Looking Back at Diocesan Synod- April 2022

The meeting of Diocesan Synod and the Annual General Meeting of the Lincoln Diocesan Trust and Board of Finance Ltd was held at the YMCA Showroom in Lincoln, on Saturday 23rd April. Synod came together for their first meeting of 2022 and for the first time with Bishop Stephen Conway as their President, to celebrate the joy of Easter and consider key matters in the Church’s work of spreading the message that our God lives. Members engaged in round table discussions about Living in Love and Faith, took part in lively debate about the resourcing of Children and Youth Work and received multi-media presentations on the work of Time to Change Together and the Strategic Development Funding project. Coffee and breakfast rolls were shared whilst Synod members received the 2021 annual accounts and dealt with usual AGM business. We heard about the great strides that we have made in reducing our costs and planning for a sustainable future, but also noted the warning that there is still lots to do to reach a point where the diocese is financially viable for the long term.

Diocesan Synod was chaired by Canon Nigel Bacon, Chair of the House of Laity. Mrs Kate Hutchinson, Lay Chair of Grimsby and Cleethorpes, led members in an opening prayer.

# Bishop’s Address

The Acting Bishop of Lincoln, the Rt Revd Stephen Conway, addressed Synod for the first time and confirmed how pleased he was to do so during Easter week. The Bishop described the challenges of being Diocesan Bishop for two dioceses, but confirmed the joy to be had in Jesus even when we are busy and tired. During his address, the Bishop wished her Majesty the Queen a happy birthday, noted the current challenges of food and fuel poverty in this country as well as the horrific scenes coming out of the war in Ukraine. In terms of our own diocese, the Bishop spoke of the good work being done as part of Time to Change Together, and his admiration for the Bishops of Grimsby and Grantham. The full version of the Bishop’s Presidential Address can be found [here.](https://www.lincoln.anglican.org/News/synod-presidential-address)

# Dwelling in the Word

The Bishop introduced Dwelling in Word to members and explained that at the beginning of each meeting of Synod, Bishop’s Council and of his Bishop’s Staff, members would join together in prayerful reflection of scripture. The Revd Sudharshan Sarvananthan of Holland Deanery led Synod in a reflection on John 20:19-31.

# A Motion from Grantham Deanery Synod

The Revd Stuart Cradduck presented a motion from the Grantham Deanery Synod, which had been sent to Diocesan Synod for their consideration and debate. The motion acknowledged the work done to reduce costs at the centre, but was concerned about the lack of Children and Youth resources being offered by the Parish Support Services. The Chair called a number of Diocesan Synod members to speak in the debate, with members agreeing about the importance of engagement with the youth of the diocese but disagreeing over the possible method of achieving this. Following lively debate, Synod voted against the motion as written, however officers had reiterated the senior team’s commitment to work in this area.

# ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

As part of the Annual General Meeting of the Lincoln Diocesan Trust and Board of Finance Ltd, of which Synod constitute the ‘members’, the record of the previous AGM was approved and our Auditors (Haysmacintyre LLP were reappointed for 2022.

A presentation on the 2021 Annual Report and Financial Statements was then given by Canon Prof Muriel Robinson, Chair of the Board of Finance. Synod were shown the breakdown of income and expenditure where it was highlighted that operations continued to need support from the sale of our historic assets, due to the fact that contributions from parishes do not meet the cost of ministry for the diocese. Diocesan finances were referred to as a ‘leaky bucket’, where money is going out faster than it is coming in. Whilst it was confirmed that the final accounts were slightly more positive than budgeted, this was largely down to a revaluation of the

Pension Fund and other unrealised gains. Despite our financial difficulties, it was confirmed that due to the planned work of Time to Change Together and what had already been done to reduce costs, the Auditors had signed off the accounts for 2021 and had declared the LDTBF Ltd as a Going Concern.

Following questions and comments from Synod members, the 2021 Annual Report and Financial Statements were formally received.

# Meeting of the Houses

Canon Nigel Bacon announced that no elections were required and therefore that Synod did not need to split into Houses as originally planned. The Revd Simon Dean was duly elected unopposed as a clergy member to the Vacancy in See Committee. Synod were urged to consider themselves and their fellow members for the remaining positions of two lay people for the Vacancy in See Committee and a Clergy member from the Archdeaconry of Lincoln for the Bishop’s Council of Diocesan Trustees. It was confirmed that both elections would be held in July.

