

Diocese of Leicester

Acts of Synod held on Saturday, 4 December 2021
at 9.30am on Zoom

<u>Present:</u>	House of Bishops	1
	House of Clergy	43
	House of Laity	44

Apologies:

<u>In attendance:</u>	Ecumenical Observer	1
	Officers and Speakers	13

Chair: Stephen Adshead, Chair of the House of Laity, chaired the first half of the meeting, with Wendy Dalrymple, Chair of the House of Clergy, taking over from the Written Questions item to the end.

The Synod began with worship led by the Community of Tree of Life which skilfully wove together themes of creation, renewal, tension and transformation.

Presidential Address

This was followed by the Presidential Address in which Bishop Martyn reflected on news of recent appointments which saw Lusa Nsenga-Ngoy and Alison Booker leaving the Diocese to take up the roles of Bishop of Willesden and Archdeacon of Oakham respectively, and Saju Varghese Muthalaly joining as Bishop of Loughborough.

Bishop Martyn then expressed his appreciation for the spirit of the debate of the Minster Communities framework at the previous Synod meeting and his hope that this spirit of generosity and listening would be present in discussions about Living in Love and Faith which would be held in 2022. He also welcomed the presentation of the Environment Policy to Synod and expressed his gratitude to those who had worked on it, stressing that the most important thing is how it will be implemented. Noting that this was one of a number of challenges facing the Church, Bishop Martyn said that Advent is nonetheless a time in which Christians look forward with hope to celebrating the incarnation.

Environment Policy

Following the Presidential Address, Andrew Quigley, the Diocese's Environment Officer, presented the Environment Policy for approval by the Synod. He explained that this was the result of more than a decade of work, but was also something that was needed in order for the Diocese to achieve its agreed aim of obtaining Eco-Diocese status. Anne Scott, a member of the Environment Group, said that she felt that environmental issues gave an opportunity for witness. Liz Wilson, Vicar of St Anne's in Leicester, talked about her PCC obtaining Eco-Church status in spite of the restrictions in place during the pandemic.

Comments and questions from the floor were received from 10 Synod members and focused on issues such as the importance of partnerships, eg with schools, the need to reduce superfluous travel, and how to encourage church members to take action in their own lives. In response to concerns about moves towards a deindustrialized society, Andrew Quigley

gave assurance that the issue was about sources of energy, not the use of energy itself. Following the debate the Environment Policy was adopted with 77 votes for, 2 against and 3 abstentions.

Governance Review

Jonathan Kerry then briefed the Synod on the Governance Review, explaining that the review had been undertaken for two reasons

- The discovery earlier in 2021 of a larger than anticipated deficit; and
- The recognition that it is good practice to review arrangements periodically.

The review had identified a number of strengths, but also some significant weaknesses that would need to be addressed. As advised by those who had undertaken the review, time would be taken to reflect and it was likely to take around 12-18 months to bring back proposals for change to Synod. In the meantime some change was already being noticed around culture. Comments from Synod members included;

- The need to highlight Synod's role in offering challenge to proposals; and
- That members of governance bodies should have a God-focused mindset alongside other skills.

Quinquennial Inspection Scheme

The Synod approved an updated scheme for 5 yearly inspections of church buildings.

Written Questions

Responses to written questions had been circulated in advance of the meeting.

In responding to questions from David Monteith and Jon Walker, Bishop Martyn stressed that his own view of marriage does not prevent him from wanting LGBT+ people to have an honoured place in the Diocese and that he is keen to ensure that LGBT+ people who feel they are being treated differently in their local context should have an appropriate route for reporting such concerns. He went on to say that the exploration of radical inclusion needs to be undertaken in dialogue and that he is engaging with Living in Love and Faith with an open mind. Responding to Ann Reddecliffe, Andy Brockbank said that the membership and terms of reference of the Living Well Together Group will be published once the group is re-established in January.

Roy Faulkner submitted a question about Shaped By God Together supported by a graph which he said showed correlation between reducing clergy numbers and lower church attendance. Expressing concern about further possible reductions, he asked whether the Operations Director posts envisaged as part of Minster Communities could be given clergy titles instead, such as Vicar. Bishop Martyn replied that there is not a straightforward correlation between clergy numbers and church attendance and added that the growing administrative burden on clergy had been in factor in drawing up the Minster Community framework.

Shaped By God Together

Claire Bampton gave a brief SBGT update following which two points of clarification emerged as a result of questions from the floor:

- Whilst SBGT is envisaged as a process of change involving dialogue at local level, it is acknowledged that influence from the centre may be perceived locally as change being forced, although this is not the intended outcome.
- Where vacancies are now being filled this is on the understanding that parishes commit to being involved in conversations about Minster Communities.

Diocesan Budget 2022 and Appointment of DBF Chair and Vice-Chair

Prior to discussion of the 2022 budget, the Synod approved the reappointment of David Palmer as Chair of the DBF and appointment of Chris Sheldon as Vice-Chair. David Palmer then presented the budget with the good news that a national church Covid-related grant of £700k meant that the deficit for 2021 would be much lower than anticipated. There is, however, a structural deficit of around £2m which needs to be reduced over 5 years.

Questions and comments from Synod members focused on the need to engage with children and young people, how to address the deficit, and expectations around Parish Contributions. David Palmer noted that 68% of the budget is related to staff and clergy costs and therefore this is the area where most savings will have to come from. However, Parish Contributions are at least holding steady according to offers received for 2022 and annual returns show that parish reserves have increased by £2m during 2019-20. Stuart Burns reported that Matt Long had been appointed to the new Youth Engagement and Intergenerational Communities role and that this role would focus on developing people to provide support to Youth and Children's Workers. Following debate the Synod approved the budget with 69 votes for, 5 against and 5 abstentions.

DBE Measure

The Synod approved a revised document setting up the Diocesan Board of Education as required by church legislation.

General Synod report

Shayne Ardron updated the Synod on the proceedings of General Synod at its meeting in November.

Bishop Martyn then closed the Synod with prayer.