



**OXFORD DIOCESAN SYNOD**

**and**

**BOARD OF FINANCE**

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

**MINUTES**

**Saturday 21 March 2015**

*All papers referred to in these minutes are available online at  
[www.oxford.anglican.org/diocesan-synod-papers](http://www.oxford.anglican.org/diocesan-synod-papers)*

## **1. OPENING WORSHIP**

Revd Canon Adrian Daffern led members in a period of 'Dwelling in the word' based around Luke 10:1-12.

## **2. NOTICES AND WELCOME**

Noting the end of Rt Hon Tony Baldry's term as Second Church Estates Commissioner and his retirement from the House of Commons at the forthcoming general election, the Bishop of Dorchester welcomed his appointment as the next Chair of the Church Buildings Council. Members' permission was obtained for Mrs Anne Davey, Revd Mark Poulson and Revd Paul Smith to address the Synod.

## **3. PROCLAMATION OF AMENDING CANON**

Amending Canons Nos. 32 and 33 were proclaimed, following their promulgation and execution at respectively the February 2015 and November 2014 groups of sessions of the General Synod.

## **4. MINUTES**

Minutes of the meeting held on Saturday 15 November 2014 were approved and signed. There were no matters arising.

## **6. QUESTIONS**

Five questions under Standing Order 70 had been received, one each from Revd Mark Bennet, Mr Mark Burton and Revd Canon Chris Sugden, answered respectively by the Bishop of Dorchester, the Chair of the Board of Finance and the Bishop of Buckingham, and two from Revd Jeff West, answered by the Diocesan Registrar. Both questions and answers are available on the diocesan website at [www.oxford.anglican.org/diocesan-synod-papers](http://www.oxford.anglican.org/diocesan-synod-papers). By way of a supplementary question, Revd Mark Bennet asked whether, given the existence of the Simplification Task Group at national level and the potential need for legislative change to meet the rural challenge, the resourcing of the diocesan Rural Strategy Steering Group was sufficient for it to influence the national debate in a timely manner, including, if appropriate, by a motion in the Diocesan Synod? The Bishop of Dorchester replied that the resourcing issue would be examined, but that the Group's real focus was on what could be done at diocesan level. In terms of influencing the national debate (which was already under way, the General Synod having just debated 'Released for Mission: Growing the rural Church' (GS Misc 1092), an excellent report on rural multi-church ministry by its Rural Affairs Group), the key would be to have a good rural voice in the new General Synod to be elected in summer 2015.

## **6. PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS**

The Bishop of Dorchester updated members on progress towards the appointment of a new Bishop of Oxford. As expected, shortlisting by the Crown Nominations Commission would take place in April, with interviews in May; after that, timings were less certain, but with the General Election and summer intervening, an announcement was probably unlikely before September. In the mean time, life went on, and in particular the General Synod had been debating a significant series of reports under the umbrella of the Archbishops' programme for reform and renewal of various aspects of the Church of England's institutional life, set out in General Synod paper GS 1976. The General Synod had approved a number of proposals in the first report, concerning discipleship, which would have clear implications at diocesan level, and discussion of these would be best left until both a new Bishop of Oxford and a new Director of Mission were in post. The others, dealing with 'Resourcing the Future', 'Resourcing Ministerial Education', 'Simplification', 'The Church Commissioners and Intergenerational Equity' and 'Discerning and Nurturing Servant Leaders', were introduced briefly by members of the General Synod (Revd Dr Mark Chapman, Mrs Julie Dziegiel, Dr Anna Thomas-Betts, Revd Canon John Wynburne). The strategy proposed in 'Resourcing Ministerial Education', aimed at a 50% increase in both lay and ordained vocations by 2020, involved resourcing church growth in the present by redirecting historic assets away from the future as well as changing the balance between diocesan and national responsibilities in relation to selection and training; the report's recommendations had not been particularly well received, and the Synod would be returning to debate them in more detail in due course. 'Discerning and Nurturing Servant Leaders' (known as the 'Green report' after the task group's chair, Lord Green),

which had come in for criticism for its perceived lack of connection with theology and the spiritual, attempted to address the missionary imperative presenting the Church by proposing a new approach to selecting and equipping its ordained leaders; again, the Synod would be debating this report further, in this case in July 2015. 'Resourcing the Future' concerned the funds distributed to dioceses by the Church Commissioners, currently on the basis of the 'Darlow formula', which was not well understood and which analysis suggested had a tendency to support decline; instead it was proposed that funding should be split 50:50 between Mission Development Funding in support of poorer dioceses, and Strategic Development Funding targeting projects with strong potential for growth, with a bias to more deprived areas. The report on 'Intergenerational Equity' proposed a change to accepted practice, whereby the Church Commissioners would be asked to release capital in support of the reform and renewal programme, since it was felt that the urgency of the situation facing the Church was such as to call into question the principle of not spending capital. The first report of the Simplification task group proposed a range of changes aimed at unblocking legislative constraints to mission and growth, particularly around common tenure, pastoral reorganisation, use of church buildings and Bishop's Mission Orders. Though the broad thrust of these proposals was welcomed, there was some concern that they were aimed too much at diocesan rather than parish level. Given that they concerned legislation, however, there would be good opportunity to tease out these issues in the course of the Synod's legislative process.

## **7. CHRIST CHURCH CATHEDRAL ANNUAL REPORT**

The Sub-Dean of Christ Church, Revd Canon Edmund Newey, spoke to the Cathedral annual report for the academic year 2013–14 (paper ODS 15.1), highlighting in particular the launch of the Cathedral Music Trust, aimed at establishing a permanent endowment to support the Cathedral's music. Otherwise, beyond the daily run of services, education provision had been expanding, as had hospitality in its broadest sense, with the clergy of the Diocese of Llandaff spending four days at Christ Church, and the cathedral hosting a quiet day for the clergy of Oxford and Cowley deaneries. In response to a question (Revd Canon Chris Sugden) about numbers ordained and commissioned in the cathedral, as well as numbers of regular worshippers and of those baptised and confirmed, the Sub-Dean said that worshipper numbers were very variable, ranging from 400 for some choral eucharists and summer evensongs to more typically 30 or 40 in winter; data on ordinations and licensings he did not have to hand. Revd Canon Toby Wright took the opportunity to thank the Cathedral Chapter warmly for what had been done in the course of the year to change the feel of the relationship between diocese and cathedral very much for the better.

## **8. UPDATE ON WORK OF BOARD OF EDUCATION, INCLUDING CHANGES TO CONSTITUTION**

The Bishop of Buckingham, Chair of the Board of Education, noted the high energy in the education arena with the General Election fast approaching. Whatever the colour of the next government, academisation would very likely increase and be pushed out further to primary schools. It was therefore more than ever important for education, the Board and its 280 schools (representing a community of around 150,000 children, parents and staff) to be understood as central to the mission of the Diocese. The distinctive ethos of Church of England schools, as a gift to the whole community, meant they were not 'faith schools' in the sense popular in the press, and this was an ethos guarded jealously by the Board. Against this background, Mrs Anne Davey, Director of Education, reported that the Board's draft 2014 accounts showed a substantial surplus, with 93% of its schools signed up to service-level agreements as well as around £100,000 in other services being provided by the Board; services had also begun to be offered to other dioceses and to Roman Catholic and community schools. Furthermore, 84% of the Board's schools were rated good or better by Ofsted (above the national average), up from 75% three years earlier (below a then lower national average). As for the Diocese's multi-academy trust, Oxford Diocesan Schools Trust, this was responsible for 11 schools, with four more requests in process, one of which was a community school, joining the Trust not for its Christian ethos but because it was a first-rate set-up.

One real challenge for the Board remained, which was the very high level of foundation governor vacancies (20%). There was therefore an urgent need to find people with an appropriate skill-set and the commitment required. Further academisation of primary schools would present another significant challenge, for the Board's small village schools particularly, and one or more additional

multi-academy trusts might well be needed to support them. Finally, in the context of all these shifts and changes, the Board had been examining itself against the recommendations contained in the report 'A Diocesan Board of Education for the Future', commissioned by the National Society and put together by senior leaders in Church schools in July 2013. The one measure on which the Board as currently constituted had been found to fall short was size, the report recommending smaller boards with greater focus on skills; this was in the context of a move across the whole public sector towards more slimline, skills-focused boards. Scope for reducing the size of the Board of Education was more limited in Oxford than in smaller dioceses, however a proposal had been developed for a 22-member Board, as set out in paper ODS 15.2, including scope for up to 8 members to be co-opted to ensure an appropriate skills mix on the Board overall.

On a show of hands, the motion "That this Synod approve the revised constitution of the Oxford Diocesan Board of Education set out in paper ODS 15.2." was passed by an overwhelming majority.

## **9. DIOCESAN OFFICE ACCOMMODATION**

The Bishop of Dorchester, the Diocesan Secretary and the Chair of the Board of Finance spoke to paper ODS 15.3, setting out the background to the decision taken by Bishop's Council that the Diocese's central services and meeting accommodation should move from its current site in North Hinksey. Pressure on space, brought about over time by the significant expansion in the education team as well as by the employment of specialist staff to cover HR and safeguarding and the move of the Archdeacon of Oxford's office from Christ Church, had meant that Diocesan Church House had become simply too small. A whole series of internal office moves and adjustments had taken place in recent years, however the options had now been exhausted. The existing building also had very inadequate meeting space and an unsatisfactory reception area, as well as increasingly problematic parking, all of which meant that it felt very much like a staff domain rather than a resource for the Diocese as a whole.

