

**GENERAL SYNOD SESSIONS**  
**8<sup>th</sup>–13<sup>th</sup> JULY 2011**  
**IN YORK**

**AN INSTANT REPORT**  
from Ven. Clive Mansell

**A number of Anglican and Ecumenical guests were welcomed** at the start of the Synod.

**His Beatitude Anastasios, Archbishop of Tirana, Durrës and All Albania, then addressed the Synod.**

The text of his address is available and it contains some inspirational and moving contents. I set out below just some extracts from it. Please bear in mind that he was a Greek, not an Albanian, and he was asked to go to rebuild the church in Albania from nothing after centuries in which the church existed as a minority within the Islamic Ottoman empire — still Christians are a minority in Albania — and after the period from 1944 to 1990 in which the Orthodox Church in Albania was, first of all oppressed and then, within the period from 1967 to 1990, the atheistic state constitution banned all expressions of religion and brought about the complete dissolution of the Church. Read then some of the things which the Archbishop said to us.

“I had never thought about Albania and never expected furthermore to live in it. All my interest had been focused on Africa, and that is where I was in December 1990, when I received a message from the Ecumenical Patriarchate that I had been elected Patriarchal Exarch. A type of nuncio, to Albania. My task would be to investigate the conditions which obtained after the persecution, as well as the opportunities which existed for starting a new missionary effort and for reconstituting the Church of Albania ...”

“It was July 1991 when I arrived for the first time in Albania. Together with a small group of old and harassed men, we made our way from the airport to the ruined Cathedral of Tirana. In order to express the most essential message of my mission, I asked each one of those present to take a candle, and inquired how to say the greeting ‘Christ is Risen’ in Albanian? I lit the candle exclaiming “Krishti unjall!”, that is, Christ is Risen! One after the other, the candles of the few believers were lit, and they answered “Vertet unjall!” Truly He is Risen! And their eyes were full of tears and light. From then on, the exclamation ‘Christ is Risen’ has become the watchword with which we have advanced all these years with the restoration of the Orthodox Autocephalous Church of Albania from the ruins ....”

“As Patriarchal Exarch in Albania I visited as many cities and villages as possible where there had formerly been Orthodox communities. People began to become together and hear the Gospel message and at Liturgies, most of which took place in the open air under trees or in the ruins of old churches. The Liturgical life and sermons were the basic means of getting the faithful to attend. The central message of the sermons and of spiritual activities was that Christ — crucified, buried and risen — “is the light of the world” and that God does not abandon us and “There is hope, however dark everything may seem ...”

“A fundamental element in Christian missionary work throughout the centuries has been the construction of places of worship, so that hymns and thanksgiving can be raised to God in the ages of ages. Hundreds of churches had been destroyed or converted to other uses. We were concerned, therefore, to build new churches, in places where old ones had been demolished. Altogether 150 new churches were built, and at the same time, 60 dilapidated cultural monuments were restored. As well as this, in many villages, 160 small churches were repaired, as were about 70 buildings built to house the administration of the dioceses, schools, medical centres and various institutions. This broader construction activity contributed to the provision of work for thousands of workers, with benefits for a corresponding number of families, as well as for the economy of the country in general.

In the administrative sphere, apart from the establishment of the Holy Synod, and the creation of a local Albanian clergy (around 150), about 460 parishes were organised in towns and villages ...”

“The interest of our Church was directed in particular to the younger generation. In this transitional period, young people are faced with an enormous vacuum. From the old illusion of the Communist paradise, they have been led to the illusion of the capitalist paradise without moral inhibitions. And yet,

thousands of young people have responded to our invitation. In this way, these young people do not represent merely the future of the church, but also the present ...”

“When we discuss the theme of “sharing”, my thoughts go to the two lakes of Palestine, the Sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea. Those two lakes have a principal feature in common and a basic difference. Both receive the water of the River Jordan. The first, the Sea of Galilee receives the water and offers it to fertilise the southern regions. The second, the Dead Sea receives the water but keeps it for itself. In the first, there is plenty of life within its waters and around them. In the second, there is no sign of life. And we know that our Lord had nothing to do with the Dead Sea. He started his public mission and performed many of His miracles in the area of the Sea of Galilee.

