



OXFORD DIOCESAN SYNOD

and

BOARD OF FINANCE

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

MINUTES

Saturday 21 June 2014

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

1. OPENING WORSHIP

Opening worship was led by the Director of Mission.

2. WELCOME AND NOTICES

The Bishop of Oxford welcomed Ven. Judy French, newly collated as Archdeacon of Dorchester, to her first meeting of the Synod, and noted Revd Canon Martyn Percy's appointment as Dean of Christ Church, to start in the autumn. A warm welcome was also extended to Ms Alison Jestico, in post as Director Finance since the middle of May. Members' permission was obtained for Revd Canon Dr Michael Beasley and Ms Anne Davey to address the Synod.

3. MINUTES

Minutes of the meeting held on Saturday 22 March 2014 were approved and signed. There were no matters arising.

4. QUESTIONS

No questions under Standing Order 70 had been received by the deadline of Friday 13 June 2014.

5. ANNUAL REPORTS OF THE DIOCESAN BOARDS, COUNCILS AND COMMITTEES

The Revd Andrew Marsden presented the Annual Reports on behalf of the Bishop's Council and Standing Committee, highlighting some of the huge variety of ways in which the parishes of the Diocese were served by its Boards, Councils and Committees. On a show of hands, the motion 'That this Synod take note of the reports listed in paper ODS 14.7.' was passed unanimously.

6. ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE DIOCESAN BOARD OF FINANCE

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

7. 2015 OUTLINE REVENUE BUDGET AND DEANERY SHARE APPORTIONMENT

The Chair of the Diocesan Board of Finance spoke to paper ODS 14.8. In his first six months in post, he had been particularly conscious of the mismatch between on the one hand the Board's firmly committed expenditure, and on the other its reliance on the generosity of parishes in giving through share (which remained giving, despite being calculated by reference to what individual parishes might be expected to be able to afford). He had also been enormously impressed by cost control within Diocesan Church House, as well as by the consideration given in the construction of the share scheme to issues of fairness and the pressures faced by parishes. As to the 2015 outline budget itself, this incorporated stipend and salary increases of 2% along with static stipendiary clergy numbers, funded through a headline share increase of 1.5% with a -0.5% floor and 4.5% ceiling to smooth the impact of changes. Work was continuing in the Share Review Group on changes to the details of the scheme, but these needed time to get right and so would impact the 2016 budget rather than 2015.

In discussion (Revd Canon Chris Hargraves, Mr Mark Johnson, Mr Mike Powell), the fairness and transparency of the new share scheme were commended, however the Share Review Group was asked to look again at its costing of house-for-duty posts, and at what could be done to improve the scheme's responsiveness to reductions in deanery deployment; it was also suggested that greater investment in lay people might allow a smaller number of clergy to be used in a more focused way. Adding a historical perspective, the Bishop of Oxford recalled the 5–10% annual share increases of a decade or so earlier, and against that background congratulated the Finance team on the remarkable tautness of current budgeting.

On a show of hands, the motion 'That this Synod take note of paper ODS 14.8.' was passed unanimously.

With the consent of the Synod, the order of business was varied by the Chair under Standing Order 24 so as to take item 9 before item 8, the Director of Education not yet being present.

9. AMENDMENT OF DEANERY SYNOD RULES

The Chair of the House of Laity introduced paper ODS 14.10, setting out proposed revisions to the Rules for Deanery Synods, in particular to make provision for the use of electronic communication in the conduct of deanery synods' business. Overall, the proposed changes were warmly welcomed. In debate (Revd Mark Bennet, Revd Canon Andrew Bunch, Mrs Julie Dziegiel, Mr Paul Hirons, Mr Mark Johnson, Mr James Macnamara, Mr David Pittaway), it was suggested that in a future round of revision, the distinction between the roles of chair and chief executive might be clarified, and that the requirement for the Secretary and Treasurer to be members of the synod should be reconsidered. Concern was expressed that the removal of the requirement from rule 67(a) that deaneries should have audited accounts, which in itself was appropriate, had resulted in that rule becoming too weak; it was proposed instead that deaneries should be required to have independently examined financial statements, a proposal which appeared to have broad support.

