Report to Amersham Deanery Synod. Notes of Diocesan Synod, Saturday 14th June 2025 Hazlemere.

Oxford Diocesan Synod met at Holy Trinity Church, Hazlemere. The Agenda, Papers and Questions can be found on the Diocesan website and a meeting summary at https://www.oxford.anglican.org/who-we-are/how-we-are-governed/diocesan-synod/diocesan-synod-report/digital-discipleship--diocesan-synod-14-june-2025-1418.php The following is my synopsis of the main points of discussion.

Synod opened with a time of worship followed by 'Dwelling in the Word" in Ephesians 3.

A number of questions had been received and written answers given prior to Synod. In particular there was a request querying how the response to the Living in Love and Faith (LLF) questionnaire to be filled in by Synod members would be reported back to the National Church. This and other issues were discussed in more detail in the later main section on LLF

Presidential Address

The Presidential address was given by the Bishop of Oxford, Rt Rev'd Steven Croft. Steven reflected on the recent Oxford Diocese Clergy Conference where 100 15 to 17 year olds were invited to attend. His biggest take away was in the concerns expressed by the young people over developments in Artificial Intelligence (AI), Technology and Social Media. The highest concern was over AI removing the possibilities of employment, and of not knowing what is true. Steven has been reporting on AI for nine years, and the science fiction of then, is the reality now. Over half of Synod had had experience of or were using ChatGPT.

What wisdom can the church bring? Steven proposed three ways.

- Turn towards the human - Contemplation
- Develop wisdom and patterns of digital discipleship grounded in – Compassion
- Find and use voice to shape society – Courageous.

Oxford Diocese Budget

Sir Hector Sants, Chair of the Oxford Diocesan Board of Finance (ODBF) presented the 2026 Budget which had been submitted as a pre-read. The main point was the parish share allocation will increase by an average of 3%, with a maximum capping of 4%. However, there were risks in keeping to this from both macroeconomics and from within the national church. The recent proposal to raise clergy stipends to a 2011 equivalent by 10.7% would be significant as would a change in national church cost recovery model for training costs.

Oxford Diocesan Board of Education

There was a short presentation of the ODBE Report and Accounts. Tribute was paid to the late Bishop Alan Wilson who had chaired ODBE for many years.

Living in Love and Faith

Following a national request that all Diocesan Synods provide time in 2025 to consider the issues raised by LLF (and Prayers of Love and Faith), Oxford Bishop's Council has scheduled this time together at this in person Synod. While it had been planned to show the video recorded by Bishop Martyn Snow, Lead Bishop on LLF, this was now not appropriate following his resignation from the role.

The session was introduced by the new Oxford Suffragan Bishops of Buckingham and Reading who asked what a good conversation would look like where there was major disagreement. They focussed in on John 4 – the Samaritan woman at the well, and how Jesus was able to converse across the wide geographical ethnic and cultural boundaries.

Synod was asked to break into table groups, and express what three words were felt by Synod members. Unsurprisingly a range of feelings across the room.

Bishop Steven gave his view of the national picture. Guidance has not changed much, and there would be a further meeting of the house of bishops in the Autumn. The most fluid area was over Delegated Episcopal Ministry (DEM). No minister should be obligated to use Prayer of Love and Faith, and there would be Pastoral Reassurance on this.

Given the lack of definition of DEM and what the Pastoral Reassurance would be, a procedural motion was raised to abandon the discussion and move to the next item on the Agenda. This motion was defeated – but the dissatisfaction over the lack of clarity was clear.

Synod were than invited to complete an individual questionnaire to be used by Bishops Council. There was a further vote which decided to allow Question 6 relating to Pastoral Reassurance to be included in the Oxford Diocese feedback to the National Church.

Overall then Synod mood was still one of continuing dissatisfaction and disappointment from both those wanting to see change, to those who see a continuing affirmation of traditional biblical understanding of marriage and human sexuality.

Oxford Diocese Annual Review

Copies of the Annual Review of the Diocese were made available.

Closure

Bishop Steven noted that Synod was due to be closed with a reflection from Archdeacon of Buckingham Guy Elsmore, who is retiring for personal reasons in September. Guy was unable to be present through illness. +Steven placed on record his thanks for Guy's work over the last nine years.

Synod was then closed in prayer.

Lawrence Tebboth

Amersham Deanery Lay Chair

General Note on Oxford Diocesan Synod for Amersham Deanery[1]

[1] Diocesan Synod meets three times a year. In addition to Bishops, Archdeacons and others drawn from roles in the Diocese, there are two "houses" – Clergy and Laity. Elections for a three-year term (triennium) are held, with the number of places to be filled set for each Deanery based on Deanery size. Amersham Deanery is allocated three clergy positions, and these are filled by Rev Canon Edward Bowes-Smith (Chesham), Rev'd David Whale (Chenies), and Rev'd Peggy Ludlow (Area Dean). For the Laity, there are five positions filled by Mr Eddy Weiss (Beaconsfield), Mrs Helen Savage (Chenies), Mr Lawrence Tebboth, with two vacancies. General Synod members are also members of Diocesan and Deanery Synods. Amersham Deanery General Synod members are Rev'd Jeremy Moodey (Chesham), Canon Julie Dziegiel (Chesham) and Dr Andrew Bell (Gerrards Cross and Fulmer).