

# Rochford Deanery

## General Synod: July 2009

### **1. Ministry with People with Learning Difficulties & on the Autistic Spectrum** GS 1725

This comprehensive report gives much good and up-to-date advice on including more people in Services.

### **2. Being Adult About Childhood** GS 1744

We welcomed the 'Good Childhood Inquiry' on the wellbeing of Children in this country – the worst in a developed country. There were criticisms on its lack of theology, but we liked its recommendations, eg in supporting parents and especially fathers. Awards for Child Friendly Churches were commended.

### **3. Faithful Cities: Urban Life and Faith** GS 1745

There is difficulty of recruiting clergy to UPA parishes who are often stressed and lonely. There are also problems caused by lack of continuity in Government and their willingness to fund only multifaith projects.

### **4. Archbishops' Council Spending Priorities 2010 –2015** GS 1731 **Budget** GS 1730

It is recognised that parishes face major financial pressures, so spending by the national Church will increase by less than inflation for two years, then by no more than inflation for the next three. Priority is proposed for clergy training (44%) and retirement housing, with cuts likely in the wide range of activities done in Church House eg to support parliamentary activities, education and chaplaincy. A total net expenditure of £27.7 m was approved for 2010, including £11.8 m for training for ministry.

### **5. Archbishops' Council Annual Report** GS 1732

This report was debated in a rather grumpy mood. The Council has the difficult task of keeping the ship running and looking for strategic initiatives that can't be done more locally (eg the Weddings Project).

### **6. Church Commissioners' Annual Report**

The Commissioners believe they have weathered the economic storm well and are taking actions to maintain their assets and income. They hope to maintain their distribution to the Church close to current cash values, and are encouraging a review of how the money is spent; they would welcome a strategy for growth.

### **7. Giving for Life – Stewardship** GS 1723 and GS 1723A

We reaffirmed our call for all Church members to give 5% of their income to the Church (3.4% in 2007) and 5% to other work that builds God's kingdom. A new set of materials is available to parishes.

### **8. Clergy Pensions** GS 1746

The current economic situation has increased the problems for most pension schemes including the one for clergy, where there is a deficit of £352m. The Board has set an interim rise to 45% (£8,838 pp) from January. To avoid a possible rise to 57% and major reductions in clergy employment, a set of options is being proposed. All are based on: 42% contributions; using the Second State Pension; limiting inflation rises in pensions; increasing pension age to 68 and the period for a full pension to 43 years. Option 1 is to retain the 'defined benefits' provision, with risk mainly on the dioceses. Option 2 is to change for future service to 'defined contributions', which transfers much of the risk to the clergy, but does not necessarily give lower pensions - Church Lay staff are already on such a scheme. Option 3 is a hybrid which spreads the risk and avoids some costs.

### **9. Funded Pensions Scheme** GS 1749, GS 1750, GS 1751, GS 1753, GS 1754

We agreed changes to the pensions scheme reflecting changes in the law, eg allowing greater 'lump sums'.

### **10. Clergy Discipline Measure** GS 1747 A&B

In 2008, only about 70 complaints were made against the 22,360 eligible clergy, most were not made by designated officials. There were fifteen suspensions and 20 cases were not resolved by the year end. The process seems to be 'settling in' and some proposals for adjustment are expected.

### **11. Ecclesiastical Offices – Terms of Service** GS 1726.

The Measure on 'Terms of Service', comes into force on 1 July. We approved regulations which give more detail to 'Common Tenure', eg on rights to a statement of particulars of office, to a stipend and to MDR.

- 12. Additional Weekday Lectionary and Amendments to Calendar, Lectionary and Collects** GS 1724  
The additional lectionary is aimed at cathedrals which have many visitors who did not hear the readings the previous day, so ‘stand alone’ readings are an advantage. There are five additions to the ‘calendar’.
- 13. ARCIC – Life in Christ (preparation for group work)** GS 1736  
This flawed and dated document eventually reached Synod as group work, so no conclusions were reached.
- 14. Anglican Communion Update**  
Archbishop Rowan gave an optimistic account of the recent Anglican Consultative Council and hoped that the whole of the Anglican Covenant will be available by December. He regrets recent actions in the USA.
- 15. Ecclesiastical Fees** GS 1715A  
The aim is to improve clarity, transparency and consistency in fees for weddings etc. In future fees will be payable to the DBF rather than to incumbents and those who have not yet assigned their fees, will have to confirm this in writing (about 25% of clergy think they have assigned, but no papers can be found). They will have authority to waive the DBF fees in individual cases, but must consult the churchwardens before waiving fees due to the PCC. The documents now go for ‘final drafting’.
- 16. Questions**  
There will be a new leaflet encouraging higher rate tax payers to make greater use of Gift Aid. No licensed clergy are known to be members of the BNP. The Church of Sweden has been made aware of some of the difficulties likely to be caused by changes eg in making their marriage service ‘gender neutral’.
- 17. Introductions; Progress of Measures & Statutory Instruments**  
We welcomed a range of ecumenical visitors, including the Armenian Bishop Nathan whose Church became established in 301 and who addressed Synod.
- 18. Report by the Business Committee** GS 1729  
The Group of Sessions was shortened by a day and concentrated on legislation. This evoked a deal of anger that some of the usual outward looking debates and presentations were lacking.
- 19. Appointments to Archbishops’ Council and Chair of Audit Committee** GS 1734, GS 1735  
We agreed appointments to the Archbishops’ Council and reappointed the chair of audit but the earlier discontent spilled over into this item.
- 20. Review of Constitutions** GS 1737  
After a second debate, Synod rejected the massive slimming of structures and asked for new proposals.
- 21. Episcopal and Senior Appointments** GS 1733 A&B  
Concern was expressed that while clergy numbers are decreasing, there are no fewer bishops, archdeacons et al. We welcomed the new Dioceses Commission and other initiatives, and asked for a (theological) report on the patterns and exercise of senior leadership.
- 22. Promulgation of Amending Canon 28** GS 1642D  
The amending Canon on Holy Communion in ecumenical parishes, was ‘promulged’.
- 23. Vacancies in Suffragan Sees & Other Offices** GS 1692B **Parish Representatives** GS 1693B  
We gave final approval to updates in the way these senior appointments are made, eg we will no longer have to submit two names to the Crown. ‘Crown Benefices’ (about 8%) will be able to appoint ‘parish representatives’ at a vacancy, as do other parishes.
- 24. Church Representation Rules, Clergy Representation Rules** GS 1738, GS1739. **Pastoral and Mission Measure** GS 1740. **Care of Cathedrals Measure** GS 1727. **Legal Officers (Annual Fees) Order** GS 1741. **Ecclesiastical Judges, Legal Officers & Others (Fees) Order** GS 1742. **Parochial Fees Order** GS 1743.  
A wide range of updating and ‘tidy-up’ documents was agreed. In the only real disagreement Synod refused to accept the deletion of the right for candidates for General Synod to be given e-mail addresses of electors.