



2. Bristol Diocesan Synod Minutes

Date: Saturday, 16 March 2024

Time: 9.30am to 1.00pm

Venue: St Michael’s Church Centre, The Green, Stoke Gifford BS34 8PD

The agenda and papers for this meeting can be found on the Diocese of Bristol website at: [Diocesan Synod - Diocese of Bristol \(anglican.org\)](https://www.anglican.org/diocesan-synod)

Worship
Kate Davison led worship which included singing and reflection.
Bruce Fynamore in the Chair
1. Welcome, minutes of last meeting, and apologies
<p>Bruce welcomed Diocesan Synod members, then thanked the Diocesan Support Services staff team for all the work they had put into making Synod happen and Kate Davison for opening Synod with worship.</p> <p>Bruce noted 10 apologies from the House of Clergy and 4 apologies from House of Laity.</p> <p>Bruce reminded Synod about processes and provisions in place to assist with the efficient running of the meeting. This included, if a member wished to ask a question they should raise their hand, and when called on should state their name and deanery. There was also an opportunity to ask questions via the Synod email address. A trained facilitator or Bishop’s Council member had also been placed on each table as a point of contact.</p> <p>Bruce acknowledged that Synod might cover some subjects that Synod members, visitors or Diocesan Support Services staff might find triggering. Due to this, Caroline Jowett-Ive (Director of People and Safeguarding) and Simon Taylor (Director of Mission & Ministry Support) were available should anyone wish to speak with them.</p> <p>Synod received the minutes from the meeting on 18 November 2023 as accepted.</p> <p>Bruce explained the structure of the meeting was largely formed of three parts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Routine Business: This included reports from recent meetings of Bishop’s Council, Board of Directors, DMPC, and General Synod. Additionally, there was an update on Bristol Diocese’s progress toward Net Zero. • Updates and Questions: This part featured updates on Transforming Church Together, Education, and Finance, with dedicated time for discussion and questions.

- **Diocesan Synod Elections:** the current Diocesan Synod would conclude on 31 July 2024 and the new Diocesan Synod will run, for 3 years, from 1 August 2024.

Before inviting Bishop Viv to address Synod, Bruce invited The Revd Phil Goodey to stand and be acknowledged by Diocesan Synod as a new member. Bruce welcomed Phil to his first meeting.

2. Bishop's address – Rt Revd Viv Faull, Bishop of Bristol

Bishop Viv focused her address on church buildings and asked Diocesan Synod members to pause and reflect on a church building that was precious to them.

Bishop Viv reminded Diocesan Synod that church buildings were not essential to living a life of a Christian. God has met with his people on mountains and in the wilderness. However, church buildings can be a refuge, a sanctuary, a place of warmth with food and company. A permanent landmark that is rooted in its community, but this is only possible due to the time, dedication and generosity of volunteers.

Bishop Viv's address is available on the Diocesan website at:

<https://www.bristol.anglican.org/news/bishop-vivs-diocesan-synod-presidential-address-16-march-2024.php>

General Synod

3. 3a. General Synod verbal report

3b. Questions

The Revd Kat Campion-Spall (General Synod representation) presented a verbal report on General Synod. Kat explained that a written report was not possible in this instance because General Synod was still underway when written reports for Diocesan Synod needed to be submitted.

Kat summarised the recent General Synod sessions referencing the Code of Conduct for PCCs, Jay Review of Safeguarding within the Church of England, simplification process for those wishing to be ordained who were divorced or married to divorcees, funeral fees, and improved clergy pension. Kat also highlighted the contributions of her representatives on General Synod:

- The Revd Canon Alice Kemp spoke into the debate on bullying and shared her knowledge about mental health and neurodiversity.
- Ed Shaw proposed an amendment to the Living in Love and Faith (LLF) motion.

Questions

The Revd Phil Goodey (Swindon Deanery) asked if there was any more information about clergy pensions.

Richard Leaman replied that the national pension fund was in good shape, and this had resulted in a drop in the Diocesan contribution recently.

