

Summary of Diocesan Synod – Monday 28 June 2021, by Zoom

The **opening prayers** were led by **Bishop John** and included the licensing of Alison Maddocks as Dean of Smaller Churches and commissioning of Chris Boden as Stewardship Officer.



Bishop John then gave his **Presidential Address**, starting by saying that it was a delight to be able to license/ commission Alison and Chris and praying for God's rich blessing on them in their new roles.

He continued by reflecting that during this Synod, we shall go on to spend a good proportion of our time talking about money, something which Jesus also did quite a lot. A quick count indicates that 19 out of the 47 teachings which are clearly parables relate directly to money or material possessions. And that is just the parables. Jesus knew how vital it was to people, and that ultimately our security will be defined by what we depend upon. Lasting treasure is measured not by what we have, but by what we give away. Giving reflects what's really going on inside us. Jesus knew signs of spiritual vitality and the blockage of the giving arteries which will be a serious risk to our health.

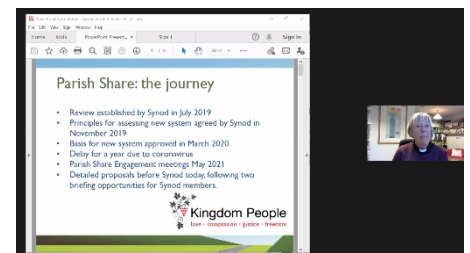
It is in God's nature to give rather than accumulate, and deep down, we all know that it is only in giving that we find and enjoy life in all its fullness. Bishop John asked synod, in discussions on money this evening and particularly in consideration of the parish share review, to bear in mind the words of Jesus in St Matthew:

“Do not store up for yourself treasures on Earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal; but store up for yourselves treasures in Heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” (Matthew 6. 19-21)

[Read Bishop John's Presidential Address in full.](#)

The Archdeacon of Dudley, Nikki Groarke presented the second report of the **Parish Share Review Group**. [You can read their paper here.](#)

Nikki set out the journey so far, reminding synod that the parish review group was established by Synod in July 2019 and the basis for a new system approved in March 2020. Most recently, a series of engagement meetings have been held with over 200 people across the Diocese briefed.

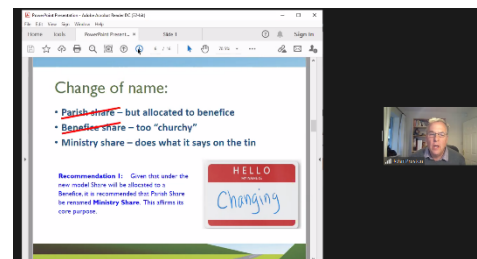


The current parish share system looks at how many people are in our parishes and what their level of income is. There are a number of drawbacks to this system - only 76% of parishes contributed in full in 2018 leading to our £1m deficit; there were huge swings following the rerun of the incomes survey; and the system also doesn't encourage growth.

The parish share group looked at a wide range of different options and in March last year, proposed a new system based on the cost of ministry received in a benefice, adjusted by income if it is a particularly wealthy or deprived parish. This system is stable, durable and transparent and supports 'local discussions' around deployment of ministry and what is affordable across a local area.

Diocesan Secretary, John Preston set out four different recommendations which came out of the engagement meetings:

1. Given that under the new model Share will be allocated to a Benefice, it is recommended that Parish Share be renamed Ministry Share. This affirms its core purpose.
2. The DBF element of wedding and funeral fees will be averaged across the Diocese in order to keep the Ministry Share at a lower level. (£64,466 per minister for an average income benefice for the 2021 budget).
3. The base ministry cost per benefice should be amended by up to 30% for the benefices with the highest and lowest incomes as outlined in paragraphs 21 and 22.
4. That there would be an annual opportunity for benefices to appeal to change income band. This appeal would be considered by a review group made up of members of Deanery leadership teams.
5. That the share for models of ministry other than a full-time stipendiary position should be on the basis that:
 - the stipend element is included pro-rata to the stipend paid
 - the housing element is included if the minister is in receipt of a house, the housing allowance figure is included if the minister is in receipt of the housing allowance instead of a house, and
 - all benefices contribute at least 75% of the ordinands and curates element, and 100% of this element is included where there would otherwise be no contribution (i.e. incumbent is self-supporting and no housing or housing allowance is provided). This ensures that all benefices make a contribution of at least this amount.
6. That a Ministry Support Fund be established to support transition, and that benefices who stand to benefit from the new system be encouraged to make generous contributions over and above their incomes adjusted cost of ministry to help others transition well (Some lowest income communities funding and also diocesan reserves would also be added to this fund). Grants would be made by the same panel as would review appeals against income banding.



John explained that materials will be available to PCCs to explain the new system, as well as an indicative request for 2022 for each benefice.



Nikki offered thanks for everything that has been done in parishes to help ensure parish share has been continued to be paid during the pandemic and then synod had a short time to discuss the proposals in breakout rooms.

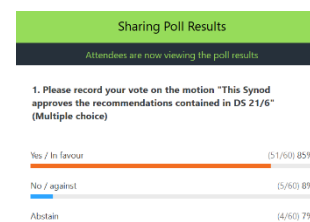
On returning to the main room, discussion in plenary included questions around the importance of making sure the right ministry is in the right place, the usefulness of the 2018 income survey, the fact that if a priest looks after more than one benefice in plurality, this will be counted as one benefice for the purpose of share allocation, lowest income community funding, the transparency of the appeal process and the help available to support clergy and PCCs in allocating a benefice's share to individual churches.

Nikki moved:

"That this Synod approves the recommendations contained in the paper DS 21/6".

