

**Coventry Diocesan Synod
Minutes – 5 November 2011**

Minutes of the meeting of the Coventry Diocesan Synod held at the Harris School, Rugby, on 5 November 2011.

The Bishop of Coventry took the chair.

1 Welcome and opening worship

Mr Steve Dobson, the Headteacher of Harris School, welcomed the Synod to Harris and introduced the Student Worship Team, who were at the meeting to help lead the opening worship.

Bishop Christopher explained that the Synod meeting would be held in the context of an extended Eucharist, starting with the opening worship and ending with the dismissal at the end of the day. He and the Harris students led the Synod in worship.

2 Welcomes, apologies and notices

The Bishop welcomed guests to the Synod, including Fr Mark Liddell and Mrs Anne Gregory, both members of the Bishop's Advisory Commission. He noted the apologies: four from the House of Clergy and five from the House of Laity.

The Bishop told the Synod that after the recent election the Revd Paul Manuel would be joining the Bishop's Council and that Mr Keith Marchington had decided to resign his membership of the Synod.

3 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Synod on 15 June 2011 were considered. Two amendments were agreed and the minutes were approved and signed.

4 Ministry of the word

Bishop Christopher spoke on John 14:23-26, exhorting the Synod to seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit as, through the meeting, they sought to be more deeply faithful to Christ's will for his church.

Mr Graham Wright took the chair.

5 Debate and vote on the legislation for the ordination and consecration of women to the episcopate

Graham Wright began by explaining how the debate would work, saying that as the principal motion had been referred by the General Synod it could not be amended. He spoke about the information on the different points of view which had been made available, including the observed discussion at the June Synod and the papers sent to members outlining the available resources and the outcome of the discussions in the Deaneries. He said that his hope was that as in June the debate would be both helpful and uplifting. He then opened the debate.

The Revd Martin Gorick (Fosse), Canon Margaret Sedgwick (Coventry North), Mr Sam Margrave (Nuneaton & General Synod), Bishop John, the Revd Malcolm Tyler (Coventry East), Mr Nick Hodges (Rugby), the Revd Jim Perryman (Kenilworth), Mr Derek Price (Kenilworth), the Revd Terry Colling (Nuneaton), the Revd Dr Mark Beach (Rugby & General Synod), Bishop Christopher, the Revd Peter Walker (Alcester), the Revd Canon Martin Saxby (Rugby & General Synod), the Revd Canon Barbara Clutton (Rugby), Mrs Rosemary King (Rugby), the Revd David Mayhew (Coventry North), the Revd Ruth Walker (Alcester & General Synod), Fr Mark Liddell (Guest) and Mrs Jo King (Warwick and Leamington) all spoke in the debate.

The main points considered were: whether women should be ordained as bishops; whether provision should be made for those who cannot accept the propriety of ordaining women; and if so, whether the provision in the legislation is sufficient.

A clear majority of the speakers were in favour of both the ordination of women and some kind of provision for those against it. Concern was expressed by a number of speakers for those who are considering leaving the Church. A number of the speakers felt that provision by a code of practice would be too weak. However, a number of members also felt that stronger provision in legislation would ultimately be divisive and would undermine the role and authority of Bishops.

After some time the Chair closed the debate and put the motion:

“That this Synod approve the proposals embodied in the draft Bishops and Priests (Consecration and Ordination of Women) Measure and in draft Amending Canon No. 30.”

For the purpose of ensuring an accurate count, he asked the Synod to suspend standing orders to permit voting by secret ballots during the meeting. This was agreed unanimously.

Bishop Christopher led the Synod in prayer before the vote was taken. The voting was as follows:

House of Bishops	For: 2	Against: 0	Abstentions: 0
House of Clergy	For: 35	Against: 2	Abstentions: 4
House of Laity	For: 34	Against: 4	Abstentions: 1

The motion was carried.

The Bishop of Coventry told the Synod that he would be exercising his right to attach comments to the Diocese’s response to the General Synod. His comments are at the end of the minutes.

6 Following motion

The Chair invited the Revd Canon Martin Saxby to introduce the following motion he had proposed. The motion was as follows:

‘This Synod

- desires that all faithful Anglicans remain and thrive together in the Church of England; and therefore*
- calls upon the House of Bishops to bring forward amendments to the draft Bishops and Priests (Consecration and Ordination of Women) Measure to ensure that those unable on theological grounds to accept the ministry of women bishops are able to receive episcopal oversight from a bishop with authority (i.e. ordinary jurisdiction) conferred by the Measure rather than by delegation from a Diocesan Bishop.’*

Martin explained that as a member of General Synod he had felt he should put forward this motion. He was concerned for the unity of the church and was seeking to obey the biblical command to ‘make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace’. He explained that for many people provision by a code of practice would not be enough and that the motion called on the House of Bishops to strengthen the provision. Martin was also concerned that the draft legislation would not be passed. A new General Synod had been elected since the current draft had been agreed and it was possible that the new membership might vote against the legislation as many see the provision as being too weak.

