

**Acts of Synod held on Saturday, 23 September 2023  
at 9.30am at Christ the King, Beaumont Leys**

<u>Present:</u>	House of Bishops	2
	House of Clergy	31
	House of Laity	21
<u>Apologies:</u>		42
<u>In attendance:</u>	Officers and Speakers	10

Chair: Stephen Adshead, Chair of the House of Laity, was in the chair for items 1-4 and Wendy Dalrymple, Chair of the House of Clergy, was in the chair for items 5-9.

### **1. Opening Worship**

The Synod opened with worship led by Wendy Dalrymple, who was attending her final meeting as Chair of the House of Clergy after nearly 3 years in this role. The worship reflected the season of Creation and included a reading from Amos. An impromptu choir assisted Wendy in leading Synod in a song of worship.

### **2. Presidential Address**

Bishop Martyn reflected on his sabbatical, noting that alongside travel he had been busy writing a book on intercultural ministry. On his return from sabbatical he was pleased to confirm that the diocesan vision – the Kingdom of God – has not changed. He noted, in the context of the budget deficit, that Jesus didn't have money, neither did he have a place to lay his head, but nonetheless his ministry is the model for us. Alongside vision, the 3 Key Questions also remain in place. Barry Hill has now been appointed as Strategy Development Enabler to help us think about how to deliver the diocesan strategy.

Bishop Martyn continued that Minster Communities will be central to this strategy. Further work would be needed on the Reconciling Communities and Eco-Communities strategic priorities, which were less fully worked out and resourced than other strategic priorities. He was clear that this is not about internal restructuring but how we serve our communities and care for everyone in our parishes. Not everyone is happy about what is proposed and being implemented, but our vision remains unchanged. How we deliver that is what we are still learning.

### **3. Modern Slavery Statement**

Synod then heard a presentation from Florence Gildea, Bishop's Social Policy Adviser, on the Modern Slavery Statement which had been adopted by the Diocesan Board of Finance. She highlighted key areas of the statement to the Synod and also gave information about how Synod members might recognize different forms of

modern slavery, noting that Leicestershire Police had made 125 arrests in relation to such crimes in the previous year. Jonathan Kerry added that modern slavery is happening around us and affects people in our churches and their families.

Comments on the floor focused on support for asylum seekers, who are easy targets for those engaged in things such as County Lines drug networks, and the work done by the Mothers Union on highlighting the evils of modern slavery and the need to take action. Synod noted the Modern Slavery Statement.

#### **4. St Philip's Centre: interfaith engagement**

Tom Wilson then spoke about the work of the St Philip's Centre, which exists to promote interfaith engagement. He explained how the Centre can arrange visits to churches to help people to understand how to live well together across differences of faith and culture. Such work usually involves bringing in faith practitioners and therefore he had brought two such people to address the Synod. Shirin Mansur spoke about her experience of working at St Philip's Church, where she is Business Office Manager, as a Muslim woman. She spoke about her experience of interacting with a wide range of people who use the facilities at the church and about how they react to her. Pradip Gajjar then spoke from his experience as President of the ISKCON Hindu Temple in Leicester. He said that he had first received a copy of the Bible as an 11 year old and that he had been nourished by Christian thought and faith, including through meeting Tom Wilson to study their scriptures together. He reflected on the helpful role that Bishop Martyn had played when there had been conflict between communities in Leicester in 2022. He added that Bishop Martyn's response to a question 'Will God forgive my sin?' on a school visit had become a proverb within that school: God will forgive but will you be willing to live a life as a blessing after he has forgiven you? Contributions from the floor included reflection on the importance of engagement with schools, which the St Philip's Centre offers, and the vital role that food plays when people engage across cultures.

#### **5. Draft Diocesan Budget 2024**

After a short break the Synod turned its attention to the draft diocesan budget for 2024. David Palmer, the DBF Chair, said that the DBF trustees were not pleased to present a budget with a projected deficit of £2m, but that this is the reality of the Diocese's current position. The increase in Parish Contributions received in 2023 to date was good news, but it continues to be the case that the diocese will run out of reserves in 4-5 years if the books cannot be balanced. Simon Wilson, the Finance Director, then highlighted how Parish Contributions had lagged behind inflation even prior to the pandemic. Synod members then engaged in small group discussions. Comments and reflections emerging from those discussions highlighted that it is hard to know what expenditure can be cut; that some people in parishes don't know what central staff do; that asking PCCs to pay faculty fees could reduce compliance with the faculty regime for church buildings and that clergy stipends have also not kept pace with inflation. There was a request for more information about expenditure on chaplaincies and also a suggestion that clergy should be given a housing allowance

rather than a house. David Palmer thanked the Synod for engaging with the issue and highlighted the need for a significant increase in Parish Contributions. The budget would be brought back for approval to the November meeting.

## **6. Encouraging Generous Giving**

Simon Wilson then teamed up with Phil Leech, Senior Generous Giving Adviser, to present an item on encouraging generous giving. They began with a light-hearted role play conversation that explored attitudes to Parish Contributions. Synod members were then invited to discuss the issues raised in small groups. Reflections from these discussions included concern that parishes who increase giving now might be asked for a further increase in future years; the need to increase commitment to generosity and to increase imagination; and different perspectives on the question of 'who owns the church'.

## **7. Appointment of Chair of Nominations and Remuneration Committee**

Synod then approved the appointment of Madeleine Wang as Chair of the Nominations and Remuneration Committee (part of the new governance structure).

## **8. General Synod report**

The General Synod report which was presented by Roy Faulkner. He highlighted the difficult discussion at the July General Synod meeting over the termination of the Independent Safeguarding Board and also expressed concern over the allocation of £190m by the national church for the implantation of Carbon Net Zero plans, which he felt could have been better spent on stipends. Following a brief discussion, Synod voted on whether to note the report with the decision being not to note the report.

## **9. Other Business**

In final business, Amending Canon no 42 was promulgated and Bishop Martyn thanked Wendy Dalrymple for her contribution as Chair of the House of Clergy, before closing in prayer.