

DIOCESAN SYNOD

SATURDAY 22 JUNE 2019

(St George's School, Gravesend)

MINUTES

The Bishop's Chaplain and the Rev Dylan Turner led Synod in a short act of worship, and the reading was Acts 2:41-47.

THE REV CANON ALYSON DAVIE IN THE CHAIR

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS – The Rt Rev James Langstaff

The early believers, as we have just heard in that reading from Acts, were of one heart and soul, and everything they owned was held in common. And we learn that from other passages in Acts as well.

The English word 'common' can, of course, be understood in a somewhat derogatory way, as in "he (or she) is just so common", implying vulgarity or lack of refinement. But the etymology of the word is far more loaded from that, deriving from the Latin *communis* via the old French *comun*. Problems may arise, I realise, for some with a linguistic connection to *communist* and all that that concept and ideology may imply. But that idea of that which is shared or held in common is fine one and has very clear roots in Christian thought and practice. In our tradition, the Book of Common Prayer has an honoured place, being those prayers and acts of worship around which we gather and which bind us together as Anglican Christians both in this country and across the Anglican Communion.

Our passage in Acts gives us a description of the early Christian community in which, it seems, possessions were deemed to be held in common, in order that the needs of all might be met. Debate about the practicability of that in different settings did, of course, follow almost immediately – and there continues to be debate about the theological basis of things being held privately as opposed to in common. One of my discoveries in Tanzania this time was that they have Thirty-Eight Articles of Religion because they had to omit the one which is about the Queen and Britain and stuff like that. But the authors of the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion felt it necessary to include Article 38, which states that: "The Riches and Goods of Christians are not common, as touching the right, title, and possession of the same, as certain Anabaptists do falsely boast." I cannot help but think that St Luke might beg to differ from the Thirty-Nine Articles.

We know only too well that, from the very beginning, the Church being made up of fallible people, failed to live according to its own aspiration and distinction.

But there remains nevertheless something very attractive and inspirational about this vision of the community (note the word) in which common life is nurtured and expressed, in which the common good is desired and a common hope is affirmed.

I've focussed on this theme today because it seems to me to offer us a connecting thread in terms of things both within our church life – including items on our agenda today – and of things within the life of wider society in our nation and in our world.

When a bishop leads prayers at the start of business each day in the House of Lords we have no freedom to shape the prayers – they are written down. She or he says a prayer seeking for “the laying aside of all private interests, prejudices, and partial affections” [partial not in the sense of only a part but partial in the sense of not being impartial] in order that the outcome of our deliberations may be the “public wealth, peace and tranquillity of the realm and the uniting and knitting together of the hearts of all persons in the State within the same in true Christian love and charity one towards another”. The word ‘common’ is not actually used in that prayer but it could well be. And the concept is certainly there, not least in the phrase about the public wealth – that is the common good – and about Christian love and charity.

We live in times when many of us from different perspectives have considerable concerns about the common life of our nation. Indeed, much of the current debate – and I don't intend to go on about Brexit specifically – is around the question of what constitutes our nation and its common identity and life, and within that question even about what we mean by ‘nation’. Is this about England, or Great Britain, or the United Kingdom? And in relation to any of those, what is it that we hold in common and which shapes our common life and identity? Personally, where do I sit within that as a person who was born in Germany with a father who was born in India, and whose father in turn was born in what is now the Republic of Ireland? And many of you will have similar personal stories about your own belonging and identity, and therefore what we hold in common or not one with another.

As I've already indicated, I had the opportunity last Sunday in Tanzania to talk in some length with a senior government minister. Tanzania is a country within the Commonwealth where this generally widespread affection for and sense of connection with our own country. And I was trying to help them understand what we are about at the moment in terms of our current political life and debate. And one of his questions was around the future role of the UK on the world stage, not least in relation to his own country, and what that might mean, what that might look like. He was struggling to understand what might emerge – and I guess I was too. I came away from that thinking that whatever the strengths and the weaknesses of the various arguments on all sides, there is a work to be done in terms of communication who we might now be and how we are to be in relation to the wider world, not least with those nations with which we, as the Church of England and because of our past, have particular connection – where our sisters and brothers are full of questions as to quite what the future political state of the UK might mean for their wider connection with us. And it seems to me that actually we Christians – as part of the Anglican Communion – may actually have an important role to play because whatever goes on in the political world we have those continuing relationships, not least in things like our diocesan Anglican links.

Closer to home, and going back to those phrases from the House of Lords' prayer, many have expressed concern about our national society, the divisions which are there which you've seen in the percentages of those who vote in different directions, and also about the nature and tone of language and discourse as it is being used in our public, that is common, life. And unfortunately concerns around that may be seen to increase as we hear reports, allegations and so forth about how, for example, some of our people in public life, in political life, are speaking about each other, not least on social media – and that ought to concern us.

Our Archbishops and other bishops – myself included – have spoken about this in Parliament and elsewhere. Archbishop Justin we know received a somewhat mixed press over his call to us to open our churches and invite in our neighbours for tea, cake and conversation as part of the remedy, and that may indeed have been a bit too close to certain stereotypes as to what the Church of England is about. But, if our common life is to be comfy, wholesome and life-giving, then there is a clear need for discovery and articulation of a compelling common narrative that speaks to and shapes our shared identity, our values, our national being.

And it surely part of our calling as Christians, and especially in a church which aspires to be a church of and for the people of the nation, to play our part in action and in prayer – a leading part perhaps – in bringing back to reality and bringing healing to our Commonwealth relationships.

Our concern for that which is held in common must, however, extend beyond one nation and society. Our vision ultimately is neither just for the Church nor for our own nation. It is a vision of redemption and transformation of the whole of humanity, indeed the whole of God's creation. On our agenda today, in response to a question from the Sevenoaks Deanery Synod, we have discussion around our calling to care for creation. I will have the opportunity to speak further about this in introducing that item but, in the context of this address, I want to suggest that theologically this sits within an understanding of the common calling to be stewards of that which is entrusted by God to our common care. Under God we hold the world and all the rich diversity of its life in common – that is, we share together in that care. Indeed, we might go further and say that our wellbeing, as humankind, is held in common with the wellbeing of the whole of creation. This is therefore not some matter of peripheral interest for those who are passionate about that sort of thing. It is, rather, a core dimension of our discipleship, which is why it is there so prominently in the Five Marks of Mission.

If we are to speak credibly in relation to national and global matters of common life, then our own common life within the Church needs itself to be credible. There is a theological understanding that the Church needs to seek to be a living example of the life of the Kingdom. To put it another way, this about the Church being able to exemplify that which is God's intention for the whole of creation. Our common life as the people of God, as followers of Jesus, is to be both a prophetic statement and an act of witness. If it doesn't seem too grand that which we seek to embody is to be a foretaste of the life of heaven. That may seem a bit far-fetched as we gather for worship tomorrow morning and look around those that are gathered with you, and you ask yourself the question: "Is this a foretaste of heaven?" But theologically that is what it is – as the people of God gather, and not least as we gather around the Lord's table.

