

Archdeaconry Synod, Jacut-sur-Mer May 2016

Report to the CCC by Jenny Kerridge, Archdeaconry Synod Representative

Introduction, representation, first impressions

The France Archdeaconry Synod took place from 18th to 20th May 2016. The Church of England has a system of synodical governance: the General Synod, Diocesan Synods and Deanery or Archdeaconry Synods. We at St Michael's have representation at the France Archdeaconry Synod; with elected lay and clergy members from Archdeaconry Synod to the Diocese in Europe synod; and finally with representatives at the Church of England General Synod in all three Houses (Bishops, Clergy and Laity). For further information, see the Diocese in Europe website: www.europe.anglican.org/diocesan-handbook/the-synods-of-the-church.

St Michael's has three archdeaconry synod representatives: our chaplain, and two lay members (Justin Hayward has been our other representative for some years). This was my first synod. Looking at people's name badges and chaplaincies was a different sort of 'Tour de France': we gathered in a beautiful abbey conference centre near St Malo in Brittany, with Anglicans from the four corners of France (Pas de Calais, the Pyrenees, Strasbourg and the Cote d'Azur from Menton to Cannes and St Raphael ...), from cities like Paris, Lille, Lyon and Marseille, and from rural areas like Poitou Charente and Hérault and Gard. There were over 60 lay representatives (some with their partners), and nearly all the chaplains attended, from over 30 Anglican chaplaincies.

After the Wednesday evening introductory session, we had conference-style presentations with questions and discussion over two days. Each year the synod has a main theme (for example, marriage and the family in 2015). This year's main theme was Refugees and Migrants, with two excellent speakers. The other main topics were Safeguarding, and developments in ecumenical initiatives with French Protestants and Roman Catholics. All these topics are summarised in separate sections below. If anyone would like more information, please contact me. There were also separate meetings for the House of Clergy members and the House of Laity members.

Each day there was the eucharist, bible study and morning and evening prayer. The final eucharist in the village church with Bishop David Hamid (who is the Suffragan Bishop for our diocese) included the licensing of a lay reader from Aquitaine. There were plenty of opportunities to meet and talk to other synod members, at break and meal times and on short walks in the gardens and coastal paths. I was impressed by the important role that lay people play in many chaplaincies, and the range of worship, fellowship and activities. Many do not have their own buildings, meeting in Protestant 'temples', Roman Catholic churches and cathedrals, or other venues (see also below on ecumenical work). Some are able to give an impressive amount to charities: for example, All Saints Hérault (Languedoc) has a similar electoral roll to St Michael's but no building of their own; they gave away over half of their income to charities in 2015.

Changes concerning our Archdeaconry of France

Two important changes were announced at synod concerning our Archdeacon and the bishop responsible for France.

We were all sorry to hear that our excellent Archdeacon Ian Naylor is standing down in Autumn 2016 after three years, so a recruitment process is being undertaken. In his final summing up, Bishop David praised and thanked Ian for his clarity, honesty and questioning, and for encouraging all of us to speak the truth. Bishop Robert has since written to chaplains, wardens and synod reps (letter dated 27th May): "I now wish to consult with the clergy of the Archdeaconry and lay synod officers

about the appointment of the next Archdeacon of France and Monaco. With this in mind I invite clergy to attend one of two meetings, the first being at St Michael's, Paris on Friday 15th July between 14.00 and 16.00. The second meeting will be held at Holy Trinity, Nice on Saturday 16th July between 14.00 and 16.00."

The other change announced at synod was Bishop Robert taking over responsibility for France from Bishop David, so hopefully we can look forward to meeting him in Beaulieu in the future, in what Ian Naylor described to me as the most beautiful of all the Anglican churches in France! We have just received a letter from Bishop Robert (dated 2nd June) confirming this: he says: "When Bishop David and I met in March 2016 we agreed to amend the 'lead bishop' responsibilities in order better to equalise numbers of chaplaincies and to reflect our interests. As such from 1st June 2016 I will take responsibility for the Archdeaconry of France and Monaco. This is an opportunity I shall relish and I look forward to visiting many of your chaplaincies over the coming months and years."

