

District report of Synod, September 2014

On 13th September 2014 synod met in Trinity Methodist Church in Codsall, Wolverhampton. We began with worship led by Revd Ian Heath and members of the Wolverhampton Circuit. Mr Gavin Williamson, MP, Cllr. Brian Edwards, Leader of South Staffordshire District Council and Revd Michael Fox of St Nicholas CofE Church, Codsall brought warm greetings.

Our theme for the day was Mental Illness and the Church. Gill Dascombe, current vice-president of conference gave the keynote address; she said that 'the mentally ill are still stigmatised in our society like the lepers of old'. She moved us through history, consideration of brain functions and current treatments to thinking about what we could do in the name of Christ to change attitudes to those with 'eccentric behaviour patterns'. She reminded us that people suffering from mental illness need love, not fear, reaching out to them, not recoil. This led on to a series of work-shops, e.g. on Dementia, exploding the myths, pastoral care, the bible and mental health and nurturing good mental health. The vice-president said, 'Good quality spiritual care leads to easier and speedier recovery.' Jesus said 'I have come that you might have life, - life in all its fullness'. So we, His church, are encouraged to challenge our prejudices, increase our compassion towards those who have a mental illness.

Business from Conference

The replies to memorials sent by synod and by the Cannock Chase Circuit to Conference 2014 were available to all members of synod in writing. A highlight at conference, in addition to inspiring addresses, challenging debates and wonderful prayer-times, was the 20 year Commemoration of the Rwanda Genocide. All the representatives from the district took part, led by Bishop Samuel of Rwanda and Revd. John Howard. We processed through conference with candle and banner from Rwanda. The President, Revd. Kenneth Howcroft exchanged the Rwanda candle for a conference candle for Bishop Samuel to take back home. He invited the bishop to address conference and then your representatives led in prayer. We all felt we had been privileged to take part and member conference members were moved by the experience.

Representatives to Conference 2015 are Revds. David Lavender, Denise Williams, Beatrice Cloke, Brenda Shuttleworth and Keith Walton. These will join Helen Cook, Denise Beaumont and Revd Paul Nzacahayo, who were elected in previous years.

Synod Business

Chris Reed, district treasurer, reflected on finance. He thanked circuits for paying the required assessments in full. He reminded synod members that only 2p in every pound paid to the district by circuit assessments remained in the district. He reminded synod about grants available through the District Advance Fund and the District Training Fund. He asked for prayerful support for treasurers. Synod thanked Chris for his efficiency and hard work.

Ken Collins launched an appeal for the redevelopment of Darlington Street following the fire last year. The money raised would help to transform the building into a place suitable for mission and evangelism in the 21st Century.

Brenda Shuttleworth spoke about the Kairos report from Palestinian Christian Churches and advocated we read the response by the British Methodist Church, entitled 'Kairos, a Time for Action'.

John Howard spoke about the West Midlands Joint Public Issues Team, which has produced a paper to encourage us to think about the type of society we want to live in. Each church is encouraged to become involved and to use the questionnaire on these issues. The results will be used to help churches in the run up to the General Election and will be sent to all candidates.

There was a very varied range of stalls available and an excellent bookshop.

Synod concluded with Holy Communion. Led by Revd. John Howard . An offering was taken for Mission Alongside the Poor, in response to the success of our memorial encouraging the church to raise funds for this fund. Many members stayed for fellowship over a very welcome cup of tea and a cake.

The Spring Synod will be held in Dudley College, Broadway Site and hosted by the Dudley and Netherton Circuit on 18th April, 2015.