

## Coventry Diocesan Synod 18 November 2023 Minutes

Minutes of the meeting of the Coventry Diocesan Synod, held on Saturday 18 November 2023 at 9.30am at All Saints' Church, Emscote, Warwick, CV34 5NL.

*The meeting of the Diocesan Synod of the Diocese of Coventry, opened at 9:30am under the Standing Orders 2009. The President, the Right Reverend Ruth Worsley, the Acting Bishop of Coventry, took the Chair.*

### 1. Opening prayer and worship

**Worship** – led by the Revd Charles Higgins and Helen Bryant, chaplains to Diocesan Synod. Revd April Gold read Matthew 6:19-34.

### 2. Presidential Address and introduction of Bishop Ruth Worsley, Acting Bishop of Coventry

Bishop Ruth addressed Diocesan Synod, speaking of how when the disciples were in a boat in a storm, full of sickness and fear, they stayed on the boat and prayed, and His words of peace stilled the storm. Today, our society is full of fear and conflict and so we must keep our eyes open for Jesus. Bishop Ruth is delighted to join us in Coventry along with Bishop Saju on a journey of discovery and learning. *"God is in this place, may we hear words of peace, still our fears."* The full address can be read on the diocesan website.

Andy Waddams, Director of Communications & Engagement led a question and answer session with Bishop Ruth and Bishop Saju. Both Bishop Ruth and Bishop Saju are delighted to be walking with us in Coventry and shared the stories of how they came to faith and what inspires them, what experiences they bring and their hopes for the next 18 months. Bishop Ruth hopes to keep the momentum going in Coventry, supporting us through this changing time and Bishop Saju hopes to learn and help bridge the gap in cultural intelligence between East and West. Revd Charles Higgins, chaplain to Diocesan Synod led prayers for both bishops.

### 3. Notices and apologies for absence

15 apologies received in advance of the meeting; 7 from the House of Laity and 8 from the House of Clergy. The meeting was quorate.

Appreciation was shared for Chris Baker, interim DBF Chair and Steve Coomber was introduced as the incoming DBF Chair, effective from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2024.

Helen Bryant, lay chaplain to Diocesan Synod was introduced to Synod.

Tom Cook was welcomed as a new member from Coventry East.

### 4. Minutes (DS 23-15)

The minutes of the Diocesan Synod meeting held on 22 June 2023 were **approved** with a show of hands from those present and signed on behalf on those present by Bishop Ruth.

### 5. Promulgation of Amending Canon No. 42 (DS 23-16)

Jenny Dymond, Diocesan Registrar gave notice of the amending of canon No.42.

*The Chair of the House of Laity, Mr Phil Swards, took the chair.*

### 6. General Synod feedback

The Revd Jonathan Jee provided feedback from the July and November 2023 General Synod sessions. He commended General Synod as a place that releases resources for mission, noting that whatever is discussed there are experts speaking. In the summer, General Synod discussed the proposal to remove wedding fees. Several dioceses have been invited to partake in a trial period whereby there is a voluntary donation in place of a wedding fee. The other two major areas of discussion in July were the environment and safeguarding: by working in partnership with other large investors, there has

been significant influence on the environmental policies of many companies and the CofE have now ended investments in gas and oil, and although there was strong debate, a motion was passed on responding to the climate emergency with a major majority. General Synod were told that there would be an independent enquiry into recent events involving the Independent Safeguarding Board. General Synod approved an outline bill setting out a Safeguarding Redress Scheme, initially underpinned by £150 million from the Church Commissioners and a code of practice for safeguarding reviews, aligning our processes with good practice elsewhere. A motion was then brought in November to approve the redress measure to go to the next stage, demonstrating how work flows from one synod session to the next. This is particularly relevant to Living in Love and Faith which was given two days in February, an update in July and two days in November where there was a 108-page paper, Coventry's Kate Massey made a speech and there were nine hours of debate. Jonathan emphasised that General Synod is very divided, almost 50:50 with some feeling the proposed changes are not enough and others feeling they are too much. Motions around LLF are passing with a very small majority. In summary, Jonathan reflects that there is *'more that unites us than divides us.'*

Jonathan welcomed questions from Diocesan Synod members:

Jonathan was commended and thanked for his high-quality balanced interpretation.