On a show of hands, it was agreed unanimously, with one recorded abstention, that in rule 67(a) in the Rules as proposed to be revised, the words "independently examined" should be inserted before the words "financial statements". Subject to that insertion, on a show of hands the motion 'That this Synod approve the revisions to the Rules for Deanery Synods set out in paper ODS 14.10.' was passed unanimously, with two recorded abstentions.

8. ANNUAL REPORT AND ACCOUNTS OF THE DIOCESAN BOARD OF EDUCATION

The Bishop of Buckingham, Chair of the Diocesan Board of Education, spoke to its annual report and financial statements (paper ODS 14.9). He had had the opportunity earlier in the year to put the question 'What is an educated person?' to the Secretary of State, to which the answer had come back "Someone with lots of choices." His own view, by contrast, was that education was not simply about giving people choices, but about equipping them to make good choices, and this was a core part of the Board's contribution in adding a Christian perspective in education. The Board's role had changed hugely over the last five years: in the past it had supported religious education and worship and had employed a small number of schools advisers; now with the Oxford Diocesan Schools Trust ('ODST') it was back to running schools hands-on and as a result employing many more staff.

As explained by the Director of Education, in terms of the 2013 accounts a small part of these changes related to ODST, a newly formed multi-academy trust currently responsible for five schools; in terms of the future, this number would likely be up to 10 within a year, and potential for further growth was significant. However, all this depended on the quality of the services being offered by the Board, and keen business decisions would be needed about growing the whole operation. The news was so far good: people appeared to want the Board's services, and a new service-level agreement was in profit, but in the current economic climate it was not possible to develop new services without subsidy from the Church Schools Uniform Statutory Trust from funds derived from past school closures, and the risk was always there that this money would be spent without the work developing as expected.

In discussion (Bishop of Dorchester, Dr Philip Giddings, Revd Jeremy Goulston, Mr Mark Johnson, Mr Gavin Oldham, Revd Kate Stacey, Revd Tim Stead), a number of questions focused on the Board's interaction with non-Church of England schools. Questions were also asked about how faith schools would resist secularisation, support for apprenticeships in schools and intentional evangelism with young people. In reply, the Director of Education said that community schools could be brought into ODST, and that the Board was minded to do this if requested, in a spirit of bottom-up collaborative koinonia; support was also being made available from CSUST for religious education work in these schools. The Bishop of Buckingham added a reminder that none of the Birmingham schools at the centre of allegations around Muslim extremism were 'faith schools', language with which in fact he felt quite uncomfortable: the Board of Education was not about converting children to a particular brand of Christianity, but about offering an education at the heart of which were Kingdom values. In that context, a plea was repeated for more school governors, to fill the 16% of places currently vacant: engaged, disciplined people were needed who could carry the trust of the Board and were at the same time able to focus on the governance work required.

10. INTENTIONAL EVANGELISM

The Director of Mission introduced the General Synod paper 'Intentional evangelism' (GS 1917), circulated with covering paper ODS 14.11, exploring the challenges faced by the Church in the transmission of faith and the need for a more intentional evangelism, and calling on every PCC and every diocesan and deanery synod to take time annually to focus on these issues. Following a brief presentation of the paper's highlights, members were invited to divide into eight discussion groups, seven focusing on the 'disciplines of evangelisation' identified in GS 1917 and one on issues of resourcing. Each group was asked to record its discussions by way of a flipchart sheet, to be collated for analysis by the Board of Mission, and also to feed back to the meeting a summary of the main points covered. In closing, the Director of Mission returned to a comment made by one of the group leaders, saying that he hoped members would continue to pray over, think about, give time to and then make wise decisions around the issues raised.

