

Leeds Diocesan Synod

DRAFT Minutes of the twenty fifth meeting of the Synod of the diocese held at 9.30 am on Saturday, 15 July 2023 via Zoom.

Chair: The Bishop of Leeds

1. Opening prayers, Welcome and Apologies

Worship was led by The Very Revd Andy Bowerman.

Mr Jonathan Wood, Secretary to the Diocesan Synod, (JW), confirmed the Zoom meeting procedure and that the Diocesan Communications Team would be using social media to provide a live general commentary on Synod.

Welcome

The Chair welcomed everyone including:

The Chair's permission to speak (SO3) was granted to:

- Emergency motion on Sudan: Frederico Awi Vuni.
- Item 6 - Presentation and Discussion: Leeds DBF 2022 Annual Report and Financial Statements, Geoff Park, Chief Finance Officer.
- Item 8 - Diocesan Boards and Committees' 2022 annual reports - for noting and a presentation to the Synod from the Diocesan Property Team, Mr John Knox, Director of Strategy Implementation & Head of Property.

Apologies

17 apologies were received.

The Chair confirmed the meeting was quorate.

Emergency Motion: Sudan

The Chair reported that an emergency motion on the situation in Sudan had been received from The Revd Canon Anne Russell (East Leeds deanery). A copy of the wording of the motion Document DS23 07 05 had been circulated to the members of the Synod by email.

Under Standing Orders 21 Bishop Nick confirmed that as President of the Synod he had directed that this matter was urgent and specifically important and therefore to be added to the Agenda.

Under Standing Order 26 (i), permission was given for the motion to be brought without notice and it was noted it would be considered after Item 3 - the Presidential Address.

Chair: Canon Matthew Ambler (Chair of the House of Laity)

2. Minutes of the last meeting on 18 March 2023.

The Chair proposed:

“That the draft minutes contained in DS23 07 01 be accepted as a true record of the Diocesan Synod meeting held on 18 March 2023”.

Synod voted on the motion:

For 78

Against: 0

Abstain: 4

The motion was approved.

JW updated Synod in relation to Item 7 “Update report on the Linda Box case” from the 18 March 2023 meeting. He informed Synod that:

“The mediation was held on Thursday, 13 July 2023 and we have been able, following robust and difficult exchanges, to agree a settlement which we believe compensates appropriately for the loss to the DBF and to the Bishop of Leeds.”

3. Presidential Address

The Bishop of Leeds gave his Presidential Address. A copy of the address is attached to these minutes.

Emergency Motion: Sudan

Paper: DS23 07 05 Wording of emergency motion on Sudan.

Proposer of the motion: The Revd Canon Anne Russell (East Leeds deanery)

Presenters: The Revd Canon Anne Russell (AR) and Frederico Awi Vuni (FAV).

An emergency motion had been received from The Revd Canon Anne Russell (East Leeds deanery). AR outlined that there had been clashes between the military RSF and the Sudanese government since 15 April. The situation was dangerous and food and medicines were in short supply. Agencies could not enter the centre of Sudan. The diocesan link group had managed to get some limited support through. The Church in Sudan was asking for prayer at the moment, rather than money or other support. The proposed motion was a request to the diocese’s churches to pray.

FAV outlined to the Synod members how the conflict in Sudan had escalated and the deadlock in seeking a solution. He said the only way though was prayer. On behalf of the church members in Sudan, he thanked the Diocese of Leeds for prayers so far. He asked for prayers for the protection of the Syrian people, for peace and for healing of the minds of the warring leaders.

There were no questions of clarification on the presentation.

Debate

Bishop Toby Howarth (Bishop of Bradford)

Thanked AR and FAV for bringing the emergency motion to the Synod. There were long standing link between the Diocese and the Episcopal Church in Sudan. He encouraged churches and deaneries across the diocese to pray for Sudan and to talk about Sudan and to be ready to speak about Sudan.

The Revd John Bavington (Inner Bradford Deanery and General Synod)

Strongly supported the motion. He mentioned that FAV's spouse was a Self-Supporting Assistant Curate at his church and there was a community of Sudanese and South Sudanese with tragic stories from the conflict in Sudan.

Bishop Arun Arora (Bishop of Kirkstall)

Bishop Arun wondered if the motion might include all clergy in the diocese and not just the just Area Deans and PCC Secretaries.

JW confirmed that it was planned that the request would be copied to all clergy.