And there is in my opinion no clearer test of the quality of the common life than how we handle possessions and money. We go full circle back to Acts chapter 4. Whether in the context of a family, or church, or nation – how we handle our money is a sure indicator of our values, our priorities, and the quality of our relationships. We have on our agenda today a proposal of our diocesan General Fund being re-designated as our Common Fund – many other dioceses already use that term, in fact every other diocese in which I've served. And, while that may seem a small matter of words, it does reflect the fact that the ministry and mission supported through that Fund is to be our common concern and responsibility. It is primarily the costs associated with our lay and ordained ministries – both direct costs such as training, stipends, housing, and pensions, and indirect costs such as safeguarding and costs associated with legal and synodical structures, and with the National Church. We also have a motion relating to how we share those costs across our diocesan family. It is, please note, only a formula to give parishes and congregations an indication of what they may give towards that common mission and ministry. And we know that no such formula is perfect, which is why almost every other diocese has a different one. But what concerns me is not the precise details of the formula but rather the spirit in which we equate the matter of giving to God and to one another in order that the mission of the Church may be offered credibly in every community for which we have a shared responsibility. And as members of this Synod, though we may be elected from particular places, our responsibility when we are here, is primarily for that which we have in common, that which we hold in common. The Synod is a gathering of those who are journeying together on God's way. And just as the early Christians had to work out practical things that served their common life – things such as the care of the vulnerable and the support of churches that lacked resources – so also do we. The important thing is to see this in the context of our understanding of the nature of the Church, our calling to a common life and witness and mission.

And finally on this theme we have in recent years, as you know well, been seeking to think about our calling in terms of it being something which we hold together in common. We are called together, to use our phrase, and that not least in terms of the calling to growth, to mission, and to enrich the places where we are sent. Today, once again, we have time to engage with a couple of strands from Called Together as part of our synodical oversight and shaping of our common life. It is quite easy to portray the life of the early Christian community as somewhat idealistic and so forth, and because we know that they struggled with it, therefore to view it as something which is not practically achievable. Nonetheless, that calling to interpret and understand that model, that pattern, which is there in the earliest communities, in terms of our common life and what it might mean in our setting to "hold things in common" – that calling seems to me just as relevant today as it was then. And as a Synod we have a particular responsibility in that regard.

1. Opening Worship and Presidential Address

The worship and Address were as detailed above. Bishop James also took the opportunity to notify members of the following:-

- It was with sadness that Synod learned of the death of the Ven Norman Warren (former Archdeacon of Rochester) earlier in the week. Members were urged to hold his widow, Yvonne, and the rest of the family in their prayers.

- Greetings were received from our sisters and brothers in the Diocese of Kondoa. During a recent visit the Bishop and others had shared in their Ordination Service, which included the first four priestly ordinations of women in that Diocese.
- Between 16-23 July 2020, prior to the Lambeth Conference, the Diocese would host its own Companion Dioceses Bishops, the Bishop of East Tennessee, and a bishop from New Zealand (both of whom also had links with Kondoa), along with one or two bishops from South India (where the Cathedral and some parishes had links). A programme would be drawn up for various engagements during that time.
- It had been noted that attendance at the Summer meetings of Diocesan Synod was problematic, due to weddings, church fetes, etc. The Bishop hoped to be able to address this issue, perhaps with more creative thinking around the pattern of meetings, when looking at diocesan dates for 2020.
- The Diocese's bid for funding from Church Commissioners' Strategic Development Fund had borne fruit to the tune of £1.388m, which would enable locally based projects to be supported in four urban areas of relative deprivation across the Diocese, namely Anerley, Erith and Slade Green, Gillingham, and Strood. Thanks were expressed to those who had been involved in shaping the bid.
- The Bishop and his Leadership Team were pursuing opportunities that had begun to open up for a fresh approach to conversations with the Diocese of Canterbury on further collaborative working.
- The Very Rev Dr Phil Hesketh, Dean of Rochester, had recently been appointed as a Deputy Lieutenant of the County of Kent, an honour bestowed in recognition of his contribution to the county.
- A celebration service was to be held at 11:00am in the Cathedral on Saturday 29 June in the context of the diocesan partnership with the Diagrama Foundation and Home For Good charity, around fostering and adoption and the calling to those ways of parenting. The service was open to everybody.

2. Promulgation of Amending Canon No 38

The Chair GAVE NOTICE that, at its February 2019 group of sessions, held in London, the General Synod resolved that the Amending Canon No. 38 be made, promulgated and executed.

Amending Canon No 38 replaces the former Canon B 43 (relations with other Churches) and Canon B 44 (local ecumenical projects) with a new Canon B 43 to be entitled "Of ecumenical relations".

The Synod TOOK NOTE.

3. Annual Report & Accounts 2018

Canon Judith Armitt, the Chair of the DBF introduced Mrs Jenny Ross, the Communications Officer, who spoke about the new format of the Annual Report & Accounts, which combined the finances of the Diocese with details of the activities and mission that they enabled.

Canon Armitt thanked the Finance Team and the Communications Team for the new, more dynamic presentation, adding that she hoped it made the document much more accessible to those who were not particularly financially minded.

By way of a financial overview, Canon Armitt went on to say that:-

- Net Income on all funds was a surplus of £2.0M (2017: £7.8M).
- The Operating Result was a deficit of £0.38M (2017: £0.43M); after support towards stipend costs from the Diocesan Pastoral Account of £500K (2017: nil).
- Budget objective 2018 was a deficit £0.55M.
- General Fund expenditure was within limit of £12.5M authorised by Synod.
- The reserve balance on the Unrestricted General Reserve was £6.0M (2017: £3.2M).
- Net Assets £72.1M (2016: £68.5M).

She continued by informing members that the Diocese's financial strategy sought to eliminate operational deficits within three years, through a combination of:-

- Underpinning the values and aims of Called Together;
- Achieving a balanced budget;
- The introduction of Indicative Offers; and
- Building stronger financial resilience.

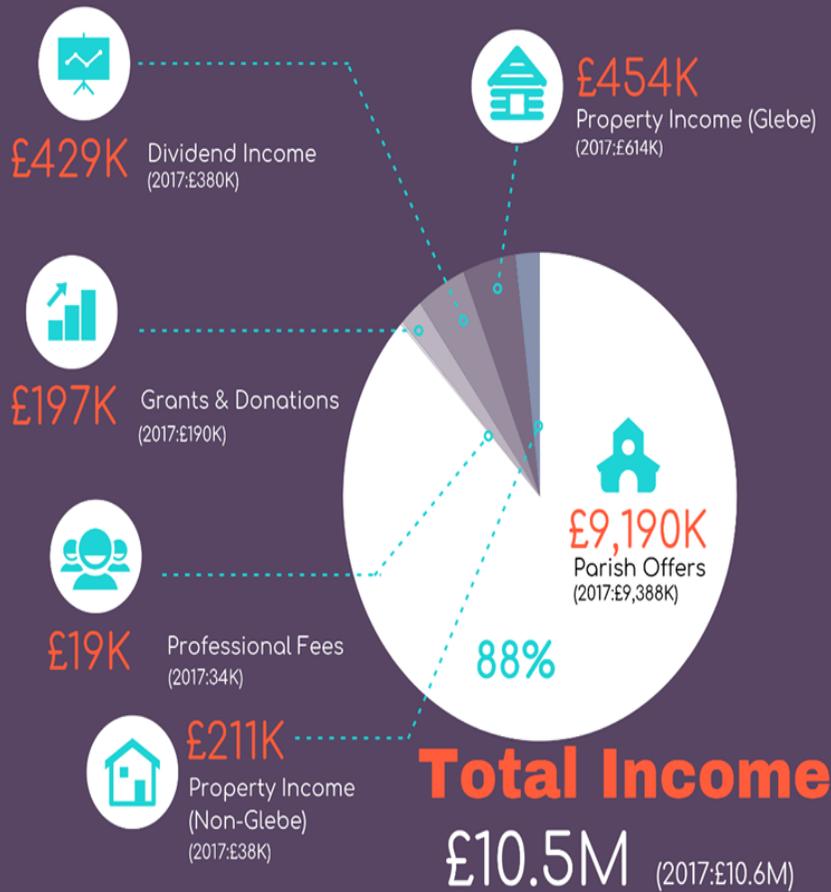
The Finance Director, the Rev Richard Williams, reminded members that the aim was still to achieve a break-even budget. However, 88% of the Diocese's income was down to parish offers, with 50% going back into clergy costs. The solution lay with each parish understanding its responsibility for the shared underlying mission and growth of all the parishes.

