



OXFORD DIOCESAN SYNOD

and

BOARD OF FINANCE

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

MINUTES

Saturday 15 November 2014

All papers referred to in these minutes are available online at
www.oxford.anglican.org/diocesan-synod-papers

1. OPENING WORSHIP

The Bishop of Reading and Revd Canon Rosie Harper led members in a period of 'Dwelling in the word' based around Luke 10:1–12.

2. NOTICES AND WELCOME

The Bishop of Dorchester welcomed Very Revd Prof. Martyn Percy to his first meeting as Dean of Christ Church. Members' permission was obtained for Revd Canon Michael Beasley and Imam Monawar Hussain to address the Synod.

3. PROCLAMATION OF AMENDING CANON

Amending Canon No. 31 was proclaimed, following its promulgation and execution at the July 2014 group of sessions of the General Synod.

4. PROCLAMATION OF ACT OF SYNOD

The Act of the General Synod Rescinding the Episcopal Ministry Act of Synod 1993 was proclaimed as an Act of Synod.

5. MINUTES

Minutes of the meeting held on Saturday 21 June 2014 were approved and signed. There were no matters arising.

6. QUESTIONS

No questions under Standing Order 70 had been received by the deadline of Friday 7 November 2014.

7. PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

The Bishop of Dorchester gave a presidential address. Starting with thanks on behalf of Bishop John and Wendy Pritchard to all those who had contributed to their farewells, an update was then given on the process to identify the next Bishop of Oxford. Around 230 people had been consulted by the Prime Minister's and Archbishops' Appointments Secretaries, and their thanks too were passed on for the programme put together for their days in the Diocese. The Vacancy in See Committee had since had its last meeting, to finalise the diocesan specification for the new bishop and to elect six representatives (Lord Blair, Revd Canon Sue Booy, Miss Prudence Dailey, the Bishop of Dorchester, Dr Philip Giddings, Dr Anna Thomas-Betts) to serve on the Crown Nominations Commission, the national body responsible for selecting and recommending to the Prime Minister candidates to fill diocesan vacancies. The Commission would meet twice to consider the Oxford vacancy, with a preferred candidate being identified at the second meeting, in mid-May 2015; it would therefore be very unlikely to have someone in post before November 2015. Though the intervening period would not be a time for new initiatives, some decisions would have to be made, and in particular it would be important for appropriate provision to be made in the 2016 budget to give the new Bishop of Oxford scope for new ideas and emphases.

8. STATEMENT ON THE MIDDLE EAST SITUATION

Imam Monawar Hussain gave a presentation on 'A mainstream Islamic response to the beliefs and practices of Islamic State', available on the diocesan website at www.oxford.anglican.org/diocesan-synod-papers. Questions and comment (Mrs Mary Braybrooke, Prof. John Missenden, Mr Gavin Oldham, Revd Canon Chris Sugden) followed on what support non-Muslims could provide to help turn young people away from the Islamic State brand of Islam promoted through social media, whether joint working between the Imam and the Bishop of Dorchester would be possible to build bridges between Christian and Muslim communities within the Diocese, the generally negative reporting of interfaith issues in the media, and how Islam coped with the notion of liberty of conscience. In reply, the Imam said that education was key if young people were to become advocates for mainstream Islam, and training to enable teachers and others working with young people to debate with them in an informed way could be provided through his Oxford Foundation (www.theoxfordfoundation.com), which through its Pupil Empowerment Programme was already working to equip young people with arguments against violent extremism. He would be more than happy to work with the Bishop of Dorchester in the way proposed, and indeed they and other faith

and civic leaders would be taking part on 30 November in a service of readings and silent reflection uniting Oxford's faith communities against religious extremism, under the banner of 'United for Peace'. As to freedom of thought, there could be no compulsion for people to convert: if God had wanted us all to be the same, he would have made us all the same.

9. LIVING FAITH: THE FUTURE

The Bishop of Dorchester and the Director of Mission spoke to paper ODS 14.12, proposing a way forward with *Living Faith*, which had been introduced in 2009 for an initial phase of five years. A variety of research conducted over the course of 2013 and 2014 strongly suggested that what people wanted was more time to explore the resources *Living Faith* offered. Bishop's Council were therefore seeking the Synod's endorsement for a proposal to carry on encouraging engagement with *Living Faith*, to better align diocesan resources with the five priorities, and to embed them more deeply into diocesan systems, structures and practice. This would be for the next two to three years, explicitly to cover the period of the vacancy in see and to give the new Bishop of Oxford breathing space on first appointment. Two points were made in response: Mr Gavin Oldham asked for a particular emphasis on engagement with young people; and Dr Philip Giddings commented that shifting resources (whether money, buildings and/or people) was in practice very difficult in the short term. In reply, the Bishop of Dorchester noted the findings of a recent survey on attitudes to religion which suggested that the current younger generation were much less anti-Church than their parents, and said that the refocusing of resources envisaged was for example in terms of engagement with the 2015 General Election, in other words a refocusing where possible of the workload of diocesan staff. The Synod expressed its general assent to the way forward proposed.

