

Information for Editors

Why is there a need of a bishop of someone on the staff of Jesmond Parish Church? The Jesmond PCC motion of 6 March 2017 sums it up:

"in the light of the vicar's fourth talk at the Jesmond Conference and the REFORM Covenant that expresses 'the need radically to reform the present shape of episcopacy and pastoral discipline to enable local churches to evangelize more effectively' the PCC supports planning for Jonathan Pryke to be consecrated for an alternative form of episcopal oversight."

There are excerpts from that fourth talk in the Church Newsletter for April 2017 and there is a follow-on article in the Church Newsletter out for May 2017 on Sunday 7 May 2017. These are appended below.

Of course, two questions need to be answered. First, is it possible to have responsibilities in a Church of England parish while at the same time having episcopal responsibilities? Yes, certainly. For one of the Panel of UK GAFCON bishops before retirement was a priest in charge of a parish in the Church of England while at the same time a bishop of the Church of Rwanda, where he spent a month or two each year. Secondly, will this new role make a great deal of difference to Jonathan's work at Jesmond? No! He will spend 80% of his time in helping Jesmond Parish Church fulfil its mission of being faithful to its founder's 19th century vision of being "a central point for the maintenance and promulgation of sound scriptural and evangelical truth" and its 20th/21st century vision of "Godly Living, Church Growth and Changing Britain". And 20% of his time in helping establish new churches. This follows the model of episcopacy in REACH SA where everyone except the Presiding Bishop is in a charge of a congregation.

Jonathan already is a member of the AMiE executive and so committed to planting 25 new churches by 2025 (essential,

under God, for evangelism and growth) and 250 new churches by 2050. The main thing that is significantly different now as far as Jonathan is concerned is that Jonathan can ordain men for the ministry, whereas other presbyter/priests of us involved in evangelism cannot. Some leaders obviously need this "power" (as the 16th century Richard Hooker would say) as more men are trained for ministry and to be faithful to Canon A5. Also they need it to help planted churches corporately keep faithful to Canon A5. At the Jesmond Conference a group of senior leaders including one REACH SA bishop and one English GAFCON Bishop, agreed that three bishops were needed, one being consecrated with REACH SA orders; one being consecrated as a result of an initiative by the GAFCON Primates; and one other.

It is hoped that the GAFCON Primates will secure the consecration of a man in such a way that will enable the reform of the Church of England, with him responsible to English Christians rather than a distant Primate. In this 500th anniversary year of the 16th century Reformation it needs to be remembered that the independence of the local Province was a major concern of the English Reformation as well as the primacy of the Bible and Justification by Faith.

From the Jesmond Parish Church Newsletter for April 2017

7th century lessons from the North East for the evangelization of Britain in the 21st century

The following is an edited extract from my 20 minute introductory talk at the fourth session of this year's February Jesmond Conference.

7th Century Missions

The lessons actually have their roots in the early 5th century (AD) when the Roman legions had left Britain to defend the Empire nearer home; and, also, the lessons began in Celtic Ireland, not the North East of England, with Patrick who was born in 390 and who in 432 was a missionary bishop for

Ireland. Amazingly before his death Ireland had become a Christian country. Patrick died in 461. However, his work bore more and significant fruit 100 years later. For in the 6th century, in 563, a wider Celtic missionary movement was launched from Ireland by Columba, who founded a monastery on Iona, an island off the west coast of Scotland, that then became a centre for evangelizing Scotland.

The next important initiative as far as Britain was concerned was in 597, 34 years later. That was when there was a new Italian, or Roman, missionary initiative. It began small with Pope Gregory (590-604) sending a team under Augustine (not to be confused with the great Augustine, Bishop of Hippo) to the south of England. He was to establish diocesan structures and with provincial archbishoprics in London and York, following the pattern of government left by the Roman legions nearly two centuries earlier. Augustine saw people converted and he established bishoprics in London and Rochester. But, sadly, in 616 in the face of a pagan resurgence the bishops of London and Rochester had to flee across the Channel. Paulinus, however, who had joined Augustine's team, went up to York in 625 and was involved in the conversion of King Edwin of Northumbria. But, sadly, that mission too was short-lived. For with Edwin's death in 633, pagans gained control of Northumbria and Paulinus had to flee south. So by the early 630s, forty years after its start, the Roman mission to Kent appears to have been unsuccessful.

