

## Leeds Diocesan Synod

DRAFT Minutes of the twentieth meeting of the Synod of the Diocese of Leeds held at Bradford Cathedral, 1 Stott Hill, Bradford BD1 4EH and via view only YouTube broadcast for Synod members at 9.30 am on Saturday, 16 October 2021.

Chair: The Bishop of Leeds

### 1. **Welcome, Apologies and notices.**

#### **1.1 Notices**

Mr Jonathan Wood, Secretary to the Diocesan Synod gave Health & Safety, Social Media and Report Summary notices.

#### **1.2 Welcome**

The Bishop of Leeds opened the Synod welcoming all the new members to the Diocesan Synod 2021 – 2024 term. He reported that the newly elected Chair of the House of Clergy was The Revd Canon Rachel Firth, (Huddersfield Deanery) and the Chair of the House of Laity, Mr Matthew Ambler (Huddersfield Deanery).

#### **1.3 The following were welcomed and given the Chair's permission to speak (SO3):**

Item 7 - 2022 Budget: Mr Geoff Park, Chief Finance Officer.

Item 10 - Saving Creation - Carbon Net Zero Strategy: Mrs Jemima Parker, Environment Officer and Mr Jack Bacon, Communications Officer.

#### **Apologies**

33 apologies had been received.

#### **General Synod elections results**

The successful candidates in the recent General Synod elections for the diocese. (\* = new to General Synod members):

#### **Proctors in Convocation:**

The Venerable Paul Ayer, The Revd Canon John Bavington\*, The Revd Canon Paul Cartwright, The Revd Canon Rachel Firth\*, The Revd Angela Hannafin\*, The Revd Canon Joyce Jones, The Revd Ruth Newton, The Revd Che Seabourne\* and The Revd Gary Waddington.

#### **Member of the House of Laity:**

David Ashton MBE, Mr Alexander Berry\*, Canon Mrs Jane Evans\*, Canon Professor Joyce Hill, Mr Stephen Hogg, Dr Richard Mantle OBE, Mrs Catherine Stephenson\* and Dr Diana Tremayne\*.

#### **Farewells**

It was reported that this would be the last Synod of Bishop Paul Slater and of Archdeacon Anne Dawtry both of whom would be retiring before the next Synod meeting.

## 2. Opening Eucharist

An opening Eucharist service was held for the new Synod triennium.

Order of Service: The Revd Canon Paul Maybury, acting Dean, Bradford Cathedral.

President: The Bishop of Leeds

Deacon: The Revd Canon Paul Maybury

Reader of the Gospel: Kay Brown (Elected laity, Allerton deanery)

Intercessor: The Revd Canon Paul Maybury

Distributors: The Bishop of Leeds, the Bishop of Kirkstall and the Archdeacon of Halifax.

Chair: The Revd Canon Rachel Firth, Chair of the House of Clergy

## 3. Presentation and Discussion: Introduction to Synod

**Presenter:** Jonathan Wood, CEO and Diocesan Secretary (JW)

JW welcomed everyone to the new Synod, the first in person Synod since the Covid pandemic began. An induction for Synod members had been held on 4 October 2021 and JW invited all Synod members to get in touch with the diocesan team if there was anything they needed to talk through about the Synod. He introduced the Chairs, The Revd Canon Rachel Firth and Mr Matthew Ambler and the legal adviser to the Synod, Mr Peter Foskett. Mr Chris Tate, Diocesan Director of Communications was in attendance along with Mr Jack Bacon, Communications Officer. After the Synod, meeting The Communications Team would send a briefing to all the Synod members to share with their PCCs and deaneries. Jack would be reporting on the Synod meeting via Twitter during the Synod.

The in person Synod was an opportunity for Synod members to have conversations together. Time had been set aside during this item for the Synod members to talk to those sitting near them. Members were asked to discuss with them the question: "What excites you about being on the Diocesan Synod?"

*A break was taken after item 3.*

Chair: Matthew Ambler, Chair of the House of Laity

## 4. Declarations of interest – Members are reminded of the need to declare any conflict of interest on matters on this agenda.

There were no declarations of conflicts of interest.

## 5. Motion: Minutes of the last Meeting on 16 June 2021. DS21 10 01

The Chair reported that an amendment had been received from Mr Robert Graham (Headingley deanery) that the date of meeting recorded in the draft minutes should be 12 June 2021 not the 16 June 2021.

The Chair proposed:

“That the draft minutes contained in DS21 10 01 be accepted as a true record with the amended date to 12 June 2021”.

Synod members voted on the motion.

The motion was approved.

There were abstentions from those not previously on the Diocesan Synod.

## 6. Presidential Address.

The Bishop of Leeds gave his Presidential Address a copy of which is attached to these minutes.

### **Matters arising on the Minutes of the Synod meeting held on 12 June 2021 not covered elsewhere on the Agenda (if any).**

There were no notified matters arising.

## 7. Motion: 2022 Budget.

Motion:

*“That the Diocesan Synod authorise (or direct) the diocesan board of finance to raise and expend a sum not exceeding £21,363,040 for the calendar year 2022”.*

Proposer: The Ven Andy Jolley (Archdeacon of Bradford)

### **Proposer and Presenter:**

The Ven Andy Jolley (AJ) and Mr Geoff Park, Chief Finance Officer (GP).

### **Introduction to the motion**

AJ said that ordinarily the Budget motion would be proposed by the chair of the Finance Assets and Investments committee (“FAIC”), Canon Mr Irving Warnett. Irving wasn’t able to be at the Synod and so AJ was proposing the motion instead.

AJ explained the motion was worded “authorise (or direct)” as required under regulations that applied to bringing money resolutions to the Synod.

The diocesan finances in 2020 has turned out better than had been expected – probably because as a diocese we were driven to action and to prayer. Things were not going so well in 2021 and this gave the context for the Budget 2022.

