



**BIRMINGHAM DIOCESAN SYNOD (DS)**

**Thursday 13 July 2023 at 7pm**

St Martin in the Bull Ring, Edgbaston Street, Birmingham, B5 5BB

**MINUTES**

**1. Prayers and Welcome**

Prayers and worship were led by the Revd Jeremy Allcock, Vicar at St Martin in the Bull Ring.

**2. Welcome to New People, Apologies and Previous Minutes**

Bishop Anne was delighted to announce the following new Curates to the diocese: the Revd Louise Beasley, Lickey & Blackwell; the Revd Peter Dalton, Anchor Church; the Revd Sarah Down, St Mary Bearwood; the Revd Liz Dumain, St Columba Banners Gate; the Revd Richard Haynes, Shirley; the Revd Julie Heathcote, Christ Church Yardley Wood; the Revd Peter Norman, SS Peter & Paul Water Orton, the Revd Martin Price, St Matthew Perry Beeches, the Revd George Reeves, St George Edgbaston, the Revd Alison Ridge, Holy Trinity Ward End with Bordesley Green, the Revd Sue Round, Garretts Green & Lea Hall, the Revd Wayne Simmonds, St Benedict South Yardley & Bordesley, the Revd Amy Tan, St Luke Birmingham.

Bishop Anne noted the apologies given before the meeting. No further amendments to the Minutes of DS 230325 had been received so they stand as agreed by Bishop's Council.

Due to the challenges of evening meetings, it was noted that all Diocesan Synod sessions would be taking place on Saturday mornings in 2024.

**RESOLUTION: The Diocesan Synod approved the Minutes of DS 230325**

**3. Bishop's Presidential Briefing**

Bishop Anne gave her Presidential Briefing, a copy of which is attached to the Minutes.

An animated film 'People & Places – the Next Two Years' was shown. The link to the film can be found [here](#).

**4. Report of the Proceedings of General Synod – July 2023**

The Revd Canon Douglas Machiridza (General Synod Representative) reported on the July 2023 session of the General Synod. A copy of his report is attached to the Minutes.

Mr Jonathan Goll (Warley & Edgbaston deanery) expressed his concern regarding the Independent Safeguarding Board by the Archbishops' Council.

Mr Adam Chinery-North (Kings Norton, Moseley & Shirley deanery) encouraged members to take an interest in the proceedings of General Synod in order to be more informed and present questions to our representatives. He felt there was a lack of trust in the safeguarding process and asked if thought had been given to using an outside agency on our behalf.

Bishop Anne replied that she could only respond to what was heard at General Synod. There is a commitment to developing independent scrutiny. She stated that a lot of progress had been made with implementing robust systems, particularly in dioceses.

## 5. Annual Report on Safeguarding

Ms Steph Haynes, Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser, and Ms Claire Wesley, Safeguarding Learning & Development Officer, gave a progress report on national developments in safeguarding in The Church of England. A copy of the presentation is attached to the Minutes.

It was reported that at the end of last year the Independent Chair of the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisory Panel (DSAP), Lis Fisher decided to step down from the role. Lis Chaired the group for many years and we are indebted to her for her leadership and service. At Easter a new Independent Chair was appointed. Geoff Taylor-Smith has many years of experience in social care and is also the Chair of Worcester's DSAP. We look forward to working with Geoff as he helps us to review our terms of reference and the way the group operates to provide scrutiny of safeguarding within the diocese.

Members noted that most of the IICSA recommendations focus on revising church structures to improve transparency and accountability and improving the way we engage with and respond to those with lived experience of abuse – these projects are ongoing.

Information sharing agreements are now in place between all dioceses and externally with all police forces in England. General Synod gave its approval for the next steps for the development of a national redress scheme and a link to information about the scheme is available via the Church of England Birmingham website, together with a link to an easy read guide of the national responding well to victims and survivors of abuse policy.

In Birmingham, as part of our ongoing journey of listening and learning towards responding well to individuals who disclose their experiences of abuse, our parish safeguarding co-ordinators heard from two survivors of church-based abuse at a deeply moving and thought-provoking day held in February.

Birmingham continues to be a pathfinder diocese as part of pilot project for the regional model. Participation in this project will be a key part of the diocesan safeguarding team's work until the end of 2023. The Church is currently commissioning auditors for dioceses and Cathedrals to be audited from 2024.

The final stage of the amendment of Canon 42 was approved by General Synod and bishops are now required to appoint a Diocesan Safeguarding Officer (DSO) rather than a Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor (DSA).

