

## Archdeaconry of Gibraltar Synod, 2019

### Feedback from the delegates of the Chaplaincy of the Holy Spirit, Costa Blanca

As usual, the Clergy met on Tuesday (5<sup>th</sup> February). The evening before Fr Marcus had led Evening Prayer.

In the Clergy Chapter meeting various business updates from the Archdeacon were followed by the morning session entitled "The Church's Ministry of Healing", led by Fr Rodney.

The afternoon session was "Reader Ministry in the Diocese in Europe", led by the Diocesan Director of Readers.



The Lay members and guests joined the clergy for the opening Eucharist, presided by Bishop David, who also preached. Our first hymn together was "Walking in the Light", which set the tone for a moving and very meaningful few days.

That evening we dealt with various business issues, including a few procedural matters and the financial report. We received reports from both Diocesan and General Synod, and we dealt with the procedure for elections to the current vacancies on Diocesan Synod.

The business session began with a silence in memory of current and past reps to Synod, who have recently passed away, including our retired Senior Chaplain, Fr Peter Edwards.

Finally, we were asked to inform our ecology representative to register on the Eco Church website to facilitate the Diocesan application to be registered as an Eco Diocese.

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#### DAY TWO

The second day began with Morning Prayer, led by Fr Don, who brought us all to a spiritual start to the day.

After breakfast we settled in for a wonderful Bible Study. This was very ably led by the Revd Dr Richard Briggs, who lectures at Durham University. He is an Old Testament scholar and brought the Psalms to life. This was a stimulating and very informative session.

Following this our Diocesan Bishop, the Right Reverend Dr Robert Innes, was joined by Andrew Caspari, the new Diocesan Secretary (called Chief Operating Officer). Together they presented a way forward for the Diocese, based on Mission. Stewardship and Care.



Andrew explained his intention of seeking funding from the Church Commissioners and pointed out that we are almost unique in the CofE in being a Diocese that is clearly growing. Under the heading "Care" he reminded us of our duty of care to the vulnerable, and to ALL people.

Andrew also gave an update on Safeguarding. We know that our chaplaincy is at the head of the pack in terms of Safeguarding preparation. It was reassuring to hear that the Diocese is leading the Dioceses of the Church of England.

We tabled our concerns about the sustainability of Diocesan plans, when many chaplaincies will struggle to meet the central financial demands. Our concerns were heard, and we were assured that we are not expected to deplete our realistic reserves to fund the Diocese.



Our afternoon keynote speaker was our Suffragan Bishop, the Right Reverend Dr. David Hamid. He spoke on the Synod theme "Building up the Body of Christ", and talked about several topics.

He considered the history of Anglicanism in Europe, dating back far further than most of us realised. He considered what makes us legitimately the "Body of Christ" in this place; who are Anglicans in Europe and what we as a family are here to do. He also reminded us that most refugees are fleeing war, drought or famine, mostly made by man or global warming.

He talked about the fears surrounding Brexit and our role as disciples in Europe. He explained that the Anglican communion is alive in 165 countries, and that 40 of those countries are within this Diocese, with 300 chaplaincies, spread from Madeira to Moscow. He then asked us to consider –



- 1) Who am I? and what is my place in the universe?
- 2) Why am I here? and what is God calling me to do?
- 3) How then shall I live?

As always, his sermon the night before and his keynote address served to make everyone think about our role as the Body of Christ and motivated us all to further commit our lives to God. That evening we celebrated the Eucharist together in a nearby Catholic church, where the clergy team included Fr Don.



### DAY THREE

After Morning Prayer, Thursday began with a continuation of Richard Briggs inspiring study of the Psalms.



We then met our new Diocesan Registrar, Aiden Hargreaves-Smith, who explained the need to clarify and simplify legal matters. He was an engaging speaker, and keen to make things far more approachable, although his time in our Diocese is limited to 1 day a week!

He was followed by Damian Thwaites, who carries a double role, as the Bishop's attaché (in his role as the Archbishop of Canterbury's Representative to the European Institutions) and as Diocesan Director of Communications. While he looked at options for improving both Diocesan and local communications, the central pillar of his presentation was a review of the current Brexit process. He has a background in European diplomacy and

expressed his doubts about the possible outcomes. He then invited us to share our concerns, which ranged from citizen's rights, and pension concerns, to worries about the financial and attendance impacts on our chaplaincies.

The afternoon included a well-supported "Market Place, with tables set up around the refreshment room, allowing chaplaincies to share ideas and best practice. Fr Marcus promoted the idea of involvement in local radio, by explaining the benefits of his participation on Pure Gold FM. We picked up several ideas, from sewing and selling re-usable cotton bags to use in place of supermarket plastic bags when buying fruit or vegetables, to support for food banks, establishing Mothers' Union groups, prayer for our children and Godly Play. We will share these ideas as we can.

We are in the Archdeaconry "Spanish Section" and met with the other chaplaincies in Spain to hear updates on rules/laws affecting us and our clergy. We enquired about running public lotteries and were warned off because of the cost and bureaucracy involved in Spain.

After this we had an update on the work in support of our partner Diocese in Peru.



The results of the Diocesan Synod elections followed, and the Closing Holy Eucharist was a healing service led wonderfully (of course) by Fr Rodney.

Your clergy and lay delegates were slightly reduced in numbers due to ill health, but we made our presence known, by participation at all levels and across the activities of the programme. The worship was organized by Fr Marcus and provided variety and a broad opportunity for all.

***"Building up the Body of Christ"***