

**MINUTES OF THE FIRST SESSION OF THE NINETEENTH DIOCESAN SYNOD,  
HELD AT ST JOHN'S MEADS EASTBOURNE AND BY TELECONFERENCE,  
ON 16<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 2024**

PRESENT:	The Bishop (President)
(in person or	Suffragan Bishops 1
on Zoom)	Clergy 64
	Laity 65
	Dr John Preston (Diocesan Secretary)

The meeting began with an act of worship followed by some administrative announcements.

**MEETING OF THE DIOCESAN SYNOD**

**1. ELECTION OF CHAIR OF THE HOUSE OF LAITY AND CHAIR OF THE HOUSE OF CLERGY OF DIOCESAN SYNOD**

The Bishop of Chichester introduced Lesley Lynn to Chair the election. One valid nomination for the Chair of the House of Clergy had been received from Canon Mark Gilbert who was announced to be deemed elected. No nominations had been received from members of the House of Laity and volunteers were invited to be nominated. Mrs Sara Stonor volunteered and was validly nominated unopposed during the meeting and thereby deemed elected as Chair of the House of Laity.

**2. PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS**

The Bishop of Chichester gave a presidential address, in which he spoke about coming back from the Synod on Synodality in Rome. This was a process of international consultation within the Roman Catholic Church, to which he was invited as an Anglican observer. The voice of the people of God both lay and ordained came together to be centre and focus of lengthy and prayerful discussions.

This legislative body has drawn its synodal practice from a parliamentary model. As we go forward, he hoped we in this diocese will want to widen our understanding of what synodality means and what it means to be a positive expression of being the Church in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This is about hearing the voices of the baptised and recognising the authority of every baptised Christian who is an agent of Jesus Christ and to ensure our formation as Christians goes deep into the scriptures, God revealed in word and in sacrament.

This deepens our understanding of how we are the recipients of an inheritance that speaks to the culture of our day. To bring the balm of God's grace to an international global community: wounds caused by war, greed, injustice, pride, hate and revenge and the wounds which are the result of our own folly, in the ways in which we have lived badly in our common home the earth and how we are now reaping the bitter fruits of that bad living.

In the Pacific, islanders see their homes and livelihoods disappearing as global warming effects patterns of dependency whereby fishing and farming for generations are destroyed. Learning to listen to the cries of the earth, the poor, the migrant exiles from their homes. The Bishop spoke of those suffering due to conflict

and disaster and how we listen to those cries and how we speak into this environment of pain; the balm of hope that is at the heart of the gospel and the efficacy and the effectiveness of our Lord and saviour Jesus.

The Bishop spoke about the nature of this evil that we experience and as Christians we must be alert and informed and attentive to this. We have, in the Book of Common Prayer, in its pattern of life and worship, somewhat lost sight of the repeated call to repentance and the repeated call to face head on our sinfulness and to take responsibility for it in penitence. We are called not only to be sorry and receive God's forgiveness but to change and move on from those patterns of life and moments of failure. And when we fail, to come back and try again.

As we address the question of evil, we see that the scriptural record is not a text that belongs in the past; it is alive in our experience today. So those highly sophisticated stories in the book of Genesis that speak of a kind catastrophe which we are responsible for in the misuse of freedom, they are speaking about the consequence of the sins we commit today. They speak about the profound damage of human relationships, about Adam and Eve and the damage to human relationships which link us to the beauty of creation.

The garden of Eden is described as the place of worship, it is the temple, the human person was the priest of creation who gave glory to God for the beauty and perfection of the world. A new temple is needed where we might recover what it means to live in a right relationship with the creator and with each other and where the pains of labour can be elevated to that manifestation where resourcefulness is used to produce what is beautiful and true and reflects the glory of God and deepens faith.

This idea runs through the scriptures and inspires the mindset of the composers of the Book of Common Prayer. We see it in imaginative ways. Blood cries out from the ground when it has been spilt in anger. We see it when the evil one speaks about God, and in sickness that destroys. We see it in Jesus Christ who touches that evil to reveal it is as it is named and to banish it. Evil recognises that power as Jesus names and overcomes these forces, even the forces of creation, such as wind and storm. This also comes under the rule of the presence of God in which evil is banished and order is restored. And this fascinates us.

In the 16<sup>th</sup> century as the new world offers new power in its wealth and gold the human person, endowed with intellect, seizes control. Slowly we begin to understand how this works. Goethe and Christopher Marlow write plays about the modern age in which a person casually makes a pact with the devil and says, 'Okay what can you do for me, then?' And John Milton sets out for us the sophisticated attractiveness of the devil.