We Christians have the privilege of receiving continuously the living water of the spiritual Jordan. We receive unstintingly a great many gifts — spiritual and material. - If we keep them only for ourselves, we shall lose them. The Dead Sea remains the symbol of what it means merely to receive and keep for oneself. If we offer, we shall be like the Sea of Galilee, full of life. Receiving and sharing is the secret for having life, The Life.”

**Synod approved the meeting dates of the General Synod in 2013**, namely 4<sup>th</sup>–8<sup>th</sup> February, 5<sup>th</sup>–9<sup>th</sup> July and, if required, 18<sup>th</sup>–20<sup>th</sup> November.

**The Terms of Appointment for 2 appointed members to the Archbishops’ Council** were extended, namely, for the present Professor John Craven and Mr Philip Fletcher.

**The Constitution of the Legal Advisory Commission** was duly approved.

Questions on a range of topics were addressed by those Charing boards and councils during **Question Time**. An interesting statistics to emerge concerned the numbers of those who had moved voluntarily to Common Tenure. These statistics given were: 34 bishops transferred voluntarily (that is 34% of the bishops) and in addition the two Archbishops who were transferred by virtue of the statute itself. 21 archdeacons (approximately 21% of archdeacons overall) transferred, as did 2 deans (approximately 5% of the deans) and 219 incumbents (approximately 7% of incumbents).

The Saturday morning was devoted to the theme of **Mission**.

It began with the **Presidential Address from the Archbishop of Canterbury** and then members of Synod met in groups for discussion, reflection and prayer.

The full text of the Archbishop’s address can be found on his website, but within the address, he sought to pick up certain themes relating to the nature of the Church’s mission and how those beyond the regular life of the Church perceived the Church.

Here are some quotations from his address.

*“If it wasn’t for the Church, no one, absolutely no one, would have cared (for these people) and they would be lost still.”*

*“Pray that our work today will bring into focus in new ways what it means to be entrusted with the strength not to abandon and the joy of knowing ourselves not abandoned.”*

*“We want to see growth in awareness of what it means that God does not abandon us.”*

*“Growth, I want to say, is growth in the power to show God’s fidelity.”*

*“What would be lost ... if the Church of England were not here. Perhaps only as we think about what would be lost do we really get a purchase on what matters most.”*

*“Our appeal in mission therefore has to be, ‘Walk with us as we walk with Jesus.’ — Walk and continue learning — there is no entrance test except the willingness to trust that walking with Jesus is the way to life and reality.”*

*“Christianity is not advice, but News.” — The world has changed; humanity is not what it was. We are still working out, often in floundering and stumbling ways, what this means, but the one thing to beware of is reducing the news to exhortation, sound moral or even spiritual teaching, alone. We must always be beginning again with the news that God has shown himself to be a God who does not abandon. — Even when all the evidence has pointed to his absence, he recovers himself and us in the great act of vindication, homecoming and transfiguration that is the resurrection.”*

*“Biblical awareness and self-awareness go together; and both need a steady attention to the tradition, in the sense of the whole deposit of what has been prayed and understood in and by the Body of Christ across the ages.”*

*“..How far do we currently think about an ordained minister as someone who can as a real priority communicate what the worship of the Church really is and help others to animate it ?The ordained minister as co-ordinator, as liturgist and trainer in liturgy, as well as teacher and inspirer in the more usual ways, the ordained person as celebrant of the community in a very full sense, and one who helps others learn how to celebrate in the name of the Church — this is surely one dimension of where we are being led today, and it poses searching questions to our training processes.”*

*“I hope that today we can do something different and celebrate a Church that deserves our loyalty — not because it is humanly impressive and successful, but simply because it is Church, because it is the visible sign of a faithful God. Make the most of it. It may be that reflecting on this will help us love the Church in the way we should; when we love the Church for what it actually is in the eyes of God, we have a better chance of becoming what I called earlier a Church in love. And only a Church in love can really convert, serve and celebrate.”*

In the context of the discussions following the Archbishop’s talk, Synod members were given some quotations from young people around certain word headings. Here are some examples.

