

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

13 October 2018

Present

3 Members of the House of Bishops
38 Members of the House of Clergy
42 Members of the House of Laity
3 Observers

Apologies

4 Members of the House of Clergy
16 Members of the House of Laity

1. Welcome and Eucharist

The meeting was chaired by **Mr Bob Collins**, Chair of the House of Laity.

Bishop Julian welcomed members of Diocesan Synod to the meeting.

Bishop Julian led the Eucharist, which included a reading from the Book of Galatians 3: 19-28.

2. Welcome to Blackpool Ministry Experience Volunteers

Bishop Julian welcomed Miss Amy Bland and Mr Eden Worrall, two of the Blackpool Ministry Experience Volunteers. A third volunteer, Miss Rebecca Burmiston had sent her apologies. All three Blackpool Ministry Experience Volunteers were looking forward to spending time on the project and prayers followed for them, along with prayers of thanks for Rev Tracey Charnock.

3. Parish Share Budget

Mr David Barlow, Chair of the Diocesan Board of Finance Limited, presented the Parish Share Budget for 2019.

The budget had been through various stages of challenge, refinement and scrutiny prior to receiving approval from the Board of Finance Trustees. Mr Barlow thanked the Finance Team, the Budget Committee and the Bishop's Budget Team for their hard work and involvement in this process.

He explained how the budget is about raising and allocating the investment required to undertake our shared Vision. It funds both the clergy and those employed at Clayton House, so they can support the work of Christ in the Diocese. 70% of the Diocese's income is invested in people, with a further 11% invested in property to house the clergy. 5% is also invested in parochial training.

The main budget points for 2019 include:

- Lower Incomes Community Funding has been looked at carefully. The proposed measures provide a stop gap to allow time for the review of a new share system. Going forward, it will be important to provide the deprived parishes with all the funding earmarked for them whilst at the same time demonstrating to the Church Commissioners that this funding is being directed to the deprived parishes. More transparency with the process is needed and a meeting has been arranged early in 2019 to get input and guidance from the parishes affected.

In order to specifically allocate money to the deprived parishes, the net amount of National Church money used in reducing the main parish share budget has been reduced by £399k. This had been achieved partly by using reserves. Additionally, 2% of the 4% increase in the Share request relates to this redistribution of Lowest Income Funding money.

With this re-direction of money and the current Share system's use of the Social Economic Multiplier calculation to target deprived parishes, some £1.2m has been distributed to the 20% most deprived parishes by income nationally.

- The use of £312k in free reserves will be used to reduce the increase in parish share to parishes. Alongside this, there will be a cap of 5% on the increase, where the Cost of Ministry element has not changed. This is estimated at £70k, also from free reserves.
- The Share collection rate has once again been a key challenge. If it continues at 89% it will result in a further decrease in free reserves of £328k, making this a total of £710k coming from free reserves. As in previous years, there was concern about the general level of giving in the Diocese, which remains amongst the lowest in the country.
- Giving is not an end in itself; it reflects our own personal response to God, His grace and generosity. Hence the need to review our discipleship, the key theme for 2019, and what it means to live as a follower of Jesus today.
- The Diocese is committed to maintaining its stipendiary numbers in the future.
- An increase of 5% has been allowed for repairs and refurbishment to stipendiary clergy housing.
- Vacancies continue to be budgeted centrally. This means all parishes benefit every year from the vacancies rather than having a reduction in share when they are in vacancy. The expected level of vacancies has increased by 2 to 14 this year.
- As in previous years, Whalley Abbey's funding for 2019 of £120k will be from reserves.

Mr Barlow then moved on to explaining the figures in more detail:

- The main source of income will be the Share received from parishes and the biggest expenditure will be parochial staffing and related costs (ie, parish incumbents and curates). The income the Diocese receives in share equates to 97% of parochial staffing costs.
- The proposed increase in share requested is 4%. This will not be the actual increase for all parishes because changes in RWA are taken into account which affects parishes differently, hence the cap of 5% on any increase for individual parishes which is estimated to cost £70k.
- The non-share income and fees reduce the amount required from parishes, as does the use of reserves. The share relief fund of 8% has been added, to arrive at the final amount requested.
- The budget as stated utilises some £389k from reserves, including £77k from restricted reserves but with share collection rates at only 89% the total shortfall in 2019 is likely to be closer to £710k, which is the amount that will be underwritten from reserves.
- The Diocese has benefitted over the last few years from increases in the value of its investments, which the Investment Committee continues to manage well. This additional £595k in investment income has been included in the share calculation. However, investment value can fall as well as rise and the outcome of Brexit could have a negative impact on investments going forward.

Mr Barlow highlighted the importance of prayer alongside the budget to enable the success of Vision 2026. He urged Synod members to think about what they could do individually to further Vision 2026. This might include encouraging Vision Champions or having the Vision prayer as part of weekly church intercessions.

Bishop Julian emphasised the need to address stewardship at a local level as the Diocese cannot continue into the future with a deficit budget. He asked Synod to feed back the message to parishes that giving needs to increase if the Diocese is to continue what it is currently doing. A 4% increase in share is ambitious, but this is what it will cost without including anything new. It is a matter of stewardship and prayer.

Mr Bob Collins (Chair of the House of Laity) invited questions.

Ms Jacqueline Stamper (Lancaster and Morecambe Deanery and General Synod) expressed her appreciation regarding the work that had gone into preparing the budget. She emphasised the importance of the Lowest Income Communities Funding being directed into the lowest income communities. One of the questions asked during the Peer Review process is about how this funding is getting to the communities it is intended for.

Mrs Vivienne Goddard (General Synod) reported that the Ministry Council is beginning to push towards investing in the laity and increasing ordinand numbers. She expressed concern that the Diocese is spending £187k less in these areas than before.

Mrs Joan Kirkwood (Chorley Deanery) asked for clarification regarding the £120k budgeted expenditure for Whalley Abbey.

Mr Mike Briers (Kirkham Deanery) thought the subsidised amount of £710k seemed high and asked about the amount held in reserves.

Mr Barlow explained the following:

- The sum of £120k is the net cost of the subsidy that has been going to Whalley Abbey for several years. More detail is available for those who would like it.
- The £710k subsidy within the proposed budget will reduce the Diocese's free reserves to approximately £4.3 million.
- There had been a slight reduction in the figure for training but not as much as stated.
- Transparency around Lowest Income Communities Funding will be addressed.

A period of silent prayer followed.

Mr Barlow moved that "this Synod accepts the recommended budget for 2019 with a total amount requested from parishes (Calculated Assessment) of £9,256,380 and a total expenditure of £11,024,154 and agrees to fund the 5% cap (unless there has been a change to ministry) on the increase from reserves."

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

4. Diocesan Board of Education Annual Report and Accounts 2018

Mr Stephen Whittaker, Director of the Board of Education presented the report and accounts for the Diocesan Board of Education for the year ending 31 December 2017.

The main content of his presentation can be found within the slide pack (attached).

Questions were invited.

Rev Steve Haskett (Blackpool Deanery) asked how the DBE is tackling the issue of recruiting Head Teachers and Deputy Head Teachers.

Ms Jacqueline Stamper (Lancaster and Morecambe Deanery and General Synod) praised Mr Whittaker and his team for their hard work. She highlighted the importance of ensuring that young people are fully integrated with the Church as they underpin Vision 2026.

Prof Richard Carter (Lancaster and Morecambe Deanery) congratulated Mr Whittaker and his team for their achievements. He asked whether there was any work being carried out within further and higher education.

Bishop Jill thanked the Education Team for their efforts. She pointed out that children and school work is a key area as most people come to faith at school age.

Mrs Vivienne Goddard (General Synod) pointed out the importance of PCCs and school governors, etc working together to ensure that Christian values do not disappear when children leave school. It is important to hold onto children when they leave education.

Ms Jackie Hough (Lancaster and Morecambe Deanery) would also like to see more focus from this perspective. She spoke of two young people from her own parish that had signed up to the youth council but how this did not really get off the ground.

Rev Anderson Jeremiah (Lancaster and Morecambe Deanery) asked about incentivising churches to use resources as part of mission. He also spoke about the lack of daily worship in schools and whether anything could be done to challenge this.

Rev Marc Wolverson (Leyland Deanery) spoke about the relationship between parishes and schools. He uses the requirement of attending church in order to get children into schools as an opportunity, so people feel encouraged and learn about the Christian faith. However, he asked whether there was a more creative way to get people to engage, to help them understand the ethos of the schools and help them understand that Christianity is a commitment (eg, a 'Start'-type course).

Mr Whittaker responded to the questions and points raised.

The Board of Education had been running some leadership courses in partnership with DBE Services which underpin the Christian vision and help potential Head Teachers and Deputy Head Teachers understand the role from this perspective.

Work is carried out in higher education institutions within the Diocese and the DBE is looking at its future vision for work in this area. Whilst there are three chaplains based at universities within the Diocese, further education institutions have ceased their funding for chaplains and there is no other means to pay for them. However, the DBE is in regular conversation with its further education partners in the hope that they may provide some funding in the future.

Some work is underway regarding relationships between incumbents and schools. Mr Whittaker urged incumbents to speak with schools regarding ways they can inter-relate. Whilst the school is a mission field where seeds are cast, it is the church's place to put children in the church. Schools are the pathway to mission.

Mr Whittaker will follow up on the issue with the youth council.

The DBE intend to increase their presence in schools where there are staff new to roles to explain how they can help and they will be using this as an opportunity to show them the resources that are available. The national picture is a concern; there seems to be a massive push to remove religion from schools, which is why it is important to hold onto our individual schools. Mr Whittaker had written to the Secretary of State inviting him to visit in order to see how a Christian presence within schools can work for all.

The Schools' Adjudicator has agreed one measure of 'Christian' that can be applied for entry into schools, which is for the parents and children to attend church. A 'Start'-type course could be open to a legal challenge as the parents who resent attending such a course could complain to the Schools Adjudicator. Mr Whittaker agreed there are no easy answers.

Mr Whittaker moved that "the summary Annual Report and Financial Statements of the Diocesan Board of Education for the year ending 31 December 2017 be received."

All members voted **in favour** and the motion was **carried**.

5. Preston Resourcing Parish Stage 2 Application for Strategic Development Funding

Bishop Philip presented the Stage 2 Strategic Development Fund application for the Preston Resourcing Parish. He urged Synod to be inspired by Vision 2026.

The hope is to create two vibrant, joyful churches that are witnessing, growing and attracting families, students and people from every aspect of life, and a parish that is available to the rest of the Diocese through planting. It will also be an opportunity to have different traditions working together for the benefit of Preston and the whole Diocese.

He added that although this is an innovative, creative project, it comes with a degree of risk. However, the basic model had been applied in other Dioceses and had proven to be successful.

Archdeacon Michael Everitt pointed out that Holy Trinity Brompton are confident in their ability to make the project a success. He assured Synod that local issues of importance and the distinctive mission needs of Preston will be honoured. The congregations have been consulted and they are keen to see the project develop as long as the other parties involved are also fully engaged and keen to embrace the future.

Mr Dave Champness, Vision Co-ordinator, described how Preston Minster and St Georges are two magnificent buildings with plenty of space for growth. A congregation of 400 within the two churches is estimated by the end of 2023 and it is anticipated that only 15% will be transfer growth from other parishes. Although this is an ambitious target, growth in other parts of the country had been even quicker and higher where Holy Trinity Brompton had been involved. Preston is a vibrant community with a large student population and a lot of growth is expected to come from the younger age group.

Contributions are expected to increase over time from the growth in congregations. It was proposed that any shortfall in local income generation from the project will be underwritten by the Diocesan Vision Fund. To mitigate this risk, a review of the project's progress will take place at the end of 2021. At this point, if the project's success falls short, there will be the opportunity to change direction if necessary.

Questions were invited by **Mr Bob Collins**.

Rev Alastair McHaffie (Preston Deanery and General Synod) asked when the resourcing would begin and how long it would take. He also asked what sort of resourcing was envisaged.

Rev Cindy Rigney (Lancaster and Morecambe Deanery) pointed out that a large amount of growth is aimed at the 18-30 age range and that they do not tend to have much money to give. She also asked whether the chaplaincy would be involved in the planning process.

Rev Steve Haskett (Blackpool Deanery) praised the ambitious target to reach young people. He asked how the Resource Church intended to engage with the community.

Archdeacon Michael Everett responded to the questions raised as follows:

- Worst case scenarios had been shared in the spirit of being as open and honest as possible.

- Resourcing had already begun. There had been lots of enthusiasm about the project and in 3 to 6 months' time the focus will be on how the Resource Parish will work with neighbours. Planted communities will be needed as a result of the new housing developments to the north of Preston and natural linkages with local churches will need to be built up. There is also much enthusiasm from St Wilfrid's RC Church and the Jesuit community. There is lots of collaborative work going on.
- Holy Trinity Brompton have the experience, methodology and understanding to achieve this work in parallel with our local church communities, which is why they were chosen. Students give generously of their time and money, and Preston was chosen because of its large student population.

Mr David Barlow moved that "this Synod approves the DBF's financial contribution to the budget for the Preston Resourcing Parish project as required for the Strategic Development Funding Stage 2 application.

The net DBF contribution will be between £786,000 and £1,584,000."

Except for 4 abstentions, all members voted **in favour** and the motion was **carried**.

6. Results of Elections to Diocesan Synod and Diocesan Synod meeting dates

Archdeacon Mark presented his paper, reflecting on the results of the recent elections.

He explained that although there are 226 places on Diocesan Synod which includes appointed members, there were still 49 House of Clergy vacancies and 38 House of Laity vacancies following the elections.

There seems to be a downward trend with an increasing number of vacancies. However, the numbers attending church within the Diocese on the whole has also reduced and it may be necessary to look at restructuring the size of Diocesan Synod accordingly. Under the existing structure, some deaneries can be significantly under-represented when vacancies are not filled.

The Synod Business Committee will be looking at this and will bring some ideas for streamlining numbers to a future meeting. Under the current rules, Diocesan Synods must have a minimum size of 100 members.

Comments were invited.

Rev Ian Enticott (Accrington Deanery) expressed his support for the move towards a reduced number of members.

Mr Tim Cox (Preston Deanery) explained that several clergy within the Preston Deanery had been new in post and that they did not want to be on the Synod for this reason. As well as looking at the size of the Synod, he suggested looking at who is wanting to get involved and finding creative ways to get people involved.

7. Peer Review Self-Assessment

Canon Graeme Pollard explained that the Diocese was due to undergo a peer review on 14 November. The National Peer Review Team visit each diocese every other year to carry out the review.

This is an important process and a lot of preparation work had already taken place. Synod members were invited to send in their thoughts and contributions regarding the self-assessment form by Monday 22 October.

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

The meeting concluded with prayer.

The next meeting of Diocesan Synod will be held on Saturday 23 March 2019.

Signed

+ John Bloembergen

Dated

25 March 2019