

Synod Report: Diocesan Synod 1st March 2014

GOD of all our journey, with each step we take, be our way, our truth, our life, in every choice we make...

These were the words of the new Diocesan Centenary hymn, sung after the end of Synod in this year of pilgrimage and parties, but this sentiment guided the spirit of the morning.

The big news was the rapid referral to Diocesan Synods of the new draft measure for women in the episcopate. We had debated female bishops in 2011, but the measures had been narrowly defeated at General Synod in November 2012. What had been perceived as a disaster was now seen by some as God's wisdom: the newly drafted package was seen as simpler, fairer and less contentious. Our overwhelming majority in favour reflected that.

The Diocesan Director of Education spoke to the recent 'DBE for the Future' paper. Its 'ten marks' of a highly performing DBE presented a useful measure for self-evaluation but the report also presented a significant challenge to school improvement. With the government no longer resourcing this itself there was now no option but to appoint two full time School Effectiveness Officers – and to budget accordingly. Synod agreed wholeheartedly with this conclusion.

The Revd Dave Gardner reported on the progress being made in forming a growth strategy. A fresh report from the national church – 'From Anecdote to Evidence' – gave clearer indicators of the markers for growth – these including youth and children's involvement, community engagement, adaptability, and a clearly articulated mission. The growth in numbers, influence, depth of discipleship and youthfulness was encapsulated as 'Growing in God' – recognising that while our mission plants the seed, it is God who makes it grow.

With centenary celebrations commencing, the business of Synod was again that of looking to God with each step we take.

Report by TIM ROGER