Humanity comes of age and we ask ourselves what kind of pact we can make, like in Othello: 'Evil, be thou my good'. Against that background, then we set the turmoil of the CofE and the horrific heartrending account of terror John Smyth inflicted upon his victims. This has to be named as evil. Violence can never be the means by which the sinner is called to repentance.

The Bishop noted that the Synod in Rome called us to our 'pact' in baptism, our covenant with the God who made us and calls us, who is merciful and gives us the dignity to be Church, the expression of life in Jesus Christ, extended through time by the Holy Spirit. The Church, which must always be merciful. In this Church there must always be a fresh determination to ensure that in our congregations, Church schools, Christian leaders and teachers, every aspect of our life exudes that sense that the vulnerable are safe, the marginal are welcome and valued, that every human being is a child of God and bears the image of God and has the promise of redemption.

The Bishop spoke of being asked for his views on what it means to be human in the present age. It is sometimes presumed that bishops who have a traditional view of marriage will also have a condemnatory and denigratory view of same sex relationships as though one view must necessarily flow from the other. What disturbs him is the thought of the categorisation and segregation of people among the baptised. The

Bishop wanted it to be on the record that there is no place for anything that speaks of homophobia and justifies the segregation of the Church. The openness of the Church's doors for all people and the love and respect in which all people are received as made in the image of God is fundamental to our calling and to the account we must give for God for our lives together.

The Bishop asked that as we have in this past week lived with the horror and sadness of the Makin report, and the resignation of the Archbishop of Canterbury, so we should pray for victims of abuse, and pray for Justin Welby and his wife, Caroline. The Bishop also asked, most urgently, that we will continue to want to find a deep love for our church. That does not mean putting the Church on a pedestal, making it an end in itself. But it does mean recognition that the Church is the gift of God to us. It is where we are nurtured and born into faith and baptism. It is the assembly of those that are Christ's flock, who witness to his love to those around them. It is essential that we love our Church in a proper way, cherishing this divine and human creation that can only be made up of mortals like me and you. It will fail. But at the same time, we should be certain that this is the instrument by which God reveals his love and salvation through Jesus Christ. 'The Church's one foundation is Jesus Christ, her Lord; she is the new creation by water and the word; from heaven he came and sought her...and for her life he died.'

As we look to the future, nurturing with joy and love the life we have together in our church communities is not a mechanism for defending ourselves against unattractive and unpleasant realities that unfold in human experience. Rather, it is how we nurture the proclamation that Jesus Christ is Lord, and he has won the victory over sin and evil by the power of the Father's love.

And when we open our church doors, it must be to invite others to join us in that safe environment that engenders a glimpse of heaven that characterises our life together where, by grace alone, we live and minister. Here we find forgiveness and hope. As the pilgrim people of God, we seek to walk together (the literal meaning of 'synod') in order that we might grow in love and joy and holiness. And eventually, when we rest in death, we take our leave of this time and place, to await the resurrection and the vision of God and of creation perfected, ourselves included: a vision that, as yet, we cannot fully see.

The Bishop also welcomed the new Dean of Chichester, the Very Reverend Dr Edward Dowler, and new Assistant Archdeacons: Marc Lloyd, Matthew Foy and Sam Carter, helping the Venerable Martin Lloyd Williams. Stephen Hoyles was welcomed who would take over as new Chair of the Finance Committee on 1st January 2025 as was Bill Telford who would become Deputy Chair on the same date.

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

### **1. PRESENTATION OF THE BUDGET FOR 2025**

Lesley Lynn, Chair of the Finance Committee, presented the budget. The first year she was involved was 2019 and parish share nearly rose to £14million. 80% of income received came from parish share. Lesley's predecessor had done well in managing the deficit. However, due to Covid in 2020 and 2021 much income was lost in parish share as churches were closed. In 2022 parishes made a heroic effort in the recovery from Covid to push back the levels of parish share. It was hoped that trend would continue but sadly it has not. As inflation erodes the value of money the drop was greater in real terms.

During Covid it was possible to mitigate against the loss of income by furloughing staff, receiving the government grant, and works to parsonages could not be carried out. From 2023 the deficits were growing significantly. LL went around the diocese talking to treasurers each year and heard a consistent message that the parishes' financial situation did not permit growth in parish share to

permit the diocesan deficit to diminish. The deficit therefore had to be funded from the reserves. The deficit for 2024 was predicted to be £1.5m but was hoped may be less.

