

Oxford Diocesan Synod

Minutes of the meeting held on 12th March 2022 via Zoom

Welcome and opening worship

The Rt Revd Dr Steven Croft, Bishop of Oxford, welcomed Synod members and introduced Julie Dziel and Mike Smith who led dwelling in the word on 1 Peter 1:13-2:12. Prayers were said for Ukraine, especially for the most vulnerable, and also for all other places facing war and conflict. Prayers also for the Queen at this time and for this meeting.

1. Notices

Canon John Sykes, chair of the house of Laity, gave notices and welcomed Sir Hector Sants and other new members to this Synod meeting. He asked permission that Hannah Ling, Tina Molyneux, Stuart Jones and Steven Buckley join the meeting and be allowed to address Synod. This was agreed.

Following a recent survey of Synod members, Bishop's Council had agreed that until further notice, one meeting of Synod per year will be on site, others online. The next meeting will be in person at Gerrard's Cross on 11th June.

2. Approval of minutes of the meeting held on 13th November 2021 (previously circulated)

Approval was given by an overwhelming majority.

Questions under S.O(70)

The following question was received from Dr Andrew Bell:

In response to a letter from over 2500 Christian Ministers and Pastoral Workers concerning the government consultation on "Banning Conversion Therapy"¹ Bishop Gavin and the Diocese issued the following statement:

"The letter has undoubtedly upset a lot of people. It puts out a message that people aren't safe or welcome in our churches, and it cuts across the settled view of the Church of England that coercive conversion therapy is unacceptable and should be banned. I am disappointed that the authors have used an open letter to diminish people who are in faithful same sex relationships and those who are transgender. Thankfully, the views expressed in the letter are not representative of the Church of England today. I am clear that we are all made in God's image, that all are welcome in His church and that everyone has a place at the table."

This response has dismayed many, including several Oxford Clergy and Synod members who signed the letter and/or support its message. The letter:

- Begins "In our churches we welcome and show love to many people who have different experience and views, including same-sex attraction and forms of gender transition. We always seek to act in love, with gentleness and respect, for the good of all, and never with any form of coercion or control."
- Opposes any form of coercive or abusive therapy but wishes to ensure that ordinary pastoral ministry is not inadvertently criminalised.
- Highlights our duty to call people to be converted to Christ.

The response, perhaps issued in haste, appears not to appreciate the content or tone of the letter. It is unclear who the response is accusing of supporting "coercive conversion therapy".

¹ <https://ministersconsultationresponse.com/>

1. In view of the fact that it (perhaps unintentionally) misrepresents the content of the letter, will the Diocese remove Bishop Gavin's statement from the website and social media?
2. In addition, (or even if the answer to (1) is "No"), as much damage has already been done, please will the Diocese add a clarification in all places where the original response was published? The statement from St Ebbe's², added promptly to the BBC item, but not to the Diocesan post, would serve this purpose well.
3. Please can you clarify the role of the Diocesan Communications Department and its Director in publishing items externally, particularly on topics which relate to the doctrine of the Church of England and those with potential to cause distress or undermine the ministry of those who take a different view? What is the approval process for such items and who signs them off? Is the role and remit of the Communications Department published?

The response from Bishop Steven is below:

The background to the letter and to Bishop Gavin's statement is the motion agreed at the General Synod in July 2017 (proposed by Jayne Ozanne and carried by large majorities in all three houses of the Synod):

That this Synod (a) endorse the Memorandum of Understanding on Conversion Therapy in the UK of November 2015 signed by The Royal College of Psychiatrists and others that the practice of gay conversion therapy has no place in the modern world, is unethical, potentially harmful and not supported by evidence and (b) call upon the Church to be sensitive to and listen to contemporary expressions of gender identity; (c) and call on the government to ban the practice of Conversion Therapy.

