

Minutes

Meeting on: Saturday 5 October 2024
 Time: 9am
 Location: All Saints' Academy, Blaisdon Way, Cheltenham, GL51 0WH

	Item	Action
1.	Refreshments	
	Members were invited to join the meeting starting with refreshments.	
2.	Elections	
	<p>Elections were held for Chairs of the House of Clergy and House of Laity.</p> <p>Following the elections, Bishop Rachel welcomed the newly elected Chair of the DBF, David Roberts, Chair of the House of Clergy, Revd Jo Pestell, and Chair of the House of Laity, Carole O'Donnell who was re-elected. Bishop Rachel gave huge thanks to everyone that stood for each election.</p> <p>Bishop Rachel gave thanks to our outgoing Chair of the DBF, Canon Karen Czapiewski, outgoing Chair of the House of Clergy, the Revd Canon Katrina Scott and Chair of the House of Laity, Carole O'Donnell and presented gifts.</p> <p>Benjamin Preece Smith then announced the results from the other elections which are circulated with the minutes for information.</p>	
3.	Worship	
	Bishop Rachel led worship.	
4.	Welcome and Apologies	
	<p>Bishop Rachel noted 23 apologies had been received.</p> <p>Bishop Rachel welcomed the new members of Synod for the next triennium.</p>	

Item	Action	
	<p>She shared that there will be an opportunity for a Synod induction. (<i>Information coming out soon</i>)</p> <p>She gave a gentle reminder that Members represent deaneries, and not just local worshipping communities.</p> <p>She also noted that this was the last synod for Archdeacon Phil and invited all to attend his leaving service in the Cathedral on Friday 13 December at 5.30pm.</p>	
5.	Notices and questions	
	<p>The Revd Nick Bromfield (Cheltenham Deanery) had submitted questions, but unfortunately too late to be officially presented, he did receive a written response.</p> <p>Bishop Rachel also explained the delay for sending out the Synod papers only a week in advance due to the change in date of Bishop's Council and the short timeframe between both meetings for the Budget papers to be prepared.</p>	
6.	Minutes of the previous meeting	
	<p>The minutes of the previous meeting held on 10 July 2024 were proposed by Revd Susan Cooke (Severn Vale Deanery) and seconded by Revd Canon Nikki Arthy (Gloucester City Deanery). The minutes were approved <i>nem con</i>.</p>	Approved: minutes of the Synod meeting held on 10 July 2024.
7.	Matters arising	
	<p>Archdeacon Hilary gave a brief update on item 13 of the previous meeting.</p> <p>She explained how the introduction of the new parish share model has been deferred and the aim is to be ready for 2026. She further explained how there are meetings scheduled with each deanery to continue conversations which will inter-weave parish share with the deanery strategic plans.</p>	As accepted by the chair.
8.	Diocesan Board of Education (DBE) Annual Report	
	<p>Bishop Robert introduced the item and Diocesan Director of Education Jane Borgeaud.</p> <p>Jane started by sharing how the family of schools we have support the flourishing of all the children.</p> <p>She explained the history of how a school qualified to be a church school. (see slides circulated with the minutes)</p>	Received: Members received the Annual Review and update from Jane Borgeaud, Director of Education.

Item	Action
<p>She described how it was a joy that the vision of the Church of England and the Diocese are centred on John 10:10 and described the impact we have across the diocese within our church schools.</p> <p>Jane asked Members to think about how to support PCCs and schools in their search for Foundation Governors noting the challenges to recruit volunteers.</p> <p>She encouraged people to talk around tables about schools, church and non-church, and to share stories.</p> <p>Bishop Robert asked for any comments.</p> <p>Andrew Smith, (Severn Vale Deanery) shared how within his benefice there are 4000 children in mainly non-church schools. He also raised the issue of having little engagement with secondary schools.</p> <p>Revd Sue Murray, (Stroud Deanery) commented how good open the book is to get into primary schools but noted the challenge to get into secondary schools.</p> <p>Bishop Robert highlighted that one of our aims is to expand working into secondary schools.</p> <p>Revd Dr Mike Parsons (Gloucester City Deanery) shared how during his ministry he had been a governor in three schools, only one of them a church school, but the community schools are very open to engagement with the church.</p> <p>Revd Canon Nikki Arthy (Gloucester City Deanery) voiced how she is passionate about working with schools across her parishes and encouraged others to take the opportunities that are out there for engagement.</p> <p>Bishop Rachel thanked Jane and her team for their continued hard work.</p>	
<p>9. Living in Love and Faith</p>	
<p>Bishop Rachel introduced the item. She expected that Members will have read the updated paper by Nick Shepherd and explained that this was not an item for decision making or debate, but an opportunity to hear different voices on the process so far. There will be time</p>	