This was carried with 51 votes in favour, 5 against and 4 abstentions.

The meeting moved to be [the Diocesan Board of Finance's Annual General Meeting](#).





Andy Todd, Chair of the DBF, presented the **2020 Annual Report and Accounts** saying that if he'd been asked a year ago, what he'd be expecting to share, he wouldn't have predicated such a positive outcome. In 2020, share was £4,431k – only £300,000 less than in 2019. Andy thanked parishes for their generosity and the fact that many parishes have given sacrificially to enable this. However, he said that it hasn't been a stress-free year and at times felt like a rollercoaster of a ride! [See Andy's presentation.](#)

Andy explained that over the past few years the DBF has been taking steps to reduce the deficit from 2018 and in 2020, despite the pandemic, this was reduced further to £236k (in 2019 it had been £754k). Investments performed well by year-end and a sizeable income comes from these. The accounts show that the DBF has £74.8m in reserves, but these are divided into a number of pots and all but £6.1m is subject to very stringent rules as to how the money can be used. At the moment, most isn't able to be used for the day-to-day work of the Diocese, although Andy explained that the finance team is looking for ways to unlock these reserves.

The good news is that the auditors agreed with the assessment of the finance team that the DBF has adequate resources for the future and can be considered a 'going concern'. However, 2021 looks very challenging and it is important to continue to get as much giving as possible into planned giving, through the Parish Giving Scheme.

Andy finished by saying thank you to Helen Archer-Smith for her work on the budget, the budget holders for managing down costs wherever possible and to John Preston and Eric Wiles who have helped steer a calm course through the pandemic. He also reiterated his thanks for everything the parishes have done and continue to do in contributing share.

[See the full annual report and accounts](#)

The floor was opened to questions and then on behalf of the Bishop's Council and Standing Committee in their capacity as the Directors of the DBF, the Chair of the DBF moved:

Resolution No.1: "That the Annual Report and Accounts for 2020 of The Worcester Diocesan Board of Finance Limited be received."

This was passed unanimously.

Resolution No.2: "That haysmacintyre LLP be reappointed as Auditors to The Worcester Diocesan Board of Finance Limited"

This was passed with 55 votes in favour and 2 against.

The meeting again became **Worcester Diocesan Synod**.

This diocesan synod was the **final session of the triennium**, so an update was provided on progress on matters discussed by Synod during the past three years:

Net Zero Carbon and Eco Church



Bishop Martin presented a report from Hugh Burton, chair of Climate Crisis Group, highlighting our progress towards becoming an Eco Diocese. Bishop Martin explained that we need to double the number of churches achieving a bronze Eco Church status as a priority and the Climate Crisis Group would be happy to advise on this. There were several comments from the floor which Bishop Martin agreed to pass back to the group.

Sharing Poll Results

Attendees are now viewing the poll results

1. Please record your vote on Resolution 1: "That the Annual Report and Accounts for 2020 of The Worcester Diocesan Board of Finance be received" (Multiple choice)

Yes / In Favour (56/56) 100%

No / Against (0/56) 0%

Abstain (0/56) 0%

Sharing Poll Results

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1. Please record your vote on the Resolution "That haysmacintyre LLP be reappointed as auditors to the Worcester Diocesan Board of Finance" (Multiple choice)

Yes / In favour (55/57) 96%

No / Against (0/57) 0%

Abstain (2/57) 4%

Living in Love and Faith

Jonathan Kimber spoke to a short paper, offering thanks to all those who have engaged with the course so far. He reminded synod that the aim of the LLF course isn't to come to an agreement, but rather to listen to each other. Jonathan acknowledged that there have been some concerns about the timing due to the national timescale for receiving feedback. He encouraged parishes to still consider engaging even if it's not feasible to complete the course by January 2022. On Saturday 10 July there is an opportunity to find out more about the course as well as further training and support for those who might be considering running it. Please do contact Jonathan if you have any questions or concerns about Living in Love and Faith.



Diocesan Transformation



Archdeacon Nikki presented a paper and started by saying that much of it had been covered elsewhere on the agenda because transformation is a core part of everything we're currently doing. She reminded synod that we are still going through a time of change and that it is important to allow people time to rest and regroup over the summer rather than rushing into more change. Our diocesan transformation journey is just beginning and there will still be lots to do over the coming years. Nikki explained that the hope is to bring forward a cohort of mission

accompaniers to support parishes in engaging with the change process as the journey continues into the next triennium and beyond!

Safeguarding

Bishop Martin gave a short introduction to this element as the bishop overseeing safeguarding in the Diocese. He expressed thanks to our safeguarding team – our safeguarding advisers: Hilary Higton, Delia Stokes and Sarah Booth as well as Liz Toone who handles DBS checks, Simon Hill who helps with training and the independent chair of the safeguarding panel – Geoff Taylor-Smith along with the rest of the panel.

The IICSA report and the Past Cases Review 2 have both been considerable areas of work over the last few years and the PCR2 report will go to Bishop's Council in July. Bishop Martin concluded by reading comments made by the independent reviewer for PCR2 in the conclusion to his report, who said that the Diocese is in a very good position due to the dedication of the safeguarding team and wider support in the Diocese.



Statutory **reports from the Diocesan Board of Education and the Diocesan Mission, Pastoral & Resources Committee** were laid before the Synod.

Bishop John offered thanks for the service of the synod over the last triennium – especially those who won't be standing again and **closing prayers** were led by Bishop Martin.

The next meeting will be the first session of the eighteenth synod and general meeting of the DBF held on **Thursday 11 November at 7pm** at St George's Church in Kidderminster.