AJ was going to pass on to the Synod Irving Warnett’s view as independent chair of the FAIC and

FAIC's views on the Budget. The 2021 outturn in respect of share receipts for the current year gives an indication of how quickly congregations are returning, parish incomes are being restored and the ability of parishes to pay share. Parish Share receipts were 15% below where it was hoped they would be when the Budget was set aware of Covid. These were heavily discounted from 2019. This means the finances are a long way short of where need to be to support the Budget which was before the Synod. FAIC were very aware of this. There were three key financial indicators for the diocese: share receipts, cash and unrestricted free reserves. FAIC have a number of actions pending for when it reviews the working Budget at the end of the year/early New Year. These in themselves would not sufficient to avoid a potential seven figure deficit in 2022 and so further difficult issues and decisions which may have to be taken. To have a full understanding of the financial position across the whole diocese will need information about how much diocesan and parish cash reserves there are, how much share parishes can afford to pay (both this year and next) and so who are able to best support the churches and mission across the diocese. PCCs were asked to work with GP and the Finance Team in sharing their reserves position and share payment intentions. This will then mean that there is clear data to support the various options to return to balance.

### **Presentation**

GP gave a presentation on the current financial position and the draft Budget 2022. Members had been circulated with papers setting out the figures and GP highlighted some figures and matters to aid the debate on the draft Budget. There was uncertainty in the current position and so the future position, so the presentation was a forecast and so it would need to be reviewed regularly.

The Budget deficit was £0.3m for 2022. This would be a best-case scenario based on parish share receipts returning to nearer pre-Pandemic trends. The reserves and cash position at the start of 2022 would be key factors. The diocese would again be applying to the National Church's Sustainability fund. The Budget did include a deficit beyond 2022 and so presented a significant challenge how to address this. There were significant contributions to diocesan finances from the parishes, National Church and individuals and so further costs savings were not being recommended. However, this would be reviewed in the near future and so the ability to make costs savings decisions was being reserved.

The deficit range at the end of 2021 was likely to be around £2.2m and £2.9m. Parish share was the key factor in where in this range the final figure would be. The September 2021 parish share figures were the best seen since February 2020. However, the range for the deficit remained relevant. GP thanked the parishes and congregations of the diocese for all their hard work in re-establishing both worship and contributions to the finances to support mission locally and across the diocese.

Although there was a shortfall in share and so overall income, there were costs savings that mitigate some of the shortfall. However, the potential deficit meant that the diocese would be approaching the National Church for support from its Sustainability fund. This was open to all dioceses. The National Church has made it clear that there is a shared responsibility at the current time and this was why the diocese needed to know the cash reserves position of the parishes. The National Church was understandably not willing to deplete their own reserves, if dioceses and parishes were not using theirs.

There were various key assumptions in the draft Budget 2022. The stipend and salary assumption is a 1% increase. This is not a decision taken lightly. It was recognised there were inflationary pressures in the economy. However, in the context of the overall draft Budget, it was not felt that

this figure could be higher. However, since the decision to set the increase at 1% the Government had announced National Insurance changes which would have some adverse effect on the increase. The draft Budget included a deficit of £0.3m. This was probably the best outcome. The parish share figure of £13,878,938 was below 2019. However, although it was recognised this was a challenge, it was important to emphasise that the return to historic levels of income was key to maintaining the previous levels of ministry committed to.

The reserves position at the end of 2021 would be c.£3.9m (excluding any monies from National Church support). If monies were received from the National Church then the diocesan finances would be at an appropriate level. If below this level, the Board would need to take immediate action to reduce the costs within the diocese.

Looking ahead from 2023 onwards the forecast was for deficits to rise. Even if parish share rose at a small rate, the National Church's grants were reducing. This was because regular funding was being replaced with more project based funding such as the Strategic Development Fund funding.

Once the figure for parish share contributions were known, recommendations would be taken to the Board in February 2022. These would be for any costs savings needed in 2022 to ensure finances remain within a manageable budget. The FAIC had asked that i) £1m net property sales are found to support the cash position if needed and ii) that there were £200k of savings which could be achieved in 2022 to reduce deficits if required.

#### **Questions of Clarification prior to debate**

None were raised.

#### **Debate of the motion**

Graham Foster (Halifax and Calder Valley deanery)

The biggest flexible/variable figure in the Budget was parish share. There was still a massive void between the Synod and the parishes. He thought that the deanery synods needed to play a bigger part and questioned if the presentation made to the Synod (or an updated one), the diocese or the members as the Diocesan Synod should urge each deanery to discuss the situation. The Diocese had written to all PCC Treasurers and Churchwardens but he didn't think the message was getting through.

Mike Moss (Aire & Worth deanery)

During the Archdeacon of Bradford's presentation, the first thing which had come in to his mind was "God does provide". The Archdeacon had said at the beginning of his presentation that the diocese had had a massively different outturn at the end of 2020 than had been expected. Whether through the National Church or otherwise, God did provide. Secondly, the Archdeacon had mentioned prayer. This was a very important part of the whole issue and getting the message out into all the parishes was important. He thanked the officers and staff at the diocese for all the work they had done to get the diocese to this point. It was a nightmare being a PCC Treasurer of a large church, so he could imagine what it was like to be a treasurer in charge of the diocese.

He raised a couple of concerns. It was mentioned that the 1% was by national stipend benchmark but he was concerned the diocese would end up with parishes where they would be feeding their parish priest through the foodbanks because of the increased in the rip and energy bills. Most people realized that the diocesan vicarages were not the most efficient buildings to heat and light and it was important that this was monitored. Although it would make a huge impact on the

Budget to change the 1%, he felt it was important to maintain the welfare of the clergy. His second concern was the parish share system. He felt it was a fair system but the controls put in to it have made it an unfair system. He believed that most parishes had no idea what their calculated share was. They knew what the Share request was but not how it was calculated. There were cappings for increases and decreases and those which took account of parish income. These complicated the system and on the current last year request for share notice, it wasn't pointed out what the actual calculated share was. He understood that there would be a change so that the figure would be included in the parish share statement for the next year. However, he felt this was a key issue if the parish didn't realise that its calculated share was massively different from what was actually being collected, then this needed looking in to.

