

## **NORWICH DIOCESAN SYNOD**

**Minutes of a meeting held at St. Andrew's Hall Norwich  
Saturday 15 October 2022 at 9:30am**

### **Attendees:**

House of Bishops – 3 representatives

House of Clergy – 43 representatives

House of Laity – 41 representatives

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

### **Apologies:**

Apologies were received from 28 members of Diocesan Synod.

**Opening Prayers** were led by The Ven Catherine Dobson, Archdeacon of Lynn and The Ven Keith James, Archdeacon of Norwich.

**Kandi Kammoun, Chair of the House of Laity took the chair for the first session of Synod.**

### **1. The Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 16 June 2022**

The minutes were approved and signed as a true record.

### **2. Any matters arising from the previous meeting**

No matters arising were received.

### **3. Prayerful Review of the year**

The Bishop of Norwich introduced the session, gave thanks for the work undertaken over the last year and reflected that God listens - prayer is the longing of the human heart for God and an intimate sharing between friends.

The Bishop of Norwich invited Members of Synod to share stories from around the deaneries in discussion at their tables before feeding back in plenary.

The overarching themes included:

- Prayer was something we should continue with, not let go.
- Prayer arose spontaneously in response to need; God was our help in those times of need and prayer was a calling of the Spirit.
- Technology helped in recent times, the reach of Zoom for example during and post Covid underpinned the importance of being together in prayer.
- Reflections on children and prayer in terms of prayer spaces and thoughts about engagement with young people in many different ways.

- Increased appetite for talk about prayer and deeper understanding using a variety of resources, for example, Lent course, Alpha etc.
- Bringing new people to faith. Creation of prayer groups to encourage those people to come to church.
- Prayer was central to coming together and building a relationship with God.
- The need for prayer and to understand that silence was an opportunity to pray.
- The value of 40 Days and 40 Prayers.
- The fruit of the pandemic, meeting online enabled different forum for prayer and allowed people who were housebound, to meet.
- Prayer accessed through a range of different and creative ways such as use of green spaces and creation of indoor and outdoor labyrinths.
- Widened team of intercessors to support access to prayer.
- People felt better equipped due to resources online at Diocesan and National Church levels via websites. Also, prayer courses on YouTube.
- Challenges and joys of encouraging people to engage in church other than on Sunday.

#### **4. Keynote Speaker - John Spence CBE**

The Chair sought permission from Synod for **John Spence CBE, Chair of the Archbishops' Council Finance Committee** to address the meeting and welcomed John to the meeting.

**John Spence** explained his work for the Archbishops' Council, shared the background to his spiritual journey and spoke about some of the current issues faced by the Church of England.

On the theme of engagement, John Spence stated there was a need for the Church to unlock the gifts of the laity and encourage more people to discern whether to take the path to ordination.

Regarding a vision for the future, John Spence explained that work is proceeding on legislation designed to introduce changes and simplify the governance structures of the Church of England's national church institutions.

On fiscal matters, John Spence referred to the fall-out from the pandemic and the rising cost of living. Ageing congregations and reclusive living had also taken a toll on the number of regular church-donations. Plate collections had reduced tremendously. John explained that the index-linked Parish Giving Scheme (PGS) went some way to mitigate growing financial pressure as the scheme was linked to inflation, so the tithe would increase exponentially.

In closing, John alluded to future plans for funding to be made available for parish churches and dioceses to try new things. He shared his thoughts on this - be young in what you do, including your ambition, your attitude, your approaches and be young in your thinking. The Risen Christ will be at the centre of all that you do.

#### **John Spence invited questions from members of Synod.**

Diocesan Synod members thanked John for his speech and in particular supported his statements about the importance of inspiring youth, noting the need to think about every

member of the ministry. The growth of the Church and faith was the responsibility of all Christians, parish priests could not work alone, laity support was needed.

**John Spence** responded to say it was essential to train priests to help equip them for change as they were the backbone of the Church. If we were really going to be the young people's church, he explained, we needed to have a deep understanding of how that could be achieved. **John Spence** referred to 'Setting God's People Free,' a report from the Archbishops' Council and reiterated that everyone was called to be ministers for Christ and had a responsibility to tell the good news of Christ.

In reply to a question on the rollout plan for the Parish Giving Scheme (PGS) **John Spence** advised that approximately three quarters of dioceses across the Church of England had adopted the scheme. It was hoped that ultimately every diocese would join the roll out and reiterated the scheme was index linked and so the tithe increased in line with inflation.

