

DIOCESAN SYNOD

SATURDAY 7 MARCH 2020

(St Andrew's Church, Paddock Wood)

MINUTES

The Rev Lindsay Llewellyn-MacDuff, Bishop's Chaplain, led the Synod in a short time of worship, which included the Presidential Address.

MRS SARAH POOLE IN THE CHAIR

1. PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS – The Rt Rev James Langstaff

As you may conclude from the theme of the worship so far, I had been intending to use all of this address to lead into the first debate on our agenda this morning, that relating to the Eco Church award and the follow-up to the recent General Synod debate on climate change and carbon reduction. I will come to that, though in a slightly abbreviated form, because I think it is important to use this occasion today to say a few things concerning the Covid-19/ Coronavirus situation – indeed it might be thought rather odd if I did not do that, and you will have all seen the notice on the door as you came in, which relates to that.

I am grateful, and I'm sure we all are, that we live in a country where we are fortunate in having what may well be the best public health service in the world – and if it isn't, it's very close to that. And I don't only say that because my wife happens to work for them! Professor Chris Whitty, the Chief Medical Officer, and Dr Paul Cosford, the Emeritus Medical Director of Public Health England, exemplify – as you will have seen when they have appeared on TV and such like – a balanced, calm, and utterly professional approach to these matters, which inspires confidence certainly in me. In relation to the Church of England, their advice and that of their colleagues lies behind the material which is on the national Church of England website and our own diocesan website. That advice is being updated pretty well daily and I want to express my huge thanks to Jenny Ross and Katerina Gerhardt of our Communications Team for their diligence in making sure that all our information is as up to date as possible. Given we have all of this guidance, it of course behoves us to take careful note it – both in terms of what it does say but also in terms of what it does not say – and to learn from that. And I encourage us, therefore, to return to those web pages frequently, as they will have the latest information and advice. Jenny will send out emails and other prompts from time to time but do please take your own initiative in keeping yourself up to date with what is on our website.

I am very conscious that anything I say today may be out of date by tomorrow, and indeed some of what I wrote yesterday is out of date today. Though it is, I think,

just worth taking this opportunity just to touch on some of the elements which may be of particular import to us within the life of the Church.

The first, of course, and witness the fact that we are here this morning, is that there is at the moment no general guidance to curtail meetings or gatherings, whether those be services of public worship, other parish or similar gatherings, or indeed the daily life of our schools. The obvious exception to that is where a person who is part of any such group or gathering has themselves become infected or has had close contact with somebody in that position – and there is specific guidance online dealing with those particular circumstances. So far at least, Public Health England has been able to keep pretty much on top of the tracing of close contacts of those who have the virus and those contacted as a result will obviously know who they are and they are the people who are being asked to self-isolate. We also know that, while this virus is more infectious than normal seasonal flu, it is primarily communicated via the hands or through droplets in the air. Therefore, the very basic things like good hand hygiene, which we should be doing anyway, and being careful about close contact – these things are key. I think the overall message arising out of this is not to take disproportionate action (for example, by discontinuing activities or closing our schools) but to take a sensible and precautionary approach.

More specifically, we will have within our church and wider communities those who are more susceptible to infection, notably the elderly and those with underlying medical conditions especially those to do with the chest and breathing. It occurs to me that some of these people, quite understandably, when they take note of what is broadcast and they know that they may be at greater risk, may take their own decisions not to attend worship and other such gatherings. And we may already have some who have done that. If they do that, it follows that they may also be wary of going into other public spaces, including their local shops. I, therefore, ask all of us but particularly clergy, lay ministers, and wider ministry teams to be particularly alert to those who by their own decision stop coming to church. If they stop coming to church, that may also mean that they are not shopping and that therefore they may not be feeding themselves properly – and we're thinking here of some of the most vulnerable, older people particularly, in our communities. My strong encouragement to all of us is to do whatever it takes to keep in touch with those people, whether by telephone, notes, or conversations through the letterbox or, if they are into it, social media. Check that they are OK, help them in whatever way to maintain their friendships, even if not face-to-face, so that they don't become isolated and cut off. Arrange for their food to be bought and left on their doorstep, and whatever else it takes. Such actions in these circumstances would be a tangible expression of care and fellowship for some in our midst who may be very anxious about the situation and therefore making decisions for themselves which actually place themselves at further risk through their isolation and not engaging with the things that keep them well.

There are then the obvious scenarios in relation to what we do when we do gather. There is as yet, although I'll say something more about this in a moment, no blanket ban on shaking hands, whether at the Peace or more generally.

It's been interesting, I've been this week on a deanery visit to the Deanery of Orpington and I was quite surprised that, when I had a half-day visit to the Princess Royal University Hospital, everybody was shaking hands with me and taking the initiative so to do. Having said that, on going into and out of every individual space whether a ward or anything else, it was clear one was expected to wash one's hands and actually soap particularly is really important because – and I'm not a scientist so I picked this up from others – I understand that viruses have a fatty layer around them and soap dissolves that even more so than alcoholic cleansing and so forth. So ordinary handwashing is really, really important and, whatever it was that they were doing in the PRU, that's what we should do. There is guidance online about other ways of expressing the sharing of the Peace. And, as it happens, one of our Readers, Susie Pinder, is just going to demonstrate for us the sharing of the Peace through British Sign Language. You can also find this online in various places.

A short video of Susie Pinder sharing the Peace in BSL is available on the diocesan website (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kJdbMwKptBY>).

In terms of handshaking, my information is that, within the next few days, generally there is likely to be a much clearer and stronger advice about not shaking hands in any circumstances nationally. So we might just need to be alert to that when it comes through and reflect that advice in our practice. Having said that, as I've said, the thorough and frequent washing of hands is the key overall piece of advice in relation to this because that is one of the clearest ways in which this virus is communicated. While we are still shaking hands and, if you are in your church at the Peace, it is obviously especially important that anybody involved in the distributing of Holy Communion (not just the person presiding) should cleanse their hands after sharing the Peace and before distributing Holy Communion.

Which brings us to the receiving of Holy Communion. In terms of potential for infection, though there is some variation of opinion on this, I think there are three practices should best be avoided. The first is intinction – the dipping of the bread into the wine – because may risk spreading infection into and through the wine. The second is the placing of the bread directly onto the tongue of the recipient because that can transfer infection onto the fingers of the person distributing. I recognise that some of these are more relevant to different traditions in the Church than to others! The third is for the elements of Holy Communion to be passed around a group from one to another, which happens sometimes in smaller settings, because that simply multiplies the number of people who may have touched the bread before a person receives it. I do also wonder about the use of non-alcoholic wine because, though the antiseptic properties of wine are limited (and are anyway antibacterial rather than antiviral), the use of alcoholic wine may offer some slight protection against infection.

