

## Synod looks at a changing church

The Diocese of Leicester Synod met for the first time in 2022 on 26 February to hear about what Bishop Martyn described as a changing church in a changing world. Part of that change was reflected in the fact that nearly 30 people participated in the meeting by Zoom, including two of the speakers.

The Synod meeting began with worship led by Bishop Saju and came in the context of the meeting taking place 2 days after the Russian invasion of Ukraine. The Scripture reading from Matthew 11 reminded the Synod of Jesus's invitation to all who are weary to come and receive rest. Prayers were offered for the situation in Ukraine.

In his presidential address Bishop Martyn reflected on living in a changing church and in a changing world. He urged people to get involved in prayer for Ukraine, while also noting that the invasion brought a sense of uncertainty about the future. He noted that the five strategic priorities for the Diocese include new communities, ie church planting, which featured on the agenda, but also reconciling communities. Reconciliation, he said, lies at the heart of the gospel and we can make a difference in our own communities where God has placed us.

Bishop Martyn then reflected on Living in Love and Faith noting that a number of written questions had been submitted about this and that the Church is divided on sexuality. LLF is about changing the way that we engage with each other across difference on this issue and he encouraged all members of Synod to do the LLF course.

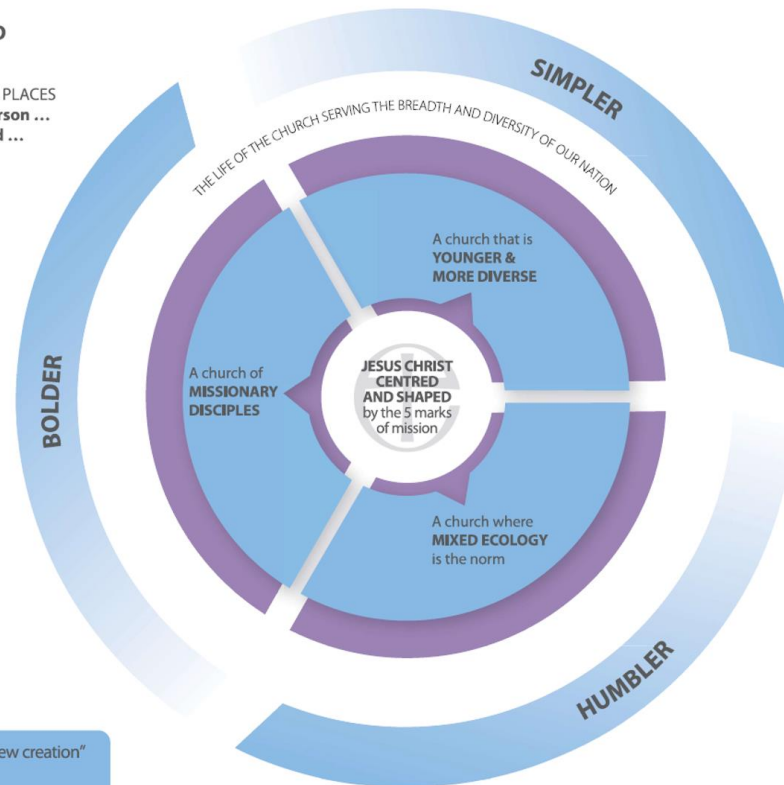
Finally, he offered the Community of the Tree of Life as a good example of living with difference and told Synod members that there would be a Community open day on 2<sup>nd</sup> April.

Eleven written questions had been submitted on a variety of topics including the Racial Equity strategy, Shaped By God Together, and issues of sexuality. Answers were circulated to Synod members and follow up questions were received from Vee Pinto, Roy Faulkner, David Monteith, Rachael Brind-Surch and Ann Reddecliffe.

Synod then heard from Dave Male and Debbie Clinton from the Archbishops' Council about the Church of England vision and strategy. Dave Male explained that this was the first time that the Church of England had sought to create this at national level. The work had been developed before and during the pandemic and the views of a wide range of people, including young people, had been taken into account, along with discussions from General Synod over the previous 2 years about priorities. Debbie Clinton then explained that this work had resulted in the vision and strategy diagram below

**A VISION FOR  
THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND  
IN THE 2020s**

A CHURCH FOR ALL PEOPLE IN ALL PLACES  
... a Christian vision for every person ...  
... a Christian vision for the world ...



"If anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation"  
(2 Corinthians 5:17)

The presenters noted that the vision and strategy was unapologetically ambitious. 3,500 new worshipping communities were already planned and the strategy set out a target of 10,000. They highlighted issues of needing to align resources and prayers with the strategy and that action was needed at all levels of the Church including parish, diocese and national.

Questions and comments from Synod members focused particularly on the place of church buildings in the strategy, the allocation of resources from the Church Commissioners and the role of lay people. In closing comments, Dave Male encouraged dialogue at local level and for feedback to be passed to the national church about what is working well locally and what is not.

After a break, Andy Brockbank and Penny Pullan led a short presentation on [Living in Love and Faith](#). They set out a number of opportunities for Synod members to take part in the LLF course and encouraged participation. Andy Brockbank explained that time would be set aside at the next two Synod meetings to discuss LLF. In a time of questions it was noted that people in the Church are at different stages of processing the sexuality conversation and that this needs to be taken into account. The framework to ensure that people can participate safely was explained and Andy Brockbank stressed that LLF does not presuppose any specific outcome from the discernment process.

The final major agenda item was a presentation by Barry Hill and Jonathan Dowman about the New Communities strategic priority. Introducing the presentation, Barry Hill stressed that work on the New Communities priority is not being done in a silo but is integrally entwined in the other four strategic priorities. He then spoke about the Resourcing Churches project and highlighted that 18 new worshipping communities had already been formed through the project with around 250 new people already joining those communities (in addition to the teams that set them up). A further 18-20 new worshipping communities are either about to launch or in the planning and discernment stages. Jonathan Dowman reflected on the Diocese's journey with Fresh Expressions of Church and

noted that there are now 8 ordained pioneer ordinands who are both pioneering themselves and taking an interest in lay pioneering initiatives. The presentation included a number of video clips highlighting work in places such as Loughborough, Thurmaston, Framland Deanery and Leicester. Questions and comments from the floor highlighted opportunities for new services as people emerge from the pandemic, the flexibility of Fresh Expressions and the fact that they can be time limited as well as the need to ensure that church planting takes place across a range of diverse contexts and traditions. The slides and videos are available to watch or use in your context here: <https://www.leicester.anglican.org/news/synod-explores-new-communities-strategic-priority.php>

Finally, Chris Collins brought a report of proceedings at General Synod in February highlighting the range of issues under discussion including external-focused issues such as the challenge of modern slavery and human trafficking.