

## NORWICH DIOCESAN SYNOD

### Minutes of a meeting held via Zoom Saturday 26 March 2022

#### **Attendees:**

House of Bishops – 3 representatives

House of Clergy – 42 representatives

House of Laity – 39 representatives

Please note that not everyone attended the whole meeting, and this is reflected in the voting.

#### **Apologies:**

Apologies were received from 19 members of Diocesan Synod.

**The Chair was taken by Revd Dr Patrick Richmond (Chair of the House of Clergy) for the first session.**

#### **Opening Prayers**

Opening Prayers were led by Revd Canon Sally Theakston.

#### **Presidential Address**

The Bishop of Norwich addressed Synod with reflections on **Hope in God at Time of War**.

*“I want to offer in this Presidential Address some brief reflections about the horrifying war unleashed in Ukraine, something about how it has been shaped within a Christian context, and how we might hold out a vision for hope in the midst of enormous suffering.*

*The first thing to say is that this war has come about within the geopolitical context of an exclusive Russian nationalism which is not unlike other nationalism that we have seen, such as the early twentieth century nationalism of Nazi Germany. Today, we have a mix of Christian orthodoxy and national superiority that is pitching an authoritative state versus what are perceived and portrayed as decadent pluralistic democracies. This is why the culture wars are being invoked so readily, with the Russian finger pointing at moral decadence, and where, of course, women, gay people, marginal communities become both the scapegoat and the target. The war in Ukraine is the sad result of a clash of world views.*

*For Russian orthodoxy, Kiev is geographically and spiritually important because it was the place of the conversion of Vladimir The Great in around the year 988. The imperial politics of Putin's presidency has long had its eye on this place, the cradle of faith and nation, to the point that it needs to be claimed as sovereign territory. We see that, of course, in examples elsewhere in the world, where religious sacred spaces are fought over, and where religion can become complicit in the violence of the state.*

*But there is also an inter-orthodox conflict being played out here. Orthodoxy is divided. The Russian Orthodox, under Patriarch Kirill, recognise the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. However, following the annexing of Crimea, the Ecumenical Patriarch granted in 2018 autocephalous standing to another orthodox church, the Orthodox Church of Ukraine. This created a new schism between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Ecumenical Patriarchate and its autocephalous churches. So, this is also a struggle about the primacy within orthodoxy, with Russia wanting to replace Constantinople.*

*So, as in so many places of conflict, there is much driving this war. This does not excuse what we are seeing daily on our screens, but it might help us to understand what is going on. As the Archbishops of Canterbury and York have said, the "horrific and unprovoked attack on Ukraine is an act of great evil."*

*So how do we respond?*

*I want to begin by repeating three words of scripture which are well known. 'God is love'. God does not chose to, or not to, love. God is love. If we believe that, then every individual, every oppressed and suffering person, every refugee, and every single person who has done, and is doing, wrong, is the object of God's love. Thus, Jesus' command to us to love our enemies, because they too are made in the image of God, is both a deeply rooted hallmark of the Christian life and one of the hardest of things to do.*

*John's gospel records John the Baptist pointing to the 'Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world'. We pray those words at every Eucharist in the words of the Agnus Dei. It does not say 'some of the sins' or 'from some of the people'. Every person is included. God in Jesus seeks to free us from the grip of evil in our lives, as well as from the suffering that evil inflicts. We need to see, however hard and warped, the humanity in the persecutor, and however damaged and broken, the humanity in the oppressed. Thus, the resistance of evil is an expression of love for the victims, but also seeks to transform the aggressor.*

*In every Eucharist we also say the words of the sursum corda, 'Lift up your hearts'. We response, 'we lift them to the Lord'. Today we lift to the Lord those on our hearts - those suffering through war, dislocation, death and destruction; those who will be cold as fuel prices suffer, and those*

*who will starve as the cost of wheat soars; and those who bravely cry out in Russia, 'enough, enough, no more war'.*

*So how might we do this? Well, I think we do this prayerfully, pastorally and prophetically.*

*First, we keep seeking truth as to what is happening, including the truth which is against those we see on 'our side', and draw this truth into our prayers, praying for those suffering, bereaved, injured or seeking refuge, but not forgetting to pray for the transformation of the oppressor, many of whom are caught up in a system not of their making. And knowing that whatever we bring to God in prayer – even in words of anger, disappointment and lament – is heard.*

*Secondly, by sharing what we have with refugees, through funds like the Disaster Emergency Fund, or the fund run by the mission society USPG which is supporting Anglican chaplaincies in Europe helping refugees, or my own refugee fund. And supporting those in our communities offering a home, because theirs is a long-haul task of generous hospitality, whilst also still seeing those refugees from other conflict zones for whom we did not offer rooms in our homes (which is interesting in itself) but are in need of support. Seeking their wellbeing, just as we will talk later about clergy wellbeing.*

