#### **A NEW LOCATION**

Domaine Lyon St Joseph, once a Roman Catholic Diocesan seminary for Lyon, is in a delightful location on the outskirts of the city, providing comfortable facilities, welcome hospitality and good food. A real bonus was having a spacious and inviting chapel separate from our main conference hall. Worship and Bible study was the framework within which we engaged with issues of communication, conflict, safeguarding, and the wider mission of the Diocese, as well as an update on Brexit. The worship was led by a variety of clergy and lay ministers, with the Archdeacon sharing presidency of the Eucharist (and preaching) with the three Area Deans. Tonie Chandler was also Commissioned by the Archdeacon as Diocesan President of the Mothers' Union. The worship was greatly enhanced by the musical leadership of Adrian Shaw and his team.

#### **CONFLICT & GOVERNANCE**

In his opening address, the Archdeacon welcomed our visiting speakers, before addressing a pressing issue for many of our chaplaincies: the degree to which conflict was evident in a number of places; and how this is undermining the Church's mission. The strain this is placing on both clergy and lay representatives, and how much of this was rooted in unhelpful models of governance, was explored in the rest of his address. The majority of chaplaincies ensure that their constitution is virtually identical to the constitutional framework that is a pre-requisite of belonging to the Diocese in Europe. The Archdeacon, speaking from his recent (and immediate) experience of engaging with situations of conflict, was clear that when chaplaincies formulate their own constitution, and wilfully disregard the constitutional requirements of the Diocese, trouble is inevitable. It leads to unrealistic and confused expectations around roles and responsibilities. He also reminded the Synod that clergy holding the Bishop's Licence were primarily responsible to the Bishop for their ministry. In this respect, the Archdeacon outlined how a priest's accountability is expressed through the Ministry Development Review.

The Archdeacon also emphasised that that the constitutional expectations of the Diocese, as well as our identity as part of the Church of England, was not a menu from which individual chaplaincies could pick and choose to suit their own purposes. It is a *prix fixe*! With an awareness of the close and dynamic ecumenical relationships we have with other churches in France, he said it was especially important that we are clear about the doctrinal, liturgical and constitutional factors that have shaped our identity as Anglicans over many centuries.

Aware that some of these issues may be new, or unfamiliar, territory, the Archdeacon said that a 'pack' was being prepared to help chaplaincies bring their governance into alignment with the rest of the Church of England, and hoped it would be especially useful for chaplaincies preparing to welcome new chaplains – not least to avoid conflict arising out of confused expectations.

#### **THANKFULNESS**

Our Bible Studies were led by Brother Matthew of the Taizé Community. Originally from Yorkshire, Brother Matthew helped us to explore passages from Matthew 11.25-30 and Philippians 3.4b-16, focussing on mission, reconciliation and thankfulness. These were participatory, and included song, silence and discussion in groups.

## **COMMUNICATION**

Our new Diocesan Director of Communications, Damian Thwaites, was joined by Amaris Cole and Liz Morgan from the Digital Media Team at Church House, Westminster (the HQ of the Church of England), as he explored how our chaplaincies can extend their on-line presence, both through the use of social media and the free web-hosting service 'A Church Near You' (ACNY), which is freely available to all chaplaincies in the Diocese in Europe. In particular, he highlighted how the Church of England, centrally, is investing £10m to develop ACNY, which means individual churches do not need to spend money in developing their own website, and can easily link to ACNY.

## **DIOCESAN RESOURCING AND STRATEGY**

The Archdeacon welcomed Mr Andrew Caspari to his first Synod as Chief Operating Officer of the Diocese (Diocesan Secretary). Andrew explored many of the challenges and opportunities in resourcing the mission of the Diocese, and emphasised the partnership between the Diocesan Office and chaplaincies across the Archdeaconry. He was also keen to understand the pressures individual chaplaincies face, and to be a source of encouragement and support.

## **SAFEGUARDING**

We were joined by Majeane Griffith and Katherine Harris from the Diocesan Safeguarding Team. They brought members of Synod up to date on the latest requirements of the Diocesan safeguarding policy, as well as developments and opportunities for training across France and the Diocese. In emphasising the need for our chaplaincies to be places of safety for all, especially children and vulnerable adults, they offered helpful advice and encouragement to enable chaplaincies to employ the Diocesan policies to best effect.

## **WORKSHOPS**

Synod representatives were given the opportunity to attend two of four workshops:

- Welcoming the Stranger: Kirrilee Reid
- GDPR: Clive Billenness
- Safeguarding: Majeane Griffith and Katherine Harris
- Communication: Damian Thwaites, Amaris Cole, Liz Morgan

## **BREXIT**

The UK's proposed departure from the European Union is causing many British citizens who belong to our chaplaincies anxiety and uncertainty. We were delighted that Matthew Lodge, Minister at the British Embassy in Paris, was able to join us again and update us on the latest developments. With such a fluid political situation, and (at the time of writing) two further extensions to the British departure timetable, there was little he could say with any certainty. Nonetheless, his clear explanation of the process so far, and the likely effects of British citizens was appreciated.

## **MEETINGS OF THE HOUSE OF LAITY & HOUSE OF CLERGY**

During the Synod the Archdeacon led Synod's thanks to Kate Giry-Deloison who retired after 20 years as Chair of the House of Laity. Diane Murray was elected to serve as Chair of the House of Laity. Following meetings in individual houses, a plenary session of the Synod voted unanimously to send a motion to the Diocesan Synod to seek a debate on the authorisation for the training and commissioning of lay pastoral assistants. It arose from an expressed need for a local form of pastorally-focussed ministry.

The Archdeacon thanked the Archdeaconry Standing Committee for its time and skill in planning the Synod, and all members of Synod for the energy, vision and experience they bring to our time together each year.