Undoubtedly the letter signed by 2500 Christian Ministers and Pastoral Workers in response to the government consultation did upset a lot of people, and this distress went well beyond those who actively campaign on these issues. As the question indicates, the response issued by the Diocese has also caused distress to those who signed (or were in sympathy with the original letter) distress, which was often very sharply felt. The original letter does not acknowledge the widespread support for the ban on conversion therapy within Church and society, nor the diversity of views on issues of human sexuality among Christians, nor the distress caused by some forms of conversion therapy acknowledged by the Royal College of Psychiatrists and others. The Diocese was approached for comment on the letter by the BBC at short notice following condemnation of the letter by Oxford Pride and many Christians online. To have not commented when there is an established General Synod position on conversion therapy did not seem appropriate. The statement was developed by Steven Buckley and Bishop Gavin in dialogue and signed off by myself. A number of people have suggested ways in which the statement itself or the process by which it was developed could have been improved. We take this seriously. We want to pay careful attention to all of these comments and learn any lessons, so if Synod members have any further comments please raise them with Steven Buckley, who will share them also with me. The suggestions so far include taking more time where possible to consider such a statement and consult. Bishop Gavin was able to bring greater nuance to the statement in his planned BBC local radio interview the following Sunday. However, we do not believe it would be helpful either to take the statement down at this point or add additional information to the statement: to do this would risk undoing some of the good work the statement has done without necessarily alleviating the pain it has caused those who signed the Ministers Consultation Response. I have readily agreed to meet with representatives of the Diocesan Evangelical Fellowship to listen to their concerns around the statement and to seek to build further trust between us. We want the Diocese to continue to be a place where Christians who hold a range of positions on questions of human sexuality are able to flourish in creative, honest and loving dialogue.

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There was a further question from Andrew who expressed concern arising from the lack of definition of conversion therapy. He said that legislation is poorly drafted and could make it illegal to help people to follow standard Christian

² "Those who read the full text of the letter will know that its signatories are certainly not supporting conversion therapy. They are rather expressing widespread concerns that, without further clarification, the proposed legislation could unintentionally end up criminalising key aspects of mainstream Christian belief and ministry. We wholeheartedly affirm the immense dignity of all people, without exception, as made in God's image."

teaching on identity, marriage and sexuality. He asked why are our Bishops not prepared to speak out in support of many of our clergy who could potentially be criminalised under this legislation? How are clergy who do not wish to depart from 2000 years of church teaching to be pastored? How can trust be restored?

Supplementary questions were also asked by Jayne Ozanne (193): Are Bishop Steven and Bishop Gavin aware that the letter talked about assisting and urging those people from the LGBTI+ community to remain celibate and single for the rest of their life? This is a definition of conversion therapy. Is the Bishop aware of a response from the Minister for Equality, in which **he assured that religious practices are not normal** and will be banned and that those who continue to abuse and harm LGBTI+ people will have to face the law?

A supplementary question was also asked by Prudence Dailey (214): Can Bishop Steven give a clear assurance that the Diocese does not support criminalisation of those who are offering pastoral support to those actively seeking such support?

Bishop Steven addressed these questions. He said that he was very aware of the issues being raised and acknowledged that the framing of legislation is a delicate process. The Lords spiritual will keep a close eye on this and will want to minimise the effect on those practising Christian faith. This will be a full process with good parliamentary scrutiny. He requested Jayne to send the Minister's response and is happy to have further dialogue. He confirmed support of pastoral care to those continuing to live and practise Christian faith. He hoped that through good dialogue and good listening that trust will be rebuilt.

3. Presidential Address and response:

Bishop Steven gave his presidential address which focussed initially on the war in Ukraine, the devastating impact of the invasion of Russia and the plight of refugees. He then spoke about his recent Deanery and Community visits. He acknowledged the strain on clergy over the past 2 years, the strain on finances, the time needed to rebuild. He referred to the John 15 passage "I am the true vine, and my father is the vine grower... I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit because apart from me you can do nothing".

He spoke of Lent as being a time to watch over ourselves and one another. He reminded members of the commitment to common vision to be a more Christlike church for the sake of God's world and confirmed that we remain committed to the five priorities of that Common Vision.

Bishop Steven ended the address with a recording of the Lord's Prayer sung in Ukrainian.

The full address can be found [here](#).

4. Discipleship

Paper ODS 22.01

A short film was played about the meaning of discipleship and personal discipleship plans and can be found [here](#).