Response to the debate

AR asked the Synod to remember that the link with Sudan was bold and confident and that help rested in Christ.

The Chair read out the motion proposed by The Revd Canon Anne Russell:

***“THAT** this Diocesan Synod, recognising the worsening crisis in Sudan and the long-established Link with the Episcopal Church of Sudan, calls upon the Secretary to the Diocesan Synod to send a letter together with Sudan information about prayer and information resources on behalf of this Diocesan Synod to every Area Dean, PCC Secretary and Dean in the diocese requesting:*

- 1. That every church in the Leeds Diocese is encouraged in their prayerful support of our brothers and sisters of Sudan throughout the current crisis.*

2. *That every Area Dean and Cathedral considers facilitating a prayer vigil in their deanery or Cathedral for Sudan during this crisis, and considers inviting participation by those of Sudanese heritage and Sudanese refugees who may live in their area."*

Synod voted on the motion via a Zoom poll. The result was:

For: 87

Against: None

Abstain: None

The motion was approved.

4. Questions to the Synod

The Chair reported that a Question had been received from The Revd Eve Ridgeway (North West Leeds deanery) and that a reply had been emailed to members.

The Revd Eve Ridgeway confirmed there was no supplementary question.

A supplementary question was asked by Stephen Hogg (General Synod). SH said he was a trustee of the Clergy Support Trust. SH asked JW if the diocese had data of support given by other charities and trusts?

JW answered confirmed he had seen the data and was grateful for the additional and wide support the Clergy Support Trust gave. There was other funding too for example the Lady Elizabeth Hastings trust but the question only referred to what was available from the diocese.

5. General Synod report (July 2023)

Paper: DS23 07 02 General Synod Report from Catherine Stephenson

Catherine Stephenson (General Synod) spoke on her circulated report. Catherine said there was more detail available on the Church of England website including papers and videos of the debates. Her report had focused on the main aspects of the General Synod sessions. Catherine said she had been particularly struck by the mutual support of the Diocese of Leeds General Synod members and this was noted by members from other dioceses. Catherine invited questions on her report.

There were no questions or comments.

6. Presentation and discussion: Leeds DBF 2022 Annual Report and Financial Statements

Paper: DS23 07 03 2022 Leeds DBF Annual report and financial statements

DS23 07 03 01 2022 Statutory Accounts Covering Paper

Speaker: Geoff Park (GP)

GP outlined that the item was an opportunity for a conversation to discuss diocesan finances generally. A PowerPoint presentation had been circulated prior to the meeting. GP highlighted from the presentation the reserves and net income of the diocese over the previous six years. There had been a significant deficit on 2017 and after a lot of work on costs, the finances were brought back to a balance position. The position had changed and the expected deficit was now £2.2m as shown on the unrestricted net income and free reserves 2017 – 2022 slide. Investments had decreased in value since 2022 but it should be noted that the value may improve again in the future because the investments had not been sold. Transfers from reserves had been used to cover the costs of closed churches or from the s554 funds to support the work of the Diocesan Board of Education.

Parish share contributions had peaked in 2019. Parish share contributions received had reduced during Covid but had slowly recovered. However, at the end of 2022, receipts were £1.5m lower than pre 2019.

Funds received from the national church have also decreased significantly. The national church had moved to the provision of restricted funds for specific projects or purposes rather than unrestricted funds they had previously provided.

Income from housing and the schools' service provided by the Education Team had risen. Expenditure on support for parish ministry had significantly reduced due to the cost saving measures which had been implemented in 2018 ie the support costs and reduction in housing expenditure. These had increased more recently partly due to implementation of delayed work on properties and the inflationary increase of works following Covid.

Although there was a significant amount of assets in property which accounts of £158M this is mostly made up of parsonage properties occupied by the clergy. Of the endowed funds, the stipends capital fund is used to generate income to pay stipends. The key was to have a strong position in the unrestricted cash funds. Although there was an underlying deficit, cash remained within the target figures.

The Finance Update slide showed that the £340k adverse to Budget figure was mainly due to lower parish share receipts than budgeted for. Current expectation was that the parish share receipts would not exceed 2022 which would result in a deficit against the budget.

Discussion questions

Tabitha Tanna (Wakefield deanery)

Thanked GP for the clear presentation and PowerPoint. Tabitha asked i) The reduction in monies from the National Church seemed to have reduced by a fair amount and less than the parish share amount. Was this a trend? And ii) There seemed to be a dramatic shift with regard to investments in the period 2021/2022. What assurance was there for the future?