He had two suggestions, for bringing in the share. Scrapping the percentage limits, the capping and the 80% of income rule. He felt parishes should receive a statement that included the figure of the calculated share ie what the system says the parish should pay. Along with this could be suggestions for how the parish might work to get to the figure. He felt by asking parishes who got a decrease to aim towards a figure, rather than making it the requested figure, would result in a better response. An example of this was his parish which, on the old system, had a request of £130k. The calculated payment is c. under £80k. The parish was still being asked for £110k five years in to a new system. He estimated that by the end of 2027 the parish would be requested for its calculated share. He felt ten years in to a new system was too long. With regard to the 80% rule, he had anecdotal evidence that there were parishes which said [to contributors to their income] if you pay in to restricted funds this would keep parish income down and so parish share allocation. If this message or the not increasing giving to keep parish share allocation lower then this was a bad message. The diocese and parishes were a Christian community that should share all its resources equally.

Angus Maude (Wensley deanery and Leeds Board member)

Wensley deanery is a rural deanery. If parish share is not paid then there will be a reduction in clergy because that is where the parish share is spent. He felt that there was an absolute need to have the same kind of debate [on the Budget] at deanery, benefice and parish levels. He felt there was quite often no general understanding at parish level about diocesan finances. He had carried out work in his deanery and he could report there were some substantial unrestricted reserves. He felt that there was a general feeling that, somehow, there would be someone else who would pay the clergy stipends. This was not going to happen. He felt that there needed to be debates at deanery and benefice level to have the opportunity to devise alternative solutions to the current problem. More parish share needed to be paid, whether through planned giving or parishes using their reserves and notwithstanding the issues with the current share system.

Roger Lazenby (Headingley deanery)

He wanted to support the comments made so far. He felt there was a lot that people could do at deanery and parish level to understand what was being discussed at the Diocesan Synod. The Leeds episcopal area deaneries had had a joint meeting recently. The Diocesan Secretary had spoken to the meeting. The numbers presented to the Diocesan Synod had been explained at the deanery synod in a way which meant that deanery members were able to present the information to explain to PCCs and congregations. They would be able to outline the joint responsibility for the provision of ministry across the diocese. Using the forums available, members needed to discuss the numbers in a way that was easy for people to understand.

Jonathan Wilson (Harrogate deanery)

He recommended the Parish Share Giving Scheme. This had enabled his parish to sustain their revenue though there had been a big adverse impact from not being able to let church buildings. He wondered if there was a way for PCC Treasurers to support one another and perhaps get together to do this.

The Ven Paul Ayers (Archdeacon of Leeds)

The issue of caps in the parish share system was being reviewed but review of the parish share system had been put on hold by the pandemic. He cautioned that there might be loud protest from parishes who on a change to the current system may face a much larger share allocation. He said PCCs should be encouraged to look more realistically and more generously at their reserves. He read parishes annual accounts and some parishes had reserves where it was unclear why they were holding them. For example, he had recently seen a parish's accounts, which had reserves in a designated account of £40k for a curate's house, when they didn't need to provide a curate's house. Another had reserves of more than twice its annual turnover, which was far more than any charity should have.

At the joint Leeds EA deaneries meeting mentioned by Roger Lazenby, someone had said "there's a finite amount of money". Archdeacon Paul felt this wasn't true – there was a finite amount of Budget that the diocesan team were allowed to spend but there wasn't a finite amount of money. This wasn't how Christian giving worked. People forget that in the days when there were clergy everywhere, clergy were funded by endowments and tithes. These had long since disappeared. Funding was now by voluntary giving. So the saying in this context of "You must cut your coat according to your cloth" is quite wrong. We needed to spend to make Christian mission happen.

Pete Gunstone (Inner Bradford deanery)

He thanked the diocesan staff and Archdeacon Andy Jolley for the presentation. He said the question of discipleship was the first thing that came to mind. Looking at the parish share ask for this year of just over £13m, if the total electoral roll supposed at mid-30,000s to be accurate, that would be £440 per member of the electoral roll. He wondered if the state of the parish share was indicative of the church's state of discipleship. As Archdeacon Paul Ayers had stated, in the past, we rested on the laurels of systems and endowments. However, we are called to be a community of disciples today. From the beginning of Fountains church [Bradford], we have been encouraged to preach about discipleship, including stewardship of money. They had been doing this because they knew they had a big budget to fund themselves in just over two years' time. Therefore, there was a pressing concern on them to do that. Therefore, there were two things: discipleship and the second is culture. He wondered if there were questions for the House of Clergy to consider about what culture they are espousing and what discipling they are doing.

Canon Ann Nicholl (Allerton deanery)

Said two words had come to her during the debate, "education" and "action". She believed that the deaneries and members of deaneries, parishes and benefices needed to have more understanding of what was expected of them. She hoped that the current debate would encourage action to help people like her to understand what is expected and how she and others could put it in to action.

Deirdre Morris (Wakefield deanery)

Agreed that people do need to understand. During Generosity Week, the treasurer at her parish had spoken at a service. It was her idea though to put an edited version of the presentation in the parish magazine so that those who were not at the service could read it. She urged the Synod members to use their parish magazines to explain what the financial needs were and why the

parishioners were being asked for the money.

Reply to the debate.

AJ he had said that a Budget should drive people to prayer and to action. The key thing before that is clearly communication of the financial position. He welcomed all the suggestions about how communication could be done better. He was grateful to the diocesan staff who made themselves available to attend deanery synods and encouraged those responsible for deanery synod agendas to pick this up. He particularly mentioned the Stewardship team. Discipleship was a key part in understanding the budget and the governance of the diocese's money.

GP spoke about the parish share scheme review. The process to review the parish share scheme had begun in the autumn of 2019. This was stalled in the Spring of 2020 when the focus for parishes shifted to how to maintain ministry and to paying something towards parish share during the year.

