

Diocesan Synod

Minutes

Meeting on: Saturday 3 February 2024

Time: 9.45pm

Location: All Saints’ Academy, Blaisdon Way, Cheltenham, GL51 0WH

|  | **Item** | **Action** |
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| 1. | **Refreshments** |  |
|  | Members were invited to join the meeting starting with refreshments. |  |
| 2. | **Worship and Presidential Address.** |  |
|  | Bishop Rachel led worship. The first Reading was read by Graham Collins, Cirencester Deanery, and the second Reading was read by Jane Borgeuad, Diocesan Director of Education.  Bishop Rachel gave her Presidential Address to members (Attached with the circulation of the minutes) |  |
| 3. | **Welcome and Apologies** |  |
|  | Bishop Rachel noted 19 apologies had been received. She welcomed Jane Borgeuad to her first Diocesan Synod meeting. She also bid Archdeacon Phil a good Sabbatical, which he would embark on following the meeting. |  |
| 4. | **Notices and questions** |  |
|  | None were noted. |  |
| 5. | **Minutes of the previous meeting** |  |
|  | One amendment to the location relating to Geoff Addlington in the previous minutes, which should have read Tewkesbury and Winchcombe Deanery.  The minutes of the previous meeting held on 18 November 2023 were proposed by Chris Hill (Severn Vale Deanery) and seconded by Revd Sue Murray (Stroud Deanery) The minutes were approved *nem con.* | **Approved**: minutes of the Synod meeting held on 18 November 2023. |
| 6. | **Matters arising** |  |
|  | Revd Canon Katrina Scott (North Cotswolds Deanery) shared with members how, following on from the question presented by Stroud Deanery to Synod, she has since met with members of that Deanery and has formulated a question to be presented to General Synod. |  |
| 7. | **Election for trustee of the GDBE/CIO** |  |
|  | Bishop Robert introduced the item and Jane Borgeaud, the new Director of Education.  He introduced the paper DS24-27a and 27b, inviting members to vote for Rachel Howie to become a trustee for the DBE.  Bishop Rachel asked if there were any questions. None were noted. She asked for a show of hands.  The item was agreed *nem con.* | **Agreed:** Members Agreed to invite Rachel Howie to be trustee for the DBE (DS24-27a) (DS24-27b) |
| 7. | **Safeguarding** |  |
|  | Bishop Rachel introduced Canon Judith Knight, Director of Safeguarding and People and Debbie Innes-Turnill, Chair of the Safeguarding Advisory Panel (SAP), thanking them for all their hard work, and especially for the work undertaken to support the INEQE Audit taking place.  Debbie Innes-Turnill introduced the item. She shared how she wanted to talk about some of her reflections and thinking, referencing what Bishop Rachel had mentioned in her presidential address, keeping the ‘why’ and the vision in focus.  Debbie shared how the Safeguarding Advisory Panel (SAP) look at the number of increases in requests for advice coming into the Safeguarding Team and the wider context around that. How it might relate to the cost-of-living crisis and the pressures people find themselves in, but also the raised awareness among people about safeguarding, which is a postive.  She shared how she has reviewed the training provided in the diocese and how excellent it is, encouraging members and those within their parishes/benefices to take part in the training provided.  Debbie also highlighted the challenge of recruiting Parish Safeguarding Officers, but emphasised the vital role they play and encouraged people to come forward, being confident that the Safeguarding Team will do all they can to support them in the role.  Debbie thanked the Safeguarding Team for their diligence and hard work over the last year. She shared how the INEQE audit team have a gap in understanding how the Church of England operates and how a lot of the work Judith and her team have been doing has had to conform to their style of reporting, with the whole experience more of an inspection rather than an audit.  She expressed that she will be feeding back her views to the national Church.  Debbie shared concerns she and other colleagues have regarding the demise of the national Independent Safeguarding Board and the process that follows.  She noted that Alexis Jay has been appointed to develop a model of fully independent safeguarding within the C of E – one of the main recommendations of IICSA. We now await the report which should be released very soon.  Debbie ended by thanking all the Diocesan Safeguarding Team for the work they do and asked for any questions.  Bishop Rachel thanked Debbie for her update. She explained that Bishop Robert had taken up a new lead role around safeguarding nationally, which he would share shortly with the members. She asked for any questions.  Revd Richard Coombes (Cheltenham Deanery) asked Debbie what it is that ‘keeps her up at night’ and where we, as a diocese, are most vulnerable.  