



**OXFORD DIOCESAN SYNOD**

**and**

**BOARD OF FINANCE**

**at St Andrew's Church, Hatters Lane, High Wycombe**

**MINUTES**

**Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> November 2015**

*All papers referred to in these minutes are available online at*

[www.oxford.anglican.org/diocesansynod](http://www.oxford.anglican.org/diocesansynod)

Before the main meeting of the Diocesan Synod, members met for elections. The Revd John Tattersall was re-elected as Chair of the Oxford Diocesan Board of Finance (ODBF) and Mr Michael Hardman was re-elected as Vice Chair.

The Houses of Clergy and Laity met separately in order to elect Chairs of their respective houses. Judith Scott was elected as Chair of the House of Laity (and thereby also Vice-Chair of the Diocesan Synod) and the Revd Canon Sue Booy was elected Chair of the House of Clergy (and thereby also Vice-Chair of the Diocesan Synod).

### **1. OPENING WORSHIP**

On behalf of the Amersham Deanery, the Revd Camilla Walton led synod members in a period of 'Dwelling in the world' based around Philippians 1:27 to 2: 1-10.

### **2. NOTICES AND WELCOME**

The Bishop of Dorchester welcomed the new synod, and especially newcomers. He indicated that there remained some vacancies on the boards and committees of the Synod, and said that there would be a second round of elections. Nomination forms were available.

### **3. INTRODUCTION TO THE NEW GENERAL SYNOD MEMBERS**

The Bishop of Dorchester welcomed the recently elected General Synod members. They are: the Revd Samuel Allberry, the Revd Dr Andrew Atherstone, the Revd Jonathan Beswick, the Revd Canon Susan Booy, the Revd Prof Mark Chapman, The Revd Canon Charlie Cleverly; The Ven. Karen Gorham, the Revd Canon Rosie Harper, the Revd Kate Stacey; the Rt Hon Canon Sir Tony Baldry, Dr Andrew Bell. Mr Graham Caskie, Miss Prudence Dailey, Mrs Julie Dziegiel, Mr Gavin Oldham, Ms Jayne Ozanne, Mrs Kathryn Winrow.

### **4. PROMULGATION OF AMENDING CANON No 35**

Amending Canon No. 35 was promulgated.

### **5. PROMULGATION OF A NEW ACT OF CONVOCATION RELATED TO THE GUIDELINES FOR THE PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT OF THE CLERGY**

The Act of Convocation was promulgated. The Bishop of Dorchester noted that the new guidelines had been sent to all clergy in September 2015.

### **6. PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS**

The Bishop of Dorchester gave a Presidential Address which is available in full on the diocesan website ([www.oxford.anglican.org/diocesansynod](http://www.oxford.anglican.org/diocesansynod)).

The Bishop thanked the synod for their willingness to stand for membership. He also thanked the General Synod members for their willingness to serve in this way, which entailed being a key link between the two bodies, and also with the deanery synods. He encouraged the new members to engage in all matters, not just those that were of particular personal interest. He also thanked all those who had helped the elections run smoothly.

This time last year, when preparing his message in the diocesan calendar, Bishop Colin said that he wrote about welcoming our new Bishop of Oxford. It had been an intense disappointment not to welcome the new bishop as hoped. However the process was now in train again. Shortlisting would take place in February 2016 and interview in early March. We expect to welcome the new bishop around October 2016. He thanked the members of the Bishop's Staff for their leadership in the interim.

Living Faith continued to provide a good framework for mission and growth in the Diocese, he said. The last Synod had agreed that it should continue for two or three years, but when the new bishop arrived, it might be time to develop in some new directions. At the heard of any development would remain the central "Sustaining the Sacred Centre" strand. There were in fact many initiatives relating to prayer springing up around the diocese, often lay led.

Other developments included the Archdeaconry Mission Action Plans (to be presented later). One aspect of this was the response to the needs of our new housing developments. Other initiatives included Messy Churches, Fresh Expressions and the pilot of Partnership for Missional Church in the Reading Area. In that context Bishop Colin welcomed the recent appointment of Andrew Anderson-Gear as our new Director of Mission. His role included ministry, which encompassed the work around discipleship and vocations. The diocese was investing in this area as part of a response to the national Reform and Renewal agenda.