It was asked how Coventry members voted on recent motions. Jonathan noted that the voting record will be publicly available in due course. It was confirmed that Bishop Ruth does not receive a vote as Acting Bishop of Coventry.

Congratulations were expressed for the Coventry representatives who had made their maiden speeches in November.

## 7. Our Shared Future (DS 23-17)

Jacqueline Ladds introduced DS 23-17, the updated strategic framework *Our Shared Future*. The framework was approved by Bishop's Council in October and Diocesan Synod in November 2022. The updates are a response to listening and feedback exercises during 2023 and also work that has been undertaken with the national church's Vision and Strategy Consultant. Jacqueline reiterated that there will be detailed implementation plans sitting behind the strategy.

The Ven Barry Dugmore emphasised that our purpose of following Jesus remains the same and our vision has three aspects: restored health, renewed relationships and new growth. Our mission pathway is being fleshed out in this dynamic document, *"This will take us through to new worshipping communities with new leaders and congregations and planting. We will raise new people for Jesus."* The Bishop's Strategy Integration Group (BSIG) will continue to oversee this work and Bishop's Council will receive regular updates. All those who participated and contributed were thanked.

Observations and questions were welcomed:

- Thanks were expressed for this huge amount of work.
- Page 3, paragraph 4: farm land size – this may require correction as it differs to the government record.
- Page 5, Key priorities, final bullet point [To have reduced energy consumption and carbon emissions across our buildings (priorities 1,6)]. It is requested that this statement is strengthened to reflect our commitment to working towards net zero by 2030.
- What about LGBT+, different ability and barriers of class, poverty or gender – can this be strengthened? Jacqueline Ladds responded that we should look at a range of diversity.
- Section 6, Romans 10 quote: In the lost Christian age we need to attend to other points in the list more, it will only matter when people are ready to hear and when we are on better terms. Barry Dugmore highlighted that generation z have little contact with the Christian faith, people do need to understand what the gospel is and so it is our duty to articulate it wherever we are.

Diocesan Synod noted the updated Strategic Framework (DS 23-17) which has been reviewed by Bishop's Council.

#### 8. 2024 Budget for the Coventry Diocesan Board of Finance (DS 23-18)

The Interim Chair of the Board of Finance, Chris Baker, introduced the proposed budget for 2024, prepared by Steve Lee, Interim Director of Finance. Chris emphasised that this has been scrutinised by the DFG and ISC, and is recommended to diocesan synod by Bishop's Council. Simon Danks, previous Chair of the Board of Finance, was thanked for his work. Gratitude was also expressed to deaneries and parishes for the contribution through parish share which enables the DBF to develop key and core activities as detailed in Our Shared Future. The DBF is heavily reliant on the income generated by the Glebe portfolio, [managed by the Glebe Committee] estimated to be £2 million in 2024 however, this is not enough to cover all required expenditure and the DBF will need to release unapplied total return. The DBF are proposing to release less for 2024 than in previous years, in line with the long-term financial strategy which is being developed. Chris shared a pie chart showing how the Unapplied Total Return will be used in the 2024 budget:

25%	£590,000	Cost of ministry
28%	£668,000	Growth strategy
23%	£550,000	Cashflow support
17%	£400,000	Net Zero investment
7%	£150,000	Grant fund availability – this was previously where surplus was directed.

Chris shared that Parish Share uptake is increasing compared to last year but many parishes are still yet to provide their full offer for this year while seven deaneries have agreed to increase their offer in 2024. The Parish Giving Scheme is recommended as a facility for stewardship.

Comments and questions from Diocesan Synod on the budget:

*Can further funding be released from the DBF's reserves to fund CO<sub>2</sub> reductions?*

A full response to this point has been provided in DS 23-23 (questions received under standing order 69).

