

**MINUTES OF THE FIRST SESSION OF THE EIGHTEENTH DIOCESAN SYNOD, INCLUDING THE AGM OF
THE CHICHESTER DIOCESAN FUND AND BOARD OF FINANCE (INCORPORATED)**

Held by teleconference on 20th November 2021

PRESENT: The Bishop (President)
(on Zoom) Suffragan Bishops 2
Clergy 64
Laity 62

Miss Gabrielle Higgins (Diocesan Secretary)
Mr Darren Oliver (Diocesan Registrar)

The meeting opened with prayer.

1. PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS AND WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS

The Bishop of Chichester addressed the Synod

The Bishop spoke about the two Christian festivals that fall this weekend: the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and the feast day of St Cecilia. The first connects us to the mysteries of redemption and to the Temple in Jerusalem. As a child, Mary was involved in weaving the veil of the Temple, which shielded the Holy of Holies from the rest of the Temple. Later, this veil was torn asunder at the moment of the Crucifixion. The feast day of St Cecilia, which falls on 22nd November, has been celebrated since the third century and commemorates the martyrdom of Cecilia, who sang the praises of God as she died. It is therefore celebrated by musicians in particular.

The Bishop explained that the arts play a particularly important in this diocese, particularly over the last century, and in our Cathedral. The Archbishop of Canterbury recently made a statement about Bishop George Bell, having reflected on the issues, and has reminded us of the virtues and legacy of his episcopacy. Recently, the extraordinary paintings at Berwick, which connect the sacred and the everyday and which Bishop George Bell was involved in commissioning, have been restored.

The Bishop thanked Synod members for being willing to serve. He thanked those who had served in the last quinquennium, including those who had served on diocesan committees. In particular, he paid tribute to Fr Mark Gilbert who had served as Chair of House of Clergy from 2013.

The Archdeacon of Chichester, the Ven. Luke Irvine-Capel, had been elected to succeed Fr Mark. Mr John Booth had been elected as Chair of the House of Laity.

The Bishop welcomed all those who had been elected as members of the new General Synod, which had met for the first time in London earlier in the week.

2. WELCOME TO NEW ARCHDEACON OF HORSHAM

The Bishop welcomed the new Archdeacon of Horsham, the Ven. Angela Martin, explaining that Archdeacon Angela would be continuing as incumbent of Forest Row alongside her new role. There had been some reorganisation of the rural deaneries, and the deaneries of Midhurst, Petworth, and Storrington had moved from the Archdeaconry of Horsham to the Archdeaconry of Chichester.

Bishop Martin explained that some members of senior staff were absent as they were ill with the coronavirus, and asked members to remember them and all others affected in their prayers.

3. PROCLAMATION OF THE CLERGY COVENANT FOR WELLBEING ACT OF SYNOD 2020

The Bishop formally proclaimed the Clergy Covenant for Wellbeing.

The Revd Canon Ann Waizeneker introduced the Covenant, explaining that all dioceses had been asked to consider holding a debate, adopting the covenant, and signposting the services available to clergy and their families. In this Diocese, there was also a plan to hold a clergy study day in the next 18 months.

It was explained that, for clergy, calling was a privilege and a joy, but also brought unique stresses and strains. There was a general lack of understanding about the strains and complexity of clergy roles, and this was not helped by the fact that clergy also live where they work. It was noted that problems often only came to light when things reached crisis point. It was explained that clergy well-being should be everyone's responsibility and the Covenant sought to remind dioceses and parishes of mutual shared responsibility.

Ms Laura Steven, who had recently taken up the role of Head of Wellbeing for Clergy and Families, outlined the services available for clergy and their families in this Diocese, including confidential short-term therapy for clergy and their families, reflective practice groups, post-trauma debriefing, and educative workshops. The team was also developing a range of training events for 2022 and would welcome suggestions and requests for training. From 2022, it was hoped that it would be possible to begin sharing resources with other dioceses.

Ms Steven was hoping to attend deanery chapter meetings to inform clergy about the resources available, contribute to the diocesan 'E-news', develop the pages on the website, and produce a clergy well-being booklet.

Canon Waizeneker explained that there would need to be further conversations at diocesan and local level, and that further resources were being developed to help support those conversations. The resources would be aimed at clergy, congregations, and Bishops and the wider Church, and would cover four areas for reflection.

The Bishop thanked Canon Waizeneker and Ms Steven and invited questions and comments from Synod members.

The Revd Lisa Barnett expressed her thanks and said that it was really good to hear how this would be fleshed out in our Diocese and that more resources were on their way. In particular, it would be helpful to consider how clergy could help themselves and train congregations to support them.

The Revd Phil Coekin asked about how this related to the Clergy Discipline Measure process and whether there was any information about progress with this project and the timeline.

