

Oxford Diocesan Synod Saturday 17th March 2018

A summary of proceedings:

Canon Sue Booy, Vice-President of Synod and Chair of the House of Clergy, welcomed people to Synod, in particular new members and visitors.

OPENING WORSHIP - On behalf of the Woodstock Deanery, The Revd Marcus Green and Revd Canon Adrian Daffern led Synod members in Morning Prayer for Lent. They focussed on the reading from the Beatitudes (Matthew 5.6-8) with time taken for prayer in groups.

The Sisters of the Precious Blood were approached to provide a continuing Prayer Presence through a rota of Sisters who took their Watches in their Chapel, with the Agenda to hand, while Synod was in session. This was to show a support for our work and to be much blessed, with an awareness of God's guidance in any decision-making and planning.

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS: Bishop Steven's opening words were....

"The World has woken up to the dangers of single use plastic" referring to Sir David Attenborough's interview by the Daily Mirror a few weeks ago, addressing the response to Blue Planet 2's study of the oceans. Bishop Steven reflected on how during his year of listening he noted consistently across the Diocese the urgency of environmental care, the call to tend creation. An essential mark of what he described as God's mission to strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth. He noted how many churches across the diocese were already engaged in such matters and leading by example.

The full text of Bishop Steven's address "Tending Creation" can be found at: <https://blogs.oxford.anglican.org/tending-creation/>

MINUTES of the meeting held on Saturday 18th November 2017 were approved and later signed by Bishop Steven.

QUESTIONS: ONE question had been received under Standing Order 70 from Mr Gavin Oldham, General Synod Member (and also Wendover Deanery), asking:

"What proportion of parishes in the Diocese of Oxford actively maintain their page on the Church of England website 'A Church Near You', and will the Diocese actively encourage those and other parishes to include their community action activities (i.e. Food Bank, Street Pastors, Debt Counselling, etc..) on the site: acknowledging that these activities are the Church's living witness to 'Love your neighbour as yourself', and therefore particularly appropriate in our mission to those who have little knowledge of, and may see no relevance for, the Christian faith in their lives?"

The Diocesan Secretary responded, as Secretary of Synod noting that presently there isn't the facility to analyse how recently or frequently parishes update 'A Church Near You', though this is something the national team are working on.

'A Church Near You' was originally developed in the Diocese of Oxford and we're keen to see it thrive in its new form. As more parishes begin to update their profiles we will encourage them to include information such as social justice campaigns and community action. We are also keen to showcase highly populated and engaging pages in diocesan publications such as *the Door* and our social media channels.

A fuller response can be found on the diocesan website <https://www.oxford.anglican.org/who-we-are/governance/diocesan-synod/>

DIOCESAN SYNOD AMENDED MOTION TO THE ENVIRONMENTAL DEBATE:

At a meeting of Diocesan Synod in November 2014 a Motion initiated by Bracknell Deanery was debated and passed. It has since been waiting in a queue to be brought to the General Synod for further debate. The Motion was essentially concerned with disinvestment from all oil and coal companies asking for action to act quickly on climate change issues.

Given that the climate change and fossil fuel situation has changed markedly since 2014, The Revd Darrell Hannah, one of the proposers of the original 2014 Motion led, with the support of Bishop's Council, a debate on an Amendment that was considered to be more relevant to the current situation.

Mr Gavin Oldham, General Synod member and Church Commissioner, presented an amendment to the new Motion for debate asking for members support by amending clause (C)(i), which would allow for an escalating formal process of engagement before closing the door on companies via disinvestment.

A formal debate took place which led to a vote. Mr Oldham's amendment was defeated and subsequently the Motion was carried. This will now be taken back to General Synod as an amendment to the 2014 Motion. Both papers outlining the full proposals can be found on the diocesan website at <https://www.oxford.anglican.org/who-we-are/governance/diocesan-synod/>

A COMMON VISION Bishop Steven gave an update on the diocesan strategy work that is evolving. Using a slide presentation, he shared how there was an opportunity to consider how the Synod's work in the new triennium could reflect the call to be a more contemplative, compassionate and courageous Church, noting 7 key focus areas being explored by the working groups. He noted that in the year 2047 the Diocese of Oxford would be 500 years old and reflected on the significant milestones that had shaped the diocese over the years and how people of future generations might perceive our legacy. Full slides can be found at <https://www.oxford.anglican.org/who-we-are/governance/diocesan-synod/>

DIOCESAN SYNOD – FUTURE MEETINGS: Bishop Steven gave an introduction to the future Diocesan Synod Triennium and our hopes and expectations of how the Synod would work, particularly in light of the evolving strategy for the diocese. This would include attracting a new membership and also looking at a more suitable venue in terms of delivering effectively working in groups. Canon Sue Booy's hoped that Synod members present would take the message back to proclaim its good work, noting that some parishes (and some deaneries) have a sceptical view of what a Diocesan Synod does and its effectiveness. It was hoped a positive message would be cascaded down to grass roots level to encourage a better understanding of the influence that, for instance, a Deanery Synod Motion could have. She noted that Judith Scott would not be standing as Vice-Chair and Chair of the House of Laity this time so there was another important position to be filled. There are a number of key decisions to take forward to the next triennium and members were asked to consider prayerfully and thoughtfully whether to stand for re-election.