As small group had now begun to resume the review. The timetable would be for a recommendation to be brought to the Synod during 2022 to be in place for requests for 2023. With regard to the points raised about the caps and how this distorted the system was a fair point. The parish share request circulated in 2021 would refer to a "base line" parish share. This was what would be asked without the adjustments.

The review group was aware of the distortions around true costs inherent within the current system and would like to make some changes. However any radical change, such as removing the caps, would be for discussion and debate at the Synod. More would be done to share the information with deaneries. There was a role for deaneries to play within share as a whole. Many parishes know better than the Finance team as to what their neighbour is able to achieve. So maybe there was a role for deaneries to play in may be allocating even what a fair share would be? These were the sort of questions the review group were looking at and hoped to bring recommendation to the Synod in 2022.

**The Ven Andy Jolley moved the motion:**

*"That the Diocesan Synod authorise (or direct) the diocesan board of finance to raise and expend a sum not exceeding £21,363,040 for the calendar year 2022".*

**Voting**

Synod voted on the motion:

For: Majority

Against: 0

Abstain: 1

The Synod approved the motion.

**9. Motion: Ratification of Leeds Board nominees**

Motion: *"That this Synod ratifies the appointment of the Leeds Board nominee trustees whose details are contained in DS21 10 03"*

Proposer: The Rt Revd Dr Helen-Ann Hartley

Bishop Helen-Ann Hartley (+HA) gave an introduction to the motion. The Leeds Board could nominate up to five trustees to serve a term of three years. The term for the current lay nominees expired on 13 October 2021. The Leeds Board nominated three lay trustees at its September meeting and those nominations require ratification by the Synod. The three Board nominees are Mrs Marilyn Banister, Canon Mrs Jane Evans and Canon Mr Irving Warnett. These are all content to continue as Board trustees. The Board will be looking to fill the fourth lay nominee trustee place, now the elections to the Board have run their course and it is able to identify any skill gaps. The Revd Canon Kathryn Fitzsimons is also a nominee of the Board but her appointment runs to March 2022. Synod members had been circulated with DS21 10 03 which contained the statements of the three nominee trustees. +HA read out the motion: *“That this Synod ratifies the appointment of the Leeds Board nominee trustees whose details are contained in DS21 10 03.*

#### **Debate of the motion.**

No members wished to debate the motion.

The Rt Revd Dr Helen-Ann Hartley moved the motion in her name.

#### **Voting on the motion**

For: All.

Against: 0

Abstain: 0

The motion was approved.

### **8. Questions to Synod**

Questions had been received from Graham Foster (Halifax and Calder Valley deanery) and from Dr John Beal (Whitkirk deanery). The questions and replies had been circulated to the Synod members.

#### **Graham Foster asked a supplemental question for his first question.**

He said he understood that to report to Synod at this point may be prejudicial to the case but he noted and hoped that when the legal cases were settled a report would be made.

He said his supplemental question was framed in the background that he was a member of the former Wakefield diocese since 1987. Mrs Box was a seemingly respectable pillar of the diocese. In his opinion, we went wrong by having the Registrar and the independent legal advisers as the same person of the practice. This was still the case in the Leeds diocese on many matters. Under best practice he said surely these two should surely be separate roles, so that the Registrar can independently sense check the work and advice of any separate legal advisers used by us as a diocese. Has this been considered or should it be considered?

Jonathan Wood, Secretary to the Synod, (JW) replied to the question.

He checked that he understood the question was “Should the diocese use the same legal firm for legal matters as that of the Registrar?”

What the diocese of Leeds does is not different to many other dioceses and there’s no bar in doing this. It was worth noting that while the diocese does use Lupton Fawcett for a number of the diocese’s legal matters they’re not the only legal advisers the diocese use. The diocese don’t

have an exclusive contract with Lupton Fawcett, the diocese does use other firms for other matters. He couldn't comment on how the former diocese of Wakefield had worked but he was able to say the way the diocese of Leeds conveyancing and governance works, the Registrar isn't in control of any of those things. The diocese might sometimes use its relationship with the Registrar to make sure things are happening eg where there are performance concerns about individual cases. So the Registrar wasn't in control of these transactions, though he may provide advice. The diocesan governance systems ensured that via its accounting systems proceeds are tracked. The diocese actively looks at which legal firms are used for which issues and JW continues to keep a watching brief on this for the Leeds DBF. It was also to be noted that Linda Box had made herself the sole signatory for a number of matters. In the Diocese of Leeds, there were processes for approving and signing of property matters. The Property Committee had sight of purchases and sales and there were delegated processes to a delegated group by the Property Committee. A signings register for transactions was produced to each Leeds Board meeting. So there are various groups and processes involved in transactions.

**Graham Foster asked a supplemental question to his Second question**

He said his original question also applied to the auditors/examiners of the former Wakefield diocese and associated trust funds. Have their actions been examined and if found failing are their professional indemnity insurers on notice or are they the same auditors/examiners as Dixon, Coles and Gill?

Peter Foskett, legal adviser to the Synod replied to the question.

The short answer was yes the responsibility of the auditors of Wakefield Diocesan Board of Finance has been considered. No separate proceedings as yet have been raised because there is an issue of firstly duty of care and secondly identifying the issues that arise from the accounts. The proceedings as indicated in the Question arose is in relation to the insurers of Dixon, Coles and Gill and the competencies arising therefrom. So currently, no formal proceedings have been considered but the legal teams who are dealing with the matter and the two Silks who are involved have actively considered it.

Graham Foster asked if he could confirm if they were separate firms as he had asked?

Peter Foskett said they were separate firms. He outlined again his reply.

The question was had it been considered – the answer was yes it has been considered by the Silks who are instructed by the Board of Finance. The QCs are engaged both on behalf of the Board of Finance and by the Bishop of Leeds as he has also suffered loss in his corporate capacity. The Silks legal advice at present is that there is no significant course of action which could be levied but it is under active consideration. The second supplemental issue was are they the same firm. The answer is no they are not, they are two separate firms. The proceedings which have been issued relate to the auditors of Dixon, Coles and Gill, the argument being that if the insurers have to end up paying liabilities, they seek indemnity from that firm in relation to those liabilities and this is the formal process that has been issued currently.

