

A Summary of Diocesan Synod St Peter's Church, Ipsley – 12 November 2019

The meeting started with worship, which included the licensing of Doug Chaplin as Discipleship and Lay Training Officer.

There were two matters arising. Since the last meeting of the Diocesan Synod, the diocesan office restructuring has been completed and the DBF has given notice to the Cathedral on its tenancy of the Old Palace. Diocesan Secretary, John Preston, is working with them on possible options.



Amending Canon no. 39 was read.

Presidential Address

Bishop John began his Presidential Address by paying tribute to Alastair Findlay who is standing down after chairing the DBF for 20 years. He said: "I want to say a heartfelt thank you for all that you've done over those years in an entirely voluntary capacity. We all owe Alastair a great debt of gratitude."



Bishop John went on to talk about some of the serious business to be discussed by Synod at its meeting, making reference to the series of conversations to look at the future of the Diocese and also highlighting the forthcoming election and issues faced by many politicians.

Quoting from the recent pastoral letter from the Archbishops, he said:

"As followers of Jesus Christ each of us is called to honour the gift of truth, both to speak it and to seek it. We all have a responsibility to speak accurately, to challenge falsehoods when we hear them, and to be careful to separate facts from opinion."

Bishop John concluded by saying: "I hope that we shall be able to come together to seek the common good and enable others to do so by our prayers and our actions."

[Read the full text of the Presidential Address.](#)

All Together as Kingdom People

Diocesan Communications Officer, Sam Setchell introduced a film with highlights from the All Together as Kingdom People Day in September. [You can see the film here.](#)

Diocesan Restructuring

Hugh Richards, Chair of the Diocesan Restructuring Group, presented a summary of developments in the group's thinking to date, explaining that as a diocese, we need to ensure that we have a range of ministry which will be sustainable in the future. Budget constraints also mean that we need to cut 15 stipendiary posts.

Some initial thinking has taken place as to how we should move forward, but now we need input from a range of people so that the issues and possible solutions can be discussed together. From mid-December until early February, there will be a series of open conversations across the diocese so we can hear from as many people as possible.



Diocesan Synod members were encouraged to spread the message and encourage people to come - to whichever meeting is most convenient. The group especially wants to hear from people from whom we might not usually hear.

The meetings will include introductory presentations and then discussions in small groups with the opportunity to feedback at the meeting or afterwards.

[Find out more about the open conversations here.](#)

Parish Share review

Archdeacon Nikki introduced this item on the parish share review by saying that whatever we decide regarding ministry in the Diocese, we will need to pay for it. Parish share is a key way in which we do that. A group has been looking at different options – looking at different systems from other dioceses and analysing numbers and spreadsheets.



This group has proposed a number of underlying principles, which Archdeacon Nikki explained:

1. God's generosity to us blesses us in many different ways. The Gospel teaches us to be generous and care for those less fortunate than ourselves. Giving money is part of our discipleship and should be reflected in our approach to Parish Share.
2. We are committed to being 'a Christian Presence in Every Community' funded through the 'common purse' and appropriately expressed through people and buildings
3. Our approach to Parish Share must be:
 - a. **Sustainable** i.e. meet our current and future needs in a way which is both realistic and **Stable** in that it avoids big changes from year to year.
 - b. **Agile** i.e. flexible enough to cope with changing the needs across the Diocese without major changes in what a parish is asked to contribute.
 - c. **Clear** i.e. it should be easily understood by all those in our churches, whatever their role.
 - d. **Empowering** i.e. it encourages parishes to engage in the common life of the Diocese and to participate in local conversations around ministry and other costs.
 - e. **Sufficient** i.e. it brings in enough money across the Diocese to meet costs, taking into account other income sources e.g. Lowest Income Communities funding received from the national church.
4. We value the understanding of 'fairness' established through 'Fairer Share' i.e. that any measure of the wealth of a parish relates directly to the incomes of church 'members' rather than the overall parish population.



Synod was asked to discuss the principles thinking about what they could affirm, whether there was anything missing and if there was anything they disagreed with. There was then the opportunity to feedback some thoughts.

Archdeacon Nikki moved that:

"This Synod approves the principles proposed in DS 19/13, and asks the Parish Share Review Group budget to work to these in developing its recommendations."

This was carried unanimously.

Consideration of the 2020 DBF Budget



Diocesan Secretary, John Preston, presented some key numbers from the 2020 budget, which projects a deficit of £677k. The longer-term projection gives accumulated deficit of £2.25m to the end of 2023 with the deficits gradually reducing. For the budget to be sustainable, we'll need to reduce 15 clergy posts as well as sell some parsonages. [Read John's presentation.](#)

Chair of the DBF, Alastair Findlay, also gave a speech on the budget situation after which there was a time of questions from synod. These included contributions asking how members might continue to raise the profile of the financial situation, expressing thanks for the realistic deficit budget and reinforcing the importance of mission as well as ministry.



Alastair moved that:

“This Synod approves the budget presented by the Bishop’s Council and Standing Committee for the Worcester Diocesan Board of Finance Limited, which provides for expenditure of £8,795,573 in 2020 involving an increase of 2.0% in the amount of Parish Share requested, and leading to a budgeted deficit of £775,465.”

This was carried unanimously.

The meeting then became a meeting of the Worcester Diocesan Board of Finance and Alastair moved Resolution No. 1:

“The Company hereby approves the budget of the Worcester Diocesan Board of Finance Limited for 2019, as approved by the Diocesan Synod in its immediately preceding business.”

This was passed unanimously, after which the meeting once again reverted to being Worcester Diocesan Synod.

Everyday faith/ Setting God’s People free

Diocesan Ministry and Discipleship Officer, Doug Chaplin presented an item about how we can more effectively live out our faith every day. Synod was shown a short video with some individuals talking about what their faith means to them. Doug explained that he is planning ‘A big conversation about Discipleship’ to ask people in the parishes what training or resources they feel they need to be able to share their faith with others.

Diocesan Communications Officer, Sam Setchell, outlined a campaign being planned in the New Year sharing stories of everyday faith on social media. Synod was encouraged to think about whether there were any interesting stories in their own parishes.

Sarah Maxfield-Phillips (General Synod) moved that:

This synod believes

- a) that all Christians are called to live out their faith in daily life*
- b) that the church needs to balance its activities so that at every level we equip and support each other for the business of day to day living as witnesses to and servants of the love of God and therefore*
- c) asks the diocesan staff team to develop resources that will help us achieve this rebalancing and support one another in our living out the Christian faith in Monday to Saturday contexts.*



After a short period of discussion, this was carried unanimously.

Governance matters

Synod were asked to:

- a) approve the table of representation for the 2020 Deanery Synod elections.
- b) appoint the Rev'd Julia Curtis as Chair of the Audit Committee
- c) appoint one trustee to fill a vacancy on the Trustee body of Holland House (unfortunately there were no nominations)

The meeting was closed with prayer.

The next meeting of the Diocesan Synod will be held on Saturday 29 February 2020 at St Peter's Baptist Church, Worcester.