Tina Molyneux then presented on PDPs. These were first started in 2018 and when people were asked if they were being supported to live out their faith Monday – Saturday only 35% agreed. After only 6 months with a PDP, 100% agreed. PDPs are tailored specifically to each church and there are many resources on the website. [Diocese of Oxford | Discipleship resources \(anglican.org\)](#) Tina offered to visit and work with parishes.

PDPs are aimed at people who have never been to church, those who connected online during Covid, and also to members of congregations who want to explore more. In 2020 Bishop Steven developed the online resource Come and See and in 2021 almost 1000 people participated. This year 1674 have currently joined with Come and See for Lent. Resources have been extended for children and families and to be accessible to schools for RE lessons also.

Members went into breakout groups to discuss and share examples of discipleship in their own parishes and deaneries and to see what they have in common

Questions:

Katie Tupling (106) – Have you got the capacity to work alongside the new deaf chaplain especially with use of BSL?

Stephen Walker (157) – during Lockdown his church in Milton Keynes has run an Alpha course – what is the difference between Alpha and Come and See?

Steve Short (85) – Can we put a link into chat for the link to the website? Done.

Tina replied that she is looking forward to working with Hannah Lewis. The film shown is available with subtitles already.

She confirmed that the Diocese are encouraging people to continue with Alpha, and Christianity Explored. Come and See offers more flexible but specific resources. Last year it was based on the creed, this year based on The Lord's Prayer.

5. Christ Church Oxford

Paper ODS 22.02

John Sykes reminded members that this is an extraordinary complex matter and very sensitive on all sides.

Bishop Steven gave an update as follows: On 4th February Christ Church announced a settlement under which the Dean would stand down following several ongoing disputes with the Governing Body, and following a process of mediation. There was a separate settlement related to the allegation of sexual harassment against the Dean.

This brought a conclusion to 4 years of difficulties between the Dean and Governing Body. It has taken a tremendous toll on all concerned and many things are still not resolved. Wider press and media are still involved and not all commentary is accurate or complete. The Diocese will mark thanks and appreciation for the work of the Dean at an event in due course. Bishop Steven is in discussion with Martyn Percy about this.

In the autumn Martyn Percy raised issues with Bishop's Council including allegations of systemic failures in safeguarding and issues relating to Winkworth Sherwood. Bishop's Council appointed a group of 4 members, led by Bishop Olivia, who met with Martyn, to investigate this and after examining extensive written material the group did not find evidence of any systemic failure in safeguarding. The Safeguarding Panel, under its independent Chair Peter Hay, are looking into certain more general issues further. Bishop's Council has taken all concerns seriously and spent much time on this. The Diocese has also written Winkworth Sherwood and Council has been reassured by a full reply received from the managing partner. The Diocese also engaged the registrar to the Diocese of London and Norwich to act on behalf of Bishop Steven and the Bishops Council in relation to any further issues relating to Christ Church or the Dean. Bishops Council have agreed to an independent Lessons Learned Review. The national safeguarding team were involved in this case, and we have written to the Archbishop's Council to set up the Lessons Learned review. Christ Church are also finalising terms of reference for an independent review of governance. Likely to take several months for the review, and more months for any conclusion.

In the meantime, the work of the Cathedral continues, and Bishop Steven thanked Richard Peers for all he and cathedral staff are doing. Bishop Steven encouraged people to work together to encourage reconciliation and peace going forward.

Richard Peers, the Sub-Dean, thanked Bishop Steven for his words and said how difficult the last 18 months have been but that he is confident about the future. The cathedral has received a lot of interest in the post of Diocesan Canon, and he is confident of a strong appointment, who will be based at the cathedral for the first 3 years. During the difficult times an external facilitator has been working with some of the staff on the distress caused. The Governing body has agreed to continue with this facilitation. Richard will represent chapter on the recruitment of an independent chair for the governance review. The cathedral are building positive relationship between members of community, with refreshments after services and garden parties etc. They were pleased to have relaunched parishioners pass scheme, and parish visits (tea tour and evensong). Importance of 'Your Cathedral'. Daily worship continues. People welcomed to come and pray at the cathedral, and more have been coming recently especially with the situation in Ukraine. There has been a series of sermons at Easter time where preachers from around Diocese are welcomed to the cathedral.