He informed Synod that an average of £73,000 was required per parish to run the Diocese, pointing out that whilst some would struggle to meet this figure, there were others who could contribute more than that.

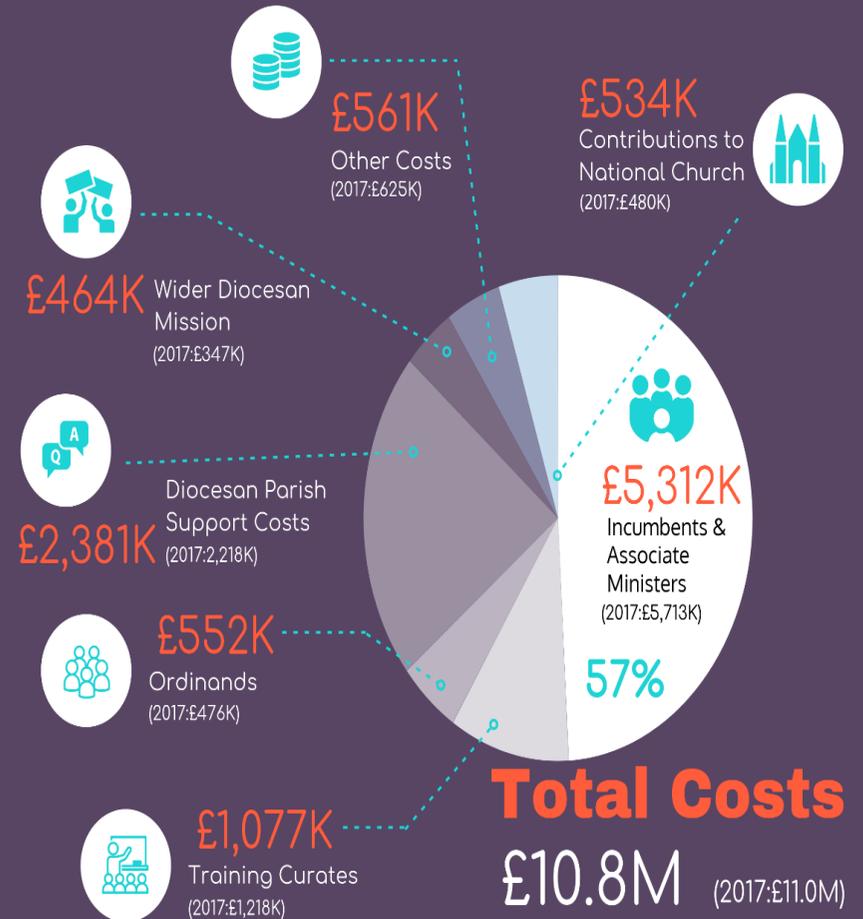
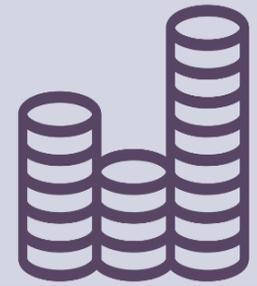
The support costs for a parish were as follows:-

Cost of a Full-time Incumbent	41,000
Diocesan Support Costs	10,000
Average contribution required to cover costs of Future Ministry, Wider Diocesan Mission and National CofE	14,000
Net average contribution required to support parishes unable to cover fully the cost of a Full-time Incumbent and Diocesan Parish Support Costs	8,000
Average contribution required from Parishes	£73,000

WHERE OUR INCOME COMES FROM



HOW THE MONEY IS SPENT



Mr Philip French (General Synod) commented that, on page 10 of the report, it referred to "Setting God's People Free" (SGPF). It said that, through its embedded commitment to Licensed Lay Ministry, the Diocese was already embracing the principles of the national programme. However, SGPF looked beyond and outside Church structures to the whole people of God at work in communities and wider society. SGPF challenged a culture that over-emphasised a distinction between sacred and secular for a fuller vision of calling within the all-encompassing scope of the Gospel. It sought to affirm and enable the complementary roles in vocations of clergy and of lay people. He asked therefore that, going forward, in Called Together and in all other deliberation, the Diocese began to take this seriously.

Bishop James responded that the phrase in the report was probably not as full as it should have been but he assured members that the Diocese had been participating fully in the national processes and six people from the Diocese had been part of the consultations. There was also work underway with the Diocese of Leicester, and the Bishop's Leadership Team residential would be held in Leicester to take that further. Although Rochester Diocese was not using the language of SGPF, because it had begun its own process of Called Together but it clearly sat very firmly within a number of strands of CT, not least the whole discipleship strand but also in things like enriching communities and chaplaincies.

The Rev Nicholas Cooper (Strood Deanery) asked for confirmation of the figure of £73,000 as an aspirational figure for each parish. Mr Williams responded that it was correct – but it was an average figure and it was understood that some parishes would be unable to cover that total cost. However, he hoped the aspiration in those parishes would be to aim to at least cover the ministry cost element. There would also be a cap in place of 50% of income for those parishes that could not cover the cost of ministry and diocesan support costs. Those parishes that were above average in terms of size and wealth, the figure of £73k was a minimum target. If the average cost was met, the ministry of the Diocese would be fully funded.

The Chair of the Board of Finance MOVED on behalf of Bishop's Council that:

"The Synod

- (i) adopts the Annual Report & Accounts for the year ended 31 December 2018; and
- (ii) appoints Haysmacintyre as auditors for the year ended 31 December 2019 and the Chair and Secretary be AUTHORISED to determine their remuneration.

On being PUT, the motion was CARRIED *nem con*.

4. Chair of the DBF

On the nomination of the Bishop's Council, Mr Nigel Pope was ELECTED *nem con* as Chair of the Diocesan Board of Finance with effect from the end of this meeting of the Synod.

Thanks were expressed to Canon Judith Armitt for all her work over the last three years or so as Chair of the DBF in building confidence in the Diocese and its finances. A gift of a limited-edition print of Rochester Cathedral would be presented shortly as a token of the Diocese's appreciation.

5. Safeguarding

(a) Update

The Archdeacon of Tonbridge reported that the Diocese of Rochester was one of seven that had been instructed to repeat by September 2020 the Past Cases Review (PCR) that it had undertaken originally in 2007-2009. There was also a requirement to undertake a second PCR, which would be carried out simultaneously. The Reference Group would be created shortly and an independent assessor would be appointed to undertake the audit of the Review.

