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**Minutes of a meeting  
of  
Blackburn Diocesan Synod**

**14 October 2017**

**Present**

1 Member of the House of Bishops  
37 Members of the House of Clergy  
48 Members of the House of Laity  
3 Observers

**Apologies**

1 Member of the House of Bishops  
7 Members of the House of Clergy  
8 Members of the House of Laity

**Welcome**

**Mr Tim Cox**, Vice Chair of the House of Laity welcomed members of Diocesan Synod to the meeting.

**1. Opening Worship**

Opening worship was led by members of Whalley Deanery and included a bible reading from 2 Corinthians 5.14 - 6.2 NRSV.

**2. Parish Share Budget**

**Canon John Dell**, Chair of the Diocesan Board of Finance Ltd addressed the members of Synod.

The Parish Share Budget for 2018 had been proposed by the Budget Committee and with some modifications, approved by the Board of Finance Directors and Trustees. The purpose of the 2018 Budget would be to raise the resources required to undertake the shared Vision for our parishes and the Diocese.

Canon Dell thanked Mrs McGaughey, Mrs Farnhill and the Finance Team, the Bishop's Team and the budget holders for their efforts in preparing the budget.

A similar process to last year had been followed, involving some members of the Bishop's Team and the budget holders, to ensure that the focus stayed on Vision 2026, and to ensure that if savings needed to be made, they would come in places which would cause least harm to the Diocese. As the budget moved through the various stages, areas were challenged and refined.

One significant area of debate for all the groups had been the tension between a stipend increase that was fair and right for the clergy and setting a parish share increase that was not too challenging in the current climate for our parishes. The Budget Committee recommended to the Finance Committee and Directors a 1.7% increase in Parish Share, incorporating a 1.5% increase in Stipends and Salaries. This was a majority decision and there had been advocates for 1%, 1.5% and 2% increases in stipends.

The Directors then decided that with a suggested national stipend increase of 2% and the rising level of CPI, that a 2% increase to both stipends and salaries was warranted. The impact of this decision was to lift the proposed increase in Parish Share requested from 1.7% to 2%. Canon Dell emphasised that none of the clergy or officers affected by the stipend increase took part in the final decision making.

The main budget points for 2018 include:

- A stipends and salaries increase of 2%.
- An estimated 8 new stipendiary curates to join the Diocese in 2018.
- One of the main areas for improvement is the parish share collection rate and giving in the Diocese. Meetings with parishes that needed support in 2017 have emphasised the need for stewardship. These meetings will continue in 2018.
- Part of our appeal to retain and attract clergy is the care taken over our housing stock. In addition to a £50,000 increase in the property budget, there will be a further allocation of £300,000 from the pastoral fund in order to increase the number of kitchen and bathrooms that can be replaced in the property program of works.
- In order to minimise the cost of providing housing where it is economically sensible renting curate housing will continue to be looked at where possible.
- Vacancies will continue to be budgeted. This means all parishes benefit every year from the vacancies rather than having a reduction to share when they are in vacancy.
- An allocation from reserves has been made while some restructuring of central diocesan teams is considered. With retirements due, the opportunity to look at this will be looked at alongside any cost savings that can be realised. While this is happening, the increased costs to Parish Share are being cushioned using reserves.
- With regard to Whalley Abbey a special meeting of the Bishop's Council and Directors will take place in November to consider options for the future of the Abbey.

Canon Dell emphasised that the churches in our most deprived areas need additional support to be able to transform their communities. Consideration is being given to how the funding from National Church aimed at our poorest communities can best be allocated whilst still maintaining a stable budgetary position. This is taking place alongside the work of the re-established Parish Share Review Group, which has already commenced a review of the current and possible alternative share systems. It is planned that proposals will be brought to the Diocesan Synod in July next year with changes being introduced in 2019.

Canon Dell then moved on to explaining the figures within the 2018 Budget.

It was proposed that the 20% most deprived parishes by income measure will not have to pay the 2% increase in share. Additionally, no parish in this group will have a request greater than in 2017. The funding for this will come from the 8% relief fund.

The main income source in the budget is the Share received from parishes and the biggest expenditure is parochial staffing and related costs. The income received in share and fees roughly covers the cost of clergy.

The 2018 budget is not balanced and some reserves will be used to allow time for a re-organisation to naturally take place as people retire and for new ways of working to be introduced.

Although the proposed overall increase in parish share budget is 2%, this will not be the actual increase for all parishes because changes in Regular Weekly Attendance (RWA) also need to be taken into account.

The drop in RWA is of real concern, not only due to actual reductions in attendance, but also partly due to parishes not calculating their numbers carefully and then needing adjustments to be made. 2016 showed an even greater drop than the previous year with the three-year rolling average reducing by 3.4% (582 attenders). The result is an annual increase of £8.11 per RWA which will of course have an impact on some parishes. Canon Dell pointed out that the increase caused by the reduction in RWA is not connected with increasing costs but rather with a lower base to spread costs across.

The expense figure within the budget moved from £10.8 million earlier on in the process to £9.0 million. This was reduced using non-share income and fees as well as reserves. The share relief fund has also been used to get to the final amount requested.

Questions were then invited from Synod. The main points were:

**Rev Michael Hampson (Tunstall Deanery)** explained that he has been a member of the Budget Committee for two years. He was pleased that options for the future of Whalley Abbey are being considered. He highlighted the need for a clergy deployment strategy and hopes one will be available soon. He was also glad to see that central costs will be reviewed and hopes that Board of Education costs can also be reviewed in the future. Funds available for clergy are greater than for lay and this also may need looking at, to enable a good number of lay to support the clergy.

**Bishop Julian** stated he had struggled with an increase in stipend to 2%, not because he was against it but because there needs to be an increase in giving from parishes to allow this to happen.

**Canon John Dell** supported Bishop Julian's view, and pointed out that there needs to be an in-depth discussion about finances at Synod in 2018. He urged as many as possible to attend the discussion.

**Mrs Susan Witts (Blackburn with Darwen Deanery)** spoke about fresh expressions in churches. Although these are to be encouraged, some are now 10 or 11 years old. She would like some thought to be given to making them financially accountable.

**Canon Dell** moved:

"this Synod authorises the use of £300,000 of pastoral funds to be used specifically for bathroom and kitchen replacements in clergy housing and accepts the recommended budget for 2018 with a total amount requested from parishes (Calculated Assessment) of £9,026,583 and a total expenditure of £10,766,683.

Except for 3 abstentions, all members voted **in favour** and the motion was **carried**.



### **3. Update on the Implementation of the Vision for Blackburn Diocese**

**Mr Dave Champness** updated Synod on progress with the applications to the National Strategic Investment Board for Strategic Development Funding.

#### **Stage 2 Application - Outer Estates Leadership Phase 1**

Mr Champness explained there is a lot of excitement as work on some of the projects has already started.

He welcomed Miss Lizzie Haydon and Mr Josh Harrison to Synod who are voluntary workers at the Blackpool Ministry Experience, working with Rev Linda Tomkinson, Rev Tracy Charnock and Rev Steve Haskett. They are and making connections with people in some of our most deprived parishes.

At the Grange Park Centre of Mission, work will be carried out in partnership with the Church Army to recruit two Church Army evangelists. Mr Champness welcomed Mrs Lucy Rowley to Synod. Lucy is a newly-recruited Community Worker (there will be two) who is starting to make connections within the community prior to the arrival of the evangelists.

Rev Tim Horrobin is leading on the Blackburn Leadership Hub project. It is proposed that there will be two urban evangelists, one in Lower Darwen and one in Over Darwen, working on the ground and providing tutoring within the Leadership Hub which will be offering opportunities for ordinands and lay leaders from our deprived parishes.

The Church Commissioners expect the Diocese to be behind the Outer Estates Leadership Phase 1 projects in leadership, prayer and finance. The total cost for the three projects is £2.5 million until 2023 and it is proposed that the DBF funds 34% of this. The remaining 66% will come from the Strategic Development Fund (SDF), supported by applications for other resources.