Re: Good News: *“Good News is like Christmas. It doesn’t come often, but when it does, it’s like a whole new world. It makes people be nice to each other sometimes.”*

Re: Sharing: *“When you’ve got nothing, you share everything.”*

Re: Love: *“Not going to sleep until my sister gets in. Watching over someone” and “when the priest came round to my granddad, they’d talk about all the people on the street they’d known. That priest loved my street. That was impressive. I remember that.”*

Re: Salvation: *“Getting home.”*

Re: Leadership: *“A true leader never leaves anyone behind and goes back to get you.”*

Re: Church: *“When people join a church, it makes them old inside” and “I love the church street where I live and I like to walk through the church path rather than along the street. I love it*

*when the lights are on in the church late at night. But I don't want to go in. Other people can do that."*

Re: Religion: "*Religion gives people hope, ... doesn't it?*"

### **Legislative business:**

Various items of legislative business took place, including **funding for the Church's contribution to the Churches Conservation Trust** (- the other main contributor is the Government) which helps with the maintenance and keeping open to the public certain high quality churches no longer required for regular public worship. **The Rules of Compensation** received approval for **where there is the reorganisation of 2 dioceses** and where certain posts are abolished, eg, bishop, archdeacon, dean, residentiary canon (— for example, you will be alert to the proposals for adjustments to the dioceses in parts of Yorkshire.)

Rules and Regulations making adjustments to the **Church of England Funded Pensions Scheme for Sodor and Man** were also approved.

In a major debate, the *Synod declined to approve* the proposed **Parochial Fees Order 2011**. This made provision for the amounts for fees in accordance with the new legislation passed a year ago. We await further guidance as to the legal situation following the defeat of the Fees Order. For the moment, it is understood that the fees set for 2011 will remain in force in 2012. However, because of the changes in the law, there are some charges which churches have been adding on to fees which may no longer be allowed and, as a result of the defeat of the Fees Order some additional funding which the Fees Orders would have introduced will not now be forthcoming.

The **Draft Church of England Marriage (Amendment) Measure** moved through the 3 legislative stages of provision, final drafting and final approval. This will now pass through Parliament and in due course for the Royal Assent. When this comes into force, this will address 2 particular situations.

Firstly, it will make it possible in certain situations, - for example, where there is a multiple-church benefice with one incumbent, - for the couple with qualifying connection entitled to be married in one church in the benefice, in fact, to have their service held at another church within the benefice by direction of the Bishop. (The Marriage Measure of 2008 which introduced the qualifying connection omitted to cover this particular point which *was* covered under the *existing* law for *other* circumstances where a qualifying connection was *not* involved.)

The new Measure - when it comes into force - will also provide a wording for the calling of banns which is in modern English so that banns can be announced by either the wording given in the Prayer Book or in this more modern wording. Banns will be published at the principal service on a Sunday or at a principal service and another service on that same Sunday. There is no other change to the law concerning banns of marriage and banns will still need to be published on 3 Sundays preceding the occasion of a marriage.

**Mission Action Planning:** The Synod adapted a Diocesan Synod motion on Mission Action Planning in the Church of England from the Diocese of Southwell and Nottingham and confirmed that a growing number of parishes find that Mission Action Planning can be a strategic tool which helps them grow in faith, numbers and in service to the community;

It also called on the Archbishops' Council to work with the House of Bishops to develop the priorities identified in *Challenges for the New Quinquennium* (GS 1815) and further outlined in *Challenges for the New Quinquennium - Next Steps* (GS Misc 995) into a national mission strategy that will support dioceses, deaneries and parishes in their own church growth and mission planning."

**The Legal Offices (Annual Fees) Order 2011 and the Ecclesiastical Judges, Legal Officers and Others (Fees) Order 2011** received deemed approval from the Synod.

