

Diocesan Synod Digest

Saturday 13th September 2025

Diocesan Synod took place on Saturday 13th September 2025 at The YMCA Showroom. The Chair of the House of Laity, Nigel Bacon, opened the meeting.

Stephen Woodcock, Lay Chair of Louthesk Deanery, accompanied by Chris Lilley, led Synod in a Dwelling in the Word reflection on the Bible reading Philippians 2:5-11. The key reflections were on servant leadership.

Bishop's Address

The Bishop of Lincoln delivered an address to Synod. The Gospel for Holy Cross Day is John 3, which reminds us of the cost and reward of a life lived for Jesus. Bishop Stephen reflected that the world needs to hear what we say. Bishop Stephen spoke about the appalling violence in the news and condemned the attacks in Gaza and Israel. Bishop Stephen invited all to pray for peace and democracy to flourish and to see the face of Christ in one another, including those who are fleeing their lives and livelihoods. Additionally, concern has been shared with Bishop Stephen about the escalation of far right racism. Churches are called to welcome the stranger and refugee and represent life.

The address finished with more positive thoughts on signs of hope, light and life. Bishop Stephen is thankful for the people and places Synod represents, the upcoming appointments of the next Bishop of Grimsby and Archdeacon of Stow and Lindsey and the strategic working groups.

Bishop Stephen led Synod in prayer.

[Click or tap here to read the full address.](#)

The minutes of the Diocesan Synod held on the 21st June 2025 were unanimously approved as a true and accurate record.

Questions under Standing Order 72

1- First question received from The Revd Jess Bellshaw, Lawres Deanery.

"Last Synod, when asked about the current WATCH campaign to repeal the Five Guiding Principles, Bishop Stephen offered assurances of continued support and pastoral provision for those within the diocese who are unable to accept the ministry of women. Joyfully, since

then, the Church of Wales has elected the first female Archbishop. I'd like to ask please, what assurances can the Bishop offer the women who minister in this Diocese, that he will continue to uphold, value, support and champion the ministry of women; not only in the wider Anglican Communion but specifically within the senior leadership of this diocese?"

Bishop Stephen responded that he will continue to strive to uphold the ministry of women. It was a privilege to work alongside The Right Reverend Dagmar Winter Ely. It is also a privilege to work among women in this Diocese, especially Canon Liz Brown who has been appointed the Dean of Women's Ministry. He is deeply encouraged by the richly diverse candidates for the next bishop of Grimsby, in terms of their theology, gender and background.

2- The second question was received from The Revd Ben Topham, Stamford Deanery

"We have seen in the Christian press and national news that the so called 'Quiet Revival' continues to get a little louder. Young adults in their 20s are turning up, often unexpectedly, and seeking a relationship with Jesus. This happening across many streams of the church within Great Britain. Has the Bishop heard of similar patterns across the diocese or beyond? And how might we intentionally nurture discipleship among this age group?"

Bishop Stephen spoke about the Bible Society's data on the quiet revival and rising church attendance. We are hearing that locally and nationally, young people want to explore their faith. There is good news coming from the young adults group at the Cathedral and the Ministry Experience Scheme. The recent pilgrimage to Taizé led by Bishop Nicholas is also an encouraging example. We should be ready to be changed by young people, a key priority of the Church of England is to become younger and more diverse. Bishop Stephen is encouraged to hear about revival and delighted to hear testimonies.

In his follow up question, Ben Topham offered to support new young people who are new to Christianity. Bishop Stephen responded that this would be appreciated and welcomed him to work with Hugh Jones and the College of St Hugh.

General Synod Report

Synod received the General Synod Report from Carl Fender, General Synod representative, from the recent meeting of General Synod held in York during July 2025.

Carl expanded on the changes to safeguarding legislation, which came about in response to the Makin report that was published last year. The redress scheme will be operational by the new year.

[The full report on the meeting of General Synod can be found here.](#)

Safeguarding report

Synod received the update from Jack Redeyoff, Diocesan Safeguarding Officer.

Jack reported on key areas of the INEQE audit. Next year, there will be a report on the actions for the next 5 years. Already anticipated changes are being made and are some already in place, including the increase of capacity in the safeguarding team. A Cathedral Safeguarding Officer and Caseworker have joined the Diocesan team and we are sharing resources with the Cathedral. As per the INEQE recommendations, Jack's role description has changed to Safeguarding Officer, and he holds the title of Director of Safeguarding. Jack thanked everyone who engaged with the INEQE Audit.

We are working through the IICSA report recommendations published in 2022. This included regional peer audits, and we will be auditing Southwell and Nottingham Diocese while they undertake an audit for us. Issues have been with DBSs, an increase in fraud for the elderly and domestic abuse. All were invited to the [Diocesan Safeguarding Conference](#) on the 4th October, which will have speakers on all of these issues. There will be training for Parishes and Staff on a new code of practice on responding to allegations. If you have any questions, please invite the Safeguarding Team to your local area and they can be available to help.