*And thirdly, to fostering conversations across divides - seeing, hearing, touching - so as to keep recognising our common humanity, especially where culture wars are played out. Later today I will be attending the liturgy of the Russian Orthodox Church here in Norwich and speaking to Russians, just as I have spoken to Ukrainians living in the diocese in recent weeks. How we agree and disagree can be a prophetic witness to the world. Interestingly this is what the Living in Love and Faith work, which we will discuss later, has tried to do.*

*In so doing, the light of justice and truth can be shone in these difficult days for the world, which are terrible days for the people of Ukraine. Here in this Synod we will be reflecting upon how we seek to be transformed by Christ – prayerful, pastoral, prophetic – as we place our trust in the God who is making a new thing in the world. However hard, that is what gives me hope in the face of overwhelming evil. Pray sisters and brothers, that this evil, this too shall pass as we learn more what it is to know that 'God is love'.*

## **1. THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 6 November 2021**

**Steven Sivyer (Great Yarmouth)** requested the amendments; (page 4) changing wording to “in addition to names”, not rather than names and (page 7) the spelling error of his first name.

**Revd Chris Hutton (Redenhall)** requested the amendment; (page 2) Paul Dunning, Director of Education, introduced the paper circulated prior to the meeting, Chris Allen, RE Advisor

for the diocese and Revd Chris Hutton and Revd Andrew Whitehead also spoke to the paper.

## 2. ANY MATTERS ARISING

**The Chair** confirmed an amendment to the minutes of Diocesan Synod June 2021.

**David Griffith (Thetford)** had requested deletion of the statement 'To say that the Church of England is institutionally racist is, in itself, racist but some aspects of the Church fail. Why?' The recording of the meeting has been reviewed.

The statement was not a highlight of the presentation by Revd Sonia Barron as stated in the minutes and is to be deleted from the records of the meeting.

**Steven Sivyer (Great Yarmouth)** referred to the motion for the divestment of NDBF investments from oil and gas, asked if the deadline for divestment from oil and gas direct holdings was achieved by the deadline of 31 December 2021 and invited Susan Bunting to respond.

**Susan Bunting (Director of Finance)** confirmed that this had happened prior to the deadline.

## 3. GENERAL SYNOD UPDATE

The Chair invited Revd Canon Catherine Dobson and Caroline Herbert, members of General Synod to address the meeting.

**Revd Canon Catherine Dobson** spoke of the reasons for standing for election to General Synod, to understand and be part of how decisions are made at a national level which affect the diocese. Explaining how and when General Synod meets, the induction process for new members and the format that the meetings follow.

Highlighting that in the Presidential Address, Archbishop Justin Welby spoke of the need to listen to God and each other to ensure we cast our nets to the right side of the boat, and the changes in society around us. That we are to be a church walks backwards into the future, not losing sight of the past wisdom and inheritance. He urged synod to adopt three reconciling habits - be present to one another, to be curious and to reimagine as we aim to model living together with difference, how we agree and disagree well. Archbishop Stephen Cottrell spoke about the vision for the Church of England to be Jesus Shaped; Simpler, Humbler and Bolder.

Catherine concluded by asking for prayer for General Synod, for wisdom, for the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Advising that agendas and papers for General Synod can be found on the Church of England website and that live streaming of meetings is also available for viewing.

**Caroline Herbert** shared the main business items from the last meeting of General Synod in February which included Living in Love and Faith, Racial Justice following on from the Lament to Action Report, which recommended to increase diversity in all Synods, and the Difference Course which challenges people to foster conversations across divides.

The Vision of the Church of England is to become a Church of Missionary Disciples, with mixed ecology (different ways to express Christian faith) the norm and being a church that is younger and more diverse.

Caroline highlighted the role of Synod to be part of the debate on current issues such as Net Zero Carbon, Modern Slavery and human trafficking and responding to motions that have been moved by Diocesan Synods. Caroline concluded by asking for thoughts of how people live out their faith.

**John Brydon (General Synod)** affirmed the content of the reports and the topics discussed at General Synod and voiced concern that other matters pertaining to the finances of the Church of England had yet to be discussed at General Synod and will look to the time when he will address Synod with this matter.

**Harry Verney (Heacham and Rising)** informed Synod of the benefit of air-source heating and to the environment and gave explanation and recommendation for the use of this form of heating church use when replacing boiler systems.

#### **4. VACANCY IN SEE – AN INSTRUMENT OF SYNOD**

**Stuart Jones (Diocesan Registrar)** informed Synod of the need to maintain a Vacancy in See Committee, which is established under the regulations of 1993, which is periodically updated. The latest update was in 2021, and then each Diocesan Synod is asked to take note of the five main regulation changes as follows:

1. Members act as a single electorate for purposes of election of members.
2. Provision to allow Vacancy in See to elect to the Crown Nominations Commission.
3. A new provision making Chairs and Episcopal members not eligible for Crown Nominations Commission.
4. A provision for replacement of the Diocesan members of the Crown Nominations Commission in the case of resignation by recounting former elections.
5. Enabling the Vacancy in See to transact business via remote meetings.

