

## Report on the Diocesan Synod held via Zoom on 13th June 2020

Please note this was an informal meeting with no official business conducted

The papers for our meetings and, in due course minutes as well, are posted on the Diocesan website: <https://www.oxford.anglican.org/who-we-are/governance/diocesan-synod/>

This report aims to draw out those points which are most pertinent to feed back to members of the Deanery Synod who in turn can feed back to their respective PCC's.

### **Bishop Steven's Address**

Bishop Steven was very thankful, and spoke of an extraordinary response by the Church during the pandemic continuing to be salt and light in our communities and deepening pastoral ministry. He recognised that circumstances have been challenging financially but sees God providing in amazing ways. He reminded us that we are only part of the way through the crisis and that much more is to come; there will be a legacy of accumulated grief, fear and anxiety, children's disrupted education, and a devastated economy. He alluded to the fact that there will be numerous decisions to make and how we navigate emerging from lockdown will be key. He drew a parallel with the end of WWII in 1945 asking will there be a move as there was then to redefine the world on the basis of justice and peace - christian principles.

He said life will be unpredictable and there is no map for the future, but that in God's promises and the Holy Spirit we have a true north, a compass to follow. There have been benefits, not least of all for the environment. People have been living more simply. Will that continue? Interest from non Christians in the christian faith and hunger to find out more has been very evident. He said we need to make plans now if we are going to be able to respond in the autumn. However he warned us not to rush either: emerging from lockdown will be slower and more complicated than entry into it, and we need to reflect on lessons learnt. A new tool based on the 5 Marks of Mission gives an opportunity to reflect on how the future might look. He drew a tentative conclusion that where the church is doing well, it is stripped back to simply love of God and of neighbour.

### **Covid-19 Update**

Archdeacon Judy (Dorchester) gave a summary of the major themes and concerns around managing lockdown that had been voiced. Latterly they centred mainly on emerging and recovery from lockdown. The question of how to manage re-opening churches is an obvious one. In reality whether or not churches do open will depend on individual circumstances and some will not be able to. There is some concern about managing the backlog of weddings and memorial services, how to manage a hybrid version of church during the time that full congregations will be unable to meet, the question of tiredness, and worry about the future sustainability of some parishes facing a worrying future financially. There were stories of imaginative responses of some churches, e.g. delivering craft bags to families with children, and themed bags for older teens, leaving candles on church steps for people to light, and plans for meeting outside to worship including a picnic eucharist.

### **Financial Overview**

The overall position with regard to the Diocesan finances is much better than it might have been or was imagined, giving grounds for hope despite inevitable challenges ahead.

### **Disciples Together - a Report on Church in Relation to Children, Young People and Families**

The Diocesan Youth Adviser, Ian Macdonald and the Children's & Families Ministry Adviser for the Oxford Diocese, Yvonne Morris presented this new report. It is the result of many months of work focusing on understanding the cultural shifts that have happened in the world around us and the changes we need to put in place to connect young people with the church today. The first section details child and youth engagement as it stands today and what the challenges and opportunities are. It identifies a deepening disconnect between the Church and children, young people and families. The second section identifies five significant shifts as necessary to effectively engage with and minister to them. The first move is towards an inter-generational church. Of particular importance now, is communicating these cultural changes and supporting parishes, benefices and deaneries

to engage afresh with children, young people and families. We are therefore being asked to invite our PCCs to engage with this report, and to make them and the people who work with children aware of key resources available on the youth pages on the Diocesan website, in particular of the dates of webinars coming up soon and a retreat in October.

The youth pages on the Diocesan website can be accessed here: <https://www.oxford.anglican.org/mission-ministry/youthandchildren/young-people/>

Stephanie Summerell

**For Information**, the members of the Oxford Diocesan Synod from the Amersham Deanery are:

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)  
Nigel Edward-Few (Great Chesham)  
Edward Weiss (Beaconsfield)  
Michael Hardman (Great Chesham)  
Stephanie Summerell (Gerrards Cross and Fulmer)  
Revd John Goodman (Chalfont St Peter)  
Revd Canon Tim Harper (Amersham and also Co Area Dean)  
Revd Cassa Messervy (Seer Green and Jordans and also Assistant Area Dean)