The Archdeacon went on to say that the recruitment of two new part-time posts in the diocesan Safeguarding Team had been successful. There would be some reorganisation of the resourcing, which would result in a small increase in the capacity of the team.

Parishes had recently been instructed to conduct an audit of their safeguarding processes and policies. Whilst most had done this, there were still 30 outstanding and the Archdeacons would be following those up. Those received had been incredibly useful – some parishes had been able to request help, which would be offered, whilst others had discovered what they needed to do to meet expectations.

The Rev Rob Hinton (Beckenham Deanery) was concerned that, at the APCM in his parish this year, it had come to light that a churchwarden had sought nomination (as an act of encouragement) from a vulnerable adult who did not have power of attorney over his own affairs, was being preyed upon by a local criminal and upon whom the police and Social Services were keeping a keen eye. Mr Hinton felt this was deeply inappropriate but not illegal. He said that, if the Church was serious about protecting and including people, then it would be extremely helpful if some proper written guidance was brought forth – perhaps even from General Synod – that enabled churches and PCCs to know how to handle vulnerable adults who were allowed to be on the Electoral Roll.

Mr Martin Sewell (General Synod) asked whether the issue behind the request to repeat the initial PCR was not so much of the substance but that the process was not sufficiently documented. He added that a number of victims of past abuse were looking at parish websites to see if they complied with regard to safeguarding. He was pleased to report that the Diocese of Rochester was second best in the country with regards to this, and the diocesan Safeguarding Team had really understood the importance.

The Archdeacon responded to Mr Hinton said that it was a complicated issue because the action did not place the vulnerable person in any risk. It was not a question of their vulnerability but of their competence. She would take the point on board and talk about it further with the appropriate people. On the matter of Mr Sewell's question, she said that there was nothing heinous going on, but that the Diocese could not be able to be confident enough that the initial Review had been done completely to the letter of the guidance. It was, therefore, only right that it was redone. She concluded by affirming what Mr Sewell said about parish websites and the critical necessity for them to meet the requirements – and that included display of safeguarding information posters in churches.

The Synod TOOK NOTE.

(b) Policy and Guidance Documents

The following documents were noted at the October 2018 Synod meeting:-

- Promoting a Safe Church - Policy for Safeguarding Adults in the Church of England (2006)
- Protecting All God's Children, The Policy for Safeguarding Children in the Church of England (4th edition) (2010)
- Responding Well to those who have been Sexually Abused Policy and Guidance for the Church of England (2011)
- Safeguarding Records: Joint Practice Guidance for the Church of England and the Methodist Church (June 2015)
- Safeguarding Guidance for Single Congregation - Local Ecumenical Partnerships (Joint Practice Guidance with the Methodist Church) (June 2015)
- Practice Guidance – Safeguarding in Religious Communities (June 2015)
- Practice Guidance – Safer Recruitment (July 2016)
- Safeguarding Training and Development Practice Guidance (2017)
- Responding Well to Domestic Abuse Policy and Practice Guidance March (2017)
- Promoting a Safer Church – House of Bishop's Policy Statement (June 2017)
- Glossary Reference Guide (October 2017)

The Archdeacon of Tonbridge MOVED that:

"The Synod ADOPTS the documents listed above, issued by the House of Bishops, and also the following new documents:-

- Responding to, Assessing and Managing Concerns or Allegations against Church Officers (October 2017)
- Key Roles and Responsibilities of Church Office Holders and Bodies Practice Guidance (October 2017)
- Parish Safeguarding Handbook (October 2018)
- Practice Guidance: Responding to Safeguarding Concerns or Allegations that relate to Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults (2018)
- Guidance for DBF, PCCs and Religious Communities: Identifying and Reporting Safeguarding Serious Incidents to the Charity Commission (January 2019)
- Guidance for PCCs: Reporting Non-Safeguarding Serious Incidents to the Charity Commission (January 2019)“

On being PUT, the motion was CARRIED *nem con*.

6. Indicative Offers

The Rev Richard Williams, Finance Director, spoke to the circulated paper outlining the proposal for Indicative Offers, reminding members that it had taken 18 months to get to that point, with extensive consultation, debates and meetings raising the question of how to support the mission and ministry of the church together.

The formula meant that parishes would pay for their own ministry and make a contribution to the wider mission of the Diocese. It was acknowledged that this would be easier for some parishes than for others, and parishes which were unable to cover their own ministry cost and diocesan support costs would be asked to contribute 50% of their income. The ability to meet diocesan support costs and make a contribution towards the wider diocesan mission would be aspirational targets for those parishes going forward.

He noted that 10% of income, when added to 10% tithe for wider giving, represented 20% of income – a figure that Joseph used to recover tithes in Egypt, and a familiar rate in UK Income Tax.

Parishes would be notified of their Indicative Offer for 2020 in September, and these would be calculated using the 2018 Parish Returns.

In conclusion Mr Williams said that it was hoped that, with the combination of the Indicative Offers initiative and the new arrangements being put in place for DBF fees, together with a much stronger focus on stewardship support for parishes, the various aspects of Called to Grow, and a new-found financial resilience, the Diocese would be able to achieve its aspiration of reaching a break-even budget in the next three years. He then opened the item up for questions and comments.

The Rev Peter Callway (Malling Deanery) felt that the proposals were unrealistic in the current context. He said that structural level changes were needed – less clergy, less churches. Whilst investing in growth was good, it would take time to turn any growth into substantive giving, and he did not feel he could support the motion before Synod.

The Rev Rob Hinton (Beckenham Deanery) said that any system needed to be fair, and that was not achieved with the current proposal, as some more wealthy parishes, including his own, were being asked for less and some in poorer areas were being asked to pay more. He questioned the biblical basis of 20% of income as being 'theological gymnastics'. And he further questioned whether there was sufficient emphasis on making people pay and the analysis of a suitable assessment of the ability to pay. He felt it lacked reference to partnering of parishes. He felt, therefore, that the proposal was unfair.

Mr Hinton went on to say there was confusion as to how the calculation was made, and he also questioned whether it was right legally to make a call on legacies. He added that there had been no guidelines on what constituted gross income and he did not feel he could vote in any knowledgeable way without that information. Therefore he too could not support the proposals.

The Chair of the DBF, Canon Judith Armitt, said that these were well-made arguments, but two crucial points should be taken into consideration. The first was the extent of consultation and the thoroughness of examination of the feedback. She did not feel it fair to say that people did not understand it. The second point was for members to reflect on the issue of voluntary giving and fairness; the desire was for wealthier parishes to step up and give more, so the system aimed to be fair. The Bishop's Council had concluded that the proposal for extra contributions from the richer parishes had not been consulted on and so that could not be included in the proposal before Synod. There would, however, be more work on that.

Mr Gerry O'Brien (Sevenoaks Deanery) said that a top-down approach of the Diocese working out how much each parish should pay and informing them had been tried in the past. The alternative, bottom-up approach, of pledged offers had not brought in enough income.

The Rev Nicholas Cooper (Strood Deanery) added that he too was struggling to support the proposal and that using parochial fees to fill the gap would, in many cases, only lead to a commensurate fall in the parish offer.

