

Notes from Oxford Diocesan Synod 9th March 2024 at Holy Trinity Hazlemere

Oxford Diocesan Synod met on Saturday 9th March.

The for Diocesan Synod is at:

<https://d3hgrrlq6yacptf.cloudfront.net/61f2fd86f0ee5/content/pages/documents/diocesan-synod-march-2024-agenda.pdf> .

The following represents a summary of the major points covered prior to release of the formal minutes.

Item 5 Presidential Address and Item 10 Youth Strategy

By far the largest item on the Agenda was the Diocesan Youth Strategy. Bishop Steven Croft used as his presidential address the presentation “Putting Children, Young People and Families at the centre of a more Christ like church”

<https://d3hgrrlq6yacptf.cloudfront.net/61f2fd86f0ee5/content/pages/documents/diocesan-synod-cyp-strategy-slides.pdf> . The presentation reflects on where the church is in reaching young people, and to ask a series of questions for Deaneries and Parishes. The Diocesan vision is “To play our part in the national vision to double engagement with children and young people across the Church of England by 2030”.

Synod had been provided, as a pre-read, the paper “Sharing God's love with children and young people: transforming our engagement and recommitting to our Diocesan strategy”

<https://d3hgrrlq6yacptf.cloudfront.net/61f2fd86f0ee5/content/pages/documents/ods-24-01-youth-strategy.pdf> This paper was formally presented and discussed in Agenda Item 10. Following an amendment (highlighted) Synod duly approved the following statement.

*‘That this Synod endorses the need to significantly increase our engagement with children, young people, families and schools building on Disciples Together, **and to share the good news of Jesus Christ**, and calls on every deanery and benefice in 2024 to develop plans and partnerships for growth’*

Item 2 Minutes.

It was noted that elections to Diocesan Synod will take place this year for a further triennium.

Item 4 – Questions.

Four questions were tabled to Synod and written responses were provided in advance, with the opportunity to follow up at Synod.

The first question was whether there was any data on finding affordable accommodation for youth workers and whether this was a barrier to recruitment. To which the answer was mostly yes.

The second question related to the appointment of new area bishops (it being noted that Bishop Olivia will retire, and that the untimely death of Bishop Alan has meant an acceleration of that appointment). Bishop Steven’s written and verbal response was that he was open to the appointment of someone holding a traditional view and opposed to use of Prayers of Love and Faith. +Steven gave a more qualified yes around the appointment of a person who considers that blessing of same sex couples was a first order issue noting that any candidate will have to offer ministry across a diverse episcopal area.

The Third Question (tabled by Rev’d Jeremy Moodey – Amersham Deanery Tag for General Synod) related to whether a candidate holding a traditional view of marriage could be considered for

appointment as LGBTQIA+ chaplain. The written response was that anyone is welcome to apply, but needs to embody best practice and be open and transparent on their views.

The fourth question, also tabled by Jeremy Moodey related to potential financial distress of clergy relating to the change to Universal Credit. The response indicated that this matter was being handled at both a national and diocesan level. Clergy are invited to respond to the Archdeacons so that the scale of impacts can be assessed.

Item 6 Racial Justice Disability and Deaf Issues

A series of presentations were made by the Diocesan Advisers in these areas. A particular appeal was made for local disability representatives in support of Rev Katie Tupling.

Item 9 Financial

Sir Hector Sants, Chair of the Board of Finance, gave a verbal update on the financial out-turn for the year ended 31st December 2023. A surplus had been realised compared to a deficit budget thanks to a 94.5% realisation of parish Share, and a higher than expected number of vacancies. (Budget is based on 30 vacancies across the whole diocese and there are 30 in Bucks Archdeaconry alone).

Lawrence Tebboth
Amersham Deanery Lay Chair
12/3/24