

Oxford Diocesan Synod Digest (A summary of the meeting held on Saturday 16th March 2019)

The Digest is intended to be a summary of Diocesan Synod meetings that can be shared with deaneries and PCCs.

The Diocesan Synod met at St James Church, Gerrard's Cross.

The Bishop of Oxford, The Rt Revd Dr Steven Croft warmly welcomed Synod members. Bishop Steven then led a period of silence and solidarity in prayer for the victims of the New Zealand shootings in mosques where 49 people had died the day before.

The meeting started with opening worship led by members of the Amersham Deanery. Starting with Godly Play led by Revd Cassa Messervy and followed by Dwelling in the Word using Luke 10 v 1-12. Members spent time reflecting on the passages with their neighbour.

1. The Minutes of the meeting of Diocesan Synod held on 17th November 2018 were approved and signed.

2. Questions (raised in advance of meeting):

There were five questions raised which some needed a complex response. The issues concerned episcopal oversight for clergy and congregations on matters relating to gender and sexuality; Completion of Electoral Roll digitally through online applications; stipend differential for Team Rectors; a breakdown of Oxford dioceses historic assets and statistics around weekly attendance and population and those areas identified as being most deprived. The full questions and responses can be found at <https://www.oxford.anglican.org/who-we-are/governance/diocesan-synod/>

3. The Minutes of the meeting of Diocesan Synod held on 17th November 2018 were approved and signed.

4. Presidential Address:

Bishop Steven's address entitled 'I won't wear makeup on Thursdays' focussed on the importance of our work as a diocese with children and young people. He thanked all those involved in so many different ways with this vital work, from teaching, to work within our churches and any people who contribute to the health and wellbeing and protection of young people, especially those who work in safeguarding roles. He used a YouTube video clip showing a performance of the singer songwriter Jesse Glynn who performed at the Brit Awards. Bishop Steven noted how the song "I don't wear makeup on Thursdays" revealed a brave, tender and vulnerable performance. He noted that she was singing about a storm in the mind of a young woman trying to discover her identity. He hoped that it would not be associated with a struggle to keep up appearances but seen for what it was, an honest reflection of what life is like for someone in their twenties or teens. He noted there was a storm inside the minds of our young people and like the storm on Galilee it was a symbol of the forces of chaos in our lives threatening to overwhelm us.

Bishop Steven noted the diocese's commitment to strive to offer the best possible education in a Christian environment. That our strategy work with education and mission teams and children and young people was emerging well, seeking to model and develop chaplaincy models which are contemplative, compassionate and with courageous leadership. He noted how we were in a position of great responsibility and opportunity. Our calling is to be a more Christ like Church for the sake of the children and young people and he asked for the continued support of that vision as we move forward.

Bishop Steven's address can be found at: <https://blogs.oxford.anglican.org/i-wont-wear-make-up-on-thursday/>

5. Bishop Steven introduced the agenda item '**Common Vision**' setting the context explaining that the big theme for this year was how we move forward locally in parishes and in deaneries. Two things that have emerged from the process are the developing of a tool to assist local churches in connecting the vision and values with the planning processes and the second was developing and making resources available locally to support that vision. He wanted people to keep their eyes firmly on the vision to be contemplative, compassionate and courageous and be generous, open-handed and open-hearted in our response to one another and what we are trying to do.

- Introduction to a Common Vision discernment process for preparing and reviewing plans for mission.

Andrew Anderson-Gear, Director of Mission, gave an update on where we have got to in developing some resources as we ask the question about our calling to be a more Christ like church. **'Into deep water': a resource for the reviewing and renewing of our local mission:** could be used by deaneries and local churches to discern, explore, decide, and implement their plans for mission through the lens of our Common Vision. The paper outlined the research, underlying vision and values and proposed shape which had emerged from a working group comprising Diocesan advisers, in consultation with the Archdeacon of Buckingham and parish clergy.

- The Development Fund and its operation

Rosemary Pearce, Diocesan Secretary, shared the summary of proposals which had been shared and discussed with Bishop's Council and the Planning & Budget Sub-Committee. The paper explained the context and aims of the Development Fund, together with key features of how the Fund would operate. A full set of documentation had been drafted, including application forms, guidance for applicants and feedback forms; this would be being finalised and available at the end of May. She noted this as one of the key ways of supporting parishes through their exploration of ministry.

The development Fund would be offered in two tiers – Tier One, up to £2.5k. Deaneries can decide whether they wish to apply for a £2.5k grant to allocate to their parishes. Alternatively, parishes can apply directly. Anyone who is allocated a grant will still need to complete the necessary documentation to show the outcome and expenditure for such projects. There will also be a Tier two funding for projects above £2.5k.

Following this a number of questions were taken from the floor.

All of the presentations and papers can be found on the website at <https://www.oxford.anglican.org/who-we-are/governance/diocesan-synod/>

6. UPDATE ON CROWN NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE MOTION

Caroline Boddington, Archbishops' Secretary for Appointments, was invited to synod to give an update on the Review of the Crown Nominations Commission (CNC) procedure following the motion from Wycombe Deanery, passed at Diocesan Synod on 12th March 2016, and forwarded to General Synod for consideration: *"That this Synod invite the Archbishops to initiate a review into the role of the Crown Nominations Commission, including consideration of alternative methods of appointment for diocesan bishops"*

The key points of Oxford's Motion were: The need to rectify the time delays of the current process, lack of responsibility for the appointment, lack of transparency and the way in which representatives take up their role on CNC. In addition, Oxford also asked for consideration of alternative methods of appointing a diocesan bishop.

