**Synod Highlights**

The East Anglia District Synod met on 21 September 2019 at Upwell Methodist Church, which has a lovely garden. The theme for the day was “Becoming a Community of Witnesses”, with a particular focus on sharing testimonies. It is intended that this will be a theme for the District for some time (not just one year). We were welcomed to The Fens Circuit by its Superintendent, Rev Adam Stevenson.

The opening worship was led by our District Chair, Rev Julian Pursehouse, was about sharing our story and included Rev Mary Sachikonye sharing some of her testimony and reminding us that nothing is impossible with God. It is hoped that we will develop fresh confidence in sharing our story and how it inhabits God’s story, through tradition and scripture. The book “So What’s the Story …?” written by the current President and Vice President of Conference was recommended and we were invited to listen, be shaped and encouraged.

We were joined by the National Youth President, Thelma Commey, who introduced the 3Generate “Year of Testimony” and reminded us that our stories are unique. She had asked God to write her story for his glory. We need to have confidence to let God write our story.

Rev Catherine Hutton had been invited to write some bible study material to use in Lent around sharing our stories and our District Mission Enabler, Dr Yasmin Finch, had obtained postcards showing Trey Hall’s top tips for sharing a testimony.

District reports were mainly received in written form and a lot of information was shared. Dave Friswell gave an update from the Learning Network, including the planned local 3Generate event on 3 May 2020.

Our Assistant Synod Secretary explained how the re-invitation process for our District Chair had been carried out, drew attention to the reasoned statement issued with the Synod papers, and a secret ballot took place. A large majority agreed the recommendation to extend Rev Julian Pursehouse’s appointment by a further four years from 1 September 2020.

We watched the Conference highlights video and our elected representatives to Conference 2020 are Mrs Mary Gibbs and Deacon Ian Murray, joining those who still had a remaining part of their term to serve.

The video produced by the Marriage and Relationships task group was introduced by Rev Peter Rayson and Rev Julian explained the arrangements for the District consultation on the report. Narrative feedback will be sent by each Circuit to the District by the end of February 2020 and the Assistant Synod Secretary has subsequently been asked to collate the responses to go into a report to go to Spring Synod 2020. At this Synod the five resolutions ultimately going to Conference 2020 will be voted on by secret ballot.

Rev Steve Oliver reminded Synod that the Church should be doing something about the significant issues in our world such as climate change, following the lead given us by our young people.

Rev Sharon Thraves shared her moving testimony, Rev Matt Finch gave an update on Our Calling (Evangelism and Mission) and Bishop Alice Muthoni (currently studying at Wesley House, Cambridge) gave an update on her Kenyan project which is helping a Hall to be built where 1,500 young people can get together and be trained to improve the talents they already have.

A collection was taken, amounting to £543.09, to be divided between All We Can and the District Benevolent Fund.

It was agreed to send various letters of greetings and encouragement. The closing worship, based on Acts 2, was led by The Fens Circuit (with their Circuit Band) who also provided a splendid tea to enjoy before we departed at the end of an excellent day, fired up to share our testimonies.

Rev Peter Goodhall expressed the thanks of Synod to the Fens Circuit and to Rev Julian, Marilyn and Susan for the hosting and organising of Synod.

Susan Eldridge and Marilyn Watsham