Revd Andrew Blyth (Cheltenham Deanery) asked what we are trying to do to support survivors and victims.  Debbie responded to Richard’s question first. She described how even if Safeguarding was as good as it could possibly be, it doesn’t mean that someone won’t come to harm, and how although we can try and be the best, we may not stop everyone coming to harm.  Judith Knight added in response to that question that how we filter down national polices and processes to local worshipping communities is so key and doing that well is vital.  In response to Andrew’s question, Judith shared that there is lots of support locally with a range of people being supported individually. She highlighted the importance of training and Responding Well.  Debbie added that she would also be cautious of grouping victims/survivors together and how they are all individuals and that is how they are treated here.  Revd Richard Thomson (Wotton Deanery) commented how hard it is to find a Safeguarding Officer, especially across a small group of rural parishes, and the one they do have, doesn’t want to continue with the worry of legalities and feels overwhelmed with the number of emails received from central services. He asked if it would be possible to have a ‘benefice safeguarding officer’.  Judith Knight confirmed with Richard that you can have a benefice officer, and there are already some across the diocese.  Geoff Adlington (Tewkesbury and Winchcombe Deanery) asked if the diocese have any links with ‘Nightstop’ and concerns he has about people offering their homes, not having the necessary training.  Revd Nick Bromfield (Cheltenham Deanery) asked if they could share the reason why some of the independent safeguarding team were sacked last summer.  In response to Geoff’s question, Judith shared how she was not aware of the process involved for ‘Nightstop’ and how we don’t have any links with the organisation, but felt it would be good to have some join up with them.  Bishop Rachel added that Nightstop is an organisation she has a ‘loose’ connection with but are clear where the boundaries are. She directed Geoff to look at their website for more detailed information about the process.  Responding to Nick’s question, Judith and Bishop Rachel described it as a very poor process with lack of communication. The complaint procedure around this is to be investigated.  Lynda Remmer (Tewkesbury & Winchcombe Deanery) commented about the evidence the INEQE audit had requested and the areas our diocese were unable to accommodate.  Margaret Sheather (Stroud Deanery) commented how the National Safeguarding Board had functioned well under Maggie Atkinson, who was the original Chair.  Bishop Rachel thanked Margaret for her comment and for being a voice of reason.  Judith responded to Lynda’s question. She shared that the contract for the audit is a company called INEQE and how our diocese is the second of their audits, but how it seems they don’t understand the Church and how it works.  She described how everyone is coming together, how as much information as possible is being captured, and how 200+ documents had been uploaded for them to review.  She also shared how grateful we are for the 400+ responses we had to the INEQE questionnaire and survey.  Bishop Rachel shared that July will be Judith’s last Synod, as she is retiring from the diocese to focus on her own business.  She again thanked Judith, Debbie, and all the Team for what they do and invited Bishop Robert to share with members details of his new role.  Bishop Robert explained how most bishops tend to take on an oversight of an area nationally and that he has been invited to take on the role as Deputy Lead on Safeguarding.  He described wanting to improve the understanding of what the thoughts are nationally of what goes on locally and hopes to enable conversation and policy that lands well and is helpful in the local context. | **Received:** Members received the Annual Safeguarding Update (DS24-28) |
| 9. | **Environment** |  |
|  | Carole O’Donnell (Chair of the House of Laity) welcomed Bishop Robert and Revd Cate Williams to introduce the item on the Environment.  Bishop Robert welcomed Cate to Synod and described the environment as a first order issue which we as Christians have made a commitment to, and how Cate was going to share some of the progress on that.  Cate began her presentation reminding members that we do this work as Christians, with the care of creation at the forefront.  She described how we are currently in the process of recruiting a Net Zero Officer, with a focus on clergy housing. This has been partly funded by the national Church as a regional approach, working with Hereford and Worcester.  