

## **Report to the 2026 APCM of the Cowley Deanery Synod.**

There were 3 meetings of the Synod during 2025.

In February, Synod heard a presentation by an organisation called Renew Oxford, which is an interdenominational initiative to enable a collaborative response to pressing social challenges within Oxford.

Over 50 churches and Christian organisations, including Holy Trinity, responded to a survey about local challenges and our response to them. Four main themes for future work were identified. They were: Holistic support for families, (many do not have family support in Oxford), Homelessness, Mental Health issues particularly among children, and Enabling Collaboration between parishes. Churches in Oxford are growing in number, becoming more diverse, articulate the needs of the city, are engaged in a wide range of social action, provide friendship, community and belonging and generate fresh hope. They also identified that the work, ministry, service and progress across Oxfordshire is phenomenal, and that children, youth and families and people in crisis were identified as two main areas for initial focus. Synod highlighted the need for better communication both between churches, and outwards to the communities we serve, and encouraged congregations to reflect on the results of the study. A more detailed report is available.

During the year the Lay Chair of Synod, became a 'secret worshipper' and visited every church in the Deanery. He reflected on how broad the Church of England is in its welcome, worship, sermons, prayers and refreshments(!)

Within the Deanery there has been significant change. Many of the parishes have new incumbents (including our own!) and some are in vacancy. Some parishes are experiencing issues with their buildings including subsidence and roof repairs and are worshipping elsewhere. Deanery Synod whilst deliberating on Parish shares and finances, also provides support and collaboration between parishes, as they meet the challenges identified in the Renew Oxford report.

Janet Masters. 7/5/26