

COWLEY DEANERY SYNOD MOTION**BRIEFING PAPER**

In the light of the Oxford Diocese's commitment to becoming a Christlike Church that is courageous, compassionate and contemplative we ask that the Oxford Diocesan Synod:

I) recognise the significant level of inequality that exists across the diocese that enables some parishes to have churches that are "fit for purpose" whilst other parishes struggle to provide even the most basic of facilities such as running water,

and

II) commission a Working Group that will propose how best to provide urgent practical support and funding to those parishes that are most in need of basic facilities so as to enable them to fulfil their mission.

Proposed by Jayne Ozanne, St Mary & St Nicholas, Littlemore

Seconded by the Revd Canon Dr Geoff Bayliss, Area Dean

Unanimously approved, September 25th 2019

1. Inequality is inevitable in our fallen world and is unlikely to ever be eradicated during our lifetime. Whilst Jesus himself admitted that "*the poor you will always have with you*" (Matt 26:11), He calls us to not be daunted by this and to strive to build the kingdom of God on earth, amongst us now. This was modelled to us by the active faith and generosity of the early disciples who "*sold their property and possessions to give to anyone who had need*" (Acts 2:45).
2. The level of inequality across our diocese – both between our churches and within our wider society - is increasing. It is also more often than not hidden, as was highlighted by the 2017 "For Richer, For Poorer" Report by Jane Perry, commissioned by the Diocese of Oxford, where she flagged that in addition to "increasingly apparent inequality" the diocese was subject to:

Hidden struggles – *paradoxically, diversity of experience and increasing inequality also contribute to poverty and marginalisation becoming hidden. Statistically, local neighbourhoods which are particularly struggling can become subsumed into wider averages. (Page 2)*
3. The Cowley Deanery know this to be true amongst our own churches. Some of our churches have no plumbed water (so no toilets), nor adequate heating – making any form of outreach, especially children's work, virtually impossible. We have churches that have been condemned as unsafe and unfit for use. We know that this will be the case in many other churches across the diocese, where the burden of solving the problem has been laid squarely at the feet of local parishioners – independent of their ability or capacity to address such problems. To date little has been done to quantify the scale of this problem or propose strategic solutions, as it has generally been accepted as "just the way things are" (or placed on the "too difficult" pile!)
4. The Cowley Deanery believe that if we are to follow Bishop Steven's call to "put out into deep water" and prepare ourselves for a large catch, then we need a fleet of fishing boats that is at least seaworthy. This motion therefore seeks to acknowledge and own the problem that exists and to take a practical first step towards looking at ways to strategically address this problem.