Questions were received as follows:

Mark Bennet (201): Will the governance review impact on the process of recruiting a new Dean? What is the timetable? What is being done to support the cathedral while they are one person down? Can we have details of any event to give thanks for Dean?

Response from +S: This will delay the appointment of a new Dean/Head of House. Efforts will be made to ensure the Cathedral has adequate resources for leadership and ministry. The new Diocesan Canon being appointed shortly will help. It is too early to say what the timetable will be, but it is not likely that any new Dean will be appointed in the coming months. It would be intention to give good notice of an event to say goodbye to Martyn.

Jayne Ozanne (193): Congratulations to Richard on the work done on annual report. How is Chapter faring through this difficult time? Is there more that synod members can be doing to support chapter?

Response from Richard Peers: Chapter has continued with regular prayer and fellowship. There have been difficulties with staff being away on sabbatical, and Chapter is looking at ways to address this. It is difficult to move onto the next stage while Martyn and Emma are still in the Deanery. External facilitation will still be needed as well as some process of bringing people together. He encouraged people to pray for the cathedral and staff, especially for Richard and Philippa. Any help with wider diocesan links is appreciated, and Richard encouraged people to come to worship at cathedral. Encourage people to come with parish visits.

Mike Smith (42): Is Bishop Steven prepared to say more about the lessons learned review? And give details of what the Diocese might want from the review in terms of terms and independence of the review?

Response from Bishop Steven: Bishop's Council is committed to it being genuinely independent and to wanting to learn lessons. We are open to accept if mistakes have been made to act differently in future and currently looking into who exactly will be involved in overseeing review.

Bishop Olivia: Report indicated that the cathedral has weathered Covid in an amazing way. She was delighted to attend the cathedral recently and see such a young congregation. What is the cathedral doing to support these young people and their journey with discipleship? Are they linking with our discipleship team and taking up PDPs?

Response from Richard Peers: 1/3 congregation are new over the last 12 – 18 months. Covid has created some space for young people and a few key individuals have attracted other young people. The diminution of older members of congregation may have helped with this. Links with undergraduate and graduates has been helpful. Planning to link with PDPs and importance of Discipleship; part of brief of new Diocesan Canon. Enabling and encouraging people to see the cathedral as 'safe place' for people of all faiths and none.

Deiniol Heywood (67): What role will Diocesan Synod play in setting up questions and oversight of the lessons learned review?

Response from +S: The review is likely to be a Bishop's Council matter. It will report back to Synod. There is a significant role for Diocesan Synod in the governance review at Christ Church. Wide consultation is envisaged, and it may well be necessary to call an extraordinary meeting of Synod when we know timing.

Comments from Archdeacon Jonathan (007): Primary statute object of Christ Church is the advancement of religion, education and learning, so to incorporate this in the vision of Christ Church is part of its DNA and we definitely want to build on this with the new Diocesan Canon. Jonathan also wanted to highlight work of Claire Hayns as college Chaplain, working with both undergraduate and postgraduates. The number of missional conversations after evensong is a testimony to the missional work of the cathedral.

Point of order raised by Helen King (216):

After presentation on LLF, listening in small groups. What safeguarding measures are in place to protect people during these discussions?

6: Living in Love and Faith: an update and listening exercise

Paper ODS 22.03

Geoff Bayliss responded to the point of order. Facilitators are aware of the sensitivities. Individuals can leave breakout rooms if they wish and go to a separate room with a pastoral ear. LLF advisors gave an update as below:

Anthony Buckley (102) - LLF advisor, Area Dean of Oxford, Vicar of St Michael at the Northgate Oxford

Anthony reminded people of the national picture. Through the LLF process people have been engaging and learning from others. Reminder of key dates:

LLF resources released in November 2020. Engagement material Sept 2021 and April 2022. The deadline moved back due to the pandemic. Feedback is welcomed in many different formats. The national Next Steps group looking for feedback from everyone. Findings of feedback will be published in September this year. LLF proposals will be drafted and considered by GS in Feb 2023, which will mark the conclusion of the LLF journey.

