

Report on Diocesan Synod to the Stroud Deanery Synod meeting on Wednesday 7th October 2020

The Diocesan Synod met via Zoom on 1st July 2020 and discussed the following main items.

Reflections on LIFE

The aim of this item was to hear testimonies from around the diocese of how the transforming Gospel of Jesus Christ has been lived and shared during the pandemic. This was at the point where we were only just starting to think about churches being open again so the focus was very much on worship and projects during the most restricted period of lockdown.

- Two people involved in it talked about the “Feeding the Five Thousand” initiative which had provided 31,000 meals over 12 weeks, many either directly or via Foodbanks, to those who were struggling financially but also to some who were shielding but were able to pay for the meal. Many of you will be aware of this project from communications at the time.
- Revd Malc Allen talked about experiences of going live on Facebook for worship and on Zoom for Coffee and how this had been received by a wider range of people than the usual congregation. This reflected many people’s experiences.
- Our own Revd Kate Stacey talked about all the different activities developed across the nine churches of the Stroud team including youth work, time for reflection and many other creative ideas.
- Rachel Howie talked about schools aspects of the diocesan response including the creation of prayer bunting as a way of recognising the Year 6 transition when there couldn’t be the usual service in the cathedral.

There was a short period for break out discussions for all of us to share experiences.

Finance Update 2020

The finance team had been working with a reduced number as some staff were furloughed and were responding to a lot of contact from parishes worried about the financial impact of Covid-19 and how to manage it. The priority at diocesan level was to try and maintain cash flow sufficiently to meet all current commitments. Julie Ridgeway thanked everyone for the efforts and hoped these would continue, referring to a letter that had been sent from the GDBF Chair and Diocesan Secretary setting out expectations in the current circumstances.

Deanery Strategic LIFE plans

Dana Delap reported that this had been moving forward well until March but had now been delayed. Bishop Robert said that the process now needed to be re-started in the changed landscape, ensuring that it still had a missional focus.

GDBF Budget 2021

The proposed budget for 2021 was agreed. This is a standstill budget as at 2020 which means that there will be no increase in Parish Share, stipends or salaries. It was noted, however, that Gloucester Diocese has paid any stipend and salary increases due in 2020, which has not been the case everywhere.

Note about General Synod

As you already know, the main General Synod elections have been postponed until 2021. However, we have a vacancy to fill on the House of Laity and all lay members of this Synod should have received information about this election in the last few days as you are the electorate. Please do participate in the election and also consider whether you, or someone you know, would be a good candidate.

Margaret Sheather

1st October 2020