The Finance Director, the Rev Richard Williams, said that staff were aware of the feedback on the DBF fees proposal from parishes that were struggling. Each parish's offer and fees would be scrutinised side by side in evaluating a parish's contribution. He added that the parochial fees collected would be used solely to fund stipend support.

The Rev Dr Helen Burn (Rochester Deanery) – urged Synod to think before approving the reclamation of DBF fees. She said it felt very destabilising for parishes that were paying their share but struggling to do so, and she would wish for the proposal to be set aside until the Indicative Offers process had bedded in.

The Rev Nigel Bourne (Gravesend Deanery) felt that what was being proposed had something good about it, and it was the first time that a relatively coherent proposal had come forward to put finances on a reasonable footing. But he could not support it because of some elements, although he commended the 50% cap for poorer parishes. He questioned whether members should vote for something that did not unfavourably affect their own parish, but which would adversely affect others. Mr Bourne finished by pointing out that the deficit on clergy pensions would be cleared in three years or so, so that cost would fall away, and asked how that windfall would be spent.

The Rev Dylan Turner (Cobham Deanery) found it troubling to hear people speaking against the proposal yet failing to come up with an alternative. He felt it was vital for Synod, as members of the Diocesan Board of Finance, to give its support to the Finance Team, who had worked incredibly hard to produce a viable solution. He said that he would support the proposal and he urged members to prayerfully consider their vote and to think about what the consequences might be as members of the Board if they voted against, and what it would mean for colleagues in the Finance Team.

Mr Rodney Hutchinson (Tunbridge Wells Deanery) pointed out that little had advanced over the last year and a solution was still sought. He wondered if Synod was losing touch with what its approach should be. He reminded members that they were all Christian believers, with faith in God, and that our whole trust should be in Him. He drew members' attention to Malachi 3:8-10 and asked if Synod was effectively 'robbing' God in the same way. He went on to quote 2 Corinthians 9:6, saying that giving should be 'joyful'. He acknowledged that it would be hard for some parishes and less hard for others, but the Bible urged generous giving which would bring about blessing.

Bishop James informed Diocesan Synod that proposals to release additional Church Commissioners' funding to support curacies were coming forward which would help. He was aware that there was no system which was going to solve all the challenges but the contribution levels in Rochester Diocese were among the lowest in the Church of England. This suggested underlying issues to do with discipleship and so forth, not about formulae and systems.

The Rev Gareth Bowen (Erith Deanery) stated that his parish could not afford what being asked for and that the system, in his opinion, was unfair. He asked if a parish could choose to pay less than the Indicative Offer.

Mr Bob Moreton (Gravesend Deanery) was disquieted that parishes had not received clear guidance on what did and did not constitute "restricted funds". He would support the proposal but with an unease.

Mr Laurence Pearce (Sevenoaks Deanery) announced that he was in favour of the proposals – there needed to be a formula and the one before Synod was a good system compared to some experienced in other dioceses. He agreed that progressive rates for wealthier parishes was a good idea and was glad to hear it would continue to be explored, as he felt that some parishes could afford to give a lot more than they had been.

The Finance Director assured members that "gross income" was already defined in Parish Returns, as were "restricted" and "unrestricted" funds. The information was already out there in the parishes but conceded there was a need to ensure everyone understood.

Canon Armitt acknowledged that there was scope for the situation to improve but the Finance Team and the Bishop's Council had worked really hard to ensure it was as fair as possible, and she felt it was significantly better than previous systems.

The Chair of the Board of Finance then MOVED that:

"This Synod APPROVES the introduction of Indicative Offers from 2020 and the renaming of the 'Unrestricted General Fund' as the 'Common Fund'".

On being PUT, the motion was CARRIED, the voting being:-

For – 50

Against – 8

Abstentions – 12

7. Parochial Fees

The Synod NOTED that, with effect from 1 January 2020, the DBF would reclaim from parishes that proportion of the parochial fee to which it was legally entitled, and this would be reflected in the Bishop's guidelines.

8. Diocese of Harare

The Rev Canon David Kitley opened his report by reminding Synod that parishes had recently received a letter from Bishop James and Bishop Simon asking them to hold a collection in favour of Harare Diocese, such were the needs of that place, and that Rochester's partnership with Harare went back quite a number of years. On 6 January 2019 Canon Kitley had attended the Consecration of Bishop Farai Mutamiri.

The Diocese of Harare had a troubled history in that in 2007 the clergy were thrown out of the Cathedral by the police on the orders of the bishop at the time, Nolbert Kunonga, a friend of Robert Mugabe. Mr Kunonga's subsequent actions led to the Church of the Province of Central Africa understanding that he no longer wished to be bishop and had resigned. Bishop Sebastian Bakare was then appointed in his stead. At that point Mr Kunonga declared his ownership of the Cathedral and the churches and refused to leave office, barring and bolting the Cathedral doors. In 2009 Bishop Chad Gandiya was appointed as caretaker bishop and the Cathedral was reclaimed. Mr Kunonga continued to make life very difficult, however, refusing to acknowledge Bishop's Chad appointment and retaining use of church properties. At the same time some \$800,000 of Cathedral money disappeared and was never recovered. Churches continued to be harassed by the police and Mr Kunonga with congregations being evicted by force. Not to be discouraged, the congregations simply began to worship outside the locked churches, in the open or under the trees and canopies.

The Archbishop of Canterbury at the time, the Most Rev Dr Rowan Williams, met with Mr Mugabe to talk about the situation the churches were under. Following that meeting, the court case that was running concerning the ownership of the buildings, etc, was won to the benefit of the Church in Harare, and people were allowed back into their churches. What they discovered, however, was that the congregations had grown in that time of displacement and they no longer fitted into the buildings – being at the heart of the community whilst worshipping outside had reaped a harvest of people, and some churches had to rebuild to accommodate that growth.

The economic situation in the country has gone from bad to worse, and exports of food to South Africa have ceased. Many large families were living in shanty towns in houses that were about the size of a garage here in the west, and water was collected from the village pump. It was humbling to be hosted by families who had so little but were willing to share it. Despite the lush greenness of much of the area, there is often too little rain to water the harvests. A cholera outbreak in 2018 was caused by a burst sewer and polluted water sources, so 40 water filters had been taken out to ensure clean water was available. The price of fuel was recently raised by the government and put it out of the reach of a lot of the population.

Bishop Farai, who would be coming to speak at annual Celebration of Overseas Links on 22 September 2019, had given up a position with a comfortable life to become Bishop of Harare. He asked: "Do continue to pray for us as we minister to the Church in such a very difficult economic environment. Be that as it may, we remain a people of hope, hope of a better tomorrow."

The letter mentioned earlier asking churches to hold a collection in favour of Harare Diocese had gone out in response to an economic situation that had changed dramatically. In 2008 a \$100b note issued on 1 July would have bought a bag of maize meal. The following day two such notes would have been needed to buy that same bag of meal. Prices doubling every day meant people were going to work not knowing if they would earn enough to catch the bus home again. A week later 150 \$100bn notes would have been required to purchase the bag of meal. By the end of the month a billion \$100bn notes would have been needed. So the government revised the worth of the currency and people lost faith in banks as their savings became worthless. The government then decided to abandon the Zimbabwean dollar and deal with foreign currencies. That raised the issue of there only being what was available in the country at that time – one cannot print somebody else's currency. The only way to get more into the country was to buy it with goods, but sanctions and drops in productions, together with 80% unemployment meant that was not a viable option. The inflation rate for May 2019 alone was 12.5% – which gave an annual figure of 400% inflation.