Anthony quoted John 21:11. Why was it so important to note that the net was not torn? Jesus is risen. Things have changed. Sometimes processes and discussions can seem overwhelming, but perhaps we can be comforted that the net will not break, and the kingdom of God will not fall apart.

Gill Barrow-Jones (61) – LLF advocate for Buckingham. Rector of 2 parishes in Milton Keynes.

Gill offered a local update. What do LLFs advisors do? They encourage people to engage with LLF material, and courses nearby to them if their local church is not running one. The team have been running facilitation sessions online and have trained 83 people so far. Positive feedback from these sessions. 14,136 registrations on LLF website. 730 from Diocese of Oxford. To give feedback to the national LLF team there is a questionnaire available on the website. All are anonymous but reference a diocese, so we know that 73 so far have been submitted from our Diocese. This is slightly less than some other dioceses, but it is hoped this will increase over time. Take up in our Diocese has not been universal. Tiredness from dealing with a post covid world. Some feared running an LLF course might be too much, some also don't feel it necessary. Advocates are there to encourage as much engagement as possible so people's views can be heard. Feedback has been good. Deanery Synod meetings have been a good outlet. One village felt this course could be a good mission opportunity particularly for youngsters in the village. The national LLF team has created many resources, including a shorter session for youth leaders particularly to ensure younger people's views are included. A reminder that pastoral care opportunities are available, in local parishes and deaneries, and also through Archdeacons. Authorised listeners also available and LGBTI+ chaplains, details all on the Diocesan website.

Hannah Ling, Social Justice Advisor, expressed thanks to Anthony and Gill and reminded members to be kind, respectful and thoughtful in the breakout rooms when discussing the following 2 questions:

1. What experiences, perspectives, hopes, and fears are people likely bringing to the LLF conversations?

2. How might we, as members of Synod, encourage engagement and response with the LLF process? (Offer leadership? Are there obstacles or misconceptions that need to be addressed? How might we do that?)

Hannah reminded people of the LLF course commitments in order to help guide conversation: In our discussions, we commit to...

- holding each other before God in prayer
- praying for the presence and guidance of the Holy Spirit in all our conversations
- learning together from Scripture and from each other
- enabling everyone to speak
- making space for those whose voices have not yet been heard to contribute – but without putting people on the spot if they don't wish to speak
- avoiding interrupting each other, instead acknowledging what others say before moving on to have our say
- keeping confidential anything personal that is shared
- taking care about how we speak about others who are not in the room
- looking out for and being sensitive to people's feelings
- giving each other time to reflect before sharing with others
- offering one another an opportunity to say if there is anything in the discussion, they have found difficult but haven't been able to express
- learning together how we can live more fully in the way of Christ.

Comments and questions following breakout groups:

Jayne Ozanne (193): Has the House of Bishops / College of Bishops actually done the LLF course and discussed where they stand?

Bishop Steven advised they have spent more time on LLF issues over last 4 years, than any other subject. Individual Bishops have done the course in their own Dioceses. All have been engaged in significant parts of the course. And he confirmed that they have talked about where they each stand. A series of meetings of the College of Bishops in the Autumn will discern what will be brought to Synod. Encouraged people to feed into Bishops Olivia, Gavin and himself.

Helen King (216) expressed that the concern that human sexuality isn't a point of view; it relates to real people and how they are and there is a question over how church treats them?

Response from Gill: very aware that for some people this is not just a question of theological issues, but also real people and real lives.

David Salter (81): group raised question over how to find a solution that doesn't mean many may decide to leave the church because of a lack of change? How can we look forward to something that works well for everyone?

Bishop Steven response: We haven't found a way forward yet on unity over this issue. This still needs to be resolved going forward.

Laura Biron-Scott (101): timeline for process – concerns over this due to the inability to meet in person due to constraints of Covid. Deadline of April seems very soon. Is there any flexibility on this?

Stephanie Summerell (143) – same point as Laura's. Lack of engagement due to challenge of covid and lockdown. Is there a case for giving more time to those parishes who haven't yet engaged?

Mark Bennet (37) advised timescale for formal feedback by 30th April is now set, and won't change, but national team are looking for ways to look at feedback in different forms and with wider scope. Encouragement to continue using the materials. Welcomes feedback as General Synod rep.