The Affirmation and Promulgation of the Regulation as an Act of Synod and the need for elections to take place to re-populate the Committee.

Stuart then invited the Chair to accept the affirmation and promulgation.

**David Griffith (Thetford and Rockland)** asked if this affected interregnum periods within parishes?

**Stuart Jones (Diocesan Registrar)** explained that this was only relevant to the appointment of the Bishop of Norwich and so have no bearing on benefice vacancies. In some benefices, parishes consider and plan for vacancies in advance, but this is not always possible, given local circumstance and potential reorganisation consideration.

**Harry Verney (Heacham and Rising)** advised that having been part of several vacancies, parish profiles can be drawn together within reasonable periods of time.

**Mervyn Wilcox (Breckland)** asked for clarity around filling local vacancies.

**Stuart Jones (Diocesan Registrar)** explained the Patronage Benefices Measure is designed to encourage the filling of vacancies if appropriate.

**Stephen Thorp (Breckland)** asked if the Vacancy in See Committee is at full strength?

**Stuart Jones (Diocesan Registrar)** advised two Clergy and six Laity places are to be filled by election in the near future.

**The Bishop of Lynn** cautioned that to fill vacancies in parishes too quickly can sometimes not always be advisable and that a period of interregnum can be seen as beneficial.

**David Warner (St Benet's Waxham and Tunstead)** commended Bishop Jane's comments.

**The Chair Stated:** "At the Group of Sessions of the General Synod held at Westminster in November 2021 the Vacancy in See Committees Regulation 1993 in the form it takes following its amendment in July 2021 was formally affirmed and proclaimed as an Act of Synod. An Act of Synod is the embodiment of the will or opinion of the Church of England as expressed by the whole body of the General Synod. Copies of the Instrument proclaiming and affirming the Vacancy in See Committees Regulation as an Act of Synod have been sent to members of this Synod."

**Synod invited Julie Smith, Strategic Programme Manager to join the meeting.**

## **5. DIOCESAN VISION AND STRATEGY UPDATE**

Tim Sweeting, Diocesan Secretary and Julie Smith, Strategic Programme Manager, addressed Synod and spoke to the paper circulated prior to the meeting.

**Tim Sweeting and Julie Smith** informed the meeting of the work to date. The Vision and Strategic Priorities were agreed by Diocesan Synod in March 2021, agreed by Bishop's Council of Trustees in November 2021, to be brought back to Diocesan Synod in June 2022. Since June 2021, over 400 people across the diocese have contributed their ideas and thoughts to the process. A series of focus groups were held in July 2021 involving clergy, laity, experts and specialists, staff, volunteers, and partners.

The strategic framework was considered by Bishop's Council of Trustees and Diocesan Synod in November 2021. Strategy development groups met intensively between January to March 2022 to collate ideas received and shape plans for consideration.

Diocesan support staff engaged in development of the Vision enabling strategy and some have participated in the strategy development groups.

Three working groups, consisting of clergy, laity, volunteers, partners, staff and senior leaders were tasked with developing strategies; Mission and Ministry Strategy - led by Bishop Jane, Discipleship Strategy - led by Bishop Alan and Environment Strategy - led by Revd Canon Sally Theakston.

A further two working groups were formed to develop the two supporting strategies; Vision Communication Strategy considering ways to inspire and equip people to engage with the Vision - led by Revd Canon Keith James and Vision Enabling Strategy considering how the Diocesan support team can best support parishes, chaplaincies and schools to live out the Vision - led by Tim Sweeting.

An independent Church Buildings Commission has been set up under the leadership of Laura McGillivray, is considering ways to support the continued life and strength of our church buildings. It is running alongside the strategy process but sits separately to it and is intending to report its findings in approximately 12 months' time.

An Education Strategy is in place led by Paul Dunning, Director of Education, and will be reviewed as part of the normal pattern of work in October 2023, overseen by the Diocesan Board of Education.

The next steps are to form strategy development groups to conclude at the end of March and to host online briefings with Diocesan Synod members to be held in May and June. Consideration at Bishop's Council of Trustees in May 2022 and at Diocesan Synod in June 2022 will then take place, followed by the development of annual plans and budgets for delivery, to be repeated each year over the next ten years.

**John Brydon (General Synod)** questioned why the 42 dioceses of the Church of England and the Church of England itself were working to differing vision statements, instead of a shared vision, how much this was costing and where funding was coming from?

