

The Diocesan Synod (which meets three times a year) held its latest gathering last Saturday. A full agenda began with a time of reflection drawing on Jesus's parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector (Luke 18), including the importance of a right attitude in our hearts, and covered the following main items:

**Youth Strategy:** A new vision for the Diocese was presented, inviting us to imagine the difference that could be made through an orchestrated training and development programme for new and existing youth workers (both paid and voluntary), the introduction of dozens of large Youth Worship Gatherings, and working with our three C of E secondary schools to become beacons of best 'Growing Faith' practice (where church, school and household work effectively together). Initial funding for implementing this new strategy will be sought through the national church's strategic Ministry and Mission Fund.

**Safeguarding:** After first being reminded of the '*why*' (care of the vulnerable is at the very heart of God, and the church has to be a place where people can find sanctuary and certainly not abuse), there followed an update on the '*what*' – the next steps required following PCR2, with a particular mention of the importance and value of engagement with victims and survivors.

**Net zero carbon:** The 'NetZero Group' presented its analysis of what will be required to deliver on the Diocese's objective to be net-zero by 2030, and its initial resourcing plan to achieve this. The scope of the target is quite limited (encompassing the energy use of our buildings, together with work-related travel), yet still demanding. However, with the increasing evidence of the harmful effects of climate change over this last summer, it is vital that we believe we can meet the challenge – as the people of God, we are 'guardians of hope' for the world...

**DBE Measure and new Board:** Martin Breadmore gave a brief update on progress on implementing the scheme set out in the new DBE Measure, in particular sharing the results of the recent election for the new DBE Board (Wendy, could we include a link here to the webpage that Mary Peters will be setting up with the results?) and Bishop Andrew's direct appointments. The new Board will be meeting for the first time on 16th November and the scheme will be in operation from 1st December.

**Budget for 2023:** It isn't easy in the current climate, seeking to invest in key areas like the three above and at the same time wanting to give meaningful (if still well short of current price inflation) staff salary and clergy stipend increases, while managing to keep parish share increases affordable. Nevertheless, after discussion in small groups and then in plenary session, the Synod passed a motion on the 2023 budget by an overwhelming majority – more detail on this will (I imagine!) follow shortly.

**Diocesan Youth Leaders' Group:** We returned to the subject of the environment for our final agenda item, fronted up by members of this Group. These young leaders shared how much their peer group cares about the 'climate crisis', and the passion they have for taking a lead in encouraging their church families into action. A challenge for us: are we listening to and involving young people enough in our response to this issue?

Graham Everness  
(Dorking Deanery representative and member of Bishop's Council)