Stephen Pullin (008): Some churches substituting LLF for other programmes, according to whichever side of the discussion they have. Should we do more to encourage people to engage with LLF rather than other materials? Or indeed discourage the latter?

Mark Bennet responded: Encouragement to engage with resources from their own starting points.

Gill: some LLF advocates talked about how they had added extra 2 sessions onto the material to particularly deal with issues of scripture which they thought were light in original 5 sessions.

Mark Hopkins (32) – He is an LGBT clergyman with friends in the same community who are exploring ordination, but who have not been able to continue with this. Will LLFs next steps group coordinate with national CofE vocations process for ordinations. Will they be treated fairly by the Vocations departments?

Jonny Dade (69) – do others agree that some of the language around LLF is disingenuous? Language around listening, learning, friendships etc but timescale is to *inform* some way forward from February 2023. Is this LLF trying to be a pastoral group but also a vehicle for informing change?

Katie Tupling (106): Wondering when disabled people might be next on the list, after sexuality, women, race etc? there is as big a divide over how to deal with those in the disabled community as there is over issues- e.g. gay community / women etc.

Sue Scott (170): How is LLF changing the church or is it just another talking shop? What is the impact if nothing changes – remember the debate is over 20 years old.

Prudence Dailey (214): How can we ensure discussions on sexuality doesn't just focus on gay people? How can we put discussions in a wider context?

Response from Anthony: Welcomed reminder to treat everybody as individuals, not lump together in a particular community. Part of LLF is to respect and honour each person in their own right and in relation to whatever their journey might be.

Response from Hannah: the 2 aims of LLF are to talk together to discuss and learn, and to inform the national conversation. She has tried to make this clear when running the course. Heard that this is a positive space where people have opportunity to discuss these topics, where they may not have had that before.

Bishop Steven: Doesn't know if next steps group is in touch with vocations process. Welcomed a letter from Mark Hopkins in order to raise this question with the right people. Confident that within our own Diocese our DDO team are dealing with matters in the best way possible.

Another resource to be published in September is 'The Gift of the Church' looking at ecclesiology looking at different responses to human sexuality. Looks at question of how can we be a church which holds different views but still honour and respect one another? Bishop Steven acknowledged the question over dislocation between historic official position of CofE and current culture of people we are trying to serve.

Bishop Steven commented that it had been a really helpful session and encouraged members of synod to feed into Hannah what we need to do next to facilitate further discussion.

Peter Barrett (138 - Sonning Deanery): Been leading a group on LLF – some feedback from group was on questionnaire at end which seemed to ask whether they enjoyed the course, rather than the content? Is the questionnaire leading people in a particular direction?

Val Plumb (63) – reiterated question over whether College or House of Bishops have undertaken LLF course in the same way that others have?

Daniel Matovu (217) – concern over response rate from Oxford. If there are so few responses how can that feed into Bishops' decision-making going forward? How is the 'Gift of the church' going to feed into the process? How can we be sure the Bishops will reflect the whole views of those in the Diocese?

Anna Thomas-Betts (154): only 1/3 of her breakout group had been to a course. Wondered if the course is only being attended by like-minded people? Also concerns over questionnaire and what sort of answers it might elicit?

Geoff requested synod approval for Jayne Ozanne to speak a second time. Majority approved.

Jayne Ozanne: Is there a recognition that the 2 different 'sides' of this issue are not equal? Does the House of Bishops and this Diocese recognise the mental health impact on one of the groups' views?

Andrew Bell (212): Surely we as God's people are called to be counter cultural especially in cases where we are different.

Response from Gill Barrow-Jones – questionnaire designed by Fiona Tweedy, a statistician at University of Edinburgh and Glasgow and SSM in Church of Scotland, with LLF national team. Church Army research are also conducting surveys on these issues.

Response from Hannah Ling on the questionnaire – there are sections on the questionnaire which allow for expansion and comments. People can also send in letters or respond to GS reps or LLF advocates. She agrees the church is called to be counter cultural. We need to show a sense of listening well, but know that in society this doesn't always happen. LGBTI+ community often experience abuse and marginalisation and we want to be a church which doesn't follow this pattern.

