

DIOCESAN SYNOD ACTS

16 March 2017



Acts of the Diocesan Synod held on 16 March 2017 at St Luke's Hedge End. 70 members were in attendance. The Revd Fiona Gibbs and Mr Nigel Williams led members in opening worship.

The Bishop of Winchester welcomed members.

AMAP PROPOSALS 2017-1019, DS 17/01

Vision & Implementation of Strategic Priorities

The Bishop of Winchester shared an overview of the vision and implementation of the diocesan strategic priorities at a diocesan and archidiaconal level, focusing on sustainable growth for the common good, with the intention to be proactive rather than reactive. Four projects were proposed:

1. Benefice of the Future, Promote Rural Evangelism & Discipleship

The Archdeacon of Winchester presented proposals for the Benefice of the Future to be trialled in three benefices initially: Pastrow with Hurstbourne Tarrant & Facombe & Vernham Dean & Linkenholt; North Hampshire Downs; Avon Valley.

2. Invest Where There is the Greatest Potential for Numerical Growth – Resource Churches Planted, Flourishing and Preparing to Plant Again

The Archdeacon of Bournemouth presented proposals for Resource Churches, with initial plans to go into Southampton and Basingstoke, each Resource Church to develop a pipeline to plant other churches.

3. Major Development Areas (MDA) – the Church Supports Sustainable Community Development and Offers a Missional Christian Presence

The Bishop of Basingstoke presented an overview of areas across the diocese which will see developments of 250+ houses over the next few years; proposing that the diocese must engage with the new communities as soon as possible to ensure a Christian presence.

4. Further & Higher Education – Grow and Deepen the Church's Engagement with Students and Institutions

The Bishop of Winchester presented members with an overview of Further and Higher Education and the challenges the church faces with engagement. The Bishop proposed a focused commitment in two key areas: Basingstoke and Southampton. That in addition to ongoing work in Winchester and Bournemouth.

Discussion & Vote

Members were invited to speak. Concern was expressed at the absence of proposals that focussed on Fresh Expressions and Pioneers, and also at the over emphasis on Resource Churches as the solution to all issues. In response, the Bishop of Winchester expressed his strong support for Fresh Expressions and Pioneers and explained that the selection of the four proposals to be included in the bid for funding from the Church Commissioners had

been a strategic decision. He stated that his support for Fresh Expressions remained strong and was intrinsic to all the proposals. He reassured members that there was nothing to prevent the diocese from making further bids for funding which could, at a later stage, include proposals regarding Fresh Expressions and Pioneers.

Members expressed support for the Benefice of the Future and asked for consideration of the 'decreasing generation' not just the 'missing generation', ie those who have supported churches throughout their lives and are now finding it increasingly difficult – in rural areas more so - to reach church on Sunday. Further questions were raised on the use of curates in rural ministry and how to subsequently deploy them. The Archdeacon of Winchester reiterated that the three proposed pilots would be bespoke to each location, and that the process would be one of learning for the diocese as well as for the parishes.

Overall, members were supportive of the proposals but asked for consideration to be given as soon as possible to Fresh Expressions, and that Resource Churches should not become the diocesan default. While accepting that MDAs are of great importance, members pointed out that many towns are filling up with 'independent living' accommodation for older people. Members acknowledged that the proposals offered 'broad brush strokes' rather than finely detailed solutions, and that it was impossible to include everything that happened across the diocese in one plan, and that it was better to do a few things well. In response to member questions, CEO, Mr Andrew Robinson confirmed that the proposals would go ahead even if the funding bid was not successful, but that the timescale for implementation would be longer.

The Bishop of Winchester stressed the difference between the aMAP, dMAP and pMAP. The aMAP, the proposals in the document presented, were designed to bring about a strategic step change across the whole diocese. Whereas every dMAP and pMAP throughout the diocese was a unique response to the local, and the chance to build on existing opportunities and develop Fresh Expressions. The Bishop of Winchester moved the following motion:

That this Synod:

1. Approves the four major projects as set out in the paper DS 17/01.
2. Requests the Bishop's Council develop detailed project delivery plans and associated costings.
3. Approves the submission of an application to the Church Commissioners for Strategic Development Funding to expedite the project delivery.
4. Endorses the outline proposals for the delivery of the remaining mission outcomes within the constraints of existing diocesan resources.

The motion was passed overwhelmingly with 6 votes against, and 4 abstentions.

Report from General Synod

The Revd Andrew Micklefield reported on:

- The 500 year anniversary of the Reformation, which would be commemorated by churches around the world in 2017 and presented a number of significant opportunities for the Church of England to strengthen relations with partner

churches in Europe, and to deepen reconciliation between churches historically divided by the events of the Reformation.

- Preliminaries to Marriage, legislation to replace ecclesiastical preliminaries to marriage by universal civil preliminaries. The proposal was rejected on the grounds that the reading of the banns provided an opportunity for mission and outreach which should be welcomed.
- Fixed odd betting terminals, a reduction from £200 to £2 was proposed and passed by synod. Next steps to include lobbying the government.
- Marriage and same sex relationships, following on from facilitated discussions, the report was presented as a 'take note' report. After lively debate, the report was rejected. Next steps include further discussion among diocesan General Synod representatives, and more work by the House of Bishops on a teaching document which would go to General Synod for another debate.
- Setting God's People Free, a report which called for a shift in culture to look beyond church structures to the whole people of God at work in communities and wider society; to seek to affirm and enable the complementary roles and vocations of clergy and of lay people, proposing steps to nourish, illuminate and connect what is working already in and through frontline parishes, to see confident involvement, engagement and leadership of lay people wherever they are called to serve

Mrs Alison Coulter, Chair of the House of Laity, took the opportunity to say farewell to the Revd Paul Kennedy, Area Dean of Winchester, shortly to relocate to London.

The Bishop of Winchester closed the meeting with prayer.

DEEMED BUSINESS

Approved nem con.

- Acts of Synod June 2016