Diocesan Synod Digest April 2023

Diocesan Synod took place on Saturday 22nd April 2023 at The Showroom, Tritton Road, Lincoln. The Chair of the meeting was Canon Nigel Bacon. The meeting started with Dwelling in the Word, using Zephaniah 3:17, A Song of Joy, led by Revd Rachel Heskins (Christianity).

# Bishops Address

The Rt Revd Dr Nicholas Chamberlain, Bishop of Grantham, then officially opened the meeting with a powerful address which covered the business for Diocesan Synod and for the following months. A

full version of the Bishop’s address can be found on the diocesan website.

The minutes of the meeting which was held on the 19th November 2022 were approved.

# Questions were received in advance under Standing Order No 72, as summarised below:

*Received from the Revd Martyn Taylor of Stamford Deanery*

“Have our bishops discussed if any of them will follow Archbishop Justin’s lead in not using the prayers of love and faith (for the sake of unity in Lincoln diocese) for those who in conscience will not be able to use the prayers of love and faith?”

Bishop David responded that no discussion had yet taken place. We fully understand and respect the decisions, taken in conscience, of all of our clergy colleagues, and will support them if they decide not to use the prayers, as we will support them if they decide to use them.

*Received from the Revd Ben Topham of Stamford Deanery*

“What provision will the bishops put in place to protect traditional catholic and evangelical clergy who hold to the historic and traditional teaching on marriage from being pressurised to act against their conscience regarding the Prayers of Love and Faith?”

Bishop Nicholas responded that there were three working parties of bishops, also including consultants, who are following up the General Synod debate in February. One working party is looking at pastoral guidance, a second at the prayers of love and faith and a third at pastoral reassurance. When these parties have done their work, they will report to the College and House of Bishops. The intention is then to report back to General Synod at its July meeting. Every incumbent can be pressured with respect to conscience, on a whole range of matters, and all Lincoln incumbents will clearly receive appropriate support from the bishops of the Diocese should they be subject to pressure. It was noted that bishops were also being pressurised, and were grateful for the support they were receiving at this time.

*Received from the Revd Ben Topham of Stamford Deanery*

“Can the bishops with agreement of the clergy and parishes of this diocese decide which churches will (and will not) use the Prayers of Love and Faith, thus creating a centralised pathway for signposting for those who want to receive such prayers, and a taking pressure away from local clergy should requests be made of those who from theological conviction and conscience will not use these prayers?”

Bishop Nicholas responded that it was not legally possible for the bishops to ‘decide’ about the use

of the Prayers of Love and Faith. The right and responsibility of this decision will be held by each incumbent.

What will clearly be very helpful, however, is for each incumbent to consider how he or she will communicate their own general intent or otherwise to use the prayers. We are hoping that some suggestions will be made by the various national working parties about best practice for how this may be done. If this is not the case, then we will certainly consider producing some diocesan guidelines.

*Received from the Revd Martyn Taylor of Stamford Deanery*

“Have the DBF made any financial contingency for possible legal challenges that may arise because of the prayers of love and faith, which could come from either a liberal or a conservative challenge against clergy or bishops?”

Muriel Robinson responded that no, in a budget situation where we are forecasting a working deficit for 2023, it would be inappropriate to set aside funds for a contingency where as yet there is no clarity as to the final outcome from General Synod and the House of Bishops, and where there is equally a lack of clarity as to where any potential liability would rest. They would continue to monitor the situation.

# ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

**Financial Statements and Auditor’s Report**

Canon Prof Muriel Robinson and Mrs Ann Treacy presented the Financial Statements and Auditor’s

Report. The previous minutes from the 2022 Annual General Meeting were approved.

The slides for the presentation can be found on the diocesan website. Synod heard that £539,375 less than budgeted was spent in 2022, although there was still a £2.7m deficit on the general fund which was the money available to us to spend freely. The savings were largely down to an improvement on the valuation of the Clergy Pension Fund and benefitting from reduced expenditure following restructuring.

Synod heard about what was being done to repair the “leaky bucket” of our Diocesan finances, and it was confirmed that £151k more money was raised in 2022 from Parish Share/Covenant Pledges than had been committed to.

Synod formally received the 2022 financial summary and accounts. Haysmacintyre LLP was re- appointed as the auditors for 2023.

Copies of the Financial Summary and full Financial Statements and Annual Report can be found on the diocesan website.

