



BIRMINGHAM DIOCESAN SYNOD (DS)

Thursday 14 July 2022 at 7pm
Gas Street Church, 41 Gas Street, Birmingham, B1 2JT

MINUTES

1. Prayers, Welcome, Apologies, Previous Minutes and Bishop's Briefing

Prayers were led by the Revd Dr Nick Drake. The Revd Andrew Hobbs was welcomed to the Diocese as Vicar of Cofton Hackett & Barnt Green.

New Curates were also welcomed. The new Curates are: the Revd Richard Brooker, Dorridge & Bentley Heath; the Revd Mike Darbandi, St Luke's Gas Street & Shirley Plant; the Revd Chloe Hewitt, St Chad's Rubery; the Revd Jo Jennings, St John's Harborne; the Revd Matt Mason, St Mary's Pype Hayes; the Revd Christine McAteer, The Resurrection, Smethwick; the Revd Sebrina Blackstock-Miller, St John Sparkhill & Christ Church Sparkbrook; the Revd Marcus Pagnum, St Mary's Wythall; the Revd Jacob Palett, St Mary's Selly Oak; the Revd Tom Rushton, St Matthew, Perry Beeches; the Revd Alison Treasure, St Paul, Hamstead.

The Bishop acknowledged a number of apologies given before the meeting but noted that the meeting was quorate. No further amendments to the Minutes of DS 220326 had been received so they stand as agreed by Bishop's Council.

RESOLUTION: The Diocesan Synod approved the Minutes of DS 220326

As this would be his last Diocesan Synod meeting, Bishop David reflected on his 16 years in Birmingham. He gave his thanks to Synod and was thankful that Christianity is now moving to a more outward looking witness of Christ. His retirement from post will create a Vacancy in See from 19 October 2022 and Bishop Anne will be authorised by the Archbishop of Canterbury as Commissary Bishop during this vacancy, continuing her episcopal ministry and oversight of the diocese and her role as Bishop of Aston.

Mr Anesu Muyambi (Handsworth & Central Deanery) updated Synod on the Eternal Wall of Answered Prayer. Further information can be obtained at the following link <https://www.eternalwall.org.uk/>.

2. Lambeth Conference Programme (July – August 2022)

God's Church for God's World: walking, listening and witnessing together

Bishop David reported that the Lambeth Conference would be taking place from 26 July to 8 August 2022 and is an invitation to 800 Bishops and their spouses from around the world. Bishop David and Bishop Anne will be present at the conference and further information can be found at <https://www.lambethconference.org/>.

3. Safeguarding

Ms Steph Haynes, Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser, shared her presentation and gave an update on national developments in safeguarding in the Church of England. A copy of her presentation is attached to the Minutes.

Steph explained that the national safeguarding work is focusing on the three following areas:

1. Response to IICSA recommendations
2. Policy renewal
3. Learning & Development Framework

Learning & Development is currently stable and is not due to be revised until 2023/2024. The consultation process has just begun.

The national safeguarding team focus is predominantly on responding to the 8 recommendations from IICSA's inquiry and report into safeguarding in the CofE. Most of the recommendations focus on ways to improve transparency and accountability and

improving the way we engage with and respond to those with lived experience of abuse, including the development of a national redress scheme.

To improve transparency and accountability a project has been set up to look at alternative models of safeguarding within the church. Birmingham is one of eight dioceses selected to pilot the new regional model. The project aims to improve independence of the current Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser (DSA) role with a new role of Diocesan Safeguarding Officer (DSO) who will be externally supervised by a regional safeguarding lead appointed by the national church. Key features of the project will be:

- to develop and test a safeguarding code for implementation across the whole of the CofE at the end of the pilot
- to define the terms and scope of the next programme of independent audits of dioceses and cathedrals from 2024

Participation in this project will be a key part of the diocesan safeguarding team's additional work over the next two years.

The following five standards will form the basis of the new safeguarding code that the regional model pilot will help to develop. The code will be the 'must dos' under each of these areas.

1. Prevention
2. Culture and leadership
3. Risk
4. Victims and survivors
5. Governance, Supervision and management structures

As part of the Church's ongoing programme of audit and review, every diocese was asked to appoint an independent reviewer to look again at all its past cases. The review for Birmingham was completed and submitted earlier this year and the national church is collating the recommendations from the reports from all 42 dioceses; these will be published later this year.

There were no significant issues raised by the independent reviewer for Birmingham and the main recommendations were:

- Minor adjustments to the way we keep records which we've already implemented
- Further improvements to our engagement with those with lived experience of abuse. A new survivor care strategy is being worked on and events are being planned to take place during the autumn.

The work streams of the national safeguarding team focus on delivering improvements in response to IICSA but there are other work streams including case work and a programme of policy review.

