

Oxford Diocesan Synod – 15th June 2019.

The Diocesan Synod met at the Unipart Conference Centre, Cowley. Opening introduction and worship was led by the Cowley Deanery. Cowley, home to the Mini, is also one of the most socially deprived and needy areas in the Diocese, and some of the statistics informed the intercessions.

Presidential Address

Steven Croft's Presidential Address set out to explore progress in the development of the Common Vision of being a Christlike Church for the sake of the world. The theme of the address was based around the call of the Disciples in Luke 5. Jesus commanded Simon Peter "to put out into deep water". Peter response was to point out that they had laboured all night long – but "if you say so" we will let down the nets. The result was a huge catch.

Common vision is when we get a fresh vision of Christ and his call, it is not about what the Bishop or Diocese is asking. There will be diversity in the ways it will unfold, just as there are difference gifts of the Spirit.

Packs of information were made available for each Deanery. This includes launch of the £ 1 million development fund and a Parish Planning Tool. Common Vision information is also available on the Diocese Website. <https://www.oxford.anglican.org/mission-ministry/towards-a-common-vision/>

The address was followed by a time of Questions and Answers.

AGM of Oxford Diocesan Board of Finance

The main item was the Draft Budget for 2020. Basis includes a 2% rise in clergy stipend, and support of curates in training. This then leads to the (ever contentious) allocation by Deanery. For Amersham this is proposed to be a 2.29% rise over 2019. (Reading is 4%). Synod duly "took note" of the Budget set out in paper ODS 19.07.

Oxford Diocese Chancellor

Synod welcomed Judge David Hodge QC who has been appointed the new Chancellor of the Diocese of Oxford, in place of the Reverend and Worshipful Alexander McGregor, following his appointment as Head of the Legal Office of the Church of England.

Digital Evangelism and the Use of Social Media

Adrian Harris, Head of Digital Communication, works with a team of 6 whose aim is to use the digital resources in the service of the Kingdom in the areas of Evangelism, Discipleship and the Common Good. The main Church of England website has been overhauled to be more "Audience and Image Led" <https://www.churchofengland.org/>. The A Church Near You (ACNY) website <https://www.achurchnearyou.com/>, which originated in Oxford Diocese, has also been developed. Usage shows that this is a major way of finding out about Christmas Services. This site was also well used for access to Lenten reflections. Amazon's Alexa was asked 75,000 questions related to the Christian Faith, and the appropriate responses have been developed built in to meet those exploring faith. A similar Google platform is being developed.

Annual Reports 2018

Synod took note of the Annual Reports of various committees.

<https://www.oxford.anglican.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/ODS-19.08-Synod-Reports-2018-FINAL.pdf>

Annual Report and Accounts of the Oxford Diocesan Board of Education

Tony Wilson, introduced himself as the Diocesan Director of Education. He noted that some 283 church schools serve 60,000 children in the Diocese. New challenges are arising continually with increasing concern about mental health issues. There is a continuing need for church members to serve in Schools.

Synod took note of the paper ODC 19.09

Diocesan Secretary

Retiring Diocesan Secretary reflected on her time of serving over several years working with three successive Diocesan Bishops. Many challenges and new issues had arisen.

LJT

16/6/19

Copies of the various Synod Papers and presentations are or will be available on the Diocesan Website. <https://www.oxford.anglican.org/>