



BIRMINGHAM DIOCESAN SYNOD (DS)

Saturday 26 March 2022 at 9.30am
St Peter's Church, Highfield Road, Hall Green, Birmingham, B28 0BT

MINUTES

1. Prayers, Welcome, Apologies, Previous Minutes and Bishop's Briefing

Prayers were led by the Revd Canon Martin Stephenson, Vicar at St Peter's Church, Hall Green.

The Revd Trevor Thurston-Smith was welcomed to the Diocese as Vicar of St Matthew, Perry Beeches. The Bishop acknowledged the apologies given before the meeting and noted that no further amendments to the Minutes of DS 211113 had been received so they stand as agreed by Bishop's Council.

RESOLUTION: The Diocesan Synod approved the Minutes of DS 211113

2. Report of the Proceedings of General Synod

Bishop David reported on the November 2021 sessions of the General Synod on behalf of the Revd Canon Priscilla White and Mr Guy Hordern reported on the February 2022 sessions on behalf of Mrs Dawn Brathwaite. A copy of both reports is attached to the Minutes.

3. Proclamation of the Vacancy in See Committees Regulation 1993 as amended

RESOLUTION: The President proclaimed the resolution approving the Vacancy in See Committees Regulation 1993 in the form it takes following its amendment in July 2021.

Copies of the Instrument proclaiming and affirming the Vacancy in See Committees Regulation as an Act of Synod can be found [here](#).

4. Strategic Review Update

Bishop Anne spoke about the vision for the next season of life together as Church of England Birmingham. Transforming Church – "Growing Churches at the Heart of Each Community" remains the vision for CofEB, rooted in the Five Marks of Mission which are shared by the Anglican Communion.

The priorities for delivering Transforming Church have been refreshed and Archdeacon Jenny Tomlinson shared the list of core principles. For funded strategic programmes there will be a focus on growing new disciples through existing parish growth, revitalisations and church plants. It was noted that as a church, we cannot become younger or more diverse without reaching new disciples. We also need to have the right structures and culture in place; and a plan for sustainability.

The Revd Canon Dr Mark Pryce shared a reflection on the opportunity to be re-rooted in, and share in, the life of God in a fresh way. God's life of love is at the centre – creating, redeeming and sustaining. As followers of Jesus we are drawn into this life and, as Anglicans, are called to Proclaim, Serve, Teach, Transform the Unjust and Sustain Creation (the 5 Marks of Mission). This will take particular shapes at particular times and for us in Birmingham at this time it is through Transforming Church. The summary slides are attached to the minutes.

Bishop Anne shared some of the work that is already taking place through the Mission, Discipleship and Ministry Teams. She concluded by asking those present to reflect on what part each person can play as individual baptised Christians and in their role as synod members.

Bishop David ended this section by giving examples of Christians sharing their faith in their own lives. We create structures to allow for the work of the Holy Spirit. He reminded us of our shared responsibility.

5. Update from the Reference Group for Racial Justice

The Revd Canon Bamidele Sotonwa and the Revd Calvert Prentis gave an update (a copy of their notes are attached) and asked Synod members to discuss in small groups their understanding of the Lament to Action report in their own contexts.

6. Living in Love and Faith

The Revd Dr Sally Nash, LLF Advocate Diocese of Birmingham, gave an update on Living in Love and Faith. A full paper was circulated prior to the meeting [DS 220326 6] and a copy of Sally's presentation is attached to the Minutes.

The period of church-wide engagement in learning, listening and discerning began in November 2020 and finished on 30 April 2022. The multiple ways in which the learning, reflections and experiences of church-wide engagement have been offered through the questionnaire, focus groups and creative responses will be gathered and published in September 2022. The College of Bishops will produce proposals for General Synod in February 2023.

Questions and comments:

- The process has been well received and has helped to open-up conversations.
- A concern was raised that, because of the need for accessibility for all, the depth of theological content in the actual course was not always sufficient. It was noted that supplementary material is available on the LLF website.
- How many Bishops have attended this course? Bishop David confirmed that West Midlands Bishops have participated as part of their regional gathering and that all Bishops are being encouraged to take part in the course.
- As attendance is self-selected, will the feedback be representative? Sally Nash confirmed that specialist researchers have been used to seek input from potentially underrepresented groups and also the opportunity for individuals to watch the material and feedback individual responses if they did not want to attend with other participants.