- The policy that most impacted parishes last year was Safer Recruitment and People Management. The overall procedure for safer recruitment remained unchanged but we are currently transitioning from 5 year to 3 year DBS check renewals.
- The Responding Well to Victims and Survivors of Abuse policy published this year mostly impacts the work of diocesan safeguarding teams – the key thing for the parish is to report concerns to the DSA who can then advise what support must be offered to the victim/survivor. This policy also details the characteristics of a healthy church culture.
- The Safeguarding Children, Young people and Vulnerable Adults replaces the recognising abuse fact sheet and looks at definitions, signs and symptoms of abuse with sections dedicated to spiritual abuse and domestic violence

Going forward all new policies must be approved by General Synod. This will slow down the programme of policy renewal but should help to improve awareness and ownership of policies across the whole of the church. Policies due to be approved by Synod in 2023 are expected to have more impact on diocesan safeguarding teams than parishes.

Policies scheduled for renewal in 2024 are much more focused on safeguarding in parishes

In the Church of England Birmingham we use the Parish Safeguarding Dashboard to help PCCs navigate the requirements of national policies and reassure themselves that they are complying with these requirements. The dashboard has three levels:

1. key policies and safeguarding arrangements
2. Checklist for activities with vulnerable groups
3. Specialist policies and safeguarding arrangements

Two out of three of our PCCs have achieved level 2 or level 3 on the dashboard and one PCC has achieved 100% compliance at all three levels on the dashboard. The safeguarding team is currently contacting the remaining 13% of parishes who are yet to use the dashboard to offer help and support to get them started before moving on to helping level 1 parishes achieve level 3. Every PCC in the diocese is expected to achieve level 3 by the end of this year.

Policies and procedures are important because they make very visible value statements on what is important to us a community and how we're going to put these values and commitments into practice. Learning, both formal courses and experiential, raises

our awareness of what we need to do and why. This helps us to explore further our beliefs, attitudes and behaviours and reshape them to achieve our aim of safer, healthier cultures. The attitudes of those in leadership towards policy, procedure and learning is crucial in setting the tone and creating healthier cultures.

The recommendation to further improve engagement with survivors will be explored in a series of events this autumn:

- LOUDfence – a visible demonstration of our support for victims and survivors of abuse within an institution by tying brightly coloured ribbons to railings outside the cathedral – parishes can join in too if they wish
- The cathedral will be hosting workshops led by the theologian Gillian Ahlgren on spiritual practices that support recovery and growth after trauma
- The CofE will be participating in national Domestic Abuse awareness month in October with webinars and resources to support parishes

Members were also asked to consider dedicating a Sunday service to safeguarding. It does so much to raise awareness amongst congregations about the importance of safeguarding as everyone's responsibility and sends a clear message to those with lived experience of abuse that we really care about them and want to support them. Liturgical and other resources are available.

Following the presentation, members were divided into breakout groups and were asked to discuss the following two questions and to record the key points on a feedback form:

- Question 1: Where do you see good examples of the characteristics listed overleaf in the church communities or groups that you belong to?
- Question 2: All of the characteristics listed are important to achieve a safer, healthier culture. However, if you were asked to focus on improving one or two of these over the next twelve months, which one or two would you choose?

**RESOLUTION: The Diocesan Synod adopted the following motion put forward by the President:
This Synod adopts the following House of Bishops' Safeguarding Policies and Practice Guidance:**

- [Safer Recruitment and People Management 2021](#)
- [Safer Recruitment – Permission to Officiate](#)
- [Responding Well to Victims and Survivors of Abuse 2022](#)
- [Safeguarding Children, Young people and Vulnerable Adults 2022](#)

4. Update from the Reference Group for Racial Justice

The Revd Canon Bamidele Sotonwa (Chair of the Racial Justice Group) reported that since the last update, fair progress has been made on the implementation of the Lament to Action report:

Education

- the education board has made efforts to be as inclusive as possible with members co-opted from the UKME/GMH reflecting diversity of our church
- collective worship and ethos development has been reviewed to reflect Christian teachings on diversity, and promoting a change in culture which ensures that all voices are heard

Training

- the Unconscious Bias training is continuing and has now become part of curates' training and other programmes. Active awareness is being created in deaneries and parishes to get all those required, to have the training
- a framework for the development of an anti-racism charter is also being put together and it is hoped that a draft would be ready before the end of the year

Deaneries

- there is continuous engagement with Area Deans and their deaneries on the implementation of the recommendations contained in the report. Currently, the deaneries of Aston and Sutton Coldfield; Edgbaston and Warley; and Coleshill and Polesworth are putting together action plans to promote diversity and inclusion across parishes

Cathedral

- the cathedral is putting in place a placement program to support UKME ordinands and clergy who may wish to explore Cathedral ministry as their vocation

Diocese

- it is hoped that The Racial Justice Reference Board for Birmingham will have been finalised by the next council meeting and details of the terms of reference shared with the council. +D and BSo are meeting to finalise the details

Actions

- the post of the Racial Justice Director is yet to be filled and the Bishop's Council's support in this regard will help yield desired results
- further engagements continue to be held with the different operational strands in the diocese

The Revd Canon Bamidele Sotonwa invited members to share their stories of racial inclusion:

The Revd Katie Stock (Handsworth & Central Deanery) observed, with joy, that more UKME/GMH candidates are being ordained.

Mr Jonathan Goll (Edgbaston & Warley Deanery) noted the high quality of BAME ordinands coming through the system.

