

Spring 2024

Report from the Bishops Diocesan Council to Diocesan Synod

This report from the Diocesan Secretary is on behalf of the Bishops Diocesan Council (BDC) and is addressed to members of Diocesan Synod. The paper has been approved by BDC and may be forwarded or passed on by members.

1. **Fruitfulness and Sustainability**
Diocesan Plan for Change and Renewal

Having approved the Diocesan Plan for Change and Renewal in 2023 the BDC receive regular reports on progress towards its implementation. Direct oversight of the plan is through the Board for Change and Renewal, which meets regularly and reports to BDC.

- **Recruiting and training, including Local Leaders and Oversight Ministers**
Among other positive areas of progress the BDC have heard that Local Leaders are volunteering, training and being commissioned across the diocese to work alongside Oversight Ministers in the leadership of local church communities. The Board and the BDC are now looking at “people planning” across the diocese to understand how volunteer, paid and stipendiary posts are to be shaped and supported, and where there may be “gaps”.
- **Clergy Recruitment**
Nationally the number of stipendiary clergy is falling, a decline set to continue with more retirements than ordinations. Against this backdrop we are working to significantly increase the number of stipendiary clergy in post in the Diocese of Truro, and then to at least maintain that number. Numbers are now rising but we need to maintain the surge achieved in the winter of 2023/4, this is a top operational priority.
- **Lowest Income Communities Funding (LICF)**
After allocating LICF at deanery level across the diocese it has been very good to see how parishes are now able to use that funding to support ministry and mission among communities experiencing deprivation. BDC continues to be committed to this approach and to helping parishes make best use of this significant funding from the national church (around £900,000 per year).
- **Increasing the size of the worshipping community in Cornwall**
All deanery plans include ambitious targets for reversing the decline in the size of worshipping communities, however progress towards this ambition remains patchy. There are some very encouraging examples of churches growing, but we recognise how hard this is particularly in churches that are struggling to sustain their worshipping life as it is - let alone try new things.
- **Small churches, children and young people, and buildings**
BDC have committed to significant work to support small churches, to prioritise the growth in the number of children and young people we work with, and supporting PCCs in their stewardship of buildings, particularly church buildings. In each of these three areas we know that we need to be led by local needs not from a single diocesan perspective and are beginning, or continuing, to consult widely before making plans. We expect to make a major application for national funds to support work with children and young people adding to DBF resources already allocated.
- **Finance - MMF**
For the first time in many years the “collection rate” for MMF contributions from parishes matched the budget in the first quarter of the year. We honour the faithful generosity of parishes that makes this possible. Thank you.

- **Leadership**

We know that deanery and parish leaders already have a very heavy workload, sometimes working with less to try and do more. The bishop's team are continuing to work with rural deans on how best the DBF should support deanery leadership, including through the proposed Deans of Area role.

There are challenges finding enough PCC officers in every parish, one important step is to resource work under Bishop Graham James looking at small churches and how they should be resourced and supported.

2. **Governance**

- **Vacancy in See**

The Vacancy in See Committee has completed its work and has finalised the diocesan "Statement of Needs" please pray for the Crown Nominations Commission as they take the work forward and begin shortlisting.

- **Diocesan Synod Elections**

Members should be aware that there are elections later this year for Synod, each parish has been sent information to encourage candidates as well as links to online material. We are grateful to those who act as "returning officers" in their deanery, please do encourage candidates to stand.

- **Chairs of the Diocesan Board of Finance and Board of Education**

Mike Sturgess has indicated that he intends to step down from this role later this year, work to find a new Chair has begun with an invitation for candidates to express an interest. Anna Corbett is also stepping down from the Board of Education and work to identify a successor for her is also in hand.

- **Trustee led review**

In line with Charity Commission guidance the BDC regularly reviews the governance arrangements of the Diocesan Board of Finance. The latest phase of this work is a review led by one of our trustees, the Revd Jeffrey Terry.

3. **Operational**

- **Church House location**

The Church House team will be moving to offices at the Old Cathedral School in June. We will be occupying a much smaller (and cheaper) but more flexible space. We look forward to working more closely with the cathedral team.

- **Cherish Creation, Cut Carbon, Speak Up!**

BDC continue to monitor our ambitious environment action plan which is supported by the national church, and which itself supports local churches.

4. **Safeguarding**

- **Conference**

A successful spring conference was held in March focussing on how a "trauma informed" approach can help church safeguarding.

- **Audit**

Safeguarding in the diocese has been audited by the independent organisation "INEQE" on behalf of the Archbishops Council. We are grateful to Parish Safeguarding Officers and others who contributed to the audit. The report will be published on 2nd July - initial feedback was positive and constructive; the full report will be shared in due course and BDC will consider an Action Plan as appropriate.

5. **Education**

We congratulate Lee Moscato who has been appointed Diocesan Director of Education following a full recruitment process earlier this year.