

## Diocesan Synod Report | 9<sup>th</sup> March 2024

### By Gordon McFarland

The Synod was held at Christ Church Woking, we received a warm welcome from our hosts and opened in Prayer led by Rev. Emma Dornan, the Associate Vicar at CCW.

Bishop Andrew welcomed Synod and introduced/welcome Kate Derwent as our new Deputy Diocesan Secretary. He gave an update on the positive contribution made by Leatherhead Deanery, the Synod and National Church on the recent passing into legislation of the prevention of on-line harm act.

Bishop Andrew provided his Presidential Address focusing on the theme of Multi Racial Diversity, and the value this brings to our community and worship. In particular how diversity can provide deeper insight and richer understanding of our faith. Bishop Andrew challenged us all to reflect on how we can do more to promote diversity and welcoming.

After approval of the November Diocesan Synod minutes, Rev. Dr. Peter Harwood, provided an update on his paper on the Continuing Recovery, Looking to the Post Covid Future. He led us into working subgroups to provide feedback on how to grow Church participation and enabling our Parishes to flourish. Peter provided some positives, against a general backdrop of declining numbers, to encourage us. In particular the promise in scripture and resources such as the Justin Brierley Pod Cast series on the Surprising Rebirth of Belief in God, the impact of alternative outreach channels like the TV series 'The Chosen', the Talking Jesus 2022 report, and shared the very powerful testimony of Steff, who shared her journey from AA to Lay Ministry – clearly sharing her love and very visible relationship with Jesus.

Canon Peter Bruinvels along with Bishop Andrew provided an excellent update from National Synod and the very strong representation of 'Team Guildford'. What was evident from the update was the wide range of matters covered by Synod ranging from Race, Environment, Codes of Conduct, Safeguarding, Clergy Pensions, Estate Ministry and funds for addressing impacts of historic Transatlantic Slavery amongst others.

After welcome refreshment and the opportunity to meet our friends across the Diocese, we had an update on the DBE – Diocesan Board of Education from Canon Alex Tear. He outlined the importance of the work of the DBE through his presentation on the Annual Report. Alex illustrated this through 4 fantastic stories showcasing the work of Teachers, Heads, Governors and the DBE. These show just how impactful and important our work with CoE schools (and indeed wider community schools) have on building links in the community and promoting a Christian ethos to over 20,000 children and their families. This is a key enabler of our strategy of Growing Disciples, Diversity and Community.

We broke into groups again to discuss the future challenges and opportunities for the DBE and to provide feedback into the priorities for the future. There then followed a useful discussion and Q&A along with completion of AOB and points of clarification.

Reflecting on Synod I view the packed agenda as showing the wide range of important work we are actively leading. There are many challenges but also many positives to encourage us in our ongoing service, in Jesus name, to our community and wider afield.

Bishop Andrew closed in Prayer and with a Blessing.