

## **Diocesan Synod Meeting 7 October 2020: Information Note**

***This summary of business done at the Synod meeting has been prepared by the Bishop's Office and the Chairs of the two Houses, and may be circulated by members of the Synod to deanery synods and PCCs.***

The Diocesan Synod met on Wednesday 7 October 2020 via Zoom. This was the first meeting of the Synod to take place in 2020, as the meeting scheduled for Saturday 14 March was cancelled owing to the then increasing coronavirus risk. When that decision was taken, we wondered whether we were being over-caution. Little did we know what the next few months would have in store. Synod is required to hold a minimum of two meetings a year, and so a further virtual meeting is scheduled for 8 December.

For the first part of the meeting, Canon Simon Kershaw (Chair of the House of Laity) was in the chair. The meeting began with Dwelling in the Word. Following the routine administrative business, the Bishop delivered his presidential address. Reflecting briefly on the publication of the final report into the Church of England of the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA) on 6 October, and then on the challenges of, and response to, the Covid-19 pandemic, he invited us to consider the importance of character and hope shaped by Christ as we commit ourselves to purposeful Christian living and radical discipleship. Synod members were then divided into small groups to reflect on the experience of their parish or church context over recent months, exploring three questions: what has gone well? What have you lost that you want back? And, what has gone that does not need to come back at all? The groups (and any member of Synod who wishes to do so) are invited to feed in their reflections to help as priorities under Ely2025 are re-set in light of Covid-19.

Following a brief screen break, Canon Alison Myers (Chair of the House of Clergy) took the Chair, and Synod heard a presentation from Rebecca Boswell, Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser, and Jon Chapman, Independent Chair of the Diocesan Safeguarding Liaison Group. This indicated the scope of the safeguarding team's work over the last year, including completion of the comprehensive work on the Past Cases Review 2, and indicating future directions of work, especially in light of what will follow from the national church's response to the IICSA report's recommendations. Of particular note was the importance of ensuring that a positive culture of safeguarding good practice is well embedded at every level of church life and the support offered by Rebecca and her team to parishes. Rebecca and her team were thanked for their excellent work.

Synod then considered the business of the Diocesan Board of Finance, including the budget and ministry share proposals for 2021. Canon Brian Atling (Chair of the DBF) explained that he was proposing a deficit budget for 2021, of around c.£950k, resulting from the loss of investment income and forecast lower ministry share collection as a result of the pandemic. Recognising the financial pressures on parishes, Synod agreed that there should be no increase in the ministry share request for 2021. Parishes and deaneries were thanked warmly for their continued generosity in ministry share and hard work in challenging times.

It was noted that there will be elections for both the General Synod and the Diocesan Synod in 2021, postponed from 2020.

Finally, the Archdeacon of Cambridge offered a brief forward look of business to return to Synod at the December meeting concerning the new round of deanery planning that will need to take place from 2021. It was noted that deaneries may require support and facilitation to make this effective.

The Bishop of Huntingdon closed the meeting with prayer at 9pm.