CHANGES TO CONSTITUTIONS: The Synod was presented with a number of revisions to constitutions which were approved. This included the Partnership in World Mission, Diocesan Advisory Committee and changes to Diocesan Synod Standing Orders, all making changes to enable more effective working.

DIOCESAN SYNOD ELECTIONS 2018: In readiness for the elections in Summer 2018, members considered the paper 'Elected Representation from Deaneries on Diocesan Synod, 2018-21', outlining the numbers of places as determined by electoral roll figures across each deanery. Church Representation Rules also require the Synod to determine whether elections should be conducted by the first past the post system or by single transferrable vote (as used for elections of the General Synod). The Synod approved the Scheme presented and the recommendation to use the first-past-the-post system.

ANNUAL REPORT AND ACCOUNTS – CHRIST CHURCH CATHEDRAL: The Sub-Dean of Christ Church, the Revd Canon Edmund Newey, gave an overview of the year's activities noting that the report had once again been superseded by events due to the difference in the year end reporting timescale, this being based on an academic year compared to the Diocesan calendar year-end. He noted that the cathedral continues to thrive and delivered a presentation to include:

Past: highlights from Annual Report: ministry among younger people (Oxford Brookes University Christian Union Carol Service, Calais Jungle; expanding Education volunteer team);

Present: Volunteers, staff changes, website with sermon texts and recordings, new lighting project; and

Future: Retirement of Professor Stephen Darlington, cathedral organist and Director of Music, and the appointment of Steven Grahl who will join the team in September 2018. Other events include Summer Lectures on *Christian Ethics: Today's Issues*, Remembrance projects - *Poppy Field* and *Henry V*. Art and Awareness: A Showcase in Solidarity with Refugees (Christ Church Cathedral is hosting an evening of performance and discussion by refugees and activists to raise money for [Help Refugees](#), following a group from college volunteering at the Calais 'Jungle' in 2016).

More information of the cathedral work can be viewed on their website: www.chch.ox.ac.uk/cathedral

FINANCIAL UPDATE: The Revd John Tattersall, Chair of the Diocesan Board of Finance, gave a verbal update on the year ended 31st December 2017, noting that currently this was subject to audit. The anticipated surplus of £268k would be held in diocesan funds and would be earmarked for future funding commitments for the evolving diocesan strategy. Savings were due primarily to a higher glebe investment income and underspend on the Mission budget largely due to posts not being filled during the year. More information will be provided in June when the financial reports come to Synod.

97% of the Parish Share requested was contributed by parishes and thanks were given to all those who helped achieve this in an increasingly difficult financial climate for churches throughout the diocese.

MATTERS FROM GENERAL SYNOD: Mrs Judith Scott introduced The Revd Frog Orr-Ewing, a newly elected General Synod representative for the Diocese of Oxford, replacing the Revd Kate Stacey. He gave an insight from a new member's perspective on the February Group of Sessions. Noting that his expectations had not been met in all areas he paid tribute to the very important business the Synod had on its current and future agenda. He had been warmly welcomed by fellow members. Following on Mr Gavin Oldham, one of General Synod's longest serving members representing the Diocese of Oxford, gave a snapshot of some of the other historical and current business: Some of the wider concerns at February Group of Sessions had been around valuing people with Down's Syndrome and a debate on Food Wastage.

Gavin's slides are available on the Diocesan Website for further reading at: <https://www.oxford.anglican.org/who-we-are/governance/diocesan-synod/> Both the full agenda and a summary of Business Done can be viewed at:

<https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2018-01/GS%202078%20-%20Agenda%20%28February%202018%29.pdf>

<https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2018-02/Business%20Done%20-%20February%202018.pdf>

Full agenda and report on proceedings can be obtained from: <https://www.churchofengland.org/about-us/structure/general-synod.aspx>

REFLECTION Mrs Maureen Lomas, Mursley Deanery, gave a reflection on the morning's business.

CLOSING PRAYERS were led by the Bishop of Reading, The Rt. Revd Andrew Proud.