

On returning from General Synod in London I was asked by a number of people how the reps from across the various dioceses had spent the three days together "at the church's parliament."

I answered that we listened to presentations and debates about a variety of topics including food waste, Down's Syndrome, digital evangelism, safeguarding, a theological review of the Crown Nominations Commission, religious communities, the covenant between the Methodist and the Anglican churches and there was legislation about Church of England Canons on various topics. Alongside this there is always the Question and Answer session - and this time there were 93 questions and included such areas as discipleship, sexuality, pensions, statistics, safeguarding, church buildings, dementia, persecuted Christians, the environment, interfaith dialogue, clergy deployment and Church Commissioners' grants.

The media has reported something of the Down's Syndrome Debate and Safeguarding, and particularly the time we spent before the session on Saturday morning, standing with and praying alongside survivors of abuse committed by church officers.

The question I ask myself as I leave Synod each time is: So what difference will that make? What and how am I being challenged to do and be? Sometimes the answer is easier to find than others!

This time I know that there are three moments that stand out and will impact and they are these:

1. During the Food Waste Presentation

we were reminded of the number of house food waste bins which are overflowing each week. As a result of the "buy one get one free" culture we take more than we can use which ends up in it going off and being thrown away. To counteract this we heard of the community fridge projects which enable this food to be used effectively by people who need it.

With the introduction of the "best before" labels perfectly good food is thrown out because the date that it is at its best is that day or the previous. 25 million pounds worth of food is thrown away each year. Best before refers to quality and not use by.

Praying: Lord to those who hunger give bread - to those of us who have bread give a hunger for justice for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen

In praying this I was challenged to consider what will that hunger for justice mean and what can I do differently? Could it be through

education, examining my attitudes and changing my practices or simply recognising that just because something is free of charge doesn't mean it was free to produce.

2. During Saturday's Morning Prayer

having just come inside from standing with church abuse survivors we sang the words of Bernadette Farrell's song 'Christ be Our Light'
"Longing for shelter, many are homeless,
Longing for warmth many are cold,
Make us your building, sheltering others, walls made of living stones."

I found myself in tears at the realisation that we as a church haven't sheltered and that we as living stones have brought about abuse and not life and light. The need for repentance was palpable.

In listening to the experiences of two survivors over the lunch break it was brought home yet again the importance and need for people to be listened to well, and the impact of a lack of listening. Listening to and learning from are important bricks in the walls of living stones.

3. Hearing from three archbishops who were guests from within the Anglican communion

The first was Archbishop Thabo from Cape Town

After telling us that with the water which we take for granted he now smelled a lot better than when he had arrived from a city without water, he reminded us to create space to care for each other; that we are sisters now yet historically we were seen as Mother. We were encouraged to converse in gentleness and as we create space in our hearts for one another we breakdown stereotypes through our links across the communion. We were challenged to live 1 Peter 4 - a practical expression of being in communion and strengthening mutuality in mission.

He was followed by Archbishop Humphrey from Pakistan

who told movingly how anything which happens in the West causes a reaction and retaliation in the Muslim world and so subsequently 75% of people are internally bruised and injured. The need is for someone to wipe tears. The church has both the graciousness and grace to embrace them. Quietly they come and say what's happening. The tiny body of Christ has therefore developed inroads in the Taliban.

In asking that we would pray for his people we learnt that the oldest mosque has 15-17000 people and of those there are 3-5000 praying five times daily. As we reconsider our calling to be a source of joy, blessing

and healing for a bruised world we see how God is at work in tiny churches all over.

Finally Archbishop Winston from Polynesia and New Zealand reminded us of the amazing identity we have in Christ. As we do life together and continue with loyalty and faithfulness the grace of God overflows. Together is the only way forward and no-one walks alone. Together is the secular word for Trinity. One bangle does not make a sound. In demonstrating the impact of climate change he showed a moving video of a communion celebration. Several years previously he had celebrated communion on one of the islands. In this latest celebration he was standing in the same spot up to his knees in the sea. As he lifted up the bread and wine with his alb soaking wet it was a powerful reminder of the impact of our place in the world. Science has taught us that humanity is the main cause of climate change. In this place people are losing home and their land due to the reality of climate change.

So beyond Synod? At the heart of what we say and do one bangle does not make a sound....In Christ we move together in the challenges of mission and ministry in a world where we are called to minister healing and wholeness, alert to the needs of both the local and global community.

Judith Rigby