

## Report on the Diocesan Synod held via Zoom on 14th November 2020

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.

### **Living in Love and Faith**

Over the last couple of years, the Diocese has been instrumental in opening up a dialogue about the inclusion of and care for LGBTI+ people within the Church, first issuing a pastoral letter in October 2018 called "Clothe Yourselves with Love" and a year later launching a Chaplaincy Service for LGBTI+ people and their families. A few days before the Synod met, the Church of England published the *Living in Love and Faith* set of resources. They aim to help discernment and decision-making about what it means to be holy in a society in which understandings and practices of gender, sexuality and marriage continue to change. Resources include a book, story films and podcasts, and a five session course for small groups. *Living in Love and Faith* marks the start of a period of church-wide learning and engagement that will take place during 2021, after which there will be recommendations made for the future life and mission of the Church. Parishes can expect to see further information from the Diocese about *Living in Love and Faith*, and how we can all contribute to the national feedback process, early in the new year. Meanwhile, every parish is encouraged to visit the [LLF Learning Hub](#) and to begin to plan how they might prioritise these conversations in churches and small groups during Spring/Summer 2021. We were reminded that care and sensitivity is required around this issue and encouraged to clothe ourselves with love and take care with our language as we debate this.

### **Presidential Address "Responding to the 4th Industrial Revolution"**

This focused on the future of work in a technological age. Bishop Steven suggested that the world is facing several challenges, each wider and deeper than the preceding ones. The pandemic is the first. Then comes deepening economic recession, then climate change and then the so-called 4th Industrial Revolution. He said that disease, technology and sustainability are combining to raise sharp questions for the whole world in the coming decade, especially questions of purpose: what are our lives for? What is the place of work within them? Technical innovation and the gig economy are likely to result in fewer people having meaningful work, and more education making increasingly less difference. He argued that the Biblical theology of work is undeveloped for the 21st century and stressed the need to focus on how we ensure good quality, satisfying work for all. Good, purposeful work is a key part of God's vision for human flourishing. This means as a Church and as a Society we need to raise this debate and pay careful attention not just to the quantity but to the quality of jobs which are created. The bishop has drafted a motion for debate at our next Diocesan Synod in February before he takes it to General Synod. His full address, always worth listening to, is available to read here: <https://blogs.oxford.anglican.org/responding-to-the-fourth-industrial-revolution/>

### **The Care and Wellbeing of Ministers and those in Leadership in a Christ-like Church**

This paper which contains links to *Flourishing Together* and the Diocese's new Dignity in Ministry and at Work Policy was introduced by the Bishop of Reading and the Director of Human Resources and Safeguarding. Bishop Olivia said that wellbeing is multi-faceted with some aspects being obvious and some far less so. Also that it is very individual. She said churches should be communities where all are valued from bishops to people contracted to work, through PCC members, churchwardens and all volunteers. The question is how do we create a culture of respect and mutual flourishing in our parishes? This was discussed in break out groups. There are new resources published by the national Church and leadership is being encouraged to use it: she said it is important that this document is given the widest distribution and encouraged active engagement at parish, deanery and diocesan levels.

### **The 2020 Revenue Budget and 2021-23 Projections and Authorisation of Expenditure, and Deanery Apportionment**

John Tattersall presented the budget. In challenging times he was fairly optimistic. He confirmed that no deanery will face an increase in Parish Share. Some reduction has been made in central costs, but not in clergy numbers. The stocks and shares portfolio has recovered. This means we can support mission in parishes and commit £50,000 to the Bishop's Fund and £1 million to support other dioceses who are struggling over the next four years. Some were uneasy about taking such radical action in the midst of the pandemic but the budget was passed.

### **Parents and Children Together (PACT)**

The Chief Executive of PACT, Mrs Jan Fishwick (soon to step down) presented an overview of some of the current work of PACT and some of its projects. It is a thriving charity doing impressive work in adoption and support of women and children who are victims of domestic abuse. It has many links with the Church amongst its trustees. Bishop Steven is its patron and the Diocese gives it a grant. Its HQ is in Reading and it has offices in London and Brighton as well. The lion's share of PACT's work is adoption, for which it has won many awards and been judged by OFSTED as outstanding. PACT has placed 217 children in forever families over the last three years. The adoption support it offers is also significant: it has supported over 500 adoptive families in the same period. Its Alana House in Reading supports at least 200 women a year. BB4K (Bounce Back for Kids) uses therapeutic techniques to support children and the non-perpetrating parent who have been victims of domestic abuse. The Covid pandemic has increased the number of those affected by domestic abuse. A fund-raising team raises about £500,000 a year and many churches donate via collections, for which thanks was given. They always appreciate any support, prayer and/or financial. For further information on the charity please see their website: <https://www.pactcharity.org>

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)