10. AMENDMENTS TO STANDING ORDERS

The Chair of the House of Laity introduced paper ODS 14.13, setting out proposed amendments to Standing Orders 5 and 73 intended to implement membership changes agreed by Bishop's Council to take account of the creation of the fourth archdeaconry. On a show of hands the motion 'That this Synod approves the amendments to Standing Orders set out in the Appendix to paper ODS 14.13.' was passed unanimously. It was agreed to leave for future consideration the possibility of further condensing the drafting of Standing Order 73.

11. ELECTED REPRESENTATION ON DIOCESAN SYNOD, 2015–18

The Chair of the House of Laity introduced paper ODS 14.14, detailing background to the triennial elections to the Diocesan Synod taking place in 2015, and setting out decisions to be made by the Synod in preparation for those elections, concerning the number of members to be elected from each deanery and the method of voting to be used.

Two members (Mr Mark Johnson, Mrs Jo Saunders) spoke in favour of the single transferable vote ('STV') method of voting, as being fairer and more democratic. In response, the Registrar said that though STV was an excellent system in certain contexts, his experience as diocesan presiding officer for elections to the General Synod was that in terms of administration it was complex and time-consuming, and he would not want that burden inflicted on deanery presiding officers if it could be helped. In answer to a question about the nature of the concerns raised following the 2012 elections and referred to in paper ODS 14.14, it was explained that these had had to do with the over-representation of smaller deaneries produced by the requirement that every deanery should have a minimum of two elected lay and two elected clergy representatives, and the under-representation of clergy in deaneries with larger churches. Since both the minimum and the fact that the level of clerical representation was unrelated to electoral roll figures were reflections of the Church Representation Rules as they stood, legislative change would be required to effect change in these areas; however, detailed analysis of the effects of the minimum had in any case revealed that the over-representation was in fact very slight, affecting only a single deanery.

On a show of hands the motion 'That the numbers of members to be elected in 2015 by the houses of laity and clergy of each deanery synod to the respective houses of the Diocesan Synod shall be in accordance with the scheme of representation set out in paper ODS 14.14; and that the voting papers to be used in the elections to the Diocesan Synod in 2015 shall be in the form set out in

section 7 of Appendix 1 to the Church Representation Rules, i.e. that the elections be conducted by the first-past-the-post system.' was passed with four votes against and all others in favour.

12. PRIVATE MEMBER'S MOTION: DISINVESTMENT FROM FOSSIL FUEL COMPANIES

Debate was introduced by Revd Dr Darrell Hannah (proposer) and Revd Hugh Lee (seconder). Referring to paper ODS 14.15A setting out the arguments for disinvestment as they saw them, Dr Hannah noted that since that paper had been written, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change had published a report urging that at least 80% of the world's electricity needed to come from renewable sources by 2050, when currently only around 30% did. This added yet further urgency to the issues under discussion. However, despite major organisations including Stanford and Glasgow universities, the World Council of Churches and the Rockefeller Brothers' Fund committing to disinvestment, fossil-fuel companies were simply not getting the message, and indeed were continuing to expend billions of dollars in the search for untapped reserves, increasingly in expensive, low-yield fields such as tar sands, deep sea and Arctic projects. The time had therefore come to move on from a policy of engagement, aimed at persuading companies to change their ways by shareholder action, and to begin a programme of phased disinvestment. A common response to the call to boycott Apartheid South Africa had been that it would render Western nations powerless over the country's future; as it turned out the opposite proved to be true, and far from seceding influence, global disengagement served to convince most South Africans that the time had come for change. With its influence as the established Church, the Church of England was in a position to act prophetically on the matter of fossil fuels, but if it was to do so it would need to act fast if it was not to become merely a follower of others. Revd Hugh Lee added that, having worked as an economist for 40 years, and on climate change for 20, he wanted fossil-fuel companies to be part of the solution to climate change and to diversify significantly into renewables. What was being advocated was not a boycott of such companies, but disinvestment, and even if the result of this was to lower investment returns, this would be only right when the poorest countries of the world were already suffering from the effects of climate change.