For 2025, there was a budget deficit of £722,000. Deficit budgets were not financially sustainable. Costs had been cut dramatically in the 2025 budget, mainly in Church House, some serendipitous and some very hard decisions. There was still a £722,000 operational loss which eventually needed to be eliminated. There was a need to change the ministry model deployed in Sussex to eliminate the operating deficits because 80% of the costs related to parish ministry so without reducing that cost base the deficit could not be eliminated. The UK government announced a 2% increase in national insurance. The impact of this in 2025 would be £160k. Half would be met from the £200k contingency budget which would leave the contingency funds tight. All departments would have to keep strictly to their budgets. Changes to reduce ministry costs needed to be pushed forward.

Questions or comments were invited.

Susan Saunders 148 of Hove Deanery asked if Synod could be assured that where properties were to be sold to invest in equities to provide a better return, these would be ethical investments and particularly no more investment in fossil fuels? LL confirmed that better yields could be generated from financial investments, avoiding the costs of letting properties. LL confirmed that recent Synods had debated investment in fossil fuels and it had decided to retain investments in fossil fuel companies where they say they are working to reduce fossil fuel pollution both methane and carbon, so we remain invested in Shell and BP. Ethical investment had been conclusively debated at the last Synod and was not going to be revisited.

Catherine Butcher 143 Eastbourne Deanery noted that the expenditure for children and youth had almost halved since 2023. How do we justify this when the national agenda is that we should become a younger and more diverse church? Catherine Dawkins, Finance Director, explained this drop was mainly due to May Camp, an important part of mission and ministry, which had become increasingly expensive to run at Plumpton Racecourse. It would continue but without the excessive costs. CD confirmed that children and youth were a priority and there would be more on this later.

Mrs Lesley Lynn (Chair) moved "That the budget of the DBF for 2025 be received". The motion was carried by a unanimous show of hands and by a unanimous poll vote from members on Zoom.

## **MEETING OF THE DIOCESAN SYNOD**

### **3. EDUCATION UPDATE**

The Bishop welcomed Lesley Hurst (LH), the new Diocesan Director for Education. LH explained the Church's involvement in education, highlighting the historical significance of Christian schools established in 1870 when there was no free or state education. The 1894 Education Act mandated daily acts of worship and religious education (RE) in schools. The Church of England (CofE) is a major provider of academies, with many people having attended CofE schools.

The Diocesan Board of Education (DBE) oversees education in the diocese, working with 155 schools to maintain a distinctly Christian ethos. School Effectiveness Officers support school development, and the DBE is involved in headteacher recruitment and reviews. The team collaborates on school performance and place planning, providing training to around 650 governors.

School sites are held in trust for CofE schools, with some having reverter clauses that require safeguarding against activities that might trigger a reversion. National funding is used for maintenance projects, though the bidding process is complex.

The education team handles unexpected events like flooding, bereavements, and school closures. Falling pupil numbers pose challenges, leading to school closures and reduced funding. The team encourages

collaboration among schools to focus on RE, collective worship, and Christian distinctiveness. Efforts are made to reduce the carbon footprint of CofE schools, which are open for longer periods.

The education team supported the Year of Faith celebrations by offering schools opportunities to explore the creed through music and art. LH thanked Synod for their support and praised the DBE members' questioning and support.

Questions or comments were invited.

Mrs Ginny Barrett of Petworth Deanery referred to the efforts of the Education team to help schools to decarbonise and asked LH how she felt when she heard that the diocese was still investing in some fossil fuel companies, which she found hard to believe. LH emphasised the work being done to decarbonise schools and that she was not on the committees who debated financial investments and that the investment in particular fossil fuel companies had been a decision for Diocesan Synod.

Revd Philip Coekin of Eastbourne Deanery (PC) asked LH to reassure Synod that children in diocesan schools would not be taught that sex outside traditional marriage was acceptable. PC also asked if 'mermaid resources for schools' were being utilised in any diocesan schools. LH explained there were clear curricular resources about relationships and that schools must follow the national curriculum so all of the diocese's schools followed these which were age appropriate. LH would find out the answer to the question about 'mermaid resources'.

Revd Steve Rees, Rotherfield Deanery, thanked LH for all her team's work and praised God for church schools. It was a blessing to have a church school in the parish; there were so many parents coming into church.

The Bishop thanked LH and asked her to take Synod's thanks and support back to her team.

#### **4. DIOCESAN BOARD OF EDUCATION ELECTION TIMETABLE**

The Venerable Luke Irvine Capel moved that "this Synod resolves to adopt the arrangements for the 2024 DBE election and the term of office for the newly elected members as set out at page 2 of the supporting pages". The motion was carried by a show of hands and by the poll vote on Zoom.

#### **5. VISION 2025-2030**

The Bishop spoke about the vision for the next five years and reflected that the previous four more strategy had to be rethought due to the pandemic. The year of the Old Testament and the year of the New Testament had brought us to 2025, the 950<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of the Christian mission of the south Saxons. The Normans created the diocese of Chichester. 2025 was a year of faith, not simply a year of nostalgia.

This year of celebration of our inheritance was a springboard into the future. The core at the heart, the inspiration, the well spring is our common baptism. That is the point at which you are both commissioned and empowered and sealed in confirmation and share the faith and hope that is within you. The year coincides with the 1700 anniversary of the Council of Nicea when we began to shape the creed. The creed is what Christians share globally across 1700 years shaping our belief in God, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. As the Christian church across the world celebrates this gift to us it is an opportunity to deepen our understanding and by doing so re-energise our mission.

The Bishop asked everyone to make a special point of saying the Nicene Creed on Advent Sunday. The Bishop reminded Synod of those Christians who are persecuted and fear the threat of martyrdom for holding this creed. The Bishop spoke of the celebrations that would take place including a big conference of the international church, invitations to the cathedral, deanery

services which bishops will attend, a pilgrimage and walk to Chichester from Petworth. The Bishop emphasised the importance of the activities for youth and children and referred to celebrating faith.co.uk. In addition to May Camp there would also be a Family Camp.

For youth and young people there would be three pilgrimages. It was possible to subsidise young people to come. Bishop Ruth would like to hear from people with outdoor health and safety qualifications, from cooks or those with a car willing to carry the bags to and from the destinations.

Young people and the intergenerational sharing of faith was at the heart of the vision for 2025. This could be supported in many ways and the Bishop asked members to go back to their parishes and deaneries to encourage them to take part. It was hoped those taking part would feel renewed.

The Bishop spoke of the theme of new Christians and that it was possible to be young in your faith at any time of life. It was a privilege to confirm people in their 70s and their 80s. A Missionary disciple. We're about to launch in this year of faith you'll see a flavour of this before Christmas.

A programme of profound accompaniment would be launched online whereby every candidate would be accompanied by a member of the congregation. Everyone was encouraged to enter a journey of faith, encountering what we believe about Jesus Christ, about prayer and the nature of the Church. This would be a way of enabling people in a wide range of circumstances to undertake an exciting exploration of Christian faith: youth groups, family groups, or if you cannot manage to join a group you can do the whole course with your person accompanying you on your mobile phone. The Bishop spoke of exciting ways to bring faith alive where perhaps it was once buried.

This was part of the vision to springboard faith in 2025 which will be the introduction for us for the next five years.

## **5. DIOCESAN STRATEGY UPDATE**

The Bishop introduced the Diocesan Secretary, John Preston (JP). JP spoke about the plan to encourage more people to know, love and follow Jesus. There were three key pillars to help guide that:

- Inspiring prayer and worship to draw in new people as well as inspiring those already in church communities
- Engage many more children and young people to be part of our church community
- Invest in excellent leaders both ordained and lay

It was essential to have a sustainable church to enable this to continue over time. The challenge was that it was a struggle to sustain the church financially on a year to year basis. It was difficult to find volunteers to enable giving to grow. The national church had responded by creating a national investment programme, underpinned by clear and thoughtful analysis. JP and the team would draw together the diocese's strategy into a robust proposal and plan to come to the next Synod.

The focus would be on the above three areas and also emphasise a number of other elements. Trends across deaneries would be compared and contrasted. Looking at the percentage of people that live in each deanery and the percentage attending our churches.

JP spoke of Apostolic Partnerships in the diocese over the last 10 years whereby churches had worked together with funding from the national church to support this. Church attendance had grown by 65% in these communities whereas elsewhere attendance had fallen.

Apostolic Partnerships would be part of the strategy going forwards. An important component was that there would be something to engage with for every parish. The funding would be spread amongst many

more parishes although there would not be enough for every parish. The aim was to support growth in numbers and especially in children and young people.

JP wanted as many people as possible to participate in the consultations that would take place early in the new year. This would help inform the strategy going forwards as well as learning from the SDF projects and other dioceses.

## **6. COMMITTEE ELECTIONS – VACANCIES**

The Bishop and JP gave huge thanks to those who served on the diocesan committees and those who had stood for election. JP reminded Synod members of the deadline for voting in the committee elections: 25 November 2024. JP outlined some of the remaining vacancies on committees and encouraged Synod members to think widely about suitable candidates. JP invited members to vote today and express an interest in the vacancies on committees.

## **7. MOTION TO GENERAL SYNOD TO CALL FOR A NEW FINANCIAL SETTLEMENT FOR THE CHURCH**

The Bishop introduced John Booth, Arundel and Bognor deanery (JB), and Gareth Mostyn of the Church Commissioners (GM). JB thanked JP for his covering paper and thanked GM for the support from the Church Commissioners to the diocese and the financial investment.

JB spoke to JP's paper and explained that in the late 1990's the Church Commissioners were no longer able to fund their clergy pension liabilities which were passed to dioceses, who in turn were forced to pass them onto parishes through increased parish share. Relieved of that commitment, since that time the Church Commissioners' assets had boomed whilst dioceses had come under considerable pressure. The proposal was to re-adjust the balance by returning £2.6 bn of the £9.9bn assets of the Commissioners to dioceses.

JB outlined the questions that would still need to be answered if this motion succeeds:

1. The need to talk about the diocese's strategy in terms of how to spend the money that would be released to invest in mission and growth.
2. There is no guarantee that a clear formula exists as to how to distribute it among dioceses
3. One of the great success stories is the Church Commissioners' investment strategies and the fruits borne which shows that larger sums were easier to invest successfully than lower amounts. JB suggested that the Church Commissioners' should continue to invest the money and distribute to dioceses when they had decided how best to invest it.
4. Much of the money given to dioceses was subject to bids. Ongoing monitoring can be complicated.
5. Subsidiarity is important: JB felt that decisions were best taken closest to where they will have most effect.
6. There are two national reviews, one looking for the right model for inter-diocesan funding and how best to arrange the church finances over the next three years.

GM explained that the Church Commissioners existed to support the church's mission. This was done by managing the CofE endowment fund to pay out the maximum sustainable distributions for the church's ministry. The Church Commissioners oversee a diversified portfolio, investing ethically in forests, land estates, and private equity, avoiding oil and gas since last year. With strong returns averaging 9% per annum, they distribute £400 million annually. Collaborating with the archbishops' council, they allocate funds to dioceses, net zero initiatives, cathedrals, and the national safeguarding team.

The Commissioners face the challenge of addressing diocesan financial pressures and simplifying the system. A diocesan finance review has been established to identify ways to support local churches. Transferring funds between pots did not increase funds but changed decision-making dynamics. Moving a quarter of the fund would mean that the income would reduce by a quarter (i.e. £100m a year). Managing smaller amounts separately was less efficient. GM pledged to relay any points to the board.

Susan Saunders of Hove Deanery asked if the funds which were not invested in fossil fuels while held by the Church Commissioners, could be invested in fossil fuels if transferred to Chichester diocese? JB felt it would be most efficient to allow Church Commissioners to carry on managing the funds and continue in their investments, rather than generating costs in liquidating and reinvesting by dioceses.

Ian McDowell, Rotherfield Deanery, understood that the proposal was to transfer £2.6bn to dioceses and that would reduce the amount of income the Church Commissioners would have to distribute by £100m a year. He understood the £2.6bn would be transferred as an endowment and not available for dioceses to spend. Ian McDowell suggested that if the available funds would have otherwise been £100m a year, why not change the way that the Church Commissioners distribute their funds so that more goes directly to dioceses?

JB explained the £2.6bn would be distributed roughly £60m per diocese. Around 4% of the capital sum would be distributed per year, which would release £2.4m per annum. This would be transformational. Church Commissioners would be asked to distribute notionally this money but it would not be received all at once.

Questions or comments were invited.

David Docherty, Worthing Deanery (DD) supported the proposal's principle, acknowledging the current financial model's increasing strain. His PCC had passed a deficit budget again, and the diocese faces similar challenges. DD doubted the sustainability of the current operations and believed the proposal's principles could lead to positive changes, especially in parish ministry. DD suggested the motion should be seriously considered.

JB agreed that the strategic challenges facing the diocese could not be denied. There was a need to reimagine how ministry works in the diocese. This motion would not fix existential challenges of the diocese. However, JB supported the motion because finances were less complicated the less centralised they were. JB emphasised the advantage of keeping things as simple as possible.

