

March 2017 Diocesan Synod, St Edmundsbury Cathedral:

Pilgrimage:

Bishops Martin and Mike's 11-day Lent Pilgrimage across Suffolk concluded as they arrived to a very warm welcome at the March 11th Diocesan Synod at the Cathedral.

The Cathedral's Great West Doors were flung open to welcome the Bishops to Synod at Bury St Edmunds, as they completed their pilgrimage from Dunwich beach to Bury see God at work across our county.

Bishops Martin and Mike had visited 25 villages, 22 churches, 17 businesses, 10 pubs, and two schools as they met people where they live and work, right across the county.

Bishop Martin said: "We were impressed with how those Suffolk businesses and organisations we saw were focussed on the common good, and creating products for the common good.

"We found during our pilgrimage that some churches were flourishing and some were struggling. Where we saw churches flourishing we found lay people supported by their clergy taking a lead, showing the same adaptability and flexibility that those successful businesses were."

New Diocesan Secretary and new delegates

Delegates heard that the diocese was moving into a time of stability and growth as they welcomed Anna Hughes, the new Diocesan Secretary, who attended her first Synod in her new role. Synod also welcomed new delegates Jean Lindsey and Peter Beaumont, who will serve as representatives for their churches on Synod.

Diocesan Budget

Archdeacon Ian Morgan, Chairman of the Diocesan Board of Finance, reported that he was cautiously optimistic as he spoke of a three-year medium term plan and reported major improvements. He said a small increase in clergy numbers may even be possible and an £8.4 million expenditure ceiling will not be exceeded.

He said that people must however pay their parish share and we need to keep costs down, to achieve the diocese's vision.

Diocesan vision and strategy.

Bishop Martin spoke of priorities including equipping people for mission, young people and schools, finance and buildings. He said he was very grateful to diocesan staff who are achieving an enormous amount after a period of major change. A diocesan youth officer is about to be advertised for and +Martin spoke of the importance of sharing good news.

General Synod Report

Diocesan Synod heard that Bishop Martin has been elected to a national ministry role in addition to leading the diocese. He will serve on Archbishop's Council, as chair of the ministry division.

Diocesan Synod heard about several issues that had been debated nationally, including the shared conversations about human sexuality that were held recently.

The shared conversations had caused anxiety, Synod heard, and high expectations of a gay blessing or marriage may not come soon. The Archbishop of Canterbury now wants to see a new teaching document on sexuality prepared.

Fixed odds at betting terminals were debated at General Synod, games where gamblers can bet as much as a £100 a time.

A clergy wellbeing report is under discussion and additionally The Revd. Tiffer Robinson, from Rattlesden near Stowmarket, has put down a motion to allow clergy who move into vicarages to gain places for their children at local schools, including church schools, more quickly. The motion gained 100 signatures in one day.

General Synod voted for a new Suffragan Bishop in Leicestershire too.

Suffolk Show, May 31 / June 1

Archdeacon Ian Morgan, Chairman of the Project Team, reported that 2017 attractions will include a key theme of "Y-Church?", why people come to church and why they do not, with discussions on stage and video presentations. In modelling Messy and Café Church, there would be a host of activities for families, plus live music too, at the Church of England marquee on Flower Show avenue next to Adnams.

An annual Centenary Fund Concert

This will be held on October 7 2017, with the Suffolk Philharmonic Orchestra event being at The Apex, Bury St Edmunds.

Elevenes and Café Church - great example of mission in the Diocese

Capt. Andrew Payne, Haverhill Parish Missioner, reported successful activities for mission and outreach at the town centre parish church of St Mary's, in Haverhill.

Good News Weekend

The Revd. Julia Lall, priest in charge of the South Hartismere area near Eye, reported a targeted focus on mission that connected with communities and those who had drifted away, strengthening existing relationships, using Christmas services and events to engage with hundreds of people coming through the churches doors at that time of year.

Parish Giving Scheme

Revd. Canon Graham Hedger, Head of Stewardship, reported that this would help parishes manage gift aid contributions. A donor management system for parishes, with donations by direct debit to the central scheme restricted and returned directly to the parishes for which it was given with the gift aid. An option was included that enabled donors to annually review their giving in accordance with RPI.

Farewells

The Revd. Paul Daltry, Ipswich Minister for Community Engagement, was leaving the diocese for a new role as a parish priest in Essex.

Next Diocesan Synod

The next meeting of the Diocesan Synod will be held on Saturday 10 June 2017 at the St Nicholas Centre, Ipswich. IP1 1UQ.