

Report on Salisbury Diocesan Synod – Tuesday June 23rd 2009

There was a wide-ranging agenda at the last Synod of the Triennium, held at St Paul's Church Salisbury, Tuesday June 23rd 2009 at 6.30pm.

The Bishop of Salisbury, the Rt Revd Dr David Stancliffe, introduced the session by welcoming Bishop Ezekiel Kondo of Khartoum in the Sudan, and Bishop Pavils Bruvers of Liepeja in Latvia. The Bishop paid tribute to Archdeacon Alistair Magowan, soon to be Bishop of Ludlow, and Mr Chris Dragonetti, outgoing Diocesan Accountant.

The Archdeacon of Sherborne, the Venerable Paul Taylor, Chair of the Diocesan Environment Group, reported on progress. Canon Jean Coates, Rural Officer for Sherborne, explained the discussions, seminars, publicity and policy preparations involved. Fiona Hulbert, Social Responsibility Officer for Wiltshire, highlighted plans for solar panels, collaborations with seven other dioceses for purchasing bulk energy, and support for the Countdown to Copenhagen campaign.

After debate, the proposals for adopting the Diocesan Environment Policy and a National Motion were overwhelmingly voted in.

Mr Gil Williams, Chair of the Diocesan Board of Finance, then presented the annual reports and Accounts for 2008, noting the "chaos in the financial markets... presenting us with a significant set of challenges."

- Investment value had fallen 25% during 2008
- However, deposit account balances had nearly doubled
- General Fund incomings and outgoings were well-matched on the whole
- £166, 936 had been spent on mission projects.

A 1.79% budget increase for 2010 was proposed. The increase in the clergy pension contribution rate to 45% would be funded by savings from the lay pension scheme as well as savings on stipend costs. Mr Williams stressed that all diocesan priorities had been fully funded, and that 91% of Share had gone towards supporting parishes and ministers, with only 3.6% used for administration, adding that it was in everyone's interests for parishes to pay Share on time.

After debate, the budget was approved by overwhelming majority.

The Archdeacon of Wiltshire, the Venerable John Wraw, reported on progress in implementing the strategy for the deployment of ministers, pointing out that the Pilgrimages in Portland and Devizes embodied the principle of mission being at the heart of deployment, with its need for people skills and engagement.

Revd Thomas Woodhouse, Rural Dean of Calne, and Pam Evans, Lay Chair, talked of the need for generating enthusiasm and confidence for mission, of covering interregnums, and of being strategic in planning for and nurturing new vocational appointments, including specialist posts. Mr Roger Holehouse, Lay Chair of Dorchester, noted the need for parish stability, given a projected 30% reduction in Dorchester clergy by 2016, and the need for partnerships, both to cover interregnums and to foster new curates into team rectors.

The Archdeacon drew out three points: the need for ongoing review, matching clergy to suitable roles in their first incumbency, and the "huge priority" of growing and developing vocations. "It's important," he said, "to share skills and experience in order to build the Kingdom of God."

A proposal by Lady Gooch to change to two regular Synod meetings a year engendered a debate. Synod sought to balance the value of meeting together as a diocesan body to address various issues against the importance of reducing travel and carbon footprint. The end result was a gentle defeat by vote.

The next meeting of Synod will be an all day session from 10am on Saturday 7 November 2009 at Amesbury Baptist Centre.