

**Coventry Diocesan Synod
Minutes – 19 March 2022**

Minutes of a meeting of Diocesan Synod, held on Saturday 19 March at The Manor Hotel, Meriden.

The Bishop of Coventry took the chair

1. Welcome and opening worship

The Bishop of Coventry welcomed the Diocesan Synod, referring to Isaiah 11, a passage of Messianic hope. The Synod prayed the Coventry Litany, keeping the people of Ukraine in mind.

2. Visitors and Apologies

Chris Edwards, Chair of the DBE was welcomed. The Synod remembered Sarah Little, who has passed away, and gave thanks for her life by holding a moment of silence. Apologies were noted and the Synod was quorate.

3. Minutes of the last meeting (DS 22/02)

The minutes of the Diocesan Synod meeting held on 20 November 2021 were approved.

4. Presidential Address

The Bishop of Coventry addressed the Synod.

Bishop Christopher reminded Synod that ordinarily he would speak from notes on the life of the Diocese and the Church of England, today he invited Synod to have a conversation with him.

Synod asked "What are we doing about Ukraine?"

Bishop Christopher briefed Synod on activity within Coventry through HOPE Coventry and the Coventry Refugee and Migrant Centre. At this early stage, it is not clear what else is happening across the diocese and it would be good to coordinate activity. Information is currently scarce on how clergy might open parsonages to refugees, and it was recognised that we shall need to be discerning about how and if we might participate in the proposed scheme. Bishop Christopher is liaising with the Church Commissioners about use of Bishop's House for such purposes. HOPE Coventry plan to hold a webinar in early April to provide further information on how we might help, and it is intended that the Equip Hub will provide information as the situation changes.

"Can you comment on Ecumenical relationships with Ukraine and Russia?"

Bishop Christopher spoke about significant tensions within the Russian and Ukrainian Orthodox Churches with the very real possibility that clergy who speak out against the war could be killed. The Archbishop of Canterbury has spoken with Archbishop Kirill of the Russian Orthodox Church, and with Pope Francis. It is hoped that a Ukrainian priest, will be coming to speak to Coventry church leaders on 30 March. The Bishop and Dean have tried to make contact with the Russian city of Volgograd. The Bishop has followed this up with several other attempts, all of which have been unsuccessful to date.

The Reverend Stella Bailey asked the Bishop "What in your ministry is making your heart sing"

The Bishop responded by noting that the response of people across the nation and the way in which Christians are coming together in response to the Ukraine situation is making his heart sing. Bishop Christopher shared his hope to lead a call to prayer for Ukraine from Coventry.

The signs of growth as a result of our mission hub churches is encouraging as are plans to bring together the young people of our schools for a celebratory event. Pre-pandemic, marvellous things had been happening in our schools and we must remember that resurrection is stronger than death.

5. **Introductions**

Bishop Christopher introduced Karen Morris as new President of Mothers' Union who has taken over from Jane Hill. The Diocese is well served by the President of Mothers' Union, who worships at Berkswell. Synod prayed for Karen and her work.

The Chair of the House of Laity took the Chair

It was proposed that standing orders 28-50 be suspended for items 6 – 8 of the agenda to allow for an informal discussion to take place. This proposal was carried by a show of hands.

6. **Whole Diocese Strategy (DS22/03)**

Chris Edwards introduced the DBE update and stressed the importance for the DBE to ensure that all children, who are the future of the Church of England, can thrive in our nation and diocese.

April Gold, Diocesan Director of Education spoke to her presentation on the vision of the DBE schools, which is based on Matthew 5:13-16 - being called to be salt and light.

Schools are salt and light through daily collective worship ie as worshipping communities, and an intentionality is to be rooted in wisdom and hope through the way we live and work. Schools are inspirational rather than directly confessional, with the potential to inspire everyone with whom schools have contact.

April spoke about the governance of schools and the potential for parishes to engage with children through taking up seats on governing bodies. It is important that no governor seats should be left unfilled by parishes to ensure that our Church schools remain Christian communities.

Another layer of governance is added when schools become academies, and the DBE would like to create and maintain a pipeline of people with requisite skills – eg finance, legal, HR – who could participate the governance of academies. Unlike other dioceses, our multi-academy trusts have a Christian foundation which it will be important to maintain through governor participation.

Synod were invited to discuss on tables "How can your deanery support schools ministry"

7. **Whole Diocese Strategy (DS 22/04)**

Barry Dugmore introduced his report and drew attention to where the Growth Strategy dovetails with schools. He invited questions and comments from Synod.

Jo King requested that lay leaders are included in updates as they are part of National discussions on lay leadership.

An observation from Synod was that the paper seemed to be focused on urban ministry and it was not clear how this dovetails with rural ministry which is of concern when we know benefices are not blessed with resources.

Barry shared that at the heart of this strategy is the mission purpose to release the whole people of God into a greater breadth of lay leadership and that Rob Harrison, the new Director of Ministry and Leadership will be looking at this. Katie Cross at the Alcester mission resource hub will be leading on support for rural ministry. In addition, a rural mission day on May 7 will seek to resource both clergy and laity and looking at specific support for our rural context. The key to this is how we resource once another.

