Looking Back at Diocesan Synod- July 2022

The summer meeting of Diocesan Synod was held on Saturday 16th July at the YMCA Showroom on Tritton Road in Lincoln, following the July sessions of General Synod earlier that week and preceding the Lambeth Conference of Anglican Bishops on the 26th. Despite the high temperatures, Synod was able to come together in prayer and to consider the launch of the College of St Hugh, the work already underway in our new Deanery Partnerships, the work of the Diocesan Board of Education and how church has been adapting “post-covid”.

The meeting was chaired by Canon Nigel Bacon, Chair of the House of Laity. Synod were led in Dwelling in the Word by Canon Prof Muriel Robinson, Chair of the Board of Finance, using Psalm 139 verses 1-13.

# Presidential Address

The Rt Revd Stephen Conway, Acting Bishop of Lincoln, provided a pre-recorded address from Ely where he was conducting a wedding later that day. The Bishop discussed continuity and change in the monarchy and the political sphere and how this compares to continuity and change within the diocese. Refugees settling into our diocese as a result of the war in Ukraine were a particular focus, as was the current political and social unrest in Sri Lanka. The Bishop considered that some members of our congregations experience change with a sense of fear and loss. The strength of Time to Change Together is that it faces reality about the necessity of change, so that we can face the future and journey deeper into the life and resurrection of Jesus. The Bishop also welcomed the Ven Aly Buxton as the newly installed Archdeacon of Stow and Lindsey and paid particular tribute to the Ven Gavin Kirk, Archdeacon of Lincoln, for his efforts whilst the archdeaconry was in vacancy.

# The College of St Hugh

The Revd Canon Dr Hugh Jones introduced himself and the proposed way forward with the College of St Hugh. He explained that he was drawing together all of his teams’ activities into a coherent whole, placing lifelong Christian learning at the heart of how we support and grow as Christians across the Diocese. He then presented each member of his team including Dr Sally Buck who is the Warden of Lay Ministry, the Revd Sarah Lawrence as the Director of Studies and IME 2 Officer, the Revd Sonia Barron who is the Diocesan Director of Ordinands and Vocations, Mrs Sarah Spencer as the Mission and Discipleship Officer and also the Revd Simon Dean as the Generous Living and Covenant Lead. Each member of the team talked about their specific area and how it related to the themes of “Discovering, Growing, Discerning, Training and Continuing”. Synod members were informed about the big launch of the College which would take place on 24th September in 9 simultaneous services across the Deanery Partnerships, to celebrate our shared calling to participate in God’s work.

The presentation ended with a plea for participation in a brief questionnaire on what people would like to see from the College in order to take the next steps in their Christian faith.

# Time to Change Together

The Archdeacon of Stow and Lindsey, the Ven Aly Buxton, introduced the report and handed over to the Revd Richard Crossland, Re-imagining Church Lead, who described the work of the Deanery Partnership Steering Groups and how varied and creative their work had been. The Revd Carolyn Bailey and the Revd Nick Nawrockyi spoke about the experiences in the Deanery Partnerships of South Holland and North East Lincolnshire respectively, including what had worked well and what had been a challenge. Synod then engaged in round table discussion to consider how engaged people are with “locally discerned plans” and what the main challenges are for local decision making. A plenary session followed with Synod members asking questions and giving their feedback.

The Archdeacon then introduced Mr Ed Scrase-Hollamby, an organisational change consultant who has been assisting the Time Change Together Team since the beginning of the programme. Ed asked Synod to consider

people’s differing perspectives of change, using the example of a beach ball with different coloured stripes that looks different from each angle.

# Separate meetings of the Houses

Canon Nigel Bacon announced that following the usual nomination period, Mr Russ Coulter of Lawres Deanery and Mr Mark Suthern of Graffoe Deanery were duly elected unopposed as lay members for the new Vacancy In See Committee. It was noted that the new committee would come into effect upon the completion of the current committee’s work (which had been paused) and appointment of the new diocesan bishop.

The Very Revd Christine Wilson, Dean of Lincoln, chaired the separate meeting of the House of Clergy in order to hold hustings and an election for two positions. Following a competitive ballot, the following results were confirmed by the Diocesan Registrar:

The Revd Cameron Watt of Louthesk Deanery was elected as the Chair of the House of Clergy.

The Revd Rachel Heskins of Christianity Deanery was elected as the Lincoln Clergy rep on the Bishop’s Council of

Diocesan Trustees.

# General Synod Report

Mr Carl Fender gave a report about the recent sessions of General Synod which took place in York from the 8th - 12th July. Carl drew attention to the debate about the War in Ukraine, led by the Bishop of Leeds, which had focused on what reconciliation might look like. He also spoke of the reforms of the Canterbury Crown Nominations Committee, a review of PCC membership and electoral rolls and a motion from Chichester Diocese on Assisted Dying.

# Safeguarding Update

Mr Jack Redeyoff, the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor, gave a brief update on the work of the safeguarding team including the successful recruitment of two new case workers. It was confirmed that the Diocese of Lincoln would be publishing its section of the Past Case Review 2 (PCR2) report earlier than had been recommended by the National Church. This was due to a number of delays in the planned publishing date of the full report from May to October, and a decision made under the leadership of Bishop Stephen to prioritise the needs of survivors in our diocese. It was confirmed that the National Team had left this decision to individual dioceses but that currently no other diocese had elected to publish early. The Lincoln report was expected to be released in the week commencing 25th July.

# Church in a Covid Changed World

The Rt Revd Nicholas Chamberlain, Bishop of Grantham, and Miss Lynsey Norris, Assistant Director of Education, led Synod in a reflective exercise about how leadership had changed since the pandemic both in education and in the church environment. It was noted that inequity had become more visible, connectivity had changed in both positive and negative ways and that schools and churches were experiencing the loss of volunteers and the consequences of poorer mental health and wellbeing.

Synod members engaged in round table discussion followed by a plenary feedback session on their experiences of the pandemic.

# The Diocesan Board of Education annual Report

The Ven Dr Justine Allain Chapman, Chair of the Diocesan Board of Education and Mr Paul Thomson, Diocesan Director of Education, presented the Annual DBE Report to Synod and an update presentation on the relationship between the DBE and Synod, changes brought about by the recent 2021 DBE measure, the current reach of the DBE and the work of the team. It was noted that there were currently 27,927 pupils in Church of England schools across the diocese, in a total of 141 schools. Synod was also updated on the Government’s Multi Academy Trust Strategy to see all schools be part of a MAT by 2030, and the impact that will have on the

education landscape in our diocese. Finally, Synod was informed of the overlap between the Time to Change Together and the National Church’s Growing in Faith strategy, which promotes a partnership between the three communities of church, school and household.

The Rt Revd Dr David Court, the Bishop of Grimsby, closed the meeting of Synod in prayer.