



DS 2047

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

Tuesday 18 October 2022

Present

1 Member of the House of Bishops
35 Members of the House of Clergy
27 Members of the House of Laity
1 Visitor

Apologies

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

1. Opening Worship

The meeting was chaired by **Mr Tim Cox (Vice-Chair of the House of Laity)**. The meeting opened with worship led by **Rev Peter Lillicrap (Chair of the House of Clergy)**.

2. Welcome and Opening Address

Bishop Philip welcomed Synod to the meeting. He observed the current energy in our parishes and the many exciting things happening around the Diocese.

The Diocese is committed to maintaining clergy numbers and he spoke of the three main items that are important to achieving this – generosity, vocations and evangelism.

He asked Synod to remember the dignity of what we do; although the Diocese is in a time of change, our call to Christ will never change.

3. DBF AGM

The Annual General Meeting of the Blackburn Diocesan Board of Finance followed. The minutes will be available separately.

4. Net Zero Carbon

Rev Canon Prof John Rodwell (Diocesan Environmental Officer) presented on Net Zero Carbon. His presentation is attached.

Synod were asked to consider the following questions in small groups, in order to contribute to the action plan that is being constructed within the Diocese:

- As a Diocese, what should our decarbonising priorities be?
- How do we underwrite the costs of decarbonising the Diocese? How much should be incorporated into the budget with share contribution?
- How do we embed Creation Care across all our areas of diocesan life and mission?

The information captured by each of the groups was gathered and will be used to help develop the action plan further.

Rev Chris Anderton (Blackburn with Darwen Deanery) asked if the effect of the grants given to schools is being monitored.

Dr Peter Roberts (Kirkham Deanery) asked how realistic the aim for 2030 is.

Rev Jonny Lee (Blackpool Deanery) asked if anything can be done to cut through the red tape and if guidance will be issued to the DAC.

Canon Stephen Whittaker (Interim Diocesan Secretary) stated there is a project looking at a decarbonisation plan for the schools in the Diocese. This will have a total cost of £157 million. The maximum amount has been claimed by our schools from the grant fund scheme and there will be nothing further available. Whilst every school is being monitored it is too early to obtain any data on results.

Rev Canon Rodwell explained that the 2030 target is a hope which we must endeavour to meet. It is also a target agreed by the Synod.

Canon Whittaker stated that National Church are in the process of shaping up further guidance.

Rev Canon Andrew Holliday (Chorley Deanery and Chair of the DAC) stated that the central building office is making a huge commitment to net zero and the DAC is committed to achieving it.

Prof Richard Carter (Lancaster and Morecambe Deanery) commented on longer term issues, eg giving up steel, concrete and cement, and also the impact of war on climate change.

Rev Canon Rodwell underlined the importance of getting the life and fabric of the church sustainable for the next decade and beyond.

Rev Carol Backhouse (Lancaster and Morecambe Deanery) had brought forward the following motion. This was moved on her behalf by **Rev Leah Vasey Saunders (Lancaster and Morecambe Deanery)**:

"This Synod accepts that the world is in a state of climate emergency, and acknowledges the necessity of a strong, visible Christian response to what is happening to our world.

This Synod therefore commits the Diocesan Board of Finance and the senior leadership team to strengthen the Net-Carbon Zero Task force, using senior representatives and experts:

(i) to work with every church, and the Diocese's own property portfolio, to assist in developing decarbonisation plans for its buildings, with a plan for this to be in place by July 2023;

(ii) to establish a range of projects focused on specific targets and technologies, eg solar panels, heat source pumps, insulation, boiler replacement, etc; and

(iii) to assist in delivering a strategy for the resourcing of such projects; with the commitment that all church buildings and Diocesan property in Blackburn Diocese have a clear roadmap in place to achieve net-zero carbon by 2030, in line with the Church of England Routemap to Net Zero Carbon by 2030, as adopted by the General Synod in July 2022."

Mr David Barlow said he was encouraged by the motion but pointed out the reality of the financial implications. Because the DBF do not have the funds to deal with the crisis within the timescale; this will need to be funded by our congregations.

Canon Whittaker stated that the National Church has set aside £190 million over 9 years towards net zero which will break down to approx. £700k per parish. It is not known at this stage when this will be made available or how it can be used. Whilst a lot of action planning has been carried out, advice on financing this will need to be taken.

Questions on the motion were invited.

Some members felt that it would have been useful to see the motion before the meeting and several thought they would have liked the opportunity to reword it.

Mrs Jacqueline Stamper (General Synod) was involved in putting the motion together and urged Synod to vote in favour.

Rev Sarah Gill (Blackburn with Darwen Deanery) highlighted how our actions create consequences for other people and that this is about justice for humanity. She felt it was important for Synod to support the motion.

Rev Adrian Wolton (Blackpool Deanery) suggested waiting for more information regarding the funding from the National Church before making decisions.

Mr Joseph Brookfield (Preston Deanery) said this is a justice issue which needs to be dealt with now.

Mr Barlow said that voting should be approached from the point of view of what is right; it is impossible to vote for this from a financial perspective.

