

Gloucester Diocesan Synod 3rd February 2024

Report to Stroud Deanery Synod

1. Bishop Rachel's Presidential Address

Introducing her address, +Rachel referred to the thinking the bishops in the House of Lords have been doing in preparation for the General Elections. They have focussed on:

- Doing the join-up
- The vision of the world we want to live in – not just a “fixit” mentality
- Vision of the Kingdom of God

She also asked us all to think in our own lives in the church about how often we have “why” conversations as the context for thinking about “what” and “how”.

Towards the end she summarised that we all need to:

- Hold fast to the vision
- Take responsibility but with Christ as the head
- Only then make plans

The full text can be found on the Diocesan website and I recommend it for reading.

2. Stroud Deanery question

Revd Katrina Scott confirmed that this is being put forward to General Synod.

3. Safeguarding

Synod received the annual update from Debbie Innis-Turnell, the independent chair of the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisory Panel (DSAP) and Judith Knight. They reported that it has been a good year, including strategy implementation and working on trends and how best to support parishes.

Debbie considers that the training arrangements are very good and the team is confident and competent.

They outlined some of the pressures coming from the national level with a number of central projects not being sufficiently aware of the reality on the ground. They felt that the projects need to be better prioritised and better communicated.

4. Carbon Net Zero

Cate Williams updated Synod on work to achieve this goal. National church funding is contributing to the appointment of a CNZ officer in each diocese, and Gloucester, Worcester and Hereford dioceses have agreed to work together so that each officer leads on a specific aspect of the work.

Cate noted that it is not expected that every building associated to churches will get to Net Zero and many of the small churches have very small carbon footprints anyway. The request is for everyone to do the small things that will cumulatively make a difference. In this, the influence a church can have on its congregation and surrounding community makes a big contribution.

Ben Preece-Smith noted that 50% of churches in the diocese are already CNZ, usually because their heating is electric and they are buying green energy. Clergy houses are the greater challenge, but we already have PV panels on more vicarages than any other diocese!!

5. Financial Update

Lisa Gardner summarised the draft out-turn for 2023, which currently stands at £2.23m deficit. We are not in a crisis but the issues do need to be addressed somehow.

Lisa's aim is to de-mystify the finances and enable everyone to work together on the issues. As she moves into her second year in post the described moving from a year of discovery into a year of change.

6. Parish Share

This was the main discussion item of the Synod and was framed with the two questions and answers:

“What does money do? Ministry”

“What does ministry do? Presents the love of God, makes Christ known and builds the kingdom.

Wotton and North Cotswold Deaneries spoke about their approach to and experience of Parish Share.

There was then a period of discussion on the proposed principles of a new Parish Share approach for 2025. The theme will be abundance and generosity. Members of the team will be coming out to Deaneries to consult about the thinking to date, as part of dialogue on the topic at all levels. This should enable a final decision to be made at the Diocesan Synod in October.

The whole process into the future will be assisted by the appointment of a Giving and Stewardship Advisor.

The minutes of the meeting will be circulated as soon as they are received.

Margaret Sheather