

## Oxford Diocesan Synod

### A summary of the meeting held on Saturday 17th November 2018

The Diocesan Synod met at Green Park Conference Centre, Reading for its first meeting of the newly elected Synod for the triennium 2018-2021.

The Bishop of Oxford, The Rt Revd Dr Steven Croft warmly welcomed Synod members, especially the many new members present.

1. The meeting started with opening worship led by The Bishop of Reading, The Rt. Revd Andrew Proud, assisted by the Revd Verena Breed and Mr Millius Palayiwa. It included Dwelling in the Word using Colossians 1 v 15-20 and 3 v 12-17. Members were asked to reflect on both passages with their neighbour.
2. The Houses of Clergy and Laity met separately to elect Chairs for each House of the Diocesan Synod. The Revd Canon Sue Booy and Mr John Sykes were elected for the new triennium 2018-2021. They will also serve as Vice-Presidents of Diocesan Synod. Bishop Steven prayed for the new Chairs.
3. The Bishop gave a statement on the situation at Christ Church Cathedral:  
<https://www.oxford.anglican.org/diocesan-synod-statement-dean-of-oxford-martyn-percy/>  
The Dean had asked for it to be made clear that the issue under discussion did not relate to Safeguarding matters.
4. Questions (raised in advance of meeting): Mr Philip Read had submitted a question asking when the diocesan investment managers performance was last reviewed in comparison with returns of competitors managing assets in the Church and Charity sector. The Chair of the Board of Finance, The Revd John Tattersall, responded by noting that Newton Investment Management's performance was reviewed with that of competitors in November 2016. The diocesan Glebe and Investment Committee had felt that performance was comparable in terms of investment return across a wide range of funds and other factors and therefore concluded there was no need to change at that time. The full question and response can be found at <https://www.oxford.anglican.org/who-we-are/governance/diocesan-synod/>

Mrs Lydia Messling asked a supplementary question whether any investments were still in fossil fuels. John responded that the diocese does still hold some and they are being replaced in a strategic way and being replaced by investments in renewables.

5. Presidential Address: Bishop Steven's address entitled 'How to be Human' noted how in early 2017, he was invited to join the House of Lords Select Committee into Artificial Intelligence, a yearlong enquiry by a group of thirteen peers to consider "the economic, ethical and social implications of artificial intelligence". His address outlined some of the significant benefits of its future use in the healthcare sector whilst balancing it with some of the risks. The House of Lords Select Committee report would be debated in Parliament on Monday 19<sup>th</sup> November. *(Note): This has now taken place and a link to this can be found at: <https://blogs.oxford.anglican.org/move-fast-and-mend-things/>*

Bishop Steven's FULL Presidential Address can be found at: <https://blogs.oxford.anglican.org/how-to-be-human/>

6. The Minutes of the meeting of Diocesan Synod held on 16<sup>th</sup> June 2018 were approved and signed.
7. Bishop Steven introduced the agenda item '**Update on Common Vision**' as the diocese explored how to **become a more** Christ-like Church: contemplative, compassionate and courageous. The session was in three parts; an update from Bishop Steven on progress so far; a financial presentation by the Chair of the Board of Finance explaining how the key areas of work are to be funded, and a presentation from the

Archdeacon of Oxford who is Chair of one of the area working groups tasked to explore and develop the area 'New Communities and Church Planting'. The Archdeacon's focus was on the need for churches to be 'Present and Engaged' and outlined the group's five-year plan. Following the presentation, discussion took place in groups on the questions: a) What are the people and places that your current parish ministry does not reach? and b) What could make the difference? Following this a number of questions were taken from the floor. All of the presentations can be found on the website at <https://www.oxford.anglican.org/who-we-are/governance/diocesan-synod/>

8. Mrs Fiona Craig, Director of Education had been granted permission to address the Synod. She would be leaving her role at the end of the year and had wanted to thank all members for their support for the work that the Board of Education does in our church schools. She noted how 60,000 children in church schools really need our help and gave thanks to all those involved. She was presented with a small gift on behalf of synod. The Bishop of Oxford paid tribute to Fiona noting she was an extraordinary Christian leader and gave a blessing for the future.
9. The Revd John Tattersall, Chair of the Board of Finance presented the budget for 2019 which had already been considered in outline at the June meeting. A number of people asked questions from the floor to which John responded. The Motion to approve the budget was passed unanimously with some abstentions. A PowerPoint presentation and the budget document can be found at <https://www.oxford.anglican.org/who-we-are/governance/diocesan-synod/>
10. Elected members to General Synod, representing the Oxford Diocese, introduced themselves to the new synod noting the areas they had been assigned to and their willingness to attend deanery synod meetings to give updates on the work of General Synod. A full list of members can be found at: <https://www.oxford.anglican.org/who-we-are/governance/general-synod-2015/>

Feedback from the General Synod July 2018 group of sessions was given by two members, Dr Andrew Bell and Revd Philip Cochrane, who had been asked to update synod members on the agenda item 'Renewal and Reform'. Andrew noted the consultation to streamline the Patronage (Benefices) Measure 1986. Comments to be received by January 2019. He was happy to liaise with anyone wishing to contribute to the consultation. Andrew and all other members can be contacted at:

<https://www.oxford.anglican.org/who-we-are/governance/general-synod-2015/>

For further details of the work of the 'Renewal and Reform' visit

<https://www.churchofengland.org/about/renewal-reform>

A full report on all the work done at the July Sessions can be found on the Church of England website

<https://www.churchofengland.org/more/policy-and-thinking/work-general-synod>

11. The meeting closed with a time of reflection on the morning's business led by Mrs Sue Scane, followed by closing prayers led by the Bishop of Dorchester, The Rt Revd Colin Fletcher. Given that it was his birthday that day and Archdeacon Judy's the next day, the Synod sang happy birthday wishes to them both.

The date of the next meeting is **Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> March 2019 in Gerrard's Cross**

Closing date for new Synod business is **9<sup>th</sup> February 2019.**