

## Summary of Diocesan Synod - Saturday 13 March 2021, by Zoom

**Opening worship** was led by Laura Handy from Droitwich parish.

Diocesan Secretary, John Preston updated synod on the **DBF Office move**. An office has been found which enables the DBF to make considerable savings, fulfilling the criteria of the motion passed previously by Diocesan Synod. The move is likely to take place in May.

John Preston also proclaimed amending Canons number 40 and 41.

Bishop John gave his **Presidential Address**, asking Synod members about the purpose of the church and its role in helping people to die. He said:

“As a way into the first great commandment of Jesus, maybe the time has come for us to talk more about death. We have an opportunity to do so because of the Coronavirus. Until a year ago death had become a taboo. Death had replaced sex as the great ‘no-no’, not to be mentioned. The pandemic should have changed all that. The number dying have been reported every day and we have been reminded of the terrible tragedy of people dying in their thousands. Death is back centre stage.”

Bishop John suggested that we should help prepare people to die by talking about our faith and making peace with ‘letting go’. “As Christians, we have an opportunity to learn again to view our lives in the light of eternity, to see death as a pathway to new life. We don’t know what it will be like any more than an unborn child can know anything about life outside the womb but we can be confident that God’s love in Jesus is stronger than death.”

[Read the full text of Bishop John’s address.](#)



Director of Ministry and Discipleship, Jonathan Kimber opened the item on **Living in love and Faith (LLF)** as our diocesan advocate for this area and introduced Eeva John, National Enabling Officer for LLF.

Eeva began by explaining why the LLF process was important, especially since the Church of England has been talking about sexuality for decades! She said that LLF grew out of the crisis following the last statement on this topic in 2017, after which the

Archbishops and Bishops thought that it was important to take a radically different approach. LLF provides teaching and learning about identity, sexuality, relationships and marriage; it is about engaging the whole Church and recognising that we all have things to learn together.

The materials were put together by a wide group of people with the aim of creating an interdisciplinary learning journey featuring real life stories from a range of different perspectives. All the materials are freely available on the LLF learning hub, including a book and a five-week course. The group’s vision is for people to engage in learning in groups. To create braver and safer spaces in which people can learn together well and hear what the Spirit is saying to the Church today.

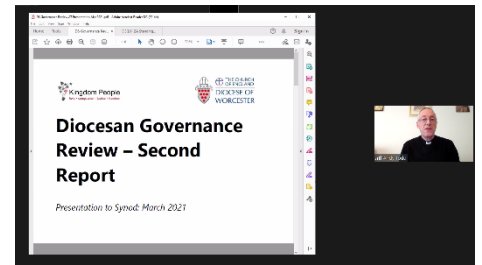


Synod listened to Jonathan in conversations with Andrew Goddard and Giles Goddard (no relation) who were both involved in the LLF process and come from very different backgrounds and perspectives. Giles and Andrew explained the importance of listening to each other through this process, recognising that we're all part of the body of Christ and addressing differences in a more relational manner.

Eva shared part of the LLF course looking at the pastoral principal of fear and there was the opportunity to discuss this in breakout groups. Jonathan then talked about the timing and the support available before members had a chance to think about how it might work in their contexts.

Andy Todd, Chair of the DBF presented the **second report from the Governance Review group**. Highlights from the report include that:

- Bishop's Council retains representation from each deanery but builds co-options based on skills and diversity.
- The Finance & Resources Committee consolidates finance and compliance responsibility with panels for investment/ glebe management & property matters.
- Audit Risk & challenge – wider remit for the challenge of governance, systems & controls
- Local pastoral committees – each deanery to contribute four members (six from Greater Dudley)



The report also includes proposals on the operation of committees and groups – skills audits, standardised induction process, regular training and tidying up of the standing orders for different groups.

Andy explained that the Diocese will transition to the new structure by 2022 and there will be a follow up review of effectiveness as well as a possible review of other committees and groups.

Bishop John thanked all those who were involved and synod members were given the opportunity to ask questions. He then moved:

*“That this Synod approves the recommendations as set out in the report paper DS 21/2”.*

This was carried with 57 votes in favour, 1 against and 1 abstention.



Archdeacon Nikki introduced an item on **diocesan transformation** by showing the latest update video on the programme and explaining that since it was filmed, the new deaneries have come into effect and have had their first deanery synod meetings. There are other local discussions moving forward. Although the transformation group is keen to engage with parishes as much as possible, they are also aware that it is a strange year and don't want to add to parish burdens. The floor was opened for questions.

