

Open Synod Group

Newsletter

Spring 2020

President:- Right Rev Trevor Willmott, Former Bishop of Dover

Chair:- Robin Back, Norwich

Editor: Tim Hind, Bath & Wells

Editorial

As I write this, it appears that Brexit will be done! It wasn't my personal preference, but I think that now we need to move on and pray for a healing of the divisions that have surfaced over the last 3 years. Most of us have been bruised by the skirmishes and I must confess that it reemphasised, for me, how civilised General Synod debates are compared to the other place down the road from Church House.

This will be my penultimate editorial as I will be leaving Synod after the July Group of sessions. I have found the last 25 years a mixed bag with many highs and a few lows. However, I feel it is right to move on and spend the next few years being more involved in Diocesan and Deanery work.

I am once again indebted to the contributors to the newsletter for both for their variety and their insights.

We have also received the news of the translation of Bishop Stephen from Chelmsford to York. I hope you will join me in praying for him in his future ministry and for Archbishop Sentamu as he plans for his retirement in June.



As we enter a New Year of uncertainty it is important that we recognise the stability that the Church of England can bring to our nation through parishioners beavering away quietly in the background day in day out.

Chair's Reflections

Robin Back, Chair, Open Synod Group

London 2020 Group of Sessions has reverted to a Monday to Thursday framework which we last saw in 2017. I hope this will be more to the liking of GS Members than the Saturday option essayed in the past.

Reflecting on the proposed timetable for February, there is much to engage us. The revision stage of the Draft Cathedrals Measure for example will be of much interest and not only to those with direct Cathedral involvement. Rumour has it that the Revision committee have been particularly busy!

There are many other items proposed and GS Members will find there is enough of both legislative and public interest business to keep us all on our toes.

For the OSG we plan to have our AGM on Wednesday (12th @ 7:15PM in the Robert Runcie Room) and as a new departure we will not only welcome OSG members and guests but other members of Synod to join us for supper and a general chinwag. Flyers on this may well reach you before this newsletter is published.

As is customary, the penultimate Group of Sessions in each Quinquennium addresses the allocation of seats for the ensuing election for a new General Synod. It will be interesting to see if there are any major changes to emerge.

As we face our final Group of Sessions in July, plans are already advanced for the OSG Review. If you have ideas for a sketch or would like to contribute musically, John Appleby would love to hear from you

I look forward to seeing our readers in February.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Robin Back', with a horizontal line underneath it.

The Porvoo Communion – Approaching a Quarter Century

Will Adam, Archbishop of Canterbury's Ecumenical Adviser and Director for Unity, Faith and Order for the Anglican Communion

Those with VERY long synodical memories will remember the advent of the Porvoo Agreement in the mid 1990s. It was one of those Articles 7 and 8 matters affecting the relationship of the Church of England with another Christian Church (or in this case Churches) that requires reference to the dioceses. When all was done there was a series of formal signings in the British Isles, Scandinavia and the Baltic including one at Westminster Abbey during a sitting of the General Synod.

The 25th anniversary of the signing of the agreement between the British and Irish Anglican Churches and the Nordic and Baltic Lutheran Churches is coming up. The formal celebration will be in October 2021 back in Porvoo, Finland.

The Porvoo Communion of Churches is unique in the world. Most of the member churches share national or folk-church characteristics, all are episcopally ordered and, as a result of the agreement, the episcopates of the churches are all united in being within the historic episcopate as Anglicans understand it. Since 1996 there have been additions: the Church of Denmark did not join up originally but did so in 2010. The Latvian Church Abroad and the Lutheran Church of Great Britain (not national churches as the others are), along with the Lusitanian and Spanish Episcopal Reformed Churches have also been brought into the fold. The Evangelical-Lutheran Church of Latvia, however, remains outside, although the relationship of intercommunion between the Church of England and that Church, which was forged in 1938, remains in force.

As a family of churches across Northern Europe (and Iberia and those places further afield covered by the Latvian Church Abroad) the Porvoo Churches face similar issues. Questions of mission and evangelism in an increasingly plural and indifferent world face us all. The environment and advances in technology challenge us all.

