



Affirming Catholicism UK  
GENERAL SYNOD - NOVEMBER 2015 EDITION

# REVIEW 2015



Inspiration and  
Hope in the  
Anglican  
Communion

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# A Preface

From Affirming Catholicism's new president

# 1

**When I was at school I vividly remember that the way we learned about frogs was to dissect a dead one. We took it to pieces, examining each part of its innards, and when we had finished the dead frog was, I suppose, thrown away.**

So much of our knowledge of the universe, of ourselves, and all our astonishing scientific, medical and technological advances comes this way. We take things apart to learn how they work.

Catholic faith and theological endeavour and missionary enterprise work the other way round. The word catholic actually means, 'that which accords to wholeness'. It is about putting things together. It is about recognising that no one person has the whole story, that we need each other and that we are made for community: community with God; community with each other; and community with the creation itself.

What does Affirming Catholicism do? It affirms and proclaims these things: that you cannot be a Christian by yourself; that you are part of a great flowing stream of faithful prayer and praise, a body of people formed by the dying and rising of Christ, and charged with a vision to make the world whole.

This is the catholic vision, held in the Church of England with a great devotion to word and sacrament; an acknowledgment that we are shaped by what has gone before; and a determination to make all things new and, therefore, holding a particular responsibility to say that the faith we have received needs to be lived and shared, and, yes, examined carefully, but also extended so that this wholeness that is ours in Christ may grow to include all people. And the whole creation. Our business is the scandalous hospitality of God as we have seen and received it in Christ. We are putting things back together again in what is called the kingdom of God.

**Rt Revd Stephen Cottrell,**  
**Bishop of Chelmsford**  
*President of Affirming Catholicism*

*We are made for  
community:  
community with  
God; community  
with each other.*

# Siempre Adelante!

from Affirming Catholicism's Chair

## 2

**As I write this, we are awaiting the final announcement of the names of the new members of General Synod (GS), and I do hope that I am amongst them.**

At the end of the last Quinquennium, a large number of GS lay and ordained members stood down, often after many years of service, and this included many supporters of Aff Cath. It is our hope that many of the newly elected members will join with us in taking forward the work of Affirming Catholics in Synod (ACiS), as outlined in Mary Johnston's excellent report on the last Quinquennium in this Review.

On November 23rd, there will be the induction of the new and returning members. The Aff Cath Board and ACiS hope to greet them with renewed vision and vigour in the organisation, and with plans for conferences and seminars in 2016 and early 2017 which focus on study and worship materials for children and young people and on engaging Black and minority ethnic theologians. We shall also be looking for ways to work with other groups in Synod, especially other Catholic groups, discovering ways to collegiately deepen our prayer life, assert the centrality of a sacramental approach to ministry and mission, and affirm the social gospel as it informs debates on the common good.

Apart from its significant legislative responsibilities, the new General Synod will as usual work its way through a smorgasbord of social issues, some that will come forward from the last Quinquennium and others that will arise from the concerns of members in the Synod and in the Dioceses. These will not be all focused on issues of Human Sexuality, as some would have us believe.

It is our hope that these discussions will be undergirded by prayer and attentiveness to the well-being of others, alongside a real desire to move forward as a church in dialogue and shared conversation.



In his address to the recent meeting of Roman Catholic Bishops in the USA, Pope Francis said that fearless and authentic dialogue is to be engaged in, not as a shrewd strategy, but out of fidelity to the One who never wearies of visiting the marketplace to proclaim afresh the Good News, to listen to concerns and to care for the spiritual growth of the flock. Looking forward, this is certainly a witness to which we can adjoin ourselves in finding common cause with others, even if at times we disagree gracefully.

This Review has a brand new look, as will our website. We may have revamped the exterior interface but Aff Cath's core beliefs are central to how we go forward as an organisation. We continue to seek to bring together and strengthen lay and ordained people who recognize the positive, inclusive and joyful currents in the Catholic tradition of Christianity; and, working together, to make the Catholic element within Anglicanism a positive force for the Gospel and a model for effective mission today. Siempre Adelante!

**Revd Canon Dr Rosemarie Mallett**  
*Chair, Affirming Catholicism*

*We continue to seek to bring together and strengthen lay and ordained people who recognise the positive, inclusive and joyful currents in the Catholic tradition of Christianity*



*Revd Canon Dr Rosemarie Mallett*

# Celebrating Ministry Eucharist at St Mark's

Hamilton Terrace - 31 January 2015

# 3

*A Eucharist followed by champagne reception to mark the passing of the legislation to admit women to the episcopate and the consecration of the Rt Revd Libby Lane.*

**President: Canon Philippa Boardman (St Paul's Cathedral).**

**Preacher: Revd Rose Hudson-Wilkin (Priest-in-Charge of St Mary-at-Hill, City of London; Chaplain to the Queen; Speaker's Chaplain to the House of Commons; Priest Vicar at Westminster Abbey).**

