

GENERAL SYNOD

Update from the Implementation and Dialogue Group

Introduction

1. The Archbishops established the Implementation and Dialogue Group in February 2018 to review how the House of Bishops' Declaration and Five Guiding Principles are being understood, implemented and received in the Church.
2. The Group was established to work in such a way as to model the principle of mutual flourishing across the diversity of the Church. The membership of the Group is as follows:
 - Bishop James Langstaff (Chair)
 - The Rt Revd Anne Hollinghurst, Bishop of Aston
 - The Rt Revd Jonathan Baker, Bishop of Fulham
 - The Rt Revd Rod Thomas, Bishop of Maidstone
 - The Rt Revd Dr Emma Ineson, Bishop of Penrith
 - Miss Debbie Buggs
 - Mrs Alison Coulter
 - The Ven Michael Everitt
 - The Revd Dr Rosemarie Mallett
 - Canon Elizabeth Paver
 - The Revd Canon Dr Emma Percy
 - The Revd Dr Philip Plyming
 - Canon David Banting was invited by the Archbishops to participate in the Group's discussions for two meetings during Bishop Rod Thomas' sabbatical.
3. The Group has met five times and a summary of their progress to date can be found below.

Overview of Progress

1. The Group has spent some time considering how the Five Guiding Principles are being experienced in practical terms within the following seven components of Church life:
 - Application generally in parishes and dioceses
 - Application in individual parishes/benefices
 - Application in church structures, including BMOs, Church planting and pastoral reorganisation
 - Application in regard to vocations and prospective ordinands
 - Application for curates in IME2
 - Application in clergy parish appointments
 - Application in senior appointments

2. The Group communicated with all Dioceses and Theological Educational Institutions to understand what has been done to educate and inform the clergy and laity on the 2014 House of Bishops' Declaration and Five Guiding Principles.
3. This desk based survey led to some examples of good practice, and the Group decided to undertake more detailed focus groups with five dioceses. These dioceses were chosen because they either exemplified good practice or reflected the broader church in their make up. The dioceses are Leeds, Lichfield, London, Manchester and Southwark.
4. The focus groups include interviews with the Bishop, the Diocesan Secretary, an Archdeacon, a DDO and a lay representative such as the Lay Chair of the Diocesan Synod or the Chair/member of the DBF. In addition, the dioceses were asked to put together a small panel of people from parish level within in the diocese, chosen to represent a diversity of viewpoints, and be able to comment on parish and inter-parish issues.
5. To date, the focus groups have been delivered in Manchester and Southwark. The findings from these sessions will feed into the final report from the Group.
6. Alongside the focus groups, the Group recognised that there was a need for a deeper consideration of the theology of mutual flourishing, to understand what makes the principle of mutual flourishing – as called for in the Five Guiding Principles - demanding from a theological perspective and to outline what theological resources might nourish the principle and practice of mutual flourishing referred to in the Five Guiding Principles.
7. A theological colloquium is being held on 10th and 11th July in Leicester. There will be eight theologians attending, and their discussions will be used to generate resources which will feed both the Group's ongoing work and the Church's further life in this crucial area of mutual flourishing.

Initial Findings

8. The desk based surveys and initial focus groups undertaken by the Group so far demonstrates that there are examples of some good practice. Some dioceses have sought to model mutual flourishing, and this was demonstrated by the mutual flourishing group in the Diocese of Manchester. The diocesan mutual flourishing group established by Bishop David meets three times a year and includes representatives from traditional catholic, conservative evangelicals and female clergy. The deliberate focus by the leadership of the diocese has led to diverse appointment panels for pan-diocesan roles/senior diocesan appointments and for good engagement across traditions.
9. However, the Group has identified that there are issues that there will need responses to if mutual flourishing can be a reality. This is particularly important as the Group has noted that across the Church, there has been an approach of mutual toleration rather than mutual flourishing.
10. There were three streams of work identified in the report to the House of Bishops, and these related to process issues, lived reality and theological explanation. The

Group continues to build on this work as these underpin the activity for the Group.

11. There have been two main issues identified by the Group to date. The first is **trust**, how can trust be built across the traditions to ensure that mutual flourishing is possible. The second challenge which has been identified is how to make **mutual flourishing a reality** for the whole Church, rather than just an issue for those from one of the minorities. The focus group in Manchester highlighted that there was much evidence that people who were not directly impacted as members of one of the minorities did not really engage with mutual flourishing. The Group has noted that there needs to be more effective communication relating to the Declaration and Five Guiding Principles.
12. The Group have highlighted that the initial findings relate to the issue of traction. When the settlement was made, it was noted that this was an issue for the whole church, not just petitioning parishes. However, as illustrated by the initial findings, there has been little engagement in non-petitioning parishes which has led to this becoming a minority issue rather than an issue for the whole Church. The initial findings have highlighted that as time has passed since the settlement in 2014, there are fewer clergy and laity who have a memory of the Church before the settlement, and this will become more true as time passes. The Group is aware that for mutual flourishing to be a reality, it is important to ensure that there is understanding of the settlement in all parishes, and that this continues over time.

Next Steps

13. The Group is holding a fringe meeting on Monday 8th July at 8pm in Room P/T006 and they would welcome feedback from Synod members.
14. The Group is due to meet later in the year, and they will start to draft their report to the House of Bishops. It is expected that this will be presented to the December meeting of the House of Bishops, and that this will be presented to Synod in February 2020.

+James Langstaff,
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