**Tim Sweeting (Diocesan Secretary)** responded that the national mission statement and those of other dioceses were intertwined. In 2020 this was looked at in a local context and in 2021 the Norwich Diocesan Synod signed off the 'Prayerful, Pastoral, Prophetic' as the language for our diocese.

Costings are being established during this process and will stem from the high-level actions. The environmental work is a good example and if this becomes a key action, then detailed work and costings will take place, following the agreement of Bishop's Council of Trustees and Diocesan Synod. Therefore, the vision will be set out and funding will then be sought from national, diocesan and external funds, remembering that the money should follow the mission.

**John Hooper (Humbleyard)** stated that the Church of England is like other organisations, can be good on strategy and visions and suggested that to come to life work must be undertaken with a bottom-up approach. Sometimes dissemination of ideas can be poor and what people need is examples of good practice and how to achieve the vision and strategy. Further suggesting that communication needs to be at a parish level to both Clergy and Laity and the wider support structures at the local level, and not rely totally on the Diocesan to Deanery Synod communication process to avoid the risk of dilution.

**Tim Sweeting (Diocesan Secretary)** responded that he sincerely hoped that this will not be the case and the plan is to ensure this makes a difference at local level. This is not a top-down suite of actions but celebrates what is already taking place and enables sharing of

success from local areas to build confidence and momentum. Further stating that the Communications team are actively working with the aim of sharing strong stories from across the diocese.

**Judith Ford (Norwich East)** agreed that dissemination can be difficult and shared that Norwich East Deanery, when communicating Eco-Church information, used a method of emailing information directly to PCC members in addition to communications to Chairs and Secretaries. Also asked for clarification around the online meetings planned for Synod.

**Tim Sweeting (Diocesan Secretary)** responded by confirming that members would be offered a choice of dates, but need only to attend one session, this is to enable smaller groups for discussion and contribution.

Tim highlighted the investment of PCC News, a high-quality printed publication, as vital. It was deliberately circulated in printed copy as a deliberate investment in communication to wider audiences and invited Synod to share ideas for other methods to promote communications.

**Mark Jeffries (Chair of the NDBF)** referring to John Brydon's earlier point on sharing ideas and communicating, highlighted that Sue Bunting, the Director of Finance, had introduced a series of Treasurer's workshops to directly support parishes which will continue as a quarterly opportunity.

**Gerald Palmer (Dereham and Mitford)** advised of the importance to keep future users in mind referring to education and youth work and the importance of this for the future of the Church.

**Tim Sweeting (Diocesan Secretary)** concurred that young people will remain a focus moving forward, however expressed that everybody of all ages will be included.

**Graham Kirk-Spriggs (General Synod)** asked as an incumbent, as there are lots of things to do, the admin can be frustrating and holds mission back, advising that administrative support is key to move forward with the parishes. Enquiring what is available to support the start of new parish projects?

**Tim Sweeting (Diocesan Secretary)** responded in agreement that administration is key in all areas, the importance of Clergy and Lay leaders to have time for ministry, mission and their own well-being is key and this is a national issue as well as one facing our diocese.

**The Bishop of Lynn** advised that in terms of administration the Mission and Ministry Group has considered this, as there is a need to start new things and to stop others, but it would be helpful to know the thoughts of others of what things could be stopped. Requesting that ideas could be sent to directly to Bishop Jane, Tim Sweeting or Julie Smith.

**Harry Verney (Heacham and Rising)** concurred that administration for Church Wardens has



grown enormously, and wonders if small parish admin could be different to larger parishes.

**Graham Kirk-Spriggs (General Synod)** suggested that some people have particular gifts and could a pool of gifted people be brought together to support the parishes with aspects of administration, for example with funding applications, and some sort of directory be created for wider support.

**Tim Sweeting (Diocesan Secretary)** responded by confirming that within the vision enabling strategy, consideration is being given to how the DBF team can support parishes with day to day tasks, however the resource is now reduced by 13 people following the central service review of 2021. Liz Humphries, Communications Manager, is looking to make the diocesan website more helpful with greater resources and supporting information.

**The Chair thanked Synod for their participation during the first session and handed the Chair to Kandi Kammoun (Chair of the House of Laity) for the second session.**

**Synod invited guests Alysha Moat and Revd Rachel Foster and Synod member Revd Richard Lawry to join and speak to the Living on Love and Faith session.**

## **6. LIVING IN LOVE AND FAITH**

A presentation and interactive session led by Revd Canon Keith James, with contribution from Alysha Moat, Revd Rachel Foster and Revd Richard Lawry.

A film was shared as an introduction to the session, the transcript of which follows:

The Living in Love and Faith Journey

Some journeys begin out of a sense of adventure, others begin out of necessity, and yet others begin when God calls us into the new and unknown. Some journeys we must take on our own, some journeys we take with others.