**Testimonies were offered by Sally Barnes, the Revd Canon Philippa Boardman, the Revd Dr Hannah Cleugh, Mary Johnston, the Very Revd Andrew Nunn, and the Rt Revd Clive Young, all of whom have worked – and continue to work – for the full recognition of the gifts of both men and women in the Church of England.**

*Gracious God,  
in whose image we are made,  
male and female:  
we thank you for the consecration of  
Libby as a bishop in your church;  
May her ministry and that of the  
whole church, bear witness  
to the reconciling love of your  
kingdom,  
through which divisions are healed,  
and in which women and men are  
one in Christ,  
in whose name we pray.  
Amen.*

**Readings: Romans 16; Mark 4. 35–end**

**Sermon – Rose Hudson-Wilkin**

What a joy to be here gathered with a real sense of celebration, but also an awareness that we are not quite there yet.

There is more to come, we are getting there! And what more, we can begin to see the visual signs of getting there: over 2,000 women are priests and of course, the Right Revd. Libby Lane! In today's gospel reading, Jesus said to his disciples, "Let us cross over to the East side." Many of us for a very long time, the dear deaconess spoken of in Bishop Clive's testimony, the women and men in the past, have heard the call, "Let us go over to the East side." It is a call that asks us in effect, to trust God. What you are doing here in your parishes and places of ministry is terrific, but I want you to crossover on the East side. In another gospel reading we are told that Jesus goes off to find a quiet place. The disciples search for him and when they find him they tell him that, "The people are loving what you are doing they want to have more of you." Jesus said, "No it is time to move on and share the message elsewhere; in a new context. Time to cross over on to the East side."

Many of us have heard the call to crossover to the East side but the institution tells us otherwise, and so we end up not responding



Rt Revd Libby Lane

to God's call. You and I will need to be able to learn to differentiate between the different voices so that we can respond only to the voice of God's call to go over to the East side.

For many years the institution has been the gatekeeper and in so doing has denied many women, faithful to the gospel, from crossing over to the East side. It is important that we do not simply do what the institution wants us to do. I often say that I learnt my theology not in theological colleges but actually through the men and women and in particular the faithful women I grew up with. Women who had a deep unquestionable trust in God. Women who would say "in God I trust" ("In Gad mi trust"). There I saw women who had nothing, yet they smiled; they thrived because they had a deep trust in God who they believed had called them into being and who would enable them for that which he had called them to be and do.

...

We must decide whether we are going to allow the storm to break us, to devastate us. We are accustomed to having hurricanes in Jamaica. One year we had a very severe one, hurricane Gilbert that devastated large parts of the island. Days later people were wearing T-shirts with the words "I survived Gilbert." We need to learn to do that to see the glass as half full instead of being half empty. We have survived the storm - we have survived

this storm, but let's not fall asleep without recognising that there are still more storms to come. We have not arrived yet. As long as all our brothers and sisters are not allowed in all levels of the church's leadership, we are not quite there yet. You and I have a role to play to ensure that all God's people, without exception, be allowed to serve God, to serve the church.

### **Testimony I - Sally Barnes**

As a very young girl in 1953, I remember asking my vicar in all innocence as I was going out of church, where the women vicars were?

I shall not forget the look on his face, the raised eyebrows, the hand patting my shoulder, that sardonic smile, a smile I learned later in life that is often given to women when they have a question so beyond-the-pale it is unworthy of a serious answer. It was at that very point, young as I was, something wordless, burning, stubborn and dangerous built up in my heart.

...

It is bad and sad enough when individuals, for whatever reasons, bury their own talents, but it is far worse, and so unacceptable, to have the Church as an institution, consciously or unconsciously, engaged in doing this for us.

# Celebrating Ministry Eucharist at St Mark's

Hamilton Terrace - 31 January 2015

**It was in 1978 recovering from a bout of pleurisy, I heard on the radio the vote to ordain women was lost. I wept with anger. I had read the arguments against and wondered how they could be reconciled with the life, teaching, and role model of Jesus, especially towards women. I immediately joined MOW. From then on I got more and more involved with women and men who also felt as strongly about the injustice that was being shown.**

Throughout the next nearly-four-decades I found in MOW, and then WATCH, kindred spirits who supported each other and taught me so much from their widely differing gifts. They thought (give or take) what I thought and felt. They built up my self-belief and confidence, brought life-long friendships, kept me in the Church, and, if I am honest, helped me channel the fiery anger I felt and expressed (and still do) into more productive and creative ways of conveying it, especially in the face of the many insults, sneers and undermining behaviour directed towards us over the years by those opposed that were intended to demean, patronise, and belittle us. But we are neither demeaned, patronised nor belittled. ...

