

Notes from Oxford Diocesan Synod – 5th September 2020

The Oxford Diocesan Synod met “officially on line” following the prior distribution of the Agenda and papers. These reports are available at <https://www.oxford.anglican.org/who-we-are/governance/diocesan-synod/>

Synod commenced with ‘Dwelling in the Word’ reading and reflecting on Philippians 1:27 – 2:13. The Diocese will continue to think about this passage in the coming year.

The Rev’d Geoff Bayliss was duly elected to Chair of the House of Clergy.

Bishop Steven Croft delivered his Presidential Address in which he explored, in this time of emerging from lockdown, the role of the people of the church as disciples and citizens, drawing from the character of Jesus. Bishop Steven encouraged the Synod to:-

- Meet face to face where safe to do so
- Rebuild relationships with Children and Families
- Take pastoral care of others

In conclusion he concluded that “Every Ministry is a Pioneer Ministry”. Christ is with us.

Synod adjourned for the AGM of the Oxford Diocesan Board of Finance at which the Directors Reports and Financial papers for 2019 were approved.

On resumption of Synod, Synod were asked to take note of the paper “Financial Update and 2021 Draft Revenue Budget and Share Allocation”. Rev’d John Tattersall, Chair of Board, explained the process and outlined the projected deficit. The draft budget assumes no change in parish share for 2021. For many parishes, reduced income in 2020 as a result of the Covid19 pandemic, will see inevitably see a draw down on reserves, and it was recognised that not all churches would be able to meet share, and this picture would continue into 2021. There would be no central Diocesan direction to reduce clergy numbers, this being a discussion at Deanery level. The adoption of the Parish Giving Scheme was urged.

The Annual Report and Accounts of the Oxford Diocesan Board of Education were received. Tony Wilson, Diocesan Director of Education, gave an upbeat presentation on the role of the ODBE noting that 2020 had been nothing like expected or planned for. Synod duly took note of the paper.

The following item from Cowley Deanery followed a previous Synod meeting expressing both the concern over significant levels of inequality existing across the Diocese of the provision of the most basic facilities such as running water. The advance paper listed the survey response from urban and rural churches. Recommendations were made for further work to establish priorities.

Following a summary presentation, Synod took note of the Annual Reports of the Diocesan Boards, Councils and Committees 2019.

Synod finally bade Farewell to Bishop Colin Fletcher who is retiring having served as Bishop of Dorchester (and on more than one occasion acting Diocesan Bishop) for 22 years.

LJT