The Chair called the Revd Dr Mark Beach, who wished to propose an amendment to the motion. Mark explained that he had invited members of the Catholic group on General Synod, members of Women and the Church (WATCH), the Bishop of Blackburn, Bishop Christopher and the Cathedral’s Canon for Reconciliation David Porter to discuss ways of closing the gap between their viewpoints. Mark explained that he could not support the following motion as it sought changes to the measure which would weaken the Church’s commitment to women bishops. He proposed an amendment which would replace the second bullet point of the motion with:

- Supports efforts being made by the Diocese to achieve reconciliation, and therefore;*
- Calls upon the House of Bishops to ensure that sufficient provision is made within the Code of Practice for those who cannot in conscience agree with the Measure.’*

Martin Saxby responded to this proposal, asking the Synod to vote against the amendment. He said that provision only through a Code of Practice would not be sufficient for many people. He also explained that his motion had also been voted on in other Dioceses and would have greater weight.

Graham Wright explained that Mark's amendment had been proposed at short notice. So that the best way of handling the amendment could be determined, he briefly adjourned the Synod to allow consultation between Mark Beach, Martin Saxby, himself as Chair, the Diocesan Secretary and the Diocesan Registrar. After this consultation Martin Saxby agreed to accept the amendment as an addition to the following motion, which left it as follows:

"This Synod

- Desires that all faithful Anglicans remain and thrive together in the Church of England;*
- Supports efforts being made by the Diocese to achieve reconciliation, and therefore;*
- Calls upon the House of Bishops to ensure that sufficient provision is made within the Code of Practice for those who cannot in conscience agree with the Measure;*
- Calls upon the House of Bishops to bring forward amendments to the draft Bishops and Priests (Consecration and Ordination of Women) Measure to ensure that those unable on theological grounds to accept the ministry of women bishops are able to receive episcopal oversight from a bishop with authority (i.e. ordinary jurisdiction) conferred by the Measure rather than by delegation from a Diocesan Bishop."*

Graham Wright proposed that the Synod should vote separately on each of the four bullet points. After some discussion this was agreed, with the final clause to be voted on by ballot, and Graham opened the debate.

The Revd Canon Katrina Scott (Coventry East), Mr Anthony Woollard (Fosse), Fr Mark Liddell (Guest), the Revd Ruth Walker (Alcester/ General Synod), the Revd Ian Kennedy (Nuneaton), the Revd David Mayhew (Coventry North), Bishop Christopher, the Revd Kate Mier (Fosse), Canon Margaret Sedgwick (Coventry North), Mr Sam Margrave (Nuneaton/ General Synod), the Revd Canon Richard Williams (Fosse & Chair of the House of Clergy), Dean John Irvine, the Revd Terry Colling (Nuneaton) and the Revd Stephen Burch (Coventry South) spoke.

The debate focused on the fourth clause of the motion, with the first three supported by almost all of the speakers. A number of the speakers argued for the motion on the grounds that adequate provision for those who could not accept the ministry of women as bishops is necessary to hold the church together. Various concerns about the consequences of provision by legislation in this way were also raised, including the creation of two separate tiers of bishops and the undermining of the authority of Diocesan Bishops and their place as the focus of unity in a diocese. Some speakers also felt that legislative provision would perpetuate discrimination against women and entrench division in the church.

Bishop Christopher was asked for his personal view. He explained that he was in favour of the fourth clause, as it called for measures similar to the Archbishops' proposals for co-ordinate jurisdiction. He explained that he would be against any proposal which 'dismembered' dioceses, but that co-ordinate jurisdiction would instead create partnerships between Bishops.

The Chair closed the debate and invited Martin Saxby to put the motion.