The principle behind Porvoo, that members of one church in the territory of another may be welcomed as members of that church, remains. Clergy move from one to another. Bishops share in consecrations. Each year there is a consultation or conference bringing together representatives and experts in a particular area from each church.



As the silver jubilee approaches there is a need to think again about the significance and the impact of Porvoo, but it remains a remarkable achievement and a sign of the communion which is God's gift and our calling.



Community Action

Gavin Oldham, Oxford

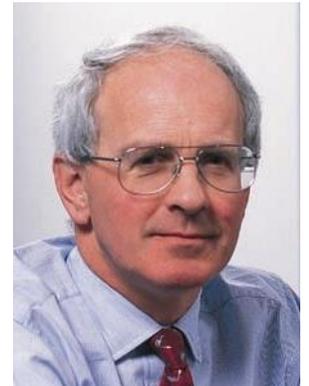
St John tells us in his first epistle that the nature of God is love, unconditional love. Christians believe that the motivation for God to share in our earthly existence results directly from this nature, since unconditional love would surely wish to share in the experience of its own creation:

1. to enable humanity to experience the nature of unconditional love directly, to witness the existence of God;
2. to teach us how to interact with one another, by learning how to share that unconditional love with others; and
3. to provide a bridge of unconditional love between the human and divine, being guided by our conscience but still being able to rely on Christian redemption when things go wrong.

The core teaching is in the second great commandment, to love our neighbour as ourselves. Jesus not only provides a direct interpretation of who is our neighbour in the parable of the Good Samaritan but also, in advocating support for those in distress, went on to say clearly 'whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me'. So - it is by carrying out the second great commandment that we do the first: to love God with all our heart, soul, strength and mind.

Love is like water: keep it flowing, and it remains fresh and vibrant. Hold it back, and it becomes stagnant. So when thousands of Tesco employees voted for the value 'Treat others as you wish to be treated yourself' they were responding to that same abundance of love which floods creation and which looks for us to open the sluice-gates of our hearts to allow us to share it.

And this is the reason why action in the community is at the cutting edge of our mission because not only is it central to our Christian faith but it also resonates clearly among the millions of people who otherwise see no link to God.



I am therefore delighted that there is a major set of pages on community action (<https://www.churchofengland.org/community-action>) at the heart of the Church of England website: covering different types of community action and how to get started, thinking it through, finding leaders and volunteers, and the inevitable administration aspects, plus useful contacts and sources of funding.

'Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me': such a great way to bring people to God while showing our love for God, and there's millions of volunteer hours doing just this every month. Let's celebrate this by forming a much more visible bridge between this work for others and our worship.

Crown Nominations Commission Half Term Report

Christina Baron, Bath & Wells, Elected Member of CNC 2017-2022

Having been elected to the Crown Nominations Commission in July 2017, I am halfway through a five year term. So, how is it so far?

1. It is both an immense privilege and an immense responsibility to be a central member of the CNC. we started with the search for a new Bishop of London and people said "Isn't that a big job for your first one?" All episcopal appointments are important and every nomination process is a big job. Bishops make a difference! (Should that be on a T-shirt?)
2. Everything we do is undergirded at every stage by prayer. A Eucharist at the start of every meeting, evening prayer, morning prayer and a quiet solitary time before important decisions are made.
3. I have learnt so much from both my central member colleagues and the representatives from each diocese. All give their time unstintingly in their commitment to the task of discerning whom God is calling.
4. Insight into the ramifications of being an established church. "Why will it take so long for the appointment to be announced?" "It is HM's appointment, she has to approve it." "And ...?" "She is in Scotland and she doesn't do English matters while she is there."
5. Much time is spent studying the Diocesan Statement of Needs, the Person Specification and the papers of possible candidates, to try to discern whom God is calling. Then, occasionally, the Holy Spirit comes among us and we discern that God is calling the most unlikely candidate.
6. A challenge to overcome : neither CNC members nor the very professional and hard-working appointments staff have the contacts and the time to identify the gifted clergy throughout the Anglican Communion. It would be good to be able to identify potential from beyond England (even if not all might wish to come). If any members of Synod - or anyone else - would like to suggest names of episcopabile candidates - please get in touch with me (baron.christina@googlemail.com) or any other CNC member.



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