*It would be extremely useful to have a comparison between 2023 budget and expected year end forecast position based on actuals to Q3.*

*It would be highly desirable if the budget descriptions could be mapped to the strategic workstreams in the Diocesan Strategy – whilst some of these are recognised, the lack of mapping for other strategic pillars makes it difficult to come to an informed position on the relative weightings.*

*A huge thanks for the inclusion of a future forecast, and the mature position of reflecting financial sustainability within the overall Diocesan sustainability objectives. However, it appears that this future forecast doesn't recognise growth associated with the investment funds for growing existing church communities and mission, on the basis that the assumed growth in parish share contribution appears to be driven solely by exogenous factors – it would be helpful for forecasts to contain the assumptions on growth driven by endogenous activity, so that as we look towards future years we are not incorrectly reducing growth initiatives through a suppression in the financial model of their contribution to a longer term financially sustainable position.*

Chris Baker, the Interim Chair of the Board of Finance introduced the motion:

*"That this Synod:*

- *Approve the 2024 budget, as recommended by Bishop's Council, noting the release of historic funds to fund the planned activities*
- *Pass a resolution to authorise expenditure in 2024 up to a maximum of £12.520m"*

Vote:

For: majority

Against: 1

Abstention: 5

**Motion carried**

*The Chair of the House of Clergy, The Revd Claire McArthur, took the chair.*

### **9. 2024 Triennial Elections to Diocesan Synod (DS 23-19)**

Jacqueline Ladds introduced DS 23-19, which sets out the process for elections and the parameters for setting the numbers to be elected in 2024, highlighting what Diocesan Synod are being asked to approve. Points of clarification were invited, of which there were none.

Diocesan Synod were invited to:

- Approve the number of elected spaces for the 2024-2027 Diocesan Synod

Vote:

For: unanimous

Against: 0

Abstention: 0

**Carried**

- Approve the voting method to be used in the Diocesan Synod elections

Vote:

For: majority

Against: 0

Abstention: 2

**Carried**

- Note the timetable for Diocesan Synod and Bishop's Council elections

### **10. Net Zero Carbon (DS 23-20a, b, c)**

Claire McArthur thanked the Revd Tim Cockell, Acting Archdean Pastor and DAC Chair for presenting this item and informed Diocesan Synod that questions could also be answered by Godfrey Armitage, Diocesan Environmental Officer and Chair of the Net Zero Steering Group.

Tim Cockell expressed gratitude for the enormous amount of work the Net Zero Steering Group have put into this clear and concise plan, emphasising that the plan has undergone scrutiny by Bishop's Strategy Integration Group and Coventry Operational Leadership Team and is based on the CofE Route map to Net Zero Carbon, which the Coventry Net Zero Steering Group contributed to the development of. Tim highlighted key points, in particular Milestone 4.1.4: *"All dioceses provide an outline of their decarbonisation plans to Diocesan Synod as a Net Zero Carbon Action Plan, to include estimates of costs for different options, as well as the policy changes and levers for change required. To be reviewed annually by senior staff. The plan should make reference to the Practical Path to Net Zero and actively consider implementation of 'quick wins', how to decarbonise heat, how to reduce energy consumption and how to encourage behaviour change."* Tim highlighted that the plan covers what is in scope and within the influence of the DBF, noting that schools, PCCs and the Cathedral are separate legal entities. The DBF will work closely with these to encourage and support, but cannot compel them to take action. Within the diocese the main emitters are schools followed by churches and so we will support the whole diocese to work to net zero. He noted that reported emissions have risen but this is attributed to more accurate recording and an additional 15 schools becoming in-scope due to governance changes. The Net Zero strand of the Church Improvement Fund has already funded work in parishes to reduce carbon and the DBF appointed a Net Zero Project Officer in early November 2023.

Comments and questions were invited

*Land and investment are not mentioned. Within the Glebe portfolio some properties are on long leases, should we dispose of land? We need to think now for action in the future, we do have influence. Please can this be considered in the future.*

*Covid effects are still being felt by parishes and carbon emissions are rising as we return, our emissions from churches figure will rise as parish activity increases.*

[Secretariat note: 2020 and 2021 figures are adjusted for lockdown to take into account the effect of building closures during those periods.]