In the light of that you may think it's actually rather simpler and safer to administer Holy Communion in one kind only – that of the bread – and again there is plenty information about this online. While that practice is found more commonly in Roman Catholic circles, it is entirely consonant with Anglican theology.

While receiving in both kinds, bread and wine is the norm and indeed the preference, receiving in one kind only does not diminish the effectiveness of the sacrament as a means of grace and a sharing in the life of Christ.

And finally on this, I do want to assure you that nationally and within the Diocese we are beginning to think – and indeed some thinking is a fair way down the line – about planning for the various scenarios which may occur in the coming weeks and months. We are alert to the events and gatherings in the diary which may have to be curtailed or to take place in a different way – and some of those are quite significant in our life, such as ordination services and indeed gatherings of this Synod. Should that reach the point of public worship, there is already information available nationally about places where worship is available on line and is live-streamed. There are one or two parishes in our Diocese which already live-stream their worship on Facebook Live and so suchlike, and that is something we may need to look at a little bit more as to whether we do that in a more intentional way at a diocesan level. And I'm assured that other people are thinking about events such as the Lambeth Conference and what the implications for that might be.

I am conscious that people may have questions arising out of what I have said. My suggestion – and the Chairs have taken this on board – is that we find some space later in the morning to take those – perhaps immediately before or after coffee as time may allow depending on the other debates. More generally, the best people to advise you within the Diocese are those in my office (and particularly Lindsay) and Jenny and the Communications Team. They would wish me to add the rider that they are not public health experts but they are in touch with the people who are, and are alert to the information which is being renewed each day. So just to summarise that, precautionary sensibleness and especially good hygiene. Please keep an eye on the diocesan website and pray for those who are the most vulnerable and perhaps the most worried in our midst, including those who upon hearing things on the news find themselves a bit panicked. Pray also for those caught up in this at a personal level, and there will be some within our communities, and of course those people who are in parts of the world which are the most badly affected by this.

Given the possible origins of the outbreak of Covid-19, the alleged eating of bats in China, it is very possible that there is a connection with the question of how we live and relate to the wider creation and indeed other forms of created life on earth. Our current focus around creation care and related issues might suggest that we had actually got our act together and coordinated things – not something the Church of England is usually known for. The Archbishop of Canterbury decided to have this focus for his Lent book and invited Dr Ruth Valerio to write it. She is now in place as Honorary Canon Theologian for our Cathedral and Diocese and, to mark her installation, gave a lecture based on that Lent book [Say Yes to Life] and that lecture is available for you to see online. An accompanying Lent course has been produced nationally and we have added filmed diocesan material for each of the weekly themes. And, as I discovered this last week while attending a parish group in Biggin Hill, some parishes have also added their own material to that national and diocesan material to make the connections with their own situation, experience and priorities. And so there is a fairly wide-spread engagement with this.

And, as things have worked out, this focus within the Church has coincided with significant focus on these issues in the wider world. This is the bit that perhaps we couldn't have planned but it happens to have happened. Some of it has been planned, not least our country's hosting of the Cop-26 gathering later this year, and I think Christians will be prominent in various ways around that event. And of course the unplanned things have included the devastating fires in the Western USA and Australia, floods and extreme weather in our own country and in others also, the continuing political debate about the human contribution to climate change and the significance of that, and the activities of Extinction Rebellion and other pressure groups, which have caught the headlines.

The Anglican Communion began to develop the Five Marks of Mission in 1984 and they were adopted by the General Synod of the Church of England in 1996. It is the fifth of those marks of mission which speaks of striving 'to safeguard the integrity of creation, and sustain and renew the life of the earth'. Whatever else may motivate us in relation to our care for the world, that phrase sets that care for God's creation in a clearly theological context and framework. In our acting towards the created world, we are those who, made in the image and likeness of God, share in God's work of creating, sustaining and renewing. In particular, we are to see ourselves as those entrusted by God with stewardship for that which God has created and given.

I am thankful, and a bit intrigued as well, that this focus on creation is proving to have the power to draw us together in common Christian cause across the traditions of our own Church and communion and across the various denominations as well. Those of more catholic tradition have long held to a very high view of the doctrine of creation and all that goes with that. Those of more evangelical tradition are often affirming strongly the thoroughly biblical foundation of the need for stewardship of God's world and the place of this within the life of the Christian disciple. Indeed, that dimension is emerging more strongly in a good many of the discipleship formation courses and programmes which are around – and I expect it will be clearer still in future editions of some of these.

It is also the case that these shared concerns are those which help to connect us and bind us with Christians in other world settings. We see, for example, the effects of deforestation in our companion dioceses in Tanzania, as land becomes ever more desert-like and infertile. And there is a wonderful project – LEAD Foundation – initiated by the previous Bishop of Mpwapwa, which is focussed around educating farmers in appropriate farming techniques, and a major project of reforestation in parts of central Tanzania. We are conscious also of Christians in South East Asia and the Pacific whose very land and livelihood is threatened by sea-level rises. And we could all add numerous other examples of where our brothers and sisters are living liminal and vulnerable lives in relation to these changes in the world in which we live. And, of course, many of those changes are driven by human activity, exacerbated by economic injustice and inequity, unchallenged because of powerful vested interests. It is no accident that the framing of that fifth mark of mission was significantly shaped by Christians from the southern hemisphere.

What should be our response, my response? Well, as a tiny starter, we can vote for the motion that Mark Barker will be moving shortly, and we can act upon it as a Diocese and in our parishes, chaplaincies, and other settings. That will mean looking at our buildings – cathedral, churches, halls, clergy houses, schools – and how we use them, what resources they use up. We will need to spend money on them to make them less carbon greedy. It will mean looking at our common life, how and where and when we gather, and what we do when we gather. It will mean looking at our procurement of goods and services and our consumption of them. In my role, I'm conscious I need to think about my travel to our companion dioceses which I thoroughly enjoy and which is, I tell myself, quite important and useful – but how can the carbon impact of that be mitigated? My hybrid official car may need to become a fully electric one. And as for my personal priorities and way of life – well I've gone public on avoiding short-haul flights and trying to minimise the use of single-use plastics. But I'm well aware that that is just a tiny little scratch on the surface, and I need to challenge myself to go much, much further. And I dare to believe that that probably applies to all of us.

The General Synod motion calls on each Diocesan Synod and Cathedral Chapter to address progress towards net zero emissions every 3 years. If there is one thing that I leave behind me when, in due course, the time comes for me to retire, I hope that it will be a determination in this Diocese to sustain a focus on these matters rather more frequently than every three years, indeed to see it as a core and continuing dimension of our daily walk with God and of our response to God's call to live in a Christ-like, gospel-motivated, and kingdom-centred way. Thank you.