The Revd Theresa Morton (Kings Norton, Moseley & Shirley Deanery) shared her experience of a recent vibrant CofE West Indian funeral which was a wonderful event.

The Revd Becky Stephens (Aston & Sutton Coldfield Deanery) talked about how important it is for everyone to be included in leading worship so that no one feels side-lined.

The Revd Toby Crowe (Yardley & Solihull Deanery) gave his thanks to the Revd Canon Bamidele Sotonwa for his work on this subject, and urged that momentum should continue and, in particular, conversations should be held with regards to slavery and restitution.

Dr Rachel Jepson (Handsworth & Central Deanery) reminded members of the work being undertaken by the Church Commissioners with regards to Modern Slavery.

5. Annual General Meeting of the Birmingham Diocesan Board of Finance

The DBF Chair, Mr Steven Skakel gave his thanks to everyone who had contributed to the 2021 Annual Report.

Steven invited the Finance Director, Ms Karen Preece to take members through the 2021 accounts. Areas to be covered included:

- 2021 Final statutory accounts
 - 2021 Financial outturn
 - 2021 Common Fund outturn
 - Going Concern assessment
 - Audit and completion

A copy of her presentation is attached to the Minutes.

Karen reported that there were two resolutions for Synod to consider:

- Resolution to adopt the Annual Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 31 December 2021, together with the Independent Auditor's Report
- Resolution to appoint auditors for the forthcoming year

The Revd Katie Stock (Handsworth & Central Deanery) raised a question as to the increase in Common Fund when clergy savings have been made. Karen responded that a new methodology of Common Fund was introduced in 2019 but the impact of Covid in 2020 has meant that the underlying methodology is no longer fit for purpose. A new approach to Common Fund is currently being looked at.

Dr Jan Smart added that on the positive side of Common Fund, there has been a positive impact from our new Giving Adviser through the Parish Giving Scheme and the use of technology to support different ways of giving. These are available to any parish.

Archdeacon Jenny explained that clergy recruitment has been slower than previously but this is beginning to change.

The Revd Emma Sykes (Aston & Sutton Coldfield Deanery) raised a concern that some poorer parishes had been in vacancy for a long time. Archdeacon Jenny responded that it was difficult to generalise, however some parishes had found it harder to produce parish profiles during lockdown.

The following motion was then put and carried on a show of hands with one abstention.

RESOLUTION: The Diocesan Synod approved the minutes of the 2021 AGM.

A vote was taken on the following two motions with no abstentions or dissent.

**RESOLUTION: The Diocesan Synod adopted the following motion put forward by the Chair of the DBF:
This 75th Annual General Meeting of the Birmingham Diocesan Board of Finance adopts the Annual Report and Financial Statements of the Company for the year ended 31 December 2021, together with the Independent Auditor's Report thereon.**

**RESOLUTION: The Diocesan Synod adopted the following motion put forward by the Chair of the DBF:
Haysmacintyre LLP to be appointed as Auditor to the Board and that the Directors be authorised to fix their remuneration.**

6. Closing Remarks

The Revd Canon Priscilla White reported that significant focus was given at General Synod to include those with a disability. She expressed her gratitude to Gas Street for enabling her to feel included in the proceedings and she invited parishes to do all they can to include those with disabilities and to make access to church possible.

Dr Jan Smart, Diocesan Secretary, gave thanks on behalf of Diocesan Synod to Bishop David for his leadership of Synod throughout his 16 years in Birmingham. Synod members responded with huge applause for Bishop David.

7. Meeting Dates 2022/2023 followed by The Blessing

Members of the Diocesan Synod noted the meeting dates for 2022 and 2023.

On behalf of Diocesan Synod, Bishop David thanked Gas Street Church for hosting the meeting.

The next meetings of Diocesan Synod are:

Saturday 12 November 2022 at 9.30am

Saturday 25 March 2023 at 9.30am

Thursday 13 July 2023 at 7pm

Saturday 18 November 2023 at 9.30am

Synod adjourned at 9pm with prayers led by Bishop David, followed by the Blessing.

Summary of Resolutions

Agenda Item	Resolution
1.	The Diocesan Synod approved the minutes of DS 220326
3.	<p>The Diocesan Synod adopted the following motion put forward by the President: This Synod adopts the following House of Bishops' Safeguarding Policies and Practice Guidance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safer Recruitment and People Management 2021 • Safer Recruitment – Permission to Officiate • Responding Well to Victims and Survivors of Abuse 2022 • Safeguarding Children, Young people and Vulnerable Adults 2022
7.	<p>The Diocesan Synod approved the minutes of the 2021 AGM.</p> <p>The Diocesan Synod adopted the following motion put forward by the Chair of the DBF: This 75th Annual General Meeting of the Birmingham Diocesan Board of Finance adopts the Annual Report and Financial Statements of the Company for the year ended 31 December 2021, together with the Independent Auditor's Report thereon.</p> <p>The Diocesan Synod adopted the following motion put forward by the Chair of the DBF: Haysmacintyre LLP to be appointed as Auditor to the Board and that the Directors be authorised to fix their remuneration.</p>