



**OXFORD DIOCESAN SYNOD**

**and**

**BOARD OF FINANCE**

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

**MINUTES**

**Saturday 22 March 2014**

## **1. OPENING WORSHIP**

Opening worship, on the theme of the First World War, was led by the Archdeacon of Oxford.

## **2. WELCOME AND NOTICES**

The Bishop of Oxford obtained members' permission for guest speakers Revd Canon Dr Michael Beasley and Ms Sarah Meyrick to address the Synod, and welcomed as an observer Bishop Victoria Matthews, of Christ Church, New Zealand, a keynote speaker at the forthcoming diocesan clergy conference.

Members indicated their agreement to the proposal that papers for all future meetings of the Synod should be posted in pdf format on the diocesan website (at an address to be circulated by email not later than three weeks in advance of each meeting), and that only those without email or specifically requesting it would continue to receive papers through the post, with the further option of named printed sets of papers being provided on request for collection on the day.

## **3. PROCLAMATION OF ACT OF SYNOD**

The Vacancy in See Committees Regulation 1993 as amended, as further amended by the Vacancy in See Committees (Amendment) Regulation 2013, was proclaimed as an Act of Synod.

## **4. MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on Saturday 16 November 2013 were approved and signed.

## **5. PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS**

The Bishop of Oxford gave a presidential address, available on the diocesan website at <http://www.oxford.anglican.org/diocesan-synod-papers>.

## **6. QUESTIONS**

Two questions under Standing Order 70, from the Revd John Cook and Miss Prudence Dailey, were answered respectively by the Bishop of Oxford and the Diocesan Registrar, as attached. Both questioners asked supplementaries, as follows. The Revd John Cook asked the Bishop for confirmation that the bishops of the Diocese would continue to seek assurances from clergy in civil partnerships that they remained sexually abstinent, given the point made in his *Ad clerum* about avoiding witch-hunts. The Bishop confirmed that they would. Miss Prudence Dailey asked the Registrar whether he was aware of the deanery elections 'campaign pack' published by the Society of Catholic Priests and circulated by the Archdeacon of Berkshire to clergy in her archdeaconry, or of any precedent for this circulation. *[The Archdeacon has since pointed out inaccuracies in Miss Dailey's supplementary. The material in question was circulated, along with other resources, to area deans only, for onward transmission to other clergy at their discretion. Furthermore, it was produced not by the Society of Catholic Priests, but by a coalition of interest groups including the Society, as part of an exercise designed to raise the overall profile of deanery synod elections.]* The Registrar responded that he was aware of this, and that though it would be improper for him to be drawn on content, he felt that any enthusiasm that could be injected into the life of deanery synods must surely be a good thing.

## **7. LIVING FAITH REVIEW**

The Revd Canon Dr Michael Beasley and Ms Sarah Meyrick gave a presentation summarising the findings of the impact review of the *Living Faith* initiative conducted by the Christian Research Consultancy. Towards the end of the first five-year 'cycle' of the initiative, the purpose of the review had been to gauge how well *Living Faith* had permeated the Diocese and to investigate what difference it might be making in terms of activity at parish level, so as to inform thinking about the next five years. Three web-based surveys had been used to assess the extent of awareness of and engagement with *Living Faith* and what aspects of it had been found to be most salient. The first survey had been aimed at clergy and LLMs, a second at PCC secretaries and churchwardens, and a third at other members of church congregations. Though the response rate to the third had been statistically insignificant, responses to the first two had been encouraging,

with some level of awareness and engagement among a large majority of clergy, LLMs and lay officers. As to next steps in thinking about the future of *Living Faith*, consultation would be taking place with those attending the clergy and LLM conferences, Bishop's Council would be considering the next phase in July, and a Diocesan Synod discussion was planned for November.

In discussion (Revd Mark Bennet, Revd Canon Sue Booy, Dr Philip Giddings, Mrs Anne Lee, Mrs Jo Saunders, Revd Camilla Walton, Revd Toby Wright) it was suggested that another five-year cycle would be important to consolidate what had already been achieved; that *Living Faith* should feature in clergy orientation and could productively be used by the Parish Development Advisers and PCCs to help profile vacant posts; that the content of diocesan courses could be shaped around it, in terms of both current provision and new offerings; that more could be done around safeguarding the integrity of creation, in line with the fifth Mark of Mission; and that helpful context would have been given by data on how those responding compared to the total population of clergy and laity in the Diocese. One speaker praised the Diocese for having the confidence not only to commission the research but to make public the results, though warning that responses received might well be skewed positively; another bemoaned the low percentage of clergy engaged with the 'Shaping confident collaborative leadership' strand.

