

## **Diocesan Synod Digest**

**22 November 2025**

Diocesan Synod took place on Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> November at the Lincoln Bishop University campus. The meeting was Chaired by the Revd Canon Martyn Taylor, Chair of the House of Clergy. Pauline Cummins of Loveden Deanery led Synod in **Dwelling in the Word** on Matthew 9: 1-8. The minutes of the last meeting were approved and no questions were received in advance under the Standing Orders.

### **The Bishop's Address**

In the absence of the Bishop of Lincoln, the **Bishop's Presidential Address** was delivered by his Chaplain, the Revd Nick Nawrockyi. The Bishop invited Synod to consider how we glorify God and raise the spiritual temperature during this time of change. He noted the departure of the Archdeacon of Stow and Lindsey, with Canon Steve Johnson stepping in until January, and confirmed that an announcement regarding the new Archdeacon would be made on 23 November. The appointment of a new Bishop of Grimsby was with Downing Street, and an announcement would follow in due course. The address also touched on key agenda items, including Living in Love and Faith and Time to Grow Together, and concluded with prayer.

### **Budget 2026**

Canon Muriel Robinson, Chair of the Board of Finance, and Gaylene Noble, Head of Finance, presented the **2026 Budget**. Income was projected to grow by 5% compared to 2025, with covenant pledges assumed at £4 million. This was a 6% increase on the current forecast. Lowest Income Community (LInC) and transitional funding had been granted for 2026 by the National Church. Expenditure highlights included an 8.6% stipend pay increase (to recover shortfalls against inflation in recent years), a 4.1% staff pay rise, and a general 2.1% inflation uplift on non-pay costs. The budgeted deficit stood at £1.243 million, compared to £804,000 in 2025. Capital expenditure included £500,000 for clergy housing, £600,000 for property purchases, and £60,000 for IT upgrades.

Muriel spoke to Synod about the levels of giving y parishes since 2019 and advised that the £55k “average cost of a stipend” was being reviewed in light of rising costs. More information would be provided on this soon, and any changes to that figure would be from 2027.

Synod approved the overall expenditure, capital spend, and covenant pledge target for 2026.

### **Living in Love and Faith**

The Bishop's Chaplain introduced the discussion item on the recent **Statement of the Prayers of Love and Faith**, confirming that the formal vote by the House of Bishops would not take place until December and noted that General Synod may refuse to take note of the result.

The Revd Canon Stuart Craddock of Grantham Deanery then spoke to a motion that had been submitted to the Synod in advance. In introducing the motion, he noted that delay is not a neutral act and that it harms those who have been waiting for clarity. An apology recently made to LGBTQ+ by the bishops for their historic mistreatment by the Church would ring hollow without definitive action behind it.

The motion was then opened for debate, with numerous Synod members speaking both for and against the motion detailed below:

*“This Synod calls on General Synod’s House of Bishops to proceed at pace in facilitating implementation of all aspects of the Living in Love and Faith motion passed by the General Synod at its July 2024 Group of Sessions, including by revising the Pastoral Guidance to remove restrictions on the use of the Prayers of Love and Faith in standalone services.”*

There was a procedural motion raised from the floor to move to next business. Following a short debate and a vote, this motion was lost.

Stuart Craddock then summed up the debate and thanked all those for participating, both for and against. The required 10 members asked for the vote to be counted by houses. After a show of hands for each house, the motion was carried.

### **Annual Safeguarding Report 2026**

Sally Hodges and Jack Redeyoff presented the **Annual Safeguarding Report** to Diocesan Synod, noting the recent Charity Commission letter on Church of England safeguarding and its call for swift action. Jack outlined the 2024 report, highlighting prevention work focused on roles of responsibility, which present the greatest risk. This included improvements in Safer Recruitment and People Management, resulting in an 85% increase in training uptake compared to 2023. Safeguarding tools also saw wider adoption, with Safeguarding Hubs growing from 14 parishes in January to 73 by December.

During the year, 294 safeguarding concerns were recorded on My Concern, with emerging themes informing future resources and workstreams. Responses included referrals to the Charity Commission, safeguarding agreements for managing known risks, and engagement with national cases such as the Makin report. Survivor engagement remained a priority, and a dedicated project was approved for 2025. Two audits were completed: a statutory Section 11 audit and an independent INEQE audit. Quality assurance methods were developed for future use, and training provision continued to be efficient and high-quality. However, local people management was essential to ensure all parish officers completed required training.

An external version of the 2024 Annual Safeguarding Report would be available soon.

