

Diocesan Synod Digest

Saturday 20th July 2024

On Saturday 20 July 2024, Diocesan Synod took place. Canon Nigel Bacon, Chair of the House of Laity, opened the meeting and explained to Synod that there was a cake stall at the back of the room, with all donations to the Bishop of Lincoln's Ready for School Fund. Donations could be made by cash and card.

The Chair introduced Andrew Holmes to Synod, the new Interim Finance Director who was attending his first Synod meeting.

The Archdeacon of Boston, the Ven Dr Justine Allain Chapman, and Canon Paul Thomson, Director of the Board of Education, led Synod in a reflection on Exodus 3, Moses and the Burning Bush. They were assisted by the Revd Canon Sudharshan Sarvananthan. The Chair then asked Synod to consent to postponing item 24 on a New Financial Settlement for the Church to a later date, which was agreed.

Presidential Address

The Bishop of Lincoln gave a Presidential Address to Synod, highlighting change both as part of Time to Change Together, as well as in the political world and beyond.

[Click or tap here to read the full address.](#)

The minutes of the Diocesan Synod held on 27th April were unanimously approved as a true and accurate record. There were No Questions under Standing Order 72, so we moved quickly onto the Generous Living Team item.

Generous Living

The Revd Simon Dean addressed Synod and introduced Andy Wright, who is also part of the Generous Living Team. Simon explained that generosity is not just about money, but also about generosity of kindness and is an important part of our spiritual discipleship.

Simon shared that 389 parishes (81%) fulfilled their covenant pledge for 2023. All but 50 parishes had pledged for 2024 (90%). It was noted that if all 2024 pledges are fulfilled, then we would have an increase overall of 6%. Simon reiterated that there was still work to be done and that we should all continue to be generous.

- “How are we modelling holistic generosity in our local mission work, and in what ways have we received the generosity of others?”
- “What opportunities can we identify for people to express their generosity?”
- “How has our own Covenant Pledge supported mission across our LMP?”

Synod were then asked to work together for 10 mins and provide feedback using the handout on the tables.

Finance Discussion

The next item was a financial discussion on the cost of stipendiary clergy. Canon Professor Muriel Robinson, Chair of the LDTBF, confirmed to Synod that there were no slides and that this was not an item concerned directly with the annual report or the budget, but was an opportunity for Synod to dive deeper into what was behind the figures.

A number of handouts were provided for Synod to read, including a breakdown of different cost centres, and a worksheet for Synod members to fill in and help prompt discussion.

Muriel explained that many of these costs were for statutory things, such as Safeguarding, contributions to the National Church and the cost of the Diocesan Registrar. Synod were asked to work together in groups to consider the various things that we pay for as a Board of Finance, and to put them into categories based on how important we think they are or how directly relevant they are to the parishes.

Synod members then provided some feedback to the room, including from Mark Williams who stated that things like Safeguarding may seem costly and unnecessary, until you have a safeguarding issue in your parish and then you are very grateful they are there.

The same was said of other statutory functions like the Registrar, who is vital when you need assistance with a faculty or other legal matter. Revd Rachel Heskins also asked if we could consider providing more support to parishes who are looking to access grant funding.

Synod also considered whether it is right that some stipendiary clergy with families have to claim Universal Credit and some even rely on foodbanks, as this topic had also been raised at General Synod. Muriel confirmed that whilst Lincoln has tried to remain on top of the National Stipend whereas other dioceses had fallen behind, there was still work to be done.

Synod broke for refreshments and many members contributed to the Ready for School Fund, by sampling cakes and other treats made by diocesan staff.

Diocesan Board of Education

After the break, Synod continued with an item from the Diocesan Board of Education, including their annual report. The Archdeacon of Boston, the Ven Dr Justine Allain Chapman introduced the item and Canon Paul Thompson, Director of Education, gave an update on the key events during 2023.

Paul showed a beautiful video created by the DBE to promote their new Vision, of being Called, Aspirational, Rooted and Empowering.

[The video can be viewed by clicking or tapping here](#)

[A copy of the presentation slides can be found by clicking or tapping here.](#)

The Archdeacon underlined the importance of the Vision and the connection to the story of the Burning Bush which we had read at the start of the meeting. The Archdeacon confirmed that, as a DBE, we are called into fellowship with God to support schools to:

- Recruit strong headteachers who will develop a culture where all adults and pupils can flourish;
- Develop effective governance to support, challenge and hold leaders to account, and;

- Provide support, guidance and high-quality training so that schools can be inclusive and safe places for pupils of all backgrounds to thrive.