Item	Action
<p>for further discussion following the General Synod meeting in February 2025. (<i>More info re this meeting coming soon.</i>)</p> <p>Bishop Rachel summarised where we are in the process and then opened the floor to hear from Members. The key content of each comment is below:</p> <p>Revd Canon Nikki Arthy (Gloucester City Deanery) began by reminding everyone that while we speak on behalf of our deaneries, she wanted to say something personal. She described how on the day of the Pride march she spent the day at Gloucester Park wearing a t-shirt saying: 'This priest loves you' and the positive response she got. She shared how people think they have no place in the church if they are gay. She voiced concern that we are becoming irrelevant in society because of the LLF process.</p> <p>Revd Richard Coombs (Cheltenham Deanery) felt very concerned about the way the LLF process is being conducted. He described how bishops are pushing through proposals with slender majorities and questioned that there isn't sufficient mandate for these changes. He felt that even though bishops insist there is no change to the doctrine of marriage, he believes there is now a huge strain and that people outside the church won't understand the difference between blessing same sex partnerships and marrying people.</p> <p>Canon Margaret Sheather (Stroud Deanery) shared that during the LLF process she was a diocesan advocate and a group facilitator, and how although her views are at the inclusive end of the spectrum, her role was to create a space for all views. She wanted to highlight those in the middle ground. As a member of General Synod many have come forward with strong views, but the conversations that have happened are not representative of the spectrum of views within congregations.</p> <p>Revd Canon Andrew Dow, (North Cotswolds Deanery) read in the Church Times that Bishop Stephen Croft had arranged and permitted an alternative ordination service and asked if Bishop Rachel would be willing to have a similar situation in this diocese for those who would want that.</p> <p>Guy Fancourt, (Tewkesbury and Wincombe Deanery) shared that he is a gay man and married ten years ago. He is a member at Ashchurch parish which is very welcoming</p>	

Item	Action
<p>and inclusive. He endorsed Nikki Arthy's comment about the church becoming more irrelevant because of this issue.</p> <p>Revd Dr Daniel Button, (Severn Vale Deanery) described how the process had felt for him and that there is a very narrow consensus on this very radical change in the Church.</p> <p>Revd Canon Katrina Scott, (North Cotswolds Deanery) highlighted that she is a General Synod Representative. She shared how as we've lived this process she has seen the worst and best of Synod. She described how we are now seeing an increased honesty and desire for the Church to move forward together.</p> <p>Revd Andrew Blyth, (Cheltenham Deanery) shared the very different opinions held by people in his church and how as leaders we must try to hold together the family of church. He works to ensure Trinity is a safe and welcoming place for all. He particularly wanted to highlight the voices of those who are gay and believe it is right to remain single and celibate.</p> <p>Bishop Rachel thanked everyone for sharing their comments and views and asked if there was anyone in the 'middle ground' that would like to speak.</p> <p>Archdeacon Phil shared that he sits in that middle, messy ground and how as he reflects on his Christian vocation he has become more uncertain of more things, and more certain of fewer things. He shared that he has friends and family who hold different views, and how they are becoming more polarised. He pleads for us to be able to all hold different perspectives and respect the views of others.</p> <p>Revd Ashley Collishaw, (Cheltenham Deanery) shared some of his own personal story which he doesn't talk about much. He said that he doesn't have a particular stance on where he stands on this. He shared how his own church will fall apart if we split down the middle. He felt the biggest challenge is the erosion of trust with the House of Bishops. He explained how he reads all the material, but he cannot see how it works with canon law. He felt we are not tackling the essential question, 'what is the doctrine of marriage.'</p> <p>Bishop Rachel thanked everyone for their comments</p>	

Item		Action
	<p>questions and gave some responses.</p> <p>On the issue of lack of trust, Bishop Rachel explained how ‘she and Bishop Robert heard that.’ She shared how it makes her really sad, but they both remain committed to ensuring that every individual and worshipping community across a range of theological views has an equal place in this diocese. She expressed how important it is that communities and individuals can live and express different views whilst always treating one another with love, respect and humility.</p> <p>Bishop Rachel reminded people how long the LLF process had been going for and that none of this is ‘sudden’.</p> <p>In terms of how we live the process well, she shared that we all carry different stories, so not to make assumptions. She added that she will always make space for people to speak their views and how important all of us listen well.</p> <p>In response to Andrew Dow she shared that all these things are under discussion, and herself and Bishop Robert are absolutely committed to finding ways to live this together.</p> <p>Finally, she described the effect of fear and asked members to focus on how we provide a welcoming place for everyone.</p> <p>Bishop Rachel ended the item by praying for everyone.</p>	
10.	Break and refreshments	
	Members were invited to break for refreshments supplied by The Welcome Table Café.	
11.	GDBF Budget 2025	
	<p>Benjamin Preece Smith introduced the item.</p> <p>He described how our finances are ultimately to fund the mission of the church and how stipendiary ministry is the bulk of the expenditure.</p> <p>He explained that UTR is a capital fund we can release to manage deficit and how it is a valid means of buying time, but not a permanent answer. We need £2.5million to fund the deficit in this budget.</p> <p>He described the long-term view, how costs are going up</p>	<p>Agreed: Members agreed to adopt the proposed Budget for 2025.</p> <p>Received: Members received the Consolidated Accounts of Gloucester DBF for the year ended 2023.</p>