### **5. A Year of Living Pastorally**

**The Bishop of Norwich** spoke about some of the challenges faced by society today in the midst of a cost-of-living crisis and reflected on how we might respond pastorally to these issues with examples of pastoral work such as homework clubs, lunch clubs or foodbanks for those in need. The Archbishops' Council had allocated the Diocese £428,000 to be used by parishes to help with higher energy costs. All parishes would be encouraged to apply, and every parish that applied would receive a grant.

The Bishop of Norwich counselled that in loving our neighbours, no one was excluded, we were the face of Jesus for them, with them and alongside them. Clergy and laity were interwoven in the patchwork of our communities. A copy of the book "How Village Churches Thrive: A Practical Guide" had been sent as a gift to each parish priest this year.

**Members of Synod took the opportunity to explore the Pastoral Market Place held in the Crypt.**

**Revd Dr Patrick Richmond, Chair of the House of Clergy took the Chair for the second session of Synod.**

### **6. Diocesan Vision and Priorities**

**The Chair** sought permission from Synod for **Julie Smith, Strategic Programme Manager** to join the meeting and welcomed Julie.

**Tim Sweeting, Diocesan Secretary**, addressed the meeting, spoke to the previously circulated papers and explained the steps undertaken since the approval of the Vision and Priorities by Diocesan Synod in March 2021.

**The Bishop of Norwich** reflected that the vision of Prayerful, Pastoral, Prophetic had caught people's imagination.

**The Bishops of Norwich, Lynn and Thetford** spoke to the Vision and Priorities report which outlined the eight priority projects to progress the vision and priorities for the diocese:

**Project 1** *Attract and recruit excellent lay and ordained leaders to an increased range of ministry pathways and support them to thrive.*

**Project 2** *Form a diocesan plan to support mission and growth based on population, poverty, and proximity.*

**Project 3** *Increase intentionality and ownership of local mission through an increase in the number of parish / benefice mission plans, with support from the deaneries.*

**Project 4** *Encourage and support an increase in baptisms and confirmations.*

**Project 5** *Establish a Bishop's certificate in Christian faith.*

**Project 6** *Establish a diocesan task force to take forward our inclusion and diversity intentions, with particular reference to disability, LGBTI+ and UKME concerns.*

**Project 7** *To strengthen our work with children youth and families, we will develop more fruitful connections between school and church.*

**Project 8** *Strive to achieve Net Zero carbon by 2030.*

**The Chair invited questions from Synod.**

**Points of note included:**

Members noted that the clarity and intentionality of the report was positive. In reference to project seven, non-church schools were included in the vision which was pleasing.

In reference to project six, members questioned the intentionality around the mention of LGBTI+. Broad discussion included caution that it was not about doctrine, but about a welcome for all God's people and that reference to the language of national reports and House of Bishops Guidance would be of benefit to the wording of project six.

**The Bishop of Norwich** explained that there were eight projects and we need to focus on each one equally. All are welcome as part of our life together in the Diocese as followers of Christ. Responding to the comments made, it was proposed that with the agreement of Synod, the title for project six would be amended to include 'in line with national reports and House of Bishops Guidance.'

**The Chair moved that, subject to the addition to the title of Project six, Synod approve the eight projects that had been identified to support the delivery of the Diocesan Vision and Priorities for our life together. The Vision and Priorities had previously been agreed by the Diocesan Synod in March 2021.**

The result was as follows:

**In Favour 84          Against 1          Abstentions 1**

## **7. The 2023 Budget for the Diocesan Board of Finance**

**The Chair** invited **Mark Jeffries, Chair of the Norwich Diocesan Board of Finance** to address the meeting.

**Mark Jeffries** introduced the presentation of the Diocesan Budget for 2023, with the long-term intention to deliver a balanced budget by use of a total return approach, promotion of the Parish Giving Scheme and continued close working with parish treasurers.

Mark invited **Susan Bunting, Director of Finance** to address the meeting.

**Susan Bunting**, referred to the detailed assumptions and notes previously circulated to Synod Members and presented the budget for 2023 to Diocesan Synod, which showed a deficit of £103.6k, which was 0.9% of budgeted income, assumed an 87.5% collection rate for parish share in 2023 (compared to the 2022 budget 85% collection rate) and a 5% increase in clergy stipends and lay staff salaries.

**Susan Bunting** explained more detail on various areas of note including that 71 parishes had subscribed to the Parish Giving Scheme to date and urged Synod to consider the scheme.

### **The Chair invited questions from Synod.**

In response to a question on why the use of the Parish Giving Scheme was beneficial **Susan Bunting** explained that plate collections had significantly decreased during lockdown. The Parish Giving Scheme relieved local administrative burden and had the benefit of the opportunity to be index-linked.