The third question was from Dr John Beal who was joining the Synod via the YouTube feed so was unable to ask a supplemental question.

No other member wished to raise a supplemental question.

Chair: The Revd Rachel Firth, Chair of the House of Clergy

## 10. Presentation and Discussion: Saving Creation - Carbon Net Zero Strategy

The Rt Revd Paul Slater, Bishop of Kirkstall, introduced this item as Chair of the Diocesan Environment Group. During his time as Chair, he had seen environmental issues become mainstream and the brief of the Diocesan Environment group's brief change to implementation rather than advocacy. He reminded Synod that it had approved a motion in March 2019 for the diocese to be carbon net zero by 2050. General Synod then approved a motion for carbon net zero by 2030, which whilst ambitious was a marker of how serious the situation is.

Jemima Parker, Diocesan Environment Officer (JP) introduced a video of an interview with Professor Piers Forster, Director of the International Centre for Climate Change at Leeds University, co-author of the IPCC, the inter-governmental panel on climate change and their reports over many years and he received a Nobel Prize for his work and a member of the UK committee on climate change, the independent body which advises the Government on climate change.

Members then broke in to small groups to discuss the following questions:

- a. *What is your reflection on what you have heard?*
- b. *How is the changing climate already having an impact in your parish?*
- c. *Who will be impacted most by the impacts of climate change?*

Members then watched a second video "Saving Creation: Six Steps to Carbon Net Zero".

Jemima Parker introduced the Six Steps to Carbon Net Zero resource for parishes. It was intended as a simple pathway to help every parish to start on the journey to carbon net zero. Putting in place a carbon net zero plan will require some upskilling. JP would be running a webinar on the Toolkit and details of this were on the diocesan learning platform. The Toolkit included a template plan that is intended as a starting point. JP suggested parishes would want to establish a team to embed this throughout the life of the church. Over a 150 parishes now have a parish environment officer and 25 of these had undertaken the Salvation Creation lay training course. Further courses were already oversubscribed. There were volunteer area environment champions in the episcopal areas to support parishes. The Diocesan Environment Group had also been reformed as a group of advisers who could assist with Carbon Net Zero and other environmental matters. Alongside this was the DAC team who could advise on technical building matters. There were some vacancies in the Diocesan Environment group team and JP encouraged Synod members to come forward if they had the skills or encourage others to do so.

From the data, it was clear that the greatest challenge for the churches was the emissions from gas and oil heating, with the largest buildings having the highest emissions. For most parishes there was time to plan as we move towards the 2030 deadline. In the meantime, every church could switch to a 100% carbon neutral electricity tariff and carbon offset gas tariff as offered by Green Journey the diocesan energy procurement package, provided by Green Energy Consulting. Some churches which had electric heating and were on a renewable electricity tariff were already nearly carbon net zero.

Jack Bacon (Communications Officer) outlined for the Synod how the Toolkit worked. The Toolkit

could be found on the diocesan website. It was designed as a digital document. It included an introduction by the Bishop of Leeds, a theological explanation of the work through the framework of Loving, Living & Learning, an explanation of what the scope of the work. Alongside these were the Six Steps to Carbon Net Zero:

- i) Measure and Monitor
- ii) Plan and Prepare
- iii) Essential energy actions
- iv) Essential travel actions
- v) Carbon offsetting
- vi) Stepping Out and Up.

Each section has links to resources to assist in achieving the goal of the section. There was also a resources hub page at the back of the Toolkit where all the links are grouped together along with information about the diocesan team. The diocese is putting together a resource of case studies from the diocesan churches on their Carbon Net Zero journeys. The first volume of this is also available on the website. Synod members were encouraged to get in touch if their parish wished to be included in the next volumes of case studies.

Synod broke in to small groups to discuss the following questions:

- a. *How would you use the Six Steps to Carbon Net Zero Church Toolkit in your parish?*
- b. *What would be the additional benefits of becoming a carbon neutral church?*
- c. *What two actions will you take away from this Synod?*

#### Plenary discussion

Synod members fed back to the plenary session with comments/questions from their small groups.

#### Mike Moss (Aire & Worth deanery)

Said he would love to see joined up thinking across the diocese and across the diocesan committees on matters like this. He had given the example that his parish was trying to replace roofs over their church hall and it was suggested that they should have solar panels as part of this. If they had just replaced the roofs, it could have been given approval via an archdeacon's permission. However, the addition of solar panels meant that the decision had to go to the DAC. It was looking as if it would be at least a 6 month process. He wrote to the Chancellor and had the approval in a week.

JP responded, that she sits on the National Environmental Working group of the Church of England and as part of the work they are doing, the Dean of Arches is looking at reviewing the regulations so that all of these things will line up better.

#### The Ven Dr Anne Dawtry (Archdeacon of Halifax)

She said she was a member of the Rules Committee for the Church of England that has met recently to look at amending the rules to make it simpler for parishes to achieve their environmental goals. She also said it was important to get young people involved.

#### Graham Foster (Halifax and Calder Valley deanery)

He said he worships in a church, which was freezing cold. His parish had raised money and the diocese had given a grant towards fitting heated seats in the pews that was a low cost efficient

system. However, the fitting had stalled because the installation needs a faculty. The faculty system needs to catch up with the environmental work.

The Revd Chris Lawton (Wensley deanery)

Is there a tool available to measure carbon offsetting to enable parishes to calculate how much carbon-offsetting churchyard trees provide or how many trees they would need to plant to offset current carbon emissions each year?

JP responded that the answer was not yet. The National environmental working group was looking in to this and are aware that carbon offsetting was an important piece of the jigsaw, though it is particularly difficult to measure at the moment. The key thing with carbon offsetting was that it needed to be “additionality” ie add to what was already there.

Jen Read (Headingley Deanery)

With regard to heating, which was the main user of carbon and energy in churches, parishes needed to be proactive in planning for replacement of heating systems well in advance of the system failing and take the opportunity before the system failed to plan for what alternatives were available and setting aside monies for them.

The Revd David Gerrard (Wakefield deanery)

Many parishes have buildings, which are the hardest to make carbon neutral, and are struggling financially. How do we support will there be for those parishes which are very willing but feel the steps are completely unmanageable?

JP responded that the situation was very challenging particularly with regard to funding. The diocese has a fund with grants available up to £5k for church building improvements. In addition, there was a loan scheme. It should be noted that some schemes eg an LED lighting scheme would pay for itself very quickly. This is being thought about nationally and in the diocese. The Church can also learn from what other bodies who look after larger buildings are doing.

The Revd Peter Gunstone (Inner Bradford deanery)

With regard to Step 3 Essential Energy actions, reduce your church energy use as much as possible. What if that is to abandon the building? Today he let go an old car he had driven for many miles and he felt emotionally attached to it but he was letting go of it because it wasn't fit for the future. What if our buildings are constraining our imagination about being a Christa presence in every community?

The Revd Eve Ridgeway (Headingley deanery)

Asked what was the relationship between what was being asked of local churches, buildings and communities and our personal response to being carbon neutral? For example the relationship with wider campaigning and influencing of culture and society through our congregation members. This could be empowering them to know who to write to and influence in their workplaces, schools and community links. There was free training on the St George's website about campaigning in different ways and about prayer and protest. She advised it was not necessary to have achieved getting our own house in order environmentally before engaging with Society on the issue. She asked if resources which are already available be included in the Toolkit to empower people to make a difference during the week and in their local communities.

JP responded. The six steps Toolkit was designed as a church toolkit as part of our integrity and act of holiness. However she agreed that not all of that needed to be in place before we can go out into the World and speak for justice. On the diocesan webpage there were also lifestyle tips and information looking at global issues and environmental campaigning.

The Chair asked JP how the communication from the Diocesan Synod to the deaneries and parishes would work. JP confirmed she was very happy to speak at deanery synods.

The Revd Jon Swales closed the item with prayer.

## **11 Report: General Synod Report**

A report from The Revd Canon Kathryn Fitzsimons had been circulated. Kathryn couldn't be at the Synod due to a family bereavement.

There were no questions on the report.

## **12 Diocesan Strategy Implementation update**

JW spoke to this item. The Strategy had been approved by the Synod in 2019. It contained five goals: Thriving as a Distinctive Diocese, Re-imagining ministry, Nurturing Lay Discipleship, Building Leadership Pipelines and Growing Young People as Christians.

The Strategy was supported by a Toolkit for parishes to use. This was launched immediately before the Pandemic, so progress on working with the Toolkit in parishes had been hampered. As the diocese emerges from the pandemic, there is an opportunity to re-engage with the Strategy.

The work of the diocesan teams had been reviewed in relation to the Strategy so that all work was now mapped to the Strategy. There was a diocesan business plan mapped to the Strategy and this tracked progress towards achieving the Strategy goals set by the Synod.

To assess whether the diocesan teams were making a difference towards reaching the Strategy goals, an annual survey had been introduced. This was run for the first time from March to May 2021. There were 143 responses, representing 225 churches. This was a response rate of c.30%, which gave an indication of the engagement with the Strategy.

Some responses have been of particular interest. A survey question: "Our roles would be harder without the help of the diocese", had resulted in 34% agreeing with this statement. However, 39% of people weren't sure. 59% of PCCs felt overburdened by the diocese's expectations. 80% of respondents felt they are able to do new things, which was a promising. However, the responses concerning the diocesan support for parishes needed to be reviewed.

Breaking down the responses to where the parishes felt the diocese was assisting most, showed that with regard to buildings, parishes felt there was a good offer of support. 12% said they were getting support with help with engaging with young people. The Church House team would be reviewing this as one of the five Strategy Goals was Growing Young People as Christians.

The next survey would be circulated in November 2022. The Church House team would be assessing the responses for changes and to ensure that the work of the diocesan team was focused

on the right areas.

Questions

An unnamed Synod member and also The Revd Chris Lawton (Wensley deanery)  
Asked for the report/slides from the presentation.

JW said he would need to look at the best way to present the information to not overburden parishes and would circulate this.

**13 Bishop of Leeds Blessing and Close.**

The Bishop of Leeds closed the Synod with a blessing.

Signed:.....

Date: .....

**Diocese of Leeds****Twentieth Diocesan Synod, Saturday 16 October 2021****Presidential Address**

Let me start with a warning. When we were clearing out the Bishop's House in Bradford whilst moving to Hollin House in Leeds, we came across two hidden file boxes marked simply '1936'. I know I should have been humping boxes around with everyone else, but curiosity got the better of me. In the first box was a pile of typed and hand-annotated presidential addresses by the then Bishop of Bradford, Dr Alfred Blunt, to what we would now call his diocesan synod. Among them was the one dated 1 December 1936 in which he thought he was urging the new king, Edward VIII, to go to church more often and recognise his need of the grace of God. A single - rather oblique aside - led to the abdication crisis which ended ten days later.

In other words, be very careful what you say here! (Incidentally, the second box contained the correspondence the bishop received from around the world - mostly negative - which proves that green-ink letters and social media nastiness are nothing new. The best letter is beautifully written and from a QC in Gray's Inn in London; it begins: "Your Grace, you worm..." ... and doesn't get better.)

A new synod - like a new anything - brings an opportunity to look afresh at matters that have become familiar to the usual suspects. As I often say to a congregation when licensing a new parish priest, there is little point bringing in someone new if all you want them to do is to repeat what has been done before. The gift of newness is the opportunity to look differently, to see through a different lens, to re-calibrate our perception of reality, to check on the direction of travel.

So, this new synod is not here to flog once-dead horses or to keep dancing to the same old tune, but, rather, to shine fresh light on old and current themes in order to keep us on the right track, reminding us of our core vocation as the Church of England in West Yorkshire, parts of North Yorkshire, a bite of South Yorkshire, a slice of Lancashire and a morsel of County Durham.

