

**MINUTES OF THE SIXTH SESSION OF THE EIGHTEENTH DIOCESAN SYNOD, HELD
AT ST MARY'S, HORSHAM AND BY TELECONFERENCE,
ON 18TH MAY 2024**

PRESENT:	The Bishop (President)	
(in person or	Suffragan Bishops	2
on Zoom)	Clergy	56
	Laity	50
	Dr John Preston (Diocesan Secretary)	
	Mr Darren Oliver (Diocesan Registrar)	

The meeting began with an act of worship.

MEETING OF THE DIOCESAN SYNOD

The Bishop thanked the Revd Lisa Barnett and the St Mary's team for their hospitality and welcomed Mr John Preston (Diocesan Secretary) and Mr Simon Whitwell (Governance and Information Manager) to their first Diocesan Synod.

The Bishop congratulated Lesley Hurst on her appointment as Director of Education and the Archdeacon of Hastings on his appointment as Dean of Chichester Cathedral.

Finally, the Bishop remembered with thanksgiving the life of Martin Cruttenden, a faithful lay member of the Church of the Good Shepherd in Brighton, who had served for many years as a member of Diocesan Synod, the Bishops Council, and the Audit Committee, noting that Martin was a truly holy and Godly lay Christian in all that he did.

1. PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

The Bishop of Chichester gave a Presidential Address, in which he spoke about the role of the Laity and about the beauty and significance of stained glass.

The Bishop explained that the laity are the Body of Christ within the world. The purpose of the clergy is to serve the laity, enabling them to use their many gifts in the world. When we look at what Jesus says, he talks about lay people and what they were doing in first century Palestine; farming, building, trade, fishing, viticulture, architecture, and teaching. The occupations of lay people represent life in all its dimensions, gathered to respond to God and proclaim His mighty acts.

The Bishop went on to speak about stained glass windows and the role that they have played over the centuries in inspiring and encouraging congregations and in bringing stories to life. He quoted George Herbert's "The Windows", which speaks of "brittle and crazy glass", which is fractured but beautiful and allows us to see the glory of God. The Bishop mentioned a recent article by Canon Jessica Martin, which analyses Herbert's poetry and explains that Herbert's crazy glass represents the uniqueness of individual personalities, which God's love shines through.

The Bishop concluded by explaining that this provides hope for all who struggle and that it

is important for us to seek the see the glory of God, which is obscured but evident in every person. It was important as we looked to the future to remember the generosity of God and to seek to be generous in response. Finally, he encouraged Synod members to look at the stained glass in our churches and to think about what it was calling us to do and to be.

2. YEAR OF FAITH 2025 AND 950TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS

The Bishops of Horsham and Lewes presented plans for celebrating the Year of Faith and the 950th Anniversary of Chichester Cathedral in 2025. It was explained that there would be various events and initiatives, starting in January and February with deanery celebrations, and including a Lent Course, Family Camp, the ELS Conference, two Youth Pilgrimages, and a Clergy Conference. The Cathedral’s 950th celebrations would include a Cathedral exhibition, a Concert, Street Party, and a Light Show. In response to questions, it was confirmed that the slides would be made available, and that May Camp would be happening alongside these special events in 2025.

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

3. PRESENTATION OF THE 2023 ACCOUNTS

Mrs Lesley Lynn (Chair of the Finance Committee) and Mrs Catherine Dawkins (Finance Director) introduced the 2023 accounts. It was explained that the Statements showed an operating deficit of £794,000. The two key factors were a decrease in parish share, which had increased from 2022 but not to the levels seen before the pandemic, and an increase in the costs associated with maintaining the Diocese’s property portfolio. On the positive side, there had been an increase in income from investments and the Diocese had sold some glebe land.

There were two questions about the restricted fund into which some parishes were paying their parish share. It was explained that this fund had been set up in response to the Living in Love and Faith process for those parishes who were concerned about the direction of travel, and provided a mechanism for them to only contribute towards the costs of parishes that shared their views. From a diocesan perspective, this had worked well and meant that parish share was still received and that no parishes had opted into the national scheme, which was run by a third party. There was also a question about trustees that had not attended any meetings in the year; the Diocesan Secretary agreed that, unless there were good reasons, it would be right be question whether they should continue in post.

