



# Open Synod Group Newsletter June 2014

## President

The Rt Revd John Packer, Bishop of Ripon & Leeds

Mrs Caroline Spencer, Canterbury (Chair)

## Women Bishops; The final synodical steps?.

The House of Bishops statement GS1886 and the decisions of GS in November and February marked a decisive step forward. This "better way" is by grace and trust and less law. The dioceses have given massive approval to these proposals. Is it at all reasonable for the general synod after two compelling references to the Dioceses to vote against the expressed wishes of its Synodical partners? The final vote is on Bastille day; let us hope that any fireworks are just sparklers and not thunderflashes. Those of you who know who the last inhabitants of the Bastille were might be reticent about any celebration; the signal of substantial change is unmistakable

## The Scottish Referendum and the House of Lords

The Scottish referendum will take place this summer and given the promises made by the UK government for devolution max the UK now faces the prospect of constitutional change in all four nations. The West Lothian question will need to be answered in order that English affairs are decided by English members of parliament. In this new setting can the House of Lords possibly continue in its present form? And if it has to be drastically reformed can any episcopal presence be maintained? It would be unlikely but some presence of religious leaders from the four countries might be continued.

## OSG Quiz Night

Saturday July 11<sup>th</sup> at 10.00

Last year this light heartedly competitive fun evening raised £660 for Christian Aid; so please make a date to come. Proverbs 18.15

AGM; will take place in Feb; committee will approve examined accounts in July and report.

## OSG Committee

Will meet on Monday July 14<sup>th</sup> at 8.00am

In Vanbrugh 44.

A cool way to start a day that in France anyway is a celebration of liberation.

## General Synod; February. *Tim Hind reflects;*

This was a strange Synod in many ways. We made good progress on the Women Bishops legislation thanks to the progress made in the previous Synods. Good debates on the Environment with a rescue of the Shrinking the Footprint; on protection from abuse and dealing with abuse effectively, and a somewhat tedious one of church representative rules. Attention was also focused on see Houses, Pensions, Legal Officers fees. There was a sense that the major issue (WB) had moved on and that the next one was taking centre stage. There was a slight sense of nervousness that there might be still be spectres preventing smooth passage of the women bishops' legislation. There were certainly no overt celebrations or triumphalism

## ***Synodical Government; spotlight on the lay Chairs of Diocesan Synods.***

### **Diocesan Lay Chair's Conference 2014; Christine McMullen reports**

About 30 of us met in March for 36 hours at St Katharine's in Limehouse and it was a stimulating and informative time.

Tug Wilson (Lichfield) summarised the findings of a survey done in the autumn, on the topic of **Making Diocesan Governance 'fit for purpose'**. Someone said, 'if we were a civil company, we would not have 44 regional offices, each operating differently across the country.' . Deployment, scrutiny and monitoring were among the areas that interested me.

Next we moved onto **Making Diocesan Governance 'fit for purpose 'in support of Church mission** and Lucinda Herklots Diocesan sec for Salisbury and a member of the Dioceses Commission spoke about running a diocese for mission. She explained some of the background reasoning behind **the new diocese of West Yorkshire and the Dales**. Lucinda was followed by John Tuckett, Diocesan sec elect of the new diocese with 5 bishops, 3 cathedrals and 4 minsters, which will initially retain a Bishop's Council of 100 and a diocesan Synod of 300 in a single working diocese with no constraints, no precedents whilst at the same time maintaining 'business as usual' among the clergy, lawyers and churchgoers. There was a possible hurdle- what if best practice in the new diocese did not equate with the C of E Synodical structures? We wait to see....

The work of the **Simplification Group** was brought under scrutiny and we worked in informal groups to answer a simplified form of their question, - **'What would you really want to change if you were able?' .....some excellent ideas here- e.g** changing Common Tenure so that nonperforming priests could be moved; a hard look at a review process for clergy which had an element of appraisal in it; to separate governance from management in the dioceses; get DACs to focus on mission above heritage; make boundary changes easier; give more power to Deaneries...