Graham Foster (Halifax and Calder Valley deanery)

Asked where the monies recovered against Linda Box would be appear in the Accounts. In the March 2023 Diocesan Synod minutes, it was noted that the mediation had not been settled as yet. Where

would the final position be reported ie the known losses, costs incurred and recovered. Graham also asked if it was time for a jubilee for parish share over the next three years in exchange for a write off of old debt as had been done before?

GP responded to the questions

The way the National Church provides income had changed. Previously, funding under the Darlow formula provided each diocese with unrestricted funding. Now the trend was for unrestricted funding to reduce every year and for dioceses to apply for project funding which was restricted funding ie it could only be used for the purposed outlined in the bid.

With regard to the investment figures, the change shown is in the valuations which may increase/decrease daily. The gain or loss only crystallises when the investment is sold.

In response to the question about Linda Box GP said the Accounts circulated were for the year 2022 and there were no costs or recoveries in this period. Any monies received would be held on the Balance Sheet until the final position was known.

The Leeds Board did consider writing off all arrears during the previous nine months. It was agreed that all arrears would be written off where they related to the period prior to the current parish share Scheme. This would be all arrears for the period before 2017. The timing for this would be with regard to the parish share reports for 2024. GP highlighted that parish share were not a legal debt. They were just a record of what hadn't been paid to date.

Stephen Hogg (General Synod)

Emphasised that the parish share arrears were not a legal debt. Some PCCs were concerned about a debt they owed to the diocese but there wasn't an enforceable debt and this should be made very clear.

Graham Foster (Halifax and Calder Valley deanery)

Were the parish share arrears under the current system subject to a jubilee or was that a question for debate.

JW – the jubilee was discussed 9 months ago. Payment of parish share was fundamental as a resource for the provision of stipendiary ministry. At the moment there was no plan to apply the jubilee to the arrears under the current scheme. However, as the question had been now raised, the matter would be discussed with FAIC.

With regard to the Linda Box matter, any sums recovered would be split between the Leeds Diocesan Board of Finance and the Bishop of Leeds. The portion recovered by the Bishop of Leeds would not be in the Leeds Diocesan Board of Finance accounts as the Leeds DBF and the Bishop of Leeds were two separate corporate entities.

Canon Matthew Ambler (Huddersfield Deanery)

Commented that restrictions were in place in the mediation agreement governing what could and could not be disclosed with regard to the settlement.

The Revd Angela Hannafin (General Synod)

Expressed concern that the annual report didn't highlight the development of the laity.

GP – The intent wasn't to emphasise or exclude one strand of work. The strategy was to highlight Barnabas as the vehicle to deliver the diocesan Strategy. So there was no highlighting of any particular team ie the document wasn't about the centrality of the work of the diocese.

Synod took a refreshment break.

Chair: The Revd Canon Rachel Firth (Chair of the House of Clergy)

7. Motion: Leeds DBF 2022 Annual report and Financial Statements - for noting
Paper

DS23 07 03 Leeds DBF 2022 Annual report and Financial statements

DS23 07 03 01 Report on Leeds DBF 2022 Annual report and Financial Statements

Proposer and Presenter: Canon Mr Irving Warnett (Bishop's Nominee).

IW proposed the motion:

"That the 2022 Leeds Diocesan Board of Finance Annual report and Financial Statements contained in DS23 07 03 be noted".

There were no questions of clarification and Synod did not wish to debate the motion.

Synod voted on the motion:

For: 82

Against: 0

Abstain: 1

The motion was approved.

8. A Motion and Presentation: Diocesan Boards and Committees' 2022 annual reports - for noting and a presentation to the Synod from the Diocesan Property Team

Paper: DS23 07 04 Diocesan Boards and Committees' 2022 annual reports

DS23 07 04 01 Social and Digital Media Review 2022

Proposer: The Ven Bill Braviner (Archdeacon of Halifax).

Presenter: John Knox, Director of Strategy Implementation & Head of Property (JK).

JK gave a presentation on the work of the diocesan Property Team. The structure included a Property Committee which met four times a year and considered property transactions and policies. The Committee provided scrutiny and support for the Property Team and clergy. The Property Team covered all five episcopal areas. There were three property managers and support staff. A recent addition had been the appointment of a property development manager.