The purpose of a synod is given a clue in the title: it brings together the bishop, clergy and laity in council where the bishop can take counsel. This involves considering legislation for the national church, debating and agreeing the shape and priorities of this diocese, discussing and knocking around issues of the day - in church, society and the wider world. It is not a locus for mere grandstanding or waging battles. It is not a forum for trying to put others down, but, in humility, genuinely trying to seek the mind of Christ together.

Now, I haven't begun this address in this way because I think controversy is a bad thing or because I fear the next few years on this synod. In fact, the opposite is the case. My experience since our second diocesan synod in 2015 has been almost entirely enjoyable, even if the agenda in the first five years was dominated by the nuts and bolts of creating a new diocese and getting it up and running. You will recognise how we went from a simple vision statement ("to be a vibrant diocese, equipping confident clergy to enable confident Christians to live and tell the good news of Jesus Christ in our region") to a simple dynamic ("confident Christians - growing churches - transforming communities") exercised through our values ("Loving - Living - Learning") and shaping our Strategy (which is under regular review). It has been a long journey, but the hard work and commitment of clergy and laity alike has given us a strong foundation for future mission and ministry. The role of this synod is to help us think, calibrate our commitments, check our priorities and shape our mission according to the resources we have.

Now, this might be a good time to make reference to some of the noise around the country, not least on social media. Is the parish in danger and is there a centralising plot to evangelicalise the Church of England into a plethora of free-standing and independent congregations? Do we need to 'save the parish'?

No. The parish is not in danger.

I have been explicitly clear in this diocese that the Church of England has (what I call) “a unique vocation” to England - rooted in missional and legal obligation to territory. If we don’t do it, nobody else will. We are not giving up that responsibility that emerges from the parish system. This is why we insist that all new clergy do LYCiG training. The way parishes are shaped or organised might always change according to opportunity and available resources; but, the parish is essential. What about SDF and resources churches? In this diocese they are working strategically through parishes.

This is important. The church - as is true of every institution and every community in the country - currently faces huge challenges. It is still too early to identify the true cost and impact of the Covid pandemic. Some churches might not survive into the future; the Parish Share might not be sufficient to pay for all the clergy we would like; we just don’t know yet and the picture is not clear. However, building on current surveys and the baseline studies done in the first years of the diocese’s existence, we are now trying to build a picture that gives some indication of the direction of travel for the next few years.

(As an aside, let me address quickly the rumours about planned church closures around the country. There is a massive difference between a forecast that “350 churches might close” and “there is a plan to close 350 churches” in England. I rest my case.)

However, as the budget item later on the agenda makes clear: the money can’t go out if it doesn’t come in. We have to be responsible stewards of the resources available to us. But, we are confident that a responsible strategy for (a) getting clarity of data, (b) setting priorities for the next couple of years, and (c) looking at potential as well as the status quo, will set us on a course we can sustain with confidence and commitment.

This is a course of action that is being replicated across England. At a national level I chaired a Governance Review which reported in September, will be presented to the new General Synod in November and will be debated next February. If the Synod doesn’t like our recommendations, it will have to identify alternatives that are better and will, subject to Parliament and Charity Law, better address the problem of duplication and expensive complexity that no one has said isn’t a problem. Governance is vital, but reform is pointless unless we have paid attention to the fundamental questions of vision, strategy, legislative simplification and evaluation of effectiveness. So, although the governance work was commissioned before the pandemic, the other work began in the context of and in the wake of likely pandemic impact. The aim is to simplify and clarify national structures, enhance accountability, and identify ways in which the national church might better resource parishes and dioceses.

The other element being looked at has particular resonance in this diocese. The Dioceses Commission has invited bishops thinking about possible ‘mergers’ with other dioceses to have a conversation with the Commission. This is hardly a strategic approach. To be clear (and I have repeatedly tried and failed to make this clear in the House of Bishops): in the eleven years since the Scheme was launched that led to the creation of the Diocese of Leeds there has been just one roundtable meeting of all the bodies involved in it - and this took place on 22 November 2017 in London ... at my instigation. There has been one ‘review’ ... and that was a quick data-led review (nothing about process or people) commissioned by me in 2020. Nothing has been instigated by the Dioceses Commission or the archbishops. Consequently, there has been and continues to be no learning nationally as a very unstrategic process of considering possible diocesan reorganisations apparently begins. I cannot conceal my frustration at this; but, I will say no more at this point.

Suffice it to say that you - this synod - have had the courage to walk an untrodden path, create a new diocese without any template to work to, and have pressed on in the absence of any national curiosity or learning - and you should be hugely proud of what has been achieved in the last seven years. We are a resilient diocese and will continue to face the current and future challenges with that same faith, courage and costly determination.

So, today we set all this in the context of the planet's urgent crisis. Theologically, we can say that "saving creation" is God's remit; but, we are the body of Christ, human beings and communities made in the image of God, co-creators and partners, in the power of the Holy Spirit, taking our responsibility for saving what God has given to us as stewards. For many people - particularly younger people - the climate crisis is the priority of all priorities, reducing other matters to a low level of interest or engagement. There is a certain clarity to the position put to me recently by a teenager: "If there isn't a planet to live on, there won't be a church to worry about."

We need, therefore, to keep a sense of perspective in all that we discuss today in this synod. What is our primary calling from God as a church? These questions never offer a binary choice - creation and climate OR the parish share. We have to look at it all, but keep the perspective clear ... and as simple as possible. Or let me put the question differently: How are the people and churches in the parishes and institutions of the Diocese of Leeds going to be Good News in the years ahead as we emerge through and from the pandemic into a new - and as yet undefined - future? For that is our calling and that, brothers and sisters, is our joy.