11. PARISH FOCUS

The Revd Canon Andrew Blyth spoke about church growth in the context of his work as Vicar of Holy Trinity, Walton in Aylesbury deanery, a network church in the evangelical tradition with a real concern for the immediate neighbourhood but to which people travelled from a wide area, which was at times a challenge. Congregations had doubled in size in recent years, and this was itself another challenge: priorities needed to take account of the fact that it was a large church, at the same time as trying to replicate the advantages of small communities within that, and looking to see 'who was missing' from the community as a whole. The Mission Action Planning process had been found to be a very helpful way of concentrating energy around a small number of things the church could do well. Small groups/mission clusters were being developed to set people free to pray, think and act, and PCC meetings had been reorganised to focus on strategy. It was important to be conscious of the church community as a complex system, a fast-changing, fluid environment, and to work with it accordingly, but this made leadership much harder: there were no rules, and the key was to listen for guidance from the Spirit.

12. REFLECTION AND CLOSING PRAYERS

At the end of his last meeting before his retirement at the end of October, the Bishop of Oxford reflected on seven years as President of the Synod and on the six principles he had set out at his first meeting in 2007. (1) In terms of sustaining the sacred centre so as to be a holy Synod, there had been lovely examples of different ways to pray, although never yet a pause for prayer in the middle of discussion. (2) A fundamental concern with growing the Kingdom had been reflected in the establishment of a Department of Mission led by a Director of Mission, and in making disciples being key to *Living Faith*, in which respect *unintentional* evangelism was perhaps just as important as intentional. (3) There was still work to be done on working relationally rather than institutionally; certainly the Synod had been relaxed in style, but perhaps this had sometimes gone too far and members had been too comfortable with each other. (4) He hoped that the Synod had indeed been a place of imagination and inspiration, a good group to be part of, and not just a body concerned with reports and budgets. (5) An ethic of responsible stewardship was essential if the Church was to look society in the face and ask questions about social justice, the environment and so on; such an ethic was surely reflected in the fact that 81% of churches were now involved with food banks. (6) His belief remained that the way of faith was to be enjoyed and celebrated in all its fullness: there should be parties as well as prayer, although in this context it was difficult to recall an occasion on which the Synod had laughed! Concluding, the Bishop quoted the retreat director's comment that the sorrows of the world should never be allowed to disguise the joy of Christ Risen, and offered a resounding thank you for the joy, delight and pleasure it had been to be in Oxford. He then led closing prayers.

ATTENDANCE

3 bishops, 40 members of the house of clergy, 58 members of the house of laity and 1 ecumenical observer indicated their attendance.

Apologies for absence were received from:

Mr James Adam
Rt Hon Sir Tony Baldry
Fr Jonathan Beswick
Revd Piers Bickersteth
Mr Robin Birch
Revd Canon Sue Booyes
Revd Ron Bundock
Revd Dr Mark Butchers
Mr David Carter
Mr Bob Chapman
Revd Dr Mark Chapman
Revd Rod Cosh
Miss Prudence Dailey
Revd Canon Adrian Daffern

Revd Philip Derbyshire
Mr Mike Dockrey
Mr John Glanville
Revd Michael Godfrey
Revd Mary Harwood
Mrs Diana Hasting
Revd Canon David Hodgson
Mrs Julia Hunt
Mrs Anne Lee
Revd Sally Lynch
Revd Pam McKellen
Mrs Lindsay Mills
Mr David Morgan
Revd Mike Morris

Revd Canon Nick Parish
Mr David Pickup
Rt Revd Andrew Proud
Mr Philip Read
Mrs Julia Reece
Revd Canon John Robertson
Revd Canon John Salter
Mr Don Sanderson
Mrs Jo Saunders
Revd Linda Smith
Revd Ainsley Swift
Mrs Elizabeth Thomson
His Hon. Christopher Tyrer
Revd Susan van Beveren