# Time to Change Together

The next item was an update on TTCT from the Revd Richard Crossland, Implementation Lead. Synod was updated on the formation of 23 Local Mission Partnerships, engaging all ministers in the progress. It was confirmed that launch services would be combined with the Archdeacons Visitations and swearing in of Churchwardens, and that these would happen throughout June and July.

# Election to the Board of Education

There were no election nominations for the Diocesan Board of Education. Election papers were released for the next opportunity to elect to the vacancy, which would be at the next Diocesan Synod in July.

# Response to the Cost of Living Crisis

After a short refreshment break, Mrs Sarah Spencer and Ms Ruth Brewin presented on the Response to the Cost of Living Crisis. The stories came from across the Diocese and included Churches, Schools and Communities all responding with generosity, compassion and courage.

Revd Ben Topham, presented a video on the responses from St George’s Stamford, which included, Fresh Hope ministry, Friday Connect, CAP Centre, help into action, a foodbank, furniture delivery, and free top ups for gas and electricity funds. In the Benefice of Grantham Harrowby with Londonthorpe, the Revd Sam Parsons reported on their wellbeing café, warm space including crafts, games and cake which is self-sustained with donations. Synod discussed the following questions in groups.

How are churches responding to the cost of living crisis? What have you been learning?

Where are you noticing God at work at this time?

The next video was from Lynsey Norris, Assistant Director of Education, who interviewed two

headteachers about their school’s response to the Cost of Living Crisis. The interviews were with Mrs Adeline Brack at Barton St Peter's CofE Primary School and Mrs Sonya Ely at Tydd St Mary CofE Primary School.

Community responses included foodbanks and help with housing. General Synod met in February and encouraged Diocesan Synod to discuss the Cost of Living Crisis and continue to pray, and do all we can and call on the Government to act.

# Safeguarding update

Revd Canon David Dadswell gave an update on Safeguarding and introduced the new independent chair of the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisory Panel, Mrs Sally Hodges. Sally addressed Synod and confirmed her experience in Social Work and Safeguarding across a long and varied carrier, and confirmed the priorities of DSAP over the coming year. These included Prevention, Responding Well, Survivors, Quality Assurance, Communication, and also Learning and Development.

# General Synod Report

The General Synod Report was prepared by Revd Canon Sonia Barron and presented by Mrs Sue Slater. The motion for the Church to repent, recommit, commend and learn together in regards to Living in Love and Faith was discussed over multiple sessions at General Synod. It was confirmed that there were no proposals to change the doctrine of marriage in the Church of England. Another relevant motion had been the Lafford Deanery motion to influence the Government to exempt churches as charities from the Insurance Premium Tax. A full copy of the General Synod report prepared by Sonia Baron for our Diocese can be found on the diocesan website.

# Scheme to vary Deanery Synod membership

A background paper and scheme prepared by the Diocesan Registrar was presented to Synod by the Revd David Dadswell, to vary the membership of Deanery Synods to allow for a rural dean who is appointed to multiple deaneries to be joint chair (with the lay chair) of each deanery synod. The scheme would also allow in certain cases approved by Bishop’s Council, for a clerk in Holy Orders, deaconess or lay worker to be appointed to more than one deanery synod. It was noted that the scheme has arisen from local demand. Synod unanimously approved the scheme.

# Strategic Development Fund Project Annual Report

The Rt Revd Dr David Court, Bishop of Grimsby, presented the written report to Synod and encouraged those present to ensure their Deanery Partnerships recruit a Mission Enabler, who could focus on church plants and revitalisation projects. Synod received verbal update reports from the 3 Resource Church Leaders. Canon Martyn Taylor (Stamford) spoke about the church plant from

Stamford St George’s to St Ann’s, led by Curate, Revd Andy Acheson. This plant had involved 12

family units moving from Stamford to Grantham to join the church.

Revd Canon Jim Prestwood spoke about the St Faith’s church plant from St Swithin’s in Lincoln. The community were seeing growth from de-churched and un-churched people and it was not the case that families were simply moving from one church to another. The church was currently investing in relationships with schools and have Alpha and similar courses available.

Revd Stuart Cradduck reported that St Wulfram’s in Grantham, who had been modelling collaboration similar to the Local Mission Partnerships of Time to Change Together. Challenges the churches had faced included being forced to close during the pandemic at the very beginning of the project, and therefore having a very short time frame.

Synod closed with Prayer and a Blessing given by The Rt Revd Dr David Court, Bishop of Grimsby.