Rev Chris Scargill (Kirkham Deanery) pointed out this is a Christianity issue as well as a justice issue.

Rev Chris Anderton (Blackburn with Darwen Deanery) asked about the time and energy required from the senior leadership team and whether it would be more reasonable to extend the timetable to past 2030.

Bishop Philip confirmed that the Vision and Strategy Team is committed to this agenda although he felt that 2030 is ambitious.

Rev Jonny Lee (Blackpool Deanery) spoke of the huge changes also needed outside of the Diocese and felt we should be putting effort into lobbying government.

Rev Anne Beverley (Kirkham Deanery) asked Synod if they are going to support the Vision and Strategy Group in terms of the time and effort needed.

Rev Leah Vasey-Saunders thanked Synod for their contributions.

In the vote:

Members voting in favour – 35

Members voting against - 11

Abstentions – 12

The motion was carried.

5. Re-Allocation of the Parsonages Board DS 2045

Mr David Barlow (Chair of the Board of Finance) explained that DBF Board was looking at its meeting structure and the structure of the DBF Committees.

Canon Stephen Whittaker (Interim Diocesan Secretary) explained that the Property Committee is a statutory committee and that the DBF is the Parsonage Board. The proposal sought to designate the Finance Committee as the Parsonages Board of the DBF. The background behind this is explained in paper DS 2045. It was hoped that the proposal would strengthen the position of beneficed clergy in terms of property whilst increasing efficiency.

Questions were invited.

Rev Paul Benfield (General Synod) urged Synod to vote against the motion. He felt that it placed too much power placed on the Finance Committee, that it would not be in the interests of beneficed clergy and that it was not legally compliant. He also pointed out that the representatives on the Property Policy and Strategy Committee had not been named.

Canon Whittaker said it was his opinion that the motion was legally compliant and that it would strengthen the position of beneficed clergy. The duty would fall to the newly-constructed Parsonages Board to draw up their Terms of Reference.

Mr David Barlow moved:

“This Diocesan Synod approves the Scheme to designate the Finance Committee of the Diocesan Board of Finance as the Parsonages Board for the Diocese of Blackburn.”

Due to the overwhelming majority of members voting against, the motion was **not carried**.

6. Proclamation of Canons

None

7. Questions

Two questions had been received from **Rev Canon Simon Cox (Blackpool Deanery)**:

Question 1:

Whilst welcoming the recent appointment of two Retired Clergy Officers and the aspirational introduction on the Diocesan Website (*The ministry of retired clergy is a vitally important part of the life of the diocese and our work together.*)

We have two Clergy Retirement Officers [one for each Archdeaconry] who offer pastoral support and encourage the exploration of new ministry opportunities. They enable networks of friendship, support and encouragement affirming the value of all retiring clergy and their spouses as well as a doorway to exploring what God calls for next.) will the Bishop share the Retired Clergy Officer's job descriptions and the way in which these aspirations are to be achieved?

Bishop Philip responded:

The new Role Description was drafted in July by our Retired Clergy Officers and has since been agreed by the People and Places Team. It is as follows.

There shall be two Clergy Retirement Officers, one for the Archdeaconry of Blackburn and the other for the Archdeaconry of Lancaster. They are appointed by the Diocesan Bishop. Their responsibilities are:

- To work with areas deans and parish clergy to ensure that pastoral care is available to all retired clergy (with or without PTO)
- To contact every retired clergy person within the archdeaconry at least once a year and more frequently in time of need
- To organise opportunities for retired clergy to get together for an annual diocesan quiet day
- To promote opportunities for more local gatherings of retired clergy for fellowship on either a deanery or archdeaconry basis as appropriate
- To ensure that news of sickness, bereavement, financial and other needs as well as celebrations is shared with the bishops, archdeacons and relevant area dean
- To keep abreast of charitable grants that may be available to retired clergy in financial need and to discuss any cases of hardship with the relevant archdeacon
- To work with the Bishop's Office in keeping an up to date address and contact list of all retired clergy and their partners. These retirees may or may not hold the Bishop's Permission to Officiate.
- To encourage the work of the retired Clergy Association
- To maintain good links with the Pensions Board as appropriate and liaise with them on welfare issues where necessary and appropriate

Question 2:

From the Diocesan Website, retired clergy are invited to *"Please get in touch especially if you are feeling isolated or if you have retired into The Diocese of Blackburn from another diocese and await a welcome."*

Would the Bishop reassure the Synod that the ministry of the Retired Clergy Officers towards all retirees will be proactive and not merely reactive?

Bishop Philip responded:

Pastoral care is offered proactively and reactively. That wording on the website is important as people sometimes retire into the diocese without the knowledge of the Bishops or Archdeacons. More proactive pastoral care is offered in a range of ways, some of which were outlined at the last Synod and can be found in the minutes. Furthermore it should be noted that PTO and retired clergy are not in posts of responsibility and so generally come under the care of an incumbent. Pro-active pastoral care is offered primarily from that source.

8. Motions

None.

The meeting closed with a prayer led by Bishop Philip.

Signed: *Philip Burnley*

Dated: *19.11.22*