

Oxford Deanery Synod
 Minutes of Synod on Thursday 24 November 2016
 at St Peter and St Paul Church, Botley

Attendances signed:

Clergy

Charlotte Bannister Parker
 Tim Bateman
 Jonathan Beswick
 Laura Biron
 Andrew Bunch
 Liz Carmichael
 Joanna Coney
 Shei Crowther
 Will Donaldson
 Charles Draper
 Ben Drury
 Alistair Gibbs
 Peter Groves
 Dan Heyward

Total-58

Laity

Jonathan Anelay
 Anne Andrews
 Felicity Blair
 Edward Bradley
 Julia Cameron
 Diana Clews
 Dianne Cockburn
 Prudence Dailey
 Michael Daniell
 Joyce Day
 Richard Dodd
 John Donald
 Thomas Fink-Jensen
 Henry Gibbon
 Keith Hill
 Stephanie Hobson
 Bob Johnston

Felix Leach
 Michael Ling
 Alan McCullough
 Heather Nevard
 Rod Nixon
 Mark Pyper
 Julia Reece
 Amanda Saville
 Robert Simpson
 Ann Stedman
 David Taylor
 Paul Taylor
 Penelope Warner
 Janet Warren
 Penny Wearn
 Jenyth Worsley

Apologies

Clergy

Tom Albinson
 Martin Davis
 James Fletcher
 Jo Moffett-Levy
 Edmund Newey
 Bob Wilkes
 James Wilkinson

Laity

James Cook
 Andrew Down
 David Field
 Melanie Florence
 Kate Goodacre
 Edmund Weiner
 Andy West

The Synod was joined by a number of welcome guests from parishes around the Deanery.

The Synod was held at St Peter and St Paul Church, Botley, by kind permission of the Revd Clare Sykes.

The Area Dean, Revd Will Donaldson, opened the meeting, welcoming Bishop Steven and the number of guests who had been invited to attend. He then invited the Revd Clare Sykes to lead an act of worship, and he mentioned that she was Deputy Area Dean, with special responsibility for liturgy.

1. The act of worship was led by the Revd Clare Sykes, Vicar of the Osney Benefice. Clare then gave an outline of the benefice: 4 churches, c 7,000 population – urban, suburban, and rural – many of the residents being transient. The aim of the churches is to provide a visible and distinctive Christian presence.

2. The minutes of the two previous synods, 7 June and 28 September, were approved.

3. Notices: A number of members gave notice of special events in their parishes.

Prudence Dailey then took the chair:

4. Financial reports

2015

Alan McCullough (*Treasurer*) proposed and Revd Kate Seagrave seconded a motion that the accounts should be accepted: motion carried unanimously.

Alan McCullough proposed and Revd Mike Rayner and Michael Ling seconded a vote of thanks to Dr Colin Wilson for his generous work as an independent examiner of the accounts.

2016

As the previous system of applying a formula to calculate the share to be raised by each parish was resulting in unfairness, a new system had been adopted by which each parish made their best offer. This had resulted in a shortfall of £7,400. A corresponding loan of £7,400 has been given by St Aldate's so that the Deanery will qualify for the 2016 3% rebate, and the loan will be repaid on receipt of the rebate in January.

Alan McCullough noted that 15 of the 17 Deanery parishes now pay by direct debit, thereby qualifying for a 1% rebate.

Alan McCullough proposed and Revd Felicity Scroggie seconded a vote of thanks to St Andrew's (2015) and St Aldate's (2016) for providing loans.

2017

A further increase in parish share could not be met by the Deanery's first call for offers. The Archdeacon has been invited to come to the next meeting of the standing committee. Meanwhile the Treasurer has gratefully accepted those offers already made by parishes for 2017 which should be used as the basis for budgetting.

5. An introduction to Bishop Steven.

Bishop Steven thanked the Synod for the Parish Share contributions.

He then described the 34 years he has spent since ordination: 13 years as a parish priest including time in his hometown of Halifax, then Principal of a theological college, then time spent leading the Fresh Expressions movement, followed by 9 years as Bishop of Sheffield.

He described Sheffield diocese with its population of 550,000 making it the 4th largest by population but also 3rd poorest in the country. Despite this, it is the most generous diocese in giving.

Since September Bishop Steven has visited the vicars of all parishes in Oxford and Cowley, and by the end of July 2017 he will have made corresponding visits to all deaneries in the diocese.

He anticipated the question: 'What is your vision of the church at this time?' with the caution, 'There's a simplicity in the near side of complexity which is worthless but there's a simplicity on the far side of complexity which is priceless'. His vision is that the church should be seen as a Christ-like community. He drew attention to the Beatitudes: not commandments or challenges, but describing the character of the church.

Bishop Steven then invited questions from the floor. He concluded the session by leaving the synod with two questions:

- (1) Has your church got rhythm? This relates to Mark 3:14 describing what was to be the work of the disciples. i.e. to be both with Jesus and to be sent out. Each church needs both a strong heartbeat and a reaching out into the community.
- (2) Is there a road? Bishop Steven drew attention to the fact that during Christmas over 157,000 are expected to come to church in the Oxford diocese while the average Sunday attendance is only 50,000. This gap is greater than in any other diocese. What is the road between the two figures?

The Area Dean closed the synod firstly by thanking Bishop Steven and secondly by thanking the Revd Clare Sykes and her colleagues for their hospitality. He then read the Beatitudes, and the synod then combined in saying the Lord's Prayer and The Grace. [8.50 p.m.]

Date of next meeting: on Thursday 23 February at the usual time of 7.30 pm for 7.45 pm in the Library at St Mary the Virgin in the High Street.

The final meeting of the Triennium will be on Tuesday 23 May at St Michael at the North Gate.

Michael Daniell
Secretary
27 November 2016