

Helmsley Deanery Synod

NOTES OF THE MEETING OF HELMSLEY DEANERY SYNOD AND HELMSLEY PCC HELD AT THE TOWN HALL, HELMSLEY AT 7.00 PM ON 12TH OCTOBER 2004.

Synod apologies: Revd Michael Cartwright.

Welcome.

1. David Purdy welcomed everyone to the meeting and explained that this was the second time that the Deanery Synod had met under the new arrangements whereby the Synod was hosted by one of the benefices/parishes. He thanked Helmsley for hosting the event and looked forward to meeting, interacting with and learning from the members of Helmsley PCC.

Opening Prayers.

2. Opening prayers were led by David Purdy.

Introduction from Helmsley PCC.

3. David Wilbourne welcomed the Deanery members and pointed out that his parish consisted of 4 churches, Helmsley, Rievaulx, Sproxtton and Eastmoors but rather than focus on them he thought it would be useful and informative to interview (a la Michael Parkinson), one of his churchwardens – Ben Nicholson. Ben was to embark on a major career change by selling his successful Butcher/Grocery shop in the Market Place at Helmsley and exploring his vocation towards ordained ministry. Ben responded to various probing questions. A summary is given below.

3. His call to explore ordained ministry had occurred gradually over the 4 years that he had been churchwarden. After discovering that he was able to tackle the duties of churchwarden following initial worries, he felt that God had led him to this decision. Having experienced a service which he considered dull, he felt that maybe he could add vitality and meaning to the conduct of services and felt challenged in this way. He had explored his vocation with the Director of Ordinands at Bishopthorpe Palace and with the Bishop of Whitby. He was presently studying at the College of Ripon and St John for a Foundation Degree in Theology and Ministry and was to be attached to Clifton Parish, York to gain experience of an urban environment. He would be attending a 4-day Ordinand Selection Conference in January.

4. He believed that his career so far in business had prepared him for duties as a priest. He got on well with his customers and as a manager. After initial concerns from his parents, his family was fully supportive. If other people were considering a similar move, his advice for them was to explore their feelings, discuss with family and friends and, of course, the vicar and, if still of the same mind, "Go for it!" Ben shared a trio of phrases which to him provided comfort and support: "God will never let you down", "If God is for you, who can stand against you" and "Thy will be done".

5. Ben felt that he would like to go to Durham to study full time (for 2 years) but that if he were not recommended for training as an ordinand, he would search for another way to serve God.

We were left with a final thought: individual's tastes change and they must move with the times because although not all change is good, no change is fatal.

6. It was apparent that all present were impressed and heartened by Ben's frankness, commitment and enthusiasm and we all agreed to pray for his success.

Supper.

7. The meeting then had an excellent supper of soup, quiche and other goodies (including a chocolate cake to die for) plus wine, soft drinks, tea and coffee. Members of both groups mixed together, getting to know one another and swapping experiences.

Young Adults and the Mission Shaped Church

8. The Revd Ashley Wilson, Archdeaconry Young Adults' Officer, gave a stimulating and engaging presentation. He pointed out that there was a need to move forward, with new ways of being church and synod. A useful question to ask was, "How do others see us?" His particular task was to work with 16-25 year olds within the church but where were they? There were not many who attended church services. Tim Jones had done some useful work; networks had been established which had grown out of "Time of our Lives" but momentum had been lost. The involvement of young people in church life was slight and decreasing. He sought advice from Synod – "what could and should we do with that age group? He drew attention to the publication "Mission Shaped Church" which was a report from the Church Mission and Public Affairs Council. In 1998 the attendance of 20 – 29 year olds had fallen by 49% over the past 2 decades. The church had lost touch with young people – why? Some suggested answers were: Young people naturally rebel against establishments, the way we preach and worship is not suited to that age group, the Church of England is perceived as archaic and irrelevant, it is too structured.

9. What was needed was perhaps a "liquid church" which was more flexible than the present church attendance dominated model. How attractive was it to come into a badly heated church whose services were conducted in archaic language. What was needed was an acceptance of difference rather than forcing all to conform to a particular format. To connect, we needed to move towards attending to the needs of others. No single parish could solve the problem but together, perhaps as benefices, we might achieve progress but it needed to be local, bottom up and collaborative.

10. Following discussion within groups, several points were made: Modern culture was ill informed about the Christian faith. It was difficult to communicate with, articulate and persuade the younger, questioning age groups. The low number of young people in rural villages was a challenge but small groups are important (eg EMMAUS, ALPHA). We need a deanery based, joint venture and "we need to go where they are".

Parish Share

11. John Lindley quickly pointed out that this had risen by 3% from last year.

Diocesan Synod Report

12. Helen Goodman reported on the July and October meetings of the Diocesan Synod. It was a privilege to serve on the Synod, which met three times a year, including once every other year with the Methodists. The deanery contributed 5 members.

13. In July, The Diocesan Director of Education had outlined her tasks. There were 128 church schools, 20,000 children and 1500 staff. School was often the only contact pupils and staff had with the church. Revd Cathy Rowling gave a review of 'Clergy Terms of Service'. Clergy did not wish to be employees because who was their employer? God or the Diocese? A concept of 'Common Tenure' was being developed. The term 'Freehold' had to be defined. The budget had been agreed which needed to be stretched a long way. A Diocesan Surveyor plus part-time assistant had just been appointed. The Very Revd Keith Jones, the new Dean of York Minster had been introduced. The Bishop of Selby and the Archdeacon of Halifax had introduced "A Mission Shaped Church", following on from the 'Living the Gospel' initiative. Revd Ann Coleman had talked about her new job as Director of Wydale Hall. This had been followed by a team of young people describing their trip to South Africa as part of the 'Companion Link' established with that country.

Departure of Archbishop David

14. David Purdy reminded the meeting that Archbishop David's farewell eucharist as Archbishop was to be on 15th January 2005 at 11 am and that he would be inducted as Vicar of St Margaret's, Ilkley on 2nd March 2005. He said that the Archbishop was setting an excellent example and was much admired for electing to return to the role of parish priest for his final years of ministry. The meeting unanimously directed the Chairman to write a letter of thanks to the Archbishop for his ministry to us and to express our admiration for the example he was setting.

Closing Prayers

15. Closing Prayers were led by David Wilbourne.

Next Meeting

16. The dates and venues of next meeting of the Standing Committee and the Synod will be published in due course.

Secretary's Note:

17. Overleaf is a list of Synod members (Synod only). Please check the list and if you spot any errors or omissions, please let me know.

IAN HENLEY
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All Deanery Synod Members
Helmsley PCC Members (10)