For two of our number this will be their last synod in this diocese. Anne Dawtry served as Archdeacon of Halifax in the historic Diocese of Wakefield and worked hard - strategically and on the ground - to help shape the structure and culture of the Diocese of Leeds. We owe her a great debt as she retires back to her native Lancashire at the end of this month. Anne, you go with our love and gratitude - and our prayer that you will enjoy a long, happy, healthy and hopeful retirement.

Bishop Paul Slater has served his entire ordained ministry in the Diocese of Bradford and then Leeds. Paul was the Archdeacon of Craven when the Scheme was laid down and his job was the only one to be named for redundancy (apart from the diocesan bishops, of course). Paul served with selfless commitment despite the potential personal cost and was integral to seeing the Scheme through to reality. This involved him straddling two dioceses as the Archdeacon of Craven and the Archdeacon of Richmond until the roles were combined in the new diocese. In 2015 I asked him to become the Bishop of Richmond (subsequently Kirkstall) in order to shape the Leeds Episcopal Area and deputise for me when necessary in the diocese. He has done this with faithfulness, wisdom and vision - like Anne Dawtry, often against the odds and at personal cost. Paul will retire at the end of January and the process has begun to seek a future appointment.

Both Paul and Anne retire with our heartfelt gratitude. May God bless you both in all that lies ahead, and may you never doubt the value of all you have done here and among us.

So, to business. I offer you the best invitation in the Bible to someone - Bartimaeus - who was being invited and challenged to take responsibility for the future in the company of and in response to the offer of Jesus: "Take heart. Get up. He is calling you."

The Rt Revd Nicholas Baines  
Bishop of Leeds  
16 October 2021

## Diocesan Synod 16 October 2021 – Item 8 Questions to Synod

### Question 1 of 2 received from Graham Foster (Halifax and Calder Valley deanery)

“To the Chair of the Leeds Diocesan Board of Finance

Further to the Church Times report on 3/9/2021 "Leeds in doubt about retrieving stolen money" regarding " money stolen from the diocese by the imprisoned Linda Box", please can you advise when it is appropriate for a report to be made to Synod on the sums lost by the Diocese and associated Trusts, the recovery of the same, the costs incurred in legal actions, the lessons learned and new procedures put in place to stop this ever happening again.”

From The Rt Revd Nick Baines, Chair of the Leeds Diocesan Board of Finance

The claims of the Diocesan Board of Finance (“The DBF”) and of the Bishop of Leeds (“the Bishop”) arise from acts of dishonesty by Linda Box whilst acting for the Wakefield Diocesan Board of Finance and for the Bishop of Wakefield. The dissolution of this diocese and of the See of Wakefield and the creation of the Diocese of Leeds has already removed the opportunities which were exploited by Box and which consequentially enabled her to undertake her fraud over a number of years. The Diocesan Board of Finance has clear processes in place to ensure all money is accounted for and all transactions are subject to confirmation of funds being received into DBF accounts. These processes have been subject to scrutiny under two separate sets of auditors and there has been no weakness found.

The DBF and the Bishop had been successful at first instance in arguing that the innocent partners were responsible for all acts of their fraudulent partner whenever they occurred. There were two appeals which arose from this first hearing. The first appeal decided new law which limited any claims against the innocent partners to a limitation period of six years. It is the consequence of this limitation on claims which is reported in the headline quoted in the question

A second appeal has now also been heard by the Court of Appeal and concerned the aggregation of the various claims arising from Box’s dishonesty. The insurers argued that this principle confined their liability to a maximum sum of £2million whatever the level of the claims. This second appeal was dismissed with costs but this is now subject to a further application by the Insurers to the Supreme Court for permission to Appeal.

This application has yet to be determined. In resisting this appeal the DBF and the Bishop of are supported by other charities as well as the Solicitors Regulation Authority.

Whilst the matter is under consideration by the Supreme Court it would be improper to provide additional comment at this stage.

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**Question 2 of 2 received from Graham Foster (Halifax and Calder Valley deanery)**

“To the Chair of the Leeds Diocesan Board of Finance

*[With reference to the Question 1 above]*

Whether any non-recoverable monies/legal costs are recoverable from the Auditors/Examiners who didn't spot the missing funds for many years.”

From The Rt Revd Nick Baines, Chair of the Leeds Diocesan Board of Finance

The role of the “Auditors/examiners” of the former firm of Dixon Coles and Gill (“DCG”) has been considered. It is understood that the Insurers for DCG have issued proceedings alleging negligence and seeking indemnity for liabilities which may be incurred to third parties such as the DBF and the Bishop of Leeds. Neither the DBF nor the Bishop are currently parties in these proceedings.

**Question received from Dr John Beal (Whitkirk deanery)**

“To the Bishop of Leeds

During the quinquennium 2010 to 2015 I was a member of General Synod and voted for the establishment of the new diocese. The understanding at General Synod was that the previous number of Bishops and Archdeacons would remain the same as the total across the three dioceses merging. At a time when the number of parish priest posts in the Church of England has been reducing would the Bishop of Leeds explain why, after a short period of time, the number of Bishops in this diocese was increased from five to six.”

From The Bishop of Leeds

Before the creation of the Diocese of Leeds there were three diocesan bishops, two suffragan bishops and six archdeacons across the three former dioceses. The Dioceses of Bradford, Ripon and Leeds and Wakefield Reorganisation Scheme 2013 dissolved the bishoprics of the three dioceses and created a new diocesan bishopric and the Diocese of Leeds. The Scheme also abolished the archdeaconry of Craven. The new structure was for one diocesan bishop, five area bishops (with the diocesan bishop also being the Leeds episcopal area bishop) and five archdeacons. Therefore, the total number of bishops and archdeacons together has not changed.

However, it became clear once the new diocese was in place, that it was not sustainable or workable for the diocesan bishop to also shape and run the Leeds Episcopal Area. The complexities and demands required two separate posts. Accordingly, a petition was made for the restoration of the see of Richmond so that this See could be held by the Leeds area bishop. This was granted and the see later renamed the suffragan See of Kirkstall. Any episcopal vacancy is looked at and the Archbishops and the Dioceses Commission have to agree that a bishop be appointed.