Auriol Britton (Bristol South Deanery) highlighted that the Church Commissioners decision to allocate £100 million for projects seeking to address the legacy of slavery

had been criticized. Auriol asked if the Church of England might communicate better what the £100 million was for and how it might be used.

Bishop Viv acknowledged Auriol's point and explained that whilst she was a Church Commissioner she was not directly involved in working on this. Bishop Viv clarified that the money was intended to address a number of difficult slavery legacy issues that the Church of England, has been struggling with for years. The tragedy of the slave trade touches on our history, economy, endowment funds and investments, so the question of how to use the money was a complicated debate

ACTION: Bishop Viv suggested having a section at Diocesan Synod to debate this which could also be shared online. Bishop Viv indicated that she would discuss this matter with The Revd Melanie Otto.

The Revd Melanie Otto (City Deanery) confirmed that it was always the time to talk about slavery and the need to address systemic racism. There was a need to articulate the full history of the city of Bristol. Melanie suggested that some of the funding announced by the Church Commissioners should come to churches and their local communities.

Action: EB to add to the Agenda Committee agenda

4.	Bishop's Council & Board of Directors report, 7 December 2023 and 20 February 2024
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John Sunderland (Bishop's Council member) presented the Bishop's Council report. John drew Synod's attention to two errors in the written report:

- Bishop's Council via Zoom for 7 December 2023 rather than in-person as suggested in report; and
- The report numbering was out of sync.

John explained that Bishop's Council starts and ends with prayer, it then goes on to discuss, debate, recommend and advise the Bishop on various matters. These discussions are lively and ensure that the necessary checks and balances are in place.

John summarised the work of Bishop's Council highlighted in the report, this included:

- Transforming Church. Together;
- Living in Love and Faith;
- Deanery School;
- Governance review;
- Uganda Link;
- Diocesan Synod Elections;
- 2024 Budget; and
- Diocesan Mission and Pastoral work.

Questions

Julie Childerhouse (Chippenham Deanery) suggested that any sensible organisation would regularly review its practises, but it couldn't recall the Diocesan Board of Finance undergoing a governance review before. Julie therefore asked what had prompted the review.

John Sunderland (Bishop's Council member) confirmed that the review has been prompted due to challenges at Deaney School. Consequently, Bishop's Council wished to take a step back and look at all Governance, identify any further issues and address them.

John Sunderland (Bishop's Council Member) moved that the report be received.

Motion passed unanimously

5. Net Zero

Amy Dartington (Environment and Sustainability Manger) presented the Net Zero annual update report.

Amy reported on the four main workstreams: clergy housing; church buildings; business travel; and schools.

Clergy housing

Completed:

- 24 CWI/loft installations installed;
- 21 PV installations installed;
- 3 heat pumps installed;
- 22 energy audits undertaken;
- 2 infrared panels installed; and
- 4 vents installed.

Currently underway

- A further 4 heat pumps;
- A further 20 heat pumps; and
- Tender for remaining loft installation.

Next steps

- Data collection;
- Heat loss management surveys;
- Void works;

Church buildings

Completed:

- 62 energy audit visits;
- 119 churches registered for Eco Church;
- 24 churches at Silver or Gold Eco Church Awards;
- 48 churches engaged;
- 135 Eco Champs (45 at each meeting);
- 3 grants of £10k paid out;
- 12 people trained on Carbon Literacy;
- Free temporary heaters secured; and
- More Additional Matter Orders (AMOs) granted to move works to make church buildings more sustainable from Faculty to List B.

Currently underway:

- Build Eco Champ support network to provide advice and support;

- Continue to push energy audits and grants;
- Next Carbon Literacy training booked;
- Build case study library; and
- Increase communications.

Next steps

- Eco Champs buddy system;
- Renewable energy campaign;
- Net Zero church designation; and
- Bulk buy schemes.

Travel

Diocesan Support Services Staff travel is less than 1% of total emissions. However, this is likely to increase due to the number of new parish-facing roles, so ways of reducing and offsetting travel were being considered.

Schools

- Teaching and other resources launched;
- Energy management support;
- PV for schools in progress;
- Environment will be the theme of the Education conference; and
- Aiming to run Eco campaign from September 2024.

