

## Synod Questions February 2024

### 1 Gill Verschoyle

*In the Diocesan newsletter recently there was an account of a wonderful Plough Sunday event held in Caundle Marsh. The Church Warden who organised the event happens to be a very old friend of mine, so I know how much effort it cost him and what health issues he has. I know he probably won't wish to organise many more such events.*

*I also know his church is apparently one of 17 in his Benefice, and, I believe, the only one to pay the share in full.*

***What is the Diocese's long term plan to deal with this short fall in income, which I am sure is replicated across the Diocese? How can we encourage younger people to take over fundraising?***

#### **Response by Jane McCormick, DBF Chair**

It is brilliant to celebrate this excellent example at Caundle Marsh. Anna Hardy from the diocesan giving team has been meeting with them since January 2022 when they first invited her to their Plough Sunday service.

There is no magic wand to wave to encourage families with children to take up the fundraising mantle, but the first step is to invite them to be part of the local church worship and to embed the church in the life of the community, so as to be relevant and valued. This small rural church has moved in two short years to having no children at Plough Sunday in 2022, to several families with young children at their service in January 2024.

This effort has been part of a strategic approach to make use of the uniqueness of the church (on a farm, isolated from housing, and not visible from the road) and to see these qualities as a strength rather than a hinderance.

The PCC, which mainly had services on the 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday of the month, spoke with their curate Jenny Nelson to see if services could be rearranged to fit better with the services connected to rural life and farming - Lammas, Rogation, Harvest. This has led the way in engaging with the local school in Bishops Caundle, to promote Plough Sunday.

They are blessed that the owners of the farm are on the PCC as well as church members, and their Tractor Rally was a big fundraiser for them in 2023 and being repeated in 2024. They have been brilliant at promoting events locally with press releases.

Anna and Harry from the DBF giving team are happy to meet with any church that would like to look at ways to engage with the local community. Toni Bush who has recently joined the Church Buildings team in a nationally funded post joint with Bristol diocese will also be supporting and contributing to this approach of supporting local communities in fundraising through community engagement.

Each local church exists in a unique context and the best people to judge how to raise the income they need are those in that community. This will be a mixture of regular giving, fund raising events and for some income from hiring out a church hall.

Collectively the diocesan plan to deal with the shortfall in income was headlined at the Diocesan Synod of June 2023 as part of the vision and strategy for Making Jesus Known. This is summarised in the following principles which Synod endorsed at that meeting:

To achieve and maintain our goals of financial **probity, equity and sustainability**, our financial strategy will be based on the following overarching principles:

1. The financial affairs of the Diocese of Salisbury will be managed with **full visibility and consideration of the total economy of the Diocese**, not just of the Salisbury Diocesan Board of Finance (SDBF).
2. Notwithstanding this, we will progressively move to a position in which mission and ministry is **designed to meet local needs** through [inter alia] missional communities, benefices etc. and the financial means to support this will (subject to limited exceptions, see below), come from local sources.
3. Income arising from the DBF **Stipend Capital Account may be used to cover a deficit** in the funding of local mission and ministry **on a transitional basis** to allow time to balance budgets. Such funding may be extended to an ongoing basis if the local community is not able to support itself, but it is decided by Bishop's Council that ongoing support should be provided for strategic reasons.
4. **By 2027 the budget of the DBF will be in balance or surplus**. This will be achieved by increasing the amount of share collected and/or reducing the cost of paying, housing and otherwise supporting ministry.
5. DBF will **continue to liquidate assets to release agreed commitments** of unapplied total return to a) cover any deficit arising in FY 24 and FY25 and (b) to support the initiatives which are part of the Diocesan Strategy.
6. During the transitional period our financial reporting will **separate Business as Usual (BAU) and investment/transformation budgets** to ensure that one does not inadvertently subsidise the other. In particular, an operating deficit should not be covered with funds intended for investment/transformation.
7. Subject to the approval of Bishop's Council (or via delegated authority) the **Aldhelm Mission Fund will be used solely to fund new mission and ministry initiatives** which are part of the Diocesan Strategy.
8. **The costs of achieving Net Zero Carbon NZC** (once established within the forthcoming plan to Synod) as it relates to parsonages will form part of the SDBF business as usual (BAU) budget. KPIs showing progress towards with target will be agreed and reported as part of the SDBF BAU reporting process. Progress towards the budget will be subject to affordability.
9. The cost of achieving NCZ as it relates to churches and parish halls etc will be covered by the parishes. The cost of a resource to provide advice and support, eg, in obtaining grants will be met by SDBF and included in the BAU budget to be recovered through share/national funding.

