

## Communications Report

A group of diocesan communicators met in Bahrain on October 17 2015 to review the terms of reference and the strategic plan drawn up formerly by the Communications Team. This Report is essentially the conclusions of that review group.

Neither the structure nor the modus operandi of the Team had proved as successful as had been hoped. Video conferencing had not proved popular either within the Team or in wider diocesan communications, and there were significant differences between the opportunities for liaison with local media outlets between Cyprus and the Gulf. Local correspondents had been difficult to recruit. Training had not been accomplished, and work with young people had not been developed.

On the other hand there had been significant progress with the website, with the scene@ publications, Olive Branch, and most recently the diocesan (Synod) dvd.

It was recommended that a new structure be put in place that would see the Team chaired by the Executive archdeacon who would be directly responsible to the bishop on communication matters, but with a dedicated communications co-ordinator in each archdeaconry. The role of the co-ordinators would include the following:

- To encourage every parish to have a communications officer/person/contact
- To monitor posts on parish websites and social media and to discern appropriate further outlets. For example, one post may be appropriate for the diocesan website, another for Olive Branch, another for Bible Lands.
- To become a repository of news in each archdeaconry and to set up locally appropriate systems to enable that.
- To help disseminate diocesan news widely within the constituency.
- To liaise with the 'other' communications co-ordinator and the chair on a regular basis.
- To help with training in communication related skills
- To help develop a sense of community amongst communicators
- To initiate feature articles
- To liaise with the webmaster

It was felt that the local and more focussed approach would be more likely to achieve desired results.

The Gulf and Cyprus communicators should meet together, ideally once each year. The whole Team should attempt a short meeting at Synod, and a fuller meeting every two years.

The membership of the Team will change, partly as a result of these recommendations and partly because of resignations and retirements.

The website is currently being overseen by Nick Truscott with the help of Jon Lavelle. Posts should be sent to Jon. He will need continuing help with the 'back end' aspects of the site and its design, and it is hoped a suitable person can be found, with those skills, to share with Jon the role of webmaster. Content and 'front end' issues will continue to be Jon's domain, subject to the overall editorial oversight of the executive archdeacon, acting for and alongside the bishop. A number of suggestions were made to improve the current website, which in any case is constantly being updated and improved. The work that Nick Truscott has done, both for the diocesan site and for numerous parish sites was noted with grateful thanks.

The issue of archiving digital material was raised. Increasingly, material that could be of use to future researchers, both words and pictures, is being generated in a digital form. The diocese has no policy on storing or archiving this material, and the Group recommends that Standing Committee give consideration to this.

The Group was concerned that no progress had been made with regard to diocesan communication amongst young people. It was felt that the 'Our Common Life' theme invited some work in this area. It was decided to launch a #Friday Club string on an appropriate social medium after consultation with young people and youth leaders in Bahrain, Jebel Ali and Abu Dhabi. Diocesan safeguarding provisions would need to be observed. The hashtag would be initiated at a pre-announced time in Bahrain. It was hoped that this might capture imaginations and that before long young people from all parts of the diocese could be talking to each other.

The Group was concerned that there appeared to be no co-ordinated plans for the celebration of the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the diocese (and the Province) beyond the production of a special calendar. The Communications Team could have a role here and should be willing to be a coordinating body if so requested. A redesign of the website to acknowledge the anniversary has been suggested, but there are wider opportunities, and the 'branding' of the year could be important in external relations. Also it presents a further opportunity to develop the common life theme. All Saints tide 2016 might be an appropriate time for special services to be held throughout the diocese for example. There could be special projects and aims for this momentous year. Standing Committee is the obvious body to initiate any work and the group looked forward to its response.

Finally, it was suggested that an area on the website be made available for liturgical material for occasional use (e.g. All Souls commemoration, Remembrance, Harvest, Family service formats) which has been proved useful in any particular parish, to be shared more widely. That facility will soon be available.

John Holdsworth 10/2015