At the conclusion of her presentation, Amy asked Diocesan Synod members to discuss what has gone well and what improvements were needed.

Questions:

Julia Childerhouse (Chippenham Deanery) commented that it was great to hear what's going on. Julia queried if there was a review plan for comparing baseline, progress and targets. Also was the diocese going to achieve Net Zero by 2030

Amy Dartington confirmed that the diocese was on course to achieve Net Zero but there was always the possibility of wild cards as the Diocesan Support Services (DSS) can only have a direct impact on church property and schools.

The Revd Toby Boutle (Swindon Deanery) asked if there were any patterns in terms of parish engagement. For example, were middle class parishes engaging more with the eco agenda. If yes, what can we do to encourage a wider demographic to engage.

Amy Dartington explained that she had not mapped this, however, churches with more resources did engage more. This was why a buddying system between churches would help with the environmental agenda.

Paul Langham (exofficio) commended Amy and her team for all that they are doing but queried why there wasn't National Church leadership for this whereas there was for other workstreams such as schools?

Amy Dartington confirmed that there is National Church leadership in place, The national church's Net Zero programme has £90million in the first triennium and £130million in next. It also has funded capacity grants for Environment advisers and has established an Eco Champions and equivalents group so people in similar

diocesan roles can share resources and ideas.

Richard Leaman highlighted that whilst these figures seem large, in comparison to the quantum needed (nearly £1Bn at Diocesan level), it was relatively small.

Julie Childerhouse (Chippenham Deanery) queried whether the diocese was going to be stuck with out-of-date technology and whether the diocese was future proofing technology.

Amy Dartington confirmed that heat pumps and infra-red would be used for a long time. Both have been around a while and were unlikely to become obsolete in the near future.

Lindsey McMullam (Director of Property) highlighted that the DSS has commissioned a lot of trials of different technologies, and will adapt what is implemented as new technologies develop, and are released.

Kate Davison (Kingswood and South Glos Deanery) promoted the Eco Champion meetings.

David Clarke (City Deanery) queried if the DSS intended to install electric charging points in all vicarages.

Amy Dartington confirmed that there were no plans to do this, noting that there are grants available should individuals wish to do so. The reason the DSS was not investing in electric charging points was because of budget and also because they do not decrease traffic or energy consumption. However, Amy did highlight that churches are encouraged to add electric charging points to their car parks.

The Revd Trudie Wigley in the Chair

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| 6. | 6a. Update report
6b. Table discussion
6c. TC.T Good News Story
6d. Q&A |
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Rob Mountain (Director of Transformation) presented the TC.T update.

Rob summarised the journey so far, focusing on the four main stages of TC.T to date.

Stage 1

Year:2020/1

Question: What is God calling us to do?

Action: Conversation, discernment, and reflection

Stage 2

Year: 2022

Question: What practical things can we do?

Action: Strategy and workstream creation; and 1st bid for National Church funding.

Stage 3

Year: 2023

Question: What structures do we need?

Action: 2nd Bid for National Church funding (£6.8million); and building necessary foundations.

Stage 4

Year: 2024

Question: How do we make things happen on the ground?

Action: Engagement and implementation.

Rob explained the 2024 engagement schedule, which included:

- Two incumbent engagement days held in January and February.
- LLM conference (TC.T update) held in February
- Chapter meetings hosted by Archdeacons to be held in April and May
- DSS Senior Leadership Team to visit Deanery Synods from February onwards.
- Zoom meetings to be arranged and open to whole diocese.
- Parish Officers training days to be held in July and September

Rob asked Diocesan Synod to help with refining the content for the Parish Officers training day and asked the following question which was discussed on tables:

“What content should be included in the Parish Officer training days this summer / autumn?”

Table discussion feedback:

The Revd Rich Cresswell (Kingswood and South Gloucestershire Deanery) reported nervousness as according to the Church Times, churchwardens and PCC numbers were dropping off a cliff. Rich was worried by the reference to “Parish Officer training **days**,” he suggested that training evenings or short days might be better. He highlighted some churchwardens just want to come to church and that we might be asking too much of our volunteers. Rich also asked for a summary of the TC.T day because he was unable to attend and, despite being assured he would receive a summary, still hasn’t received anything.

