

**Agenda item 2**

**Minutes of a Session of the Bath and Wells Diocesan Synod, held at Canalside, Bridgwater,**

**on Saturday 19th March 2022 at 9:30 am**

The session opened with worship led by Martin Canning of the World Mission and Global Justice Governance Group.

1. **Presidential Address**

[presidential-address-diocesan-synod-march-2022\_1624668855.pdf (d3hgrlq6yacptf.cloudfront.net)](https://d3hgrlq6yacptf.cloudfront.net/60638a2c87045/content/pages/documents/presidential-address-diocesan-synod-march-2022_1624668855.pdf)

Bishop Ruth referred to recent world events and noted that there has been a cycle of power abuse across our world, across the centuries.

The conflicts we experience here in Bath and Wells may be very different from those where bombs explode and shots are exchanged. But they are there, in the unhealthy cultures we sometimes contribute to or refuse to challenge, or in the power we exert.

We would shortly hold a moment of reflection for the lives lost and the brokenness felt as a result of the pandemic. Throughout this time, hospitals, churches, schools, and communities had responded with compassion and care. The experiences of conflict or pandemic may be very different, depending on where we live in the world, yet as disciples we are all called to respond with the love and compassion of Christ. Welcoming others means going out into their territory, becoming the guest rather than the host, meeting them where they are.

Bishop Ruth thanked those who had signed up to extend a welcome to strangers, offering hospitality to Ukrainian women and children who need sanctuary.

This morning we were to engage in some difficult conversations, which required us to step into areas of challenge and difference. We know that there are a range of views held. How might we shape our discussion together? We are also taking stock of where we are as a diocese following the pandemic. We have severely reduced finances, this is unsustainable for the future, and is having a significant impact on how we shape our priorities. Our vision remains the same, to live and tell the story of Jesus in response to God’s great love for us. But we are having to make changes. We will have to stop things, to do what is most important.

Questions of money, identity, relationships and sex are topics we often prefer to avoid. And yet today we are called to address such. As we do so, let us hold in mind the conversation we are engaging in this Lent through the ‘Knowing You, Knowing Me, Knowing God’ resources, and how we are asked to explore the themes of welcome, hospitality, inclusion, and generosity.

It is Christ’s friendship with each of us which holds us together, not necessarily the friendship we have for one another. At times those human friendships are strained, but as we allow the Spirit of Jesus to shape us, then our confidence grows and we find ourselves able to develop friendships which are strong enough to engage with difference and disagreement**.**

**Dr Caroline Mason, Chair of the House of Laity, in the Chair**

1. **Minutes**

Synod resolved that the minutes of the sessions held on 30 October 2021 and 3 February 2022 be approved as a correct record.

1. **Matters arising from the minutes**

None.

1. **Bishop’s Council Minutes**

Synod resolved that the minutes of the meetings of Bishop’s Council held on 18 November 2021 and 15 February 2022, be noted.

1. **Questions**

Four questions had been received; three of the questions and replies are attached to these minutes as an appendix; one is covered in minute no. 8.

1. **World Mission and Global Justice Governance Group**

Synod welcomed Martin Canning, Chair of the World Mission and Global Justice Governance Group, who encouraged Synod to take a broad view of God’s church, including a wider engagement with Zambia through more parish and school links.

The activities of the Group included the Zambia link newsletter, Zambia Sunday, dissemination of information via Connect and B&W website, prayers for diocesan calendar, working with Church Mission / Development Partners based on a quarterly focus. The Group had oversight of all funds related to the Zambia link. The commitment to World Mission is exemplified by the Zambia link but not confined to it.

There was a need for new members of the Group with relevant experience (especially lay) to replace retirees.

The Revd Ann Gibbs reported on her recent visit to Zambia, on which she had seen a willingness to work together and to learn from each other, and incredible hospitality.

Synod received the report and affirmed the work of the World Mission and Global Justice Governance Group.

1. **Feedback on “Shaping Diocesan Synod”**

Peter Evans, Assistant Diocesan Secretary, reported that at the last Synod members had been invited to focus on three questions.

* What do you hope to contribute to Synod over the next 3 years?
* What do you hope to get out of Synod over the next 3 years?
* What should be the role of Synod in the challenges facing the church?