2. Care for Creation

The Rev Canon Mark Barker (General Synod and Tonbridge Deanery) opened the item by saying that he had been present at the General Synod debate on the topic in February. It proved to be a major debate and, in light of the global climate emergency, it was agreed to call upon the whole Church of England to work to achieve a year-on-year carbon emission reduction with the aim of net zero emissions by 2030. The original motion was to achieve this by 2045 but an amendment was passed to bring that forward 15 years. Canon Barker said that he had voted against the amendment, as he thought it required an enormous task to achieve it, especially as there was no working plan in place. The amendment having been passed, however, the Church of England now had clear targets and much hard work would be needed to try and meet them.

Canon Barker acknowledged that he was a long way behind the curve on the subject and thought that many of those present would be way ahead of him. He was aware of parishes in the Diocese that were already doing much to work against climate change and to care for creation. As he thought about the Church becoming carbon neutral by 2030, he recognised it was a massive ask. However, he also recognised that the world had a problem and this evident by the stories in the news – wildfires in Australia, flooding in our own country, droughts in East Africa, ice caps melting in the Arctic, and so on. It was not an option, in his opinion, to sit back and say the task is too hard – there was an obligation to do what we could in the hope we could make the world a better place for future generations.

Canon Barker believed that this was a God-given calling for his people to rise to the challenge as good stewards of his creation. On that basis, his own church – St Stephen in Tonbridge – had decided to use the Archbishop of Canterbury’s Lent book by Dr Ruth Valerio as a basis for its sermon series during Lent, whilst also studying it in midweek groups. Parishioners were also being encouraged to use the #LiveLent resources. They had also booked a speaker from TearFund to share more about caring for God’s creation and to introduce the church to the Eco Church movement. He hoped they would then be in a position to form a small environmental working group, which would ascertain the church’s carbon footprint using the tools mentioned in the agenda item paper, and begin to guide them as how as a church and as individuals they could become more environmentally aware and reduce that footprint.

Whilst these were small steps, and ones that might have been taken years ago, they were taking the church in the right direction. There were other options available to help with the issue – solar panels on the church roof, a ground source heat pump, energy efficient LED lighting – but these were costly and for most churches were perhaps distant dreams but that should not stop parishes doing what they could. At church socials, St Stephen’s parish had begun to ask people to bring their own crockery and cutlery, rather than providing disposable equivalents. Electronic communications, including the weekly newssheets, were being encouraged rather than paper-based exchanges. They were also considering whether they should plant more trees in the churchyard, having learnt that the Woodland Trust would provide churches with free trees upon application.

Canon Barker concluded by saying that churches could work alongside local councils, schools, other faiths, ecumenical partners, and others within our communities. The motion before Synod called for an agreement that the Diocese of Rochester register as Eco Diocese and sought to work towards net zero emissions by 2030. The work could not be left to the Environmental Working Group, it needed to be a regular item on agendas at all levels – parish, deanery, DBF, DBE, and Cathedral. And the national Church institutions needed to consider if there were ways to provide grants to churches seeking to reach the challenging target. Whilst 2030 was a challenging target, the Diocese could no longer sit back, and so he urged members to support the motion.

Mr Cameron Clark (Cobham Deanery) said that he had spent nearly 39 years working in the Department of the Environment and its successors, helping to bring recycling from a niche activity into the mainstream and then to develop environmental management systems that allowed businesses and other organisations to assess and improve their environmental credentials. With the background of a degree in geography, he was committed to doing everything possible to protect and improve our fragile planet.

He had difficulty, however, with the more extreme elements of the environmental lobby whose commendable enthusiasm was not tempered by reality. He regretted the decision of General Synod to call on parishes and dioceses to draw up a plan of action to achieve net zero emissions by 2030 rather than the original proposal of 2045, as he feared it was doomed to fail – not because of any unwillingness to make a difference but because of the sheer impracticality of moving so fast.

He admitted that his own parish would not know where to start to make a difference. Its rural, isolated, oil-heated, draughty, leaky, Grade I listed church building would take more money than the parish could afford to achieve zero emissions. A lack of public transport meant most of the congregation had no option but to drive, and there were no public electric car chargers in or around the parish, all attempts to provide some having so far have failed, and so fossil fuel remained the only option for many to reach church in the foreseeable future. He felt there was likely to be conflict between installing affordable energy-saving measures and the need to preserve the integrity of a historic building.

In his opinion, the first step towards trying to comply with General Synod's request, was to ensure parishes had access to the resources, expertise and cash to assess their own energy and carbon footprints, and must also be motivated to use them. They would then need help to take a realistic look at the options to make a difference within the constraints imposed by negative budgets, falling congregations and the increasing cost of merely staying afloat.

In a society where goals and targets must be SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-bound), Mr Clark feared that General Synod had allowed enthusiasm to trump the search for achievable, realistic goals, and his greatest concern was that, by imposing an unrealistic demand on parishes, their full engagement – vital for success – would not be forthcoming.

Whilst he hoped a real positive impact could be made, even achieving the Bronze Eco Diocese Award would only take the Diocese a little way towards zero emissions. The Bronze Award only required 10% of churches to register to become an Eco Church and if the other 90% were slow to respond, the 2030 deadline would be rapidly approaching. Placing hope in the Eco Diocese model alone would not be enough – if the target was to be achieved, action must be swift and work on a comprehensive Plan of Action must begin immediately.

Prof John Quenby (Shoreham Deanery) welcomed the motion, saying it was incredibly important and he was thoroughly convinced by the scientific and empirical evidence for climate change. However, he agreed with previous comments about the costs involved. He believed that accepting the motion would mean that, in 10 years' time, gas and oil-fired boilers would have to become obsolete. A lot would depend on what Government said and what technology could do that individuals could not do themselves. The only sure-fire way of meeting the General Synod's target, in his opinion, was to go entirely to electrical heating and pay for the green tariff – and the cost of that was currently unknown.

Another way forward was a combination of geothermal heating and solar panels. However, it would be difficult to get enough panels on one church roof to become self-sufficient, and it would also be dependent on technology being developed for long-life storage batteries. Achieving the target would require companies investing in battery power. Prof Quenby concluded by saying that Synod must support the motion before it.

Mr Martin Sewell (General Synod) said that nothing he would say would detract from his support for the motion, but he would plead that Synod would continue to think carefully about these matters, and not get swept away. He took environmentalism seriously and knew that a huge number of mistakes had been made in predictions. Out of five major predictions made around the subject, only one had become a reality and that was that there would be large-scale immigration from southern sub-Saharan Africa to the north. It was important to realise, for example, that the internet now produced more carbon than air travel. One of the biggest problems for putting carbon into the atmosphere was that poor people in the south who were using timber to heat their houses, and which made them ill. Supplying them with cheap diesel made them healthier with a lesser impact on the environment. Planting trees on heathland would reduce the number of species that used to live on that heathland. The offset of one problem would often cause another. These were immensely complicated issues which had to be thought through carefully.

At this point Synod took Mr Cameron Clark's (Cobham Deanery) question, as detailed in agenda item 9, because it related to the topic currently being debated. Mr Clark's supplementary question and the response are also detailed under item 9.