And so the need for Harare was one of prayer and compassion – members were urged to support the Bishops' appeal, and to reach out to form parish links with churches in Harare to offer support, friendship and love where it was sorely needed in a country suffering drought and crop failure.

The Synod TOOK NOTE.

MRS SARAH POOLE IN THE CHAIR

9. Diocesan Policy on the Environment

Bishop James began by saying that this item was a two-stage process. Today's presentation was an introduction and there was no motion to be voted upon, as the intention was that the matter would come back to Diocesan Synod in October 2019 in a more developed form.

He emphasised that environmental issues were part of our discipleship and stewardship and not simply an added extra for those people who were interested in eco matters. It was core to the Church's mission and to Christian living responsibly in the world. The paper sketched out the background in terms of the General Synod's consideration of the matter, in terms of the Five Marks of Mission, and then began to look into some possible ways forward for the Diocese.

The Bishop added that, as a Diocese, Rochester was one of those which had not funded a paid post in terms of an environmental officer with care for creation responsibilities. So there was a question about where this would sit in the future but, on a positive note, Canterbury Diocese was also working on this and there could be an opportunity for working together with them, and also in partnership with organisations like A Rocha UK and Tearfund, who were making a particular emphasis of this in their work. Clearly, if Rochester Diocese was going to embed care for the environment in its work, there would be implications across many areas.

Bishop James then handed over to Mrs Anna Pattenden, Headteacher of St Margaret's CE School in Rainham, which was a Silver Award winning eco-school.

Mrs Pattenden began by sharing some quotes from their pupils:-

- The future of keeping the school clean is in our hands
- Being green is staying clean
- Ride a bike or take a hike

It important that the school as a whole was on board with ethos of caring for the environment, and so it was good to have the pupils' involvement from the beginning.

In order to achieve the Silver Award, there were various steps that the school had had to take.

In order to first gain the Bronze Award the first three stages were:-

Step 1: To elect an Eco-committee (also has good links with British Values as well as the School Values)

- Members from each class in the school were given the opportunity to write a speech on why they should be the eco representative for their class.
- An anonymous vote was held, and a member of each class elected forming the new Eco-Committee. This now happened every year. A teacher and a school governor were also present during every other meeting.

- Meetings were held termly with minutes taken and displayed on the school Eco-board.

Step 2: Environmental Review

- The Eco-Schools Environmental Review covering all ten Eco-Schools topics was completed by pupils, with adult supervision and support from the CEO of Starfish Malawi (who was also a previous Green Flag assessor).
- A copy of the Eco-Schools Environmental Review was displayed on the school's Eco-Board and the results communicated with the whole school.

Step 3: Action Plan

- The Eco-Committee produced an Action Plan influenced by their Eco-Schools Environmental Review.
- Pupils on the Eco-Committee took responsibility for leading their chosen topic actions; these were litter and recycling, reducing energy consumption and reducing pollution.
- The Eco-Committee shared the Action Plan with the whole of the school.
- A copy of the Action Plan was displayed on the Eco board.

Having achieved the Bronze Award, there were then more steps to be put in place to gain the Silver Award:-

Step 1 to 3 had to be continued and in addition ...

Step 4: Curriculum Links

- Environmental issues were covered in the following areas: litter and recycling, reducing energy consumption and reducing pollution. Lessons were also connected, via their international schools link, to looking at how fuel could be produced through recycling materials in Malawi (Eco-bricks) and deforestation in parts of the world. This was clearly evidenced in pupil's work and through teacher planning.
- Whilst the three curriculum examples did not have to be from the same Eco-Schools topics as those chosen for the Action Plan, the school chose to link them in order to strengthen their understanding of "Eco" as well as strengthen their link.

Step 5: Informing and Involving

- A prominent and designated Eco-Board was established, detailing all the work on the Eco-Schools Seven Steps and chosen topic actions. This was put in place from the moment the committee was established and built upon, updated and added to as the work strengthened. The board included: Eco-Committee members from all year groups, meeting minutes, a copy of the Eco-Schools Environmental Review, the Action Plan, examples of Monitoring and Evaluation and the Eco-Code.

- The Eco-Committee used newsletters, the school website and Act of Worship times to communicate with the school and the wider community. Lesson plans and activities were also shared with Mtumbira, their link school in Malawi.

The school's next aspiration was to gain Green Flag status and, in order to attain that, it would be necessary for the Eco-Committee to continue all its hard work on Steps 1-5 and:-

Step 6: Monitoring and Evaluating

- Eco-Committee to monitor the effectiveness of the Eco-Schools topic actions: via data collection, National Call to Action surveys (or other national surveys), before and after photographs etc.
- Monitoring and Evaluation outcomes to be communicated to the whole school via the Eco-Board.
- Evidence and data collected must be analysed and evaluated to help pupils develop further topic actions.
- Some of the monitoring and evaluation data had been used in the curriculum, for example creating graphs and charts or statistical analysis in maths lessons.

Step 7: Eco-Code

- An agreement on an environmental statement for the school drawn up by pupils.
- The Eco-code must reflect the topic actions being worked on for Green Flag status.
- The Eco-Code must be displayed on the Eco-Board.
- The Eco-Code must also be displayed around the school for example in classrooms, school halls and even the toilets!
- The Eco-Code must be known and understood by the majority of pupils and, obviously, the staff.

So far the Eco Committee had produced an Eco Code, linked with the school's healthy eating focus:-

Helping each other

Eating fruit and vegetables

All working together

Love your environment

Tidy our playground

Healthy choices

YES to being healthy at St Margaret's

And further steps would include:-

- Eco Code to be predominant through the school and well known
- Green Flag – Monitoring and Evaluating
- Clean Air project data completed and monitored
- Litter picking rota to be used and placed on board
- Termly meetings with Eco members to be carried out
- Eco awards for classrooms
- Schools link – Eco schools to decide on a new project
- Classroom monitors

Mrs Pattenden closed with some more quotes from the Eco Committee, as the school became even more aware of the extent of the global issue:-

- Don't be mean, keep our planet clean and go green
- Save a planet, save a tree, in the end it will save you and me!

Bishop James thanked Mrs Pattenden and told Synod that many other schools were also engaging with environmental issues at differing levels. He then introduced the Rev Canon Matthew Rushton, Canon Precentor at Rochester Cathedral, who was an observer from the Diocese of Rochester on the Canterbury Eco Diocese Working Group and who had been involved in creating the liturgical resources that supported the Eco Church initiative.

The Canterbury Eco Diocese Working Group was set up in 2016 as the Diocese began to formulate its environmental policy, which was adopted in early 2019. A major aspect of the policy was to promote the Eco Church initiative, which was a scheme whereby churches could register and carry out an eco survey, which would lead them to different levels of Eco Church awards.

Canon Rushton informed members that the environment page on the Diocese of Canterbury's website had many useful links, including Eco Church resources, the diocesan environmental policy, and information about what different groups could actually do in practice.