**Mr Tim Cox** invited questions from Synod. The main points were:

**Mrs Joan Kirkwood (Chorley Deanery)** asked for further information regarding the Diocese's financial contribution and how the projects would be evaluated going forward.

**Mr Champness** explained that a contribution from the Board of Finance to the Vision Fund had been made at the end of 2016 from reserves in excess of the policy. Evaluation of the projects is part of the Church Commissioner's criteria for funding. The projects will be periodically evaluated by the Programme Board chaired by Bishop Philip. There will be a full review by the Church Commissioners at the mid-way point of the programme in late 2019. A quarterly report will be submitted from each of the projects tracking outcomes. Synod will also be informed of progress on an annual basis.

He reported that the Church Commissioners were comfortable with the outline project outcomes submitted at Stage 1. Stage 2 of the application will be submitted at the end of October.

The first applications from Dioceses to the SDF were submitted in 2015. It is clear that the Church Commissioners are keen to support dioceses and want applications to be successful. Blackburn Diocese has set up an informal partnership with the Diocese of Birmingham to share information and help develop our work in urban areas. There are lots of opportunities for sharing across the country.

**Rev Stephen Cooper (Garstang Deanery)** asked if there are any plans to develop similar projects for leadership in rural areas of the diocese.

**Mr Champness** clarified that there is no plan to do this in the current implementation plan to the end of 2019. Figures from the National Church indicate there is a larger proportion of ministry allocated to rural areas in the Blackburn Diocese than in urban/suburban areas.

**Bishop Julian** pointed out that the Diocese's third application for Strategic Development Funding is likely to be of benefit across the Diocese rather than in one particular area.

**Rev Richard Marshall (Blackburn with Darwen Deanery)** was very encouraged by the projects. He pointed out that although the overall figure seems a lot, the diocesan contribution each year is approximately £100k which is not a huge amount and the budget had been constructed very carefully. He also reminded Synod that any deanery or parish with a good project for developing mission and ministry could apply for support from the Parish Vision Fund.

**Mr Mike Briers (Kirkham Deanery)** expressed concern regarding the 10% contingency and wanted to know where it would come from.

**Mr Champness** confirmed that it would come from Diocesan Vision Fund. There is enough cash held within the fund to support this if needed. The budget will receive strict monitoring and the DBF directors would need to approve release of contingency funds if required.

**Canon Dell** pointed out that the budget had been looked at very carefully by several committees and the Board and that it was affordable.

**Canon Dell** moved:

"this Synod approves the DBF's financial contribution to the Outer Estates Leadership – Phase 1 Programme of £849,000 revenue (out of a total cost of £2,504,000) plus £435,000 capital from the pastoral fund, and delegates authority to the DBF Directors to allocate up to 10% additional revenue and/or capital as a contingency."

Except for 1 member voting against and 1 abstention, all remaining members voted in favour and the motion was **carried**.

### **Stage 1 Application – Resource Church (Preston)**

Mr Champness explained that the second application was for a resource church in Preston. The SDF had supported several dioceses in the creation of resource churches. 75% of applications to the SDF to date had been resource church applications.

The Bishop of Islington, Bishop Ric Thorpe, has been encouraging dioceses to submit resource church applications. With 25,000 students and a population of approx 140,000, there is a real opportunity to utilise the Minster and St George as a resource church for church planting in Preston Deanery and beyond. The resource church will have strong Anglo-Catholic connections, with a Holy Trinity Brompton sourced leader at the Minster assisted by an Anglo-Catholic priest based at St George.

He highlighted that the new housing developments alongside the M55 will stretch westwards and will be twice the size of Buckshaw Village by the time it is completed. This will provide a fantastic opportunity for church planting where the need will be great.



Stage 1 of the application will be submitted to the Strategic Investment Board by the end of October.

Mr Cox invited comments from Synod.

**Rev Paul Benfield (General Synod)** stressed that there is a need to ensure the current congregation is consulted about the plans rather than telling them what is going to happen.

**Archdeacon Michael Everitt** explained that he and Bishop Philip are working together with the PCCs at St John's and St George's, as well as other organisations within the city centre, in order to listen to and support them, and pave the way for the future. He thanked Rev Timothy Lipscomb for his contributions to this exploratory work.