Bishop James envisaged that, following appropriate conversations, that the Environmental Working Group would want to bring to the Bishop's Council, and thereby to the Synod, not just policies in words but work plans as to what could be achieved and when it could be achieved, and what that would require. The question of the resources, financial and other, would need to be part of that. That piece of detailed work would take some months to draw together, but he assured members that it would be pushed forward as fast as possible but in such a way as to produce a serious and rooted outcome. Bishop James added that the level of parish reserves overall – across the Church of England, let alone across the Diocese, was more healthy now than it was a decade ago. There might be some interesting discussions to be had in PCCs and as a Diocese as whether the time had now come because of the imperative of this, to invest some of those reserves in some of these things. That would need further thought but might be the kind of conversation required.

The Rev Canon Mark Barker MOVED that:-

"This Synod agrees that the Diocese of Rochester should register as an Eco Diocese and work towards the Bronze Award, as an initial response to the General Synod report [GS 2159 Climate Emergency and Carbon Reduction Target](#) and the subsequent motion for all parts of the Church of England to work to achieve year-on-year reductions in emissions and urgently examine what would be required to reach net zero emissions by 2030 in order that a plan of action can be drawn up to achieve that target."

On being PUT, the motion was CARRIED, with three votes against and one abstention.

3. Sports Evangelism

The Bishop of Tonbridge informed members that Rochester Diocese had been selected as a pilot Diocese by the national Church for Sports Evangelism. Sport was a 'Marmite' topic and people's response to it sadly often went back to whether one was picked early for teams in school PE lessons or not.

In the previous month, the Head of the Chartered Management Institute had said that the culture of sports talk at work needed to be stamped out because it was excluding. She might have had a point, especially when it came to corporate decisions reached on the golf course between men, but there were two social developments of note.

The first is the growing role and profile of girls and women in sport, both locally and nationally. Women's sport was finally getting the recognition on TV that it should have had previously.

The second was the embrace of sport played by people living with disabilities, perhaps first seen in the Paralympics but now extended to other sports. Sport was so much more than simply the domain of able-bodied men and boys. And it had become one of the dominant narratives through which people interpreted life. It is joy, pain, suffering and redemption, it is defeats and victories, it is heroes and villains. There were shards of idolatry in people's addiction to sport but also elements of truth. Sport should not matter as much as it seemed to but it did. Perhaps because of its embrace of tribes and rituals. It was often said that evangelism should speak the language that wider society understood, and sport gave an ideal environment in which good news could be shared. For a century or more, people have lived with a false dichotomy between science and religion, where some think that they have to choose one over the other. That tragic legacy had found a lesser echo in the way that sport and church had been set against one another in this generation. Sport had parked its goalposts on the ground traditionally occupied by church on Sunday – that had impacted on church attendance, especially among families with dependent children – and the lingering resentment this had created often soured people's judgment of the increasing role that sport played in the community.

Rochester's selection as a pilot diocese for sports evangelism for the next three years would give access to expert advice and training, access to those who were leading the way in sports ministry and evangelism, and development of plans for sustainable projects. There would be no cost to the Diocese this year, and in future years it would be the Diocese's choice how much or how little of its resources were committed to it. Last September a conference was held in the cricket pavilion in Kings Hill and it became evident just how much of the work was already going on in parishes. The intention, therefore, was to build on that as a way forward. It also gave a handle on how the profile of evangelism might be raised in the Diocese.

Bishop Simon reminded members' of the words of the athlete Eric Liddle, in the film 'Chariots of Fire' which, he felt summed up the spiritual experience of using the gift of the human body: "When I run, I feel God's pleasure." He went on to say that there was so much good to tap into in the nation's growing obsession with sport and it was our duty to express our love for God in and through it in a way that brought honour and praise to Jesus.

He then handed over to the Rev Wil North, the Diocesan Sports Ambassador and the Rev Mark Montgomery who assisted him in that role, to share ideas of how sports ministry and evangelism was already happening and how it might be developed.

The Rev Wil North (Diocesan Sports Ambassador) began by saying that many people probably thought they were not a sporting person and were not interested in sports ministry and so the item was not relevant to them. To challenge that, he shared some words from Bishop Tony Porter (Bishop of Sherwood, Diocese of Southwell & Nottingham), who was the previous National Sports Ambassador for the Church of England: "Sport, for the Christian, is just as much a mission field as going abroad or working amongst the business community." Mr North believed what he was trying to say was that Christians were called to take seriously sport as a mission field and, by intentional involvement, to become a Christian presence.

Mr North was clear that, for him, sports ministry required the proclamation of the Gospel and ways to do that in culturally relevant ways must be sought. Rochester Diocese had recently appointed three Growth Enablers and part of their role was to help churches map their parishes and look for ways to engage – and sport provided this to the church on a plate. From clubs to gyms, to dog walkers, to people gathering in the pub to watch sporting events, these sporting networks provided a definable group. The question was how churches might engage with them.

Most parishes would already have members within those groups, but the pilot project would help with was enabling those people already involved in those groups to plug in intentionally – to be a good Christian witness, to be open about their faith.

Whilst agreeing with Bishop Simon's comment about the church being at odds with sports ministry in, Mr North was of the opinion that sporting people were very spiritual. As a keen long-distance runner, he was amazed by how many spiritual conversations he had with people because they were out enjoying God's creation. It was vital that churches were given the language, the ability, and the confidence to talk to them. Another misconception about sports ministry was that it was about setting up a sports club – churches that ran such clubs were not necessarily doing sports ministry, they were just another service provider. If a church was to be involved in such an activity, it had to know what made it specifically Christian – what is the activity doing to proclaim the Gospel?

Mr North concluded by emphasising that not everyone had to be an expert or a great sporting enthusiast to encourage people to be involved. Christ Church, Orpington, began by setting up aid stations for a local run in the area – people who were not sporting enthusiasts, people who were not runners, providing the good news in a very practical way.

The Rev Mark Montgomery (Malling Deanery) picked up the thread, admitting that he loved sport – watching it and playing it so much that recently two members of his congregation had commented that he had not mentioned the Superbowl or Liverpool FC in his sermon and was he ill?!

Sport was key in the Kings Hill area in which Mr Montgomery ministered. He was chaplain to Kings Hill Cricket Club, which had hosted the Sports Ministry Day, and which provided a venue for the church-run community café.

Every Sunday morning, his PCC Treasurer engaged with 30 young lads as a football coach, with the church's blessing, because Mr Montgomery wanted to give him the skills and ability to witness in that place, and because it was a key part of his Christian faith.

In another instance, a 70-year old volunteer had proclaimed how joyful she was that she had managed to achieve the personal best for her age category at parkrun. Mr Montgomery was clear that sports ministry was key and he wanted to give that person the tools to be able to speak about her faith in those places. He believed that being a pilot diocese allowed that to happen.