Paul thanked Synod for giving so generously to the Bishop of Lincoln's Ready for School fund and noted the importance of the fund to families at this time of year to help with the daunting task of perhaps having to supply uniforms for 2 or 3 children. Synod gave a warm applause and thank you to the DBE and all their staff for the work they undertake.

Safeguarding

Next followed an item on Safeguarding, which Bishop Stephen introduced, explaining the importance of the INEQE audit surveys which would be starting the following week. The Bishop asked all of Synod to take part in the Audits, when prompted. Mr Jack Redeyoff, Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser, asked Synod to remember to fill in the survey, and to share it far and wide within the parishes.

Jack then gave a presentation about Safer Recruitment and how vital it is to keep our parishes safe. Safer Recruitment and People Management (SRMP) is a vital requirement of Parish Safeguarding; crucial in preventing harm to children and adults at risk.

A handy matrix was provided to Synod members for them to share with their parishes, taking those responsible through a step-by-step guide of what to consider.

[The matrix is available by clicking or tapping here.](#)

General Synod update

The Archdeacon of Lincoln, the Ven Gavin Kirk, gave an exciting and entertaining update on the recent meeting of General Synod. General Synod meets at least twice a year, with updates provided after each meeting from your elected representative. The Archdeacon's update included the report on Trust and Trustworthiness within the Church, with themes of this report quoted many times throughout the sessions.

Various items of Legislative Business were approved in relation to Safeguarding and Clergy Risk Assessments, Church Fund Investment, Chancel Repair Liability and the standing orders of the Crown Nominations Commission.

Archbishops' Council Budget of £64.1 million, was also approved. Updates were received on The Clergy Conduct Measure, the National Church Governance Measure and a presentation was received on the Archbishops' Council Annual Report.

A large amount of time was given to discussion on Living in Love and Faith, with debate and opinions expressed ranging from 'not far enough: no gay people will have anything to do with the Church' to 'too far, too fast: people like me won't be able to remain.'

Eventually, General Synod voted to:

- Continue the overall direction of travel.
- Allow stand-alone services of blessing for same-sex couples, where desired and acceptable to the incumbent for a trial period.
- Give ability to register for Pastoral Reassurance (passing Resolutions) and to ask the House of Bishops to publish a Code for this.

- Replace Issues in Human Sexuality with Pastoral Guidance and Code on Pastoral Reassurance.
- Make sure Faith & Order Commission do urgent work on the nature of doctrine, particularly as it applies to marriage.
- Make the trial period at least three years.

A full report on the recent General Synod sessions will be available on the General Synod section of the website soon.

Time to Change Together

The Rt Revd David Court, Bishop of Grimsby, and Rachel McLafferty led Synod on the final discussion item a – Time to Change Together Implementation Update. Bishop David explained how great it was to have a fresh pair of eyes looking at the TTCT strategy. Rachel reiterated that change doesn't happen overnight but if we keep focused, we will continue to go in the right direction.

Bishop David commented that he had gone back and read the original TTCT recommendations document, which is a very long document and his family did make the remark that +David “really knows how to live”. He had noticed that the Deanery Partnerships were not used as much as the Local Mission Partnerships, and that there was no mention of Focal Ministers, but this document was supposed to be a development not a tick list.

Bishop David asked Synod to think about whether there is anything we should be doing that we are not doing, or whether there is anything we have overlooked. Discussion took place around the tables. He also asked for Synod to think about whether we should think about changing “Time to Change Together” to “Time to Grow Together”? let us know your thoughts.

Amending Canon 43

The final item on the agenda was Amending Canon 43, which Canon Nigel Bacon formally read out and promulgated as below:

“I give notice that, at its February 2024 group of sessions, the General Synod resolved that Amending Canon No. 43 be made, promulgated and executed.

“Amending Canon No. 43 makes miscellaneous amendments to the Canons of the Church of England. It complements the Church of England (Miscellaneous Provisions) Measure 2024.”

Bishop Stephen then closed the meeting in prayer.

The Chair summarised that it had been a busy meeting with lots of sharing and discussions taking place. It was well supported, and we were pleased to announce that the cake stall for the Bishop of Lincoln's Ready for School fund had made over £440. A huge thank you was given to all those who had contributed items to the stall and all those who supported it.