8. **Living in Love and Faith (LLF)**

Edmund Newey, Co-Advocate with Gail Philip for LLF in the diocese, made a presentation on the Church of England's LLF project, its background, and the current process of engagement with dioceses.

In Coventry, there have been 12 Deanery courses, 3 away days, with 1 participant from Nuneaton invited to be part of the national focus group. LLF resources available on the website include podcasts, story videos, a 5-week course booklet and an opportunity to provide feedback following participation in a course.

(<https://www.churchofengland.org/resources/living-love-and-faith>). Edmund noted that he and Gail hope to develop a more scripturally based framework for ongoing discussion.

In response to a question, Bishop Christopher spoke about the process following the conclusion of engagement with C/E dioceses. The College of Bishops will be meeting in September to review all feedback that has been received. Further consideration will be given by the House of Bishops at their meeting in December and will take their considerations to General Synod in February 2023 which will then lead to proposals to be taken to General Synod in July 2023. Meanwhile, resources will remain available on the LLF website beyond the end of April which is when consultation with dioceses will conclude.

9. Financing Net zero in DBF property (DS22/05)

Synod received the report from Bishop's Council on planning and financing the journey to net zero for DBF property.

No additional funds are currently being made available. There are more funds in the budget this year, and the DBF has committed to delivering net zero and putting funds in place over the next five years. Through the planning happening at the moment, the intention is to increase the 2024 budget as we understand the size of the challenge.

10. A motion proposed by Phil Hemsley on the CO₂ footprint of Diocesan properties

The Chairs agreed with Phil Hemsley that this motion be heard at a future Synod meeting to enable a full discussion of the motion at point 11 on the agenda.

11. Motion proposed by Phil Helmsley on increasing the limit of Church Improvement Fund grants to enable net zero projects to be funded.

Recognising the urgency of the climate crisis this Synod: "require that the Diocesan Church Improvements Fund funding limit for net zero projects is increased to £25,000." (Noting that the Church improvement fund already includes net zero projects.)

Phil Helmsley spoke to the motion outlining key concerns about climate change and the possibility of irreversible global damage if action is not taken immediately. Further, he outlined how he believed the DBF could release funds now to assist in reducing Co2 in our church buildings and properties.

Godfrey Armitage, Chair of the Diocesan Environment Group, commended Phil for the work undertaken at St George's, Rugby, and concurred that the global situation is more serious than he would like. However, he recognized the need to approach this problem systematically, including clarity about how funding will be achieved for the action required and said he would be prepared to support the motion if there were a clear plan for a way forward.

In response to the previous speakers, Simon Danks, Chair of the DBF, noted several important factors including the reduction in giving; funding required for our missional activity, including specific support for improving rural churches. Our practice has been to move a certain amount of money into the CHIMP and one project could have an adverse affect on funding for all other projects, therefore we need to be clear about the timing of these decisions.

Over the coming months, Bishop's Council will be giving strategic consideration to use of our financial resources in light of the important and competing demands while addressing the net zero challenge.

There were no further members of Synod who wanted to speak to the motion.

Synod voted on the motion with

In favour 28: Against 27: Abstentions 7

The motion is carried

12. Safeguarding annual report (DS22/06)

The Diocesan Synod received the annual Safeguarding report (DS22/06).

As a result of holiday and sickness no one was available to present this report. Questions on the report should be sent to Graeme.pringle@Coventry.Anglican.org

The Chair of the House of Clergy took the chair

13. Amended Vacancy in See Committees Regulation

The Joint Diocesan Registrar, Jenny Dymond, proclaimed the Act of Synod in respect of the Vacancy in Sees Committee Regulation 1993, by saying:

“At the Group of Sessions of the General Synod held at Westminster in November 2021 the Vacancy in See Committees Regulation 1993 in the form it takes following its amendment in July 2021 was formally affirmed and proclaimed as an Act of Synod.

An Act of Synod is the embodiment of the will or opinion of the Church of England as expressed by the whole body of the General Synod. Copies of the Instrument proclaiming and affirming the Vacancy in See Committees Regulation as an Act of Synod have been sent to members of this Synod.”

14. Diocesan Trustees (DS22/08)

The Diocesan Synod appointed the following trustees to the Diocesan Trustees:

The Revd Steve Gold,
Robert Morton,
Graham Hindley,
John Handley.

Thanks for the service of those stepping down was given. It was noted that the new trustees were all male, and the Diocesan Trustees were encouraged to actively seek applications from those not currently represented.

15. Diocesan Board of Education Casual Vacancy (DS22/09)

The Synod voted, unanimously with one abstention, to approve the terms and conditions of the election to fill a casual vacancy on the Diocesan Board of Education.

16. Amendment of Standing orders for Diocesan Synod (DS22/10)

The Synod thanked Tim Pollard for all his work going through the standing orders and for making them gender neutral. It was however noted that Paragraph 86 and 27 required updating. In paragraph 74 “C” for chair should be lower case.

The vote was unanimous to adopt the amended standing orders.

17. Questions from Synod under SO69 (DS22/11)

It was noted that six questions and supplementary questions were circulated and answered

18. Date of meetings in 2022

The meeting dates for 2022 were read out as follows:

21 June – Harris Church of England evening
19 November - morning

The Bishop of Coventry took the chair.

19. Closing prayers and meeting concludes

Signed: Date: