

**Coventry Diocesan Synod
Minutes – 16 November 2019**

Minutes of a meeting of Diocesan Synod, held at St Andrew's, Shottery in the Deanery of Fosse, on Saturday 16 November 2019.

The Bishop of Coventry took the chair.

1. Welcome

The Bishop of Coventry welcomed members to the meeting.

2. Opening worship

The Revd Captain Craig Grocock led the Synod in worship. He noted that the day was the start of Celtic Advent which is marked by the Northumbria Community. This was the traditional beginning of monastic fasting and preparation for the feast of Christmas, reflecting Lent in lasting for forty days. The worship concluded with the Morning Prayer from the Northumbria Community.

3. Apologies and notices

Specific welcome was expressed to the Revd Dan Corlett, Alcester deanery and Revd Beren Hartless, Fosse deanery, as visiting clergy. Also welcome to the Diocesan Chancellor, The Worshipful Stephen Eyre QC and to the new Archdeacon Missioner, The Venerable Barry Dugmore, on his first meeting of the Coventry Diocesan Synod.

Apologies were noted from 4 laity and 8 clergy, including Bishop John and Dean John. It was noted that Bishop John was hosting a Friends of the Holy Land meeting at the Cathedral and therefore was unable to attend this Synod meeting.

It was highlighted that Jane Hill from the Mothers' Union was present at the gathering today, selling greetings cards on behalf of the charity. Bishop Christopher mentioned that there was a Mother's Union enrolment service happening today in the Diocese of Kapsabet where 800 new members were being enrolled, to strength the current membership of over 2,700 women in the Mother's Union in that area.

4. Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes of the Synod held on 18 June 2019 were approved as accurate, and signed. A clarification to be noted on item 7) which should be corrected to read:

7. Diocesan Board of Education Annual Report and Accounts

"Highlights have included the Cross of Nails pilgrimage to each of the 75 church schools in the diocese"

Helen Simmonds, Chair of the House of Laity, took the chair.

5. Presidential address

Bishop Christopher opened his address by stating 79 years and 2 days ago on the 14 November, our Cathedral was devastatingly bombed and brought to the ground. It was a night of destruction across the city of Coventry when buildings, lives and spirits were torn down by the forces of hate, violence and fear. He stressed that we live at a moment of history when many

things seem under great stress and at risk of being torn down. He referred to the international stage, political issues and the devastating effects of climate change seen throughout the world. With violence taking over peaceful protest and the questioning of the identity of the UK and our place in the world; highlighting issues such as poverty, youth violence, homelessness and mental health.

With the uncertainties of the world and our personal circumstances, it is easy to despair. But in the ruins of St Michael's Cathedral on the morning of 15 November 1940, Provost Howard didn't despair. For him like us today, Advent was near.

The Bishop referred to the forthcoming Confirmation service happening next week, on the eve of the Feast of Christ the King, a week before Advent Sunday. He referred to the act of the confirmation as 'surrendering to hope', which is also a good definition of the Church: a community surrendered to hope. Provost Howard surrendered himself to hope as he stood in the ruins nearly 80 years ago, and quoted as saying: 'We build again and it will be a Cathedral of hope'.

The Bishop sent a message of hope across the diocese, saying Christ is our hope and has the power to bring our communities to life. Our calling is not only to speak of hope into our communities but to bring hope through our actions, as we are, individually beacons of hope.

He cited some of the pioneering and missional work happening in the diocese, especially of the Bronze Eco-Diocese awarded to the diocese, as one sign of our commitment to healing the damage we do to our environment, and that in our centenary year we planted trees in church yards across the diocese. The work in Nuneaton, where Together for Change are working with many of the town's churches which will be a hope-bringer to the young people of Nuneaton, through the 'Saints' project and for the bid to found a new Church of England school among new housing in Nuneaton, to be a school of hope for its young people.

Bishop Christopher stressed the message of hope, in this time of elections, and that whatever the differences driving us apart, there are stronger ties that bind us together. To the politicians we say, make Jesus' prayer your own: 'God's will be done on earth as in heaven'. And follow the advice of the ancient prophet; 'Love mercy, do justice and walk humbly with your God'. And God will bless our nation.

