

# **PETERBOROUGH DIOCESAN SYNOD**

The Spring Session

Held on Saturday 23 March 2024

At The Bishop Stopford School, Headlands, Kettering

## **1. OPENING WORSHIP**

Led by Kettering Deanery

## **2. PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS**

Bishop Debbie began by thanking members of Synod and the broader community for the warm welcome she and Paul have received upon their arrival in the Diocese. They both have a sense of belonging here and that is important as Bishop Debbie continues to learn who we are and as we get to know her, reflecting on how learning patience is important in this context, and also on her deep sense of being called to serve here.

Moving on to a reading from John 4 the narrative of a Samaritan woman who has come to draw water at a well in the middle of the day, and her encounter with Jesus. This is a passage deep in theology which ends with a strong sense of evangelism and ministry. In analysing the message behind the gospel Bishop Debbie reminds us who we need to be to enable our communities to know Jesus.

Bishop Debbie then went on to reflect on two visits that happened this week in Peterborough, where the press were present, and which explored how we as a diocese are reaching out to our communities and bringing them in to know us. The Garden House is a project reaching out to the homeless in Peterborough, and the Community Hub in St Johns Church Peterborough. Whether those people engaging with these two facilities know or not, they are experiencing the love of Jesus, the starting point is the opening of the doors. It is apparent that it is not always money that is the issue, but a loneliness in society, where people feel cut off. As a church we can help to change that.

When we read so much negativity about a church in conflict with itself, a church which is no longer relevant today, it was good to welcome the press to be able to see and report on how we are bringing Jesus into our communities and the difference that is making. The Garden House networks across many service providers, sharing the load, often as a church we feel we must carry the pastoral load alone. This is evidence we do not, and the value in that.

Bishop Debbie is aware there are many more similar initiatives across the Diocese and wants to get out to see them, the Bishop has asked for stories to be shared, encouraging members to contact the communications office where help is at hand. For people where the church is often four generations removed from them, stepping through the church door is often the biggest hurdle, anything we can do to build the stepping stones for people to make that journey we should, we need to breakdown reputational barriers. The church is about so much more than Sunday services, and each context will look different, we need to support each other. God is at work in our lives before we even talk to him, we need to be sure we are building on this in our communities.

**3. AN UPDATE ON THE WORK DONE BY THE DIOCESAN BOARD OF EDUCATION**

Peter Cantley Director of Education gave a full and informative overview of the work of the Board of Education, its successes, challenges and plans for the future.

**4. APPOINTMENT OF ASSISTANT BISHOPS**

Bishop Debbie gave some procedural clarity before Synod were informed of the appointment of Bishop John Stroynan as an Assistant Bishop in this Diocese.

Synod were then asked to consent to the preparation of a new instrument of delegation to Bishop John Holbrook Bishop of Brixworth.

All in favour.

**5. REPORT OF BOARDS AND COMMITTEES FOR 2023**

Members were asked for any questions relating to the Report of Boards and Committees for 2023:

Richard Burbage (Greater Northampton Deanery)

Wished to raise the point that the experience of the Greater Northampton Deanery was that Clergy housing was neither managed nor delivered well. In response the Diocesan Secretary acknowledged this and confirmed we are currently managing improvements through and encouraged people to raise matters when they arose in order that throughput can be prioritised accordingly.

Graeme Anderson (Brixworth)

Graham wished to acknowledge that he and his staff have seen an improvement in housing matters in recent months.

Revd Nick Leggett (Brackley)

Wished to comment that renting out property when it is empty would bring in welcomed income.

In response, the Diocesan Secretary confirmed where possible we do rent out and currently receive c£300k income from rentals.

Chris Banks Brixworth

Wished to comment that the training schedule for the implementation of the Online Faculty System is far too long at 8 months.

Jenny Smith (Wellingborough)

Asked if there were any plans to support those people in parishes who were unlikely to ever be able to move to the online system.

In response Revd Nolan Robson (DAC Chair) said the training schedule reflected the workload demand on the 2 DAC staff. Going on to confirm there will still be support available for those unable to submit applications online.

The Venerable Alison Booker Archdeacon of Oakham

Confirmed training for Church Wardens is currently being explored at present for delivery in the autumn months.

The Very Reverend Chris Dalliston

Asked Synod to consider the extraordinary amount of work the reports show is going on in the Diocese, and we should affirm and celebrate everting that is happening.

## **6. GENERAL SYNOD**

Revd Morna Simpson gave an overview of key items discussed and outcomes as follows.

Living in Love and Faith: The outcome of this debate is now known, with prayers available where the PCC and Incumbent agree. Important to note, this is not mandatory for incumbents.

Racial Justice: A good debate resulting in a unanimous agreement there is much more to do in this regard.

Estates Ministry: Again a very fruitful debate with a General Synod acknowledgement we need more investment as there is still much to do to ensure we have the resources focussed in these areas, particularly in those under privileged areas.

Families and Households: The Love Matters report was commended and received with gratitude and thanks.

Safeguarding: Both the Jay and Wilkinson Reports were received with gratitude and acceptance of the recommendations in order that we can improve how we deliver safeguarding. Consultation emails should be arriving in people's inboxes, and all were encouraged to participate if they are able.

Divorce: Specifically considering the need for a C4 faculty process when a candidate going through the discernment process has divorce in their story (either them or their partner). This question is not yet resolved.

Pensions and Parochial Fees: an acknowledgement that pension levels need to be reviewed as soon as possible as the last review was 2011. Where an incumbent conducts a funeral at a crematorium it was agreed the fees should go to the PCC in recompense for the Incumbents time.

**7. REVIEW OF STANDING ORDERS**

As standing orders for Diocesan and Deanery Synods have not been reviewed since 2000, Synod were asked to approve the commencement of the process, this was approved.

**8. TIME FOR QUESTIONS (STANDING ORDER 70)**

There were no supplementary questions from those members raising questions under standing order 70

**9. OTHER APPROVED BUSINESS**

None

**10. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Saturday 12 October 2024