

Report on the Diocesan Synod meeting held via Zoom on 10th June 2023

This report is based on the [summary of the meeting posted on the Diocesan website](#). It has been written to help you to feed back relevant material to your respective PCC's.

Presidential Address

In his [Presidential Address](#), the Bishop of Oxford spoke of the concerns about AI voiced by leading figures in the tech industry warning of the need to regulate both research and deployment of AI. He said that there is much to be done to support parents and children in responsible approaches to the internet. Drawing on his work in the House of Lords to improve the Online Safety Bill, along with some alarming statistics about material available to children online, his address set out the challenges the next generations will face, the need to monitor and limit access to social media and the resources of the Christian faith to establish and build a vital core of Christian identity rooted in God the Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Board of Education (ODBE)

Members heard from the Bishop of Buckingham and Chair of the Board of Education, the Rt Revd Dr Alan Wilson, and Mr Tony Wilson, Diocesan Director of Education. Bishop Alan began with a summary of the many issues facing our schools following the pandemic and the pressures arising from the cost-of-living crisis, and also from the way that schools are currently inspected under Ofsted. On the plus side he reported that in the present secretary of state for education we finally have somebody who is actually interested in education! He said that the majority of schools across the country are already academised. About a third of ours in the diocese are. Also that over half of ODBE's funding is self generated and not reliant on parish share. Tony's presentation looked back on a busy year with wide use of the [Space Makers contemplative toolkit](#), and that 280 schools are now on a service level agreement with ODBE. 93% of all church schools in the diocese are currently categorised as outstanding or good by Ofsted. The national average is 86%. 28% of the number of foundation governors are in vacancy and he encouraged us to find people willing to step into this important role.

Children, Young People and Schools

Work with children, young people and schools is a key area of discipleship and diocesan focus and puts children, young people and families at the centre of a more christ-like church. There are a number of resources available:

- Disciples Together - a resource that understands the specific needs of a rural church.
- Chaplaincy: this is a great gift to offer a school and where this is happening there is much fruit. But we need more chaplains.
- Space Makers for Families - commended and suggested that this could be given as a gift to members of our church families.
- Diocesan Discipleship Enablers: the Diocese has three and they are dedicated to supporting children, youth and families in schools, at home and in church. They are there to answer any questions and to help you in your specific context.

These resources can be accessed [here](#).

Finance

Sir Hector Sants, Chair of the Oxford Diocesan Board of Finance (ODBF) presented the draft 2024 budget. He commented that 2023 financial performance is broadly on budget.

This is thanks to the fact that our parish share recovery rate is around 95%, despite the very difficult economic circumstances that many are facing.

Annual Review

The Annual Review was introduced and taken note of. It can be accessed [here](#).

Christ Church Governance Review

Bishop Steven introduced the [Christ Church Oxford governance review paper](#) and outlined the process ahead for the group considering the recommendations. There will be reform to the leadership structure, separation of certain roles, and the formation of a governing council within the governing body. Some changes are internal and might be achieved quite quickly but some will demand changes to the statutes which will require external approval and probably at Privy Council level and this will take time, maybe even years to enact.

Safeguarding Panel Annual Review

A report from the Independent Safeguarding Panel is produced annually and shared with Synod members. [The latest report](#) notes that the diocese has invested so that each episcopal area now has its own caseworker, with the Head of Safeguarding adding a Diocesan strategic perspective. The new structure has reduced the amount of outstanding casework in the diocese.

Stephanie Summerell July 2023

For Information

Members of the Oxford Diocesan Synod from the Amersham Deanery

Representing the House of Laity:

Andrew Bell (Gerrards Cross and Fulmer - Ex-Officio as a member of General Synod) Julie

Dziegiel (Great Chesham - Ex-Officio as a member of General Synod)

Lawrence Tebboth (Gerrards Cross and Fulmer and also Lay Chair of Amersham Deanery)

Edward Weiss (Beaconsfield)

Michael Hardman (Great Chesham)

Stephanie Summerell (Gerrards Cross and Fulmer)

Peter Flory (Chesham Bois)

There is one vacancy

Representing the House of Clergy:

Revd Peggy Ludlow (Chenies Benefice and also Co Area Dean) Revd Canon Edward

Bowes-Smith (Great Chesham)

There is one vacancy