Responding, Michael Beasley said that he would reflect on how *Living Faith* could be used in clergy orientation, that he hoped the Mission in the World team would be able to respond in relation to the fifth Mark of Mission, and that the lower engagement with 'Shaping confident collaborative leadership' was not unexpected in that this strand had only been reached in 2014. As to the very low response rate from congregation members, this was a result of the untargeted nature of the survey, and in retrospect it could have been handled differently. Positive skewing was certainly possible, although interestingly there had been a number of responses from those not currently engaged with *Living Faith* but who were nevertheless grateful that it was available as a resource.

## **8. FINANCIAL YEAR-END RESULTS, 2013**

The Revd John Tattersall, Chair of the Diocesan Board of Finance, reported on the 2013 out-turn. Though the numbers were not yet finalised by the auditors, the year had generated an estimated surplus against budget of £700,000. This was a rather better result than expected, however in practice it was due to a number of one-off factors, in particular the above average number of clergy vacancies, an increase in prompt payment of parochial fees for weddings and funerals, and savings due to changes in National Insurance; a further factor was the lower than budgeted salary and stipend increases (which as a result of the surplus had now been made good from 1 February 2014). The result also needed to be read in the context of the 94.9% share received in the course of 2013, similar to 2012 and 1.9% up in cash terms, but lower than hoped for and significantly down on the historic trend. A single question concerned the inflexibility of the deanery rebate, whereby one parish failing to pay in full could jeopardise the entire rebate. Responding, the Chair said that it was important in his view that this rebate was at deanery level, but at the same time he recognised that the system could have the effect described and was not perfect for everyone.

## **9. SHARE DISCOUNTS AT PARISH LEVEL**

The Chair of the Board of Finance introduced proposals for share discounts of 1% for parishes either paying in full by 31 January in a given year, or in 12 equal instalments by monthly direct debit on the 15th of each month. The proposals were primarily process driven, and the hope was that they would make things easier for the Board of Finance without making life harder for parishes. If implemented, they would necessitate changes to the details of the deanery rebate system, so that 1% would be earned for payment of 25% of the deanery allocation by 31 March and 50% by 30 June, and a further 2% for payment of 100% by 31 December, in contrast to the present arrangement of 1% for 20% paid by end March and 50% by end June, and a further 2% for full payment by 30 November.

The proposals were broadly welcomed in debate (Revd Mark Bennet, Mr Martin Chandler, Dr Wendy Goodier, Revd Canon Chris Hargraves, Revd Charles Overton, Mr Mike Powell, Revd Jeff

West, Mr Allan Whittow), a number of speakers referring back to the question at the end of the previous item to say that their own deaneries safeguarded the deanery rebate by means of mutual support and negotiation between parishes. Two speakers queried the interaction of the parish discount with the deanery rebate, and one the effect of the discount on the share scheme overall in terms of the kinds of parishes it might benefit, and another commended standing order via CCLA as an alternative method of regular payment. Furthermore, Mr Mike Powell proposed and Revd Jeff West seconded an amendment, whereby a 1% discount would be payable for direct debit payment in 10 monthly instalments on the 20th of each month from February to November. In reply, the Chair reiterated that the proposals were essentially about streamlining process and so no attempt had been made to guess the kinds of parish it might benefit, and would involve the payment deadline for deanery rebates changing to 31 December; if implemented, they would be communicated to parishes via PCC treasurers. The fact that the proposals were process driven explained why they involved direct debits and not standing orders, the level of the former once set up being seamlessly updated at the diocesan end each year without the need for a hiatus in January, the latter being easily varied (or indeed discontinued) by parishes; however, he would take away the comment about standing orders via CCLA, which was not a bank and so could not use the direct debit system, and see whether anything could be done to accommodate these.

On a show of hands, the amendment was defeated, and the unamended motion 'That this Synod approve the share discounts to parishes set out in paper ODS 14.3.' was passed with four votes against and seven recorded abstentions.

