

Planning Group: Initial Report to Standing Committee

The Group has met on one occasion, to discharge its remit, which is to bring forward considered proposals for the sustainable development of the diocese. Its initial observations were that this is a good time to be set this task. In its forty year history the diocese has already developed a great deal both from the initial vision, and from the initial facts on the ground. There has been a huge increase in congregational numbers, and in the number of churches chaplaincies, and stipendiary clerics. Some of the vital expressions of a more mature diocese are evident. Vocations are increasing, varieties of ministry are developing, appointments are being made to accomplish development, for example in the field of spirituality. The kind of words that describe where we have come to, looking back, are: perseverance, faith diversity, versatility and stability.

But the Group believes that the structures within which the diocese is now working were designed for a phase of church life that has now passed. Instead of being enabling and supporting, they have become constraints on further growth. Perhaps this perceived movement between phases is well expressed in the transition from descriptions of our basic units as ‘chaplaincies,’ to that of describing them as ‘Anglican parishes,’ which Standing Committee has commended. A ‘chaplaincy’ model of church implies providing short term succour and pastoral care to transient people, who want to worship in a familiar tongue and idiom, and find some context for further social intercourse, whilst away from what is properly described as home. This kind of care needs little continuity. It can be provided cheaply and easily by retired clerics, especially retired chaplains from other contexts. It makes few demands on the congregation. It is by nature responsive rather than pro-active. It can encourage consumer mentalities when used as a longer term model. It lacks ambition. It does not easily admit of long-term initiative. No hospital chaplain (to take a parallel example) would start a course of Confirmation classes.

In so far as that was a model of church life in this area in the past, it is clearly not appropriate now. Neither does it reflect the ‘facts on the ground’ where priests are clearly working with a different and more mission oriented and innovative model. During the past forty years there have been far more ‘settlers’ especially in Cyprus, and many Gulf congregational members have been long term in the area, even if not in the same job or church. Other things have changed as well. The interface between Christianity and Islam for example is hugely more significant now in world affairs, compared with even a couple of decades ago. The title ‘Anglican parish’ suggests something adequate for the new situation. “Parish,” because it gives structures to encourage ambitious venturing in mission. It signifies a perspective that is not complacent. The New Testament origins of the word parish translate as something like ‘resident aliens,’ giving due weight to both settledness and journeying. “Anglican,” because the Group feels strongly that we should embrace what is special about our particular place in the spectrum of Christian groupings evident throughout the diocese.

There are many churches that take a confessional stance, and that limit entry to those who believe certain doctrines or believe them in certain ways. There are many churches that are suspicious of difference and challenged by diversity. There are many churches who feel compromised by relations with the State. There are many churches without historic roots, whose leadership is entirely local and congregational. We are unlike these churches and fellowships. We believe in Episcopal oversight, Synodical government and local responsibility. We are trusted by Gulf Rulers and Orthodox bishops alike, as a legitimate and reasonable face of Christianity. We do not view seekers, and those who disagree with us, as

fodder for conversion, but as opportunities for dialogue. We are inclusive, broad, and (hopefully) welcoming and generous hosts. For the Group, all of that is somehow expressed in the title: Anglican Parish. That is not to make exclusive claims for ourselves. The Group believes in a mixed economy of church presentations and welcomes a degree of diversity in the Christian offer. But it believes we make our best contribution to that diversity by owning who we are.

The Group considered what our vision should be, and how it might be expressed. We found two statements of particular value in setting out for us the kind of aspiration we might have. The first, more general statement is the Anglican Church's Five Marks of Mission. Adopted by ACC 8, and subsequently expanded. These set out what Anglican Churches should understand by their mission. They are:

- To proclaim the good news of the kingdom
- To teach baptise and nurture new believers
- To respond to human need by loving service
- To seek to transform the unjust structures of society; to challenge violence of every kind, and to pursue peace and reconciliation
- To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation, and sustain and renew the life of the earth.

