

**Eighth Meeting of the Fortieth Session
NORWICH DIOCESAN SYNOD
In-person meeting held at Northgate High School, Dereham, NR19 2EU
Saturday 23 March 2024 at 09:15**

Draft minutes

Diocesan Secretary, Tim Sweeting, welcomed members of Diocesan Synod to the Eighth Meeting of the Fortieth Session, noting that members of the Parish Support Team were present to answer any questions regarding the help and support offered to parishes.

Senior Leadership Team; Director of Finance Susan Bunting, Director of Property, Alan Cole, Director of Education, Paul Dunning and Diocesan Surveyor, Charles Thurston.

1. Naomi Rizk (Generous Giving Team).
2. Yvette Sullivan & Sally Finn (Property Team).
3. Charlotte Bayes (Mission Team).
4. Revd Dave Lloyd (Mission Team).
5. Marleen Madinda (Ministry Team).
6. Frances Jackson (Historic Church Buildings Team).

As this was the last face to face meeting before the end of this triennium (2021-2024), and in order to celebrate Bishop Graham's ten years as a bishop, a short 'in conversation' session was held after opening prayers.

Opening Prayers were led by Kandi Kammoun

Handover to Revd Dr Patrick Richmond, Chair of the House of Clergy

Attendees:

House of Bishops – 3 representatives
House of Clergy – 33 representatives
House of Laity – 38 representatives

Apologies: House of Laity 13, House of Clergy 14 (total 27)

1. The minutes of the meeting held on 18 November 2023

A vote to accept the minutes as a true record was unanimous.

2. Any matters arising from the previous meeting

The Archdeacon of Norwich explained that feedback received in response to the table discussions on the questions "What is God calling your parish to pay attention to in the next two to three years?" and "The next step is...?" would be included at appendix 2 of these minutes.

3. Diocese of Norwich Environmental Policy

Revd Canon David Longe, Chair of the Diocesan Environment Working Group spoke to a PowerPoint presentation on Net Zero, Environment Working Group & Eco Diocese, explaining the five areas that Eco Church and Eco Diocese covered:

- Land management (including how we reduce carbon emissions)
- Building maintenance and improvement
- What is our worship and teaching? How do we manage our prayers and intercessions?
- Local and worldwide community, how do we engage
- Our individual life path: there has to be integrity in how we move forward caring for Creation.

The Diocese of Norwich Environmental Policy was originally approved by Diocesan Synod on 20 March 2021. Diocesan Synod was asked to consider updates to the environmental safeguarding objective and list of commitments to support the development and completion of the Routemap to Net Zero Carbon, including the gathering of baseline and ongoing data from churches through completion of the energy footprint tool.

In closing, members were asked to discuss in groups what was happening in parishes and put forward suggestions for one thing that might be done in each deanery and included in PCC agendas; for example, could everyone in the deanery be asked to register for Eco Church, complete the Energy Footprint Tool, or could one individual be nominated to be Creation Care Champion. Feedback would be collated and considered by the Environment Working Group and shared in due course.

Diocesan Synod unanimously approved the revised Diocese of Norwich Environmental Policy subject to the inclusion of references to Eco Schools alongside references to Eco Church and amended wording on page two commitment (v) 'protecting biodiversity'.

4. Vacancies in Licensed Clergy Posts

The Archdeacon of Norwich gave a summary presentation and facilitated a discussion exercise exploring the issues surrounding vacancies in licensed clergy posts and what next steps might be.

In response to a question asking for details of the current parish vacancy rate for the diocese and how this compared to ten years ago, Diocesan Synod heard that in 2014 there were 170.93 FTE established posts with 145.62 FTE filled, therefore 25.31 FTE or 14.81% vacant.

In 2024 we have 144.15 FTE established posts, again excluding curates, with 25.75 vacant or 17.86%. So, the number of vacancies are around the same but with fewer clergy posts in 2024, the proportion is higher. Many benefices are larger, perhaps giving an increased sense of being stretched.

The bishops and senior staff had been working on this issue over several meetings. The issue is complex, with no one simple solution and so it was necessary to make progress on multiple fronts with many people involved.

