

DS 948

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

11 March 2017

Present

1 Member of the House of Bishops
39 Members of the House of Clergy
55 Members of the House of Laity

Apologies

11 Members of the House of Clergy
10 Members of the House of Laity

1. Welcome

The meeting was opened by Mr Bob Collins who welcomed nine of our Vision Champions from across the Diocese to the meeting.

Standing Orders were suspended.

2. Worship

Bishop Julian asked members of Synod to remember Bishop Philip in their prayers following his announcement to withdraw from his acceptance of the role of Bishop of Sheffield on Thursday 9 March. Bishop Philip will be warmly welcomed back into his role as Bishop of Burnley on his return to work. Bishop Julian also asked Synod to pray for Archbishop Sentamu and the Diocese of Sheffield at this time of uncertainty.

Opening worship was led by Burnley Deanery and included a reading from 2 Corinthians 4:7-18 as well as prayers for Bishop Philip and Lent.

3. Vision Stories

Mr David Champness introduced the session. The Vision Champions present at the meeting and two Synod members then shared their Vision stories via several short presentations as follows:

- **Mr Tony Dunne (St Leonards Walton-Le-Dale, Leyland Deanery)** – Growth Groups (Making Disciples)
- **Mrs Lillian Duffy (St Barnabas, Darwen, Blackburn Deanery)** – Vision Champion in a Parish in Vacancy and Lay Reader Course (Growing Leaders)
- **Mrs Carolyn Johnson (St Hilda's Billsborough, Garstang Deanery)** – Praise & Play Children (Children, Young People & Schools)
- **Ms Jackie Hough (Dolphinholme, Lancaster Deanery)** – Life as a Rural Vision Champion
- **Rev Pauline Bicknell (St Wilfrid's Halton, Tunstall Deanery)** – Messy Church Leads to Confirmation (Growing Leaders)
- **Mr Grant Davies (All Saints, Anchorholme, Blackpool Deanery)** – Being a Vision Champion in an Urban Setting
- **Ms Joanne Hutchinson (St John's Lytham, Kirkham Deanery)** – Home Front Line 1940's Weekend (Being Witness)
- **Rev Anton Muller (Churches Together in Lancashire)** – How is Vision 2026 Being Seen by Ecumenical Partners?
- **Mrs Kathryn Sperring (St Thomas Garstang, Garstang Deanery)** – Youth and Children Including Spiritual Direction (Young People)
- **Mrs Ruth Fort (St Stephen's Burnley, Burnley Deanery)** – Occasional Preachers and Children's Group Leaders (Growing Leaders)
- **Mr Peter Tomkinson (Freedom Church Mereside, Blackpool Deanery)** – Transforming Communities in an Outer Estate

Mr Champness thanked the Vision Champions for attending to share their experiences.

4. Provision of oversight and leadership in the future

Bishop Julian explained that a thorough consultation process was necessary prior to applying to the Diocese Commission for a new suffragan bishop to replace Bishop Geoff. The Diocese Commission will require paperwork by 24 May for submission on 6 June. Papers will need to be signed off at the Bishop's Council Meeting on 13 May.

Synod then split into small discussion groups to consider the following questions and any other relevant issues of importance:

- (a) Looking back, what structure of oversight in the Diocese has worked well or not so well?
- (b) Looking ahead, what structure of oversight would help us be more effective in our mission?

Feedback was invited. The main points raised were:

Canon Alastair McHaffie (Leyland Deanery) felt that present structures had worked well and the three Bishops have always been available when necessary. He advised against overburdening the Area Deans if roles are to change. Better support would be needed if their workload was increased.

Mrs Margaret Stewart (Chorley Deanery) agreed that the Bishops are accessible to all under the present structure although some would like to see more of them. Both Suffragan Bishops are needed to cover the wide geographical area and the current structure also allows different traditions to be represented. Three bishops are also needed to adequately fulfil their supporting role to clergy.

Rev Peter Lillicrap (Blackpool Deanery) explained that his group would need clarity around roles in order to answer the questions posed. As a starting point, it would be useful to know more about the roles of the Diocesan Bishop, Suffragan Bishops and Archdeacons. He pointed out that the Archdeacons within the Liverpool Diocese are being funded by the Church Commissioners.

Rev Michael Hampson (Tunstall Deanery) spoke of there being a great distance between the episcopate of the Diocese and lay people within parishes. Although Bishop Julian visited his parish some time ago, people had not seen him since then. He believes it would good use of time if Bishop Julian attended deanery and chapter meetings.

Dr Peter Roberts (Kirkham Deanery) agreed that support to the lay is important but that Bishops are also needed to provide regular pastoral support to the clergy.

Rev David Phillips (Chorley Deanery) pointed that there are fewer clergy and laity in the Diocese than several years ago. If numbers are to be cut, then some of the workload needs to be taken off the Bishops. Without knowing what the Bishops do, it is not possible to know what that might be. It is also important to be realistic about what the Bishops can do. He does not feel it is up to him to dictate this.

Rev Tom Donaghey (Accrington Deanery) spoke about the natural orientation between the east and west of the Diocese and asked whether the Suffragan Bishops could be centrally based as this may create more unity.

Canon Timothy Lipscomb (Preston Deanery) sees the Diocese's future as a great challenge. However, through its wounds it could lead the way forward. It is difficult for the Diocesan Bishop to keep a balance between national church and the Diocese. Two suffragan bishops are needed to lead whilst he is away and to keep the balance between the traditions, he would like to see the continuation of a catholic bishop and an evangelical bishop.

Mr Derek Matthews (Lancaster and Morecambe Deanery) pointed out that job descriptions for the Diocesan Bishop and Suffragan Bishops have not been published on the website. It would be useful to have these.

Rev Alan Hogarth (Chorley Deanery) emphasised that people come along to mission events when they are led by bishops. He believes that evangelical bishops are needed to lead missions and get involved in Vision 2026 within the Diocese.

Rev Tracy Swindells (Whalley Deanery) believes the Diocese is a model example of how the different traditions can work together. Three bishops are needed to continue with this.

Rev Roger Parker (Burnley Deanery) spoke of the excellent pastoral care received due to having three bishops to cover the geographical area. There is also a need to keep the status quo with both traditionalists and evangelicals. He believes Area Deans have enough to do already and that we have enough Archdeacons.

Mrs Sandy Harris (Kirkham Deanery) commented on needing three bishops to cover the geography of the Diocese and different traditions. Bishops need to spend a lot of time travelling due to the large geographical area.

Bishop Julian prompted Synod to "think outside of the box" regarding future structure and the following points were then raised:

Mrs Vivienne Goddard (Leyland Deanery) commented on the long hours worked by Bishop John prior to his retirement and how clergy value their MDRs being carried out by the Bishops.

Mrs Susan Witts (Blackburn with Darwen Deanery) pointed out that Leicester Diocese recently have gained permission to appoint a new bishop with a role specifically linked to presence and engagement.

Rev Stephen Corbett (Blackburn with Darwen Deanery) suggested recruiting a new suffragan bishop with a specialist missionary role to lead on the planting of the 50 new congregations. This could potentially be based on the Bishop of Islington role.

Rev Chris Newlands (Lancaster and Morecambe Deanery) commented on the lack of women in senior roles within the Diocese. If Blackburn is to be seen as a model diocese for the five guiding principles, this would be strengthened by having a female bishop.

Dr Awena Carter (Lancaster and Morecambe Deanery) suggested that bishops could have more defined/specialist roles as well as an overarching role towards the clergy.

Dr Peter Roberts (Kirkham Deanery) suggested having four bishops to ensure the provision of spiritual leadership to congregations as well as clergy.

Bishop Julian thanked Synod for their input and acknowledged the points made regarding Bishops' job descriptions being outside of the public arena, although he explained there is accountability. Bishops are also assigned to specific roles although these are not always widely known. He confirmed that the cost of a new Archdeacon would not necessarily have to be funded by the Diocese as the rules have changed and a bid for an additional Archdeacon or Assistant Archdeacon is a possibility.

Members were asked to put completed response forms in the box at the end of the meeting and to pass any further thoughts to Bishop Julian.

5. Presentation by Rev Peter Warren, International Church in Cambodia

Canon Simon Cox introduced Rev Peter Warren, who was previously a vicar in Blackpool for 11 years and now a Pastor for the International Church in Cambodia.

Rev Warren briefly shared his experiences with the International Church in a short presentation. The main highlights were:

- Work with the International Church in Cambodia is a cross-cultural mission in an environment that is hot, humid and dusty.
- Although there are similarities to working as a vicar in Blackpool, the context is different. It involves living and working in a very different culture. People from all over the world are part of the church. There are people from all different continents in his church from thirty different countries. People come for many different reasons as individuals or as part of organisations (eg, teachers, doctors, nurses, missionaries).
- Ex-patriots can be lonely and driven people. Often they come for a season and can learn from each other. The church is very fluid with people constantly joining and leaving and there is a constant need to find volunteers.
- Focus is centred on the work of Christ. It is exciting, exhausting stimulating, challenging and sometimes chaotic. God moves people as he works out his plans.
- Opinions can divide people. There is a worldwide happening of people on the move. It is currently estimated that a billion people are on the move. The International Church is like a crossroads.
- Sometimes people come for protection (eg refugees).
- When people are away from home they are more open to new (spiritual) possibilities.

- It is helping him to grasp the variety and scope of God's kingdom.

Rev Warren concluded by asking Synod to remember and pray for international churches across the world.

6. Proclamation of Canons

None

7. Motions submitted in accordance with Diocesan Synod Standing Orders

None

8. Questions submitted in accordance with Diocesan Synod Standing Orders

None

9. Notices

The next Diocesan Synod will be held on Saturday 15 July at Blackburn Cathedral.

10. Closing Prayer

The meeting concluded with a blessing and prayers by Bishop Julian.

Signed

+ Julian Blackburn

Dated

13/5/17.