However, to speak to those for whom sport was not of interest, he expanded on the role he played as chaplain to the Cricket Club. Through being involved, hanging out and watching games, he understood that sports ministry was not just about playing. Two weeks previously he walked with a member of the Club as they buried their unborn child. The previous evening and that morning he accompanied a vulnerable adult working with the Club who was homeless and in need of accommodation but who needed someone to advocate on his behalf. That was not the sports ministry that came to mind first but it was the ministry many were called into because they were engaging and witnessing to a new group of people in the community. It unlocked needs that would not come through the doors of the church.

Mr Montgomery concluded by saying that such opportunities were why sports ministry was key in the life of churches, and key in the life of communities, and it was why the Diocese was really enthused about being part of the pilot scheme.

Bishop Simon drew the item to a close, asking members who already had stuff going on their churches or were interested in starting something to get in touch. Members would be kept informed of developments on the issue, which would kick off after the appointment of a National Project Manager after Easter.

The Synod TOOK NOTE.

4. Safeguarding

The Archdeacon of Tonbridge began by thanking the teams at Bishops court and the Diocesan Office for the way they had responded to Past Cases Reviews 1 and 2 in readying files for review.

She also thanked those out in the parishes who had checked records, asked difficult questions of members of the public, and send in returns and feedback on the whole process. All of that was much appreciated and the work was ongoing.

One thing that she felt the Church was learning – albeit slowly and late – was about the importance of the survivor voice. The Diocese had been working with a consultant who was a survivor of church-context abuse, who had been incredibly helpful, and the Archdeacon wanted to express her gratitude to him. The work coming out of the collaboration with the survivor would include a survivor care strategy and some new publicity material that could be downloaded and used in parishes.

There was also some work being done regarding media engagement – radio and TV – which had borne fruit, with people coming forward from the south east for the first time who had been abused within churches to seek help, and they had been signposted to support agencies.

The Archdeacon went on to say that, in terms of resources, the third part-time Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser was currently being recruited, and some additional administrative help within the Safeguarding Team had also been made available to help with processing the move from paper-based records to the new online Case Management Service. The new system would make it much easier to manage cases, questions and referrals more effectively.

She was also aware that a question would be submitted to a future Synod meeting by Mr Martin Sewell that related to survivor experience, in particular around the ethics of insurers and the sort of compensation that survivors received.

The Rev Canon Mark Barker (General Synod and Tonbridge Deanery) said that, at General Synod, the Archdeacon had raised the issue of redress, saying: “Survivors have suffered in terms of mental health and physical health. They have lost families, relationships, homes and jobs. If we are serious about redress, if we are serious about offering hope – and surely, as a Church, that is what we should be offering – then we must not fail to deliver on that. Failure to deliver hope kills quite literally.” He asked whether Rochester, as a Diocese, could be sure that it was offering justice, and generous justice, to those who had been victims of or were survivors of abuse in the Diocese. And were the practices of the Diocese’s insurance company good enough, or should we ask the Diocesan Secretary or Bishop’s Council to review the matter?

The Archdeacon responded by saying that Canon Barker’s questions related very much to the question that Mr Sewell would bring to Synod. She felt it was important that the Diocese put its own house in order. The details of confidential full and final settlements were not known but – as a ballpark figure – she had heard of survivors who were offered something along the lines of £45,000 as compensation. By the time they had paid their legal fees out of that, they were looking at less than £30,000, and that was for abuse in a church context that would have destroyed their lives.

She agreed that there were ethical questions about insurers – all insurers used a very similar processes – and the Diocesan Secretary would be picking up on the matter as part of answering the questions.

Conversations needed to be had with insurers about the methods used, including desk-topping – a practice whereby, without somebody actually seeing a professional to make an assessment, a decision was made on the basis of paperwork about how damaged somebody was before they were abused in order to argue a percentage reduction in the settlement, on the grounds that how damaged they were did not therefore relate to the abuse. There was quite obviously an ethical question about that. Those were the kind of questions that were beginning to be asked.

General Synod had felt it would not be helpful if all dioceses did their own thing in terms of redress to survivors, particularly where some dioceses have more money than others. She was mindful, however, that wheels moved slowly but, whilst the National Church would continue to be pushed to look at what might be on offer, she thought it was also important for dioceses to look at how they could be generous with survivors, and Rochester had cases where that might be appropriate and, in her opinion, a Gospel imperative.

Mr Martin Sewell (General Synod) commented that, after the debate at General Synod, he had spoken to the Archbishop of Canterbury who remarked that he wanted “to see delivery”. The matter was complicated, but Mr Sewell felt that the National Church did want to deliver on the issues. Mr Sewell went on to say that the lawyer of a victim had made a very important point that was easily overlooked – that the Ecclesiastical Insurance Group did have some unethical practices but the one thing it did not do was plead the Limitation Act. They would look at and compensate on a 30-year old claim. However, if they were pushed too hard, they might revert to the lawful position, and people would be excluded from being able to claim.

The Synod TOOK NOTE.

5. Notices

(a) Safeguarding

Bishop James wanted to acknowledge the engagement of Rochester’s members in the safeguarding debates at General Synod, which had been significant. He had a sense that the Diocese was working well within the complexities of the issues, and he was very grateful to the General Synod representatives, the Safeguarding Team in the Diocesan Office (and in particular Greg Barry, the Lead Adviser), the Communications Team, and colleagues at Bishops court, all of whom had worked incredibly hard and continued to do so. Inevitably, the Past Cases Review had produced cases that needed further work, which meant more work for the Safeguarding Team. He was conscious that the workload from the Past Cases Review had been hugely demanding and he was very grateful to all involved.

(b) Vacancy-in-See Committee

Bishop James informed the Synod that the Rev Canon Mark Barker had been appointed by the Bishop's Council as Chair of the Vacancy-in-See Committee.

(c) Thy Kingdom Come

The Called Together Manager informed members that Thy Kingdom Come would run once again from 21-31 May 2020. Three events were planned to equip and inspire parishes, looking at how we help ourselves and each other to look at prayer, being led by Canon Barbara Lloyd and Mrs Margaret Wooding Jones – all in March, they would be held in Instead Rise, Orpington, and one in Hildenborough – and booking was via the diocesan website.

The resources available for the 2020 campaign would be available at each session. The new prayer map for families had augmented reality with it, by way of a downloadable app. All resources would be made available direct from Thy Kingdom Come and not centrally via the Diocese.

(d) The Big Church Survey

The Called Together Manager informed members that the Big Church Survey was new this year nationally, and was a tool being offered to help churches to find out where their congregants were on their journey of discipleship. The survey would take place in May and June and could be completed on paper, online or on an app. More information would come out in due course.

(d) Corona Virus

Bishop James urged members to make the current pandemic a focus for prayer, because it was a matter of worry for many, and to keep an eye open for latest guidance.