The first three clauses of the motion were voted on by a show of hands. The first two parts of the motion were carried unanimously without abstentions, while the third passed by seventy votes for, three votes against and four abstentions. The fourth clause, which was voted on by houses and by secret ballot, was not carried. The voting was as follows:

House of Bishops	For: 1	Against: 0	Abstentions: 1
House of Clergy	For: 8	Against: 29	Abstentions: 1
House of Laity	For: 8	Against: 29	Abstentions: 1

The following motion passed by the Synod was therefore:

“This Synod

- *Desires that all faithful Anglicans remain and thrive together in the Church of England;*
- *Supports efforts being made by the Diocese to achieve reconciliation, and therefore;*
- *Calls upon the House of Bishops to ensure that sufficient provision is made within the Code of Practice for those who cannot in conscience agree with the Measure.*

7 Eucharist

After the result of the vote was announced Bishop Christopher led the Synod in celebrating the Lord's supper.

The Revd Canon Richard Williams took the chair.

8 Numbers for election to Diocesan Synod: 2012 to 2015

The Synod noted the paper DS 11/20 and approved the proposals in it for the numbers of elected Deanery Synod representatives for the triennium 2012 to 2015.

9 Pilgrimage of the Cross of Nails

Mrs Linda Wainscot, Diocesan Director of Education, gave a presentation on the pilgrimage of the Cross of Nails around the Church Schools of the Diocese, which was due to finish in the week after the Synod meeting. She highlighted the opportunities the pilgrimage had created for adults and children to pray together and the creation of chances for pupils to explore the Christian message of peace and hope. Copies of her presentation and the videos she used are on the Diocesan website.

The Bishop of Coventry took the chair.

10 Presentation on the Anglican Covenant

Bishop Christopher introduced Charlie Annis and Ben Kirby, who were to give a presentation on the Anglican Covenant, which in the same way as the legislation for the ordination of women to the episcopate had been referred to all Diocesan Synods by the General Synod.

Charlie and Ben gave a presentation which covered the history, development and content of the Covenant. A copy of their presentation is available from the Diocesan website.

11 Update on Transforming Communities

The Revd Dr Mark Beach spoke to the Synod about work going on in the Diocese in line with the third of the Diocesan mission purposes, Transforming Communities. He gave examples of initiatives being taken: a project started by two ladies from Kenilworth who had begun by asking how they could meet the spiritual needs of people with dementia, and a partnership between the church in Lillington and a one-stop community action shop.

He distributed contact information for the community and ward forums and the voluntary sector forums around the diocese. He encouraged the Synod, saying that the Government's Big Society agenda had changed the way people of faith are received by councils and the voluntary sector and had created a great opportunity for churches to engage with the needs and issues of their communities.

Mr Graham Wright took the chair.

12 2012 Diocesan Board of Finance budget

Canon Ian Francis spoke to the paper setting out the proposed budget for the Coventry Diocesan Board of Finance in 2012. He noted the significant changes to the budget caused by the new system for the allocation of parish share, which had been implemented during 2011. He invited questions and put the motion:

'That this Synod:

- *receives the budget as proposed,*
- *approves the Training and Development budget contained therein of £1,269,000, and*
- *authorises the Diocesan Board of Finance to expend a sum not exceeding £8,463,000.'*

The motion was passed with one abstention.

13 Other business

The Chair drew the Synod's attention to the papers setting out the vacancies on Diocesan committees and the response from the General Synod to the Coventry Diocesan Synod motion on the role of Deaneries. No questions were asked from the floor.

14 President's business

Bishop Christopher updated the Synod on his predecessor. Bishop Colin, who was once again suffering from a serious form of cancer, had had an operation and was receiving further treatment. Bishop Christopher said that Bishop Colin was not finding the treatment as onerous as it might have been, and had sent his love to the Synod and the whole Diocese.

The Bishop explained that he had prepared an address on two items, which in view of the time he would not read. He explained that the first item was the announcement that the Archbishop of Canterbury had accepted the invitation to preach at Coventry Cathedral's Golden Jubilee service on 25 May 2012 and would in total be in the Diocese for three days. He also summarised the second item, which was a reflection on the protest next to the London Stock Exchange and St Paul's Cathedral. [A copy of the Bishop's address is on the Diocesan website (www.coventry.anglican.org)].

15 Date of next meeting

The Synod noted that its next meeting would be on Saturday 10 March 2012.

16 Conclusion

To close the meeting, the Bishop led the Synod in worship and prayer.

Attendance

Bishops: 2 Clergy: 41 Laity: 39

Statement of the opinion of the Bishop of Coventry, on the legislation for the ordination of women to the episcopate

1. I have voted for the Draft Measure because I want to signal my full support for the ordination of women to all three orders.
2. However, I am not convinced that in practice the provision for those against the ordination of women is sufficient and I believe that there is need for amendment to the Draft Measure before it returns to General Synod for approval.
3. This explains why I voted for the whole of the Following Motion proposed by the Revd Canon Martin Saxby.

Signed: Date: