Diocesan Synod Digest

Saturday 16th November 2024

Diocesan Synod took place on Saturday 16 November 2024 at Bishop Grosseteste University.

The Rt Revd David Court, Bishop of Grimsby opened the meeting. Canon Professor Muriel Robinson and Rachel McLafferty led Synod in a reflection on the canticle for Morning Prayer (Isaiah 43:15-16, 18, 19, 20c-21).

# Bishop’s Address

The Bishop of Lincoln delivered the presidential address to Synod, opening with – ‘any form of abuse committed against children, young people and vulnerable adults is a vile sin against God and the rejection of who Jesus is.’

The Makin review is a report that investigates the handling of the abuse perpetrated by John Smyth. Synod were urged to read the review in full, to begin to understand the terrible suffering experienced by so many, and to see where the Church has fallen short of our calling to love our neighbour and defend the vulnerable.

[**Click or tap here to read the full presidential address.**](https://www.lincoln.anglican.org/news/diocesan-synod-presidential-address-saturday-16-november-2024/)

Bishop Stephen also spoke of the INEQE Audit, which will be a robust independent scrutiny of church safeguarding that will enable greater accountability in the Church, and ensure we are protecting people and making our churches as safe as they can be.

Synod were invited to join the commitment to greater awareness, vigilance and improvement in safeguarding culture and practice, where the needs of victims and survivors of abuse are at the front and centre of our response.

Bishop Stephen led Synod in Prayer.

The minutes of the Diocesan Synod held on the 28th September were unanimously approved as a true and accurate record.

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**Questions under Standing Order 72**

No questions were received.

**Deanery Restructuring Consultation**

Helen Doyle reminded Synod that in April, the Bishop of Lincoln notified them that a proposal to restructure the Deaneries from 22 to 9 is currently under consideration.

As part of this consultation process, Diocesan Synod was asked to discuss and provide feedback on the proposals. A summary was put together from the feedback and included a map of the proposed boundaries.

In small groups, Synod discussed the impact of these proposals on the Diocese of Lincoln as a whole, and on our ability as a Diocese to meet our strategic objective of collaboration as part of Time to Change Together. The purpose of the session was to gather consultation feedback and not have a formal vote. A final recommendation will be made to BCDT in November, who will make a recommendation to the Bishop for a decision.

The feedback indicated a need to enhance relationships between rural and urban areas, highlighting identity, distance, and integration as the primary concerns.

BCDT will consider this twice before now and the New Year and it won’t be imposed. What is decided will have to have lasting value. BCDT will help the Bishop discern and there will be more conversations.

**Time to Change Together implementation update**

Rachel McLafferty reported on the progress of Time to Change Together. A brief overview of the work in priority areas was presented, including Assets, Parish Share, Costs, Deployment and Growth.

Phase one is being evaluated and we will continue to ensure the progress continues to be delivered.

During Phase 2, the group will report directly to the Trustees. The new strategy includes funding from the Strategic Mission and Ministry Investment Board (SMMIB) to realise plans which require additional financial resources. Synod were invited to join in a prayer initiative, ‘Lord, Show Us The Way.’

Synod received the update report and had the opportunity to ask questions to Rachel and Bishop David during the break.

**Meetings of the Houses**

**Elections to BCDT**

The Revd Martyn Taylor was congratulated for his unopposed election to the Chair of the House of Clergy.

Canon Nigel Bacon was congratulated and thanked for his unopposed election to the Chair of the House of Laity.

**Elections for the Vacancy in See Committee**

The Elections for the Vacancy in See Committee were overseen by the Revd Martyn Taylor for the 2 Clergy Representatives and Canon Nigel Bacon for the 2 Lay Representatives. The candidates each gave a short presentation on why they should be considered for the committee and answered questions.

The elections were announced at the end of the meeting.

Synod broke for refreshments.

**The 2025 Budget**

The Synod came together again for Canon Prof Muriel Robinson and Mr Andrew Holmes, Interim Director of Finance, to present on the budget. Muriel thanked everyone for their work to support mission and ministry.

Andrew Holmes explained how the budget was set. The income approach will be a 1.8% increase on the 2024 forecast. The Covenant pledge income of £3.8m is based on covenant pledges received by December 2024. The National guidance on pay inflation of 3% has been included in the budget. The capital plan of £1.1m includes the parsonage budget, IT systems replacement and the essential works on Edward King House.

Questions were received from Synod.

Synod received the budget and approved

* the overall expenditure of £11,143120
* The capital plan for 2025 £1105,076
* and authorised BCDT to raise at least £3.850,742 by covenant pledge for 2025.

**Annual Environmental Report and Net Zero Carbon Report**

The Environmental reports were presented by Canon Sarah Spencer, the Environmental Officer, Mx Stiorra Xander-Crabb, Environmental Champion, Mr Chris Lynch, NZC Manager and Mr George Davies, NZC Enabler.

Synod were presented with the Net Zero Carbon Report, Annual Environmental Report and Environmental Policy. Sarah explained the framework for the Diocese and how this is embedded in our work. Synod were encouraged to read the Annual Environmental Report and Carbon Footprint Report, which have been put together by the Net Zero Carbon Team using data from across the diocese.

