

## **MEETING OF GENERAL SYNOD 17-18 NOVEMBER 2014**

My thoughts as I arrived at this two day meeting of Synod (agreed to only take place if approval for the women bishops legislation to proceed had been voted through successfully in July at York) were that the long and winding road would seem to have made it back to the door of Church House again!

Since that July day this year when we had agreed to enable women to be consecrated as bishops, the Ecclesiastical Committee had been busy and debates had taken place in both the House of Commons and the House of Lords, with agreement in both.

So at our meeting in November on the Monday we had a largely symbolic and archaic process to vote through by which the Measure to enable women to be consecrated as Bishops could be formally incorporated into English Law. The Archbishop of York told us that the Royal Assent and licence to 'make, promulge and execute' the Canon had been given. We then had three steps to take - first the Registrar would read the instrument of enactment. Secondly we were to, without any debate, on a show of hands, vote to show our will 'that the Canon entitled 'Amending Canon No 33 'be made, promulged, and executed'. If this was passed by a simple majority, the two Archbishops, the Prolocutors of the House of Clergy and the Chair and Vice Chair of the House of Laity would then sign the 'instrument of enactment' that would declare and testify consent to the Canon (the Bishops were to meet later in the afternoon!). By the show of hands there was a clear majority to this and we all sat in silence as the signing took place. No whoops or shouts of joy permitted, out of respect for those who raised their hands against (but I noticed some were actually absent). So it was all over. Women can now be consecrated as Bishops in the Church of England – but not to dioceses of Sodor & Man or Winchester, which includes the Channel Islands, until such time that legislation is passed by the Tynwald and the Channel Islands legislatures.

I was delighted that, with this finalising of the women Bishops issue, the Bishop of Coventry reflected on the Anglican-Methodist covenant and how this might now be better put into effect through the Joint Implementation Commission. Our Chair of Laity was saddened that the Archbishops Council has yet to

discuss this. The Bishop of Peterborough commented what a good, joyful, result that could bring. Halleluiah!

The Archbishop next gave a superb Presidential Address, describing his recent visits to the whole worldwide Anglican Communion (except for shouts from the floor that Scotland yet remained to be visited!). The Archbishop described the Anglican Communion as 'A flourishing Communion but also a divided Communion'. This activity had entailed 96 days in all and 11 days in aeroplanes!

Other topics that were discussed included the care of Churches and the Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction (Amendment Measure), PCCS and property, administering communion, the Diocese in Europe, diocesan investments and diocesan names.

A panel discussion on Iraq and Syria included a first ever guest Muslim to address Synod – Sheikh Fuad Nahdi, the executive Director of Radical Middle Way. Emphasising that he was neither a theologian nor an academic the Sheikh spoke about how the British Muslim Community was reacting to the events in the Middle East.

All in all Synod was, to my mind, very less fraught than before and more as I would personally like it to be seen - a body of people with diverse minds and views but all, especially at this Advent season, driving away darkness and putting on the armour of light. In the name of Christ. AMEN