## **Testimony II – Bishop Clive Young.**

It was 1975 that I met the Deaconess. I was a curate in Hammersmith. Roger, the vicar, asked me to take communion to her. I arranged to arrive at Castelnau Barnes; 142, I think it was. On the front door, a painted sign board - 'The Deaconess Evelyn Morris.' There could be no mistake. The Deaconess, then in her eighties, greeted me. I don't think I'd met a deaconess before. Well not one like this. She was wearing, as Betjeman might have put it, the habit of the order. Over the next three years I saw the life-fulfilling embodiment of vocation, the call to be human for God's sake, and how we grow into the integrity of who we are, by the grace of God. Growing up in a Derbyshire Vicarage, Evelyn had worked with her father in the town parish, taught in the Sunday School. The bishop encouraged her into the order of deaconesses; she was to become Head Deaconess in Derby Diocese. Evelyn told me she worked for a time with Geoffrey Studdert Kennedy, how he and she would speak from platforms outside factory gates. This was the 1920s, under the banner of the Industrial Christian Fellowship. She admired Studdert Kennedy, charismatic yes, but he was no great orator; she recalled he had a rather squeaky voice. During WW2 Evelyn was working in the parish of Holy Trinity Barnes, tin hat at the ready for the fire-watching duties. In retirement she became co-founder



*St Mark's, Hamilton Terrace*

and UK Director of an International Charity supporting orphans in Bethany. She would fly to the Holy Land every other year. Really quite deaf, and sometimes unable to sleep, she once told me that a nocturnal visit by a burglar was cut short, she was certain, by her habit of reciting psalms in sleepless nights. She frightened him off without knowing it. On the mantelshelf in her home Evelyn displayed a little card she treasured.

A commonplace saying now, but I think it was the first time I had come across it.

“For all that has been – thanks! For all that will be – yes!”

### **Testimony III – Hannah Cleugh**

After all the words about why women should be bishops, all the arguments about the terms, and a synod debate or two, I simply don't know what to say. And here's why: some of you were campaigning for this before I was born. I was a toddler when the first MOW tea-towel proclaiming that “A woman's place is in the House of Bishops” was printed, and still at primary school when the vote went through in 1992. So how can I say anything today?

... By the time I went to university I knew that the only place I could really see myself was standing at an altar. It came to my notice that there was some unfinished ecclesiological business, but it seemed to me that it was kind of obvious. But then I had my moment.

It was at a service in Christ Church Cathedral in April 2004; maybe some of you were there. And it was to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the first priestings of women in the diocese. At the end of the service, the Bishop of Oxford – to the horror of a nearby vergers! – went off-rubric. He handed his staff to the visiting preacher and knelt down on the altar step, so that she could give the final blessing.

In that moment, I realised. This wasn't simply about fairness or chronological inevitability. This was about justice, about women and men before God. About our baptism, and about what sort of church we want to be. ...But what I really want to say today is not about me. It is this: Thank you to those of you who were doing the hard work before I was born, and when I was at school, and who put up with years of rubbish and hostility. Thank you to those who today rejoice in another place. Thank you for letting me join in, and help be part of this good thing. And – again – thank God for bringing us to this day of celebration.

# Celebrating Ministry Eucharist at St Mark's

Hamilton Terrace - 31 January 2015



*Revd Rose Hudson-Wilkin*

## **Testimony IV – Andrew Nunn**

People ask me, “What have women brought to the church?” I was asked this on the radio on Monday as we were waiting for the service to begin in which Libby Lane – Bishop Libby – was to be consecrated. Whilst you can understand someone asking the question it isn't really a question that should be asked. Would we dream of asking what it is that men have brought to the church? Of course not.

Women like men bring themselves, bring whatever good qualities, skills, they might have as individuals, whatever negative aspects of their personality they might have. It's as impossible to generalise about women as it is to generalise about men. In the past I think I've said that women are more relational, more pastoral, but I'm not sure that's really true. Men can be relational, they can be pastoral – being a woman doesn't mean that you are and being a man doesn't mean that you're not. ... The question really is: “What was the church lacking when women were not ordained?” And the answer has to be that we were lacking the fullness of humanity, that all that made creation good, that all that reflected the true image of God, was not to be found in the ordained ministry of the church. And if, as a deacon proclaims the gospel, and if as the priest breaks the bread, and if as the bishop sends

out new ministers they're simply reflecting in themselves half of what God has given of God's self in creation, then it's deficient and we're selling humanity short.

So women, like men, don't bring anything so unusual, they simply bring themselves but in that very fact they bring everything because they are, we are, reflecting the full, complete and true image of God. ...

## **Testimony V – Mary Johnston**

Some 35 years ago, I fell into MOW after hearing a news report on the radio of a fatuous over-reaction by the Church of England – my Church – to the activities of some women hoping to become priests. I was invited to an evening gathering of my local MOW cell in a West London flat; I went along, knowing no-one, wondering what to expect – and encountered a group of about eight women, most of them conscious of a calling to the priesthood, most of them being actively discouraged by clergy and certainly by London bishops. Several were about to leave the diocese. I had been working in HR in industry. It took me no time at all to appreciate that these women were a very impressive bunch of people, all different, but of uniformly high calibre; moreover, since they and all such women were barred from priestly ministry, the Church was operating at half power, with 50% of its engines not fully functional. I was struck too by something



“ *Faithful God,  
in baptism you have adopted us as your children,  
made us members of the body of Christ  
and chosen us as inheritors of your kingdom:  
we thank you that in this Eucharist  
you renew your promises within us,  
empower us by your Spirit to witness and to serve,  
and send us out as disciples of your Son,  
Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.* ”

special, something distinctive about those women – that in the face of so much discouragement they were warm, relaxed and good-humoured, a quality which I observed over and over again in MOW, and much later recognised as grace.