Members noted that the five safeguarding standards have been refined and developed into three tiers for each standard:

- Tier 1 – the standard statement – as per the slide
- Tier 2 – what good looks like indicators
- Tier 3 – a quality assurance handbook and toolkit

The consultation process ended on 2 June 2023. Feedback is currently being analysed and the standards will be refined before being published in due course. It is expected that each diocese will be audited by the national safeguarding team on one standard per year over a five-year rolling programme.

Birmingham has been using the National Case Management System since summer 2022:

- Recording consistent across the Church
- Easier to share information between dioceses
- Reduce risk when individuals move between dioceses
- Improved data analysis to identify themes and risks

There is an increasing number of new referrals to the team year on year as follows:

- **86** new safeguarding referrals
- **39** active cases
- **25** referrals made to external partners
- **12 serious** concerns reported to Charity Commission

Just over two thirds of the referrals the team receives relate to individuals who attend church or attend activities run by the church. Just under a third relate to individuals who hold a role within the church. Just under two thirds of our referrals relate to vulnerable adults or under 18s with the majority of these relating to vulnerable adults. A fifth relate to risk assessments for blemished DBS checks. Referrals for domestic abuse are growing as we begin to gain more awareness of this through training and media stories.

Alongside referrals the team also manage 15 safety plans for those known to pose a risk to others, and wish to attend a church.

Going forward all new safeguarding policies must be approved by General Synod. This will slow down the programme of policy renewal but should help to improve awareness and ownership of policies across the whole of the church. The Safeguarding Practice Reviews guidance went before General Synod this July. This is expected to be published on 31 July 2023 and it will then be brought

before this Synod for approval in due course. Policies scheduled for renewal in 2024 are much more focused on safeguarding in parishes.

In Church of England Birmingham we use the Parish Safeguarding Dashboard to help PCCs navigate the requirements of national policies and reassure themselves that they are complying with these requirements. The dashboard has three levels:

1. key policies and safeguarding arrangements
2. Checklist for activities with vulnerable groups
3. Specialist policies and safeguarding arrangements

Parishes start at level 1 and work their way to level 3.

We think that actual compliance levels may be higher than we can see from the Dashboard. 81% of lights on the Dashboard are red. This largely applies to areas of safeguarding that the PCC is required to review annually and then enter the review date on the Dashboard to ensure the light is kept green. The review may have taken place but the review date may not have been entered on the Dashboard. This assessment of why we have so many red 'non-compliance' lights is supported when we analyse activity, or rather inactivity, on the Dashboard. PCCs that have moved through the levels up to level 3 are actively using and updating their Dashboards. PCCs at level 1 have logged in and begun to use their Dashboard – but haven't updated it again for a year or longer – they're not actively using their Dashboard. We'll be sending reminders to these parishes to login and use their Dashboards over the summer and will be offering support via the Drop-ins.

To support parishes with recording DBS checks and training we've added a new tool to the Dashboard, called the Safeguarding Hub. We want all PCCs to keep their training and DBS records on the Hub going forward so that they're recorded confidentially and securely and transferred easily to a new person taking on the safeguarding co-ordinator or identity verifier roles. The Hub will also automatically transfer training and recruitment data to the Dashboard so that parishes will no longer have to manually update these areas. A link to a short 4-minute video explaining more about the Hub can be found here:

<https://www.safeguardinghubs.org.uk/overview.php>

The Revd Paul Tullett (Coleshill & Polesworth deanery) noted that it was good to hear that reporting had improved, however, had any research been done on under-reporting? Claire responded that improvements in reporting had been due to a variety of reasons including more awareness through training and a change in our culture. Steph added that under-reporting would be due to a fear of not being listened to and issues around power. Being available to parishes and making ourselves known continues to be a priority.

The Revd Katie Stock (Warley & Edgbaston deanery) thanked Steph and Claire for their helpful presentation. She raised a concern with regards to the statistics with 86 referrals and only 15 plans and explained that it was a challenge for those in local ministry as a DBS blemish does not necessarily discount you from joining a church. Steph responded that there is a risk assessment process in place and that the person concerned would be spoken to and all factors taken into account. A conviction does not necessarily bar someone from church. The safety plans are reviewed every year and 15 plans is the average number compared with other dioceses.

The Revd Ben Green (Kings Norton, Moseley & Shirley deanery) asked how the safety and digital security of the new National Case Management System is being audited as it keeps track of people who have been flagged, with presumably intimate personal details. He was reassured that the system has been developed with external consultants who are aware of security requirements for such sensitive personal data.

Dr Rachel Jepson (General Synod Representative) asked if there is any specific training available for clergy and laity in leadership roles with regards to interacting and engaging with survivors. Claire responded that there is no specific training available nationally, but this has been addressed indirectly in other training modules. Survivors have also been invited to speak at Safeguarding Co-ordinator days.

## 6. Intercultural Mission Resource – *Two Way Street*

The Revd Guy Donegan-Cross introduced members to *Two-Way Street* which is a resource to help local churches. The authors of the resource are Harvey Kwiyani, a Malawian theologian of mission and Nigel Rooms, an Anglican priest. Guy reported that 12 parishes have registered an interest in the resource and another 18 are being sought. Copies of the resource are available from Guy and parishes were encouraged to contact him to register their interest.

A copy of Guy's presentation is attached to the Minutes.

## 7. Annual General Meeting of the Birmingham Diocesan Board of Finance

The DBF Chair, Mr Steven Skakel gave his thanks to everyone who had contributed to the 2022 Annual Report. Thanks, in particular, were given to the members of the Finance, Investment and Property Sub-Committee (FIPS) who meet in advance of Bishop's

Council and conduct a deep dive of all finance and property matters. Recommendations are submitted to Bishop's Council which acts as the Standing Committee before coming to Diocesan Synod

Steven invited the Finance Director, Ms Karen Preece, to take members through the 2022 accounts. Areas to be covered included:

- 2022 Financial outturn
- 2022 Common Fund outturn
- 2022 – Audit and completion
- Going Concern assessment

A copy of her presentation is attached to the Minutes.

Karen reported that there were two resolutions for Synod to consider:

- Resolution to adopt the Annual Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 31 December 2022, together with the Independent Auditor's Report
- Resolution to appoint auditors for the forthcoming year

Mr Adam Chinery-North (Kings Norton, Moseley & Shirley deanery) asked if other options had been looked at such as selling long leases on church buildings. Karen responded that when there is a redundant property, leasing does not usually generate sufficient income to cover the operating requirements.

Mrs Amanda Kaye-Wright (Kings Norton, Moseley & Shirley deanery) noted that the pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis meant parishes were struggling with Common Fund payments and were using funds for building maintenance. She asked if consideration could be given on providing more support for parishes. Dr Jan Smart responded that diocese currently provides free services for parishes including bookkeeping, HR advice and building services, however, the request would be noted and added to the strategic programme. The Revd Sarah Hayes (Warley & Edgbaston deanery) added that Ian Simpson, Historic Places of Worship Support Officer, offers support for strategic funding for properties and Fred Rattley, Director Community Regeneration, offers support with community-based projects.

A vote was taken on the following three motions which were passed with no abstentions or dissent.

**RESOLUTION: The Diocesan Synod approved the minutes of the 2022 AGM.**

**RESOLUTION: The Diocesan Synod adopted the following motion put forward by the Chair of the DBF: This 76th Annual General Meeting of the Birmingham Diocesan Board of Finance adopts the Annual Report and Financial Statements of the Company for the year ended 31 December 2022, together with the Independent Auditor's Report thereon.**

**RESOLUTION: The Diocesan Synod adopted the following motion put forward by the Chair of the DBF: Haysmacintyre LLP to be appointed as Auditor to the Board and that the Directors be authorised to fix their remuneration.**

## 8. Written Questions

### 8.1 Question from the Revd Canon Catherine Grylls (Kings Norton, Mosley & Shirley Deanery)

*As Central England Co-operative launches a partnership with Malawi, and as we receive the annual accounts detailing income and expenditure for the BDBF Malawi Fund:*

- a. What was raised by the appeal launched to raise funds for the ACM response to Cyclone Freddy and how was the money spent?*
- b. What is the breakdown of expenditure through the Malawi Fund, and what was the giving through the container?*
- c. How are partnerships being developed or maintained with Birmingham Children's Hospital, Christian Aid and Central England Co-operative, all of whom have particular links with Malawi?*
- d. What are the key prayer and practical needs at present for Malawi and the Malawi Partnership?*

### **Response from Ms Karen Preece, Finance Director**

- a. Cyclone Freddy – we have received £5,000 in contributions from individuals and parishes. In addition, the Malawi Task group allocated £6,000 from its own resources. All of these funds have been sent to ACM (Anglican Council in Malawi) for their appeal. ACM's planned budget covered immediate needs such as food and sanitation as well as training and construction works for churches, hospitals and schools, seeds and livestock (as well as transport and logistics). Their total budget was estimated at \$260,000.*

- b. *Malawi expenditure 2022 – General grants to 4 dioceses totalling £30,000, Flood relief grant £5,000, Restricted Education grants to 4 dioceses £9,000 plus payment for the Container £13,000. Totalling £57,000. Direct giving towards the Container (from parishes and individuals) amounted to £11,000 (in addition to the contents of the container).*

**Response from the Revd Paul Bracher, Chair of the Malawi Task Group**

- c. *These important institutions are, in fact, only three examples of a quite large number of other local, regional and national institutions that have links with and support Malawi in various ways. These include other charitable and medical organisations, as well as educational organisations (some specifically Christian, some not). The Malawi Task Group tries to maintain contact with all of these organisations at some level. With some, particularly where approaches overlap and there is the possibility of co-operating on projects, there are formal meetings with minutes taken. With others, contact (by telephone or on Zoom) is more informal. With some organisations, there is specific co-operation - eg some make regular use of Birmingham's annual container lorry; others make occasional use of it; and some churches in Birmingham send items on the lorry specifically to support these other organisations. With some, there has been joint funding of projects - eg a water supply for a hospital and a salary for an accountant to review the books of certain Anglican institutions. With others, Birmingham has used their services to support our projects - eg to repair one of the 2016 classroom blocks. With still others, it is more about sharing of information - so for example, this year Christian Aid and Birmingham discussed how best to respond to Cyclone Freddy. Ultimately, however, it was decided that we had different obligations (Birmingham's being to support the Anglican Church's response to the flooding). So different approaches for different institutions but often co-operation that bears real fruit.*
- d. *The Malawi pages on the Diocesan Website give details of Birmingham's 2023 commitments as they currently stand. Essentially, in three of the dioceses, we are committed to placing roofs on two churches and/or priests' houses that the dioceses have nominated. In some cases, these are to replace roofs that were destroyed by storms; in other cases, the buildings are new. We have committed to giving £12,000 to each of these three dioceses for this purpose. Some of this money has already been sent and some of the roofs have already been erected or are in the process of being erected. So, pray the roofs survive the next storms - the first was erected just before Cyclone Freddy and, unlike its predecessor which was not well constructed, it did survive the storm and indeed the building provided shelter to flood victims. In the 4th diocese (Upper Shire) Birmingham is providing support and training for rebuilding the diocese following a very turbulent period which ended with the dismissal of its bishop. So far, we have funded residential training for the new team of archdeacons, training for board members of Anglican hospitals and schools and funded a week's retreat for clergy. Please pray for the appointment of the right person to be the new bishop and for healing and a much better direction for the diocese.*

*In 2023, Birmingham is also looking to begin a programme of funding new roofs for classroom blocks which, for whatever reason, lack roofs. We are awaiting agreement from Lake Diocese regarding a list of such blocks and news of this will be added to the website pages when agreement has been reached.*

*Lucy Ward, a teacher and member of Birmingham's Malawi Task Group, remains resident in Malawi, working for the education department of Lake Diocese. Although working under the auspices of TeachBeyond, Birmingham remains committed to supporting Lucy and her work, practically, in prayer and, where appropriate, financially. Several members of the Task Group (or their families) have visited Lucy, or are about to, in order practically to assist her work. And Birmingham is helping to finance the Skills Share course she will running this summer for teachers. Please pray for Lucy and her work.*

*Still on the subject of education, some Birmingham schools have recently expressed interest in developing a partnership with a school in Malawi. The first of these partnerships is now being activated with someone from Birmingham visiting their partner school in Malawi. Please pray for flourishing links to be developed which will be of real help for teachers and pupils.*

*As reported above, money has been sent to the Anglican Council of Malawi in response to its Cyclone Freddy appeal - again see the webpages for more information. A good deal of Southern Malawi remains badly affected by the flooding and prayer for recovery, not least of infrastructure and of people's lives, is much needed.*

*In terms of non-financial partnership, there are the beginnings of plans to run a cross-cultural discipleship group on Zoom involving young adults from Malawi and Birmingham. The idea is that participants, as well as receiving discipleship training, will receive an education simply from learning with those from a very different culture. Please pray for wise decisions regarding the nature of the material used and for the right people to volunteer to be part of this experiment! More on the webpages in due course.*

*There are some other plans for the development of the partnership, but these remain in the very early stages of development.*

The Revd Canon Catherine Grylls gave her thanks for the full and helpful response.

**9. Meeting Dates 2023 followed by The Blessing**

The next meetings of Diocesan Synod are:  
Saturday 18 November 2023 at 9.30am

Synod adjourned at 7.15pm with prayers led by Bishop Anne followed by the Blessing.

**Summary of Resolutions**

Agenda Item	Resolution
2.	The Diocesan Synod approved the Minutes of DS 230325
7.	The Diocesan Synod approved the minutes of the 2022 AGM.
7.	The Diocesan Synod adopted the following motion put forward by the Chair of the DBF: This 76th Annual General Meeting of the Birmingham Diocesan Board of Finance adopts the Annual Report and Financial Statements of the Company for the year ended 31 December 2022, together with the Independent Auditor's Report thereon.
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