

## Oxford Diocesan Synod

### A summary of the meeting held on Saturday 16th November 2019 in Milton Keynes

1. The Rt. Revd Dr Steven Croft, Bishop of Oxford, welcomed Synod members and visitors to the meeting. Following this, the meeting started with opening worship. It included Dwelling in the Word using a passage from Acts 20:17-38, led by The Revd Tim Norwood, Canon John Robertson and other members of the Milton Keynes Deanery. Special prayers were said for Bishop designate, Olivia Graham as she prepared for her consecration as Bishop of Reading taking place on Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> November in St Paul's Cathedral.
2. A number of notices were read: there was a special welcome to The Rt Revd Oswald Swartz (Bishop Ossie) from our link diocese in Kimberley, South Africa. Bishop Steven paid tribute to Bishop Ossie as he prepared for his retirement early next year; this was part of his farewell tour. There were a number of other announcements: Revd Canon Stephen Pullin had recently been appointed as Archdeacon of Berkshire; The Archdeacon of Oxford had recently been nominated to be the next Bishop of Dudley; this was his final Synod and a small gift was presented to him on behalf of members. Revd Canon Sue Booy, Chair of the House of Clergy to the Diocesan Synod, announced she would be relinquishing her role as Chair in March 2020 and a replacement would be sought. Sue had been appointed as the new Chair of the Kimberley and Kuruman Link Committee.
3. Presidential Address: Bishop Steven's address was titled '*How to Pray for this General Election*'. He noted that by this he meant how to pray for the renewal of our political life in our nation at this present time. He noted how, over recent months, friends and colleagues on different sides in Parliament had asked him to pray for them and our Government. "So great is the rising tide of desperation, the sense that we are running out of answers, the sense of paralysis at the heart of national life". Those requests he felt were sincerely made, and he wanted to respond to them: hence the need to give thought to how we pray, particularly as the general election will fall in the season of Advent. His full address can be found at: <https://blogs.oxford.anglican.org/how-to-pray-for-this-general-election/>
4. The Minutes of the meeting of Diocesan Synod held on 15<sup>th</sup> June 2019 were approved and signed.
5. Questions: A member of Synod had submitted a question asking "Approximately how much has the Diocese spent on the development and production of the new Parish Planning Tool, in terms of money, resources and staff time?" A written response was given by the Diocesan Secretary outlining its purpose and details of costs. It noted that the response to the tool at the three Archdeaconry Area Days had been extremely positive and the tool had become a key resource for our Parish Development Advisors and the parishes exploring their call to become more Christ-like. A copy of the Parish Planning Tool is being made available to each parish/benefice free of charge, often at the Archdeaconry Area Day (around 150 packs were distributed at the recent Dorchester Area day alone). Additional packs may be purchased online at a cost of £10 per copy, along with additional listener cards. The Parish Planning Tool content is also available free of charge to our parishes to download and print locally.  
  
The full question and response can be found at <https://www.oxford.anglican.org/who-we-are/governance/diocesan-synod/>
6. Bishop Steven introduced the new Diocesan Secretary, Mr Mark Humphriss and invited him to address the Synod. In his speech, Mark paid tribute to his predecessor, Rosemary Pearce noting her level of knowledge and insight that she accumulated and the great team she had built in Church House. He noted his intention to spend some time getting out and about around the diocese, to gather wider views, to celebrate the life of our diocese but also to ensure that he hears where we are doing things well and where we might be able to do better.
7. The Chair of the Board of Finance, The Revd John Tattersall, presented the budget for 2020 which had been agreed in outline at the June meeting. A number of people asked questions from the floor which led to some discussion points and the Motion to approve was later passed with one vote against and some abstentions.
8. The Synod worked in groups to discuss two questions following a request for a wider debate on how the diocese was resourced and finances spent. A paper had been circulated to assist with this. This can be found at: <https://www.oxford.anglican.org/who-we-are/governance/diocesan-synod/>

Following the group work sessions, feedback was collected and a summary of these would be available to members in due course.

9. A Deanery Synod Motion from the *Cowley Deanery* was presented to members and the Synod were invited to debate the motion, asking that *“In the light of the Oxford Diocese’s commitment to becoming a Christlike Church that is courageous, compassionate and contemplative we ask that this 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.”

After a period of debate this Motion was passed unanimously and Bishop’s Council would address how to move this forward.

10. The Synod debated a proposal for the appointment of three full-time Associate Archdeacons in the Diocese of Oxford. Bishop Steven gave background to this item noting that currently the Diocese was significantly under resourced in this area compared to other dioceses where archdeaconries were typically much smaller. An increase in archdeacons’ responsibilities, including changes in legislation in safeguarding, Clergy Discipline Measure and Common Tenure meant that archdeacons’ workloads were not sustainable and had stretched existing resources to their limit. This proposal would seek to redress this balance and focus on our Common Vision allowing better proactive mission and pastoral support to parishes and deaneries. Following a period of debate this was voted on and passed with four votes against and seven abstentions.

11. The Chair of the House of Laity, Mr John Sykes, presented the Scheme for approval for the Elected Lay Representation on Deanery Synods for the triennium 2020-23. This was approved by the Synod and would be disseminated to parishes in January before APCMs.

12. Mr John Sykes, Chair of the Development Fund Panel, gave an update to members noting that the first round of funding had now closed, and the panel had met to review applications. There had been an encouraging response; it was not possible to give details of projects supported at this stage as applicants had not yet been notified.

13. The Revd Tim Norwood and Canon John Robertson were invited to speak to the Synod on the work of the Celebrate and Bless Milton Keynes Deanery strand of the Common Vision process. With a population of 300,000 it is growing rapidly and becoming a regional centre – at the heart of the Oxford-MK-Cambridge arc.

14. Reflection on the morning’s business was led by The Revd Richard Lamey, Sonning Deanery and Acting Assistant Archdeacon in Berkshire. Following this the Bishop of Buckingham led the closing prayers.

**Future Diocesan Synod meetings:**

<b>Next meeting:</b>	<b>Venue:</b>
14 <sup>th</sup> March 2020	Green Park Conference Centre, Reading

**Dates of further Diocesan Synod meetings in 2020 (All Saturdays) from 0900 – 1300 (or as advised):**

13 <sup>th</sup> June 2020	Oxford area
14 <sup>th</sup> November 2020	TBC

**Elections for new Deanery Synods will be held in 2020 (3-year term of office). Notification will be sent in early January 2020.**

**2020 is also an election year for General Synod elections (5-year term of office).**