Placing Financing the Future Sustainably at the heart of our priorities for Making Jesus Known has led to the completion of the Share review and the launch of the new Share approach being presented to Synod at the meeting today.

The plan to implement the vision and strategy also includes a People Plan which is currently being developed. This will include aligning our 'people costs' (clergy and DBF employees) to the available resources and making any necessary changes over time. The review of DBF staffing number and focus will be led by reviewing the support needed by the local church as well as the statutory obligations of the Diocese within the Church of England. With regard to clergy numbers, unlike other

Dioceses we have not gone in for wholesale retrenchment in response to the loss of worshippers during Covid and beyond because we wish to give time for people to respond with generosity to the new Diocesan Vision and Strategy, but we cannot run a deficit at this level for too much longer.

In all of this we need to recognise that 'the diocese' is all of us- not a central body! As with the Caundle Marsh example, only local change will make our churches more inclusive of children and young people and only local creativity will lead to successful fundraising and income generation. The resources of the DBF, like Anna and her team, are there to support and encourage mission which is led by the local church.

## **2      Andy Bousfield**

*"With an ageing church, is a 2% allocation of the budget towards Youth & Children adequate investment into reaching those who will be the future of the Church of England? As this money primarily provides for the work of the DBE could we have some indication of how parish-based children's work may benefit from this investment. We believe that schools-based work alone cannot reach this generation if our churches are not better equipped to welcome and disciple young people."*  
(Rev Andy Bousfield, on behalf of Salisbury St Mark & Laverstock St Andrew PCC).

### **Written Response from Jonathan Triffitt Director of Mission and Ministry; supplementary at Synod Bishop Andrew.**

At the heart of the Church of England's nation vision is a commitment to being a church that is younger and more diverse. To this end, the Church of England, commits to doubling the number of children and young active disciples in the Church of England by 2030. In the context of the Diocese of Salisbury (based on Sunday attendance) that means growing from just over 1250 to 2500 children and young people. This compares to 43,000 children & young people attending a Church of England school in the Diocese of Salisbury (a little under 50% of the children and young people in the diocese.)

The Diocesan vision, Making Jesus Known, is clear in its intent to thread work with and amongst children and young people through the five areas underpinning the vision. Sitting at the heart of our approach to growing a younger and more diverse church and building the confidence of local leaders to invest in the discipleship of children and young people is the place of Growing Faith, which has been positioned as a piece of collaborative work across the Diocesan Board of Finance and the Diocesan Board of Education (DBF/DBE).

Growing Faith reflects the shared understanding that the place of greatest impact on children and young people and their discipleship sits in the intersection between Church, school, home, and community.

The financial commitment to the DBE helps secure the school sphere, enabling the flourishing of deeply Christian church schools, who understand that a fundamental aspect of their role is to work in collaboration with churches, homes, and communities, enabling connections, imagining new ways of practice, and creating opportunities for spiritual encounter. This is increasingly delivered through the Programme for Church School Flourishing (PCSF)

So, as the DBF invests in the vision in this sphere of our work, how might parish-based children and young people's work benefit from our shared working and investment through a Growing Faith approach?

- We are looking increasingly to the leadership of children and young people at a local level to support us in discerning the most effective and strategic ways of meeting their needs in community and in faith.
- We are beginning to explore our strategic approach to identifying, training, and supporting new leaders of mission with children and young people.
- There is ongoing work into developing a diocesan approach to school/Trust chaplaincy.
- We are developing an approach to mentoring and peer-mentoring.
- We are investing in creative partnerships with other agencies in the provision of work with and amongst children and young people.
- Re-frame Initial Ministerial Education (IME) provision to support and equip the newly ordained to be confident leaders in this area of mission and ministry. This is currently absent from our provision.
- Strengthening the Continuing Ministerial Development (CMD) offering to licensed clergy and lay leaders to better equip them in the discipleship of children and young people.
- Develop a dedicated diocesan network for those working with children and young people to encourage the sharing of good practice.

In summary, the DBF/E is seeking to develop its approach to the formation of leaders to enable them to be confident and equipped in their ministry with and amongst children and young people. In addition, the diocese will be developing a broad range of networks designed to enable parishes to develop their engagement with children and young people in a way which is most appropriate to their context and needs.

### **3 Peter Breckwoldt**

*If a parish felt that because of authorisation by our bishops of Prayers of Love and Faith - they could no longer receive the ministry of their Bishop, what pastoral provision has been put in place in the diocese as promised by the bishop Stephen to members of the Salisbury Diocesan Evangelical Fellowship? Which bishop could that parish look to for spiritual oversight and what other structures will be put place?*

#### **Response: Bishop Stephen**

Peter, as you know, you are one of nine clergy from Dorset who have written to me recently requesting additional spiritual oversight from a bishop other than Karen, Andrew, or myself. The receipt of that letter has given me deep spiritual sadness. I also recognise that many parishioners are contacting their bishops, wishing to disassociate themselves from such a request.