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

The Dean of Christ Church, the Very Revd Christopher Lewis, spoke to the Cathedral annual report for the academic year 2012–13, which had seen a re-branding of the cathedral side of the Christ Church operation from Christ Church Cathedral to 'Oxford's cathedral at Christ Church'. Staff changes had seen Edmund Newey succeed Ed Newell as Sub-Dean, Martin Gorick starting as Archdeacon of Oxford, and George Pattison leaving to a professorship in Glasgow. Amongst special services, highlights had been the Royal Maundy Service, a Civic Service on health and wholeness, and the premiere of a new mass setting by Francis Grier, 'Missa Aedes Christi', at one celebration with dance by Rambert Dance. Three new 'toblerone' displays – on Jesus the Christ, Christianity and What is the Church?; Prayer & Worship, the Cathedral and the Friends; and Pilgrimage, the Diocese of Oxford and the Church of England – had been introduced to interpret the building to the large number of largely uninformed visitors. As to the accounts, confusing because of the dual nature of Christ Church as both cathedral and college, the basic summary was that the non-fabric side of the Cathedral cost about £1.4m a year, the largest part for the choir and music, covered in part by Christ Church as a whole and in part by money coming direct.

Two members took the opportunity to thank the Dean warmly for the impact he had made at the Cathedral. In answer to a question about the very low level of charitable giving in percentage terms, the Dean explained that this represented 25% of congregational giving, but that in addition Christ Church as a whole had a grants committee which gave money to charities in Oxford and elsewhere. In closing, the Bishop of Oxford thanked the Dean for 11 years during which he had served with distinction, always reassuringly calm, with a great ability to lower the temperature at the same time as having sharp insight and being very much on the ball.

## **11. WOMEN IN THE EPISCOPATE**

The Bishop of Oxford introduced a debate on the new legislative package to allow women to be consecrated as bishops, referred to dioceses under Article 8 of the constitution of the General Synod. As such, the package would need to be approved by a majority of diocesan synods in order for a final approval debate to take place at the General Synod's July 2014 group of sessions. The new package was widely agreed to be a significant improvement on the earlier legislation which had been approved by a majority of diocesan synods in the course of 2012 but then failed to receive final approval by the General Synod in November of that year. This was in large part due to the very different legislative process followed, with facilitated conversations amongst General Synod members, a much larger legislative steering committee than usual representing a wide

cross-section of views and traditions, and a revision stage taking place in full synod rather than in committee. The legislative package itself was also quite different, consisting of a very much simpler Measure and Amending Canon, a Declaration from the House of Bishops on the Ministry of Bishops and Priests setting out five key 'guiding principles', and a dispute resolution procedure overseen by an independent reviewer. Other key points were that the initiative for seeking alternative episcopal oversight at parish level lay with PCCs, that there was an explicit commitment to the continuing consecration of bishops theologically opposed to women's ministry, that the oaths of obedience for both clergy and bishops would stay unchanged on the basis that they added nothing to the duty of canonical obedience already existing in law, and that two-thirds majorities in all three houses of the General Synod would be required for any future changes. As a result, diocesan approval had been requested this time on a shortened, three-month (as opposed to six-month), timescale. Given that a large majority of deanery synods in the Diocese had last time voted in favour of the legislation, the decision had therefore been taken that the new package would not be referred to deaneries for discussion.

In debate (Revd Mark Bennet, Mrs Mary Braybrooke, Mr Mark Burton, Revd Dr Mark Chapman, Dr Philip Giddings, Mr Michael Hardman, Fr Ross Northing, Mr Gavin Oldham, Mrs Vicki Russell, Revd Kate Stacey, Revd Canon Chris Sugden, Revd Canon John Wynburne) members from a wide range of theological perspectives spoke of the better place in which the General Synod and the Church of England more widely found itself with the new legislative package, one saying that it would help the Church get off the battlefield and onto the mission field, another commending it as a sign of how to disagree well. Key aspects of the new package included the guiding principles, the fact that it was built around relationships and made demands of all within the Church, the dispute resolution procedure which meant that there would be no need for recourse to the secular law, and not least the spirit in which it had been worked out. Issues remained for some, for example over episcopal succession, however in general the package was welcomed, and in particular a number of General Synod members who had voted against the previous legislation spoke of their support for the new approach.