One continuing growth area was the Education Team and the Oxford Diocesan Schools Trust. The Diocese of Oxford was one of the few that was really responding to the unparalleled opportunities in the field.

More than 50 people had expressed an interest in taking part in the Shared Conversations on Sexuality. As a result, he was exploring the possibility of organising another weekend exclusively for people from this diocese, to provide a critical mass of people who have been enabled to listen both to scripture, and tradition, and reason, and each other.

There were a host of other good things to mention of life in the diocese. But he was aware, too, that there were tough things, too: tight finances, aging congregations, shrinking numbers in some places. There were difficulties in wider society, too. These things have to be faced realistically, but it would be a mistake to focus exclusively on difficulties.

"My only plea is that we don't leave God out of the picture," he said. No institution had a divine right to continue to exist, but "God has a way of doing things that surprise us...May we, in the Synod, be aware of his leading, expect to see him at work, focus on prayer, and continue to go forward into his future."

## **7. MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on Saturday 20 June 2015 were approved and signed.

## **8. QUESTIONS**

Penny Keens had asked a question about the membership of the Crown Nominations Commission:

*The next Bishop of Oxford will be chosen by the Crown Nominations Commission elected from the last Oxford Diocese Vacancy in See Committee, and the last General Synod. Following recent elections two people from Oxford – and possibly others from General Synod – are no longer Synod members. Is it right that they should be representing us in this important work?*

Since there had been a recent election of the General Synod, was it right that the same group of people were still representing the Diocese of Oxford? The Bishop of Dorchester provided a written answer and added that the circumstances were unusual, but that these were the rules. In a supplementary question Mrs Keens said that this was unsatisfactory, and asked whether the General Synod could be requested to see what could be done. The Bishop replied that this process was in train.

## **9 RESOURCING THE MISSION OF THE DIOCESE: PLANNING AND PRIORITIES THROUGH THE ARCHDEACONRIES**

The four Archdeacons gave a presentation about their archdeaconry Mission Action Plans (available online at [www.oxford.anglican.org/atoz/a/](http://www.oxford.anglican.org/atoz/a/)). Their presentation included a DVD with some examples of the way some of the Plans are working out on the ground. This is also available on the website, with the presentation ([www.oxford.anglican.org/diocesansynod](http://www.oxford.anglican.org/diocesansynod)).

The Archdeaconry plans brought together the big picture, said the Archdeacon of Buckingham. "It's about introducing our priorities and sharing our stories." The plans were work in progress, but they allowed for workforce planning, decisions about the deanery share, and enabled deanery and archdeaconry planning. "Our diocese's priorities are to serve the local," she said. "It's about bringing together local mission and local ministry to determine diocesan priorities."

Archdeacon Karen talked about the values of the Buckingham archdeaconry, characterised by mutual support. There were good innovations and a history of thinking strategically, but there were challenges, too, including the large areas of new housing. The Archdeacon of Berkshire described the Berkshire plan as not a plan for revolution, but for a rapidly changing context. "Business as usual won't do," she said. As a result it was becoming necessary to change the way we work, to ensure that people, both lay and ordained, were free to use their gifts and talents for the Gospel. The principles were about "releasing and resourcing" Area Deans and Lay Chairs, rather than giving them jobs. "We need to keep our eyes and ears open to what God is doing," she said. Amongst other initiatives, she mentioned the Berkshire Partnership for Missional Church pilot which is about "enabling us to move into God's promised and preferred future", she said.

The Archdeacon of Dorchester spoke about the challenges of getting to know one another in a new archdeaconry. The Plan, like others, had been worked out in consultation, and was not a "top down" list of things to do. It was more about working out how Bishop, Archdeacon and PDA could best serve the parishes and resource leadership. She talked about the passion in the archdeaconry for working with schools, for rural communities, for pioneer ministry and for making good use of church buildings. The Archdeacon of Oxford said that his archdeaconry was the "hole in the middle" of the diocese and the only predominantly urban archdeaconry. One of the many challenges was the disparity between rich and poor: Oxford was the most expensive city in the country to live in, relative to earnings; at the same time, five out of ten of the poorest parishes in the diocese are in the Oxford archdeaconry. And while a small number of churches were full to bursting, others were struggling. He spoke about two particular initiatives: trying to forge creative partnerships between parishes; and looking to appoint a chaplain at Oxford Brookes University.