7. Environmental Update

Mr Dan Mayes (Property Director) gave an update on the Carbon Emissions Report. A copy of his presentation is attached to the minutes. A huge effort has gone into gathering the data for the report and, although the data may not be 100% complete, the report does give a good starting point. A table of comparisons with other dioceses is included in the presentation. The next stage is for the Net Zero Group to produce an action plan with high-level costings.

The Revd Canon Douglas Machiridza is facilitating a network for the deanery environmental champions to encourage more local involvement.

8. BDBF Office

Mr Dan Mayes (Property Director) gave an update on the relocation of the DBF Offices from One Colmore Row to the Citadel, Corporation Street.

The choice was made following a thorough options analysis reviewed by FIPS and Bishop's Council. The key points to note are that the new building has good accessibility with ground floor meeting facilities; the building will be net zero; public transport links are excellent; and the costs are better than current (and significantly better than future expectations of the charges in the current building). In addition, we will be working with a landlord organisation which shares our values and ethos.

9. Clergy Wellbeing Covenant Update

The Revd Canon Becky Stephens had planned to speak on behalf of the Revd Canon Priscilla White who is unable to attend due to illness, but unfortunately Becky herself was ill and so the Revd Canon Louise Shaw stepped in at late notice to co-facilitate this item with the Revd Canon Dr Mark Pryce.

An update, a document on 'wellbeing in work and life' and a 'clergy wellbeing' diagram had been circulated prior to the meeting. [DS 220326 9a, 9b and 9c]

The Revd Canon Dr Mark Pryce reminded the meeting that Synod had adopted the clergy wellbeing covenant in March 2021. Bishop David then set up a wellbeing advisory group. The previously circulated reports were produced by this group. Mark noted the importance of clergy being aware of all the support available to them and making the link between the support and their wellbeing. The report summarises the priorities and areas for development. In particular, helping PCCs to engage in deeper conversation about how to support the covenant.

Louise and Mark then posed a series of questions related to clergy wellbeing which highlighted the need for clarity and consistency as there were several different opinions and answers to each question.

There were several comments in support of the work of the advisory group but a recognition that the good wellbeing work can be undermined if clergy feel they are being asked to do too much. They do not always have teams to support them (some struggle to build teams, feeling the expectation is for them to do everything).

10. Motion passed to Diocesan Synod by Ms Caroline Egan (Kings Norton, Shirley & Moseley) and Mr John Heywood (Aston & Sutton Coldfield) on behalf of the Birmingham Anglican Climate Action group (BACA):

That this Synod, recognising that

- (a) There is a global climate emergency caused by global warming, and that this is a crisis for God's creation;*
- (b) The principal cause of global warming is the extraction, processing and, primarily, burning of fossil fuels;*
- (c) In 2015, Birmingham Diocesan Synod passed a motion calling on the National Investing Bodies to begin divestment from fossil fuel companies;*
- (d) General Synod committed in 2018 to divest, by 2023, from fossil fuel companies that are not aligned with the Paris Agreement goal of limiting global heating to well below two degrees Centigrade above pre-industrial levels;*
- (e) Since then, there have been further developments including (i) CCLA, the Church of England's fund manager, deciding to divest from some major fossil fuel companies on the grounds of financial risk; (ii) in autumn 2021, the International Energy Agency reporting that, to meet the Paris Agreement goal of 1.5 degrees Centigrade, the now internationally agreed goal, there must be no new prospecting for fossil fuels or commencement of extraction from new sources; and (iii) in November 2021, the Transition Pathway Initiative (TPI) reporting that only one in ten major energy companies are on a pathway to align with that Paris target;*
- (f) Birmingham Diocese has direct investments in fossil fuel companies that are not aligned with that Paris Agreement target, and are committed to further prospecting and new extraction;*
- (g) As a small investor, Birmingham Diocese has no leverage to persuade fossil fuel companies to change course. As the Diocese representing England's second city, however, it has, in making the decision to divest from fossil fuels, the potential to be a force for good beyond its physical and financial size, and in so doing, along, among others, with seven other Anglican dioceses and the Anglican Church of Southern Africa, live out the fifth Anglican Mark of Mission;*

therefore determines to:-

- (1) Divest by 31st December 2022 from those fossil fuel companies in which it holds direct investments, and move promptly towards climate-positive investments;*
- (2) Identify whether investment/unit trusts held on its behalf include fossil fuel companies, and if so, divest from the same by 31st March 2023, and move promptly towards climate-positive investments; and*
- (3) Refrain from investments in fossil fuel companies going forward.*
- (4) Insofar as the passing of this Motion requires it, the Synod authorises the Diocesan Board of Finance to take the actions specified in paragraphs (1) and (2), incur the fees and charges properly associated with such change in investments, and to expend the sum so incurred.*

