

Report from Archdeaconry of Gibraltar Synod attended by Clergy: Fiona Jack and Rachel Ganney and Laity: Cheryl Douglas and Judith Rigby

The theme of the Archdeaconry of Gibraltar Synod held in Calpé from 30th January to 2nd February was “Walking Together in Faith by Building Up the Body of Christ and Fostering Growth.”

Bishop Robert presided over our opening Eucharist. The theme was that of the Holy Spirit and in the sermon given by Rev’d Ishanesu from Mallorca we were reminded that the Spirit draws us closer, provides all, teaches all and is our protector. “We are co-workers in God’s service. You are God’s field, God’s building.” As we began our time together we prayed that we would allow God to grow his Kingdom in our archdeaconry. Within our times of Eucharist and Morning Prayer there was the re-licensing of Rev’d John Chapman of Barcelona, the renewal of the commissions of the Area Deans and the admittance of Diana Pringle as a reader in Costa Blanca North.

The first session included the business of elections for Vice Chair and secretary of Synod, a financial report by the treasurer and the final item of business was a Living in Love and Faith discussion. By the end Synod recognised:

1. The recent developments in the Church of England’s Living in Love and Faith process
2. The diversity of views held regarding The Church of England’s approach to clergy who enter into a same sex marriage
3. The lack of provision in some countries within the archdeaconry and wider diocese of any form of legally binding same sex partnership other than civil marriage, which is different from the position in England.
4. The consequences of that lack of provision for those clergy wishing to enter into a legally recognised same sex partnership consistent with the teaching of the Church.
5. The continuing work being undertaken by the Living in Love and Faith steering group

It invited the bishop to bring matters referred to above in paragraphs 3 and 4 to the attention of the episcopal co-chairs of the Steering Group for its consideration.

Our Bible Study on day 2 was based on 1 Cor 12:1-30 with the themes of covenant, refuge and building materials. We were invited to consider; “Who are the people you struggle with in your chaplaincy or wider community? How does your chaplaincy / wider community need them? How can we show care and concern for those we disagree with?”

Our second Bible Study was Lectio Divina using John 17:20-26 and Ephesians 4:1-6. After listening to the passages read several times we shared, in groups, the phrases which had spoken to us.

Our keynote speaker on day 2 was Bishop David whose talk was entitled: The Universe strikes back. Ecology returns to the Heart of Christian Theology.

- Our relationship with Creation is a walking together.
- Called to reflect on why it's central in the church's teaching now.
- Pope Francis' Encyclicals refer to the care of our common home: We acknowledge the harm inflicted on our planet and that the world in which we live is collapsing and maybe nearing breaking point.
- Surprisingly the top environmental problems are recognised as: Selfishness, apathy and greed and Spiritual Transformation is needed.
- Religion and Science – the 2 most powerful forces in the world share a moral precept. We owe future generations a beautiful, rich and helpful environment.
- As church we must seek to transform unjust structures of society, challenge violence of every kind and pursue peace and reconciliation. Alongside these we are to strive to safeguard the integrity of creation.
- Be prepared for Radical Discipleship – live simply so that others can simply live.
- We contribute to the problem and the solution so the challenges for our chaplaincy are: Are our environmental concerns firmly embedded? What is the direction which God wants for our island home and for our communion with generations to come?
- Be encouraged in our struggle for justice, love and peace.

Our Agenda also covered reports from:

1. The Dean of Women's ministry Debbie Flach – We have about 30 women clergy and 80 who have PTO(Permission to Officiate) and she works alongside them
2. World Youth Day 2023 – where many thousands of young people were hosted by the chaplaincy in Lisbon and shared their exuberance and joy during a visit from the Pope and Archbishop Stephen. We also had another session listening to an update on children and youth ministry across the diocese and what it might look like to implement the principle of archbishop's council to double the number of children and young active disciples by 2030.
3. The Archdeaconry Visit to Peru, our link diocese, between 4-17th Jan. Those who visited spoke of openness, welcome, liberation theology and poverty. There was deep hospitality, love and concern for the poorest and the church was described as a combination of catholic, evangelical and charismatic in its being. It is a community of difference with unity. We learnt too of a visit by one of the team with Roxanna who we have been supporting in her studies and who without support from All Saints would not be in the position she is today – in the final year of her degree studies. She

expressed gratitude for all we have enabled her to pursue and she will give back to her local community on completion of her psychology degree.

