**Priorities and Process – Diocesan Synod 21 Nov 2020**

Thank you Bishop Guli and good morning Synod. My name is Claire Bampton and I’m here today in the role of Diocesan Programme Manager, which means I’m charged with the coordination of the Shaped by God Together Process.

As we have heard from Bishop Martyn in the Presidential Address, six priorities have been identified and are being put to Synod this morning in the motion you have on your agendas.

Growing **new communities** such as fresh expressions and church plants

Seeking to be **intercultural communities** where people from the global majority fully participate,

Growing faithful **intergenerational communities** across our schools, churches and households

Becoming **eco-communities** who actively care for and wisely steward our environmental resources for this and future generations,

Embodying a desire to live well together as **reconciling communities**, recognising and grappling with the many issues and contexts that divide us

And, of course, we are **Anglican** communities, and firmly rooted in our commitment to incarnational ministry through the parish system.

These priorities will help us focus our thinking about the future, as we discern how we are being shaped by God to fulfil his calling to us, and within this, how we address the significant challenges we face. This is the “Shaped by God Together” process.

We have created a series of working groups, or workstreams. Underpinning the whole process is **Wellbeing** – the group, chaired by Bishop Guli, is continuing to work on ways in which we can all be equipped to take responsibility for our own wellbeing and attend to the wellbeing of others. The process of story gathering, sense-making and distilling insights and learning from those stories is being coordinated by the **Organisational Learning Group**, led by Rob Hay.

There are then four groups grappling with questions and challenges in four big areas.

 The **Finance Group,** led by Jonathan Kerry, is looking at the financial challenges faced by churches and the diocese. They are exploring ways to ensure that the way we construct our budget, and our Parish Contribution system, can best enable us to provide the ministry we need across the diocese.

The **Ministry Group** is led by Stuart Burns and is exploring different possibilities for what the ministry of clergy, lay ministers, and the whole people of God, could look like in the years to come.

Archdeacon Richard is leading the **Church Buildings Group**. This group is exploring possibilities around how we can support and encourage parishes in the care of church buildings, particularly in those places facing significant challenges.

The **Support for Ministry Group**, led by Dean David Monteith, is exploring the principles that should guide decision making around the provision of supportive roles centrally and locally. The group is gathering learning from within and beyond the diocese to help in this thinking.

As we move through this process, the Organisational Learning Group are helping ensure that we are **attentive** to the insights and learning emerging from the stories. We are working closely with colleagues in the **Communications team** to get information out to people at the right times and yet we are aware of the particular challenges in this, in the context of Covid.

The whole process began with a Call to Prayer from the Bishops, and we seek to ensure it continues to be **enfolded in prayer and rooted in theological reflection.**

As Diocesan Synod, you will have a specific and important role in the process. Early in 2021 we will begin a whole **series of conversations** with people across the Diocese, sharing a variety of possibilities as to how we might respond to God’s call to grow his Kingdom here on earth, while also tackling the practical challenges we face in our ministry, buildings and finance. We hope to give significant time at our **February Synod** to this conversation. We will need to pay careful attention to ensuring that we are hearing from as many different voices and perspectives as possible.

Through the Spring, the possibilities will be refined, taking into account feedback, ongoing learning from our stories and exploration of new ideas in local contexts, and no doubt also further research and analysis. As **preferred options emerge**, we will make those known and continue to test them out in a range of conversations, before bringing **proposals to Diocesan Synod in May**.

Alongside your formal role within our governance structures, I would also ask Synod members to be **advocates** and encourage people to engage with this process as much as they are able, and to continue to hold it in **prayer**.

Claire Bampton, Programme Manager, Shaped By God Together.