

## New beginnings—new challenges

**B**ishop Donald set out his vision for growth in his Presidential address.

I want to speak about new beginnings. We've had quite a few clergy coming into the diocese from elsewhere recently. And since we've been under the number of clergy we should have for a number of years it's great to welcome new people in to bring, we trust and pray, new breath, new life, new thinking, consistent with the old gospel that doesn't change

And there are also new Ordinands. We've had an upsurge in numbers, which is extremely good news. They'll need paying and training, but it's surely good news that we've got more people wanting to come into ordained ministry, including more younger people. And they will bring energy, enthusiasm, perhaps a bit less wisdom and maturity than some of the clergy have, but they'll bring the things that we may have been a bit short of in recent years. Also some clergy are moving within the diocese, not least a number of our curates becoming incumbents in the diocese.

### Clergy need care

That raises a few issues. One is care and support for new clergy, particularly for those coming into incumbency for the first time. Because the average age of ordination has gone up over recent years and because the Church of England, I think a little foolishly, has just been trying to save money, people are coming into vicar jobs less well prepared and trained than used to be the case. Actually leading a parish or a benefice is a big job. It's not like any other job. There are so many balls to keep up in the air, so many people to get to know, so many relationships in the church, community and diocese. So many things to learn. It's really important that we care for and support new incumbents. One of the things I'd like to do long term is find ways to give them



**"We're not in the business of static church or dying church. We're in the business of building the kingdom. To do that you need to build the church."**

longer preparation before they become an incumbent. The return of second curacies would be a really good thing, but we can't easily do it with the current rules of the Church of England. I think roles as Assistant Priest or Assistant Vicar in a parish might be a good way of doing that.

But that means we need to create some new jobs, and find parishes willing to have two full timers and pay for them. As younger clergy come in we need to find ways of giving them solid experience in ministry, starting without much responsibility as a curate, working up to more responsibility before they take on the incumbent role.

### Clarifying diocesan culture

I'm trying to clarify and to some extent modify the culture of this diocese so that people have a clear view of what the bishop and the diocese thinks is important in terms of priorities for parishes and clergy. I don't want to create parishes that are clones of each other. I want to encourage each parish to have its own life, vision, and way of doing things, but as part of the diocesan culture contributing to all and cooperating with others for everyone's mutual benefit. I've produced a document which now goes out with every parish profile and is on our website that says what we would like in a new vicar. We've sent copies to all the clergy who are currently in post so they know how we are thinking and how this culture is developing.

### Safeguarding: no cover-ups, no exemptions

One thing in it is an expectation that clergy will be working for the growth of the church in numbers, depth, discipleship, influence and effectiveness. We are not in the business of static church or dying church, we are in the business of building the kingdom, to build the kingdom you need to grow the church. Another expectation is that all clergy who come into the diocese



## **New beginnings—new challenges *continued***

will cooperate fully and completely with all our safeguarding policies, and will engage in safeguarding training on a regular basis. It needs to be firmly in the culture that no one is exempt. We are not going to cover up harm to children or vulnerable adults up. We will deal with it robustly. It will be reported to the police, and we will take whatever action is necessary

### **Schools are “core business”**

Another expectation is that I think it's absolute core business for every priest and every parish to be involved with all the schools in the parish. They are places where there is so much life and energy. They are huge mission fields. We can and should support the heads and school staff, in areas of worship and RE not least, but in the wider culture and wellbeing of the school. Not every priest has great gifts in doing assemblies, but then they find other people who have and send them on courses, encourage them. It's the clergy's job to make excellent relationships with heads and chairs of governors. And if there are clergy or parishes who aren't fully involved in church schools and community schools that needs to be put right. It's core business, the core of the job.

### **Working together**

One of our lay ministers said shouldn't we have in the document something about good collaborative working between the new vicar and the licensed lay ministers. The answer is yes, of course, but the parish profile will say it. But bluntly if I hear any more stories of clergy and lay ministers not cooperating and getting on together perhaps it needs to go into the document as an expectation for all. And I do have an expectation that all parishes that haven't yet got lay ministry should develop it.

### **Change with stability**

But in all these areas of new beginnings it's important that we maintain stability and confidence while making room for change. Change can easily be seen as a threat, it can easily be seen as something that empties a church. There used to be a type of priest who would say I see my role as first going into the parish, emptying it out and getting new lot in who will do things the way I want it. That's not the culture or the policy we want in this diocese. We want people to come in and love those who are there, show that there is real stability, give confidence in a new leadership and bring in the change that's needed too. Change alongside confidence and stability is what we look for in any new leadership. So may we pray that God will give stability, confidence and appropriate change.