The Working Group was formed to assess Canterbury Diocese in pursuing its Eco Diocese status. It also supported the Diocesan Environmental Officer, assists in keeping the environment webpage up to date, raised awareness of events, and provided advice on environmental matters. It also worked on influencing governments and institutions in relation to environmental values, and it raises awareness through liturgical renewal and development. The group also ran a twice-yearly forum event for church and those engaging with the issues, engaging speakers and running workshops. The other area it supported was ongoing training and development.

In April 2019, Canterbury was well on the way to achieving Bronze Eco Diocese status. Diocesan House had a Bronze Eco award, and the Cathedral had registered as an Eco Cathedral and was seeking its Bronze award.

Canon Rushton went on to say that the Church was responding well to the issues surrounding care for creation. A series of liturgical resources entitled "Eco Liturgy for an Eco Church" (also referred to as "Green Communion") was published in 2017 and reissued in 2018, the Pope had issued an encyclical concerning creation and creation care (*Laudato si'*), and the season of Creationtide had been introduced into the Church calendar (1 September to 4 October), although Mr Rushton felt that every Sunday was Creation Sunday as it was one of the fundamental aspects of Christian faith. In the last few weeks, a website had been launched by the Church of England for Creationtide resources.

The resources in which Canon Rushton had been involved in preparing were intended particularly for those engaging with the Eco Church and Eco Diocese initiative, and could be used at different points in the process of gaining Eco status.

Two liturgical themes ran through the materials. The first was the idea of 'greening' – greening the worship space (green being the colour associated with Ordinary Time) with altar frontal, lectern falls, vestments, etc – as an opportunity to reinforce and rediscover the significance of the colour green within the worshipping life. Lighting and technology could also be used to green the space symbolically. The other aspect to the resources was the Five Elements of the Eco Church questionnaire – five areas of a church's life that were the focus of potential change and reflection: worship and teaching; church buildings; use of land; community and global relationships; and awareness and lifestyle. Those five areas informed and structured the resources to focus worship on the aims and intentions of the Eco Church initiative. The Eco Liturgy resources were designed in the hope that they would enhance the life of churches as they spent time reflecting on God's creation and their place within that creation.

Bishop James thanked Canon Rushton, saying that he was somewhat encouraged to hear that Canterbury Diocese had taken 3 years to develop its policy! The paper from the Diocesan Secretary focussed on forming a policy for the Diocese of Rochester, as that had been the request from Sevenoaks Deanery Synod. However, Bishop James was less worried about the production of a document because documents did not necessarily bring about change. He was more interested in the discussion about what the programme or initiatives might be that would be undergirded by a policy. He continued by saying that there were questions about process, the connectedness with Canterbury, and some Rochester-specific initiatives, not least about the engagement with our own structures, through the Board of Education, work around houses and church buildings, and so forth. The Bishop then opened the item up for discussion.

The Rev Richard Martin (Gravesend Deanery), as Diocesan Interfaith Adviser, said that the issue was one in which co-operation with other faiths was possible and important. He urged that any policy included that interfaith element. Mr Martin finished by asking why members were not instructed to bring to Diocesan Synod their own reusable coffee cups.

Mr David Fitzpatrick (Orpington Deanery) informed members that he had recently learned that Tanzania had banned plastic products being brought into the country by travellers, and there was an example to be seen in that.

The Rev Ian Smith (Sidcup Deanery) said that his previous Diocese, Birmingham, was an Eco Diocese and he said it had an impact on the local communities. He had a number of conversations with people saying "I didn't know the church cared about things like this". It was the Fifth Mark of Mission and generally the most neglected one, but it really engaged with people in our communities and was therefore a good tool with which to reach out.

Mrs Jennifer Ross (Diocesan Communications Officer) said that, when she worked for Canterbury Diocese, she had been involved in the development of the policy.

She added that the Eco Church theme had really gone down well with people, as it gave them a structure to work with and was free. However, people also wanted to hear the stories of the simple things they could do to make a difference – changes in the communion products used, the cleaning products, or the paper they sourced.

The Rev Ann Richardson (Gillingham Deanery) told members that one of the younger members of her congregation, who had never got involved in anything, had approached her to say that the church needed to be more environmentally conscious, to which she had responded "brilliant – that can be your job!". And that person had flourished through that role, and had gained a sense of her place in the church as its environmental champion. Miss Richardson hoped that there could be other such champions in the Diocese with whom that young person could meet to encourage and to inspire.

The Ven Julie Conalty (Ex-Officio and General Synod) said that she drove an electric car and was grateful to the Diocese for ensuring her archdeaconry had a car-charging point. She had been inspired by a former churchwarden who had been driving an electric car despite living in a flat, which meant that she could not charge it at home and had to consciously seek out public charging points until her employer put one in at work. It was therefore do-able by most people and she hoped to see more and more staff and clergy in the Diocese able to drive green cars.

Mr Paul Stevens (Sidcup Deanery), member of the Spirituality network and a Spiritual Director, made a plea for an awareness to be developed between the external environment that God was calling us to take care of and the inner environment, our inner spiritual world – how we take care of our bodies, our souls, our spirits. Both should be treated as holy.

The Rev Christine Allen (Gillingham Deanery) observed that thinking outside the plastic box should be an aim. She had been to Tanzania recently and had gone on a safari – the Catholic nuns who had packed their lunch had wrapped it in newspaper which was dated 23 November 2012. There were lots of ways in which we could think outside the box in recycling.

The Rev Canon Matthew Rushton (Visitor) added that it was important to remember that humankind was not separate from creation but was part of it. The view of some church elements was that the destruction of the earth through lack of care was part of God's plan, and Canon Rushton refuted that strongly. Made in the image of God, humankind was the only part of creation that could irreparably harm or destroy creation – that was free will. A culture change was needed.

Bishop James concluded the item by saying that there was now a question around how the Diocese shaped the matter going forward, in terms of the Diocese itself, any potential partnership with Canterbury, and also with the work of the Cathedral. Those discussions would need to take place before it could be seen as to whether a specific policy could be brought to the Synod in October. He hoped, however, that Sevenoaks Deanery Synod would take heart from the fact that its question had galvanised the Diocese to take action.

The Synod TOOK NOTE.

10. Called Together

Miss Claire Boxall, the Called Together Manager, began by summing up a few of the things that had taken place under the Called Together umbrella.

The Diocese had taken part in the “Thy Kingdom Come” initiative, resourcing parishes and people with Novenas, Prayer Maps, and Prayer Journals. An event took place in the Cathedral and a calendar had been put together detailing over 400 other events across the Diocese and parishes. Feedback would be appreciated so that planning for 2020 could be informed accordingly.

An email had been sent out the day before talking about a meeting on 1 October 2019 to talk about the issues surrounding rural ministry and how they can be better supported and resourced, with a view to putting on a larger event in 2020.

At the last meeting of Synod the Rev Jane Winter spoke about development of a rhythm of life – Life Together – which would be launched at the Lay Ministry Conference and at Diocesan Synod in October.

An event was planned for 26 September 2019, which would look at discipleship materials. It would be a taster event with workshops where one could get a feel for the resources available on discipleship.

The Missional Property Fund was open for applications – funds of grants of up to £20,000 were available for parishes wishing to change something within their church building which would make it more missionable. That could be toilet facilities, a kitchen, an improved heating system, and so on. Deadline for applications was 5 July 2019.