After a period of group discussion, the video was shown. Archdeacon Karen concluded by saying that while this was ever evolving, she hoped the presentation and film had helped synod members see some common themes that would feed into budgets in the future. Key themes include:

- Resourcing ministry in areas of new housing
- Investment in the wellbeing of the workforce
- Support for work within our schools
- Lay discipleship, ministry and training
- The encouragement of local leadership
- Stewardship and financial management
- Help with our church buildings
- Support for projects with funerals, the rural church and church planting.

Much was already happening in these key areas, but a diagram showed where the gaps were.

### **10 AN INTRODUCTION TO DIOCESAN FINANCES BY THE CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD OF FINANCE FOLLOWED BY APPROVAL OF 2016 REVENUE BUDGET AND 2017/19 PROJECTIONS, AUTHORISATION OF EXPENDITURE AND DEANERY SHARE APPORTIONMENT ODS15.12**

The Chair of ODBF, the Revd John Tattersall, gave an introduction to diocesan finances, which he said built on his words at the induction evening in September. He also drew the synod's attention to the document "Diocesan finances explained" which had been circulated ahead of the meeting. He wanted to draw members' attention to two points. First, that the process of setting the budget had begun much earlier in the financial year when parameters were set. Second, that the acceptable level of rate increase in the parish share was discussed at the spring consultations with Area Deans, Lay Chairs and Deanery Treasurers, and then presented to Bishop's Council in May. The parish share allocation was again adjusted in the light of comments at the June meeting of diocesan synod. "All of this is reflected in the budget presented today," he said. At this stage comments were welcome but major changes were difficult.

Revd Jenny Ellis (068) asked if any consideration had been given towards investing in social housing. Jayne Ozanne (203) asked whether there was a fairer way of making share allocations by attendance and income. Gavin Oldham (116) asked how many deaneries were in special measures, and whether the numbers were increasing. John Tattersall replied that the ODBF worked within constraints as far as investments were concerned, but indicated that the diocese did seek to be generous in the matter of social housing. Regarding the allocations of share, he said that the matter was complex; the present approach reflected extensive discussions on the best way to moderate application of measures of church attendance and income with allowances for deprivation and 'rurality' and he reminded the synod that it was up to deaneries to make their own allocations between parishes: they could use the diocesan methodology or modify it to reflect local circumstances. He did not know immediately how many deaneries were "recovering deaneries" but assured the synod that there had been no significant change over the last two years.

The Chair went on to present the 2016 budget and to ask for Synod's approval. He pointed out that it was difficult to estimate clergy vacancies accurately, but that these had been adjusted downwards for 2016. The overall increase was 1.25% although some deaneries would be paying more and some

less, within the range of plus 4% to minus 2%, before allowing for changes in stipendiary clergy numbers and fees remitted to the Diocese..

There were a number of questions. Prudence Dailey (114) said that Oxford Deanery would struggle to meet the increase “though no one wants to pay more than we do”, she said. Diana Hasting (176) thanked the Synod for its support of PACT. Members should take “parental pride” in the fact that the organisation was thriving. The Revd Norma Fergusson said that she had been asked by her Area Dean to express the disappointment of the Vale of the White Horse to find themselves with an increase of over 4%. Jim Tucker (129) said that the rise of 5.1% had hit his deanery hard, but it wouldn’t reduce their determination to pay. He was uncertain about the incentive to raise fee income, and about the allocation of support available through Glebe.

John Sykes (127) said that a headline increase of 1.25% was laudable. Stability was the key, however; he was more concerned about unpredictability and surprises than the actual figures. His deanery urged the Bishop’s Council to carry out a review. Michael Waring (185) paid tribute to diocesan staff for their hard work. Everything was looking promising and that deserved acclaim. Hugh Rees(195) said that the latest revision had been issued very late, and that this was problematic. Julie Dziegiel (115) supported the comments about the difficulty of volatility. But she also urged synod members to ensure they understood the diocesan finances so that they could help debunk myths and “support defend our priests” who need pay and pension, housing and training.