Cate moved on to describe the ‘Routemap’ baseline principles and the importance of asking everyone to do the smaller things, like lighting, heating plan etc and that the Routemap plans to identify the highest energy users and focus on decarbonising them.  Cate then highlighted some of the milestones and priorities that have been identified and then moved on to funding.  She appreciates funding this work is expensive, but how on balance, there is a cost of simply doing nothing, and gave the example of flooding.  She shared that there is some funding centrally, with various small grants available, but that the expectation is that some of the costs will be covered locally by the diocese.  Cate then highlighted EcoChurch, highlighting that the national church uses the term ‘Hearts and Minds’ to describe all areas of work that are about encouraging participation in this area of ministry. (Please take part in our #EcoChurchInAnHour campaign. Its really simple and effective way of learning how to be more environmentally friendly. <https://gloucester.anglican.org/living-faith/environment/eco-church-in-an-hour/> )  Bishop Robert thanked Cate for her presentation and gave a couple of minutes for members to reflect on what they had heard.  Cate left the meeting following the presentation and Bishop Robert asked for any questions or comments.  Roger Parker (Severn Vale Deanery) commented how he is from a small rural parish, and that they want to participate, but need guidance, and asked what ways they can be assisted.  Revd Susan Cooke (Severn Vale Deanery) shared how her parish have achieved their bronze award, and how the EcoChurch website is really helpful. (please visit our #EcoChurchInAnHour webpage to get your bronze or silver award! - <https://gloucester.anglican.org/living-faith/environment/eco-church-in-an-hour/> )  Stephen Youngs (Wotton Deanery) commented how he is aware that some rural parishes have oil fired boilers and that there is now an alternative in the form of biofuel. He asked if the diocese had any buying initiatives for parishes hoping to get a good price if multiple biofuel boilers were sought.  In response to Roger’s question, Bishop Robert suggested that the diocesan website hosts lots of videos with ideas and advice and with the new net-zero officer role there will be more advice to come.  He added to Susan’s comment, how the EcoChurch website may seem daunting, with lots of long checklists, but all the suggestions on there are very doable.  Bishop Robert responded to Stephen’s question on how he would advise if the boiler is not broken, don’t try and replace it, but the importance of having a plan in place for when it does need replacing.  Benjmain Preece Smith commented how the papers presented may seem overwhelming, but how in fact, around 50% of our churches are already carbon nett-zero without doing anything particularly drastic. He reported how the biggest issue is heating, and mentioned Matt Fulford one of our DAC members, being a great resource and he would be happy to be contacted. He described lots of new innovative ideas and how lots of our vicarages already have PV panels installed.  Benjamin finished by urging people if they haven’t already, to think about switching to Green Energy. | **Received**: Members received an Update on our ‘Routemap to Carbon Nett-Zero’ (DS24-29) |
| 10. | **Coffee and cake break** |  |
|  | Members shared hospitality provided by Emma Wilson and her team from The Welcome Café Matson and all the members sung happy birthday to Bishop Rachel and Dean Andrew. |  |
| 11. | **Financial Update** |  |
|  | Karen Czapiewski welcomed Lisa Gardner.  Lisa Gardner introduced the item, explaining how herself and her team have worked really hard on sharing transparent figures for everyone to see.  She described the Draft Outturn Summary as of December 2023 and what the figures meant.  She acknowledged how difficult finances are for parishes and thanked everyone for all they give.  She described how last year for her was a year of discovery and how she sees this year as a year of change!  KC thanked Lisa and her team for their continued hard work. | **Received:** Members received an update on the Financial Outturn from Lisa Gardner. |
| 12. | **Parish Share Model 2025** |  |
