



Diocese of Aberdeen and Orkney

Scottish Episcopal Church

Newsletter – 17 June 2021

From the Bishop

Reporting on the General Synod of the Scottish Episcopal Church

The General Synod of the Scottish Episcopal Church met virtually on 10/11 June 2021. This newsletter contains reports from the Bishop and clergy and lay representatives who attended the virtual meeting via zoom.

From the Bishop:

On each of the two days of synod we began by logging on to zoom. This brought the experience of seeing the faces of friends across the province, yet not being able to have a chat and say proper hello. We were together, and yet still apart. However, the business before us was important and forward looking, so we made the most of things. We were helped in this by the worship at the beginning and ending of each day, a reminder that it is our common prayer that informs and resources all that we do together.

On the first day the business included confirming the **St Andrew's Declaration**, which describes where we are and what we hope for in our relationship with the Church of Scotland. The declaration had already been accepted by the General Assembly, and was backed by a majority of members at the General Synod. Important for us all is the commitment to share resources, so that in places where churches are being rationalised, buildings sold, and the number of ministers/priests reducing, there is a commitment to find ways of worshipping and ministering together.

The item of business that I found most moving was the addition of **Jane Haining to the SEC calendar** of saints and heroes of the faith ((for 17 July).



Jane Haining was a Church of Scotland Missionary in Budapest who was caring for Jewish children at the outbreak of the Second World War. She was asked to return to her native Scotland when war broke out, but refused to abandon the children in her charge, and was transported to Auschwitz. On one of the occasions she was asked to return to the UK, she replied: "If children need me in the days of sunshine, how much more do they need me in the days of darkness?"

In its report to Synod, the Board reported: "Jane Haining is well known in Hungary (there is a street named after her in Budapest) but less so in Scotland. Work has been going on between SEC and Church of Scotland colleagues on educational materials on Jane Haining and the Holocaust for Scottish schools.

She is an outstanding example of Christian witness in a life lived for others – and in this case, those of other faiths – and the willingness to face death as a result."

I recommend that readers of this newsletter follow the link to see the short film about Jane Haining that proposed her inclusion.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qI0Vlvtfn8>



From Dr Martin Auld:

The 2021 General Synod was held 'online' as a two day 'Zoom' assembly. More than 140 people attended what was an engaging and, on occasion, a lively affair.

Praise and worship are key to the Synod, setting the tone for the rest of our time together. All our recently developed skills in 'online' meetings came together in some excellent praise.

The first day contained much procedural material – perhaps this could be reduced in future (taken as one) to allow more time for the substantive items?

The St Andrew's Declaration, working more closely with our friends in the Church of Scotland, was agreed following some doctrinal discussion. This was an opener to a pithy and crucial Climate Change debate around how our church must contribute, at all levels, to the reduction in carbon emissions. We approved, almost unanimously, our first steps in the right direction – now for the Nature crisis! Interestingly, we also approved an excellent policy on ethical investment, these three matters are closely linked as moral imperatives.

Across both days we covered a range of important topics from how we should elect our bishops to how we should treat and care for each other in the 'work place'. Congregations, vestries, clergy and bishops, we are all God's people and we should engage with each other with compassion and grace – where we fall short, new processes to deal with issues sensitively and fairly, are being created.

The near final item was a video exhortation from younger church members for us all to step up and be counted in protecting the world they will inherit from the ravages of climate change – an excellent, if sobering, send off.

From Revd Dr Ruth Green:

At the start of this year's General Synod, the Primus said that we know when we are at God's work, we can feel it in our hearts. He encouraged us to bring hope and joy to those we meet on our pilgrimage, to help those on the edge of society and agree on the message of love.

Again this time, we met on Zoom, from the comfort of our homes but unable to meet new people and catch up with friends.

We discussed many different subjects, about the election of bishops and the St Andrew's Declaration with the Church of Scotland. We were challenged by the urgency of the climate emergency, and given Ten Points of Guidance to consider and put into action.