*Bishop Donald also touched on change in current affairs including the new Archbishop, the new Pope, and the situation in China. A full transcript of his address can be found on the diocesan website [www.peterborough-diocese.org.uk](http://www.peterborough-diocese.org.uk).*

## **General Synod—matters the media didn't report**

**Bishop Donald reported on the November General Synod when the women bishops measure was defeated. But he focused on “three other hugely important matters” overlooked by most reports.**

### **1. Authority to administer the sacraments**

A measure is in progress to allow people to be authorised by the PCC alone and not the bishop. It “says the parish can make its own decisions” and includes authorising children and young people who are regular communicants to administer sacraments.

### **2. Pay the living wage**

Synod agreed that the living wage (about £2/hr more than the minimum wage) affirmed Christian values and called on all CoFE institutions to pay it. It allows “a bit more dignity. I hope it will catch on and that the government will hear the message that we're telling them the minimum wage is too low,” Bishop Donald said.

### **3. Debate on corrosiveness of youth unemployment**

This debate encouraged parishes to listen to the views of young people, and to give them work experience and references to help them find jobs. Bishop Donald suggested they might be paid the living wage to make tea and coffee at church events. “Care for them, look after them,” he said. “It would lift them out of despair.”

*After his address and report Bishop Donald took questions on a variety of subjects. He pointed out that he encourages young clergy to have mentors; that dioceses need to work differently because of their different local situations; and that he allows communion by extension at Christmas and Easter in any benefice.*

## **Other Synod matters**

**Opening prayers were led by members of the Oundle Deanery, and focused on St Wilfrid who died at the minster there. He was “a stubbornly determined church planter who saw obstacles as opportunities and never gave up.”**

**The 2012 reports of Boards and Committees were also received by the Synod.**

**Much of this Synod meeting was taken up with presentations of important information. Not many people know it! Please pass on this vital information to people in your parish.**

# Greater responsibility for school standards

**T**here are 15,000 children in church schools every day—more than the total worshippers on a Sunday in the diocese.

And the Church of England remains the single biggest provider of education in the country. That makes Church Schools a prime mission field, Miranda Robinson, Director of Education (pictured), told the Synod. Some 15m people alive today have benefitted from a Church of England education which aims “to offer a spiritual dimension to the lives of young people, within the traditions of the Church of England, in an increasingly secular world.”

The diocese has 101 church primary schools and three secondary schools, she explained. They of course seek to offer a high standard of education but there is more to them. “Christian principles run through every aspect of the school life like the lettering through a stick of rock. A church school should be a model of *koinonia* where fellowship, participation, sharing, and even communion, in a sacramental sense, combine to create a unique sense of community” where “children of faith and those who are still searching may understand what it means to have a religious view of the world.

“Fundamental to Church Schools is belief in the infinite worth of each child as a unique individual created in the image of God and endowed with God-given talents and gifts. At the heart of the school is the formation and education of the whole human person; human becoming rather than human being.”

## Changes in the educational landscape

In 2012 the Chadwick review of church schools made 26 recommendations. Among them were training clergy on the role of the school in the church’s mission; the recruitment and training of Christian teachers; and identifying strategies for the improvement of teaching and learning in RE. It also asserted that Diocesan Directors of Education and their support staff should be properly resourced and that dioceses should review the balance of finances between parish and school development services to ensure the long-term survival of the Church as a provider of education.

There are now major changes in the educational landscape, she said. DBEs are now responsible for overall standards, and not just for standards in worship and RE. “If we don’t get it right, the DfE will step in and we’ll lose the schools. Satisfactory is no longer good enough” in

Ofsted thinking.” Currently four diocesan schools are in an Ofsted category and “if we don’t have the resources to sponsor them or broker an appropriate sponsor, then we run the risk of losing the school to a secular sponsor.”

## Debating points

Several speakers including Revd George Rogers (Peterborough) commented on, or asked questions about, recruitment of teachers and heads. Miranda Robinson said that the diocese runs an aspiring heads course but “we haven’t got it right in seeing and promoting teaching as a vocation. It’s a calling, to make a difference to young people,” she said.