The Revd Natalie Loveless observed that there seemed to have been an upsurge in clergy taking out insurance and joining unions to protect themselves against CDM proceedings, and expressed concern that the Sheldon Community had withdrawn from the CDM review process. She thanked Ms Steven and her team and noted that good progress had been made in this diocese, but explained that it was important for clergy to have a voice in the CDM process and that this was key for well-being.

The Revd Jane Willis wondered whether there would be any wider review around clergy practices and patterns, searching for points that put extra pressure on clergy?

The Revd Arwen Folkes echoed the comments about the CDM process. In relation to the Clergy Covenant, she observed that it would be difficult for clergy to facilitate those conversations at parish level and with the PCC, and asked whether it would be possible to organise external facilitators?

Mr Chris Bell observed that churchwardens are often the people closest to their clergy, and noted that churchwardens should take more responsibility for noticing and assisting when there were issues. He asked whether it would be possible to circulate the Covenant to churchwardens and encourage them to be proactive, in particular?

The Revd Marc Lloyd noted that there is a lot of local variation and suggested that it would be good to share good practice at local level.

Canon Waizeneker responded to the comments. She explained that she could not comment on the CDM process. In relation to a wider review, she explained that the bigger conversations at local level would help in looking at wider issues and ascertaining what else should be done. She agreed that it would be difficult for clergy to facilitate these conversations themselves, and suggested that the WCF team might be able to assist with this. She agreed that churchwardens were very important, and that deaneries would be the best place for these conversations to happen. She indicated that they would try to get resources out quickly so work can start.

In relation to the CDM process, the Bishop explained that the review would be the task of the General Synod and that the newly elected Synod members would be able to contribute to those discussions on behalf of the Diocese.

The Revd Canon Waizeneker moved *“That this Synod adopt the Clergy Covenant for Wellbeing set out in the Act of Synod 2020 as a statement of its commitment to clergy care and wellbeing”*

The Synod adopted the Covenant, with 127 voting in favour, none against, and 2 abstentions.

MEETING OF THE CHICHESTER DIOCESAN FUND AND BOARD OF FINANCE (INCORPORATED)

1. PRESENTATION OF THE BUDGET FOR 2022

Mrs Lesley Lynn (Chair of the Finance Committee) introduced the Budget for 2022.

Mrs Lynn explained that she had taken on this role in May 2020, just as the impact of the pandemic was becoming apparent. She was very thankful that it was for this Diocese that she accepted this role, as, in this Diocese, it was possible to bring a budget that shows a deficit. The blessings that we have in Chichester are the blessing of time (we have reserves in the general fund and the pastoral fund), and the faithfulness of the congregations of Sussex. Parish share had continued to be collected at much better rates than initially feared, but these were the lean years in which we start to take the grain out of the store. If it seemed prudent to do so, parishes were encouraged to draw on their reserves, as the diocese does the same. It was noted that other dioceses were not so fortunate, and had found themselves with no buffer.

It was anticipated that the budget for 2022 would be a mid-way point between the lowest year for parish share (this year) and pre-pandemic levels, which it was hoped the Diocese could return to, but there would not be clarity until January/February 2022.

Over the past months, Mrs Lynn had been meeting with deaneries; while the topic of parish share was never embraced enthusiastically, the meetings had been positive, and the £13.5 million target seemed achievable for 2022.

Over the past couple of years, spending on parsonages had been reduced. The Property Director had worked with the senior team to cut spending and it was agreed that essential maintenance and repairs of parsonages should continue but not improvements arising from quinquennial inspections. The 2022 budget allowed for improvements to be resumed, as there was concern that, if we continued to cut back what we spend, parsonages would deteriorate, and the Diocese would also be asking clergy families to live in houses where bathrooms and kitchens were beyond their usable life.

A revised Budget was circulated recently, including changes to the proposals for stipends and salary increases. A couple of weeks previously, the Bank of England had acknowledged that inflation was running well above 3% and could go as high as 5% over the next few months. In light of inflation and conversations about clergy welfare, and in light of the fact that there was no stipend increase in 2021, it had been decided that the 1.5% increase originally proposed for 2022 should be increased to 3%.

For staff, the salary increases would be skewed towards those on lower salaries; as many diocesan staff did not earn enough to buy housing and rents across Sussex were rising sharply, it was felt that it would be important to increase salaries for those on lower pay so that staff can continue to afford to work for the Diocese.

Over the past couple of days, there had been discussions with other dioceses in respect of stipend increases; only three other dioceses were putting stipends up by 3% as recommended in this budget and 2% seemed more common. However, many stated that they may adjust it again. In this Diocese, it was felt that it was important to increase stipends by 3%, in order to avoid storing up a problem for 2023.

