

**Acts of Synod held on Saturday, 21 May 2022
at 9.30am at St Martins House**

<u>Present:</u>	House of Bishops	1
	House of Clergy	42
	House of Laity	39
<u>Apologies:</u>		25
<u>In attendance:</u>	Ecumenical Observer	1
	Officers and Speakers	10

Chair: Stephen Adshead, Chair of the House of Laity, was chair for agenda items up to and including the AGM of the DBF, with Wendy Dalrymple, Chair of the House of Laity, the chair for the rest of the agenda.

The Synod began with worship led by Corinne Aldis who invited those present to reflect on a passage from 1 Kings 19:9-13, asking themselves if the fury of debate or noise of our opinions reduce our chances of hearing God's voice.

Presidential Address

Bishop Martyn reminded Synod members that the diocesan vision is to seek the Kingdom of God and that this means trying to imagine another world than the one we see around us. He spoke about the way that God interacts with different cultures, how the church takes different forms in these cultures, and the effort of the imagination that is needed to see that the Christian faith can take other cultural forms than our own. This therefore calls us to an adventure of the imagination and the relevance of this to the Synod agenda was then set out as follows

- In thinking about Intergenerational communities, we can reflect on how we might reach the thousands of children in Church of England schools.
- In discussions about finance, to consider the possibility that the real issue is a lack of imagination about what we do with our money, rather than not having enough money.
- In looking at the Pastoral Principles in the context of Living in Love and Faith, to hear an invitation to imagine how we can live well together in spite of our differences and to model this to a bitterly divided world.

In closing Bishop Martyn reminded the Synod that we need to see a church using our imagination which is in the image of a triune God.

Intergenerational Communities

Carolyn Lewis, Diocesan Director of Education, then introduced a presentation on Intergenerational Communities by reflecting on a conversation in which

schoolchildren had been asked to reflect on what kind of king Jesus is. Among the responses was a reflection that although Jesus could have commanded people to do all sorts of things, he chose to ask people what he could do for them. Matt Long, the Youth and Intergenerational Enabler, then informed the Synod about the work of Growing Faith, which is an initiative which seeks to promote engagement with children, young people and families leading to a doubling of the number of active disciples in the Church of England among children and young people by 2030. He explained that Growing Faith looks at promoting and making use of intersections between church, school and household in order to reach children, young people and their families.

The Synod then heard from Sadie Batstone, Principal of Brockington College, who gave a powerful talk outlining the challenges facing schools in their provision for children with special educational needs. She noted that Leicestershire is one of the most poorly funded regions but with a high number of SEN children. The local authority is unable to close the significant funding gap due to budgetary constraints. This is putting significant pressure on schools and bringing some families to the brink of crisis. In response to this Carolyn Lewis highlighted the need to listen to our schools and to grow relationships. Contributions from the floor reflected on the need for our churches to know their communities well and to encourage vocations into schools.

AGM of the DBF

The AGM of the Diocesan Board of Finance was chaired by David Palmer, who reported that the net operating loss for 2021 had been lower than expected at £953k. This encouraging piece of news was tempered by the knowledge that the outcome had been significantly influenced by a one-off national church grant of £700k and income from house sales of £660k. He highlighted that increasing Parish Contributions remains key to working towards a balanced budget. The Synod received the Annual Report and Accounts and approved the reappointment of Hays McIntyre as auditors with no votes against.

Written Questions

Synod considered written questions which had been received in relation to Shaped By God Together, Resourcing Churches, Living in Love and Faith and the cost of living crisis. Follow up questions from Roy Faulkner and David Monteith focused respectively on how funding of clergy can be explained to churches and pastoral provision for same sex married or civilly partnered couples in our congregations. To the former Bishop Martyn responded that parish contributions will go towards the cost of the Minster Community ministry team. In response to the latter question, Bishop Martyn said that he trusts incumbents to respond appropriately and that he is happy to support incumbents on how to respond pastorally where that is needed.

DAC Annual Report

Richard Trethewey presented the annual report of the Diocesan Advisory Committee for the Care of Churches (DAC). He noted ongoing prayer for DAC Secretary Rupert Allen, who has been off sick for several months, and gratitude for Gill Elliott (Buildings Development Enabler) who has provided cover in Rupert's absence.

Reconciling Communities

The Synod then considered the Reconciling Communities strategic priority. This was a first opportunity for Florence Gildea, the Bishop's Social Policy Advisor, to present her initial work in this area. She explained that the work of reconciliation is theologically rooted in God's work of reconciling all things to himself, and that reconciliation is not a one-off event – but an ongoing and deepening journey, involving truth, justice, and mercy. She went on to outline how Living in Love and Faith fits within the Reconciling Communities priority.

Living in Love and Faith – Pastoral Principles

This led into the final agenda item in which Synod engaged with the Pastoral Principles for living well together as part of overall engagement with Living in Love and Faith, and as preparation for a more substantive discussion in September. Following a scene setting introduction by Bishop Martyn the Synod moved into 11 facilitated small groups looking at three of the pastoral principles: addressing ignorance, casting our fear, and speaking into silence. After half an hour in these discussion groups the Synod came back together to hear presentations on the other three pastoral principles, namely acknowledging prejudice, admitting hypocrisy and paying attention to power from Florence Gildea, David Monteith and Jitesh Patel respectively. Finally Andy Brockbank, Jon Barrett and Stuart Burns offered brief highlights from initial work on collating feedback from the groups and said that this feedback would feed into preparations for the discussion of Living in Love and Faith in September.

The Synod closed with prayer led by Bishop Martyn.