

# Synod digest

Your round-up of what took place at the latest meeting of  
the Diocesan Synod

**GROW ENRICH RESOURCE**



Growth Enabler posts, one for each archdeaconry. They will come alongside parishes to help them further establish a vision for numerical and spiritual growth, using the excellent toolkit created by our own clergy and lay leaders.

"What they won't do is tell people how to do things, like the worst kind of management consultant. They won't have pre-programmed answers from a one size fits all checklist. They won't audit the church they visit."

## Presidential Address

Bishop James spoke to Synod about the common theme of stewardship that ran through all the items on the agenda.

"Stewardship in the broad sense of how we guard, grow, and pass on that which is entrusted to us."

Referencing the first letter of Peter, Bishop James said that we are encouraged there in, "our stewardship of God's grace in its various forms."

This included being stewards of creation, of our resources and of the Gospel:

"Without that faithfulness of discipleship and the life of prayer – the other things become mere good activity rather than faithful and fruitful following of Christ."

**View all papers, minutes, and the full presidential address at:**

- [www.rochester.anglican.org/diocese/diocesansynod/](http://www.rochester.anglican.org/diocese/diocesansynod/)

## Other links and downloads

- [www.rochester.anglican.org/diocese/commonfund/](http://www.rochester.anglican.org/diocese/commonfund/)
- [www.rochester.anglican.org/diocese/lifetogether/](http://www.rochester.anglican.org/diocese/lifetogether/)
- [www.rochester.anglican.org/resources/called-to-grow/](http://www.rochester.anglican.org/resources/called-to-grow/)

*Diocesan Synod, the elected body which formulates diocesan policy on a wide range of issues, met on Saturday 12 October.*

## Budget 2020

Nigel Pope, the newly appointed Chair of the Diocesan Board of Finance (DBF), presented the budget for 2020.

Having served for 13 years as a parish treasurer, he explained that his first three months as Chair of the DBF had taught him that this was not an "us and them" process, although it could often feel like it in the parishes.

Rather, it was "all of us together, with the same goal – to grow God's kingdom".

A break-even budget was proposed, which assumed a 7.1% increase in giving by parishes this year.

While it was acknowledged that this would certainly not be easy, it was achievable.

The Rev Richard Williams, Finance Director, went on to say that Rochester Diocese needed to challenge itself to raise all the funds.

It is currently ranked 39th among the 42 dioceses when it comes to parish share as a percentage of parish income.

He added that other dioceses had requested much larger increases in giving, which had been met or almost met.

Members were urged to look at new resources and a presentation on the diocesan website about the Common Fund, to use them widely in parishes and deaneries, and then to have honest discussions in their parishes as to

what their offer should be.

A helpful discussion followed, as members had the opportunity to ask for clarifications and raise any concerns.

Synod endorsed the budget.

## **Safeguarding**

Archdeacon Julie Conalty, the Archdeacon of Tonbridge and Bishop's Lead on Safeguarding, told members about the Past Cases Review, which is now underway across the Diocese.

Its aim is to ensure that all cases of concern relating to the behaviour of members of clergy or church officers, whether current or non-recent, have been identified and dealt with appropriately.

This follows a House of Bishops instruction to all dioceses to undertake such a review.

She highlighted an independent helpline, run by the NSPCC, that is available to anyone with information about church related abuse, or poor safeguarding practice: 0800 80 20 20.

Archdeacon Julie explained that parishes had been notified about key changes coming up with regard to safeguarding training.

Synod approved two guidance documents issued by the House of Bishops on Safeguarding Training and Development, and on Safer Recruitment – Permission to Officiate.

## **Policy on the Environment**

Claire Boxall, Called Together Manager, was introduced as leader of a new work stream on the environment.

Claire said that responses to an environmental survey sent to parishes in early 2019 revealed an appetite in the Diocese to support and encourage local parishes to take action on the environment.

"Although we lack a formal policy, there are already many activities being undertaken by parishes and diocesan staff to try and reduce our impact on the environment.

"This includes a number of parishes who have achieved, or

are working towards, the Eco Church award, activities in schools, and environmental improvements to parsonages."

She explained that a Working Group is now being formed of those who had expressed an interest through the survey, in shaping a diocesan-wide response.

Anyone else interested in being part of the group was also welcome to contact her on:

[claire.boxall@rochester.anglican.org](mailto:claire.boxall@rochester.anglican.org)

## **Called Together**

Three presentations were given on different aspects of the Called Together vision.

### *Life Together*

The Rev Jane Winter spoke about "Life Together", a new initiative, offering a diocesan-wide rhythm of listening, commitment and prayer.

It aims to be a flexible resource for all different worshipping communities, to help build confident disciples.

A Cathedral 'Life Together' group was highlighted, which has set aside

time to meet.

Members of the Diocesan Youth Council explained, via videos, how they use a WhatsApp group to pray with and for each other online.

## **Community Engagement**

Caroline Clarke, Community Engagement & Social Responsibility Advisor, spoke about work to raise awareness of the signs of modern slavery.

With Winter Shelters opening soon, she highlighted materials aimed at rough sleepers – the largest group of people likely to be targeted for trafficking at the moment.

She also spoke about the White Ribbon campaign, which seeks to end male violence against women, and which the Diocese is supporting.

### *Growth Enablers*

Bishop Simon spoke about the work of the new Growth Enablers, to help facilitate the Called To Grow process.

He said: "We have created three