The Living in Love and Faith Journey began out of necessity; 2017 Synod votes not to take note of Bishop's Report. It began as an adventure; "a large-scale teaching document ensuring a wide ranging and fully inclusive approach in both subject matter and in those who work on it."

It began as a call into the new that is rooted in the old; "a radical new Christian inclusion founded in scripture, reason, tradition, theology and the Christian faith as the Church has received it; based on good, healthy, flourishing relationships, and in a 21st century understanding of being human and sexual."

It's a journey we travel together; "because episcopal ministry must be exercised with all the people of God, lay and ordained."

Its destination is the answer to the question...

What do we believe God is saying to the church today about identity, sexuality, relationships and marriage?

Some resources were put together for the journey and we hoped the resources would...  
Be distinctive in approach, have a missional focus, be widely accessible, and have a unifying impact.

We hoped that as we journey together, we would...

1. Be inspired by scripture's glorious and joyful vision of God's intention for human life.
2. Have discovered rich biblical, theological, historical and scientific thinking in a way that deepens our desire to know God and follow Christ.
3. Have a deeper understanding of the Church's inherited teaching and of emergent views and the Christian reasoning behind them.
4. Have heard the voices and encountered the experiences of people who would otherwise have been invisible to us.
5. Have learned different ways of reading scripture together well, allowing it to exert its transformative and revelatory power.
6. Find help for everyday Christian discipleship in all its diversity, physicality, messiness and grittiness.
7. Become alert to the life of the church in its cultural contexts and equipped to engage in the public square about what it means to be human and sexual.

We knew there were challenges that we had to surmount. The resources need to be attractive, accessible and academically credible. They need to encourage us to be open to learning in head and heart: Open to being imaginative, relational, prayerful and personal. Willing to be vulnerable, compassionate, and courageous.

The resources need to connect with everyday living, while arousing curiosity about big questions. They need to deal with complexity without oversimplifying. They need to present different and even opposing perspectives faithfully.

That's why lots of people were involved in different ways: Telling their stories, sharing their expertise, creating the resources.

We planned to have the resources ready to start the journey in June 2020, but by then the nation was in lockdown, so we launched on 8 November 2020 with a message from the Archbishops in the trailer video.

We made the suite of resources available for free, because they are for everyone:

The Book, the Podcasts, the Course, the Online Library, and the Story Films

Everything on the Living in Love and Faith Learning Hub, so now we have the resources to journey together.

But travelling together isn't easy, we either get to know each other much better, or go our separate ways.

The journey is an adventure; we need to be brave.

This journey is a call into the unknown; we need to help each other to be safe.

There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear (1 John 4:18)

That's why we have the Pastoral Principles and the Commitments.

That's why we invested in facilitation training (over 500 people took part in national training – many more in their dioceses).

That's why we offered "taster days" so people would know what to expect (over 6000 people took part).

That's why each diocese has local LLF Advocates (there are 70 of them).

That's why many dioceses have LLF Chaplains.

The way we travel together is at least as important as the destination. The journey began on 8 November 2020, on 30 April 2022 we will gather what we heard people say through the questionnaire, focus groups and creative responses. In September 2022 we will publish these "findings" and the bishops will begin the process of discerning.

What do we believe God is saying to the Church about identity, sexuality, relationship and marriage? The fruit of this discernment will be brought to General Synod in February 2023. Our hope is that there is the widest, most diverse possible participation across the whole church. Our hope is that we engage in deep learning together. Our hope is that we are kinder and more understanding of each other as we travel together. Our hope is that everyone is listened to, heard, loved and taken seriously. Our hope is that the Spirit's work among us reveals something new and unexpected. Our hope is that the love and understanding we have experienced on the journey will help us reach our destination in a better way.

Maybe the way we journey together is part of our destination: What kind of a Church does God want us to become as we move hopefully into the future in love and faith

**Revd Canon Keith James** informed Synod that in our diocese a taster morning was held (attended by 90 people) and Jane Keeton, Diocesan Counsellor and Adviser in Pastoral Care, supported with online courses (attended by a further 80 people) and feedback via a questionnaire had received 46 responses.

In Autumn 2021, there was an evening with Bishop Graham for those who had taken part in the course to reflect on their shared experience.

**Revd Richard Lawry** shared reflection on the course and why he took part, commending the quality of the content and resources produced that supported learning and understanding. Richard warmly recommended the course to others.

**Alysha Moat** shared that she does not necessarily have a church-based faith and was drawn to the course due to her wife's role as a reader, sharing her experiences and personal journey. During the process, Alysha was thankful for the people met during this period and the conversations that have been able to take place.

**Revd Rachel Foster** confirmed that she had taken part as both participant and facilitator as a Chaplain on two courses. She stated the importance of attending the course and recommended deeper study into the subject, particularly with reference to biblical context. Would like to have seen it offered to the whole church and would have wanted to include feedback from wider audiences.