We had our fun, lots of it, and it was sorely needed, because the struggle to be heard, to be taken seriously, against a backdrop of dismissive indifference, if not outright hostility, was debilitating. Those among us called to be priests encountered indignity upon insult .... For some lay women, there was the awkward challenge of justifying to very critical friends and family the time, energy and effort we incomprehensively devoted to a body – the Church – which appeared to them prejudiced and utterly ridiculous. And, more than that, came the awful thought that we might be wasting our own God-given abilities; that our gifts would be better directed to something more genuine, of greater integrity, than a blinkered and unappreciative Church. We were all bruised by that experience, even damaged. For some, the long struggle was too much, and we should remember today those who have left the Church, simply driven out

by the weight of hostility and the cost of perseverance.

What kept us going? The short answer must be the grace of God – and that manifested through the contributions and the friendship of a great many extraordinary people. ... Decades later, with a whole new generation of younger women now filling WATCH shoes and the bar on women in the episcopate finally lifted, our Church of England is that much closer to being Real Church.

*May the boldness of the Spirit transform you,  
may the gentleness of the Spirit lead you,  
may the gifts of the Spirit equip you to serve and worship God;  
and the blessing of God almighty,  
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,  
be upon you and remain with you always. Amen.*

You can find Rose's sermon and the complete testimonies on our website:  
<http://www.affirmingcatholicism.org.uk>

# Two Consecrations

Hannah Cleugh attends two consecrations of Bishops in two weeks

## 4

*Hannah learns to live gracefully, joyfully, and hopefully in the new dispensation.*



Revd Dr Hannah Cleugh

**I had never been to a consecration before. Then, a week apart, I went to two - both in York Minster, both of suffragan bishops in north-western dioceses, both on very cold, bright days, and both different from what had gone before.**

The first, on the feast of Timothy and Titus, was that of Libby Lane as Bishop of Stockport. I'd been delighted and privileged to be part of the General Synod which gave final approval to the legislation to allow women to be consecrated as bishops in July last year, and the consecration of the first woman to the Church of England's episcopate was a day for which I had longed. Outside the Minster before the service, as friends appeared, and journalists milled around looking for people to interview, there was a huge sense of anticipation and excitement. At last! For me, the most striking thing about the service was just how normal it felt, and how easy it was to say "Bishop Libby". Yes, this was a day on which the Church of England changed and her ministry became a bit more whole, but it didn't feel like anything particularly peculiar was happening. Even the one point at which the service was interrupted by a heckler proved positive - the Archbishop asked again whether it was the congregation's will that she should be ordained, and the volume and intensity of the response was overwhelming. The church was saying 'yes' to the equality

of women and men before God. It was hard, really, to work out what all the fuss had been about. At the time of writing (in late September), six more women have been appointed bishop - two of them have been consecrated already, two more will be consecrated at Michaelmas, and Rachel Treweek has been enthroned in Gloucester as the first female diocesan. She will shortly also be welcomed as the first female Lord Spiritual. In many ways, in a few short months, the appointment of women as bishops has become almost unremarkably normal, and the debate feels a very long way away.

The following week, on Candlemas Day, Philip North was consecrated as Bishop of Burnley. In advance, there had been much debate and disquiet aired - including by Affirming Catholicism in a statement made together with the Society of Catholic Priests - about the arrangements for his service. The controversial point was that the Archbishop of York presided at the service, but did not lay on hands, which only three bishops did, the others (including the new Bishop of Stockport) standing gathered around, and then the Bishop of Chichester celebrated the Eucharist. I had shared all those concerns: about what it means to be in one church; about what these arrangements were implying about Bishop Libby's orders; about impaired communion, and 'taint'; and about the future. I was also



very anxious that traditional Catholics - by whatever accident or design - would appear marginalised. So it was with some considerable trepidation (as well as a warmer pair of socks!) that I headed back to York on Candlemas.

In the event, the service was wonderful, joyful and hopeful. The Minster was packed again, and the arrangements about which I had been so anxious did not, in the event, feel particularly strange. Nor did they suggest a church divided. Rather, they spoke to me of a church that is learning how to live together again. Oddly, again, my feeling was that it was hard to work out what all the fuss had been about. It was with a deep and profound and joyful sense of eucharistia that I received communion alongside traditional Catholic brothers and sisters, many of whom would have felt unable to receive from me. This seems a good beginning to living in “the highest possible degree of communion”, and nothing exemplified that more powerfully for me than the presence of the Revd Alice Whalley as deacon in the service.

