

NOTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE CHICHESTER DIOCESAN FUND AND BOARD OF  
FINANCE (INCORPORATED)  
Held virtually via Zoom on

SATURDAY 7<sup>th</sup> NOVEMBER 2020

PRESENT:                   The Bishop (President)  
                                  Suffragan Bishops        2  
                                  Clergy                     58  
                                  Laity                      53

Miss Gabrielle Higgins (Diocesan Secretary)

The Bishop of Chichester (+MC) opened the meeting with a prayer and welcomed everyone.

**1.     PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS**

+MC gave the presidential address. +MC noted that the Synod met in the context of the national lockdown and that in the negotiations for the terms of the lockdown the question of the role of the church and faith communities and access to church buildings, and the place of prayer and worship was an important issue. +MC praised Cardinal Vincent Nichols' campaign to request that the government provide the scientific evidence that suggested Christians gathering for worship was the means by which Covid 19 could be spread. Although the campaign was supported by other faith leaders and the CofE no headway had been made in demanding that Christian worship be permitted in this lockdown. +MC noted that this mattered because being a Christian was fundamentally about being able to worship God and the celebration of the eucharist was one of the fundamental ways in which Christians contribute to the common good and in which the morale, spiritual, mental and physical health of the communities of which Christians were a part were sustained and maintained. This benefit had made no impact on the government which signified a new era where the recognition of the place of Christian worship was regarded with indifference. Christian life and work and its contribution to the common good, justice, human dignity and the values of the Christian faith and the ten commandments had been influential in forming of the nation's culture and society. +MC emphasised these were things Christians needed to be very clearly apologetic for, promoting an understanding of why they mattered. In 2012 the Queen hosted a gathering for faith leaders at Lambeth Palace and noted that one of the responsibilities of the CofE was to make space for the place of faith within the nation, to be attentive to promoting the benefits and the freedom to worship of those who serve in other faiths, not simply making the case for Christian freedom but for that of others too.

+MC reported that the ordination of deacons and priests had been accomplished having been deferred from June to September. Gratitude was expressed to all the churches where ordinations took place. The rites of ordination were very beautiful and provided encouragement to parishes. Gratitude was expressed for the hospitality given and to the Bishop's episcopal colleagues who worked tirelessly to ordain 17 deacons and 14 priests in two weeks.

+MC reported that the Bishop's Council had agreed the instrument of delegation that set out the responsibilities delegated to the new bishops and those responsibilities reserved to +MC. The Bishop of Horsham (+RH) served the archdeaconries of Chichester and Horsham and the Bishop of Lewes (+WL) served the archdeaconries of Hastings and Brighton and Lewes as well as both bishops' particular diocesan responsibilities.

## **2. WELCOME FROM THE BISHOP OF CHICHESTER TO THE BISHOPS OF HORSHAM AND LEWES**

+MC invited the bishops to speak about their diocesan responsibilities.

+RH explained she was on the Safeguarding Advisory Panel, she was the link person for suspended clergy and she was on the team overseeing the work of the Past Cases Review. +RH reported that Colin Perkins had returned as diocesan safeguarding adviser following his secondment to the national safeguarding team. Gratitude was expressed to Jason Tingley and Claire Coles who had done a great job in his absence. The IICSA report had been published which made for sobering and shameful reading. The ongoing safeguarding work included providing support for victims and survivors and ensuring that horrific abuses cannot happen again. The second independent Past Cases Review involved parishes looking through files to check whether all cases had been reported. 63% of parishes had responded and there was just over a week for the remaining parishes to respond. +RH urged office holders to check if their parish had responded.

+RH explained the purpose of Strategic Development Funding (SDF): to support specific projects for renewal, revitalisation and missional growth. The criteria for funding had been narrowed and funding was only available for mission in cities. This meant that Brighton and Hove was the only place in the diocese that qualified for SDF, although there were other types of funding for other areas. +RH explained the significant decline in worshipping communities in Brighton and Hove: according to the census it was the most irreligious place in the country. The result of the bid proposal for Brighton and Hove was due on 10 December. The proposal involved a partnership between the Diocesan Apostolic Life department, St Peter's Brighton, All Saints Hove and St Matthias Brighton for revitalisation and mission, the aim was for there to be 5,000 new believers in Brighton and Hove in five years. It involved upgrading buildings, opening a community café, establishing a hub of training and resourcing for the wider church and attracting and training teams of young interns. If the result was positive on 10 December then detailed work would begin: consulting with local clergy; working hard with deaneries to make sure it was as fruitful as possible for all the churches in the area; and tying in the strategy of the Apostolic Life department. The deadline for the main bid was 11 March 2021, the result of which would be known in the summer.