Elections

Following the nomination period, no valid nominations were received.

The Search and Nominations Committee will now review the casual vacancies for Stow and Lindsey for the Vacancy in See Committee. The remaining one position for the House of Laity and two for the House of Clergy on the Board of Patronage will roll over to our next meeting, where we will also be electing to the Bishop's Council of Diocesan Trustees and Search and Nominations Committee. Please give these vacancies serious consideration and encourage your colleagues.

Time to Grow Together

This report was presented by Andrew Holmes, Diocesan Secretary. He spoke about a 10-year strategy for the Diocese, 'Lord, Show us the Way.' He presented the background of the TTCT transformation programme which aimed at changing the models of ministry and finances. Moving into 'Time to Grow Together' we will focus on discussion, collaboration and local challenges. Synod looked together at the statistics for church attendance, including Children, Youth and worship communities.

Parish returns provide this data and help us form a picture of where there are challenges and where we can support parishes. The utilisation of lay ministry is a fundamental aspect that has come from the TTCT strategy.

[A video exploring the basics of Lord Show Us the Way can be found here.](#)

A Strategy Working Group, 5 diverse lever groups and a Theology Reference Group have been formed, which are made up of lay and ordained representatives from diocesan-

wide locations. The lever groups are exploring challenges for people, discipleship, resources and what growth means.

Steve Johnson, a member of the people lever group, spoke about their meetings. They have been having wide-ranging discussions on collaboration, raising the spiritual temperature, missing generations in congregations and the implications. They have been able to hear the views of people from different contexts. They will report what actions can be taken to help the diocese grow.

5 emerging themes have been

- Prioritise foundational health before growth
- Increase focus on collaboration and unity
- Invest in diverse and dynamic models of church
- Rethink growth metrics
- Deepen practical engagement and youth involvement

There will be deanery events with resources and online meetings through October and November for people to engage with.

The Diocesan Advent and Lent course was introduced, 'Set Our Hearts on Fire'.

The Synod broke for refreshments.

Annual Report and Presentation from the Diocesan Board of Education

Daphne Whiteoak, Acting Chair of the DBE, Lynsey Norris, Assistant Director of Education and Gillian Georgiou, RE & SIAMS Advisor presented to Synod.

Daphne outlined the DBE's four vision drivers. Reflecting on the DBE's role in building disciples of Christ and empowering families and schools to flourish.

Christian school education is servant hearted and focussed on learning to live in a changing world. Daphne highlighted the key events of 2024.

The Strategic priorities for 2025 – 2027 were introduced.

1. Ensure all church schools live up to their Christian foundation
2. Ensure church school education is sustainable
3. Develop and sustain partnerships for the benefit of church, school and home

Lynsey explained how communities are strengthened and faith grows when schools, church and households come together. It is important that the three build relationships and recognise capacity issues for all three groups. Projects were shared and how they impact communities and children.

Gillian spoke about supporting every child to be curious about faith, belief, meaning and purpose and the complexity of religious education in the different types of schools.

[A copy of the presentation can be found here.](#)

[The annual report for the Board of Education can be found here.](#)

The College of St Hugh and the Diocesan Learning Platform

Hugh Jones, Warden of the College of St Hugh, presented an overview specifically focused on Training in Christian Mission, Ministry and Discipleship.

‘Lifelong Christian learning’ is our core value – helping each person to take their next step in Christian discipleship, ministry and mission.

Hugh introduced the Diocese’s digital learning platform [Learn-Grow-Share](#). There are thousands of subscribers and other dioceses have requested to use Lincoln diocesan resources.

Hugh gave more information on the Diocesan Advent and Lent course for 2025-2026. ‘Set Our Hearts on Fire’ is a three session Advent course and 5 session Lent course. It will be fully launched at the Ministerial Gathering in October. There will be an opportunity to lead the course online.

‘To Love and Serve the Lord’ training for ALMs is provided in house but organised and delivered locally.

Hugh clarified that St Hild offers training for Ordained ministry and also Reader Training.

Training for curates (IME 2) is provided in house led by David McCormick, the IME 2 Officer. Hugh leads training for Focal Ministers; two cohorts have been commissioned already.

There are networking events for mutual reflection, learning and encouragement for Children, Youth and Family work, a CYF focused ALM course is being piloted and finalised and the Catalyst course is recruiting cohort 2.

The College of St Hugh also provides training and support for new Incumbents, and continuing Ministerial Development training including wellbeing support.

Synod were informed about the Ministerial Gathering in October, which will focus on the theme ‘The Communities We Serve.’ There will be learning and reflection around the specifics of mission and ministry in distinctive contexts.

[A copy of the presentation can be found here.](#)

Bishop Stephen closed the meeting in prayer.