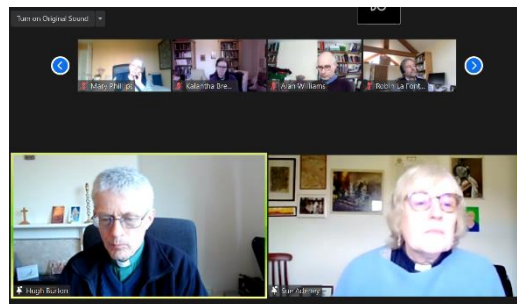
A motion on **Net Zero Carbon** was introduced by Hugh Burton, following on from the General Synod motion last year. Hugh suggested that it is a good time to be committing to this as we have an opportunity to build back greener after Covid. This is one of the key issues of our time and things are beginning to move. What is required now is motivation to engage hearts and minds – becoming net zero carbon needs to be embedded in everything that we do.

Sue Adeney joined Hugh to lead a short meditation. This was followed by a short film about the views of young people and how they think the church should respond. You can [watch this here](#).

Sue explained that in 2019 synod passed a motion to work towards becoming an Eco Diocese but are still way off that target. Only 2.6% of our churches have been awarded bronze and only three churches have gained silver. However, Eco Church is an effective way of engaging hearts and minds in churches and communities as well as reducing carbon. Everything we do will reach our zero carbon target.

Completing the Church of England's Energy Footprint tool is also vital. 60% of our churches in the diocese engaged with this last year – a fantastic response. However, we need to continue to engage with this and for all parishes to do it as soon as possible so we have a benchmark of where we are now.

Churches should also consider switching to greener energy tariffs.



In breakout groups, synod members considered: What are the best ways to motivate and embed Creation Care including Net Zero Carbon in Diocesan life? And What would this Synod suggest as the key resources needed to achieve the goal and make a real difference? What are the chief barriers to achieving Net Zero Carbon?

Following the breakout rooms, members suggested the following useful links:

- [The Church of England's Net Zero webinars](#) (Including a number of webinars from our diocesan Heating Adviser under the 'webinars on low carbon solutions - heating, lighting, solar and more' section.)
- [A practical path to zero net carbon](#)
- [Resources for 'sustainable preaching' based around the weekly Sunday lectionary](#)
- [Climate Sunday resources](#)

Hugh Richards led synod in a plenary debate, which included the following comments:

- Important to be focussed in our message to make it clearer and easier for parishes.
- Can we put solar panels on churches and vicarages?
- Is there a role for church schools?

Hugh then moved that:

*“This Synod, responding to the General Synod motion and the global climate emergency sets a target that all parts of the diocese within the scope of the General Synod definition, should achieve net zero emissions by 2030 at the latest; and commits as a diocese to develop an action plan and resources for sustainable living including:*

- *policies and procedures to minimise energy use and waste, and increase the use of renewable energies;*
- *the incorporation of creation care into the prayers, liturgies and worship of our churches;*

- *discipleship and learning resources to support changing and developing understanding and practice in our personal and corporate lives*

*and in order that this target can be realistically worked towards and achieved*

*a) calls on Bishop's Council to bring a proposal to Synod for the allocation of appropriate resource, whether full-time, part-time, or in partnership with neighbouring Dioceses, with sufficient time and skills to develop a clear pathway that would enable the Diocese to meet our target*

*b) requests a report to Synod every 2 years on progress, beginning in 2022."*

This was carried with 53 votes in favour, 1 vote against, 3 abstentions

Diocesan Secretary, John Preston introduced a short paper on **Deanery Synod elections to Diocesan Synod**. He explained that the numbers of clergy and lay members to be elected to the Diocesan Synod by deanery synods at the elections in 2021 need to be determined in accordance with the Church Representation Rules. Diocesan Synod agreed in November 2005 that there would be a maximum of 60 members to be elected to each of the House of Clergy and the House of Laity.

Numbers elected to the House of Clergy are required to be related to the numbers in those houses in the respective deanery synods, whilst numbers elected to the House of Laity are required to be related to the total number of names on parish electoral rolls. There is a proviso that the number in each house in each deanery shall not be less than two. The Church Representation Rules require that the numbers of the houses of clergy and laity are approximately equal.

The proposal for numbers elected are as follows:

Deanery	House of Clergy		House of Laity	
	No	Reps	Electoral Roll	Reps
Greater Dudley	34	14	2754	13
Redditch & Bromsgrove	19	8	1431	7
Kidderminster & Stourport	16	7	2013	10
Malvern & Upton	20	8	1568	8
Pershore & Evesham	19	8	2191	11
Worcester	35	15	2223	11
Totals	143	60	12180	60

The Chair moved:

*"That this Synod approves that the number of persons to be elected to the houses of clergy and laity of the Diocesan Synod from each deanery is as set out in paper."*

This was passed with 50 votes in favour, 1 against and 4 abstentions.

Bishop Martin closed the meeting in prayer.

The **next meeting of Diocesan Synod** will be held on Monday 28 June.