

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

Thursday 16 July 2020

Present

2 Members of the House of Bishops
34 Members of the House of Clergy
36 Members of the House of Laity

Apologies

1 Member of the House of Bishops
11 Members of the House of Clergy
9 Members of the House of Laity

1. Welcome and Opening Worship

Bishop Julian welcomed all present to the meeting and expressed his thanks to Canon Simon Cox and Rev Ian Enticott as this would be their last meeting. Opening worship was led by Tunstall Deanery.

2. Presidential Address

Bishop Julian gave his thanks to everyone around the Diocese for the way in which they had responded to the challenges brought about by Covid-19. He described the way the Diocese had adapted as being inspirational. Whilst the pain and loss experienced should not be understated, there had been many exciting new ways to connect with and care for those in our communities.

He spoke about what we as church should do in response to the rising number of Covid cases in some parts of the Diocese and how coming out of lockdown required wise decisions.

Looking ahead, it will be important to plan for the next phase of 'being church' and decide on our priorities. He underlined the seriousness of the financial challenges that would be faced unless there is a major increase in giving and a reduction in expenditure.

Flexibility will be needed to embrace the new opportunities we are given as we move towards 2026. Our Vision Implementation Plan is being refined and will be launched early in 2021. It will be important to step forward with courage, realism, confidence and faith.

3. Diocesan Board of Education Annual Report and Accounts 2019

Canon Stephen Whittaker (Director of Education) presented the Diocesan Board of Education Annual Report and Accounts for 2019. The details can be found in the attached slide pack.

Questions were invited and the following was noted.

Canon Alistair McHaffie (Preston Deanery) spoke about the possibility of his church school running assemblies via Zoom. He asked if any resources will be produced for clergy who may be running school worship in quite a different way.

Canon Whittaker confirmed support would be provided to schools including some video resources for use as part of their worship. He will give further thought to providing some support for clergy also.

Prof Richard Carter (Lancaster and Morecambe Deanery) pointed out that two of the strategic objectives within the report related to higher and further education but nothing had been mentioned in the presentation.

Canon Whittaker confirmed there are chaplains working hard in each of the three universities and the UCLAN chaplain had been developing a central resource for spirituality for the University of Cumbria. Canon Whittaker will be meeting with the various institutions regarding how this might develop.

Bishop Julian gave his thanks to Canon Whittaker and his team for their hard work.

4. Vision 2026 Update

Mrs Carolyn Barton (Vision Co-ordinator) introduced her paper and updated Synod on the process currently underway for reviewing the implementation of Vision 2026 and aligning the strategy going forward.

The review began early in 2020 with the Vision survey which had received a response from almost every parish in the Diocese. Meetings had then taken place with Area Deans, the Bishop's Leadership Team and the Bishop's Council. The summary of outcomes is set out in her paper along with an overview of what is helping us achieve the Vision and what the challenges are.

The draft Implementation Plan will be presented at Diocesan Synod in October for discussion with a view to launching the next phase in early 2021.

Questions were invited.

Canon Alastair McHaffie (Preston Deanery) asked:

- What percentage of parishes are not buying into the Vision?
- Are we making any plans for reducing clergy?
- Is there any effort being made to attract Asian and Eastern European clergy?

Mrs Barton confirmed:

- approximately 10% of parishes do not have a Vision Champion or engage on Vision matters.
- Maintaining clergy number remains one of our flagship commitments and there are no plans to reduce clergy numbers.
- Diversity and inclusivity are a priority for the Diocese.

5. Clergy Care and Wellbeing

Ms Jacqueline Stamper (General Synod and Lancaster and Morecambe Deanery) explained that the Covenant for Clergy Care and Wellbeing focuses on mutual accountability and shared responsibility for one another's wellbeing, both clergy and lay. The wellbeing of the clergy affects many people, just as the wellbeing of the laity affects both clergy and the wider church.

There is a focus on shared commitments and acting locally to make improvements, and on prevention rather than cure. There is a shift to a coordinated response and working towards cultural change with the local church, the Diocese and the National Church being aligned.

To assist in the implementation of the covenant, dioceses are being asked to report on progress to the newly formed Clergy Care and Wellbeing Facilitation Group no later than February 2023. There are some national resources that will be made available soon.

Bishop Jill highlighted that data seems to suggest clergy flourish best when they feel they are doing well in their post and they want to know when they are doing a good job. A number of new areas of support for clergy are being looked at within the Diocese. These are set out in item B of the paper.

