

'I hope that you enjoyed a happy Christmas and New Year.

Recently I attended something called a Diocesan Synod. A diocesan synod is equivalent to local government; indeed I am an elected clergy representative. In his address to synod the newly installed Bishop of Oxford, Steven Croft, presented his three priorities for the diocese; children, poverty and discipleship. I will share a few brief thoughts on each of these over the next few months. Let's start with children:

There can be little doubt that Jesus took children extremely seriously. He welcomed them, included them as equals (Matthew 19, 13-15, for example) and, stressed that we all ought to retain a childlike perspective (Matthew 18, 2-5). Children were incredibly important to Jesus, ergo, children should be important to the Church. At St. Laurence we aspire to be a child friendly church as part of our commitment to hospitality and inclusivity.

This year, starting on the 15th January, we will be offering a new '**Come and Share All Age Communion.**' The service will last approximately half an hour and will be followed by breakfast. The music will be led by the junior choir with children from the age of seven being invited to participate in communion as full and equal members. The Come and Share All Age Communion is not however just for children; it is genuinely all age and, will be celebrated on the third Sunday of every month. We will also continue to worship, on an occasional basis, using the communion set to nursery rhymes and well known tunes.

In other services children are welcome to either stay with their parents throughout the service, maybe making use of the play bags, or to join with other children for the Vestry Club which takes place during the sermon.

On Wednesday mornings between 10 and 11 the Church provides time for parents and toddlers to meet, build friendships, sing, play and pray. We are also happy to welcome children into the choir, in fact we are incredibly proud that our church choir spans an age range of nearly eighty years.

Please do bring your children to St. Laurence, they will be welcomed as full and equal members of the community, after all St. Laurence Church belongs to the whole community.' In Christ, Andrew