

General Synod Report Tuesday at Church House Westminster

Date : 7 February 2006

After a service of Holy Communion there were four items discussed by the General Synod today.

The **Guildford Report** is the first attempt to consider how the Church will cope with the divisions caused if legislation to consecrate women as Bishops goes ahead. At this stage a decision has still not been made to approve the consecration of women Bishops. The report was introduced and taken note of this morning and it was noticeable that far more people were called from those opposed to the innovation. A more substantial motion will be debated, at greater length, on Thursday morning.

Of the conservative evangelicals called to speak were the following:

- Jane Bisson (Channel Islands) argued that the proposals in the report were born out of desperation and that the Church is tearing itself apart. She did not wish to see further division caused by going ahead.
- Angus Macleay (Vicar of St. Nick's Sevenoaks) argued that conservative evangelicals are being ignored and pointed out that no evangelical opposed to the ordination of women had been appointed as a Diocesan Bishop in the last decade.
- Sarah Finch (London) asserted that women were being disenfranchised if they accepted biblical models of ministry rather than those now current in the Church. She argued that justice requires us to recognise that men and women are different.
- Rod Thomas (Exeter & Reform Press Officer) argued that there must be acceptable provision for those opposed to the ordination of women and stated that the Guildford proposals (called TEA) are a reasonable starting place for this.
- Dr Chick Kaw Tan (Lichfield) stated that the arguments for consecrating women as a matter of natural justice were irrelevant if the original decision is wrong. He also argued that reception meant that the practice must be universally accepted.

The afternoon and early evening saw three largely uncontroversial and uneventful debates all of which were passed unanimously.

Seeds in Holy Ground is a report on rural issues. The Synod affirmed its commitment to work (ecumenically) to sustain and support an effective Christian presence in each rural community. It also called on national and local government to do more for rural communities and to involve churches (and other faith groups) in decision-making. The report itself was commended for study in rural churches and national church bodies were called upon to monitor and review the issues.

Pushing at the Boundaries of Unity is a report on Anglican-Baptist relations. This was commended for study but churches and feedback requested by the end of 2007. It should be noted that the Baptists involved in this dialogue are the Baptist Union not the reformed or particular Baptist churches who are much more biblically conservative.

Mutual Expectations is a report on the Church of England's colleges and universities. The continuing involvement is recognised as of great benefit of the Church and the institutions and builds upon the very strong involvement in primary and secondary educations. There were a number of people in the debate who called for the distinctive approach of church colleges to be maintained although the speakers did not really flesh out what this meant in practice. The motion passed was affirmative of the colleges and called for greater partnership between dioceses and the higher education institutions.

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