The second, more immediate statement for our context is an extract from Bishop Michael's presidential address to Synod in February 2011, in which he set out the diocesan task as follows:

First, **we must maintain and enhance our witness**, in solidarity with other mainline Trinitarian Christians but paying particular attention to the authentic Anglican way at both chaplaincy and diocesan level. We and others are precious evidence of the flourishing existence of Christianity in the region. Many do not realise just how flourishing the Church and the Churches are here. Many do not know of the persistence and bravery of the historic Eastern Churches in particular over twenty centuries. Alongside theirs, our presence must bear witness to non-Christians, to nominal Christians, and to observant Christians. In several of our countries we could and should plant and grow congregations in even more locations, according to Anglican norms. We are not overchurched but underchurched.

Secondly, **we must provide appropriate strong ministry** for service, leadership, and development. Continuity and accountability in public ministry are crucial. So a network of ordained clergy and licensed laity is vital. At the same time it is more than desirable, it is essential, that all regular worshippers should be encouraged to play their part in the corporate life of chaplaincies. The

Anglican model of church life is people and priests together within the unity of a diocese under its bishop's oversight and authority: neither clerical autocracy nor congregational autonomy. That model must be understood, adhered to, and enhanced at all levels in this diocese.

Thirdly, **we must create a stronger base of support**, in money, prayer, and intelligent interest. Our present financial base is precarious in providing what the diocese as diocese needs to run and develop, first because – and it may be that this is in some measure unavoidable – there is not as yet a thoroughgoing system of share or quota that would, for

example, facilitate strategic deployment of clergy and mission development in areas where local finances do not as yet permit it, and secondly because the diocese's Endowment Fund is still comparatively very small. It is also true that our diocesan profile remains low internationally, even though we serve arguably the most interesting and multistranded region in the world, in which lie several of humanity's greatest challenges and greatest opportunities. People know, or think they know, Jerusalem; they as yet know little of Cyprus and the Gulf. We must tell our story and invite others into it.

Fourthly, **we must work on serious encounter with Islam** locally and bring news of our encounter into Christian-Muslim thinking worldwide. Our non-Christian neighbours are overwhelmingly Muslim, in almost all instances within the individual countries where we are present. In some parts of the diocese there is explicit, articulated contact, for dialogue, common service, or both. In some places we as Anglicans do engage not just with particular people who happen to be Muslims but with Islam as a world faith. In others there is little or nothing. Modelling ways of interfaith encounter in the heartlands of Islam could be our significant diocesan contribution to better Christian-Muslim understanding internationally, and should be explored at local level by all our chaplaincies.

Fifthly and finally, **we must realise that our presence and church life can be genuinely evangelistic**. If our chaplaincies look outwards as well as inwards, if they get to know and in due course have the courage to speak into the societies in which they are set, if they are creative in identifying works of compassion such as medical clinics, prison-visiting, and advocacy for the poor and powerless, if they make positive efforts to recognise and address the many nominal Christians who live around them and to work with anyone of good will for the common good, then even in a diocese where proselytism and what is conventionally understood as traditional evangelisation are discouraged or forbidden they will be participating in the mission of God. Understanding this should make us more imaginative in what we plan and more confident in who we are. We are assuredly a broadly inclusive and welcoming church.

The Group recognises that the response of most Anglican dioceses to such calls to mission has been to set up series of boards, committees, directors and so on. Typically there would be a diocesan Board of Finance, diocesan bodies of various sorts dealing with Mission, Ministry, Social Responsibility, Stewardship, Spirituality, Communication, Teaching and Learning, Youth and Children's work, Evangelism and Ecumenism among others. There would probably be a diocesan centre that would incorporate some of these functions, along with the financial administration that such structures would demand.