+WL spoke about his role in the pastoral care of clergy. Clergy welfare was something that constantly changed, it could be a lonely place with particular pressures and issues and it was important to constantly look at how best to support the clergy and their families. The national church was also looking at this and the Covenant for Clergy Wellbeing and how to implement its recommendations. Gratitude was expressed for Nicola Canham and the Apostolic Life team for their work which meant the diocese was ahead of the curve. +WH recommended the clergy wellbeing handbook which included much of what was involved in the Covenant for Clergy Wellbeing. +WH was looking at how Ministerial Development Reviews could be tweaked and was hearing from clergy and those that support them in parishes, particularly considering the current pressures of pandemic. +WH was looking at how to support clergy preparing to retire and retired clergy that moved into the diocese and what to put in place to ensure their well-being as a vital part of the household of faith; the diocese was blessed with a large number of retired clergy.

+WH spoke of his role with the Common Good. The Council for the Common Good aimed to seek, hear, support and proclaim the common good ecumenically, including the care of individuals, including issues such as modern day slavery, mental health and homelessness; also the care for community life and cohesion, family life, domestic abuse, and the

increasing need of food banks because of poverty. The Council was also concerned with rural issues affecting isolated communities and what partner organisations were doing so that people could be sign-posted in directions where they could get more information on starting a project in their own parish or benefice. Another aspect was looking at how to care for the environment. +WH commented that the pandemic reminds us that this cannot be fought as individuals. The origin of the pandemic existed in the abuse of the natural world. General Synod had signed a declaration to aim for the Church to be carbon neutral in 10 years. +WH spoke of the need to change our mindset and proclaim the positive message that we have on care of the environment.

+MC thanked +WL and +RH. +MC explained the intention to open up discussion and debate on the issues raised by the bishops at deanery and parish level to get this into the blood stream of parishes locally and in daily Christian life.

### **3. REPORT FROM GENERAL SYNOD**

Mrs Mary Nagel moved "That this report be received"

There were no questions. This was approved by a show of hands.

### **4. REPORT ON THE BISHOP'S COUNCIL**

Mr John Booth moved "That this report be received"

There were no questions. This was approved by a show of hands.

### **5. QUESTIONS UNDER SO69**

+MC confirmed that no questions had been received. +MC introduced the additional item for the agenda in relation to the Diocesan Synod elections.

### **6. DIOCESAN SYNOD ELECTIONS**

Gabrielle Higgins (GH) spoke to her paper. Fr Mark Gilbert moved "That this Synod resolves to adopt the Scheme set out in paragraphs 6 and 7 in the Elections Paper for the Diocesan Synod elections in 2021, subject to any amendments required and approved in accordance with paragraphs 8 and 9 in that paper" and "that this Synod resolves that a simple majority voting paper shall be used for the elections."

Mr Brian Hanson (255) suggested that the minimum number of members objecting or requesting a debate which would trigger an emergency single issue Synod meeting to be convened by Zoom, as set out in paragraph 9, should be raised from ten to twenty five.

The resolutions, as amended by Mr Brian Hanson, were approved by a show of hands.

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

### **1. PRESENTATION OF THE BUDGET FOR 2021**

Mrs Lesley Lynn (LL) explained she was appointed as chair of the DBF in May 2020 which was bad timing due to the pandemic and parishes had to be asked how they felt they could maintain their parish share during lockdown particularly with the closure of church halls. The budget for 2021 was prepared in a similar state of uncertainty. Although the 2020 forecast showed potential parish share dropping to a little over £12m, collections to date from parishes had been more encouraging. Parish share had dropped, but the DBF were encouraged by the generosity and faith parishes continued to show in making contributions over and above what was anticipated.

In the last week two parishes had generously made additional contributions towards the 2020 parish share over and above what was pledged which was encouraging in a difficult year. The deficit between income and expenditure was likely to be £1m higher than originally budgeted.

