

Standing Committee: Report to Synod

Since the last Synod Meeting, Standing Committee / Bishop's Council (SC) has met for Ordinary Meetings in May and October, and for an Extraordinary Meeting in December. It has also met immediately prior to Synod. That Meeting is largely concerned with the organisation of Synod business, and this Report does not take account of that Meeting. This has been the first year of membership for Mrs Angela Murray, as Lay representative for the Gulf. The term of Mrs Elizabeth Taylor, as lay representative for Cyprus comes to an end now.

At the May Meeting, SC agreed to the experiment of producing a magazine-type account of business, similar to scene@synod, that would help to maintain informed interest in the work of the diocese, between Synod Meetings. The expected audience for the publication would be Synod members, Church Council members and visitors to the diocesan website. Two editions of scene@cypgulf have also now appeared and feedback has been good. That also means that this Report can take more for granted, and therefore be shorter.

The Cyprus financial crisis has been a backdrop to all SC Meetings. Some cash has been converted to shares in the Bank of Cyprus by the notorious 'haircut,' and this has affected both the recruitment of a Chaplain for Aden and the purchase of a residence for the Executive Archdeacon, which were agreed at last Synod. However thanks to the successful outcome of a legal action against the Bank of Cyprus, the initial amount 'taken' has been considerably reduced. Plans are now in hand for recruitment to Aden, which it is hoped will take place in 2014.

A number of new documents have been approved by SC. They include a generic job description for clergy in the diocese; a document outlining the professional guidelines expected to be adhered to by clergy, and a document aimed towards those thinking of working in the diocese, describing its particular character, and giving a realistic assessment of what can be expected. That document: Venturing in Mission in the Diocese of Cyprus and the Gulf, is a combination of information, and stories from a variety of clergy and their spouses. All are available on the website.

SC has decided that the term 'Anglican parish of...' is preferable to that of 'Chaplaincy,' for a variety of reasons, set out in more detail in the Initial report of the Planning Group. No implementation plan has been agreed. SC hopes that the two terms might be used in parallel for a time, to allow people to get used to the new nomenclature, but that the term, parish, will become part of common usage. SC accepts that in some cases there may be constitutional or legal reasons for keeping the older term in some documents.

SC has received regular reports from a number of diocesan groups. It has approved the appointment of Diane Heaney as Gulf representative on the Diocesan Group for the Protection of Vulnerable People. It has noted the developments in the Spirituality Development Team, and accepted the Terms of the Communications Group. It has approved the membership and set the terms for the Planning Group. It has been interested in the plans for the three way Thika / Exeter/ Gulf/ Cyprus gathering in Cyprus, under the auspices of the companion diocese scheme. It has noted the implementation of the new guidelines for Clergy Appointments, both in the Gulf and in Cyprus.

SC has monitored the introduction of the UTO Grant, which funded an initiative to help vulnerable foreign workers and others in Cyprus. This scheme funds a research worker, whose

task is to assemble resources that can be used by all the churches on the island, and in turn to help Churches respond to the needs of foreign domestic helpers, trafficked women, refugees and other vulnerable groups, with greater confidence. That work has now begun.

The work of planning the next Synod begins as soon as the last one has finished, and that has proceeded throughout the year. This year, once again a theme was chosen – Ministry – and details about speakers, programme and agendas have been discussed at each meeting. For 2014, the logic of the 2013 Synod has been pursued, with the aim of moving from the past to the future, and from decision to costing. Hence, programmes will be discussed prior to the budget. The exception will be the Ministry forum proposals, which not only form the climax to the programme, whose theme is Ministry, but also involve separate costing considerations. Next year we hope to introduce a new way of illustrating our diocesan work through video presentations.

In the past the chaplaincy video presentations at synod have had a common theme, and have been shown together as one part of the agenda, bringing news from the parishes. What is proposed for next year is that we have not one theme but several, corresponding to areas on the agenda: spirituality, ministry, communication, vulnerable people and so on. By the end of March each parish will be asked to choose the theme for its video in 2015. Within the Synod programme, each video will then be shown at the appropriate point in the agenda. This will also be, potentially, a means of bringing agenda items to Synod's notice. It will still be possible for parishes who do not want to participate in this way, to simply bring a 'news from' style of video, if they wish.

The December Extraordinary Meeting was called to consider the Initial report of the Planning Group, and the Report of the Ministry Forum, both of which had structural and budgetary implications. The aim was to see whether, and in what form the SC wanted to bring the Reports and any recommendations before Synod, and to give the Director of Finance opportunity to prepare forecasts based on those decisions. The results are evident from the order papers.

Reports from each Archdeaconry are received at each SC Meeting. Much of the substance of that is by now historic, or in some cases, and in some degree, confidential. In the Gulf, moves are afoot to provide guidance on the policy for hosting congregations, other than our own, on our premises. In Cyprus, where there is a Community of Cyprus Treasurers who meet as a group, SC has learned of their aspiration to move towards the formation of a Cyprus Board of Finance, from which stipends can be paid centrally.

SC along with JEMT has expressed dissatisfaction with the present situation in which the only legal entity registered in Cyprus is the Trustees of JEMT. This is both inhibiting and could lead to situations of potential disingenuousness. Consequently our legal team has been looking at ways in which the Diocese itself can register as a legal entity. Legislation allows for various kinds of association, but churches do not readily correspond with the categories available. However, SC has decided to pursue the possibility of registering the Diocese as a limited not for profit company. Following a meeting in January, it is hoped this process may be complete in the first half of 2014.

JH