But in God's timing there was now to be a new Celtic mission to England, coming from Iona to Lindisfarne, the island off the North East coast, just south of Berwick upon Tweed. How did it happen? Well, only a year or two after Edwin's death, a Christian named Oswald gained power as the Northumbrian king. He immediately invited not a person from Paulinus' Roman connection, but from Celtic Iona to re-evangelize the north. After a short visit by someone unsuitable, Aidan came as a missionary bishop, and in 635 he founded the monastery on Lindisfarne. This island, now "Holy Island", then became the 7th century centre for Christianity in England. Aidan and other church planters went out from Lindisfarne not only

evangelizing Northumbria but many other parts of the country; and this resulted in a significant advance of the Christian faith. So the Celtic mission took over where the Roman mission had failed and converts now stood firm. Nor was Lindisfarne only an evangelistic centre. It also became a centre for education and scholarship, with the world-famous Lindisfarne Gospels being completed at the monastery around the year 700.

Lessons for Today

The strength of the Celtic mission certainly has lessons for us today. Not least is the fact that it was centred on monasteries (or minster churches) under abbots (with bishops assisting). Evangelistic teams were then going out from the monasteries which were not regulated or restricted by diocesan structures. This was so different to the Roman pattern of working. As John Finney puts it:

"The Roman pattern was to set up a skeleton organisation and then evangelise. The Celtic pattern was to gather the people and then set up an appropriate framework for them."

But the Celtic mission was not without challenge. It seems the Pope, or those of the Roman connection in the south, had worries over a lack of practical conformity and organization (with the presenting problems being the date for Easter and the tonsure of monks). According to the early 8th century Tyneside historian, Bede (672/673-735), himself a Northumbrian and pro-Roman monk, matters came to a head at the Synod of Whitby in 664. And at this synod the Roman tradition won the day. Things then changed but only gradually. For with society so unstable and people too often on the move as they were displaced through invasion or war, there was something to be said for the Celtic method and for the comment that "the Celts looked after people while the Romans looked after geographical areas". Be that as it may, the fact is that after Whitby, the Roman diocesan and parish system was now on its way but not fully established. However, in the 21st century, once again the Celtic missionary methods are being seen to be of value as distinct from established parish models.

For following the Act of Toleration 1689 allowing freedom for free churchmen to meet; with Roman Catholic emancipation in 1829; with the advent of modern urbanization; with phones and cars; and especially when, after 1960, the Church of England became seriously divided doctrinally and has declined numerically, the parish system has raised many questions.

So that is why in England many are now arguing the time has come to try again, alongside the parish system, a Celtic model of church order and evangelism – the minster model with missionary bishops. Churches like Holy Trinity, Brompton, in London, most famously, but other churches, including Jesmond Parish Church, are beginning to operate as "minster model" churches. True, in England the parish system cannot be abandoned in terms of duties (for example, for weddings and funerals). But a parish has lost its rights to a monopoly once churches of other denominations are in its parish and when many laypeople in its parish choose to attend another parish church, a church of another denomination or no church at all. Currently official Church of England figures for 2015 show us that the national average is for 1.5% of the population to go to church each week. That means 98.5% of people in England are not attending the Church of England on a Sunday. It is, therefore, truly sad when some clergy claim "no-go" areas in their parish to prevent others evangelizing those 98.5% when they are only able to attract to church 1.5%!

Missionary Bishops

A new model of Celtic mission, however, needs missionary bishops to help with visitorial and governance issues in the new churches planted. Also, and most importantly, such bishops are needed to help steer the church plants in a faithful, apostolic and biblical direction. A value of establishing the historic episcopate with regard to new church planting is to remind people that it is not only a small church in the North East of England (or wherever) but also part of the universal, or catholic, Church of God that has existed ever since the Resurrection and Day of Pentecost. And for Anglican

churches and bishops that direction has to be determined by the words of Canon A5 ...

"the doctrine of the Church of England is grounded in the Holy Scriptures, and in such teachings of the ancient Fathers and Councils of the Church as are agreeable to the said Scriptures. In particular such doctrine is to be found in the 39 Articles of Religion, the Book of Common Prayer, and the Ordinal."

And current implications of that are spelt out in the REFORM covenant (an orthodox Anglican statement of belief and behavior). So the Church of England is based on the Bible. The tragedy is that we are going through a period when too many clergy, including bishops, are ignoring the Bible – hence another reason for the value of new Celtic evangelism. So we need to pray that God in his grace, and for the re-conversion of England, will raise up men for a genuinely apostolic and missionary episcopal ministry. This will result in what is a "mixed economy" Church about which a former Archbishop of Canterbury spoke, Rowan Williams (many will agree with him on this while disagreeing on other matters):

"Church is what happens when the call of Jesus is definitively heard. God calls. God makes a difference. God draws together a community of people. We hold to Scripture and sacraments as the essential common language God has given. But what then? Then, I suspect, it's a lot more chaotic than we have usually assumed. In Wales, we used to talk about the 'mixed economy' Church - that is, one which is learning how to cope with diverse forms and rhythms of worshipping life. The parish system works very well in some contexts. It's just that we are increasingly aware of the contexts where it simply isn't capable of making an impact, where something has to grow out of it or alongside it, not as a rival (why do we cast so much of our Christian life in terms of competition?) but as an attempt to answer questions that the parish system was never meant to answer... Mission, it's been said, is finding out what God is doing and joining in. And at present there is actually an extraordinary amount going on in

terms of the creation of new styles of church life. We can call it church planting, 'new ways of being church' or various other things; but the point is that more and more patterns of worship and shared life are appearing on the edge of our mainstream life that cry out for our support, understanding and nurture if they are not to get isolated and unaccountable"
(Archbishop Rowan Williams, Presidential Address at General Synod, York, 14 July 2003).

From the Jesmond Parish Church Newsletter for May 2017

New style orthodox bishops

What is proposed?

I read two significant articles in April 2017. The first was in *The Mail on Sunday*. It came from its paper's Religion Correspondent, Jonathan Petre. The headline was, *African threat to 'plant' bishop in UK to defy Welby on gay Christians*. It said the following:

"Conservative Anglican archbishops from Africa and Asia are plotting to create a new 'missionary' bishop to lead traditionalists in the UK – after warning that the Church of England is becoming too liberal on homosexuality ... Archbishop Welby alarmed conservatives in February by issuing a letter softening his stance on homosexuality. In the letter, written with his counterpart in York, John Sentamu, he called for a 'radical new inclusion' for gays and a '21st Century understanding' of sexuality - apparently paving the way for the first formal services to celebrate gay couples.

The Archbishop of Nigeria, Nicholas Okoh, who chairs the Global Anglican Futures Conference (GAFCON) group of conservative archbishops, said the 'distressing' letter had 'downgraded the historic and biblical mind of the Church'. Even more alarming for GAFCON leaders, however, is that the liberal Scottish Episcopal Church is expected to become

the first Anglican body in the UK to approve full-scale gay marriage at its annual synod in June.

At least seven GAFCON archbishops, who represent a vast swathe of the world's Anglicans, will be at the five-day meeting starting tomorrow in Lagos, together with UK clergy. Although several options will be discussed, the most dramatic would involve African archbishops consecrating a new bishop who could then be 'parachuted' into the UK to minister to traditional parishes. Church of England leaders will see this as a highly unwelcome parallel Anglican Church set up without the permission of Archbishop Welby. It is thought the most likely candidate to become the first such bishop is Canon Andrew Lines, who runs the mission organisation Crosslinks in South London and who is already the chair of GAFCON UK."

That was written on 23 April 2017. On 30 April the GAFCON Archbishops "replied" via a Communique from the Primates Council to its members and supporters as follows:

"During our meeting, we considered how best to respond to the voice of faithful Anglicans in some parts of the Global North who are in need of biblically faithful episcopal leadership. Of immediate concern is the reality that on 8th June 2017 the Scottish Episcopal Church is likely to formalize their rejection of Jesus' teaching on marriage. If this were to happen, faithful Anglicans in Scotland will need appropriate pastoral care. In addition, within England there are churches that have, for reasons of conscience, been planted outside of the Church of England by the Anglican Mission in England (AMiE). These churches are growing, and are in need of episcopal leadership. Therefore, we have decided to consecrate a missionary bishop who will be tasked with providing episcopal leadership for those who are outside the structures of any Anglican province, especially in Europe ... We believe that the complexity of the current situation in Europe does not admit of a single solution. Faithful Christians may be called to different courses of action."