The Chair responded to the comments. He said that the treatment of fees was not about incentivisation, but about taking them out of the equation. This had been debated at PBSC and Bishop’s Council. It was the treatment of fees that had pushed some deaneries over the 4% ceiling. He recognised the problem of volatility. There had been some changes since June that reflected corrections, and he apologised for that. He said that he and the Director of Finance would take the comments to heart. He moved the motion:

“That this Synod –

- a Approves and adopts the 2016 budget set out below and in the accompanying papers;
- b Authorises the Standing Committee of the Diocesan Board of Finance to expend in 2016 a sum not exceeding the following net amounts;
- c Requests that such expenditure be financed in part by deanery share apportionments for 2016 based on the figure of £18,431K being net of allowances for rebates and under-collection (Head 6);
- d Notes, in the accompanying papers, the projections of income and expenditure for 2017 to 2019.”

The synod voted in favour of the motion by a clear majority.

## **11. UPDATE ON THE MOVE OF THE DIOCESAN OFFICES**

There was a short presentation on the progress of the move and the new facilities. Rosemary Pearce, Diocesan Secretary, set the context for the move which includes increase in the number within the Education team to provide a very significant investment in school improvement, and the establishment of the Oxford Diocesan Schools Trust. The organisation had considered whether the education team should move into separate premises but it had been agreed that everyone should

stay together. This opened the opportunity to consider working in a different sort of building, in a more interdisciplinary way. It was also felt that DCH was not very accommodating to visitors. "Life is pretty difficult," she said. "The new building enables us to have something that is better for the staff team and better for the diocese as a whole."

David Mason, Director of Glebe and Buildings gave a presentation on the move. (The presentation in full is available online at [www.oxford.anglican.org/diocesansynod](http://www.oxford.anglican.org/diocesansynod)).

The diocesan offices had moved to St Lawrence Vicarage from central Oxford 40 years ago, he said. The move was not a sudden decision: for the last two or three years it had been a struggle to move people around to fit in. The new building was a freehold property. It had better parking, and was better served by public transport. The expectation was that the move would take place around Easter 2016. It was hard to give a figure yet about final costs, because the fit out was out for tender. However, the new building had cost £3.1 million. The target was to deliver the project for £1 million and this should be seen as an investment. DCH was on the market, and there was a lot of interest in it. The other thing to bear in mind was that building on to DCH would have been significantly more expensive.

Questions were asked about whether the synod could meet at the new Church House Oxford, and whether it was accessible to people with disabilities. The answer was that yes, in theory it could; and that yes, the building is fully disabled compliant.

**12 REFLECTION** The Revd Skye Denno gave a reflection on the morning's business.

**13 CLOSING PRAYERS** Closing prayers were led by the Bishop of Dorchester.

#### ATTENDANCE

Three bishops, 52 clergy, 71 members of the House of Laity and one ecumenical visitor indicated their attendance. Apologies for absence were received from:

Dr Andrew Bell

Revd Piers Bickersteth

Mr Robin Birch

Mr Graham Caskie

Revd Dr Liz Carmichael

Revd Prof Mark Chapman

Revd Rod Cosh

Revd Adrian Daffern

Revd Peter Day

Revd Marcus Green

Revd Dr Peter Groves

Revd Mary Harwood

Revd Hannah Higginson

Mrs Elizabeth Jones

Revd Canon Dr Simon Jones

Revd Caroline King

Miss Geraldine Lea

Revd Rachel Lewis

Mr Jamie Macdonald

Revd Darren McFarland

Revd Pam McKellan

Professor John Missenden

Mr Gavin Oldham

The Dean, the Very Revd Prof  
Martyn Percy

Revd Canon John Robertson

Revd Paul Smith

Revd Tim Stead

Revd Andrew Symes

His Honour Christopher Tyrer

Dr Anna Thomas-Betts

Revd David Uffindell

Revd David G Williams

Ms Carol Worthington