Work was underway to update the following:

- Parish Profile template
- Diocesan website – forthcoming vacancies
- Bishops are contacting Training for Ministry institution
- Improving the Shared Vocation Space
- Increase of 7% on stipends
- Increased spending on parsonage improvements

Diocesan Synod members were invited to join table discussions, to identify possibilities and fresh thinking on the themes of; Lay Ministries, Vocations and Growing Ministry, Recruitment and Reaching Out. Feedback included:

- More Authorised Worship Assistants (AWAs) able to assist the incumbent with the Ministry of the Word and in conducting worship, also intercession and Lay training.
- Vocations and growing Ministry, preaching about the body of Christ and particular roles within that.
- A greater flexibility in the system to make it more centred around the needs of those who feel called.
- The need to embed a culture that:
 - i. is encouraging
 - ii. fosters vocation, national and local.
- Sharing responsibility, taking background administration away from parishes.
- Clearer, sharper vision to attract people from outside. Promoting that this is a safe place for mutual flourishing. This is where we are trying to get to before God.
- Proactive HR planning with regard to retirement, swifter action around the Diocesan profile.

At the end of the session members were invited to reflect on what they would be taking away individually from the session. Outcomes from the table discussions would be a future agenda item for Bishop's Staff. A summary of feedback is included at Appendix 1 to these minutes.

The report was noted.

Handover to Kandi Kammoun, Chair of the House of Laity

5. Diocesan Synod Elections 2024

Diocesan Registrar, Stuart Jones, spoke to the election timetable previously circulated and taken as read.

Diocesan Synod was recommended to agree:

- i. The election timetable.
- ii. The number of seats to be filled in the 2024 elections.
- iii. The use of the simple majority voting system.

Diocesan Synod unanimously agreed the recommendations for Diocesan Synod Triennial Elections 2024.

6. Update from General Synod November 2023

The Chair invited Graham Kirk-Spriggs and Caroline Herbert, General Synod representatives to answer any questions on General Synod matters from November 2023.

Diocesan Synod asked for a progress update on Living in Love and Faith and were told that the matter had been difficult for those on both sides. The next steps remained unclear at this time.

7. Questions under Standing Order 71

The Chair invited David Longe on behalf of the Diocesan Environmental Working Group to ask a question under Standing Order 71.

Could the Diocesan Board of Finance provide a response to [Christian Climate Action's petition](#) for the Diocese to move its banking from Barclays?

Mark Jeffries, Chair of the Norwich Diocesan Board of Finance was invited to respond.

This matter was discussed at the Asset Management Committee meeting in January and a member of the finance team was asked to attend a workshop run by CCA in association with MotherTree (a bank switching service). This was arranged to enable Dioceses to discuss the process of switching bank accounts. Whilst alternative banks were highlighted in the workshop, two of the most ethically rated do not currently offer charity bank accounts (i.e. Triodos and Nationwide). One of the main concerns is ensuring that any switch is to a bank that has a satisfactory credit rating (e.g. AAA) and there also needs to be continuity with our existing systems (such as direct bank feed to our accounting system and direct debit administration). The Diocesan Environmental Officer network is to approach MotherTree shortly with an outline of DBF requirements to see if they can identify potential banks to which banking services can be switched. The outcome of this will inform future discussions, which will be led by the Asset Management Committee.

The Chair invited David Longe to ask a supplementary question, which he declined.

The Chair invited David Longe on behalf of the Diocesan Environmental Working Group to ask a question under Standing Order 71.

Noting the limited availability of banking in rural locations, could the Diocesan Board of Finance both acknowledge the difficulties that many parishes are facing in dealing with Barclays and indicate what support might be available?

Mark Jeffries, Chair of the Norwich Diocesan Board of Finance was invited to respond.

The Diocesan Board of Finance certainly recognises the difficulties faced in dealing with Barclays. The topic of banks was noted as one of two "hot topics" at the recent round of treasurers workshops (held late February 2024) and is raised at many local engagement events attended by members of the Parish Support Team.