Mrs Lynn concluded by explaining that it was hoped that parish share would return to pre-pandemic levels but, if it became clear that was unrealistic over the coming months, adjustments would need to be made to proposed expenditure.

Mr Jeremy Kaye observed that areas like Crawley had been very badly affected by the pandemic and the end of the furlough scheme. In the deanery of East Grinstead, parish pledges were approximately £100K below what they had been, and the deficit seemed unsustainable. A five-year forecast had been brought to the Bishop's Council but had not yet been shared with Diocesan Synod.

The Revd Mark Standen thanked the Finance team and welcomed the news about stipends.

The Revd Tim Crook welcomed the proposals for stipends but wondered whether it was ethical for clergy members to vote in favour of their own pay rises?

Mrs Lynn responded, explaining that some areas were badly affected but that many parishes were reporting that their finances were recovering. The Diocese had received some offers to make additional payment in the current year. She agreed that deficits are unsustainable in the long term but explained that they were sustainable in the short term.

The Revd Lee Duckett observed that the safeguarding budget seemed to have increased.

The Revd Arwen Folkes explained that she would feel uncomfortable about the proposed stipend increase, noting that it seemed wrong to take an increased stipend when we are asking parishes to increase their giving, and that she was also uncomfortable with voting on this. She also asked whether clergy in different diocese would be paid differently?

Bishop Martin explained that there are already differences between the stipends paid by different dioceses.

The Revd Danny Pegg asked whether the Diocese could give stronger advice around Parish Ministry Costs and expectations, noting that parish share goes up and up with inflation, but that the percentage increase and the effort required to raise it disproportionately affects poorer parishes.

The Revd Kathryn Windslow thanked the Finance team and welcomed the increase in clergy stipends, noting that some colleagues were seriously struggling and really needed an increase. She suggested that clergy who didn't feel that they needed or wanted an increase had the option of gift aiding it back to their parish.

Mrs Lynn agreed that clergy could donate the increase back to their parish if they wished, explaining that this Synod should give clergy what they feel they deserve, and clergy must use their own conscience to decide whether to keep it or not.

In relation to the Safeguarding budget, it increased significantly in 2021 to cover the cost of the Past Cases Review, but that had now come to an end, so expenditure had returned to its normal level.

In relation to what parishes are expected to pay towards Parish Ministry Costs, Mrs Lynn explained that the Diocese was acutely aware that some parishes really struggled to raise money to pledge as parish share. The figure that parishes tended to fixate on was the Parish Ministry Costs, which was an average for providing a full-time clergy person, but average PMC was not what the Diocese was asking parishes to pay; parishes were asked to contribute what they could genuinely afford to pay. Those who could afford to pay to pay above average should pay more, whilst the Diocese did not expect most deprived parishes to give as much as the average. However, it was hard to change the culture and last year, only 11% of parishes had paid more than average.

Ms Gill Bradnam observed that the way in which Mrs Lynn explained the expectations around PMC and parish share was very helpful and wondered whether it would be possible to have that in writing to share with parishes.

The Registrar confirmed that there was no conflict of interest, and it was fine for clergy to vote.

Mrs Lesley Lynn (Chair) moved *“That the budget of the DBF for 2022 be received”*.

The budget was received, with 128 voting in favour, none against, and 5 abstentions.

MEETING OF THE DIOCESAN SYNOD

4. EDUCATION MATTERS: NEW DBE SCHEME & GROWING PARTNERSHIPS

The Archdeacon of Chichester introduced the new DBE Scheme, explaining that, under recent legislation, every diocese is required to pass a Scheme. The proposed Scheme had been created using a template from the Archbishops’ Council, and had already been sent to the DBF and the Registry for comment; if approved by this Synod, it would be sent to Mr Nigel Genders at the Archbishops’ Council to be ratified, and would come into effect on 1st January 2023.

There were several options for the operating structure but, in this Diocese, it was considered that it would be best for the DBE to remain a Sub-committee of the DBF.

Due to delays in the process, the date of implementation would not tie in with the synodical cycle so it was proposed that the current members of the DBE should continue until January 2023, when the new Scheme would come into effect. New members would then be elected for a two year term, and the triennial term would then resume in line with the synod cycle.

In relation to the listing of land and assets, the Registrar had advised that, as property is held by schools rather than by the DBE directly, it was not necessary to list all school assets.

Mrs Liz Henderson asked if members of the DBE could vote, and it was confirmed that they could.

The Venerable Luke Irvine-Capel moved, *“That provided the attached Scheme is certified by the Archbishops’ Council in accordance with section 23(1) of the Diocesan Boards of Education Measure 2021, the Scheme be made on the date on the Archbishops’ Council’s certificate”*

The Synod voted in favour of adopting the scheme, with 131 in favour, none against, and 1 abstention.