Property costs had increased due to vacancy works and catching up on works not carried out during Covid. In 2022 the Team had carried out 54 vacancy works and rented out 79 properties. The time between properties becoming vacant and renting out had decreased. The Team worked with EON on an eco-project on a mix of solar and other projects.

During the year properties had been sold for a total of £2.17m. Two houses had been purchased for £1.2m in total. JK informed Synod that housing needs are reviewed with the Archdeacons throughout the year.

A new initiative in 2023 was the introduction of the reporting portal, Fixflo. This had been very helpful for clergy to be able to report property issues to the Property Team. The next phase to be rolled out will be for contractors to be notified of jobs direct via Fixflo.

A pilot project was in hand for nine properties to establish what action was needed to make diocesan properties carbon net zero. The results of the project would be used to develop a plan for the rest of the diocesan portfolio.

The new Property Development Manager was reviewing all diocesan land, housing and closed churches for development opportunities. These would include social housing provision. This was to be a self-funding post.

Question of Clarification

Barbara Smith (Brighouse and Elland deanery)

With regard to the properties which had been bought and sold, six had been sold for £2.6m and two purchased for £1.4m. What was the quality of the housing that so much had been spent on those two? It seems a lot of money to spend on two properties.

JW replied that the purchase of properties depended on the context and location of the property. Some diocesan properties were not suitable in that they didn't meet the Green Book guidance. For example one of the sold properties was a small terrace which had been sold for £165k. Whereas a recent purchase in Wakefield had been of a property at £600k plus to comply with the Green Book guidance of four bedrooms and a study. It was difficult to compare purchases as prices varied from area to area for similar specification properties. Every sale and purchase was considered by the Property Committee and the diocese tried to get the best value possible for both sales and purchases.

Debate

Archdeacon Paul Ayers (Archdeacon of Leeds and General Synod)

Recommended voting on the motion. Congregations usually wanted the clergy to live in their parishes but that meant that the diocese was at the mercy of house prices which varied tremendously across the diocese. The diocese tried to provide clergy housing as close to the Green Guide as possible with regard to size and shape. Clergy needs varied but the diocese didn't want to keep buying and selling properties and in some places the choice was very limited to meet the

Green Book guidance. Where clergy properties were vacant the diocese tried to rent the property where possible. However, the timings of tenancies and clergy recruitment didn't always match and so sometimes it wasn't possible to rent the properties.

Archdeacon Bill Braviner

Echoed what Archdeacon Paul Ayers had said and highlighted that the work JK had outlined involved an enormous amount of work. All the diocesan teams' reports told the story of a number of teams and people trying to do their best for the parishes and schools and ministry and mission at the front line. He was impressed with the service received from the diocesan teams.

Archdeacon Bill Braviner proposed:

"That the annual reports contained in DS23 07 04 and DS23 07 04 01 are received."

Synod members voted on the motion:

For: 83

Against: 0

Abstain: 1

The motion was approved.

9. Presentation on the Link Dioceses Review

Paper: None

Presenters: The Bishop of Leeds and Dean Andy Bowerman (Dean of Bradford).

PPT presentation: The Bishop of Leeds.

The Bishop of Leeds gave an overview of the history of the diocesan links which had been in place when the diocese was formed in 2014. As nearly a decade had passed it was time to review all the links and Dean Andy Bowerman had been commissioned to carry out a review. The outcome of the review would be brought to a future Synod.

The current links were:

Sudan – this had been linked with the former Bradford diocese. Sudan and South Sudan were linked with Salisbury diocese too. The Diocese of Leeds is linked with five diocese in Sudan and this was one of the strongest diocesan links.

Sri Lanka – this had been linked with the former Ripon and Leeds diocese. The link was with two dioceses but there had been a change in bishops in Sri Lanka over the last 18 months to 2 years. Whereas there had been a strong relationship with the previous bishop, it was proving more difficult to make contact with the current bishop.

Tanzania – this link was originally with the former diocese of Wakefield. Originally there was one diocese, Mara but this had been divided in to three. The links remained fairly strong and there were some parish links too. None of the bishops from the link attended the Lambeth Conference.

Pakistan – this link was dormant, though the new bishop had indicated he would like to renew the link and this was being considered.

USA – This link was from the former diocese of Bradford. This was a strong link between the bishops, parish to parish links and there was a youth exchange. Having a link with the USA made sense.

Erfurt – This link was from Bradford diocese but Erfurt is equivalent in practice to a deanery. The Diocese of Leeds had been looking instead to Hanover diocese which had similarities with the Diocese of Leeds. There had been exchanges already and the Ralph Meister, was an Honorary Canon of Ripon cathedral.