Miss Boxall then handed over to the Rev Mark Ball to talk about Chaplaincy, the second workstream of the day. Mr Ball was recently appointed as Chaplain at Bluewater shopping and leisure complex.

Mr Ball began by saying that Bluewater had celebrated its 20th birthday in March, and there had been chaplaincy there since the construction stage, employed by Kent Workplace Mission, but paid for by Bluewater. His primary responsibility was the pastoral care of the Bluewater Management Team and the direct employees – the cleaners, the concierges, the welcomers, and all the administrative staff.

Mr Ball was also responsible for co-ordinating a team of volunteers from different ecumenical churches in the area, who worked with the retailers, going into the shops and looking after the staff and management of the shops. Most of the team came in once a week for a couple of hours to be available to their particular section of the centre.

He was also involved in leading Bluewater's community engagement within its corporate responsibility framework, which included the Bluewater Community Forum and the North Kent Interfaith Network Council. It was important to engage with the local community in as creative and constructive a way as possible.

With the Kent Workplace Mission Mr Ball was responsible for promoting chaplaincy across Kent and supporting other workplace chaplains.

Bluewater was designed for integrated, creative, theological reflection. All sorts of people came to Bluewater in all sorts of situations and for all sorts of things, and it was a place where God was. There were people who came to the Place of Quiet to pray – not to shop but just for their prayers. The Place of Quiet was the physical location of the chaplaincy. The circular room was used for reading, prayer, meetings and had open access. A local autism group had begun to use the chaplaincy area as a transition space – coming from the outside into the shopping mall could be challenging for those with autism and the space allowed them time to acclimatise. Counselling was also offered for those who had been bereaved of babies and children.

Comments from people who had used the Place for Quiet included:-

- Thank you for providing such a lovely, still space for everyone
- It's an impressive surprise to find this here
- A good place to chill
- It's too cold
- It's too hot

Mr Ball went on to say that he and his team were present in Bluewater to be a recognisable and accessible caring presence at the heart of its community, in some small way reflecting something of the reality of God's presence and the truth of God's love in that place. It was good mission from the Church's point of view and from Bluewater's point of view it was good business.

2013 research from Princeton University that looked at American corporate organisations that had relationships with chaplaincy providers found the following came out as important benefits:-

- organisational commitment
- employee well-being
- reduced operational costs
- increased staff retention
- an overall positive organisational culture

Mr Ball summed it up by saying that, in the end it was about personal encounter and the pastoral care for personal well-being within the Bluewater community. It was about rejoicing with those who rejoiced and weeping with those who wept.

Miss Boxall reminded members that one of the delights and challenges of chaplaincy was that it was completely different in almost every place it was in. Meeting in St George's School gave the opportunity to try and understand what it was to be within the school. She therefore introduced the Rev Trudi Oliver, who was the Chaplain at St George's School and Vicar of St Mary, Gravesend.

Mrs Oliver reiterated Miss Boxall's comment that every chaplaincy was different and school chaplaincy was equally diverse. Each school was different, and each chaplain would bring his or her own unique personality to the role. St George's School, whilst a Christian school, was not a school solely for Christians. In practical terms, Mrs Oliver wrote for the daily Pause for Thought three times a week and delivered that over the tannoy system.

She tried to make them contemporary and relevant to recent events. Each day of the week, each school community had an act of worship in St Mary's Church, so she prepared one to be delivered four times a week. The acts of worship could include a starter game to break the ice and introduce the students to the fact that church did not have to be quiet, still and boring.

However, the majority of Mrs Oliver's work was like any other chaplaincy – building relationships and being present for the staff, students and occasionally the parents. Increasingly the role had been to look after students who had been bereaved in some way. The death of a staff member, a parental suicide and the sudden and tragic death of a Year 8 student had all had an impact on the school, and – alongside personal family bereavements – had meant a difficult 18 months. Having struggled as to whether she was making any impact on the staff, Mrs Oliver had been overwhelmed and encouraged by the staff coming to see her at the end of the day to check that she was okay. It had not occurred to her that they would reciprocate that care. In that moment she realised that she had started to become an important part of school life.

There were also many joys to the job – an after-school drop in at St Mary's Church had many children coming along, with funny conversations, enough toast to feed a developing world nation, and friendships forming across the age groups. And every day, she had the opportunity to tell over 200 young people that they were loved unconditionally by God, reminding them over and over that they were precious and valued. She had stood outside the exams rooms and offered prayer before the students went in – some said no but many more said yes. There was a prayer space in the school which had proved invaluable as it opened up the opportunity for pupils to make safeguarding disclosures in that safe space. The pastoral team in the school picked up those issues and deal with them accordingly.

Various years came to the church at different times of the Christian year to hear about the Nativity, the Easter story and so on – providing the chance to stop and think about what was really behind those stories.

The role of chaplaincy in school often brought up the most diverse of questions ranging from the biblical to the sexual, but Mrs Oliver was aware that the teenagers she dealt with were simply young people trying to discover who they were in a broken world.

Miss Boxall then introduced the Rev Canon Bryan Knapp, lead on the Called to Grow workstream, who started by reminding Synod that the feedback from across the Diocese reflected a desire to see more people come to have a relationship with God, to come to faith, and to increase the numbers of people worshipping in church. However, there was also a strong message that people did not have the confidence to do this or did not know where to start, and so the Called to Grow workstream was seeking to address that.

To that end, the working group was today launching a Toolkit that had been developed which would lead parishes and congregations through the process of developing a Called to Grow Plan.

The Toolkit outlined ways of establishing an intentional time of review, development of the plan, and then delivery of the plan. The aim was that the discussions during the process would help review the whole life of the local church, which was the 'unit of activity' – where stuff actually happened. Every church was different, and thus every plan would be different, but the 'golden thread' should be the desire to see the Good News spread, and growth in churches, both numerical and spiritual.

There were five basic steps to developing a Called to Grow Plan:-

- Who are you as a church within the community in which has placed you?
- What does this mean for you as a church, and for us as a community?
- What now? What do you need to become the church you need to be for those around you, as well as supporting those who take part in the life of the church?
- Let's do this! Let's get on with what God has challenged us to engage in with the parish and the community.
- Review what has happened and celebrate how God has used the goals and aspirations as you have gone along.

There were various areas for support in this process across the diocesan teams but also through the three Archdeaconry Growth Enablers, who should be in post by early October 2019, and their archdeaconry teams of lay and ordained support enablers.

So far fifty parishes had asked for the resources and were piloting some of the stages, and 10 were being actively supported by members of the working group. Called to Grow was about creating a trophic cascade in parishes – looking to make one or two changes that attract new people, that created an engaging environment for both existing and new people, that brings new life to parishes and churches and made them a place of flourishing.

It was hoped that the Toolkit, with the resources and the changes made at diocesan level, would help all to continue to grow the Kingdom of God in parishes in this Diocese, enabling churches to look for those lost sons and daughter, to search for the treasure hidden in the field, and to encourage sowing the seed so small that it seems insignificant to the naked eye but which grows into a tree of such stature that all are attracted to it.

The Synod TOOK NOTE.

11. Time for Questions

There were none.

The meeting closed with prayer at 2:45pm.

Date of Next Meeting

12 October 2019 – St Olave's School, Orpington