

ELY DIOCESAN SYNOD

Minutes of a Meeting of the Ely Diocesan Synod held St Mary's Ely, on 11 March 2023 starting at 9.00am

The meeting opened with Eucharist led by the Bishop of Ely followed by the commissioning of the Revd Mandy Flaherty, Development Officer for Schools' Mission and the Revd Catherine Wright as Diocesan Director of Ordinands

Canon Simon Kershaw, Chair of the House of Laity, in the Chair

- 1. Apologies for Absence received** House of Clergy 14 House of Laity 17
2. There being one minor adjustment to the **Minutes** of Diocesan Synod held on 15 October 2022, they were then signed by the Chair. There were no **Matters Arising**.
3. **Safeguarding Update:** Ms Rebecca Boswell, Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor, presented her update. 42 referrals to date had been received and there are 21 Safeguarding Agreements in place. 74% of parishes have now signed up to the Safeguarding Parish Dashboards and the roll out of Safeguarding Hubs is proving successful. The system for carrying out digital DBS checks has been implemented and the next expected stage is to offer digital Right to Work Checks. Safeguarding training updates are being automated; the training materials for Leadership are being updated and modules on Spiritual Abuse and Trauma practices should be available before long.
4. **Presidential Address:** The Bishop of Ely reflected on the tragic death of the Revd Canon Anna Matthews in early March. He observed that the House of Bishops is very concerned about the Illegal Immigration Bill going through Parliament. Bishop Stephen then reassured members of Synod that the College of Bishops recognise the concerns relating to using the draft prayers prepared for Living in Love and Faith. There is currently no ability to ask for use of the prayers as they are not yet made available. This will be discussed further at the meeting of General Synod in July. A meeting with the Diocesan Evangelical Fellowship is to be held on 16 March 2023.
5. **Report from General Synod representatives:** Mr Christopher Townsend and Dr Felicity Cooke each gave a presentation relating to the developments in Living in Love and Faith (LLF). Dr Cooke reported on the consideration at General Synod of LLF. There were three agenda items in all: discussion in small groups of the findings of the House of Bishops and the draft Prayers of Love and Faith; responses to 142 Questions submitted relating to the House of Bishops' proposals, and eight hours of debate on the motion presented by the House of Bishops. In all 27 amendments to the motion were discussed, of which one was passed. The final vote was 57% for the motion as amended, 41% against and 2% abstained.

Mr Townsend reported that the members of General Synod disagreed deeply, noting again that the draft prayers are not yet made available, that current legal advice on aspects of the proposals are not yet definitive and that further work is to be carried out. The House of Bishops lead, the Bishop of London, confirmed that more work on the proposals would be carried out before the further sessions on LLF taking place at the July meeting of General Synod.

Two questions were raised under S086, both relating to LLF, from Mrs Sarah Robinson (Cambridge North) to the Bishop of Ely: *Some 56% of General Synod recently voted to accept the Bishops' proposals for further refinement of the prayers of blessing and affirmation for same sex couples, whilst ensuring that in their final form they should not be contrary to or indicative of a departure from the doctrine on marriage. Yet there is a 41% minority but nevertheless significant minority who voted against. Can the Bishop of Ely tell us what consideration has been given to steps which can be taken*

to ensure that the theological views of this substantial minority are represented, and valued, within the senior staff team and on Diocesan committees and indicate what such steps would involve?

and from Revd Tom Simpson (Cambridge North) to the chair of Bishop's Council:

Reporting from London Diocese (amongst other places) indicates a likely significant and wide-reaching impact on that diocese from the implementation of the Bishops' Response to Living in Love and Faith. While every diocese has its own particular circumstances, what risk or impact assessment does the Diocesan Board of Finance and Bishop's Council plan to undertake before July 2023 when General Synod next meets (and what methodologies will be used for such assessment) to assess the potential impact on the Diocese over the next 12-18 months, and over the next 10 years in relation to:

- (a) average Sunday attendance;
- (b) ministry to children and younger people;
- (c) parish share contributions;
- (d) deanery development planning?

Both of which were answered by Bishop Stephen. There then followed questions from the floor.

6. The Ven Hugh McCurdy and Revd Peter Leech gave a presentation about **Deanery Development Planning**, deployment and sustainability. They explored the topics of mission and outreach, effective use of church buildings, the offer of a mixed ecology of worship, increasing the number of missionary disciples, working with children and young people and growing the levels of community engagement.

Revd Canon Sarah Gower, Chair of the House of Clergy, in the Chair

7. Geoffrey Hunter, Head of Church Buildings and Pastoral Department, presented the findings of **REACHEly** focussing on issues surrounding church governance. He identified a range of options enabled by changes in the Church Representation Rules (2020) which encompassed PCC-run churches, churches administered by Joint PCCs and Festival Churches both run by Friends and those cared for under the new Ely Church Buildings Committee.

8. Canon Paul Evans elaborated on the distributed report from the most recent meeting of **Bishop's Council** advising that Revd Canon Brian Atling, former Chair of the Board of Finance (and current Vice Chair), continues to hold a brief for Ministry Share matters. He advised that it was hoped to have the new Diocesan offices open by summer 2024. The new role of Deputy Director for Planning would focus on the implementation of the Deanery Development Planning process, drafting Ely2035 and the production of grant applications for strategic funding from the national church and other grant providers for developing mission in new communities, the development of local leadership and work with children and young people.

6. **Business of the Ely Diocesan Board of Finance:** Revd Canon Brian Atling advised Synod members that the annual audit was in process; that 95% of requested Ministry Share for 2022 had been received and that there was a small reduction in the anticipated deficit for 2022 (approx. £131,000 against the original projected deficit of £161,000).

The meeting closed with prayer and the Bishop's blessing at 12.55pm

Dates for 2023 meetings: 11 March (morning) / 14 June (evening) / 14 October (morning)