

WORCESTER DIOCESAN SYNOD

A summary of the Second Session of the Nineteenth Synod and general meeting of the

WORCESTER DIOCESAN BOARD OF FINANCE LIMITED

held at Woodgreen Evangelical Church on Saturday 1 March 2025

The meeting was opened in prayer by Bishop Martin.

The Revd Jon Evans asked this **question**: “Following discussions with clergy from other dioceses regarding part-time stipendiary posts I would like to know what does this diocese consider the number of days “worked” for a 0.5 (half-time) stipendiary to be and how is this calculated?”



The Archdeacon of Worcester, Mark Badger responded, explaining that a trust-based system is used with the role description setting out the particular duties of the post and agreed with the office holder. However, there is an overt encouragement to all clergy to care for themselves appropriately and take rest.



Bishop Martin gave the **Presidential address**, referring to St David’s Day and highlighting the fact that synods have existed since the time of St David. He set out the different elements of synod’s agenda and also spoke about the importance of the Cure of Souls and the fact that sharing it with priests at their licensing is one of the highlights of his role. Bishop Martin said: “the Cure of Souls is our job as clergy and is the duty of the whole church together.”

Finally with St David’s last words speaking of joy, Bishop Martin asked synod to talk to each other about what had brought them joy this week. [Read the full address](#)

Updates from General Synod

Director of Safeguarding, Hilary Higton gave an **update on safeguarding**, reminding synod about the INEQE audit which covered the cathedral, parishes and the DBF. She thanked everyone who completed an online questionnaire ahead of the audit. The final report is available [on the diocesan website](#). Hilary quoted from the report highlighting the positive feedback we were given. The report made over 50 recommendations which have all been accepted. Some were quick changes and other are longer term, including increasing the capacity of the safeguarding team. Hilary said that we are the first diocese to act on INEQE’s general recommendation to bring diocesan and cathedral safeguarding together in a single directorate, which she is now leading. [See her slides](#)



General Synod rep, Kashmir Garton talked through the safeguarding debate at General Synod, where two different models were debated. Both models proposed an independent scrutiny body, but the second model was more radical and would have made safeguarding teams throughout the Church of England completely independent (which many of those with professional experience of working in safeguarding argued against). The final motion agreed by General Synod accepted that the National Safeguarding Team should be transferred to a newly constituted separate charity for greater independence, and that further detailed work should be

done to assess the implications of moving other safeguarding staff to a fully independent body in due course. The motion also added a statement at the end of the motion to lament and repent of the failure of the Church to be welcoming to victims and survivors and the harm they have experienced and continue to experience in the life of the Church. [Read the full General Synod motion as amended](#)

Hilary shared her own view having watched the whole synod debate. She felt the outcome allows the CoE to work at pace and really understand what is possible to make sure we can keep everyone as safe as possible. She said: “I don’t mind the safeguarding team moving out of the diocesan structures if this protects and supports the most vulnerable people. However, the measures we are putting in place seem to be making a difference, and my feeling is that more can be achieved by working within the organisation as long as the processes are in place to keep the safeguarding team accountable and check for unconscious bias.”

There was an opportunity for Synod to ask questions.

Lynn Nichol spoke to synod via a video message offering a factual report on what was presented to General Synod on the **Living in Love and Faith proposals** and an outline of ongoing work. [Watch her slides and presentation here](#) (scroll down to the links at the bottom of the page).

Bishop Martin also added his reflections on this subject and explained that Diocesan Synod will be having a significant discussion on this topic at our synod in June to provide feedback to the House of Bishops. Deanery synods can also discuss if they’d like to.

Kashmir Garton introduced the **Racial Justice Forum** and the work being done through the charter.



Stephen Edwards, Dean of Worcester, and member of the Forum spoke about his experience in a multi-cultural parish in Manchester, where the racial diversity hadn’t been reflected in the parish profile or on the PCC. As a white male priest, he was very aware of privilege and did some work on how he was responding to all people in the parish. However, he also felt that although pastoral approaches are important, these should move onto a justice approach, righting historical wrongs and calling out hate and racism.

Harriet Chimani, who was born in Zimbabwe, spoke about her experience of moving to England and worshipping in Pentecostal churches before she moved to Inkberrow and joined the Anglican Church there. She spoke about her children and conversations with their primary school about their black history curriculum. She explained that the forum mandate is to raise awareness, not to allocate blame and why memorials to slavery don’t sit well with her. She said: “My children don’t see faces like them that they can celebrate. We are all created by one God and created to worship together in our differences.”



Synod also heard a film from Darian Murphy-Griffiths a member of the cathedral’s congregation talking about the draft charter.

Bishop Martin explained that the charter sets out the principles for the Forum’s work. This work involves the whole diocese, and it is important that synod is involved in the charter. He said: “We long to be a church where we celebrate unity in our diversity. I see many Christians arriving in our churches from Africa, southeast Asia and elsewhere. These people could be at the heart of the renewal of our church but are often not the ones taking on public roles. We’re all different but all children of the same Heavenly Father.”

Synod was asked to discuss the charter in small groups and offer suggestions as to what was good and bad, improvements that could be made and practical ideas of what could be done in parishes.



Archdeacon Nikki introduced an item on the **diocesan transformation strategy**. She explained that her sabbatical had given her an unusual opportunity to come back and look with fresh eyes. It was obvious that there is a lot of work going on and she is able to report on clear progress. This includes an increase in the number of children and young people, around 60 New Worshipping Communities in different stages of development across the diocese, and six of our renewal churches now up and running.



Nikki said that we are now moving towards phase two of our transformation programme for which we will be putting in another bid to the national church to enable the bigger pieces of work that we can't afford. Diocesan Synod will be involved in the approval process as we work towards a SMMIB bid in summer 2026. For this bid we will be aiming to make informed decisions on how best to support our mission and ministry and help churches in both urban and rural settings become sustainable into the future.

Nikki also asked synod to please pray, saying: "None of this will happen unless it's part of what God is doing through the Holy Spirit in our diocese. What might God be showing you could be happen in your area. Engage with curiosity. Ask questions and learn from the experience of others so together we can build a stronger and more sustainable church."



Synod had the opportunity to ask questions and then Director of Transformation, Damian Herbert spoke about the importance of capturing numbers and the stories behind them. He asked synod to discuss and then feed back on the 'most significant change' churches have seen over the last two years.

The Archdeacon of Worcester, Mark Badger introduced an item on **mission to new housing** estates. He explained that in most places across the Diocese there will be some scale of new housing. Although often people react negatively to this, new housing offers a massive opportunity for Christian mission.



Mark said: "New housing estates can be soulless, isolating places and it is unlikely that there will be a church building. How do we engage with these areas and see the possibilities of new life and new hope? We need to take a creative, proactive response with a team working on site to bring a Christian presence." He explained that with the size and number of developments across the diocese, we're unlikely to have the people or the finance to establish a presence in all the new communities, but there are two working groups looking at strategy and what we might practically do on the ground.

Welcome packs have been designed and are available along with 'how to guides' on the website. Mark is looking to develop a new housing network across the diocese and working with deaneries in this. He also explained that he is planning a Healthier Churches bid to purchase a vehicle which can be parked on areas of new housing and provide a welcome ministry. Initially to builders and then to people as they move in.

The synod was closed with a Eucharist led by Bishop Martin.

