**Synod Highlights**

The East Anglia District Synod met on 19 September 2020 by Zoom. This was a new experience and involved a lot of planning. The faces were largely familiar (photographs were shown of those new to the District as they were welcomed) and everything worked well except for a small number of people being unable to participate due to technology issues. We fitted Synod into a morning with a short break and the time flew by.

The opening worship was led by our District Chair, Rev Julian Pursehouse. Psalm 8 was read out. Julian said that five months of lockdown has resulted in decreased pollution, jet streams rare, wildlife migrated into urban areas and a slowed down world. As we live with more awareness, the differences can be seen. He showed a picture of a gateway into a meadow at Marston Marshes which is not far from the Norwich manse and has been part of his daily exercise. As Julian walked he was able to discover again the glory of creation in nature and wonder anew. It is God’s world which we have been given as a gift and which we have a responsibility to maintain. As part of our Community of Witness and our testimony we were asked to reflect together in relation to God’s environment and how we can look at our responsibilities to cherish the cradle of life for ourselves and for those who come after us. Julian reminded Synod that “God in his love for us gave us this planet”.

Our theme for Synod was Eco-Church which fitted well with the theme of the Youth President, Phoebe Parkin, which is God’s World Our Home. It was brilliant to have Phoebe with us and a former Youth President, Michael Pryke. Phoebe spoke passionately about her theme and the need for Christian Climate Action with the Church having a louder and a clearer stance. Much of Climate Activism has been led by young people and children. It has a spiritual, theological and practical aspect and if Jesus were here now he would want to be involved. The work can be adapted for many different contexts so that we can all make a positive response from recycling, to reducing plastic use, to beach clean ups. Phoebe quoted from Leviticus 25 v 23 and went on to say that actions speak louder than words and that in doing something we are giving an outward witness to our communities. Radical change is needed now as the Climate Crisis is an emergency. This has been on the 3Generate Manifesto every year with young people fed up adults think that the young people have got it covered. This is part of the legacy of the Church and action is needed now. Micah 6 v 8 also talks of poverty and inequality. Phoebe showed illustrations of wildfires in California, flooding in Ironbridge, drought in Ethiopia affecting farms and plastic in Indonesia.

3Generate 365 has been established to create a continuous dialogue with young people, a year of prayer and discernment, journeying together as a whole Church. All ages from 5 to 85 can learn from one another. Groups can sign up on the Methodist Church website and individuals can offer themselves as District Ambassadors. 3Generate representatives go to Methodist Council and Conference, speak on the radio and across the country so that the voice of young people may be heard. Phoebe concluded by reminding Synod that young people are part of the Church NOW and the Church should be open to their wisdom. Synod needed to remember the influence each member had on young people and that Climate Change is happening now. She finished by quoting 1 Timothy 4 v 12 and said we needed to work together as a family and NOW.

Later in the Synod we had a question time with Phoebe which was ably handled by Rev Alison Walker, our “Chat Monitor”. This covered areas such as where to find 3Generate information, whether a District online forum for young people was a good idea (seek safeguarding guidance), the work of A Rocha, some Districts having Green Champions, the use of Fair Trade goods and raising the ECO rating for manses. Phoebe asked Synod to pray for a Christian focus on the issue and for worship material. Lorna Burroughes (our Service Group Coordinator) and Revd Julian (our District Chair) asked for people to come forward from the District to join a working group.

Feedback from this year’s Methodist Conference included watching The Good News video, Deacon Ian Murray speaking about Reaffirming Our Calling and using Chesterton Church as an example of becoming a class of a bigger Church to enable it to release resources for mission, and an EDI update from Rev Charity Nzegwu. The Conference Digest had been sent out in advance. We elected our representatives to Methodist Conference 2021 by Zoom poll. Rev Robert Roberts, Deacon Lemia Nkwelah, Maggie Finbow and Deacon Ian Murray, join those who still have a remaining part of their term to serve.

Our Assistant Synod Secretary, Marilyn Watsham, gave us a brief update on “God in Love Unites Us” which will be the focus of our next Synod. District Reports were emailed out in advance together with the information regarding the Deferred Special Resolution. We watched the video from MHA prepared for the East Anglia District. We were informed that from 10 October 2020 the Learning Network East of England would be joining with East Central to form the Eastern Region. A team of 8 people would work with each District in the new region and would streamline Trusteeship and Oversight. The District Safeguarding Group had reviewed the District Safeguarding Policy which was to be adopted for this next year. Norma Virgoe, our District Archivist, is looking for volunteers to help her. The LEP Constitution for Loddon was agreed.

Thanks were offered to all who had enabled the smooth running of Synod and it was agreed to send some letters of greeting, encouragement or condolence from Synod. The closing worship was led by the Ipswich Circuit and we closed Synod blessing each other as we signed the peace.

It certainly was a new experience doing Synod by Zoom but it seemed to be well-received. Feedback included that Zoom really leant itself to the use of the visuals in a way that a screen in a large hall doesn't in our traditional setting, people felt connected and part of the District.

**Susan Eldridge and Marilyn Watsham**