The two consecrations a week apart in York Minster signified both the potential and the complexity of living out the five principles which undergird the House of Bishops’ Declaration accompanying the legislation enabling women to be consecrated as bishops. The theological anxieties expressed by Aff Cath, SCP, WATCH and others in the run-up to Philip North’s consecration do not disappear simply because it was a hopeful joyful service. Questions - genuine and pertinent ones - remain about just how tightly those five principles can really be held in tension. I have no doubt that there will be points at which the elastic is stretched very thin indeed. And if the commitment to mutual flourishing is real, then we have agreed that we are going to live with theological and ecclesiological loose-ends:

there are, and will remain, key points of theological difference. Flourishing means that we are neither silenced nor marginalised - we must all of us be able to share our anxieties and concerns, to say how things look from where we stand. We do not flourish if we are either too afraid of causing offence to express an opinion, or if we are out to score points off one another. These questions are not going to go away any time soon, so the greater challenge is that we learn to live gracefully, joyfully, and hopefully in the new dispensation.

This, it seems to me, is a challenge for the whole Church of England, but a question which has a particular texture for those within the Catholic tradition of Anglicanism: we hold in high esteem the corporate life of the church, her orders, and her sacraments. And we are aware - very aware - that “the highest degree of communion possible” remains an incomplete communion. How, then, do we hold together our vocation to speak of justice - including gender justice - with our deep desire to offer a unified Catholic voice together with those who take the traditional view about the ordination of women? How do we, for whom the Eucharist is central to our faith and common life, gather with those who seek a different degree of sacramental assurance? There are no straightforward answers. The picture that told the story of those two consecrations on successive cold Mondays in York was the photograph of the warm embrace shared by the two new bishops: the ends remain loose, and the communion remains impaired, but there was shared rejoicing and it felt hopeful for a future together in a church whose ministry is now that bit more whole, and which proclaims something more of a vision of the Kingdom.

An earlier version of this reflection appeared in *New Directions* in March 2015.  
Revd Dr Hannah Cleugh

# General Synod 2010-2015

Mary Johnston offers a personal reflection on the Quinquennial just past

## 5

*The primary achievement must be the opening of the episcopate to ordained women in 2014*

Amongst the mass of material circulated in preparation for my final General Synod meeting in July this year was a contribution from the highly competent Chair of the Business Committee, Revd Canon Sue Booy (an ACiS member – see below), entitled “Record of Business Done in 2010-2015 Quinquennium”, rather neatly referenced as GS Misc 1111. Attached were two separate lists of Legislative and Non-legislative business, a reminder that the General Synod is the Church’s legislative arm, with the privilege and responsibility of being the only body in the country other than Parliament which can initiate law. I read that paper with amazement, frankly astonished that so much had been accomplished on behalf of Church and society via that succession of brief, infrequent, largely voluntary gatherings, which constitute a General Synod quinquennium, underpinned of course by experienced and efficient staff.

The primary achievement must be the opening of the episcopate to ordained women in 2014, business initiated in 2000 through a Private Member’s Motion. Any evaluation of General Synod and its place in the life of our Church should take note that this major advance of having women as bishops owes its inception, not to the House of Bishops or the Archbishops’ Council, but to one elected member of General Synod,

exercising their right to table a PMM, i.e., to the very essence of synodical governance. For such a significant development, much deliberation was inevitable. This one issue undoubtedly dominated the quinquennium. Time and time again, “women bishops” appeared on the agenda, in response to yet another committee’s report, yet another set of proposals crafted to keep within our broad church those who continue to find the concept of ordained women in authority unacceptable. Over time, tension, frustration, anxiety and disappointment led to mistrust and anger; no-one who was present in November 2012 when the proposals (accepted by 42 out of 44 Diocesan Synods) were rejected by the House of Laity will forget the furore which erupted on the floor of Synod, or subsequently in society at large. General Synod’s reputation had been brought to a low point both within the Church and beyond.

That this issue hung over General Synod like an incubus for so long has, I believe, had unfortunate consequences, particularly regarding the relationship between the three Houses, Bishops, Clergy and Laity. As in 2015, clergy and laity must offer themselves for election by their peers. By contrast, diocesan bishops who, accompanied by a few elected suffragans, make up the House of Bishops, join General Synod by



*Mary Johnston*

right; membership goes with the job. While some bishops undoubtedly appreciate the synodical system and contribute conscientiously – even enthusiastically – to General Synod, others clearly regard it as an unnecessary interruption to more pressing diocesan business and attendance as a chore. During this past quinquennium, any newly appointed diocesan with no earlier, positive experience as an elected member of General Synod – and there were many of them, including the present Archbishop of Canterbury – would have found himself part of a disgruntled and frustrated body hampered by the saga of the women bishops legislation, a General Synod under-performing.

