

Diocesan Synod Meeting – Saturday 25 April 2026

A time of discernment, stability and renewed focus on mission

Diocesan Synod met on Saturday 25 April 2026 at The Engine Shed, University of Lincoln, for a full morning of prayer, discernment and decision-making.

The meeting took place in a period of significant transition for the Diocese, shaped by ongoing safeguarding processes and wider change within the Church of England, but also marked by signs of hope, renewal and a clear commitment to the Diocese's future mission.

Worship, reflection and leadership

Synod opened with prayer and **Dwelling in the Word**, led by the Bishop of Grimsby and supported by the Archdeacon on Stow and Lindsey, grounding the day in Scripture and shared reflection. Members were reminded that Synod's work is not only governance, but spiritual discernment undertaken together.

The **Bishop's Address** was delivered by the Acting Bishop of Lincoln, Bishop Nicholas Chamberlain. He reflected on leadership, stability and shared responsibility during a challenging period for the Diocese. He spoke candidly about the circumstances surrounding the Bishop of Lincoln's suspension, the role of statutory processes, and his own appointment as Acting Bishop, emphasising transparency, safeguarding and careful stewardship of trust.

He outlined current episcopal and archidiaconal arrangements, welcomed Bishop Jean and Archdeacon Eleanor into their new roles, and stressed that ministry in today's Church must be genuinely shared, drawing on the gifts and goodwill of clergy and laity alike. Organisational work on strategy and pastoral reorganisation, he noted, is necessary to underpin mission, evangelism and service.

Setting these matters firmly within the hope of Easter, he reminded Synod that the Diocese's calling is to serve communities with faith, compassion and resilience, drawing deeply on God's grace while facing a troubled world together.

Shaping the Diocese's future: *Time to Grow Together*

A major focus of the meeting was the developing diocesan strategy, **Time to Grow Together**, presented by the Acting Bishop of Lincoln and the Diocesan Secretary. Synod received an update on the work undertaken since the wide-ranging engagement events held across the Diocese in 2025.

The emerging strategy affirms the Diocese's long-standing vision: *to serve our communities so that people come to know the love of God in Jesus Christ and have their lives transformed*. This is being expressed through three interconnected priorities—deepening faith and worship, reaching those currently missing from church life, and strengthening collaboration and leadership across the Diocese.

Synod was invited to engage with this direction of travel, reflect on priorities, and help shape the next phase of development through round table discussions and plenary feedback. Further detailed proposals will return through diocesan governance processes as the strategy continues to mature.

Reshaping deanery structures

Synod next considered the **Proclamation of Bishop's Pastoral Orders** relating to deanery reorganisation. Following extensive consultation with deaneries over the past year, a number of local groups agreed to formalise existing partnership working by combining deaneries where there was clear local support to do so.

Ruth Brewin and Matt Rodgers, from the Haverstoe and Grimsby & Cleethorpes Deaneries, spoke to Synod about their positive experiences working together in a Deanery Partnership.

These changes, which take effect from **1 July 2026**, aim to simplify governance, align structures more closely with mission and partnership life, and release energy for

ministry, while respecting local identity and context. Synod was also invited to look beyond structures alone and reflect on shared hopes for the future of diocesan life.

Safeguarding: accountability, learning and commitment

Safeguarding remained a critical focus of the meeting. Synod received an update report from the **Diocesan Safeguarding Team and the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisory Panel**. The report outlined current safeguarding activity, key data trends, and priorities for improvement.

Members heard about the strength of culture in the Diocese in relation to Safeguarding. The Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor referenced ongoing work to strengthen safer recruitment, training, and parish engagement, alongside developments in case management and survivor support.

Synod was also updated on national safeguarding developments and serious incident reporting. He also made a plea to Synod members to consider themselves and their colleagues for the advertised role of “Safeguarding Link Person”.

Synod received and noted the report, reaffirming safeguarding as a core responsibility shared by all parts of the Diocese and an area of continued scrutiny, learning and action. A round of applause was given to the Diocesan Safeguarding Team.

Supporting ministry in deprived communities

Synod received a detailed briefing on **Lowest Income Communities (LInC) funding** for the 2026–2028 triennium. Members were updated on the revised national funding settlement, which confirms increased LInC funding for the Diocese over the next three years.

The paper explained changes to the local allocation methodology, including the move to the Index of Multiple Deprivation using updated national data, and the introduction of transitional protection for parishes affected by methodological changes.

Synod was assured that allocations would be monitored and reported annually, with transparency around impact and use of funds.

Wider Church context: General Synod update

An update from **General Synod** was received, covering its February 2026 sessions. Members heard about safeguarding reform at national level, Living in Love and Faith discussions, funding models, mental health, poverty, and developments in liturgy and clergy discipline.

The report highlighted a noticeably calmer and more collaborative tone at General Synod, including the first Presidential Address by Archbishop Sarah Mullally, and the Diocese of Lincoln's active contribution to national debates.

Caring for church buildings and heritage

The **Diocesan Advisory Committee (DAC) Annual Report** was presented by the committee Chair, Susan Leadbetter, and the DAC Secretary. She highlighted the breadth of work undertaken in 2025 to support parishes in caring for church buildings. This included faculty casework, advice on repairs and reordering, accessibility improvements, environmental sustainability and net zero projects, and partnerships with national and local bodies.

Synod gave thanks for the voluntary service of DAC members and advisers, and for the work of the Church Buildings Team in helping parishes balance heritage, worship, mission and community use.

Governance and legal business

Synod received the formal **promulgation of Amending Canon No. 44**, following its enactment by General Synod and Royal Assent. This Canon makes specific provision for the exercise of ministry by Armed Forces chaplains.

Looking ahead

The meeting concluded with prayer, bringing together a day characterised by honesty about challenge, careful attention to safeguarding and governance, and a focus on mission, collaboration and hope.

As the Diocese continues to navigate a season of change, Synod's work reaffirmed a shared commitment to transparency, accountability and faithful service to the people and communities of Greater Lincolnshire.