David Porter, (The Archbishop's Director of Reconciliation at Lambeth) came and spoke about his work. ... **'How do we live with our deepest differences? What good news do we have for the world if the church cannot do this?** He reminded us that the internet is now 25 years old and today the whole social media is watching everything ....' Perhaps the church's governance structures of the 1920s will no longer work for the church of the 2020s?

**Facilitated conversations worked for the women Bishops debate**, he said, because a significant majority wanted it to work but there is more diversity of opinion over the Pilling report. Many people today talk more easily about sexuality, but not everyone wants to talk about it, so when More Issues in Human Sexuality (1990) came out the church did not follow up with effective conversations. So we have a situation where not every parish will want to talk about it; are we clear about what the issue is? Is it sexuality or diversity? Finally we need to be clear about what we want the outcome to be... not everyone supports the concept of a 'broad church'.

The plan is for the conversations to start in the **College of bishops** in September 2014 so they can lead the process in the church. Then in autumn this year, materials will be piloted with a **main launch at GS in July 2015**, moving towards one (or 2) days of facilitation at GS in July 2016. Finally the **dioceses will have 12 regional events** with a safe space for honesty so that everyone can join in on equal terms. I was not sure how safe some clergy may feel being totally honest with their Diocesan even if bishops make every effort to be safe... Of course the process should become ecumenical and should involve the Anglican Communion- our linked dioceses perhaps. Can the church show the world that it can live with disagreement?

David was clear thought that what he proposes is not mediation and it is not focussed on outcome: it is dialogue. People change through dialogue, but their views don't necessarily change'. We need 'respectful conversation', 'safe spaces' and 'accountable conduct'. 'It is not what you do in the room, but how you enter it and how you leave it.'

We summed up with some lists of things we want to do as Lay chairs, particularly regarding mission, simplification and Pilling.

### **Ann Martin adds**

One other main issue concerned the delegates, 'Priority of Mission and Evangelism, especially among those aged under 35' Rachel Jordan, (National Advisor for Mission and Evangelism) presented the Hope Programme, an ecumenical project for mission across the country in 2014, stressing the new role young people had to play and how we need to think outside the structure of the Church of England. This was echoed by Penny Stradling (Vocational Recruitment Officer for young adults working with the Church Mission Society.) In her experience young adults look for Christian fellowship over a meal and in discussion, not in formal church services.

**Leadership in the churches; a current buzz for Lay leadership.**

There is a continuing current interest in leadership often because it is seen as the “ingredient” that makes a, or even the, difference. In most of the “chatty pieces” the many years of sound research on leadership in many kinds of places and organisations is set aside in favour of some current fad or hot topic; (the acronym of HOT topic comes from a critique of pop bookstall literature by naming it Heathrow Organisation Theory). A few years ago “culture” was the hot topic; but it died in the wind of recession and a regression to authoritarian styles.

Mary Follett reminded us to examine how followers are encouraged (these are necessary aspects of a leader?); and Nottingham University researchers found that the least encouraged followers were those they categorised as exemplary, preference being given to “yes” people and those who might be described as deviantly compliant. The relationship between leaders and followers has been described in three ideal types as regressive, symbolic and developmental. And this came from examining the unhappy events where leaders and followers colluded in destructive behaviours.

Our churches have had since the reformation a very substantial space for lay leadership in the ancient office of Warden; and there are now so many examples of lay leadership , not least in General Synod, that it might reward us if we understood them better in order to aid effectiveness.

We are way past the time where an incumbent could claim to be the leader and act as a gatekeeper to lay leader development in the church.

Some interesting topics for consideration might be; Leadership in work groups and teams; leadership across and beyond organisations; leadership and gender; leadership and ethnicity; leadership and culture; leadership and risk; strategic leadership; policy leadership; learning leadership; the construction of leadership ideas, taking a critical account of leadership and followership. And these have all been studied from a variety of theoretical positions. And let’s not pretend that good social science is not as valuable as “my own experience”

**Tony Berry June 2014**

#### **OSG Officers & Committee Members**

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Penny Allen, Lichfield  
Debbie Mclsaacs, Salisbury (Secretary)  
Mr John Freeman, Chester (Treasurer for the next few weeks!)  
Mr Stephen Barney, Leicester (Membership Secretary)  
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Dr Edmund Marshall, St Albans  
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John Ashwin, Chichester

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