**Diocesan Synod Digest 15th July 2023**

Diocesan Synod took place on Saturday 15th July at The Showroom, Tritton Road, Lincoln. The Chair of the meeting was the Revd Cameron Watt, Chair of the House of Clergy. The meeting started with Dwelling in the Word, with the reading Matthew 13:1-9 The Parable of the Sower, led by Ms Maggie Townend (Christianity). After listening to the reading, Synod reflected on the generosity of the sower, the way Jesus preached and the line, ‘He who has ears let him hear.’

**Bishops Address**

The Rt Revd Dr David Court, Acting Bishop of Lincoln, officially opened the meeting, with the reading of Psalm 105 and a poem from ‘I see a New City’ by Gerard Kelly. The address covered five reasons to be hopeful and thankful.

* We have our new Bishop arriving this Autumn, who already knows us and our Diocese well, and we are looking forward to continuing working together.
* The Local Mission Partnerships have been launched along with the licencing of Churchwardens in the Archdeacons’ Visitation Service and Local Mission Partnership Covenant Services.
* Our finances are going in the right direction.
* 8 out of 9 Mission Enablers have started working in our Deanery Partnerships to develop and make real their own mission priorities.
* The joy of the recent Ordinations.

Bishop David expressed gratitude for all that we’ve achieved together over these last years and for all that we’ve achieved in this first phase of TTCT, whilst there are still big challenges ahead. As we await the arrival of Bishop Stephen, we are looking forward with huge anticipation to working with him to see that further embedded in our life and as he leads us into the phase that lies beyond, that focus not on how we organise ourselves, which is what we’ve needed to do, but on how we’re going to get on with the business of building the kingdom, declaring the goodness of God, making that real in each of the communities that make up this great diocese.

The minutes of the meeting which was held on the 22nd April 2023 were approved.

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

*Received from the Revd Ben Topham of Stamford Deanery*

“Since starting TTCT, the maintenance costs on clergy housing have increased dramatically, and I understand that over 50% of the related budget has been spent in the first 25% of the year. Has the finance department considered an increase of at least £5k per annum to the parish share to maintain clergy housing, making parish contribution to ministry £60,000 per annum in Lincoln Diocese?”

Canon Professor Muriel Robinson responded that we committed in this year’s budget to holding to £55k and to change it now would be to go back on our word- and if we expect parishes to meet their covenanted pledge, we also have to hold to our side of the covenant. We do monitor costs carefully including the impact of rises in the cost of living, but our carefully calculated figure right now, considering all the indirect costs, suggests a much smaller rise to £56k which can be managed. We will be sticking to the pledges from Parishes and not asking them to increase them. However, we can increase the maintenance budget short term or long term by looking at other areas of the budget.

*Received from Revd Ben Topham of Stamford Deanery*

“What measures are the diocese planning to put in place to monitor rising and falling attendance and giving levels in relation to the practice or non-practice of the Prayers of Love and Faith across the diocese?”

The Revd Canon David Dadswell responded that because there are so many factors that influence giving and attendance levels it would be difficult for the Parish Support office to monitor a specific reason for falls in giving and attendance. It would be very difficult to identify a causal link between such practice or non-practice in relation the Prayers of Love and Faith. We do not do such monitoring for any other factors and I would not want to set a precedent for doing this for each and every change of policy or practice. We are happy to receive information from Parishes on this and why people may be leaving the church.

*Received from Mrs Sue Slater of Elloe West Deanery*

“Having heard at General Synod that the Church Commissioners propose to build houses on their land south of Lincoln at Bracebridge Heath, I would like to know more about the scale and nature of this development please. Does the Diocese have any similar plans for developing its own land, and how does it fit in to our Diocesan progress towards net zero?”

The Revd Canon David Dadswell responded that the statement that the Church Commissioners for England had received planning permission for a mixed-use community in Bracebridge Heath, Lincoln, which will add more than a thousand new homes, feature new transport links and public spaces, and create jobs can be found on the Church of England website. It was confirmed that the Diocese had received no warning that this has happened, or notice afterwards. After contacting them, the Commissioners had apologised. Conversations would now begin about possibilities for mission initiatives, amongst the promises they had made in their statement about community facilities. Following its strategic objectives for its glebe estate, the Diocese proactively pursues both housing and green energy development opportunities. The Diocese had just completed a sale for a major housing development at Barrowby and is in active negotiations with developers in respect of several other sites. The objectives centre on the development of a green strategy which is being undertaken as part of the Diocese overall environmental policy and 2030 net zero strategy.

**‘Love Matters’ - Archbishop’s Commissions on Families and Households Report**

The Rt Revd Paul Butler, Bishop of Durham, joined us to speak about the new report ‘Love Matters’ which was commissioned by the Archbishops’ to explore what families and households of all shapes and sizes need to flourish. 12 experts worked on the report, the four workstreams focussing on Theology, Social History, Children and Young people and Couple Relationships.

After collecting the evidence from wide range of families, five key messages came from the research. We must:

1. Value families in all their diversity, meeting their basic needs by putting their wellbeing at the heart of Government policy-making and our community life, including religious communities.
2. Support relationships throughout life, ensuring that everyone is able to develop loving, caring relationships, manage conflict well and promote the flourishing of individuals and families.
3. Honour singleness and single person households, recognising that loving relationships matter to everyone.
4. Empower children and young people, developing their relational skills and knowledge, recognising their value and agency, protecting them from harm, and giving them the best start in life.
5. Build a kinder, fairer, more forgiving society, removing discrimination, division and deep inequality for the sake of every family and household.

