



Review of Diocesan Synod 2018 to 2021

The meeting of the Diocesan Synod on 12 June 2021 is the last of the current three year term. This paper serves as an *aide-memoire* to members of the range of issues the Synod has addressed, decisions it has made and ways in which it has engaged.

The Diocesan Synod has met 11 times, twice in Swindon, four times in South Gloucestershire and five times on Zoom.

At each meeting, there has been a variety of prayer and worship led by different members. This has included worship led by students of the Deanery CE Academy in Swindon and a meeting devoted wholly to prayer in the pandemic in June 2020, led by Bishop Viv.

Bishop Viv has given the Bishops Address at each of those meetings picking up themes of remembrance and our commitment to people and place; lament in the light of job losses at Honda; learning about how to live well together from St Luke's journey narratives; the role of church buildings in mission; our responsibilities for creation and reflections on rewilding the Church; on the pandemic and the example of Edward Jenner.

The Bishop's Council has reported at each meeting and General Synod members on sessions to six of the meetings. There have been six substantive discussions of diocesan finances. Safeguarding reports have been given annually and there have been two Deanery Synod motions (see below).

The majority of each meeting has been devoted to substantial aspects of the Church's mission.

Some of these have been focused on aspects of the Creating connections priorities and plans. There have been encouraging reports on the initiatives to increase the quantity, quality and diversity of vocations to licensed ministry and to establish Mission Areas (November 2018), engaging younger generations through schools (November 2019) and the recently planted resourcing churches, St Nicholas in Bristol and Pattern Church in Swindon (November 2020). A full review of the 2016-2020 Strategic Plan to support Creating connections was discussed at that meeting with learning feeding into *Transforming Church Together*.

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In March 2019, the Diocesan Secretary explained how synods work and work together, explaining how motions could be brought from parishes and deaneries up to General Synod. At the same meeting there was a substantial item on the fifth mark of mission, to safeguard the integrity of creation. Together these contributed to the Diocese adopting its Environmental and Climate Justice Policy and the motion to declare a climate emergency and commit to net zero carbon emissions by 2030 in November 2019. This motion came from two parishes in City Deanery, was passed and contributed to the General Synod amendment in February 2020 brought by Revd Canon Dr Martin Gainsborough related to net zero by 2030. A report on progress of the environmental work was given in November 2020.

Another Deanery Synod motion was brought by Swindon that called upon all Church of England bodies in the Diocese to commit publicly to paying the Real Living Wage and consider accrediting with the Real Living Wage Foundation. The motion was passed in March 2020.

There have been reports the ongoing work of the Diocesan Support Services in support of ministers, parishes and schools; the diocesan Link with Uganda as its 50th anniversary was marked; and ways in which the Church is connecting with its communities – through action in serving our communities and through making the most of our buildings to be accessible places of service, outreach and worship.

In all these reports and discussions, the Diocesan Synod has been a place where people from different places, backgrounds and perspectives come together to represent the diversity of the Church. This has been most apparent when it has prayed together, explored the Pastoral principles for living well together with a particular focus on LGBTI+ people in March 2019, reflected on the impact of the pandemic and in its participation in engagement for *Transforming Church. Together* in March 2021.

We look forward to the next three years with a Diocesan Synod drawn from across the Diocese, continuing to advise, debate and shape the life of the Diocese of Bristol.

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