Archbishop Justin’s strategy of “facilitated conversations” ultimately brought reconciliation to General Synod and the eventual acceptance of the Women Bishops legislation. The bishops themselves moved swiftly to ensure that newly appointed women diocesans would “jump the queue” to be admitted as members of the House of Lords. And the bishops have gone on to instigate ambitious new costly training and development programmes for church leaders, along with other new schemes. In doing so, they exercise their clear right and responsibility to provide leadership but have perhaps not fully acknowledged

the complementary role of clergy and laity in a Church of England which prides itself on being “episcopally led and synodically governed”. The Church of England does not have a Pope or a curia; by the grace of God, a synodical system has evolved whereby the *sensus fidelium* can be ascertained and the Holy Spirit is recognised as inspiring equally the lay, the ordained and the consecrated in the service of God’s Church. At its best, General Synod enables all three Houses to work together, contributing from three distinct spheres of church service and experience.

Alongside the necessary legislative business for the proper care and resourcing of church organisation, structures and officers, and liturgical provision for an increasingly unchurched population, there were numerous debates on issues of contemporary social concern, what might loosely be grouped as the Common Good. One large chunk of Synod time and associated worship prior to the 2014 General Election was specifically devoted to that, and how the Church might encourage politicians to focus on widespread long-term benefit rather than short-term popularity. Laudable aspirations are not always successful. During such debates, the value of the breadth of experience to hand becomes strikingly apparent, as when Synod debated our response to Suicides, or the

# General Synod 2010-2015

Mary Johnston offers a personal reflection on the Quinquennial just past

adverse impact of the so-called Bedroom Tax, where the description of the plight of one disabled parishioner in the hearing of the Second Church Estates Commissioner, moved him to carry the report across the road to the government. The proximity and interaction between General Synod and Parliament should not be disregarded. Some such social issues are ongoing; there was a wide-ranging debate on Assisted Dying in 2013, useful background for the recent House of Commons debate at which the bill was defeated. Synod had the benefit of a first-hand, favourable account of an assisted suicide from one of its clergy members. A complex system for the Safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults was finalised at the close of the quinquennium, but in the course of the many stages of that process, it became obvious that the painful consequences of historic abuses will be with the Church for decades. Also on-going is the pressing concern of Climate Change and our responsibility for the whole of creation, a topic to which General Synod has returned with renewed vigour. One telling quote will stay with me: "There is no Planet B".

Despite good intentions, ecumenism did not fare well during 2010-2015. ARCIC discussions seemed to have stalled, and only very recently was there a determined thrust to advance Anglican/Methodist reconciliation.

Likewise, the urgent imperative to involve more black and minority ethnic (BME) people in leadership roles, frequently repeated, has fallen flat; one hopes that the current election to the next synod will result in better BME representation and then go on to achieve more. And attempts by the former Archbishop Rowan Williams to establish a Covenant for the Anglican Communion were firmly rejected, failing to gain the approval of the majority of Diocesan Synods (18 dioceses passed the motion accepting the Covenant, whilst 26 rejected it). As we now know, Archbishop Justin is trying a different approach in inviting his fellow primates to London for discussions in January, 2016.

The Archbishop's strategy of "facilitated conversations", having succeeded in resolving the impasse over women bishops, is being utilised again, in addressing the ongoing issue of the position of gay people, and more specifically gay clergy. The Bishop of Sheffield's measured, sensitive explanation of the Pilling Report in February, 2014, which won cautious, guarded respect at Synod, was promptly sabotaged two days later by a letter from the House of Bishops purportedly offering "Pastoral Guidance" but which actually abruptly enforced the status quo on clergy.



**Better joined-up thinking in the communication departments, as well as a greater sense of realism and compassion, might help in the next quinquennium.**

But 2010-2015 did manage to satisfy, or at least ameliorate, a long-standing synodical grumble, by providing space in a published, tight agenda for pressing problems of urgent concern. So, in February, 2012, the then Bishop Justin of Durham gave a graphic description of his recent visit to Nigeria, and the appalling persecutions and destruction there; and a year later, Archbishop Angelos of the Coptic Church in Egypt could tell Synod of the plight of Christians and others in the Middle East whose ancient churches are threatened with extinction. Sadly, these have not proved to be transient crises.

Throughout the ups and downs of the quinquennium, Affirming Catholics in Synod (ACiS) came together, regularly, to worship together and to play a full part in furthering a progressive, inclusive, catholic church. ACiS members offered themselves for election, successfully, to most of the many committees and commissions through which General Synod's business is actioned. Well represented in all three Houses, ACiS worked hard to counter a perceived split growing between Bishops and the rest, and friendly cooperation was fostered which helped

greatly in work towards the final proposals for women as bishops. Open-minded, inclusive members of the next quinquennium will find a warm welcome awaiting them in ACiS, and that precious, unique opportunity within General Synod for service and friendship that I did.