Response from Bishop Steven - Regional groups of Bishops have committed to spending time on LLF resources before the Autumn. He doesn't know how Bishops' meetings in the Autumn will be structured but does not see an expectation that the report will go straight to Synod. Autumn meetings will determine how and when GS will debate this.

Bishop Steven recognises that the 2 different sides are not equal and agreed we need to strive to continue to listen to LGBTI+ communities and understand the impact on this communities.

Question of being counter cultural has been going for a long time. Other conversations in the past e.g. remarriage of divorced people in church have confirmed this.

Bishop Steven thanked everyone for all their questions.

8. Financial Year End.

Geoff Bayliss invited Sir Hector Sants to give a verbal update on the financial outturn for the year ended 31st December 2021.

Sir Hector advised he has been in post for 2 months and this was his first meeting of Synod. He participated in a formal induction process and has now met all department heads. He felt the Church House team is very committed and hard working but also noticed some are stressed due to the effect of the pandemic. His overall impression is that resources are aligned to common vision and strategy. He intends to improve transparency of financial and management information. He wants to be seen as listening to concerns people have. Sir Hector expressed thanks to his predecessor.

Draft results indicate a surplus of £139k for 2021, in line with forecast given to Bishop's Council in 2021. 3 main factors:

1. Parish share has held up well – receipts at 93% of 2021 allocation
2. Parochial ministry – we kept vacancies open for slightly longer to cut costs and received enhanced rentals from empty vicarages
3. Positive variance to budget for buildings – Covid led to a shortage of contractors so building works were not undertaken and costs were down. Now working on a revised programme of work and we will need to use these saved funds going forward.

Sir Hector will be working hard to ensure good discipline, so we remain in as healthy position as possible. He was looking forward to meeting people in parishes going forward. Budget for coming year looking at a deficit of £500K. It was a challenging time due to impact of increasing inflation.

9. General Synod update and welcome.

Rt Revd Olivia Graham, Bishop of Reading, gave an update on the proceedings from the February 2022 Group of Sessions. First hybrid meeting welcoming those who couldn't attend in person to attend online.

Highlights:

1. Change to faculty rules – only legislative business on agenda. This was to make it easier for PCCs to make good decisions to help work towards a low carbon future.
2. Moving speech from Sir Paul Boateng on racial justice. This issue is our problem as God's children, and we all have responsibility to deal with this. We have started to address this in our Diocese.
3. Two diocesan motions, one on tackling human trafficking and modern slavery, the second on the persecuted church in the world with shocking statistics relating to the number of Christians being persecuted and killed and churches being attacked. Both issues were called to be discussed at Lambeth Conference.
4. Report of governance review. Motion was to allow work to be done to draft legislation to enable governance of CofE to be simplified. Debate was full of anxiety, emotion and mistrust. Purpose was for simplicity and transparency.
5. Presidential address by the Archbishop of Canterbury talked about the profound call to see the wholeness of people in society and urging us to be a community that seeks the common good.

<https://www.churchofengland.org/about/leadership-and-governance/general-synod/general-synod-meetings/general-synod-agendas-and>

10. Reflection - Mrs Sue Scott

Sue reflected that we are all in shock with what is happening in Ukraine. We are still in recovery following Covid. We need to be gentle on ourselves. We are requested to pray for Christ Church, for reconciliation and healing. LLF is a live issue and continues. We are finding a way to recognise LGBTI+ groups and to move forward is important. We need to build a truly inclusive church and welcome all to our churches.

Bishop Steven: Gave a final blessing and encouraged people to continue these important discussions.

Attendance:

4 Bishops and a further 120 members from the House of Laity and House of Clergy

Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from ... members in advance of the meeting.

House of Laity:

John Rogers
Judith Hogg
Felix Leach
Alison Wood

House of Clergy:

Philip Hobday
David Knights
Catharine Mabuza
Talisker MacLeod
Melanie Marshall
David McLeod
David Meakin
Sorrell Shamel-Wood
Clare Sykes
Benji Tyler
Katie Wakeman-Toogood