He concluded his address by stressing that hope is grounded in reality and that reality is God. The God who raised Jesus from the dead. The God who is with us and for us in the living Christ, the Lord of history who will come to judge the living and the dead.

6. Introduction to new Archdeacon Missioner

The Chair of the House of Clergy, Charlotte Gale introduced Barry Dugmore, as the new Archdeacon Missioner and asked him a number of questions in order that the Synod could find out more about him. Having now been in the area for 6 weeks, Barry stated that his first impressions were that it was a friendly diocese, with a variety of different worshipping communities. He observed that the diocese 'punches above its weight', compared to its resources and size, which is encouraging to see. Whilst he sees some parts which feel discouraged and despondent, especially where there are clergy vacancies, he is encouraged by seeing people grow in the confident of the good news. He commented on the engagement across the diocese of the NCD Healthy Church framework, and encourages those churches who have been through the process to tell their story of what that has meant for their church and community.

When asked what would be his key priorities in the role, Barry highlighted a focus on clergy recruitment and to create a vision for church planting across the diocese. He specifically mentioned making the church in new housing developments beacons of hope and encouraging pioneering growth through different forms of 'church' such as café church, messy church and forest church. Charlotte thanked Barry for sharing his thoughts and wished him and his wife well as they settle into their new home in Hampton Lucy.

7. 2020 Budget and long term forecast for the Coventry Diocesan Board of Finance Limited.

The Chair of the Board of Finance, Canon Ian Francis introduced the proposed budget for 2020, highlighting that this was a budget to enable growth and thanked Julie Bellamy (JB), Director of Finance and her team for the work in producing it. He stated that the investment would be in clergy, housing and welfare and pointed out the key new developments as laid out in the paper (DS 19/15). As the political and economic outlook looks uncertain, the budget to continue to be aligned to the strategic priorities of the diocese.

Ian stressed that the diocese contribution to the 2020 Support Fund has increased, which shows that parishes are struggling and that the deaneries are not being as generous as they had previously been. He expressed gratitude for the hard work in parishes which make the contribution to the Parish Share possible.

Ian referred to the 'infographic' summary of the budget and where the money is spent, which Julie had produced and encouraged this to be shared across the diocese. An electronic copy can be found on the diocesan website <http://www.dioceseofcoventry.org/finance/dbf>.

The Chair of the Board of Finance, asked for any questions on the budget paper:-

- Anthony Woollard, Fosse deanery, congratulated Julie and CDBF for the best presentation of the budget he has ever had. It aligned with the theme of 'surrendering to hope, and punching above our weight'. He commented that the budget demonstrated the dark waters in PCC and diocesan finances, however that Julie had shown how this can be done and how priorities need to be adjusted. Markers have been identified that resources through people and not money will be important in the future.
- Tim Pollard, Coventry South deanery, echoed thanks for the presentation but questioned the quoted number of houses in that deanery. There was a short discussion on communication between Area Deans and the diocesan office to ensure the correct information is received and presented.

JB was actioned to look into this with Tim, and to ensure that the process is tightened up in the Support Fund meeting in June.

- Sam Margrave, General Synod, asked how in the context of the whole church and of other dioceses, Coventry diocese compared, specifically in terms of stewardship. JB responded that in broad terms, the diocese is very healthy and the balance sheet is in the top quartile compared to other dioceses. She commented that Coventry has strong Glebe land management. In terms of stewardship, Coventry is in the mid to lower range, with an average giving of £12 a week. JB stressed that the diocese is living off the generosity of past congregations. Bishop Christopher noted that in 1959, weekly giving was equivalent to a packet of cigarettes and currently such item costs £12.40; thus weekly giving in relative terms has remained the same.

- Jonathan Jee, Warwick and Leamington deanery, asked what the lay worker salary increases would be, compared to the clergy increase of 2%. Ian replied that this would also be at 2%.

After the questions, Ian addressed the room and introduced the motion: “that this Synod:

- receives and approves the budget as proposed
- approves the Training and Development budget contained therein for net expenditure of £1,512,454 and
- authorises in 2020 the Coventry Diocesan Board of Finance Limited to make general funds expenditure not exceeding £9,111,384 and special funds expenditure of no more than £2.1m.

The Chair of the DBF formally moved the budget as proposed, which was unanimously approved by the Synod.

8. Deanery Synod numbers

Ruth Marlow (REM) addressed the Synod outlining the paper DS 19/16, stating the requirement to have the best representation of the deanery, with involvement from across the parishes. It was stressed that membership of Deanery Synod is important, as members are the electorate for the General Synod elections which are happening next year. The changed scale is recommended so that majority of parishes can have fair representation.

RM asked for questions and comments from the members and there followed a period of discussion and questioning over this formula.

- Sam Margrave, General Synod, asked what consultation had been undertaken with parishes and stressed concern as to the way these changes had come about, if the laity had not been consulted. He suggested that more of a consideration of what the diocese wanted from lay representation should be addressed, rather than just changing the number and expecting a positive result.
- Jonathan Jee, Warwick and Leamington deanery, questioned the current vacancy rate.
- Michael Newey, Alcester deanery, questioned that the stated clergy numbers are greater than the current numbers.
- Nicola Perryman, Kenilworth deanery, questioned where the vacancy numbers had come from.

In response to the queries posed, REM clarified that consultation had occurred with the Area Deans, but did not know if they discussed it further with their lay representatives.

In terms of vacancy rate, these are the number of clergy in that area, calculated on the total number of ordained (not just stipendiary), which includes those who are licensed and are able to attend the meetings. It was noted by Barry Dugmore that the Area Deans and deanery Lay Chairs had been consulted, but only 4 deaneries had responded.

There was some realisation from the members that they did not appreciate how important this issues is to the General Synod elections happening in the summer of 2020. To this end Tim Pollard suggested an amendment to the proposed scale in the paper, to ensure good representation.

- John Hearn from Warwick and Leamington deanery suggested that those parishes

which would be adversely effected would be those which have over 400 on their electoral role and asked how many parishes that would affect.

REM explained that she had written to all deanery secretaries to get the number of representation. In response to why this process needs to happen now, REM clarified that the Church Representation Rules require this to be set and agreed by Diocesan Synod by the end of this year, in readiness for the numbers of representation for General Synod to be calculated by National Church, for the elections for next year. She stressed that the rules say 'where practicable' no less than 50 per deanery representation and that the diocese is trying to get closer to the rules. It was not clear on how many churches in the diocese have over 400 on the electoral roll, but it was deemed as not too many.

Tim Pollard proposed a change to the scale, so that after 100, the number would increase in increments of 50, rather than 100.

Proposed amendment to scale B:

# on electoral roll	Parish reps
1-25	1
26-60	2
61-100	3
101-150	4
151-200	5
201-250	6
251-300	7
301-350	8
351-400	9

There were concerns raised that members were not in a position to vote on any proposal which would reflect the thoughts of their deanery, as this had not been discussed at the deanery level.

REM stressed to the Synod that the purpose of the Diocesan Synod is to make decisions on actions proposed in the papers, on behalf of their deaneries and that the Area Deans and Lay Chairs were asked to comment. She stressed that the proposed scale B would not disenfranchise the parishes.

The Chair of the House of Laity, Helen Simmonds (HS) called the Synod to order and suggested that the coffee break was taken and that for members to consider the amendment proposal which had been put forward by Tim Pollard, and then the Synod would take a vote.

HS reconvened the meeting after the break and stressed the importance of the role the laity play in the workings of the church. Pointing out that laity are to engage at all levels of the synodical ladder. She noted that Deanery Synods need to be places people want to be and therefore the need that there are interesting and engaging topics being discussed so that it creates a desire for people to want to be there. HS expressed a deep concern of the strength of the deanery synods, where real discussions and decisions take place. She also commented that, under new rules passed by General Synod, in the future laity will only be permitted to serve two consecutive terms on Synod unless parishes vote to amend this. The result could be to limit the involvement of laity.

The Chair put the amended scale to the vote. There were 2 votes for, therefore the amended did not carry.

- Jon Roy, Coventry North deanery, raised his concern if the rate was increased for larger parishes that would result in them having an over-representation.
- Sam Margrave, General Synod, stressed the importance of increasing engagement.
- Jonathan Hearn, Warwick and Leamington deanery, suggested another amendment to the proposed scale B, to give greater representation to larger churches by adding:

# on electoral roll	Parish reps
200-400	5
401-500	6
500+	7

The Chair put the amended scale to the vote. There were 15 votes for, 22 against, therefore the amended did not carry.

The Chair then proposed that the motion is voted on as it stands, and that scale B would be adopted by the Diocesan Synod. The majority of the members voted in, with 2 votes against. The motion was carried.

The Rev'd Charlotte Gale, Chair of the House of Clergy, took the chair.

9. Promulgation of Amending Canon No. 39

Mary Allanson, the Diocesan Registrar presented the promulgation of amending Canon 39. Mary briefly summarised that this Canon is concerned with reducing the burden on churches to hold morning and evening prayer and holy communion, with a number of other rules amended, as per the paper DS 19/17.

10. Churchyard regulations

The Venerable Sue Field introduced the Chancellor, The Worshipful Stephen Eyre QC and presented him with a number of questions, starting with asking what the role of Diocesan Chancellor entailed. Stephen outlined that this role is the judge of the church court of the diocese. The Chancellor deals with principle alterations to church buildings, memorials and exhumations.

Stephen explained that he lives on the border of the Coventry diocese, in a parish of Birmingham. His day job is that of a 'circuit judge' and he is also the Chancellor of Litchfield diocese.

He noted that he is grateful to have the opportunity to do interesting work which he enjoys.

The Chancellor introduced the new Churchyard regulation (which are available on the diocesan website <http://www.dioceseofcoventry.org/churchyards/Memorials>), which became law on 1 November this year. He provided the Synod with a short summary of the regulations:

- 1) **Purpose.** People have the right to be buried in a churchyard if it is open, however they have no automatic right to have a memorial on the grave. For this a faculty is needed. It is important that the correct and consistent rules are communicated to bereaved families about what they can and cannot have as a grave memorial. The regulations are there for permission and authority for incumbents to use and to protect the clergy in the

parishes – to keep alongside the bereaved and to ‘blame the Chancellor’, if they cannot do what the families are requesting.

- 2) **The changes.** The previous regulations were 10 years old and the new regulations have three main themes:-
 - 1: includes straightforward permissions
 - 2: has greater scope for variety (provided it is in consultation with the Archdeacon Pastor) to put things on a memorial
 - 3: the scope for the individual parish churchyard policy to state what the parish would permit (as approved by DAC), which can replace the regulations. It was stressed that they should not be blank uniformity in our churchyards, however, they should be of high quality and to encourage proper design.
- 3) **Implementation.** Parishes are advised to seek guidance from the Archdeacon Pastor or the Diocesan Registrar if there are any problems or uncertainties. Whilst the regulations are set out, the incumbent has to authorise the request and can insist upon a faculty being sort. However, that does not mean that ‘anything goes’ (see Talking tombstones online).

The regulations need to be given as much publicity as possible, so that bereaved families are aware of what they can and cannot have on a memorial and it is endeavoured that these regulations remove any issue of grievances.

After the summary presented by the Chancellor there were questions from the Synod:-

- Frank Seldon, Nuneaton deanery, noted that there are a lot of forms and asked if the forms on the website can reflect what the current fees are.
- George Heighton, Shipston deanery, asked if the regulations were the same across all dioceses and if these regulations can be shares with funeral directors. Stephen clarified that this is a public document and can be shared. The local memorial masons and funeral directors have been sent the revised version. The Chancellor noted that each diocese will have their own regulations, but will have some similarities. In essence he stated that if there is a request to have something on a memorial in a churchyard, then you have to show good reason for it in this diocese.
- Sam Margrave, General Synod, asked if there were digital materials or a tool kit available for the bereaved to show what is permitted and what is not. It was noted that Archdeacon Sue is working on a simple guide for bereavement.
- Karen Armbrister, Rugby deanery, thanked the help of the Registrar’s assistant (Michelle McBrierty) for her support in a matter Karen was dealing with and stressed the importance of walking the family through the process, with support.