[**A document full of Net Zero discussion materials was offered to those present at Synod which can also be used during a PCC meeting.**](https://www.lincoln.anglican.org/wp-content/uploads/PCC-Discussion-Material-Diocesan-Synod-Sat-16-Nov-24.pdf)

Stiorra Xander-Crabb, an environmental champion from NE Lincolnshire Deanery Partnership, presented on the work that has been going on. The message was that everyone should care for the safeguarding and integrity of creation. A video was presented featuring Revd Kay Jones from St John and St Stephen New Clee in Grimsby and the work around their community.

The church is centre to these growing initiatives and community activities. There has been successful intergenerational collaboration, involving community members who may not have previously participated in church activities united by a shared interest in being greener. The number of Eco Churches achieving Bronze and Silver awards is rising.

Chris Lynch and George Davies, from the Net Zero Carbon Team presented on the Carbon Footprint Report which was put together using the Energy Footprint Tool return data from across the Diocese. It provided an interesting insight into our journey to Net Zero Carbon. Chris spoke about the challenges identified in the Diocese.

George explained the plans on how the NZC team plans to work with parishes, through site visits, securing funding through grants and funding sources. Next year, the Energy Returns System will be open from January.

Synod received an update on some of the key achievements this year and were invited to provide feedback on what works best using less carbon in terms of communications, support and resources.

**Safeguarding**

Mr Jack Redeyoff reported on the work of the Safeguarding team and the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisory Panel. Synod received a comprehensive written report on safeguarding.

Synod were reassured that the Diocesan Safeguarding Team were in contact with the National Safeguarding Team regarding the Makin Report and they are reviewing everyone in the report.

Synod was reminded that everyone in the Diocese is held accountable for safeguarding of children and adults.

Jack expressed gratitude to all the Parish Safeguarding Officers for their work and acknowledged that they would be receiving increased communications from individuals needing support.

There are two Focus groups arranged for the INEQE Audit. Volunteers, Parish Safeguarding Officers and Churchwardens are invited to meet online on the 20th November at 11am.

Clergy are invited to the meeting at Edward King House on the 26th November at 9:30am.

We have recently welcomed a new HR Manager, Nicola Eaton-Taylor, who will be working with the safeguarding team on the issue of sexual harassment. Training will be available soon.

Jack received questions from Synod and clarified that the policy is clear that all PCC members are charity trustees and must comply with the requirements to complete their safeguarding training. The lone working policy, guidance and templates can be found on the National Safeguarding website.

**A new financial settlement in the Church**

The Revd Canon David Dadswell introduced the problem, common in most Dioceses, of insufficient income to cover the stipends for clergy. Some Dioceses are considering bankruptcy, therefore Synod were asked to consider and debate the following motion:

*That this Synod:*

*(i) call upon the Church Commissioners and Archbishops’ Council to undertake everything necessary to effect a redistribution of financial resources directly to Diocesan Stipend Funds to reflect the value of contributions made by Diocesan Boards of Finance to the Church of England Funded Pension Scheme since it was established by the settlement of 1997 (£2.6 billion); and*

*(ii) call upon Diocesan Boards of Finance to manage the funds redistributed as a result of the above to support parish ministry in the ways discerned locally to be most effective in enabling growth and sustaining the Church of England's commitment to be a Christian presence in every community.*

*22 Dioceses are looking at these a third have passed this and it will be going to General Synod.*

The proposal is to readjust the contribution to pensions to sustain the number of clergy and increase the number of ordinands in other dioceses. The figures indicate it should not impact on our SDF, link funding and other strategies. This was put before Synod to consider and if agreed, would go to General Synod.

The Dioceses would be given a lump sum to invest for a secure future.

Muriel Robinson, Christianity Deanery, encouraged Synod to support this. This is our chance to show solidarity with new dioceses that were not given the money when they were set up.

Seb Brown, from Christianity Deanery, added it is important to talk about the people that we will be supporting and providing for.

The motion was proposed by Archdeacon Gavin and seconded by Muriel Robinson. The motion was carried with one abstention.

**Election results**

Ian Blaney, Registrar, announced the Election results.

Duly elected unopposed to the Diocesan Board of Education:

Hilary Beverly

Julie Bacon

Paul Brewster

Cherry Edwards

Victoria Lawrence

Sudharshan Saravanthan

Alison Warrick

Duly elected unopposed to the Bishops Council of Diocesan Trustees:

Paul Davie as Lay representative for Boston

Rachel Heskins as the Clergy Representative for Lincoln.

There is now a casual vacancy for:

A lay representative for Boston Archdeaconry (until Nov 2027)

A Clergy representative for Boston Archdeaconry (until Nov 2026)

The following people have been duly elected to the new Vacancy in See Committee commencing the 1st January.

House of Laity: Laura Mitchell and Paul Davie.

House of Clergy: Simon Dean and Matt Rodges.

The Revd Canon David Dadswell was thanked, as this was his final Diocesan Synod meeting with us.

Bishop Stephen closed the meeting in prayer.