The Very Revd Matt Thompson (Dean of Birmingham) to move this amendment to the motion:

In (1) remove "Divest by 31st December 2022" and insert "Following a review of BDF investment strategy during 2022 and a full understanding of the impact of divestment, recommend to Diocesan Synod, by 31st December 2022, a route to divestment"

Replace (2) with "As part of the review of DBF investment strategy, identify whether investment/unit trusts held on its behalf include fossil fuel companies, and if so, identify the impact of divestment and recommend to Diocesan Synod by 31st March 2023 a route to divesting from the same, and move promptly towards climate-positive investments; and"

Remove (4)

Ms Caroline Egan introduced the motion giving reasons why divestment from fossil fuels is important and urgent. A background paper had been issued prior to the meeting [DS 220326 10]. She noted that climate change disproportionately affects the poorer in society and that continued investment in fossil fuels goes against Marks of Mission 4 and 5. In recognition of The Very Revd Matt Thompson's amendment, she moved to amend the original motion as follows

in (1) remove '31st December 2022' and insert '31st December 2023'

in (2) remove '31st March 2023' and insert '31st December 2023'

Remove (4)

The Very Revd Matt Thompson formally proposed this new amendment which was accepted by Synod.

The president opened the floor for debate on the amended motion.

Mr Julian Philips (Yardley & Solihull Deanery) spoke against the motion, saying that it is important to ensure the supply of oil and gas in the short term while new energy sources are explored.

Mr Adam North (Kings Norton, Moseley & Shirley Deanery) spoke in favour, relating the need to divest as soon as possible with the rising costs of energy bills and the resulting social factors.

Mr Jonathan Goll (Warley & Edgbaston Deanery) spoke in favour, focussing on the reputational risk for Church of England particularly among younger generations.

The Revd Tim Bateman (Handsworth & Central Deanery) spoke in favour of divesting as soon as possible and was against the extended timescales. He said we should be taking a lead in society on environmental matters.

The Revd Jodie Brown (Kings Norton, Moseley & Shirley Deanery) spoke in favour, noting the Church of England Birmingham's integrity is at stake and highlighting that many other faith institutions have already divested.

There were no further comments.

The resolution was accepted by a majority with 6 against and no abstentions.

RESOLUTION: The Diocesan Synod accepted the amendments and adopted the motion put forward by Ms Caroline Egan (Kings Norton, Shirley & Moseley) and Mr John Heywood (Aston & Sutton Coldfield) on behalf of the Birmingham Anglican Climate Action group (BACA) amended as follows:

That this Synod, recognising that

- (a) There is a global climate emergency caused by global warming, and that this is a crisis for God's creation;*
- (b) The principal cause of global warming is the extraction, processing and, primarily, burning of fossil fuels;*
- (c) In 2015, Birmingham Diocesan Synod passed a motion calling on the National Investing Bodies to begin divestment from fossil fuel companies;*
- (d) General Synod committed in 2018 to divest, by 2023, from fossil fuel companies that are not aligned with the Paris Agreement goal of limiting global heating to well below two degrees Centigrade above pre-industrial levels;*
- (e) Since then, there have been further developments including (i) CCLA, the Church of England's fund manager, deciding to divest from some major fossil fuel companies on the grounds of financial risk; (ii) in autumn 2021, the International Energy Agency reporting that, to meet the Paris Agreement goal of 1.5 degrees Centigrade, the now internationally agreed goal, there must be no new prospecting for fossil fuels or commencement of extraction from new sources; and (iii) in November 2021, the Transition Pathway Initiative (TPI) reporting that only one in ten major energy companies are on a pathway to align with that Paris target;*
- (f) Birmingham Diocese has direct investments in fossil fuel companies that are not aligned with that Paris Agreement target, and are committed to further prospecting and new extraction;*
- (g) As a small investor, Birmingham Diocese has no leverage to persuade fossil fuel companies to change course. As the Diocese representing England's second city, however, it has, in making the decision to divest from fossil fuels, the potential to be a force for good beyond its physical and financial size, and in so doing, along, among others, with seven other Anglican dioceses and the Anglican Church of Southern Africa, live out the fifth Anglican Mark of Mission;*

therefore determines to:-

- (1) Divest by 31st December 2023 from those fossil fuel companies in which it holds direct investments, and move promptly towards climate-positive investments;*
- (2) Identify whether investment/unit trusts held on its behalf include fossil fuel companies, and if so, divest from the same by 31st December 2023, and move promptly towards climate-positive investments; and*
- (3) Refrain from investments in fossil fuel companies going forward.*

