

## Report on the Diocesan Synod meeting held via Zoom on 12th March 2022

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.

Summaries of our meetings and recordings of our Zoom meetings are posted on the diocesan website: <https://www.oxford.anglican.org/who-we-are/governance/diocesan-synod/>

Andrew Bell (Gerrards Cross and Fulmer and General Synod member) had submitted a written question, answered in writing by Bishop Steven. An opportunity for further questions was given, which resulted in several and revealed the opposing views that exist within the diocese about where the church should stand on questions of gender and sexuality. Andrew's question sought to rectify possible misrepresentation of a letter sent by over 2,500 ministers, including a significant number in the diocese concerning the government consultation on "Banning Conversion Therapy" by a statement that had been published by Bishop Gavin and the Diocese.

In his **Presidential Address**, Bishop Steven spoke of the terrible events in Ukraine and said that the sanctions that have been imposed on Russia will be felt here, particularly by the poorest. He said the **church must rise to the challenges of our times**: the pandemic, the rising cost of energy and now conflict.

He is two thirds of the way through a series of **visits to all deaneries**. The purpose of his visits is to spend time with clergy, lay leaders and parishioners to listen to where we are as a Church. *(Note: The bishop is visiting Amersham Deanery on 5th May. For more details see Lawrence Tebboth).* He said he has encountered a church that is 'down but not out'. The arrival of Omicron at Advent has taken its toll. Our capacity as a church is lower. Rebuilding requires a combination of patience and urgency. We have been pruned! In God's grace this is always for a purpose: to continue to bear fruit. He emphasised the need for clergy to take at least 24 hours together off each week, and often two days together.

Revd Tina Molyneux, Head of Discipleship and Social Justice gave a presentation on **discipleship**. [Everyday Faith](#) is a set of resources available on the diocesan website designed to help Christians live out their faith Monday-Saturday and to bring more people to faith. It's for people who have never been to church before and also for Christians who are established in their faith. One resource available is a [Personal Discipleship Plan](#) (PDP). She said the process is quietly transformative: A survey showed that only about 1/3 of Christians felt they live out their faith outside church but this was converted to 100% amongst those who had done a PDP. If you would like to offer this in your church or parish, Tina is available to come and visit. It's tailored to each individual church.

The [Come and See](#) resources on the Diocesan website were designed to alleviate the workload of parishes are geared to those who have never been to church or are just beginning to connect. There were around 1,000 participants in 2021 for Lent and there are over 1,600 this year. Come and See is different to Alpha in that the resources are more flexible: last year they were based on the Creeds and this year on the Lord's Prayer. Unlike Alpha they allow for people to grow deeper in their faith as well as helping people come to faith.

The Bishop gave an update on **Christ Church, Oxford** and the sub-Dean presented the annual report.

[Living in Love and Faith](#): There are 8 advocates for LLF in our Diocese. The advocate for LLF in the Buckingham area reported on the positive feedback received from those who had engaged with the process, but said that the number of those doing so in our diocese was proportionately low. She said it was important to hear from everyone, even those unwilling to engage. The course consists of 6-8 sessions but there is a day course template and also one for a 2½ hour session for youth groups. Pastoral care is available via the diocesan [LGBTI+ chaplaincy service](#) to offer prayerful support of those in our care who might need it. There is a [poster](#) advertising this which she encouraged us to print and display. We spent time in break out rooms to reflect on how we can deepen engagement, on the experiences and insights we each bring to the LLF process, and

our hopes and fears. We were reminded that LLF resources have been developed as an invitation for churches to discuss, learn and explore but also to inform the national conversation on this issue.

Some comments and questions:

The deadline of 30th April for feeding back can not be further extended.

The LLF programme presents material from different perspectives. Some churches are using different material. These do not allow for open discussion and a variety of views.

How do we preserve unity but create the change that some want to see?

How can we be/manage a church with different points of view?

The church is out of step with the culture we seek to serve. LLF seeks to address this.

How can the feedback reflect the views of the whole church given the proportionately small number of responses?

There are other ways to feed back other than via the feedback questionnaire, which is only available to those who have engaged with the resources, e.g. by letter or via a General Synod rep.

It might be a good idea for each church to advertise their course to other churches so that people who wish to participate but would like to retain a degree of anonymity might be able to do so.

Sir Hector Sants, the new Chair of the Board of Finance, gave a verbal update on the **Financial Year End results**. Finances are in a surprisingly healthy state given the circumstances.

**General Synod Update:** Bishop Olivia, Bishop of Reading, gave an update on proceedings from the November 2021 and February 2022 Group of Sessions. An amendment was made that makes it easier for parishes to do the right thing and harder for them to do the wrong thing on the path to achieving net zero. Racial justice was a big agenda item. Awareness of modern slavery was raised: 340 million Christians are persecuted for their faith. 91% of those killed are in Africa (4,700 in total). She spoke of [the Clewer Initiative](#), which is the national network of the Church of England to combat modern slavery. It aims to raise awareness and mobilise the Church and communities to take action against modern slavery, promote victim identification and provide victim care and support.

The [Archbishop of Canterbury's Presidential Address](#) had majored on the message that a society that loses love for God loses the ability to view and love individuals as a whole.

Stephanie Summerell  
18th March 2022

## 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