**Higher Education Funding Changes:** The Synod endorsed the recommendations in a report from the Ministry Council (GS1836) which would:

- 1 Maintain our commitment wherever possible and affordable to HE validation in order to give time to develop more long term options;
- 2 Develop Church approval for all pathways into ministries which provision is made by Canon from 2012, there is a viable option for dioceses and training institutions;
- 3 Develop from this basis, as rapidly as possible, a national Church-approved suite of awards which will also confer a HE award, ideally in partnership with other churches;
- 4 Agree a rise in the General Synod budget for the academic year beginning 2012 to accommodate those institutions who are facing moderate rises (to up to £700 per full-time equivalent students) in validation fees;
- 5 Fund only in part those pathways where validation or tuition fees are set to rise steeply and encourage the creation of student bursary schemes for high costs pathways where necessary; and limit the pooling of maintenance costs for candidates for those candidates who can be ordained by the time they are 50 years of age having completed their normal training.

These recommendations followed the changes in the government's arrangements for the funding of Higher Education. (If the C of E had done nothing and had continued funding training in the same way, the overall additional costs for ordination training would have been of the order of a loss of £924,000 to the training institutions currently receiving money from HEFCE via universities and a rise of £626,000 of the General Synod vote for ministry training through a combination of rising student fees on high costs pathways and increasing validation fees which are to ordinands.)

**The Anglican-Methodist Covenant:** The Synod took note of a report from the Council for Christian Unity concerning progress in implementing the Anglican-Methodist Covenant and opening up the possibility of Ecumenical Partnerships over larger geographical areas than, for example, the usual LEP or benefice area.

**A Diocesan Synod motion from the Bradford Diocese** asking the House of Bishops to bring forward regulations to authorise the admission to Holy Communion of adults who had been baptised, but who had not yet been confirmed and who were not yet ready and desirous to be confirmed, was unsuccessful. A procedural motion moved "Next Business". Currently arrangements including, of course, Confirmation, were affirmed during the course of the debate and to remain unchanged.

**The Report of the Audit Committee** for the Archbishops' Council was duly debated and formal note was taken.

**The Presentation of the Annual Report of the Archbishops' Council** was also given. This report — like other papers for the Synod sessions — is available online and explains the wide-ranging work done for the Church of England through the Archbishops' Council and its staff.

**Liturgical Business: Draft additional Eucharistic Prayers for use when children are present in significant numbers** (eg, a school Eucharist) were the subject of their first Synod debate and had been prepared following widespread trialling in parishes on an experimental basis. In general, these 2 draft Eucharistic Prayers were appreciatively received, but a number of points were made suggesting improvements and revision. They will now go to a Revision Committee and people can submit comments concerning the proposed Eucharistic Prayers. In due course, the Revision Committee will report back to the General Synod and there will then be further stages before any liturgy is approved legally for use.

**House of Laity elections:** A Private Member's Motion requesting that the business committee to commission a thorough review of how the House of Laity of the General Synod and the House of Laity of Diocesan Synods are elected was approved by the Synod. It is anticipated that this review will be undertaken by the Synod's Electoral Review Group. One of the concerns is to see whether a better electoral college for voting on members for Diocesan Synod and for lay members of General Synod can be found above and beyond the existing membership of Deanery Synods.

**“Unfinished Business: A Pastoral and Missional Approach for the Next Decade: A report by the Committee for Minority Ethnic Anglican Concerns”** — The Synod approved proposals to encourage those from minority ethnic groups within the Church of England to get experience or to stand for consideration for appointments, and an amendment to the motion, which would seek to gather in some more statistical information concerning minority ethnic Anglicans participation in church life, was also passed.

**The Archbishops' Council's Draft Budget and Proposals for Apportionment for 2012 (GS 1842)** were debated and duly passed. This will result in an overall national increase of 1.8%, but under the apportionment formula, the increase for Rochester will be only 1.1%.

**Presence and Engagement:** Work on done under this title concerning the Church of England's ministry particularly in areas of significant populations of those from other faith communities was commended. The Synod noted with pleasure the Government's grant of £5m to the “Near Neighbour's Project” which the Church of England is undertaking in 3 major centres and which fits in with the government's “Big Society” agenda.