11. Questions

11.1a Question from the Revd Canon Priscilla White (General Synod Representative)

Three years ago, in February 2019 General Synod debated the issues facing Gypsies, Travellers and Roma. On 23 February 2019 General Synod passed a motion that called on every diocese to appoint a chaplain to serve these communities.

The motion (as amended) was as follows.

'That this Synod, mindful of the Church of England's commitment to combat racism in all its manifestations:

- a) call upon the Church's leadership, including the Lords Spiritual, other bishops, senior staff, the Mission and Public Affairs Division and others, to speak out publicly against racism and hate crime directed against Gypsies, Irish Travellers and Roma, and urge the media to stop denigrating and victimising these communities;
- b) request every diocese to appoint a chaplain to Gypsies, Travellers and Roma, to provide pastoral care, harness the potential for church growth among these communities and help combat racism in the Church and wider communities;

c) request the Mission and Public Affairs Council, in its forthcoming work on housing, to evaluate the importance of provision of sites for Gypsies and Travellers in wider housing policy, and recommend Church bodies to play their part in lobbying for and enabling land to be made available for such sites; and

d) request the Lords Spiritual and staff of the National Church Institutions to meet with representatives from Her Majesty's Government and Loyal Opposition, as well as leaders from Local Government, including the Local Government 24 Association, to co-ordinate and collaborate on shared plans to make traveller stopping points available across England, to develop community cohesion.'

Whilst aware of conflicting priorities, pandemic and many other factors, has any progress been made within Church of England Birmingham under section (b)

11.1b Answer from Bishop David

Having looked into this, it appears that while neighbouring dioceses may have more Gypsies, Travellers and Roma in their care, we have few people of this background in the Diocese of Birmingham. Therefore, CofE Birmingham has not appointed a specific chaplain to this group. If, and when, a specific need and vocation arises, we will consider the appointment of a chaplain. We should be glad to hear of any need and any vocation to minister to this important group.

12. The Blessing

On behalf of Diocesan Synod, Bishop David thanked the Revd Canon Martin Stephenson and the parish helpers of St Peter's, Hall Green for hosting the meeting.

The next meetings of Diocesan Synod are:

Thursday 14 July 2022

Saturday 12 November 2022

Saturday 25 March 2023

Thursday 13 July 2023

Saturday 18 November 2023

Synod adjourned at 1pm with prayers led by Bishop David, followed by the Blessing.

Summary of Resolutions

Agenda Item	Resolution
1.	The Diocesan Synod approved the minutes of DS 211113
3.	The President proclaimed the resolution approving the Vacancy in See Committees Regulation 1993 in the form it takes following its amendment in July 2021.
10.	<p>This Synod, recognising that</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) There is a global climate emergency caused by global warming, and that this is a crisis for God's creation; (b) The principal cause of global warming is the extraction, processing and, primarily, burning of fossil fuels; (c) In 2015, Birmingham Diocesan Synod passed a motion calling on the National Investing Bodies to begin divestment from fossil fuel companies; (d) General Synod committed in 2018 to divest, by 2023, from fossil fuel companies that are not aligned with the Paris Agreement goal of limiting global heating to well below two degrees Centigrade above pre-industrial levels; (e) Since then, there have been further developments including (i) CCLA, the Church of England's fund manager, deciding to divest from some major fossil fuel companies on the grounds of financial risk; (ii) in autumn 2021, the International Energy Agency reporting that, to meet the Paris Agreement goal of 1.5 degrees Centigrade, the now internationally agreed goal, there must be no new prospecting for fossil fuels or commencement of extraction from new sources; and (iii) in November 2021, the Transition Pathway Initiative (TPI) reporting that only one in ten major energy companies are on a pathway to align with that Paris target; (f) Birmingham Diocese has direct investments in fossil fuel companies that are not aligned with that Paris Agreement target, and are committed to further prospecting and new extraction; (g) As a small investor, Birmingham Diocese has no leverage to persuade fossil fuel companies to change course. As the Diocese representing England's second city, however, it has, in making the decision to divest from fossil fuels, the potential to be a force for good beyond its physical and financial size, and in so doing, along, among others, with seven other Anglican dioceses and the Anglican Church of Southern Africa, live out the fifth Anglican Mark of Mission; <p style="text-align: center;">therefore determines to:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Divest by 31st December 2023 from those fossil fuel companies in which it holds direct investments, and move promptly towards climate-positive investments; (2) Identify whether investment/unit trusts held on its behalf include fossil fuel companies, and if so, divest from the same by 31st December 2023, and move promptly towards climate-positive investments; and (3) Refrain from investments in fossil fuel companies going forward.