*At a previous parish we did a lot of work to shrink the carbon footprint of a 1950s church building and, in the process, we realised that it was the lifestyle of congregation members that was a big source of carbon emissions, not our building. Personal action will make more of a difference than diocesan work.*

*A great strategy built on insight data, it would be good to realign to energy management and ensure that data is accurate to build a stronger strategy.*

*We must recognise the barriers and blind spots. There needs to be more urgency, are we seeing enough progress?*

*The enthusiasm is admired and applauded but ultimately, we are the Church of Christ, not the Environment. There are many things we should be doing, we have limited resources, time and effort should go into growth as it is the core of what we should be doing. If we were to pull more resources, what should we cut?*

Godfrey Armitage, Diocesan Environment Officer concluded the comments by quoting Colossians 1:15-20 to reiterate that God loves this world. Godfrey noted that we must ask “what are we called to do?” He highlighted that on a global scale, the actions covered within the diocesan Action Plan could be considered ‘peanuts’. It is people who are generating the most carbon dioxide and most personal actions are not within scope but when you journey into Eco Church (40% of parishes in the diocese are signed up – where is the other 60%?) lifestyle is assessed and this is how we can make an impact as we influence others. We must deal with what is in scope as a benchmark and do more voluntarily where we can. He confirmed that schools are represented in the Net Zero Steering Group and that communication with the Cathedral is ongoing. Godfrey responded to the comment that the plan would not take us to Net Zero by 2030 by highlighting that life does not work in a linear way but sigmoidal, meaning the rate of change will increase as we win more hearts and minds, Godfrey charged every member of synod with taking this enthusiasm back to their parishes, so that every parish sees creation care as part of the gospel and celebrates the physical world God made.

Claire McArthur encouraged Diocesan Synod members to explore the Eco Church display set up within the church.

Tim Cockell expressed appreciation of the passion evoked by this motion and emphasised that the action plan is an organic document that can be adapted as we grow, it is a starting point.

The Acting Archdeacon Pastor, The Revd Tim Cockell introduced the motion:

*That this Synod:*

- Supports the milestones outlined within the national Routemap to Net Zero Carbon and seeks to meet those as far as possible within the context of the Diocese of Coventry.*

Vote

For: Majority

Against:0

Abstentions:2

**Carried**

2. *Endorses the proposed Diocesan Net Zero Carbon Action Plan as an essential direction of travel, and recommends that the priorities and actions identified within the Action Plan form part of future strategic and budgetary decision-making.*

Vote

For: majority

Against:0

Abstentions:5

**Carried**

3. *Calls on parishes, schools, the Cathedral and others associated with the Diocese to continue their positive Net Zero Carbon and Eco work and form their own plans consistent with the Diocesan intention.*

Vote

For: majority

Against: 0

Abstentions: 3

**Carried**

**Motion carried**

Gratitude was expressed to all for the good working shown in this item.

Diocesan Synod noted the annual emissions/progress report (*DS 23-20c*).

#### **11. Member Motions**

No member motions were received.

#### **12. Papers to note**

The following papers were noted by Diocesan Synod:

- Update from the Governance Review working group (DS 23-21)  
Phil Swards highlighted that the group have met and papers will go to Bishops Council and Diocesan Synod in 2024.
- Update on the Vacancy in See process (DS 23-22)  
Phil Swards highlighted that the statement of needs is being worked on, it will be complete by 15<sup>th</sup> January and prayers are requested. A Chaplain to the Vacancy in See Committee has been appointed, Alison Evans. She has produced a prayer for the committee and a simpler version for group prayer which was shared.

#### **13. Questions received under Standing Order 69**

Six questions were received and written responses were provided in DS 23-23. No supplementary questions were asked.

#### **14. 2024 meeting dates**

Sat 9 March, Tues 2 July (evening), Sat 16 November.

Bishop Ruth thanked All Saints, Emscote for their hospitality and thanked all of the organisers of the meeting before sharing a prayer and blessing.

*Bishop Ruth closed the meeting at 12:20pm*