Item	Action
<p>with inflation, but income is not coming in to cover that and whilst money has been raised through property development, it is not a permanent answer.</p> <p>Bishop Rachel asked for any questions. She added that the proposed budget had already been through many committees before coming to Synod.</p> <p>Revd John Longuet-Higgins, (Severn Vale Deanery) asked for a breakdown of the £82k costs for clergy.</p> <p>Gerald O'Brien, (Stroud Deanery) commented how the slide that explained if parish share had been indexed it would be £2 million more, but that the number of worshippers has decreased.</p> <p>Revd Gary Grady, (Cheltenham Deanery) asked if there are any restrictions on proceeds of glebe sales.</p> <p>In response to John's question, Benjamin will ask Lisa Gardner (Chief Financial Officer) to make that breakdown available.</p> <p>Benjamin replied to Gerald's comment and agreed with his observation. He shared that Evangelism is the best answer to our budget.</p> <p>In response to Gary's question, Benjamin shared that the proceeds are restricted to the diocesan stipends fund.</p> <p>Bishop Rachel shared that BC agreed to tithe a proportion of glebe sales to fund two curacies in other dioceses and how we want to support the wider Church with the gifts we have been given.</p> <p>Revd Canon Nick Davies, (Tewkesbury and Winchcombe Deanery) asked for further information around Sportily.</p> <p>Peter Moore, (Cirencester Deanery) asked for clarity for deaneries surrounding the difference in figures, how parish share was £8.1million but the ask was £6.8million.</p> <p>Revd Nick Bromfield, (Cheltenham Deanery) highlighted corporate partnerships and what potential we could have as a diocese. He explained how in North Cheltenham they have a corporate partner, and that people are just waiting to be asked.</p>	<p>(DS24-37)</p>

Item	Action
<p>In response to Nick Davies question, Benjamin explained the main DBF investments, Sportily being the largest. He further detailed how Sportily report annually in detail and how further financial support will be required until they reach sustainability.</p> <p>Benjamin responded to Peter's questions and explained that the request of £8.1 is the full cost, but the reality of what will be received is £1.3 million less, hence the two different figures.</p> <p>Bishop Rachel reminded members how Archdeacon Hilary and others will be visiting deaneries to look at DSPs and parish share together and that we don't want a vision of decline. We want to be missionally focused and resource aware.</p> <p>Benjamin responded to Nick Bromfield's comment and shared that any corporate sponsorship will be more locally lead, and that Lisa Jayne Lewis is on hand to help. He also shared that the Cathedral already do it too.</p> <p>Benjamin shared how the new diocesan office will have a long-term saving to the diocese, £40k saving per year.</p> <p>Bishop Rachel highlighted the new office will enable us to work more collaboratively.</p> <p>Andrew Smith, (Severn Vale Deanery) commented on the communication from the diocese to our congregations. He highlighted the mention of the £30million made in glebe sales, people think that the diocese is wealthy. He felt that communication feels quite opaque.</p> <p>Revd Richards Coombs (Cheltenham Deanery) noted that if it wasn't for UTR Members would be asked to agree a huge deficit budget.</p> <p>Benjamin directed Andrew's comment to the helpful parish share video on our website. He shared how we used to produce a fuller annual report, but for cost savings we now just produce a financial annual report. He shared this can be reviewed.</p> <p>Bishop Robert talked about the Deanery Strategic Plans and Parish Share conversations to be had with deaneries and the vital need for honest conversations about resolving our financial deficit. It is a difficult conversation, but we</p>	

	Item	Action
	<p>have to be prepared to have it.</p> <p>Canon Karen Czapiewski, (Cirencester Deanery) described how committees have spent many hours working on the budget and so proposed the Budget for 2025 and Chris Hill (Severn Vale Deanery) seconded. The item was agreed <i>nem con</i>.</p> <p>Bishop Rachel gave huge thanks to Lisa Gardner and her team, to Benjamin Preece Smith, to Karen Czapiewski and all who serve on Resources Committee.</p>	
12.	Bishop's Council Update	
	<p>Bishop Rachel introduced the item and noted it was shared with members for information.</p>	<p>Noted: Members noted a digest of the business conducted by Bishop's Council since the last Synod is circulated for information. (DS24-35)</p>
13.	Date of next Meeting	
	<p>The Date of the next meeting will be on Saturday 1 February 2025.</p>	