4. Dr Christopher Shiell our Archdeaconry Environmental Officer: Where are we and what do we do now? All chaplaincies are asked to record travel from January 2024. Our efforts can be seen as a drop in the ocean but an ocean full of drops can change the world.

There followed a presentation on the new diocesan Safeguarding and Antbullying policy.

This is found on the diocesan website www.europe.anglican.org under Resources → Policies of the Diocese in Europe → Antbullying Policy

We were taken through the background to it (Toxic environment in some chaplaincies) and the appropriate action that will be taken for both clergy and laity moving forward. There is a General Synod motion to further progress the issue that a person currently can't be removed from an elected position if on a council or church warden. Huge grief has been caused by this in some chaplaincies.

The policy is clear that to be a safeguarding matter one or more of the following must apply:

- Person who is the object of abuse must be a child or a vulnerable adult
- Seeking to exploit a vulnerable person to gain sexual activity of any nature, physical or emotional
- Person seeking to gain financial advantage over a vulnerable individual
- Person is seeking to gain physical or emotional harm
- Domestic violence

Safeguarding has no teeth in a bullying situation in chaplaincy conflicts.

Bishop Robert's keynote speech explained something of the life of our diocese, re-envisioned in a post Brexit era. The trend is that it is:

- Younger and more diverse
- Lean centrally re staff and operations
- Many candidates are applying for clergy vacancies – unlike many in England
- Freestanding Archdeacons and Area Deans

He explained the process for Bishop David's farewell, handover and recruitment. A Diocesan service of Farewell will be held on Zoom on 28th February. It is at 17:00 GMT on YouTube and Zoom. The Zoom ID is 86072447279 and password is 972358972358. Please join to pray for both Bishop David and his chaplain Canon Deacon Frances Hiller.

With both Bishop David and his chaplain Frances Hiller retiring different archdeacons will take up different aspects of the job until an appointment is made.

Archdeacon David will take on the role of care and selection of Readers. Honorary Assistant Bishops will help with confirmations.

Bishop David's office in London will close. The diocese is putting together a case for 2 suffragan bishops given the size, scale and extent of our diocese. 1 has already been approved and will be located in Brussels. Further analysis and a case has to be put to the church commissioners for a second. Advertising and recruitment will follow, before approval and announcement.

Diocesan Officers presentations:

Andrew Caspari: Chief Operating Officer

1. More than 95% of funding requested has been received by the diocese. Thank you to chaplaincies.
2. Diocese is in 175 locations and a financial team of 2 works with many currencies and bank accounts /Gift Aid.
3. Diocese has vibrancy, opportunity and a life rooted in community and service
4. Very uneven picture across Europe but the electoral roll numbers are stable
5. Collections now run behind overall chaplaincy income
6. 20 clergy new to the diocese since last year

Challenges and Opportunities:

- Aging population
- Mutual support because there's not an even picture
- Fund technology and ideas
- Marketing and promotion

Growth:

- Supporting congregations where numbers are high but income is low eg Rabat
- Find out ore – Data matters

Priorities:

- Net Zero Commitment
- Racial Justice – Actions
- Training
- Children and Young People

Aiden Hargreaves-Smith: Diocesan Registrar What is the Registry and what can it do for me?

- Take Advice – early, succinct and complete

- Be Kind – In disputes there are entrenched positions. Aim to reduce and resolve disagreements
- Trust judgements of Senior Staff – they have a fuller, more complete picture
- Due Process is your friend
- Review and see that your chaplaincy constitution is fit for purpose – refer to Archdeacon at first stage

Grace Fagan-Stewart: Head of Safeguarding

- Doing nothing is not an option
- Gratitude to all for promoting a safe church
- Functions of safeguarding team are to; provide consultations, casework, government and strategic development, Dashboard oversight, safeguarding checks and leadership training
- Between Feb 23 and Jan 24 16 queries received, 11 cases are open, 7 cases have been closed, 163 checks completed and 354 people trained.
- Challenges are language barriers and lack of knowledge of local agencies

Ruth Blanco: Communications

- Susi Doherty will replace Amber Jackson
- Share pictures and videos with @dioceseineurope
- They will offer advice and support with specific communications and reputational issues

Spanish Chaplaincies attended a business meeting regarding FEREDÉ where legal reps, constitutions and notary issues were dealt with.

Our final evening involved a thankyou to Bishop David, good wishes for his retirement and a time of fun and laughter.

Synod next year will be on Zoom on 28th and 29th January 2025