

FIFTEENTH DIOCESAN SYNOD



Excerpt from the draft minutes of the Second Meeting held on Saturday 2 March 2013.

Background

Synod members attending the debate included one member of the House of Bishops. There were 47 clergy and 48 laity, though not all were able to attend for the whole meeting. Voting was by secret ballot: 90 voted in favour of the Scheme, four were against, with no abstentions.

Process

The Revd Paul Benfield spoke on behalf of the Dioceses Commission. This was followed by questions of clarification. The motion was moved formally by the Ven Paul Slater, Archdeacon of Craven.

The Debate

The Chair explained how the debate would be conducted. The same process would be followed by all three dioceses. Voting was on this motion only; no amendments and no following motions were permitted.

Members made the following comments:

- The Scheme offers the best of both worlds – both large and small at the same time. At present everything is Bradford-centric, but it will be good to relate to other episcopal areas. We are being given a wonderful opportunity – we should grasp it.
- In itself it is not going to create evangelism, mission and church growth. It may facilitate it however, and is a chance to shake ourselves up about what we are trying to achieve and how we go about it. A light touch should be followed at diocesan level, with much more done at parochial level.
- We are the first people to do it this way. It is exciting – we will learn from it. Vote for it!
- From experience, an area system provides a fantastic level of clergy training across the whole diocese but also pastoral care for curates by area. This combined a technical approach across the whole diocese with a local level of care. There is a real advantage to being both big and local.
- Synod was urged to vote wholeheartedly for the proposal, even though the member's parish, with great sadness, will transfer to another diocese. 'Do not turn this down as it may not come around again for a long time, both for ourselves and for others nationally. We are always looking back over our shoulder at what we have done; let's turn round and see what God has planned for us. Think about the wider picture'.
- We were being invited to buy a pig in a poke. It is worse than that, as not only do we not know what we are getting, we do not know what it will cost. The intangible costs, however, were the main objection. The Commissioners have carried out no audit that assesses value. The real connectedness and collaboration across the Diocese of Bradford is the outcome of generations of generosity and service by both clergy and laity. Instead of dreaming of what might be, they got on and made it work. The proposal slices and dices the diocese in an act of wanton malevolence. If you want a church that lives by grace, encouraging service and support from its members, then there is an obligation to respect and value what we have received from the past

and to build on it. The ground zero model of reform is not one the Church should adopt; nor is the colonial model where the metropolitan elite send out their agents to redraw the maps. To show ownership of our Diocese and acknowledge its worth, the Synod was begged to reject the motion.

- Experience in a range of NHS situations showed how hard it was to undergo change in big organisations. The right thing is to be prepared for what ever happens. There are many challenges ahead for us, but it would be well worth the effort.
- It would be folly to ignore the hard detailed work done by so many people; however, that is not an endorsement of the process. It must not be done this way again. We have lost momentum in looking at mission. Is the Dioceses Commission backed up by an adequate philosophy and theology to tackle all the issues thoroughly from the start? The process has been a rapidly moving target, which was extremely difficult and demotivating. Synod was urged to vote for it, but learn from the experiences of those who have worked in an area system and also understand the pitfalls.
- It will enable us to face the challenges of the post-modern world and the 21st century. The Scheme will provide more effective resources for ministry and mission, and particularly for younger people.
- The vision of the Scheme commends it. There is something of the biblical imperative to journey, which we need to work with.
- It is really about how we make parishes more effective. The process would be hard and if we grab the opportunity we have to be prepared to roll our sleeves up. However people are beginning to take on board some of the creative things about what this opportunity might mean.
- For most Anglicans it does not make any difference what diocese they are in. The scheme would allow the Diocese to concentrate more on sector ministry and the resources going to this should not be reduced. With economies of scale the savings could be invested productively in areas like education and youth workers.
- There will be more opportunities for clergy development in a bigger diocese.
- The mission we talk about is of God not the Church and we are invited to take part in it and even to facilitate it. Before we rush into a new diocese, we should spend some time in prayer to determine God’s mission. If diocesan structures change, it must be to make it easier for God to do his mission.
- Bishop Nick commentedthe Church exists not for its structure but for the world we are in. We need to relate better to the region and we need some diversity to do it. When a church grows it becomes a different church, not the same church with new people; if we make this change we will not be the same but bigger, or the same but different, it will be different. The choice is whether we take responsibility for what that looks like, or we just let it go.

Voting took place. The result was:

90 For	4 Against	0 Abstain	CARRIED
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Debbie Child
Synod Secretary

31 May 2013