Ms Stamper explained that in usual circumstances Synod would be invited to formally adopt the covenant. In current circumstances she invited:

- Diocesan Synod to debate the covenant with a view to its adoption
- PCCs and Deanery Synods to consider and adopt the Covenant for themselves
- all to take the shared commitments forward
- all to request the Bishop to sponsor a clergy study day on care and wellbeing
- all to consider how the work could be best taken forward in the Diocese.

Comments, suggestions and feedback should be emailed to Bishop Jill or Ms Stamper.

Questions were invited.

Mr Tim Cox (Vice Chair of the House of Laity and Preston Deanery) commented on several points within the paper:

- Section B(1) of the paper states that Liverpool Diocese “encouraged good practice by asking questions which gave clergy helpful steers as to what the Diocese valued”. He asked if these were leading questions.
- Is the 3D coaching desired by the clergy or is it something the Diocese require them to undertake?
- He asked for an update on the trialling of the new Launchpad programme.

Bishop Jill confirmed:

- The Liverpool survey was framed around the importance of clergy taking some time off each week.
- Clergy can opt into 3D coaching if they would like to. It is intended as a positive means of support.
- Launchpad was partly trialled prior to the lockdown and will be continued when it is possible.

Rev Stephen Corbett (Blackburn Diocese) asked about the Sheldon review of the Clergy Discipline Measure (CDM) and whether there was any joined-up thinking on this.

Ms Stamper confirmed that work around the covenant is not related to disciplinary measures.

Bishop Julian confirmed there is a review of the CDM taking place by the Bishop of Lambeth which will be coming to General Synod at some stage soon.

He will be speaking with Bishop Jill and Ms Stamper regarding how the covenant can be taken forward in the Diocese.

6. New Lay Majority Ministry Framework

Rev Nick McKee (Director of Vocations) highlighted the importance of lay ministry. The majority of ministers across Lancashire are lay. The intention is to provide a framework of freedom to allow the maximum number of people to participate as fully as possible in the life, mission and ministry of the local church. There are 4 categories within the framework:

- Informal lay ministers who need minimal or no training, eg people on the welcome team.
- Authorised Lay Ministers who require some training to equip them in more involved ministry, eg children's or pastoral work. The training will begin to run later in 2020.
- Licenced Lay Ministers and Church Army Evangelists. These are nationally recognised ministries that require substantial training.

Questions were invited.

Mr Tim Cox (Vice Chair of the House of Laity and Preston Deanery) asked about churches that choose not to engage with licenced lay ministry and those who regularly lead that do not wish to go forward for authorised lay ministry

Rev McKee acknowledged that there will always be those who choose to disconnect but that we need to work with the vast majority who will be willing to engage. As people engage and experience, it is hoped that the framework will gain ground.

Rev Nancy Goodrich (Tunstall Deanery) asked where occasional preachers fit into the framework.

Rev McKee explained that the occasional lay preachers' course will not be offered in isolation but will be integrated into the formalised lay ministry programme. Those who undertake occasional lay preaching will have some investment in their own spiritual disciplines and discipleship as part of the preparations for preaching.

Rev Fiona Jenkins (Whalley Deanery) asked if current occasional preachers will need to retrain.

Rev McKee confirmed this would not be the case.

Mrs Natalie Cox (Preston Deanery) asked about churches choosing not to use lay readers because they already have occasional preachers.

Rev McKee stated that generally people are seeking to balance their ministry teams. It is important to steer away from restrictions being placed on those who are properly trained and authorised to deliver ministry.

7. General Synod Report

Rev Stephen Corbett (General Synod and Blackburn Deanery) presented his report from General Synod in February for noting.

Bishop Julian reported there had been a virtual General Synod earlier in July. There had been a paper on how the church has reacted to the Covid-19 situation.

Permission had been granted by Parliament to extend General Synod's term for a further year. Elections will now take place in summer 2021.

8. Questions

None.

9. Any Other Business

Bishop Julian informed Synod that the North West Bishops had made a decision in June to propose the formation of a new theological institution in the North West to take over the work of All Saints Centre for Mission and Ministry, St Mellitus North West and Cumbrian Christian Learning. This will be one of the biggest institutions in the country. Work on this will commence in September 2021.

10. Closing Prayer

The meeting closed with the Vision Prayer led by Bishop Julian.

Signed:

Julian Blackburn

Dated:

September 2020

[Signature]