In a spirit of optimism for the 2021 budget, the DBF had budgeted for £13.3m of income from parish share. LL was concerned this was overly optimistic but any re-forecasting of the budget would be done once pledges had been received from parishes. The 2021 budget showed a reduction in the operating deficit to a little over half a million for 2021, if the figures proved accurate. This allowed parish ministry costs to be kept flat in 2021 which was hoped to be of encouragement to parishes. If the income for 2021 appeared unlikely to meet the £13.3m target the diocese's expenses would be re-visited. The 2021 budget would be kept under constant review and if required further costs would have to be taken out of the budget in order to avoid a further run on the DBF's general reserves.

The Revd Philip Coekin (PC) (78) asked if the CofE had made any adjustments in its requests for payment from the diocese in the light of the pandemic. LL confirmed no adjustments had been made to the diocese's contribution to the national church. GH and LL had asked for clarity as Chichester was the fourth largest contributor as a diocese but the same formula had been used, as agreed by General Synod, and had not been adjusted. However, this was the first year the amount had not been increased. GH offered to send PC the relevant paper from the Inter Diocesan Finance Forum explaining this. LL reported the national church had awarded the diocese a £600,000 sustainability grant which meant that the numbers of newly ordained curates (which had been reduced) would be increased. +MC reported the grant had also enabled the appointment of a parish development officer to work across the diocese helping parishes to respond to the damage of the pandemic and how to make best use of their resources in terms of buildings and mission.

Mr Jeremy Kaye (JK) (233) noted there was £1.6m investment income in 2019 whereas this reduced to £1m in the 2021 budget. JK appreciated the stock market had been in difficulty but asked if the four investment managers had been pressed in relation to investment income. LL confirmed the investment managers would continue to be pressed to improve their performance. LL hoped the 2021 budget might be over conservative in relation to the fall of investment income but that it would not be prudent to budget for a higher number in the current climate.

Mrs Jane Wilkinson (182) noted the property expenditure on the archdeaconry of Chichester was much more than all the others. GH explained this was due to the DBF owning the properties the other archdeacons lived in whereas a notional rent appeared in the budget in relation to the expenditure on the archdeacon of Chichester's house, which was rented as a temporary solution. +MC explained that one of the reasons for this temporary arrangement was because the former archdeacon of Chichester's house was sold to help cashflow at a strategic moment.

Mrs Lesley Lynn (Chair) moved "That the budget of the DBF for 2021 be received" with the caveat that it would be kept under constant review. This was approved by a show of hands.

## **2. UPDATE ON THE DBF'S APPROACH TO ETHICAL INVESTMENT - (pages 4-6 of the supporting papers): Mrs Lesley Lynn**

LL felt it was clear to the Assets Committee that ethical investment particularly in relation to fossil fuels, was of interest to parishes and it had held a special meeting devoted to this topic joined by the ethical investments leader of one of the DBF's investment managers and those in the national church that specialised in such issues. The matter was much more complicated than it first appeared. It seemed the national church had got it right and it had been decided to align the investment policy and instructions to investment managers with the national church's policy.

Revd Natalie Loveless (48) (NL) felt saddened that the decision had not been taken to divest in fossil fuels now but thanked the Assets Committee for discussing it. NL understood the diocese had £2m invested in fossil fuels and felt the best way to send a message to such companies was to divest now and to reinvest when the companies had improved sufficiently. NL spoke of young and prophetic voices in her parish that spoke of the urgency of the climate change emergency and she felt these voices should be listened to. NL said she would like to see Synod respond to that call; the national church did not have to be followed and she would like to see the decision overturned.

LL agreed that there was no requirement to follow the national church and she was acutely aware of the argument that the diocese should go further. If the diocese were to divest it would not have a voice in the ears of the decision makers at the fossil fuels companies. LL had become convinced that it was more beneficial for the diocese to use its voice with the investment managers to continue to press for urgent change. LL commented on how BP were now approaching this on an accelerated timetable. Pressure by investors to move in a particular direction could be at least as influential as divesting entirely.

Mr John Booth (166) (JB), as a member of the Assets Committee, explained that after deliberation the decision was taken to retain investments in certain fossil fuel companies, and he referred to evidence that BP was not only listening to its investors but, as well as being a large fossil fuel company, was also the biggest green energy company quoted on the London stock exchange. BP was accelerating the pace at which it moved its production towards renewable energy. JB felt that without the support and advocacy of shareholders that change would not have happened at the pace it had. JB felt there was a generational momentum for disinvestment but on reflection the committee felt it was more important for the diocese's voice to be heard, advocating to those companies from the influential perspective of being large shareholder. This was a very important issue which mattered to the committee. LL explained she had arrived at the special session of the Assets Committee advocating that the DBF should sell quickly. LL was convinced after 2 hours of deliberation that this was not the right way forward.