Mrs Lesley Lynn (Chair) moved *“That the Annual Accounts and report of the DBF for 2023 be received”* and the motion was carried on a counted vote:

For:	Church: 54	Zoom: 95%
Against:	Church: 0	Zoom: 3%
Abstain:	Church: 1	Zoom: 3%

The Bishop and Mrs Lynn expressed their thanks to the Finance Director and her team. Mrs Lynn also thanked the members of the Assets Committee and the Audit Committee, who volunteer their time and expertise towards the work of these important committees.

4. APPOINTMENT OF AUDITORS

Mrs Lesley Lynn (Chair) introduced the motion and moved, *“That Haysmacintyre LLP, Chartered Accountants, be re-appointed as auditors of the Company to hold office until the conclusion of the next Annual General Meeting”*.

The motion was carried on a show of hands. The Bishop thanked Mrs Lynn for her chairing of the Finance Committee.

MEETING OF THE DIOCESAN SYNOD

5. PLANS FOR SUSTAINABILITY AND DEVELOPMENT

The Diocesan Secretary and Bishops gave a joint presentation outlining plans for sustainability and development within the Diocese.

It was explained that it was important to look at the current deficit in the context of longer-term trends. Between 2014 and 2022, there had been a decrease of one-third in church attendance, but diocesan income and parish share had stayed flat. Increasing Parish Ministry Costs meant that this static income was a problem, and it was the gap between income and rising costs that had caused the current deficit.

There was a need to save 1.5 million per year and the original plan was for 20% of the savings to be made from central diocesan costs. However, it now seemed that it would be possible to reduce these costs by 33% (500k rather than 300k), by reviewing posts as they became vacant and finding alternative ways to fund May Camp. The Diocese was also benefitting from increased interest rates and there had been a decreased in the contributions for clergy pensions, which would not affect benefits but reduced the cost for dioceses. The Diocese was also accessing national funding for posts where possible.

Bishop Martin, Bishop Will, and Bishop Ruth outlined three workstreams for which Diocesan Investment Programme funding will be sought from the National Church, and explained that the Diocese would be seeking growth in three areas:

- Prayer and worship
- Children and Young People
- Investing in Excellence in Leadership

There were questions and comments from Synod members about:

- The reduction in diocesan funding for Family Support Work from 35k to 1k and whether it would be possible to reinstate that funding?
- The future of clergy pensions
- The three workstreams and how they related to the overall vision
- Reader ministry

In response, it was explained that the decision to reduce funding for FSW was reached with reluctance, but that the funding was not enough to make a difference to the overall direction of the charity and that it would not be possible to reinstate the funding in the current situation.

The Bishop explained that there was an ongoing debate about the future of clergy pensions at national level and that the Diocese would need to contribute as agreed at national level. In relation to the diocesan strategy, the Bishop explained that the Diocese was continuing to build on the vision of the Four Mores. Finally, the Bishop explained that Reader ministry was very important and that this was an opportunity to review Reader ministry and to look creatively at Reader ministry as a suite of ministries that supported the life of the Diocese.

6. REPORT ON THE BISHOP'S COUNCIL

Mrs Sara Stonor moved *"That this report be received"*.

The motion was carried on a show of hands.

7. REPORTS FROM GENERAL SYNOD

Mrs Mary Nagel moved *"That these reports be received"*.

The motion was carried on a show of hands.

8. AMENDMENT TO STANDING ORDER 9(v)

The Archdeacon of Hastings moved *"That the requirement to include those absent without apologies in the Diocesan Synod minutes be removed."*

There was a question about whether it would be possible to include the number of those absent without apologies if not the names. It was agreed that this would be possible.

The motion was carried on a show of hands.

9. QUESTIONS UNDER SO69

There were no questions under Standing Order 69.

10. PROMULGATION OF AMENDING CANON 43

The Bishop promulgated Amending Canon 43 by reading out the following: "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."

The Bishop made some final announcements and the meeting closed with the Blessing.

Number absent without apologies: 31