

Summary Report of 4 November 2017 Diocesan Synod:

Presidential Address by +Martin

Bishop Martin spoke of the need to be bold and imaginative with our worship and to develop our prayer and study of scripture, drawing on the Church of England's rich traditions to bring others to faith.

Bishop Martin spoke of how 120 people are now training to lead worship in new, improved and innovative ways within the Diocese and ways of using music and family worship are being imaginatively developed.

During his address to Synod he spoke of growth within the Diocese and introduced new people to Synod, including the diocese's new Youth and Young Adults Officer Phil Bailie, who has already seen youth events increasing in numbers, new Dean of Rural Mission Consultancy Revd Canon Sally Gaze, and the new acting Dean of St Edmundsbury Cathedral Bishop Graeme Knowles.

Synod heard that candidates to become the new Cathedral Dean would be interviewed during February, with an appointment expected during the summer.

Bishop Martin told how 18 candidates were currently being trained for ordination, meeting with both Bishops Martin and Mike for three hours every fortnight to study scripture, pray, and grow as Christ's disciples. Bishop Martin said he hoped longer term to also increase the numbers of both paid and voluntary clergy within Suffolk.

Growing in God - Reluctance, failure, and fruitfulness

The Revd Canon Dave Gardner, Director of Mission and Ministry, interviewed the Revd Chris Childs, priest in charge of seven churches in the Stowmarket area, about both the successes and failures of the Growing in God strategy within his parishes, including encouragingly how new people are now coming to church.

Children's Society

Synod heard from representatives from the charity about the organisation's work with vulnerable 10 to 18-year-olds, who may be at risk of abuse, and how every five minutes a child runs away from home.

The charity traces its origins to the Church of England, listens to young people, builds trust with children and works tirelessly with the young to ensure they have the happy childhood they deserve.

Parishes across the Diocese have been supporting the work of the charity, as volunteers and giving an amazing £76,802.10 during the last financial year to help make a difference to the lives of vulnerable children and young people.

Synod members were asked to consider praying for vulnerable children the charity works with and the organisation's workers, organise fundraising efforts, become volunteers, have a giving box available and campaign for the Children's Society.

Safeguarding report

Synod heard that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and if you see something concerning, then it is important to say something about it. Synod saw a moving film before discussing the impact of abuse and heard how such risks should be managed. +Martin said it was essential to revisit our Church policies, training and practices and to be as caring and alert as we can. He spoke of the importance of safeguarding and that while none of us want to accept it, abuse whether physical, sexual, psychological or neglect, does happen in many areas of life.

Bishop Martin said that churches should have the best possible practices for any survivors of abuse and ensure that any perpetrators are held to account. +Martin said safeguarding is about both children and adults and that everything should be done to make our churches as safe as possible.

Synod unanimously voted to adopt the House of Bishop's policy statement, 'Promoting a Safer Church' and adopt a strategy for training all those serving on behalf of the diocese, further commending them to PCCs to do likewise at the earliest opportunity.

Preventing bullying and harassment and encouraging positive relationships

+Martin recognised that bullying or harassment in some form takes place and said a prevention of bullying and harassment policy was essential, like those in place to other Dioceses. Bishop Martin said the policy would contribute to creating a culture where any form of bullying or harassment of others was wholly unacceptable.

+Martin said behaviour could range from removing someone's responsibility without telling them, strong criticism by email without having the courtesy of meeting someone face-to-face, to a priest being harassed by a church member.

Approval of 2018 budget and Parish Share

Anna Hughes, Diocesan Secretary, presented on behalf of the Chairman of the Diocesan Board of Finance Archdeacon Ian Morgan, who is currently unwell. Synod approved next year's budget, which creates an ambitious break even financial position.

Delegates heard of the need to understand the importance of Christian giving and that ordination training spending has increased, as more people come forward to serve as clergy.

Synod discussed parish share and a fairer method of allocating this, which has received good feedback locally.

Archdeacon Ian will be stepping down as Chairman of the Diocesan Board of Finance in February after about two years from what was always a temporary role. Work has begun in seeking a successor.

Reports, questions, notices

Delegates heard several notices including details about new communications initiatives, notably an encouragement to engage with the diocesan supported National Church Christmas Campaign, #GodWithUs; and church insurance, including how parishes should always seek two quotes from providers and how many Suffolk churches have now moved to a different insurer, saving them money on premiums. Synod were also advised about both parish data returns and plans to launch the Parish Giving Scheme throughout the diocese in the New Year.

Next Diocesan Synod

The next meeting of the Diocesan Synod will be held from 9.30am on Saturday 24 February 2018 at St Edmundsbury Cathedral, in Bury St Edmunds.