The Archdeacon of Brighton and Lewes (8) (MLW) felt this issue ought not to be something that was confined to the minutes but was an issue that needed to be communicated across the diocese as much as possible so that people were aware of what was going on and were aware of the influence that had been brought to bear as a result of holding some of these investments and the rationale for the policy. MLW thought NL was right about the wider issue in the way the diocese connected with younger people in particular who were often in the vanguard of this movement. MLW felt the diocese needed to be demonstrating that these were not just committee issues but this was part of a movement that it wanted to contribute to.

+MC felt it would be worth plotting what the achievements had been through the CofE's retention of its holdings in companies engaged in fossil fuel trade and what levels of pressure it had been able to bring to bear and the changes that had been made globally. The last time it was debated in Synod an interesting case was made for demonstrating the global impact of the global consortium of shareholders that the CofE had brought together to tackle issues of fossil fuels, to the extent that it was recognised by the United Nations as being one of the most positive contributions to tackling the question of environmental damage and future investment in green energy. +MC felt there was a lot of data that should be looked at and presented in order to engage with people of a much younger generation who rightly felt passionately about this and who were not alone; across the spectrum there were serious concerns.

The Revd David Hill (86) (DH) said he and the vast majority of his congregation would agree with NL. DH felt the diocese needed to be extremely careful, as there was a potential reputational risk if the diocese were to make a case for continuing to invest in fossil fuel companies; it had to be extremely careful how this was explained. DH was not in favour of continuing to invest but if this was the decision, then the DBF needed to make the reasons very clear as many people he knew would be grumpy to say the least.

LL confirmed that the policy the Assets Committee had adopted was greener than it had been.

Revd Angela Martin (108) (AM) commented that it was good to know the reason for the decision and commented on the reputation for not moving quickly enough. AM commented on the CofE's request to parishes to be carbon neutral by 2030 which given the number of old buildings almost seemed like an impossible task. SDF money was going towards mission and church growth but perhaps there was a case for church commissioners to be asked to put some money aside to enable parishes to be carbon neutral and enable them to move forwards. AM argued this was also missional and that it was not just the youth but vast numbers of the diocese's congregations were keen to do it. AM suggested the diocesan environmental action group which had not been very active needed to come back into play.

+MC felt that explaining the rationale and what the benefits might be of the CofE policy which the diocese were following would be a helpful response to this very important challenge from Synod. +MC handed this over to LL and asked for some feedback and suggested Bishop Will see how the debate could be opened across deaneries and parishes.

+MC noted the latest mission figures for the Diocese for 2019. +MC commented that last year the figures showed that the Diocese could claim it had at least halted decline, the figures had not increased but the Diocese was not on a sharp downward trajectory. There had been a tiny increase this year. Last year there were 45,700 people in the Diocese of Chichester. This year there were 46,000 - an increase of 300. This reinforced an interesting picture of a household of faith that was not in decline but holding its own. Any figure which was holding its own actually showed there had been some increase over and against losses. Each of those increases and losses was a human life. In terms of population, Chichester was the ninth largest diocese. In terms of numbers, it was the fourth largest diocese (household of faith) in the country.

+MC commented that as the challenges of the pandemic were faced, the finances were completely thrown off course and all aspects of church life thrown into a degree of turmoil, to remember that God had blessed us in so many ways. The diocese prayed for and planned for the reopening of faith, mission and growth, and had a very strong base. The diocese had been blessed by strong faithfulness and solid Christian commitment, numerically and financially across this diocese. The challenge across the country was very significant. The diocese had the gifts God had given to face this challenge with some degree of confidence not complacency. Confidence which builds hope in the God who was faithful to his promises which builds hope and trust in Jesus Christ who had told us the gates of hell, of death and of disease would not prevail over His church as the victory over death had been won.

+MC looked forward to the future with great hope. This household of faith had the resources to respond well to the future, and to say to the people of the area we serve, here is hope for you as we come through the process of this time of loss and mourning and grief and lament, here is hope for dignity and here is hope for a better world, a greener future, hope for our young people.

The Bishop dismissed the meeting with the Aaronic blessing and the Grace.