**“At the heart of the church school is the formation and education of the whole human person; human becoming rather than human being.”**

Jim Chew (Greater Northampton) said that his parents and he himself had been teachers but that the stress was “killing”. “We have to speak out against this culture of stress and the fetish with testing; schools don’t educate people, they get them through exams,” he said.

The importance of becoming foundation governors was emphasised by others. “It’s hard work, has tested my skills and brainpower but it’s a huge joy, and I get to go and do assemblies,” said Paul Adams (Diocesan Stewardship Officer).

Archdeacon Christine (Chair of the Board of Education) said that the Board had requested extra resources. Bids for Free Schools, and Academy sponsorship, would only be successful if they were handled professionally. The Board had recently failed to appoint anyone to a new post of schools effectiveness adviser because the salary offered was too low to attract a credible person.

## Thanks and looking ahead

At the end of the debate Bishop Donald paid tribute to the work of Miranda Robinson and Archdeacon Christine. He also announced that Bishop John would become Chair of the board of Education when Archdeacon Christine retired later in the year, in order to maintain the high profile and priority of church schools in the diocese. Bishop Donald reiterated his belief that “Church schools are core business” for the diocese.

**The motion “that in the light of the changing educational landscape, the implications of which are helpfully explored in the *Church School of the Future* review, Peterborough Diocese reiterates its commitment to ensuring schools’ stand at the centre of the Church’s mission to the nation” was passed unanimously.**

## “Young adults are not novelties—please take us seriously”

**Hannah Page (pictured) is a student at Northampton University, worships at Holy Trinity Northampton, and is Chair of the Church of England’s national Youth Council (CEYC). She was formerly CEYC rep on General Synod. She outlined CEYC’s work.**



Using Paul’s words in 1 Timothy 4:12 (“Don’t let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity”) Hannah explained that the CEYC actively represents young Anglicans (aged 16-25) by engaging in dialogue with the Church and community.

It is currently working on a guide to help PCCs integrate young people into them, and another to help young people know how to get onto the PCC in the first place.

In answer to a question after her presentation, Hannah said frankly that “people don’t want to listen to us because of our age. We’re not taken seriously, but we’re allowed to speak because we’re a novelty. We are young *adults*; we’re the church of today and the future, and we do know what we’re talking about.”

The CEYC helps young people gain a knowledge of the church, experience its different traditions, and explore their gifts, she explained. Consisting of 13 core members plus two representatives from each diocese, it meets twice a year and debates issues affecting all young people in order to improve their quality of life.

It holds workshops on such things as the Anglican Communion and evangelism, and receives feedback from local youth events. It is also developing a campaign, Revive, which is collecting news and stories from around the country and plans to produce resources for young people’s work.

Hannah, who was on Derby Diocese’s Youth Council at the age of 14 and has been active in CEYC ever since, said it is biblically and prayerfully led and love centred. She urged synod to encourage young people to consider their calling. “It’s the easiest time to move around.”



**Find out more about the Church of England Youth Council at [www.ceyc.org](http://www.ceyc.org), and about Revive at [www.revive.org.uk](http://www.revive.org.uk)**



## Sobering facts about child abuse and church responsibilities

**There are abused children and people who abuse them in our churches, warned Safeguarding Officer Garry Johnson (pictured).**

Safeguarding is not an easy subject, he said, and it stirs strong views and emotions, and brings back painful memories of past traumas. One in four children will have been sexually abused before they reach the age of 18.

“Our churches are microcosms of the communities we serve. In our churches we’ll find children who are or have been abused; older children who are abusing; parents, carers and others who have been abused, or have abused in the past and may do so in the future,” he said.

He reminded Synod that churches are open to all; everyone is welcome. That includes people who have abused children (whether known, convicted or not). “Safeguarding is a necessary responsibility that we all have.” Despite this,



working with children is a joy and privilege, he said, and abuse is an exception, not the rule.

The Church of England report *Protecting God’s Children* requires us to respond without delay to allegations of abuse and to co-operate with the police and local authorities. Over the past year he had dealt with 43 new cases mostly involving monitoring and supporting convicted offenders or people who may be at risk of abusing. He added that false allegations of sexual offences are no higher than for other crimes, yet less than 4% of reported cases of child abuse ever result in conviction, partly because victims are afraid to speak out.

Garry reminded Synod that parishes must carefully select and train all who have responsibility for children in line with good safeguarding practices. He runs training courses, and details of these and safeguarding practice, are on the diocesan website (address and contact phone no. below.)