ACTION: Rob Mountain to forward slides and notes from the Clergy Days to Revd Cresswell.

David Clarke (City Deanery) suggested involving Parish Administrators in communications and training.

The Revd Kaf Smith (Swindon Deanery) reflected on the diversity of parish contexts and different levels of parish officers and engagement. Not sure how this might be fixed, but something to DSS might be able to assist with.

The Revd Phil Goodey (Swindon Deanery) suggested demystifying the Church of England as many people do not know how the Church of England works. Also suggested explaining how to access resources and succession planning. Training on conflict resolution and listening skills would also help PCC members on how to approach concerns/complaints.

The Revd Paul Langham (Bristol West Deanery) was concerned that the money awarded was based on set criteria and this might cause tension. Paul felt that the point of TC.T was to ensure a range of activities and for the PCC to decide, based on

its needs and context, what those activities and ideas should be.

Rob Mountain agreed, and confirmed that the DSS had pushed back on unnecessary constraints imposed by the National Church. The whole concept is that parishes should discern what is best in their context, and TCT funding should be used to support these ambitions wherever possible. Bishop Viv stated that some of the conversations with the National Church showed a lack of trust in Dioceses.

Good News Stories

Parishes across the diocese have been establishing and continuing inspirational work to help and support their local communities and the DSS has been striving to do all it can to support parishes in their mission. Rob highlighted a few of the many good works that have been happening since Diocesan Synod last met in November 2023.

- **Environment** – PCC of Lydiard Millicent has been granted a faculty to introduce a pond in its churchyard. It will be the first pond in a churchyard in the diocese.
- **Church Buildings** – Funding has been granted for two church building officers (Church Buildings Maintenance and Repair Officer; and Church Community Enabler) to work with the churches most in need.
- **Youth and Children's work** - 21 Expression of Interests for under-18 youth workers have been received, and will be processed soon.
- **Funding** – the diocese has been awarded £100k to distribute as grants or minor repairs and improvements
- **Conferences** – two upcoming conferences: Everyday Faith at Pattern church on 11/05/2024; and We're In This Together at St Paul's, Chippenham on 13/07/2024.

Questions

Nick Orman (Swindon Deanery) queried how the recruitment of reverse mentors was progressing.

Rob Mountain confirmed that it was going well and there was only one more position to fill. Rob explained that his team are now working with reverse mentors to ensure they play a constructive role in the programme.

The Revd Sally Wheeler (Chippenham Deanery) thanked Rob for the presentation and requested a newsletter that could be printed and circulated. She also asked if there was any movement on growing faith chaplains.

Rob confirmed that a newsletter would be created and that Liz Townend (Director of Education) would address growing faith chaplains later.

The Revd Steve Wilkinson (North Wiltshire Deanery) mentioned that he was enthused by the TC.T day but when feedback was requested he was uncertain what to say. Whilst the TC,T day was good he was not sure what he would do that he isn't doing already.

Richard Leaman (CEO/Diocesan Secretary) replied that the Diocese did recognise that incumbents would come to that day with different levels of understanding, and activity, within their parishes. Richard suggested that if the day left people thinking 'I know what I am doing already', and 'I have a bit more information but don't need to

change anything', then that is fine. The idea for the day was to give incumbents information on the programme, understand what support is available, and to put names to faces. Richard also highlighted that 21 people had given feedback which was mostly positive with a couple of exceptions. The negative feedback was being looked at and fed into future conference planning.

The Revd Jones Mutemwakwenda (City Deanery) asked how much engagement would there be for the youth? Would there be a youth engagement officer and youth engagement programmes. Revd Jones suggested that TC.T cannot be successful if young people are not strongly involved and engaged.

Liz Townend (Director of Education) confirmed that a youth engagement officer had been appointed this week, as well as Growing Faith chaplains, and she hoped to be in a position to spread the news more widely by Easter.