**Rev Mark Wolverson (Leyland Deanery)** spoke about the Alpha Course. Although it has many strengths, it has a middle-class flavour. He would like to ensure that a wide variety of people from different backgrounds are considered to ensure the message of the gospel is accessible to all members of the community.

**Rev Timothy Lipscomb (Preston Deanery)** praised the hierarchy of the Diocese and Holy Trinity Broughton for their graciousness in involving him in the plans for the resource church. The faith landscape in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is changing quickly and it is impossible to do everything singlehandedly. He has spent most of the last 30 years helping people. If a good team is put into the centre of Preston they can look into many different aspects of what is needed. It is important to think broader and wider, and look at all aspects of churchmanship. Support can come from unlikely places; those not against us are with us. He wished his successors and all who support them every success.

#### **4. Setting God's People Free**

**Archdeacon Mark** addressed Synod.

The laity is our biggest resource, yet a much smaller amount is spent on resourcing and equipping them when compared to the clergy. This is a real challenge.

People are unlikely to spend 10 hours a week in church, yet they may spend 100 hours out in the community at work and leisure. We need to equip our laity to have the confidence to serve Christ in a voluntary capacity. In order to achieve the shift to helping people with their Monday to Saturday work, some significant work is needed nationally.

The National Church report on Setting God's People Free is timely for Vision 2026 and one of its strands focuses on making disciples. Blackburn has been selected as a pilot diocese for the report's implementation. This will be led by Archdeacon Mark beginning in 2018. Alongside this, 2019 will be a year of discipleship. There will also be a new bible challenge in 2019 from Bishop Julian for both adults and children.

Synod were asked to discuss the report in groups and were then invited to feed back. The main points were:

**Rev Michael Hampson (Tunstall Deanery)** endorsed the report. He explained that a substantial amount of work has taken place across Tunstall Deanery involving clergy working in partnership. He offered to share some of the work that had taken place at the next Synod.

**Dr Awena Carter (Lancaster and Morecambe Deanery)** feels this is a good report. She spoke about the points within the document regarding culture shifts. We all share the same baptism but have different roles. It is important that lay and clergy listen to each other and work together.

**Bishop Julian** commented on the need to increase vocation amongst lay people within all spheres of national life. Clergy will be invited to bring a lay person with them to the 2018 Diocesan Conference.

**Karina Lancaster (Whalley Deanery)** pointed out that we need to recognise the gifts of those around us which are given by God.

**Rev Peter Lillicrap (Blackpool Deanery)** reminded Synod that we all have a calling. However, in practice if a person has a spiritual need they will turn to the clergy. It is important to change the balance within parishes and increase the confidence of the laity to proclaim the good news.

**Archdeacon Mark** agreed with all the comments made by the speakers. He asked members of Synod to use the report within their own deaneries and parishes.

## **5. Transforming Communities**

**Canon David Banbury**, Parish Mission Support Department Leader and Diocesan Missioner led an interactive session on Transforming Communities, which relates to the 'Being Witness' strand of Vision 2026.

Synod members split into small groups to discuss the ways in which they are being witnesses in their own communities. Canon Banbury explained we have been faithfully doing this for many years in several different ways. The aim is to encourage people to carry on with doing so in 2018.

Some further groupwork followed and it was observed that most Synod members were more comfortable being witness through their deeds and actions rather than through their words.

Canon Banbury pointed out that words can be difficult. Hope 2018 is an initiative that will tap into what we are good at and will firstly focus on being witness through deeds. Churches and Christians will be invited to do this through being a blessing to our communities. It will also be an invitation to continue to do this with a missional focus. A range of resources will be distributed to parishes in January to help with this.

A number of 'Transforming Communities, Being Witnesses' resourcing evenings are also planned during October and November.

Finally, Synod were asked to think about the person who had been most influential in their development as Christians. In most cases this was a lay person. Canon Banbury explained that lay people are best equipped to do this through their actions.

## **6. Clergy Wellbeing**

**Archdeacon Mark** explained that a Covenant for Clergy Wellbeing, based on the Military Covenant, is being developed nationally. Work is also taking place within the Diocese.



