

ST ALBANS DIOCESAN SYNOD

17 JUNE 2017

SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTIONS

With reference to Question 1 DS/17/02, the Reverend Dave Brown (Stevenage Deanery) expressed his thanks to the Reverend Dr Quentin Chandler (Diocesan Director of Ordinands) for the hard work in putting the figures together and the encouraging comments that the Reverend Canon Dr Tim Bull made about the number of people entering training for full-time ministry.

In the light of his own informal research which indicated that those curates included in the figures, who might best be described as coming from a conservative evangelical tradition, had all come into the diocese from outside for IME2- rather than being home-grown he asked if Synod could be assured that those holding strong orthodox theological positions from whatever tradition, were not in any way prejudiced when exploring their calling and whether, given the Church of England's (and he hoped this diocese's) commitment to 'mutual flourishing', it would be a good idea to keep track of the theological traditions of those exploring a call to full-time ministry, and those curates in training?

He referred to ministry apprenticeships which could be a useful tool in allowing people to discern their calling and asked whether at a time when students left university with ever-increasing levels of debt, there was any way that funds might be made available to help individual churches recruit such students and so increase the number of potential ordinands.

The Reverend Dr Quentin Chandler responded and thanked the Reverend Dave Brown for the question. He commented that the figures that had been provided did not give the complete picture. In his 9 months experience so far as DDO, there was no prejudice against people coming from conservative backgrounds and what was attempted was to find the right training parish for the right people with the right training incumbent so that they were getting the best possible training.

He commented that it would be interesting in future to try and identify what tradition the ordinands come from. However, it would be quite difficult to do, as especially when people had been trained through courses rather than the Colleges, as they came from across the spectrum, and the Ordinands would have to self-identify. This could be done and it could be an interesting exercise.

With regard to apprenticeships, there was the Hatfield Root Scheme in the Diocese and also at the Cathedral so there were opportunities for people to have apprentice type experiences prior to beginning their training for ordination.

He went on to offer an observation about the figures, commenting that the number of Ordinands year on year was going up, that things were going better than we thought in some areas and there were some signs of growth.

With reference to Question 2 DS/17/02, the Reverend Dean Henley (Amphill & Shefford Deanery) thanked the Reverend Karen Turner, Chairman of the Caribbean Links Group, for her clarification that she was in fact representing the Bishop of Belize and not the Bishop of St. Albans at the recent International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia (IDAHOT) held in Belize.

He commented that the Belizean Council of Churches (which included our Anglican partner diocese and its bishop) had said that attempts to decriminalize LGBTQ people, were part of “an orchestrated plan of demonic darkness to dethrone God from our Constitution and open massive gateways to demonic influence and destruction that will affect generation after generation to come”.

He asked the Reverend Karen Turner, whether as the Bishop of Belize’s representative she would agree that the Council of Churches ought to look first to itself before attributing demonic darkness and destruction to LGBTQ people.

The Bishop of Bedford, on behalf of the Reverend Karen Turner, who was unable to attend Synod, responded that, as a Church, we knew where we were in terms of listening and affirming those of the LGBTQ community and would distance ourselves from the comments attributed to the Belizean Council of Churches, if they were correct.

He said that he was not in a position to comment in detail on the situation in Belize although his understanding was that the Bishop of Belize was being brave and robust in his attempt to distance himself from such statements and to place the Belizean Church somewhere else.

The Bishop of Hertford added a further response and said that his understanding was that recently the Chief Law Officer of Belize had acted to make a move within the country to decriminalize homosexuality. He commented further to say that there was a movement from various churches within Belize to challenge that move and he hoped that the Bishop of Belize who had chosen not to join in with those churches and therefore had come under pressure would be supported.

The Bishop of Bedford commented that the desire was to work with the Diocese’s Caribbean partners in the face of this and a number of agendas, and hoped we would keep all our Caribbean partners in our prayers. He suggested that this was also an opportunity to send best wishes to the Diocese of the North Eastern Caribbean and Aruba who, this year, had been celebrating 175 years of the life of their Diocese ending with celebrations in August.

The Reverend Dean Henley commented that his understanding was that the Bishop of Belize was President of the Council of Churches in Belize.

With reference to Question 3 DS/17/02 the Reverend Dean Henley (Amphill & Shefford Deanery) thanked the Bishop of St Albans for his answer and asked a supplementary question whether the Bishop would agree that the ongoing debate about human sexuality, celibacy and same sex marriage would be better served if the college of bishops were honest about the sexualities of their own membership.

The Bishop of St Albans responded and thanked the Reverend Dean Henley for his question saying that there was a debate going on. The General Synod representatives had met and would meet again on the Monday following Synod to continue the discussion. This was a sensitive area. There were many people who tried to live with absolute integrity; he could not speak for them and could not comment on claims about the sexuality of members of the House of Bishops.

He said that individuals should speak from their own positions with integrity as this most sensitive and sacred of areas was explored. This was the best way forward and this conversation would continue. Meanwhile, he wanted all people to know that they were a vital and valued part of our Church and of our Diocese.