Doing God, Doing Good

Standing Committee has agreed plans for Synod 2018 on the theme, “Social Liturgy: Doing God and Doing Good.”

Feedback from last Synod showed that the workshop sessions were popular. There had been suggestions for new workshops and several offers to lead them.

In presenting the plans, Archdeacon John stressed the need to develop the resourcing function of Synod. It is hoped that this year there will be a bookstall at Synod for example and a donation has been received to get that started. New workshops will include:

- Faith Neighbours (with a local Imam)
- Running a Pilgrim Course
- Staging a Christian Musical
- Natural Church Growth
- It worked for us: a chance for people to bring ideas and orders for services successful in particular parishes.

These will feature alongside established favourites such as How to Read a Balance Sheet (and other mysteries), No Choir, No Problem and Theological Reflection. There will be two workshop sessions on the agenda.

Saluté, Primate Michael!

Standing Committee, which also operates as Bishop’s Council, congratulated Bishop Michael on his election as Primate of the Province, from November 2019, at its Autumn Meeting in Larnaca. The Bishop, in response, reiterated his strong commitment both to the Diocese and the Province. Provincial Synod had been keen to explore possibilities for Canon Law, he said, and to consider the possibility offered by a new appointment in Jerusalem, for youth work on a Provincial scale. It was possible that there may be some review of Provincial Structures and Boundaries in the near future, prompted in part by the rapid growth of the Anglican Church in the Horn of Africa. There are over eighty churches in Ethiopia alone.

The speaker at Synod will be the Rt Revd Dame Sarah Mullally, Bishop of Crediton and a former Chief Nursing Officer for England.

The Synod Meeting will be held at the Golden Bay Hotel in Larnaca whilst the Lordos Beach is being refurbished. The dates will be February 5th – 9th and representatives were urged to book early to take advantage of the 2017 price - €150, as opposed to the 2018 price - €175.
Treasurers Trumped

The combined results of Brexit and the election of President Trump, with the effects on exchange rates that have been experienced, are having an adverse effect on parish receipts, according to the Community of Cyprus Treasurers.

Meeting to coincide with the Diocesan Standing Committee, they also heard that new regulations affecting Gulf churches and procedures put in place by UK banks to deter money laundering are also having an effect at Diocesan level.

Pensioner residents of Cyprus whose pensions are paid in sterling have seen their income drop. The devaluation in Turkish currency against the Euro has meant that parishes whose congregations contribute in Lira and who pay their bills in Euros are also suffering.

The Gulf regulations about transfer of money are seriously affecting the speed at which transfers to diocesan accounts can be made, and there is a prospect of cashflow problems. UK banks have become quite suspicious of addresses in Cyprus.

Despite all that, the Diocesan finances are in good shape, according to Finance Director John Banfield, reporting to the Treasurers, the Cyprus Forum and Standing Committee. We may well end the year spending less than budgeted.

Bishop Michael warned that there was no room for complacency and that we must not underestimate “the financial fragility of the Diocese.”

MINISTRY MATTERS

The Ministry project supported by Synod four years ago is definitely in business and on budget. It recorded the signing of the MOU with Queen’s College Newfoundland, who are accrediting the Exploring Faith course that we use. It looked forward to the second meeting of the Theological Educators’ Group in November. This group attempts to meet our Diocesan needs with training possibilities offered by a number of institutions from India to the Lebanon, the UK and Canada; thus to devise realistic and affordable training pathways for ministerial candidates. Also, in November there will be a residential training session for new selectors. It is hoped that one outcome will be a robust selection and training programme for prospective Readers and Lay Ministers. The selectors’ first outing may well be to Doha in the Spring where some fifteen potential candidates have been identified, and where they have begun an Exploring Faith course.

CYPRUS: Buildings in better shape than JEMT finances

The JEMT Report to Standing Committee included details of this year’s quinquennial inspections.

The buildings are in generally good shape, bearing witness to the careful stewardship of congregations, but the cost of discovering that has meant that JEMT has little money left in the kitty for this year.

In addition there has been considerable expense incurred at St Helena’s Court in Larnaca as the building has been re-plastered and a new lift installed.

Stuart Hillard has been proposed as a new Trustee to be ratified by Synod.

APPOINTMENT

Revd Ian Nicholson is the new Gulf representative on the diocesan Safeguarding Team.
NEED FOR SPEED DRIVES WEBSITE RENEWAL

The Diocesan website has been operational for six years and looks seriously out of date. So it’s time for a makeover.

It contains 280 pages, many of which are redundant, and which slow navigation considerably, as speed becomes increasingly the criterion of a useful site.

Standing Committee saw a presentation of work to date on a new website by Saracen, the Doha-based firm whose pro bono work was offered at Synod in 2016. They have seconded a member of their team, Kimberley Evans, to work on the project and she was also present.

The new site will give an opportunity to think creatively about our current communication priorities. Digital media have developed greatly over the past six years. The Diocese’s own strategy has also changed. Six years ago, the main aim was to build a sense of ‘Diocese’ among ourselves. Now there is more emphasis on telling our story to a waiting world.

At Synod this year we shall be asking that one member from each parish be delegated to attend a communication session, which will address our need to have a better news gathering operation. We are also looking at the way we organise editorial oversight, and whether there are platforms apart from the website and Facebook that we need to consider.

SIMPLY THE BEST

The Barnabas Team presented a report to Standing Committee that drew together the work of the discussion groups at Synod 2017 and offered some commentary on it. The theme gave opportunity to process the work of the ACC on Intentional Discipleship. We are the first Diocese or Province to have a coherent way of considering the ACC work and as such it is eagerly awaited by the Anglican Communion Office as an example of good practice. The Report will be presented to Synod 2018, with suggestions about using it as a tool in parishes.

IN BRIEF

Revd Xhu Peijin will be ordained priest in January. This will take place in Kuwait to enable the Chinese congregation to be present.

In Iraq, the grey structure of the School extension has been completed, but now awaits money to be transferred from UAE. It is still hoped to appoint a priest in Aden as soon as it is safe, and money is set aside for that. The Clinic continues its work in heroic fashion.
And finally...

Although the partnership between the Korean Methodist Church and the Diocese has been terminated, the building in Mussafah has reached the grey building stage, with the roof in place. This will be our biggest church in the Gulf when completed.

Andy Thompson’s book, Jesus of Arabia, is to be published in Arabic.

The new Ammochostos parish in Cyprus is settling well and was described by a delegate to the Treasurers’ meeting as “a happy place.”

The appointment to the parish of Limassol is expected to take place in December. The post will be combined with that of the Diocesan Spirituality Advisor.

The History of the Diocese is proceeding well under the hand of Angela Murray. No date has yet been set for publication. A workshop run by her at the Cyprus Forum proved both popular and instructive.

Versions of the Disciplinary and Competency procedures and the new Constitution were studied prior to Synod.

This was the first Meeting of Standing Committee attended by our latest recruit, Helen Perry (pictured right). She found it “fascinating.”

Good wishes were extended to Christine Taylor, unable to attend whilst recovering from surgery.

The Bishop is to produce a short paper clarifying the conditions under which Clergy may hold a Permission to Officiate.

Determined work on the Clergy and Spouses Conference was due to go ahead before the end of the year and it was hoped definite proposals could be put together for 2018.

We are invited to compete for grants towards projects that meet certain criteria. Further details available from the Diocesan Office.