The most inspiring and challenging session for me was one of the small group sessions, imagining a vision for our church's future. We discussed the need for prayer and discipleship, and stressed ecological ideas. Someone suggested abolishing the Code of Canons - starting again, to make decisions on every aspect of church life easier, with new, revitalised systems. Another encouraged us to think the unthinkable about what to do with old churches and rectories. Bold thought is needed about the use of churches, finding new ways of going beyond the building into the community. We need new ideas to be more visible out there, maybe in food banks, allowing groups to use our facilities and offering hospitality. And be willing to take risks when trying new ideas!

From Dr Nicola Mills:

Much business at this year's General Synod was preliminary or ongoing, with no momentous votes. Topics covered included the form of future elections of bishops, bullying and harassment policies, clergy wellbeing (including the very important matter of clergy time off) and of course the perennial discussions on quota, stipends, pensions and investments.

For three topics we were able to form break-out groups for detailed discussion. One of these was episcopal elections, and the other two were the climate emergency and, with some reference to the peri- and post-pandemic world, the strategic direction of the Church. Church in Society has provided some very useful guidelines for how a congregation might head towards carbon neutrality, and our stewardship of the environment is one of the Anglican Five Marks of Mission that stimulated some useful discussion on the Church's strategic direction.

This was our second Zoom General Synod – last year's was one day in December to deal with important or urgent business. This year in some ways felt stranger – the weather was right, the business extended over two days with morning and evening prayer, and it was easier to imagine again meeting in person, sharing coffee breaks and meals, and renewing old acquaintances. At least this time we had some more input from our interfaith and interdenominational guests, though technology, as so often, meant that there were one or two problems along the way. On the whole, however, all was well, and we can look forward, perhaps, to more normal times next year.

From Revd Dr Jenny Holden:

Looking to the future, hope and care. When reflecting on two days of General Synod these are themes that come to mind. Yes, Zoom is not the same as being in person, a catch up in a café on Leith Walk is not the same as a Messenger conversation, an encounter around the tea urn does not happen when you provide your own. However, we had break out groups throughout the days allowing us to speak to people across the diversity that forms the Body of Christ that is the Scottish Episcopal Church.

There was a sense that the Coronavirus pandemic is still going on and it has changed how we have been church and that has impacts, but this was not a Synod where this was lamented and dwelt on. On the contrary conversations, motions and decisions were made that look to the future, to the time beyond, looking forward in hope with the assurances we have of God's abiding love.

We were asked about vision for the future travelling direction of the Scottish Episcopal Church. Care was a theme – how do we care for our environment, how will we accomplish ambitious carbon goals. How do we care for clergy through stipend, time off and those who are prepared to stand for Episcopal election? How do we collaboratively minister to the people of Scotland? These are all items that look to the future, to a time where we think beyond the next set of restrictions lifting and having to operate in default crisis mode.

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A DAY FOR THE YOUNG,
THE OLD, AND
EVERYBODY IN
BETWEEN; FOR
FAMILIES, COUPLES
AND ALL WHO LIVE
ALONE; FOR THOSE
WHO FIND WALKING
EASY AND THOSE
WHOSE MOBILITY IS
CHALLENGED.
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Provincial Services

Service links available from the Scottish Episcopal Church website, and on the Provincial Facebook page

Sunday 20 June – 4th after Pentecost

11am The Bishop of Aberdeen and Orkney, Rt Revd Anne Dyer, leads a service of Holy Communion from Ellon.

Sunday 27 June – 5th after Pentecost

11am The Bishop of Edinburgh, Rt Revd Dr John Armes, leads a service of Holy Communion.

Sunday 4 July – 6th after Pentecost

11am The Bishop of Glasgow and Galloway, Rt Revd Kevin Pearson, leads a service of Holy Communion from Glasgow.

'Children's Chapel' is available on-line from early Sunday morning every week.

Other services

Details of services live-streamed or broadcast by churches across the diocese and province are available from the churches' websites and facebook pages.

This newsletter comes as a PDF,
and an on-line copy can be read on the Diocesan website.

The date of next issue should be:

Wednesday 7 July 2021

Please send your news to me at : bishopanne@aberdeen.anglican.org