

Oxford Diocesan Synod

A summary of the meeting held on Saturday 16th June 2018

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

1. The meeting started with opening worship led by members of the House of Laity based around the main theme of the day 'Growing Disciples and Setting God's people free across the Diocese' with emphasis on the Beatitudes from the Gospel of Matthew.
2. Mrs Judith Scott, Chair of the House of Laity, welcomed Synod members and visitors on behalf of the Bishop of Oxford. There were a number of notices: The new triennium of Diocesan Synod commences on 1st August 2018 and people were reminded to send in their election results to the diocesan office as soon as they are available. An announcement was made concerning a decision to try alternative venues for Diocesan Synod in 2018/19 to explore different ways of working. This would be reviewed during the year. She asked members permission to allow Bishop Steven to write formally on behalf of Synod to thank St Andrew's for their many years of hospitality, which was granted. Judith introduced Sister Jane and Sister Francis from the Community of All Saints for the Poor who provided a continuing praying presence during the meeting for the work of the diocese, particularly reflecting on Synod's agenda for the day.
3. The Minutes of the meeting of Diocesan Synod held on 17th March 2018 were approved and signed.

Matter arising from last Minutes: Bishop Steven updated members on the recent developments regarding the Oxford Diocesan Synod Environmental Motion passed at the March meeting for debate at General Synod. Following discussions with the General Synod office and the Church of England's National Investing Bodies (NIB). A Motion submitted by the NIB would be debated and Oxford Diocese would now make an amendment to that Motion calling for the timescale to be brought forward. Bishop Steven will speak in favour of this amendment which will be livestreamed during the debate on Sunday 8th July at 2.30pm. See <https://www.churchofengland.org/more/policy-and-thinking/work-general-synod/agendas-papers/july-2018-group-sessions> for further details and timetable.

4. **Presidential Address:** Bishop Steven gave his presidential address linking it to the day's main theme, Discipleship. He noted that the working group on discipleship had gathered wisdom from both the local context and the national Setting God's People Free initiative (which was discussed in this Synod in March 2017). He noted "The SGPF report underlines the importance of the Church recognising and supporting the reality that our lives as disciples are mostly lived 'out there', not 'in here'". His full address can be found at: <https://blogs.oxford.anglican.org/address-to-diocesan-synod-becoming-more-christ-like/>
5. **Growing Disciples and Setting God's People Free Across the Diocese:** Members of the Working Group on Discipleship, The Ven. Olivia Graham, Mr Andrew Anderson-Gear and Mrs Judith Scott gave a presentation outlining proposals to pilot in the coming months ways of enabling us each to develop as Christ-like Christians 'out there' and to suggest ways in which churches can be encouraged to affirm and support this. Members were encouraged to read <https://www.churchofengland.org/SGPF>, "Setting God's People Free Summary Report Version for Deaneries and Parishes", and "Setting God's People Free for Monday to Saturday".
6. The meeting of Diocesan Synod was adjourned 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 2017, and approved the appointment of Buzzacott LLP as the Board's auditors. Revd John Tattersall, Chair of the Board of Finance noted the appointment of the new auditors in 2018, following the tender process flagged the previous year.

7. The 2017 Diocesan Synod Reports were presented on behalf of Bishop's Council by the Revd Canon Rosie Harper noting a flavour of the work being undertaken across the diocese by all the Boards and Committees. She noted how each Board and Council were key to supporting the work and mission in our parishes across the diocese. She particularly noted the life changing work of the group Parents and Children Together (PACT); how placing a child in a loving family reflects a real hands-on transformation. All the Boards and Councils were commended for their outstanding contributions, albeit in a paid or voluntary capacity and were described as the 'Crown Jewels' of the Diocese. 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, The Rt Revd Alan Wilson with Mrs Fiona Craig, Director of Education. Bishop Alan praised the work of the teams across the diocese for their commitment, given the limited resources they have and the fast pace at which they operate. It was noted that education is going through a challenging time with ever increasing demands on the education team and recognition was given to all teachers and staff for their endurance and the excellent service they offer. Fiona thanked all those parishes that support local church schools. She asked members to reflect on the need for pastoral care of teachers, pupils and all those in the education environment as this was a particular challenging profession, with a lot of pressure. She noted there was a real need for chaplaincy care and support in mental health issues. Members were asked to 'take note' of the reports. This is available on the website at <https://www.oxford.anglican.org/who-we-are/governance/diocesan-synod/#tab-id-1>
9. The draft budget for 2019 was presented and noted in outline following vigorous debate about the use of Experian data and the affordability of share. It would return for approval in November.
10. Reflection on the morning's business was led by Mrs Penny Keens, Milton Keynes Deanery.
11. Special tributes were made to members who were standing down at the end of the triennium. Those thanked by Bishop Steven included Jo Saunders and Anne Cartland, both of whom had given long and valuable service. Mrs Penny Keens had served 42 years on Diocesan Synod with a significant period as Chair of the House of Laity and had been actively involved in church life in the Milton Keynes Deanery; Mrs Judith Scott would be stepping down after 3 terms as Chair of the House of Laity, and Canon Adrian Daffern who, since January, had been Chair of the Diocesan Advisory Committee. All were thanked by Bishop Steven for their dedicated service.

Future Synod meetings:

Dates for diary:

17th November 2018

Venue:

Green Park Conference Centre, Reading

Dates of Diocesan Synod meetings for 2019 (All Saturdays) from 0900 – 1300 (or as advised):

16th March 2019

St James Church, Gerrard's Cross

15th June 2019

Unipart Conference Centre, Cowley

16th November 2019

TBC

Induction for new Triennium of Diocesan Synod:

Monday 17th September:

St Aldates Church, Oxford followed by a communion Service at Christ Church Cathedral.

This will commence at approximately 5.00pm (further details will follow). All synod members are encouraged to attend.