In debate (Mr Mark Johnson, Mr James Macnamara, Dr Anna Thomas-Betts), a range of diverging views on the issues were expressed: one member spoke passionately against the idea of a moral case for disinvestment, arguing that as an investor the Diocesan Board of Finance needed to put its beneficiaries first rather than any 'warm feelings' about what might be desirable; another equally strongly in favour of the motion, referring to the need to look after the wider environment and not just ourselves; a third in favour of keeping climate change and justice issues at the forefront of the Church's thinking, but against what was seen as the simplistic terms of the motion under debate, the timing of which was all wrong when the Ethical Investment Advisory Group's review of ethical investment policy was in the pipeline. As context, Revd Tim Stead reported that Cowley deanery had recently passed by an overwhelming majority a stronger motion with strict disinvestment timescales for companies not demonstrably responding seriously to the issues.

Revd John Tattersall, as Chair of the Diocesan Board of Finance, spoke to paper ODS 14.15B setting out a rationale for amendments removing timescales from the motion. His view was that engagement was working, and that the issues were not as urgent as the proposer and seconder were suggesting: as a prudent steward, the Board and the Church of England's national investing bodies needed to disinvest in a pragmatic, cautious way, not "at the earliest opportunity", which in the terms of the financial markets in practice meant immediately. Responding, Dr Hannah said that the motion as it stood was being misinterpreted: immediate disinvestment without prior research was not what was being called for, but the fact was that the issues were indeed urgent; votes on the motion needed to be votes against the background of the effects of fossil-fuel use on every person on the planet, not just the effects on the Diocese.

In further debate (Mrs Judith Babb, Revd Mark Bennet, Mr Mark Burton, Mrs Julie Dziegiel, Mr Paul Godwin, Mr Martin Hughes, Mr Peter Jeal, Mr Gavin Oldham), a number of members spoke for various reasons against the amendments, one suggesting that embedding the *Living Faith* injunction to make a difference in the world surely involved disinvestment but that the motion as amended would be too woolly; another that it was the unamended motion that gave the right context for a national debate; a third that sometimes when seeking to question the way the world

worked one simply had to get on and do something and not run the risk of Bonhoeffer's "cheap grace" by attaching too much importance to one's own interests. Others spoke in favour of the amendments as producing a less extreme motion, of the need for a motion couched in more positive terms around reinvestment, of the very personal nature of the issues, and in favour of continuing engagement with fossil-fuel companies rather than disinvestment.

Revd John Tattersall moved the following amendments:

"In respect of call '(a)' that the word 'disinvest' be replaced by the words 'examine the possibility of disinvestment' and that the words 'at the earliest opportunity' be deleted;

In respect of call '(b)' that the words 'but not before three years from now' be deleted;

In respect of call '(c)', that the words 'but not before five years from now' be deleted."

On a vote, the amendments were lost, with 38 votes for, 50 against and 5 recorded abstentions.

Summing up, Dr Hannah said that the motion was about disinvestment and reinvestment, and that the vast majority of the world's climate scientists were now convinced of the need for urgent action, and reiterated his call for the Church of England to provide prophetic leadership on this issue while it still had the chance. On a vote, the motion:

"That this Synod:

- (i) recognising the damage being done to the planet through the burning of fossil fuels;
- (ii) aware of the huge reserves held by gas, oil and coal extraction industries;
- (iii) committing itself to taking seriously our Christian responsibility to care for the planet ("the earth is the Lord's");
- (iv) acknowledging the financial responsibilities of the Church's national investing bodies;
- (v) noting that a review of recommended ethical investment policy with regard to climate change has been begun by the Church of England Ethical Investment Advisory Group ('EIAG')

calls on the General Synod of the Church of England to debate a motion in the following form:

'That this Synod:

- (a) urges the National Investing Bodies to disinvest from all coal companies (except those investing in carbon capture) and tar sand companies at the earliest opportunity,
- (b) urges the National Investing Bodies to examine the possibility of disinvestment from oil companies but not before three years from now,
- (c) urges the National Investing Bodies to examine the possibility of disinvestment from natural gas companies but not before five years from now,
- (d) calls on parishes and individual Christians to take steps to encourage the government and political parties to act quickly on climate change."

was carried, with 52 votes for, 37 against and 7 recorded abstentions.