However, as I stated in my reply, I am committed to disagreeing well, even though the Church of England has yet to determine the way forward in terms of pastoral provision. Your bishops are sad that you feel such pre-emptive action is deemed necessary. And yet, I am considering and seeking the appointment of an Honorary Assistant Bishop. I will not recognise those retired bishops and others from outside the diocese who are offering themselves in a self-appointed way. That is poor Anglican ecclesiology. You may no longer feel supported by your bishops, but we remain committed as shepherds to you.

#### 4 Peter Breckwoldt

*How do the senior leaders, along with Bishop Stephen, plan to lead the clergy and all the parishes of diocese in our Mission of Making Jesus Known in the next two years? Could you explain some of your plans to the Diocesan Synod? In what ways will the Diocesan Synod be able to measure the effectiveness of these plans for mission and judge the outcomes?*

#### **Response- Bishop Stephen**

The Making Jesus Known vision and strategy was adopted unanimously by Synod in June last year. We are all responsible for unified courageous leadership and for a common commitment to Christ's mission.

Everything in the strategy is geared towards supporting the work of the local church in mission and ministry. Increasingly this will be in creative partnerships with our schools and others. Most of the prayers and actions taken in faithful discipleship will not be known, measured, reported or have measured outcomes back to the Synod.

Some areas of work do merit collective planning and an outcome focus. Where external funding is accessed, this is usually a requirement, and even when it is not it is good stewardship of our God given resources for us to be transparent and accountable to one another in Christ. Towards this I have taken steps to reform my Bishop's Leadership Team which will be working closely with leaders in the Board of Education and Board of Finance. As Bishop in Synod, I intend to move forward together in this calling as #TeamSalisbury.

Under the leadership of the Diocesan Secretary the staff team and senior clergy are moving into a 'programme way of working' with clear plans for areas of change with specific outcomes and planful allocation of resources. A framework of accountability is being established to the Bishop's Council as the trustees of the DBF and Standing Committee of the Synod.

At the next stage of seeking national funding for our work in mission we are starting to work with the below national framework of outcomes and I anticipate us adapting and adopting this in how we develop our implementation plans, each of which are led by a people and finance plan in alignment.

Attendance change	Number of worshipping communities	Number of leaders	Financial sustainability
Scale of community service	Scale of evangelism	People new to faith	Scale of discipleship groups
Individual discipleship	Resilience and impact of leaders	Changed church practices	Demographics

We will only be effective in mission and speak into our times if we commit to one another in grace and in hope.

## 5      **Revd Veronica Batchelor**

*With regard '5.3 Business Case for new Share System' I have noted that the proposed new system includes increasing the discount scheme figure from 0.5% to 1% (page 4). I understand this scheme is the incentive for parishes to opt for upfront or regular payments therefore assisting cashflow. However, would it be possible for the DBF to consider offering parishes who are financially able to participate in the discount scheme a second option simply to 'gift' their discount? This option would mean, although paying the full amount, a parish could choose to 'gift' their 1% discount entitlement, perhaps even to a nominated parish of their choice. If such gifting transactions could be encouraged, noted and celebrated it would provide an incentive to become a 'gifting parish'. Although, the figures involved are relatively minimal the 'gifting' option fosters an outward looking approach to payment of share and offers an alternative incentive that is more in line with Christian teaching.*

*I hope this maybe something that could be considered in the future.*

*Veronica*

*Forest and Avon Team, Alderbury Deanery*

### **Response- Jane McCormick, DBF Chair**

Thank you, Veronica, for this generous commitment. As you say, the discount scheme has been reintroduced to help us manage cashflow through the year and sustain the funding of ministry and mission.

In the Share Review, the feedback from across the diocese included a strong commitment to mutual support and it is important that we continue to find practical ways to encourage and enable this to happen amongst us. Some parishes may wish to take the step of sharing this gift within the benefice, and we can also ensure that this is possible collectively at a diocesan level.

A 1% discount next year would provide - if adopted universally - relief worth in the region of £100k. This assumes a similar number of parishes pay in a manner commensurate with the award of the discount.

Forest & Avon Team received £272 in discount last year (3 out of 6 parishes in the benefice received discount), if all 6 parishes received the discount in 2024 this would be £710. As you say, while the amounts might seem relative minimal, the option to gift support does indeed foster an outward looking approach to the payment of share which is in line with Christian teaching.

Thank you for this idea and we will add this to the roll out of the new Share scheme.