On a vote by houses, the motion 'That this Synod approve the proposals embodied in the draft Bishops and Priests (Consecration and Ordination of Women) Measure and draft Amending Canon No 33.' was passed with 3 bishops, 47 clergy and 57 laity voting in favour, 3 clergy and 1 lay member voting against, and 3 lay members recording abstentions.

## **12. PARISH FOCUS: OWNING THE VISION**

When the Revd Sally Lynch had started as Vicar of St Luke's, Maidenhead three years earlier, she had inherited a great proliferation of meetings and committees, many of which had become closed shops, and she had decided to do something about it. The result was a whole new structure explicitly linked to *Living Faith*, in which the word 'committee' no longer featured, and which was aimed at enabling the parish to work through in practice its vision "to be an inclusive church which is 'In Faith, Out There', with a spirit of adventure and risk". The overall number of meetings had been cut right down, with bi-monthly 'Vision meetings' with published dates and foci (two per meeting) to which the whole church community was invited, focused on the parish's Mission Action Plan ('MAP') and feeding back to the PCC. There were also seven 'focus planning groups', each led by a member of the ministry team, which met at the Vision meeting to plan MAP development. It was so far early days for the changes, but already they were proving their worth, with a much wider range of people involved in discussions, and different things beginning to happen.

## **13. BISHOP'S MISSION ORDERS AND DEANERY SYNOD REPRESENTATION**

On a show of hands, the motion 'That this Synod approve the representation schemes annexed to paper ODS 14.5.' was passed *nem con*, with one recorded abstention, subject to a drafting correction being made to the heading of the representation scheme relating to St Mark's Milton Keynes. In answer to a question as to the status of lay members of mission initiatives in relation to elections to diocesan synods and the General Synod, it was left that the Diocesan Electoral Registration Officer would check up on this and confirm the position in due course.

#### **14. REFLECTION**

Mr Brian Newey began with the confession that his first response to the suggestion that he might give the Reflection was that there was nothing he would like less. The morning had provided wonderful subjects for Christian thought and reflection, with such a moving start in the opening worship. The atmosphere in the debate on women in the episcopate had been so different from last time, although his fear remained that all the gracious work since then within the Church had done nothing to improve its standing in the nation at large, which had received an enormous shock as a result of the earlier 'no' vote. Discussions in the diocesan synod had always been gracious, with rarely a hint of animosity, and his prayer would be that this graciousness would endure, and that ways of 'disagreeing agreeably' would continue to be found. It had been wonderful how Bishop John had given regular presidential addresses revealing something of who he really was, and working with his gracious leadership had been a real privilege. In conclusion, a thank you was offered to all those who had supported him in so many ways during his 12 years as Chair of the Diocesan Board of Finance, and the hope expressed that members would leave feeling uplifted by the business of the morning.

#### **15. VOTE OF THANKS AND CLOSING PRAYERS**

The Bishop of Oxford thanked Mr Newey warmly for his gracious service to the Board of Finance, which he had run with such calm authority as to be a real gift to the Diocese. This was a man quite without guile, who all sensed they could trust, always focused on Jesus and Kingdom values. The Bishop then led closing prayers.

#### ATTENDANCE

3 bishops, 51 members of the house of clergy, 61 members of the house of laity and 1 ecumenical observer indicated their attendance.

Apologies for absence were received from:

Mrs Ann Beaton	Revd Dr Darrell Hannah	Mr David Morgan
Fr Jonathan Beswick	Mr David Hare	Revd Heather Parbury
Revd Piers Bickersteth	Mr Martin Hughes	Revd Canon Prof. Martyn Percy
Mr Robin Birch	Mr Peter Jeal	Revd Canon John Robertson
Mrs Teresa Carter	Mr Mark Johnson	Revd Canon John Salter
Miss Margaret Drage	Mrs Penny Keens	Revd Liz Simpson
Mrs Julie Dziegiel	Revd Canon Dr Judith Maltby	Revd Jason St John Nicolle
Rt Revd Colin Fletcher	Revd Andrew Marsden	Mr John Sykes
Ven. Karen Gorham	Revd and Worshipful Alexander McGregor	Revd Susan van Beveren
Revd Jeremy Goulston	Revd David Meakin	Revd Robert Willis
Revd Canon Linda Green		Revd Derek Witchell