

Diocesan Synod Report | 25th June 2024

By Nick Stuart

This was the last Synod session of the triennium. The meeting opened with worship and Holy Communion.

The text for the readings were Hezekiah's Prayer to the Living God from 2 Kings 19: 14-19 and Peter's declaration that Jesus is the Son of the Living God from Mathew's Gospel 16: 13-20.

Bishop Andrew's address took us through some of the key events, locally and globally, which had affected the Diocese over the past three years and the challenges which that they had posed, many were dealt with but some were still on going. He reflected on the readings, especially Hezekiah's prayer, that we should lay before the Living God the issues we currently face and those we will face in the future.

After approving the minutes of the previous Synod meeting, Steve Roberts, as Chair of the Diocesan Board of Finance, presented the Annual Report and Accounts for 2023 and gave a top line explanation on the income and expenditure. There was a very small surplus at the year end which was good news as we had been able to deliver the various projects and control general costs despite the increases in inflation. The report and accounts were approved unanimously. Synod agreed to appoint Mazars LLP as the auditors for 2024.

Malcolm Twigger-Ross (Finance Director) and Graham Everness (Deputy Chair of the DBF) presented the draft budget for 2024. The underlying assumptions with regard to inflation, salary and stipend increases, the cost of property maintenance, the payment to the National Church and the likely percentage increase in Parish Share were detailed along with the potential risks that the Diocese may face. The increases in costs would be mitigated by several cost savings notably the office move to the Education Centre at the Cathedral. The presentation highlighted the many initiatives which were currently underway in the Diocese including £3.25 million grant from the National Church to promote the evangelism and discipleship of 12-16 year-olds in our diocese and the Diocesan Mission Fund which has made grants to develop parish initiatives and training more lay ministers.

The Synod broke into groups to discuss the information given and feedback was given. The majority of Synod agreed with the assumptions used as well as challenging some of the likely costs. These comments will be used to finalise the budget proposal which will be presented to the November Synod.

Malcolm Twigger-Ross, who was standing down as Finance Director, was warmly thanked for his service and for him and his team's tight management of the finances.

Also, Kate Darwent and Mary Peters were thanked for their sterling work in managing the election process for the new Synod members.

The Synod closed with prayer.