Amongst the answers received from Synod members were the following:

* To give parishes a voice and to hear the concerns of deaneries
* To use the different life experiences and skills of Synod members
* To ask questions; to ask the stupid questions
* To feed in from General Synod
* To represent the real mixture people from across the diocese
* To support each other in financial challenges and other issues
* Synod should bring hope, understanding and wisdom to support and challenge the Diocesan leadership
* The importance of communication-to help the diocese understand what parishes are doing and vice versa
* To help shape the future of our church
* A forum for active connectedness and real consultation before decisions are made- Synod should not be a rubber stamp.
* To improve understanding of the governance of the diocese and the Church of England and to make the governance structures work well

These points reflected an interest not only in shaping decisions but in how decisions are made. The Lay and Clergy Chairs, Caroline Mason and Jane Haslam had produced a draft guide to Synod. The Chairs emphasised to Synod their wish to be voices for their respective houses, and encouraged members to contact them on any matter.

In summary, Synod members wanted to hear, to speak, to serve, to connect, to shape, to understand.

The Synod Planning Group and the Bishop’s Council would be taking these views into account when shaping the business of Synod.

1. **Item submitted by Locking Deanery**

Locking Deanery had submitted the following item for discussion:

*'This Deanery would welcome a discussion at Diocesan Synod around use of the Common Cup and the use of individual cups where necessary.'*

The Revd Tom Yacomeni reflected that the pandemic had disrupted the Church of England’s normal practice of celebrating Holy Communion through the Common Cup.

Christ’s commandment was to receive in both kinds for the whole congregation. The 1662 Prayer Book takes into account that wine may be in more than one vessel. The number of cups used at Last Supper is debatable.

Reference was made to the Grove Booklet – “Drink this all of you,” which argues that the provision of individual cups enables the inclusion of every Christian in eating and drinking at Holy Communion.

There was a strong encouragement to press for change, because of the desire to be able to receive in both kinds. Was Locking Deanery’s frustration at the current arrangements shared across other deaneries?

A discussion paper produced for Locking Deanery by The Revd Andrew Hemming had been circulated to Synod.

The Revd Stephen Girling had submitted the following question:

*“In the light of the desire among many, to return to receiving communion in both kinds, is it permissible to use individual cups at Holy Communion? If this is permissible then please would the Bishop clarify which of the two following options for the distribution of the wine is permissible:*

*1 - Consecrating communion wine in a flagon, within the Eucharist, and then pouring it into individual cups for people to consume safely.*

*2 - Pouring communion wine into individual cups before the Eucharist and then consecrating these within the service before they are distributed.”*

In reply to the question Bishop Ruth referred to advice received from Dr Matthew Salisbury National Liturgy & Worship Adviser. The use of individual cups has been deemed unlawful. The House of Bishops had recently decided not to change legislation to make them indisputably lawful. We should be guided by the ideal of one bread and one cup in whatever is done locally. Government and Church of England guidance that the chalice should not be shared was withdrawn in July 2021, so there are two options for receiving communion: Common Cup, or intincted wafers.

Members were encouraged to reflect on these matters in groups.

**The Synod adjourned briefly.**

**The Revd Preb Jane Haslam, Chair of the House of Clergy, in the Chair.**

**9. Five Year Projection**

The DBF Chair, Ian Theodoreson, highlighted the importance of being good stewards of our money. Money is a measure of our activity and of where our heart is. The DBF is borrowing over £4m to meet cashflow-this is not good stewardship.

We were now facing tough decisions. Parishes are unlikely to be able to recover their historic ability to give; in future we should expect a lower level of parish share, despite encouraging early signs. Parishes provide 75% of DBF income. We had reduced the cost of support functions at Flourish House, and there was more to do.

Other dioceses had taken steps to reduce their stipendiary clergy, but we had maintained 2010 levels. That historic position was no longer sustainable. A reduction in stipendiary clergy to 150 posts was now proposed.

We wanted to help parishes build in sustainability to their finances through the Parish Giving scheme, which would help establish stable income streams. Pilots with other digital platforms had been successful.

During the re-shaping process we had sought to achieve savings in support services of £250k.

The Revd Charlie Peer, Head of Mission Support and Ministry Development, emphasised the role of our re-shaped Support Services in supporting work “on the ground”:

* Mission Support and Ministry Development: Deanery and Parish Support, Mission Development and Ministry Training.
* Education and Faith Development: Education and Everyday Faith.
* Central Services including Secretariat, Safeguarding, Finance, Communications and Property.

All these services are there for the benefit of parishes, schools and churches.

Bishop Ruth emphasised that our ambition was still as strong as ever. A day of prayer for our mission and our finances had been suggested. An announcement would soon be made about the arrival of a new Diocesan Bishop.

Matthew Pinnock, Head of Finance and Operations, emphasised that we needed to generate income to cover our costs, and needed to plan for the number of stipendiary posts and the number of staff we could afford. There was also a need to address a structural deficit within the finances. The 5 year projection included the following assumptions:

• Common fund recovery.

• Stipendiary clergy: a gradual reduction over 5 years from 178 stipendiary posts at present to 150, with an assumed vacancy rate of 12%.

• Housing: a reduction in housing stock from 251 to 220 in line with the reduction in clergy numbers; active renting out of vacant properties to generate additional income.

• Stipendiary curates: a reduction from 9 to 7 and a reduction in amount provided for training costs.

• Diocesan support office costs: these had been reduced by 12% in 2022, with further incremental reductions expected.

Following discussion in groups a number of issues were raised, including the following:

To what extent can savings be made by sharing services with other Dioceses? In response it was noted that discussions with Salisbury Diocese were continuing eg HR support was already shared.

What impact can we have on Secondary Education? There are 9 secondary schools and the MAT connection is enabling us to work with secondary schools.

Can the Diocese do more to support parishes that are entrepreneurial in their mission? Yes

Can guidance and regulations be reduced? Much of these were determined at national level and would need to be addressed through General Synod.

Our Net Zero target is ambitious-are we putting significant resources into achieving it? Noted that the relevant DBF post was under review. There were a lot of issues about what needed to be done to get buildings compliant.

How do we detach conversations about money from conversations about ministry? We couldn’t pretend that these are not linked, but we were striving to de-couple.

The need for us to be faithful in tithing, as exhorted in the book of Malachi. It starts with personal ownership.

At what point do we have the conversation about whether a centuries old system is the problem?

Where is the commitment to the World Mission and Global Justice Governance Group? The role of the Zambia Link Coordinator was under review. There was not always a direct link between paid employment and the importance of an area of ministry.

Synod resolved:

(1) That the direction of travel set out in the 5-year projection be endorsed.

(2) That it be noted that the projection will be kept under 6 monthly review.

**Synod adjourned for lunch.**

**10. Report from General Synod, February 2022**

Synod received a report from Matt Orr, which highlighted the challenge for the church to do better with racial diversity and the need for the church to challenge slavery and human trafficking. General Synod had noted the work done by this diocese on “Everyday Faith”.

[20 minute video on YouTube from Matt](https://youtu.be/T7y0p0ZY3x8)

[Jo Stobart’s blog post](https://likethelorries.wordpress.com/2021/11/19/general-synod-november-2021/).

**11. Status of the Living in Love and Faith process**

The Revd Mike Haslam mentioned thatthe LLF process set out to inspire people to think more deeply about what it means to be human and to live in love and faith. Following publication of resources a number of events had been held, including a Taster Day, and parishes, deaneries and other groups had run the LLF course with help from trained LLF facilitators.

Individual feedback questionnaires were to be submitted by the end of April 2022. The purpose of the questionnaire was to enable the Church of England to listen to the learning, reflections, and experiences of engaging with the LLF process and resources.

Members were encouraged to reflect on the process in groups, following which a number of comments were received:

* It was difficult for some parishes to have these conversations if their parish priest did not engage. It was noted that Deanery courses were also available, and details of courses could be obtained from Allie White at Flourish House.
* It was important to encourage people to respond to the questionnaire via the LLF website.
* The Bishops would be considering these issues at 3 residential courses.

Following a discussion, Synod:

* Took note of the progress of the LLF process in the Diocese of Bath & Wells.
* Encouraged parishes, benefices, deaneries and individuals to engage with the LLF Course and provide feedback via the national questionnaire.
* Encouraged deaneries to provide opportunities for and publicise LLF Courses for those unable to engage at parish level.
* Affirmed the role of Chaplaincy and chaplains within the LLF process.

**12. Constitution of the Diocesan Board of Education(DBE)**

A draft Scheme, which provided for the Diocesan Board of Education to be reconstituted as a statutory committee of the Diocesan Board of Finance, in accordance with the 2021 Diocesan Board of Education Measure, had been circulated. The Scheme was due to take effect from 1st January 2023.

During questions it was noted that Bath and Wells MAT was a separate entity with whom the DBE had a special relationship. The need to clarify arrangements for DBF oversight of the DBE was also noted.

Synod approved the proposal that the Diocesan Board of Education be reconstituted as a statutory committee of the Diocesan Board of Finance, and adopted the draft Scheme, subject to approval by the Archbishops’ Council.

**13. Date of next meeting**

13th July 2022 at 6.30pm (venue to be confirmed).