Sweden – this link with Skara was from the former Wakefield diocese through the Porvoo agreement. Bishop Åke Bonnier was an ecumenical canon of Wakefield cathedral.

Dean Andy Bowerman commented that he was committed to the Anglican Communion and working in partnership.

Comments

Canon Mrs Jane Evans (Halifax and Calder Valley deanery and General Synod)

Jane said she was a lay representative on the Anglican Consultative Council. Her parish also had a link with Tanzania. Jane asked that the Link Dioceses review take in to account the personal links. She cautioned about the possible consequences of ceasing the Tanzania link.

Archdeacon Andy Bowerman

Commented that during the review they would be listening to all interested people.

The Bishop of Leeds said that a review could not dictate to a parish what it should do. It was hoped to hear of parishes' experiences to inform how as a diocese we then promote the links.

The Revd Canon Anne Russell (South Leeds deanery)

Asked how the voices of the laity might be brought in to the debate as lives had been touched by the links? She outlined her journey getting to know about the link with Sudan and how the link was a blessing to Inglebrough parish. She also emphasized that the link had changes a lot though listening to the people of Sudanese heritage in the diocese.

The Bishop of Leeds recognized and endorsed what Canon Anne had said but cautioned that when a review was carried out with a view to change, it wasn't appropriate to say it was acceptable to require change with other links but exclude one. Accordingly, the diocesan links were being reviewed as a whole. There were some things which were beyond the diocese's control. For example, the Sudanese bishops were clear that if LLF was adopted then the Church of England bishops may not be welcome in Sudan. However, it was time to review all the links and look at how a decision on them might be made. The Synod would be given an opportunity to debate this at a future Synod.

Members were asked to limit their comments to one minute and to also send any comments direct to Dean Andy after the Synod.

Canon Ann Nicoll (East Leeds deanery)

Asked that the historic huge contribution made by schools visits to Sri Lanka through that link be included in the deliberations.

Roger Lazenby (North West Leeds deanery)

Said that it had been said it was important to carry out a review. However, it was unclear what the consultation process was. This needed to be clarified so that everyone who wished to contribute knew and could input in to the process.

David Ashton (Dewsbury & Birstall deanery and General Synod)

Highlighted that the review also needed to be mindful of the funds raised for particular diocesan links. He asked that the review identified what monies had been sent by the Diocese to support the link dioceses and that none was lost.

The Bishop of Leeds – confirmed he had referred to the review in various different forums and in his Presidential Address to Synod. He confirmed that where offerings were given in services he took, they went in to a general pot for the diocesan links (ie not for a specific diocesan link) and this was then administered centrally. He encouraged Synod members to send their thoughts on the diocesan links to Dean Andy.

Dean Andy confirmed he would welcome input from the Synod members.

The Bishop of Leeds said that the meeting was the last Synod of The Ven Peter Townley, the Archdeacon of Pontefract, who would be retiring after 15 years of service and moving to the Diocese of York in September. He thanked Archdeacon Peter for all he had been to the historic diocese and the current diocese: his humanity, wisdom and particularly his compassion and pastoral care.

Archdeacon Peter Townley thanked the Bishop of Leeds and said he felt wonderfully privileged to serve in this way and was grateful for the bishops, archdeacons and bishop’s staff. He asked the Synod to keep himself and Moira in their prayers as they moved to a new chapter.

10. Bishop of Leeds Blessing and Close.

The Bishop of Leeds closed the Synod with a blessing.

Signed:.....

Role:

Date:

Diocese of Leeds

Twenty Fifth Diocesan Synod, Saturday 15 July 2023

Presidential Address

A story that grabbed my attention this week was the complaint by a British pensioner that her holiday in Benidorm had been ruined because there were too many Spanish people there. She is reported to have said: “They get on my nerves; why can’t they go somewhere else for their holiday?”

Well, in the light of other media behaviour in the last week or so, this might seem trivial. But, I cite it here simply because it struck me as a perfect example of how easy it is to miss the point and assume that how I see the world is how the world actually is. This is why I never tire of hearing the biblical call to repentance – metanoia, change of mind, of a way of seeing and, therefore, thinking about God, the world and us. And, of course, repentance assumes humility – the basic acceptance that I might be wrong.

Which, of course, means that Spaniards should be allowed to have a holiday in Benidorm – but, why would they want to, if Benidorm is full of Brits who think like that pensioner?

The point of a synod is that we bring together people who are united in Christ and in a common cause – the Gospel of Jesus Christ and all it entails. The clue is in the word: syn-od. That is, a ‘coming together’ (of odd people?). So, we need not fear expressing our view and perception of whatever issue we are discussing; but, we do so with the humility that others seeing differently might mean that I need to repent, and not them.

While we meet this morning in relative peace we are conscious that the plight of suffering people around the globe is too easily ignored. A cost-of-living crisis here can blind us to the horrors going on in Sudan and Ukraine (to pick just two places in violent conflict). So, it is timely that today we turn our gaze outwards before looking inwards.

It won’t have passed you by that the General Synod met last weekend in York. Reporting on it focused almost exclusively on the car-crash encounters about negative stuff: safeguarding failures being the most prominent. Without rehearsing what happened in and around the chamber, I simply want to say that, whatever the challenges nationally, we can be confident about our safeguarding systems here in the Diocese of Leeds. I am sorry that we shall be losing our Team Leader, Carla Darbyshire, who has served us well during her time here. Our DSOs will now adjust to a new regime, but they are a pleasure for me to work with in this vital area of our common life. That said, we don’t know what we don’t know; and must remain vigilant as we seek to create a safe church for everyone, but especially those who have been damaged by the church in the past.

I had to leave York early (and after some excellent speeches and contributions from Leeds clergy and lay reps) in order to be in London for meetings and debates. I sit on the House of Lords Communications & Digital Committee and we recently published a report on digital exclusion. Our next inquiry will revolve around the revolutionary development of AI and the challenges and opportunities the new technologies can bring us. Underneath the technological questions (and well-hidden to some people) lie some crucial-

but-difficult questions about what it means to be a human being, how ethics are to be done, why morality matters, and why human ability to do something does not mean we *should* do it.

Debates about so-called “illegal migration” and “online harms” revolve around these same questions. The technical, political and pragmatic are vital, but so is the thinking – and the assumptions underlying the thinking – about meaning and value and theology/philosophy. Which is why I went from the chamber on Wednesday to a meeting with Sudanese people about the crisis in their homeland. Which, of course, has a particular importance for us here in the Diocese of Leeds.

We have had a partnership link with the Episcopal Church of Sudan for nearly half a century. Relationships are strong. A visit was scheduled for this coming autumn, but has had to be cancelled because the violence and the destruction in Khartoum makes travel impossible. However, I have promised Archbishop Ezekiel that I will visit him and his people as soon as travel is allowed. We express our solidarity and love not just with our prayers and communications, but by being there physically when times are hardest for them. (I should add that earlier this week I also met with politicians involved in Sudan – we need to exploit every channel possible in a very challenging environment.)

So, why am I telling you this? Well, partly so that you know what some of us are up to beyond the link, but because of our link. But, mainly so that we keep our sisters and brothers in Sudan at the forefront of our prayers and our loving commitment. Sudan has fallen from the headlines and wider reportage, but they must not fall from our attention here.

Later in this synod we will have a brief presentation about our wider partnership links, so I won't say more now. Suffice it say at this point that the Dean of Bradford is reviewing our links and will soon offer proposals for how we set up for the next ten years. I am very grateful to him for bringing his fresh perspective and wide experience of the Anglican Communion to this task on our behalf.

Despite all this, the bulk of our synod this morning focuses on financial matters, and this is right. Our diocesan business still has to get done, whatever else is happening, if we are to shape our common life in such a way as to enable the Church of England in this part of the world to fulfil the unique vocation given to us. We will look at and critique the Annual Report and Financial Statements. This will tell us something about our priorities in the last year and, hopefully, open our eyes and minds to where we might go from here in the light of the constraints and gifts we have together.

In this context, I want to bring some good news.

Our diocesan vision has not changed in the nearly ten years we have been the Diocese of Leeds. We want to grow confident Christians who consequently grow churches which help to transform our communities. This means being faithful to our calling to be and to share the good news of the Gospel as we serve with steadfast purpose the communities in which we live. We are called to bring hope, not just collude in the grief. This vision has been, and continues to be, at the very heart of the strategic direction of this Diocese.