THE REV CANON ALYSON DAVIE IN THE CHAIR

6. Vocations

The Rev Canon Pamela Ive, Diocesan Director of Ordinands and Vocations, opening by saying that the last time the topic of vocations had been brought to Diocesan Synod was in June 2016 and many changes had happened since then.

She went on to remind members that all were called from baptism to be disciples and it was therefore a lifelong journey to grow in faith as one followed Christ. Each person had gifts and skills that were God-given – things that they could do which were unique to the individual – and God called each one in unique ways to use those gifts. The Church was made up of a diverse people and that diversity was celebrated.

Canon Ive informed members that, on the previous Saturday, a number of clergy and lay ministers had attended a conference with Neil Hudson, from the London Institute of Contemporary Christianity (LICC), who talked about how the vocation of the Church was mission. So, in vocation, all were called to be missionaries.

It was calculated that 6% of people were churchgoers and, when thinking about mission, that could be very depressing – how could they possibly expect to have any effect? However, during a week, that 6% was scattered amongst the rest of society and therefore able to reach a larger number of people. So, it was vital to discover the vocations of that 6%. And that was the aim of the Vocations Team in the Diocese – to encourage parishes and deaneries to help people discover their own vocation.

A Vocations Plan for the Diocese had recently been drawn up and one of the most important elements of it was to create a seed bed for vocations. Sometimes it might take time for seeds to grow and for people to blossom and it was important, therefore, to ensure there was a 'seed bed' in parishes, deaneries and other places in order to grow vocations.

Canon Ive informed Synod that a report called "Setting God's People Free" talked about 'baptismal mutuality', that is that, in baptism, everyone had a calling. There were four areas in which peoples' vocations could be seen:-

- The gathered church – unelected roles (eg Readers, Clergy, Messy Church leaders) numbering in the tens of thousands
- The gathered church – elected roles (eg Churchwardens, Diocesan Synod members, General Synod, Deanery Lay Chairs and members), numbering about 100,000 most of whom worked at a local parish level
- The sent church – involved in church-led community and social action (eg elderly support, Church schools, parenting and marriage courses), again numbered in their thousands.
- The sent church – involved in the workplace and in the wider community, which numbered over 1,000,000 lay people in every sphere of society.

Canon Ive then introduced Mr Philip French to talk about some of things that he saw as his vocation.

Mr French said that he thought he saw his vocation as being to use professional skills and time for public good, and for the Kingdom. Currently that consisted of three things. Firstly, the bulk of his time was technology and management consultancy for various charities, including the Trussell Trust and the Pilgrims' Friends Society. His vocation took many forms within that – in selecting people for roles, developing individuals, dealing with some trade-offs that charities had between their aims and objectives and the way they were perceived.

The second area was in non-executive roles (often voluntary) with a variety of organisations, once of which was as a member-nominated Trustee Director for the pension fund for Hewlett Packard in the UK. In the past Mr French had been a school governor, and been involved in education charities in Zambia and in India, and in not-for-profit technology business.

And then there was the church stuff – General Synod and its Elections Review Group, Bishop’s Council, and the Mission Council of the United Reformed Church as the Church of England’s observer. Locally, Mr French served in a variety of roles – Churchwarden, Elder, and Chair of the PCC’s Standing Committee.

Mr French then asked Synod what, of all that, was lay leadership. He felt the answer was most of it.

Canon Ive thanked Mr French, saying his vocation was a good example of why it was important for people in parishes to be helped to understand that Christian vocation was not just what could be done in church. There was the ability to be missional and to be Christians in all spheres of life.

She went on to talk about a book entitled “Calling All God’s People”, which was a theological reflection on the whole Church serving God’s mission and a resource to encourage everyday faith and growing vocations. One of the stories within it was of a vicar in the Paddock Wood Deanery who had been commuting to London to see where people worked in the city. It was important to understand what people were doing from Monday to Saturday.

It was a common misconception that vocations were just about clergy, whereas it was about the whole church. There were two books that she would recommend – “Life is for Giving” and “The Great Vocation Conversation”, which would help those who sought to encourage both lay and ordained vocations in others.

Canon Ive continued by reminding members that finding a vocation could be any or all of the following:-

- uncertain
- surprising
- affirming
- sudden
- hard work
- a long journey

And so, in discerning a vocation it was necessary to be aware of God and listen to Him, to listen to trusted others, to have self-awareness in recognising one’s gifts and weaknesses, and to value whatever one could offer and wherever one could serve.

Anyone wishing to explore a vocation should attend an ‘It’s Your Calling’ day.

When thinking about authorised and lay ministries, it was important to know that the Diocese encouraged collaborative leadership – lay licensed and authorised ministries and ordained ministries, alongside such roles as churchwardens – working together. The options available were varied and included:-

- Bishop's Certificate
- Licensed Lay Minister
- Anna Chaplaincy
- Hospital Chaplaincy
- Ordained Ministry

There were also short courses for those who did not feel a licensed or ordained route was for them.

She continued to say that Mr Alan Mitchell, an LLM of St Augustine w St Luke, Bromley Common and Chair of the Editorial Board of Transforming Ministry, had undertaken some statistical analysis which highlighted that lay ministry deployment across the deaneries was very unbalanced. In some deaneries there were significantly more LLMs/Readers than clergy; in others there were far fewer; and some deaneries had no LLMs in training at all. The question then had to be asked as how best the Diocese could nurture more lay vocations and deploy lay ministers for mission and growth.

The Vocations Plan for the Diocese which Canon Ive mentioned earlier in her presentation aimed to:-

- Encourage a wider understanding of Vocation to include the mission which was carried out by church members living out their everyday faith;
- Encourage all authorised and licensed ministries especially those who were underrepresented –
 - ✓ Younger vocations, especially younger women
 - ✓ BAME vocations
 - ✓ Vocations amongst those who have a disability
 - ✓ Vocations amongst those with no or few formal qualifications;
- Help Clergy and Lay Ministers to understand the Discernment Process and training requirements; and
- Care for those who were not recommended in the discernment process

The Rev Ade Lawal, a diocesan Black, Asian & Minority Ethnic (BAME) Vocation Champion, spoke of the obstacles that needed to be overcome in order to ensure that the BAME community was fully represented within ministry, both lay and ordained.

Parishes were therefore encouraged to create safe spaces and opportunities whereby everyone felt able to explore further their vocations, irrespective of their situation.

The Synod TOOK NOTE.

7. CRF and DLF Policies and Guidelines

The Finance Director, the Rev Richard Williams, informed members that the Church Repair Fund (CRF) and Diocesan Loan Fund (DLF) Policies and Guidelines had recently been updated, and reminded them that the CRF was set up 50 years ago to enable parishes to set aside monies for regular quinquennial repairs. Almost £4,000,000 was set aside in the CRF, and Rochester was one of the leading dioceses in having such a scheme. Alongside that was the DLF for parishes to set aside surplus funds so that other parishes could borrow off that money towards capital projects. Both funds had a small rate of interest attached to them.