The Parish Support Team spend much time offering practical support and advocacy to PCCs in this area. The way anti-money laundering and other regulations are being applied by banks has increased the frustrations felt by PCCs and required a step up in support offered also. Our finance team have been issuing certified letters on behalf of parishes where Barclays have undertaken Know Your Customer investigations, to assist with the explanation of PCC charitable status, as well as confirming the key contacts. There has also been a section added to the Diocesan website with FAQ's that PCCs are asked by (existing or prospective) banks, as well as listing bank accounts available to PCC's, which include the ethical ratings shared at the CCA workshop. This table also confirms whether there are post office services available, as current bank branch closure trends suggest that the post office will likely be the key provider of hubs for banking deposits.

This trend of bank branch closures is exacerbating the issues faced as it becomes harder to have face to face contact with banks to resolve issues faced. Lobbying on this topic has started with Bishop Graham recently speaking about the impact of bank closures in rural areas and market towns in a House of Lords debate, using the situation in Watton to argue for hubs to meet the banking needs of local communities.

It is important to note that this is a national issue, shown by the two related questions asked at General Synod in February (Q119 and Q120). The Secretary General has raised the matter with the banks, the Treasury, the Charity Commission and the Financial Conduct Authority, and Dr Malcolm Brown, who is Director for Faith and Public Life, will be holding a series of meetings over the coming weeks, including with Barclays. Parishes with evidence of difficulties with banking, especially due to the money laundering process, are encouraged to get in touch with Dr Malcolm Brown directly: malcolm.brown@churchofengland.org

The Chair invited Holt Deanery Synod to ask a question under Standing Order 71.

Following and noting section 7 in the last minutes of Diocesan Synod, how will the Diocese help parishes financially to reach net zero when they are reliant on fossil fuels, in particular change their oil fired and gas systems to a carbon neutral system?

Tim Sweeting was invited to respond.

The commitment to NZC by 2030 is an ambitious target and every diocese is focused on how best to achieve it with limited resources available. Our own plan was agreed by Synod in November 2023, and the NZC Working Group has been co-ordinating efforts to deliver this. We know that our parishes are the stewards of a huge number of ancient church buildings, many in rural areas, where the options to change from fossil fuel systems are limited, and beyond the means of those responsible for their care. These are challenges facing every diocese but are particularly challenging for us.

A number of churches locally are already driving forward with this agenda, and it is wonderful to see the energy and determination of those early adopters. Our aim is to enable as many churches to join in as possible. This is also the aim of the national church who are working on ways to release funding and support. The Parish Support Team is working to ensure all of these opportunities are secured by parishes in this diocese, including financial support for those churches wanting to change their oil fired and gas systems to a carbon neutral system.

We have made two successful applications under the Church Buildings Council's Net Zero Carbon Demonstrator Churches scheme. These envisage financial support for the installation of solar panels and ASHP at St Peter Mancroft in Norwich, and for feasibility studies and technical support for a major environmental project at Great Yarmouth Minster. There will be further similar rounds of funding under this scheme. The Diocese also expects to receive a share of the £2.4 million to be disbursed under the Church Buildings Commission's Net Zero Carbon 'Quick Wins' programme, which will support small scale decarbonisation projects such as new LED lighting, pew heaters, insulation, or upgrades to electric supply.

In addition to this, other initiatives are being launched to increase income or reduce expenditure for local churches. For example, the Parish Buying Scheme are facilitating the installation of Electric Vehicle charging points in church car parks to provide income to churches, and joint procurement of heated cushions nationally will also provide cheaper solutions for heating people rather than buildings over the winter months while delivering our environmental objectives. There is now a wealth of national guidance available including 'technical webinars for non-technical people'.

Ed Cotterill, our new Environmental and Sustainability Officer, funded by the national church, will be starting with us at the beginning of April, and will be a focal point for this support moving forward.

Closing Prayers were led by Revd Dr Patrick Richmond.

The Bishop of Norwich formally thanked Alan Cole, who would be leaving his role as the Director of Property shortly and noted that this would be his last meeting of Diocesan Synod in his current role.

The Bishop of Norwich gave the Blessing and the meeting ended 12:20.