**The session ended at 2.50pm**

**Appendix-questions and replies**

**(1) From: The Revd Julia Hicks (Somerset South Deanery)**

*“What is Bath and Wells current schedule for disinvesting from fossil fuel extraction and distribution? Some Dioceses, including Truro and Bristol, have already made this commitment.”*

**Reply from Ian Theodoreson, DBF Chair**

*“The diocese invests in line with guidance laid down by the Church of England's Ethical Investment Advisory Group. At present the EIAG guidance does not rule out investment in companies involved in fossil fuel extraction, other than extraction from tar sands and from fracking, preferring instead to engage with companies as they move to develop more sustainable energy production.*

*Having said that, at the end of December the diocese held no shares in oil and gas companies in either of its investment portfolios but this was an investment decision by our managers rather than a specific instruction not to invest.”*

As a supplementary question, The Revd Rob Eastwood Dewing asked that if energy based on fossil fuel extraction was not sustainable, should we not take a decision on ethical grounds?

In response the DBF Chair noted that the Diocese is following the Church of England approach. The experience of EIAG is second to none.

**(2) Question from Exmoor Deanery Synod submitted by Reverend Simon Robinson, Vicar of Minehead, General Synod member.**

*“At the special meeting of the Diocesan synod held on Thursday 3rd of February synod was informed of the proposed reduction in stipendiary clergy posts from 178 to 150 over a period of 5 years with an assumed vacancy rate of 12%.*

*What will be the proposed system for making the decisions as to which posts these are?*

The Archdeacon of Bath referred to the current formula for allocation of posts, based on number of worshippers, population, number of churches. This would be revised to take account of Magnificat Parishes and reported to Bishop’s Council for approval. Deaneries would then be allocated a number of clergy posts, and DMPG’s would be asked to make proposals. It was hoped that most reductions could be achieved by planned pastoral reorganisation. It would not simply be based on the next post that became vacant-we wanted to be more strategic. The proposal was to make savings over 5 years, some of that needed to be achieved in the first 2-3 years due to the serious financial position.

In response to a supplementary question the Archdeacon confirmed that Area Deans and Lay Deans would be supported through the process of change management.

In response to a further supplementary question as to whether the process could be underpinned with a clear theological statement so that decisions were not made only on financial grounds, the Archdeacon was sure that this could be done.

In response to a further supplementary question as to whether an interim minister could be appointed during a vacancy, the Archdeacon agreed that interim ministry could be appropriate to allow space for pastoral reorganisation, but it had to be used with a specific purpose.

In response to concerns that long vacancies can be damaging it was said that if the post was of incumbent level it would not inevitably be stalled, but would need to be considered imaginatively. We had pressed “pause” on Assistant or House for Duty posts for the time being.

Deaneries could potentially be given a “posts” budget rather than a clergy budget, but this would need thinking through.

**(3) Question from Reverend Simon Robinson, Vicar of Minehead, General Synod member.**

*“The agenda for General Synod is set by the Business Committee of General Synod. The Standing Orders for Diocesan Synod state that the Agenda for Diocesan Synod is set by the Bishop’s Council SO 62. SO 65 states that the Bishop’s Council and committees of Diocesan Synod are accountable to the Diocesan Synod. The committee which is being held accountable by Diocesan Synod therefore sets the business agenda for Diocesan synod. Synod may be content with this arrangement.*

*However, is there the potential for conflict of interest and confused lines of accountability in this arrangement?”*

Response from Peter Evans, Assistant Diocesan Secretary

*“Thank you for your question, Simon.*

*In practice the agenda for Diocesan Synod is shaped by partly by Bishop’s Council and partly by the Synod Planning Group. A rolling programme of possible Synod items is reviewed by Bishop’s Council, but the detailed work of shaping the agenda is carried out within the Synod Planning Group.*

*That Group comprises the Bishops, the clergy and lay Chairs, who of course represent Synod, the DBF Chair, the Diocesan Secretary and a number of officers.*

*The Synod Planning Group do their best to ensure that the agenda is balanced between the inevitable business items, some items which are more missional, as well as other matters which are referred from the national church.*

*It is of course open to deaneries to submit items for Synod through motions, and for members to submit questions.*

*I would say that today’s agenda reflects that blend of interests.*

*As you say, Simon, Bishop’s Council is accountable to Synod, and the process for doing this is through the minutes of Board meetings, which are reported to Synod and on which Synod members are able to ask questions.*

*I do see the issue which you have raised about possible conflict of interest, but in practice I am not aware of any examples of this happening. The fact that the Bishop’s Council are able to influence the Synod agenda does not in my view prescribe the statutory role of Synod, for example, “to express their opinion on any matter referred to them by the General Synod”, and “to advise the Bishop on any matters on which he may consult the Synod”.*