Safeguarding

Ian Carter, our Diocesan Safeguarding Manager, attended synod, met delegates informally and had an hour's session with a presentation and questions to explain the importance of safeguarding. He pointed out that all dioceses in the Church of England must comply; given the wide reach and different jurisdictions in our diocese, it is especially important for us to engage.

Ian has overall responsibility for Safeguarding matters in the diocese: he has served at a high level in the Essex Police and has recently completed a period of two years in a similar role with the Diocese of Chelmsford. He also introduced his expanded team who are there to support and advise safeguarding officers and chaplaincies: Tola Akinde-Hummel (Assistant Safeguarding Manager) and Mark Gregory (Safeguarding Administrator, for safeguarding checks and accessing training).

In his summing up in the final session, Bishop David again emphasised the urgent requirement to implement safeguarding training, and thanked us for our commitment and understanding now that the message is getting through to chaplaincies in France

Developments in ecumenical initiatives: Anglicans, French Protestants and Roman Catholics

There were two sessions with presentations and discussion about links between churches in France. This is of particular interest to us at St Michael's, because our former chaplain Father Roger Greenacre was closely involved in the early days of French ARC (see below), forging closer links with the Roman Catholic church.

French ARC (Comite mixte Anglican-catholique)

We received a presentation from The Revd Matthew Harrison (St Georges, Paris) who co-chairs ARC with Mgr Robert le Gall, Archbishop of Toulouse. Matthew is one of the three Anglican clergy members of French ARC (all three were at synod). In 2015, ARC launched "O Lord, open our lips/Seigneur, ouvre nos levres": this compares the daily offices in both our traditions and practices, which have converged in recent years. It is hoped that this will encourage us to pray together using each others' daily offices. We also learnt that the French translation of the Lord's Prayer will be changing in 2017, so we have been warned! Fr Emmanuel Gougard (Ecumenical Secretary of the French Bishops' Conference) joined us for the final synod session; Mgr Robert Gall sent his apologies but will be at synod in 2017.

Anglican-Protestant links: the Reuilly Declaration

The Declaration was signed in 2001 and brought together the main French Protestant churches, and the Church of England, the Church of Ireland, the Scottish Episcopal Church and the Church in Wales. Since then, French Protestant churches in the Lutheran and Reformed traditions have united in a single body known as the Eglise Protestante Unie de France. The Declaration acknowledges the positive elements which link the churches and outlines their commitment to share a common life and mission. There has been a renewed interest recently in our Archdeaconry and Diocese and in the Church of England. Archbishop Justin Welby has asked for efforts to revitalise the Reuilly relationships. We had a written report and a presentation at synod from The Reverend Christian Kreiger, who is a Pasteur in Strasbourg, Vice-President of the Eglise Protestante Reformee d'Alsace et de Lorraine, and a member of the Reuilly Contact Group. We also heard about examples of local co-operation from different chaplaincies.

Bible study: the books of Jonah and Daniel

These two sessions were led by the Reverend Dr Richard Briggs, Lecturer in Old Testament and Director of Biblical Studies at Cranmer Hall in Durham. Richard was a most engaging speaker, who started by acknowledging that for many of us, the Old Testament remains a closed book. He started by pointing out that the OT is a 'strange gift' (a voice from a strange new world); a textured gift (of a collection of books beautifully written) and a Christian gift (because of the unique two testament structure of our Bible). He also linked the two books to the theme of Refugees and Migrants: Jonah and the Assyrians (when the Other is the enemy) and Daniel and the Babylonians (when we are the Other). He also commented on how the powerful stories in both books are well-known to children: Jonah and the whale; Daniel in the lion's den; but they have more to say to us as adults, if we examine the texts and their context. Richards's notes are available from me.

Refugees and Migrants

The wider picture: Ms Doris Peschke, General Secretary of the Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME)

CCME is an ecumenical agency of churches in Europe engaged with migration and integration, refugees and asylum, and anti-racism and discrimination in Europe. Below are some key points from her presentation and my notes; her Powerpoint presentation is available from me on request.