Appendix 1

**Feedback from Vacancies Session – Diocesan Synod 23rd March 2024
Recruitment and Reaching Out**

What could be done differently - Summary
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be proactive • Clergy, LLMs etc involved in consultation of candidates • Look at needs for parish
Retention strategy: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Curate focus, actively seeking good fit for future ministry • What does Norfolk & the Diocese have to offer
Profile: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clearer vision for ministry • Distinctive deacons • Facilitate housing and area information • Wellbeing • What does Norfolk & the Diocese have to offer ?
Good support <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Central support for local roles (eg cleaning, admin) • Support additional costs for transport for spouse accessing paid work • Induction package (pre-application) • Creativity around where funding comes from
Best idea
HR Planning: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proactive, expecting retirement • Preparation of profile • those with potential identified
Clearer vision for ministry (ordained & lay) (including theological rationale etc mutual flourishing)
Make the basic job more manageable: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • eg more central support. • The man and its message is still more important than our monuments and management

Vocations and Growing Ministries

What could be done differently - Summary
Encourage diversity of ministries: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • of age (young people, middle aged and older) • of abilities • of underrepresented groups
Communication/recruitment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive social media • Involvement in schools and universities • Stay in touch with people
Funding for more lay/youth ministries
Flexibility around worship and buildings

What could be done differently? - Summary
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognising the abundance which is 'in the pew' • Expertise within the community - awareness of breath of possibilities • Priesthood of all believers
Joint education and training on certain topics/issues for clergy, LLMs, AWAs, PCC members, Churchwardens
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Templates with job description • collate, integrate and communicate pathways - APAs - ministry to children and young people
Intentional development and proactive succession planning
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making it simpler for people to exercise lay ministry • Ensure that what we do is known and why we do it is also known (including flexibility) • Increase use of Church of England Ministry Experience Scheme, Time for God etc
Best idea
Encouraging a diversity of ministries (the possibilities are endless)
Culture that fosters vocations: national - diocesan - local
Flexibility - make everything centred on the need of those called
Preaching on every member ministry, the Body of Christ and particular roles that need filling

Lay Ministry

Best idea
<p>Enable all in Ministry to enable others to grow in ministry;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anyone in diocesan leadership should sign up to an agreement that their prime purpose is to enable the ministry of others. • For clergy follow up at MDR. Increase use of cemes, time for God etc. • Develop Junior pathways eg junior warden etc so that vocation is inculcate from age 7+, with excellent safeguarding
More training for lay people with templates given for job description and forms
Share best practice:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give confidence + encouragement

Appendix 1 (cont)

**Summary of responses – ‘What does the Diocese of Norwich do well?’
from Diocesan Synod on 23 March 2024**

Doing well	Develop/do more of
Parish Support Team: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • good support from Finance Team • good support from Property Team • good presence on social media and website 	Administration support for clergy
Good support from senior staff, archdeacons	Encourage curates to stay locally
Clergy wellbeing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • high priority • full time counsellor • grants for clergy families 	Profile template - Enhance rural ministry - show more of the good
LLMs AWAs Committed volunteers	Reinstate induction - develop sense of being valued - 2-way expectations - counselling for LLMs and AWAs
DBoE, schoolwork good reputation	Up the Eco Church, Environmental Issues and Care for Creation
Eco Church and Environmental Issues Care for Creation	Housing for clergy
Strong contribution to local communities	Articulate and focus on vision - more engagement with wider community
Shared Vocation Spaces	
More diverse than people think: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • broad church atmosphere • openness to change • welcoming and inclusive 	

Appendix 2

We are paying attention to...

Deepening faith - increasing growth. Accessibility - Accessible churches and facilities. Draw in more support to sustain our buildings.

Care for Building as a village focus.

Confidence in presence.

Ministry with LGBT+ people.

Viability - keeping the church alive by funding it. Can't raise enough money to pay for full-time clergy.

Sustainable governance.

Finding a new incumbent.

Youth and Children Work Children, Young People and Families Mission to Young Families Young people Families work. Serve the children and community, build bridges to call them into the church community. Deeper discipleship for young people. Encourage young family and young people in the church. Growing a younger church. Engagement with schools.

As a joint project between the local church school and the church a children's choir is to be formed. They will sing in our monthly praise and worship service we hope this will encourage the children and their family members - a grant has been obtained to provide the children with robes to encourage belonging.