**Revd Canon Keith James** asked what was learned or received?

**Revd Rachel Foster** said that hearing the hurt and damage done to the LGBT community, she would like to have heard more from others who felt differently or with different perspectives who were not on the course. The focus on the concern around the outcome (marriage) gets in the way of the conversation on diversity and would like conversations to continue.

**Revd Richard Lawry** concurred with Rachel and stated the importance of the ability to disagree well and the need to consider the complex situations and individual people's situations. Encouraging others to engage with Living in Love and Faith.

**Alysha Moat** stated that it confirmed fears for people who feel that they are on the outside, looking in to seek a community who may have a different definition of inclusivity. Also realisation of the size of the church organisation, however individual churches are shaped by the opinion of their congregation.

The issue around marriage will be an ongoing one, and should not be the main focus of discussions. Concluding by recommending that the church has need to talk to the wider community, both inside and outside the church environment, to create a position of middle ground for more people to come to faith.

**Revd Canon Keith James invited Synod move to breakout rooms for further discussion.**

**Judith Ford (Norwich East)** suggested the course possibly reached people who were already converted and asked how to reach others?

**Pam Spychal (Great Yarmouth)** explained that the breakout group had diverse experience of Living in Love and Faith, from none, to in depth engagement. However, everyone was positive about the need to be diverse and inclusive. A strong point was made of the need to engage the young people, as they do not see church as relevant, also young people understand diversity and have a lot to teach others.

**Alysha Moat** stated that inclusive must include everyone, those that have disabilities, those who use various support dogs and asked if the Living in Love and Faith course and further training be made mandatory for all clergy in training to widen knowledge, education is a good place to start but young people need to experience others leading by example or the learning is lost. Concluding by asking how churches can welcome a person who does not feel safe or comfortable (for example wearing badges etc.) and thanked Synod for the step being taken to have conversation.

**Dean Akrill (Norwich North)** stated that Sprowston had not run the course, due to work previously undertaken. Having had conversations where people who might be gay and do not like to be examined in this way, suggested that any organisation that is looking at

inclusivity needed to consider the approach in a way that not leave people feeling less included.

**David Warner (St Benet's Waxham and Tunstead)** suggested the need to avoid the risk of talking rather than just doing and the way we handle this issue can be potentially damaging. There is need to be positive about the principle of moving forward toward a settled solution even if there are some clergy and churches that identify in a different way. Concluding that this is an issue that tests credibility, not least because as a church we seemed to have been obsessed with the topic of sexuality.

**The Bishop of Norwich** thanked Synod and the guest contributors and reflected by saying: *"I have found the book, the podcasts and the story films really valuable and I have learned a lot through the process and indeed as the College of Bishops in the work that we have been doing. I look back and marked that yesterday it being eight years since my consecration, and for those whole eight years this has dominated conversation in the College of Bishops, and now I am quite keen that we can find some sort of settlement which Father David Warner has just spoken about.*

*Alysha, Alysha, you are beloved and immensely special, in my sight, in our sight and in the sight of God. Thank you for your bravery in what you have shared with us today and all those who identify as LGBTI on the call today.*

*Thank you as its often from the edge or the outside that the Church has been transformed and changed. Thank you because God loves you and you are precious, and I hope and pray that you will find yourself a true part of the Church of England.*

*Thank you Rachel for the comments you offered, especially around where the course has not been offered or where a parallel course has been run because there has not been trust in this course which I have found very sad because the course materials were put together by a whole range of Bishops including those from a conservative evangelical and a traditional catholic perspective and it has been designed to try to create good conversations, so thank you Rachel for raising that point.*

*We have heard a lot about the hurt and damaged historically to the LGBTI community and I want to really call out that in this diocese, I see absolutely no place for bullying or fear, or homophobia or misogyny and I think we need to be really clear that. But I also want us to be a diocese that also recognises that there are a range of theological perspectives, even some that will not be agreed with, but part of our living out the Christian life and living out that life together is to try to understand, try to come alongside, to explore together God's calling in our lives.*

*Because what I don't want us to be doing is to be entering into the culture wars that we see so much of in secular society; that there is a right side and a wrong side, that we frame such a conversation as winning or losing, I am right and you are wrong, I am good, and you are bad. That can silence the other but that is also not the way of Christ.*

*I think we have always got to remember that when we use the term other or see somebody as different, they are also like us made in the image of God. Each one of us is in Christ, a member of the one body of Christ.*

*So, as we move forward with this conversation, and as the College of Bishops which includes Bishop Alan and Bishop Jane who will be meeting three times during the Autumn to try to discern the future here, I think that doing nothing is not an option.*

*Speaking pragmatically, I don't think that equal marriage in church will be proposed because that would require a two-thirds majority in each of the Houses of the General Synod and looking at the makeup of the General Synod that is simply not going to happen and will create more pain. I wonder if there is some kind of middle way that would be both pragmatic but move us forward in hope.*