The Synod TOOK NOTE.

8. Parish Offers Update

The Finance Director reminded members that the Indicative Offers initiative was launched in September 2019, and 167 out of 185 Parish Offers totalling £6.82M had been received, which meant that 10% of parishes were still to submit their offers. He thanked parishes for their ongoing generosity.

Mr Williams went on to say that he wished to encourage working towards contributing the Indicative Offer and DBF fees in full. He added that the request for 10% of gross income was the level required to meet mission needs within the Diocese. If that could not be met, it would impact directly on diocesan funding and capability. He also reiterated that parishes in a vacancy should try to maintain their offer, including the full Ministry Cost rate. Vacancy was experienced by all parishes at some point and, if offers were maintained during that time, then all could benefit from it. If not, there would, again, be a significant impact on funding.

The diocesan financial strategy, set out 2-3 years ago, was to break-even in 2020, and that was still the intention, along with a break-even budget on the Common Fund A prudent fall-back plan was set in case parish offers fell short of the required level. The break-even budget was based on £9.4m of parish offers and the recovery of DBF fees added to it. That compared with £9.7m of parish offers if all parishes met their Indicative Offer. On that basis, a full recovery of offers over a two-year transitional period was predicted by 2021. The prudent fall-back plan would lead to a deficit of around £800,000.

It was anticipated that a total of £8.60m would come in through parish offers, compared with the fall-back plan budget of £8.90m (a shortfall of around £300,000). However, it seemed that parishes were still offering the same amount as in the previous year overall. Mr Williams then ran through the figures in the table below:

	Parish Offers + DBF Fees (£M)	Contribution Rate*	Offer/ Adult
2019 (A)	9.04	31.3%	£523
2020 (Base Case)	9.39	32.5%	£543 (+4%)
2020 (B/E)	9.79	33.4%	£566 (+7%)
2021	10.1 #	33.4%	£584 (+10%)

* (Parish Offers + DBF Fees) as a % of Gross Income

Level of 2020 Indicative Offers ('IO')

If the Diocese achieved the average contribution rate of the wider Church of England at 33.4% it would reach break-even. And if individuals gave at the average Church of England in terms of a percentage of personal income, at 3.6% of net income, that would enable the Diocese to reach the £10.1m target for 2021. The question was whether it was within the ability of parishes and individuals to make that step change from £9m to £10m. It would be ultimately involve a cost at parish level. However, it should be noted that there were unrestricted parish reserves of £27.5m within the Diocese, and £1m per annum, going forward, was what was being requested. Mr Williams then handed over to Mr Nigel Pope, Chair of the DBF.

Mr Pope began by saying that no-one underestimated the challenges ahead and there was a need to continue improving communication.

The launch of the Common Fund, and the introduction of the new process of Indicative Offers had improved the conversation and relationships across the Diocese. The questions asked were mainly no longer about whether or not the system was fair and transparent but, on the whole, simply whether parishes were able to meet their indicative offer.

In rolling this out it had become clear that it was necessary to build on that with a formal system for receiving and responding to Parish offers. This needed to be in looking with the parish at the resources it had, and in some cases had not, so that where there was a challenging situation it was known and shared.

In getting to a fair level of offer which adequately reflected the cost of ministry and support that a parish received, the emphasis must be on collaboration and support, and not on point scoring. Where there were concerns of hardship these had to be seen and dealt with and not become another weight for the parish to carry.

But equally, if a parish was able to meet its share, but did not, it must be clear that its neighbours would be picking up the cost.

With this in mind a Parish Offer Evaluation Panel would be formed, which would deal with issues from parishes concerning the level of Parish Offers. The panel would also consider existing policy and how the existing system was operating. So the process will be:-

- Calculation of Indicative offer
- PCC resolution to agree their Parish Offer
- Review by Parish Offer Evaluation Panel
- Interaction with Parishes as appropriate in conjunction with Archdeacons
- Preparation of reports for Bishop's Council

The Parish Offer Evaluation Panel would be a sub-committee of the Finance Committee comprising clergy and laity, including:-

- 3 Archdeacons
- Up to 3 of the elected members of finance cttee
- Up to 2 co-opted reps from the parishes
- Diocesan Secretary and Finance Director
- and Chair to be appointed by the Chair of the DBF

Therefore, Mr Pope urged members to give consideration to anyone they thought would be appropriate to either be a parish representative or indeed to chair the Panel, and suggestions should be forwarded to himself, the Finance Director, the Diocesan Secretary, or to the Archdeacons. The first meeting would be in early April.

Mr Pope concluded by stating that the establishment of the review framework should enable a joined-up oversight of Parish Offers that was wider than the Finance team, and enabled parishes to have a body which was understanding and encouraging, and one that would hear their concerns about an appropriate level of Parish Offer according to their underlying financial situation and ministry and mission priorities.

The Synod TOOK NOTE.

9. Time for Questions

(a) Question from Mr Cameron Clark (Cobham Deanery)

"What is the Diocese doing to help parishes to analyse their environmental impacts and what advice and support is available to parishes to develop realistic programmes that will reduce those impacts and achieve net zero emissions within ten years?"

Response from the Called Together Manager

"Following previous discussions at Diocesan Synod and the recent General Synod commitment to aim for net zero carbon emissions by 2030, the Diocese and National Church are looking at how to support local churches to achieve this. This Diocesan Synod is considering a motion to aim for Eco Diocese status.

"Part of the criteria to achieve this is for 10% of churches to register to become an Eco Church, and 5% to have been awarded a Bronze award or higher. The Eco Church scheme encompasses all areas of church life and gives tips and suggestions on management of church buildings and management of church land.

"Throughout Lent the diocesan communications messages will align with the national #LiveLent campaign, starting with a message from Bishop James encouraging us, followed by weekly films featuring churches who have each taken actions. We hope that sharing these stories will inspire others.

"The National Church is looking at a number of ways to support churches with the target for net zero carbon. The first is the Energy Footprint Tool, which helps churches measure the energy footprint of their buildings – a further tool to help measure carbon emissions is in development. The Diocese of Rochester was an early adopter/pilot for the Energy Footprint Tool, which is available through the Parish Returns website, and is free to use. Over 25 churches in our Diocese have already started using this tool. Users are encouraged to gather their utility bills for the past 12 months before logging on.

"A number of other activities are planned to help churches engage with the environment, including a joint 'forum' event with the Diocese of Canterbury on Wednesday 4 November 2020 at St Benedict's Centre.