Organising holiday clubs using leaders other than members. Inclusion. Enabling schools to play a role in the church mission. Involve young people. Growing Work with our non-church schools through open the book and other links. Reach out to unchurched members of the community including children youth and families.

Enable more schools to be involved in our racial justice network and activity.

So few CYPF in church, but many schools in the parish. Spread outreach to support R.E. in more community schools.

Continue to reach out to children and families where relationships have been built over many years.

Being disciples who make disciples. Nurture discipleship. Making disciples. Who will serve the community when we are too old?

Education and Training. Encourage and value lay ministry in the church not as pseudo clergy but recognised in their own right. Engagement with irregular churchgoers. Including those who join us via livestreams.

The Vicars. Releasing vocations. What must be done. Eco Church Group joining facilitator in Parish.

Silver Eco-church. Eco Church Group joining facilitator in Parish.

Consult with Anchor people in the community. Building community. Community connection. Re-engaging with community. A Palpable presence in the community. Find new ways to care for forgotten rural communities when other agencies have gone.

Work better as Christ's body at the heart of our community. Connecting sections of community together in sacramental worship

Assisting those struggling with cost of living crisis. Cost-of living

Developing the church the community by providing more opportunities for organisation to help the church. Engage with families to encourage them to come to church. Engage with families and schools

Discipling asylum seekers. Discipling those with historic abuse or addiction. Disciple young people (and all people).

Engage more deeply with Cathedral visitors and pilgrims.

Encouraging a visibly prayerful presence in multiple parishes.

Work with all village organisations who bring fullness of life to all people showing love matters. Reaching out to the lonely of our parish

Pastoral care of the elderly. Care for community. Extended pastoral teams to encompass elderly across the whole village. Building pastoral visiting teams APAs to fund this. Reaching the margins.

Mustard tree church.

Working together as a community to continue outreach to the local community to welcome them into the church.

Going out and not just waiting for people to come to us. To reach out more to the communities who do not worship with us.

Reaching the unchurched and sharing the gospel. Be transparent in our witness n more outreach. Praying for the growth of our congregations. Grow congregation. Telling people the good news.
Deepening partnership in wider community e.g., teaching English to refugees and asylum seekers.
Reach our new housing areas with the good news of Jesus. Caring for the community, everyone.
Extend pastoral ministry. Embracing. Welcoming.
Deeper & Wider spreading our Christian influences across our community. To be full of grace and truth as we are biblically faithful. Biblical faithfulness. Growing and deepening congregational faith. Discerning & sensitive. Prayer not money. Proactive prophetic prayer in our communities. Collaboration between benefices. Grow together at the core. Homeless. Discern a viable way forward for our multi-parish benefices.
Be open to all faiths and alternative world views. Differences in opinion. Creating a unified benefice.
Supporting each other across a benefice of parishes

Our Next Steps are:

Creating time for specialist tasks. Look at parish grouping that can provide administrative support for future incumbent so they can do their core job. PCC members roles clarified. Employ youth worker and pastoral assistant. Use IT to effectively engage with community.
Advertising coupled with increasing prayer pressure. Access funding. Awareness of parish share need. Apply for Lottery community grant to bring these organisation together under the banner of a Caring Village.
Be more explicit about our inclusivity. Step back and let other do some work for the church. Getting it through the DAC. Children's choir – building confidence joy and learning. FISH (food in school holidays). To employ a youth worker or volunteer for this ministry.
Reengaging parents and schools. Young people in church. Seek a trained youth leader. After school club.
Strengthening of our Junior Choir.
Construct a plan to address making space for children, young people and young families.
Encourage children and families to becoming involved in our church which has a considerable congregation of 'older' members.
Encouraging children into the church e.g. Youth club, Sunday school, messy church. Listen to the young people in church, in church school, in baptism families. Grow our mission to families and schools. Youth and children's clubs. Developing school chaplaincy – focus on primary schools. Afterschool club proposed at primary schools – hope to make connections with secondary school. Work with young families – stay and play starting next year. Discern how to build Open the Book and create new opportunities create opportunities with non-church schools. Children, Young people and families. Preparing and supporting children and young people in the church. Inviting people to our children's workshops to get further included. Seek out and develop relationship with those already offering school chaplaincy. Promote the importance of RE to all schools church and non-church. Work with young families and adults to plan for the future. Fresh expression/worshipping community aimed at families. Strengthen and develop ministry team. Commitment to discipleship and working together. More support for struggling parishes especially rural. To develop home groups. To encourage vision and enhance Christian character. Starting small, building confidence in people. Discerning with congregation how to nourish faith.
In each parish, identify energy and channel it. Equipping congregations to be disciple makers. To forge friendships with biblically faithful groups. Bible study for discussion meetings to bring church together. Congregation buy-in – not much has happened in years in mindset, change is required. Allow worship to reflect aspirations and achievements of the village. Continue teaching the priority of biblical teaching and bible listening. Explore new forms of liturgy by listening, encouraging, planning, celebrating, together worshipping together.
Prayer walk maps and group to facilitate.
Establish enquiries course.
Join authorised Pastoral Assistant scheme. To encourage AWAs and APAs. Training members in welcoming internationals/asylum seekers.
Release of gifts.
Encourage and equip more to take responsibility for the life of the church.
Empower and enable churches to evolve and find new models of ministry. Eg training and resources.
APA Training. Develop lay ministry in the benefice. Responding to requests from members of the congregation for education and training.