Mary Johnston  
Convenor, Affirming Catholics in Synod (ACiS),  
until 2014

*Throughout the ups and downs of the quinquennium, Affirming Catholics in Synod (ACiS) came together, regularly, to worship together and to play a full part in furthering a progressive, inclusive, catholic church.*

## Affirming the Social Gospel

# 6

*You don't have to have your roots in the catholic tradition to see that social action is much more than doing good to the poor, but it helps.*

**Several times a week I walk, in one direction or the other, across Manchester's city centre.** My most frequent route takes me along Market Street, past Marks and Spencer, down the side of Piccadilly Gardens, and then on to the entrance to the station. In the two years I've been making this walk the number of people sleeping in doorways, or sitting quietly behind polystyrene cups with a few coins in the bottom, must have doubled. To the ones who are awake I offer a greeting and a blessing; if they look ready for it, I stop for a brief conversation. Around the city centre there are a number of projects offering support to rough sleepers. Pretty well all of them are run by Christian groups. One was housed in my cathedral until last year, when we had to move it into much bigger premises. From time to time I drop in on one of the schemes and spend a while chatting to the men and women who make use of the facilities. Between the conversations on the streets and those in the centres I've been able to build up a bit of a picture of what pushes people out into sleeping in Manchester's doorways and car-parks, and what makes it so hard for them to get back to having a home.

**How many lives am I changing through this? God knows. But the answer is at least one. Mine.**

The pastoral encounter has always been for me the place where ministry and mission begin. Sam Wells argues powerfully for the primacy of "being with" over against "doing for" people. But the purely pastoral is rarely where it ends. Hearing the voices of street sleepers, and beginning to recognise both the individuality and the repeated patterns in those voices, has equipped me for the task of speaking out. I can articulate something of what is going on in their midst to both my city and my diocese. The pastoral becomes the political, albeit a politics without party affiliation.

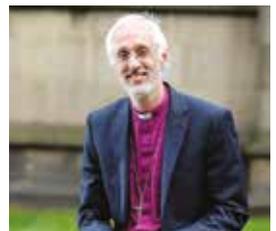
But it goes deeper than that. Alongside the encounters I have in streets and projects I am laying my encounters with God, in my reading of scripture, my participation in liturgy and in my private prayers. All these become part of the pattern. They make me part of it too, forming and reforming me in the process. So when I speak out about homelessness, or take some action to combat it, I'm doing so from the heart of my theology and my spirituality.



And deeper even still. The unbidden smile on a weather worn face, brought to life by being spoken to as a brother or sister, contains the release of the forgiven penitent. The life story shared with honesty is like hearing a parable from the gospels. The homeless man who brought me fresh tea and buttered toast to share with him from the counter of one project could have been giving me communion. And when, early one morning in the summer, the scarred arms of a heroin addict were raised to give me a blessing in just the same traditional formula as moments previously I had offered him, I was as truly blessed as at the end of any Eucharist. You don't have to have your roots in the catholic tradition to see that social action is much more than doing good to the poor, but it helps.

**Rt Revd David Walker**  
**Bishop of Manchester**

*I've been able to build up a bit of a picture of what pushes people out into sleeping in Manchester's doorways and carparks, and what makes it so hard for them to get back to having a home.*



*Rt Revd David Walker*

# Parish Development

Reflections on the challenge of parish development

## 7

*Nick Chamberlain reflects on the challenge of parish development and poses some of the questions we need to ask ourselves going forward...*

**There are many different ways in which to ‘develop’ parishes. In the delivery of this brief on behalf of the Affirming Catholicism Board I have sought to do two things: to offer ‘food for thought’ and to provide ‘reflective space’.**

The ‘food for thought’ has mainly been through occasional contributions to the monthly Newsletter. I see the Newsletter as a crucial way of building relationships (and thus an informal network) among our supporters, donors, and interested onlookers. Speaking personally, I am rather tired to be told increasingly repeatedly about all the things I ‘ought’ to be doing and being as a Christian and as a parish priest. What I am looking for is encouragement, something to stimulate me and the knowledge that I am not on my own. I think the Newsletter is one way in which Affirming Catholicism might repair and strengthen the fabric of the Church and achieve these things – and that is why I contribute to it.

The conference that we held in Newcastle during May 2015 was designed to provide both stimulation and reflective space. It was titled ‘Going for Growth’ and was inspired in response to the Church of England’s report *From Anecdote to Evidence*. However, rather than be a spur to ever-increasing cycles of activity, the three speakers offered

different insights and perspectives on the life of the church – using both the report and the Reform and Renewal programme as lenses through which to focus reaction and response. Participants were able to converse with each other, to explore the perspectives that they had been offered, and then to take time to bring all that they had heard and contributed to God in the concluding worship. In their different ways, Archdeacon Geoff Miller from Newcastle Diocese, Professor Pauline Pearson from Northumbria University and Dr Stephen Spencer from the Yorkshire Training Partnership helped us to humanise and to theologise some of the change programmes with which we are being presented and reminded us of the importance of stories, of prayer, and of evidence that is qualitative as well as quantitative. We were reminded that a parish is both a geographical area and an idea in the mind and the spirit – and that the community that gathers in prayer and worship is also the community that contributes to the life of the world, in partnership with all others of goodwill. I ended the conference feeling strengthened in my identity and my calling, and hope that others did also.