"There is more to come, and they are catching up fast. The people who are working in the national team on this were not quite expecting the change that General Synod made but there are things to come. They are looking at the issue of funding. We are looking at charitable funders and who might look at supporting this work going forward, and there is also some interesting work going on particularly with reference to Cameron's issue of medieval churches. There is some interesting work going on in the Diocese of Canterbury, who are looking at energy audits on those churches specifically, so we are learning from each other and looking at this nationally as well."

Supplementary Question from Mr Cameron Clark

"The Energy Footprint Tool could be useful for some parishes but, in many cases, it will only confirm what we already know, that medieval churches need a lot of money spent on them if they are to make any significant environmental improvements. Where will that money come from in cash-strapped parishes?"

Response from the Called Together Manager

"That's a really good question, isn't it?! It is being looked into. Funding is being sought at the moment, but we have start with measurement. We have to know what we are looking at before we know what we need to look for. We are looking into it as fast as we can, locally and nationally."

(b) Question from Mr Gerald O'Brien (Sevenoaks Deanery)

"From 2007 to 2013, the aggregate electoral rolls of parishes in the diocese dropped from 27801 to 24540, a fall of 11.8%.

"From 2013 to 2019, the electoral rolls dropped from 24540 to 21586 a further fall of 12.0%.

"Noting that the parish share has risen significantly over this twelve-year period, is the Diocese working on the assumption that a strategy of asking for ever greater contributions from a dwindling pool of contributors is sustainable in the future?"

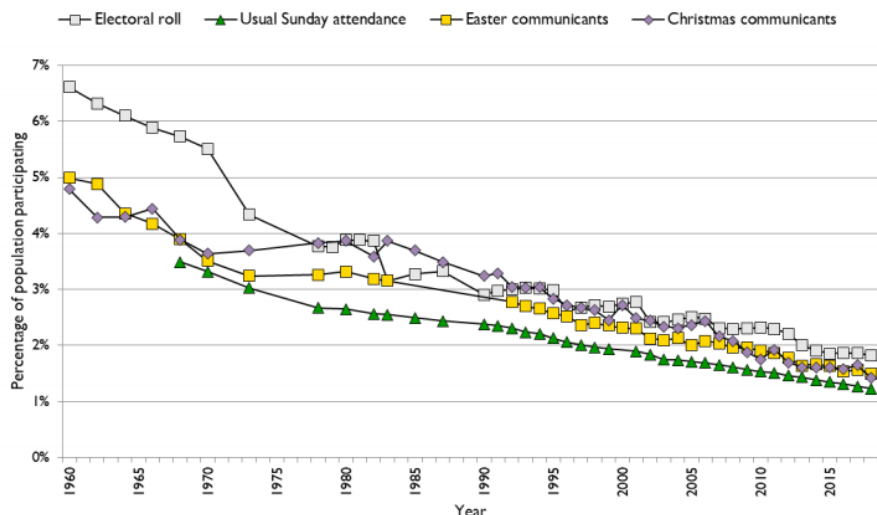
Response from the Diocesan Secretary

"We are aware of the decline in electoral roll figures and, although the reasons for the decline are varied and possibly not all understood, we do know there is a correlation with the decline in church attendance (see table below from 2018 Statistics for Mission):

Church of England attendance and participation trends should be viewed in a longer historical context where possible.

Figures for Usual Sunday attendance, Electoral roll, and Easter & Christmas communicants have been collected reasonably consistently for many decades. The trend over the past decade is consistent with what has been happening for the past half century (Figure 11).

Figure 11: Church of England participation summary, 1960-2018



https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2019-10/2018StatisticsForMission_0.pdf

"This picture of long-term decline in church attendance is a concern. Our shared Called Together vision focuses on Growing Disciples, Enriching Communities and Resourcing Mission and Ministry. (It is worth noting that these are interlinked, and in this context we cannot Grow or Enrich if we don't Resource ourselves adequately).

"Within Called Together every church has been invited to consider how it is Called to Grow. The Called to Grow process and the Growth Enablers are focused on growing churches in number and spirituality. It is too early to tell the impact of this investment, but the intention is absolutely to help parishes reverse the trend, and to share the Good News.

“Additionally, together as a Diocese we support each other with evangelism, working with children and young people, prayer, community initiatives, pioneer ministry, chaplaincy, vocations, discipleship, large projects to plant churches and re-mission communities, and much more, all of which aim to grow God’s Kingdom.”

10. General Synod Report

The Rev Canon Angus MacLeay reminded members that a written report on the February 2020 sessions of General Synod had been circulated prior to the meeting. He went on to say that a number of important internal issues had been discussed:-

Clergy covenant for well-being – Whilst Canon MacLeay had reservations about some of the language used, he was sure the intentions were good and that caring for clergy should be in the lifeblood of the Church.

Safeguarding – There seemed to be a greater sense of focussing on survivors as part of the new declared mission.

Provisions in terms of Elections – There would be online voting for the next General Synod Elections. It was noted that Rochester Diocese had been allocated four lay and three clergy seats.

Living in Love and Faith – The full set of resources was awaited. Clearly, it was an incredibly sensitive and controversial topic with people holding strong views.

In terms of the Church in the world, members had already heard something of General Synod’s response to the climate emergency and about the Windrush commitment and legacy – the clear recognition of, how for such a long shameful period, racism was effectively tolerated, and how it important it was to have an increase of leadership of lay and ordained BAME Anglicans.

Canon MacLeay drew attention to the debates on Children’s and Youth Ministry, which he felt was as important as all the other issues, because the figures presented in that report highlighted the dramatic decline across the country of those under the age of 16 linked to the Church of England. It was good for Synod to debate how resources could be developed and shared across the Church. He felt it was a wrong step to isolate children’s ministry from ministry amongst parents because it was as parents were gripped by the Gospel that their children would become connected with the Church and start their own steps in discipleship. It seemed odd therefore that reference to parents was strikingly absent from the report.

Canon MacLeay concluded by saying that the coming year within the Church of England would be an important one, especially with the publication of Living in Love and Faith, with the Lambeth Conference and with General Synod elections. The Archbishop of Canterbury’s Presidential address referred to 1 Peter 5:8 and the fact that we faced an adversary prowling around like a roaring lion, and it was necessary to remind oneself that the Church was in a spiritual battle and one’s resources as always were God’s word and prayer together.

Canon Davie drew members' attention to the papers circulated for information, which included the Bishop's Council Reports, and the dates of future meetings of Diocesan Synod.

Bishop James, in closing, informed members that the Rev John Tranter would be retiring and so this had been his last Diocesan Synod. The Bishop thanked Mr Tranter for his ministry in Chelsfield and as Area Dean of Orpington, and wished him well for his forthcoming retirement.

The Synod closed in prayer at 12:55pm.

Dates of Future Meetings

- (i) **Tuesday 7 July 2020** (Evening – commencing with Evensong at the Cathedral at 5:30pm, then buffet supper and meeting at Bishops court)
- (ii) **Saturday 10 October 2020** (All Day – St John's Church, Beckenham)