11. DBE developments

The Director of the Diocesan Board of Education (DBE), Canon Linda Wainscot (LW), presented a summary of recent activities and developments across the diocese in Christian education. She stated that the DBE exists in an ever changing landscape, full of complexities, but where challenges are seen as opportunities.

The DBE Strategic School Organisation Plan outlines the vision and supporting structures over the next 5 years to 2025. LW stressed the DBE's mission statement of *"encourages and empowers others to be courageous and equips them to deliver excellent Christian education so that all will flourish to achieve their full human potential."*

LW stated that partnership working is the key way for schools to flourish, with local authority resources scaled back, more schools are now in Multi Academy Trusts (MATs) and there is an increasing number of schools in federations (meaning one governing body for more than one school). She stressed that Excellent Christian education needs excellent Christian leadership.

Highlights were presented around a new free school bid in Nuneaton with Inspire Education MAT, and working with Arden Forest MAT for a new school in Bishop Tachbrook. It was mentioned that Warwick Local Authority is to consider relocating and expanding St James, Southam and St Andrew, Shotton and expanding Long Itchington and Berkswell. LW stated that this is hugely significant as our diocesan family will grow in number without having to enter competitions to run new schools. Numbers are set to increase from 15,500 to 18,000 children due to larger schools.

The Ofsted results are encouraging, as LW clarified that church schools are subject to regular Ofsted inspection under sections 5 & 8 and also subject to church school inspection, section 48. Of the 74 schools, 12 scored 'Outstanding', 54 'Good', 7 'needs improving', with 1 scoring 'inadequate'. On the church school criteria, 37 scored 'Excellent' and 37 'Good'.

LW spoke of growing faith in action and gave Wellesbourne school as an excellent example. Wellesbourne CofE Primary School is the first school this year to be inspected under the new SIAMS schedule. Very few schools nationally are judged as exceptional and the DBE are thrilled that Wellesbourne is now among them. The report stated that *'This is an excellent church school which lives and breathes its vision, deeply grounded in biblical teaching. Pupils demonstrate the fruit of the spirit which is the school's Christian vision from Galatians 5: 22.'* The report goes on to state that there is an exemplary approach in the way the school and church are 'friends to each other' and as a direct result attendance at church services and events has risen. This is growing faith in action. The report concluded that *'Wellesbourne is an excellent example of how good seed, the right soil and skillful tending lead to an abundance of life and a fruitful harvest.'*

The Chair thanked LW for her presentation and for the work of her and her team across the schools within the diocese.

12. Appointment of Trustees to the Chapel of Unity (DS 19/18)

Charlotte Gale asked for any members to consider standing as a Trustee for the Chapel of Unity, as no one had come forward, by the deadline. Mark Bratton, the Bishop's nominee to the Chapel of Unity had written a short summary of the role, to encourage members to join.

This summary will be emailed to members after the meeting.

The Chair of the House of Laity confirmed the re-appointment of the Trustees to the

Diocesan Board of Education for another three years. Emma Griffiths, Diana Jackson and Sharon Jones will serve another term from 1 January 2020 to 31 December 2023.

This was agreed by the Synod.

13. Social Enterprise motion proposed by Sam Margrave

Due to time constraints the proposed motion with regards to Christian entrepreneurship was not debated and will be postponed until the next appropriate convening of the Diocesan Synod.

14. Date of next meeting to note

The meeting for 2020 were highlighted as Saturday 21 March am, Tuesday 23 June pm and Saturday 14 November am. The venues will be confirmed with the first notice of the meetings.

The Bishop of Coventry took the Chair

15. Closing prayers

The Bishop of Coventry closed the meeting in prayer. The meeting concluded at 1pm.

Attendance: Bishops: 1 ; Clergy: 25 ; Laity: 35 . Attendees and guests 9:

Signed: Date: