**Synod Highlights – September 2018**

Synod took place at King’s Lynn Academy, King’s Lynn and the theme was The Church-local and global. Our Chair of District Rev Julian Pursehouse welcomed everyone.For the opening worship, the theme was “To All the Saints in every Place” and the reading was from 1 Corinthians 1 v 1-3 which talks of those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints together with all those who in every place call on the name of our Lord. Julian also spoke of skimming stones and the ripples created and likened this to our actions (or “pebbles”) creating ripples from God.

It was a joy to welcome students from Wesley House who were from across the world. Several members were attending Synod for the first time and Julian welcomed them. New lay representatives were asked to show themselves by raising their hands. We are all in Connexion and relationship in Synod.

The Superintendent of the West Norfolk Circuit, Rev Andrew Maguire, welcomed everyone to West Norfolk and to King’s Lynn. John Wesley’s journal showed that he was a late convert to King’s Lynn, preferring Norwich, but after he was 69 he visited 12 times and found the market place in King’s Lynn to be spacious and noble but Wesley later said the place was cold and comfortless!! Andrew hoped that we had all the comforts that we needed for the day.

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

**Arrangements/Reminders -** Susan Eldridge highlighted some of the notices on the sheet including that Spring Synod will be held on 30 March 2019 at Trinity Methodist Church, Lowestoft and all written reports to be with the Synod Secretary by the end of February please. People were asked to check that they had two packs, one with the attendance sheet on the front which required completion and one with a green agenda on the front. Susan expressed her thanks to her husband and to the District Administrator for all the help given in preparation for Synod. A first aider was available if needed. Superintendents needed to clear their boxes and copies of Circuit Plans and Directories should be sent to the District Chair and Synod Secretary each quarter. It was highlighted that there were two amendment sheets with the papers for the District Directory.

3Generate Children and Youth Assembly will be held on 23-25 November 2018 at Pontins, Southport. It was virtually sold out but volunteers were being sought. Volunteer packs were in the boxes. The District website, with interactive maps showing locations of Churches with youth related work and where there are ecumenical links, is well worth a look. Andrew Maguire was thanked for his hard work on this. There is a Symposium “Cultural Diversity: What is our Calling?” organised by the EDI Committee and Adviser based on “The Unfinished Agenda” report to Conference. This is for 150 Methodists, Presbyters, Deacons and Lay and will take place from Friday 8 March to Sunday 10 March 2019 *(this date has since been changed to 1 to 3 March 2019)* at the Oxford Belfry Hotel in Oxfordshire. Expressions of interest to the Synod Secretary.

In the Circuit boxes there were three Safeguarding sheets, copies of Grapevine, LP weekend booking forms, Fund for Human Need leaflets, 3Generate postcards to write to the young people at 3Generate, 3Generate volunteer packs, information from Wesley House Easter School, information on the York courses, a Reader’s Guide to Mission and Ministry in Covenant to help with ongoing conversations in the Circuits, Methodist Summer Fellowship leaflets, Navigating Change Conference postcards and a report from MHA.

**GDPR Presentation -** The Assistant Synod Secretary did a short presentation on GDPR highlighting the use of Legitimate Interest and Consent forms where they were needed. She encouraged everyone to comply with the requirements and to ask for help if needed.

**Conference Reflections -** The Conference Business Digest was in the papers. An excellent Conference video was then shown which highlighted aspects of the Conference. Thirty-eight Presbyters and 5 Deacons were ordained. Reports on the Methodist Church website include the Conference video and Digest, Our Calling, Marriage and Relationships, Ministry in the Methodist Church, Additional Support for Managing Trustees, Baptism, MHA and All We Can.

Deacon Ian Murray had attended Conference and expanded on some of the aspects. It was two decades since Our Calling had been published and this was being used to look at strategy and our future as Church. The discussion paper online was recommended. Ian talked about Marriage and Relationships and how in the early 2000’s discussion on human sexuality had led to people leaving the Church. There is a summary in the Conference Digest and the task group have been having long and respectful debates. Part of a video was shown, available online, where three members of the task group reflected on the journey. There have been competing convictions, laughter and many tears and they had learned that there was always more to learn and that “The Spirit will guide you in all the truth” which was more than enough for who we are and who we may become. Conversations should begin now in Circuits so that all are ready for a full consultation after Conference 2019. Formal votes will be taken at Conference 2020. As Methodists we are committed to everyone irrespective of gender, sexuality etc. and we are all made in God’s image and we all have a place in God’s kingdom. 1000 people participated in the conversations across the District 4 years ago and the District will help to resource the consultations from September 2019.

