

SPECIAL AGENDA IV

DIOCESAN SYNOD MOTION

EUCCHARISTIC WORSHIP FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

A background paper from the Diocese of Peterborough

“That this synod request the House of Bishops to commission the preparation and collation of materials for Eucharistic worship, including Eucharistic prayers, for use on occasions when a significant number of young people are present, having a mind to Church Secondary Schools as well as youth services and events.”

In 2007 Northampton Deanery passed a motion from St Giles Northampton which was then sent on to Peterborough Diocesan Synod proposing that “The Church of England, following the introduction of Common Worship now needs to consider the provision of Liturgical material, specifically for Eucharistic worship, for congregations where children form a substantial proportion of the congregation.” At Diocesan Synod there was debate about the place of both children and young people in the Church and it agreed that any Eucharistic liturgy produced would need to cater for both children (for these purposes those in primary education) and young people (those in secondary education or beyond). This was particularly highlighted by some of those working with Eucharistic communities within Church of England Secondary schools. The motion which began in a parish was agreed within the deanery and then amended by the diocesan synod and forwarded to the General Synod. At the same time a motion had been proposed to General Synod by Durham Diocese which requested a Eucharistic Prayer for children. This motion was duly passed in February 2008 with an amendment to ask for Eucharistic Prayers, rather than a Eucharistic Prayer. However, an amendment to widen the motion to provide material for young people was lost. Hence, Peterborough Diocese have agreed a revised motion which requests that Eucharistic materials, including Eucharistic Prayers be prepared for use when a significant number of young people are present, having a mind to Church Secondary Schools as well as Youth services and events. The proposal is being put forward for several reasons:

1. Peterborough Diocese has been receiving young people to Communion before Confirmation for many years and many of our children who have grown up within the Church have gone on to be confirmed and take their place within the life of the Church in the diocese. There has been a desire to develop Eucharistic worship for young people which is authentically Anglican, authorised by the Church and taking account of the important place young people play in the Church at every level.
2. The particular place that Christian young people have within Church Schools has led us to develop Eucharistic communities within schools. It would assist those involved in leading this Eucharistic worship to have material which recognises the particular context of Church Secondary Schools.
3. Peterborough Diocese has been innovative in developing worship events for young people and the particular development of the “Critical Mass” events has helped to reach and nurture young people within the diocese and beyond. These events have been very successful in bringing young people together but the Eucharistic material whilst broadly Anglican is not all authorised.

4. The General Synod committed itself to “take young people seriously”¹ and agreed that “there has been substantial growth in the range and variety of worship opportunities for and with young people in local congregations, deaneries and youth churches over the last ten years.”² We believe that we must hold ourselves to account over how we have progressed the vision outlined by the Church in 2002.

In the last 20 years we have seen a huge change in the numbers of children attending church reflected in the statistics produced by Christian Research. They report³ that the number of Baptisms in the Church of England fell from 217,000 in 1991 to 145,200 in 2001 and that Sunday attendance by under 16’s between 1980 and 2005 has gone down by 75%. Since then, the downtrend trend in baptisms has continued, with just under 138,400 taking place in the Church of England in 2006⁴. These statistics show a trend which is seen in many churches, namely that there are less younger people attending Sunday worship. In Peterborough Diocese we have been working with the Diocesan Board of Education and the Diocesan Youth Officer in developing ways of including young people in the worshipping life of the Church and recognising that for many young people the Sunday worship pattern we have inherited does not work for them. We have been developing alternatives which whilst not completely stemming the tide have at least made the decline in attendance and participation less dramatic.

We believe that we need to hold ourselves to account over the key commitments made by the General Synod in 2002. We agreed to several *Key Tasks*⁵, namely:

- Work with the Diocesan Youth Officers’ Network to identify the most effective examples of worship with and for young people
- With the Liturgical Commission, Praxis, Breaking New Ground 2, etc. identify any obstacles which prevent these worship experiences being developed within the Church of England’s liturgical framework and consider how any such obstacles might be removed or circumvented
- Identify good practice which enables worship to be a tool for effective mission and evangelism with and for young people and to be inclusive and adaptable to the spiritual needs of the local congregation
- With para-church organisations audit what is happening across the country with young people and worship
- Work collaboratively with key partners
- Produce and disseminate by various means evidence of best practice

The Peterborough motion, if passed, would demonstrate our commitment to the vision for youth within the Church of England outlined in 2002. Whilst recognising that there is no quick fix for the Church and no one-size-fits-all solution this small step would show a willingness to explore alternative Eucharistic materials and prayers which might better serve the young people within our Church.

¹ GS Misc 1481 GOOD NEWS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE - National Youth Strategy; Archbishop’s Council 2002 page 3; debated and agreed by General Synod November 2002

² GS Misc 1481 page 4

³ Religious Trends 5 2005/6 © Peter Brierley 2005

⁴ GS Misc 901 Church Statistics at a glance 2006/7

⁵ GS Misc 1481 - page 4