# Time to Change Together Implementation update

The Revd Canon Aly Buxton, Director of Resourcing Sustainable Church, introduced members of the team to talk about the what had been happening since the last meeting of Synod in November. Steven Sleight and members of the Church Buildings Team described their work in assisting parishes to consider their church ‘types’ including a number of online resources such as webinars and team bulletins. The Revd Canon Dr Hugh Jones, the Warden of the College of St Hugh, had produced a pre-recorded video which introduced members of his team and described what was coming up for the college including a launch event in September. The Rt Revd Nicholas Chamberlain, Bishop of Grantham, described the progress thus far with the Vocational Conversations. These had been offered to all clergy and would soon be rolled out to anyone in licensed ministry. The Revd Simon Dean, Covenant and Generous Living Lead, presented figures on the work of the Covenant Pastors who had collectively offered over 1100 hours to the diocese as part of the Covenant Pledge process. The Revd Richard Crossland, Re- imagining Church Lead, then took Synod through a presentation on the ongoing work of the Deanery Partnership Steering Groups where they were beginning to explore ministerial resources and take a strategic view of church types in their area, as well as exploring local issues and opportunities.

The item finished with a question and answer session and a plea from the Revd Canon Aly Buxton for Synod members to continue to share and discuss the work of Time to Change Together with their Deanery Synods and Parishes.

# Inspection of Churches Scheme

The Archdeacon of Lincoln, the Ven Gavin Kirk, presented the amended Scheme to Synod and explained that this was the Scheme under which church buildings in the Diocese of Lincoln are inspected every 5 years, known as the Quinquennial Inspection or QI. The revision had become necessary because of legislation passed by General Synod most latterly in 2020.

Synod approved the revision unanimously.

# Living in Love and Faith

The Rt Revd Dr Nicholas Chamberlain, Bishop of Grantham, presented a reminder of the vision, process and purpose of the Living in Love and Faith (LLF) journey, with an update on what had happened locally and information on the next steps for the Diocese of Lincoln and the Church of England. One of the National Church’s resource videos was played, followed by discussion in groups about the video clip, members’ experiences of taking part in an LLF group and what members could do locally to transform how their churches in order to relate better to difference and diversity. The Bishop also urged Synod to join a local course if they had not yet completed one, and to complete the national survey by the end of April to ensure that the Diocese of Lincoln was heard as part of the ongoing national conversation.

# Safeguarding update

Mr Jack Redeyoff, Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor, presented his written report to Synod and provided an update on the recently completed Past Case Review 2 and the ongoing roll out of Safeguarding Training. Synod members asked questions about the recent changes to DBS check rules (in the requirements moving from every 5 to every 3 years) and what training was considered ‘core’ for PCC members.

# General Synod Report

Mr Carl Fender of Stamford Deanery presented his written report on the recent General Synod sessions held in February. It was noted that this had felt like an ‘in-between’ session, with many items being considered before they return for approval at a later date. Renumeration of clergy was considered, along with Racial Justice, Setting God’s People Free and the Governance Review which may see the different strands of the National Church being brought back together under a new ‘National Church Service’.

# Strategic Development Fund Project update

The Revd Canon David Dadswell, Diocesan Secretary, presented the SDF Project Annual Report to Synod, which had been prepared by Mrs Nicola Snelling, Strategic Programme Manager. A presentation was given on the highlights of the project over the last year, including the successful recruitment of 6 high calibre curates to occupy 5 stipendiary curacies across St Wulfram’s Grantham, St Swithin’s Lincoln and St Mark’s Grimsby. Usual Sunday attendance had increased across the recent launches at St Mark’s, St John’s in Spalding and St Faith’s in Lincoln with new events including international student lunches, light parties and Alpha Courses.

The Revd Canon Martyn Taylor of Stamford Deanery spoke to Synod about the church plant that Stamford St George was resourcing in Spalding and that he had been really encouraged by its steady growth. It was confirmed that a new Children and Youth worker had recently been recruited by the parish, so it was hoped that further good news on attendance figures would be forthcoming by next year.

The Revd Matt Rodgers of Christianity Deanery, who is the planting curate from St Swithin’s Lincoln now deployed at St Mark’s in Grimsby, spoke to Synod about the importance of ‘invitation’ and of encouraging new people into church, onto courses and into the church community.

The Rt Revd Stephen Conway, Acting Bishop of Lincoln, closed Synod with a Blessing.