13. APPROVAL OF 2015 REVENUE BUDGET AND 2016/18 PROJECTIONS, AUTHORISATION OF EXPENDITURE AND DEANERY SHARE APPORTIONMENT

The Chair of the Diocesan Board of Finance spoke to paper ODS 14.16. This was a second look at the budget, which incorporated a few small changes following the autumn round of financial consultations in deaneries, but nothing to affect the overall aim of keeping the average share increase below 1.5%. It was stressed that the increase in provision for clergy vacancies and the decrease in the budgeted number of curates in training were simply working assumptions reflecting changes in practice. In addition, for sake of clarity following the result of the vote on the fossil-fuel motion, it was noted that the 2015 budget being proposed was the budget as drafted, without the addition of higher investment fees, which would inevitably affect future years' budgeting.

Three comments were made in discussion (Miss Prudence Dailey, Mrs Julie Dziegiel, Revd Tim Stead): first, members were urged to own the budget and be prepared to defend it so that parishes would continue to give; second, it was explained that because a shift in the balance between urban and rural allowances had hit the poorer areas of Cowley deanery very hard, a number of Cowley members would be voting against the motion or abstaining, although the deanery as a whole would continue to pay its share in full notwithstanding; third, a query was raised around the fact that clergy housing transactions appeared in the budget as if the houses were owned by the DBF. In reply, the Chair accepted that the rural and urban allowances were not perfect, and the Share Review Group were continuing to look at improvements to the system, and explained that financial reporting standards meant that certain costs around clergy housing had to be shown in the financial statements.

The Chair moved the motion:

“That this Synod –

- a) approves and adopts the 2015 budget set out below and in the accompanying papers;
- b) authorises the Standing Committee of the Diocesan Board of Finance to expend in 2015 a sum not exceeding the following net amounts;

BUDGET HEAD	AMOUNT (£000s)	Note
<u>Net Revenue Costs</u>		
1 Parish Ministry	14,274	
2 Diocesan Administration and Finance	420	1
3 Mission in the Diocese	2,586	
4 National Church Responsibilities	991	
5 Transfers to Unrestricted Reserves	6	
Total Net Revenue Costs	<u>18,277</u>	
<u>Funded by</u>		
6 Net Parish Share (see c) below)	18,277	
<u>Capital Costs</u>		
7 General Fund Expenditure	58	
8 Capital Transactions – Houses	-	2
9 Loan Transactions	-	3

- c) requests that such expenditure be financed in part by deanery share apportionments for 2015 based on the figure of £18,277,000 being net of allowances for rebates and under-collection (Head 6);
- d) notes, in the accompanying papers, the projections of income and expenditure for 2016 to 2018.”

Notes

- 1 Gross Administration and Finance £720,000, less income from investments and trusts £300,000, net £420,000.
- 2 2015 budget for Capital Transactions – Houses is a net cash inflow so no vote is required.
- 3 No funds need be voted for loan transactions as these are funded by the CBF.

The motion was passed with three abstentions, one vote against and all others in favour.

14. REFLECTION

Mr Mark Johnson reflected on the morning’s business. It had been a particularly good meeting, with a lot of passion, concern and angst, but all handled in a very Christian way. The morning had shown why standing for election to the Synod was important, and that voting really did matter. His plea was that the passion with which members had spoken about disinvestment would be translated into a passionate way of being as Christians. The Christian faith was not about being comfortable; it was about going out passionately into the world and inspiring people.

15. CLOSING PRAYERS

The Bishop of Dorchester led closing prayers.

ATTENDANCE

3 bishops, 40 members of the house of clergy and 60 members of the house of laity indicated their attendance.

Apologies for absence were received from:

Mrs Ann Beaton
Revd Peter Bennett
Fr Jonathan Beswick
Revd Piers Bickersteth
Mr Robin Birch
Revd Chris Bull
Revd Dr Mark Butchers
Revd Derrick Carr
Mr Martin Chandler
Revd Charlie Cleverly
Revd Rod Cosh
Revd Canon Adrian Daffern

Revd Tim Davis
Mr Mike Dockrey
Mr John Glanville
Revd Jeremy Goulston
Revd Robin Grayson
Revd Canon Linda Green
Revd Dr Simon Jones
Mrs Caroline Kallipetis
Miss Geraldine Lea
Mrs Heather Llewellyn
Revd Pam McKellen
Mrs Lindsay Mills

Mr David Morgan
Mr Brian Newey
Mrs Gillian Ovey
Mr David Pocklington
Mr Philip Read
Revd Canon John Robertson
Mrs Vicki Russell
Mrs Tanya Sims
Mr Jeremy Twynam
Revd Susan van Beveren
Revd Canon Toby Wright
Mr Steve Young