From these ambitions came four key priorities:

1. Maximise the protective effect of the family.
2. Ensure that all loving relationships matter and are valued in everything we do.
3. Give every child the best possible start.
4. Tackle the societal issues which limit people’s ability to flourish.

Synod discussed together what this might look like in their own contexts. More resources on Love Matters are coming in the Autumn, including the Youth version produced by young people which will be available in November.

**Election to the Board of Education**

Two nominations were received for the vacancy on the Diocesan Board of Education. Hustings were held where both candidates addressed Synod and had the opportunity to answer questions from about mission and the challenges faced by Church schools. Following a ballot, the candidate elected to the Board of Education was the Revd Canon Sudharshan Sarvananthan.

**Lincoln Cathedral**

After a short refreshment break, the Revd Canon Nick Brown, Cathedral Precentor and Mr Mark Suthern shared the purpose, vision and structure of the Cathedral’s Measure. Although there had been a decrease in staff since Covid, Nick and Mark shared the many successful events held at the Cathedral and the importance of the link with the wider Diocese. The aim of the Cathedral Chapter was to hold relevant activities that appeal to a wide range of groups. To pray for and offer a daily round of worship on behalf of the bishop and parishes of the diocese, and the communities they serve; ​ to contribute to the wider mission of the Church through experience, learning and encouragement; ​ to maintain the cathedral as a holy place, where visitors can encounter the presence of God; and​ raise funds to support and resource all the above. The Chapter and Senior leadership team were introduced and Synod had the opportunity to ask questions. It was confirmed that the Cathedral are improving diversity of staff by encouraging people from different backgrounds to work with them. It was clarified that the Cathedral is not only a type 1 church in Christianity Deanery because the Cathedral aims to be a resource for the whole Diocese, not just locally.

**Safeguarding Update**

Mr Jack Redeyoff, Diocesan Safeguarding Officer, gave an update on Safeguarding and reported that Mr Alexander Kubeyinje, the Director of the National Safeguarding team, had recently visited. This gave the team the opportunity to show the National team who Lincoln is and the Safeguarding work in the Diocese and Cathedral. Synod were updated on the disbanding of the Independent Safeguarding Board, and the National Safeguarding Standards Handbook and Quality Assurance Framework. The Handbook and Framework are used for the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisory Panel and BCDT, and drive safeguarding standards in our work. Synod were invited to comment and provide feedback for these on the Church of England Survey online.

**General Synod Report**

Revd Stuart Cradduck presented the General Synod meeting report from the very recent July 2023 sessions, which were held in York. The meeting discussions included Safeguarding, where there was an extended time of question and discussion on the disbanding of the Independent Safeguarding Board. Other topics included Living in Love and Faith, the Climate Emergency and the Archbishops’ Council Annual report on finances. There was discussion around Clergy conduct measures to allow a more generous approach to disciplinary action in the Church. Also challenges such as a motion that called on the Archbishops’ Council to re-establish an elected body for young adults, to replace the recently disbanded Church of England Youth Council, we need to focus on giving them a voice.

**The Diocesan Board of Education Annual Report**

The DBE Annual Report was presented by the Ven Dr Justine Allain Chapman and Mr Paul Thompson, Director of Education. The presentation began with a video from LAAT (Lincoln Anglican Academy Trust) celebrating 10 years of success. Currently there are 142 church schools in Lincolnshire. The DBE are working on a Multi Academy Trust (MAT) Strategy and schools will have 4 options, either to join a church MAT (as an individual school) ​, join a church MAT (as a group of schools) ​, form a new MAT​ or stay as they are – for now. ​The Diocesan vision for Education has been Excellence, Exploration and Encouragement since 2015. As there have been lots of changes since then and the DBE will have a new vision which is not simply adopting the Church of England vision for education as they need a vision for their local unique context. The 2023 Diocesan Vision for Education is the promise to our schools:

*Believing we are called into fellowship with God who seeks the flourishing of all, we aspire to strengthen our school communities with wisdom, knowledge and understanding. Through partnerships firmly rooted in Christian hope and in the love of God, we empower all in our Church school family to love one another with humility, justice and kindness.*

In addition, TTCT and Growing Faith are starting to work together to create connected communities (between schools, churches and households) to see where relationships currently exist and where they can be built upon. The aim is to work closely with LMPs and Children and Youth Enablers. The report was received by SynoD. During the question and answers time, Archdeacon Justine clarified that MATs can take in non-church schools, and that it is currently a national challenge to find clergy to be School Governors.

**Time to Change Together Implementation Update**

Fr Richard Crossland updated Synod on the progress made. The 23 Local Mission Partnership Visitations were almost complete, all showing collaboration, energy and growth in their own distinctive ways. LMPs were starting to begin the process of working together, being clearer of the shape of the structure, with resources and vacancies being filled. We are moving from restructuring to Ministry and will be concentrating on sharing the Good News and being disciples of Christ. There will be more vision days at the beginning of September.

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