Ed Shaw led prayers and commitment for Transforming Church.Together

7.	Education 7a. Education Update report 7b. Q&A
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Liz Townend (Director of Education) presented the Education update report.

Liz explained that life for everyone in education was changing rapidly but sustaining and improving standards in schools continues to be a key role for the Education team.

Liz informed Diocesan Synod that children today live in digital world where communication has never been so easy but also record number of children would say they feel isolated and alone. In terms of mental health, 10% of children state that they can't face coming into school.

Liz encouraged Diocesan Synod to think about how churches can support families, its local area, and schools to navigate the changing world and help children to stay in school.

Questions:

The Revd Toby Boutle (Swindon Deanery) thanked Liz for her presentation and asked what the role of the sacraments in school work was. Toby was concerned to hear that the Deanery School had not received the sacraments in 5 years.

Liz Townend (Director Education) explained that this had not been thought about centrally. Sacraments were normally brought into a school if it had a close relationship with the parish church. Liz confirmed she would reflect on it.

The Revd Sally Wheeler (Chippenham Deanery) was delighted to hear Liz's passion but was concerned that a year ago the Diocesan Synod was hearing similar passion from Diocese of Bristol Academies Trust (DBAT). Sally suggested that we keep an eye on the governance whilst we are doing exciting things.

Liz Townend (Director of Education) agreed and explained that the Education Team now had two schools advisers who were focused on governance and inspections.

The Revd Phil Goodey (Swindon Deanery) explained that in Highworth there was

a flourishing youth group of 30+ children. The two leaders that run this group were more than twice the age of the oldest child. What resources were being directed to help fund and train youth, family and children's workers. Phil highlighted that we have young people, but we are running of people who can work with them because the resource on the ground was not there.

Liz Townend (Director of Education) agreed that it was hard to find good youth and children's workers because there was little career progression or budget. Due to this, she was really working on growing faith chaplains. Chaplains would be community based not church based. Liz was trying to link with SWYM and Mullers so that work was not duplicated.

David Briggs (North Wiltshire Deanery) explained that his mission area had collaborated to pay and employ a youth worker who was doing a brilliant job. The challenge was part of the funding came from matched funding for three years. The parishes involved are hopefully prepared to continue their funding but also need to seek new match funding.

Richard Leaman (Diocesan Secretary) suggested he and David talk after Diocesan Synod to see if funding, or support to gain funding, might be available.

The Revd Malcolm Strange (Kingswood & S Gloucestershire Deanery) explained that he had conversations with headteachers across the diocese about the school, church and home relationship. From these conversations it was clear that there was concern that the church was not training clergy and leaders on how to work with schools, and also needs to train new heads about how to work with their local church. Malcolm asked what would be Liz's dream in terms of developing that relationship.

Liz Townend (Director of Education) stated that her dream would be for curates to have a two-week placement in schools as part of their curacy. Liz also suggested that parish profile's need to work with local school(s).

Action: Liz Townend to investigate with the Director of Mission and Ministry

8.	Deanery School
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Neil presented an update on the Deanery School to Diocesan Synod.

Neil highlighted the fantastic work of Liz Townend and her team.

Neil explained that on 9 November 2023 Ofsted published its report on the Deanery School which concluded that it was inadequate. Since then, it has been decided that the Deanery School would be moved to another Trust, the name of which will be announced shortly.

Neil assured Diocesan Synod that Liz and her team were working hard with the other schools in their care and, once the lessons have been learned from DBATs experience with the Deanery School, they will be taken onboard and actioned.

Chris Dursley led prayers and commitment the Deanery School.

9.	Question Time
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Trudie Wigley asked each diocesan synod member who had submitted a formal written question whether they wished to ask a supplementary question.

Ed Shaw (Bristol West Deanery) asked if the Diocese of Bristol was going to declare a children's emergency? If nothing was done to encourage more children to attend, Ed questioned who would be in our churches in 20,30,40 years time.

Trudie Wigley (Chair for House of Clergy) confirmed that this would be discussed at Agenda committee.

Action: EB to add to the Agenda Committee Agenda.

