

## Oxford Diocesan Synod

### A summary of the meeting held on Saturday 17th June 2017

The Diocesan Synod met at St Andrew's Church, High Wycombe.

1. The meeting started with opening worship led by members of the Claydon Deanery and was based around the main theme of the day 'Towards a Common Vision' with emphasis on the Beatitudes from the Gospel of Matthew.
2. Bishop Steven welcomed Synod members and visitors. He announced that Canon John Rees, the Diocesan Registrar, had been awarded the Canterbury Cross for services to the Church of England. Also, announced in the Queen's birthday honours list was an OBE to Jan Fishwick, Chief Executive of PACT. Diocesan Synod heard about the work of PACT at the meeting in November 2016.
3. The Minutes of the meeting of Diocesan Synod held on 18<sup>th</sup> March 2017 were approved and signed.

Bishop Steven noted that an Interim Report on the Review of the Crown Nominations Commission was going to the July General Synod meeting.

4. Questions: Mark Burton had submitted a question concerning the "Setting God's People Free" report and subsequent significant interest in Oxford becoming a pilot diocese. The Diocesan Secretary responded that the first tranche is full but we expect to join the second learning group in 2018. Mark then followed this up with a supplementary question asking "Why do we have to wait?". The Diocesan Secretary responded that the diocese is taking seriously the involvement and resourcing of lay people in all the work we are doing. The Diocese would be looking at how we engage with the pilot project at the appropriate time.

A second question from Revd Angie Paterson, Aston and Cuddesdon Deanery. This was concerning costs of advertising of stipendiary posts during a vacancy and asked whether the costs could be paid by the diocese rather than the parish. The Diocesan Secretary responded on behalf of the Bishop of Oxford saying that it was recognised in a time of vacancy there can be financial pressures and the diocesan Planning Budget Sub-Committee would be looking at the issues raised and would report back to Bishop's Council.

Full questions and responses can be found at <https://www.oxford.anglican.org/who-we-are/governance/diocesan-synod/>

5. Bishop Steven introduced the session '**Towards a Common Vision**'

He reflected on the recent tragedies at Grenfell Towers and the terrorist attacks in Manchester and London.

He noted that many people across the Diocese are engaging with Dwelling In The Word. We are reading together in different meetings the profound and beautiful passage in 1 Corinthians 4. "But we have this treasure in clay jars, so that it may be made clear that this extraordinary power belongs to God and does not come from us. We are afflicted in every way but not crushed; perplexed but not driven to despair; persecuted but not forsaken; struck down but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may be made visible in our bodies".

He noted "our calling is to make the life of Jesus visible through ordinary acts of love and kindness and dedication", and that "We are in a season where we are exploring together our calling as a Church. We have been asking two questions. "What kind of Church are we called to be?" and "What are we therefore called to do together?"

Bishop Steven noted how we have been exploring those questions through a range of leadership and governance meetings, beginning with the Area Deans and Lay Chairs meeting in January. The Synod broke into groups to reflect on the following questions:

**What kind of Church are we called to be?**

A Christ-like Church: contemplative, compassionate, courageous

How do you respond to this vision for our future life?

What would it mean for us to be more: Contemplative? 2. Compassionate? And 3. Courageous?

And to consider what are we therefore called to do together.

Following the group work sessions, the feedback indicated there was more work to do on these questions. Some key themes emerged around communication and a need to be more courageous. Others felt they would like more steer towards Bishop Steven's original 3 Priorities that he announced when he became Bishop of Oxford: children and young people, the poor and discipleship. The responses would be used to aid further reflection. These will shortly be available on the website at

<https://www.oxford.anglican.org/who-we-are/governance/diocesan-synod/#tab-id-1>

6. Canon Sue Booy adjourned the meeting so the Annual General Meeting of the Diocesan Board of Finance could take place. The Synod received and approved the Minutes of the previous meeting held in 2016, and approved the appointment of Critchleys Accountants LLP as auditors. It was noted that there will be a review of auditors during the year.
7. The 2016 Diocesan Synod Reports were presented on behalf of Bishop's Council by Mr James Macnamara. This gave a flavour of the work being undertaken across the diocese by all the Boards and Committees. Members were encouraged to take these reports into their parishes to share the information more widely. Synod 'took note' of the reports. They are also available on the website at <https://www.oxford.anglican.org/who-we-are/governance/diocesan-synod/#tab-id-1>
8. The Annual Report and Accounts of the Diocesan Board of Education were presented by the Bishop of Buckingham with Fiona Craig, Deputy Director of Education. It was noted that education is going through a challenging time with ever increasing demands on the education team and recognition of the excellent service they offer. Bishop Alan noted that we have an excellent legacy and that we really cannot leave it to the politicians, especially in these uncertain times. Members were asked to 'take note' of the reports. These are available on the website at <https://www.oxford.anglican.org/who-we-are/governance/diocesan-synod/#tab-id-1>
9. The draft budget for 2018 was presented and approved in outline. It would be debated more fully in November.
10. The meeting closed with a time of reflection on the morning's business led by Mr Graeme Slocombe from Wycombe Deanery, followed by closing prayers led by Bishop Steven.