**Synod Highlights**

Our Chair of District, Revd Julian Pursehouse, welcomed us all to the East Anglia District Synod by Zoom. This time we had great support with the technology from the Ipswich Circuit (including a short tutorial on using Zoom) and all ran smoothly.

We were very fortunate to have the President, Revd Richard Teal, and the Vice President, Mrs Carolyn Lawrence, “visiting” our District that weekend and they led the opening worship. Carolyn started worship by Synod singing “Jesus Stand Among” us, led Synod in prayer and read the lesson which was John 17 v 20 – 26. Richard reflected on the reading in his address. He spoke about throwing coins in a wishing well and making a wish. He said that the reading was often used at unity services where the writer prays three times for the unity of the Church. Unity is a benchmark of our faith where if we draw close to God we will draw close to one another. It is not about uniformity or being nice but about having mutual love and respect. We can be different and loving and live in that unity. We may be one so the world may believe.

If we have love for one another, people will look at us and believe. We are grounded together in the life of Jesus, his earthly life and the glory of the cross and his resurrection which has taken Christ and made him available to every generation. We have the presence of Jesus with us in our midst and in our hearts. Synod is important and Richard hoped that his message would set the tone for Synod, praying, discussing, conferring and worshipping together. The last hymn was “What shall our greeting be – sign of our unity?” and Carolyn closed this section by praying for Synod members knowing peace and unity, sharing our thoughts with grace and conviction and that God would guide our conversations. The President and Vice President then left Synod to re-join after lunch.

It was agreed to send letters of condolence or congratulations to various people, including a letter of sympathy to Her Majesty the Queen on the death of Prince Philip.

Our theme for Synod was “God in Love – Unites Us” and the Resolutions were the main part of our business. The video produced by the Task Group about its work was shown. Julian asked that people who spoke subsequently did so with grace, compassion and care. The Assistant Synod Secretary read out each resolution in turn, conversation was invited, the resolution was read again and voting then took place. All the Resolutions were voted through. A couple of amendments were proposed in advance and one of these was rejected and it was agreed not to put the other one. The main discussion was in relation to Resolution 10/8 and there were speakers in favour and against the Resolution. It was all conducted with respect and grace. The results of the Zoom votes were confirmed by the scrutineers after lunch.

The work of MHA was shown on video after a break for lunch. MHA Sunday is 13 June and the theme is Loneliness and Isolation. The Deferred Special Resolution was approved by a large majority. A Memorial to Conference was agreed almost unanimously relating to global vaccination and COVAX. District Committee reports were received, including the adoption of the accounts and the revised budget (following the reduction in the Connexional Assessment). District Appointments from 1 September 2021 had been circulated and were voted on and unanimously approved.

The Synod Secretary made reference to our District magazine, Grapevine, being available electronically and that it included a report from our 3Generate District Ambassador.

The President and Vice President returned after lunch. Revd Richard Teal shared about having been to Kenya before lockdown. Every agenda at their meetings started with “Mission, Mission, Mission”. It is a growing church and equality to all appointments is being given. Kenya’s prayer support for Richard has been unbelievable. Through lockdown, new ways of working for the President and Vice President had to be developed. Richard said that in one day he had been in eight different meetings or preaching, including with Archbishop Justin Welby and Cardinal Vincent Nichols and on Facebook Live and someone told him he was like a rash in that he got everywhere! His Presidency had brought him close to thousands of people for which they were grateful. Richard had even preached at the telephone worship at Lessingham Church in our District. Richard said that he still missed the face-to-face special events.

Carolyn Lawrence spoke of going to Brazil before lockdown where the Church is growing. It has been wonderful to be part of small groups and Carolyn has been doing a lot of work about eradicating bullying in the Church. She said we needed to be content in all circumstances and quoted “I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength”. Richard and Carolyn had met with our District Pioneer Group the previous day, were in the Norfolk Broads the following day and with our Circuit Stewards the day after.

Revd Charity Nzegwu talked about the Racial Justice Symposium which is happening on 15 May from 10 to 12.30 and Synod members were invited to sign up for this so that everyone can listen to what has been experienced and learn together. The speakers should include Bevan Powell, the Methodist Secretary for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, Revd Jill Marsh, EDI Implementation Officer, and a former Youth President. It would be good if every Circuit is represented.

Farewells were said to those Ministers retiring/moving out of the District. Thanks were offered to all who had enabled the smooth running of a memorable and busy Synod. We closed by singing Love Divine and with a blessing from the President. We hope to meet in person in September.

**Susan Eldridge** **and Marilyn Watsham**