

Passing on the Faith Diocesan Synod Summary – 22 November 2025

Diocesan Synod met on Saturday 22 November to pray, plan and listen together, looking back with gratitude as the Diocese approaches its centenary, and looking forward with conviction that God is already at work among children, young people and new communities.

The Synod began with worship led by Laura Marsh and Crystal McAllister which brought some of the experience of Forest Church to life for Synod members.

Presidential Address and Diocesan Investment Programme

Bishop Martyn's presidential address wove together history, hope and hard choices. As Leicester marks 99 years since the diocese was formed, he invited Synod to think not about one big centenary celebration, but about what will sustain the Church for the next 100 years.

In a context where national churchgoing among under-18s is perilously low, roughly one child per parish on average in our diocese, he pointed to the missional opportunity in our 97 church schools educating 23,000 pupils and asked how we pass on the faith to the next generation. Resourcing intergenerational ministry remains central, but recent national funding shifts have changed perspectives on how to do this. The trustees have decided that we will not proceed with a Diocesan Investment Programme (DIP) bid to the national church and will instead look to deploy income from an anticipated glebe land sale to underwrite focused intergenerational ministry. Bishop Martyn reflected that money matters, but it does not determine our future; faithfulness does.

In a time of discussion and questions the Synod explored the implications of pausing the national bid and the prospects for intergenerational posts within Minster Communities, with the following key points arising:

- Additional Lowest Income Communities (LInC) funding will be available to the diocese, and a working group is aligning spend with places of greatest impact.
- There is awareness of the impact on local communities of large new developments. Due diligence is exercised by the diocese through the Assets and Liabilities Committee. Sale of Glebe land for development transforms low-return agricultural land into resources that can be invested for sustainable ministry.
- More conversation is needed about what discipleship looks like in a school context. Intergenerational Hubs are intended to build the links so that we can properly engage with the children and young people in our schools.

Diocesan Budget 2026

DBF Chair David Palmer presented the final version of the budget for 2026, which now shows an overall deficit of £1.155m, an improvement on the current year but also a reminder that underlying pressures remain, given that there is £400k of additional national transitional funding available in 2026. Two Synod members spoke on behalf of the Church of England Employee and Clergy Advocates (CEECA-Unite) requesting a higher increase in stipends and salaries than proposed in the budget. It was noted that Parish Contributions are key to the diocese's income.

Following the discussions, Synod approved the budget by an overwhelming majority with 7 against and 3 abstentions.

Governance Update and Written Questions

Madeleine Wang, Chair of the Nominations and Remuneration, provided an update on progress with populating the new governance structure, highlighting vacancies and skills gaps, as well as thanking Synod members who have completed the skills audit. Synod approved the scheme for lay representation on Deanery Synods, with numbers of Deanery reps to be communicated to parishes before the end of 2025 for the 2026 election cycle. There was also time for consideration of written and follow up questions relating to diocesan staffing, outcomes from the diocesan strategy, and the possibility of a future Synod discussion of a General Synod motion about the redistribution of funds. Bishop Martyn confirmed his support for a future Diocesan Synod discussion about this but noted that the national conversation may have moved on by then.

New Worshipping Communities

The second half of Synod turned from structures to stories with a vibrant session led by Bishop Saju and four people involved in developing new worshipping communities.

- Laura Marsh from the Windmill Community in Framland Deanery talked about developing a Forest Church and how this had been done by noticing a gap, building on opportunities arising from difficult circumstances such as the pandemic, and by working hard at partnerships.
- Crystal McAllister spoke about her experience of more than two decades in the diocese in different roles and how she is seeing people build community and pass on the faith in her new role as Oversight Minister for the Launde Minster Community.
- Michael Broadley shared the work that has been going on in different planting activities undertaken by the Emmanuel/Good Shepherd Resourcing Church partnership, highlighting the different models used which can be described as Worship First, Relationship First and Serve First.

- Sneha Ninan presented the work that she is doing in planting a new worshipping community on the Broadnook development near Rothley, noting that this is relational planting, not a resourcing-church model, but using what we have faithfully.

In a time of discussion following conversations in small groups it was noted that good parish ministry implicitly involves outreach and may lead to new communities being formed organically without always being recognized as such.

Following this inspiring presentation and discussion, Bishop Saju closed the Synod in prayer.