

Diocesan Synod – the Diocese’s governing body

The Truro Diocesan Synod meets either two or three times each year, when about 100 clergy and lay representatives from parishes across the diocese come together to discuss and vote on matters of policy and interest, and to receive various reports. The last meeting was on 5 November, but fortunately there weren’t too many fireworks in evidence!

The keynote speaker was Kate Kennally, the recently appointed Chief Executive of Cornwall Council. She spoke about her role and the importance of the Council being able to work in partnership with the voluntary sector. We then received a presentation on the Never Alone proposals, aimed at ensuring that clergy receive the support they need. A recent survey of clergy across the diocese indicated that a significant proportion feel isolated at times to a greater or lesser degree, and this can lead to stress. The proposals promote a culture of mutual support and accountability between the clergy themselves, but also emphasise the importance of support from lay people. After a debate, Synod voted to ask the Bishop’s Diocesan Council to encourage the adoption of these proposals across the diocese.

Another debate took place on the Environmental Strategy, which aims to continue to raise awareness of the effects of climate change and provides encouragement for us to reduce our use of fossil fuels by means of 10 pledges for individuals; a Green Church Kernow award for parishes; and a commitment from the diocese to review their policies and practices.

Before Mike Sturgess, as Chair of the Diocesan Board of Finance, presented the budget for 2017, Bishop Chris gave an update on the consultation that took place over the summer on the allocation of MMF* between the parishes of a deanery. Deaneries are to be encouraged to take responsibility for allocating MMF between the parishes in a manner that the parishes themselves agree, which may be cost-based or by other methods. In his budget presentation, Mike then asked Synod for a decision on the level of the MMF increase for 2017. Should it be set at 3%, to enable a balanced budget, or kept to 1½% to help parishes that are struggling, which will lead to a deficit of some £80,000? Synod chose the lower increase for next year.

It was a full meeting, with a variety of different topics being discussed and a good contribution from the people attending.

*MMF stands for Mission and Ministry Fund – the payments to the diocese to fund the mission and ministry (largely clergy stipends, NI, pensions and housing) of the Church across Cornwall.

Sheri Sturgess
Diocesan Lay Chair