Anthony Ray, Storrington Deanery, (AR) summarised his take-out from this meeting that growth was not happening (as quantified in finances not souls), deficits were increasing, and cutting costs was a necessity, but the cavalry were coming so we can sit back and relax. AR felt this was not a solution that Jesus preached and we must understand we are soldiers of Christ.

James diCastiglione, Storrington Deanery, spoke of his struggle with the language of there being no prospects if we don't accept this settlement, that there will be no prospect of revitalising the parish system and suggested urgently giving priority to corporate prayer for growth in the diocese and the reversing of the statistics. He would love to hear us coming together to pray and ask God to turn this around for us.

JB thanked Anthony and James of reminding Synod what is important and agreed we must continue to pray for blessings upon our work and to spread the Good News. This item was about housekeeping in terms of how best to steward the funds. JB believed it was better for the proposed funds to be de-centralised as he felt the flame of faith in every community was more important. What was being proposed was taking some money from a pot which was large and flourishing which would still leave Church Commissioners in a very strong position.

John Booth moved *"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."*

The motion was carried by a vote (including those voting by Zoom):

97 for  
12 against  
9 abstentions

## **8. SEAL OF CONFESSION**

The Bishop spoke to his paper regarding a pilot scheme including training and registration in relation to the seal of confession. The Bishop discussed the practice of one-to-one confession and emphasised the importance of proper training for those being ordained. They must complete a study day covering the history and practice of confession, including role-playing to understand its seriousness and scope. The IICSA inquiry highlighted potential abuses of this ordinance, such as misuse of power and misrepresentation of the confessional seal. The Bishop stressed the need for safeguarding training and a simple penitence charter to protect penitents' rights.

The Bishop shared personal experiences, noting the value of confession in providing a safe space for genuine amendment of life and expressing penitence. The Bishop mentioned hearing confessions of serious sins, including sexual abuse, and emphasised the importance of professional training and clear explanations of the confessional seal. The Bishop hopes for a positive response and aims to see a more confident and professional approach to reconciliation in the next five years.

Questions or comments were invited.

Revd Tim Edge 22 of Brighton deanery (TE) spoke of taking confession as a parish minister and a prison chaplain. It was a wonderful powerful tool which can be abused. TE felt the registration of being a priest who can take confession was ordination and we should take all the training we can. TE warned that just because someone is on a list does not make them perfect and someone could seek to be on a list in order to get power.

Mark Heather 89 of Storrington Deanery (MH) commented on the availability of this sacramental grace through the sacrifice on the cross and the potential outpouring of grace and someone who has heard confession and been heard. MH noted that the pilot is focusing on priests who wish to hear confessions regularly. For those that fall outside that category, it would not stop a priest from hearing confession on someone's death bed. What happens if someone is desperate to offload and the priest had not done the training course and was not able to offer that ministry of grace?

The Bishop explained that the gift and capacity to release people from sins belongs to every priest and he did not wish to stop that. Rather, it behoves us to demonstrate, particularly to survivors, that we are capable of some level of regulation to ensure best practice. The Bishop explained he was not saying that if you have not signed up that you are a second rate priest or unworthy. The Bishop was simply asking for a list of those who would wish to be included. It was an invitation to learn how to do this well, but did not prevent those not signed up from taking confession. The Bishop hoped there would be a good response.

The Bishop spoke of the significant pressure to reflect nationally and respond to concerns.

**6. REPORT FROM GENERAL SYNOD**

Mr Martin Auton-Lloyd moved *"That this report be received"*.

The motion was carried on a show of hands.

**7. REPORT ON THE BISHOP'S COUNCIL**

Canon Mark Gilbert moved *"That this report be received"*.

The motion was carried on a show of hands.

**8. QUESTIONS UNDER SO69**

The Bishop confirmed there were no questions under Standing Order 69.

The Bishop thanked those that had completed the questionnaire 'We are the diocese of Chichester' outlining what it meant to people to be part of the pilgrimage of faith in this diocese and encouraged others to take part.

There was a moment's silence for the life and work of Revd Annette Hawkins who tragically died while receiving treatment in hospital. A remarkable person who bore ill health with considerable fortitude. The Bishop gave thanks for her life and prayed that she rests in peace.

The Bishop thanked staff volunteers and the team at St John's particularly Ray Hassell for the a/v.

The Bishop thanked Lesley Lynn for her many years of loyal service as chair of the Finance Committee and commended her keen knowledge, expertise and her very clear Christian faith that animated her chairmanship. The Bishop presented Lesley Lynn with gifts.

The Synod ended with a Blessing.

Number absent without apologies: 25