**District Reports and Business -** There were written reports from the Policy Committee, a report on Privacy Notices from the District Property Secretary, nothing to report from the Administration Group, an MHA report, Learning and Caring group report including an update from the World Church Action Team, an MWiB report, Training Fund update, “Sign the Cross” Ministry with the Deaf Community, Sabbaticals Report and Learning Network East of England Region Report. Julian urged everyone to read the reports if they had not already done so. Additionally, Rev Catherine Dixon, from the Worship Group told Synod of a District Worship Workshop Day on Saturday 11 May 2019 at Thetford.

Dave Friswell gave a Learning Network update, as well as his written report and showed Synod the new logo. Rev Trey Hall is the new Director of Evangelism and Growth and Richard Armiger the Director of Learning Network nationally. Dave spoke about 3Generate in Southport in November but also expressed a wish for a 3Generate more locally, maybe 9 March 2019 and invited people to come forward to be on a planning group. Interest to be expressed to Ann Howlett-Foster or to Dave. CSS, safeguarding courses are being rolled out across the District with 2500 people needing to be trained and training the trainers required as well. The courses at Wesley House were encouraged, MA online, 1 December Faith and Arts and the Easter School 15-17 April 2019. Yasmin Finch told people of a new liturgy for use with lay and ordained pioneers and the Pioneer Forum which is running three times a year for people to join if they were involved in pioneering mission and fresh expressions. There were places still available for people at the pioneering course at Cliff College in March 2019.

**Information Sharing -** The Synod Secretary reminded Synod about the Safeguarding materials in the Circuit boxes as well as copies of Grapevine. A short video “Fund for Human Need” was shown which was about families struggling to meet their basic needs and how the fund can help people out of difficult situations and a way forward. The MHA video was shown celebrating the 75th Anniversary of MHA built on the initial work of Walter Hall.

**Other issues -** Rev Louise Morrissey asked Synod to let her know of Methodists from across the world who have had their visas turned down. She is working with Barristers on a judicial review because it is thought that there is an anti-faith bias or non-divulged secret quotas in the granting of visas.

Synod broke for lunch at 12.15 with a reminder about a retiring collection for Methodist Minister’s Children. People were encouraged to visit the various stands and that Synod would resume at 1.30pm.

**Afternoon workshops -** After lunch Deacon Donna Ely introduced the workshops and directed Synod to the various rooms.

**Workshops – Ministry and Mission Overseas**

1. Mission and Ministry in Zimbabwe Revs Cliff Shanganya and Charity Nzegwu
2. The World Methodist Council Sarah and Dave Friswell
3. Methodism where you least expect it Rev Alison Walker

Mission and Ministry across Europe

1. Cross-Cultural Ministry Rev Debbie Caulk
2. World Church Songs Ann Howlett-Foster
3. Good Practice – how to develop Deacon Donna Ely

healthy partnerships with the World Church

**Outstanding Business -** Rev Julian Pursehouse would be on sabbatical for the March 2019 Synod and the Rev Andrew Maguire would chair the Representative Synod and Rev Barbara Garwood would chair the Presbyteral Synod. The workshops had been an enjoyable and enriching experience and the information from the post it notes would be collated and circulated.

**Thanks to the Host Circuit and Closing Worship -** Rev Derek Grimshaw gave his sincere thanks on behalf of Synod to the host team for the enormous task of organising Synod so that it ran smoothly. He also thanked the technical team, the Synod Secretary and her helpers, the people who had spoken concisely and informatively and to the District Chair for his excellent chairing which allowed people to contribute but also completed the business in good time. Worship was led by Rev Catherine Dixon who continued the theme of the pebble, God and the ripples coming from God and being us, belonging to God.

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

Marilyn Watsham

Assistant Synod Secretary