Doris is German, so from a country which has taken many more refugees than most European countries: she commented that in 2015, only six European countries took a significant number of refugees. She explained the international role of church agencies like CCME in Europe, and its partner agencies linked to the World Council of Churches, who engage with governments and international agencies.

Her presentation challenged the received wisdom that this is mainly a crisis for Europe. She also made the link with the Bible which is full of stories of refugees and migrants, starting with Adam and Eve evicted from Paradise! I was struck by the link with many of our congregations in the Diocese in Europe, who are also by definition 'migrants' (i.e. those who choose to live in another country for more than a year, and not as tourists, travellers or seasonal workers ...) in contrast to those who have to leave because of fear and persecution.

She pointed out that there is a global refugee crisis (60m people displaced, 20m international refugees) which is globally the biggest refugee crisis since World War II. The main countries of origin are Syria, Eritrea, Afghanistan and Iraq. The major refugee hosting countries are Lebanon (1.2m),

Jordan, Turkey (2.5m from Syria alone ...) and also Kenya (which receives much less attention). Most do not come to Europe and we have let down these host countries by not providing enough support.

The CCME Assembly 2014 called for a change of attitudes regarding migration in accordance with European values, and a truly human approach to refugee protection in line with international and European conventions, including legal and secure access to Europe for those in need of protection; a common European asylum system (including decent reception conditions) as well as a Common European Resettlement scheme.

Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe, Rue Joseph II 174, B-1000 Brussels www.ccme.eu

Refugees in Greece and the Anglican Response: Max McClellan

Max McClellan is currently working as a consultant with the Anglican Church in Greece, supported by Us (the United Society, formerly USPG). He introduced us to the human side of the refugee and migrant crisis and to many individual stories. Of special interest (in terms of the Anglican church in Europe) was the key co-ordinating role of the Anglican chaplain and congregation in Athens and links to the Bishop's 2016 Lent appeal. Below are extracts from his full presentation (sent after synod):

"So how has the church responded in Greece?"

The sheer scale of the issue and the multitude of different organisations providing assistance has meant that from the beginning deciding where and how to contribute has been very challenging for the Anglican Church. For starters the church is relatively small with a congregation that only has a limited capacity to provide direct assistance. There were few structures, either Government or non-Government, which church groups, could simply plug into... It quickly became clear to Fr. Malcolm that the way the church could best contribute was to support organisations already operating effective programmes with refugees. I came to assist Fr. Malcolm identifying the best programs, fostering relationships and then funding different programs we agreed were doing great work. The church is also assisting with refugees through collections and work in a soup kitchen.

In Athens establishing good networks between church partners and NGOs was crucial to figuring out how to target particular resources and assistance. Once it was clear that a number of different church groups were helping or interested in helping Fr. Malcolm convened an ecumenical meeting in Greece in August 2015. Fr. Malcolm has now been in Greece for sixteen years and was in a prime position to galvanise an ecumenical response. And big advantage local churches have is their existing connections between each other and with local community. This monthly churches together meeting was a space then in which different groups could sit down together and share ideas on how they were assisting and figure out where gaps were. *[The churches working together are:]* The Anglican Chaplaincy in Athens; the Greek Orthodox church *[Apostoli is its humanitarian arm]*; The Salvation Army; The Evangelical Church of Greece; Jesuit Relief Services; CARITAS; United Society; The Scandinavian Church in Athens; German Evangelical Church. ...

One of the useful aspects of the churches together meetings is that partners can learn about others' needs and contribute assistance to each others' programs. For some time now the Anglican Chaplaincy, supported by United Society and the Diocese in Europe has been providing financial support for the programs of Apostoli ... In Athens, Apostoli has been providing food and hygiene kits at temporary accommodation sites for refugees. And on the islands of Chios, Samos and Kos, it has been providing tents, sleeping bags, food, warm clothing and hygiene kits. Apostoli also works with local authorities to improve the structures which house refugees on the islands particularly on Samos island where they manage one of the government hotspots.