

Charge to Diocesan Synod, 20 June 2009

St Margaret's, Newlands

Brothers and Sisters

I am aware that most of us hope not to extend the meeting of Synod unduly and I do not wish to take up unnecessary time so I hope that what I have to say will be of help

Firstly, this is a meeting of the Diocesan Synod, and not, as some have referred to it in parish magazines, an Electoral Synod. If it were the latter, I would not be here and I mention it only as an illustration of the need to be clear about the electoral process, which I assure you will be sufficiently demanding without having to cope with misinformation.

The Dean, as ever, will guide you through the two items of business that are before you today. I simply want to say something about the process of election so that you may be prepared.

Once the Primus has issued the Mandate for election you will all receive notification of it together with whatever material the Primus wishes to issue.

The Preliminary Synod will be convened by the Primus and its set agenda will be addressed. After that meeting you will not be summoned again until the first Electoral meeting which will probably take place in December but certainly not before that. So between August and December there is a time of waiting.

Arising from my own experience as Primus for two elections I want to warn of this time lapse when it seems that nothing is happening and no progress is being made. Please be patient; do not become anxious about this time which is a time of preparation for everyone. Prayer is essential and that can be offered throughout the diocese over this time of waiting.

What appears to be a time of little happening is in fact a time of hard work for the Preparatory Committee whose election you will complete this morning.

The Preparatory Committee will intimate when they are ready to receive nominations. Nominations can come from anyone and anywhere, subject to Canonical guidance, and they are received in confidence and held in confidence. It is an enormous help if the person you choose to nominate has been advised of what you intend as well as being a matter of courtesy - but the courtesy has not always been extended in the past.

Out of the list of those nominated it is the task of the Preparatory Committee, acting on your behalf, and on behalf of the wider church to come to the point where they are able to place before you not less than three and not more than five names for consideration for election. Until that list is published there are no Candidates and it is wrong to use that term until that point has been reached. The Preparatory Committee is given the task of identifying Candidates - that is not for you as an Electoral Synod to do. I make that clear because sometimes Electors as "Why have I not been able to choose a candidate?" The reason is that the Canon says that is what the Preparatory Committee have to do. The task of an Elector is to elect after careful thought and constant prayer. That is responsibility enough; but don't get frustrated because the task is being handled by someone else - pray for them.

Now you will see that if the Preparatory Committee is to produce the list of Candidates it has to work in a concentrated burst between the end of August, say, and the end of November. Three months in which to arrange for ten or so people from around the Province to meet, to worship together, to form a working

group and to have met with as many of the nominees as they feel appropriate and to offer you a list of Candidates for consideration. It does mean that it takes a long time before the Bishop has been identified and consecrated — but for the members of the Preparatory Committee the schedule is under pressure from day one. And although as Electors you are not called upon to meet until the Preparatory Committee has finished its work it is quite wrong to speak of nothing happening and no progress being made. I repeat, you will need to exercise patience. The work of the Preparatory Committee must be carried out in confidence and so there is no way that interim reports can come to the Synod. It is bad enough, I think, that we publish the names of Candidates, can you imagine the havoc that would be caused if the whole list of nominees were put into the public domain or speculation were to be fed in this way. Everyone involved needs space and an atmosphere of prayer in which to work.

This has not been so much of a Charge in its nature as an offering of fatherly advice. On previous occasions the effect in other elections has not been 100 per cent but it makes me feel better to pass on my experience.

I offer finally two verses from Scripture which you might perhaps make your own in the next few months:

Not out of any conscious attempt of mine to identify with Moses as he lays down leadership of the Israelites, nevertheless timely words from Deuteronomy 31 "Be strong and resolute for the Lord your God accompanies you and will not forsake you"

And from the New Testament – another farewell epistle as it happens. Philippians 4 "Now my friends all that is true, all that is noble, all that is just and pure, all that is lovable and attractive, whatever is excellent and admirable – fill your thoughts with these things".

May God bless the work of this Synod

+Idris
20 June 2009