Why is it proposed?

The second article I read, again at the end of April, was in the journal *First Things*. It was from the current May 2017 edition and included a section on bishops. It asked the question: "Why do our bishops lead in such ecclesiastically unhealthy ways?" It then gave four reasons.

"First, many of them were theologically and morally formed during earlier days of British Christendom, before secular forces in the culture became dominant. During those days, the church and the culture mostly got along. If they did not, the church simply tried to catch up to the culture. The church and her leaders were seldom at odds with the culture and its leaders.

Second, there are theological reasons for inept episcopal leadership. Liberal Protestantism's God, the 'God without wrath' who 'brought men without sin into a kingdom without judgment through the ministrations of a Christ without a cross' (as H. Richard Niebuhr put it) - has trouble saying 'No!' to anything except the racism, sexism, and other isms denounced by progressives. So do bishops who worship this God. As you might guess, these bishops believe this God is all - and I mean all! - about the grace of acceptance.

Third, some key bishops are progressive in their moral theology, or at least they have progressive sympathies. They have clearly taken sides in the current church struggle; they do all they can to support the progressive cause; and they are all too willing to intimidate the more evangelical and orthodox bishops on the Council of Bishops.

And, fourth, more than a few bishops lead in this way because of an articulated, or assumed, organizational calculation. This is what they figure: If they play the middle in this disagreement in their church, if they "reach out" to the progressives and the moderates and the traditionalists, if they try to please as many Anglicans as possible, if they create as many moral choices as possible for clergy and laity in the church, if they offend as few Anglicans as possible, if they work hard to "accommodate

diversity," if they talk incessantly about the "unity" of the church (without substantive reference to doctrine, scripture, or truth), then they and their ministries will hold the Church of England together. Instead, their goal of accommodation is leading to a slow, continual erosion of the church."

But that was not written about our bishops in the Church of England. It was written by Paul Stallsworth, an American United Methodist pastor and about Methodist bishops. I just changed the word American to British in the first reason, and United Methodist and United Methodist Church to Anglican and Church of England in the fourth reason. However, as the cap fits, it can be worn! Certainly seeking "good disagreement" between the moral and the immoral, the current Church of England bishops' policy, finds a place in that fourth reason. In the world, of course, we need to work at "good disagreement" as we seek to help people come to know Jesus as Lord and Saviour. But in the Church it is a very different thing. As Paul wrote in [1 Corinthians 5.9-13](#):

"I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people - not at all meaning the sexually immoral of this world, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world. But now I am writing to you not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother if he is guilty of sexual immorality or greed, or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard, or swindler - not even to eat with such a one. For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Is it not those inside the church whom you are to judge? God judges those outside. 'Purge the evil person from among you.'"

You obviously cannot have a bishop teaching that greed, idolatry, reviling, being a drunkard or swindling requires "facilitated conversations" to lead to "good disagreement" in the Church between those not guilty and those "guilty of greed or an idolater, reviler, drunkard, or swindler". So why should those "guilty of sexual immorality" be an exception?

Conclusion

How do I respond to the GAFCON Primates? First, I thank them for proposing to consecrate one bishop as we need three such bishops. It will help orthodox Anglican church growth (with weekly only 1.5% of the population now in C of E churches). Consecrating a man such as Andy Lines, supposing the guess is right, will help meet the main need of the churches they specify - the ordaining of other men for ministry and helping with governance issues. I would, then, advise them to secure the consecration of Andy by bishops from churches like ACNA (the Anglican Church of North America) or REACH SA (the Reformed Evangelical Anglican Church of South Africa). These are both good Anglican churches that have valid clerical orders but are technically not "in communion" with the Church of England. This, actually, can help Andy's identity remain in the Church of England, and not set up a "parallel Anglican Church". So it can help with reforming the Church of England, particularly if he is required to declare his commitment to Church of England Canon A5, the C of E Canon of Canons. This says: "the doctrine of the Church of England is grounded in the Holy Scriptures, and in such teachings of the ancient Fathers and Councils of the Church as are agreeable to the said Scriptures. In particular such doctrine is to be found in the 39 Articles of Religion, the Book of Common Prayer, and the Ordinal."