

# Notes of the Tower Hamlets Deanery Synod – 16 October 2017

7pm at the Royal Foundation of St Katharine.

Attended by 18 clergy, 20 laity, the Bishop of Stepney and the Area Dean of Islington.

The meeting was chaired by Andy Rider.

## 1. Welcome

Andy opened the meeting in the Chapel and welcomed Synod members, both existing and new. Andy was pleased to announce the results of the lay elections. Hayley Thomas was re-elected Lay Chair and David Longbottom, Elizabeth Marshal and Ruth McCurry were re-elected to the Standing Committee.

A suggestions sheet was available for members to put forward ideas (venues, themes and guest speakers) for Synod meetings in 2018. Members were also invited to pick up a SoloProtect brochure, a system for protecting clergy when lone working.

Prayer was led by Andy. Members moved to the meeting room where Andy introduced Bishop Adrian.

## 2. The Church and Social Justice – The Bishop of Stepney

Bishop Adrian began by talking about his time as Rector of St Martin in the Bullring when local redevelopment looked at incorporating a proposal for ‘fully human, fully alive’. Later, he was involved in the St Martin’s Board for Social Responsibility, where questions were asked about whether the plans being made were about saving the Church or saving the world. Bishop Adrian recognised that of course there is a desire to building a better Church, especially given the dwindling numbers, but the focus should be with saving the world.

The Bishop went on to speak about the ten Roman Catholic Principles of Social Justice which has ABC Justin Welby had commented to him, are a relevant focus for the Anglican Church too.

1. Human Dignity. Human life is sacred and dignity is the starting point for moral vision.
2. Community and the Common Good. Not only is life sacred, but it is social. Everyone has a responsibility to contribute to the common good.
3. Rights and Responsibilities. Rights need to be protected and responsibilities met in all areas, eg education, healthcare, etc.
4. Options for the Poor and Vulnerable. We need to assess our own economic situations and consider how society treats its most vulnerable.
5. Participation. Economic policy should embrace the cultural life of society. No one should be excluded.
6. Dignity of Work. The economy must serve people and not the other way around. No-one should amass economic wealth and the notion of the free market should be rejected.
7. Stewardship of Creation. We are not the owners, but are entrusted with safeguarding creation.
8. Global Solidarity. We are one human family, inclusive of all races, social classes, etc. Solidarity has a global reach.
9. Constructive Role for Government. Government has a positive moral function to help us fulfil the promise of common good.
10. Promotion of Peace. Peace is the fruit of justice and the right order for humankind.

Bishop Adrian suggested we reflect on Andy Sinek’s model of ‘Why, What, How?’ and start with the ‘Why?’.

Cities are the focus of much of what we mean by social justice and all the above ten principles relate strongly. Half of the world's populations live in cities. There are lots of opportunities but there are often crime, racial and economic tensions. The Church has traditionally delivered in rural settings but seems to struggle in urban settings. However, the Bible starts in a garden, the Garden of Eden, and ends in the city – the New Jerusalem. We need to speak up for the disadvantaged, engage in education and health care issues, and be willing to listen.

Contemplation can help us. The word derives from 'temple' in its earliest form, ie the sky. Prefixed by 'con-' it means to build a temple on earth, bringing together the one in the sky and the one on earth. A practical discipline can follow where our prayers and worship are linked to political activity. Social justice is not just a bolt-on. It is at the heart of what we do.

Bishop Adrian went on to talk about the definition of liturgy, where ordinary members of the public take on public duty and acts of service. He spoke about the Magnificat (Luke 1:46-55) and the Nazareth Manifesto (Luke 4:18-19). He also spoke about the acceptable year of the Lord, when debts are released. Practical action is not something safe: it is daring and risky.

The director of Christian Aid, Michael Taylor, said the evident of lasting progress in overcoming poverty and injustice is slight. Bishop Adrian likened this to love – it is an impossible possibility. It was said after 9/11 that the only way to defeat terror is to out-imagine it.

If we are to make a commitment to public good, we need to act. The Bishop told us he does this by engaging in community organisations. Church growth and a deepening commitment to social justice are by no means mutually exclusive. We need new thinking, innovation and experimentation to save the world!

Andy thanked the Bishop and asked members to form small discussion groups. Some thoughts from those discussions:

- Lots can be learned from others and Synod could be useful for sharing information, eg how to set up a foodbank.
- Churches can be opened up to the homeless but it can be challenging coping with this on a practical level. GROWTH do good work in Tower Hamlets for the homeless.
- There does not seem to be a strong Anglican presence at protest marches, in contrast with CAFOD.
- London Citizens is a good way to get involved in political issues.
- The symptoms of injustice are all around. People are suffering because of government policy so we should protest and lobby MPs to get issues put on the agenda.
- The difference between the 'haves' and 'have nots' is immense and it is difficult to bring these opposites together. The Church has a role to play in providing space to bring different communities together, even though this might not necessarily grow the Church.
- What are the barriers to inclusion and what do people need? There are tensions but Liverpool's strapline is helpful – 'Growing a bigger church to make a bigger difference'.
- Churches have power to make change with their buildings and people and we need to build on the assets we already have.

A few minutes of silence was held to consider what we might take back to our churches.

Andy prayed that what was useful would spur us towards fruitfulness.

### 3. School Governors

The following school governor appointment was ratified:

Governor	School	Proposed by
Rachel Clapham	St Luke's Primary	Tom Pyke

### 4. Conclusion

Andy thanked the Master of RFSK Mark Aitken for hosting the evening.

Hayley Thomas advised that she had ordered white poppies from the Peace Pledge Union if anyone would like some.

Prayer was led by Jessica Swift, Area Dean of Islington, and Dean of Women's Ministry.

**[2018 Deanery Synod dates to be advised shortly](#)**