

General Synod Report

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Much of the morning was taken up with legislative business. This was all fairly unexciting and consequently the business went through very quickly.

Next was a debate on the appointments to the Archbishop's Council. Some of the members of the Council are ex-officio, some elected by the Synod and some appointed by the Archbishops jointly after consultation (which you may remember was fairly extensive). The original procedures only allowed such appointments to be for a fixed length of time. These new proposals mostly have to do with allowing appointments to be for a shorter length of time where necessary (for example when filling a casual vacancy). There does appear to be some dissatisfaction with one or more appointed member behind the need for this change.

The speed of legislative business meant that Questions began before lunch (but see below).

After lunch was a long debate on 'The International Situation'. This was a very carefully handled debate with a series of quite complicated amendments which meant that there was a danger of the overall motion getting a bit lost. Several of the contributions were very good (including Michael Nazir-Ali, who is of course originally from Pakistan). Inevitably many people who wanted to did not get to speak. There were some who wanted a pacifist response or wanted the Synod to call for a halt in the military action.

The final resolutions was: "That this Synod, humbly aware of Western Christian complicity in historical injustices in the world, and, recognising that people of all faiths are called to live in peace and mutual respect:

(a) condemn terrorism, as inimical to a free and democratic society based on the rule of law and recognize that it may legitimately be opposed in the last resort by the use of proportionate armed force;

(b) express its deep sympathy and offer the assurance of its prayers and practical support to those innocently caught up in violence whether in the USA or Afghanistan;

(c) encourage dioceses to support the witnesses of the Church of Pakistan and the humanitarian relief work of Christian Aid and those Church of England mission agencies serving in the region;

(d) call on all dioceses and parishes to begin or continue their efforts alongside other Christians and people of all faiths in working for greater understanding and reconciliation between different communities, based on freedom of religion under the law and mutual tolerance and respect;

(e) pray for the peace of the world, believing that such peace requires not only a just settlement of long-standing concerns in Israel-Palestine and Iraq but also the commitment of governments to work for a peaceful and equitable world order under the auspices of the United Nations; and

(f) commend to dioceses for further reflection the Churches Together in Britain and Ireland's report 'Who is my Neighbour' as well as the Board for Social Responsibility's report 'Demanding Peace: A Church Response to the Al Aqsa Intifada'. "

After this there was not time for the extended authorisation of the Daily Lectionary therefore the Synod resumed Questions and, unusually, got through them all before close of business.

A number of Synod members raised questions surrounding the recent pronouncements of the Board for Social Responsibility. Representations had been made to the Government regarding the legalisation of Cannabis. However, the Board itself had not been consulted. In addition the main person consulted was someone known to be in favour of complete legalisation whereas previous decisions of the General Synod were not represented.

One member of the Board, Philip Gore, had said that if such things were happening the Board might as well be abolished. In Question time the Chairman of the Board was clearly rattled and fought back by making reference to the expenses paid to Philip (who travels from Manchester) which seemed rather petty and absurd given the seriousness of issue he had raised.

Theological Students receiving this message may also like to know that the Bishop of Chester went on record as saying that the 39 Articles should be taught to all at college. I was a student when Peter Forster was a tutor at St. John's Durham and

the Bishop of Peterborough was Warden of Cranmer Hall - funnily enough I don't remember much about the 39 Articles in what we were taught.

Anyone spurred on to study the Articles in more depth may like to know that we still sell a classic work by W H Griffith-Thomas (see www.churchsociety.org)

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