The Archdeacon and Mr Cristin explained how the scheme would be implemented in the life of the diocese. There were 37,000 children in Church of England schools across the Diocese, and this created

a huge opportunity for church to interact with local communities. Church schools should be communities of formation and learning, where children and their families meet the Christian faith.

The Board of Education had recently developed a new vision, which had been sent to the Diocesan Synod for information, and which deliberately mirrored the diocesan vision for growth. The Board of Education felt strongly that the vision needed to be more than words, and needed to be visible in the work carried out in schools. The plan was for the Board of Education to receive regular development plan so that members could monitor and evaluate progress.

One of the key strategies to fulfil this vision was the Growing Partnerships initiative, which looked at how schools and parishes could work more effectively together. The initiative aimed to be a resource to help and encourage schools and parishes. Some parishes that did not have a Church school might feel that the initiative did not apply to them, but it was explained that it could be relevant for everyone, including those working with non-Church schools. Synod members were encouraged to view the video available on the website and share it with their PCCs and congregations.

Mr Gordon Marsden observed that this was a very important initiative and was very attracted by list of ideas. In relation to the lists of what the schools and communities could do, he suggested that it would also be helpful to consider engagement with external organisations working with young people, including the Scouts and other local youth organisations.

The Revd Lisa Barnett noted that partnership with schools could feel very one-way. Her family had had a negative experience when she moved parish and her children were refused places at the Church school. An important part of supporting clergy was supporting their families and schooling.

The Revd David Hill agreed, explaining that his family had experienced the same issue when moving parish. He also noted that, alongside working with Church primary schools, it was important for parishes to consider how they could work in partnership with secondary schools across deaneries and denominations, and explained that this was something they had been working on in his own deanery of Hastings.

The Bishop thanked the Archdeacon and Mr Cristin for leading this important work.

5. PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE UPDATE

The Diocesan Secretary (Miss Gabrielle Higgins) gave an update on the Planning for the Future initiative, which had been launched at Pentecost this year.

It was explained that the problem for the Diocese was that expenditure was higher than income, and there was a need to either increase income or reduce expenditure. In this diocese, there was a strong commitment to the parish system and 80% of expenditure currently went towards clergy stipends, pensions, housing, and training. A reduction in expenditure in this area was the only thing that would make a significant difference, but the Diocese did not want to cut stipendiary roles. Other expenditure was less exciting but went towards things that the Diocese had a legal obligation to provide, and things that it would be a bad idea to cut. The aim of the current initiative was to increase income so that cuts would not be necessary. As 80% of income came from parish share, an increase there was the only thing that would make a big enough difference. However, money was only a means to an end, and money was needed in order to continue to resource ministry in the parishes of the Diocese.

The first step of this project was to ask parishes to refresh their Mission Action Plans, and to send them through by the beginning of Advent. Members of the senior team had then met with each deanery leadership team to discuss finance, and the response at those meetings had been very positive. The next step was for deanery leadership teams to engage with the parishes of their deanery, and different deaneries had adopted different approaches; it was noted that it would be interesting to see the impact of the different approaches used.

It had become clear that the original timetable was too short, and most responses had not yet been received. However, from the responses so far, there was some negative feedback but also a lot of positive feedback. Some parishes had not felt able to increase giving but many had. It was hoped that the overall picture would become clear over the coming months and the next step would be to assess the responses from the whole diocese, and work out how many stipendiary clergy could be supported, and how other forms of ministry could best be deployed alongside the stipendiary clergy.

In order to raise an additional £4 million of which £2m might be pledged in parish share and £2m used for local expenditure, it had been calculated that every member of a congregation would need to give an additional £2.72 per week. However, some people would need to give more in order to make up for those who could afford to give less. It was hoped that it would be possible to reach the target but, at this stage, it seemed likely that balanced budgets would be achieved through a combination of increased giving and reduced expenditure, and it remained to be seen where the balance would lie.

6. REPORT FROM GENERAL SYNOD

Mrs Mary Nagel moved *“That this report be received”*.

The Synod received the report, with 130 voting in favour, none against, and 3 abstentions.

7. REPORT ON THE BISHOP’S COUNCIL

Mrs Sara Stonor moved *“That this report be received”*.

The Synod received the report, with 127 voting in favour, none against, and 3 abstentions.

8. QUESTIONS UNDER SO69

No questions had been received.

9. NEXT DIOCESAN SYNOD

The Bishop explained that there would be an additional meeting of Diocesan Synod on Saturday 5th February 2022, and this meeting would focus on the Living on Love and Faith process. It was hoped that this would be a face-to-face meeting, and details of the venue would be confirmed in due course.

In accordance with Standing Order 26, 35 days’ notice is required for any new business for the agenda, so the latest date that such items should be in the hands of the Secretary would be 1st January 2022.

The meeting closed with prayers and the Blessing.