|  | Bishop Robert introduced the item.  He explained how this session would be a chance to reflect on the bigger vision of LIFE Together and what money can enable, and how we need to be financially informed but missionally focused.  He invited the Archdeacon’s to speak.  Archdeacon Hilary began by saying that as we build on the Deanery Strategic Plans (DSP) and think more about the priorities emerging from them, she wanted to invite Carole O’Donell and Stephen Youngs, (Wotton Deanery) to answer some questions they have been thinking about at their Deanery Meetings.  Carole shared her thoughts on values, how they have mutual respect and integrity within the deanery, along with an openness to discuss matters, through co-operation and collaboration, with all values coming through chapter, all working together.  Stephen reinforced what Carole had said - how there is a sense of co-operation and collaboration across the deanery, with conversations underpinned by openness, and how they share knowledge and experience at deanery meetings. He described how they recognise that the deanery can be a primary enabler of change and that they, as a deanery, have taken ownership of that. They look at parish share as their ‘budget’ for the deanery, supporting ministry provision and central service support, and how the deanery is seen as a ‘division’ of the diocese.  Archdeacon Hilary asked them to share any misapprehensions of parish share and how they can be addressed.  Carole gave the example of having ‘Tax’ to pay, and how looking at the parish share request as their budget really helped. She also highlighted the openness and transparency now happening centrally, and thanked the central team, who are huge value for money for all they do.  Archdeacon Phil then invited Revd Canon Katrina Scott and Michael Storey (North Cotswolds Deanery) to come and share some of their experiences within their deanery. He explained the start of the presentation, how parish share is currently calculated, and how the cost of ministry was £67k in 2018 and is now £81k in 2024.  He asked Michael and Katrina to share their thoughts on the current system we have, what they feel has worked well or not so well.  Katrina shared how they found referring to the cost of ministry relatable and having a benefice figure really helped among their deanery.  Katrina and Michael both spoke of capacity of areas and sizes of communities, with the community being indicative of the potential, highlighting we are all part of the same ‘family’.  Michael suggested if we are asking to the future, then abundance and generosity should be at the forefront of discussions, and that we all have to share. He gave the analogy of us all living together in one house, and sharing the costs that house incurs between us.  Katrina raised a question about the use of reserves, how we shouldn’t hold on to them and a need to be transparent, aspirational, and missional.  Benjamin Preece Smith shared print outs of his presentation (attached with the minutes for information). He looked at income and expenditure, and the challenges we face.  He highlighted the Experian data for various communities, acknowledging we are an extremely diverse diocese.  He shared that there is a Parish Share Model 2025 Working Group, who have so far developed 4 principals for a new model:   1. Clear single basis for cost of ministry 2. Bandings to make the task manageable. 3. Invest in real dialogue – deanery led. 4. Quinquennial reviews – how can we help?   He also outlined the next steps, which are that Archdeacon Hilary and Ben would visit each deanery synod so good conversation and consultation can happen around the new parish share model. These conversations would then be feedback to the July Diocesan Synod, with the model then being formally agreed at the October Diocesan Synod. *Please note that the November date has been moved to October 5th 2024 to better manage the financial timetable.*  KC invited members to have a conversation around the idea of the principals.  Bishop Robert welcomed everyone back and asked  for any further comments or ideas to be forwarded to Kerry Pateman at [kpateman@glosdioc.org.uk](mailto:kpateman@glosdioc.org.uk)  Bishop Robert introduced Lisa Jane Lewis, the new Giving and Stewardship Advisor for the diocese. She shared she is happy to come out to deaneries and look at ways she can help and support. | **Received:** Members heard the proposed new model for Parish Share, followed by conversation, questions, thoughts, and reflections from all Synod members. |
| 13. | **Bishop’s Council Update** |  |
|  | Carole O’Donnell introduced the item and noted it was shared with members for information. The digest has details of some of the discussion and items agreed at the last Bishop’s Council.  She invited any member of Diocesan Synod to forward any questions to a member of Bishop’s Council after the meeting. | **Noted:** Members noted a digest of the business conducted by Bishop’s Council since the last Synod is circulated for information. (DS24-30) |
| 14. | **Date of next Meeting** |  |
|  | The Date of the next meeting will be on **Wednesday 10 July 2024.**  It should also be noted that the following meeting will be on **Saturday 5 October 2024.**  Bishop Rachel thanked Karen Czapiewski as Chair to the DBF, Katrina Scott, Chair of the House of Clergy, Carole O’Donnell as Chair of the House of Laity, all the staff at College Green and Emma Wilson for providing the refreshments for today from The Welcome Café Matson. |  |