*But above all in this whole conversation, and thank you for modelling this today, I think we return to I Corinthians 13, and what we are taught about love:*

*Love is patient, love is kind. Love is not arrogant or rude.*

*Love does not insist on its own way, it bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.*

*We need to bear with one another, believe in one another, hope in one another, endure in one another because together we are in Christ, even when we disagree.*

*And so, in a sense to sum up, I wish the title of this project had not just been Living in Love and Faith, but had been Living in Love, Faith and Hope, mirroring the words in I Corinthians.*

*And it is by hope and also in love and in a strong faith in Jesus Christ, who teaches us the way of love, that I believe we can find a way forward for our life together."*

**Revd Canon Keith James (Director of Ministry)** apologised that the content of the film was not accessible for visually impaired members of Synod.

## **7. CLERGY CARE AND WELLBEING**

Revd Dr Patrick Richmond spoke to the report previously circulated and advised that further information had been received from Breckland Deanery to add to the nine deaneries included in the report.

Patrick encouraged further responses were welcome to add to the report and suggested to ask a lay person to champion the discussion in the parishes. Further advising that Revd Canon Keith James chairs the Clergy Wellbeing Forum for the diocese.

**Revd Canon Keith James (Director of Ministry)** invited further conversation.

**Caroline Herbert (General Synod)** stated it was good to hear of the number of responses from parishes who have engaged. Asked what further support and encouragement the forum might give the 50% who had not responded and what shape would future work take? Advising that when a vacancy occurs, the Clergy Wellbeing Covenant might be included in the parish profile to demonstrate the commitment.

**Revd Dr Patrick Richmond** responded by acknowledging the current challenges that

affected parishes and might have affected the response to the Clergy Covenant discussions locally.

**Revd Canon Simon Stokes (Sprowston and Norwich North Team Ministry)** asked what might happen in a multi parish benefice, if some agree to the covenant and some do not? Also asking what consideration is to be given to lay people involved in leadership as the diocese moves forward in appointing lay people into leadership roles to lead churches and suggested this to be considered alongside clergy wellbeing?

**John Hooper (Humbleyard)** emphasised the importance of consideration for lay leaders.

**Andrew Whitehead (Ingworth and Sparham)** advised that clergy wellbeing had been discussed in all PCC's, with conversations facilitated by a lay person. This had resulted in a sense of agreement and accountability of how laity and clergy work together. Questioned how senior staff are being engaged in the process and being supported.

**The Bishop of Lynn** advised that a parish in the Archdeaconry of Lynn had signed up to the covenant by subscribing a small amount each month for a healthcare plan and asked if this could be a wider consideration.

**Revd Dr Patrick Richmond** advised that if some parishes adopt the covenant and some do not, this needs to be discussed further to increase understanding and to identify the issues involved. With regard to lay people in leadership roles being included, the question of it being called the clergy covenant might need to be considered further. Advising that funds for healthcare are available through trust funds and the information is being brought together for the diocesan website. And concluded that support of senior staff is considered in conversation and at senior staff meetings.

**David Griffiths (Thetford and Rockland)** explained the process undertaken in the Thetford and Rockland Deanery in response to the covenant. Suggesting that the covenant needs further reflection to ensure it is inline with legal process and the importance of church to adopt current practice, ensuring that a framework to prevent the issues that the covenant seeks to address.

**Sally Theakston (Bishop's Chaplain)** confirmed that at meetings, Bishop's Staff are addressing wellbeing as a regular part of the meeting. Following worship a "how are we" session takes place to address personal circumstance in Prayer and this model has been taken forward to other forums such as the Rural Dean's meeting.

**Tricia Temple-Crowe (Holt)** concurred the importance of a lay person to lead in all local discussions, and have conversation with the clergy present so not to cause unease or embarrassment.

**Revd Dr Patrick Richmond** stated that it is not compulsory and acknowledged the fact that

Clergy are office-holders and not employees, which has been raised during the evolution of the covenant. Patrick thanked Tracey Jessop for her support in the further development of the questionnaire which is to be the next step.

**Carolyn Sexton (Holt)** shared how support during interregnum can be managed and the importance of making the congregation aware of the work needed to be completed. Also, clergy need to be more aware of sharing the information of workload with the PCC to ensure there is understanding of pressures and workloads. Finally concurring that Lay Ministers do need the same level of care and the importance that this is considered.

**The Chair** stated that in response to a question in the chat function, which asked if Licenced Lay Minister's have access to counselling via Jane Keaton, confirming with Revd Canon Keith James that this support is focussed on clergy and their families only.

**Revd Canon Keith James (Director of Ministry)** reminded Synod that the Clergy Wellbeing Forum is available to support the landing of the covenant across the diocese and encourage people to be in touch with himself or Patrick.

