

## **STAMFORD DEANERY SYNOD 13 September 2016**

### **KEY POINTS FROM DIOCESAN SYNOD 13 JULY 2016**

Philip James from the Research and Strategy Unit at Church House Westminster gave us some statistical background to a discussion of the plan for learning communities. Nationally, attendance at C of E churches has declined at 1.3% pa over the past 10 years, continuing a longer-term trend. In Lincoln Diocese, the decline has been at 2.4% pa, fastest in Lincoln, Grimsby, Scunthorpe, Boston and Grantham. Of the population of our Diocese, 1.4% currently attend, in the bottom quartile nationally, and only 0.3% of 18-24 year olds. Giving per capita is also at the bottom, but ordinations are in the top quartile. If we wish to move from a cycle of decline to one of growth, radical change will be needed. The national church has a Strategic Development Fund from which grants are made for projects which address these issues.

Against that background, Bishop Christopher reiterated his aim to increase the stipendiary clergy posts from 110 to 150 (full-time equivalent) by 2017. The parish share was improving, but it made up only 40% of our income, whereas many other dioceses relied entirely upon share. The Diocese was seeking to engage more in partnerships with other agencies and to develop learning communities. Angela Sibson (Diocesan Secretary) said that to change we must learn to unlock creativity. She proposed establishing six learning communities, based on common characters: rural, urban, coastal, housing developments, market towns and large villages. Benefices, or individual parishes, would be invited to join whichever they thought most fitted them. Proposals arising from such communities could be eligible for national funding as described above, as well as from the Diocese.

Synod approved the development of learning communities, as part of the work programme for 2017.

We received the Financial Summary for 2015. James Birch, Chair of Finance, said there was a deficit of £2.4m in current expenditure, largely offset by the sale of glebe lands. The same was happening in 2016, and a brief paper on the budget for 2017 proposed continuing this pattern for a few more years to fund the increase in parish clergy posts. Dioceses had a new power to dispose of historic assets to meet current expenditure, but its use would rapidly erode the capital base. It was essential that levels of giving in parish share should increase substantially over the next few years.

A paper on parish share showed that, by end May, the Diocese had collected £132k more than in the previous year, which was very helpful with cash flow. The majority of discussions with parishes had been concluded, resulting in a reduction of pledges by £187k to a total of £4,627k. Requests for share in 2017 would be issued by the end of July; though the requests were specific to each parish, benefices would have discretion to amend the amounts from parishes within their total.

We received a paper on Lincolnshire Chaplaincy Services, reporting the outcome of a review. The paper itself was less than clear but, introducing it, Bishop David said that the Diocese had reduced funding to the Service for 2016 and proposed to end it altogether at the end of the year. Instead, parishes would be encouraged to engage with their workplaces and other activities, with support from the Diocese.

Introducing the annual report of the Board of Education, the Director emphasised the impact of the Government's drive towards academies; this created a huge task for the Board in helping all its schools to gain academy status through multi-academy trusts. They insisted that church schools join trusts which had a majority of church schools, so as to guarantee their faith-based ethos.

Philip Dale