The easy answer would have been to move some element of the central operation to a different site, however Bishop's Council had not favoured this approach, and in particular had felt that all departments, education included, should remain in the same building. A search had therefore started for alternative freehold premises in the Oxford area, as a result of which two sites had been identified, one on Cumnor Hill and a second in Kidlington. The Council had determined following extended discussion that the Kidlington premises would be more suitable, and on that basis a due diligence process had started around the proposed purchase, with a view to a move if all went well in the October 2015 half-term. Consultation had also begun with staff, and once the plans became definite, one-to-one meetings would be held to address individual impacts and concerns. As to the financial implications, the Chair of the Board of Finance stated his belief that the move would not impose an additional burden on parish share. The overall budget for the relocation, including the building, fitting out, removals expenses and VAT, would be of the order of £4 million. Of this, £500,000 had been set aside from the 2014 surplus and a further £2.5–3 million might be expected to be realised from the sale of the North Hinksey site, which under changes to planning laws should be eligible for conversion to residential use. His own view was that the remaining £1 million should be funded through a commercial mortgage, costing in the region of £25–40,000 in annual interest payments, to be offset against lower maintenance costs on a modern, purpose-built building, much reduced costs around off-site meeting bookings, and the possibility of sub-letting some space (with a more efficient but larger building, running costs would be much the same).

In discussion (Miss Margaret Drage, Mr Paul Hirons, Mrs Penny Keens, Mrs Jo Saunders, Revd Kate Stacey, Revd Canon Chris Sugden, Dr Anna Thomas-Betts), a number of members spoke in support of the move from their own experience of the meeting space at North Hinksey, however questions were raised around how the move would be perceived in parishes, the impact of redeveloping the existing site on its immediate environs, the relative capacity of the Kidlington building and its accessibility by public transport. It was acknowledged that effective communication of the rationale for the move would be critical: there was clearly a primary responsibility to staff to provide a better working environment, but it was also hoped to have proper training space in addition to much improved meeting rooms. The Kidlington building was 17,400 square feet

(including on-site storage) with 70 parking spaces as against 8,500 square feet and 40 spaces in North Hinksey; this was in the context of a total of around 80 staff currently, with further growth in the Board of Education and Oxford Diocesan Schools Trust expected by September. In terms of public transport, there was a reasonable bus service, and from autumn 2015 the Oxford Parkway train station at Water Eaton would provide a new direct connection to High Wycombe (and on into London), as well as into Oxford and north to Bicester.

## **10. INTER-FAITH RELATIONS IN GLOBAL CONTEXT**

Speaking to paper ODS 15.4, the Archdeacon of Oxford, Chair of the Diocesan Committee for Interfaith Concerns ('ODCIC'), introduced presentations from a number of speakers (see [www.oxford.anglican.org/diocesan-synod-papers](http://www.oxford.anglican.org/diocesan-synod-papers)) addressing various aspects of interfaith relations within and beyond the Diocese, in the context of the current global situation. Revd Mark Poulson, the Archbishop of Canterbury's Secretary for Inter-Religious Affairs and National Inter-Religious Affairs Adviser for the Church of England, spoke of his role via the 'Presence & Engagement' programme ([www.presenceandengagement.org.uk](http://www.presenceandengagement.org.uk)) in resourcing, encouraging and affirming the ministry and mission of the Church of England in its parish-level engagement with other faiths. His own calling to ordained ministry had come out of his experiences as a teacher in a multicultural area of Birmingham, and following theological training he had spent 12 years in parish ministry in Southall, seeing real growth in recent years despite a shrinking white British community. Messy Church had provided a particularly inviting space to which many from the local community came, both Christians and others. Amongst other things his new joint role at Lambeth and Church House Westminster involved leading the 'Presence & Engagement' programme, whose three main thrusts were to work with other faiths on socially transformative projects, to support Church schools in their holistic approach to growing confident, capable and comfortable young people, and to resource 'Presence & Engagement' parishes. The latter were defined as those where 10% or more of the population were of non-Christian faiths: in Oxford diocese, which had 1% of its total population from other faith backgrounds, this now included parishes such as Gerrards Cross and Chesham, as well as many in Reading, Slough and High Wycombe. A video presentation followed from Revd Hugh Ellis and Laurence Smy of All Saints, High Wycombe, about their involvement with interfaith matters in the town and specifically the Council for Christian Muslim Relations. After which Revd Paul Smith from Milton Keynes reported some findings of his research on attitudes of clergy within the Diocese to mixed faith marriage, and Revd Sally Lynch from St Luke's, Maidenhead described interfaith activity and events in her parish, which tended to revolve around food, music and the arts, and sport.