When compiling the Annual Review last year I rather think that I and my colleagues on the Board of Affirming Catholicism did not



anticipate the extent to which the Church of England might be challenged in its identity in consequence of the reports of working parties that were presented to General Synod in 2015. I was aware that From Anecdote to Evidence might in a sense be a 'wake up' call to the church. This is why I suggested a conference to consider it. However, events overtook us during the year. And during the year my sense is that events have also overtaken dioceses and parishes as they have begun to come to terms with the suggestions made in the different February reports. I welcome the response that I begin to see developing and I hope to play my part in what I pray will be robust and constructive discussions in all the different organs of the church as we explore what it means to be catholic Anglicans in the early twenty-first century.

**What are our values? What do we need to rethink? Who are our allies? What is God calling us towards?**

Thank you for being part of Aff Cath and I look forward to working and worshipping with you as together we develop our parishes and communities under the guidance of the Holy Spirit in the name of Jesus Christ and under the loving mantle of God.

**Rt Revd Dr Nicholas Chamberlain**



*Rt Revd Dr Nicholas Chamberlain*

*A parish is both a geographical area and an idea in the mind and the spirit – and that the community that gathers in prayer and worship is also the community that contributes to the life of the world, in partnership with all others of goodwill.*

# Going for Growth

From an Affirming Catholic Perspective



*On Saturday 9th May 2015, about fifty people gathered at St. George's Church, Jesmond, Newcastle upon Tyne for a challenging discussion of the 2014 report From Anecdote to Evidence, produced by the Church Growth Research Programme and the current initiatives around renewal and growth.*

**The discussion was opened by a stimulating paper by the Venerable Geoff Miller, Archdeacon of Northumberland.**

Geoff emphasised the need to grow, and gave examples of growth in Newcastle diocese which are not much cited in the report, which he suggested focusses on urban and southern contexts. He reminded us that growth is not always good – “ask any cancer patient” – and that a small church is not a failed large church (“a satsuma is not a failed orange”). He encouraged us to consider the value of communities rooted in sacramental worship. Looking at the Diocese of Newcastle, he pointed to the value of stable leadership and a stable episcopacy in fostering growth, a focus on revitalising the parochial system – the vicar is “for the parish and not only the congregation”. The focus has been on mission, and have significant impact in local communities. Geoff warned against assuming that one size fits all, suggesting that chaos is quite creative. “If you aim at nothing that is what you get, but if you have a strategy then you just get what the strategy is aiming for.”

The Revd Prof Pauline Pearson, Professor of nursing at Northumbria University, offered a comparison between the “impact” agenda in the University context and discussions of the future of the church. She observed that business and management terminology can be useful in helping to understand what the church is about. At the same time, a focus on secular models can restrict our vision and hide important aspects of the church’s mission. Pauline pointed to the vision and calling of Aidan, Cuthbert, Oswald, Hilda, Caedman, and Bede, which she suggested were probably not focussed primarily on numbers. She asked whether the church has lost confidence in God. Perhaps we need to think about sustainable witness, she suggested. How might we track impact: perhaps by quite simple means such as recording levels of use of prayer candles or prayer requests. Annuals, Pauline pointed out, grow and die, hopefully providing compost for the next season. Local parishes may also need to grow new projects which may be quite short-lived, but can still have influence. Trees, she suggested, also grow, but very slowly and usually steadily, until or unless struck by disease. “Nurture and relationships are about growing people, and not an organisation.”



Revd Canon Dr Charlotte Methuen

The final speaker was the Revd Dr Stephen Spencer, author of SCM Study-guide on Christian Mission and tutor on the Yorkshire Ministry Course. Stephen explored experiences of building up children's work and work in a care home. Through these, he observed, "Regular Sunday churchgoing was not growing but the level of faith awareness and of connecting with God in the wider parish was growing. How is this to be assessed?" "Missio Dei" has come to be understood in terms of Spirit-directed and Kingdom-orientated mission: it is about God's initiative in creating and redeeming the world. In this understanding, a minister's primary call is not to recruit people to join the regular membership, but to explore how the local church can become an agent of change in the wider community. There may be a parallel here to the role of medieval religious communities: monks and nuns maintained their own communal life in order to serve the mission of God in their own context. What appeals to people outside the congregation "is for Christians to come alongside them and help them with the spiritual task of connecting with God and finding healing in their lives."

Discussion focussed on the need to deepen spiritual life. It was recognised that the wider view of mission does rely on a core congregation, and that mission will become increasingly difficult if the size of that core continues to decrease. There was considerable concern that the current agenda is driven by busy-ness, particularly of bishops and clergy. There is a real need for a long-term perspective – and that means leaders who do not move on quickly.

The papers will be available on the Affirming Catholicism website soon, either as audio or text files.

Revd Canon Dr Charlotte Methuen

*Regular Sunday churchgoing was not growing but the level of faith awareness and of connecting with God in the wider parish was growing*



Rosemarie Mallett



Mark Chapman



Hannah Cleugh



Nick Chamberlain



Alan Davey



Perran Gay



Robert Hammond



Mary Johnston



Charlotte Methuen



Aidan Platten



David Thunder

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