**Conversations with the United Reformed Church:** The Synod approved recommendations contained in the report from the Council of Christian Unity concerning relations with the URC. These will include a joint service at Westminster Abbey in 2012 to mark the 350<sup>th</sup> anniversary of “The Great Ejection of 1662” and the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the inauguration of the United Reformed Church. (During the period of the Civil War and the Commonwealth in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Parliament abolished Episcopacy, the Book of Common Prayer, the 39 Articles and traditional liturgical calendar from the life of the Church of England, and clergy lost their livings because of their loyalty to the Bishops and the King. After the failure of the Commonwealth and the Restoration of the monarchy in 1660 and the failure of the Savoy Conference of 1661 to achieve agreement on the revision of the Book of Common Prayer, the Act of Uniformity required clergy to promise to use only the rites and ceremonies of the Prayer Book and to receive Episcopal ordination, and those unable to promise to do so were given the choice either of conforming or being deprived of their livings on St Bartholomew's Day, 24<sup>th</sup> August 1662. Those who were not able to conform to what was required were duly removed from their

offices. This event is known as the “Great Ejection” and nearly 2000 clergy were deprived. This remains a source of pain in the Presbyterian and United Reformed traditions.) Ongoing discussions with the United Reformed Church will take place concerning a variety of matters relating to beliefs and practices of the Church of England and of the United Reformed Church.

**Christians in the Holy Land:** The Archbishop of Canterbury made a Presidential Statement relating to Christians in the Holy Land. (Details of the statement will be available on the Archbishop’s website.)

(Earlier in the Synod, the Synod had approved the Archbishop writing to the Foreign Secretary expressing deep concern at the events in Sudan - where the new nation of **Southern Sudan** came into being as the General Synod’s sessions were beginning and where there is much violence on the border with Northern Sudan - the actions of government of Northern Sudan are giving great cause for concern.)

**Church Commissioners’ Annual Report:** A presentation on the Annual Report was given to the Synod and questions were raised and duly answered.

**The Church and Education: Into the Next 200 Years** — A report from the Board of Education (GS1845). Synod congratulated the National Society on 200 years of outstanding service to the nation and contribution to the mission of the Church of England. It affirmed the continued importance of Church of England schools being “distinctively Christian institutions, rooted in the life of the parishes while being open to the diverse communities they serve” and invited the Archbishops’ Council to report regularly on the impact of work being done to enhance the effectiveness of the Church of England stake in the public education system and in promoting the improved standards of religious education in all schools. It also invite the Archbishops’ Council to report in this quinquennium on ways of enhancing the Church of England’s involvement in the Higher Education system.

*Amongst other papers made available* with the papers required for Synod debates were the following:

**GS Misc 984: The Changing Role of Deaneries** — the paper summarises some of the changes in deaneries and the use of deaneries across the Church of England in recent times. It also includes a section on the topic of establishing a Deanery-based charity.

**GS Misc 992: The legal advice on the Equality Act in connection with episcopal appointments** and this was followed on 1<sup>st</sup> July 2011 with a **Statement from the House of Bishops on “Civil Partnerships and Human Sexuality”**. — These matters were not debated in the course of the Synod business, but were supplied for information only.

**Meeting of the House of Clergy at the General Synod:** At a meeting of the House of Clergy concerning the topic of a “Clergy Professional Association”, the House of Clergy agreed to continue work which has already begun in 3 areas which are looking to explore the provision of help for clergy involving processes under the Terms of Service legislation and the Clergy Discipline Measure. One area of exploration is the possibility of establishing a professional association for Church of England clergy within the faith workers branch of the union UNITE. A separate proposal is a proposed insurance scheme for clergy organised through the Ecclesiastical Insurance group. The third proposal is to develop schemes for a network of trained supporters for clergy and all group will work with diocesan clergy chairs to explore this last possibility. No firm decisions on any of these proposals have been made and there are mixed feelings about the desirability or the effectiveness of the proposals.