**Synod Highlights – March 2019**

Synod took place at Trinity Methodist Church, Lowestoft and the theme was Our Calling. The Deputy Chair of District, Rev Andrew Maguire welcomed everyone and especially Rev Paul Wood who was the speaker for the day. The opening worship was the hymn Jesus Calls Us here to Meet Him followed by prayers. The Superintendent of the Lowestoft and East Suffolk Circuit gave his welcome and encouraged people to walk at lunchtime to the oldest part of the town where John Wesley had preached.

Dispensations and apologies were read out or noted and it was agreed to send letters to various people.

**Arrangements / Reminders** The Synod Secretary identified the papers that people should have and gave her thanks to her husband, the District Administrator and the Deputy Chair for their help in preparing for Synod. The First Aider for the day was introduced and Superintendents were reminded to look in and to clear the Circuit boxes in the small chapel. The District website hlds a lot of information and should be looked at. Autumn Synod on 21 September is at Upwell and the Worship Workshop day planned for May had been postponed. The Synod Secretary referred to the Memorial to Conference from the West Norfolk Circuit and the Memorial to Conference from the District Superintendents was introduced, debated and voted on with 115 in favour, no abstentions and none against.

**Perspectives on Our Calling** Rev Paul Wood outlined his calling into the Methodist Church and talked about when Our Calling was launched in 2000. This had come from the Strategic Goals Planning Group and publicity seemed to be everywhere. Everyone interpreted the report as Worship, Learning and Caring, Service and Evangelism but Paul told us that the report said “The Calling of the Methodist Church is to respond to the Gospel of God’s Love in Christ and to live out its Discipleship in Worship and Mission.” God is calling the world to be in relationship with him, for Methodists to live out their Discipleship in Worship and Mission, by Ministry and through Evangelism and Growth. The 2018 Conference Report “Reaffirming Our Calling” challenges us to take stock and not to stand idle and watch a decline. A new emphasis is happening across the Connexion to focus on Evangelism and Growth. Paul left Synod Members with three questions to ponder. Where do you see God calling you? What one thing can you change in your Discipleship and what is one thing you can change in your Church?

Paul then led Synod in a musical interlude when “Hear the Call of the Kingdom” was sung.

**District Vision Priorities Update** The Synod Secretary outlined the District Vision on behalf of the District Policy Committee. The Vision which will be ongoing over several years aims to encourage, enable and enthuse the people of God to create and sustain hospitable and inclusive Christian communities in which people can come to faith, grow in faith, own their faith and celebrate their faith. More would be said about this at the September 2019 Synod, which will focus on testimony.

**Replanting Rural Grant** Dr Yasmin Finch talked about the opportunities to replant two Chapels in Blakeney and Walsingham using funding from Our Calling as well as from District, Circuit and Church.

**Update from the Pioneer and Church Planting Officer** Rev Matt Finch talked about the new team and encouraged people to stop thinking about the Titanic but to be authentic evangelists, centred on God and everything else would follow.

There was a second musical interlude led by Rev Paul Wood where he taught Synod the various parts in “Come with me, for the Journey is long”. Once we had learnt it, it was beautiful.

**District Reports and Business** The District reports had been circulated and were accepted. The accounts, budget and assessments were presented by the District Treasurer and approved by Synod. The District Property Secretary reminded members that Quinquennial Inspection reports were to be sent to him, any building works had to go on the Consents website and all property returns should have been completed. The District Ecumenical Officer asked for approval from Synod for the Model Constitution for Leiston and also asked Synod to give the necessary direction under SO611. District Policy Committee had approved a Sharing Agreement for North Lynn and this was noted by Synod. The District Safeguarding Officer read her report about significant improvements which had been made with updated training and rigorous policies and procedures. A video from Dave Friswell was played which highlighted points from the Learning Network Report.

**Action for Children Update** Holly Canham thanked everyone for their support and reminded people about the 150th Birthday this year.

**Information Sharing** The Synod Secretary stated that Synod was trying to reduce the amount of paper used and associated costs. She outlined the items in the Circuit boxes, recommended the Talking Jesus Video, MET information and Grapevine and reminded the Superintendents to clear their boxes.

**Zimbabwe Update** In the absence of Bishop Alice, there was no update on the Kenya project but Revs Cliff and Mary shared information about the very difficult situation in Zimbabwe.

**Worship with Holy Communion** All members of Synod shared in a traditional service of Holy Communion and Rev Paul Wood preached on Luke 5 v 1 – 11. He summed the reading up as WOW and urged Synod members to listen to God, to do what he says, to only do things that are relevant now and to be diligent in prayer and study and to be in relationship with God to share the Good News. The outcome would be WOW.

**Farewell and Thanks** Rev Steve Cullis gave his sincere thanks to everyone who had been involved in the organising and running of Synod, to the host Church and to Rev Andrew Maguire for all that he had contributed to the District. A special thank you was given to Rev Paul Wood for an inspirational day. The District Testimony Service for Revs Cliff and Mary is on 15 May 2019 at Bowthorpe Rd Church, Norwich. Ministers moving within the District, out of the District and “sitting down” were mentioned by name.

Synod members were invited to stay for tea and wished a safe journey home.

Marilyn Watsham

Assistant Synod Secretary