## **8. DIOCESAN BOARDS AND COMMITTEES**

Tim Sweeting, Diocesan Secretary, shared the outcomes of the elections for the Board of Education and the Board of Patronage and further opportunities to serve the diocese.

Board of Education election:

- Revd Andrew Whitehead
- Revd Derek McClean
- Jennifer Vere
- Teresa Osborne
- Caroline Hutton

Board of Patronage election:

- Revd Graham Wilkins
- Mark Little

Further opportunities to serve:

- Property Committee (2 vacancies – 2 Clergy however already have 1 Laity member elected but awaiting Clergy appointments to adhere to the representation balance of the Terms of Reference)
- Board of Patronage (2 vacancies – 1 Clergy and 1 Laity, Bishop's Council of Trustees are taking the lead to fill both vacancies)
- Vacancy in See (8 vacancies – 2 Clergy and 6 Laity)



## 9. TERMS OF REFERENCE

Tim Sweeting, Diocesan Secretary, shared the need for amendment to the Terms of Reference for the Bishop's Council of Trustees to be amended as follows:

(to add) The Bishop's Chaplain shall attend all meetings of the Bishop's Council of Trustees, which was included on the Terms of Reference in the previous committee structure.

**Mervyn Wilcox (Breckland)** enquired if this would include voting rights?

**Tim Sweeting** confirmed that the amendment is for attendance only.

**The Bishop of Lynn** informed Synod that whilst Revd Canon Sally Theakston was holding the role of Bishop's Chaplain and Archdeacon of Lynn, that voting rights would apply until the Archdeacon role is ended.

**The Chair asked Synod to vote on the amendment to the Bishop's Council of Trustee Terms of Reference:**

**The result was as follows:**

**In Favour 79    Against 0    Abstentions 0**

## 10. QUESTIONS UNDER STANDING ORDER 71

### **Revd Dr Patrick Richmond – Chair of the House of Clergy:**

*Considering the current increases in the cost of living and particularly rises in energy bills, what steps are being considered and proposed to help clergy households avoid hardship?*

Response by: Mark Jeffries, Chair of the NDBF

We are very conscious of the increasing cost of fuel and the impact of this on clergy household budgets. We have been able to secure some funding from local Trusts to be able to offer some modest grants. This offer will be based on the energy performance certificate of the house our clergy live in, if we do not yet have an energy performance certificate then this will be estimated by the Director of Property Services.

The grants will be administered through Bishop Graham's office. Eligible clergy were contacted by Bishop Graham on Tuesday with grants being offered to 117 clergy households in bands D, E and F. A grant of £200 was offered for properties rated D and £300 for those rated E or F. Over 50 requests had been received by Thursday and grants are now being paid out.

Archbishops' Council are also reviewing the issue of the increase in the cost of living and energy bills and have said that they will be in touch with Dioceses with a proposal before the end of this month. We will review and communicate this as soon as possible.

Clergy Stipends will increase by 1% from 1 April in accordance with national recommendations and the Diocesan budget agreed by Diocesan Synod in November 2021.

Actual spend is actively monitored against budget on a monthly basis. We will review the Diocesan spend and the cost of living and energy price subject again in the Autumn, prior to the next planned increase in energy prices from October 2022 and propose further assistance if we are able. That review will also inform the 2023 budget for the Diocese.

**Revd Dr Patrick Richmond** did not raise a supplementary question.

**John Brydon - General Synod Representative (Laity):**

*Please detail the response from the Diocese of Norwich to the consultation that took place regarding the proposed Mission and Pastoral Measure GS2222.*

Response by: Tim Sweeting, Diocesan Secretary

Mr Brydon has been updated with the level of Diocesan input, has been assured that the Diocese of Norwich contributed to the review and is content with the information supplied.

For the benefit of others, the Mission and Pastoral Measure was consulted upon by the Church Commissioners in 2020 to inform a green consultation paper to be discussed at General Synod in July 2021; this can be found on the Church of England website. A meeting was held with the Diocesan Support team as part of this process. In the consultation that followed the discussions at General Synod, a written response was provided by the Archdeacon of Norfolk on behalf of the Diocese, but the Church Commissioners have confirmed that this was omitted from the list of responses in the annex to GS Misc. 1312.

It is worth saying that the Bishop of Norwich has engaged with the issues raised in GS2222 at meetings he has attended with PCCs and Deanery chapters and synods, and at meetings of the House of Bishops, the Board of Governors of the Church Commissioners, and the Church Commissioners' Mission, Pastoral and Church Building Commission, where he has particularly been championing small rural parish churches.

**John Brydon** did not raise a supplementary question.

**The Chair closed Synod by inviting the Closing Prayers and Blessing.**

The Closing Prayer was led by Jennifer Vere and the Blessing by the Bishop of Norwich.