Auriol Britton (Bristol South Deanery) explained that Facebook and twitter started out as something good but has since gone very wrong. Consequently, Auriol asked if there was a case for churches to get together and create a new social network.

Richard Leaman felt that Auriol had a good point, but noted that the Diocese had opted to be a positive Christian witness within the sometimes dark world of social media. Richard also observed that there are already Christian spaces on social media, for example on TikTok there was a something called The Way (230,000 Christian people on this site).

Joel Sales (Swindon Deanery) confirmed he did not have a supplementary question.

10. Finance Update

Richard Bacon introduced Stephen Sheridan (new Director of Finance)

Finances 2023 Results and 2024 Budget

Stephen explained he had been in post since the end of December 2023 and apologized if he could not immediately answer certain questions.

On the 2023 Draft full year out-turn he noted that while Parish Share was £0.5m below budget, the Budget was aspirational and, given the cost-of-living crisis, the result was challenging, but not entirely unpredictable. He explained that this emphasized the importance of seeing parish share as a way of sharing the burden across all parishes, and not a tax which disappears into Diocesan bank account. He also observed the importance of the fundraising infrastructure being built up by the External Relations Team to assist Parishes in increasing their revenue from external sources.

2023 income was £0.7m lower than budget due to the receipt of Grants on projects being in arrears. The total shortfall of income was made up for with the realisation of investment returns and utilising the Clergy Stipends Capital Fund for clergy property works (as allowed).

2023 Expenditure was broadly on budget.

On the 2024 budget (previously approved by Synod) Stephen noted that there was a £0.9m increase in Ministry Spend from 2023 Actuals to 2024 Budget of which £0.5m related to headcount (a 6% increase in the numbers of clergy and curates) plus centrally recommended stipend increases, whilst £0.4m related to increased support and training for clergy in these difficult times. He noted that Clergy recruitment was on track.

Further to a question posed by The Revd Joel Sales (Swindon Deanery) at Synod

Stephen can clarify that the £0.4m relates primarily to Future Ministry work with £0.1m on Curate Training for 4.5 Curates and £0.2m grants to Ordinands and Curates as well as IME support and training with two major conferences and a new administrator.

Finance Team

Stephen explained that the Finance Team has had a challenging few years but it was now stabilizing and Finance clearly recognises its purpose is to help and support parishes across the diocese. In order to deliver this, it was making changes to make the team and processes more efficient which included:

- transferring to accrual accounting;
- streamlining the finance system (reducing 4000 account codes to 600);
- Introducing software to automate and speed up invoices and payments, and:
- an improved procurement structure and process.

IT Provider Procurement

Stephen explained that this project is to identify a new IT service provider (as the centrally provided service from Church House had not proved successful). This was underway and tenders have been submitted for a selection process in early May 2024.

Questions

The Revd Joel Sales (Swindon Deanery) queried whether it was the intention of the Diocesan Board of Finance DBF to spend £400k on training which would be more than £3k per clergy person.

Stephen Sheridan (Director of Finance) confirmed that was the intention and he would break down the numbers for Joel.

Action: Simon Taylor to send Joel a breakdown of expenditure on clergy training

The Revd Melanie Otto led prayer for the diocesan finances and finance team.

11.	Diocesan Synod Elections
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Bruce Finnamore (Chair of the House of Laity) reported that this Diocesan Synod was due to expire its term on 31 July 2024. In light of this, Diocesan Synod Elections will take place over the summer.

First of all, Bruce wanted to thank current Diocesan Synod members for all their time and dedication over the past three years which had furthered the diocese's work on education, environment, Transforming Church. Together and so much more.

Bruce asked each member to reflect and seriously consider standing again but also to encourage others whose voice, talents and experiences might broaden the diversity of Diocesan Synod. Bruce and Trude informed Diocesan Synod that they would be writing to all parishes to encourage people to stand for election.

12.	Blessing and Close
<p>Bishop Viv thanked St Michael's and its staff for hosting Diocesan Synod and also thanked Caroline Jowett-Ive for her service as this was her last meeting and she would be leaving the DSS in early April.</p> <p>Bishop Neil closed the meeting with prayer.</p>	