The review group made its first report to General Synod in July 2017 and Prof. O'Donovan's report identified that the group had thought carefully about how to tackle a culture of excessive secrecy, noting the work of CNC had to take place confidentially and that was essential to trust. However, within that wall an element of candour and openness should prevail. One recommendation had been to remove the requirement for voting in a secret ballot. The hope of the report was that people would share openly which way they had voted giving their reasons so that there could be good discussion about candidates. It was taken to General Synod in February, but was not passed, with the House of Laity not voting for this change. This was a great disappointment to all of those involved in this process. Oxford would now consider how this would be taken forward.

Mr Graeme Slocombe from Wycombe Deanery, who helped draft the original Motion, noted that this was a testament to the power a parish had. A concept that originated at a grass roots level had been considered at the highest authority at General Synod. He encouraged people to think about how their views could be heard.

7. Diocesan Advisory Committee - Quinquennial Inspection Procedure:

Mrs Liz Kitch, Senior Church Buildings Officer set context to her paper explaining how the process of appointing inspectors in particular no longer worked and the changes outlined in the paper were necessary and important to conducting Quinquennial Inspections as legislated in the Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction and Care of Churches Measure 2018.

There was an opportunity for questions before a vote was taken. There were some concerns noted but the Motion was passed unanimously, and DAC would now disseminate this information to parishes. The 1993 scheme is available online [here](#)

The 2016 scheme amendment is available online [here](#)

8. SAFEGUARDING *Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser (DSA) Report*

Mr Stuart Nimmo, Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser and Mr Peter Hay, Independent Chair of the Safeguarding Panel were invited to address the synod.

Peter came from a background of Social work involved at a senior level bringing a wealth of knowledge and experience. He noted how his role was not to manage safeguarding within the Diocese of Oxford but to help the diocese with the process of becoming a 'safe as possible' Church. He had worked with Stuart on establishing the team and had been working with the Board of Finance, developing a strategy for the diocese to be able to comment effectively on how it is progressing in this regard. He wanted to reassure members that strategy was about what it is like to be an adult or child in the Church, feeling safe or unsafe. Making it clear that it was as much about the future as it was about the past.

Stuart, also from a social work background of many years, noted how many of the issues affecting children and young people that were highlighted in Bishop Steven's Presidential Address amplified for children and young people in secure establishments. It was acknowledged that safeguarding can often appear to be a legal, moral and personal maze which is difficult to navigate. Effective safeguarding requires timely and appropriate responses that acknowledge the harm done and allow those who are affected an opportunity to be heard and to access appropriate help. It also requires team-work that maintains appropriate levels of confidentiality whilst minimising the risks that some individuals pose to others. Members of the Synod were invited to undertake a SWOT analysis of safeguarding arrangements in Parishes and across the Diocese to assist with a 'gaps analysis' which could be used to inform the structure and content of 6 Area meetings between the Safeguarding Team and Parish Safeguarding Officers that are scheduled to take place between April and September 2019.

Members of Synod were thanked for engaging constructively with the session before time for questions.

9. ANNUAL REPORT OF THE DEAN AND CANONS OF CHRIST CHURCH CATHEDRAL OXFORD, FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 JULY 2018

The Venerable Martin Gorick, Archdeacon of Oxford and Cathedral Canon, addressed the Synod noting the work as outlined in the report. He noted statistics show it is the best attended place of worship in the diocese for mid-week services. He gave praise to much of the work involved in education and the daily cathedral life but also wanted to address the recent media interest in the governance of Christ Church Oxford. Martyn Percy, Dean of the Cathedral was currently suspended from his role following a dispute that arose in 2018 escalating into a formal complaint which will be heard by an independent judge at a tribunal in July. The cathedral continues to offer worship every day under the governance of the Cathedral Chapter and the Sub-Dean, The Revd Canon Edmund Newey who is currently overseeing all matters. Recognising this is a very painful time for all concerned, Sue Booy's thanked Martin asking members to keep the community in their prayers.

Martin finished by reading a moving email response that had been received from colleagues in Christ Church New Zealand that the cathedral has close connections with, following the attacks on mosques there.

10. Feedback from the General Synod February 2019 group of sessions was given by way of a written report (attached), by Revd Andrew Lightbown, the most recently elected General Synod member having replaced the Revd Philip Cochrane. Andrew and all other members can be contacted at:

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

Please consider sharing this information in your deanery.

11. The meeting closed with a time of reflection on the morning's business led by The Rt Revd Andrew Proud, Bishop of Reading. This was Bishop Andrews's final Synod before his retirement at Easter. Following this Bishop Steven gave thanks for Bishop Andrew's work and closed the meeting with prayers.

The date of the next meeting is **Saturday 15th June 2019 in Cowley**. Closing date for new Synod business is **11th May 2019**. All papers can be viewed at: <https://www.oxford.anglican.org/who-we-are/governance/diocesan-synod/>