Regarding the question asking if a 10% reduction in clergy numbers outlined in the clergy deployment review had been reached, **Susan Bunting** confirmed that 10% reduction in clergy numbers had been achieved on average by reduction in some areas, and increased numbers in other areas to align to the plan, but that there would always be movement of clergy in and out of the Diocese.

On a separate note, the information on the Parish Giving Scheme presented to Dereham and Mitford during Generosity week was commended by a Member to Diocesan Synod.

**Susan Bunting** concluded the presentation of the 2023 budget for the Diocesan Board of Finance.

**Mark Jeffries** the Chair of the Norwich Diocesan Board of Finance moved:

**This Synod agrees the logic behind the assumptions and approves the 2023 Budget**

The result was as follows:

**In Favour 84          Against 0          Abstentions 0**

## **8. Update from General Synod (and Questions to General Synod Representative)**

**The Chair** invited **Tim Sweeting, Diocesan Secretary** to update Synod on representation at General Synod.

**Tim Sweeting** stated that following the relocation of The Ven Karen Hutchinson to another diocese there was a need to fill the resulting casual vacancy for an elected proctor. Election to General Synod had taken place within the year therefore it was right to return to the vote results to identify who would fill the place. Subsequently **The Revd Canon Howard Stoker** became a member of General Synod in the summer of 2022.

**The Chair** invited **Claire Williams, General Synod representative** to answer any questions from Synod on the pre-circulated paper.

**There were no questions.**

### **9. Questions under Standing Order 71**

**The Chair** invited **John Hooper, Humbleyard** on behalf of **All Saints Upper Tas Valley PCC** to pose a question under Standing Order 71:

*It seems clear that given the issues facing the Church of England, there will need to be significant pastoral re-organisation. To avoid undue speculation, Parishioners are seeking a clear lead from the Diocese and therefore asks:*

*Has the diocese yet formed a strategy and what criteria is underlying that strategy.*

- 1. Can the diocese give an indication of the timetable for reporting on its thinking and guidance to parishes?*
- 2. What other significant events which may be outside the diocese's control e.g. The Buildings Commission report, have a bearing on the strategy and its timing.*

**The Ven Keith James, Archdeacon of Norwich responded and thanked John Hooper for the question saying:**

As members of Synod may recall, a deployment strategy was presented to this Synod in the autumn of 2020, and this has informed both our budgeting (including that discussed today) and deployment since then.

The strategy arose out of the context of the Pandemic, although some aspects would have needed action anyway in due course but were accelerated because of the necessary response to the financial challenges of Covid. The strategy presented in 2020 can be reissued today to Mr Hooper and it has been available on the Committee area of the Diocesan website since 2020.

Members of Bishop's Staff and the Parish Support Team based at Diocesan House are always willing to offer support to benefices and deaneries about deployment and I am aware that the Archdeacon of Norfolk visited Upper Tas Valley PCC, when I believe Mr Hooper was present, on 27 September to do exactly that.

As we have mercifully emerged from the depths of the pandemic, the financial situation for our parishes, and hence the Diocese, has not necessarily been straightforward or clear. However, the situation is clearly much more robust than hitherto and much of the pastoral reorganisation necessitated by the strategy agreed in 2020 is either completed or in the process of being negotiated.

Earlier today we agreed a project, in support of the delivery of our Diocesan Vision and Priorities, that will form a diocesan plan to support mission and growth based on population, poverty and proximity. That includes a review of the 2020 Deployment Plan. It

will of course be discussed and agreed by both the Bishop's Council of Trustees and this Synod at the appropriate time.

The Church Buildings Commission has been meeting all year and will report in 2023. It is more important for it to do its work thoroughly than quickly. The Commission's role is to consider the gift and challenge of our buildings, and how they are resourced, rather than how we deploy ministry resources, though the number of buildings can, of course, be a factor in deployment.

Any pastoral reorganisation is necessarily collaborative and consultative, both formally and informally, and many members of Synod will have been statutory consultees as the deployment strategy has progressed.

**The Chair** asked if there was a supplementary question from **John Hooper**.

**John Hooper, Humbleyard** had no supplementary question to ask.

**The Chair** stated that this concluded the business for the fourth meeting of the fortieth session of the Norwich Diocesan Synod.

**Closing Prayer and Blessing and the Pastoral Hymn**

**The Ven Keith James, Archdeacon of Norwich led Synod in prayer.**

**Close of Business 13:10.**

**Signed:**

**Date:**