Develop people as teachers/leaders. Train our lay pastoral team. Develop Eco team. Using the Church as hub for recycling, Wildlife Trust for church land.

Eco Church – Gold! Better recycling bins.

Pastoral care. Community Larder. Engage communities and second-homers with our wonderful heritage.

Building links working with local community. Connect with each other.

Leave our buildings.

Involve local people more.

Fresh ways of connecting to people who join our area. Friends of the church group. Growth of friends group to include supporters who do not attend church regularly.

Developing opportunities for people to come and hear that Jesus came to earth to save people from their sins, specifically at newly launches Sunday intergenerational service.

Develop some new approaches to ‘church’ discipleship and ministry.

Role out our racial justice programmes and resources and bid for funding from racial justice unit.

Reaching communities where they are and engaging with them to invite to activities.

Encouraging a greater cross-section of church community to engage with Christ.

Bingo once a month as a response to warm/wellness.

Becoming more missional in our intentions

Find more ways to outreach beyond coffee mornings (reinstate parish newsletter?)

Homeless Project (Diocese help).

Project Planning (Diocese help).

Wellbeing Group in the new year.

Stability of worship, finance, presence.

Pray. Lots of prayer for more or different resources. Prayer and conversation. Listening and praying. Praying.

Listening to each the across parish boundaries; praying together. Disagreements to be solved. Growing together during challenges. Once we are officially a benefice, to work on identifying a ‘Benefice Council’. Communicate – write articles, publish pictures. Shape new times of consultation and care.

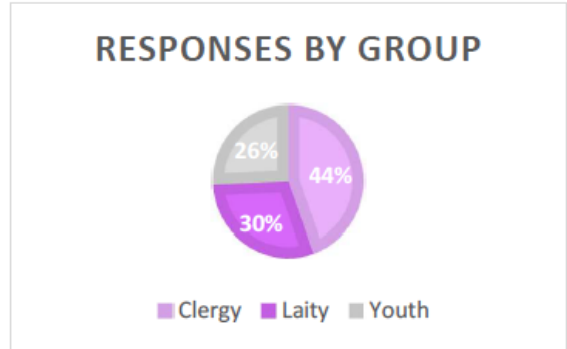
Create unity. Talk about inclusive church.

Appendix 2 (cont)

“What three words best describe your life as a Christian?”

On 21/11/2023, we asked this question to three groups across two venues.

- Clergy and Laity attending Diocesan Synod, of which 51 individuals responded with 150 words.
- Young people of high school age attending a youth activity event, not all of which express a Christian faith. 19 individuals responded with 52 words.
- 70 individuals responded with 202 words.



Top responses overall were:

Prayerful, Hopeful, Fulfilling, Community, Joyful, Purposeful, Service, Catholic, Forgiving, Surprising, Challenging, Confusing, Frustrated



Many examples of synonyms for busy and tired were also represented in the data from Synod, along with a sense of value of tradition.

Among the Youth surveyed,

“Lord hear our prayer” were top responses along with *“Confusing”* and *“Complicated”*