## **11. OXFORD DIOCESAN COMMITTEE FOR INTERFAITH CONCERNS**

Referring back to item 10, the Archdeacon of Oxford, Chair of the Committee for Interfaith Concerns, introduced the rationale for revisions to its constitution, which in particular had been first drafted well before the concept of 'Presence and Engagement' parishes existed. On a show of hands, the motion "That this Synod approve the revised constitution of the Oxford Diocesan Committee for Interfaith Concerns set out in paper ODS 15.5, including the change of name to the 'Committee for Interfaith Relations'." was passed by an overwhelming majority.

## **12. FINANCIAL YEAR-END RESULTS AND SHARE SCHEME UPDATE**

Owing to a number of factors including a higher than expected level of clergy and staff vacancies, a significant under-spend in the Buildings department due to effective cost control, and increased investment income, the Chair of the Diocesan Board of Finance reported that subject to audit, 2014 had generated a much higher than budgeted surplus, of £1.3 million. Of this, Bishop's Council had approved the designation of £500,000 towards the office move, as already reported, £300,000 as additional funding for new communities, and £80,000 for events contributing to the unity of the Diocese, probably to include a Grand Day Out style event early in the new Bishop's time and a further clergy conference. Share receipts had been up on 2013, reflecting a great deal of hard work in parishes, for which warm thanks were offered by the Chair; share requested in 2016 would probably be up overall by 2%, very largely as a result of increases to clergy stipends. As to the work of the Share Review Group, this had been focused in the areas of allowances and the costing of house-for-duty posts. No change was proposed to the fundamental premises of the share scheme, which would continue to be based on an assessment of what deaneries could be

expected to be able to afford, with some regard to the costs of ministry in a given deanery, especially stipendiary and house-for-duty. It had been proposed that in the region of £900,000 should be earmarked for deprivation allowances, for mostly urban areas, and around £600,000 for rural allowances. As for the house-for-duty costing, the broad view of the Group was that this should be revised to reflect the housing allowance payable to clergy under certain circumstances.

### **13. MEETING OF DIOCESAN BOARD OF FINANCE**

The Synod adjourned for a General Meeting of the Oxford Diocesan Board of Finance (see separate minutes). The Synod then reconvened.

### **14. REFLECTION**

The Archdeacon of Dorchester offered reflections on the morning's business based around the passage from Luke used for the opening period of ' Dwelling in the word'. Thanking the Bishop of Dorchester for the extra burdens he had taken on in the vacancy in see, she urged members to continue to be 'present and engaged' in their communities, growing in fellowship with their neighbours. In closing, she hoped that those leaving the Diocese, Michael Beasley to be Bishop of Hertford and Howard Cattermole to be Assistant Diocesan Secretary of Peterborough, would not feel they needed to shake the Oxford dust from their feet.

### **15. CLOSING PRAYERS**

The Bishop of Dorchester thanked Howard Cattermole for his excellent work for the Diocesan Synod, wished him well in his future role and gave him a token of thanks on behalf of the Synod. The Bishop then led the closing prayers.

### ATTENDANCE

2 bishops, 41 members of the house of clergy, 52 members of the house of laity and 2 ecumenical observers indicated their attendance.

Apologies for absence were received from:

Mr Jonathan Anelay	Revd Tim Davis	Professor John Missenden
Mrs Ann Beaton	Mr Chris Emery	Mr Gavin Oldham
Revd Piers Bickersteth	Dr Philip Giddings	Mrs Gillian Ovey
Mr Robin Birch	Mrs Diana Hasting	Mr David Pickup
Revd Canon Sue Booy	Revd Canon David Hodgson	Mr David Pittaway
Mrs Mary Braybrooke	Mr Martin Hughes	Mrs Julia Reece
Revd Ron Bundock	Mr Robert Hurley	Mrs Vicki Russell
Revd Dr Mark Butchers	Revd Canon Dr Simon Jones	Revd Jason St John Nicolle
Revd Derrick Carr	Revd Harry Latham	Revd Tim Stead
Mr Bob Chapman	Miss Geraldine Lea	Mr Jeremy Twynam
Revd Nicholas Cheeseman	Revd Chris Leslie	Revd Derek Witchell
Revd Canon Charlie Cleverly	Mrs Heather Llewellyn	
Miss Prudence Dailey	Revd Darren McFarland	