The challenges of the last three years and our emergence from the pandemic now provide a unique opportunity to reset and retell the story of how we will support this vision – strategically - and encourage the church to become – in the terms used nationally - simpler, humbler and bolder. In doing this, we have been encouraged by the example of the early church. Inspired by the Holy Spirit, Christians of the first

century prayed for, equipped, mentored, taught and encouraged the local church. Integral to this approach was a man called Barnabas. Barnabas was intentionally and prayerfully sent out. He not only shared the gospel and taught the disciples, but he modelled how best to support others in doing the same thing. Barnabas exemplifies the approach we want to take as a diocese as we seek the Holy's Spirit power, inspiration and guidance in ensuring that every church has an opportunity to move forward in mission, ministry and sustainability in a way that is intentional, prayerful and achievable.

Rather than being top-down, this strategy places the onus on the local to ask how progress might be made – locally.

So, I am pleased to be able to tell Synod this morning that two weeks ago the Strategic Mission and Ministry Investment Board (SMMIB) agreed to give the diocese £3.9m to fully fund the first phase of the programme we are calling 'Barnabas: Encouraging Confidence'. Barnabas sets an overarching strategic framework around which the diocese can intentionally be supportive of the missional needs of parishes and can bring a focus on revitalisation, growth and sustainability. It enables us to continue to respond to the missional and financial challenges which the diocese faces over the coming decade. This funding provides the wider foundation for supporting parishes right across the diocese as we use this national funding to develop a long-term investment partnership rather than set off a series of ad hoc projects.

There is much to do. Some elements of the Barnabas programme have begun but we are now able to accelerate this, and there will be much more coming out over the coming weeks and months. Please do take the time to engage with it and to make the most of the support that is being offered. And contact Jonathan Wood or Jude Smith if you wish to discuss details of substance or content further at this stage.

I am deeply grateful to Jonathan, Jude and their colleagues for the huge amount of work that has gone into securing this funding.

But, we must remember that this is a means and not the end. The money allows us – faithfully, responsibly and accountably – to attend to what might be termed 'the point of it all': to have communities where God is worshipped, where Jesus is followed, where the Holy Spirit inspires, and where, together in love and mercy, we serve our communities in Christ's name.

This will look different in different places. The glory of the Church of England (if only we can recognise it) is that we offer a menu rather than a single dish to the varieties of people in our communities, parishes and institutions. Put trivially, I can be swinging incense in the morning and preaching informally in the evening on the same day. Neither is 'better' and it is not a competition. But, our call is to build one another up as we seek to be faithful.

So, let us this morning come together prayerfully, if remotely ... loving one another and recognising beneath all the business our common calling as Christians and Anglicans. As I pray for you and for the variety of ministries which you exercise, please pray for me in those areas where I seek also bring the good news of Christ to a world needing hope.

And, if you do go to Benidorm this summer, please try to learn the local language and see the world through their eyes.

15 July 2023

DRAFT

Diocesan Synod 15 July 2023 – Item 4 Questions for Synod

Question received from The Revd Eve Ridgeway (North West Leeds deanery)

“To The Secretary to the Diocesan Synod:

Clergy wellbeing has rightly become an important focus in the church over the past few years. How has the Diocese of Leeds sought to support clergy wellbeing through the use grants and charitable funds over the last year?”

From the Secretary to the Diocesan Synod:

Clergy wellbeing is very important and we are committed to trying to support clergy with the resources we have available. In addition to wider support through grants for development and general support through pastoral care and access to professional care, we have also sought to use charitable grants to meet specific needs and tackle hardship.

For the period May 2022 to May 2023 (our reporting period) the Leeds Diocesan Board of Finance distributed a total of £23,205 to clergy to support them with their needs. These grants included support for broken utilities, unexpected car repairs, travel costs to visit sick family, counselling, medical help and hardship due to the cost of living. We are very grateful to the Queen Victoria Clergy Trust and the Clergy Stipend Trust for these grants.

In addition to this we also distributed 180 grants to Clergy and lay people employed formally by Parishes and the Diocese to address cost of living pressures, particularly in relation to energy bills. This was at a cost of £125,775 and fully utilised grant funding from the Church Commissioners in addition to additional support from the Leeds Charitable Trust.

The Bishop of Leeds also provides help through the Bishop of Leeds Discretionary Fund (including charity funded sums from the Henry Smith Charity and The Clergy Rest Fund). Since January 2022 until July 2023 the total amount of grants given to clergy from this fund totalled £33,100.

If any clergy are in need then please do contact your archdeacon or bishop who will be able to seek help from the appropriate sources.