Racial Justice Report to Diocesan Synod 26th March 2022

Update on “From Lament to Action” report by
Revd Canon Bamidele Sotonwa and Revd Calvert Prentis

‘From Lament to Action’ is the work of the Archbishops’ Anti-Racism Taskforce who called for urgent changes to culture of Church of England.

Last year, 2021 The Archbishops’ Anti-Racism Taskforce has published its report ‘From Lament to Action’ proposing a suite of changes to begin bringing about a change of culture in the life of the Church of England. It issues a warning that a failure to act could be a “last straw” for many people of UK Minority Ethnic (UKME) or Global Majority Heritage (GMH) backgrounds with “devastating effects” on the future of the Church.

The report sets out 47 specific actions for different arms of the Church of England to implement across five priority areas: participation, governance, training, education and young people.

Church of England Birmingham developed a racial equity strategy (shared previously) to guide the implementation and the report and to monitor the progress made and currently, the following have progress have been made:

- Interview panels as recommended by the report, now more diverse with the inclusion of one UKME panel members
- The school board headed by Dean Matt has made significant efforts to reflect diversity through the inclusion of members from the UKME background as board members.
- Also, the Cathedral is currently working on a placement scheme for UKME ordinands, curates and other clergy who may wish to explore cathedral ministry, to give a feel of what it means and discern whether it is right for them or not.
- The Cathedral is also working towards the recruitment of a Cathedral Chaplain whom they hope would be from the UKME background.
- Nominations for non-residentiary canons now include deserving UKME clergy as recommended in the report.
- The Director of Mission and Learning, the Revd Guy Donegan-Cross is working on a project that would see our churches being more intercultural.
- Gillian Sheail, Pathways Learning Manager, and I are also exploring possibilities of developing a reverse mentoring program, as recommended in the report, for Church of England Birmingham.
- Deaneries, under the leadership of Area Deans, have also taken up initiatives such as organising “walk of witness” to speak against racism as well as other activities to implement From lament to action report.
- Steps are ongoing to make the racial justice reference group to be more diverse and inclusive and updates on this will be presented soon.

While the progress report gives may be encouraging, there are still more significant steps to be taken most especially the recruitment of a Racial Justice Director for the diocese. Synod is encouraged to look for funds to help achieve this vision.

Revd Bamidele Sotonwa

Dele and I should not be standing here updating the Synod about the implementation of Lament to Action, rather different areas of Church of England Birmingham should be updating Synod on relevant progress. Lord Boateng in his address to General Synod stated that the issue of racial justice is for all of us. In our discussions regarding 5 marks of mission earlier, we mentioned the importance of all of these for the whole of society. Racial justice is living out the marks of mission, equality for all God's people. I often liken this to the imagine of the young/old women. It is often the case we only see the young or old. Some see both, however whatever you see, it is usually the case of someone trying, willing and helping others to see what you see. This is how we can all work together with regard to Lament to Action. We have to move from Lament to Action. When people say 'I do not see colour'. This disturbs me because it could be interpreted that a person's culture, identity and expression of worship is not seen or accepted. We are all God's creation. Lament to Action is about Racial Justice, which is a gospel imperative.

So rather than attempt the impossible of trying to update you of nothing we know about in your context we thought we would ask you how are things going.

In groups of 2 or 3's discuss the following:

- Have you seen the report Lament to Action
- Have you read Lament to Action
- What is your understanding of Lament to Action

Revd Calvert Prentis