'Thy Kingdom Come' will take place again in 2018 and 'Thank Your Vicar Week' will commence on 15 October.

Archdeacon Mark has seen the clergy role change substantially since he was ordained 32 years ago. There are now far less clergy within the diocese and responsibility has increased. Culture has also changed, with more hostility towards religion and suspicion towards those in leadership roles.

He described four dangers that clergy can fall into:

- Burning out (doing too much)
- Drying out (because of the busyness, prayer life is squeezed)
- Falling out (due to conflict arising in difficult situations)
- Crashing out (crashing out of ministry due to a crisis)

Synod were asked for input on how on how clergy wellbeing could be improved. The following comments were made:

**Rev Paul Benfield (General Synod)** spends a lot of time helping clergy who are going through difficulties. Clergy can be anxious and see the diocesan structure/hierarchy as being against them. He suggested forming a support panel to help people in these circumstances.

**Ms Jacqueline Stamper, (Lancaster and Morecambe Deanery and General Synod)** is on the national steering group and she commended the paper. She would like to see more about ministerial development and more support for retired clergy and PTOs as they are heavily depended upon. We all have a responsibility to listen and care for one another.

**Rev Stephen Cooper (Garstang Deanery)** pointed out that the diocesan paper does not mention about doing more with less. Dealing with multi-parish benefices can be stressful and he feels there is an issue with how they are managed. When single church benefices are advertised, it creates more work for other clergy, which is not sustainable. He believes a deployment strategy is needed.

**Dr Peter Roberts (Kirkham Deanery)** explained he had seen a few examples of clergy who have crashed out/dried out that were not well supported. He would like to see more laity involved in some of the demanding situations. It is also important to give some thought to the wellbeing of the laity.

**Rev David Phillips (Chorley Deanery)** asked whether any progress had been made with the English Clergy Association. He recently found out he was entitled to take a retreat which was paid for by his PCC.

**Archdeacon Mark** thanked each of the speakers for their input. He will consider Rev Benfield's suggestion of a support panel further. He also agreed with Ms Stamper's view on retired clergy and thinks this is a challenge that should be taken up. However, as there are some large single parish benefices, it may not be possible to end them. There also is a need to follow up on the English Clergy Association. Ecclesiastical did offer clergy professional assurance but demand for this was low, possibly because it was not widely publicised.

## **7. Elections to Diocesan Synod and its Boards and Committees 2018**

**Mr Tim Cox** explained that clergy and lay numbers for Diocesan Synod membership needed to be approved before December 2017. The figures presented were based on electoral roll data that had been returned.



Synod were asked if they would like to approve the proposed numbers to be elected.

With the exception of 2 abstentions, all voted **in favour** and the proposal was **carried**.

Mr Cox also asked Synod to note the timetable for elections.

Mrs Hargreaves confirmed that 'Deanery Synod Elections' on page 3 of her paper should read 'Board and Committee Elections'.

**Mr Joseph Brookfield (Preston Deanery)** asked whether provision could be made within the membership of Synod for underrepresented groups within the Diocese.

Mr Cox explained that Bishop Julian makes a number of nominations to Synod which are at his discretion.

## **8. Proclamation of Canons**

None.

## **9. Questions Submitted in Accordance with Diocesan Synod Standing Orders**

None.

## **10. Motions Submitted in Accordance with Diocesan Synod Standing Orders**

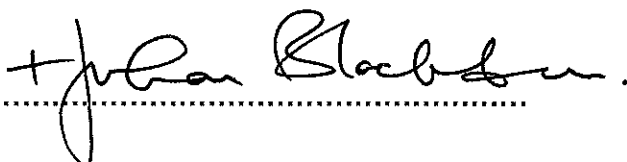
None.

## **11. Closing Prayer**

**Bishop Julian** announced that the process of recruiting a new Bishop of Lancaster has begun. Interviews will be held on 29 and 30 November. He asked all present to pray for a successful process and appointment.

**Bishop Julian** closed the meeting with prayer.

The next meeting will be held on Saturday 17 March 2018.

Signed ..... 

Dated ..... 