### **Elections**

The Chair confirmed the results of various **Elections**, including:

- The Revd Canon Sudharshan Sarvananthan from Holland Deanery for the clergy casual vacancy on the Bishop’s Council of Diocesan Trustees.
- Ruth Brewin from Haverstoe Deanery and Stephen Woodcock from Louthesk Deanery for the two positions on the Search and Nominations Committee.
- Kelly Petigrew and Christine Job as the two Stow and Lindsey elected members onto the Vacancy in See Committee.
- Henrietta Reeve from Loveden Deanery for the Lay position on the Board of Patronage.

There were still two vacant positions for clergy on the Board of Patronage. These vacancies will carry over to our next meeting.

### **Varying the Standing Orders**

Synod then approved the following motion from the Bishop's Council of Diocesan Trustees, in order to give time to rewrite the Standing Orders to properly account for the Bishop's Pastoral Order to reduce to two archdeaconries.

*"This Synod notes the Bishop's Pastoral Order reducing the number of archdeaconries from three to two, and the ongoing external governance review. In light of these developments, Synod agrees to extend by one year the terms of office of those members of the Bishop's Council of Diocesan Trustees who would otherwise be due for election at this meeting, in accordance with Standing Order 75(e), to allow time for the full composition of the Council to be reconsidered."*

### **Time to Grow Together**

Andrew Holmes, Diocesan Secretary, presented Synod with an update on Time to Grow Together and the recent strategic engagement events which were being held around the Diocese throughout November. Common themes included the importance of Lay Minsters, local identity, community engagement and financial stability. Synod members who had not already attended their local event were encouraged to do so, with the feedback provided being integral to the next stage of our strategy development.

### **Reduction to two Archdeaconries**

From the Chair, the **Bishop's Pastoral Order** was confirmed, this has the effect of:

- The Archdeaconry of Boston is dissolved.
- The deaneries that were part of the Archdeaconry of Boston are now part of the Archdeaconry of Lincoln.
- At the same time, four deaneries that were part of the Archdeaconry of Lincoln—Bolingbroke, Calcewaithe and Candleshoe, Horncastle, and Louthesk—are part of the Archdeaconry of Stow and Lindsey.

The ongoing Deanery Re-organisation would be a substantive agenda item at the next meeting and all deanery reorganisation would be completed in advance of the **new term of Deanery Synod that commences on 1st July 2026.**

### **Deanery Synod Rules and number of parochial representatives**

Canon Nigel Bacon, Chair of the House of Laity, introduced the new **Deanery Synod Rules**. The Diocese of Lincoln's "Rules for Deanery Synods" were last revised in June 2011, and much of the content was thought to date back to the implementation of the Synodical Government Measure 1969. The Rules used non-inclusive language (including "clergyman"), no longer aligned with the Church Representation Rules, were unnecessarily complex and did not reflect the breadth of ministry within the diocese. The BCDT received and approved proposals to address those issues through a redrafting of the Rules that would also bring them into alignment with the provisions of TTCT and the new deanery structures. Following an opportunity for comments and questions, Synod voted to approve the new rules, **which will take effect from 1st July 2026**, in line with the new Deanery Synod term.

Nigel then explained the requirement for Diocesan Synod to approve **the number of lay parish representatives onto Deanery Synods**, in the year before a Deanery Synod election. This was also approved.

### **Edenham Retreat House and Meeting Place**

Nigel Bacon then presented an item on **Edenham Retreat House** and showed a short video advertising the facilities that are available. It was confirmed that the House is a resource for the whole Diocese and that all may preside at the altar within the chapel.

### **The Appointment of the new Chair of the LDTBF**

Andrew Holmes **thanked Muriel Robinson for her 5 years in post** as Chair and celebrated her achievements. This was warmly supported by Synod. He then introduced **Paul Brewster as the Bishop's candidate** and explained why he had been chosen. Paul serves as Churchwarden and Treasurer, as well as a Lay Co-Lead and was recently elected a member of General Synod. He is an active member of the Bishop's Council of Diocesan Trustees, sits on the Finance Committee, and chairs the Investment Committee. Paul brings significant governance experience, having chaired governing bodies for multiple schools and trust. A retired bank manager, he offers extensive expertise from senior management roles within the financial sector, combining strategic insight with a deep commitment to the life and mission of the Church.

After an opportunity for questions and comment, Synod gave their consent to the bishop's appointment.

Nicholas Chamberlain, the Bishop of Grantham, **closed the meeting in prayer.**