The Group believes that this model is totally inappropriate for this diocese, and is opposed to the proliferation of committees. It does accept that these categories of mission need to be evidenced in our work, but proposes a less formal model of networks, bringing together practitioners with particular gifts, but that would have few face to face meetings. As an alternative to a structure of accountability and enabling that involves a complicated committee and officer model, the Group believes that this whole area of work should be under a simpler direct Episcopal oversight, and subject to Synod accountability. There would need to be adjustment of Synod agendas to allow more thematic presentations of diocesan life and mission, than those which at present are largely concerned with parish reports. A further suggestion is that most if not all parish appointments going forward should be associated with a specified diocesan role. Most would be in addition to full time parish work, but occasionally (as with Deryneia and Spirituality) there is opportunity to combine a half time post with a time

consuming but highly desirable diocesan role. An example offered is that of Communication officer.

The Group spent some time discussing how 'Anglican identity' can best be promoted. The value of strong, identifiable, visible, leadership was affirmed. At present, that is provided primarily by the diocesan bishop and the two archdeacons. The archdeacons have differing roles and conditions. The archdeacon of Cyprus has territorial oversight within that archdeaconry but combines that job with a relatively small parish appointment, and the much more demanding role of executive archdeacon. He is paid through the diocese with a contribution from the parish. The archdeacon in the Gulf has a large parish responsibility, staff to administer, and an expectation that his primary duty is to the parish that pays his stipend. The difficulties inherent in that situation, in the Group's view need to be addressed in some way. Minimally, if the promotion of an Episcopal church is to be taken seriously, the role of archdeacon in the Gulf should be full time. In other words, the lack of a full time cleric in this oversight role in this region is regarded by the Group as a barrier to development.

However, the Group spent much time on issues around Episcopal oversight more generally. It concluded that the need for that Episcopal oversight necessary for the development of the various mission activities envisaged above, together with the need to provide symbols of diocesan unity and pastoral concern within the unique setting of our diocese, could best be met by the appointment of additional assistant bishops. That uniqueness does not have to be spelt out here but it is articulated in several places. As a result of it: a) we do not have to compare ourselves with the ways that completely dissimilar dioceses organise their oversight; b) we have something precious and contemporary to contribute to the wider communion; c) by virtue of our serving ten political jurisdictions and being placed in an area with many historic churches and other great monotheistic religions, there is a burden on our diocesan bishop, in representing the church to all these bodies, that other bishops do not usually have to bear; and d) the sheer geographical size and spread makes the task of personal Episcopal pastoral care extremely difficult, without some kind of sharing mechanism. Quite legitimately, our diocesan bishop has to spend a great deal of his time either outside the diocese, travelling within the diocese, or engaged in activities hidden to parish congregations.

Moreover, the diocese is placed in cultures that value identifiable leaders.

From an interior standpoint, two things emerged from discussion: a) that the need to shape awareness of the distinctive Anglican ethos, which the Group believes is a necessity, is best done by having more people who obviously embody the diocese and represent it in a recognisable way. And b) the exercise of Episcopal pastoral oversight could cover a wider canvas with more bishops. The Group agreed that the term 'archdeacon,' though having currency in some places such as England, has little currency here. People do not understand it, it is not an office which relates directly to understood ministries within other churches, and there is a tendency to view office holders as bureaucratic functionaries, rather than sharers in *episcopate* with the bishop. The Group would be willing to jettison the term and include the function of territorial archdeacon within that of the assistant bishops.

The leadership team would therefore have a very simple structure with the diocesan bishop at the top and two assistant bishops who would share in the oversight of mission and ministry, encouraging, supporting and enabling mission in particular areas as they held specific portfolios. It believes one of the assistant bishops should be located in the Gulf, and have a

primary responsibility of developing a diocesan culture. This is work that the diocesan bishop also does, and the Group recognises that, but believes an additional episcopal presence would add to that effort significantly. Specific portfolio responsibilities for the Gulf-based assistant might include interfaith work and work with young people. The other assistant would be based in Cyprus and hold the majority of the portfolio oversight briefs. He would also have a pastoral role in Cyprus. The post would encompass the present territorial archdeacon of Cyprus role, though in time that might be delegated to an area dean for Cyprus.

The Group was absolutely clear that the assistant bishops would be just that. They would assist. They would be appointed by the diocesan bishop according to whatever means he chose, and he would direct their work. They would not, for example, be area bishops, but they would have visible Episcopal authority. This might be particularly important in the work of the diocesan office during the diocesan bishop's absences, for example.

The financial implications of such appointments were also considered. There would be little or no extra financial commitment for the Cyprus based post, which would take over the 'package' currently available to the executive archdeacon. The Gulf based post would be a new post and would need to be financed. It was felt that financing from central funds would mean a large increase in parish contributions, likely to be resisted, and that that might mean the establishment of the post being delayed. The Group hopes that income from the Anglican Centre in Doha will support the post in the medium term, but in the short term a degree of support from other Gulf parishes would probably be needed to enable this post to be established more quickly. The Group realises that there is a vulnerability inherent in depending on funding from anything other than central diocesan monies. However, the speedy establishment of both posts is seen as desirable for development within the terms envisaged.

Leadership structures are one leg of a three-legged stool, in the Group's view. A second leg concerns administration and the work of the diocesan office. Despite recent problems with the Cyprus banks, the Group believes that it is best to continue to locate the diocesan office in Nicosia. The costs of being elsewhere are prohibitive, the restrictions on moving money across national borders make other options unattractive, and a change over to a Gulf location would be difficult to achieve. Also, the bishop would still need administrative support in Cyprus. However it was clear to the Group that the present staffing in the office is quite unsustainable and needs urgent review. Two part time people are working well in excess of their hours, in an office nominally run by a third part time person, liaising with a Finance Director who is also part time, effectively unpaid, and located remotely.

Certainly the development of the diocese needs a stronger administrative base, but the situation in the present needs to be addressed in any case. With immediate effect, the Group proposes the employment of a full time equivalent person to take over financial and related responsibilities that are currently undertaken by the Administrative Secretary and the executive archdeacon. In the medium term, the Group would see a role for an additional part time person with primary HR responsibilities, taking work from the Bishop's PA and the executive archdeacon. These appointments would also help with the problem of succession, when two current long-standing employees decide to retire in due course.

The third leg of the stool is constitutional reform. The Group believes that the present constitution is rarely read and even more rarely either understood or owned. That constitution tells us for example that Synod is the supreme authority in the diocese in all matters other than those pertaining to faith and order, and the Group believes that the implications of that are

rarely taken on board by parishes. At present, in the Group's view, the constitution does not support, adequately the weight it should bear. There are areas of church life that the constitution does not mention. One example is that of buildings. Another area where the constitution might be thought to have a contribution to make is that of the role and governance of the diocesan cathedrals.

It emerged in discussion that we have no inventory of parish buildings throughout the diocese. Also the ownership of those buildings is vested in an incredibly diverse number of bodies, that include governments, embassies, rulers, individual churches, landlords, and JEMT. There are no set procedures for the care of buildings and no stated responsibilities. The building of new churches appears to have an ad hoc and local quality, without the procedures for wider consultation and strategic appraisal. The Group believes these issues need to be addressed, and that a start could be made with an inventory.

But perhaps the most striking omission in the constitution is anything beyond an attempt at a definition, describing how parishes should relate to the diocese. The Group heard that there is a plethora of individual church constitutions, few of which acknowledge that they are secondary to the diocesan constitution, and which offer differing accounts of parish responsibilities and methods of working. There have been attempts to work towards something more standard as constitutions have been reviewed, but perhaps what is required, as part of a rewrite of the constitution of the diocese is a chapter describing the organisation of parish life, thereby precluding the need for individual documents, save for something minimal for occasional legal purposes in some jurisdictions. The present parish constitutions would then have the effect of local standing orders. In any case parish and diocesan constitutions need a simple mechanism for amendment, since every Synod meeting will present potentially new decisions that affect the constitutions. The Group recommends that as part of its future work, it revisits the constitution, presenting ideas to Synod, through the Standing Committee for drafting by the Chancellor. The Group believes that the Constitution should reflect more adequately the stage of development that the diocese has reached, and that it could therefore be owned with confidence.

The Group spent some time on discussion about finance. It does not believe that the main diocesan budget can carry the weight of the new initiatives which will result from development over the coming years. Other options will include partnerships within the diocese (as for the funding of the assistant bishop post located in the Gulf), local partnerships based on existing large parishes or within national boundaries (a way forward for developing work in north east Cyprus perhaps), and more rigorous exploration of sources of external funding for specific purposes (for example clergy training). This would be a job for the new financial employee in the diocesan office. The Group heard that there are plans to centralise more financial functions in the archdeaconry of Cyprus, and hopes that that will provide a self-contained mechanism for sharing resources.

The Group had some advice for the forthcoming Ministry Forum. It does not believe that we can commit finances to the full time residential training of more than two candidates for ordained ministry at any one time, and bearing in mind the number of parishes in the diocese, it sees no way of finding employment for more than two stipendiary curates at any one time. It therefore advises that a cap should be placed on the numbers of people selected for training who are admitted to training for stipendiary ministry at any one time. It notes that all the ordinands in training at present are almost entirely supported by bursaries from the Endowment Fund. If these were unavailable in the future, a complete reappraisal would be

needed. The Group sees no problem with encouraging vocations to non-stipendiary ministry, (though that too has substantial costs), and welcomes them.

The Group sensed optimism in the diocese, and believes strategic planning is timely. This initial report highlights some structural changes that the Group believes need to be made as soon as practicable in the basic structures of: a) leadership and organisation of mission and ministry; b) administration and finance, and c) constitutional reform. It points towards the further work of building on those basic structures, and looks to Standing Committee and Synod to endorse what it has proposed and to encourage it in that further work. In its opening worship, the Group reflected on a prayer of Sir Francis Drake which supported its thinking during its time together. The prayer is worth repeating for its own sake and as a key to understanding the Group's motivation.

Disturb us, Lord, when We are too well pleased with ourselves,
When our dreams have come true
Because we have dreamed too little,
When we arrived safely
Because we sailed too close to the shore.

Disturb us, Lord, when
With the abundance of things we possess
We have lost our thirst
For the waters of life;
Having fallen in love with life,
We have ceased to dream of eternity
And in our efforts to build a new earth,
We have allowed our vision
Of the new Heaven to dim.

Disturb us, Lord, to dare more boldly,
To venture on wider seas
Where storms will show your mastery;
Where losing sight of land,
We shall find the stars.
We ask You to push back
The horizons of our hopes;
And to push into the future
In strength, courage, hope, and love.

December 2013.

Recommendations Synod agrees

1. that the post of archdeacon in the Gulf should be a full time post, to be funded from income generated by the Anglican centre in Doha; and proposes that the bishop be asked to make arrangements to facilitate this as soon as possible.
2. that as soon as is practicable, the administrative capacity of the diocese be augmented by the appointment of a specialist in financial administration.
3. that as part of its future work, the Planning Group should initiate a process of Constitutional reform, to produce a Constitution that matches present activity and that will enable future growth and mission in a consistent way.
4. that the Bishop be invited to consider the appointment of two assistant bishops in the diocese: one to be located in the Gulf region and one to be located in Cyprus. The Gulf appointment to include the present duties of the archdeacon in the Gulf; the Cyprus appointment to include the present duties of the archdeacon in Cyprus and such other duties as the bishop determines.
5. that the Planning Group be encouraged to continue its work and bring a further report to Synod in 2015.